T10P04 / Methodological Challenges for Policy Elites Analysis

Topic : T10 / Methodologies
Chair : Patrick Hassenteufel (Université Paris-Saclay)
Second Chair : William Genieys (Sciencespo Paris- CEE - CNRS)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The sociology of elites has generally focused on the analysis of economic and political elites, characterized as part of a 'power elite' (Domhoff, 1990) or a 'shadow elite' (Wedel, 2009) without directly taking into account their concrete role in the elaboration of public policies. At the same time, actor-centered policy studies rarely make systematic use of the methods developed by elite sociology (analyzing sociological backgrounds, training and careers, position, reputation…). Actor-centered approaches to public policy are less interested in the formation of policy elites than in the specific characteristics of individual 'policy entrepreneurs' (Kingdon, 1984) or political leaders, and in the formation of broader policy networks and advocacy coalitions, including organized groups.

The aim of this panel is to pave the way for a methodological approach integrating the tools of the sociology of elites with those focused on the specific policy role of limited groups of actors. Narrow groups of actors can only be characterized as policy elites if it is possible to demonstrate not only their homogeneity, common traits (sociological and/or educational) and shared policy orientations, but also their effective contribution to the formulation of policy problems and solution and their implication and impact on the decision process, as shown by their capacity to steer and control policy implementation, such as in case studies on health and social policies (Hassenteufel and al., 2010; Genieys, Hassenteufel, 2015). Other challenges of the analysis of policy elites are the time dimension – a policy elite is a group that has a strong influence on a policy domain over one policy decision in a longer time period – and the power struggles in which these groups of actors are engaged (Genieys, Smyrl, 2008).

In this context, we are interested in papers combining

.The use of the methodological tools drawn from the sociology of elites such as:

-analysis of sociological backgrounds

-analysis of educational and occupational backgrounds (in order to study the specialized skill learning process in a policy domain and the accumulation of different kind of relevant resources)

-positional analysis (in long period)

-network analysis (to grasp the interpersonal relations)

.With the use of methods allowing analysis of the policy role of actors in a diachronic perspective, especially:

-cognitive analysis

-discourse analysis

-policy process analysis.

The papers included in this panel can study policy elites in any policy domain, at every level (local, national, international…) and in every kind of political regime and do not need to combine all of these methodological tools. Empirical case studies are welcome as are more general papers tackling these methodological and theoretical issues in a broader perspective.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (Block B 3 - Auditorium)

Programmatic actors as transformative elites

Patrick Hassenteufel (Université Paris-Saclay)

William Genieys (Sciencespo Paris- CEE - CNRS)

The aim of this paper is to show how to analyze policy elites promoters of change in a policy field. Based on different empirical researches made on policy change in healthcare (in Europe and in the USA), it sheds the light on the contributions of a method combining the study of the sociological background, the careers, the ideas, the involvement in the decision process and the relations between actors holding key position in the policy process. It allows to identify programmatic actors, corresponding to narrow groups defining, promoting and producing policy change over a middle or long term period.

Ruling elites and policy reforms: The role of Presidential Advisory Commissions

Luis Garrido-Vergara (University of Santiago of Chile (USACH))

González-Bustamante Bastián (Universidad de Santiago de Chile)

Chile is a textbook case of a strong authoritarian legacy (1973-1990). Indeed, most of institutional transformations carried out from 1990 onwards, after the resignation of the Pinochet regime, were not necessarily focused on reforming the political regime inherited from military government. In contrast, these changes fostered public-sector innovations and a progressive depoliticization of the government model (Garretón et al., 2012). During this period, the so-called Presidential Advisory Commissions (PAC) were established to promote and support policy reforms considered as priorities by the government. Composed of individuals from civil society, a PAC entails a special task force ordained by the President aimed at completing a special investigation or research, with the specific goal of designing or proposing reforms in topics of public interest (Aguilera, 2009, Farías, 2008). This paper analyses the role of the PACs during the government of Ricardo Lagos (2000-2006), Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010) and Sebastián Piñera (20102014). The analysis considers a methodological approach integrating the tools
of the sociology of elites with those focused on the specific policy role of limited groups of actors. It includes mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative approaches) to describe and measure the impact of certain independent variables on the access to a PAC (considering mostly the social resources and networks identified within its members). Moreover, it describes and measures the PAC´s impact on the design, implementation and/or result of specific policies.

