### Outline of topic:

In the past ten years, we can observe the global spread of behavioural change instruments as new modes of public policy. Behavioural teams and ‘nudging’ networks have been established across countries and at the European Commission in order to facilitate the application of insights from behavioural economics and psychology in different policy areas. The rise of behaviourally informed policies goes along with political debates on state-citizen relations (‘libertarian paternalism’) and economic debates on alternative measurements of progress (‘subjective well-being’).

The aim of the workshop is to cover both, the regulatory and policy-related impact of ‘behavioural governance’ and its ethical and normative implications. Based on an international and cross-sectoral perspective, the workshop focuses on key questions that, despite an ever-growing amount of literature, have not been answered yet: What are the mechanisms behind the rise of behavioural economics over the past ten years? How can we describe and explain the diffusion of behavioural change instruments across countries and policy areas? In what ways are behavioural change instruments combined with existing tools of regulation and policy-making? What are the side-effects and unintended consequences? Moreover: What is the role of organizations and networks (e.g. behavioural insights teams, nudging networks) in this? Can we observe new or different practices of “empirically informed regulation” (Sunstein)? How is this changing the ‘ecosystem of expertise’ in Europe and beyond? Finally: How does behaviourally informed policy change the relationship between science, politics and the public? In what ways has the debate on ‘libertarian paternalism’ changed the notion of the state? What are the consequences for macroeconomic discourses on welfare, wealth and inequality?

The workshop extends the current discussion about the effectiveness of specific instruments and applications of behavioural change. Its purpose is to provide the building blocks for a more comparative perspective on both, how behavioural approaches are changing public policies and in what ways they influence discourses on state, science, economy and society. While we encourage a critical view on behavioural policies and their normative underpinnings, we are first and foremost interested in fresh empirical research, preferably comparisons on and across different levels (regional, international, transnational) and between different policy areas.

The topic has not been the focus of any recent ECPR workshop. The proposed panel, however, can build on two workshops organized in 2015, one on economic discourses in the 21st century at the international conference on Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA) in Lille, chaired by Holger Strassheim and Dieter Plehwe (WZB Berlin Social Science Center), and one panel on “Welfare, Growth, and Happiness” at the conference of the German Political Science Association, chaired by Stefan Kuhlmann (STEPS, University of Twente), Jan-Peter Voss (Technical University Berlin) and Holger Strassheim. We intend to develop the workshop programme in close cooperation with the ECPR standing group on Theoretical Perspectives on Policy Analysis and the ECPR standing group on Regulatory Governance.

The output of the workshop will be the “Research Handbook on Behavioural Change and Public Policy” edited by Holger Strassheim and Silke Beck, to be published by Edward Elgar in 2017 (Handbook of Research on Public Policy Series, edited by Frank Fischer, Rutgers). We also would like to use the workshop as a first step to develop a more permanent research hub on economic discourse, regulatory knowledge and public policy.
In many ways, the spread of behavioural insights and interventions as a novel mode of public policy is a puzzling case. As the recent OECD report on regulatory politics and behavioural economics has shown, there is currently not much research on how behavioural economics is changing policy making (Lunn 2012; Lunn 2014). Since most initiatives are very recent, there are no systematic or comparative studies on the diffusion of instruments and their combination with the existing policy mix (Bavel et al. 2013; Shafir 2013). Given that the principles of behavioural economics are well known since more than 50 years, the reasons for its sudden rise and the scope of its implementation in public policy across different countries are also not clear (Straßheim et al. 2014; Straßheim and Korinek 2015).

Behaviourally informed policy-making includes every decision, policy instrument or regulation that is informed, designed or implemented by focusing on psychological as well as cognitive mechanisms of behaviour in both individuals and collectives. There is a behavioural element to public policy when policy makers seek to change peoples behaviour, e.g. in non-smoking policies or food safety, or when people’s behaviour affects the effectiveness of certain policies. Behavioural instruments have been applied to policy areas such as consumer protection, food safety, climate change, employment, health, pensions, charitable giving or crime prevention (BIT 2010; BIT 2011; BIT 2013; BIT and BIS 2011; Shafir 2013; Sunstein 2013; Thaler and Sunstein 2008). There are, however, no comparative studies on the scope of behavioural policy, changes of existing policy mixes or experiences with the success or failure of these instruments.

