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Deliverable 9.6 Demarcation Report of Electoral Studies User Community

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Abstract:

This report defines and demarcates the field of Electoral Studies. It does so as prerequisite for the identification of important user communities in that field whose collaboration and feedback will be sought in the development of a Knowledge Graph (an important infrastructural tool in SSHOC), for the scholars and user communities. The report concludes that a small number of dedicated conferences in this field provide the best prospects for approaching active user communities located at the centre of the field.

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Executive Summary

This report is Deliverable D9.6 of the SSHOC project. It provides a precondition for subsequent reports D9.7 (Design and Planning of a Knowledge Graph), and D9.9 (Production of a user validated Knowledge Graph). Knowledge graphs are infrastructural tools, in the form of models of knowledge in a substantive domain that connect otherwise isolated silos of information about, for example, publications, data-sets, events, people, tools, etc. They allow the identification of relationships between the objects in these different silos that would otherwise be difficult to detect. Knowledge graphs are therefore potentially important aspects of the infrastructure that SSHOC aims to develop for the social sciences and humanities, and that would promote re-purposing and re-use of scientific publications, data and analytical results; multidisciplinary collaboration; and increase the potential for societal impact.

WP9 is tasked with the development of a knowledge graph in the field of electoral studies. This development requires first of all a clear description and demarcation of this subtantive field and its user community, which will be provided in this report.

The definition and demarcation is achieved by elaborating key aspects of the field. These aspects are discussed in subsections 2.2 – 2.6 of this report, and relate to, respectively, the varieties of elections, electoral outcomes, candidates and voters, rules of the game, communications and comparative approaches that are characteristic for the field, separately as well as in their possible combinations.

After having defined the field in terms of its distinctive aspects, the question is addressed how to identify and reach its important user communities. It is argued that this can only be achieved through organisational features of such user communities, which can be located in, respectively, professional organisations, dedicated scholarly conferences, dedicated publication outlets, and dedicated tools and resources. Each of these is discussed, leading to the conclusion that dedicated conferences in electoral studies can be expected to provide the most efficient options to reach relevant user communities located at the core of the field. Specific cases of such conferences are identified, which will serve as occasions for disseminating information about SSHOC, and particularly for soliciting feedback and recruiting collaborators for the development of the Electoral Studies Knowledge Graph that is one of the core deliverables of Work Package 9.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

EOSC	European Open Science Cloud
SSHOC	Social Sciences and Humanities Open Cloud
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
EPOP	'Election, Public Opinion and Parties' organised section of the British Political Science Association
IMISCOE	'International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion' Research Network
ESS	'European Social Survey' ERIC
NES	National Election Study (in a generic sense)
MEDem	'Monitoring Electoral Democracy', Research network on Electoral research (in development)
Ethmigsurveydata	The International Ethnic and Immigrant Minorities' Survey Data Network; COST Action 16111
FPTP	First past the post (electoral system)
PR	Proportional representation (electoral system)
MMP	Mixed member proportional representation (electoral system)
AV	Alternative vote (electoral system)
STV	Singe transferable vote (electoral system)
AppV	Approval vote (electoral system)
DVPW	Deutsche Vereinigung für Politikwissenschaft (German Political Science Association)
PSA	Political Studies Association (UK Political Science Association)
CSES	Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (a collaborative research project among national election studies around the world)
TEV	'True' European Voter (data harmonisation and I ntegration project based on European national election studies)

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1.   Introduction and purpose of this deliverable

The aspiration of SSHOC is to produce a relevant infrastructure not only for its consortium partners and their associated user-communities, but also for other user- and data-communities in the social sciences and humanities. Work package 9 (WP9) of SSHOC focusses on some user communities that are not represented by any of the partners of the Consortium. One of these is the user community working in the field of Electoral Studies, which is important and highly developed in Political Science and cognate disciplines. The program of activities of WP9 includes piloting the development of infrastructural tools –known as knowledge graphs, briefly described later. These tools are often expected to be exceptionally valuable in the development of open science; for the re-purposing and re-use of data, scientific publications, and analytical results; for promoting multidisciplinary collaboration; and to increase the potential for societal impact. In short, knowledge graphs are seen as one of the ways to realise SSHOC's aspiration of the "Development, realisation and maintenance of user-friendly tools & services, covering all aspects of the full research data cycle …. , taking into account human-centric approach and creating links between people, data, services and training." (Research and innovation action NUMBER – 823782 – SSHOC, page 3). In spite of its potential, the development of knowledge graphs in the domain of the social sciences and humanities is still in its infancy, and pilot studies of their development are important to identify specific problems involved. One of the aims of WP9 is to conduct such a pilot, that will be substantively focussed on the field of electoral studies. The experiences and resulting tools from this pilot will not only be of use for the electoral studies community, but also for other user communities (including those that are represented in the Consortium by its partners) that aim to develop their own knowledge graphs in due course.

This report aims to provide a frame of reference and relevant information to be used in subsequent work for T9.3[1] of WP9. An important part of this task consists of the Design of a Knowledge Graph for the field of Election Studies (D9.7), and of the subsequent production and delivery of this Knowledge Graph in a user-validated form. A Knowledge Graph is a formal and structured representation of a domain of knowledge that offers stakeholders in that domain an interface for navigating the accumulated knowledge in the domain, and for discovering relationships between information from otherwise separate and unconnected databases within that domain. This Knowledge Graph will provide an Election Studies Analytics dashboard as interface for end-users.[2] These products are intended to be distributed for general use to the user community Electoral Studies;[3] the experiences in the development of these tools and the way in which they are used by this user community

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[1] T9.3 is one of the tasks of SSHOC Work Package 9 (WP9). The focus of WP9 is on Data Communities, and Task 9.3 deals with the Data Community Project: Electoral Studies.

