

T01P09 / Political Sociology of the Policy Process

Topic : T01 / Policy Process Theories

Chair : Patrick Hassenteufel (Université Paris-Saclay)

Second Chair : Philippe Zittoun (ENTPE - Ecole de l'aménagement durable des territoires)

Third Chair : Alexandre Faure (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) - Paris)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This panel is dedicated to the development of a political sociology approach of the policy process. Its aim is to discuss its main characteristics and its contribution to the understanding of the policy process.

Our starting point is the statement made by Hacker and Pierson (2009) stressing that policies are not only the core terrain of political competition but also its main prize: control over policy is the heart of politics, related to the issues of political power and political legitimacy. In order to grasp these political dimensions of policies we propose to develop an analytical framework combining a sociological analysis of policy actors and policy processes.

The sociological analysis of actors relies upon methods focused on the constitutive elements of policy actors: their social backgrounds, occupational careers and specializations, formal position-holding, reputations for policy influence, and not least shared ideas. In this perspective the methodological tools of the elite's sociology (socio-biographic analysis, positional analysis, network analysis...) are very useful, but they need to be combined with other sociological methods able to analyze what they actually do in the policy process, as the pragmatic approach does (Zittoun, 2014).

It is an empirical and comprehensive scientific approach, which considers as essential the inquiry work at the micro-level to observe, to describe and to understand the logic of the policymakers' concrete practices during the policy process. In that sense, it is an actor-centered approach with a specific attention to the role of "programmatic" actors structured around policy change proposals (Hassenteufel and al. 2010). Second, this approach gives a great importance to the cognitive, discursive and analytical skills of the actors to define concepts and situation, to argue, to develop strategies, to discuss, to persuade and to convince, to build agreement and disagreement with other, to give meaning to their purpose, to adapt themselves to the different contexts, etc. Third, this approach rejects the distinction between discourse and practice but also between idea and interest considering that ideas are a discourse which can't be separated from its enunciation. This perspective insists on ideas "in action" to challenge all analytical tools which propose an isolated analysis of ideas and practices. Last, this approach considers as essential the inquiry, the experiment, the learning and the test developed by the actors themselves confronted to uncertainty. To define a concept, to analyse situations, to make new proposals, to produce arguments, policy actors have to test them inside interactions which challenge with critiques. During this controversial process, their discourses need to "resist" which implies to strengthen arguments and to adapt them, in order to build discursive coalitions improving their influence on the policy process.

The main task of the panel consists to discuss the methods, the concepts, the hypotheses and the contribution of a political sociology perspective on the policy process. All papers which can contribute theoretically, methodologically or empirically to this approach are welcome.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 08:15 to 10:15 (Manasseh Meyer MM 3 - 2)

Discussants

A Smith (Centre Emile Durkheim, Bordeaux University)

How do policy change proposals succeed? Programmatic actors and discursive strategies

Patrick Hassenteufel (Université Paris-Saclay)

Philippe Zittoun (ENTPE - Ecole de l'aménagement durable des territoires)

In this paper, we suggest that some actors are able to play a central role in the policy process and to shift those constraints limiting change precisely because they constitute collective actors sharing the same policy proposals, relying on several resources, and using successfully discursive strategies in order to build a broader discursive coalition that promotes their policy change agenda. In the first part of this paper we situate our approach in the policy change literature in order to stress its specificities. Then, in the second part, we tackle the two main analytical and empirical challenges of this approach: the analysis of the constitution of such groups of policy actors driving change and the analysis of their capacity to succeed in imposing policy change based on their proposals by following discursive strategies and building discursive coalitions

AN ANALYSIS OF MICRO-LEVEL WATER POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA: A POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY APPROACH

Adegboyega Adeniran (Australia National University)

Traditionally, political sociology has focused primarily on the analysis of national politics and structures, and its relationship with the civil society (Orum, 2001; Mollinga et al., 2007). It provides a lens through which state-society relationship could be analysed, particularly issues of power, governance, participation and representation. Contemporary political sociology however focuses on specific issues of socio-political relations and other informal modes of stakeholder participation and engagement (Amenta, 2012). This down-scaling has further expanded the scope, depth, and inevitably the distinctive role and contribution of political sociology to policy research.

A greater part of the analyses undertaken about the policy process is confined to the role of programmatic actors in decision-making, specifically, policy makers. A critical problem this raises is that research on the politics of policy processes at the policy implementation level (micro-level to mid-level) has received limited attention in sociological research, particularly, 'policy implementers.' Recognising the social embeddedness of these structures and agencies, key theoretical and empirical questions arise from this scenario.

One of such questions is our current theoretical understanding of the influence and relevance of elites at the policy implementation level within a weak statehood like Nigeria. On an empirical level, fragmented governance systems tend to have less formal or organised way through which power is dispensed. Power diffusion could be more extensive and complex, and its sources more invincible than perceived regardless of the scalar realities of the project. Hence, 'actual' power possessed by a programmatic actor at whichever scale within a project becomes highly debatable within the existing contextual circumstances.

In the water governance policy domain, the application of political sociology as an analytical perspective is relatively new, especially in the field of policy implementation at the intranational level, that is, between

constituent states in a federal arrangement and amongst other “independent” water governance entities.

