

T01P07 / Policy-Making in a Context of Contested Paradigms

Topic : T01 / Policy Process Theories

Chair : Grace Skogstad (University of Toronto)

Second Chair : Matt Wilder (University of Toronto)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The concept of policy paradigms is one of the most widely used in the policy literature. Amenable to both rationalist and constructivist lenses on policy-making, policy paradigms exist at the nexus between policy ideas in the abstract and the actionable ideas that guide policy formulation and implementation. Policy paradigms constitute guiding logics upon which policy-makers draw in all stages of the policy process. Questions remain, however, concerning the role played by policy paradigms when paradigms are contested. When actors are faced with numerous and incommensurate interpretations of policy issues, the predictability and stability normally associated with policy paradigms gives way to considerable uncertainty. Although variables likely to determine policy outcomes in the absence of paradigmatic consensus have been identified in the literature (e.g., influence, resources, legitimacy, lesson drawing and anomalies), a standard approach to analyzing policy-making in contexts of paradigmatic contestation has yet to be developed. The aim of this panel is to explore the dynamics of policy-making when paradigms are contested in an effort to gain a more systematic understanding of the role played by policy paradigms when they are not decisive in determining the course of policy-making. As policy-making has become more open, consultative and trans-jurisdictional, it is expected that paradigms are increasingly contested and/or not decisive.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 13:30 to 15:30 (Block B 2 - 1)

Discussants

Grace Skogstad (University of Toronto)

Matt Wilder (University of Toronto)

Paradigm Contestation Between Hegemonic and Alternative Energy Policy Paradigms: The Case of Biofuels in the US and EU

Grace Skogstad (University of Toronto)

Matt Wilder (University of Toronto)

Scholars have focused on three possible outcomes of paradigm contestation: first, the dominant embedded policy paradigm successfully rebuffs an alternate paradigm; second, the dominant paradigm is replaced by an alternate paradigm; and third, a hybrid of the contending paradigms emerges. The third outcome, hybrid policy paradigms, is argued to be a likely outcome of policy making contexts that require compromises across multiple political actors and institutions. At the same time, the concept of hybrid policy paradigms challenges Hall's ontological understanding of policy paradigms: that is, that they are underpinned by distinct/ incommensurable ideas about 'how the world works' (cognitive ideas) as well as normative ideas about desirable objectives. Given such tensions between hegemonic and competing paradigms, it is important to understand better the factors that affect the reconciliation of competing policy ideas to enable hybrid policy paradigms. In an effort to promote this understanding, this paper examines efforts to shift the energy policy paradigm in the United States and the European Union to one which includes goals of energy sustainability. The paper utilizes Bayesian network and latent Dirichlet allocation techniques to develop a novel method for assessing the structure and characteristics of policy paradigms as they evolve in relation to one another over time.

One Step forward, two Steps back? Digital Transformation as a Contested Policy Paradigm

Julia Schwanholz (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

Tobias Jakobi (Georg-August University Goettingen, Institute for Political Science)

For a decade, internet activists in Germany have pushed hard for internet policy as a new policy paradigm that covers not only technical aspects but the transformative and disruptive power of the internet on all parts of society. Recently, the Bundestag established a novel standing committee of Internet policy and digital society issues, the Digital Agenda Committee (DAC), which ostensibly indicated that the new and contested paradigm of internet policy had gained an important and permanent spot on the political agenda. However, the introduction of the DAC got mixed reviews. While some scholars interpret the DAC as an important novel actor of internet policy within parliament, journalists, Internet bloggers, and Social Media activists are disappointed by its limited responsibilities. They lament that most politicians have not grasped the new paradigm and its implications.

Much can be learned by studying how new issues contest established policy paradigms in parliaments since these are prominent venues for policy making. In our paper we ask whether the DAC matters for parliamentary decision-making processes on Internet policy legislation in Germany and how. Is the Digital Agenda Committee a venue for the new paradigm of internet policy? Does its creation help parliamentarians

to promote this new policy paradigm? We use legislation on data retention as a most likely case for the formation of an internet policy paradigm.

In a before-and-after case study, we use qualitative network analysis to study the effects of committee jurisdictional changes, related discourses and framing processes, the formation of issue coalitions (within and beyond committees) as well as strategies of individual members of parliament. By understanding how the respective policy paradigm has been contested we contribute to the more general question whether it got shifted in the direction of a comprehensive internet policy paradigm.

The Advantage of Paradigmatic Contestation? How the European Commission 'sold' CAP Reform

Gerry Alons (Radboud University of Nijmegen)

Paradigmatic contestation is likely to result in uncertainty in the policy making process due to the lack of a clear set of dominant ideas to guide policy formulation and implementation. This paper argues, however, that paradigmatic contestation can also be advantageous for policy makers when they legitimate and 'sell' their preferred policies to different audiences. This is particularly the case when the different policy paradigms are not completely incommensurate in the sense that they may aim for different policy objectives, but by means of potentially similar policy instruments. Under such circumstances similar policy solutions may fit with different policy paradigms and can thus be justified in different ways, broadening policy maker's available array of legitimating discourses.

