

Panel Proposal for the ECPR General Conference 2017, Oslo

Section “Religion, Politics, and the Public Spheres: Contesting Liberalism?”

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Religion and morality policy implementation

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 and hence, challenge liberal principles such as autonomy, freedom and equality. If these religious values prevail, they are able to determine the political process and outputs of 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 2008; Minkenberg 2002, Hennig 2012, Ozzano and Giorgi 2016). However, recent research questions the explanatory power of the religious factor in morality policy-making (Knill et al. 2014, 2015). In accordance to Knill et al. (2014), religion seems to affect solely the dynamics of policy change but not the content of regulation.

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 in general and across all stages of the policy-making process.

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. Firstly, research falls short in analyzing the role of different religious communities, including not only the Catholic Church but also Protestant churches and Muslim communities. Secondly and most importantly, 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. 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 the 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, liberal principles, secularization, implementation, morality policy

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Please send us your paper proposals (up to 200 words) until **February 3, 2017**.

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