

Panel proposal for the Trilateral Conference DVPW, ÖGPW, SVPW – ETH Zurich – 14-16 February 2019, Topic: THE END OF THE WEST? LIBERAL ORDERS UNDER PRESSURE

Panel Description

New challenges of welfare states in (il)liberal times: How policy ambiguity promotes third-sector engagement in policy implementation

The economic crisis and large migration flows pressure the welfare systems of many European states and lead to a growing demand for third-sector actors in supporting the state to deliver social services. The increasing electoral support of populist parties is another consequence of these new economic and social challenges in Europe. The expanding political spectrum in national parliaments and the potential of heightened political conflict between mainstream and populist parties challenge, in turn, policy formulation. This increases the likelihood of vague policy outputs because consensus can only be reached by an agreement that includes ambiguous objectives or vague implementation rules (Eaton Baier, March, & Saetren, 1986). In other words, policy goals or policy instruments are underspecified, or both (Matland, 1995). Such vague laws may affect implementation performance negatively (Han Chun & Rainey, 2005) but also offer more room for engagement of third-sector actors in policy implementation.

While the political science literature has discussed the consequences of ambiguous policies for public bureaucrats (Han Chun & Rainey, 2005; Pandey & Wright, 2006), third-sector policy implementers have rarely been under consideration so far. This is puzzling as the third sector is gaining importance in many welfare systems as response to new economic and societal challenges. For instance, faith-based organizations (FBO; e.g. Diakonie, Caritas) have come to play an active role in the provision of traditional social services for elderly, poor or socially excluded people (Beaumont 2012, Göcmen 2013, 2014) as well as for immigrants (e.g., Mourão Permoser et al. 2010). In relation to morality policies, they also offer services such as counseling activity with regard to abortion, prostitution or life-prolonging measures (Euchner and Preidel 2016). Besides churches and religious communities, other relevant third-party actors are non-governmental organizations (NGOs), non-profit organizations (NPOs) or volunteer organizations.

While compensating for dismantled social services, the third-sector may use its engagement to push through own policy goals through the backdoor. Policy ambiguity widens the discretion of implementers and their scope of action, and therefore, facilitates preference-based (biased) service delivery. When the third-sector causes such deviating implementation processes, this is particularly problematic as they lack any legitimation and hence, undermine democratic processes. Accordingly, the panel explores two largely neglected but highly topical research questions for the future of European welfare states in (il)liberal times: *(1) How do ambiguous policies affects the implementation efforts of third-sector actors? And (2) how does their engagement impact on policy outcomes?*

We welcome theoretical, conceptual and empirical contributions, and would be particularly interested in comparative studies focusing on public policies and third sector organizations such as faith-based organizations, NGOs or NPOs.

Sponsors: Prof. Dr. Christoph Knill/ Dr. Eva-Maria Euchner (LMU Munich) and Dr. Irina Ciornei (University of Bern)

Chair: Dr. Eva-Maria Euchner (LMU Munich)

Discussant: Prof. Dr. Fritz Sager (University of Bern)

Please send us an abstract (maximum 300 words) until **24th of June 2018** (eva-maria.euchner@gsi.lmu.de and irina.ciornei@soz.unibe.ch).