ECPR Joint Sessions 2012 in Antwerp

Workshop: **The European Public Servant: A Shared Administrative Identity?**

Workshop Subject Area: **Political Theory, Public Administration, History of Ideas**

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Abstract:

As the economic, political, and cultural integration of Europe advances, the organization of European administration becomes more complex, and the need for a shared administrative identity becomes more apparent. From the perspectives of political theory and the history of ideas, our Workshop attempts to examine the similarities and dissimilarities of historical and contemporary ideas on the public servant as a relevant political actor in Europe. By analyzing the continuities and discontinuities as well as the intellectual roots of different understandings of the public servant the workshop aims to contribute to finding an ideational foundation for a European administrative identity.

We especially welcome paper proposals on the following topics: (1) The ideas and ideals concerning the public servant in Europe. (2) What is typically European in European administrative thought? (3) Empirical analyses of the European public servant's identity, both past and present. (4) The history of administrative thought rather than the history of administrative practice. (5) Research that aims at better understanding contemporary issues by means of analyzing continuities and discontinuities, similarities and differences of various understandings of the public servant in the history of European thought.

Outline of the topic:

It is said we are currently moving "towards a European administrative space" (Olsen 2002). As the economic, political, and cultural integration of Europe advances, the organization of European administration becomes more complex but also more integrated. Consequently, the need for a shared administrative identity among the member states of the EU becomes more salient. For instance, the publication of the *European Principles of Public Administration* (OECD 1999), containing an explicit call for the construction of a collective European administrative identity, has highlighted this need.[1]

Our workshop aims to contribute to this scholarly and practically relevant endeavor by analyzing - from the perspectives of political theory and the history of ideas - the similarities and dissimilarities of historical and contemporary ideas on the public servant as a relevant political actor in Europe. As collective identity not only relies upon the mutual recognition of shared values, but also on the confrontation with 'foreign' values (Albert/Whetten 2004, 89; Hobsbawm 2004, 109), it is crucial to address the development of both inter- and extra-European administrative thought in a comparative manner.

We consider the topic particularly apt for a Workshop at the ECPR Joint Sessions, because in current debates, both academic and practical, several competing approaches to public service exist. Whe-

[1] http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/governance/european-principles-for-public-administration_5kml60zwdr7h-en

reas, especially in the Anglo-American context, economic and managerial approaches emphasize administrative values such as efficiency, effectiveness, and economy (e.g. Schedler/Proeller 2003; Hood 1991), and neo-progressive approaches stress the importance of public servants' responsibility and reliability (Lowery 1999; Goodsell 1994), other scholars, more oriented towards Europe, suggest that it is time to re-discover Weberian bureaucracy (Olsen 2006; Peters 2001). The Workshop aims to examine the intellectual roots of these different administrative approaches in order to find out in how far their respective values may serve as an ideational foundation for a potential European administrative identity.

Relation to existing research:

Our Workshop relates to various strands of research in Public Administration and political theory:

1. Whereas the lion's share of research on public administration has focused on the administrative practice, some studies have also dealt with public administration as it evolved in theory (e.g. Holzer et al. 2007; Bevir et al. 2003; Rutgers 2003; 2001; Kickert and Stillman 1999). The Workshop aims to contribute to this strand of literature.
2. In a similar vein, the Workshop topic relates to research on the history of political science as an academic discipline (e.g. Bevir 2010; Adcock 2003; Easton et al. 1995; Gunnell 1993).
3. More generally, the Workshop topic ties in with a wealth of publications on the history of political thought (e.g. Klosko 2011; Hampsher-Monk 1992).
4. Finally, the Workshop may contribute to empirical studies dealing with ethical values in contemporary public administration (e.g. Box 2008; Houston/Cartwright 2007).

Participants:

The workshop is open to all researchers from Europe and from other continents, interested in the study of political and administrative thought. They need not be formally affiliated with the study of public administration, but can also come from adjacent fields (such as political theory, political and legal philosophy, history, and others). Academic quality and a substantive interest in the research theme is the prime requirement for participation.

Type of papers:

The workshop aims at attracting papers that deal with any of the following topics:

1. The ideas and ideals concerning *the public servant* in Europe. The topic brings together political, sociological, historical, legal, as well as ethical and philosophical approaches. It is also a pertinent topic in the light of the present day academic and social interest in the idea(l) of the public servant.
2. What is typically *European* in European administrative thought? This question is central, both in a historical and international comparative perspective.
3. Empirical analyses of the European public servant's identity and status (political, legal, and social), both past and present.
4. The history of administrative *thought* rather than the history of public administration as such, even though the two are intertwined. This implies also that the interest is not a purely historical, but rather theoretical and practical.
5. Research that aims at better understanding *contemporary issues* by means of an analysis of continuities and discontinuities, similarities and differences. There is a general lack of knowledge, not least among students of political science and public administration, of how present principles of public service have come about.

Biographical note:

Fritz Sager is Professor of political science at the Center of Competence for Public Management at the University of Bern. He currently directs a research project on a history of administrative theory. In 2010, he won the *Marshall E. Dimock Award* for the best lead article in *Public Administration Review* for a paper on Wilson, Weber, and Hegel (Sager and Rosser 2009). A second paper on the history of administrative thought is forthcoming in *Public Administration* (Sager et al. forthcoming).

Patrick Overeem, PhD, is currently an assistant-professor at the Institute of Public Administration of Leiden University. His research and teaching focus on philosophical and normative issues in the study of politics and administration, such as constitutionalism, statesmanship, civil service neutrality, and the legitimacy of European administrative governance. Besides his dissertation (2010) on the historical meaning and constitutional relevance of the politics-administration dichotomy in modern states, he has published papers in *Public Administration Review* and *Administrative Theory & Praxis*.

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