P01 / Bureaucratic Autonomy and Public Policy

Topic : POLICY FORMULATION, ADMINISTRATION AND POLICYMAKERS

Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Public bureaucracies are important actors in the policy process, and scholars of public policy need to understand better their role in making and delivering public policy. The concept of bureaucratic autonomy is useful in that understanding, and has been widely used in the literature on public policy and public administration (see Peters, 2022), but yet remains less specified than would be desirable. The term is taken to mean, in a rather common-sense yet useful manner, that public sector organizations are relatively unconstrained, and are capable of making their own decisions. To be more useful, however, a number of aspects of bureaucratic autonomy need to be specified:

What level are we talking about?–the institution as a whole, organizations, or individuals

Autonomy from what and whom?–politicians, private sector actors, superiors within the organization, what else

Decisions about what?–policy, budgets, personnel.

How formal does autonomy need to be? –can informal autonomy be as effective

How much bureaucratic autonomy?–the importance of accountability

The above list of dimensions might be extended, but the basic point should be clear. To use this concept successfully will require additional specification and the creation of “autonomy with adjectives” (see Collier and Levitsky, 1997) to be able to differentiate types of autonomy and understand their potential for explaining the behavior of individuals and organizations, and their impacts on policy choices. We believe that when fully specified the concept of bureaucratic autonomy can provide insights for comparative policy studies, both across countries and across policy areas.

The panel organizers will develop a framework paper for this panel containing a typology of bureaucratic autonomy based on the interaction of sources of control. We will circulate this paper to panel participants well in advance of the panel. We would welcome papers that elaborate (and criticize) this framework. We would especially welcome papers that will use the framework to evaluate the degree of bureaucratic autonomy in different settings

Collier, D. And S. Levitsky (1997) Democracy with Adjectives: Conceptual Innovation in Comparativ Research, World Poltiics 49, 430-51.

Peters, B. G. (2022) Understanding Bureaucratic Autonomy: Existing Approaches and a Way Forward, Paper presented at Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX

CALL FOR PAPERS

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P01 / Bureaucratic Autonomy and Public Policy

Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Session 1

Wednesday, June 28th 08:00 to 10:00 (POD366)

Policy Ambiguity & Bureaucratic Autonomy

Luke Fowler (Boise State University)

Ambiguity is an often-overlooked concept in bureaucracy, but as a latent variable it accounts for many of the institutional features and flaws that tend to have the attention of scholars and practitioners. After all, when there are different ways of thinking about the same phenomenon, it often means that there are core controversies about bureaucratic functions, as the system grapples with coherence and consistency in the face of divergent interpretations. While policymaker intents are a guiding light in many cases, it is left up to bureaucrats to decide what policies or procedures mean and how to execute their job tasks in the face of uncertain, volatile, and complex conditions. In general, I argue that ambiguity increases bureaucratic autonomy, either by design or opportunity, by shifting decision-making authority from legislatures to administrators and/or from managers to street-level bureaucrats. In essence, as decisions move through bureaucratic systems, ambiguity creates opportunities that allow administrators to decide how to manifest the purposes and goals of government within a narrow space. This, in turn, has significant implications for bureaucratic leadership as well as for democratic governance. In this conference paper, I discuss these issues, how they tie to but are distinct from other strains of research, and offer suggestions for additional research.

(Virtual) Accounting for bureaucratic autonomy from local politicians by examining civil servants' ties to central politicians: Upper provincial governors in Iran and Pakistan

Guillaume Beaud (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po))

The state scholarship has sought to account for bureaucratic autonomy by exploring state apparatuses' degree of bureaucratization (see Evans, Rueschemeyer and Skocpol 1985). Civil servants embedded in public administrations framed by formalized institutions shaping recruitment, training, or career systems would derive greater policymaking or implementation autonomy when benefiting from developed professional rules, policy tools and processes, corporatist ethos, as well as monopolies over administrative skills.

