T02P10 / Bias and Representation in Policy Making

Topic : T02 / Comparative Public Policy sponsored by Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis

Chair : Anne Rasmussen (University of Copenhagen and Leiden University)

Second Chair : Dimiter Toshkov (Leiden University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Public policy must reflect and arbitrate between the diverse preferences of societal groups, organized interests and citizens. In democracies at least, public policy representation is one of the crucial parameters for judging the quality of governance (United Nations 2015). Accordingly, it has been the topic of a voluminous literature spanning across the disciplinary borders of Public Policy, Public Administration, Political Science, and Sociology (e.g. Achen and Bartels 2016, Burnstein 2014, Lax and Phillips 2012, Page and Shapiro 1983, Soroka and Wlezien 2010, Stimson et al. 1995, Rasmussen et al. 2015). Furthermore, inequalities in representation figure prominently on both the political agenda (Gilens 2012, Rasmussen et al. 2014). There is no lack of arguments that representation is biased towards the preferences of certain groups of citizens or organized interests at the expense of the views of the general public. As a result, there is growing interest in studying whose preferences are reflected in public policy making. This research has been based on different theoretical and methodological perspectives. Despite several seminal contributions to the research field), research has been predominantly focused on a small set of geographical regions and has rarely considered the impact of different types of societal actors within the same project. Expanding research on the theme of policy representation to other parts of the world that represent different systems of government can contribute to increasing the understanding of the mechanisms behind (bias in) policy representation. It will help judge the value of the instruments for increasing input from ordinary citizens in policy-making and regulating the behavior of lobbyists, which are increasingly an object of scholarly discussions and public debates (Baumgartner et al. 2009, Binderkrantz et al. 2015, Dür et al. 2015, Gray et al. 2004). In sum the scientific relevant of the proposed panel is in bringing the study of policy representation to the next level in terms of theory, empirical scope, and integration within the broader study of public policy making.

The objectives of the panel are:

1. to extend the scope of research on policy representation to policies and parts of the world that have so far not been systematically studied;
2. to advance our understanding of bias in policy making, both in empirical and theoretical terms, and the mechanisms through which bias occurs;
3. to bring together scholars working on policy representation from a variety of disciplines, theoretical perspectives, and normative assumptions.

Cited literature:

Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. (2016) Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Baumgartner, Frank R., Berry, J.M., Hojnacki, Marie, Kimball, David C., & Leech, Beth L. (2009). Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Binderkrantz, Anne S., Christiansen, Peter M., & Pedersen, Helene H.. (2015). Interest Group Access to the Bureaucracy, Parliament, and the Media. Governance, 28(1), 95-112.

Burstein, Paul. (2014). American Public Opinion, Advocacy and Policy in Congress. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dür, Andreas, Bernhagen, Patrick, & Marshall, David. (2015). Interest Group Success in the European Union: When (and Why) Does Business Lose? Comparative Political Studies, 48(8), 951-983.

Gilens, Martin. (2012). Affluence and Influence: Economic Power and Political Inequality in America. New York: Russell Sage Fondation and Princeton University Press.

Gray, Virginia, Lowery, David, Fellowes, Matthew, & Mcatee, Andrea. (2004). Public Opinion, Public Policy, and Organized Interests in the American states. Political Research Quarterly, 57(3), 411-420.

Lax, Jeffrey R., & Phillips, Justin H. (2012). The Democratic Deficit in the States. American Journal of

Political Science, 56(1), 148-166.

Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro (1983). "Effects of Public Opinion on Policy." The American Political Science Review 77(1): 175-190.

Rasmussen, Anne, Carroll, Brendan, & Lowery, David. (2014). Representatives of the Public? Public Opinion and Interest Group Activity. European Journal of Political Research, 53(2), 250-68.

Rasmussen, Anne, Reher, Stefanie and Toshkov, Dimiter. (2015). Policy Representation in Europe: A Comparative Study of the Relationship between Public Opinion and Public Policy. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Political Science Association. San Francisco.

Soroka, Stuart N. and Christopher Wlezien (2010). Degrees of Democracy: Politics, Public Opinion, and Policy. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stimson, James A., Michael B. Mackuen and Robert S. Erikson (1995). "Dynamic Representation." The American Political Science Review 89(3): 543.

United Nations (2015) Responsive and Accountable Public Governance. 2015 World Public Sector Report. New York: United Nations.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel invites papers which address one or more of the questions below. To what extent are public opinion and public policy actually aligned in different states across the world? Is policy representation to different types of societal actors the same or do we experience inequalities between different income, gender and education groups? Which role do interest groups and political parties provide when it comes to achieving policy representation? What are the theoretical mechanisms that produce or constrain policy representation? And what are the normative implications of the presence or absence of policy representation in different kinds of systems? Contributions assessing policy representation in a comparative manner and in new contexts beyond the well-studied Western democracies are especially encouraged.

