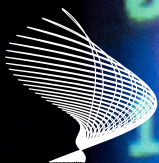




Presenting_ NORFACE

**Democratic
governance in
a turbulent age**



NORFACE
NETWORK



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Democratic governance in a turbulent age:

a NORFACE research programme

New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe (NORFACE) is a partnership of national research funding agencies in Europe, and is dedicated to leading and developing opportunities for scientists in the social and behavioural sciences.

NORFACE plays a key role in resolving major societal challenges by promoting research of the highest quality, sharing best practices among research funders and especially by making international collaboration between social scientists in Europe possible. From challenges brought on by migration and inequality to preparing for the impact of an aging society, researchers in the social sciences in Europe look at the behaviour of individuals and groups and at the dynamics of Europe's institutions and societies to understand and address these societal challenges.

NORFACE offers distinctive opportunities for researchers by developing common research funding instruments, and so opening up new avenues for facilitating and building high-quality transnational networks of research collaboration in the social and behavioural sciences. Launched in January 2004, the NORFACE network is the product of a successful bid for funding under the European Commission's 6th Framework Programme within the ERA-NET scheme.

Democratic governance in a turbulent age

Democratic politics and governance in Europe are facing turbulent times. Party systems have crumbled or been substantially changed by new parties, including populist parties, and new social movements. Parties in power at the national and regional levels have called into question constitutional arrangements and guarantees once thought to underpin modern democracies. Such political changes have in part resulted from changes in the nature and form of citizen attachments to government, political parties and democratic procedures. The financial crisis of 2007-8 raised questions about the ability of European governments to provide a framework for economic security and the pursuit of redistributive policies. Government itself has changed significantly over the past quarter century, with a growing role for 'arm's length' agencies and regulatory bodies, international governance structures and private sector organisations.

1. Objectives and outline

With this major joint transnational research programme, NORFACE (New Opportunities for Research Funding Agency Cooperation in Europe) offers a timely investigation of the precise nature of the turbulence, but also how European states can negotiate it and develop strategies to enhance the quality of democratic politics and governance.

This programme has three major objectives:

- to develop innovative and excellent research proposals addressing important challenges to democratic governance and politics;
- to produce added value through the development of European cross-national research collaborations exploring the impacts of variations in social, economic, cultural and political contexts on changes in how democracies work;
- to identify promising forms of policy innovation and institutional design and explore the conditions for their application in different jurisdictions.

The programme is structured around five of the most important challenges to democratic governance and politics. The following five themes have been prepared by an international, multi-disciplinary group of experts:

1. Inequality and redistribution
2. The evolving politics of threat
3. The democratisation of information
4. Shifting identities and representation
5. The changing authority of institutions.

The projects will start their work in 2020. The maximum budget per project is € 1.5 million.

2. Impact

The research projects will provide a new assessment of how the major challenges to democratic politics and governance have had an impact on social and political relationships in different countries, what accounts for the variation, how these challenges have been met and with what success. The academic impact of the research will be the generation of new knowledge, insights and theoretical perspectives on relations between the state, political, social and economic institutions and citizens as well as on relations among different groups of citizens. The practical and policy impacts of the programme arise from the examination of the key variables and influences that shape the intensity and outcomes of these challenges, thus providing the basis for understanding the range of positive interventions and policies that might lead to greater democratic innovation.

3. Scientific Programme Coordinator

Professor Sophie Lecheler of the University of Vienna has been appointed as Scientific Programme Coordinator for the programme. Professor Lecheler is also involved with the programme as a Principal Investigator in the project 'Data-driven campaigns: intended and unintended consequences for democracy (DATADRIVEN)'. The task of a NORFACE Programme Coordinator is to bring together researchers from within and outside this programme and to increase the networking, capacity building, and impact of the programme.

4. Knowledge exchange

The 'Democratic governance in a turbulent age' knowledge exchange strategy has been designed to ensure reliable coordination of activities, cooperation across research projects and collaboration on issues of knowledge exchange. Engagement with stakeholders outside the network and the broader public is essential to the programme's success. The knowledge generated through academic research in the Governance programme will also be made available to audiences beyond the immediate academic community.

