



**Policy-making in Hard Times:
Explaining the Variation in Policy Reactions to the Global Economic and
Financial Crisis in Industrialized Democracies**

5.-6. November 2010

Mannheim Centre for European Social Research, Mannheim, Germany

Conference organised by Jan Drahekoupil, Nathalie Giger, Felix Hörisch and Timo Weishaupt

The current global crisis, which began with the collapse of the investment banking firm Lehman Brothers in September 2008, has developed into a full-blown economic, financial, social and political crisis, affecting all European countries. The sheer massiveness of the crisis' impact in all spheres of the socio-economic life has represented an unprecedented challenge for policy makers, who have reacted to the crisis in a variety of ways. The crisis – and its response – brings many questions to the forefront.

First, and foremost, *what explains the variation in governments' crisis-response efforts?* That is to ask, do reactions reflect mainly differences in the economic impact of the crisis? Or are they conditioned by ideological predispositions of governments; by their financial rooms to manoeuvre; by the ability to form social "pacts" and concerted action? And, to what extent are these determinants specific to the crisis-response situation?

Second, *does policy making in times of crisis differ from "normal" times and if so, how and why?* Put differently, policy-making 'in hard times' means that policy-makers may have to make a decision under great uncertainty about the status quo and about the immediate and long-term effects any institutional changes on public institutions, welfare states and production regimes. Therefore, does the crisis represent a rare "window of opportunity" for some interest groups, factions of political parties, and other "institutional entrepreneurs" to advance their own political goals, as they are capable to provide information on the effects of specific policy measures?

By addressing these two interrelated questions, this conference seeks to identify the political determinants behind the different reactions in advanced industrial nations to the economic crisis in the fields of (a) financial regulation, (b) macroeconomic policies, and (c) labour market and social policy.

The aim of this conference is to bring together various scholars working on the topic to advance our common knowledge about the substantive policy reactions to the crisis and theorize about the various factors that conditioned policy-makers' responses. Ideally, the conference will allow the organisers to identify a selection of papers for a "special issue".

While the conference is open for anyone to attend, paper presenters will be selected by the organisers. Funding for travel will be made available to presenters, within the usual budgetary constraints.

Please send a 200 word abstract and your C.V. to the following address:

politics.hardtimes2010@googlemail.com

Deadline for submitting proposals: **10. September 2010**

Notification about acceptance: **20. September 2010**

Deadline for paper delivery: **25. October 2010**

Inquires should be directed via email to any of the organisers:

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