



## APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

If you wish to apply to direct a workshop at the Joint Sessions in Münster, Germany during 22-27 March 2010, please first see the explanatory notes, then complete this form, which will serve as the **cover sheet** for your workshop proposal. This form should be sent with your **workshop proposal** to the ECPR Central Services. You can do this by emailing both documents as an attached file (in word format .doc or rich text format .rtf) to the ECPR Central Services at [ecpr@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ecpr@essex.ac.uk). Alternatively, you can print up the information and send it as a fax to the Central Services, fax: +44 1206 872500. **The deadline for applications is Sunday, 01 February 2009.**

**Title of proposed workshop: The Developing Role of the Councillor in a Comparative European Context: Attitudes, Assumptions and Perceptions towards Aspects of Local Democracy**

**Subject area: Local Politics**

**Abstract of proposed workshop. Maximum of 250 words (suitable for publication in the academic programme leaflet and on the ECPR web site):**

Local democracy in Europe is representative democracy and the councillor as a local representative occupies a central position in the dynamics of local politics. Councillors conduct the business of local representation, make local political decisions and act as a governor of the municipality within a range of institutional arrangements across Europe. They have been subject to constant contextual changes in the shape, nature, process, powers, roles and responsibilities of their municipalities and the office they hold within it. The workshop will explore the developing and varied roles of the councillor across Europe; examine the tensions experienced by the councillor as a representative, a decision-maker and a governor of a municipality and municipal institution; and, analyse how the shifting institutional arrangements of the municipality support or hinder the councillor's role as a representative, a decision-maker and a governor. The workshop will examine the role perceptions councillors' hold of their office and the assumptions, beliefs and pre-dispositions they bring to conducting the activities involved in being a representative, a decision-maker and a governor. The workshop will examine how different political, institutional and democratic arrangements and trends across Europe and the spread of new models and notions of local democracy have influenced the development of the councillor's role.

**Name of workshop director(s): Dr Colin Copus; Dr Kristof Steyvers**

**Name and address of institution(s):**

**Dr Colin Copus: The Institute of Local Government Studies, School of Government and Society, The University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT, England.**

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**Please note that the information above is VERY important, as it will be used in all future correspondence and, if the proposal is successful, printed in the academic programme.**

The proposal should be typed with 1.5 line spacing on three/four A4 pages using this sheet as the first page, and should cover the points outlined in the explanatory notes/guidelines available on the ECPR website at [www.ecprnet.org](http://www.ecprnet.org). For further information, please contact: Sandra Thompson, Joint Sessions Coordinator & Managing Administrator, ECPR Central Services, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, Essex UK. Email: [ecpr@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ecpr@essex.ac.uk); Tel: +44 1206 872501; Fax: +44 1206 872500

## Workshop proposal

### Topic Outline and Relation to Existing Research

Local democracy in Europe is representative democracy and the councillor as a local representative occupies a central position in the dynamics of local politics. The aims of the workshop are to explore the developing and varied roles of the councillor; to examine the tensions experienced by the councillor as a representative, a decision-maker and as a governor of a municipality and of a municipal institution; to analyse how the shifting institutional arrangements of the municipality support or hinder the councillor's role as a representative, a decision-maker and a governor; to explore councillors' role perceptions; and, to examine how different political, institutional and democratic arrangements and trends across Europe have influenced the development of the councillor's role. The proposal builds on the existing work of the EUROLOC network project 'Municipal Assemblies in European Local Governance' (Maelg) which is exploring the developing role of the councillor across 14 European countries (see, 'Types of paper' section below for details) (see, <http://www.maelg.eu> ).

Newton (1976: 115-116) pointed out that while democratic theory makes it clear that the representative – in this case the councillor - should take into account the '*interest and well-being of those he or she represents*', it says little about how the representative should act, or whom or what is represented. These questions, for the role of the councillor, still remain to be satisfactorily answered, particularly as far as councillors' own perceptions and beliefs are concerned. To fully understand the developing roles of the councillor and to make sense of how and why, in a European context, councillors act the way they do, research must examine the attitudes, values and perceptions of the councillor to their position as a representative, a decision-maker and a governor within and beyond the municipality's institutional framework.