There are multiple examples for what Thaler and Sunstein call ‘nudges’ (Sunstein 2013; 2008). They are defined as interventions that do not force anyone and preserve freedom of choice, but still have the potential of promoting welfare. Indeed, recent studies on evidence from randomized controlled studies suggest that some of them are working: text message reminders to save money increased savings balances by 6 percent; mails to homeowners comparing their electricity bill with that of neighbours and rating them (“great”, “good”, “below average”) led to reductions in power consumption equivalent to what would have happened if energy prices had been raised 11-20 percent; automatically enrolling people in pension plans dramatically increased participation and retention (for an overview see World Bank 2015: 197). Unfortunately, we still do not know much about the side effects and unintended consequences of nudges. A recent Swiss-US study on a behavioural energy conservation campaign found that successfully reducing water by giving them feedback on their water use coincided with an overall increase in electricity. An explanation for this unforeseen outcome is what the authors call the “moral licensing effect” – people who saved water simply felt entitled to be wasteful in another area (Tiefenbeck et al. 2013). Moral licensing is well known in many areas of behavioural governance such as obesity policies or fitness campaigns. It is just one type of cognitive factors that mirrors the complexities behavioural interventions are confronted with.

The basic principles of behavioral economics such as bounded rationality and biased judgement were already formulated in the 1950s (Simon 1957). Moreover, Tversky and Kahneman’s (Kahneman et al. 1982; 1982 [1974]) seminal studies on judgement under uncertainty identified three central heuristic principles – representativeness, availability, anchoring – that form the basis of behavioural economics until today. According to their research, people trying to predict the future intuitively rely on similarities and stereotypes (representativeness); the probability of risks is assessed by the ease with which instances or occurrences can be brought to mind (availability); in many situations, estimates are biased by an initial value or a starting point that works as “default” (anchoring). From the beginning behavioural economics has always been systematically related to policy issues, using its key heuristics as source for creating behaviour changing interventions: Behavioural economists have extensively suggested corrective procedures, modes of removing biases and instruments of behavioural intervention to improve collective judgement heuristics and risk perceptions as a core challenge for public management (Tversky and Kahneman 1982). When Kahneman received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002, behavioural economics and related fields of research were already well established in academia and known to a wider audience (Kahneman 2011; Kahneman and Tversky 2000). The reasons for its relatively sudden global rise as a mode of public policy in the past ten years are still unclear. The few existing studies show that the adaption of behavioural policies is influenced by multiple factors including the organization of behavioural expertise, political opportunity windows, transnational networks and...
The spread of behaviourally informed policies is also transforming the “ecosystems of expertise” (Beck 2015; Doubleday and Wilsdon 2013) in Europe and beyond. It is associated with the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) in Great Britain, an organization that has gained both national and international influence by experimentally developing and disseminating behavioural interventions (BIT 2012; BIT 2014; Jones et al. 2013). BIT has become a paradigmatic example, inspiring the creation of similar project units or networks in other countries such as the United States, Australia, France and, most recently, Germany. In contrast, Scandinavian approaches to behavioural governance are characterized by bottom-up networks such as “InNudgeyou” in Denmark or “greenudge” in Norway. Situated at the interface of applied behavioural science, public institutions, NGO’s and private stakeholders these initiatives engage in research projects focusing mainly, but not exclusively, on environmental policy and public health, e.g. reducing foodwaste, changing littering behaviour or nudging smoking down. So far, both the emergence and impact of these organizational varieties of behavioural expertise are not fully understood (Lunn 2014).

On the European level, one of the most prominent examples of using behavioural approaches is the EU Directive on Consumer Rights limiting the use of pre-ticked boxes for online purchases. In several Directorate Generals of the Commission, such as Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE/SANCO), Justice and Consumers (DG JUST), Communications Networks, Content and Technology (CNECT), Climate Action (DG CLIMATE), Environment (ENV) or the Taxations and Customs Unit (TAXUD) behavioural and psychological studies have been issued and integrated in the development of regulations. The Commission’s in-house science service, the DG Joint Research Center (JRC), has recently tasked a Foresight and Behavioural Insights Unit (FBIU) with coordinating behavioural research across the Commission’s units and integrating it in policy-making, strategic foresight, forecasting and assessment of future technologies (Alemanno/Sibony 2015; Strassheim 2015).