Using an interdisciplinary methodological approach constituting of ethnography, critical discourse analysis and hermeneutics, the paper examines the micro-level implementation of stakeholder participation in Nigeria’s water governance as a policy concept. Focusing specifically on the exercise of and interactions between structural power (Mills, 1956) and decision-making power (Dahl, 1961) dynamics between formal (state) and informal (non-state) actors, the study draws on a combination of Weber’s approach (Weber, 1980), or its more contemporary form, and an historical institutionalism (Skocpol, 1985; 2002) approach as theoretical lenses. A case study of a state government (Oyo state in South West Nigeria) water project is examined in this study with data collection from archival texts, documents analysis, and participant observation.

Bureaucratic Discretion and Behavioral Logics of Intermediate Agencies

Xiao Shiyang

Due to the high cost for central government to supervise performance at the bottom level, the intermediate governments (i.e.: provincial governments here) as “supervisors” are entitled with large discretion to decide what and how to implement a top-down central policy. Researches trying to explain the variation in the use of such discretion mainly emphasize a close link between the environmental characteristics and bureaucratic behaviors. However, few studies show how these environmental characteristics interact with each other and co-influence the behavioral logics of agencies. In this research, we emphasize two types of environmental factors: policy environment and political environment. The former refers to policy attributes including “policy impact on the core interests of central government (principal)” and “policy burden on local governments (agents)”, while the political environment refers to “provincial reliance on central government” (measured by financial freedom). To explore the influence of these environmental factors and their interaction, we focus on central social regulatory policies from 2003-2012 in China, and see whether and how fast a province responds central government by releasing a corresponding policy on provincial level. Our research tries to show that intermediate governments face dual behavioral logics (pleasing principal & protecting agents), while the allocation of control power between central & provincial governments in a certain policy may also greatly influence agency behaviors. Furthermore, we will show how the above behavioral logics (impacts of policy environments) are influenced by the extent to which a certain province relies on central government (political environment). We try to show provinces which rely heavily on central government will be reluctant to protect agents, while be more willing to release “symbolic documents” in order to please principal.

Understanding the pragmatics of parliamentary debates: a case study from Switzerland

Benoit Renevey (HES-SO//University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland)

During the last century, social sciences investigated several aspects of social and public problems in democratic societies. Cyclic models were developed to represent how public problems are being constructed and solved again and again, which actors are engaged in these processes, which collective and individual actions are accomplished, and so on. Many sociologists explored the “problem-making” side of public problems (among them, Spector and Kitsuse, 1973), many others focused on the “problem-solving” side. However, sociology of social and public problems rather neglected the so called “black box” of political decision making, as if this part of public problems should have been investigated only by political scientists, who did it in great length indeed. Thus, sociology of social problems rarely enlightens the activity courses accomplished by public administrations, legislatures, governments and other members of the “political elite” (Kriesi, 1980: 74) contributing to the institutionalisation of a particular version of the problem and of ad hoc solutions.

Our democratic societies developed what Loseke calls a “social problem industry” (2008: 31), which she defines as being “a segment of the social world that produces, manages, and attempts to resolve social problems” (ibid.). This suggests that the activities accomplished by the members[1] of this industry are partially institutionalised, whether it is, for instance, the decision-making procedure about bills and policy devices. Since most of the activities accomplished as contributions to problem-making-and-resolving procedures are discursive and cognitive ones (Widmer, 2010: 205 ss.), understanding what the particular part of decision-making discursive procedures produces, in terms of outcomes, may enlighten the often noted gaps between the expected content of political decisions and their actual content. Usually, such gaps are being explained by power relations structures in and outside the Parliament or the public administration, or by strategies implemented by the political elite. Thus, political debates and bills contents are considered as resulting of these power structures and/or strategies. Only. However, by taking into consideration the model of discourse-as-action-leading-to-other-actions (Quéré, 2010; Widmer, 2010; Cefai and Terzi, 2012;

Cefai, 2013; Zittoun, 2014) there are possible other – additional – interpretations of the how and why outcomes of the political decision-making may be so disappointing.

I led a case study on the discursive activities of Swiss MP deliberating on reforms of the social health care insurance during public parliamentary sessions. The aims of this research was to understand how discursive practices of the MP interact with other, accountable or non-accountable, discursive practices in- and outside the Parliament, and then influence the results of the MPs votes on policy proposals. Their votes are indeed not logical regarding the goals of the health care policy they defined, but they are logical regarding the organisation of the Swiss political system.

The theoretical core of the study was the one of the enunciative analysis paradigm summarised by Widmer and his former students (Terzi, Bovet, Acklin, Gonzalez), who took over concepts from ethnomethodology and conversation analysis (activity as accomplishment; activity-bound categorisation; sequenciality; ...) and adapted them to macro-sociological issues.

I propose to present the theoretical device my research relied on and the methodological process used to produce results.

