

T01P12 / New Frontiers in Public Policy Studies: Lessons from Agri-food Policy Research

Topic : T01 / Policy Process Theories

Chair : Peter Feindt (Wageningen University and Research Centre)

Second Chair : Carsten Daugbjerg (University of Copenhagen)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Objectives

This panel aims to assemble scholars who take a public policy perspective on current developments in agri-food policy, with a view to contextualise these in broader trends in public policy and to contribute to conceptual discussion on public policy, in particular on policy interlinkage and integration, transformational policy and policy capacity, transnational co-regulation and the consequences of anti-corporate and anti-globalization protests.

Background: Over recent years, agricultural and food policy has morphed from a confined policy field that was often considered rather marginal due to the farm sector's declining economic importance and employment to a policy area at the centre of much attention from the public, policy-makers and public policy scholars. There are various reasons for this shift. First, the global food crisis has reminded policy-makers that food price hikes can trigger public protest and destabilise entire political regimes. Second, new public concerns link agriculture and food to a wide array of issues, from climate change and the environment to animal welfare and healthy diets. This has triggered calls for and attempts at policy integration. Third, concerns over the sustainability and resilience of current food production systems have made both the agricultural sector and agricultural policy the target of attempts at transformational change, raising urgent conceptual and strategic questions about the role of public policy in developing long-term transitional policy visions and the capacity to steer encompassing sectoral transformation. Fourth, the globalization and financialisation of the agricultural and food sectors has created a range of new institutional arrangements, often through private regulation or co-regulation, that has transformed the role and capacity of public policy in ways that have not been fully understood. Fifth, the developmental pathway of agriculture and food policy has become increasingly politicised over recent years, with a transnational social movement challenging "Big Ag". Such repoliticisation of public policy in resistance to globalization and corporatisation is a broader trend that has the potential to change the context of public policy significantly.

Scientific relevance

While agri-food issues have always received much attention among sociologists, political scientists and policy scholars have also taken a significant interest in studying agricultural policy-making over the years. The agricultural policy sector could be considered an extreme case of a compartmentalized and 'exceptionalist' policy-making process, characterized by a distinct set of sector-oriented institutions and ideas, well-organized and well-resourced sectoral interest groups, substantial government intervention and significant redistribution of economic assets to a relatively small group of producers and land owners. The sector is therefore almost a laboratory to study how the broader trends of policy interlinkage, sustainability challenges and stability concerns, internationalisation and anti-globalization movements affect public policy. It allows to test the traction of policy strategies such as policy integration, transformational policy, and transnational co-regulation. Building on their special issue in the *Journal of European Public Policy* (to appear in 2017), the panel convenors aim to continue their conceptual project of using analysis of current developments in agri-food policy to characterise and understand broader trends in public policy.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel aims to assemble scholars who take a public policy perspective on current developments in agri-food policy, with a view to contextualise these in broader trends in public policy and to contribute to conceptual discussion on public policy, in particular on policy interlinkage and integration, transformational policy and policy capacity, transnational co-regulation and the consequences of anti-corporate and anti-globalization protests.

We invite empirical and conceptual papers that engage with one or more of the following five trends that have contributed to increasing attention to agri-food policy by the public, policy-makers and public policy

scholars. First, how has the global food price crisis affected public policy, in particular with a view to the stability of political regimes concerned over 'bread protests'? Second, have new public concerns effectively led to link agriculture and food to a wide array of issues, from climate change and the environment to animal welfare and healthy diets? Has this effective policy integration emerged? Third, how have concerns over the sustainability and resilience of current food production systems made the agricultural sector and agricultural policy the target of attempts at transformational change? What are the ensuing conceptual and strategic challenges with regard to the role of public policy in developing long-term transitional policy visions and the capacity to steer encompassing sectoral transformation? Fourth, the globalization and financialisation of the agricultural and food sectors has created a range of new institutional arrangement, often through private regulation or co-regulation. How has this transformed the role and capacity of public policy? Fifth, the developmental pathway of agriculture and food policy has become increasingly politicised over recent years, with a transnational social movement challenging "Big Ag". How has such repoliticisation of public policy in resistance to globalization and corporatisation changed the determinants of public policy?