In its most recent World Development Report the World Bank prominently discusses both, advantages and challenges of behavioural governance (World Bank 2015). The report also points to the complexities of the approach: multiple cognitive, socio-cultural and policy factors have to be taken into account to make behaviourally informed instruments work. The uncertainties and unintended side effects related to these factors are not fully understood. Moreover, behavioural experts and policy makers themselves need to account for cultural influences on their own choices, critically re-examining the normative implications of behavioural approaches. Of course, there may be good reasons to be sceptical about the implications and effects of “nudging”. Some authors strictly advise against “nudge” tactics as being incompatible with political ideals such as empowerment, freedom and fairness (Goodwin 2012; Saint-Paul 2011). Some argue that the rise of behavioral approaches marks a shift “at the nexus of power and knowledge” in a Foucauldian sense (Jones et al. 2013). Still, there are only very few empirical studies on how behavioural interventions might have changed power or control relations, triggered dynamics of social exclusion or worked as modes of manipulation in societal interactions (see for an exception Pykett et al. 2014).

We will bring together scholars from different fields and disciplines (policy analysis, governance & regulation, administration and public management, science and technology studies, political economy, behavioural economics). We hope to create an environment that helps to initiate a conversation between different and, so far, more or less unrelated strands of research on the topic in political science, sociology, STS and economics.

We search for empirically rich, preferably comparative papers focusing but not limiting to the following issues:

1. The global rise of behaviourally informed policies: diffusion, impacts, side-effects
2. Organizing behavioural expertise: organizations, networks and evidence-based practices
3. Humanizing public policy? Behavioural discourses and their impact on state and society
### Biographical notes:

Holger Strassheim, Phd, is assistant professor at the Department for Social Sciences, Humboldt University Berlin and Visiting Research Fellow at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center. His research focuses on governance and public policy, political expertise and regulatory science, employment policy and food safety, behavioural economics and public management collaborations. Combining insights from Studies on Science, Technology and Society and Political Science, he explores the relationship between science and politics in welfare and risk regulation. As principal investigator of an interdisciplinary research project on “Changing Orders of Expertise” at the WZB he has contributed to comparative studies on political expertise in Germany, Great Britain and the US. He is co-speaker of the working group on Policy, Science and Technology at the German Political Science Association, aiming at strengthening the ties between the political science and the STS/science policy communities.

Silke Beck, Phd, is senior researcher at the Department of Environmental Politics, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research, Leipzig, Germany. Her research focuses on the relationship between science and governance and the emergence of expert organizations in global environmental change. Combining approaches from Science and Technology Studies and Political Science, she explores whether science-based policies contribute towards transforming global forms of governance and, if so, in what way. Beck has contributed to setting up the UFZ Science-Policy Expert Group. This interdisciplinary group has established a leading role in research on science-policy interactions, and actively designed and supported such activities in the field of biodiversity and eco- system services as national (stakeholder) contributions to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

### References:


**Bavel, R v, Herrmann, B, Esposito, G, and Proestakis, A, 2013, Applying Behavioural Sciences to EU Policy-making (JRC Scientific and policy reports), Luxembourg: European Commission**


**BIT, 2010, Applying behavioural insight to health, London: Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team**

—, 2011, Behaviour change and energy use, London: Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team

—, 2012, Test, Learn, Adapt. Developing Public Policy with Randomised Controlled Trials, London: Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team

—, 2013, Applying behavioural insights to charitable giving, London: Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team

—, 2014, EAST. Four simple ways to apply behavioural insights, London: The Behavioural Insights Team


**Doubleday, R, and Wilson, J (eds), 2013, Future Directions for Scientific Advice in Whitehall, Cambridge/Sussex: University of Cambridge/University of Sussex et al.**

**Goodwin, T, 2012, Why We Should Reject ‘Nudge’, Politics, 32, 2, 85–92**


—, 2014, Regulatory Policy and Behavioural Economics, Paris: OECD
(Swww.csap.cam.ac.uk/projects/future-directions-scientific-advice-europe),
Straßheim, H, 2015, Behavioural expertise and regulatory power in Europe, Paper for the workshop ‘Regulating Risks in the European Union: the co-production of expert and executive power’, Amsterdam Centre for Contemporary European Studies (ACCESS Europe) and Amsterdam Centre of European Law and Governance (ACELG) of the University of Amsterdam, 21-22 May 2015
World Bank, 2015, Mind, Society and Behavior, Washington: World Bank

For further information, please contact: Marcia Taylor, Conference Coordinator, ECPR Central Services, University of Essex, Wivenhoe Park, Colchester CO4 3SQ, Essex UK.