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Political Institutions and German Politics in Comparative Perspective

The Research Agenda at the Chair of German Politics

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Research Activities and Approach

Constitutional Courts

- ECPR SG Law & Courts
- The German Court as a Veto Player (Prof. Thomas Gschwend, Mannheim)
 - German Research Foundation (DFG)

Parliaments and Committees

- Voice without Vote: CoR and EESC influence in European decision making (Prof. Diana Panke, Freiburg)
- Thyssen

Welfare States

- Who gets cut, when and why?
- Disaggregated welfare state spending in an age of austerity

Approach: spatial modeling and game theory; quantitative methods; actor centered and institutional perspective

„The German Federal Constitutional Court as a Veto Player“



Source: Reuters on Spiegel Online - 28. September 2011

- **Funding:** German Research Foundation (DFG)
- **Duration:** 3 Years
- **Aim:** Database of all decisions by the GFCC 1976 - 2010
- **Partner:** Prof. Th. Gschwend, Ph.D. (University of Mannheim)



Research Puzzle and Theorie

Veto Player

“In order to change policies [...] a certain number of individual or collective actors have to agree to the proposed change. I call such actors *veto players*“ (Tsebelis 2002, 3).

Absorption Rule

“They [Judges, B.E.] are veto players when they make constitutional interpretations, but most of the time they are absorbed by the existing political veto players [...] As a result, I have not included the judiciary [...] as a veto player” (Tsebelis 2002, 330).

Research Question

Under which circumstances can the GFCC act as a Veto Player?



Mixed-Methods: Quantitative

- Quantitative Study
 - (new) Judicial Database
 - Decisions by the GFCC from 1976 to 2010: $N = 1450$
 - Judicial, Political, and Societal Context
 - (existing) Legislative Database (GESTA)
 - Legislative Process (in BT and BR) of every bill
 - 1972 to 2007 + additional evaluation until 2010
- ➔ Linking both database in a relational SQL Database



Mixed-Methods: Qualitative and Expectations

- Qualitative Study
 - Semi-structured interviews with legal experts
 - Journalists and scientific staff from the court
 - Identifying "bridging observations" (Bailey 2007)
- **Expectations**
 - Absorption rule won't work all the time
 - Systematic evidence for the power of constitutional courts
- **'Bringing the court back in'** ... the scientific & societal debate



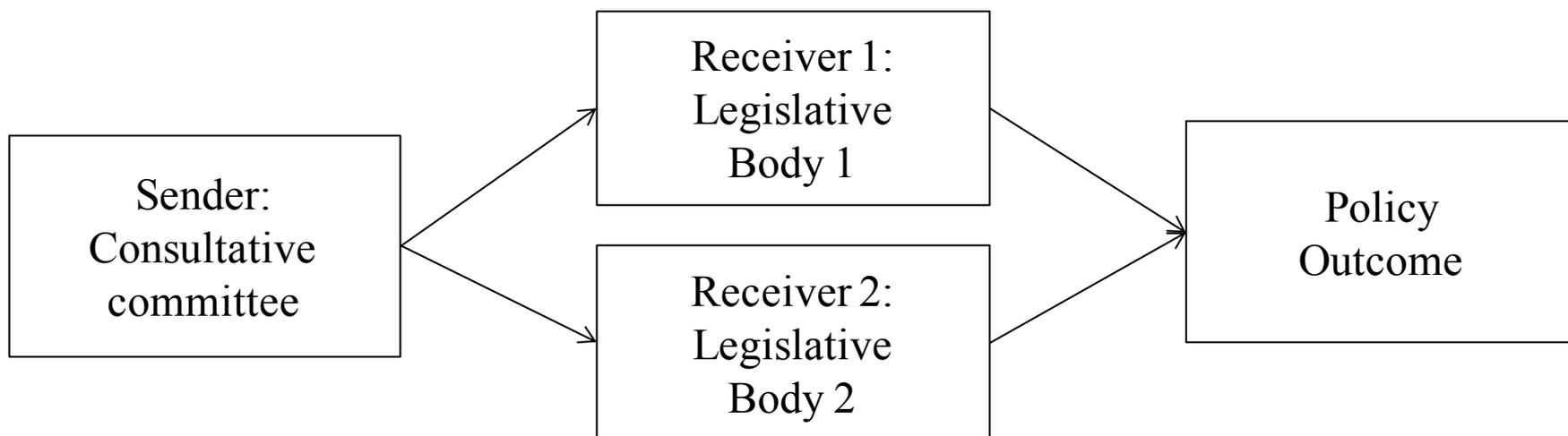
Voice without Vote: Impact of CoR and EESC on EU Decision-Making

- **Observation:** Actual influence of consultative committees unknown unlike decision-making committees
- **Relevance:** Committees with consultative status are wide-spread in political systems
- **Question:** *How and under which conditions can consultative committees exert influence even though they have no formal voting-powers?*
- **Dependent variable:** influence on positions of addressees