Despite the continued centrality of the councillor to local government and democracy the trends and patterns that have emerged in the development of the various roles of the councillor are nevertheless under theorised and researched. We can reasonably assume that they have altered and modified the role and behaviour that are traditionally associated with the councillor as an expression of the involvement of laymen in representative democracy (Mouritzen and Svava, 2001). There are a number of dimensions to exploring the relationships between the attitudes, values and assumptions of councillors and their behaviours as representatives, within the institutional arrangements of the municipality which they inhabit, that are of crucial importance to understanding the contemporary but shifting role of the councillor. The workshop's explorations would revolve around these dimensions in taking a comparative outlook.

**First**, the changing nature and context of local government and democracy, which has placed a strain on pre-conceived notions of the role of the councillor and on the actions they can take (See, Le Gales 2002, Kersting and Vetter 2003, Denters and Rose, 2005). The often contested shift from local government to governance and the uneven spread of New Public Management practices across Europe, has recast the context within which councillors conduct their activities and act as a representative and which have changed the relationship between the municipality, the councillor and the citizenry (Hood, 1995, John, 2001, Hansen, 2001). In this framework, councillors are often seen as the equivalent of board of governors of the local political firm and experience a consequent disposal of powers and responsibilities for themselves and their municipalities. Public value theorists have challenged the NMP thesis to reassert the political over the managerial and suggest yet another contextual shift for councillors. Here, a collective conversation is held between the municipality and citizens to create value from municipal activity and a positive material change in the locality. (Moore, 1995, Cole and Parston 2006, Stoker, 2006).

**Second**, the affect that differing institutional arrangements for local government and democracy across Europe has had on the developing role of the councillor and our ability to conceptualise and theorise local democratic practices (Reynaert *et al*, 2005). The gradual spread of directly elected mayors and the strengthening of the local political leadership more generally as well as the growing distinction between executive and non-executive councillors, has had a major influence on the conduct of politics and representation by councillors (Stoker, 2004, Berg and Rao, 2005, Back *et al*, 2006). Moreover, the shape, size, powers, roles and responsibilities of municipalities and the electoral systems employed, across Europe, have a fundamental impact on the nature of local representation as it is conducted by the councillor.

**Third**, although the role and power of political parties in local government varies across Europe, the organisation and activities of parties and the key role they play in the electoral systems impacts on the way councillors act as representatives, decision-makers and governors (See, Ware, 1996, Copus, 2000, 2004, Leach, 2006, Guerin and Kerrouche, 2008, Bäck, 2003). Indeed, parties interpose themselves between the councillor and the citizen and make demands on the loyalty and representative focus of the councillor, drawing him or her away from a direct link with the citizen (Glassberg, 1981). Moreover, political parties impose disciplinary demands on the councillor that places the party at the forefront of the councillor's attention and generates a tension between the citizen / community and the councillor.

**Fourth**, the fractured and often conflicting nature of the councillor's role which sees him or her variously acting as a representative, a decision-maker, a governor, the controller of a large-scale enterprise (the municipality), an executive member, a scrutiniser, a case-worker, a gate-keeper to power, a negotiator, conciliator and reconciler of differing opinions and options; and, as a party representative (Hampton, 1970, Dearlove, 1973, Young and Rao, 1994, Stoker, *et al*, 2003, Brugue and Valles, 2005, Askim and Hanssen, 2008). Moreover, the role of the councillor as a representative alone is a multi-faceted one as the relationship the councillor has with the community, citizen and voter can depend on personal choice, circumstances and political dynamics (Gyford, 1976, Newton, 1976).