However, comparing the autonomy of upper bureaucrats staffing provincial and field administrations in Iran and Pakistan suggests that bureaucratization mechanisms do not fully explain civil servants' autonomy from local politicians elected in national (and, in Pakistan, provincial) assemblies. Indeed, while Iran's postrevolutionary provincial administration is poorly bureaucratized - notably deprived of institutions framing governors' recruitment, training, and careers trajectories -, they nonetheless show strong bureaucratic autonomy regarding development work, and show stable tenures. By contrast, Pakistan's provincial governors show poor policy implementation autonomy and short tenures, despite Pakistan's upper bureaucratic cadres having inherited - and maintained - the over-bureaucratized institutional framework of the British era (Alavi 1972, Kennedy 1987).

This paper accounts for the bureaucratic autonomy of provincial governors from local members of parliament in contemporary Iran and Pakistan, by examining bureaucrats' relations to central politicians, in Iran, in the central government, in Pakistan, in federal and provincial governments). It argues that the strength and stability of such ties allows civil servants to build strong bureaucratic autonomy from local politicians who may oppose their policy endeavors, independently from the degree of bureaucratization.

The article shows that the dismantlement of former bureaucratic structures and purge of former administrative elites in revolutionary Iran (1979-1981) has allowed regime elites to rebuild strong politico-administrative arrangements. This involved the structuring, over time, of strong factional coalitions tying central politicians to upper bureaucrats, despite the absence of formalized mechanisms to regulate civil servants' recruitment, training, and careers. In turn, governors' strong political backing strengthens their

autonomy from local members of parliament. Conversely, repeated political attempts at weakening Pakistani bureaucrats' strong state power since 1973, and through the early 2000s have nonetheless been resisted by upper civil servants. This resulted in instable and precarious ties between government politicians and civil servants - embodied by short tenures and constant reshuffles, despite stronger protection mechanisms - which strengthens local politicians' leverage to disrupt bureaucratic autonomy in order to promote their private policy agendas. We account for these mechanisms by addressing policy delivering regarding infrastructural development (e.g. health, education, transport…) on which provincial governors in Iran and Pakistan hold a policy monopoly in their jurisdictions.

We resort to a mixed methods' empirical material. First, we rely on semi-structured interviews with Iranian and Pakistani civil servants, ethnography conducted in field administrations in Pakistan, as well as legal documents and biographical memoirs. Moreover, we use quantitative data on civil servants' career trajectories, using original a dataset built manually, using Pakistani archives and material collected online in the Persian press and institutional documents.

Varieties of bureaucratic autonomy: A comparative analysis of experimentalist governance in the US, EU, and China

Iacopo Gronchi (University College London, University of London)

Experimentalist governance (XG) identifies a peculiar rationale for addressing strategic uncertainty in a wide array of policy areas: namely, the institutionalisation of "a recursive process of provisional goal-setting and revision based on learning from comparison of alternative approaches" (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2012; p.169). XG transforms principal-agent relationships within and beyond government in that the role of the principal is "no longer merely to monitor front-line compliance with promulgated standards" but also "providing the infrastructure and services that support frontline efforts" to meet the agreed goals (p.173). By doing so, XG creates "dynamic accountability": i.e., a relationship where the discretion of local actors is acknowledged rather than neglected, and their "actions are justified or compliant [only] if they can be plausibly explained as efforts to advance the organisational purpose and are well informed by reflection on the best efforts of actors responding to likewise situations" (p.174). As such, XG accords greater autonomy: within government to the bureaucratic agent vis à vis the political principal; and beyond government, to the societal actors implementing "alternative approaches" to joint problem-solving vis à vis the administrative principal. Despite this, no analysis focused on the implications that the adoption of XG has for the definition of bureaucratic autonomy. Based on this view, I move from the hypothesis that different institutional settings – and, more precisely, different "sources of control" for bureaucratic action (Peters, 2022) – may identify different forms of bureaucratic autonomy.