[2] The Knowledge Graph and the Election Studies Analytics Dashboard constitute jointly Deliverable D9.9 of WP9 (titled Delivery of user validated Knowledge Graph, and Election Studies Analytics dashboard).

[3] The terms 'Election Studies' and 'Electoral Studies' are used interchangeably in the wider literature. This report will do so as well.

will be important examplars for other social science and humanities disciplines, and for other user communities represented by the partners of the SSHOC consortium.

This report (which constitutes D9.6) presents a description and demarcation of the user community Election Studies. This includes a conceptual description of the field of Election Studies and of its various subfields. It subsequently requires an inventory of the most important institutional actors and organisations in this field, which can be used to contact, recruit and train active collaborators in the co-production and user-validation of the knowledge graph. This report also lists the most important sources of existing data, publications, services, existing and related taxonomies, ontologies, controlled vocabularies, and tools that can be targeted, used, reused or adapted in the production of the knowledge graph.

This report starts, in *Section 2*, with a description and conceptual demarcation of the field and user community of Elecoral Studies and its recognizable subfields. It then continues in *Section 3* with identifying the most important organisations and institutional actors in this field. *Section 4* contains conclusions.

2. Defining and Demarcating the Field of Electoral Studies

The field of electoral studies focusses on the study of elections, and aims to understand their outcomes and the factors that influence these outcomes. This includes the way in which elections are conducted, the rules and regulations that govern who is entitled to be involved; the rules that regulate the behaviour of actors that are involved; the choice processes of voters; and so on. The 'outcomes' of elections can be defined in multiple ways, each of which leads to its own strand of studies.

The field of electoral studies is mostly empirical, although it also harbours a small segment of important philosophical and normative work. Electoral studies are most often regarded as located in political science, however, depending on their specific focus (defined by particular outcomes and by choice of factors affecting these outcomes) large segments of electoral studies are also positioned in other disciplines or in the overlap of these other disciplines with political science. The most important of these other disciplines are sociology, law, communication science, psychology, economics and geography.

Electoral studies have been developed mostly in academic settings in rich, developed and democratic countries, although important contributions have also been made from outside academia (from industry by commercial pollsters, consultants, campaign management firms etc.; and from media organisations). Recent decades see increasing contributions to the field originating from less affluent, or less democratic countries.

This very general and abstract characterisation of the field of electoral studies can be made more specific, and therefore also more informative for what this report aims to achieve, by elaborating some of its key elements and objects of interest. The remainder of this section therefore briefly elaborates – in separate subsections – several key phenomena that help define and demarcate the field of electoral studies: elections; electoral outcomes; actors (candidates, political parties, voters); rules of the game; and communication. It then adds to this a subsection about comparative electoral research, as this increasingly important subfield would otherwise remain invisible. The final subsection demarcates the field on the basis of the earlier subsections[4].

2.1 Key Aspects of Electoral Studies: Elections

Elections are processes by which a group chooses who will occupy positions (often referred to as 'offices') that are part of the governance structure of that group. The offices in question may be of all kinds. They may be public offices –part of state and government institutions– or offices in private organisations –which may be

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[4] The following subsections are based on work by Van der Eijk and Franklin (2009), Arzheimer et al. (2016), Fisher et al. (2018), and Herron et al (2018).

firms, voluntary organisations, churches, and so on. The offices in question may be executive, or legislative, or judicial. And some may not be an office in the traditional sense of the word at all, as in the case of primary elections, where the election is about who will be the candidate for a particular party in an upcoming election that will fill an actual office (this is common practice in the USA, where primary elections are used to select the candidates representing political parties in elections for president, for Congressional seats, etc.). Sometimes elections are not about the choice of who will occupy a position, but about the removal of persons from the offices they hold – so-called *recall elections*. When groups, and their governance structures are very large, offices to be filled by election may exist at different levels, e.g., local branches, regional divisions, the national level, and sometimes even at supra-national level. This is common in the organisation of states, but also quite conventional for large organisations such as political parties, labour unions, sport federations etc.

While the idea of election is often associated with the exercise of free choice and a level playing field, there are many elections that are far from 'free and fair', as is clear from elections that were commonly held in the former Soviet Union, in other totalitarian societies, or in contexts that are at best partially free.

All such different kinds of elections have attracted scholarly attention, and their examination is part of the field of electoral studies. Yet, it would be inaccurate to expect equal attention in the field for all these different kinds of elections, as actual research into particular kinds of elections is often extremely rare. Some kinds of elections are in practice heavily favoured as objects for study, at the detriment of other kinds. Thus, the field is much more engaged in the study of elections for *public office* (i.e., for positions in the institutional structure of entire states) than in the study of elections for positions in private organisations. Moreover, elections that are perceived as important are much more popular as objects for study than elections at which there seems to be little 'at stake'. Thus, presidential elections are the prime target of study in countries where the president is the head of the executive (as, for example, in the USA, Argentina and Indonesia) while parliamentary elections are the main focus of scholarly attention in countries with parliamentary government (such as the UK, India or Japan). Elections for public offices that are deemed to be less important are much less frequently studied, such as elections for presidents without political power (such as in Ireland), or elections for 'parliaments' at sub-national level (municipal, regional, etc.). Elections for supra-national assemblies (e.g., the European Parliament) also attract less scholarly attention than national elections because they are usually regarded as 'second-order' national elections.[5] All of this does not imply that elections where little seems to be at stake, or elections for offices in private organisations are entirely ignored as objects for study, but compared to the efforts and funds

[5] Although they are not a dominant topic of study in the field of electoral studies, second-order elections are nevertheless well researched, particularly since the introduction in 1979 of direct elections to the European Parliament (conducted every 5 years), which promoted the development of relevant conceptual frameworks to characterise and study such elections (cf. Reif and Schmitt 1980), and of explicitly comparatively organised primary data collection at the time of these elections (the so-called European Election Studies –or EES; see http://europeanelectionstudies.net/). Yet other elections that are not of national first-order kind remain strongly under-researched, despite occasional exceptions (cf. Van der Brug et al. 2000).

invested in research of first-order national elections, they represent just a very small corner of the field.[6] Finally, the field of electoral studies is heavily biased towards the study of free and fair elections, which are most common in *democratic* states.

