

# T01W09 / The causes and effects of policy learning: Building an interdisciplinary theory

**Topic :** T01 / Policy Process , Policy & Politics, Policymaking, Policy implementation

**Chair :** Claire Dunlop (University of Exeter)

**Second Chair :** Stéphane Moyson (Université Catholique de Louvain)

**Third Chair :** Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

Learning is essential to public policy. The policy process is also a process where knowledge is created, assimilated, assembled, and diffused across time and space. Recently, we have made considerable progress on the causes and consequences of policy learning, hence this is a good moment in the development of the field to be bold and attend to the construction of a theory of policy learning. Basically, the foundations of such a theory invite us to reflect and sharpen our tools for the explanation of the emergence of policy learning and the political consequences of learning. At the outset, we have challenging questions raised by the causality of learning: why does learning happen this way or another way, or does not happen at all? Can we design the policy process so that learning mechanisms take place in desirable ways?

We know that learning is not a monolith: actors process knowledge in different learning modes, and each of these modes requires its own explanation. At the same time, we need to be more precise, open and systematic in dissecting the normative dimension of learning.

Looking at the consequences, learning about policy is not always functional. It depends on what is learned exactly, by whom and in what context. Learning can increase power asymmetries and reduce the legitimacy of public policy – ‘learning for whom’?. Or we can learn the wrong lesson, from the wrong teachers, with skewed diffusion of beliefs, with consequences that decrease the quality of public policy. Thinking of outcomes, we need to tackle questions about the process which leads actors to select a different view of how things happen (‘learning that’) and what courses of action should be taken (‘learning how’). The field has to open up to questions of legitimacy and democratic quality, then re-connecting power and learning research agendas.

Any strong discipline, framework, or theory emerged from the right articulation of existing bodies of work and their application to new questions and/or new contexts. Recent studies have relied on various theoretical foundations to look at policy learning and contribute to the emergence of policy learning as an autonomous theory of the policy process. Others have made progress on learning within existing theories of the policy process, such as the advocacy coalitions framework, spatial models of diffusion, and the narrative policy framework. Most interestingly, we have seen political scientists getting increasingly curious and able to use the findings of cognitive psychology and evolutionary-experimental economics to explain some key variables at work in learning processes. The same applies to the input provided by different strands of sociology, adult education theories, ethnography and other fields in the social sciences.

In short, the establishment of policy learning as a theory, i.e. a privileged lens to explain policy processes, decisions and outcomes, is very exciting at this moment in time, but it is still work in progress. And we need help from disciplines other than political science.

Any strong framework, or lens, or theory emerges from the right articulation of existing bodies of work and their application to new questions and/or new contexts. For this workshop we welcome political science-inspired papers on the micro-foundations of learning, its organizational dimensions, and the macro consequences of learning, in single policy domains or across countries and policies. But we also warmly invite submissions from colleagues willing to open up their analytical vision to the cognitive and behavioral sciences, as well as sociology and other social sciences. We do not privilege any type of methods or approach, although we obviously care about sound methodology, transparency in reporting findings, and the quality of research design. The papers will be both empirical and conceptual, the important element being that they contribute to cross-fertilization and to the construction of policy learning theory.

## ABSTRACT

Learning is essential to public policy. The policy process is also a process where knowledge is created, assimilated, assembled, and diffused across time and space. This does not necessarily mean that learning

is always functional, or hasn't got undesirable consequences in terms of power and inequalities. Controlling ideas means controlling uncertainty and meanings. In other words, we need to answer questions about the process which leads actors to select a different view of how things happen ('learning that') and what courses of action should be taken ('learning how').

Equally challenging is the set of questions raised by the causality of learning: why does learning happen this way or another way, or does not happen at all? Can we design the policy process so that learning takes place in desirable ways? Finally, learning is not a monolith: actors process knowledge in different learning modes, and each of these modes requires its own explanation.

The establishment of policy learning as a theory, i.e. a privileged lens to explain policy processes, decisions and outcomes, is still work in progress. Any strong theoretical framework emerges from the right articulation of existing bodies of work and their application to new questions and/or new contexts. For this workshop we welcome political science-inspired papers on the micro-foundations of learning, its organizational dimensions, and the macro consequences of learning, in single policy domains or across countries and policies. But we also warmly invite submissions from colleagues willing to open up their analytical vision to the cognitive and behavioral sciences, as well as sociology and other social sciences. We do not privilege any type of methods or approach, although we obviously care about sound methodology, transparency in reporting findings, and the quality of research design. The papers will be both empirical and conceptual, the important element being that they contribute to cross-fertilization and to the construction of policy learning theory.

