T01P11 / Conceptualizing and researching policy learning across and beyond theories of the policy process

Topic : T01 / POLICY PROCESS THEORIES

Chair : Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

Second Chair : Bishoy Zaki (Universiteit Gent)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Background and context

From pandemics to climate change, food security, the economy and defense, constellations of actors engage in learning to update their beliefs, understandings, and create meanings that make public policy issues amenable to public policy. It has been argued that public policies are also a way to attribute meanings to action and represent the relationship between a society and its beliefs on the world (Muller, 2009, 8th edition). It follows that the processes through which actors and societies build and change beliefs about problems and policy instruments are key to explaining change. This situates learning processes at the center of decisions about policy instruments, as well as the transformation of policy goals and governance architectures (Bennett & Howlett, 1992; Hall, 1993; Heclo, 1974). In some cases, policy learning can contribute to better policymaking and resilient societies, while in others derail policy, leading to policy failures and fiascos (Dunlop, James, & Radaelli, 2019; Zaki & Wayenberg, 2021). Thus, in adopting a comprehensive understanding of policy learning, we remain agnostic about the final impact of policy learning (being either positive, negative, or even inconsequential).

Policy learning research already offers substantial contributions on the micro-foundations of learning, collective, organizational, and social learning, modes, and mechanisms of learning (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2013; Heikkila & Gerlak, 2013; Zaki, Wayenberg, & George, 2022). We also have an important learning in theoretical frameworks of the policy process highlighted by Weible and Sabatier (2017), such as the advocacy coalitions framework, innovation and diffusion models, and the narrative policy framework.

However, in these frameworks at least, rarely does policy learning as such takes center stage in theoretical terms. At the same time, there is a flow of conceptual and empirical observations on policy learning in other theoretical regions of policy analysis. Suffice it to mention evaluation theory, decision & information theory, mechanisms-based explanations of change, implementation research, and theories of European integration. Research on polysemy in public policy seems also ripe for a policy learning turn (Cino-Pagliarello, 2022). However, efforts carried out in these regions rarely feed back into building a theoretical architecture of policy learning. Finally, there is research on policy learning as autonomous theoretical lens on policy process (Dunlop and Radaelli 2018, Heikkila and Gerlak, 2013) – in this tradition, learning is not examined as one of the elements of other theories. Instead, it takes center-stage. However, these theorizations have not progressed in the direction of addressing normative questions.

General objectives

This panel calls for contributions that conceptualize and/or empirically research policy learning across a broad range of the theoretical frameworks of the policy process presented in Weible and Sabatier (2017), but also within other important areas of theoretical and empirical policy research, such as evaluation and implementation. We also invite papers that contribute to systematizing policy learning as autonomous theoretical field, for example by building micro-foundations, exploring the political economy of learning, linking learning and institutional change, and connecting crisis and learning to resilience and socially responsive innovation.

To guide our prospective authors, we suggest the following research questions:

1. How does policy learning take place within different theoretical lenses on public policy or stages of the policy process? What role does it play? And to what ends/outcomes?

2. How does research in evaluation, implementation, polysemy, and the other regions of policy research feedback into a deeper conceptualization/understanding of learning? Where is the empirical research that shows that?

3. How is policy learning research developing into a comprehensive understanding of policy processes and

policy change? How does that development address normative issues such as the quality of learning and the differential empowerment of actors in policy change?

The panel is open to a broad range of ontological and methodological approaches. We will select empirical papers and a handful of theoretical papers. We aim to collect the papers in a special issue of a world-leading journal or an edited book, hence the final discussion will be geared towards this objective of making our findings available to a large audience.

Scientific relevance

The panel's scientific relevance is demonstrated by its ambitious conceptual goals, the explicit engagement with theory, and the fact that we address normative issues explicitly.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

This Panel will only accept onsite presentations.

