

Abstracts

Tim Spier

Grand Coalitions in the German Federal States 1949-2013

Game-theoretic coalition theories have problems explaining the formation of grand coalitions, defined as coalitions of both major parties CDU/CSU and SPD in German context, because they fit the logic of office- and policy-maximization only to a limited extent. This paper wants to contribute to a better understanding of these grand coalitions by examining their structure and the determinants of their formation quantitative-empirically on the level of the German federal states from 1949 to 2013. It is shown that certain party system characteristics, like high fragmentation or an asymmetry towards the left-wing political camp, correlate with the formation of such coalitions. Especially the share of pariah parties excluded from coalition formation and the absence of an alternative minimal winning coalition in both political camps are good predictors of their formation.

Astrid Carrapatoso

The role of civil society in Asia-Europe environmental and climate cooperation – a source of legitimacy or irritation?

Since the foundation of ASEM in 1996, civil society participation has been heavily discussed among both member states and civil society actors themselves, thereby also touching the question of legitimacy in interregional relations. Cultural differences between European and Asian states led to the creation of the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF) as the socio-cultural pillar of the ASEM process. Civil society participation was finally decoupled from the official political dialogue by integrating civil society into ASEF activities. The question remains to what extent this participation contributes to the legitimacy of the ASEM process. On the one hand, the activities of the Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum), for example, which involves civil society actors, has already impacted on ASEM summits und generally promotes knowledge and information transfer. On the other hand, the participating civil society actors are rather apolitical and applying criteria for assessing legitimacy shows very mixed results.

Rita Nikolai and Kerstin Rothe

Convergence in School Structure? A Comparative Analysis of Party Manifestos from CDU and SPD

School policy in Germany is federally organized and is one of the most popular topics in party competition used for the election campaigns between the regional parties. In regard to recent developments in school policies, the positions of the two biggest parties, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), seem to align each other. Nonetheless the literature on party manifestos has largely ignored the study of party competition in the “states”. Using a computer-based quantitative-qualitative content analysis, we examine if the policy positions differ between the CDU and SPD as well as between their regional associations. We also analyze if the Christian and the Social Democrats converge in their ideological and structural beliefs since the first PISA-study in the year 2000. For this we differentiate between deep core beliefs (educational understanding) and policy-beliefs (school structure and inclusion). Our results reveal no convergence in the deep core and the policy beliefs. Just in three of 16 states we found a convergent support from CDU and SPD for a two-tiered model in secondary education. In regard to education for children with special educational needs both parties argue for more integration, but differences in the ideological and structural beliefs between the Christian and the Social Democrats remain.