P186 / Beyond Westminster and the North: Policy Advisory Systems Across Administrative Traditions and Political Regimes

Topic : Policy Process Theories

Chair : José Real-Dato (Universidad de Almería)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Since Halligan's (1995) seminal work, research on policy advisory systems (PAS) has flourished. Yet its core concepts – the location of advisers, the externalisation and politicisation of advice, and the management and quality of advisory systems – were largely forged in Westminster democracies (Craft & Halligan, 2020) and, later, in Northern and Central European systems (Hustedt & Veit, 2017). The result is a 'Westminster bias' (Hustedt, 2019), and the call to compare PAS 'beyond the OECD' (Howlett, 2019) has been only partially answered.

A growing body of work on Southern and Central-Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East shows that advisory systems there are shaped by different administrative traditions, uneven policy analytical capacity, the weight of international organisations and donors and, in non-democratic contexts, regime-driven control over expertise (e.g. Albert & Manwaring, 2019; Bakir, 2023; Belyaeva, 2019; Costa et al., 2026; Di Mascio & Natalini, 2016; Emamian & Bagheripour, 2024; Galanti & Lippi, 2023; Goyal & Saguin, 2019; Koga et al., 2026; Marchevska & Steen, 2022; Meert et al., 2023; Zaytsev, 2019). Yet this literature remains fragmented and has had limited feedback on the field's core theory (Hustedt, 2025). These systems also face epistemic transformations common to all governments – artificial intelligence (AI), the contestation of expertise and polarisation – from very different starting points in state capacity, regime type and institutional trust.

The panel pursues three objectives: to map and compare PAS outside this core across sectors, levels of government and regime types; to examine how epistemic transformations affect these systems; and to use these cases to refine PAS concepts and typologies, treating advisory systems also as an explanatory factor of policy processes and outcomes. Guiding research questions include:

1. Do core PAS concepts travel to these contexts, and what adjustments do they require?

2. How do administrative traditions, regime type and state capacity shape the composition, dynamics and management of PAS?

3. How do PAS configurations influence policy formulation, change and implementation?

4. What role do international organisations, donors and transnational networks play in domestic advisory systems?

5. How are AI and the contestation of expertise transforming advisory relationships?

Empirically, the panel brings together evidence on a heterogeneous set of countries – including hybrid and authoritarian regimes – underrepresented in PAS research. Theoretically, these cases test the scope conditions of concepts developed in a few advanced democracies and help build a comparative theory of policy advice.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel invites theoretical and empirical contributions on PAS outside the Westminster and Northern European core, including Southern and Central-Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Research on these countries has grown but remains fragmented and has had limited influence on the field's concepts and typologies. The panel aims to build a comparative understanding of these systems and to use them to advance PAS theory.

We welcome single-country, sectoral, cross-national and cross-regional studies, including comparisons with

Westminster and Northern European systems, using qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods. Topics include, among others:

a) The composition and evolution of PAS across countries, policy sectors and levels of government, including subnational systems.

b) The externalisation and politicisation of advice across administrative traditions (Napoleonic, post-communist, developmental, post-colonial), including ministerial cabinets, political advisers, consultancies, think tanks, academia and interest groups.

c) Policy advice under hybrid and authoritarian regimes: political control, expertise and regime stability.

d) The influence of PAS on policy processes and outcomes, and synergies with policy process theories (advocacy coalitions, punctuated equilibrium, multiple streams, policy learning).

e) The role of international organisations, donors, creditors and transnational networks in domestic advisory systems.

f) Advisory system management, policy analytical capacity and the quality and utilisation of advice.

g) The impact of artificial intelligence on the production and use of policy advice.

h) Responses to the contestation of expertise and to demands for ‘alternative’ knowledge (citizen, local or indigenous) amid polarisation and low institutional trust.

We particularly encourage papers that revise existing PAS concepts and typologies in light of these cases, and papers on how advisory systems shape policy dynamics and outcomes. Convenors and participants will explore a collective publication (special issue or edited volume).

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