[1] their identity vary according to the social phenomenon being problematised

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Session 2

Thursday, June 29th 10:30 to 12:30 (Manasseh Meyer MM 3 - 2)

Discussants

A Smith (Centre Emile Durkheim, Bordeaux University)

Policy Process in an Authoritarian Developmental Regime: Politics of Bureaucracy in South Korea, 1961-79

Yumi Horikane (Meiji University)

South Korea was one of the most celebrated cases of the East Asian developmental states, which had successfully brought its small, resource-poor agrarian economy to one of the most dynamic and advanced industrial powers in the world only in a few decades. Many observers have explored how and why it could do so, and a main thesis is that its state capacity was high: important institutions including its state bureaucracy were well-established and functioned well in making and implementing good and appropriate policies. The country could keep up with the ever-changing conditions of the world economy through its speedy and flexible economic policy-making/change, supported by a rich pool of capable human resources. The state was rather autonomous, and thus policymaking was insulated from various interest pressures in society, which usually is explained as an attribute of the authoritarian developmental regime. In other words, policymaking was depoliticized. However, is it really the case? The actual policymaking process in such a regime has scarcely been studied in detail.

Accordingly, this paper is to fill the gap by looking at the process of economic policymaking under the Park regime (1961-1979), which was the most typical era of Korea's developmental state. In addition to investigating the socio-biographical background data of main actors based upon Yang's painstaking research (Yang 1994), it looks into the history of the Korean public administration in order to understand the nature of main actors and institutions, and tries to apply theories of bureaucratic behavior and policymaking in order to explore how the actors worked there.

One of the main findings is that institutions were well-structured so that the rational and capable bureaucrats and ministers worked extremely hard in competition with one another. There was a politics of bureaucracy within the state here. Major policy changes were accompanied by changes in power configuration within the bureaucracy, which were the result of politics. The regime was not a democracy, yet the administration and its policymaking was effective, conferring a certain level of legitimacy on the regime. One point to note here is that the hinge of the system assuring the success of the system was the all-powerful president with a firm commitment to realizing development.

This case is already half-a-century old, and a large part of both domestic and international environment has already changed, making the case seemingly too antiquated. However, it is still relevant at least in two ways. Most importantly, it shares the actor-centered approach, and an authoritarian policymaking environment is actually still rather common in this world, while most of theoretical models presuppose democracy.

Ecological Modernization as Dispositive for Spatio-Temporal Restructuration. The Chilean Case between the 1990-2010

Fernando Campos Medina (Núcleo Científico Tecnológico en Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades)

Pamela Ugalde (Universidad Central de Chile)

Maria Skivko (Bauhaus-University Weimar (Germany))

This article describes the modernization of the environmental institution and normative in Chile between the years 1994 and 2010 as a specific form of spatio-temporal restructuring. The main argument is twofold; on the one hand, it states that Chilean ecological modernization, as transformation to the national environmental regulation has the power to reorganize the society-nature relationship. On the other hand, it proposes that a novel form of society-nature relationship at the national level is only possible by a redefinition of the categories of time and space.

There are three specific goals for this article: i) to frame spatio-temporal restructuring inside environmental public policies as a plausible object of research, and ii) to illustrate why environmental legal frameworks could be generalized as powerful input for spatio-temporal restructuring, and iii) to describe some consequences of this process during the last three decades.

The first wave of Ecological Modernization in Chile beginning on the 1990s was mainly concerned with the definition of pollution management and rational use of resources. These definitions required making explicit the spatio-temporal frameworks to measure pollution, environmental impact, and the monitoring of natural resources extraction. We call this spatio-temporal framework the "expanded scale". The second wave of ecological modernization begun in 2010 has promoted the incorporation of economic mechanisms to regulate environmental conflict. Incentives of compliance and the intents to construct a market for pollution trade have been the two main tools in this process. We call this spatio-temporal framework as "restricted singularity".

Summarizing we argue that time-space restructuring appears in the novel environmental institutional framework in four forms: i) as a predominant discursive spatio-temporality to perform the scope of ecological crisis and to organize the political response, ii) as specific judicial or legal mechanism to evaluate, avoid, compensate, but also permit certain forms of environmental impact, iii) as a parliamentary consensus, which de-politicize the socio-ecological conflict, confining it to pollution problems and sustainable forms of raw material extraction, and iv) as the incorporation of market mechanisms to regulate socio-ecological conflict.

How to use the notion of « horizon of expectation » to analyse public policies ?

Alexandre Faure (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) - Paris)

Politicians are always divided between different temporalities which producing ambiguities in expression of public policies. Indeed, politicians who create public policies are answering to diversity of problems and actors. This situation to lead a paradoxical configuration in which politician has to play with aspirations has to seek consensus and compromise between them.

This communication would try to offers a new approach of time analysis. To determinate these different aspirations, it appears that the narratives studies are the field which give most information about the articulation between these aspirations. In the same politician's narratives exposed multi-level argumentation which in fact express multiples times. We will focus on one specific public policy that induces a longer time than the electoral time and which are the new subway lines construction. In fact, this public policy assembled short time and long time, local and global aspirations, individual and collective perspective. To find these differences, in a narrative approach, we will compare urbanism documents which describing project and discourse which legitimate it (or confront it). This comparison would allow us to organise analysis grid required to develop a way of studying time in politics.

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