

# New series: The research network for progressive politics in the spotlight

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8th July 2024



# PRO GRES SIVE

# POLITICS

Progressive  
Politics  
Research  
Network

The [Progressive Politics Research Network \(PPRNet\)](#) brings together scholars who study progressive politics in the twenty-first century. The network strives to be an open and inclusive community, aiming to make academic research accessible to a broader audience and to enter into dialogue with policymakers and the interested public. It is non-partisan and consists of independent researchers, but the network's focus is on issues that are

central to contemporary progressive politics around the world.

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#### What do we study?

The network is open to scholars focusing on all geographical and historical contexts, but it primarily consists of scholars who study the contemporary transformation of politics in post-industrial societies. We aim to understand what progressive politics means in the 21st century in terms of substantive goals, organizational forms, and policies.

To this end, we adopt a broad conceptualization. We do not only focus on electoral processes and outcomes, but the objects of our study are a range of actors, institutions, and policies. We define progressive actors by their support for three core principles: universal access to policies providing protection and opportunity, open and inclusive democracies, and ecological sustainability.

First, progressive actors share a commitment to the broadest possible access to goods and services that are essential for basic human needs and development. They aim to limit the reach of the market by securing a minimum standard of living for all individuals, regardless of their ability to pay. This usually translates into strong support for a welfare state that provides all members of society with access to a range of social services (e. g., social benefits, education, healthcare, education, housing).

Second, progressive actors support open and inclusive societies. They are generally committed to democratic values, human rights, and self-determination. Two principles are at the heart of inclusive democracy: representation and participation. In an inclusive democracy, society's diverse interests and groups are represented in politics. This includes substantive as well as descriptive representation of marginalized groups. Inclusive democracy also means challenging barriers to the participation of marginalized groups.

Third, ecological sustainability is a central concern for progressive actors. They recognize the need to protect the planet for current and future generations and emphasize the connection between sustainability and social justice. They highlight that environmental degradation and climate change often disproportionately affect marginalized communities and promote sustainable practices to protect such communities and attenuate these processes.

Different actors prioritize principles differently, which creates variation within the progressive field. In our conceptualization, this progressive field includes social democratic parties, the labor movement, green parties

and movements, the far left, as well as other left-progressive interest groups. However, we are explicitly also interested in actors who do not define themselves with regard to the left-right cleavage but share an underlying commitment to progressive principles.

#### **How do we study it?**

We examine the interaction of socioeconomic structures and political behavior. We assume that socioeconomic structures influence preferences but that actors are not bound by them. Actors interpret the different socioeconomic conditions and changes to them in different ways, thereby allowing for different political strategies and outcomes.

We emphasize that elections are a core determinant of political outcomes. However, this does not mean we only study electoral politics. In democratic societies, parties and voters are central to decision-making processes, but other actors are still influential within and outside the electoral sphere. For example, a diverse set of actors including trade unions, interest groups, and social movements influence political decisions, which can limit or expand the possibility of progressive policies. These actors can also distort processes of democratic representation, leading to unequal representation or even democratic backsliding.

Methodologically, we are committed to the principle of pluralism, but our approach is shaped by the tools of empirical social sciences. Our arguments are based on empirical data analyses that use both quantitative and qualitative methods. We share the ambition to use the best and most exhaustive data to understand and explain politics, engaging in a broader discourse based on insights from this data. To this end, members of the network conduct original research but also build on existing analyses.

#### **What does the network do?**

The network aims to contribute to a scientifically informed debate. It hopes to make insights from empirical research more visible and accessible by bringing scholars into a conversation with political actors, policymakers, the media, and the interested public.

To contribute to a scientifically informed debate, the network also fosters exchanges, connections, and conversations among researchers who study progressive politics. It promotes new collaborations and strengthens existing ones. Leveraging the diversity among members of the network, the network speaks to various audiences both at the national and international level.

The activity of the network is centered around different activities. First, the network makes academic research available to the broader public through the publication of research briefs that focus on annual themes. The publication of these research briefs is accompanied by a new podcast series, that discusses the broader implications of this research for progressive politics.

Second, we organize an annual conference to stimulate the exchange between academics. These conferences provide a forum for the presentation and

discussion of new research while focusing on broader debates that touch on central aspects of progressive politics. The conferences also serve as input for the annual series of research briefs and podcasts that we publish.

Based on these broadly accessible publications in English, it is a central goal of the network to inform national debates and politics. We thus specifically look to work together with journalists and other organizations within European countries to summarize and translate work as well as to organize events with local stakeholders.

Interested readers are welcome to visit the [PPRN website](#) and sign up to a [mailing list](#) to be kept up to date on activities.

The network is co-convened by [Tarik Abou-Chadi](#) (University of Oxford), [Macarena Ares](#) (University of Barcelona), [Björn Bremer](#) (Central European University), [Jane Gingrich](#) (University of Oxford), [Silja Häusermann](#) (University of Zurich), and [Hanna Schwander](#) (Humboldt University Berlin).