Workshop

(Yet another) Crisis of Social Democracy?
Challenges and Opportunities for Social Democratic Parties in Post-Industrial Societies

November 29th and 30th 2018

Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, Wallotstrasse 19, 14193 Berlin, Room tba

Organizers: Tarik Abou-Chadi, Silja Häusermann, and Nadja Mosimann

Participants: Björn Bremer (European University Institute), Brian Burgoon (University of Amsterdam), Rafaela Dancygier (Princeton University, via skype), Jane Gingrich (University of Oxford), Christoffer Green-Pedersen (Aarhus University), Eelco Harteveld (University of Amsterdam), Ellen Immergut (European University Institute), Heike Klüver (HU Berlin), Werner Krause (WZB), Sarah de Lange (University of Amsterdam, via skype), Tom O’Grady (University College London), Sergi Pardos-Prado (University of Oxford), Line Rennwald (University of Geneva), Hanna Schwander (Hertie School of Governance), Markus Spittler (WZB), Markus Wagner (University of Vienna)

Objectives

This workshop seeks to evaluate and discuss the challenges of social democratic and other mainstream left parties within the changing political structures of advanced capitalist societies. In recent years, many Social Democratic parties such as the Dutch PvdA or the French PS have suffered deep electoral decline. Coupled with the 2016 victory of Donald Trump in the US and a simultaneous surge in support for populist radical-right parties in Europe, this has revived a decades-old debate about the crisis of Social Democracy. The public (and some of the academic) narrative strongly focuses on the parties’ supposedly dwindling support among its traditional base and a “working class exodus” towards the national-conservative Right. This development is often diagnosed as a direct result of a centrist policy shift and the Left’s unwillingness to take and implement tougher stances on immigration. However, this narrative is at odds with scholarly work that has pointed to the increasing relevance of educated middle-class voters for the success of mainstream left parties in post-industrial societies (Kitschelt 1994), to limited overlaps between electorates of the Left and Right (Rydgren 2013), and to new programmatic dynamics that cannot be subsumed under a “centrist vs. radical” view (Gingrich and Häusermann 2015, Abou-Chadi and Immergut 2018).

In this workshop we thus want to actively tackle these issues and assess the state of what we know about the electoral basis and realignment of the mainstream Left, as
well as its programmatic stances and policy-strategies. In contrast to a more standard academic workshop, we aim at a broad yet analytic discussion of the challenges and opportunities of Social Democratic parties within three areas:

1. Programs: social democratic strategies and multi-party competition
2. Policies: social democratic policies and their consequences
3. Voters: electoral trends and realignments

Each of the areas will be introduced by several expert scholars in the field. Scholars are free to either provide a full paper or a shorter brief or think piece. As a group, we then want to discuss the state of the art, explore new areas for research but also try to figure out how our findings relate to the public discourse on Social Democracy.

We see this workshop as an opportunity to establish and possibly institutionalize the cooperation of several scholars in this field.

**Workshop Program**

**Thursday, November 29th 2018**

9.00 – 9.30  Welcome

9.30 – 13.00  Programs: Social democratic strategies and multi-party competition

Markus Wagner and Tarik Abou-Chadi: "The electoral appeal of party strategies in post-industrial societies: when can the Mainstream Left succeed?"
*Discussant: Sergi Pardos-Prado*

Christoffer Green-Pedersen: "A social democratic friendly issue agenda?"
*Discussant: Werner Krause*

Ellen Immergut: “Don't forget the Meso level!: Preferences, Policies and Corporate Actors”
*Discussant: Jane Gingrich*

Brian Burgoon: “Radical Right and Radical Left Populism, and the Political Economy of Anti-globalization Backlash”
*Discussant: Markus Wagner*

13.00 – 14.00  Lunch

14.00 – 18.00  Policies: Social democratic policies and their consequences
Björn Bremer: "Austerity from the left? The response of social democratic parties to the Great Recession"
*Discussant: Christoffer Green-Pedersen*

Jane Gingrich: Did Third Way Social Democracy Work?
*Discussant: Hanna Schwander*

*Coffee Break (30min)*

*Discussant: Tarik Abou-Chadi*

Tom O’Grady: "Welfare Policy in the British Labour Party since the 1980s"
*Discussant: Björn Bremer*

20.00  *Workshop dinner*

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**Friday, November 30th 2018**

9.00 – 13.00  *Voters: Electoral trends and realignments*

Line Rennwald: “Unionization, electoral coalitions and the fate of the Left”
*Discussant: Heike Klüver*

Nadja Mosimann and Silja Häusermann: Social Democratic Parties and Trade Unions: Parting Ways of Facing the Same Challenges?
*Discussant: Brian Burgoon*

*Coffee Break (30min)*

*Discussant: Tom O’Grady*
Eelco Harteveld: "Caught between a Rock and a Hard Place: The Decline of the Dutch PvdA" (co-authored with Sarah de Lange and Matthijs Rooduijn)

Discussant: Marcus Spittler

13.00 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.00 Final discussion

Session format: ca. 50min per paper; ca. 15 min presentation, ca. 10 minutes discussion by discussant, open discussion and discussion of broader implications.