Policy learning is a fundamental social and political asset in addressing critical policy problems and crises, from pandemics to climate change, food security, the global economy and defense, among others. Constellations of actors engage in learning to update their beliefs, understandings, and create meanings that make problems amenable to public policy issues. In some cases, policy learning can contribute to better policymaking and resilient societies, while in others derail policy, leading to policy failures and fiascos (Dunlop, James, & Radaelli, 2019; Zaki & Wayenberg, 2021). Thus, in adopting a comprehensive understanding of policy learning, we remain agnostic about the final impact of policy learning (being either positive, negative, or even inconsequential).

Unsurprisingly then, research on policy learning has substantially grown since the 1990s. Current research already offers substantial contributions on the micro-foundations of learning, collective, organizational, and social learning, modes, and mechanisms of learning (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2013; Heikkila & Gerlak, 2013; Kamkhaji and Radaelli, 2017; Zaki, Wayenberg, & George, 2022).

We invite papers that explore the development of learning theorizations and applications in three directions. First, learning as dimension of the theoretical lenses on the policy process presented in Weible and Sabatier (2017). Second, the conceptualization and empirical appraisal of learning within other theoretical

frameworks of public policy, such as ex-ante policy appraisal, policy and program evaluation, implementation research, diffusion & information theory. We broaden this second dimension to other theoretical/conceptual frameworks, to include for example mechanisms-based explanations of change, gender studies, linguistic and polysemy studies (Cino-Pagliarello, 2022), and European integration theory (Radaelli, 2022). Third, we welcome contributions on systematizing learning as autonomous theoretical lens on policy processes - for example by building micro-foundations, investigating the political economy of learning (adopting varieties of rational choice theory), and connecting crisis to learning processes and resilience. In all three directions, we encourage papers that seek to address the normative dimension, for example by discussing the legitimacy and accountability of learning outcomes, or its impact on diversity and inclusion.

The panel will respect criteria of diversity and will be open to a broad range of ontological and methodological approaches. We will select a majority of papers that have an empirical dimension but will also accept some conceptual contributions. As mentioned, we want this panel to host at least some papers that address normative questions.

To guide our prospective contributors, we offer the following guiding questions:

1. How does policy learning take place within different theoretical lenses on public policy or stages of the policy process? What role does it play? And to what ends/outcomes?

2. How does research in evaluation, implementation, polysemy, and the other dimensions of policy research feedback into a deeper conceptualization of learning? Where is the empirical research that shows that?

3. How is policy learning as autonomous theoretical framework developing into a comprehensive understanding of policy processes and policy change?

4. How does conceptual and empirical development embrace normative issues such as legitimacy and accountability, and the differential empowerment of actors? Who is left out in learning processes, and how does this contribute to the final social outcomes of learning?

T01P11 / Conceptualizing and researching policy learning across and beyond theories of the policy process

Chair : Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

Second Chair : Bishoy Zaki (Universiteit Gent)

Session 1

Tuesday, June 27th 13:30 to 15:30 (KHE129)

Discussants

Paul Cairney (University of Stirling)

The theory of everything? Theorizing the policy process from a learning perspective

Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

Bishoy Zaki (Universiteit Gent)

The theoretical appeal of policy learning has grown over the last ten years, with several contributions of modes of learning, types of learning, and the role of information and knowledge utilization processes. This has enriched our understanding of how learning takes place, and the relationship between policy learning ad policy change. So much so that it seems now attractive to theorize the policy process from a learning perspective. Yet, there is a risk of conceptual stretching. If we do not pin down what is a type or mode, what constitutes a mechanism of learning, when we are observing learning and when we are not, we may end up with a bit of a 'theory of everything'. By this we mean a pseudo-theoretical framework with conceptual ambiguity, without rigorous, transparent boundaries that can guide empirical research and the cumulation of findings. The 'theory of everything' undermines the field's ability to accumulate and cross-compare findings, as well as its ability to consistently systematize (and position) emerging learning-related constructs and findings from empirical realities in relation to existing policy process frameworks. We provide a conceptual architecture to identify and position types, forms, modes, mechanisms, and outcomes of learning. We then discuss their relationship with existing theoretical lenses on the policy process. Finally, we consider them together as building blocks of a learning-oriented theory of the policy process. We find that it is possible to avoid the 'theory of everything' syndrome and proceed in orderly ways with concept formation and theorization.