To qualify this hypothesis, this paper proposes to compare varieties of bureaucratic autonomy in three different cases of experimentalist governance applied to innovation policy: namely, i) the US' Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA); ii) European Union's Research and Innovation Smart Specialisation Strategy approach (RIS3); and iii) China's industrial development policy. The reason behind this analytical focus relies in two premises: first, the ongoing search in the academic and policy debate on innovation policy of a new role for public bureaucracies to play in making and delivering innovation policy (see, e.g., Kattel and Mazzucato, 2018); second, the ongoing dynamics that are challenging existing accountabilities and autonomy relationships among politicians, public bureaucracies, and citizens across OECD countries (Bouckaert, 2022). In the first respect, the paper aims to take stock of the existing debate on the "embedded autonomy" of public bureaucracies for the governance of economic and innovation ecosystems (Evans, 1985; Breznitz, 2004). In the second respect, it aims to maximise empirical diversity by comparing a liberal federal democracy, an international organisation, and an authoritarian regime.

To test the hypothesis and develop the theoretical argument further, the paper proposes to do so by a comparative pre-study (Swedberg, 2012). By doing so, the paper fulfils two objectives: first, to point out previously undetected similarities across different institutional settings based on the use of "experimentalist governance"; second, to highlight how substantive differences across them may create different varieties of bureaucratic autonomy for the governance of similar policy challenges.

Managing State Capital: Political Control of Public Financial Institutions

Maxfield Peterson (Political Science)

How are the portfolios of public financial institutions (PFIs) held accountable to public preferences? PFIs are established with authorizing mandates that tie their behavior to legislative guidance, but the considerable autonomy many PFIs enjoy as well as the broad impacts of public financial investment across policy domains mean that their actions are frequently at odds with evolving popular social and environmental

demands. PFIs and their governments have responded to public pressure in different ways; legislators have employed ex ante and ex post methods of bureaucratic control, state executives have issued management and rule-changes, and PFIs have independently adopted private-sector practices such as ESG reporting, the creation of C-suite offices for sustainability, or even engaged issue-driven NGO partnerships. Little has been written on these interactions, and neither classic theories of political control of the bureaucracy or theories of democratic accountability in network governance sufficiently explain them. This article explores public governance of PFIs on social and environmental accountability through a comparative case study of Export-Credit Agencies, a ubiquitous and highly resourced yet understudied form of PFI.

(Virtual) The autonomy unexploited – the role of public servants in the Digitalization in Germany

Maximilian Nagel (Helmut-Schmidt University Hamburg)

There seems to be a window of opportunity for street-level bureaucrats to have a huge impact on the digitalization in Germany. The German Onlinezugangsgesetz (OZG – Online Access Act) legally obligates the public administration in Germany to provide most of its services digitally. In many digitalization projects public servants, who interact with citizens daily, are invited to bring in their knowledge and experiences to develop more citizen friendly forms and applications. Thus, they have the chance to change the way citizens interact with the state. Against this background, public servants have (to some degree) an autonomy and can influence how certain policies are made and implemented, they can even raise issues and make federal ministries aware of things, that are no longer suited for a digital world.

Even though there might be a window of opportunity for change and even though there might be room for autonomic behavior, street-level bureaucrats might not embrace the opportunity that the OZG is offering, at least when they are collaborating with higher level public servants. This being the case the present paper poses the question why public servants in Germany (with a focus on street-level bureaucrats) don’t make use of the window of opportunity.

The public policy literature provides several explanations that we would like to explore. The explanations can for instance be divided into two main groups: individual and organizational.

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Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Session 2

Wednesday, June 28th 10:20 to 12:20 (POD366)

The Autonomy of Senior Public Servants

Katarina Staronova (Comenius University in Bratislava)
Marek Rybar (Masaryk University)

Senior public servants are the nexus between politicians and civil servants, which makes them a central actor in the executive triangle: politicians, senior civil servants, and political appointees (such as ministerial advisers). Traditionally, the point of departure for most discussions of senior public service autonomy is the Weberian ideal that the public service remains neutral and is appointed and promoted on the basis of merit rather than party affiliation or personal connection. In this setting, senior public servants are the technical experts and exercise discretion and oversight over policy implementation. They are also involved in the decision-making around policy design and cross-departmental coordination and management. The nature of the relationship and public service bargain (PSB) with the other actors within the executive determines the level of their autonomy, roles, and responsibilities. The literature on ministerial advisers, however, shows that the behavior and, thus, the autonomy of senior public servants may be altered in what came to be known as functional and administrative politicization. A similar effect is also ascribed to the mediatization of politics. The political setting within which senior public servants operate significantly differs under the context of extensive patronage, where senior public servants do not work in a stable environment. Governing elites may either fire and hire senior civil servants because they have legal powers to do so or can bend, break or ignore existing regulations. To protect their autonomy, we can witness the voluntary exit of senior civil servants who do not wish to work under incoming ministers.