Key words: Presidential advisory commissions, political elites, government, public policies, technocracy, Chile.

Political Mobility of Chinese County-level Elites: An Empirical Analysis of 532 County Party Secretaries

Shuo CHEN (City University of Hong Kong)

The Chinese Communist Party always attaches great importance to leadership selection and considers it as a fundamental issue that is directly related to the party and the masses. As the "frontline commanders (an expression originally used by President Xi Jinping)" of the party, county party secretaries act not only as local policy makers but also the agents of higher-level governments. Their backgrounds, competencies and

experiences directly affect the quality of local governance.

Using the first-hand data of 532 incumbent county party secretaries, this study examines the political mobility of Chinese county-level elites. Statistical description first demonstrates the group characteristics of these county leaders. Based on this, then, regression analysis shows the effect of personal traits, educational background, career experiences, and guanxi factors on their promotion speed.

Empirical results suggest that young and better-educated cadres become rising stars of local politics, which appears to imply the emergence of some meritocratic trends in the Chinese bureaucracy. This highlights the fact that Deng Xiaoping's policy of cadre modernization has a profound effect on the career advancement of political elites. However, a number of obstacles still exist in the meritocratization process: local cadre selection depends largely on the diploma but makes light of technical expertise and actual capacities; moreover, local elite mobility is entangled with guanxi factors.

Keywords: local cadre, promotion, county party secretaries, meritocratization

Policy Ambassadors: the individual agency on the transnationalization of Brazilian social policies

Osmany Porto de Oliveira (Universidade Federal de São Paulo)

In the past decade Brazil became a model for social policies, mostly to Southern countries, but also to Northern States. After being a policy laboratory with the transition to democracy in the 1980's, Brazil developed innovations on political participation devices, poverty alleviation and fight against hunger. Models such as Participatory Budgeting, which is in more than 2500 municipalities, Family Allowance and School Feeding Programs, which were widely adopted in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa, made this country a policy exporter. How policies became models for exporting? Why Brazil was elected as a showcase for social policies Southern countries? Which actors were engaged on this process? Who were they? Where they operate and by which means?

International Policy Diffusion is immersed in a complex web of relations established among a plethora of actors participating in various moments and spaces. The literature presents different arguments that focus on international organizations, bureaucracies or think-tanks to explain how models flows from a place to another. In this study the action of elites and their circulation between various institutions are put in focus to understand the process. There is a diversified group of transfer-agents participating in the promotion, legitimation, mediation and adoption of policies, who are generally mayors, ministers, academics, International Organizations and NGOs staff, militants, etc. In this research they are called "policy ambassadors", considering the transnational dimension of their action.

The "policy ambassadors" are the high level of those continually promoting a policy. They speak different languages, have lived in different parts of the world and are cosmopolitan. Put succinctly, their action is determinant in inserting a policy onto the agenda of local, national and international institutions. They have certain typical attributes: 1) they have authority in relation to the policy; 2) they promote the policy independently of the institution in which they operate; 3) they have continued action throughout the process. The "policy ambassadors" can perform a role as policy entrepreneurs and mediators as they promote PB internationally in events, technical consultancies, acting in International Organizations, NGOs and governments without necessarily having formal ties to institutions. These actors also are frequently academics, they publish books and advise Masters and PhDs. In short these actors legitimacy can rely on political, practical, technical and theoretical authority.