Given these biases in the field, the remainder of this document will mostly refer to elections for politically important public office, and that take place under free and fair conditions in democratic states. Occasionally, this report will also refer to other kinds of elections, but where it does not, the reader is nevertheless encouraged to keep in mind that virtually everything discussed in the next sections is also applicable for other kinds of elections, such as those for second-order or other less important elections for public office, for elections in private organisations, and elections under conditions that cannot be considered to be free and fair.

Although they do not result in the selection of occupants for elective office, *referendums* are also a relatively popular object of study by electoral researchers.[7] In these events the choice to be made is between different options for collective decisions about regulation (including constitutional arrangements) or policy. And here too, the field displays the same biases: towards public referendums (in contrast to those conducted within private organisations) which are perceived as important, and which are conducted under free and fair conditions.

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[6] Elections for non-state offices are studied even less frequently; think of, e.g., elections of a company's Board by share-holders, elections of the Pope by the college of Cardinals (but, for the latter see Colomer and McLean 1998), elections of the executive of sporting federations such as FIFA by representatives of national organisations, and so forth.

[7] Just like elections, referendums come in many kinds (sometimes also known by different terms, such as 'initiatives'); for a further elaboration of such differences see, e.g., Morel and Qvortrup (2017).

2.2 Key Aspects of Electoral Studies: Electoral Outcomes

Electoral studies aim to understand the outcomes of elections and the factors that shape those outcomes. Outcomes are of different kinds. One of the most obvious outcomes is **who has won**, i.e., who obtained the offices that were to be filled by an election. A quite different outcome is the level of **turnout**, i.e., the percentage of those eligible to cast a vote who did so. Some elections (and referendums) are conducted under regulations that stipulate that a definitive result (in terms of who won) is only obtained if turnout exceeds a minimum threshold. But apart from such instances, turnout is often seen as a phenomenon meriting systematic research in its own right; it is then most often seen as an expression of popular involvement with democratic processes or, conversely, of alienation from the political system or from the specific choices that are on offer. As such, turnout reflects to some extent features of the relationship between the demand and supply side of elections, and it is therefore of inherent interest to electoral researchers who do not focus primarily on the question of who wins office, but rather on broader questions pertaining to the quality of democracy as such.

Policy outcomes are another outcome of elections, although rather indirect (except in the case of referenda). Connected to expected or realized policy outcomes are more abstract outcomes of elections that are frequently analyzed in electoral studies and relate to representation and legitimacy. **Representation** is most often seen as pertaining to the degree to which policy outcomes that are either expected from or actually produced by newly elected office holders are in accordance with substantive political desires of those who voted them in office, or of the entire population. **Legitimacy** relates to the normative authority of elected governments and their policies, and thus to the degree to which citizens ought to acquiesce to these. Free and fair elections are generally regarded as a prerequisite for legitimacy in democratic societies.

Yet other outcomes of elections that are occasionally studied are the **effects of elections on the actors** that are most directly involved: candidates and voters (see section 2.3, below). What are, for example, the consequences of winning or losing an election on the subsequent careers of candidates? When looking at citizens, what are the socialising effects of taking part (or not) in an election, and do these effects impact on voters' likelihood of taking part (or not) in other electoral contests? Do elections make citizens happy, or anxious, or do the generate a feeling of resolution of plitial conflicts?[8] The 'who won' outcome of elections has been shown to generate yet another kind of outcome, namely citizens' personal feelings of attachment to and subsequent involvement in their political system (so-called 'winner-loser effects', affecting the extent to which 'consent of the governed' is or is not generated; and effects on orientations such as 'satisfaction with democracy').

Just as not all kinds of elections are equally popular in the field of electoral studies as objects for scholarly investigation (see section 2.1), not all kinds of outcomes acquire equal attention. By far the most frequently studied kind of outcome concerns 'who won', followed by studies of electoral participation and its aggregate

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[8] See, for example, Bruter and Harrison (2020).

result in the form of turnout. Expected or actual other outcomes of elections, such as policies, representation and legitimacy, are more often assumed to flow from who won than that they are the explicit focus of empirical study. Outcomes in terms of consequences of elections on candidates or citizens are studied even less frequently. Thus, here too, it is visible that although the range of election outcomes that is studied is broad and varied, electoral researchers tend to focus most frequently on the 'who won' and 'who took part' outcomes.

2.3 Key Aspects of Electoral Studies: Candidates and Voters

Much of the research effort in the field of electoral studies is directed at understanding and explaining the behaviour of the actors that are most directly involved in elections: ***candidates*** and ***voters***. These actors are often portrayed as representing, respectively, the *supply* and the *demand* side of electoral politics, with candidates offering a supply of personnel, policies and visions for a country, and with voters expressing their demand for such by way of voting for the option(s) that they prefer most.[9]

Candidates

Candidates are the persons who vie in an election for support from voters in order to become the occupant of an elected office. In established democracies it is not possible to regard most candidates as just representing themselves and their personal ideas. Most candidates compete in elections on behalf of a ***political party***. The support of a party –financially, in organisational terms, in terms of providing existing networks of communication and of providing a 'brand'– is often essential to compete effectively in nationwide elections. As a result, studies of elections and of political parties overlap often, yet they are to be distinguished as this overlap pertains mainly to political parties as actors in electoral processes, and not to other aspects of parties' existence (such as their internal structure; their relation to social cleavages and to organisations such as labour unions or churches; their activities in government or opposition; and similar). However, when it comes to elections, political parties and candidates are often difficult to separate. The question how much the specific characteristics of a candidate matter in electoral contests as compared to the properties of parties that they represent cannot be answered unequivocally. The answer depends on various other factors, such as who decides on the choice of candidates who represent parties in elections (is this decided by party leaders or party organizations, or by, for example, primary elections); and the existence of possibilities for candidates to bypass parties in acquiring financial support; and so on. Sometimes the party is unequivocally the most important, as is the case for many candidates on party lists in elections with proportional representation. Many of such candidates are quite unknown to the general public. In other cases it is the candidate who is most important,