The chapter reviews the various executive triangle settings and corresponding defining boundaries of senior public servants vis-a-vis other actors in the executive triangle. It discusses major trends that have an impact on and/or change the traditional roles of senior civil servants and their autonomy.

The New Limits to Politics: Common Pool Problems in the Knowledge-Based Economy Era

Roger Benjamin

As Brooks (2023) point out, there are many reasons to be optimistic about the future---recent and predicted artificial intelligence aided developments, significant rising standards of living for a large percentage of the world's population, including the United States. However, there is also strong evidence of rising economic, social, and political conflict in Western Europe, North America, and other areas of the world. What are the reasons cited for this rise in conflict> Many point to the growth in right wing and especially extreme right-wing movements in politics, the inability of workers, in particular, white males to obtain the critical thinking skills they need in order to survive and prosper in today's digital economy.

This study presents the following argument. 1) There is a growing transformation of several advanced industrial countries into what should be labeled the knowledge-based economic stage of development. In these societies, services not manufacturing prevail. 2) Many citizens in these countries do not attain the critical thinking skills required by employers. 3) This change brings new challenges that leaders of social, economic, and political institutions do not have the the tools to solve. 4) The result is a significant rise in what Eleanor Ostrom calls common pool problems. If not solved common pool problems can result in an increase in domestic conflict that may create stagnation or even civil war in knowledge-based economies. This work describes the dimensions of the new knowledge-based economies, the problems and opportunities associated with it and the possible strategies that can potentially solve the dangerous common pool problems. The rise in conflict is tightly linked to the threshold changes in leading advanced industrial countries now dominated by their service sector. Over 70 percent of the economies of the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Australia, Japan, and South Korea are serviced based. Services are more

difficult to measure than physical goods presenting serious challenges to economists and leaders.

Services generate more conflict than physical goods because individuals, groups, and institutions have more difficulty understanding what they should pay for the services they seek, how much of the service they should request, and how much of the service requested should they receive for the payment they make. Education, health, social and military services are prime examples of this problem. A principal goal of this paper is to justify the following generalization. As societies move from the industrial to the knowledge-based economy, demands for greater equality begin the take precedence over demands for economic freedom. A focus on economic growth only is no longer sufficient for thinking about and guiding the economy.

APPLICATION OF A TYPOLOGY OF BUREAUCRATIC AUTONOMY ACROSS POLICY SECTORS AND LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT: EVIDENCE FROM EAST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Justa Mwangi (University of Sussex)

Wilson Muna (Kenyatta University)

Bureaucratic autonomy in the public sector is largely construed as the independence of public bureaucrats in directing themselves to deliver public policy. Although there is abundance of evidence on the importance of bureaucratic autonomy in the most developed western nations, the assessment on the African context remains scanty. This research seeks to utilize a proposed typology of bureaucratic autonomy based on the interaction of sources of control to provide insights across several policy sectors and levels of government in East Africa. The research seeks to explore different types of autonomy, at institutional, organizational and individual levels and how they may be construed to contribute to individual and organizational behavior and consequently impact on policy making in different levels of government and across policy sectors. The research also seeks to determine the controlling forces from which public bureaucrats are deemed autonomous from, whether these forces be fellow bureaucrats, politicians, businesses, or other institutions. The research further seeks to identify the level of bureaucratic autonomy in terms of decision making, at policy, budgetary and personnel levels and to assess the nature of autonomy, in terms of whether it is formal or informal and whether informal autonomy is effective. The research additionally seeks to determine how much autonomy is adequate for policy delivery, without compromising the needs for accountability, transparency and oversight by other government and non-government bodies and institutions.