The strategy focuses on different networking, communication and capacity-building aspects. A series of thematic workshops and conferences will be organized to bring together members of different projects and engage them with professional communities. In addition, the programme is assured of a strong online presence through its website and the publication of working papers, policy briefs and newsletters, in order to reach out to academic and stakeholder audiences. The programme website is geared towards a variety of different audiences, and as such reflects the informational needs of both the funded projects and the wider public. The website provides access to documentation and knowledge emerging from the programme and facilitates interaction with social media.

5. Funding

The programme is funded by 16 NORFACE partners and the European Union:

- Austrian Science Fund (FWF)
- Research Foundation Flanders (FWO)
- Independent Research Fund Denmark (DFF)
- Academy of Finland (AKA)
- French National Research Agency (ANR)
- German Research Foundation (DFG)
- The Irish Research Council (IRC)
- Luxembourg National Research Fund (FNR)
- Dutch Research Council (NWO)
- The Research Council of Norway (RCN)
- National Science Centre (NCN)
- The Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS)
- State Research Agency (AEI)
- The Swedish Research Council (VR)
- Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)
- UK Research and Innovation - Economic and Social Research Council (UKRI – ESRC)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 822166.



6. Overview of the research projects

Fourteen international research projects were funded in the NORFACE research programme Democratic governance in a turbulent age.

1. CrimScapes: Navigating citizenship through European landscapes of criminalisation

Project Leader: Professor Dr. B. Binder, Humboldt University of Berlin (Germany)

Principal Investigators: Dr M. Darley, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (France) |

Dr S. Sariola, University of Helsinki (Finland) | Dr A. Dziuban, Jagiellonian University (Poland)

The CrimScapes project explores the expanding application of criminal law, crime control measures and imaginaries of (il)legality as responses to, and producers of, a growing politics of threat across the European region. Given the inherent tensions between democratic processes and ever-expanding legal regulations, the project investigates this reliance on criminalisation as a challenge to the participatory nature of democratic societies, and as possible symptoms and causes of the general sense of turbulence dominating much of economic, social and political life today. It analyses the motivations behind, and implications of, criminalisation for the varied actors affected by and (re)producing landscapes of criminalisation (i.e. crimscales).

With the support of secondary literature, archival research and interviews, project members will develop CrimeLines (i.e. genealogical timelines) of different European crimscales (of drug use, migration, sex work, infectious diseases, prisons, LGBT identities, and hate speech). Ethnographic fieldwork will then enable conceptualising the citizenship dynamics emerging in the navigation of democratic participation and freedoms with legal regulation and measures of crime control. Building on this, researchers will highlight and open for discussion dilemmas of democratic governance so as to enhance actors' lived realities, rights-claims and desired futures.

2. Data-driven campaigns: intended and unintended consequences for democracy (DATADRIVEN)

Project Leader: Dr S. Kruikemeier, University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands)

Principal Investigators: Dr K. Dommert, University of Sheffield (UK) | Professor R. Gibson,

University of Manchester (UK) | Dr S.K. Lecheler, University of Vienna (Austria)

The project DATADRIVEN studies if data-driven campaigns using online micro targeting techniques are a threat to democracy. The consortium will focus on both the intended and unintended consequences of data-driven targeting and digital persuasion. In light of ongoing political and societal turmoil, investigating how citizens may be persuaded in a turbulent age and in a changing media landscape has never been more important. The studies will focus on micro (consequences for citizens), meso (consequences for political elites), and macro level effects (consequences for democracy).

The project's main research questions are:

- How do organizations shape election campaigns by targeting potential voters online during elections
- What are the constitutional and legislative frameworks shaping the extent and nature of data-driven campaigning in European countries?
- How are data-driven targeting practices perceived?
- To what extent do data-driven targeting practices actually affect voters?

The project extends and empirically tests a theoretical framework of data-driven campaigning, while using a mixture of research methods and a comparative perspective. The project will offer a deeper understanding of online data-driven targeting techniques during elections in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and United Kingdom.