[9] In this and following sections, the focus is mainly on first-order nation-wide elections for national public offices. The reader should keep in mind, however, that most of the arguments made apply equally to, for example, elections for public office at lower levels of government, for elections in private organisations such as for boards of directors by shareholders of a company, for the senate of a university, or for the elected winner of a talent-contest. See section 2.1 of this report for a wider discussion of different kinds of elections.

as is the case in Presidential elections in the USA, where the candidate often shapes the character of the party and its policies, particularly when he has won. And in some instances the party and the person of the candidate are both of importance, as is most clearly the case with candidates for executive government office, such as those who are implicitly or explicitly nominated by their party for the position of Chancellor in Germany, or Prime Minister in Britain. Further elaboration of the question when elections are about the choice of candidates or the choice of parties are not opportune at this place, but are regularly addressed by scholars in electoral studies (cf. Marsh 2007).

Important questions with respect to candidates and political parties that are frequently addressed in electoral studies relate to themes such as:

- The (legal and regulatory) requirements for being included as a candidate or as a political party on the ballot (including which parties or candidates are legally allowed to compete, or disallowed to do so). Such requirements define how open or how closed the field of competitors is.
- How political parties select their candidates (via top-down or bottom-up procedures; whether possibilities exist for deselection of candidates by the party; what intra-party requirements exist for selection of candidates; whether the party strives towards descriptive representation of specific groups (e.g., women, ethnic or linguistic minorities, regions; etc.). All of these factors help determine how dependent or independent a candidate can be of (particular segments or factions of) his or her party.
- How political parties and candidates decide on their manifestos which are generally seen as underlying their political positions in broad ideological terms as well as for specific policies; and what substantive pledges they make during election campaigns.
- How parties and candidates acquire finances and other material or immaterial support from the state, from organised social groups, from business, from members, or from individual citizens. The capacity to raise funds is particularly important for resourcing election campaigns.
- The behaviour of parties and candidates during election campaigns (centralised or decentralised campaigning; positive versus negative campaigning; emphasis on 'broad' or 'narrow casting of campaign communications; styles of campaigning; and so on).
- The circumstances under which all the factors referred to in the previous bullet points affect particular outcomes of elections.

The field of electoral studies can thus be demarcated, at least in part, by researchers and studies that focus on these kinds of questions.

Voters

The second category of actors who are most directly involved in elections consists of voters. *Voters* are those who make the choices that will, when aggregated, determine who will occupy elected offices for a country (or for the system or organisation whose offices are up for elections). The term voters is often used in two slightly different meanings: on the one hand all those who are entitled to participate in a specific election, and, on the other hand, those who actually make use of that right by casting their vote. A similar ambiguity exists with respect to the use of the associated collective term *electorate*. Who is and who is not entitled to vote is

generally determined by law and regulations (see below, section 2.4), but this is sometimes only done in the form of a *potential* entitlement, which still has to be completed by additional actions such as registration.[10]

Research into voters is most often directed to describe and explain their behaviour in election contests, of which two different aspects have to be distinguished: their **electoral participation**, and their **vote choice**. Studies of electoral participation focus on describing and explaining the distinction between those who actually cast their vote, and those who do not (either because they did not register while that was required, or because they did not make use of their right to vote in spite of being registered). Studies of vote choice focus on the description and explanation of the choices of those who do turn out and cast their vote. Research into both questions is increasingly, and particularly since the 1970s, based on individual-level empirical data obtained by surveys or interviews). Earlier studies often used aggregate election results to address the same descriptive and explanatory questions (see, for example, Tingsten 1937), but such studies have declined in popularity because of increased awareness of their vulnerability to so-called ecological inference errors[11] and because of the increasing availability of survey data.[12]

In addition to electoral participation and vote choice many electoral studies investigate other apects of voter behaviour, such as attentiveness to a campaign; voluntary exposure to pursuasive communication from candidates and political parties; involvement in an election campaign as manifested by discussions with others, or by supporting candidates or parties.

Explanatory factors that are of dominant importance in the empirical study of *electoral participation* are both contextual and individual. Factors that matter at the contextual level include whether or not turning out to vote is obligatory, whether exercising one's right to vote is facilitated or not, and the importance and competitiveness of an election. At the individual level frequently used factors to explain the difference between voters and non-voters revolve around indicators for *resources* that reduce the cost of voting, and for *motivations* that give positive meaning to the act of voting. Resources include a variety of demographic and socio-structural variables, of which education, absence of abject poverty (including homelessness and unemployment), and absence of fear of persecution or discrimination are amongst the most important. Other resources include various forms of social integration of individuals, such as membership of organisations (political parties, labour unions), and even living in a stable personal relationship. Motivational factors that are

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[10] In general, parliamentary or presidential elections, it is currently common that legal entitlement to vote is granted on the basis of citizenship, age, and not having been disqualified for a variety of reasons (such as being imprisoned or having been declared mentally incompetent). Yet, to actually be allowed to vote, people are often still required to *register*. Only where some form of universal voter registration is maintained by the state is such a procedure of individual registration not required.

[11] So-called ecological inference errors are fallacies that occur when making individual-level inferences from group-level empirical data, or *vice versa* (cf. Freedman 1999).