Theorizing Negative Cases of Policy Transfer and Diffusion: An Expanded Model of Transfer through Policy Learning

Samuel Henderson (University of Toronto)

Many scholars have noted the growing occurrence and study of policy transfer and diffusion over the past 30 years leading to a wealth of theoretical and empirical knowledge on these topics. Despite this growth, the literature continues to focus primarily on positive cases where policies are successfully adopted. Several scholars have denounced this lack of engagement with negative cases. It is clear that negative cases should be studied in greater detail given their ability to expand existing theory. Yet the existing literature provides little clarity or consensus on what exactly negative cases of transfer or diffusion are or how exactly they should be studied in practice. Focusing specifically on policy transfer through the mechanism of policy learning, this paper argues that negative cases of transfer be understood as cases where the transfer of a specific policy is considered by transferring agents, but the transfer process either degenerates or does not lead to the adoption of the original policy under investigation. The paper proposes a model of policy transfer through policy learning that allows for a closer examination of how these cases emerge. It argues that the transfer through learning process can be constrained in three main ways that ultimately lead to negative cases: constraints on learning, constraints on the operationalization of lessons drawn from other jurisdictions, and the application of negative lessons learnt by transferring agents. This model of policy transfer provides new insights into how the transfer process occurs, but it is also compatible with prominent

theoretical frameworks commonly used to study the process. The application of this model to empirical examples demonstrates the benefits of this model as well as its potential applicability to the study of transfer and diffusion through other mechanisms.

(Virtual) Translating changed beliefs into congruent decision-making through policy interactions: the case of policy learning in German education policy

Sandra Plümer (Bielefeld University)

In the last decade, research on policy learning has produced a vast amount of literature, developing learning as an own analytical framework. Despite major progress regarding theoretical refinements and empirical elaborations, however, the mechanisms of policy learning taking place at the micro-level remain vague. This paper departs from there and studies the interactive and processual nature of policy learning as a social practice (Kamkhaji 2022; Plümer 2021). In this understanding, policy learning unfolds in the interactions of policy actors ultimately leading to the adoption of new laws and reforms. In this area, governmental actors act as key decision-makers when it comes to translating changed beliefs and policy preferences resulting from policy learning into decision-making processes that (ideally) reflect these modified beliefs and policy preferences. Hence, the paper focuses on how government officials coordinate their actions in order to translate policy learning into congruent policy making. Empirically, the paper presents a case study of Germany's education policy and analyses the 30-year-old debate about the amount of secondary schooling necessary to receive the German School Leaving Certificate (Abitur). In this case, policy learning processes have taken place between 2005 and 2018, rendering it an influential case design to study the micro-dynamics of policy learning. By means of qualitative content analysis and interpretive process tracing, the paper analyses interview data from 13 in-depth interviews and a variety of policy documents. The results shed light on government learning (Etheredge 1985), individual and collective learning processes within organisations (Heikkila/Gerlak 2013) as well as on the practices of policy learning (Thunus/Schoenaers 2017; Freeman 2016; Freeman/Sturdy 2015)

Policy learning in Data-based Policy Innovation Labs

Sojeong Kim (Soongsil University)

Tanya Heikkila (University of Colorado Denver)

In recent years, policy innovation labs (PILs) have emerged to develop a greater capacity for solving public policy problems and achieving policy objectives. This study applies a policy learning lens to examine how policy learning has occurred in data-based PILs. Among the diverse types of PILs, data-based PILs address a growing interest in big data and advanced technologies for dealing with public policy issues. Rapidly developed technologies and the availability of a significant amount of data demand data-based PILs to help apply new technologies in policy dilemmas and develop efficient public management systems. Policy learning enables individuals, organizations, and systems to advance their capabilities in achieving policy objectives and producing desirable policy outcomes. Policy learning is an instrumental characteristic that PILs require. By analyzing interview data, this study explores the processes of data-based PILs and how policy learning occurs in data-based PILs. The findings of this study are expected to provide an understanding of policy learning processes and products, which are essential aspects of studies of policy processes.

