

Panel 8: The Crisis and Public Policy-Making: Friends or Foes?

Chaired by: Barbara Vis (VU University Amsterdam) and Sabina Stiller (Wageningen University).

Social vulnerability is arguable on the rise as a result of the pervasive effects of the global financial crisis. This applies both to advanced welfare states and to recently developing ones, across Europe and beyond. In this context, the question is whether these events have led to a political reassessment of public policy, such as welfare, and if so whether this has already translated into new policies.

This panel set out to explore how the global financial crisis has influenced public policy-making. Papers could focus for example on the following questions. Which measures have governments taken to deal with the financial crisis? Did the governments of different countries take similar measures to cope with the (rather) similar problems? Or did the governments of the different worlds of welfare respond differently? Have political actors used the crisis as a welcome opportunity to launch reforms that would otherwise be controversial and therefore would necessitate strategies of blame-avoidance? Or have governments reacted in other ways, and if so, how? Assuming that the perception of the public about the crisis also plays a role, has the crisis changed public opinion and has this translated into reform? With regard to policy responses, is it possible to generalize about the scope and direction of policy reactions? For instance, have reforms meant expansion, retrenchment or restructuring of existing public policies? Finally, since the crisis has been portrayed as the largest crisis since WWII, have government responses differed from those during previous crises?

We welcomed papers that dealt with the impact of the crisis on different areas of public policy (e.g. social policy, economic policy, financial regulation). Contributions are preferably theoretical as well as empirical, whereby a comparative perspective is welcomed.

The proposed panel ties squarely into the sub-theme 'The Future of the Nation State' of the NIG research programme. Specifically, the panel analyzes the influence of a challenge to the nation state from 'above' (the financial crisis) by focusing on questions like the following. How does the state respond to this challenge? Do different states respond similarly or different? To what extent does the crisis change the nature of the state, now and in the future?