[12] Empirical studies of voter behaviour based on aggregate data remain important, however, in all situations where no survey data are available, as, for example, in historical research (cf. De Bromhead et al. 2013).

most frequently used in the explanation of electoral participation include partisanship –a feeling of personal identification or connection to a political party or to a political leader– and a plethora of attitudinal factors such as political interest, political efficacy, and political trust. Finally, habituation to voting (or to non-voting) is of importance, and increasingly more so the longer a person has had the right to vote –the repeated behaviour of voting (or of non-voting) often generates a kind of set-decision for future elections.

As far as the analysis of *vote choice* is concerned, the most important explanatory factors used by scholars in electoral studies include

- Voters' position in the social structure of their society, which determines group affiliations as well as experiences with the consequences of policies and choices made by occupants of elected offices;
- Considerations with respect to voters' and parties' worldviews (also known as ideologies), preferred policies and issues. This includes also perceptions and evaluations of politicians' and parties' competence in dealing with issues and events;
- Partisanship: a feeling of personal identification or connection to a political party or to a political leader;
- A variety of attitudinal factors that interact with other explanatory factors, such as whether voters' value orientations are more 'materialist' or more 'post-materialist' in character;[13] whether they have little or much trust in the state,[14] and so on.

The various explanatory factors that are frequently used in the study of electoral participation and of vote choice and that were briefly referred to above characterise large parts of the field of electoral studies and are therefore of importance when attempting to demarcate that field.[15]

2.4 Key Aspects of Electoral Studies: Rules of the Game

The 'rules of the game' under which elections are conducted are of various kinds. The study of these rules and of their consequences for different kinds of outcomes (see section 2.2) is part of the subject matter of electoral studies. Among these regulations are the following.

Rules and regulations for **translating votes into allocation of offices** to candidates. These kinds of rules and regulations are generally referred to as the **electoral system**. One of the most important distinctions between the great variety of existing electoral systems is whether they are majoritarian or proportional. *Majoritarian systems* are used when the winner of each elected office is decided independently of who wins other offices. General elections in the UK, for example, consist of separate elections for each constituency seat of the House

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[13] Cf. Inglehart (1977; 1990).

[14] Cf. Hetherington (1998).

[15] Many studies that use as *dependent* variable factors that elsewhere have been demonstrated to be important explanatory factors for electoral participation or vote choice, should often be considered to be part of the field of electoral studies, even when they do not directly address questions of electoral participation or vote choice.

of Commons. In such situations, there is always only a single office to be filled, and the candidate with most votes wins that office, thus, who is 'first past the post' wins the election for that single office.[16] In contrast to these 'first past the post' (FPTP) electoral systems are *proprotional representation* (PR) systems, in which the question who wins a specific office is not decided independently for each and every single office. Instead, a number of offices (for example all the seats of a Parliament) are assigned to winners in an interconnected way, so that the distribution of votes in the electorate is reproduced as closely as possible in the elected body. This requires that candidates are organized into groupings (usually referred to as *lists*, which generally represent political parties). A combination of majoritarian and proportional elements is offered by so-called mixed-member proportional (MMP) systems, which can only be used for parliaments or assemblies, and in which voters get two votes, one for a constituency seat (filled on the basis of a majoritarian logic) and one for a list or political party (which allocates seats on a proportional logic). Elections for the lower house of, e.g., the German Parliament (*Bundestag*) are of this kind.

The broad categories of majoritarian, proportional and mixed-member electoral systems contain each many different forms that differ from each other in more specific manners, such as the presence or absence of vote share thresholds to be surpassed to gain any offices at all; how to allocate vote share remainders in PR systems, whether or not different candidates or lists can be 'linked'; the ratio of the two kinds of offices in an MMP system; whether voters are allowed to express a single preference, or multiple preferences as in the case of so-called Alternative Vote (AV), Single Transferable Vote (STV) and Approval Vote (AppV); and so on.

Their great variety makes electoral systems a popular topic for study. One of the central questions of such studies is how the electoral system impacts upon the development of other political phenomena. To what extent does a majoritarian system promote the development of a two-party system (as suggested by the so-called law of Duverger[17]) and does PR result in fragmented party systems? The logic behind these kinds of studies is that electoral systems provide incentives and disincentives to candidates and political parties to behave in certain ways, and in that way shape the subsequent development of political systems. Obviously, such consequences of electoral systems are not limited to how party systems evolve but extend also to government formation (with or without coalitions), to dominant styles of policy making, to voter behavior, and to the quality of political representation and representative democracy.

[16] Many systems that are known as majoritarian do not require the winner to obtain a majority of votes, but a plurality; the UK and the USA are both well-known examples. Some majoritarian systems require an absolute majority of votes for a candidate to be declared the winner; this is implemented by a second-round election in the case no candidate obtained an absolute majority in first instance. This second-round is then a run-off election between the top two most successful candidates from the first round; a well-known example of such a system is France (both for the office of President as for seats in Parliament).

[17] Cf. Blais (2016); Bochsler (2019).

In addition to the electoral system, many other rules and regulations exist that govern the conduct of elections. These may relate to **rules of enfranchisement** (i.e., who has and who has not the right to vote in a particular election?); rules about the initiation of an election (new elections to be held at the discretion of specific political actors, or at intervals prescribed by law?); regulations about (im)permissible behaviour of political parties, candidates, voters and others (i.e., regulations about financial donations and about campaign spending; whether results from opinion polls may be published shortly before an election, etc.). The study of all these different 'rules of the game' is part of the field of electoral studies, but not all of them are addressed with equal frequency. Scholarly attention is focused most on the rules known as 'electoral systems', and much less on all kinds of other rules and regulations.

2.5 Key Aspects of Electoral Studies: Communication

Elections cannot be conducted –with the possible exception of very small scale ones– without media that provide the opportunity for communication between candidates and parties on the one hand, and voters on the other hand. Research into political and electoral communication is therefore an important part of the field of electoral studies. This subfield lies obviously at the disciplinary intersection of political science and communication science.

