APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

This form should be used for applications to run a workshop at the Joint Sessions of Workshops. The deadline for applications is 15 February each year.

Title of proposed workshop

Effects of Incumbency on Organization of Radical Rightwing Parties

Name of workshop director(s): Robert Harmel and Kurt Richard Luther

Name and address of institution(s):

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Please note that the information above is VERY important as it will be used in all future correspondence and printed in the academic programme.

The proposal should be typed using 1.5 line spacing on three/four A4 pages using this sheet as the first page, and should cover the points outlined in the guidelines (see over).

Please send this form, together with your workshop proposal, to both:

a) ECPR Central Services
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For further information, please contact either of the above.
A. OUTLINE OF THE TOPIC

Europe’s radical right has engendered considerable political and academic debate. The last ECPR workshop devoted (albeit only in part) to this subject was in 2001 and its prime focus was on the relationship between extremism and democracy. Though generally portrayed as a cause for fear and not uncommonly associated with the spectre of Nazism, West European radical rightwing parties have recently sought to move ‘from the margins to the mainstream’. Some have not proceeded beyond publicly indicating they aspire to assume political office (e.g. Norway’s Progress Party, the Vlaams Blok and Danish People’s Party). Others have succeeded in entering national government (e.g. Fini’s Allianza Nationale, Haider’s FPÖ, Bossi’s Lega Nord and the List Pym Fortuyn) and their experience demonstrates that incumbency poses profound challenges for such parties.

It is not the purpose of this workshop to explain these parties’ primary goal shift from promoting a pure protest message to government participation. Nor is it our purpose to document and explain the ‘moderation’ of their issue profiles. Instead, we aim to carefully examine and explain organizational changes within these parties. To date, there has been relatively little scholarly work (and no ECPR Workshop) dedicated to this topic. Moreover, there is virtually no work on the effects of incumbency (or aspiration to such) on the organization of radical rightwing parties, per se, probably because the spreading of the phenomenon is so recent.

B. RELATION TO EXISTING RESEARCH

Extant literatures provide fuel for interesting theoretical expectations about the impact of incumbency on radical right parties. They include those (i) on party organizational change generally (e.g. Panebianco 1988; Harmel/Janda et al. 1995; Katz/Mair 1994); (ii) on party goals (e.g. Muller/Strom 1999) and especially the literature linking party organizational change to primary goals (e.g., Harmel/Janda 1994), (iii) on party life cycles (e.g., Pedersen, 1982) and more specifically, the literature linking party organizational change to party life experiences (e.g. Stein 1973; Harmel/Svasand 1993, 2001); (iv) on radical right parties generally (e.g. Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995; Luther 2003, Harmel/Gibson 1995, Ignazi 1992, etc); and (v) on challenger parties in government (e.g. Müller-Rommel & Poguntke 2002). Our reading of such literatures leads us to suggest the following.

First, all political parties are faced with ‘hard choices’ between the often conflicting goals of policy, vote and office, but the consequences of deciding to adopt office as a primary goal are likely to be particularly challenging for erstwhile ‘outsiders’ such as rightwing radicals. Second, we would expect the impact of such primary goal change upon rightwing radical parties’ organization and leadership to vary as a result of individual parties’ profiles in respect of at least two key issues. The first relates to the relevant party’s age or life-cycle stage at the time of their decision to aspire to and/or accept government participation: shortly after inception (e.g. the Fortuyn List), or after full institutionalization (e.g. FPÖ). The second concerns the party’s primary goal at the time it decided to
prioritise office. In the case of right-wing radical parties, it might be useful to distinguish between those whose primary goal was policy and those for whom it was vote. The former might usefully be considered to have been ‘principled’, which might typically mean adherence to ‘old right’ or ‘pure protest’ values. Meanwhile, those that prioritised vote (maximization) are likely to have been ideologically promiscuous and might thus be characterised as having been populist, or opportunistic. That is to say, these two factors may constitute important intervening variables. Third, we also recognize a difference between experiencing incumbency and just beginning to aspire to government. Government aspiration implies a change in goal priorities, but incumbency also brings role experiences which themselves might affect the party’s organization. (We thus welcome papers dealing with “government aspiration” parties [e.g. Norwegian Progress Party and Danish People’s Party], as well as those on “government incumbent” parties [e.g. Lega Nord, FPÖ].)

