

Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Understanding the challenges of policy-making in public health. Implications of behavioural policies in the field of health promotion and disease prevention

- **Format:**

Presentation (in-person)

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

In the aftermath of the Ottawa Charta (1986) and more recent efforts to promote 'health in all policies' approaches a compromise seemed to be working: Policy makers (at least in Western countries) focused on 'intersectoral action', 'healthy public policies' and 'social determinants of health' in order to shape health promoting life worlds that support people to adopt 'healthy lifestyles'. However, this dual approach driven by values such as empowerment, participation and civic engagement is not carved in stone but represents the dominating policy of specific period of time. Thus, this contribution aims to develop a theoretical understanding of how policy-makers pick up health challenges, how these choices change in course of time and which policy approaches are applied to meet this challenges. Moreover, the contribution shall

demonstrate how policy-makers use narratives or try to build on (alleged or veritable) narratives to put the identified 'health problems' and the assumed causes of these problems on the political agenda. In contrast to classical approaches on health care-policy we focus on public policy-making that deals with disease prevention and health promotion and takes up earlier movements 'calling for the adoption of healthier lifestyles'. We will present a comprehensive view on different factors that influence how public policy can promote health. Two current developments are considered as decisive in this regard: 1) the growing need for policies that help to reduce or at least stabilize the hitherto rising numbers of non-communicable diseases and 2) the booming trend of behavioural policy-making, its impact on public policies that try to steer the individual, its lifestyle-choices and its interplay with other policy interventions. Starting from there we apply a broad perspective of public health promotion beyond its rather narrow educational forms including attempts to reshape the built environment in a way that promotes people's health.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

In 2012 Benjamin Ewert published his award-winning Ph.D. thesis 'From patient to consumer? User identities and user participation in the health care system'. The study analyses the meaning of user choice in healthcare provision and discusses practical implications of behavioural health policies from a critical perspective. Main findings of the study were singled out in contributions to peer-reviewed international journals (e.g. *European Policy Analysis* and *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*). At several international conferences Benjamin made the point that behavioural policy approaches address health-care users predominantly as consumers while other facets of their identities (e.g. being citizens and community members) are marginalized. In 2015 Benjamin started a new research project at Heidelberg School of Education exploring local approaches of school health promotion in Germany, Finland and the UK. The study pays particularly attention to the shaping of school buildings and yards. In his recent article, 'Promoting Health in Schools: Theoretical Reflections on the Settings Approach versus Nudge Tactics' (2017, *Social Theory & Health*), Benjamin analyses limitations of behavioural health promotion policies in contrast to more holistic approaches.

Kathrin Loer holds a Master's degree in European Studies from the University of Osnabrueck. She finished her PhD in economic sociology at the University of Osnabrueck in 2010. After working as a Post-Doc, Kathrin moved to Berlin where she got a position as Senior Consultant in the health sector and worked on a variety of issues in health politics. In November 2013, she returned to academia and started researching and lecturing public policy. In this context, she published several book chapters and peer-reviewed articles on different aspects of public health: e.g. the German policy of

prevention, gambling regulation, vaccination and behavioural approaches in public policy and institutional issues in health policy. In 2016, Kathrin successfully applied for a funding grant for a three-year research project. In January 2017 she started the project on "Instruments in Consumer Policy" which turns one empirical spotlight on obesity prevention. Her present research is focused on studying political strategies that try to influence individual behavior (e.g. in health, environmental policy and consumer policy). Kathrin is particularly interested in the role that behavioural sciences play in public policy.