Scholarly attention to the role of media focussed traditionally mainly on mass media –newspapers, radio and TV. Over the past years, social media have been added to this menu of channels of communication and have attracted considerable scholarly attention. Although direct face-to-face communication is also an important and recognised element in the mix of different forms of communications in election contexts, it nevertheless remains somewhat under-investigated as a consequence of its fragmented character and the resulting challenges of covering it in empirical studies. As in all communication research, research questions can be differentiated in those that focus on the sender, on the message, on the medium, and on the recipient.

Studies about *senders* focus, in the field of electoral studies, mainly on communication strategies and behaviour of candidates and political parties in their attempts to reach and influence voters. The focus of such studies is often on styles of communication (i.e., the use of so-called 'negative' campaigning in which critique of competitors focuses more prominently than the elaboration of one's own strengths and proposals[18]), and on choice of (kinds of) outlets.

Message-focussed studies concentrate on manifest themes and topics, as well as on more latent discursive aspects of messages. Studies that focus on the *medium* used in communication are of two kinds. One kind looks at the inherent possibilities and limitations of particular kinds of media for various kind of purposes; for example, print media, such as newspapers, may be more useful for lengthty messages then television is. The other kind of studies that focus on media do so by looking at media organisations as actors who play a role in

[18] Cf. Walter and Van der Eijk (2019).

electoral porcesses in their own right. The view in such studies is that media cannot be regarded as neutral channels of communication between senders and recipients, but that they contribute themselves to communication processes by their choices of what to cover and what not; by their balance of providing information and opinion; by being partisan or being independent of candidates and parties; by their style of reporting (emotive or factional), and so on. Media organisations are thus play important actors, in addition to candidates and political parties, in communicative processes such as agenda setting, framing, and providing evaluative schemata for political information and opinion.

Studies that focus on *recipients* of communication emphasise that citizens are not powerless targets of communications, but that they play an active role themselves in conferring meaning to messages by processes such as self-exposure, conscious or unconscious acceptance or rejection of message content, and selective retention.

The entire array of different foci and different research questions about communication that has been briefly described above can be identified in electoral studies but, again, not all strands are pursued with equal frequency. The most prominent of these strands include studies of effects of communications on voters; and studies of the role of media (in the plural) on defining by way of agenda-setting, framing and priming what elections are perceived to be about.

2.6 Key Aspects of Electoral Studies: Comparative Research

Elections are frequently occurring events. They are conducted regularly in democracies, and even in non-democratic systems, with approximately 4-year intervals.[19] When considering successive elections, questions of electoral change unavoidably propel themselves onto the agenda of the electoral studies community. Why does electoral support for Party X increase or decrease from one election to the next? Why does a government that was installed on the basis of a parliamentary majority lose its mandate? But also, why do specific groups of voters switch their support from one party to another, and is that a temporary deviation from a stable pattern, or a more permanent phenomenon? Thus, the abundance of elections invokes questions of comparison. One kind of comparisons is ***within a single political system***; such comparisons may involve

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[19] Inter-election intervals are sometimes regulated by law; the most common interval is 4 years, but longer or shorter fixed intervals exist also. The *maximum* period between successive elections is usually defined in law, often with the possibility for earlier elections to be called by designated political actors (e.g., a Prime Minister, a President, a majority or super-majority in Parliament), or to be triggered by certain events (such as the inability to form a government with majority support in Parliament).

changes from one election to a next one; they may be about long-term evolution; or they may be about differences between different kinds of elections which are contested by the same political parties.[20]

A different tradition of comparative studies involves **comparisons across countries**. For example, why is turnout (in first-order national elections) much higher in some countries than in other ones? Why are over-time changes in political parties' vote shares –often referred to as electoral *volatility*– much more pronounced in some countries than in other ones? Why is political representation –one of the outcomes of elections– so different between political systems?

Comparative election studies have evolved into a distinct and lively subfield, strongly fuelled by the continuous increase in available empirical data about elections –aggregate level data; individual-voter level data; communication data; candidate surveys; coded data of parties electoral manifestos; and so on. The data for such research are sometimes based on separate studies that were not explicitly designed to be compared, but increasingly more are data available from studies that were explicitly designed for cross-national comparisons (see also Section 4 of this report).

Comparative studies give rise to the notion of **context**, an umbrella term for (a set of) specific conditions under which elections are conducted, and that vary over time, across different kinds of elections, or across different countries. The notion of context may refer to institutional characteristics –for example, distinguishing Presidential from parliamentary systems; or majoritarian from proportional representation or mixed-member electoral systems. Context may also refer to economic conditions (recession vs. economic growth; or differences in inequality of income and wealth; etc.); or to social conditions (referring, for example, to differences in structures and intensity of social conflicts), and so on. The remit of comparative electoral studies then consists of linking contextual differences to differences in electoral outcomes.

2.7 Concluding Remarks about the Demarcation of the Field of Electoral Studies

The field of electoral studies is defined by the study of elections. The majority of such studies is empirical in character, but the field contains also important strands of non-empirical work (which is theoretical or normative in character). This field of study incorporates studies of the way in which elections are conducted, and of their outcomes.

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[20] Comparisons between different kinds of elections may be, for example, between national and local elections, or, in the USA, between Presidential and Congressional elections. These comparisons have given rise to typologies of elections, such as between 'first order national' and 'second order national' elections (cf. Reif and Schmitt 1980; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2010).

Elections can be held in private organisations, or at the level of countries and states; the latter is much more frequently studied than the former. As discussed in Section 2.2, the kinds of electoral outcomes that can be studied are of various kinds, ranging from obvious and directly visible (such as 'who wins which elected office?') to latent and abstract (such as the quality of representation). The field includes also studies of the way in which a plethora of factors influence these various outcomes. These factors can be contextual (which thus require comparative studies to be identified), or can be found at the level of individual traits and behaviours of candidates, voters, and other actors.