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Session 2

Tuesday, June 27th 15:50 to 17:50 (KHE129)

Discussants

Tanya Heikkila (University of Colorado Denver)

Policy learning as a lens to understand policymaking: what will governments learn from each other about COVID-19 policy?

Paul Cairney (University of Stirling)

The question 'What will governments learn from each other about COVID-19 policy?' may seem simple and sensible, but it actually generates a complex analytical and political problem. It begins with the grammar of the question. A reference to what governments *can*, *should*, or will learn prompts very different exercises, from a technocratic focus on the evidence regarding the problem and solutions, to a more politically aware focus on the contest to use evidence selectively to declare policy success or failure. In that context, this paper has two aims. First, to use a three-question framework to situate the pursuit and study of policy learning in a wider policymaking context: 1. *What is the evidence for one government's success, and from where does it come?* 2. *What story do exporters/ importers of lessons tell about the problem they seek to solve?* 3. *Do they have comparable political and policymaking systems?* Combined, these questions show that a focus on learning lessons is a lens through which to understand complex policymaking environments, in which: actors compete to use evidence selectively to declare success and failure, and relate it to their definition of the problem, while struggling to explain how a policy in one context would work in another. In other words, to understand how policymakers will learn requires us to understand the politics and policymaking environments with which they engage. Second, to apply this lens to the pursuit of lessons from COVID-19 policy. The paper will describe key findings from a qualitative systematic review of the literature on learning COVID-19 lessons, to identify the extent to which each study answers one or all of the three questions.

How do governments learn from ad hoc groups? A study of COVID-19 pandemic responses

Sreeja Nair (National University of Singapore)

Ad hoc groups such as committees, task forces, and other forms of temporary groups have often been deployed to manage conditions of crisis of an evolving and uncertain nature. Ad hoc groups can help pool resources for knowledge generation and bypass the rigid, hierarchical bureaucratic systems for governments to act rather quickly under crisis. Often being transient in nature, formal mechanisms to track learning in ad hoc groups are found to be lacking and can lead to missed opportunities for improving their structure and function when deployed again. We apply Dunlop and Radaelli's (2013) learning typology to study the formation and evolution of ad hoc groups in selected Asian economies as part of COVID-19 policy response, drawing from their experience of handling SARS epidemic previously.

We find that ad hoc groups have mostly been deployed to generate knowledge under uncertainty. However ad hoc groups have also been successfully deployed to facilitate inter-agency coordination, improve communication, support capacity gaps within health care systems thus opportunities for reflexive learning could be seen. Since ad hoc groups are also seen to be the foundation for permanent changes in the bureaucratic set-up one could see bargaining to push for preferred policy changes. Once the problem is considered tractable and there is one central agency involved there could be a shadow of hierarchy

approach if governments want to maintain status quo policymaking.

Policy learning and multiple accountabilities in collaborative governance: Empirical evidence from four Belgian collaborative networks

Stéphane Moyson (Université Catholique de Louvain)

Nadège Carlier (Université Catholique de Louvain)

Hiba Cherifi (Université Catholique de Louvain)

While collaborative governance (Emerson et al., 2012) is more and more necessary and common, it does not undermine the importance of public accountability which refers to a relationship between the policy actors and their home organizations as well as their "clients" (when these organizations are private) or the general public (when they are public). The policy actors participating to collaborative networks have an obligation to explain and to justify their conducts to their home organizations; these organizations and their clients or the public can pose questions and pass judgment; ultimately, the policy actors have to face consequences (adapted from Bovens, 2007, p. 450). One specific challenge of collaborative networks is to address the multiple and sometimes contradictory accountabilities of the various participants (e.g., "efficiency vs. inclusiveness" or "sanctioning vs. cultivating long-term relationships": Lee & Ospina, 2022). This challenge, however, has received little scholarly attention so far (with some exceptions: e.g., Lee, 2022).

