# ecpr jean blondel ph.d. prize 2008

The ECPR is delighted to announce that the Jean Blondel Ph.D. Prize in 2008 will be awarded to Silja Häusermann for her dissertation 'Modernization in Hard Times: Post-Industrial Pension Politics in France, Germany and Switzerland'.

## REPORT OF THE JUDGING PANEL

Silja Häusermann's thesis aims at explaining why, over in recent decades, the three European countries France, Germany and Switzerland have been able to adopt far-reaching reforms, which adapt their pension regimes to two major challenges of the post-industrial era: fiscal austerity (i.e. a need for benefit retrenchment) and new social risks (i.e. a need for benefit expansion). Thereby, the thesis generates new insights with regard to (a) theories of welfare state development, (b) empirical methods for the analysis of institutional change, and (c) the political debate on the viability and reform-capacity of European pension regimes.

Dr Häusermann maintains that the most common explanatory approaches found in the welfare state literature – functionalism, power resources theory, varieties of capitalism and institutionalism – fail to explain the dynamics of these reforms. She proposes her own complex model of institutional change to explain the 'postindustrial reforms' of the continental welfare state.

This is a sophisticated, multi-dimensional analysis of support for pension reform in three countries, looking at groups, sectors, parties and their constituencies, and interests. It is original and convincing in tracing new alignments of interests and values. The empirical work is thorough.

The judges of the prize considered this is a high-level dissertation in comparative political science, following the tradition of leading European political scientists like Jean Blondel and Stein Rokkan.

## ABOUT THE WINNER

Since June 2007, Silja Häusermann has been a lecturer (Oberassistentin) in comparative political science at the University of Zurich. In 2002 she received a Master in Public Administration and Public Management MPA at the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration (IDHEAP), Lausanne, Switzerland. In May 2007 she defended her dissertation 'Modernization in Hard Times. Post-Industrial Pension Politics in France, Germany and Switzerland'.

The prize will be awarded to Dr Häusermann by Professor Blondel at the Joint Sessions in Lisban, Portugal, next year.



https://doi.org/10.1017/S1680433300012764 Published online by Cambridge University Press