Types of organizational changes that might be addressed in papers for this workshop include:

1) **Leadership Change.** Radical rightwing parties typically have personalized leadership, often of the charismatic or polarizing type. Leaders with these characteristics may well prove effective in parties prioritising policy or vote-maximization. However, leadership in incumbency may well require different skills (e.g. those of ‘statesman and pragmatic politician’ (Stein 1973)). Accordingly (aspiration to) incumbency is likely to precipitate leadership change. Where expanding the leadership does not suffice, we might expect change of leader.

2) **Strengthening of ‘Party in Public Office’** Related to changed leadership style is change in the intra-party locus of power. The original leader may have exercised tremendous personal control over a minimalist organization. By the time the party enters government, it can be expected that power would shift considerably in favour of the parliamentary and governmental wings at the expense of the extraparliamentary organization. For example, rules are likely to be altered to increase representation of the party-in-public-office on party committees, at the expense of the party on the ground.

3) **Greater Organizational Complexity** might be one consequence of the expansion of the organization’s clienteles to include a government branch, needing to be serviced on an ongoing basis.

4) **Centralization of Candidate Recruitment** In radical rightwing parties that prioritize policy over vote, candidate selection may be rather informal and lack central control. Prioritising national vote may enhance central control. As the party’s primary goal shifts to government, however, candidates become potential office holders. Thus the quality and political reliability of candidates becomes increasingly important and we would expect greater central control over candidate selection.

5) **Party Discipline** Because aspiration to government, and then even more so incumbency itself, is likely to increase strategic and ideological factionalism in the radical right party, the party may feel the need to develop organizational mechanisms to mitigate the negative effects of factionalism.

4) **Nationalization of Power** Local organizations of radical right parties are likely to contain many of what one Scandinavian leader of such a party called “village nuts,” or at least many policy purists.
When the party aspires to participation in government, and normally moderates some positions to make itself more attractive to potential coalition partners, behavior and statements by local organizations may be counter-productive for the national party. Hence it might be expected that the national party will create organizational means for controlling activities and communications from its local party organizations, effectively nationalizing party power.

5) Professionalisation of Voter Mobilisation As radical right parties (aspire to) enter government, they are likely to lose support from their former protest voters and/or ideological purists. Parties that were policy purists might be expected to respond by devoting greater and more professionalized organizational resources to recruit new voters. By contrast, erstwhile rightwing radical ‘vote-maximisers’ are likely to devote proportionately less resource than before to this task. Seen from a different perspective, this implies that the resource commitment to professionalization of these parties’ campaign organizations might be expected to become increasingly ‘normalised’.

The hypotheses implied in this list of expectations – suggesting that change in government aspiration and/or experience should result in a different style of leadership, decreased power for the extraparlimentary organization, more national control over local parties and candidate nomination, more organizational complexity and professionalization, and alteration of rules for greater representation of factional groups and the party-in-public-office on party boards – are just examples of the many interesting foci which may serve as the theoretical bases of papers for this workshop.

References
Stein, M. B. (1979), The Dynamics of Right-Wing Protest: A Political Analysis of Social Credit in Quebec, Toronto: Toronto University Press.

C. PARTICIPANTS

Scholars working in any of the above mentioned areas should find this workshop interesting. Included among them: Lars Bille (Copenhagen); Roberto Biorco (Milan); Piero Ignazi (Bologna); Lars Svasand (Bergen); Anders Widfeldt (Aberdeen); Gilles Ivaldi (Grenoble); Michael Minkenberg (Frankfurt); Meindert Fennema (Amsterdam); Hans-Georg Betz (York); Rachel Gibson (Salford).

D. TYPES OF PAPER

Papers for this workshop will develop and/or test theoretical expectations concerning the organizational effects of new government aspirations and/or government experience of radical rightwing parties. Papers may be either case studies, comparisons within or across countries, or completely theoretical, but all must address theoretical issues. The ultimate ambition of the directors is to develop a collaborative work from at least some of the papers prepared for the workshop.

E. FUNDING

Texas A&M University will cover the cost of travel and expenses for co-director Harmel. If this proposal is accepted, co-director Luther will investigate the opportunities for applying to his national funding agencies for additional resources.

F. BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE
