

# T02P12 / Pushing the Boundaries of Comparative Public Policy

**Topic :** T02 / COMPARATIVE PUBLIC POLICY

**Chair :** Isabelle Engeli (University of Exeter)

**Second Chair :** Christine Rothmayr Allison (Université de Montréal)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This panel addresses the major challenges for comparative design in public policy analysis today: the strong focus on the usual suspects regarding country and issue selection, the methodological divide between quantitative and qualitative approaches and the availability of comparable data. The aim of the panel is to reflect on the limitations of current practices in policy analysis and discuss innovative ways of pushing methodological and comparative boundaries within the discipline by addressing these three major challenges.

Recent research on publication patterns shows the limits of internationalization in top political science journals. Similar patterns can also be observed in public policy journals. Policy Research concentrates repeatedly on a limited number of countries, while others are barely mentioned. There is also an overfocus on a relatively limited number of policy fields that are considered to be politically salient. And even within these fields, some issues still remain largely disregarded. Finally, despite numerous calls for bridging the methodological divide, mixed-methods designs and alternative data collections remain scarce in comparative public policy analysis.

These limitations in comparative practices have major implications. It stalls our capacity for cumulative knowledge, theory building and generalization; it also hinders our aim to make better policies; it sends the wrong signal to our student population and early-career scholars about what should be studied; and it makes entry into the field for scholars working on less studied countries or policy issues more challenging.

The panel addresses the challenge of how to engage a conversation across sectoral divides and across methodological divides. While the field of comparative policy analysis has been rapidly growing, centrifugal forces pull the field in very different directions. Sectoral, regional and methodological specialization, and theory building vs. policy analysis as advice are all dividing the field in sub-communities. This fragmentation stalls our capacity for cumulative knowledge, theory building and generalization and it lessens the potential impact of policy studies on actual policy-making.

This panel proposes to look at these methodological challenges across three main lines of inquiry:

- 1) How comparative is our comparative perspective and how can we improve the comparative scope of our studies regarding country, sector and issue selection?
- 2) How can we overcome the challenges of collecting, accessing and using comparable data to build meaningful comparison?
- 3) How can we bridge methodological divide in our discipline? What role can compound research designs and big data play in order to bridge the divide?

The panel is meant to offer a critical forum on discussing how comparative public policy is practiced today by proposing authors to question and challenge the usual patterns of research design and the common strategies for comparative public policy by proposing critical assessments of the current state of practice and by proposing new, innovative strategies in order to increase diversity in case selection and overcome the methodological divide between within comparative public policy studies. As such, the panel aims at exploring new methodological avenues for comparing public policies.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel welcomes contributions reflecting on the major challenges for comparative design in public policy analysis today: the strong focus on the usual suspects regarding country and issue selection, the methodological divide between quantitative and qualitative approaches and the limited availability of comparable data.

How comparative is comparative policy research? What do we compare and how do we compare? What are the limitations of current comparative practices in public policy analysis? How can we overcome limitations to push the boundaries of comparative analysis?

The aim of the panel is to reflect on the limitations of current practices in policy analysis and discuss innovative ways of pushing methodological and comparative boundaries within the discipline by addressing these major challenges and proposing innovative ways to push the boundaries of public policy analysis.

While the field of comparative policy analysis has been rapidly growing, centrifugal forces pull the field in very different directions. Sectoral, regional and methodological specialization, and theory building vs. policy analysis as advice are all dividing the field in sub-communities. This fragmentation stalls our capacity for cumulative knowledge, theory building and generalization and it lessens the potential impact of policy studies on actual policy-making. For example, recent research on publication patterns show the limits of internationalization in top political science and public policy journals. Policy research concentrates repeatedly on a limited number of countries, while others are barely mentioned. There is also an overfocus on a relatively limited number of policy fields that are considered to be political salient. And even within these fields, some issues still remain largely disregarded. Finally, despite numerous calls for bridging the methodological divide, mixed-methods designs and alternative data collections remain scarce in comparative public policy analysis.

These limitations in comparative practices have major implications. It stalls our capacity for cumulative knowledge, theory building and generalization; it also hinders our aim to make better policies; it sends the wrong signal to our student population and early-career scholars about what should be studied; and it makes entry into the field for scholars working on less studied countries or policy issues more challenging.

