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**Workshop 9**

***Changing Party Political Constellations and Public Policy Reform in Southern Europe***

**directed by**

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***Workshop abstract***

Among the academic community, Southern Europe has attracted increased scholarly attention since the early 1980s and again over the last few years. The challenge of modernizing public policy in line with best practice and strong external pressure for fiscal consolidation has created fertile ground for policy reform. Evolving social norms and changing patterns of policy-making often identified with the Europeanization paradigm have led to political rearrangements that pose interesting questions as to the region's future development.

The workshop will seek to bring together scholars working on Southern Europe, and in particular those interested in the Italian, Greek, and Turkish cases. Creating a platform for the dissemination of the latest high-quality research in this area, the workshop will concentrate on the interaction between party politics and public policy reform.

On the one hand, the workshop will draw on the theme of a rapidly evolving party political scene. In that context, two main themes will be explored. Firstly, all three countries have experienced the ideological decline of the centre-left and the blurring of ideological differences on a programmatic level. The former right-left division, clearly articulated before the 1980s and held constant during the Cold War, has been replaced by a much more fluid ideological contestation that often seems to reject old divisions altogether. Secondly, party politics has recently acquired an entirely new dimension through the articulation of new ideological standpoints by governing parties, such as the 'Politics of the Centre Ground' espoused by the Greek New Democracy Party or the 'Conservative Democrats'

label preferred by the Turkish Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey. In the Italian case, volatility in party politics has continued even after the collapse of the old party establishment in the early 1990s and has recently led to the formation of a new centre-left Party, the Democratic Party (Partito Democratico, PD).

Interacting with this changing landscape is, inevitably, the question of public policy reform. Ranging from labour relations, social security reform and regional disparities to civil-military relations and the creation of a security culture (understood in both its domestic and international dimension), governing parties have often been hard-pressed to articulate and implement a new mode of public policy that would reflect their shifting ideological undertones whilst conforming to their electorate's aspirations and thus fulfilling a key condition for the exercise of democratic politics.

Bringing party politics and public policy reform under one roof, the workshop will seek to provide some preliminary answers to questions such as:

- 1) How has party politics impacted on public policy reform in Italy, Greece and Turkey? At the same time, how has the policy reform drive affected the changing party political landscape in these countries? Can one identify common themes and trajectories?
- 2) To what extent can the politics of public policy reform literature provide useful insights to policy development in Southern Europe?
- 3) What has the role of Europeanization been in that process, especially with regard to its exploration of domestic change?

### *Workshop description*

For a long period of time following WWII, Southern Europe had attracted little by way of scholarly attention on issues of public policy and party politics. The Cold War had conditioned a large part of the region's stance on major policy issues, and its relative economic underdevelopment pushed research interests towards the more timely subjects of democratization and democratic consolidation, political parties, civil society and the state (e.g., Bosco and Morlino 2006, Ceccarini 2006, Gunther, Diamandouros and Sotiropoulos, 2006, Diez, Agnantopoulos and Kaliber 2005).

In the context of a rapidly changing international environment, Southern Europe became an interesting area for cross-country comparative research. Democratic achievements by way of pluralist electoral politics permitted the inclusion of South European politics into broader patterns of comparative research. Although great progress has been achieved in creating a more stable axis of party political representation, the tectonic plates of political (re)alignment appear to once again be shifting in an as yet uncertain and potentially turbulent fashion.

Hence, the workshop will draw on the theme of a rapidly evolving party political scene. In that context, two main themes will be explored. Firstly, all three countries (Italy, Greece, Turkey) have experienced the blurring of ideological differences on a programmatic level. Secondly, party politics

has recently acquired an entirely new dimension through the articulation of new ideological standpoints which seem to transcend the long-established right-left division, reflecting class-based politics of the post-war era. A much more fluid ideological contestation has tended to accompany the ideological decline of the centre-left on the one hand, and attempts to redefine the centre on the other. From the formation of Forza Italia in the 1990s, to the espousal of the 'Politics of the Centre Ground' by the New Democracy Party in Greece and the emergence of Justice and Development Party (AKP) with its claim to identify itself as 'Conservative Democrats' in Turkey, it is possible to observe such attempts to redefine the centre ground. In the Italian case, volatility in party politics has continued even after the collapse of the old party establishment in the early 1990s and has recently led to the formation of a new centre-left Party, the Democratic Party (Partito Democratico, PD). Similarly, the emergence of a populist/rightist party (LAOS) and the strengthening of a left-wing party linked to social movements (SYN) in Greece add fuel to the suggestion that party politics in Southern Europe is yet again in need for a thorough examination and evaluation. This may or may not be linked to increasing signs of voter apathy engulfing those countries. In that sense, the link between party political realignments and its interaction with popular perceptions and aspirations forms one of those interesting axis of political interaction that the workshop aims to disentangle.