The analysis presents a comparison of individuals operating within three policy agendas: social participation, fight against poverty and zero hunger. It is based on four dimensions which distinguish elites by their actions: 1) Space of action (institutional/extra-institutional); 2) Longevity of action in the process (specific/continuous); 3) Range of Action (Global, Local, Inter-regional, regional); 4) Nature of Action (mediation or brokerage, technical assistance, financial support, etc.). This research relies on qualitative methods, with a process-tracing analysis strategy, based on an empirical background that counts on more than 150 elite-interviews taken in different countries. It is a second stage of a research started ten years ago about the diffusion of Participatory Budgeting that now incorporates also other Brazilian policies, Family Allowance and School Feeding Programs.

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Session 2

Wednesday, June 28th 16:15 to 18:15 (Block B 3 - Auditorium)

Capturing the role of elites in the policy process through a combination of social network analysis and process-tracing: a case study of Swiss cultural policy

Lisa Marx (University of Geneva)

This paper will focus on the advantages and implications of combining social network analysis (SNA) and process-tracing to study the role of policy elites, using a case study of Swiss regional cultural policy.

One of the key characteristics of elites is their high degree of interconnectedness through personal and professional networks, their capacity to "forge connections and bridge gaps" (Savage and Williams 2008, p. 4), as highlighted both by the sociology of elites and the studies focusing on community elites (cf. Laumann and Pappi 1976). A second characteristic is their multipositionnality (Boltanski 1973), i.e. their propensity to occupy and hold several (dominant) social positions per person, synchronically or diachronically, the accumulation of roles (Kriesi 1980) within or across sectors. These elements are also useful in a policy process, as they allow actors to share information, mobilize other actors, and advocate for or fight against policy change.

This paper argues that the use of SNA allows us to capture the role played by elite groups and their members in policy processes. While the use of SNA in the study of policy processes is well established, practically all this existing empirical policy research using SNA analyzes the relationships between collective actors, focusing on the "meso-level" of institutions and groups (cf. e.g. Knoke 1996). Our research takes an original approach, analyzing the networks of policy elite actors and groups by using SNA at the level of individual actors, therefore building on the use of the methodology prevalent in the sociology of elites (cf. Padgett and Ansell 1993, Bond 2012). As qualitative data is always necessary to interpret, nuance and contextualize the results of a network analysis, a process-tracing approach is also employed, in order to analyze the evolution of a policy process and its actors across time.

This original combination of a synchronic approach and a diachronic approach allows us to study and interpret the positions and interactions of different actors and groups in a policy making process. This paper studies actors' reputation as well as personal and professional interconnections and looks at the importance of these different resources in the policy process. Furthermore, the social and professional trajectories of the most central actors are explored.

Empirically, this paper focuses on cultural policy making processes in three Swiss cantons, combining SNA, interviews, archives and press data to reconstruct these processes over a 10-year period. Cultural policy is here conceptualized as a "most likely" case to analyze the importance of elite interconnections, given the importance of prestige and peer recognition in the policy sector (Eling 1999, Nisbett and Walsmley 2016).

Our findings highlight that while interconnection is an important resource, formal positions matter too. Administrative actors play a very central role in all three cases, which would tend to confirm the existence of a "public policy elite" (Genieys and Smyrl 2008) in the cultural domain in Switzerland. This can be linked to the professionalization of cultural policy, the construction of specific professional knowledge and practices and the multiplication of academic degrees in cultural management (cf. Dubois 2013). However, we also observe a certain amount of heterogeneity between our three cases regarding the trajectories and resources of these administrative actors, which points to the importance of local recruitment practices for these positions: in some cantons and cities a prior experience in public administration is preferred, while others favor professional experience in the cultural sector and a high degree of interconnection among cultural actors.

