

# T03P02 / Disproportionate and Instable Forms of Policy Outputs

**Topic :** T03 / Policy and Politics sponsored by Policy & Politics Journal

**Chair :** Eva Thomann (University of Exeter)

**Second Chair :** Achim Kemmerling (Willy Brandt School of Public Policy - University of Erfurt)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

***In this panel a selection of papers may be considered for the Policy & Politics journal.***

Disproportionate policy response denotes a misfit between the costs and benefits, or the between the ends and means of a policy, resulting in policy over- and underreaction (Maor 2012, 2014) or chronic instability. Sustained patterns of these policy responses are termed policy bubbles (Jones et al. 2014). Recently, several studies have illustrated the repertoire of disproportionate policy options, namely, policy over- and underreaction rhetoric and doctrines. These problems are closely related to another well-known issue in public policy making: chronic form of instability both in the amplitude of changes, as well as the frequency. The policy literature has long acknowledged the problem of output instability in policy making. Policies which are adopted and implemented might not last long and may be reversed immediately. These can result in large problems in so far as vital economic, social and political resources are wasted in over and under-reacting compared to a more 'proportional' response to social, political or other kinds of concerns.

There are numerous approaches explaining this kind of policy instability, some of which are quite old. Rational choice scholars, for example, have long analyzed cases of problematic preference aggregation of individuals and groups and the cyclical policies of partisan-electoral pandering that may follow (Riker 1982; McFarland 1991). Valence issues have also been a long-standing topic in political science research (Beland and Cox 2011). Institutional researchers have been concerned with when and why policy instability is more likely than stability in outputs (Tsebelis 2002). Many researchers have also detected cycles in issue attention which culminate in ups and downs of policy making (Downs 1972; Vries 2010; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Public policy scholars have long illustrated the structural and psychological roots that lead to well-known of patterns of punctuated equilibria (Jones and Baumgartner 2004). Moreover, this instability is often found in combination with excesses in terms of amplitude, i.e. they are signs and consequences of instances of disproportionate policy responses (Jones, Thomas, and Wolfe 2014; Maor 2012, 2014). Important examples are bubbles in financial markets or any other form of excessive under- or over-addressing of policy problems.

Focusing on the dynamics of disproportionate policy response, this panel aims to shed light on policy valuation processes; on the interaction between self-reinforcing processes and the contagion of ideas and emotions which reinforces the (lack of) confidence in the policy; on the ways media attention and policymaking activities become intertwined in self-reinforcing processes; on identifying (negative) policy bubbles; and on the role of symbolic and ideological factors for how policies come to be overvalued or devalued. solutions do we see in mitigating excessive forms of instability and the prospects for more 'efficient' policy-making?

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel focuses on the dynamics of disproportionate policy response, meaning a lack of "fit" between the costs of a public policy and the benefits that are derived thereof and the potential to lead to chronic forms of instability. It aims to shed light on policy valuation processes and the role of symbolic and ideological factors therein, the interaction between self-reinforcing processes and the contagion of ideas and emotions, how media attention and policymaking activities become intertwined in self-reinforcing processes, and how (negative) policy bubbles are identified.

We are seeking both conceptual and empirical papers that revolve around the following questions:

- *What does it mean to over- or underreact in policy terms?* How does policy over- and underreaction in amplitude and frequency manifest itself at different stages of the policy cycle? How can we tackle the challenges in empirically observing patterns of sustained over- or underreaction (e.g., establishing the relevant counterfactual of "proportionate response"; long-term vs. short-term disproportionate responses)?
- *What causes policy over- and underreaction and instability in more general?* How do cognitive, emotional, organizational, and institutional factors interact? To what extent are proportionality judgments by policymakers and the general public subject to ideologically-biased information processing? How do contextual factors impact on policy over- and underreaction? How does the concept of policy bubble enhance our understanding of policymaking?
- *What are the implications of volatile policy response?* How do sustained policy over- and underreaction create or destroy value for policymakers and for society? How do policy over- and underreaction shape chances to pursue particular opportunities? To what extent do policy over- and underreaction indicate that governments continue to play a pivotal role in policy making? How does the concept of policy bubble enhance our understanding of policy outcomes?

