



Awarded COFAS Marie Curie fellows – For the FOIP programme



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Home University:

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Host University:

McGill University, Montreal,
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Project: The importance of electoral democracy for the creation of welfare state politics in Sweden and Canada. To what extent can citizens actually change their everyday life through the formal processes of democratic representation?

Abstract: Democratic welfare states aim at making a difference in everyday lives of citizens. An important challenge for social scientists is to figure out in what situations welfare state policies actually succeed in achieving such effects on individuals' personal situations. This project focus on what is often perceived as the most important source of legitimacy when welfare state policies are designed, namely the public will. More specifically, it centres on the theoretically crucial relationship between electoral democracy and citizens' everyday life: To what extent can citizens affect their everyday life through the formal channels of democratic representation? The empirical analyses of the project will be concentrated to two countries where welfare state politics is often perceived to have consequences in citizens' everyday lives, namely Sweden and Canada. Both these countries have, in a comparative perspective, long traditions of focusing on welfare state issues.

Career plan: To establish myself as a scholar highly skilled on normative and empirical research about the relationship between citizens and representatives. In October 2009, I defended my dissertation Promising Democracy which sheds light on what I call the Pledge Puzzle: Why are citizens so convinced that parties usually break their election promises, while scholars tend to claim the opposite – that parties mostly fulfill their election promises? At present I am the project manager of the Multidisciplinary Opinion and Democracy Research Group at the University of Gothenburg and I leave for Montreal to collaborate with the Centre for the Study of Democratic Citizenship at McGill University. I very much look forward to be able to make use of both these two highly skilled research environments. Furthermore, I am one of three initiators and coordinators of the Comparative Party Pledges Group (CPPG) which has been able to finance new research on election pledges in several different countries. The Marie Curie stipend will enable me to fully focus on my research, something that I value tremendously. I will allow myself to take time to elaborate a theoretical framework that I have longed to focus on. My empirical analysis will be elaborated from my earlier work on opinion formation and party behaviour, which is described in for example my book Election Promises, Party Behaviour and Voter Perceptions (Palgrave 2011).