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 28th 16:15 to 18:15 (Block B 2 - 2)

Discussants

Carsten Daugbjerg (University of Copenhagen)

Peter Feindt (Wageningen University and Research Centre)

Post-exceptionalism in Public Policy: Transforming Food and Agricultural Policy

Peter Feindt (Wageningen University and Research Centre)

Carsten Daugbjerg (University of Copenhagen)

This paper introduces the concept of post-exceptionalism in public policies. The analysis of policy change in food and agricultural policy serves as a generative example to conceptualise current transformations in sectoral policy arrangements in Western democratic welfare states more broadly. Often these arrangements have been characterized by an exceptionalist ideational framework that legitimizes the sector's special treatment through compartmentalized, exclusive and producer-centred policies and politics. In times of internationalization of policy making, increasing interlinkage of policy areas and trends towards self-regulation, liberalization and performance-based policies, policy exceptionalism is under pressure to either transform or give way to (neo-)liberal policy arrangements. Post-exceptionalism denotes a partial transformation of exceptionalist ideas, institutions, interest constellations and policy instruments. We propose the term 'policy post-exceptionalism' to capture the combination of a less compartmentalized policy arena (institutions and interests) with an updated set of policy ideas that retain at its core claims that a policy sector is special, albeit with updated arguments that relate to the problems on the evolving policy agenda and which trigger novel policy instruments. Post-exceptionalism is as a diagnostic concept which can be used to characterize a policy sector that has not been completely 'normalized' and in which old and new ideational, institutional, interests and policy instruments coexist. The concept of post-exceptionalism highlights that exceptionalist legacies on all dimensions have been maintained over extended periods despite significant changes to one or more of the four dimensions, resulting in a layered mixture of old and new policy elements, either in a symbiotic or in a contested relationship. Discussing the stability of post-exceptionalist arrangements, we distinguish between complementary and tense post-exceptionalism and argue for the value of the concept for understanding change beyond food and agricultural policy. Finally, post-exceptionalism reflects the more complex, open, contested and fluid nature of contemporary policy fields that nevertheless still maintain their policy heritage, in particular the enduring impact of well-entrenched producer institutions which continue to exist and control core policies and shape how new policy concerns affect the sector. In this paper, we use the example of food and agricultural policy to define policy exceptionalism, review its challenges since the 1980s, introduce the concept of 'post-exceptionalism' and characterize its developments over the last two decades. Based on the key findings of the contributions to this special issue, we discuss the stability of post-exceptionalist arrangements and argue for the broader value of the concept for understanding change in other policy sectors as well.

Animal Advocates and the Slow Road to Animal Welfare Policy Reform in Australia

Siobhan O'Sullivan (UNSW)

Chen Peter (Sydney Universty)

This paper outlines the key strategic and tactical techniques used by animal welfare advocates to achieve

their policy objectives in Australia. While Australia is regarded in some quarters to be a leader in animal welfare, many advocates consider policy reform as difficult and slow. We argue this is due to a number of interconnected causes. These include agenda closure by policy elites; weak issue salience associated with the social distance between most Australians and non-companion animals; and the cultural privilege associated with nostalgic notions of farming and farmers in Australian political and popular culture. Against this context of conservatism, Australia has seen an explosion in the number and diversity of animal activist groups in the last two decades. Once dominated by the RSPCA, more radical organisations increasingly active within the policy debate. They include bodies such as Animals Australia and Voiceless. These organisations, working through networks of interconnected groups, have begun to de-prioritise traditional policy making strategies focused on state regulation, with campaigns aimed at changing public attitudes and consumer behaviour. Through this focus on non-state governance, they have explored opportunities in commercial supply chains, such as pressuring food retailers to move adopt voluntary production standards. Combined, these tactics suggest that animal advocates in Australia are having an impact, but that their influence is strongest outside the conventional political domain. In closing we consider whether this non-traditional policy approach is all that is available to animal advocates and if it is, whether they will be able to adequately influence policy (and not just practice) as outsiders.