Sender-Receiver-Model for Explaining the Influence of CC

*Consultation process
on the basis of „voice“*

*Negotiation process
between actors with „vote“*



- capacities
- preferences
- incentives

- capacities
- preferences
- incentives

Empirical Test: Survey and Case Studies

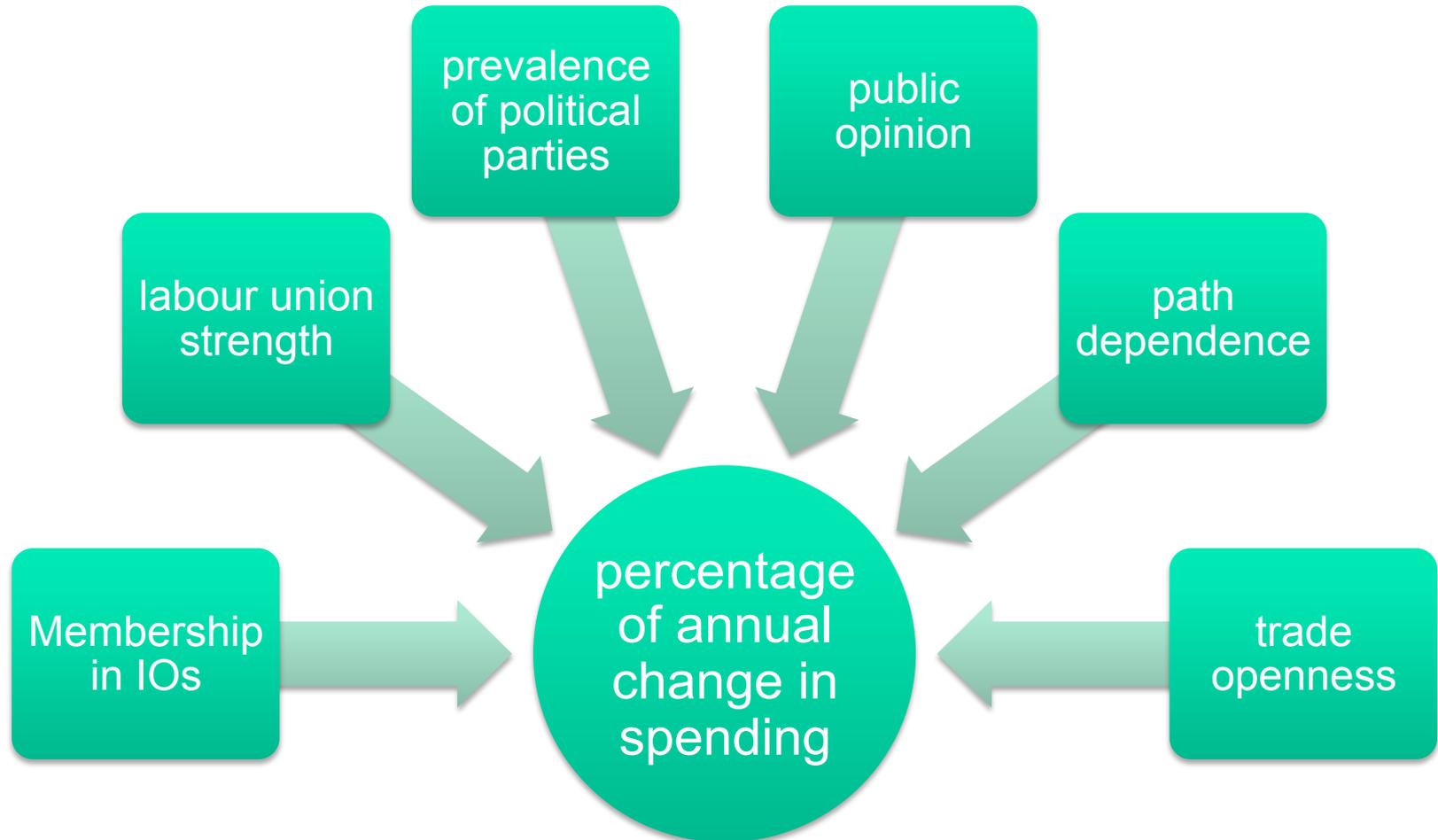
- **Mixed methods design**
- **Survey:** MEP and staff of Permanent Representation in 2010
- **3 Case Studies:** For example liberalization of postal services
- **Qualitative Interviews:** About 85 qualitative interviews to support general findings and case study results with MEP, staff of Permanent Representations, staff and members of CoR and EESC



Disaggregated social expenditure patterns: Who gets cut, when and why?

- **Puzzle:** Welfare states display very different responses in terms of allocation of social expenditure, despite facing similar challenges
- ➔ **Research Question:** *Which areas of the welfare state are most vulnerable to retrenchment measures under which political and economic circumstances?*
- **Relevance:** Understand where and how affluent democracies set priorities and how varying political and welfare state institutions influence this process within one policy field

Theoretical Approach and Expectations





Data and Methodology

- **Qualitative**

- exploratory case studies on Germany, Australia, Ireland and Sweden (MDSD)

- **Quantitative**

- OECD SOCX database
- pooled TS



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Options for cooperation? Feel free to contact us...



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