P09 / Citizens and Evidence-Based Policy Making: Perfect Couple or Strange Bedfellows?

Topic : POLICY DESIGN, POLICY ANALYSIS, EXPERTISE AND EVALUATION

Chair : Valerie Pattyn (Institute of Public Administration - Leiden University)

Second Chair : Pirmin Bundi (University of Lausanne)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Policy evaluations and other research activities generate information that can be used in order to improve public policies, which is commonly captured under the (rational) label of evidence-based policy making (EBP). However, there is ample empirical evidence that the use of such information is not systematic and often politicized. Moreover, the generation of evidence is dominated by elites, such as experts, academics, evaluators or public servants, and rarely includes the involvement of citizens. This is rather surprising as citizens are often the main beneficiary group of public policy and their beliefs and opinions define the political framework of public measures. It can even be argued that the involvement of citizens has the potential of overcoming the classic tension between democracy and technocracy in public policy making.

In research on evaluation, the involvement of citizens has been discussed in frameworks coined as Democratic Evaluation (MacDonald 1993), Transformative Participatory Evaluation (Cousins and Whitmore 1998) or Deliberative Democratic Evaluation (House/Howe 1999), which promise to be more inclusive, and foster participation and collaboration. Still, despite the existence of such frameworks, the systematic involvement of citizens in evidence creation seems to be rather exception than rule (Halachmi & Holzer 2010). How can we explain this discrepancy, and what are strategies to make research and evaluation processes more democratic?

This panel gathers theoretical, conceptual, and empirical contributions that deal with the relationship between citizens, evidence and public policy, with the aim to enhance our understanding of how citizens' claims are mobilized in evidence and how such evidence is utilized in public policy settings. We conceive the panel as a forum to exchange comparative research experience and case studies about this issue, and welcome contributions relating to different policy domains, institutional settings and countries. In the panel, we approach 'evidence' in a comprehensive way: papers can focus on any kind of evidence, such as policy evaluations, research reports, etc.

Research questions can tackle any aspect of the 'evidence lifecycle' and can relate to the agenda-setting of involving citizens in evidence generation; the actual methods to involve citizens in evidence creation; and the (mis)use and influence of citizen input in evidence generation. Potential questions of interest can include (but are not limited to):

1. Which institutional settings foster or impede the involvement of citizens in evidence generation? Do we see differences across administrative cultures, or across policy fields?

2. How can scholars institutionalize democratic processes in policy evaluations and research so that evidence is based on a valid and reliable judgement of public policies with evaluation and research methods that rely on citizen input?

3. What are the potential and limitations of evidence that relies on citizen input for public policy making? To what extent can citizen-based evidence approaches overcome the technocracy-democracy tension that characterizes the evaluation field and can inclusive evidence approaches serve accountability and policy learning purposes?

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Preference will be given to papers that systematically study the role and influence of using democratic approaches to evidence creation, and the eventual influence of such evidence on public policies; rather than applied evaluation or research studies.

Abstracts should include a clear puzzle, research question, outline of the approach, research design, and main contribution of the proposed paper.

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 26th 14:00 to 16:00 (MB 3.255)

Discussants

Valerie Pattyn (Institute of Public Administration - Leiden University)

Pirmin Bundi (University of Lausanne)

Public hearing testimonies as policy evidence and its influence over policy-makers: the case of Single-Payer issue in NYS

Yongjin Choi (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of London)

Ashley Fox (Rockefeller College, University at Albany)

Systematic Review of Mathematical Models of Citizens' Deliberative Participation in Public Policy: Proposal of Mixed Deliberation Groups

Ryota Sakai (Chuogakuin University)

Legislating for deliberation: Drivers, policies and prospects for the implementation of deliberative practices in local government by the State Government in Victoria, Australia.

Emanuela Savini (University of Technology Sydney - Institute for Public Policy and Governance)

Evaluation and Citizens: Reflections on a Future Research Agenda

Pirmin Bundi (University of Lausanne)

Valerie Pattyn (Institute of Public Administration - Leiden University)