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## Session 1 Introduction & Measurement of policy learning (1/2)

Tuesday, June 26th 10:15 to 12:15 (Posvar Hall - 3701)

### **Modes of policy learning as causal mechanisms: coming up with a “policy learning measuring instrument” for qualitative research**

Jonathan Kamkhaji (European University Institute)

Modes of policy learning as causal mechanisms: coming up with a “policy learning measuring instrument” for qualitative research

Jonathan C. Kamkhaji  
University of Exeter

Drawing on the recent systematisation of the field of Dunlop and Radaelli (2013), this contribution seeks to achieve a number of conceptual and operational goals related to the use of modes of policy learning as causal mechanisms in the context of qualitative, case-study research, providing hence a practical application of the arguments advanced by Felletti and Lynch (2009) and Heikkila and Gerlak (2013).

At the outset, in line with the seminal work of Hugh Hecl (1974), the paper puts forth a provocative conceptualisation of learning as one of the ontologies of policy making – complementary to, but distinct from, a more classical “powering” ontology. Under the ontological account of learning, modes of policy learning work as epistemological lenses that are to be applied empirically to the policy process in general, and to policy interactions in particular. In fact, the paper argues that the empirical *locus* whereby policy learning occurs and needs to be typified is the policy-specific set of interactions taking place among actors.

But how to apply these lenses in practice? How to distinguish between one mode of learning and another in the context of a given interactive policy process and how to assess explanatory leverage?

To answer these questions the paper extends the dimensions of variation of policy learning detected by Dunlop and Radaelli (actor certification and problem tractability) by adding the time-frame that characterises policy interactions and the institutional venues where they take place. Equipped with these four dimensions of variation, the paper proceeds to develop a “policy learning measuring instrument”. In more detail, through the review of a broad *corpus* of literature, the paper identifies mode-specific empirical scope conditions for each dimension of variation. The final step to come up with the measuring instrument involves systematising a series of observable implications related to each mode of learning. Importantly, these mode-specific expected outcomes are not skewed toward a value-laden view of learning as an invariably positive mechanism for the sake of the policy process, but also include instances of dysfunctional learning.

The resulting measuring instrument allows policy learning scholars to tackle case study research with a systematic analytical device that suits extremely well process-tracing informed methodologies based on causal mechanisms. In fact, by pinning down the observed scope conditions for each of the dimensions of variation of policy learning, the researcher is able to precisely characterise a case (i.e. a set of policy-specific interactions) as belonging to one or another mode of learning and then to test whether the observed outcomes fit with the implications theorised for that mode. This operationalisation arguably allows for claiming solid explanatory leverage for modes of policy learning as causal mechanisms.

In the final section, a brief illustration of how the measuring instrument works in empirical analysis is presented (based on the case of fiscal policy coordination under Economic and Monetary Union) and a number of forward-looking conclusions are drawn.

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## Session 2 Measurement of policy learning (2/2) & Micro to macro conditions of policy learning

Tuesday, June 26th 13:45 to 17:00 (Posvar Hall - 3701)

### **Policy learning: A systematic review of measurement practices and a research agenda**

Pierre Squevin (University of Oslo)

Stéphane Moyson (Université Catholique de Louvain)

The study of policy learning is crucial, because it is a central mechanism linking expertise with policy processes and designs. Learning is a cognitive and social dynamic through which diverse types of actors involved in policy processes acquire, translate and disseminate new information and knowledge about public problems and solutions, as a result of a varied set of interactions with one another. In turn, they maintain, strengthen or revise their policy beliefs and preferences (Moyson, 2018). Many researchers have claimed that existing measures of learning are not satisfactory. In fact, despite recent conceptual and theoretical developments (e.g., Dunlop & Radaelli, 2013), we lack an overview of existing practices regarding the measurement of policy learning.

To fill this gap, following the PRISMA approach (Moher et al., 2009), we conducted a systematic review of measurement practices in 44 journal articles about policy learning. Furthermore, we conducted a survey about this topic among nine leading scholars in this field. Our findings demonstrate that researchers have not only multiplied the sources of data about learning: they also show that the methods of data analysis have been increasingly sophisticated. Learning being a slow process, more and more researchers look at its individual and collective outcomes over longer periods of time. Yet, existing research relies on vague definitions of learning, displays limitations in operationalization, while the potential of some research methods remains under-explored. We also pinpoint the lack of methodological dialogue of 'social learning' studies – which look at collective puzzling by policymakers within one subsystem – with 'learning and transfer' studies – which look at policymakers learning among different subsystems. We conclude with a research agenda for future attempts to develop reliable measures of learning as a central mechanism of policy processes.

