P244 / The Ideological and Philosophical Foundations of Public Policy: Challenging Libertarian Political Principles Through Alternative Philosophical Frameworks

Topic : Policy Process Theories

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Contemporary policy formulation, deliberation, and policy research are increasingly framed around narrow financial calculations, impact metrics, and monetary gains, seemingly requiring nothing more than technical expertise. This technical authority obscures the underlying ideological and philosophical foundations of these processes, creating the illusion that policy solutions and policy scholarship are fundamentally detached from philosophical and ideological premises.

Far from being decoupled, however, both public policies and policy research remain grounded in specific philosophical principles. For example, the marketisation of scientific and policy research through corporate funding metrics and impact agendas, the commodification of healthcare systems via managerial efficiency models, the casualisation of labour platforms, the financialization of community sports, and the design of geopolitical strategies and security frameworks tailored to protect transnational capital flows are deeply rooted in neoliberalism. While prioritising negative liberty, property rights, market competition, and the entrepreneurial state, neoliberalism systematically excludes social justice and political solidarity.

In this context, while extensive scholarship in critical policy studies and international political economy—which has long scrutinised the rise of neoliberal technocratic management by focusing on the hegemony of indicators, the regulatory state, and New Public Management—has paid less attention to how these technical instruments, policy designs, and research evaluation regimes are deeply embedded in specific ideological and philosophical ontologies, philosophy in general, and political philosophy in particular, contributes crucially to uncovering these underlying frameworks.

Therefore, this panel aims to bridge political philosophy with both applied policy analysis and policy research, asking not just what fails, but how specific philosophical ontologies dictate what is even considered a 'feasible' policy solution or 'impactful' research. Furthermore, it examines how policy research itself is increasingly instrumentalised through marketisation and the politicisation of impact.

We invite contributors to address the following core research frontiers:

How does the reduction of policy to financial metrics actively delegitimise demands for social justice, framing them as ‘inefficient’ or ‘unfeasible’?

How do the marketisation of policy research and the politicisation of 'impact' agendas instrumentalise scholarship and narrow the epistemic horizon of critical policy inquiry?

In what ways does the marketisation of non-economic sectors (such as science, higher education, and sports) erode the vocabulary of political solidarity among citizens?

To what extent do civil servants, policy analysts, and policy researchers internalise these premises, viewing them as objective economic constraints rather than ideological choices?

How can applied policy analysis and policy research be redesigned to evaluate policies based on normative principles (e.g., dignity, equity) rather than financial efficiency?

How can communities and social movements use political philosophy to reframe ‘feasible’ policy solutions from below?

How do geopolitical strategies and security frameworks operationalise these axioms, translating the protection of property rights and transnational capital flows into neutral matters of state survival and technical necessity?

By focusing on the structural intersection of political philosophy, policy instrumentation, and the political economy of policy research, this panel offers a cutting-edge contribution to ICPP8. It provides a platform for scholars to analyse current paradigms and the institutional architecture required for socially just policy and research alternatives.

CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel calls for papers dissecting philosophical and ideological rationalities underlying public policy instruments and policy research practices.

While literature exposes macro-dynamics of marketisation, micro-level ideological translation within policy instrumentation and research evaluation remains under-theorised.
Accordingly, we explore how conservative libertarianism—commonly, if imprecisely, termed 'neoliberalism'—is operationalised within policymaking and policy scholarship. We welcome contributions examining how technical expertise, financial metrics, and impact agendas obscure these foundations, creating an illusion of objective, technocratic government and value-neutral research. Conversely, we invite proposals showing how distributive justice, the common good, and solidarity generate alternative policy designs and emancipatory research practices.
We encourage comparative theoretical and empirical papers across sectors, focusing on:

Financial Metrics and the Metricisation of (In)feasibility: Evaluations of how budgeting and return-on-investment metrics delegitimise social justice demands, framing redistribution as technically “inefficient” or “unfeasible” in housing, infrastructure, or social security.

The Marketisation of Policy Research and the Politicisation of Impact: Examinations of how competitive funding, audit cultures, and “impact” metrics instrumentalise policy research, marginalising normative critique for technocratic problem-solving.

The Marketisation of Sectors and the Erosion of Solidarity: Inquiries into how market mechanisms, corporate metrics, and these axioms in science, education, health, sports, and security erode solidarity.

The Bureaucratic and Academic Internalisation of Neoliberal Axioms: Explorations of how administrators, analysts, and researchers internalise these premises, converting market-insulation projects into unchallengeable constraints.

Normative Alternatives in Applied Policy Analysis and Research: Proposals redesigning policy instruments and evaluation tools around normative principles—human dignity, equity, and distributive justice—rather than financial efficiency.

Reframing Feasibility “From Below”: Accounts of how grassroots communities and social movements deploy alternative frameworks to challenge dominant paradigms and expand what is “feasible”.

The Geopolitical Securitisation of Capital and Transnational Property: Inquiries into how defence doctrines and geopolitical strategies shield property rights and market mechanisms, deploying state security safeguarding global financial flows.

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