The research will be part of other studies that will evaluate the degree of bureaucratic autonomy at different levels of governments and across different sectors, utilizing the same typology. Thus, the research will contribute to comparative policy studies and support at least one doctoral and one masters level student and several publications. This will provide the most needed evidence by scholars and policy practitioners on the nature of autonomy that is desirable for successful policy making, and what sort of parameters would be required to generalize research findings in this field in order to solve the paradox of autonomization which has led to tough balancing acts for policy practitioners. The scarcity of data from Africa raises particular concerns from an epistemological point of view and this makes a case to examine the typology of bureaucratic autonomy in East Africa more compelling.

The research will adopt a mixed method research design and authorizations for the research will be obtained from Kenyatta University, the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and National Research Councils in East Africa. Respondents for in depth interviews will consist of public officials (bureaucrats) from each sector and from various levels of government. Quantitative data and qualitative data will be obtained from officials in various positions and stakeholders such as politicians, private sector players, lobby groups, non-governmental organizations and religious groups. The quantitative data will be analysed using descriptive, regression and inferential statistics. Qualitative data will be thematically analysed using NVivo and rich insights shared. The researchers propose to undertake the project within a flexible, three-year timeline but a more detailed time frame will be presented at full proposal stage.

Tackling urgent issues in a policy vacuum: Bureaucratic autonomy and the governance of homelessness in Aguascalientes, Mexico

Raul Pacheco-Vega (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) Mexico)

The lack of a stable, safe home is one of the most emotionally de-stabilizing circumstances in people’s lives. UN-HABITAT estimates that about 16 million people live in inadequate housing in Mexico, but there is little if any information regarding the state of homelessness in the country. While the lack of shelter across the globe has become increasingly visible and relevant in national governments’ policy agendas, homelessness appears to be sorely absent from the Mexican government policy realm. Nevertheless, in the context of this policy vacuum, the Civil Protection Agency in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico, has taken it upon itself to

help unhoused individuals. Though not within its mandate, PCA personnel systematically check upon homeless people within the city and ensure their welfare. In this paper I explore whether the concept of bureaucratic autonomy can help us explain this entrepreneurial approach to governing homelessness in a context where lack of housing for vulnerable populations is not even within the realm of public policies being currently implemented. I use ethnographic fieldwork and interviews to understand how policy decisions are made within the context of relative bureaucratic autonomy in the Civil Protection Agency of Aguascalientes. Though this is a case study in a global South country, I am able to draw important lessons on bureaucratic autonomy and homelessness policy that can be applied to other contexts. I also contribute to the literature on street-level bureaucrats, and street-level entrepreneurs. I find that responsive organizations are able to tackle wicked policy problems through the application of bureaucratic autonomy.

P01 / Bureaucratic Autonomy and Public Policy

Chair : B. Guy Peters (University of Pittsburgh)

Session 3

Wednesday, June 28th 15:50 to 17:50 (POD366)

Bureaucratic Autonomy and Controversial Policy Issues

Céline Mavrot (University of Lausanne)

In line with the aim of the panel, this paper proposes to apply the theoretical framework on bureaucratic autonomy to a case of controversial policy implementation. The theoretical purpose is to analyze what disputed policy objectives and implementation conflicts make to bureaucratic autonomy. The autonomy framework is applied to the implementation of the medical cannabis policy in Switzerland (special authorizations for the use of medical cannabis delivered by the Public Health Agency). The implementation of this policy strongly opposes two groups of bureaucrats within the agency, who disagree on the degree of flexibility to adopt with the authorizations (Mavrot 2022). While the medical bureaucrats grant the authorizations, the juridical bureaucrats are ultimately responsible for the compliance of the agency with the law. The focus is on the horizontal relationships between these two groups of public servants responsible for a policy and located at the same hierarchical level (mid-level bureaucrats). As has been shown, bureaucrats are embedded in complex organizational structures and webs of relationships. They are therefore held accountable from different sides: bottom-up as well as top-down, but also ‘sideways’ (Hupe and Hill 2007, 295). This paper explores how the medical bureaucrats worked to stretch their horizontal autonomy within the agency, by relying on elected officials on the one hand, and on implementation partners on the other. Because the medical public servants have a strong professional ethos and a highly specialized knowledge, their sense of professional responsibility tends to counterbalance their duties regarding administrative accountability (in the sense of Peters 2014).