### **Policy learning in collaborative networks: the role of social embeddedness**

Cécile Riche (Université catholique de Louvain)

How do policy actors learn within collaborative networks? Since the seminal "From intellectual cogitation to interaction" of Lindblom (1977), the relational nature of policy learning is a major assumption in the literature. While the role of social relations in learning processes has increasingly been pinpointed within the field of public administration, the "micro-micro" dimension of learning or learning in groups (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2017), remains empirically under-explored (Riche et al., 2017). To address this research gap, this paper empirically assesses whether and how knowledge acquisition and opinion change of public administrators depend on their relationships or 'social embeddedness'.

As far as learning is concerned, the paper adds to existing research by differentiating between types of knowledge that can be acquired by individuals: Knowledge about policy content (policy learning), knowledge about the other network participants (relational learning), and knowledge about the process (process learning). Similarly, alterations in individual preferences regarding the relevance of the policy and of its specific measures/instruments are used to assess opinion changes.

At the relational level, the paper assesses the actor centrality in the network of information exchanges. The

frequency of interactions and interpersonal trust are used as indicators of relational quality. This way, the paper captures three relations that are important for learning. Information is seen as the primary input for learning: Being located at the center of information exchange processes provides more opportunities to acquire such information (Henry & Vollan, 2014). Frequent interactions and trust are signs of tight relations that support both the acquisition of knowledge and opinion change, based on the information received from the trustee, as well as his or her own opinions (Temby et al., 2017).

Data on relations and learning were collected through interviews and an electronic survey conducted with more than 60 individual members of six Belgian collaborative networks in different policy sectors (e.g., environment or health). Relational data (ego-networks) have been analysed with social network analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). As network members are nested within networks, those data have been related to knowledge acquisition and opinion change with clustered regression models (Yan & Gang Su, 2009).

By looking at the role of social embeddedness in learning processes, this paper brings a key contribution to the development of learning theory. It provides empirical evidence on the micro-micro dimension of learning, as developed in the bath-tub model of Dunlop and Radaelli (2017), and gives important insights into the causality of learning. Furthermore, it is a crucial step for future work on the relations between learning and policy changes: If social embeddedness has a major influence on individual learning, it probably explains, to a certain extent, the emergence of shared understanding and joint action. Finally, because the paper distinguishes between types of learning, it explores what actors actually learn, within collaborative arrangements. The results could then be useful to future researches on the consequences of learning.

All in all, by assessing how social embeddedness influences both the acquisition of knowledge and the changes in opinion, this paper contributes to the persistent theoretical debate on the conditions under which individual learning emerges in multi-stakeholder arrangements, based on solid empirical evidence.

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## LEARNING AND FOUR CHAINS OF BUREAUCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Claire Dunlop (University of Exeter)

Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

It is common to frame the accountability of the bureaucracy as a fix to the delegation problem. Yet, both evidence and conceptual critiques point to substantive limitations of this approach. Accountability is not one single set of relations between a principal and an agent around a forum. Depending on the nature of accountability, the relationship and the fora change, and the aims of accountability vary. Here, we explore four chains of accountability drawing on the literature on modes of learning. The four chains are epistemic accountability, accountability in bargaining, reflexive accountability and accountability in systems dominated by hierarchy. For each chain we illustrate accountor and accountee, the logic of the basic relationship between the two, the nature of the forum, the empirical manifestations, and the normative issues. We conclude by reflecting on how our analysis extends classic principal-agent modeling and to what extent, instead, it points towards another logic of governance founded on learning.

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## Session 3 Macro to micro conditions of policy learning

Wednesday, June 27th 09:00 to 12:15 (Posvar Hall - 3701)

### **Learning about Pathway Mixes: Improving Policy Implementation Through A Multi-stakeholder Forward Looking Problem Oriented Protocol**

Benjamin Cashore (National University of Singapore)

Iben Nathan (University of Copenhagen)

#### Abstract

Benjamin Cashore, David Humphreys, Iben Nathan, Ingrid J Visseren-Hamakers, Sarah Lupberger, and many others

In the last decade and a half policy scholarship have made significant theoretical, conceptual and empirical advances by uncovering the ways in which policy instrument 'mixes' might be fostered to nurture more efficient and effective implementation of specified policy goals and objectives. These advances include uncovering somewhat linear, albeit complex processes through which the careful disentangling of policy settings, calibrations and mechanisms reveal endogenous internal subsystem change processes, as well as exogenous interactions through cross sector and multi-level interactions. These efforts have even been shown to initiate creative ideas within the policy subsystem that are either consistent with dominant norms governing instrument logics, and/or for, even expanding the normative framework to include what had been evaluated previously as politically infeasible.

While great strides have been made, this literature still seems to offer its greatest insights for looking backwards at explaining policy outcome, when, in fact, its greatest potential role in helping foster, and advancing, new ways to engage practitioners and scholars towards forward looking applied policy analysis.

To overcome this gap, and to integrate active agents in policy mixes and implementation, we develop an 11-step protocol that integrates public policy scholarship on learning, policy instruments, with power & interests and influence.