3. Democratic Governance of Funded Pension Schemes (DEEPEN)

Project Leader: Professor K.M. Anderson, University College Dublin (Ireland)

Principal Investigators: Dr T. Wiss, Johannes Kepler University Linz (Austria) | Dr N.A.J. van der Zwan, Leiden University (the Netherlands) | Professor J.J. Fernández, University Carlos III of Madrid (Spain)

DEEPEN explores the democratic governance of capital-funded occupational pension schemes. We investigate how governments, regulators and labour market actors govern funded pensions (input legitimacy) and whether participants are satisfied with pension fund performance (output legitimacy). The project focuses on Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Ireland and Spain because the structure of funded pension provision varies along key dimensions relevant to input and output legitimacy. The project combines quantitative analysis of survey data with comparative case studies based on elite and expert interviews and analysis of primary and secondary documents.

The project addresses the following research questions: How does national policy define participant influence on funded pension provision? How do stakeholders use pension fund governance to influence investment policy? How have capital-funded pension schemes performed in terms of pension outcomes across European welfare states? To what extent are individual attitudes on pension investment aligned with these inputs and outputs?

It will contribute to academic and policy debates through journal articles, a special issue, conference presentations, and outreach activities aimed at national and European policymakers and other stakeholders.

4. EUINACTION: Willingness and Capacity for EU Policy Action in Times of Crises: Conflicts, Positions and Outcomes (EUINACTION)

Project Leader: Dr. N. Yordanova, Leiden University (the Netherlands)

Principal Investigators: Professor G. Glavas, University of Mannheim (Germany) | Dr Z.G. Greene, University of Strathclyde (UK)

Global financial, migration, security and pandemic crises demand coordination between national governments, which the European Union (EU) historically facilitates. Yet, the surge of Eurosceptic, nationalist and populist political parties and movements across Europe hinders discussions about EU cooperation on various issues. This raises the question of how these competing pressures affect EU policy integration. The project aims to inform responsive and effective policy reforms with findings about the willingness and capacity for European integration in specific policy areas. The consortium will seek to establish under which conditions politicians and institutions in the EU pursue an increase or a decrease of the EU's policy competences; when these actors manage to assert their positions in the policy-making processes; and to what extent their positions respond to public demands across and within member states.

The researchers will apply state-of-the-art natural language processing (NLP) methods to textual data (party manifestos, speeches from the European and national parliaments, EU legislative proposals and acts) to analyse the policy goals and policy-making influence of different actors in the EU. This will enable them to explain the mechanisms that drive or obstruct policy change at the European level across policy areas.

5. Extreme Identities: A Linguistic and Visual Analysis of European Far-Right Online Communities' Politics of Identity (ExId)

Project Leader: Dr S. Baele, University of Exeter (UK)

Principal Investigators: Dr N. Doerr, University of Copenhagen (Denmark) | Dr C. Boussalis, Trinity College Dublin (Ireland)

Over the past years, policy-makers and intelligence professionals have witness a dramatic multiplication of websites promoting extreme-right wing ideas and grassroots organizations. This growth of what we can call the 'far-right online ecosystem' has been so fast that academics and not-academic practitioners have struggled to keep track of its development. The Extreme Identities ('ExId') project harnesses cutting-edge computational tools to map the entire ecosystem, identifying its websites, uncovering how they connect to each other, and measuring their respective popularity.

Hosted in three of the most dynamic hubs for research on extremist communications (Trinity College Dublin, University of Copenhagen, University of Exeter), the team will also scrape the linguistic and visual content of these thousands of platforms, in an effort to constitute the largest database of far-right material to date. This big dataset will be used to expose how the many far-right online communities, through their choices of language and visual imagery, make some socio-political issues salient and construct particular collective identities (both of themselves and their 'enemies').

6. How Technological Change Reshapes Politics: Technology, Elections, and Policies (TECHNO)

Project Leader: Dr. H. Finseraas, Institute for Social Research (Norway)

Principal Investigators: Dr A. Kuo, University of Oxford (UK) | Dr A. Gallego, Barcelona Institute of International Studies (Spain) | Professor S. Häusermann, University of Zurich (Switzerland)

Technological change is disrupting labour markets in advanced democracies and creating fears about unemployment and the future of work. While it is well-established that rapid technological progress has important economic effects, its political consequences remain largely unexplored. The goal of this project is to study how technological change in the workplace contributes to political transformations, the adoption of policies to address change, and the political consequences of such policies.

The project is organized in four complementary work packages (WP). WP1 examines how workers' individual economic trajectories and political behaviour change when their industries digitalize. WP2 studies how the introduction of new technology affects local-level political and electoral outcomes through its effects on the local labour market. WP3 assesses how vulnerability to technological change affects citizen preferences for policies to respond to technological change. WP4 analyses the successes, failures, and political consequences of existing policies to address disparities due to technological change.

The project will contribute to understanding how the grievances generated by technological change manifest themselves politically. Our aim is to provide recommendations of politically viable and effective policies to help workers and communities adapt to a fast-changing economic landscape.

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7. Information in the EU's Digitalised GOvernance (INDIGO)

Project Leader: Professor H. Hofmann, University of Luxembourg (Luxembourg)

Principal Investigators: Professor F. Boehm, FIZ Karlsruhe (Germany) | Professor O. Mir, Pompeu Fabra | University (Spain) | Professor J.P. Schneider, University of Freiburg (Germany) | Professor P. Leino-Sandberg, University of Helsinki (Finland)

The project INDIGO (INformation in the EU's Digtalised GOvernance) addresses pressing issues affecting the future of democratic governance in Europe in view of the use of advanced machine learning based algorithms in public decision making. The project builds on an inter-disciplinary team of experts based in Luxembourg, Barcelona, Freiburg, Helsinki and Karlsruhe organised in working groups composed of legal scholars, social scientists and computer science experts on artificial intelligence and machine learning. The project teams will study the interactions of new technologies and their impact on concepts of democratic accountability, the rule of law, fundamental rights and principles and the use of expert knowledge in public decision-making.

The research undertaken is to develop future-proof regulatory approaches to technological innovation structuring the interface between citizens, science and law and the notions of discretion in view of AI. Thereby, INDIGO will develop pathways to both enhance the rule of law, democracy, transparency and the protection of fundamental individual rights as well as efficiency in problem solving and provision of public goods in the context of the deep and potentially profoundly transformative impact of innovative information technologies on rule-making and decision-making procedures in the EU.

8. Populist Backlash, Democratic Backsliding, and the Crisis of the Rule of Law in the European Union (POPBACK)

Project Leader: Dr G. Schnyder, Loughborough University (UK)

Principal Investigators: Dr D. Sallai, London School of Economics (UK) | Professor B. Blaszczyk, Polish Academy of Sciences (Poland) | Professor B. Sauer, University of Vienna (Austria) | Dr M. Pajnik, Peace Institute (Slovenia) | Professor S. Deakin, University of Cambridge (UK) | Professor A. Nölke, Goethe University Frankfurt (Germany)

The project POPBACK studies the mechanisms 'exclusionary populist' movements use to increase their power by undermining the Rule of Law (RoL) and eroding the divide between the public and private domains in the areas of law, the economy, and the media. We investigate the factors that make states vulnerable or resilient to such strategies and how societal actors seek to cope with them. We compare Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, United Kingdom, and Turkey all of which have experienced populist success, but differ regarding their institutional structures, permitting comparison.

A first work package focuses on the legal-constitutional aspects of exclusionary populism and seeks to quantitatively establish and explain cross-country differences in the decline in the RoL. A second one focusses on the firm-level to investigate the mechanisms exclusionary populists use to erode the public-private divide between the political and the economic domains. The third one will explore populist media strategies as mechanism of the erosion of the public-private divide, including populists' discursive strategies and attempts to change mediascapes.

We engage with a non-academic audience through five International Policy Fellowships created by the Cambridge Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) and with the wider public through a participatory stage performance.

9. Qualify Unification in Europe for Shifting Trust (QUEST): a comparative research on Muslims responses to the politics of threat in France, UK, Spain and Norway

Project Leader: Dr. A. Poli, School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (France)

Principal Investigators: Dr M.A. Cea D'Ancona, Complutense University of Madrid (Spain) |

Dr A. Hussain, University of Manchester (UK) | Dr V. Vestel, Oslo Metropolitan University (Norway)

QUEST is a cross-national three-year project focused on the shifting nature of identities and representations of Muslims in four European contexts: France, Norway, Spain and United Kingdom. Two phases of empirical research shape the deployment of the project focusing on the scale of cities. The first one will involve tracing, in a period of growing anxiety and mistrust, the discourses and mechanisms through which Muslims are folded into 'the politics of threat'. The second phase will highlight and deepen on the basis of an original ethnographic data collection the representations and actual experience of Muslims in order to identify individual and collective discourses, practices and strategies in the re-elaboration process of what it means to 'be Muslim' in the context of a polarised Europe. Strengthened by a collaboration with at least one partner among civil society and policy actors in each country, our extended engagements in urban settings will fuel a final 'action' phase dedicated to the sharing and transferring of innovative practices and forms of dialogue. A key ambition is to produce outputs that speak to stakeholders (policy, civil society, media) interested in furthering action in this area.

10. Reconnecting citizens to the administrative state? (ReConnect)

Project Leader: Professor M.C.E. Lodge, London School of Economics and Political Science (UK)

Principal Investigators: Dr N. Sitter, Norwegian Business School (Norway) | Dr C. Koop, University of London (UK) | Professor J. Jordana, Barcelona Institute of International Studies (Spain) |

Dr C.H.J.M Braun, Leiden University (the Netherlands)

The current age of political turbulence – expressed through citizen dissatisfaction and populist politics – represents a fundamental challenge to the authority of the institutions of the administrative state. As public administration is central to democratic governance, as it connects citizens to the state, it is central to explore sources of citizen disconnection and administrative efforts to reconnect citizens with the state. ReConnect investigates how calls for more 'responsive' administrative state institutions have developed – both among citizens and politicians – and how the administrative state has sought to become more responsive, especially when simultaneously faced with expectations of neutrality and impartiality. ReConnect explores, across European states, five distinct citizen-focused dimensions of the administrative state: constitutional, regulatory, enabling, consumer-protecting and consulting dimensions. Using a mixed-methods approach, including attitudinal, media, document and interview analysis, ReConnect generates new knowledge to compare and explain variation across both European jurisdictions and dimensions of the administrative state. In the process, the project contributes to academic and practitioner debates regarding the future of the administrative state, and to a better understanding of how citizens can be reconnected to wider democratic governance and the administrative state in particular.



11. Separation of powers for 21st century Europe (SepaRope)

Project Leader: Professor C. Eckes, University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands)

Principal Investigators: Dr A. Wallerman, University of Gothenburg (Sweden) |

Professor P. Leino-Sandberg, University of Helsinki (Finland)

SepaRope is the first empirically-grounded and comparative project rethinking the theory and practices of Separation of powers in present-day European Union. It addresses the very core of ‘democratic governance in a turbulent age.’

Separation of powers, the classic model of decision-making, entrusts different state functions to different branches (legislative, executive, judiciary) and serves the double purpose of ensuring collective will-formation and control of those in power. The polyarchic and multilevel nature of the EU is not easily reconciled with the separation-of-powers-model, either at EU or national level. SepaRope demonstrates in combined horizontal and vertical inquiries how recent economic and political developments affect the EU’s institutional framework and the anchoring of EU decision-making in national legitimacy. It combines conceptual constitutional analysis with empirical research in three fields (Economic and Monetary Union, migration, trade), in which EU decision-making is controversial, rights-sensitive and illustrative of recent power shifts. The teams at the universities of Amsterdam, Gothenburg, and Helsinki focus their inquiry on executive, judicial, and legislative power, respectively. Together, these inquiries are able to paint a comprehensive picture of by whom and how power is exercised and controlled in the three policy areas.

12. The Rural-Urban Divide in Europe (RUDE)

Project Leader: Professor S. Rossteutscher, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main (Germany)

Principal Investigators: Professor S. Zmerli, University of Grenoble (France) | Dr G. Rico,

Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain) | Dr C. Claassen, University of Glasgow (UK) |

Professor M. Freitag, University of Bern (Switzerland)