Regarding the questions raised in the call, the focus is on the interpersonal interactions at the organizational level; the autonomy regards the interpretation of the law (how many patients are entitled to receive special authorizations and for which medical indications); the autonomy is that of a group of medical public servants with regard to the agency’s jurists; the analysis shows how the formal structure of accountabilities can be partially circumvented by exploiting the political disagreements on an issue. The paper is based on complementary sets of data that are qualitatively assessed: in-depth interviews with all involved players inside the agency (bureaucrats involved in the dispute and their hierarchy) as well as with implementation partners, a document analysis, a dataset on the delivered medical cannabis authorizations, an analysis of the media and of political debates, and an online survey among referring physicians. The analysis shows that bureaucrats with a strong professional ethos like the medical one can depart from the juridical interpretation of policy objectives and work to increase their horizontal autonomy by establishing external alliances.

References

Peters, B. Guy (2014). Accountability in Public Administration. In Bovens, Mark, Goodin, Robert E., Schillemans, Thomas (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Public Accountability. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hupe, Peter, and Michael Hill (2007). Street-level bureaucracy and public accountability, Public Administration, 85(2): 279–299.

Mavrot Céline (2022). Bureaucratic Entrepreneurship and Morality Politics: Dividing Lines within the State, European Journal of Political Research, 34(3): 73-97.

The Side Effects of New Public Management on Corruption: Deficiencies in Monitoring Public Companies

Júlia Miralles de Imperial Pujol (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Corruption is a relevant public problem in Spain, as shown by the high levels of corruption perception, the

widespread concern about corruption, and the recurring corruption scandals. New Public Management (NPM) is a controversial issue concerning its potential effects on the quality of government and corruption.

The research is based on the construction and exploitation of a dataset of judgements for corruption felonies committed by politicians or public officers in Spain between 1995 and 2015 (N=576). Considering the data on corruption cases included in this dataset, I analyse the presence of public entities inspired by the principles of NPM.

The methodology is based on the statistical method with a large-N design consisting of the exploitation of the database described above. The central variables analysed are the kind of administration where each corruption case took place, the type of public responsibility that the condemned person had, and the intervention of public activity control bodies.

I argue that NPM entities subject to private law (that is, public companies and public foundations) are more usually present in corruption cases than the rest of public entities (H1), that these corruption cases that happen in NPM private law entities are more serious (H2), and that corruption control bodies act in fewer corruption cases that happen in an NPM entity subject to private law than if they happen in another kind of public entity (H3).

The results of my quantitative analysis support H1 and H3 but reject H2. Thus, the results indeed show evidence that public companies and public foundations are more prone to cases of corruption than other kind of public bodies. In addition, the empirical analysis suggests that the causal mechanism explaining this higher prevalence of corruption in NPM private law entities could be related to a failure on the effectiveness of the public activity control in place.

This study will not certainly resolve the controversy about the consequences of NPM in corruption. However, my evidence points to a problem of deficient anti-corruption monitoring in public companies and foundations; this could have important implications both for academia and policy making.

The Role of Bureaucratic Autonomy in Decisions to Add Oncology Drugs to Canada's Provincial Drug Plans

Daniel Cohn (York University)