For analytical traction we focus our attention on the ways in which global interventions might be drawn on to travel pathways of influence through smart policy mixes. We focus on research lessons about the co-generation of practitioner and scholar collective causal understandings, and innovative strategic options that emerge that bind together the problem focused community in a collective endeavor to develop policy mixes that have "plausible causal influence logics" for addressing a particular problem, or set of problems, in question. We make reference to a number of empirical examples from forest and climate governance.

### **Building Capacity for Policy Learning: Experimenting, Evaluating and Engaging**

Susana Borrás (Copenhagen Business School)

The growing attention during the past decades on issues of policy learning can be embedded in the broad move away from New Public Management approaches and towards approaches focusing on adaptive governance, in which policies are anchored in area-specific knowledge-bases and are activating that knowledge in order to adapt constantly to rapidly changing societal needs and budgetary contexts. Following from this, a considerable body of literature exists about the different types of policy learning, the different actors who learn in the policy process, and the different ways in which learning objectives and means are controlled in the policy process. This body of literature is rich in typologies that target the

learners, the nature of policy problems, and the processes of policy learning. Empirically, this has been sustained in single case studies, which have prevailed over comparative studies. Taken together this literature provides an ample and multifaceted conceptual framework about policy learning, and shows a wealth of detail about policy specific cases of learning processes. However, the literature has somehow tended to disregard the organizational dimension of policy learning, and has been less encompassing in terms of finding cross-country patterns in comparative terms. This paper aims at bridging this double gap.

We start with the observation that during the past few years many governments in advanced industrialized countries have been making important efforts to build up organizational capacity for policy learning. Organizational capacity refers here to the organizational set-up that governments at the national, regional and local levels have devised and invested in, in view of providing specific knowledge-bases, methodology and human capability, to be used directly in processes of policy learning. Examples of that is when a local government creates a new unit devoted to bring forward innovative solutions to social welfare services provision, or when a national ministry re-organizes its way of conducting public programs' assessments in view of using the results more actively in re-designing those national policy programs. What they have in common is that they are specific efforts of policy-makers directed towards improving and strengthening the organizational basis of policy learning. Most likely, these organizational novelties are the policy-makers' own responses to their need of new knowledge and ideas about how to improve public policies. Policy makers need clues about how to devise new policy solutions in contexts of rapid technological change, decreasing public budgets, and growing societal expectations about public policy quality.

This paper suggests that there are essentially three possible dimensions in which governments might build up their organizational capacity for policy learning, namely, experimenting, evaluating and engaging. Experimenting refers to the creation of separate organizational units in the form of "policy innovation labs". Those labs are typically small but flexible units staffed with civil servants who are entrusted to come up with suggestions and alternative views of how to "do things differently". For its part, evaluating refers to the institutionalizing, systematizing, and expanding practices of policy evaluation and impact assessment. Policy evaluation is typically conducted by experts in evaluations, and the outputs of the evaluations are an essential source of knowledge for policy learning. Last but not least, engaging refers to the creation and active use of on-line citizen participation and feed-back platforms. These platforms allow gathering valuable knowledge in the form of opinions, suggestions and co-creation opportunities for policy learning.

Having conceptualized these three dimensions, the question that remains open is, how differently have governments been building capacity for policy learning? In order to address that empirically, the paper analyzes the way in which 19 OECD countries have built up their organizational capacity for policy learning along these three distinct dimensions. In so doing, the paper aims at finding how much and how little the countries have devoted to build up organizational capacities, as well as finding some distinguishable patterns across countries and across time of preferred dimensions. The dimensions of organizational capacities are conceptually distinct as each dimension relies on specific knowledge bases, methodology and human capability (peer civil servants in experimenting; expert evaluators in evaluating; and end-users/citizens in engaging). For that reason, the analysis is based on three separate data sources, one for each of the three dimensions. Data about experimenting is based on a combination of direct data gathering by the author, and secondary data available on mapping exercises about innovation policy labs. Data about evaluating is based on secondary sources of multi-country expert interview data analysis. And data about engaging is based on a direct source of statistical UN data on the topic. Taken together all the data in this paper will be coded into one single dataset, in order to make a systematic and consistent cross-country and cross-time comparison. The codification process will be conducted using tested methodologies of inter-coder reliability techniques. The selection of the cases is done on methodological grounds (a sample of advanced industrialized OECD countries that is consistent), and on pragmatic grounds (using the base-line of data available concerning the evaluating dimension, which is the most restrictive of all three data sources).

The empirical findings of this study will show countries' different degrees of organizational capacity building in the period studied, as well as their different preferences on the three dimensions. These findings are relevant not only for casting light on the actual cross-country differences in organizational capacities for policy learning, but also for understanding that international and supranational efforts to foster cross-national learning require substantial organizational capacities at the domestic level.

## **Learning "That" or Learning "How": theorizing processes of policy and political learning in Canadian provincial energy policy 2006-2016.**

Heather Millar (University of New Brunswick)

Policy studies scholarship has long identified learning as a key mechanism of policy change. From early studies on lesson drawing (Rose 1991), social learning (Hall 1993; May 1992), and policy oriented-learning (Sabatier 1988) to more recent examinations of the function of learning in policy diffusion (Simons, Dobbin and Garrett 2008), research has documented the ways in which policy actors often use other jurisdictions as

“laboratories of democracy” to inform policy formulation and design (Graham, Shipan, and Volden 2012). Yet reviews of the field continue to bemoan a lack of clarity regarding conceptualization and measurement, namely: what is learned, who is learning, and the conditions under which learning occurs (Bennett and Howlett 1992; Moyson, Scholten, and Weible 2017). Recent scholarship has begun to address this gap, noting that policy makers can learn whether policies are politically expedient as well as effective (Maggetti and Gilardi 2016).

This paper contributes to the research questions posed by the IPPA policy learning workshop by delineating the necessary conditions for policy-oriented learning and political learning. Although the policy process literature has focused a great deal on processes of policy-oriented learning, in which decision makers make changes to policy instruments, goals, or settings based on epistemic knowledge about policy effectiveness (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014, Hall 1993, Heikkila and Gerlak 2013), fewer studies have taken up the concept of political learning, in which actors make changes based on knowledge about political feasibility (May 1992). I theorize that in both processes elites update their policy preferences based on new information; however I contend that the source and content of information, and the pace of each learning process is likely to be different (Radaelli 1995; Boswell 2009; Dunlop and Radaelli 2017). Policy-oriented learning requires new epistemic evidence provided by experts to demonstrate the effectiveness of a policy – whether from scientists, regulators in other jurisdictions, or industry (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2014). In contrast, information spurring processes of political learning among elites may be more varied, stemming from regulators’ past experiences of public authority contests, perspectives of elected officials in other jurisdictions, or policy makers’ perceptions of public opinion (Blyth 2007).

This paper builds on this distinction by examining the conditions for policy and political learning among Canadian provincial government officials working on hydraulic fracturing, a type of energy production. Primary methods include in-depth case studies of policy making in four provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia) from 2006-2016. The study draws on analysis of existing primary and secondary documents, thematic and content analysis of over 1,200 news articles, and semi-structured interviews with 28 government officials, bureaucrats, industry representatives, and advocates. The study confirms two institutional and ideational conditions for policy learning, finding that institutional insularity and perceived complexity (Pierson 1993) play a significant role in facilitating policy change. However the paper also finds that in some cases, these factors have the opposite effect on processes of political learning, dampening the attention of government officials to potential political pitfalls of new policies. As such, the study finds that processes of political learning may be more susceptible to factors such as issue attention and time. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for our understanding of the learning capacities of policy decision makers and the durability of policy reform.

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## Session 4 International dimension of policy learning

Wednesday, June 27th 13:45 to 17:00 (Posvar Hall - 3701)

### **Learning in Multilevel and Transnational Climate Governance**

Katharine Rietig (Newcastle University)

What are the mechanisms and framework conditions under which learning can contribute to achieving policy change in a multilevel and transnational governance setting? Most public policy and IR theories that include learning as a relevant intervening factor in political decision-making focus on one governance level. However, the realities of many policy fields include an interaction of governance levels, ranging from the international level of multilateral negotiations in e.g. the United Nations via the European Union and national levels to the sub-national levels, where relevant international and national decisions are implemented. Non-state actors increasingly influence the national, EU and international level and can facilitate learning among government representatives by providing knowledge, experience and taking on informal leadership roles as policy entrepreneurs. These include secretariat staff of International Organizations, NGOs, experts, businesses and representatives of the subnational level such as cities, states and provinces. International negotiations increasingly offer venues for transnational governance outside the 'formal' negotiations that also allow for the exchange of knowledge and experiences from other governance levels. This includes opportunities for policy transfer and learning from other actors' failures and successes with developing and implementing similar policies to address major challenges of the 21st century. This paper addresses the research question at the empirical example of global climate governance. Learning among actors in non-negotiation settings within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations helped diffusing policies across countries and changed negotiation positions in the core negotiations, facilitating the Paris Agreement. In combination with group pressure, these experience, knowledge and belief-based types of learning altered the negotiation dynamics within the UNFCCC. Transgovernmental city networks, the UNFCCC secretariat and NGOs created opportunities for governmental representatives to explore options and learn from other countries' successes. These learning networks were established to help countries share their experiences with low carbon economic development plans to address climate change while decoupling their economic growth. Based on elite interviews, participant observation and document analysis, this contribution examines how learning on the international level and transnational cooperation is being utilized to leverage and facilitate the implementation of international frameworks on the local, state and national levels. It finds that reflection on other countries' and non-state actors' successful experiences with domestic climate policy can help shape national interests over time towards increasing cooperation on sustainable development. It can facilitate the learning of other actors how successful initiatives for climate action can be transferred and adapted to their specific framework conditions. It contributes to the public policy and IR theory on learning by highlighting the importance of multilevel governance dynamics between international negotiations and national policy change.

### **Revisiting policy learning and transfer with insights from the South**

Osmany Porto de Oliveira (Universidade Federal de São Paulo)

Policy learning and transfer studies showed a fertile ground for innovation on public policy analysis. In a globalized world, where State boundaries are permeable and public policy flows transnationally, the diffusion of policies is a phenomenon connecting domestic policymaking to international dynamics. Policy

learning and transfer studies have accumulated a dense body of knowledge. Frameworks were produced Rose (1991) and improved Dolowitz and Marsh (2001), facilitating our analysis. The role of transfer agents (Stone, 2014, Porto de Oliveira, 2017), as well as international organizations (Weyland, 2006; Pal, 2009) was explored in depth. Within the European integration process, an independent set of works defined the field of Europeanization (Raedelli, Sauruger, Surel, 2006). Mechanisms as learning, coercion, emulation and competition (Graham, Shipan, Volden, 2013) were also defined as consensual by the literature.

A great part of the literature on policy transfers was developed taking into account the adoption of objects between Northern countries and from these to the South, as well as the role of international organizations as the World Bank (Woods, 2006), OECD (Pal, 2006) or European Union (Raedelli) on these processes. Policy models spreading along the 1980's under the so-called "Washington Consensus" is a clear example of this dynamic (Weyland, 2006). This movements have been recently turned upside down, with a fast growing mass of experiences travelling from South to South, for example within Latin American countries and from these to Africa, as well as from South to North. However, there is still little theoretical and conceptual contributions produced taking into account these dynamics and cases. How can recent experiences of policy transfer from the South improve on our understanding of policy learning and transfer processes?

Based on empirical material collected from 2007 until 2017 (around 170 in depth interviews in more than ten countries) about the Brazilian experience of social policy internationalization (participatory democracy, housing, food security and conditional cash transfers), the aim of this paper is to bring the contributions of the South to policy learning and transfer debate, bringing light on what is similar and what are the new features that emerge on this context. It is argued that on the one hand, new actors come into the scene "policy ambassadors" exporting policy knowledge and lessons, transfer is used as a broader national diplomatic tactic, international institutions are created to bypass the bureaucracy of the state in order to diffuse political instruments to other countries. On the other hand, dynamics of force as the attempt to create regions of influence using transfer as an instrument of influence is also present on the case of Brazil. In this circumstance, dynamics of resistance towards learning from the South is also present. This paper expects to contribute to the debate both theoretically and conceptually.

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## **National "Infertility Awareness" Campaigns and the Moral Dimensions of Policymaking on Procreative Knowledge**

Shelley Grant (Planned Parenthood of the Great Northwest and Hawaii, Univ. of Wash. Seattle)

The "evidence-based" turn in medical policy-making (EBM) now includes reproductive health care. Even infertility care uses processes of meta-analyses on aggregate patient input and systematic clinical reviews that already 'cornerstone' the 'gold standard of good medical practice' (Dhont 2013). Many welcome updates to policy areas historically believed to lack rigor, as suggested in obliquely gendered references to obstetric and gynecological rules as the 'wooden spoon[s]' of medical specialties (Cochrane, Teeling-Smith and Wells 1979). Since the mid-2010s, data gathering by multinational monitors such as the European IVF

Monitoring (EIM) Consortium, the International Committee Monitoring Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ICMART) and others provide information content for public health education through national “infertility awareness” campaigns. Such flows of knowledge are self-perpetuating, especially since findings of an “unmet demand” (Biovin et al. 2007) for care also beg for follow-up analyses aimed at targeting policymaking resources.

With estimates that infertility affects up to 15% of the adult population, few dispute the need for informed and effective policies on the causes of and options for treating reproductive failure. Such efforts satisfy multiple scales of concern. These range from helping patients to avoid experiences of emotional pain and social isolation, as detailed in the 1986 UK Warnock Committee report, to addressing geopolitical imperatives associated with population aging, widespread birth postponement and other demographic changes. Although knowledge transfers seem universally beneficial, some reproductive justice advocates dispute the exclusionary and normative aspects of EBM logic. They argue that intersectional biases in data gathering perpetuate an “invisibilization” of already marginalized patients through selective data gathering and inattentiveness on the high prerequisites for accessing ART (Fledderjohann and Barnes 2018). Furthering this work, I argue here that EBM logic also poses moral and ethical dilemmas for developing and enforcing infertility care governance that spans spatial care differences. Amidst the apparent alignment in interests, I note the potential for aggregate and universalized knowledge to expose variations in situated care expectations and responsibilities that demand attention.

