P02 / Public Policy and the ‘Policy State’

Topic : POLICY, POLITICS AND POLITICAL REGIME

Chair : Fritz Sager (University of Bern)

Second Chair : Markus Hinterleitner (University of Munich)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The policy state describes the organization of a state in which policy has become the preferred problem-solving tool of the government. In modern, complex, and fast-changing societies, governments address a large number and variety of problems. As governments undertake more over a broader range of issues, policy infrastructure thickens and permeates almost all areas of social, political, and economic life. This has profound implications for the organization of the state and for democratic politics. Democratic political systems are governed by different forms of rule, of which individual rights, formal political institutions and policy are the most important ones. In the policy state, policy interventions increasingly interfere with individual rights and formal political institutions, throwing into disarray the traditional ordering principles of democratic political systems. Because the policy state motivates an increase in the number and intensity of policy conflicts, it is also one of the main reasons for the current flourishing of more conflictual politics in many democratic systems (see e.g. Orren & Skowronek 2017; Pierson & Skocpol 2007).

Research on the policy state in the field of American political development bears particular relevance for the public policy discipline for a number of reasons:

First, it adopts a content-free, macro-perspective on policy that is different from the more particularistic and procedural perspectives on specific policies, which are common in the study of public policy. By considering the policy infrastructure in its entirety and interplay, the research on the policy state is able to ask (and answer) questions that do not emerge if there is emphasis on particular policies and their trajectories.

Second, research on the policy state invites policy scholars to contribute to important current debates in political science about intensified political conflict. Intensified conflict about policy forces the discipline to reconsider the assumptions about the type of political conflict presupposed in major policy-making and policy-change frameworks.

Third, research on the policy state indicates exciting new research opportunities for policy studies as well as potentials for cross fertilization between disciplines. For example, policy scholars can contribute to a better and more comprehensive understanding of policy-centered political conflict, or they can add a comparative dimension to research on the policy state, which has so far only been analyzed in the context of the US.

References:

- Orren, K. & Skowronek, S. 2017. The policy state: An American predicament. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts

- Pierson, P. & Skocpol, T. (eds.). 2007. The transformation of American politics: Activist government and the rise of conservatism. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel invites both conceptual and empirical contributions that explore various facets of the policy state, as well as its implications for democratic politics and the study of public policy as a discipline.

Papers may address (but are not limited to) the following issues and questions:

- (Empirical) Approaches to assessing the extent and form of policy states: How can we measure policy’s advance? Are there differences across policy fields? Can we build on existing work on policy expansion and policy density to get an adequate (and nuanced) picture of the policy state?
- A systematic comparison of the perspectives on ‘policy’ adopted by research on the policy state and by policy studies: What (if anything) is ‘new’ about the macro-perspective on policy adopted by the policy state? Is there work in the policy studies community that adopts a comparable non-procedural perspective on ‘policy’? What are the advantages of a different perspective?

- An international perspective on the policy state: Are there differences between policy states across advanced democracies? Are there differences in the configuration of different forms of rule (i.e. individual rights, structure, and policy)? Are there different (historical) trajectories that lead to the outcome ‘policy state?
- Assessments of the various facets of ‘policy conflict’: What are the dominant forms of conflict about policy in the ‘policy state’? Are all of these forms covered by existing policy-making and policy-change frameworks? Or do we need to update our frameworks to capture all facets of policy conflict in the ‘policy state’?
- Explorations of the link(s) between the policy state and political polarization: If research on the policy state is right that the policy state is an important enable of political polarization, through which processes does a thickened policy infrastructure enhance political polarization?
- Explorations of the link(s) between the policy state and democracy: What are the consequences for democracy and politics if policy becomes more widespread? Does politics become more polarized and democracy more confusing? What is the relationship between the policy state and direct democracy?

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Session 1Public Policy and the Policy State

Friday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (MB 9 EFG)

Discussants

Markus Hinterleitner (University of Munich)

The Study of Public Policy and the Policy State

Markus Hinterleitner (University of Munich)
Fritz Sager (University of Bern)

The more the better? Rule growth and policy effectiveness

Julian Limberg (Department of Political Economy)
Louisa Bayerlein (European University Institute)
Christoph Knill (LMU Munich)
Yves Steinebach (University of Oslo)

Sustaining the Policy State: A Concept of Vertical Policy Process Integration

Yves Steinebach (University of Oslo)
Christoph Knill (LMU Munich)
Christina Steinbacher (LMU Munich)

Occupational Licensing in Israel: the expansion of the licensing state

Osheroff Yair (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)