P01 / Policy Behaviour: Definitions, Methods and a Research Agenda

Topic : OTHER

Chair : Ching Leong (National University of Singapore)

Second Chair : Michael Howlett (Simon Fraser University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In what has been termed as the 'behavioural turn' in the policy sciences (Leong & Howlett, 2020), policy research has shifted from the traditional emphasis on models of hedonic compliance-deterrence, to a behaviour-driven approach that foregoes the assumption that all behaviour is rational and utilitarian. The question is: What is being done by whom to facilitate this transition and push the behavioural turn forward? This proposed panel aims to address this question by examining fundamental questions about what constitutes "policy behaviour", who is examining it, the extenuating factors that should be examined around issues such as compliance, what innovations in methodology have developed (such as behavioural policy experiments), and on what subject are more behavioural policy studies are needed in this area. This panel seeks papers which will contribute to empirical base and the improved theorizing of the implications of the behavioural turn for policy-making and the nature of the behavioural state.

Rationale:

In what has been termed as the 'behavioural turn' in the policy sciences (Leong & Howlett, 2020; Howlett & Leong, 2022), policy research has shifted from the traditional emphasis on models of hedonic compliance-deterrence, to a behaviour-driven approach that foregoes the assumption that all behaviour is rational and utilitarian.

This new approach emphasizes the understanding of the policy relevant behaviour actually evidenced by the targets of policy activity, and by policy-makers rather than assuming them ex ante. More importantly, this movement helps to resolve the paradox formerly characteristic of the field and strikes a new path towards behaviourally-inspired policy design and the development of what might be termed the 'behavioural state,' that is, one in which securing compliance from the target policy population is informed by careful empirical research into the actual motivations of policy targets, rather than a priori assumptions of 'rationality' and utilitarian calculus (Leong & Howlett, 2020).

A behavioural approach has important implications for policy design and practice. For example, it necessitates the acceptance of a greater level of uncertainty about the likelihood of success of policy design at the same time that it broadens the understanding of compliance, for example, from a purely utilitarian model to allow for the influence of informal institutions such as social norms, irrationalities, and the use of new tools such as nudges (Oliver 2017). The use of policy pilots and experiments, for example, emerge as key techniques for policy formulation in this approach. With the rise of technological abilities, the question of whether governments ought to undertake certain interventions have also given rise to issues of morality of public actions.

At the same time, although not situated squarely within this field of behavioural studies, there has been an emerging thread of research on the agnotology of policy studies – ie what policy makers and policy targets do not know – either through wilful ignorance or the active malice of key actors and the behavioural aspects of this issue have only just begun to be examined (Hannah et al, 2022).

These implications of the behavioural turn in the policy sciences remains to be systematically studied further and crystallized. The question is: What is being done, by who, to facilitate this transition and push the behavioural turn forward?

A more unified approach to the study of behaviour in the policy field will aid the increasing numbers in the policy sciences who are starting to embrace behavioural research in planning and designing their policy research. The ultimate objective is to develop policy strategies that are sound in theory and robust in practice (Ewert and Loer 2021).

Panel will deal with all these questions, and papers on these topics are encouraged including:

• Charting the development of the field and theories about behavioural public policy (Oliver 2017; Leong and Howlett 2020);

•Those related to the development and spread of behavioural insight labs (Muhkerjee and Giest 2020;

Straßheim 2021);

• Empirical experiments and implications for practice (Mosely and Thomann 2020)

• Country cases (Ball 2022; Lourenco et al 2016);

• Ethical issues and implications of public philosophy (Sunstein, 2016; Sugden, 2018; Rizzo & Whitman, 2020; von Mises 1927/2005).

This panel will address these questions by collating ideas and promoting discussions on this issue. From the extenuating factors that should be examined, to the ways in which more behavioural policy studies can be encouraged, the panel will contribute to the improved theorizing of the implications of this behavioural turn for the policy-making nature of the state, as well as its extent and nature (Olejniczak et al 2019).

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CALL FOR PAPERS

In what has been termed as the ‘behavioural turn’ in the policy sciences (Leong & Howlett, 2020; 2022), policy research has shifted from the traditional emphasis on models of hedonic compliance-deterrence, to a behaviour-driven approach that foregoes the assumption that all behaviour is rational and utilitarian.

This new approach emphasizes the understanding of the policy relevant behaviour actually evidenced by

the targets of policy activity, and by policy-makers rather than assuming them ex ante. More importantly, this movement helps to resolve the paradox formerly characteristic of the field and strikes a new path towards behaviourally-inspired policy design and the development of what might be termed the ‘behavioural state,’ that is, one in which securing compliance from the target policy population is informed by careful empirical research into the actual motivations of policy targets, rather than a priori assumptions of ‘rationality’ and utilitarian calculus (Leong & Howlett, 2020).

A behavioural approach, however, has important implications for policy design and practice. For example, it necessitates the acceptance of a greater level of uncertainty about the likelihood of success of policy design at the same time that it broadens the understanding of compliance, for example, from a purely utilitarian model to allow for the influence of informal

institutions such as social norms, irrationalities, and the use of new tools such as nudges (Oliver 2017). The use of policy pilots and experiments, for example, emerge as key techniques for policy formulation in this approach. With the rise of technological abilities, the question of whether governments ought to undertake certain interventions have also given rise to issues of morality of public actions.

At the same time, although not situated squarely within this field of behavioural studies, there has been an emerging thread of research on the agnotology of policy studies – ie what policy makers and policy targets do not know – either through wilful ignorance or the active malice of key actors and the behavioural aspects of this issue have only just begun to be examined. (Hannah et al, 2022)

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A more unified approach to the study of behaviour in the policy field will aid the increasing numbers in the policy sciences who are starting to embrace behavioural research in planning and designing their policy research. The ultimate objective is to develop policy strategies that are sound in theory and robust in practice (Ewert and Lower 2021).

The Panel will deal with all these questions, and papers on these topics are encouraged including those related to the development and spread of behavioural insight labs (Muhkerjee and Giest 2020; Straßheim 2021); country cases (Ball 2022; Lourenco et al 2016); and implications for practice (Mosely and Thomann 2020) among others. This panel will address these question by collating ideas and promoting discussions on this issue. From the extenuating factors that should be examined, to the ways in which more behavioural policy studies can be encouraged, the panel will contribute to the improved theorizing of the implications of this behavioural turn for the policy-making nature of the state, as well as its extent and nature (Olejniczak et al 2019).

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Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 08:00 to 10:00 (POD367)

(Virtual) Behavioral public policy design: Nudging to reduce credentialism in Taiwan

Yi-Hua Lai (Soochow University)

(Virtual) Promoting residential photovoltaic adoption with prosocial and self-interest nudges: evidence from a field experiment

Oliver Neumann (University of Lausanne)

Stronger policy measures facilitating the policy implementation of physical distancing? A survey experiment in Taipei, Tokyo, Singapore, and Seoul

Lili Li (Auburn University)

Araz Taeihagh (National University of Singapore)

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Session 2Session 2

Thursday, June 29th 10:20 to 12:20 (POD367)

Negative Spillovers from Real-time Feedback for Water Conservation

Swee Kiat Tay (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

Joost Buurman (Institute of Water Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS)

Towards a Theory of Policy Bubbles

Moshe Maor (Reichman University)

(Virtual) Toward a research agenda for human-derived biological materials

Kelly Holloway (University of Toronto)

Quinn Grundy (University of Toronto)