P07 / Making ‘Credible’ Knowledge for Policy: the Politics (and Practice) of Expertise

Topic : POLICY DESIGN, POLICY ANALYSIS, EXPERTISE AND EVALUATION

Chair : Natalie Papanastasiou (Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona)

Second Chair : Chris Hurl (Concordia University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Public policy scholarship has developed a rich and diverse literature on processes of international policy transfer and translation, and associated global networks of policy experts and institutions. However, while the impact and implementation of powerful forms of knowledge such as benchmarks, best practices, league tables, and impact assessments have received a great deal of scholarly attention, less attention has been paid to the ways these forms of knowledge are actually generated by those we call policy ‘experts’. Drawing from recent debates in Science and Technology Studies (STS), the governmentalities literature, and research on epistemic communities, this panel looks at the making of knowledge for policy. It will explore the way that policy experts package and circulate knowledge in making a case for various policy priorities and agendas, and investigate how this knowledge is embedded in particular professional practices and political technologies.

Recognising that policy experts generate policy knowledge in contrasting ways, that they draw on diverse techniques and tools, and that their work is visible to differing degrees, we ask: *How do experts work to generate credibility in the policy-making process, to what extent is their authority contested, and what kinds of political dynamics does this expose?*

The panel embraces studying policy experts in their full diversity, including those working in government, international organisations, management consultancies, think tanks, and professional service firms.

Key references

Clarke, J., Bainton, D., Lendvai, N., Stubbs, P. (2015) Making Policy Move: Towards a politics of translation and assemblage. Bristol: Policy Press.

Dolowitz, D. P., & Marsh, D. (2000). Learning from Abroad: The Role of Policy Transfer in Contemporary Policy-Making. Governance, 13(1), 5-23.

Espeland, W.N. & Sauder, M. (2007). Ranking and Reactivity: How Public Measures Recreate Social Worlds. American Journal of Sociology, 113(1), 1-40.

Kornberger, M. & Carter, C. (2010). Manufacturing Competition: How Accounting Practices Shape Strategy Making in Cities. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal, 23(3), 325-249.

Larner, W. & Laurie, N. (2010). Travelling technocrats, embodied knowledges: Globalising privatisation in telecoms and water, Geoforum, 41, 218–226.

Schwartz-Shea, P. (2014). Judging Quality: Evaluative Criteria and Epistemic Communities. In D. Yanow & P. Schwartz-Shea (Eds.), Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn (pp. 120–146). New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Shore, C. & Wright, S. (2011). Introduction. Conceptualizing Policy: technologies of governance and the politics of visibility. In C. Shore, S. Wright & D. Pero (Eds.), Policy Worlds: Anthropology and the Analysis of Contemporary Power. New York: Bergahn Books.

Sturdy, S., Freeman, R., & Smith-Merry, J. (2013). Making Knowledge for International Policy: WHO Europe and Mental Health Policy, 1970–2008. Social History of Medicine, 26(3), 532–554.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite papers which explore the panel’s overarching question from a range of angles. Supplementary

questions which paper submissions are invited to investigate include but are not limited to:

- How do policy experts generate and perform credibility in the policy-making process?

- Do different types of policy experts have different understandings of what constitutes credible knowledge?

- How is the credibility of different types of experts contested, and how are these contestations negotiated?

- To what extent do policy experts make use of various technologies in making their case? Has there been a shift in the way in which credibility is constructed and performed with the development of new technologies?

- How do experts circulate policy ideas across different contexts? To what extent do international policy experts adapt their knowledge to different institutional settings? How do they respond to demands that ‘context matters’ when developing their policy recommendations?

- How do policy experts collect, identify, and present ‘best practices’ or examples of ‘what works’? How do best practice examples become transformed into exportable policy models or sources of universal Learning?

- How do we study the making of knowledge for policy (e.g. studies of epistemic communities, following policy experts, tracing the development of policy technologies, etc.)? What are the challenges involved in these different approaches?

We welcome papers exploring these issues from a range of disciplines including political science, sociology, anthropology, political geography, and STS. If you would like to get in touch with the panel organisers to discuss a paper idea please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

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Session 1Experts and Laypeople: Contested Boundaries

Wednesday, June 26th 14:00 to 16:00 (MB 3.445)

The Practice of Evidence-Based Policymaking: The Constitutive Effects of Systematic Reviews on Scientific Validity and the Power of Experts at the World Health Organization

Jan Thiel (ETH Zurich, Center for Comparative and International Studies (CIS))

ACTION = LIFE: “Life Work” and the Ontological Shift in Canadian AIDS Policy, 1988-1994

Chris Hurl (Concordia University)

The Notre-Dame-Des-Landes airport project versus the actual Nantes airport reorganization: how experts shape the most « credible »solution ?

Dounia Khallouki (ENTPE)

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Session 2Generating credible knowledge: expert communities and policy mobilities

Wednesday, June 26th 16:30 to 18:30 (MB 3.445)

Knowledge curation and soft power persuasion: The OECD’s role as a global policy influencer of school funding debates

Glenn Savage (University of Western Australia)

Elisa Di Gregorio (The University of Melbourne)

Knowledge broker organisations and the making of ‘credible’ knowledge for policy

Eleanor MacKillop (Cardiff University)

‘Irrational’ Knowledge Sharing (or how the myth of policy success is circulated). The Case of Gender-biased Sex Selection in Asia

Laura Rahm (Center for Population and Development, University Paris Descartes)

Making scientific knowledge for promoting agricultural issues in global climate policy: three epistemic communities in competition

Océane Biabiany (INRAE)

Jean-Francois LE COQ (CIRAD - CIAT)

hrabanski marie (CIRAD)

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Session 3Performing Expertise

Thursday, June 27th 08:00 to 10:00 (MB 3.445)

Practices of making international policy knowledge: the case of a European Commission Working Group.

Natalie Papanastasiou (Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona)

Performing expertise: the case of government statisticians

Cosmo Howard (Griffith University)

Trust in Number-Makers – Expert Legitimacy in Transnational Governance

Justyna Bandola-Gill (University of Birmingham)