

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. 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 Dynamics of Morality Politics and Policy across Space and Time

Subject area:
Morality Politics, Comparative Politics, Public Policy

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

There is a growing interest in the emergence and development of a special group of policy issues called *morality issues*, such as gambling, pornography and prostitution, same-sex couples, biotechnology and organ transplantation, euthanasia and death penalty. Morality issues have achieved a great political importance across Western countries and have launched political conflicts over non-economic and personal values, often regarding broad questions such as the beginning of life, religious beliefs and personal orientations. The task arises *to understand and to explain how, why and to which effects governments regulate morality issues?*

The workshop will focus on three main questions in the field of morality politics and policy:

- 1) *Dynamics of issue attention*: How are morality issues politicized? What are the hot issues and for which reasons? What can account for variation in the politicization of morality issues across countries, sectors and time?
- 2) *How are morality issues regulated?* Why and under which conditions governments decide to regulate morality issues? Does the redistribution of values, which is implied by morality issues, lead to a specific type of policy process and/or policy outcomes?
- 3) *From a normative stance*, which policy instruments are the most adequate and effective to regulate morality issues? How to solve a controversy with a moral dimension? How should and could policies be designed in order not to impose a particular set of values?

The workshop intends to attract (1) empirical studies analyzing morality politics and/or policies, as well as (2) theoretical studies discussing the regulation of morality issues from a normative perspective. Comparative studies, across countries, sectors and/or time, are particularly welcomed.

Name of workshop director(s):

(maximum of 2 persons)

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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.

For further information, please contact:

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Outline of topic and relation to existing research

There is a growing interest in the emergence and development of a special group of policy issues called *morality issues*, which makes the policy-making process perilous, particularly in light of recent contentious public debates on pornography and prostitution, same-sex couples, stem cell and embryo research, euthanasia, death penalty (Mooney 2001). In contrast with other policy issues, morality issues launch political conflict over non-economic and personal values, often regarding broad moral issues such as the beginning of life and death, religious beliefs, privacy and personal orientations.

Lowi already stressed in 1972 that policies with such a moral dimension imply a redistribution of values instead of an economic redistribution. This redistributive character differentiates moral policies with respect to the kinds of policy actors involved and the types of decision-making processes. According to Mooney (1999: 675), "moral policies are not less than the legal sanction of what is right and wrong, the validation of a particular set of fundamental values". Discussion of these values and social norms occurs within the context of *high politics* which appeal to a broad audience and, thereby, can lead to *conflict of absolutes* (Tribe 1990). According to the literature on morality politics (Haider-Markel and Meier 1996; Mooney 2001; Tatalovich and al. 1994; Tatalovich and Daynes 1988; Smith and Tatalovich 2003), such a polarization hardens the elaboration of a strong compromise supported by a large majority. Decision-making becomes at best uneasy, at worst impossible. Governments facing a conflict of absolutes are trapped into a *zero-sum game*, or even worse, a *negative-sum game* (Mooney and Lee 2000).

Morality issues have achieved a great political importance across Western Countries. Issues such as gambling, pornography and prostitution, biotechnology and organ transplantation, same-sex marriage and euthanasia are becoming more and more politicized in Western countries. The task arises *to understand and to explain how, why and to which effects governments regulate morality issues in Western countries?* Governments are facing a series of complex decisions to make. Two successive policy choices must be carried out. First, state authorities must evaluate the feasibility of a political decision in terms of costs and benefits. A non-decision presents the considerable advantage of avoiding the alienation of a portion of public opinion. However, a non-decision can harm state credibility in the eyes of a public opinion that expects an official position on such controversies. In the case of a decision, the situation becomes still more complex, as it then becomes necessary to determine the content of the decision, and at the same time to determine the concrete redistribution of moral values. For example in the field of biotechnology, since the late 1970s, important innovations have occurred with the development of reproductive technology and more recently embryo and stem cells research. If the technological development had opened up promising fields for research and innovation, it also launched hot political debates on moral and bioethical issues, for example, the status of the embryo and the social recognition of same-sex parenting. Should governments intervene in the field of biotechnology? Should governments protect society from potential medical and social abuses by regulating this sector, or rather, should they encourage technological development?

The workshop has four main purposes. The first *purpose* of this workshop is an empirical one. It seeks to better understand *how morality issues are emerging and developing* on policy agendas across countries and to explain *convergence and divergence* of policies on morality issues. *Secondly*, the workshop aims to *further develop theoretical explanation* on the policy process by focusing on issues which imply a redistribution of values instead of an economic redistribution. The goal is thereby to test and further develop existing concepts and theories on designing public policies. *Thirdly*, this workshop intends, from a normative point of view, to contribute to evaluating *the advantages and disadvantages of the various ways of regulating* morality issues. Finally, the workshop aims at encouraging and enhancing a *long-term collaboration* among participants with possibilities of developing international research projects to study in-depth morality politics and policy.

More specifically, the workshop aims at developing the understanding of three important questions in the field of morality issues such as:

- 1) *Dynamics of issue attention*: How are morality issues politicized? Which are the hot issues and for which reasons? How to explain the raise and fall of values-loaded issues? What can account for variation in the politicization of morality issues across countries, sectors and time?
- 2) *How are morality issues regulated?* Why and under which conditions governments decide to intervene into moral controversies and to regulate morality issues? Does the redistribution of values which is implied by morality issues lead to a specific type of policy process and/or outcomes?
- 3) *From a normative stance*, which policy instruments are the most adequate and effective to regulate morality issues? How to solve a controversy with a moral dimension? How should and could policies be designed which don't impose a particular set of values?

Prospective participants: This debate is very stimulating for a very broad group of scholars working on public policy, comparative politics and morality issues. The workshop intends to attract different scholars such as:

- 1) Scholars specialized in the field of morality issues such as gambling, drug and tobacco consumption, abortion, prostitution, religious issues, pornography, new reproductive technologies, embryo and stem cells research, cloning, same-sex couples, euthanasia and end-of-life treatments, organ transplantation, etc
- 2) Scholars who are working on policy agenda, politics and policy process and who have recently added one or several morality issues to their field of research.
- 3) Scholars who are interested in theorizing the policy process and testing hypotheses on policies that imply a redistribution of values.

Papers to attract: The workshop intends to attract two different types of papers:

- 1) Empirical studies analyzing morality politics and/or policies in different countries or applying existing theories on country/sector case study in the field of morality issues. Comparative studies will be particularly welcomed.

- 2) Theoretical studies discussing the regulation of morality issues from a normative perspective or evaluating the regulation in order to formulate recommendations for public policy-making.

Funding: The workshop directors will be funded by their academic institutions.

Biographical note

Professor *Frederic Varone* is teaching public policy and policy analysis at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. He is currently co-responsible for a comparative research project studying the dynamics morality politics and policy across time in various Western European Countries (Euthanasia, Stem cells and Embryo research, Same-sex marriage, abortion and assisted reproductive technology). Since 1997, he has been involved in several international projects on comparative analysis of the regulation on assisted reproductive technology, embryo research and genetically modified organism (Montpetit et al. 2007; Montpetit et al. 2005; Schiffino et al. forthcoming; Schiffino et Varone 2004; Varone et al. 2006; Walgrave and Varone 2008)

Dr. *Isabelle Engeli* is a Max Weber fellow at the European University Institute, Florence. Her Ph.D. dissertation examines the extent to which public controversies with a moral dimension, such as abortion and assisted reproductive technology, lead to significantly different types of government's action. She is currently working on the analysis of the public decision-making process on morality issues such as euthanasia, embryo research and same-sex marriage (Engeli 2006, Engeli 2007, Engeli 2008a, Engeli 2008b, Engeli 2009a, Engeli 2009b).

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