**Fifth**, increasing demands for participation in local political decision-making have faced councillors with a two-fold pressure: first, downwards, from higher tiers of government keen to extol and exhort the virtues of increased public engagement, either as a citizen (politically) or as a consumer (through a market-orientation) (Stoker, 2004); secondly, upwards, through increasing public assertiveness and unwillingness to take the decisions of local government as the final say on local issues. Such participatory pressure faces local representative democracy and the role of the councillor in particular, with the need to respond to a new set of circumstances where councillors can no longer act in isolation from those they represent and must take account of the results of formal and informal public participation (See, Delwitt, *et al*, 2007). Councillors, now more than ever, must balance a range of inputs to the political system, which at one and the same time, undermines and reinforces their role as a representative.

The papers presented at the workshop will be asked to address a number of questions (though not all in each paper) which reflect these dimensions and which explore the nature of councillors' roles and the attitudes, values and behaviours that they bring to their office.

1. How do councillors' roles as a representative, decision-maker and governor, display themselves in the way councillors conduct their activities?
2. What are the various facets and elements of those roles in 1. above and how can they be better understood and conceptualised?

3. What is the balance between the councillor's role as a representative, decision-maker and governor and what factors determine that balance?
4. What are the attitudes, assumptions and perceptions held by councillors of their roles as representative, decision-maker and governor and how do these compare to their behavioural patterns?
5. How has the changing context of local government, across Europe, affected the roles and behaviour of the councillor?
6. How does the particular institutional setting and arrangements for the conduct of local government, democracy and representation influence the role and behaviour of the councillor?
7. What impact does the role played by political parties in local government have on the relationship between the councillor and the citizenry / community?
8. How has enhanced citizen participation in local government affected the role of the councillor?

### **Type of paper**

The workshop welcomes theoretical papers aimed at conceptualising the role of the councillor; and, papers which deploy empirical analyses of the role of the councillor, the institutional arrangements within which councillors operate, the changing context of local government, and papers which assess the impact of enhanced public participation in local government and its impact on the councillor as a representative. Empirical papers should aim to apply their data to theoretical models designed to illuminate and dissect the multi-faceted roles of the councillor; papers which examine and explore councillor roles to up-date and improve existing frameworks will be particularly welcomed. The proposers also welcome case-study papers and papers that present a historical analysis of the developing context and role of the councillor and the institutional arrangements within which they conduct their activities. Papers aiming to address methodological concerns, particularly those related to comparative study, are also welcome. For the purposes of the workshop 'comparative' will mean: firstly, comparisons *between* countries; and, secondly, comparison between different levels of local government, *within* countries.

In ensuring a robust comparative approach the workshop will substantially benefit from the work of the ongoing Euroloc-project 'Municipal Assemblies in European Local Governance' being conducted simultaneously in 14 European countries. That project, is one of the first to systematically and comparatively assess councillors' shifting roles and does so by focusing on: a) their attitudes and conceptions of local democracy, government and policy; b) their attitudes and conceptions toward the position of the council and its role in democracy, government and policy; c) the recruitment and career development of councillors; and, d) their role perception and behaviour in the council. The directors of the workshop are members of their respective national team conducting the research for the Maelg project. The first thematic groups and protocols have already started the analysis and are setting up special issues in peer reviewed journals, but, by the time of the ECPR-workshop far more data will be available and/or analysed. The insights from which would infuse the ECRR workshop with unique, contemporary and cutting-edge empirical material around a common framework, granting the workshop the status of a benchmark in the development and output of the research project.

### **Funding**

The following bodies have a record of supporting academic workshops and conferences of the nature of the ECPR workshops and for supporting the development of young emerging academics and researchers and, so will be approached for funding support: Economic and Social Research Council; Leverhulme Trust; Rowntree Foundation; Joint University Council, Public administration Committee; Political Studies Association

## Biographical note

**Dr Colin Copus** is a senior lecturer at the Institute of Local Government Studies, the University of Birmingham. His academic specialisms are local party politics and the changing role of the councillor. He has written and published widely in academic and practitioner journals and has recently published two major books entitled: *Party Politics and Local Government*, and, *Leading the Localities: Executive Mayors in English Local Governance*. Colin has served as a councillor on a London Borough, a county and a district council and two parish councils.

