

Leon Küstermann

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER · DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Employment

University of Zurich, Department of Political Science

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER

- Research group: Politics and Inequality (Prof. Thomas Kurer)

Zurich, CH

September 2025 -

Education

European University Institute (EUI), Department of Social and Political Science

Florence, IT

PHD POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

2021 - August 2025

- Committee: Prof. Anton Hemerijck (EUI, main supervisor), Prof. Thomas Kurer (University of Zurich, co-supervisor), Prof. Pavithra Suryanarayan (LSE), Prof. Simon Hix (EUI)
- Funded by the ERC project Wellbeing Returns on Social Investment Recalibration (PI: Anton Hemerijck)
- Visiting stay (seven months): Department of Political Science at Aarhus University (DK); Host: Prof. Kees van Kersbergen
- Coursework at EUI: Quantitative Methods; Qualitative Methods; Causal Inference; Field Experiments I & II; Social Stratification; Welfare States; Political Economy; Politics of the Environmental Crises; Foundations of Development; Social Policy Analysis in a Life-course

University of Oxford, Department of Social Policy and Intervention

Oxford, UK

MSc COMPARATIVE SOCIAL POLICY (GRADE: DISTINCTION; BEST MSc THESIS IN MY COHORT)

2020 - 2021

- Advisor: Prof. David Weisstanner

University of Twente and University of Münster

Enschede, NL/Münster, DE

2016 - 2018

BSc PUBLIC GOVERNANCE ACROSS BORDERS (GRADE: DISTINCTION)

- Specialization: Public administration
- Exchange semester at Waseda University (Tokyo, JP)

Research

PUBLICATIONS

Küstermann, Leon (2025). Upgrading jobs for all: How welfare states shape differences in life satisfaction between the winners and losers of structural change. *Socio-Economic Review*, 23, 1895–1921.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Küstermann, Leon (2025). Managers of change: How firms shape the political outcomes of structural economic transformations. URPP Working Paper Series, 80. [under review]

Küstermann, Leon; van Kersbergen, Kees & Colombo, Francesco (work in progress). The institutional foundations of successful adaptations: when are training policies an effective response to structural change?

Küstermann, Leon (work in progress). When ambition pays off: the social contract of managing structural change

Weisstanner, David, Küstermann, Leon & van Kersbergen, Kees (work in progress). Beyond automation risk: firm-level AI adoption and the new politics of social policy

Kurer, Thomas, Findeisen, Sebastian, Consiglio, Valentina, Küstermann, Leon & Schlenker, Oliver (work in progress). The broken ladder: Changing occupational career values and political outcomes in the 21st century

Wegemann, Mirko & Küstermann, Leon (work in progress). Reminiscing the good old days. How far-right parties deter the female losers of technological change.

Awards, Fellowships, & Grants

- 2025-2026 **Research grant**, URPP Inequality Research Fund, University of Zurich
- 2016-2022 **Scholarship**, German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes)
- 2021 **George Smith Award for the best MSc thesis in my degree program**, University of Oxford

Teaching Experience

- April 2024 **Introduction to Teaching and Learning in Higher Education**, Certificate EUI
Spring 2024 **MA-Seminar: the Politics of Technological Change**, Development of the course; in-person University of
teaching; supervision of student essays and term papers Lucerne, CH

Professional Experience (selected)

- Spring 2020 **Internship**, German Federal Foreign Office, Economy Division Berlin, DE
Research Assistant, Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis (ITAS) at the
2019-2020 Karlsruhe Institute of Technology; I was part of two projects, one on unions and the gig Karlsruhe, DE
economy, one on AI and consciousness (analytical philosophy)

Presentations

CONFERENCES

- Conference of the European Political Science Association (EPSA): 2023, 2025
Conference of the Council for European Studies (CES): 2024
Conference of the Network for European Social Policy Analysis (ESPA.net): 2022, 2024
Inequality Conference of the Cluster of Excellence “The Politics of Inequality” at the University of Konstanz: 2024
Danish Political Science Conference (DPSA): 2023, 2024

WORKSHOPS

- Workshop ”Labor Market Inequality and Workplace AI” of the Platform for Inequality Research at Aarhus University: 2025
EuroWEPS IX (European Workshop in Empirical Political Science) at the London School of Economics: 2024
Nordic ESPAnet-ReNEW workshop: Adequate social policy responses for transformational challenges in the Nordic countries and beyond? at Copenhagen Business School: 2023

POLICY EVENTS

- STG talks 2025 at the Florence School of Transnational Governance (EUI); invited to discuss skill policies in Europe
Annual conference (WSI-HERBSTFORUM) of the research foundation of the German labor unions; invited to present my findings on political outcomes of structural change: 2024
Joint Research Center (JRC) of the European Commission: DIGCLASS International Workshop: Social Class Analysis in the Digital Age: 2023

Skills

Technical skills: R (advanced), STATA (advanced), LATEX (advanced), Python (beginner), SAS (beginner)

Languages: German (native), English (fluent), Italian (intermediate), Japanese (beginner), Chinese (beginner)

Service

2022- present	Mentor in the mentoring scheme for new PhD students , European University Institute
2024-2025	Co-organizer of the Social Investment Working Group , European University Institute