P04 / Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Public Policies and the Co-evolving Dynamics of Organizations

Topic : POLICY DESIGN, POLICY ANALYSIS, EXPERTISE AND EVALUATION

Chair : Romulo Pinheiro (University of Agder)

Second Chair : Mitchell Young (Charles University)

Third Chair : Maria Laura Frigotto (Dept. of Economics and Management, University of Trento)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In the last decade or so, there has been a growing awareness among policy makers and academics alike about the importance of investigating the role that complex, adaptive systems play in policy processes (Room 2011, Morcöl 2012, Geyer and Cairney 2015). Applying a complex systems model to policy requires going beyond the macro and understanding also the dynamics of the actors and organizations that receive, (re-)produce and translate policy. Systems theorists have long argued that analytical reductionism has led to a simplification of how social, technological, cultural and ecological systems interact in non-linear ways to produce unpredicted events that cause societal disruption and turmoil, what some have termed ‘black swans’, as well as ‘wicked problems’ that confound simple, temporal or spatially bounded solutions.

Given recent turbulent events and uncertainty-raising problems such as the global financial crisis, Brexit, social media’s legitimacy issues, the EU’s migration crisis and the rise of political populism and post-truth politics, it is thus timely to inquire about the degree to which policy making and policy makers take into account the complex foundations of both the problems and policy solutions, as well as the co-evolutionary nature of the self-organising systems and the organizations that compose them (e.g. in the realms of health, education, finance, environment, media) from within which these events incubate.

Disruptive events call for change in public policies and in the actors producing and receiving public policies (e.g. organizations, communities, individuals), in terms of anticipating, reshaping and overcoming the effects emanating from these events. On the reverse side of the same coin, disruptive events also threaten society and the survival of the institutions (order, logics, behaviour) that ground it. Hence, they also suggest a need for supporting societal robustness and uninterrupted functioning.

In a systems’ thinking perspective, this call for change and persistence can be understood in terms of resilience. Resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain functioning and guarantee survival. Within a resilience framework, change can take the form of adaptability or transformability depending on the scope and the impact of change. Adaptability is the capacity to modify and adjust the system to respond to disturbances, while transformability is the capacity to change the system into a different one if disturbances make the current one unsustainable. Both these strategies allow the system to survive, however, they impact very differently on the society and the organizations, individuals and communities within it.

This panel will investigate how policy can directly and indirectly (though metagovernance of institutional and individual actors) combine and remain open to adaptability, transformability and resilience. The overarching hypothesis has two parts: one, the prevailing linear models of public policy are not adequate to deal with the complex nature of contemporary policy problems and the organizations and systems in which they arise; and two, that by drawing on complex systems theory (in this case through the concept of resilience) new insights and models of policymaking can be developed that more effectively address those shortcomings.

We envision addressing the following thee aspects of this challenge in the panel’s sessions:

- Focusing on the macro level, and exploring adaptability, transformability and resilience within policy frameworks and the policy making process;
- Exploring the conceptual and theoretical tools available to social scientists to both assess and comprehend the phenomena of adaptability, transformability and resilience (as well as the complex interplay between the three) at the macro (policy), meso (organisations) and micro (individual agents) levels;
- Investigating the empirical manifestations (evidence) of the tripartite phenomenon of adaptability-transformability-resilience at the macro, meso and/or micro levels.

The panel addresses recent calls to bring together a multiplicity of scholarly communities (inter-disciplinary dialogue) in addressing complex problems facing contemporary societies.

References

Geyer, R., and Cairney, P. (2015). Handbook on complexity and public policy: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Morçöl, G. (2013). A Complexity Theory for Public Policy, New York & London: Taylor & Francis.

Room, G. (2011). Complexity, Institutions and Public Policy: Agile Decision-making in a Turbulent World, Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

CALL FOR PAPERS

In the last decade or so, there has been a growing awareness among policy makers and academics alike about the importance of investigating the role that complex, adaptive systems play in policy processes (Room 2011, Morcöl 2012, Geyer and Cairney 2015). Applying a complex systems model to policy requires going beyond the macro and understanding also the dynamics of the actors and organizations that receive, (re-)produce and translate policy.

This panel will investigate how policy can directly and indirectly (though metagovernance of institutional and individual actors) combine and remain open to adaptability, transformability and resilience. We begin with the following overarching hypotheses: one, the prevailing linear models of public policy are not adequate to deal with the complex nature of contemporary policy problems and the organizations and systems in which they arise; and two, that by drawing on complex systems theory (in this case through the concept of resilience) new insights and models of policymaking can be developed that more effectively address those shortcomings.

Papers in this panel will address the ways in which the concepts of resilience, adaptability and transformability can be used to reshape public policy and the organizations that are governed by but also shape, challenge and (re-)produce these policies. We are interested in contributions from scholars of both public policy/administration and organizational theory. Papers may focus on different levels and/or aspects of this problematic, by taking:

- a systems or macro level approach, exploring adaptability, transformability and resilience within policy frameworks and the policy making process; papers may also deal with more specialized macro level systems (health, education, finance, environment, media, etc.)
- a conceptual and theoretical approach, exploring tools available to social scientists to both assess and comprehend the phenomena of adaptability, transformability and resilience (as well as the complex interplay between the three) at the macro (policy), meso (organisations) and micro (individual agents) levels;
- an empirical approach, investigating the manifestations (evidence) of the tripartite phenomenon of adaptability-transformability-resilience at the macro, meso and/or micro levels.

References

Geyer, R., and Cairney, P. (2015). Handbook on complexity and public policy: Edward Elgar Publishing.

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Session 1

Thursday, June 27th 10:30 to 12:30 (MB 3.285)

Every Which Way But Loose: Quantifying Institutional Resilience

Tony Casey (University College Dublin (UCD))

Organizational strategy in complex policy systems: the case of higher education

Mitchell Young (Charles University)

Romulo Pinheiro (University of Agder)

Organizational resilience, lessons learnt from the Peruvian Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation’s response to El Niño 2015-2016 phenomenon

Guiselle Romero Lora (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú)

Juan Carlos Rivero Isla (Pontificia Universidad Católica del Peru)

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Session 2

Thursday, June 27th 16:30 to 18:30 (MB 3.285)

Institutional Resilience and Adaptability at the Frontline: How City-Regions are Navigating the Crisis of Industrial Restructuring

Charles Conteh (Brock University)

Policy design as a foundation for urban resilience implementation

Marie-Christine Therrien (École nationale d'administration publique, Université du Québec)

Julie-Maude Normandin (Ecole nationale d'administration publique)

Social innovation in health towards resilient communities: policy, process recommendations

Rita Gallardo (Senate of the Philippines)