P29 / Health and Crisis in Public Policy Research

Topic : Crises, Risks and Wicked Problems

Chair : Johanna Hornung (University of Lausanne)

Second Chair : Stefania Profeti (Università di Bologna)

Third Chair : Federico Toth (Università di Bologna)

Fourth Chair : Philipp Trein (University of Lausanne)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Public policy research has widely treated the COVID-19 pandemic as a pivotal case study to understand how policymakers respond to public health crises. (Asticher & Hornung, 2026; Fossati & Trein, 2023; Profeti & Toth, 2023). However, COVID-19 is not the only health policy issue that deserves attention from public policy scholarship, nor is it the only health issue potentially related to crisis. This panel aims at broadening the perspective of research on health policy and crisis, by bringing together different strands of research that analyze the interplay of health and crises from a public policy perspective, to address the following research questions:

- To what extent do public policy theories provide insights on health policy processes in a comparative perspective, and on public health crises beyond COVID-19?

- What can we learn from COVID-19 public policy research for current or future public health crises?

- How can and should we fruitfully bridge research on crisis governance with public policy research, to gain insights into public policymaking in times of crises?

The intersection of research on health and crisis in public policy is fragmented. On the one hand (public) health policy is often decoupled from public policy research (Deruelle, 2021; Desson et al., 2020; Francetic, 2021). Studies that explicitly apply theoretical lenses from public policy to health policy as a sectoral case exist (Bandelow et al., 2024; Béland et al., 2020; Béland et al., 2018; Capano & Toth, 2023; Hornung, 2022; Trein & Maggetti, 2020), but they tend to be rare compared to studies on environmental or education policy, although this depends on the applied theory (Jones et al., 2016; Pierce et al., 2020; Pierce et al., 2017). On the other, policy process research conceptualizes crises as factors (sometime using different terms, like critical junctures) influencing public policies and policy change (Kaplaner et al., 2026; Saurugger & Terpan, 2015; Skagen, 2026). Public health crises like COVID-19 can serve as an empirical case, for instance explaining agenda setting in the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) (Asticher & Hornung, 2026; Karokis-Mavrikos, 2024) or the use of narrative strategies of political leaders (Mastroianni & Profeti, 2025).

The panel starts from the assumption that a more integrated dialogue can enhance theoretical and empirical research on health policy processes and public health crises, or the influence of crises and crisis governance on decisions in the (public) health sector. It seeks papers that:

- examine the empirically and theoretically the management and decision-making of health crisis

- bridge the literature on crisis governance and management with public policy research to examine current and future public health crises

- study the acceptance and compliance with (public) health policy in times of crisis and non-crisis

- investigate the role of different actor types in health policy, such as (but not limited to) the role of experts and scientific evidence in health policy processes and public health crises

- examine the coordination of health with other policies in the context of crises, such as public health and

climate crisis

CALL FOR PAPERS

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