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When development projects create new forms of transversal leadership for policy making: methodological and theoretical insights from a qualitative/quantitative approach in Madagascar and Morocco

Brun Matthieu (SciencesPo Bordeaux - LAM)

Development assistance is a recurring phenomenon in Africa and has left a lasting mark on social patterns and collective organizations. For over 60 years, multilateral and bilateral, private or public donors stepped in multiple sectors of public policies. Projects and programs overlap on a territorial scale while participating in the institutionalisation of public policies. In African contexts where States seem to be characterized by weak institutions and limited capacities to regulate public policies (Chabal & Daloz, 1999), the policy making-process is fragmented (Lascoumes, 1996). The configuration of actors then is disrupted by the involvement of international aid agencies in various sectors contributing to a rather different set of negotiations and institutions (Eboko, 2015). Within these configurations, our initial research intends to better understand the "memory" of development interventions driven by international stakeholders that fall within, a priori, internationalized public policies in two regions in Madagascar and in Morocco since the 1960s.

To efficiently cover thousands of projects in multiple sectors, we are focusing on actors who have been involved over time in projects locally and who are the embodiments of the "Memory of development". From the very first research we conducted on the field, we noticed that, while they participate in a large number of projects and programs at various stages of their elaboration and implementation, they accumulate knowlegde and know-how over time.

To better target and analyze those "Guardians of Memory », we have developed an original methodology based on large questionnaire surveys and semi-structured interviews at different territorial levels. Between June and November 2016, in Madagascar, we carried over 2600 questionnaires to identify the Guardians, and then we conducted interviews with different categories of stakeholders. The same methodology is being developed in 3 Communes in Southern Morocco.

Our purpose is to identify "running names" and to use the tools developed by the sociology of elites to analyze their capacities, margins of manœuvre and power over the "aid configuration" to negotiate or renegotiate projects. We will also go over the edges of « aid configurations » to analyze their involvement over local and regional policy making processes.

While conceptual frameworks on sociology of elites and sector of public policies developed in the "North" point out the existence of a large variety of actors specialized in one sector (Genieys, 2006 ; 2008) ; (Genieys et Hassenteufel, 2001), our communication will showing that a limited number of persons is not only in charge of designing and implementing development projects but is also participating in policy-making processes. We consider these guardians as a form of local elite based on the three criteria highlighted by Genieys (2006) : positions, reputations and participation in the decision making process.

Our communication intends to discuss the rise of new types of transversal leadership in two African contexts. We will bring into discussion during our communication not only the results of our analysis but

above all our methodological choices – the use of quantitative and qualitative materials – both developed in African contexts.

Policy Elites in Health Care Policy in the United States: Three Variations on a Theme

Larry Brown (Columbia University)

William Genieys (Sciencespo Paris- CEE - CNRS)

Although the concept of "policy elites"— players of such important and enduring political importance that they may be viewed as "custodians of the state"—has been mainly developed in and applied to European polities, such elites are visible in the US policy process as well. In this paper we address the changing roles of policy elites in the making of healthcare policy in the United States by examining three instructive episodes: 1) the creation of policy to promote Health Maintenance Organizations (1970-73) in the administration of President Richard Nixon; 2) the failed attempt at comprehensive reform of the system in 1993-94 under President Bill Clinton; and 3) the successful effort to enact a major reform (the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act) in 2009-2010 by the administration of President Barack Obama. The HMO case finds health policy elites in transition from an "old guard" housed in the Social Security Administration to a new market-oriented elite—a transition mediated by policy entrepreneurs operating outside the formal institutions of government. In the Clinton case, inside and "in and outer" elites contended with outside experts to balance the appeals of policy theory (especially managed competition) with political realism. The ACA, in turn, was shaped by a different elite dynamic, namely, the work of a sizable and cohesive network of policy insiders, some of whom had worked on the Clinton plan and then left government to advocate for reform in universities, think tanks, and private organizations, to fuse substantive expertise with hard-won political savvy in the design of the new law, which advanced under unified and polarized partisan auspices.