T08P06 / Beyond Critical? Decolonialising Policy Studies

Topic : T08 / POLICY DISCOURSE AND CRITICAL POLICY RESEARCH

Chair : Rosana Boullosa (University of Brasilia/Brazil and Enap/Brazil)

Second Chair : Regine Paul (University of Bergen)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

One of the epistemological cornerstones in critical policy studies is that the production of scientific knowledge is not neutral (Fischer, 1980, 1998; Yanow, 1996; Dryzek, 2010). The recognition of this non-neutrality has led scholars of policy as well as of science and technology to investigate the ideational and material foundations of knowledge claims, and the processes through which knowledge is articulated, becomes "neutralized", institutionalized through policymaking, but also contested (in short: the politics of knowledge generation in relation to policy and governance). This discussion was arguably well located on the stage of an anti-positivist turn in European humanities and social science between the 1960s and 1980s, including lastingly influential reflections by scholars such as Jürgen Habermas, Bruno Latour, or Gilles Deleuze. And it produced a wealth of scholarly engagement across the globe.

This program only gained broader interpretive possibilities, however, when crossing with other analytical paths opened by the philosopher Immanuel Wallerstein, but also Latin American developmentalism (e.g., Furtado, Prebich, Ramos, Santos). These understand the world as an articulated and oppressive system of economies and dependencies which is hierarchically structured around claims to superior knowledge, experiences, and socio-economic but also cultural development. This is the core of decolonial studies proposal. The Peruvian Aníbal Quijano (1992) proposed the concept of coloniality as the other (darker) side of the modernity project. Coloniality established itself as a political, economic, cultural, and epistemological structure that sustains the capitalist "modernization" through the (more or less visible) subordination, exploitation, and eradication of peoples outside the European metropolises (Bhambra, 2021).

Crucial part of the decolonial program has been the critical exploration of epistemological coloniality, offering a more radical hook for discussions of non-neutrality in knowledge production than more established approaches to critical policy studies. From this perspective, epistemological universalism and methodological nationalisms are often embedded even within the more critical conceptual, analytical, and methodological frames (albeit to different degrees). This marginalizes the rationalities, experiences, voices, ways of living, concepts and interpretive frames, feelings, and bodies of people elsewhere. Putting them in and letting them speak from their own perspectives would be a more radical interpretation of the non-neutrality of knowledge in policy studies.

A decolonial stance requires policy scholars to critically reflect upon (often more hidden) forms of epistemological universalism, Euro- and Western-centrism and methodological nationalism operating within our own knowledge production, as well as the extent to which this reproduces subordination of alternative epistemologies. This includes key concepts, heuristics, and analytical units in policy studies, including the Weberian "state" or "ideal type" which have universalized a specific historiography of knowledge production in ways that hide its antisemitic, racist and colonial intellectual origins (Bhambra and Holmwood, 2019).

So how we can decolonize the discussion on non-neutrality within (critical) policy studies? What would it mean to decolonize (critical) policy studies as a discipline and form of knowledge production? How can existing concepts, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies in policy studies, but also ideas about the role of policy analysts in the socio-political world, be revisited from a decolonial perspective?

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel calls for papers – theoretical, methodological, and empirical – which explore the decolonization of policy studies across the range of questions set out above.

We initially propose here two avenues for investigation that dialogue with each other, inviting authors to reflect on the following:

Epistemological pluriversity: A focus on epistemological pluriversity asks scholars to denaturalize or "provincialise" our seemingly universal concepts, methods and empirical-analytical foci, and to explore the oft-hidden coloniality of knowledge in policy studies. This lens enables us to perceive and discuss alternative thoughts/concepts/ideas like the "colonial present" (Bhambra, 2020), other-place (see Zulma Palermo, 1991; 2018), categorization of the social other (Oyèrónk? Oy?wùmí, 1997; 2016), oppressive categorization of the social other, order of Western epistemology (Valentin-Yves Mudimbe, 1988), epistemic violence, epistemic racism or epistemicide (Suely Carneiro, 2005), but also border epistemologies (Walter Mignolo, 2013) or interculturality (Catherine Walsh, 2006). Discussion of such epistemological shifts and their challenges from a policy studies lens is highly welcomed. This includes reflections on researchers' positionality in the global research environment and its interactions with the "colonial present" (Bhambra, 2020).

Decolonizing knowledge: This more structurally-oriented lens asks us to denaturalize the coloniality of knowledge and how it is produced and reproduced, including through our own scholarly interventions. More radical calls for action include centering both our analysis and research collaborations around the colonized body to rescue agency, subjectivity, and voice from epistemologically silenced people (bell hooks, 1994; 2010), their biopolitical visibility, including their voices, discursive structures, sensory and cultural references (Patrícia Hill Collins, 2018), thinking (and acting) for intersectionality (Kimberle Crenshaw, 1991; 2019), "Amefricanity" (Lélia Gonçales, 2020), and working towards "shared knowledge" (Zulma Palermo, 2018). We encourage discussions of how to bring voices of colonized people and places – and their complex interactions with classic (Eurocentric) modernity and knowledge generation – onto the central stage in policy studies. This could include debate of strategies for decolonizing teaching, research, lessons from black feminism and critical race theory, but also research funding and publication policies, but also the limits of these agendas.

We plan for an in-person event.

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Session 1 Decolonising policy studies I

Thursday, June 29th 10:20 to 12:20 (KHS239)

Discussants

Hayden King (Yellowhead Institute)

'Critical Is Decolonial, Critical is Southern': Towards Critical Data Governance

Preeti Raghunath (University of Sheffield)

The Decolonization of Knowledge as Challenge for World Society: Reflections from a Sociologist of Social Policies in South Africa and Brazil

Madalitso Phiri (University of Johannesburg)

(Virtual) 'Rule, Europa!': Coloniality and the global souths in EU trade policy discourse

Antonio Salvador M. Alcazar III (Central European University)

WHO IS YOUR KNOWLEDGE FOR? A THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL (RE)FRAMING TO DECOLONIZE HOW WE LOOK AND MAKE SENSE OF PUBLIC POLICY

Rosana Boullosa (University of Brasilia/Brazil and Enap/Brazil)

Janaina Peres (Universidade de Brasília - UnB)

Luiz Fernando Macedo Bessa (Universidade de Brasília)

The Politics of Reproductive Control & Justice in Punjabi Canada: Giving Voice to Alternative Biopolitical Imaginaries

Amrita Kumar-Ratta (University of Toronto)

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Session 2Decolonising policy studies II

Thursday, June 29th 15:45 to 17:45 (KHS239)

Discussants

Hayden King (Yellowhead Institute)

Decolonialising nudge: Epistemologies in behavioural insights

Colette Einfeld (Australian National University)

Decolonialising Social Policy: view from an other gendered researcher

Trude Sundberg (University of Kent)

Fighting the 'Silent Crisis' with 'Polyphonic Relatedness': A Feminist and Decolonial Approach towards Mobilising Black Communities in the UK

Joy Zhang (University of Kent at Canterbury)

Chinese-style International Relations and geotechnics: Considering world orders as technologies of habitation

Jonathan Hui (Balsillie School of International Affairs)