P125 / Policy Integration and Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector

Topic : Policy Change/Continuity/Dynamics

Chair : Philipp Trein (University of Lausanne)

Second Chair : Cécile CRESPY (Sciences Po Toulouse)

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a central topic for policymakers around the world. It offers potentially important technological possibilities but also poses significant regulatory challenges for decision-makers. The public sector faces the task of integrating a variety of AI tools into existing public services and governance processes. At the same time, an extensive body of scholarly literature is emerging that addresses various aspects of AI in the public sector. Some studies aim to conceptualize and assess empirically how AI should be and is used in public administration, balancing risks and opportunities. Other research focuses on the politicization of AI in the policy process, including social acceptance of AI.

The role of AI in the public sector is a cross-cutting issue. It transcends jurisdictional boundaries within countries, spans multiple policy sectors—such as health, energy, mobility, and public security—and even extends across national borders. Effective AI regulation, therefore, requires coordination across policy sectors, levels of government and potentially across countries. Nevertheless, the cross-sectorality of AI remains underexplored in the current empirical research. In order to be able to effectively regulate AI and harness its benefits for the public sector, it is of utmost importance to understand the challenges and realities of how it can be governed across and within policy sectors and jurisdictions.

This panel proposes to examine the topic of artificial intelligence from the perspective of policy integration. In very general terms, the concept of policy integration aims at analyzing governance across sectors. In other words, it refers to the process of incorporating complex and cross-cutting issues into various sectoral policies and across different levels of government. Policy integration can be combined with other concepts for the analysis of complexity in public policy, such as policy coordination, policy mixes, boundary spanning policy regimes, multilevel governance, and polycentric governance.

In this workshop, we seek to apply this broad policy integration perspective to the analysis of AI policymaking, implementation and regulation across policy sectors, levels of government, types of policy instruments, as well as across countries. Specifically, we invite papers addressing questions, such as the following:

How and why is AI conceptualized as a cross-cutting or sector-specific policy problem, and how do these framings influence whether AI governance becomes centralized, fragmented, or coordinated across sectors and levels of government?

Which types of policy mixes (e.g., soft law, regulation, incentives, capacity-building) exist in AI governance and how can these instruments arrangements be explained?

How does AI governance build on existing policy domains such as data protection, digital government, or labor policy, and what tensions or synergies arise from these overlaps?

What institutional mechanisms facilitate or hinder coordination in AI policymaking at different scales, and how do different governance arrangements balance design considerations like centralization and decentralization?

Under what conditions does greater policy integration or coordination improve (or undermine) the coherence, accountability, legitimacy, or effectiveness of AI governance?

To what extent could AI policies constitute a model for the governance of other emerging technologies such as quantum technologies?

CALL FOR PAPERS

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become a defining issue for policymakers across the globe. While AI offers transformative technological potential, it also presents complex regulatory and ethical challenges. In the public sector, governments must integrate diverse AI tools into existing services and governance frameworks, while balancing innovation, accountability, and legitimacy. An expanding body of research explores how AI is used in public administration, the political dynamics shaping AI governance, and public attitudes toward AI-based tools. Yet, the cross-sectoral and multilevel nature of AI governance remains underexamined.

This workshop aims to explore AI policymaking through the lens of policy integration. The concept of policy integration addresses how complex, cross-cutting issues are coordinated across policy sectors and levels of government. It encompasses questions of coherence, coordination, and consistency in the design and implementation of policy instruments. Building on this perspective, we invite scholars to analyze how AI governance operates across policy domains such as health, energy, mobility, and public security, as well as across national borders and administrative levels.

We particularly welcome conceptual and empirical contributions that engage with one or more of the following themes:

How and why AI is framed as a cross-cutting or sector-specific policy issue, and how these framings shape governance arrangements.
The composition and rationale of AI policy mixes, including regulatory, incentive-based, and capacity-building instruments.
The interaction of AI governance with existing domains such as data protection, digital government, or labor policy, including emerging synergies and conflicts.
Institutional mechanisms that enable or hinder coordination across sectors and levels of government.
Patterns of learning, diffusion, and convergence in AI policies across countries and jurisdictions.
The conditions under which policy integration enhances or undermines the effectiveness, coherence, or legitimacy of AI governance.

The workshop seeks to foster dialogue between scholars of AI governance, public administration, and policy integration, with the goal of developing a special issue proposal for a leading journal in public policy. We encourage submissions from various methodological traditions, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches.

The workshop will be hybrid, allowing broad participation from the international research community.