

# (Virtual) T01P10 / The Narrative Policy Framework: Taking Stock of New Developments

**Topic :** T01 / POLICY PROCESS THEORIES

**Chair :** Bettina Stauffer (University of Bern)

**Second Chair :** Michael Jones (Oregon State University )

**Third Chair :** Johanna Kuenzler (Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This panel is to discuss new developments in research applying the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) to policy processes. Developed in the USA within the last 15 years, the NPF has started to gain traction also in research from other world regions, investigating a plethora of policy fields with a diverse set of methodologies (e.g. Huda, 2019; McBeth & Lybecker, 2018; Weible, Olofsson, Costie, Katz, & Heikkila, 2016; Merry 2016; Jones 2014; Shanahan et al. 2013).

Neuroscience has long acknowledged the central role of narratives for human cognition. The NPF takes up this finding by explicitly conceptualizing the human being as a homo narrans, i.e. as individual that uses narratives both to make sense and memorize information and to relate it to others.

The NPF enables researchers to understand the dynamics of policy making by investigating narrative structure and narrative content (Jones and McBeth 2010). The framework defines narrative structure consisting of setting, characters, plot, and moral of the story that can be studied and compared systematically and empirically (Shanahan et al., 2017; Shanahan, Jones, & McBeth, 2011). Recurring character types are the victim suffering from a policy problem, the villain causing the problem, and the hero solving it (Shanahan et al., 2017).

According to the NPF, policy actors use narrative content in a strategic way to reach their policy goals. Based on various hypotheses, such as the devil-angel-shift or the scope of conflict, the framework claims that these content-related narrative elements can also be studied using systematic empirical approaches (Jones and McBeth 2010; for studies of the NPF hypotheses cf. for instance Brewer, 2019; Shanahan et al., 2017; Shanahan, Jones, McBeth, & Lane, 2013).

The goal of this panel is to enable discussions on new developments around the NPF. With the NPF still being a relatively young theory of the policy process, many research gaps remain to be filled (cf. also Shanahan et al. in C. M. Weible & P. A. Sabatier (Eds.), *Theories of the policy process*, pp. 173–213). Research topics may include (but are not restricted to):

- Comparative analyses applying the NPF
- Transferability of the NPF to new contexts
- Investigating macro-level narratives
- Exploring the role of institutions in the NPF
- Extension of NPF applications to post decision-making processes, e.g. policy implementation or evaluation

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel welcomes papers that contribute to ongoing research around and engage critically with the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF). Research topics may include (but are not restricted to):

- Comparative analyses applying the NPF
- Transferability of the NPF to new contexts
- Investigating macro-level narratives
- Exploring the role of institutions in the NPF
- Extension of NPF applications to post decision-making processes, e.g. policy implementation or evaluation

We also welcome innovative combinations of the NPF with new methodologies.

Applicants should clearly anchor their research in the NPF framework or engage critically with it to enable fruitful discussions during the panel.

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## Session 1

Thursday, July 8th 10:00 to 12:00 (Virtual 03)

### **(Virtual) Deforestation: Framing Processes In A Fragmented Transnational Field**

Silvia Pianta (Bocconi University & RFF-CMCC European Institute on Economics and the Environment)

Deforestation is one of the most pressing environmental problems our planet is facing today. Due to the multiple ecological, economic and social values of forests, a wide array of actors and organizations with different interests and perspectives have been advancing different frames of the deforestation in the transnational field and negotiating over the definition of the best strategies to address it. In this paper, we investigate how frames of deforestation have evolved in international negotiations and which actors and processes determined the evolution of dominant frames of deforestation at the international level. We employ an inductive methodology with a grounded theory approach to identify categories of frames of deforestation, and then follow a process tracing methodology to systematically track the evolution of frames of deforestation in the transnational field. We show how such evolution has been crucially shaped by the polycentric structure of the transnational field and the prevalence of different epistemic communities in different international forest-related negotiations.