At the same time, the quest for modernization and development that had underpinned the developmental aspirations of the region for a long time became a more realistic goal in the post-Cold War era. Nonetheless, question marks as to the ability to reform public administration structures as well as policy programmes came to the foreground of the debate. The perceived policy stagnation in Southern Europe observed over the last 10-15 years (Papadimitriou, 2005; Romo, 2005) interacts with a complicated process of party political realignments, the rediscovery of ideological divides and an intense 'war of positions' among political actors to carve out new spaces for electoral, political and ideological dominance. In addition, the challenge of Europeanization in the form of particular policy initiatives emanating from the supranational level (for instance, the European Employment Strategy (EES) or the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), see Ashiagbor 2005 and Zeitlin 2005 respectively) adds to the reform load required by countries and demands the rearticulation of policy practices. These issues will be discussed at more length below, in line with the thematic priorities of our workshop.

The workshop seeks to fulfil the main objectives of the 10th Mediterranean Meeting (Florence and Montecatini Terme, 2009) by creating an interactive platform within which issues of party political change and changes in the public policy process will be analyzed in an analytical, systematic and, above all, interactive fashion. The workshop will be designed around a number of questions and topics listed below, and will encourage the participants to take into account three distinct, yet interrelated, main concerns, in particular: a) To start with, we seek to enhance the debate on *the dynamically evolving ideational component of party political transformation and public policy reform*: ideologies and discursive frameworks that influence and shape policy agendas in Italy, Greece and Turkey and determine the axes of political struggles is a primary area of our research concerns; b) *the changing forms of representation and participation in the policy-making and implementation process*. The changing place and role of political parties and party politics in the policy process as well as the impact of institutional re-design across policy spaces constitutes a potentially revealing area of analysis; c) *the changing socio-economic structures of these countries and the reform of public policy*:

how does the logic of party politics transform available policy spaces for social and economic transformation; at the same time, how do changing socio-economic variables intervene in the party political process and influence the policy stance of political parties in line with contemporary needs and aspirations? These issues have recently been brought to the foreground of the policy debate and cannot easily be disentangled from the wider party political struggle for legitimization that underpins policy programmes.

Focusing on the interaction between party political change and public policy reform in understanding Southern Europe, and paying attention to the above concerns as the umbrella themes of initiating research, the following thematic priorities are underlined in our proposed application.

1. To what extent do political parties and party-politics still constitute significant and meaningful channels of **political representation and participation**, especially in a context characterised by the Europeanization of policy-making structures as well as the perceived de-politicization of the policy process? Has Southern Europe, until recently a relatively fertile ground for the articulation of societal aspirations through party political means, 'caught up' with western Europe in terms of citizen apathy and the abandonment of the ballot box as a meaningful way of reorganizing the public/civil space?
2. What is the changing role and place of the notions of, and discourses around, **'democracy', 'community', 'citizenship', and the 'social'** in the re-structuring of political parties and party politics? How are these ideational components of political discourse articulated towards a definition of a 'political centre' by contending political parties in these countries?
3. How has **party-politics** in Italy, Greece and Turkey been influenced by the **administrative reforms** in these countries? Additionally, what is the role of independent policy-making bodies in the policy process in these countries? What sort of alternative mechanisms of participation and representation has this institutional infrastructure of the policy-making process created in those countries, and are alternatives that go beyond the managerialist administration of policy able to counter-act signs of increasing apathy towards the party political spectrum?
4. How has the balance between **social and economic policies** been altered, in line with successive governmental changes in our countries of concern? In what ways have these changing policy agendas been related to the formation of centre parties, and the embrace of a more 'pragmatic' style of policy-making as opposed to the 'lofty idealism' of the past, especially with regard to social democratic discourses? Related to that question, and in many ways informed by it, is the realignment of party political ideology following the end of the Cold War, the triumphant emergence of a liberal/libertarian economic project of global scope and intensity and the concomitant reshaping of the political left.

5. What sort of similarities and differences can we detect between the policy agendas and the policy making process under the influence of **single-party governments** as opposed to **coalition governments**? How can we relate the changing compositions in governments, and the birth of new political parties, to the policy stagnation, or worse policy paralysis, experienced in these countries?
6. In what ways does the interaction between the new party political landscapes affect issues of **regional governance**, with particular reference to **regional disparities**? All of our case studies are united by a discernible thread of territorial inequity that has long been seen as a fundamental obstacle to development. Does the new policy context of the 1990s and 2000s alter pre-existing conceptualization as to the salience of closing the regional gap, and how does that phenomenon fit contemporary party political needs?
7. How does the birth of a **multi-level governance** structure in these countries, in a context characterised by the Europeanization of policy-making and implementation structures, shape the terrain of political struggle and participation? In what ways has the reterritorialisation of policy-making influenced the internal administrative organisation of political parties as well as their political agendas across the ideological spectrum?

The workshop will thus seek to create a platform for the dissemination of the latest high-quality research on the interaction between party politics and public policy reform by bringing together scholars working on Southern Europe, and in particular those interested in the Italian, Greek, and Turkish cases.

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