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European Group
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Annual Conference of the

***European Group for Public
Administration***

11-13 September 2019

PhD Symposium

9-10 September 2019

***EGPA Permanent Study Group XX :
Welfare State Governance &
Professionalism***

Call-for-Papers

⟨Ideas, Institutions, Interests and (Professional) Issues in Welfare State Governance⟩

In the last two decades, we have witnessed a major transformation of the welfare state. The governance structures of the welfare state, as well as the procedures and practices of professionals working inside the welfare state have been subject to far-reaching reforms. We can observe very different reform patterns. On the one hand, welfare state governance and professionalism have been put under pressure to increase the efficiency of service delivery, especially by marketizing and managerializing structures and processes. On the other hand, ideas of ideas of collaborative and inclusive network governance have been high on the agenda as well, and they have fuelled a practical emphasis on ‘societalizing’ arrangements.

Why are governance structures and professional practises in the welfare state changing in the (ambivalent) ways that they are changing? How can we explain which reform programmes have been/are adopted? What are the reasons for similarities and differences we discern when comparing countries, policy fields or specific organizations of the welfare state? And what are the effects, for governments, service delivery and/or citizens?

While there is consensus regarding the diagnosis – an increasing hybridization of governance structures and professional practices – explanations that can account for these changes are contested. Based on the assumption that ‘there is no more practical theory than a good theory, but good theories are based on facts and real worlds and must be confirmed by an actual impact’, the PSG is focusing on good ideas for good theories. With ideas, institutions, interests and (professional) issues, at least four analytical approaches compete for the provision of satisfying explanations:

- **Ideas** refer to values and beliefs through which politicians, bureaucrats, and professional actors make sense of the world they face. Ideas influence the mind-set of policy actors and hence determine how problems are understood and which potential solutions are perceived. The role of ideas in welfare state reforms is often discussed with respect to agenda setting and policy formulation. However, ideas can also shape implementation processes.
 - **Institutions**, may they be formal or non-formal, define ‘the rules of the game’. They are mechanisms of social order that influence the behaviour of individuals by either constraining or enabling agency. Institutional approaches emphasize the stability of structures, processes and practises and expect only path dependent change. However, literature that is more recent acknowledges that incremental change can have wide-ranging effects as well.
 - **Interests** concern both the preferences of actors and their power, their capacity and skills to realize their preferences. Even though it is widely accepted that individual agency is constraint by ideas and institutions, interest-based theories posit that actors and power are crucial aspects to explain policy outcome
 - **Issues**, especially professional issues, finally, are the problems that are on the agenda and that need to be solved. They are defining elements for (collective) actors, organizations or policy fields and are decisive to mobilize or impede actions and activities. Professional issues include the quality of services, the respect ethical and legal standard, professionals competencies, and the establishment of professional relationships with clients.

Newer approaches increasingly concede that not one, but multiple factors drive policy change. Against this background, integrated frameworks are discussed that combine the '4 Is' and reflect the relative importance of ideas, institutions, interests and professional issues as a source of change of welfare state governance and professionalism.

Abstract and Papers: Key Dates

The study group invites papers with new theoretical or empirical — especially comparative — insights on the role of ideas, institutions, interests and (professional) issues in welfare state governance. The deadline for paper proposals is **March 15, 2019**. Please submit your paper proposal (of max. 400 words) via the EGPA annual conference 2019 website (<http://egpa-conference2019.org>). The deadline for the selection of the accepted papers by the co-chairs is **May 15, 2019**. Full papers of the accepted proposals are due by **August 12, 2019**.

Practicalities

Please submit your abstract online through the Conference Website: <https://www.egpa-conference2019.org/> or directly through Conference Management System: <https://www.conftool.org/egpa-conference2019/> More information on the 2019 EGPA conference can be found at: <https://www.egpa-conference2019.org/>

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