### **(Virtual) The Participation Opportunities Act: Narratives between Labor Market Integration and Social Inclusion**

Claudia Globisch (Institute for Employment Research (IAB), Nuremberg)

Markus Gottwald (Institute for Employment Research)

Peter Kupka (Institute for Employment Research (IAB))

In January 2019 the Participation Opportunities Act came in to force in Germany: Employers who provide a long-term benefit recipient with regular employment receive a generous wage subsidy (for a period up to five years; 100% in the first two years) from the state. In addition, all subsidized persons receive coaching to stabilize their new employment. With this, the Participation Opportunities Act seems to correct a design flaw of the Hartz IV Act introduced in 2005: Based on the welfare-to-work principle, it was assumed that unemployed formally classified as “employable” are actually able to take up a job in the first labor market. According to estimates by labor market researchers, this assumption does not apply to approx. 200.000 persons receiving benefits due to a variety of placement barriers (e. g. mental and physical limitations) that.

Accordingly, Hartz IV was criticized for denying participation opportunities, as this group could and were hardly offered services of active labor market policy. From the beginning, the public discourse about Hartz IV was characterised by two competing narratives: On the one hand, the logic of activation with a more punitive approach in order to force unemployed persons to apply for any job. The other narrative stressed the point that the unemployed were given more opportunities by counselling and active labour market schemes. Both narratives supported different views of unemployed persons with regard to their own responsibility for being unemployed. This had consequences for a more demanding vs. a more supporting approach to dealing with them. Thus, the Participation Opportunities Act can be seen as the fulfillment of a promise made with the Hartz legislation, i.e. to create better opportunities.

On the basis of studying the implementation of the Participation Opportunities Act, we will present results

from qualitative interviews with stakeholders from politics, administration and welfare institutions involved in the legislative process. We will reconstruct different narratives regarding understandings of participation. While one narrative tells the story how benefit recipients who are remote from the labor market can still find regular employment, the other one is about persons without any chance for regular employment. For them, participation in subsidized employment is the only way to experience social inclusion. Supporting one or the other narrative has an impact on concepts of implementation (e.g. attracting employers, selecting participants, placement strategies, and the use of sanctions).

Across the political aisles, the view of unemployment is increasingly seen as the fate rather than the fault of the unemployed. This can be interpreted as a move away from the dominant narrative of self-induced unemployment. Beyond this tendency, one can still note conflicting positionings regarding the assessment of Hartz IV and its social and labour market implications.

### **(Virtual) Interest groups and policy framing in morality policies discussion: the intervention from health-related organisations and professionals in the debate about euthanasia in Portugal**

Luís Mota (Polytechnic Institute of Leiria, Portugal)

This paper aims to study how the issue of euthanasia was framed in the debate about this topic held in Portugal between 2016 and 2018, namely by a specific potentially powerful interest groups: health-related organisations and professionals.

More specifically, we analyse the main positions (in favour, against or neutral), the arguments expressed by these actors and ultimately if these actors used more medicine-like frames or if they used policy frames with other nature (e.g., related with ethics, politics or religion).

To this end, we examined the content of the interventions from these actors in committee hearings, written expert opinions and opinion articles published in two mainstream newspapers.

By doing so, this paper wishes to expand the recent literature about policy change and stability of morality issues in Europe by focusing on the overlooked role played by interest groups and on the Portuguese case, an understudied national context that has been identified as a very interesting case given its recent 'permissiveness' wave.

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## Session 2

Thursday, July 8th 14:00 to 16:00 (Virtual 03)

### (Virtual) WHAT'S THE STORY IN A REGULATORY PROCEDURE? NARRATING THE INSTITUTIONAL GRAMMAR OF CONSULTATION

Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

Claire Dunlop (University of Exeter)

Gaia Taffoni (European University Institute)

Jonathan Kamkhaji (European University Institute)

The Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) and the Institutional Grammar Tool (IGT), in turn nested in the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework, are two key theoretical lenses on the policy process. They have been developed separately. But after decades of development, it's time to start a conversation between the two.

