P175 / Bringing together the theories of public policy and political economy

Topic : Policy Process Theories

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Theories of policy process, in broad terms, explores and examines policy (in)action, under what conditions policies may(not) change, whether and how policy instruments are formulated, mixed and implemented, among other puzzles. In parallel, political economy scholarship, in broad terms, aims to explore and understand the economic bases of political (in)actions, the power dynamics and struggles based on material and/or ideational grounds. Both literatures tend to remain disconnected despite several attempts in the public policy scholarship (Coban 2023; Higgott et al. 2021; John 2018; Vannoni 2022). This disconnection invites studies that bridge political economy and theories of public policy given that both seek to understand “who gets what, when, how” (Laswell 1936).

Bridging this disconnect and bringing these two major fields is necessary and timely. The rapidly changing and transforming global and domestic policy processes through geopolitical and geoeconomic tensions, inter- and intra-state conflict, entrenching populism and authoritarianism, securitization of public policies are not from political economic drivers and structures. Yet when we discuss policy instabilities, ad hoc or placebo policy implementation, instrument calibrations, policy designs, or even policy successes, public policy rarely engages with the political economic drivers, motives or structures. Since both fields tend to be isolated in their own silos despite potential cross-fertilization and synthesis, the connection is very rare, this disconnect needs to change with more dialogue and more systematic engagements.

This panel invites scholars to engage more with the two fields and endogenise the political economic factors more in the theories of public policy. To this end, this panel invites colleagues to explore and examine the following non-exhaustive list of questions:

1. How could we better theorise public policy processes by endogenizing the political economic bases of policy (in)action?

2. Whether and how do international political economic factors and dynamics shape and structure domestic policy processes?

3. How do international political economic and domestic political economic structure interact and regulate domestic policy processes?

4. Whether, how and why economic constraints determine policy and instrument choices?

5. Why and how are policy or instrument calibrations regulated by political economic structures and determinants?

6. How do political economic structures shape different dimensions of policy capacity?

7. Which political economic factors and under which political economic structures do actors form advocacy coalitions, push for punctuations, or policy entrepreneurs gain or lose their leverage?

References

Coban, M. Kerem. 2023. The political economic sources of policy non-design, policy accumulation, and decay in policy capacity. Administration & Society 55(6). 1035-1065.

Higgott, Richard, JJ Woo, and Tim Legrand. 2021. The demand for IPE and public policy in the governance of global policy design. Policy and Society 40(4): 449-466.

John, Peter. 2018. Theories of policy change and variation reconsidered: A prospectus for the political economy of public policy. Policy Sciences 51(1): 1-16.

Laswell, Harold D. 1936. Politics: Who gets what, when, how. Whittlesey House.

Vannoni, Mattia. 2022. A political economy approach to the grammar of institutions: Theory and methods. Policy Studies Journal 50(2): 453-471.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The panel invites scholars to submit papers of theoretical, empirical, and conceptual types that examine the intersection of theories of public policy and political economy scholars. The contributions can adopt various methodological approaches, including qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.

The panel invites contributions that seek to explore the non-exhaustive list of questions:

1. How could we better theorise public policy processes by endogenizing the political economic bases of policy (in)action?

2. Whether and how do international political economic factors and dynamics shape and structure domestic policy processes?

3. How do international political economic and domestic political economic structures interact and regulate domestic policy processes?

4. Whether, how and why economic constraints determine policy and instrument choices?

5. Why and how are policy or instrument calibrations regulated by political economic structures and determinants?

6. How do political economic structures shape different dimensions of policy capacity?

7. Which political economic factors and under which political economic structures do actors form advocacy coalitions, push for punctuations, or policy entrepreneurs gain or lose their leverage?

The contributions will allow us to build on the existing knowledge, but more importantly, will strengthen the debate between public policy and political economy scholars. As such, the panel is open to contributions from various strands of political economy, such as comparative approaches on the varieties of capitalism, growth models, institutional theory as well as international political economy on policy regimes and regime complexes, geopolitics and geoeconomics, dependencies across the Global South and global interdependencies, global elite networks, value and wealth chains among many others. These factors or dynamics shape, regulate and structure domestic policy processes, and the panel aims to bridge the two fields for policy scholars to ground themselves in their explanations of policy processes through political economic determinants and structures. Ultimately, the panel will help us advance the debate on the disconnect between public policy scholars and their engagement with the political economy scholarship (e.g., comparative and/or international political economy).