In Canada, prescription drugs go through a multi-stage process before they are paid for by provincial governments. The three most important steps are: Approval for sale by Health Canada; A non-binding recommendation as to whether provinces should pay for the new medicine by the Canadian Drug and Health Technology Agency (CDTHA); Each province then reaches a final decision, using its own deliberation process. These provincial deliberations vary greatly in terms of the formal autonomy granted to the bureaucrats involved. For example, in Alberta recommendations are prepared by a branch of the Ministry of Health and the minister of health has the final say on adding and removing drugs from the provincial formulary. The minister may ask for advice from an expert panel but is not required to do so. In Ontario, the Health Ministry branch responsible for provincial drug plans is required to commission a review by an expert advisory committee and then the final say rests with the bureaucrat in charge of the branch (The Executive Officer of the Ontario's Drug Programs). However, even though this bureaucrat formally has full decision-making autonomy, such autonomy might not count for much if the process that must be followed and/or the factors that must be considered are narrowly specified, the minister can restrict resources to make certain types of analysis difficult to conduct, or unduly influence the composition of the expert committees that issue the reports that the Executive Officer must consider. Therefore, after identifying the formal autonomy available to bureaucrats in deciding whether to add a drug to the provincial formulary, further investigation is also required to carefully specify differences in the constraints that they face in using this autonomy. This deeper look at the autonomy available will be conducted using the "taxonomy of autonomy" proposed by Verhoest et al. (2004). Once this fuller picture of bureaucratic autonomy available in each province is developed, the second part of the paper will attempt to identify the consequences of the variations that are uncovered. This will be done by utilizing the list of recommendations issued by the CDTHA's Pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review (PCODR) from 2011 to 2020 (Myers et al.) and looking for variation in the number of recommendations 1.) not to adopt drugs and 2.) only approve them for limited use, which are followed by the provinces. The hypothesis to be tested is that provinces where there is fuller and less-constrained bureaucratic autonomy will follow more of these recommendations.

Sources:

Myers, D.E., Jenei, K., Chiasamore, T.M., Gyawali, B. 2021. Evaluation of the clinical benefit of cancer drugs submitted for reimbursement recommendation decisions in Canada. JAMA internal medicine 181(4): 499-508.

Verhoest, Koen, B. Guy Peters, Geert Bouckaert and Bram Verschuere. 2004. The study of organizational

autonomy: A conceptual review. Public Administration and Development 24(2): 101-118.

Dynamics of public administration reform processes: contrasting top-down purity and bottom-up bricolage reform in New Zealand

Rodney Scott (University of New South Wales)

Flavia Donadelli (London School of Economics and Political Science)

Few topics occupy public administration literature like the categorisation of practices as ‘doctrines’, ‘arguments’, or ‘paradigms.’ However, less attention has been paid to how these doctrines are implemented, and administrative reform takes place.

Studying pathways of change is important because administrative reform does not happen automatically. Instead, literature is filled with theoretically-sound reforms that failed to be implemented. Understanding pathways of change can help in designing reforms that are more likely to result in the desired effect. Here we use historical process tracing to compare the two most significant periods of reform in New Zealand in the past 50 years and illustrate two distinct, contrasting approaches.

The 1987-1989 reforms were based on simple (arguably simplistic) assumptions, amenable to rapid top-down reform. This approach was seen as necessary to respond to a fiscal crisis, and inversely, crisis was seen as an opportunity to implement radical reforms previously imagined by the New Zealand Treasury. This was arguably effective for addressing the ‘low-hanging fruit’ of a low-performing bureaucracy but may struggle to produce further incremental gains in a complex environment.

In contrast, 2012-2020 reforms conceived of public administration as a complex social system suited to incremental bottom-up change. Approaches were trialled, refined, and subsequently codified. New Zealand was already seen as relatively high performing; as one senior official noted, this was not the time to “throw the baby out with the bathwater.”

We argue that the first followed a process akin to Hall’s description of paradigmatic policy shifts, while the second exemplifies bottom-up bricolage as described by Sewerin and colleagues. Further, the sudden neat replacement of old paradigms by new ones may no longer be possible or desirable in the current societal/historic context. This does not imply that governments became unable to achieve extensive paradigmatic transformations; instead, paradigmatic changes can be achieved through endogenous feedback and bottom-up processes resulting in ‘interparadigmatic hybridity’.

As Christensen and Lægreid argue: “rather than looking at hybrid forms as some kind of an illness that needs to be cured, we should regard it as a systemic feature that may have advantages of flexibility.”