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## Session 1

Friday, June 30th 13:45 to 15:45 (CJK 1 - 2)

### Discussants

Eva Thomann (University of Exeter)

Achim Kemmerling (Willy Brandt School of Public Policy - University of Erfurt)

### Disproportionate responses to European Union policy? Customized problem-solving in the food safety sector

Eva Thomann (University of Exeter)

This paper analyzes the process of European Union (EU) policy implementation by member states in terms of the extent of over- or underinvestment in a policy relative to its goals. In a multilevel governance structure such as the EU, decision-makers devise centralized policies as a response to joint policy challenges such as ensuring food safety. However, recent research highlights that some member states “customize” EU policy when implementing it, by adding or reducing the amount and stringency of the respective rules. From a top-down implementation perspective, the EU policy is the adequate solution/investment to a given policy problem— deviations (customization) are potentially problematic, they could imply red tape or distortions of competition. Correspondingly, earlier studies have termed the phenomenon “over-implementation”. From such a view, customization indicates that member states over- or underinvest in an EU policy. Conversely, a bottom-up view thinks of member states who customize EU policy as especially eager problem-solvers, going even beyond the EU in investing in a policy solution. From such a view, member states correct for inadequate policy responses at the EU level. In confronting these two contrasting view, this paper asks: how does the customization of EU food safety policy affect policy effectiveness? In order to determine whether and how customization has a corrective or distorting role for policy investment, EU and domestic policies are considered as alternative courses of action that are set in relation with the severity of the policy problem, on the one hand, and domestic policy impacts, on the other.

The empirical case at hand is the implementation of 19 EU food safety rules in 4 old member states (N = 76). The governance of health risk associated to food of animal origin is, due to its situation at the interface of agricultural and food safety policy, particularly complex, gaining regulatory importance, and under-researched. The analysis is based on fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), complemented with formal set-theoretic theory evaluation and targeted analyses of typical and deviant cases. The role of customization is embedded into an explanatory framework that accounts for regulatory design (domestic implementation, monitoring and enforcement structures), political (domestic resistance, influence of interest groups) and organizational factors (resources and personnel). In tracing the implementation of EU directives from transposition to outputs and outcomes at the frontline, the study contributes significantly to understanding the practical solution of common problems in multi-level regulatory systems.

### A study on the policy stance of president and political salience of the central administrative agencies

Changho HWANG (Kunsan UNIVERSITY)

M. Jae Moon (Yonsei University)

Ever since the liberation from Japan, presidents of Korea have continued to pursue policies for the

development and growth of the country, which is why the country's administrative operation and policies have been mainly concentrated on economic and industrial factors. Such administrative directions focusing on economic development have gone through a rapid change due to internal external changes in environments. As for the internal changes in environments, Korea has been in a stage of economic maturity due to concentrated economic growth policies. And in terms of the external changes, new sectors such as environment, human rights, and welfare issues are starting to be magnified as a new agenda for the management of a country as it enters into the 21st century. In other words, president's policy stance which can be referred to as a value pursued by the government or as a direction of the country has been constantly changing in response to the changes in internal and external environments.

President has the highest authority to exert political influence as the head of the executive branch. President exercises authority over human resources to design and execute policies for the realization of his or her national philosophy and has a major influence on establishing policy agendas of the administration. Such political influence of the president is clearly revealed in a governmental reorganization accompanying a transfer of power. In general, president aims to organize a new cabinet through a governmental reorganization so that administration can effectively execute and sometimes control his or her policy stance. This is why a newly organized administration preferentially designs and executes policies that accord with the president's policy directions. Putting it differently, the administration actively pursues policies coinciding with the policy stance of president who is the strongest political actor surrounding the organization and in the process, government departments emulatively tend to follow the president's policy directions, which is called political salience.

Political salience is a concept for understanding the level of influence of political environment, which is used to explain the level of interest influencing the commitment of external agencies or public institutions (Lee & Rainey & Chun, 2009). Depending on the influence of a political actor, policy goals or priorities emphasized by each government department may change. While political actors surrounding government departments may vary depending on interests, the one who exerts the greatest influence on administration in general is president. This is why government departments reorganized through a governmental reorganization cannot be operated independently excluding a strong political environmental factor called president and as a result, there is a possibility that a government organization that shows a strong political salience in the process of pushing ahead with the policies reflecting the president's will.

