P13 / The construction of Policy Solution: The Hidden Face of the Governmental Policy Formulation

Topic : POLICY FORMULATION, ADMINISTRATION AND POLICYMAKERS

Chair : Philippe Zittoun (ENTPE - LAET - University of Lyon)

Second Chair : Frank Fischer (Humboldt University in Berlin)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

David Rochefort and Roger Cobb published an edited book in 1993 titled "The Politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda" which is used as a major reference in all Textbooks and Handbooks on Public Policy. Drawing on the studies undertaken by Cobb and Elder, the “first systematic scholarly assessment of the pre-decisional component of the policy process” (Jones, 2016), Rochefort and Cobb focused on the problem definition process. This involves defining the meaning of a social situation, its implication, its urgency, and also who or what was to blame for the situation. They proposed to study the “problem definition” phenomenon from both political and policymaking perspectives, to map out the most frequently employed [definitions] by problem definers and to analyze the scenarios by which definitions are build and crumble” (p. 4).

Despite the focus on issues and problems, however, an enigmatic paradox persists, namely the neglect of problem solutions. Jordan and Turnpenny (2015) refer to the policy formulation stage and the choice of solutions as the most neglected phase of the policy cycle. In this regard, the question of how a solution is defined remains underdeveloped, if not altogether missing from policy research. That is, how solution definitions are constructed, how a solution succeeds or fails to attract the attention of governmental decision-makers is in need of investigation. If most policy studies have shown that problems are social constructions that actors in the policy process create, then it is equally important to consider this perspective for the construction of solutions.

Following Kingdon, who argued that solutions and problems are not inherently interrelated, there is then no reason to assume that the problem definition necessarily carries over to the development of policy solution. But the means by which policymakers in the policy formulation process construct, define, build agreements and impose policy solutions remains poorly understood in the policy literature. If the problem is considered as construction, a large part of the literature considers the policy solution as an instrument which already exists and just has to be chosen by government.

But how is a policy solution defined and given meaning to attract government attention? How is the policy instrument constructed? How does an instrument become the “relevant and appropriate” solution to a problem? How and why do actors decide to accept and support a policy solution? How is the competition between different policy proposals supported by different coalitions before one is selected?

CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel focus on policy formulation and decision to better understand the target following by a proposal, from its emergence to its governmental decision. We look for paper proposals which can contribute theoretically, empirically or methodlogically can contribute to better understand the success and the failure of the different proposals and contribute to answer to the following question: how is a policy solution defined and given meaning to attract government attention? How is the policy instrument constructed? How does an instrument become the “relevant and appropriate” solution to a problem? How and why do actors decide to accept and support a policy solution? How is the competition between different policy proposals supported by different coalitions before one is selected?

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Session 2

Friday, June 28th 10:30 to 12:30 (MB 9 B)

Discussants

Charlotte Halpern (Sciences Po Paris - Centre d'Etudes Européennes (CEE))

Upcycling a Trashed Policy Solution? Argumentative Coupling and Decoupling in German Pension Policy

Sonja Blum (Universität Bielefeld)

Carbon capture and storage: transformation of a technical solution against climate change or the price of coupling

Sebastien Chailleux (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Bordeaux)

Public Postsecondary Governance in the United States: The Political Messiness of State Policy Solutions

Magdalena Martinez (Rowan University)

Building the 'Balanced' Solution to Abortion: A Frame Analysis of Canada's Federal Response to R. v. Morgentaler

Rebecca Vachon (University of Ottawa)

Framing basic income as a policy solution: a comparative study of interest groups and political parties

Rincón Leire (University of Barcelona)

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Session 3

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

Success and Failure of (De)Coupling in US Agricultural Policy Making: the Introduction and Demise of Direct Payments to Farmers

Gerry Alons (Radboud University of Nijmegen)

Policy learning, bricolage or exogenous change: what is driving the formulation of biodiversity protection solutions?

Pierre Chassé (AgroParisTech)

Smart city initiatives in Toronto: New formulation tools to address old urban problems?

Francis Garon (Glendon College / York University)

Nicolas-Guillaume Martineau (York University, Glendon College)

Caruso Andrea (York University - Glendon School of Public and International Affairs)

Re-allocating urban roadspace: a technical solution in search of a policy problem

Charlotte Halpern (Sciences Po Paris - Centre d'Etudes Européennes (CEE))

Revisiting Kingdon’s model: Does solution definition precede policy formulation?

Maitreyee Mukherjee (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)