Applying geographic perspectives, this theoretical paper assesses the particularized differences in morals and ethics that persist amidst universalized understandings of ART care created by and mediated through EBM. I study a representative set of “infertility awareness” public campaigns held in the UK (2017), the US (2018) and other European countries as EBM praxes that expose varied approaches to interpreting and using still imperfect information and interpreted knowledge on a valued human capacity. This follows explorations in moral geography on the inextricability of situation from values (Sack 1997) and variations in morals indicated by knowledge transfers and flows (Smith 2000). I anticipate evaluating EBM outcomes that advance, as well as qualify, existing protections for reproductive choice and informed patient consent. For example, I may examine aims for patient “reflexive social learning” through “interactive governance” (Sanderson 2002) that result in “evidence-based management protocol[s]” for patients (Kamel 2010). In sum, my investigations into the potential “moral” turn in reproductive policymaking are welcome additions to my ongoing research on the heterogeneity in European ART rules across numerous publications and conference participations (including IPPA2 2015 Milan).

# T01W09 / The causes and effects of policy learning: Building an interdisciplinary theory

**Chair** : Claire Dunlop (University of Exeter)

**Second Chair** : Stéphane Moyson (Université Catholique de Louvain)

**Third Chair** : Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

## Session 5 Success and failure in/of policy learning

Thursday, June 28th 09:00 to 12:15 (Posvar Hall - 3701)

### **Is there a right place for policy learning? Evidences from the implementation of two 'ICT based' programs in Italy**

Giancarlo Vecchi (Politecnico di Milano)

Marco Di Giulio (Università degli Studi di Genova)

Over the decades, many aspects concerning policy learning have been investigated. Learning directly relates with a conception of public policy as a “puzzling” set of activities in which actors have the possibility to change both policy instruments and goals. On the one side, scholars have thoroughly analysed “how policy learning takes place”. As discussed by the literature on policy change after the seminal article of Peter Hall (1993), learning can in fact emerge incrementally or, conversely, radically reverse the direction of a given policy. Moreover, policy learning can be both the endogenous elaboration of a given actor or, involve a whole policy community. On the other side, scholars have focused on the driver and mechanisms of learning, thus trying to answer to the question “why does learning occur?”.

Little attention has been instead reserved to the “where” of policy learning, meaning the venues in which learning processes effectively take place. Many of the most important policy programmes, are in fact implemented in multi-level settings, where not only different layers of government are involved (International, national, regional, local), but also, actors of the civil society and the market, and experts. This imply that learning is not only confined to the improvements of each single actor involved in the process, but relates to some extent with the attitude of actors to cooperate to solve social problems they cope with.

This is particularly relevant for policy programmes aiming at introducing significant innovations through ICT, being them related to both instruments and goals. Hence, such policies become often case of failures because of lack of policy learning, which means that actors with different objectives and rationales, although might learn from their own, they fail in coming up with a shared course of action capable to improve the way a social problem is handled.

In this paper we argue that the success or failure of a programme is not only related to whether actors learn or not, but also to the place where learning happens. We develop this argument and its theoretical implication building on two original case studies concerning the design and implementation of ICT systems in Italian bureaucracy. The first is the National Register for School Buildings, an instrument aimed at improving planning capacity of Regional and National government in education policy. The second is the On-Line Civil Trial project, developed for the Italian justice system, that regards the digitization of the civil trial procedures and the interoperability between the Courts' internal users (clerks, judges,...), the external users (lawyers, expert witnesses,...), and the public administrations involved in the procedures. For both the cases the investigation focused on two separate outcomes/phases: the development of a working solution and its diffusion. It will emerge that the effectiveness of these two phases is strictly related to the venue where they had been carried out.

### **Does the evaluative perspective support policy learning?**

Mita Marra (University of Naples )

A key question in policy learning is how to gather and use knowledge about whether a given policy design works or not, why, how, for whom, and under what circumstances. One answer to this question is often found in randomized control trials. But this paper brings in a wider perspective grounded in the discipline of

policy evaluation. The broader evaluative perspective is found in theory-based (Weiss, 1997), realist evaluation (Pawson&Tilly, 1997, 2004) and newly developed complexity driven approaches (Rogers, 2008; Cabrera et al., 2008; Forss et al., 2011; Westthorp, 2012; Byrne, 2013; Cairney and Weible, 2017). Thus, what are the advantages of thinking about learning in terms of this multi-faceted evaluative perspective? One important advantage is the focus on generative causal analysis. The latter is needed to understand why and how policies work in real-world settings. Experiments typically measure the outcomes of behavior, but seldom capture what that behavior in fact consists of (Levy Paluck, 2010). Other evaluation designs are better equipped to explore the meanings of behaviors in the context of the study, possible social and political dynamics by which the behavior is produced, ripple effects, and so forth.