Collaborative governance processes enable policy learning (e.g., Koebele, 2019), defined as the dissemination and acquisition of information among policy actors which leads, at the individual level, to changes or reinforcements of policy beliefs and preferences and, at the collective level, to a greater convergence or divergence of these beliefs and preferences between network members (Dunlop and Radaelli, 2013; Heikkila and Gerlak, 2013; Leach et al., 2014; Moyson and Scholten, 2018). In line with this definition, the general research hypothesis is that learning processes allow network members to gain a better knowledge of each other's accountabilities, which is a preliminary condition for taking these accountabilities into account at the network level. While policy learning and public accountability have already been related (e.g., Kanellou et al., 2019; Zheng & Warner, 2010), how exactly the former models the latter has, to the best of our knowledge, never been examined.

How do policy learning processes model the mutual understanding of multiple accountabilities in collaborative networks? To address this research question, 51 semi-directed interviews were conducted in Belgium with the members of four collaborative networks in four different sectors. Co-occurrences between the dimensions of learning – i.e., policy, political, and relational learning (Riche, 2020) – and the process dimensions of accountability – i.e., information, discussion, and consequences (Lee & Ospina, 2022) – were reconstructed and discussed, based on a conceptual analysis of the data (Paillé & Mucchielli, 2021).

The results suggest that relational learning (i.e., acquiring knowledge about the other members of the collaborative network) as well as political learning (i.e., acquiring knowledge about the political context of the collaborative network and the strategies of its members) serve as a basis for a better mutual understanding of policy actors' accountabilities. They also show that a better mutual understanding of network participants can influence accountability processes within each participating organization as well as the accountability of the network as such. Theoretically speaking, these findings improve our knowledge of learning-accountability relationships in collaborative policy processes. Practical recommendations to the coordinators of these policy processes are also formulated on how to develop public accountability.

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Session 3

<div align="right">Wednesday, June 28th 08:00 to 10:00 (KHE129)</div>

Discussants

Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

Bishoy Zaki (Universiteit Gent)

Policy learning through "polysemic" ideas? Comparing EU education and migration policy

Marina Cino Pagliarello (European University Institute)

Tamara Tubakovic (University of Melbourne)

This paper seeks to develop a novel conceptual approach to understanding how and when polysemy can facilitate policy learning in complex institutional contexts where there are diverging interests and diffuse power among policy actors. These include international organisations, such as the European Union, which often lack the regulatory power to impose decisions and in which policy learning is part and parcel of the integration process (Radaelli, 2022). Here, policy change often relies on a process of learning and soft coordination among key policy actors. Persuasion and argumentation through the use of ideas, rather than material power, are crucial to this process (Carstensen and Schmidt 2016). Yet, we still lack a deeper understanding of how ideas might facilitate policy learning towards new policy goals . In this paper we explore whether particular types of ideas – such as those that are polysemantic – can better facilitate learning towards new policy goals in situations where there are conflicting preferences, and where authority is unclear or contested. Polysemic ideas have been a growing focus in the public policy scholarship. Core intrinsic qualities of polysemic ideas are their potential for ambiguity, that is, their capacity to be understood in multiple ways, combining shared and unshared interpretations (Cino Pagliarello 2022). In particular, the focus has been on how polysemic ideas can act as a 'coalition magnets' (Beland and Cox 2016; Cino Pagliarello 2022; Hannah and Baekkeskov 2020). Due to their broader appeal, polysemic ideas can aggregate old and new actors, with multiple and divergent preferences. However, We explore two examples of the use of polysemic ideas in affecting policy change in the EU – the 'Europe of Knowledge' in education policy, which succeeded in forging a new policy consensus, and 'Solidarity' in asylum and migration policy, which did not (Tubakovic, 2019; 2017). By exploring a positive (education) and negative (migration) case through the polysemic ideas of the Europe of Knowledge and solidarity, the paper seeks to identify the institutional and contextual scope conditions which enable polysemy to work toward policy learning, and ultimately policy change (Dunlop and Radaelli, 2017). Our contribution to the panel is threefold. Firstly, in terms of polysemy-learning integration, we seek to bridge key insights from the study of polysemy with scholarship seeking to develop a deeper conceptualisation of the conditions under which policy learning can contribute to effective coalition building and better policymaking. In other words, how polysemy enable a better conceptualization and empirical analysis of policy learning? Secondly, we offer preliminary arguments about which factors condition the effectiveness of polysemic ideas which we illustrate through the case of EU education and migration policies. Thirdly, where institutions lack the regulatory authority to enforce policy decisions, we demonstrate the empirical relevance of policy learning through 'polysemic governance' as a potential novel mode of policymaking within the EU Commission.