Cross-Border and Cross-Sectorial Food and Health Governance: A Conceptual Framework

Frode Veggeland (University of Oslo and Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research)

Martin Stangborli Time (University of Agder)

This paper aims to shed light on the governance of a problem of a complex nature and with potentially damaging effects on human and animal health, as well as on food industries and trade, namely antimicrobial resistance. In the United States, the problem of foodborne germs is a growing challenge that is made worse by overuse of antibiotics in humans and animals; approximately 400.000 people get sick from antibiotic-resistant Salmonella or Campylobacter each year. In the EU, about 25.000 people die each year from an infection due to antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Potentially, antimicrobial resistance can cause millions of deaths worldwide. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are food-borne and can also be transmitted by and between animals and humans. It is one of the biggest challenges to food and health governance today. Thus, antimicrobial resistance may be characterized as a 'wicked problem', which means that it is complex, open-ended and intractable, can be explained in numerous ways, do not have a clear set of potential solutions, and is characterized by low or no public tolerance of failure in solving the problem. The 'wickedness' of the problem is further exacerbated by the fact that it is cutting across policy-sectors (food, trade and health sectors in particular), as well as national borders. This paper's point of departure is that the management of such 'wicked' problems requires effective global governance mechanisms and that the complexity involved makes implementation and evaluation of such mechanisms difficult. The aim is to explore how antimicrobial resistance appears as a 'wicked problem' and to develop a conceptual framework for analyzing how tools of governance can be designed to ensure effective problem-solving. The basic research questions are: First, how can we conceptually analyse the governing of cross-border and cross-sectorial 'wicked problems'? Second, how can the case of antimicrobial resistance in food and health governance illustrate the relevance and usefulness of such conceptual framework? The paper is based on public documents, elite and expert interviews, a review of literature on policy-integration, multi-level and global health governance, as well as on literature on the 'One health' approach (the idea that human health and animal health are interdependent and bound to the health of the ecosystems in which they exist). Based on these sources, some core elements of a conceptual framework for integrated food and health governance mechanisms are identified: First, the distribution of authority and responsibilities between policy-sectors and across levels of government; and second, the need to take contextual factors into account, such as available resources and cultural aspects (e.g. differences in attitudes towards the use of antibiotics in agri-food and animal production). The paper thus relates the One Health concept to a broader literature on global governance and policy-integration, and also adds a new dimension – the multilevel dimension – in order to provide a conceptual framework for studying (food and health) governance across policy-sectors, as well as levels of governments. The paper thus fits very well with the Panel's objective of contributing to a conceptual discussion on public policy, in particular on policy inter-linkage and integration.

What policies constitute 'food policy'? A new typology

Jeroen Candel (Wageningen University)

Carsten Daugbjerg (University of Copenhagen)

Academics, policymakers and a wide range of other public and private actors have called for a transition towards more sustainable food systems in recent years. Moreover, they have stressed the importance of

governance for setting and enforcing the directions such a transition should take. What complicates the governance of food systems is that food policy, as the final product of governance processes, crosscuts the boundaries of existing jurisdictions, governance levels, and policy networks. Further, whereas 'agricultural policy' or 'health policy' are relatively well-circumscribed policy domains with accompanying institutions, actor networks, and policy outputs, food policy generally lacks such an institutionalized locus and focus. Instead, food policy has primarily been used as a 'meta-concept' to indicate the need for integrative action across governance efforts.

In this paper, we argue that realizing food policy in practice has been impeded by the concept's detachment from actual policy processes. Put differently, it remains unclear which policy goals and instruments are to be made coherent; the more so because virtually all policies can be thought of to affect food in some way. We address this gap by proposing a new typology for conceptualizing food policy. We distinguish between four types of policy output that are (potentially) relevant to integrated food policy: concrete policy, symbolic policy, contributive policy, and contiguous policy. The argument is made that each of these policy types have a role to play in governing a transition towards more sustainable food systems, albeit in different ways and requiring different modes of policy integration. Subsequently, we discuss various conditions that enable and constrain these policy integration processes. We illustrate our arguments and typology by referring to the EU-level debate about the development of a Common Food Policy. The paper ends with a discussion of policy and research implications.

The paper connects well with the scope of the panel in that it seeks to contribute to both scholarly debates on (integrated) food policy and to public policy theory, particularly to the emerging debate on policy integration. The paper will particularly contribute to addressing the dependent variable problem in food policy studies, allowing for more systematic comparisons in future research. As such, the paper provides a conceptual point of departure for addressing the panel's second research question: 'have new public concerns effectively led to link agriculture and food to a wide array of issues, from climate change and the environment to animal welfare and healthy diets?'