I illustrate this with an example from policies for work-family reconciliation in public and private sector (both for profit and non for profit) organizations in Italy. In this study, the evaluative approach shed light on a range of situations of social vulnerability emerging out of the interplay of disposable income and time availability, household composition and gendered roles (Marra, 2018). Key in this project was the interdependence between 'programs,' 'mechanisms of change,' 'context,' and 'outcome patterns' showing social and policy learning dimensions.

We conclude that the evaluative perspective is superior to randomized control trials because it unveils the mechanisms of learning, its triggers as well as hindrances.

## **The Policy Learner's Gaze: Between the Mirror and the Horizon**

Amanda Wolf (Victoria University of Wellington)

ka mura, ka muri

*a M?ori proverb meaning, in essence, we walk backward into the future with our thoughts directed toward the coming generations and our eyes on the past*

This project considers how a learner forms actionable beliefs about the normative dimensions of policy decisions, specifically about hypothesised policy outcomes, when all that is available, conventionally understood, pertains to the past and the present.

More precisely, the project examines how learners combine analytically derived knowledge and beliefs with subjective and intersubjective resources, and how that process is influenced by a future-anticipating decision situation. By complementing existing scholarship that focuses primarily on the knowledge dimensions of the task, such as the implications of 'policy myopia' (Nair & Howlett 2017), this project approaches a contribution to an interdisciplinary theory of the causes and effects of policy learning through the conceptual and methodological literatures of everyday learning. Everyday learning is directed to a pragmatic need to act, despite uncertainty and the ambiguity created by incomplete or inaccurate knowledge and conflicting values. This attention to the learner-centric and 'micro' components of policy learning builds on initial work on related themes (Wolf, 2017; Wolf & Baehler, 2017).

The epigraph conveys the problem succinctly. A learner—conceived here as a policy practitioner who '[updates] beliefs based on lived or witnessed experiences, analysis or social interaction' (Dunlop and Radaelli, 2013, 599)—cannot actually see the future when judging the wisdom of some present policy decision. This situation, widely recognised as inherent in the human condition, is addressed most saliently for present purposes in the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975) and in extensive literature on abductive and phronetic reasoning in the social sciences.

Before summarising relevant literature, the paper sets out a stylised learning scenario, drawing loosely on an exemplar in current New Zealand policy: A child-protection agency seeks improved child wellbeing by combining 'objective' knowledge about the past and estimates of the future with the judgement of policy practitioners. To set this scene, imagine a policy learner (or the Ministry for Children) as the driver of a car hurtling down the road. The passenger is a (representative) child and the objective is to deliver the child to a state of improved wellbeing. But the road is in poor condition, the atmosphere is foggy, the destination is informed somewhat vaguely by various present estimates of future conditions, and the rear-view mirror, which conveys evidence to the driver from the past, is dirty and cracked. And there are too many possible courses of action to process comprehensively.

Much is known about learning from evidence, projections and predictions and research on the cognitive capabilities of the learner. Some learning prescriptions would call for putting the car on autopilot (using 'big data' analytics) or training a telescope on the future (improving the use of scenarios or predictions) or cleaning the mirror (making better evidence available or detecting its patterns more clearly) or better training

the driver. Taking a different tack, this project highlights the complementary contributions from the driver's varied experiences; cultural resources; embodied, tacit and explicit expertise; and abilities to reason analogically, embrace and 'read' complexity, and select hypotheses worth pursuing. The driver/learner can employ various means (with varying success) to toggle between what is seen in the mirror and on the horizon over time (as the past and present extend into the future), and to prepare advice for a policy decision maker.

The stylised scenario offers tractability and ease of illustration. However, the exercise to systematise learning mechanisms is designed to ensure broader applicability and to plausibly augment and extend other aspects of policy learning theory. With a metaphorical focus on the gaze of the human eye (everyday, real-time learning), the experience and expertise of an active learner is privileged. The intention for the workshop is to be able to clarify how the policy learning process can better support individual-level non-analytical learning and to explore with colleagues how to incorporate this level of focus into other levels and dimensions of causal explanations of policy learning.

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Session 6 General discussion: Key lessons of the workshop and avenues for future research

Thursday, June 28th 13:45 to 16:00 (Posvar Hall - 3701)

## **Conclusion**

Claire Dunlop (University of Exeter)

Stéphane Moyson (Université Catholique de Louvain)

Claudio Radaelli (European University Institute)

Conclusion