The field of electoral studies investigates elections and electoral processes sometimes as phenomena to be described and explained (i.e., as dependent variables), and at other times but as explanatory factors themselves, particularly for electoral outcomes such as representation, legitimacy, the quality of democracy (at the aggregate level) and the satisfaction with democracy (at the level of individual citizens).

The field of electoral studies can thus be conceptually demarcated in terms of the topics, research foci and emphases mentioned above, in Sections 2.1 to 2.6. What has been included there is not, nor is it meant to be, exhaustive. It is partly descriptive, and partly indicative. This demarcation is thus unavoidably somewhat 'fuzzy', and it does not aim to classify research projects as unequivocally being part of electoral studies or as part of other fields of research. Indeed, such questions are sterile and futile in view of overlaps between different disciplines, subdisciplines and fields of study. The attempt to demarcate the field is here motivated by a search for user communities and scholars who can fruitfully be included in the efforts of SSHOC to develop infrastructures and tools (see also Sections 3 and 4 of this report). Thus, this attempt at demarcation is intended to be more of instrumental than of intrinsic value.

3. Identifying and Reaching User Communities in the Field of Electoral Studies

The notion of user communities has been discussed extensively in the report of Deliverable D9.1 of the SSHOC project.[21] In that report it was emphasised that user communities can be defined in terms of their shared interest and active research involvement in a given field of study. In spite of these shared characteristics, these communities are often quite heterogeneous qua disciplinary background, ontological and epistemological assumptions, and empirical approaches. Moreover, active researchers are often part of multiple user communities. This diversity implies that identifying user communities (and reaching their members) is best achieved by organisations that represent them. Such organisations exist in various forms, the most important of which are dedicated professional organisations, dedicated scholarly conferences, dedicated publication outlets, and dedicated tools and resources. In the following subsections each of these will be discussed for the field of electoral studies, with a brief discussion of their potential adequacy as structures that can be leveraged to obtain feedback and collaboration in the development and testing of SSHOC tools under construction – particularly a user-validated Knowledge Graph for the field of electoral studies and an associated Election Studies Analytics Dashboard (these products define jointly SSHOC Deliverables 9.7 and 9.9).

3.1 Professional Organisations in the Field of Electoral Studies

As discussed in Section 2 of this report, the field of electoral studies is mostly located in Political Science, while it has important areas of overlap with related social and behavioural disciplines such as sociology, economy, geography, communication science and psychology. Many scholars in electoral studies are professionally organised in terms of their country and their disciplinary background. Many such discipline-based organisations contain organised sections for sub-disciplines; for electoral studies such organised sections can most often be found in national political science associations. Not all of such organised sections are equally active in organising and representing their respective user communities, but two that are consistently active in organising events for their respective communities are the *Arbeitskreis Wahlen und Politische Einstellungen* of the German Political Science Association (DVPW),[22] and the Specialist Group on *Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* (EPOP) of the British Political Science Association (PSA).[23] Each has several hundred individual members, each organizes dedicated conferences and publications for their community, and each regularly informs its membership about sundry matters deemed to be of shared interest. In principle, therefore, each of these two

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[21] See SSHOC Deliverable 9.1 'Challenges that user communities face when attempting to contribute to SSHOC' (2019)
[22] See https://www.politik.uni-mainz.de/dvpw-wahlen/.
[23] See https://www.psa.ac.uk/specialist-groups/epop.

organisations would provide an appropriate platform for SSHOC to disseminate information about the evolving EOSC/SSHOC infrastructure, to recruit collaborators, and to solicit feedback.

A potentially relevant organization that is still under development is **MEDem** (Monitoring Electoral Democracy), which is an emerging European research infrastructure that connects many existing comparative and national projects in the field of electoral studies. It aims to gain a position on the ESFRI roadmap as a central and strategically important hub for electoral research. Its foundational meeting is planned for March 2020. Once established, MEDem could be a strategically important partner for SSHOC, particularly for its Work Packages 6 (Fostering Communities, Empowering Users & Building Expertise) and 9 (User Communities), and its Task T9.3 that focuses on Electoral Studies).

3.2   Scholarly Conferences in the Field of Electoral Studies

Scholarly conferences are in principle amongst the most productive venues to contact and inform active researchers in a particular field in order to obtain their potential collaboration in the development of tools and services, and their feedback on these. Conferences are also excellent venues for disseminating relevant information about the EOSC/SSHOC infrastructure. How relevant a specific conference is in this respect depends, obviously, on how closely it is tied to the field of electoral studies. Large discipline-wide conferences, as customarily organised on an annual basis by national political science associations and transnational organisations such as the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) are probably of limited value, although the number of electoral scholars attending such meetings may be quite large. These conferences are generally organised on the basis of panels (lasting approximately 2 hours and dedicated to presentation and discussion of research papers), the participants of which disperse at the end of a panel to multiple other conference events. Therefore, even if such conferences host panels on electoral studies, they offer very restricted opportunities for effective dissemination of information, let alone for soliciting feedback or recruiting collaborators. The most relevant conferences for the SSHOC purposes mentioned are those that are entirely devoted to electoral studies. Both of the organisations mentioned in Section 3.1 do organise such conferences. The *Arbeitskreis Wahlen und Politische Einstellungen* usually has its annual conference in late Spring or early Summer (May/June), while the Specialist Group on *Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* has its annual conference in September. Each of these conferences would constitute an ideal environment to inform and consult research-active scholars in electoral studies about EOSC/SSHOC and the infrastructure, tools and services under development, and to recruit scholars who want to collaborate in some form with these developments.

