

CALL FOR PAPERS

The religious factor in morality policies

In the research on morality politics, scholars examine intensively how religion determines policy outputs and dynamics of policy change. This focus is primarily motivated by the relevance of religious doctrines. They shape individual and collective belief systems, including certain practices, norms, and values. In consequence, it is assumed that they determine the political processes and outputs in morally charged policies. A bunch of studies attests that the religiosity of a nation, the presence of religious or church-associated parties, and the constitution of the church-state-relationship influence the politicization of morality issues and the strictness of regulation (Engeli et al. 2012, 2013; Fink 2008b; Minkenberg 2002). However, recent research questions the explanatory power of the religious factor in morality policy-making and the causal mechanisms, underlying the effect (Grzymala-Busse 2016; Knill et al. 2014). In accordance to Knill et al. (2014), religion seems to affect solely the dynamics of policy change but not the content of regulation. Hence, so the argument, it cannot prevent the general trend towards permissiveness which we observe across classical morality policies, such as abortion, euthanasia, artificial reproduction, and same-sex marriage (Fink 2008a; Knill et al. 2014).

This new empirical finding raises the question of whether increasing secularization implies a diminishing power of religious communities and their agents in morality policy debates. Following the post-secularization argument, we would rather expect the reverse pattern.

Existing research does not provide a comprehensive answer to this puzzle, as it is confronted with several shortcomings. This includes not only the lack of comparative studies across times and different morality policies, but also analytical limitations. Among others, scholars only recently detected the relevance of informal access structures which vary across countries and over time and moderate churches' influence (Grzymala-Busse 2016; Hennig 2012; Knill et al. 2014). Secondly, research falls short in analyzing the role of religious communities besides Catholicism and the Catholic Church as important religious actor in the European public sphere.

For example, the Protestant churches and Islam, are under-researched yet. Thirdly, previous studies concentrate on investigating the influence of religion during the first stages of the policy-making process (agenda-setting and policy formulation), but not during the implementation phase. However following Mooney (2001), it is rather likely that religious communities try to influence the rule-enforcement, especially when they did not succeed in pushing their interests through during the legislative process. Depending on their institutional access points and their stake in the welfare, health, and education system, they might modify adopted rules and constrain the liberalization of moral order.

We invite scholars to contribute with papers that shed more light on the impact of religious factors and tackle the limits of the state of the art in morality policy research. Qualitative, in-depth studies, but also comparative large n-studies, as well as theoretical work are welcome.

Key words: religion, policy analysis, secularization, implementation, morality policy

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Please send us your paper proposals until **February 8, 2016**

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