T02P10 / Bias and Representation in Policy Making

Chair : Anne Rasmussen (University of Copenhagen and Leiden University)
Second Chair : Dimiter Toshkov (Leiden University)

Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 13:30 to 15:30 (Block B 4 - 3)

Discussants

Dimiter Toshkov (Leiden University)

Anne Rasmussen (University of Copenhagen and Leiden University)

Coalition Government and Policy Responsiveness in Western Europe

Dimiter Toshkov (Leiden University)

Anne Rasmussen (University of Copenhagen and Leiden University)

Whereas recent research has expanded the study of policy responsiveness to a broad range of political systems, existing cross-national studies focus primarily on the impact of political institutions and only rarely pay attention to the way responsiveness is embedded in the patterns of party government, and the role of coalitions in particular. We examine how coalition conflict and government positions influence policy making and moderate the relationship between public opinion and public policy. Our study is based on a new dataset that tracks policy-making activity with regard to 306 specific policy issues in three countries (Denmark, Germany, and the United Kingdom) over four years and combines information on public preferences with measures of government positions, coalition conflict, and media salience. We find a systematic but relatively weak in substantive terms positive impact of public support on the likelihood and speed of policy change. While coalition conflict has only a weak negative direct effect on policy change and no effect on responsiveness as such, we find that more right-wing governments are both less likely to enact policy changes and less responsive to public opinion.

The impact of China's advocacy groups on the policy making and its determinants

Emina Popovic (Freie Universitaet Berlin)

In non-democratic regimes, non-state actors are considered to have less impact on the policy-making than those in democratic political systems where interest groups have a wide variety of options to express their views and positions. There is, however very less empirical research done on advocacy groups' influence in autocracies, which could confirm or contradict this theoretical expectation. This study fulfills some of the literature gaps by studying Chinese advocacy groups' impact on policy-making through examining whether there is an inequality in interest representation and if so toward whose preferences. Except investigating whose policy positions are reflected in Chinese policy outcomes, the study informs us on what determines the influence that advocacy groups exert in the decision-making. More than 80 interviews are conducted with specific interest groups, citizen groups, and journalist that were involved in the policy debate, or used some of the public political activities to influence public opinion in relation to the certain policy issue.

Process tracing method is used to examine advocacy groups' policy preferences, their advocacy strategies, developments through the policy-making process and final policy outcomes for 17 environmental policy proposals. Policy position where compared to final policy outcomes as a way of assessing the influence of advocacy groups on the certain policy issues. In so doing, statements of the informants that took part in selected policy-events were scrutinized and complemented with publicly available sources and documents provided by advocacy groups and journalists. For data analysis, qualitative case studies are combined with Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) following Ragin's (2006) guidelines on integrating QCA and process tracing in a single analysis. Preliminary findings indicate that the success of NGO's direct lobbying remains limited, yet it shows that through their successful use of voice strategies their positions, to the

certain extent, get reflected in environmental policy outcomes. However, in the policy proposals where public opinion was mobilized, the analysis shows the bias towards specific interest groups. The findings are pointing out to Chinese government's responsiveness to the views of the general public when they are expressed through street protest. In the policy proposals, where increasing environmental regulation was opposed by specific interest groups and was not supported through street protests, policy outcomes were closer to business groups' preferences. The implication of these results might be that Chinese government is balancing between avoiding social unrest and protecting business interests in environmental affairs. Expect to reveal the relationship between interest groups, public opinion and policy outcomes in investigated policy areas, the findings offer some important implications for policy-making in China in general.

Delegated representation in the 21st Century: the experimentation of shared mandates.

Ricardo Cavalheiro (State University of Santa Catarina)

Leonardo Secchi (Universidade do Estado de Santa Catarina)

The objective of this essay is to analyze an alternative form of delegated representation that promises to soften the representative crisis in legislative bodies: shared mandates.

A shared mandate is a form of legislative representation in which constituents keep control of the mandate through direct participation. In shared mandates, the legislator voluntary sacrifices her voting autonomy to empower constituents, making the mandate more responsive and accountable. Shared mandates works under an agreement between a legislative representative and citizens for cooperatively exercise the legislative power of a mandate. Thus, a shared mandate is a form of delegated representation in which citizens determine the voting preference of their representative and her legislative activity. Shared mandate means that the legislative mandate does not belong to the political party or the incumbent representative but, in fact, to a group of citizens sharing the mandate.

The theoretical inspiration for shared mandates is the delegated form of representation and direct democracy applied to the legislative power. A shared mandate is a delegated model of representation (Pitkin, 1967), a type of promissory representation (Mansbridge, 2003), and an example of the ambassador and the pared-down delegate type of the Rehfeld´s distinction of representativeness (Rehfeld, 2009). Delegated representation is an alternative to the widely used trustee model in which representatives are not expected to correspond strictly to the constituents´ preferences, but they rather have an ethical obligation towards "the general interest" (Burke 1774; Pitkin 1967). As there is an information asymmetry between citizens and politicians, the political agent is tempted to defend other interests, which may be conflictive to those of constituents. In few words, the trustee model is prone to fail in its very basic element: trust. Facing this, shared mandate presents itself as a strategy to bridge this gap through binding consultation of constituencies that inform and determine the representative´s position in legislative matters.

In view of this, the following research question is presented: What formats of shared mandate are used in contemporary democracies as an alternative to confront the representative crisis? To answer this question the study uses a multiple case study discuss different formats of shared mandates in countries with evidence of its utilization: Sweden, Australia, Argentina, Brazil and United States. The variables to analyze the empirical date are the following: initiative, size, eligibility, access, permanence, distribution and extent of power, costs, benefits, and decision-making process. The study breaks down the variables in different analytical categories in order to analyze the empirical cases.

Given that the objective of this study has common objectives to those of the T02P10 panel, such as understanding "Which role do interest groups and political parties provide when it comes to achieving policy representation?", it seems clear that the discussion about share mandates and delegated representation has the potential to bring light to the panel discussion.