3.3   Dedicated Publication Outlets in the Field of Electoral Studies

User communities do not only acquire some cohesiveness from shared interest in specific topics, from professional organisations and relevant conferences, but also from shared exposure to relevant scientific publications. The existence of a limited number of publication outlets that are widely regarded as emblematic for a field is therefore of crucial importance for its intellectual coherence. Research from the field of electoral

studies is published in a great number of journals in political science and cognate disciplines, most of which are not exclusively dedicated to this field. Electoral studies articles that appear in journals with a much wider remit –such as the *European Journal of Political Research* and its many equivalents that are published under the auspices of national political science associations– may therefore go unnoticed to many members of the electoral studies community, and thus contribute little to its cohesiveness. This is different for articles published in scholarly journals that are entirely dedicated to electoral studies, and that are widely recognised as indispensible for the active researchers in the field. At the time of writing only four scholarly journals exist that focus exclusively on electoral research: *Electoral Studies* (commercially published by Elsevier), *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* (published by Routledge under the auspices of the EPOP specialist Group), *Japanese Journal of Electoral Studies* (Published by the Japanese Association of Electoral Studies), and *Journal of Electoral Studies* (published by the Election Study Center, National Chengchi University Taipei). The overwhelming majority of articles in the last two of these journals are published in Japanese, respectively Chinese, which strongly limits their relevance for western or wider international audiences. The first two of these journals, however, are internationally very well-known and enjoy a solid scholarly reputation, as reflected in various bibliometric indices. They constitute a relevant basis for identifying a core of research-active scholars in electoral studies, for purposes of dissemination of and recruiting feedback about the EOSC/SSHOC infrastructure, its tools and services. These two journals would also be optimal for disseminating information about the EOSC/SSHOC infrastructure, tools and services if such information can be included in research articles.

3.4 Dedicated Tools And Resources in the Field of Electoral Studies

One of the most important factors determining the coherence of user communities is the existence and utilisation of widely shared crucial resources and tools. For the field of electoral studies such resources consist particularly of data. Historically, the development of the field is strongly connected to the emergence in established and wealthy democratic societies of 'national election studies' (NESs). These are mostly large-scale surveys of voters, conducted in election contexts, and focussing on the electoral process and citizens' behaviour in and orientations towards that process. In view of the high costs of conducting such studies, funding (mostly by national science foundations) became contingent on the data being available for the entire scientific community as soon as possible. This, in turn, promoted the evolution of NESs into proper infrastructural projects for their respective (national) communities of electoral scholars. This implied that user communities have a role in in questionnaire construction, that data are made publicly available as soon as possible, and that datra are professionally curated, usually via data archives such as DANS (in the Netherlands), GESIS (in Germany), and their counterparts in many other countries. More recently, over the past two decades, the organisation of NESs has spread to many less wealthy and to newly democratised countries, a development that was supported by declining costs when using web-based surveys.

Data from NESs are currently among the most widely shared resources in the social sciences in general, and in the community of electoral studies scholars in particular. As discussed in Section 2, the field of electoral studies is wider than what is covered by NESs that focus almost exclusively on voters. Empirical studies of candidates,

political parties, media, and aggregate election results also generate data that are increasingly made available to others than their original investigators by way of being deposited in and curated by data archives. Additionally, the field has become increasingly internationalised. Comparative studies across countries were stimulated by the growing number of countries with high-quality NES data. The needs of comparative research promoted the construction of 'harmonised' datasets to overcome the divergencies of existing NESs. Additionally, the evolution of comparative studies stimulated new data collection efforts geared explicitly to the requirements of systematic comparative studies. Exemplary cases of such developments include projects such as the CSES[24], the 'European Voter' (cf. Thomassen 2005), and the TEV project,[25] all of which generated extensive comparative data resources that were made available, virtually without restrictions, for scholarly communities in electoral studies and beyond.

Not only does a vast amount of available data exist for secondary analyses in electoral studies, the actual usage of these data is very extensive, resulting in a considerable number of research publications. In short, an extensive part of research output in the field is based on data resources with which many of the scholars in the field are intimately familiar and this contributes greatly to an 'intellectual common space' without suppressing theoretical and philosophical divergences in the field.

The practical implications for SSHOC of the widespread existence of shared and heavily utilised data resources is that inclusion of the field of electoral studies in the EOSC/SSHOC infrastructure will be greatly facilitated by intensive communication with the principal investigators of these data collections. It can be expected that the creation of MEDem (see Section 3.1) will be of immense assistance in this respect.

A kind of dedicated resource that, for all practical purposes, does *not* exist for the field of electoral studies consists of taxonomies, ontologies, or controlled vocabularies. The development of these will have to be taken up as part of the work for Deliverable 9.9.

[24] See https://cses.org/

[25] See http://www.mzes.uni-mannheim.de/d7/en/projects/the-true-european-voter-a-strategy-for-analysing-the-prospects-of-european-electoral-democracy-that-includes-the-west

4 Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to provide necessary foundations for further work in Task 9.3 of SSHOC. This task deals with the development of tools and resources that will assist in linking the user community in electoral studies to the EOSC/SSHOC infrastructure. More specifically, it aims to generate an Open Research Knowledge Graph in the field of Electoral Studies and an associated Election Studies Analytics Dashboard. This report (which constitutes Deliverable D9.6) therefore demarcates the user community Election Studies, the actors therein and segments thereof to be contacted, recruited and trained for active collaboration in co-production of knowledge graph.

The report concludes that the most promising ways to engage this user community in the activities of SSHOC is via

- collaboration with professional organisations that represent this user community (Section 3.1);
- scholarly conferences that focus exclusively on the field of electoral studies (Section 3.2);
- centrally located research-active scholars in this field who can be identified in scholarly journals that focus exclusively on electoral research (Section 3.3);
- collaboration with principal investigators in charge of crucial infrastructural data resources in the field of electoral studies (Section 3.4).

Actual utilisation of these possibilities to engage the electoral studies user community is not a part of this deliverable but will be undertaken jointly by Work Packages 6 and 9 as part of other Deliverables.

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