P158 / Collaboration for What? How Collaborative Governance Shapes Policy Design

Topic : Policy Design, Formulation & Instruments

Chair : Mattia Casula (Università di Bologna)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Collaborative governance has become an increasingly important feature of contemporary policymaking. Public authorities routinely engage civil society organizations, private actors, experts, communities, users, and other stakeholders in consultation, deliberation, co-creation, and joint decision-making. These arrangements increasingly extend beyond implementation and service delivery to earlier stages of the policy process, including agenda setting, problem definition, policy formulation, and the selection and calibration of policy instruments.

Despite this development, an important question remains insufficiently explored: **what difference does collaboration actually make to the policies that are designed?** Existing research has generated extensive knowledge about the conditions that enable collaborative governance, the organization of collaborative arenas, and the factors that foster participation, trust, deliberation, innovation, and consensus. However, **the substantive effects of collaboration on policy design outputs remain much less understood**. The panel therefore shifts attention from the design of collaborative arrangements to the effects of collaboration on policy design.

The main objective is to investigate **whether, how, and under what conditions collaborative policymaking generates policy designs** that differ from those emerging from less collaborative or more conventional policymaking processes. Particular attention will be paid to how collaboration may affect problem definitions and policy objectives; the selection, calibration, and combination of policy instruments; the construction of target populations; the distribution of benefits, costs, resources, authority, and responsibilities; and the coherence, robustness, and adaptability of policy mixes.

The Panel will address questions such as:

- How does collaborative governance during agenda setting and policy formulation shape policy problems and objectives?

- Does collaboration alter instrument choice and calibration?

- How does it affect the construction of target populations and the allocation of policy benefits and burdens?

- Does collaboration generate more coherent and adaptable policy designs, or can bargaining among multiple actors create ambiguity and inconsistency?

- How do the composition of collaborative arenas, institutional conditions, policy capacities, and the motivations for initiating collaboration condition these effects?

Scientifically, the workshop seeks to connect research on collaborative governance, co-design, policy innovation, and policy design more systematically. Its central contribution is to treat the presumed relationship between changes in policymaking processes and changes in substantive policy design as an empirical question rather than an assumption. Ultimately, it asks: **when multiple actors collaborate in making policy, what do they end up designing differently, why, and with what implications for the architecture of public policies?**

CALL FOR PAPERS

Collaborative governance has become a prominent feature of contemporary policymaking. Governments increasingly involve citizens, organized interests, civil society organizations, experts, businesses, and other public agencies in processes of consultation, deliberation, co-design, and joint policymaking. While a rich literature examines how these collaborative arrangements operate and the institutional conditions that support them, we know considerably less about their substantive effects on the policies that emerge from these processes.

This panel invites contributions examining **the relationship between collaborative governance and policy design**. In particular, we seek to understand whether and how collaboration during agenda setting and policy formulation changes the architecture of subsequently adopted policies.

We welcome papers examining how collaborative policymaking affects policy objectives and problem definitions; policy instrument selection and calibration; the construction of target populations; distributions of benefits, costs, resources, authority, and responsibility; policy mixes and their coherence; policy robustness and adaptability; and the implementation arrangements and capacity requirements incorporated into policy designs. Contributions may also investigate whether the motivations underlying collaboration - including problem solving, legitimation, support building, or blame avoidance - condition what collaboration changes, and what it leaves unchanged.

The panel is particularly interested in **the mechanisms linking collaborative processes to substantive policy design choices**. Collaboration may broaden access to knowledge and lived experience, challenge established problem definitions, generate new policy alternatives, or increase the political feasibility of particular instruments. At the same time, power asymmetries, unequal representation, institutional constraints, or policy legacies may limit these effects or produce ambiguous and internally inconsistent policy designs.

Contributions should therefore move beyond evaluating collaboration exclusively through process-oriented criteria such as participation, trust, consensus, or process quality, and explicitly assess its consequences for policy design.

We welcome theoretical and empirical papers using qualitative, quantitative, comparative, experimental, mixed-method, or computational approaches. Comparative studies across collaborative and non-collaborative processes, different degrees or forms of collaboration, policy sectors, jurisdictions, or countries are particularly encouraged. We also welcome longitudinal research and studies using text analysis, network analysis, natural language processing, or other approaches capable of systematically measuring collaborative processes and policy design characteristics.

Submissions may address any policy sector or geographical setting. Contributions focusing on the Global South, emerging economies, multilevel governance systems, and other comparatively underexamined institutional contexts are especially welcome.

The overarching question of the panel is straightforward but consequential: **Does collaborative governance produce different policies, and if so, what exactly changes in their design?**