**Dr Kristof Steyvers** is a lecturer in political science at the Department of Political Science of Ghent University (Belgium). His research activities are mainly in the Centre for Local Politics and the Urban Policy Research Centre of Ghent University where he focuses on local political leadership, comparative local politics, local government reform, parties and elections at the local level and urban politics. He is one of the editors of the series 'Comparative Local Politics' and has published in peer reviewed journals (Local Government Studies, Representation), written and edited books and/or contributed to various book chapters.

## Likely participants

The workshop directors have a ready source of participants from the researchers in the EUROLOC-MAELG project and are guaranteed of a more than sufficient number of high quality proposals to ensure the success of the workshop. It is not intended, by any means, to limit proposals to the MALEG research as the workshop could only benefit from insights from research and/or researchers that have taken an alternative route to their projects, which, in turn, will bring a further critical assessment to the overall aims of the workshop. The workshop directors will explicitly encourage and will actively target potential contributors from outside the Maelg project. We will especially encourage young researchers to come forward with proposals. Thus, the workshop will attract participants from both established and emerging academics and researchers and are likely to be drawn from amongst the following:

Alistair Clark	Queens University Belfast, Ireland
Angelica Vetter	University of Stuttgart, Germany
Annick Magnier	University of Florence, Italy
Audun Offerdal	University of Bergen, Norway
Bas Denters	University of Twente, Netherlands
Björn Egner	Darmstadt University of Technology, Germany
Carlos Alba	Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain
Carmen Navarro	Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain
Clemente Navarro	University de Pablo de Olavide, Spain
Daniel Kuebler	University of Zurich, Switzerland
David Karlsson	University of Gothenburg, Sweden
David Sweeting	Bristol University, England
Dieter Bruneel	Ghent University College, Belgium
Eric Kerrouche	University of Bordeaux, France
Everhard Holtmann	University of Halle, Germany
Fethi Açikel	University of Ankara, Turkey
Filip De Rynck	Ghent University College, Belgium
Gilles Pinson	University of Saint-Etienne, France
Hans-Erik Ringkjøb	University of Bergen, Norway
Henk Van Der Kolk	University of Twente, Netherlands
Hellmut Wollmann	University of Berlin, Germany
Herwig Reynaert	University of Ghent, Belgium
Hubert Heinelt	Darmstadt University of Technology, Germany
Ivan Kopic	University of Zagreb, Croatia
Jacob Aars	University of Bergen, Norway

Jean-Benoit Pilet	Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
Julien Van Ostaaijen	University of Tilburg, Netherlands
Karin Bottom	University of Birmingham, United Kingdom
Kristof Steyvers	University of Ghent, Belgium
Larry Rose	University of Oslo, Norway
Linze Schaap	Tilberg University, Netherlands
Marcel Boogers	Tilberg University, Netherlands
Maria Antónia Pires de Almeida	Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, Portugal
Maria Antonia Ramirez	University de Pablo de Olavide, Spain
Marion Reiser	University of Frankfurt, Germany
Mark Scott	University College Dublin, Ireland
Melanie Walter-Rogg	University of Stuttgart, Germany
Merel de Groot	University of Twente, Netherlands
Michele Breuillard	University de Lille, France
Michaela Batarova	University of Tampere, Finland
Monique Leyenaar	University of Nijmegen, Netherlands
Nikos Hlepas	University of Athens, Greece
Norbert Kersting	University of Marburg, Germany
Oscar Gabriel	University of Stuttgart, Germany
Panagiotis Getimis	Pantheon University of Athens, Greece
Paula Russell	University College Dublin, Ireland
Pawel Swianiewicz	University of Warsaw, Poland
Pieter Jan Klok	University of Twente, Netherlands
Salvatore Pantaleo	University of Trieste, Italy
Siv Sandberg	Åbo Akademi University, Finland
Solange Verger	University of Bergen, Belgium
Tomas Bergstrom	Lund University, Sweden
Tomas Kostelecky	Czech Academy Of Sciences, Czech Republic
Tom Verhelst	Ghent University, Belgium
Vicki Johansson	University of Gothenburg, Sweden

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