Rising populism and polarization, coupled with declining democratic legitimacy, all point toward a crisis in European democracies. This crisis has a regional dimension: a political and perhaps cultural divide between rural and urban areas. The project RUDE (The Rural-Urban Divide in Europe) examines whether and how urban-rural reciprocity is related to divides in legitimacy beliefs, social identities, perceptions of injustice and threat, political and social attitudes and political behaviour of European citizens. It explores ‘Democratic governance in a turbulent age’ from different thematic angles. First, it deals with shifting identities and their consequences for democratic governance and political representation. Stable cleavages only emerge when struggles for identity are accompanied by perceptions of social inequality and unfair resource distribution. Second, it examines the role played by globalization: increasing rural-urban economic divides create social status threats which exacerbate rural-urban political divides. The project will combine a broad comparative study of all European countries with an in-depth analysis of five established European democracies. The project will result in the provision of significant new evidence on rural-urban disparities in European politics, which will allow us to examine the consequences of – and cures for – the current crisis of democracy, thereby engaging both academic and policymaking audiences.

13. Threat, identity, and dissent: Understanding and addressing political polarization in European democracies (UNDPOLAR)

Project Leader: Dr T. Kuppens, University of Groningen (the Netherlands)

Principal Investigators: Dr M.J. Easterbrook, University of Sussex (UK) | Dr R. Rodríguez-Bailón, University of Granada (Spain) | Professor C. Darnon, University of Clermont-Ferrand (France) | Dr M. Marchlewska, Polish Academy of Sciences (Poland) | Prof. dr. P. Achterberg, Tilburg University (the Netherlands) | Dr D. Caluwaerts, Free University of Brussels-VUB (Belgium)

In many countries public opinion is polarized on issues such as immigration, inequality, populism, and trust in institutions. Although for each issue there is an extended scientific literature, there is a pressing need for integration. Are opinions on these issues related and, if so, what is the glue that binds them? Do different groups of people polarize on different issues and/or for different reasons?

Our first objective is to determine how identities and threat combine to generate multiple polarized attitudes. We will identify subpopulations with unique belief systems, consisting of threats, identities, and polarized attitudes. This is followed by experiments that test a few specific causal effects of identities and threats, and how these may differ between subpopulations with different belief systems.

Our second objective is to compare subpopulations of belief systems across countries and over time. Therefore, cross-country differences in belief systems will be related to variation in the political landscape (e.g., political polarisation), and differences in social structural country characteristics (e.g., inequality and meritocratic beliefs). Third, democratic innovations such as citizen fora have been developed to overcome polarisation. We will test whether using our insights on threats and identity can make such fora more effective.

14. The Threats and Potentials of a Changing Political Information Environment (THREATPIE)

Project Leader: Prof. dr. D.N. Hopmann, University of Southern Denmark (Denmark)

Principal Investigators: Professor C.H. de Vreese, University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands) | Professor P. Van Aelst, Universiteit Antwerpen (Belgium) | Professor C. Schemer, Johannes Gutenberg University (Germany) | Professor J. Stanyer, Loughborough University (UK) | Professor A.S. Cardenal, Foundation for the Open University of Catalonia (Spain) | Professor A. Stepinska, Adam Mickiewicz University (Poland) | Dr K. Koc-Michlska, Audencia Business School (France)

We examine how current changes in political information affect the conditions for a healthy democracy. Based on the concept of 'political information environment' (PIE) we consider the supply and demand of political information. Supply refers to the quantity and quality of news and public affairs content provided by traditional and new media; demand captures the amount and type of information the public consumes. Recent changes in PIEs may lead to a growing number of uninformed, misinformed, or selectively informed citizens. This increase potentially endangers the functioning of democracy. To address this concern, the study will investigate:

- (1) how do citizens acquire political information, and how does this affect their political attitudes and behaviour,
- (2) what is the content and quality of the information citizens are exposed to,
- (3) where do divides between well-informed and less well-informed citizens exist, across and within European societies,
- (4) how can citizens be empowered to navigate in their PIE and find valuable information.

We aim at achieving these goals through a series of comparative, innovatively designed studies, including web-tracking, comparative surveys, focus-groups, and survey-embedded experiments in 10+ countries across Europe, and the US.

Contact us

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- Dynamics of Inequality Across the Life-course: structures and processes (DIAL)
- Welfare States Futures
- Migration in Europe – Social, Economic, Cultural and policy Dynamics
- Re-emergence of Religion as a Social Force in Europe?



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