The IGT sheds light on how policy-makers design rules – in short, the anatomy of a procedure or an institution. These rules define actors, their boundaries, the range of choices available, the information flows, the decisional moments, the payoffs, and the scope. But how these IGT rules narrated? This is where the NPF has much to add. We contribute to the conversation between NPF and the IGT by considering a sample of consultation procedures in the European Union. We present original data based on IGT coding of primary and secondary legislation that provide the design of consultation procedures in a selected number of European countries. Then we code the same legal base adopting the NPF. Finally we use the data to compare the IGT structure and the NPF narration, and draw insights from this comparison.

### (Virtual) Understanding the European Green Deal: A Narrative Policy Framework perspective

Ekaterina Domorenok (University of Padua)

Paolo Graziano (SPGI - Università di Padova)

Over the last decade, governments worldwide have faced multiple crises and emergencies. Climate change coupled with the economic stagnation as a consequence of the 2008 global financial crisis have been among the major challenges, requiring ground-breaking and long-term policy responses. Scholars and policy-makers alike have widely recognised that new policies could arguably rely on conventional instruments and solutions, calling for devising ambitious policy agendas based on innovative political thinking and paradigms. Sustainability and green transitions have been at the core of this political debate, whereas the coronavirus pandemic has become an extra trigger for a substantial rethinking of consolidated policy approaches (Capano et al., 2020).

The European Green Deal represents a particularly inspiring case for study in this sense, as it aims to develop a strategic pattern of policy integration in order to simultaneously tackle economic, climate and social challenges at a supranational scale. Despite the enduring political crisis and a range of deeply embedded contradictions and problems of the integration process, the EU has launched this, in many ways exceptional, policy package, setting out a consistent cross-sectoral framework of action (Bloomfield and Steward, 2020). Not only does it contain a comprehensive range of measures, covering the key economic sectors, environmental protection, climate change and social inclusion, but it also encompasses a clear policy plan, indicating future legislative provisions that are supposed to translate this ambitious narrative into

concrete policy interventions. The possibility for this package to become fully operational has been determined, among others, by the outcome of the burdensome negotiations on the EU 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, as several Green Deal instruments were supposed to be funded from the EU own resources.

This paper analyses the European Green Deal (EGD) with the objective of unveiling the main political and institutional factors that have determined its content and the process of its definition and approval. There is a widely shared opinion that the EGD has not only embodied a set of innovative political measures aimed at making Europe a climate neutral continent, but it holds a high political ambition and potential of becoming a 'new signature mission' (Storm, 2020) of the EU in a global perspective.

By adopting the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) perspective, we analyse how the strategic policy integration narrative embodied by the EGD has consolidated over time, being shaped by a range of institutional factors, including, among others, the European Commission's institutional leadership, the political support of green and left-wing parties in the Parliament, a strong output-legitimacy oriented policy-making mechanisms and pro-active pro-integration coalitions in the Council. With this respect, in addition to shedding light on the trajectory of the integration process that has recently been dominated by intergovernmental dynamics (Hooghe and Marks, 2019), this paper contributes to the theoretical development of the NPF by exploring the role of institutional factors in the NPF.

Method: we use both quantitative (text analysis: policy documents, grey literature, discourses, etc.) and qualitative (élite interviews) methods to illustrate how innovative ideas and integrated policy solutions included in the European Green Deal have progressively spread and obtained support across EU institutions.

### **(Virtual) Narrative strategies and policy subsystems: a comparative study of labour and education reforms in Italy**

Maria Tullia Galanti (Università degli Studi di Milano)

Giliberto Capano (Università di Bologna)

Giovanni Barbato (Università degli Studi di Milano)

In the Policy Narrative Framework, actors purposefully shape the content and the form of their narratives in order to achieve policy change. While the congruence in the ideas between the narrator and the recipient may determine the success of the narrative, also the narrative strategies aimed at expanding the conflict and/or at addressing the causes of the problem may reveal crucial. Our proposal is to focus on how the same political coalition – and in particular the political leader inside that coalition – uses narratives to promote reforms in two different policy sectors, labour policies and education policies, ultimately bringing to policy change only in labour policy. Our main hypothesis is that successful actors need to shape the content and the form of their narratives upon the characteristics of the policy subsystem, and in particular considering the variety of ideas and the cohesiveness of the subsystem components. We propose to test this hypothesis with a qualitative analysis of a dataset of policy narratives emerged in the main national newspapers during the formulation and the adoption of two major reforms in Italy, the Jobs Act and the Good School, promoted by the same political actors between 2014 and 2016.