The panel is meant to engage a conversation about how comparative public policy is practiced today and explore new avenues for comparative analysis. The panel invites contributions that question and challenge the usual patterns of research design and comparative strategies and propose innovative strategies for pushing the boundaries of comparative policy analysis. The panel welcomes contributions addressing in combination or separately the following lines of inquiry:

- 1) How comparative is our comparative perspective and how can we improve the comparative scope of our studies regarding country, sector and issue selection?
- 2) How can we overcome the challenges of collecting, accessing and using comparable data to build meaningful comparison?
- 3) How can we bridge methodological divide in our discipline? What role can compound research designs and big data play in order to bridge the divide?

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## Session 1 Pushing the Boundaries of Comparative Public Policy

Friday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (MB 1.301 )

### Discussants

Isabelle Engeli (University of Exeter)

Christine Rothmayr Allison (Université de Montréal)

### **Classifying global healthcare system types: Reflections and revisions of extant typologies to better guide comparative research**

Gabriela de Carvalho (University of Bremen )

Lorraine Frisina Doetter (Collaborative Research Centre 1342, Global Dynamics in Social Policy, University of Bremen)

Achim Schmid (University of Bremen (CRC1342 Global Dynamics of Social Policy))

The present study explores the role of classification and the constructing of typologies as an analytical device in understanding both the theoretical and empirical manifestations of healthcare systems globally. In a first step, we explore the relative benefits and limits of different classificatory logics – the deductive versus inductive versus the ideal type – before conducting a systematic review of extant typological literature on healthcare systems. The literature identified through our reviews shows a preponderance of inductively driven typologies with strong OECD biases, which are not able to fully reflect the particularities of the Global South. Building upon the healthcare system classifications of Wendt, Frisina and Rothgang (2009), as well as Böhm et al. (2013), we argue that, in order to capture the role of external/international actors and organizations in healthcare systems, whose impact and influence on countries of the Global South are particularly important, classificatory systems thus far applicable to the OECD world must be revised to account for potential territorial shifts across the dimensions of financing, service provision and/or regulation defining healthcare systems. In the absence of such a global analytical roster, we argue, comparative research involving countries and regions of significantly different levels of economic development becomes obfuscated. In an effort to redress this gap in the literature, we lay out how state, societal, economic and external actors feature in different dimensions of healthcare systems, putting forth a deductively derived and actor-centered typology of global healthcare systems which we subsequently refine in an iterative process using ideal types. Four important strengths of this classification are that: (1) a theory-based framework can inform the researcher's choice of dimensions, variables, indicators, and criteria for inclusion, thereby providing a necessary first step for defining a coherent analytical template for data collection; (2) a deductive approach to classification may resolve some of the limitations associated with data availability in the Global South; (3) the conceptual focus on actors and organizational attributes facilitates the evaluation of their precise role in financing, service provision and regulation, both over time and across countries; and (4) the role of external actors, which act as financing institutions, providers, and even regulators (e.g. vis-à-vis conditionality) in many poor countries on a permanent basis, is taken into account.

### **The Biomedicalisation of Home Care and Its Incidence on Services for Older Adults**

Patrik Marier (Concordia University)

Daniel Dickson (University of Saskatchewan)

To what extent does the medicalization of home care services influence the generosity of these services

and nature of the services offered to older adults? These are the two central questions explored in this paper. As part of a five year project focusing specifically on social policies that aim to enhance the quality of life of older adults, this paper develops a comparative index that measures public efforts to enhance the social autonomy of older adults and in-depth comparison of home care policies in five industrial countries (Canada, Korea, France, Sweden, and the United States). The index targets core social policy areas such as home support, transport, and social services and the limitations surrounding data in home care. It also considers the financing mechanism of these programs, their accessibility and coverage. With caution required when analyzing home care data, the comparative analysis of five case alleviates some of these shortcomings via a traditional analysis of policy documents and interviews with policy makers and service providers.

This paper also investigates the extent to which common theoretical arguments deployed in the study of the welfare state - such as the power resource, the quality of government, the grey power thesis, and the fiscal thesis - provide a solid explanation for the differences in generosity across industrialised countries. Our findings support the well know correlation between the proximity of budgetary and political decision making bodies and where the services are provided, driven mostly by the organization of social services in Scandinavia. However, we also conclude that the extent to which services are provided by health authorities, as opposed to municipalities or other administrative units, matters greatly as well.

## **TYPES OF POLICY GOALS: CROSS-SECTORAL COMPARISON OF CROATIAN PUBLIC POLICIES**

Ana Petek (University of Zagreb, Faculty of Political Science)

Kresimir Petkovic (Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb)

This paper reports on a research project that falls with the approach of cross-sectoral comparative public policies. Cross-sectoral comparison is still quite neglected in the policy research. Comparing across several sectors within the same country provides a fruitful basis for refining theoretical propositions and for developing empirical policy theory. This is especially important for the policy research in eastern European countries, as they greatly differ in historical development and current context of policy-making from US and other western countries whose practice dominantly inspires policy theory. To somewhat contribute to the aim of developing empirical policy theory by systematic comparison, this research project focuses on variations of policy goals.

