



APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

Title of proposed workshop:
The Strategic Dimension of Social Policy Reforms

Subject area:
comparative public policy analysis, welfare state research, party politics

Abstract of proposed workshop:
Welfare state reforms that impose losses on concentrated groups are politically dangerous to implement. They should consequently be accomplished during carefully designed decision making processes leaving policy-makers a number of blame-avoidance opportunities. This hypothesis dominates contemporary welfare state research but is more often suggested than empirically analyzed. Modern research has primarily focused on reform outcomes, and analyzed how and whether decision makers respond properly to a variety of challenges facing modern welfare states and their expanded social policy programs. With this workshop we intend to shed light on the strategic and political dimensions of reforming social policy and popular entrenched policy programs in general. What strategies are for example deployed by elected decision makers when they face the trade-offs between policy-seeking, vote-seeking and office-seeking behaviour? How can decision-making processes be designed strategically to increase the chance of succeeding with a planned reform program? How do policy makers safeguard own political interests while at the same time implement necessary reforms in the welfare state? We welcome papers dealing with these and related topics – preferably in a comparative perspective.

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Outline of the topic

Focusing on the strategic dimension of social policy making should be a central topic in comparative public policy analysis – for three reasons. *First*, social and welfare state analyses concentrate on outcomes rather than processes. But focusing on for example spending data for certain policy fields or the entire welfare state tells us next to nothing about the processes and mechanisms during which social policies and welfare state reforms are made. *Second*; to an increasing degree, social policy analysis has been separated from mainstream political science during the last 10 years (see for instance the 2009 ECPR workshop “From Politics to Management? Public Services Performance, Accountability and Distributional Outcomes in Social Policies” by Paola Mattei and Koen Verhoest). A rigorous political science perspective on social policy development ought to start with a model of politicians seeking to fulfil certain interests. The question is therefore how this is done when confronted with numerous dilemmas and trade-offs? *Third*; existing research on strategic politics in social policies are most often based on the rational choice assumption that politicians accommodate to the preferences of median voter in reform processes. Such an assumption does however not acknowledge that strategic decision makers often can do more than that. By well developed communicative skills and strategic design of reform processes they can also shape the preferences of median voters, and very few studies have investigated how and to which degree this is done in modern welfare state politics. In addition, strategic thinking combines different dimensions and it is questionable if there is a criterion to subsidize objectives in one dimension with success in another. Taking strategic politics seriously therefore questions the assumption of rational utility maximizers and opens the view on different kinds of ‘bounded rationality’ on the micro level.

Relation to existing research

Strategic politics in social policies has been the topic in the following publications of the workshop directors:

- Hegelich, Simon/Schubert, Klaus, 2009: Politically limited Pluralism as European Identity: European Welfare Systems, in: Schubert, Klaus/Hegelich, Simon/Bazant, Ursula (ed.), 2009: European Welfare Systems, Routledge, London (in print).
- Hegelich, Simon, 2008: Die Riester-Reform: Systemwechsel durch strategische Politik, in: Fischer, Thomas/Kießling, Andreas/Novy Leonard (ed.) 2008: Politische Reformprozesse in der Analyse – Untersuchungssystematik und Fallbeispiele, Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh, 191-252.
- Hegelich, Simon/Schubert, Klaus (ed.), 2006: Politics of Pension Policies, Special Issue of German Policy Studies (GPS), Volume III, Number 3.
- Klitgaard, Michael Baggesen (2007). “Why are They Doing It? Social Democracy and Market Oriented Welfare State Reforms.” *West European Politics*, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 172-194
- Klitgaard, Michael Baggesen (2007). “Do Welfare State Regimes Determines Public Sector Reforms? Choice Reforms in American, Swedish and German Schools.” *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 30, no. 4, pp. 444-468
- Hegelich, Simon, 2006: Moving from “defined benefit” to “undefined”, The interests in the enhancement of supplementary provision for old age in Germany, in: Hegelich, Simon/Schubert, Klaus (ed.), 2006: Politics of Pension Policies, Special Issue of German Policy Studies (GPS).
- Hegelich, Simon, 2006: Policyformation am Beispiel des Präventionsgesetzes – Politische Organisierbarkeit einer präventiven Gesundheitspolitik, in: Michna, Horst/Oberender, Peter/Schulze, Joachim/Wolf, Jürgen (ed.), 2006: „...und ein langes gesundes Leben“ – Prävention auf dem Prüfstand: Wieviel organisierte Ge-

The political process of social policy has been the topic in the following publications of the workshop directors:

- Klitgaard, Michael Baggesen (2009, forthcoming). "Agenda Setting and Political Institutions in Educational Policy. A Cross-country Comparison." In: *Governance of Welfare State Reform. A Cross National and Cross Sectoral Comparison of Health, Pension, Labour Market and Educational Policies*, Heinz Rothgang ; Irene Dingeldey (edt.). Cheltenham : Edward Elgar Publishing
- Schubert, Klaus/Hegelich, Simon/Bazant, Ursula (ed.), 2009: *European Welfare Systems*, Routledge, London (in print).
- Klitgaard, Michael Baggesen (2009, forthcoming). "Veto Points and the Politics of Introducing Vouchers in the US and Sweden." In: *Education in Political Science. Discovering a Neglected Field*, Anja P. Jakobi ; Kerstin Martens ; Klaus Dieter Wolf (edt.). London/Oxford: Routledge.
- Green-Pedersen, Christoffer & Michael Baggesen Klitgaard (2009, forthcoming). "Between Economic Constraints and Popular Entrenchment. The Development of the Danish Welfare State 1982-2005." In: *Handbook of European Welfare States*, Klaus Schubert ; Simon Hegelich ; Ursula Bazant (edt.) London/Oxford: Routledge.
- Klitgaard, Michael Baggesen (2008). "School Vouchers and the New Politics of the Welfare State." *Governance. An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions*, Vol. 21, no. 4, pp.. 479-498
- Schubert, Klaus/Hegelich, Simon/Bazant, Ursula (ed.), 2008: *Europäische Wohlfahrtssysteme*, VS-Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Hegelich, Simon, 2006: *Reformkorridore des deutschen Rentensystems*, VS-Verlag, Wiesbaden.
- Hegelich, Simon, 2004: *Can Welfare Expansion Result in Disintegration? The Integration of East Germany into the German Pension System*, in: *German Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (March 2004), 81–105.

Participants

The workshop addresses a range of participants and should bring together researchers from a number of political science subdisciplines; public policy analysts, researchers in parties and party politics, public administration, and political theory like - for instance - Robert E. Goodin, Michael Moran, and Martin Rein, Nils C. Bandelow, Frank Nullmeier, Klaus Schubert, William A. Galston, Ellen Immergut, and Martin Hering. The workshop is of interest for everybody in the "Future of European Welfare Systems"-network including (amongst others) experts like Ive Marx, Rumiana Stoilova, Christos Panagiotopoulos, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, Mare Ainsaar, Paloma Villota Gil-Escoin, Olli Kangas, Christos Papatheodorou, Anthony McCashin, Feliciana Rajevska, Wim van Oorschot, José A. Pereirinha, Sven E. O. Hort, Anja Kopač Mrak, Zinka Kolarič, Olaf Wientzek, Lavinia Mitton, Juho Saari.

The aim of the workshop is to bring together experts from different fields, like policy analysis, party politics, political administration, and political theory. Therefore, especially those contributions we would not expect now are extremely welcome.

Type of paper

We invite papers that make a clear theoretical argument to be tested in empirical analysis. Given the topic of the workshop small-N and focused comparisons of selected cases are of a particular interest, but papers based on other methodological approaches are also welcome.

Funding

The topic “strategic politics in social policies” is of great interest for the Bertelsmann Stiftung (see attached letter of intent). The workshop director has managed three related projects for the foundation in 2008/2009. In 2009 two relevant projects will be applied for at the Volkswagen Stiftung and the Hans Böckler Stiftung. Both foundations are very interested and there is therefore a good chance to get external funding for the workshop. Because the workshop fits in the research agenda of the research focus ‘Government’ at the Institute of Political Science at Münster, funding of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) will be applied for, as well.

Biographical note

Dr. Simon Hegelich is coordinator of the Graduate School of Politics (GraSP-Münster) and has recently published ‘European Welfare Systems’ (with Schubert and Bazant, Routledge 2009). His main research focuses on ‘strategic politics’, ‘dialectic state theory’, and ‘policy analysis’.

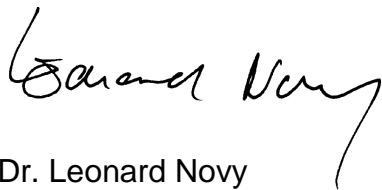
Ph.D. Michael Baggesen Klitgaard is an associate professor at the Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark. His main research interests are comparative public policy, welfare state research, political institutions and institutional reform. He has recently published in the journals *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *West European Politics and Governance*.

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To whom it may concern

Against the background of former successful cooperation with Dr. Simon Hegelich, the Bertelsmann Foundation is very interested in the topic "The Strategic Dimension of Social Policy Reforms". In case there is such a workshop at the ECPR joint sessions of workshops in Münster in 2010, the Bertelsmann Foundation will be happy to take into consideration any kind of engagement to support this workshop.



Dr. Leonard Novy
Programm Good Governance