### **(Virtual) Impact of narrative messages on COVID-19 vaccine uptake intentions**

Elizabeth Shanahan (Montana State University)

Rob DeLeo (Bentley University)

Kristin Taylor (Wayne State University)

Deserai Crow (University of Colorado Denver)

In the face of increasing vaccine hesitancy, public health officials are fervently working to identify effective communication strategies to increase COVID-19 vaccine uptake. This study uses an experimental survey design to test (i) the direct effect of narrative and non-narrative messages on intention to get the COVID-19 vaccine (others and self), (ii) the indirect mediating effects of affective response to the treatment conditions on intent to vaccinate, and (iii) the indirect moderating effects of a priori beliefs of individualism and collectivism on affective response and intent to vaccinate. The sample is representative of U.S. citizens (n = 3400). The questionnaire was launched January 15, 2021 and closes January 31, 2021.

The message treatments are graphic images pairing narrative words with a call to action. Informed by the Narrative Policy Framework, three treatments test the narrative mechanism of character selection by manipulating the victim character: 'yourself,' 'your circle', and 'your community'. The hero character (target

audience) and call to action (vaccinate) are held constant across all conditions, with the latter being presented separately as the control condition. Assignment to each condition is randomized. The survey also includes a suite of questions to gauge participants' experience with COVID-19, vaccine history and attitudes, risk perceptions, risk mitigation and exacerbation behaviors, worldviews on individualism and collectivism, and demographics. Outcome variables include questions about affective response and intention to vaccinate. The motivation for this research is to gain further precision regarding the power of narrative persuasion.

#### Research Questions

- Do narrative messages have greater impact than non-narrative messages on intention to get the COVID-19 vaccination (for self and others)?
- Does affective response (valence toward risk message) mediate the relationship between messages (narrative and non-narrative) and intention to get the COVID-19 vaccination (for self and others)?
- Do a priori beliefs on individualism/collectivism moderate the relationship between messages (narrative and non-narrative) and affect?
- Do a priori beliefs on individualism/collectivism moderate the relationship between messages (narrative and non-narrative) and intention to get the COVID-19 vaccination (for self and others)?

#### Hypotheses

H1: Respondents receiving the narrative treatment will report a greater affective response on average than in the control condition.

H2: Respondents reporting a strong negative affective response will report lower intentions to vaccinate, while respondents reporting a strong positive affective response will report higher intentions to vaccinate.

H3: Respondents receiving the narrative treatment will report a greater intention to vaccinate on average than in the control condition.

H4: Respondents with strong prior beliefs of individualism/collectivism will condition the strength of the relationships, based on congruency of beliefs and treatment received.

We will use Hayes' PROCESS model to conduct a conditional process analysis. Our objective is to test the mediating effects of affective response to the treatment and control conditions and the moderating effects of a priori beliefs of individualism/collectivism in shaping the impact of narrative risk messages on intention to vaccinate. Therefore, we control for indirect effects in our model. Analysis will include a two-stage least squares regression; the regression coefficients can be estimated using ordered logistic regression analyses.

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## Session 3

Thursday, July 8th 16:30 to 18:30 (Virtual 03)

### **(Virtual) Stories of the Old World: The Narrative Policy Framework in the European Context**

Bettina Stauffer (University of Bern)

Johanna Kuenzler (Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz)

The journal European Policy Analysis (EPA) is currently publishing articles of a special issue on new Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) research in Europe, edited by Bettina Stauffer and Johanna Kuenzler. In this panel session, we introduce the audience to the special issue's contributions. The special issue comprises a bouquet of studies from contexts as varied as Norway, Russia, Malta, or the European Union. With insights into agriculture, climate change, COVID 19, and more, the special issue also offers a wide range of investigated policy fields. Lastly, the diversity is complemented through innovative methodological approaches (e.g., linguistic analysis, discourse network analysis), and through the fruitful combination of the NPF with other theoretical approaches (notably the Institutional Grammar Tool or Bureaucratic Reputation Theory).