(Virtual) The Politics of Cross-national Policy Learning: Institution, Ideas and Actors in the making of Ethiopia's industrial park Programme

Jing Zhang (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)

The Politics of Cross-national Policy Learning: Institution, Ideas and Actors in the Making of Ethiopia's Industrial Park Programme

Among other African countries, Ethiopia is widely considered a notable case in the continent to draw lessons and learn from major East Asian economies for latecomer industrialization. From institutionalization of the Japanese Kaizen approach to the establishment of sectoral institutes, science and technology universities in line with the South Korean model, learning from China's industrialization especially taking the 'industrial park' approach becomes increasingly evident in recent years. In Ethiopia, the earliest industrial park was developed by a Chinese investor between 2007 and 2008. Without too much prior experience, the rollout of the parks in the last decade has been remarkable. By the end of 2019, there were 11 federal-led industrial parks, either operational or under construction, across the major urban centres in Ethiopia. Multiple financial, organisational and legislative supports were also quickly in place, underpinning the institutionalisation of the programme and facilitating its rapid expansion.

Indeed, policymakers can learn from their own experiences by conducting experiments and improving upon mistakes. They also can learn from abroad without necessarily waiting for their own trial and error (Gilardi and Radaelli, 2012). Focusing on the phenomenon of cross-national policy learning, the studies of policy transfer and lesson drawing grew out of political and policy science with a substantial body of literature over the past few decades(Rose 1991, 1992; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996, 2000). On the one hand, these discussions have contributed to a better understanding of ideas and agents who are responsible for the transnationalisation of knowledge; on the other hand, a strong 'instrumentalism' tends to be applied, which policy-makers are typically depicted as 'problem-solvers' in a rational process, and eclectic explanations for the success and failure of policy transfer/lesson drawing provided without too much theoretical underpinning (Fleckenstein, 2011).

This research addresses the gap by employing an institutional approach towards the investigation of cross-national policy learning in the making of Ethiopia's industrial park programme. It introduces an adapted political settlement framework to understand the structuring impacts of institutions in policy change with a two-level analysis (Khan, 2010; Lavers, 2018). At the policy level, learning is understood as a process of ideational changes in problem definition and policy solution, with the agency of transnational actors such as policy entrepreneurs and epistemic communities. At a more fundamental level, these policy changes are investigated in association with the underlying politics that have been shaped by institutions, paradigmatic ideas and power relations. It argues that the institutional settings function as the 'knowledge filter', which facilitates the instrumentalism of policy learning, thereby potentially constraining the scope within which change may take place.

Policy learning in the face of ambiguity: German wolf policy as a case of powering and puzzling in multiple streams

Malte Möck (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

Peter Feindt (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

Recent research highlights the relevance of ambiguity for ideational change in the policy process and the role of boundary objects therein (Cino Pagliarello 2022). While the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) (Kingdon 2011) is known for conceptualizing politics under ambiguity, research on updating beliefs or policy-oriented learning mostly builds on the advocacy coalition approach (Bandelow et al. 2019). The MSF seems less suited to explain policy learning because the streams are seen as loosely coupled at best. This raises the question: Can activities of policy entrepreneurs be understood as learning?