Therefore, based on such critical mind, the author would like to suggest the following research questions: First, how do the efforts to realize policy directions of president change depending on the nature and characteristics of a government department and the tenure of president? Government departments revamped under the influence of president have a strong tendency to realize policy directions of the president. If so, how is this tendency different between departments that have different functions or nature such as departments, offices, and committees? Second, how are the tendencies to realize president's policy stance between the existing departments and newly organized ones different? Third, how are the tendencies to realize president's policy directions between departments that have relatively strong power and the ones without? Fourth, how do the efforts of each department change in accordance with the passing of the president's tenure?

The executive branch tends to try to actively realize policy directions pursued by president as it tends to be reshuffled due to the will of a president or depending on political needs. This study has its significance in that it examined how these tendencies change depending on the nature and characteristics of government departments and the tenure of president and empirically analyzed whether such government departments are actually reflecting the president's policy stance in executing various political projects or they just pretend to follow the policy stance in disguise.

### **State management issues in Latin America. Assessing “patterns of mismanagement” through empirical evidence from Argentina (2007-2015)**

Luciano Andrenacci (Universidad Nacional de General San Martín)

Julian Bertranou (National University of San Martín, Argentina; National University of Cuyo)

In all Latin American countries, the performances of most state agencies in all sectors and levels of government are very frequently found to produce low, insufficient or unstable impacts, relative to public and expert expectations, as well as legally and/or ethically objectionable ways and procedures. Among most political scientists in our countries, these governance problems are straightforwardly attributed to politics, as if the public policy process was a mechanical outcome of political arrangements and decisions. Political regimes, governments and governing coalitions, or even specific figureheads, are deemed either incapable to adequately plan the right strategies necessary to solve development management issues, or too capable to model the public policy processes according to their interests and will. Yet, little or no interest is placed on what actually happens between political arrangements, decisions and outcomes. Probably because of the obvious methodological and political difficulties facing substantial research in the field, a surprisingly low

number of studies actually dig relevant evidence about what goes on in the corridors and offices of public agencies, among decision makers, cadres and clerical workers. In this paper we propose an analytical strategy designed to detect state management issues, and to trace them, especially during phases of public policy design and implementation. Using this observation guide to scour information in a number of recent relevant public policy processes in Argentina -from the moment the state identifies an issue and addresses it with policies, until the moment there are results to be assessed- we isolate a few recurrent and path dependency generating problems that we propose to call patterns of mismanagement. Although more substantive research would be necessary to ascribe causes and consequences to such patterns, we put forward some educated conjectures about their genesis and inertial effects. Even if inextricably tied to politics and political regimes, these patterns show an interesting “life of their own” that, we insist, deserves better -if possible, comparative- understanding. Such new knowledge could provide keys to design better responses to public policy problems in the developing world, as well as to understand why and how classical capacity building strategies repeatedly seem to fail.

## **Proportionate adaptation for climate risk management under uncertainty**

Sreeja Nair (National University of Singapore)

Policies are continually being designed for current and future conditions about which policymakers often have incomplete or no information at all. Climate change is a good example of a complex and unstructured policy problem that is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. Given the likelihood of non-linearity in the future climate, the impacts associated with climate change may be manifested to varying extents (IPCC, 2007). However other kinds of policies exist in which uncertainty is minimal or manageable, such as what happens in transportation policy-making or health policy-making where historical data and linear relationships greatly reduce risks associated with uncertain futures. Failing to correctly identify the bounds and range of these uncertainties is a major cause of policy over and under-reaction (Maor, 2012; Maor, 2014) and over and under-design.

Enhanced experimentation and learning can be instrumental in “keeping pace with the dynamic drivers and expressions of risk” (O’Brien et al, 2012). Pilots form a common and important form of policy experimentation and involve the “phased introduction of major government policies or programmes, allowing them to be tested, evaluated and adjusted before being rolled out nationally” (Cabinet Office, 2003). Using the example of adaptation policies for climate change, this paper conceptualizes that for policy design under uncertainty it is important to utilize ‘appropriate’ design processes such as policy experimentation that can generate outcomes that are ‘proportionate’ to the level of change in the policy environment (uncertainty). This paper focuses on the design of policy experiments to yield proportionate policy responses given the uncertainty in the policy environment in the short-and long-term, and related challenges. Responses can range from incremental to transformative with change in the policy environment. Barriers to development of proportionate responses are also discussed.