### **(Virtual) The effect of pandemic on discourse regarding smart city solutions in Europe**

Mikołaj Biesaga (University of Warsaw)

Magdalena Roszczynska-Kurasinska (University of Warsaw, NIP 525-001-12-66, Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28, Warsaw)

Anna Domaradzka (University of Warsaw)

European Commission is one of the most active actors promoting and facilitating the transition of cities into smart cities in Europe. Their active engagement has significantly contributed to the implementation of smart solutions. In the beginning, the goal was to increase efficiency – smart cities can manage their resources, assets, and services more effectively for the benefit of local communities. Lately, the narrative about the ultimate goal has changed – the goal of a smart city is the formation of a sustainable city in which the use of resources is optimized and production of waste limited. In order to become smart, cities collect all sorts of data, from citizens, buildings, and sensors (i.e. smog sensors) which allow authorities to react adequately to emerging events like spontaneous demonstrations or accidents almost immediately. Such an approach seems to be beneficial for both parties involved and as such has been recently reported. On one hand, smart city policy becomes more tailored to citizens' needs because it is easier to quantify them. On the other hand, the voice and actions of citizens are heard taken into account in creating the policy.

2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic in full swing, saw rapid popularity growth in the implementation of smart city technologies. In countries that were able to 'flatten the curve' most efficiently like Singapore, South Korea, Australia, or New Zealand, authorities were given the tools allowing for monitoring their citizens almost from the moment they left their houses or arrived at the airports. Temperature measuring points, compulsory apps using various sensors from personal devices, or contact tracking, turned out to be efficient solutions in the fight against the virus spread. The intensity of surveillance, however, made people ask questions about their privacy. European Commission has also spotted the threat that excessive data collection poses. The unquestionable benefits of smart city solutions became its worst foes.

In our project, we analyze how the narrative about smart city solutions has changed in 2020, whether the

emphasis on potential benefits and risks evolved. On one hand, we analyze how the European Commission has changed its approach to smart city solutions. On the other hand, we measure the citizens' responses when such solutions are implemented. Therefore, we have collected and analyzed data from social media regarding smart city solutions to track the narrative framework of the European Commission and the regular citizens' response. In the paper, we provide discourse analysis for a large corpus of documents which is a combination of four methods: entity recognition methods, topic modeling, sentiment analysis, and analysis of syntactic dependencies. This approach allows for the identification of main actors (entity recognition method) and analyzes differences regarding how they are described (sentiment analysis and syntactic analysis) by different content sources. The differences are described along two main dimensions: semantics and sentiment (emotional valence). This technique makes it possible to discover complex networks of relations between actors and their discursive representations as well as content-generating sources.

## **(Virtual) Space for Stories: Legislative Narratives and the Establishment of the US Space Force**

Jonathan Ruff (South Dakota State University)

Michael Jones (Oregon State University )

### **Brief Overview:**

This piece adopts a Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) lens to examine legislator narratives in the congressional testimonies (2018-2019) surrounding the development of the US Space Force.

### **Abstract:**

In June 2018, President Trump directed the development of a sixth branch of the US Armed Forces - the Space Force - whose primary mission would be celestial defense of the United States. Congress has yet to approve the establishment of this newly conceived military branch. In this paper, we utilize the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) to examine legislative meso-level narratives surrounding the advocacy for and in opposition to the creation of a US Space Force. After reviewing the major literature on the NPF and US aerospace policy, we conduct a content analysis to discern the policy narratives within congressional testimonies encompassing the development of the Space Force. The piece culminates with descriptions of the policy narratives and NPF elements used to establish the Space Force, and an analysis of the narratives crafted by Democrats and Republicans. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings to future NPF research in congressional settings.

### **Keywords:**

Narratives; Legislative; NPF; Space Force.