While Kuenzler (2018) has suggested that coupling the streams entails learning by entrepreneurs, Kippin and Cairney (2021) have pointed to the learning subjects and the varieties of learning approach (Dunlop and Radaelli 2013). Building on this work, we argue that the MSF's assumption about the streams' independence allows to distinguish puzzling as policy learning across streams vs. powering as political learning on coupling streams (cf. Heclo 1974). Ambiguity can then be exploited or strategically augmented by policy entrepreneurs. Referring to different conceptions of policy entrepreneurship (Ackrill and Kay 2011), we can distinguish different modes of political learning, e.g., coupling as selective teaching.

In order to illustrate the potential of an MSF-based learning approach, we use wolf governance in Germany as a paradigmatic case of a policy centered around an ambiguous concept, here carnivores as threat vs.

threatened. Drawing on qualitative data from expert interviews, policy documents and group discussions, we trace strategies of entrepreneurial coupling employed to link socio-technical management solutions to problem windows opened by carnivore attacks in the political systems' environment. These results are contrasted with learning across streams facilitated by prototypes of precision farming technologies utilized as boundary objects. The findings point towards a better understanding of powering and puzzling in the face of ambiguous policy situations.

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(Virtual) From Technical Debugging to Policy Adjustment: Knowledge Production Mechanism of Policy Pilot

LEI QIAN (SUN YAT-SEN UNIVERSITY)

The knowledge production of the policy pilot is the foundation that the policy pilot provides experience for the reform of government. Therefore, the knowledge production process and mechanism of the policy pilot is an important topic of the research of the policy pilot. Existing researches focus on distinguishing knowledge production modes of different pilot types, but there is still room for further research on the complete steps and operation mechanism of the pilot itself in the knowledge production process. The "standardization" pilot in Sector B of District A in China is selected as the research case, and embedded case analysis is used to present the knowledge production process and mechanism of the policy pilot. Technical debugging refers to the introduction of technology to improve work efficiency; Policy adjustment refers to the institutional changes brought about by the needs of governance, which is the knowledge produced of pilot.

The research completely describes the knowledge production process of the policy pilot. The knowledge production of sector B in the pilot process goes through the following stages: resistance when it is identified as the pilot -- passive learning of "standardized" innovation -- technical debugging -- active learning of design and "digital" innovation -- production policy knowledge -- the pilot results are recognized and transferred.

The process of knowledge production is embedded in the process of policy learning. Combining the theory of policy learning and the theory of knowledge production, the paper constructs a framework of "policy learning-knowledge production", which explains the knowledge production process of the policy pilot based on four elements of "policy learning-the role of actors - information and tools used - knowledge production". The study will answer the question: What knowledge does the policy pilot produce? What the role of actors in the process? What tools and methods are used in knowledge production? What function does the policy pilot play in knowledge production?

It is found that the determination of the pilot provides the motivation of policy learning, and the upper government opens the knowledge production; In the exploration satge of pilot experience, knowledge acquisition, transformation and application of knowledge production are realized. Pilot departments lead knowledge production and transform professional knowledge into departmental management system through conferences, media, field research and other means. In the transfer stage of the pilot, learning incentives consolidate the results of knowledge production. Through media publicity and cadre promotion, the generated knowledge can be sustained and transferred outwards in the pilot departments.

The research reveals that even if the policy learning is actively carried out in the pilot, it will be rejected and

contradicted in the process of knowledge production. Therefore, stimulating the learning motivation and enhancing the learning incentive in the pilot is conducive to the knowledge production. In addition, existing policy pilots are mostly based on the sequence of "establish pilot first, then conduct policy learning and produce policy knowledge". This case presents the different sequence of "conduct policy learning first, then establish pilot and produce policy knowledge". It is found that pilot is not a necessary condition for promoting policy learning, but it is a necessary condition for transforming policy learning daily into systematized, scientific and standardized knowledge production. The paper provides another perspective for the relationship between policy learning and knowledge production.