Policy goals, as formal manifestations of a desirable future, statements declaring what the governments will do, are basic element of any public policy. As they vary so greatly across different policies, in policy research and literature solid classifications of policy goals are almost non-existent and quite poorly connected to real-world policy cases. Still, policy goals are fundamental guidelines for policy-making, they predominately justify all action in policy-making and make prime normative element in policy-making, so their empirical relevance is unquestionable. Such an important policy features can reveal much valuable insights on the policy phenomenon and make notable ground for intriguing comparisons of diverse sectors. So, the project on Croatian public policies strives to contribute to this research gap through enhancing policy goals classifications by insights from empirical examples through cross-sectoral comparison.

The comparison is conducted by coding strategic documents of Croatian government within qualitative content analysis procedures (Schreier, 2012) and by NVivo processing. Croatian strategic documents and goals they stress were never scrutinized by a systematic comparative analysis. As policy literature and previous research on Croatian public policies give little input on the research topic, and as this paper makes initial efforts in the development of policy goals classification, descriptive purpose of the research is convenient. Therefore, the aim of the research project lays in determining and describing basic types of policy goals. Research question is by which types policy goals vary. The documents were sampled to ensure representation of sectors from all major policy areas: from defence and foreign affairs, law and order, economic, social, and sectoral policies (Compston, ed, 2004). Also, sample includes multisectoral policies, targeted at specific social groups, that "cut-across" standard sectors. Sample includes security, justice, employment, transport, education, gender equality, disability and youth policy. For processing and analysing data on the goals of Croatian public policies, the project developed an original coding scheme with five types of policy goals: sector-oriented, process-oriented, evaluation-oriented, instrument-oriented and value-oriented policy goals.

## **Consultation papers and mixed methods for comparisons: methodological thoughts surrounding the spread of new policies on corporate criminal liability**

Simon St-Georges (Université de Montréal)

How can we best study a new controversial public policy in a manner that will allow for a theoretical contribution while also having a practical impact on the policy evaluation, or even its evolution? And how can we best breach the divide between the qualitative and quantitative realm in doing so? These highly relevant methodological questions are central to my doctoral research. I reckoned with these challenges in my previous work on deferred prosecution agreements (DPAs), which I have completed under the supervision of Professor Denis Saint-Martin. DPAs are the newest and most controversial instruments in corporate criminal justice. These policies now allow state prosecutors to drop criminal proceedings against businesses, without any formal recognition of criminal liability, and in exchange of corporate reform and financial penalties. In the last five years, they have spread in various forms to many countries around the world, despite their controversial nature. They are favoured by businesses to maintain their public contracts and their reputation. Multinationals, through lobbying and public campaigns, have been the main proponents of DPAs and they have participated massively in various consultation process for their implementation. Following Young and Pagliari (2017), I have therefore given an important weight to consultation papers in my process-tracing, especially to understand the influence of corporate actors. However, my methodological design varies substantially from their work as it is qualitatively driven.

Using the new policy of DPAs as a case study, my contribution to the present panel on “Pushing the Boundaries of Comparative Public Policy” will venture into the use of mixed methods to dissect the discourses that are relayed in consultation papers. I review the consultation process and the consultation papers submitted for the implementation of DPAs in three Commonwealth countries: Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. For the purposes of this panel, I wonder in what ways we can better use the consultation papers that concern similar or identical public policies. While qualitatively comparing the process of consultation of each country, notably based on their neutrality, orientation and transparency, I also discuss the importance of a thorough qualitative review of all, or most consultation papers, whenever possible. This said, I also comment on how coding the discourses contained in the consultation papers can better describe the ideational preferences of different actors with added empirical rigour. I therefore call for a complete qualitative review supported by a quantitative description to better convey a high volume of information to the reader in an accessible way. This mixed method can be useful to contribute to wider theoretical debates, such as policy diffusion or business power, and to provide an enlighten contribution to the policy analysis of the subject matter at hand. The merit and pitfalls of a case selection based on the dependent variable are incidentally discussed when we study new and controversial public policies.

#### Reference

Young, Kevin and Stefano Pagliari. « Capital United? Business Unity in Regulatory Politics and the Special Place of Finance » 11 (March 1st, 2017). <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/rego.12098/full>.