# (Virtual) P07 / Problem structures and the policy process

**Topic :** POLICY DESIGN, POLICY ANALYSIS, EXPERTISE AND EVALUATION

**Chair :** Sabrina Kirschke (University of Copenhagen)

**Second Chair :** Hannah Kosow (Universität Stuttgart)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Public policy problems are increasingly described along with structural characteristics as a starting point for further theory building and empirical analysis (Peters, 2005; Hoppe, 2011; Peters & Pierre 2015). One particularly prominent example is the wickedness of problems (e.g., Rittel & Webber, 1973; Head, 2019), which likely influences the solvability of problems and the choice of relevant instruments and tools in policy design. Related approaches are the uncertainty (e.g., Dewulf & Biesbroek, 2018) or the complexity of problems (e.g., Pahl-Wostl et al., 2012; Kirschke and Newig, 2017), highlighting specific aspects of wicked problems as a starting point for discussing participatory and legal instruments for their solution.

In sum, these studies have contributed to a systematic analytical understanding of public policy problems beyond traditional policy field distinctions; they have also strongly stimulated the discussion of new design approaches in public policy analysis. But while structural approaches have advanced debates in public policy analysis, recent analyses correctly ask for better aligning structural approaches with public policy literature throughout the policy process (e.g., Roberts, 2018; Head, 2019). This includes a better understanding of how different characteristics of policy problems influence the agenda-setting processes, policy design, implementation, and also the possibility for evaluating public policies (ex-ante).

This panel aims at a more advanced understanding of the role of problem structures throughout the policy process. Key questions are

1) What are the potential structural characteristics of public policy problems, and how do policy problems differ along with these structures?

2) Which potential impact have these problem structures on the policy process from different theoretical angles? How could, for instance, different structural characteristics of problems influence policy design and implementation?

3) What are the actual effects of problem structures on policy processes across specific policy fields, such as environmental, health, and agricultural studies?

Addressing these questions shall advance our understanding of the role of structures in the analysis of public policy analysis, and therefore also support the generation of lessons learned across policy fields.

*References*

Dewulf, A., & Biesbroek, R. (2018). Nine lives of uncertainty in decision-making: strategies for dealing with uncertainty in environmental governance. Policy and Society, 37(4), 441-458.

Head, B. W. (2019). Forty years of wicked problems literature: Forging closer links to policy studies. Policy and Society, 38(2), 180-197.

Hoppe, R. (2011). The governance of problems: Puzzling, powering, participation. Policy Press.

Kirschke, S., & Newig, J. (2017). Addressing complexity in environmental management and governance. Sustainability, 9(6), 983.

Pahl-Wostl C., Lebel L., Knieper C., Nikitina E. (2012). From applying panaceas to mastering complexity: towards adaptive water governance in river basins. Environmental Science and Policy, 23, 24-34.

Peters, G. B. (2005). The problem of policy problems. Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis, 7(4), 349-370.

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of policy intervention. Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration, 37(4), 224-235.

Rittel, H. W., & Webber, M. M. (1973). Dilemmas in a general theory of planning. Policy sciences, 4(2), 155-169.

Roberts, N. (2018). Wicked Problem Territory and the Design Strategy. https://www.ippapublicpolicy.org/file/paper/5b0f3d2a167fe.pdf

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel welcomes contributions that directly link the structure of public policy problems and their effects throughout the policy process. Contributions should address at least one of the key research questions of

1) What are the potential structural characteristics of public policy problems, and how do policy problems differ along with these structures?

2) Which potential impact have these problem structures on the policy process from different theoretical angles? How could, for instance, different structural characteristics of problems influence policy design and implementation?

3) What are the actual effects of problem structures on policy processes across specific policy fields, such as environmental, health, and agricultural studies?

Given the panel's synthetizing nature, we welcome contributions that focus on different steps of the policy process such as policy design or implementation, and that include different theoretical angles, such as rational or constructivist approaches. Empirically, we invite contributions related to various policy fields such as environmental policy, health, technology, or agricultural studies. Comparative analyses that go beyond single case studies and cover more than one policy field are particularly welcome.

To synthesize knowledge and to encourage discussion, all presenters will be asked to provide short answers to two key questions before the conference:

1) Which problem characteristics are critical to public policy analyses in your field of research?

2) How do/could these problem characteristics influence the policy process, e.g., at the design or implementation stage?

The panel chairs will summarize the answers at the beginning of the session to set the stage for the research papers' presentations and discussions.

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## Session 1Morning SESSION, Part 1

Thursday, July 8th 10:00 to 12:00 (Virtual 07)

### (Virtual) Policies and Processes of Resource Governance: Anticommons property and institutionalized conflict in India’s forests

Priyanshu Gupta (Indian Institute of Management Calcutta)

Rajesh Bhattacharya (Indian Institute of Management Calcutta)

### (Virtual) What Kind of Wicked Problem: Applying Uncertainty Typology in Livestock Wastewater Management Practice Analysis

Herlin Chien (National Pingtung University of Science and Technology)

### (Virtual) Designing policy mixes for emerging wicked problems. The case of pharmaceutical residues in freshwaters.

Sabrina Kirschke (University of Copenhagen)

Hannah Kosow (Universität Stuttgart)

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## Session 2Afternoon SESSION, VIRTUAL part 2

Thursday, July 8th 14:00 to 16:00 (Virtual 07)

### (Virtual) A case for constructivist perspectives on ‘wickedness’: problem structure as essential characteristic versus political tool

Johanna Lönngren (Umeå University, Sweden)

KATRIEN VAN POECK (Universiteit Gent)

### (Virtual) Problem ‘structure’ and policy ‘design’ as verbs: Implications for the governance of wicked problems

Vanessa Schweizer (University of Waterloo)

Christina Comeau (Royal Roads University)

Natalya Siddhantakar (University of Waterloo)

Naresh Singh (Jindal School of Government and Public Policy)

### (Virtual) Understanding problem structure and problem perception

Sonia Gatchair (University of the West Indies, Mona)

ERIS SCHOBURGH (THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES, MONA CAMPUS)

### (Virtual) The effects of policy and functional (in)coherence on coordination – A comparative analysis of cross-sectoral water management problems

Ines Dombrowsky (German Development Institute)

Andrea Lenschow (Universität Osnabrück)