Three different policy paradigms have dominated the agricultural policy arena in the European Union. One did not neatly follow the other chronologically, however, and newer paradigms have not completely discarded older ones. After World War II, in a period of food shortages, the 'dependent agriculture' paradigm surfaced as the dominant set of ideas guiding the development of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This paradigm emphasizes farmers' contribution to the national interest by providing a sufficient and safe food supply and claims that the price mechanism is a suboptimal means of achieving an efficient and productive agricultural sector, while farming is a unique and hazardous enterprise warranting special treatment for farmers. Soaring surpluses and negative impacts on the relation with trading partners urged the EU to reconsider its agricultural policies. Starting in the 1980s, the dependent paradigm was challenged by a 'competitive market paradigm' that had already become dominant in the US. This paradigm takes issue with the assumed 'specialness' of the agricultural sector, arguing that market forces should take precedence over state intervention. Not much later, an alternative 'multifunctionalist agriculture paradigm' also made its way in EU policy circles. This paradigm emphasizes the multiple environmental and social functions of farming for which farmers are not rewarded by the market, justifying the granting of public money to farmers to safeguard the multiple functions the sector provides. The rise of the competitive market and multifunctionalist paradigms did not constitute a complete break with the dependent paradigm, though. In the past two decades there has been paradigmatic contestation in the CAP, one paradigm being dominant at one point in time and another at other points in time, without the remaining paradigms being completely discarded.

This paper will show that this ongoing paradigmatic contestation has had the following results in EU policy making on the CAP: 1) It resulted in different aspects of one CAP reform being in line with and legitimated on the basis of different paradigms; 2) It resulted in one and the same aspect of a CAP reform being legitimated on the basis of two different paradigms, addressing the concerns of different audiences; 3) and finally, it broadened the discursive repertoire the Commission and member states had at their disposal to justify CAP reform.

Policy Experimentation as a Theory of Change in Context of Contested Paradigms. The Case of Drug Policy in Latin America

Luis Rivera Velez (Center for Mexican and Central American Studies CEMCA)

During the last decade, prohibition has stopped being the dominant paradigm in drug policy, particularly with regard to cannabis. Despite the path dependence of drug policies in the world, it is now accepted at the international level that the prohibition of drug production and the criminalization of drug consumption are not sustainable solutions. On the contrary, the anomalies are so numerous that it is difficult today to defend a prohibitionist vision without being accused of inadvertence with respect to security, public health and human rights.

In this context of contested paradigms, many countries have been taking the step towards a change in their drug policies. But policy outcomes are just disproportionate. In Latin America, for example, Uruguay has legalized cannabis production with a strict control by the State, Colombia has opened the medicinal

cannabis market to the private sector, and Mexico has authorized the importation of cannabis-based medicines. So, how to explain the difference in policy change when the discussion about cannabis legalization across countries have been so similar?

This paper attempts to answer this question using the framework of the policy experimentation developed by James Morrison concerning the political economic policy on the UK during the 20th century. Based in two « crucial dimensions », Morrison argue that policymakers are more likely to experiment with new policies, in a context of contested paradigms, if the cost of the experimentation is low (within and in relation with other policy domains) and the psychological appeal is high. Each of these dimensions covers a variety of factors that will define the degree of experimentation towards which policy-makers are ready to move forward.

In short, policy experimentation is a way to bypass a series of anomalies links to a contested paradigm when alternative ideas are not on steroids. This framework is thus a fruitful tool to understand the different policy outcomes of drug policy change in Latin America in a context when prohibition is not longer trustable and free market legalization is not dominant.

The “other’ side of the feminist debate”: Contested paradigms in family violence policy in New Zealand

Rachel Simon-Kumar (The University of Auckland)

As feminist ideologies are increasingly mainstreamed into government, over the last 30 years or so, there have been clear impacts for policy making in New Zealand. There is greater attention paid to issues that particularly affect women, such as family violence or sexual violence, as they increasingly gain attention on government policy agendas. Alongside there are also shifts in the process of governance with governments selectively opting to deploy consultative, participatory, partnership and engagement styles of policy making. These relationship-centred policymaking styles particularly hold both promise and perils for the advancement of women’s issues. The engagement of multiple stakeholders brings together more holistic perspectives into problem identification and problem solving. For this same reason, however, they often also bring contested paradigms that productively enhance policy outcomes or conversely subvert and derail the process. The gains and losses for feminism deserve scrutiny.

This paper explores contested paradigms in the instance of family violence in New Zealand, specifically around the workings of a government taskforce that was instituted and ran between 2005-2015. Tasked with formulating solutions to prevent violence within families, the group comprised representatives of community NGOs working in the field of violence and nominated interagency high-level ministry officials. The taskforce represents an example of government policymaking where there are high motivations to address a mutually agreed problem but where good intentions are stalled by paradigmatic obstacles. Reminiscent of Amartya Sen’s (1987) notion of ‘cooperative conflict’ and Chantal Mouffe’s (2000) notion of ‘productive tensions’, the taskforce faced off on fundamental values while also needing to progress on issues of family violence. Through an analysis of the paradigmatic conflicts around the table, this paper demonstrates the redundancy and relevance of engagement; while contested paradigms at times changed direction of policy in valuable ways, at other times it created silences ushering in dominant voices.

Three areas of ideological contestation arising from this engagement are discussed: (a) the contested paradigm around ‘partnership’ (b) contestations around a multiplicity of feminist perspectives subscribed to by all parties, and (c) the contested paradigms of social change.

The data for this analysis comes from multiple sources; interview data from members of the taskforce and from those closely associated with its development that was collected between 2010-2012, and public and classified administrative data (minutes of meetings, agendas, etc.) from the Taskforce.