W02 / Policy Implementation Studies

Topic : Policy implementation, Street-level bureaucrats

Chair : Luciano Andrenacci (Universidad Nacional de General San Martín)

Second Chair : Michael Barzelay (London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London)

Third Chair : Mattia Casula (Università di Bologna)

Fourth Chair : Fritz Sager (University of Bern)

CALL FOR PAPERS

Call for papers

Beside personal invitations to be sent to many colleagues, the workshop will welcome academic, pracademics, professional and students that commit to the rule of submitting fully written documents at an adequate date for collective reading and assessment, taking the following three formats:

1) Public policy / public organizations / public initiatives case studies, single or multiple, in-depth or comparative, where the implementation / management dimensions are a/the central feature of research.

2) Public policy / public organizations / public initiatives fully-developed / in-progress summative / process evaluations or evaluation designs that are centered in (or include an explicit interest in) what links impact to design.

3) Methodological and theoretical discussions on how to design, conduct and/or assess implementation case studies and evaluations, or studies discussing the state of these arts.

In addition to this call, a number of personal invitations have been sent to colleagues actively involved in the related fields of work, in many universities around the world.

ABSTRACT

Implementation studies is a general label for many different approaches, all sharing the interest of considering the critical relevance of the "how", beside the what and the why, in public administration and policy. This workshp intends to provide a space for exchange to different traditions in implementation studies, with special regard to case studies oriented to design recovery and realistic evaluation. We will be delighted to bring together different strains of work into dialogue for mutual learning.

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 26th 10:15 to 12:00 (AULA 10B)

Discussants

David Gomez Alvarez (University of Guadalajara)

Doing research within the third paradigm in policy implementation studies: the state of the art and beyond

Mattia Casula (Università di Bologna)

Fritz Sager (University of Bern)

This article provides an assessment of the so-called third generation of implementation research. To do so, we propose a systematic literature review able to show how the main trait of this third-generation research paradigm has been accepted by public policy and public administration scholars doing implementation research after more than 30 years of the famous Gaggin's definition of this generation of implementation research. Doing so, we are able to provide a final assessment of how implementation studies are currently following the claims of the third paradigm, how they have changes, and in which direction they are heading today. The aim of this presentation is to open the discussion within the workshop about a general reflection on the potential and pitfalls of the key elements of this paradigm when doing implementation research, as well as to better understand if and to what extent implementation studies can improve in the future towards an its possible redefinition or reorientation.

The impact of conceptual framing in the co-creation of policy development and implementation

David Foreman (King's College London, University of London)

There is increasing awareness that public policy design, development and implementation should contribute to the public good (Junginger, 2017), contributing to "public value" (Bojang, 2022), including enabling trust and legitimacy of the agencies involved (Talbot, 2008). Developing partnerships between agencies and service users around design, development and implementation is central to this (Narbutaite Aflaki, 2021). Co-design, co-creation, and co-production have moved from vague, substitutable terms to definitions that describe relations between the institution and its service users (Vargas et al., 2022). However, attempts to implement full engagement of the public struggle at scale, and the reasons for this are unclear (Van Gestel, 2021).

Increasing public value has been connected to epistemic justice (Liabo et al., 2022). This recent advance in philosophical ethics might improve trust and legitimacy in agencies as it seeks to establish fairness under conditions of information asymmetry (Akerlof, 1970). This way, values can be maintained even when one side can privilege their information with respect to another (Radoilska & Foreman, 2023), and potentially unfair discounting can be avoided.

Van Gestel (2019) described conflicts of policies and values adversely affecting the adoption of collaborative approaches such as co-creation. A bureaucracy focused on resource preservation (Niskanen, 2017) might be unresponsive to need if not sufficiently well expressed or advocated for, but the current solution of

“street-level bureaucracy” (Cohen, 2018) is arguably a form of epistemic injustice, as the service user becomes a supplicant when there is a policy granting a claim right. Epistemic injustice bedevils mental health (Carel & Kidd, 2014) for service users but also professionals. At scale, mental health research is only 6% of the United Kingdom’s total health research budget by value (UK Clinical Research Collaboration, 2018) when it accounts for 13% of disability-adjusted life years (Vigo et al., 2016).

I will present the design and preliminary results from an action research project, using philosophical techniques to abstract, explicate and describe updating of concepts used by different actors co-creating perinatal services with their users to see if this improves and stabilises co-creation of service delivery across organisations and scales in the UK NHS.

In the UK, perinatal services have successfully collaborated with service users of all kinds in driving development, using networks of statutory & professional bodies in collaboration with charities to influence policymakers. Perinatal services also have active experts by experience—patients who develop expertise in recommending how services can be optimised for their personal needs and values and are embedded in national and local services. They are included in “local offers” to communities (Foreman, 2016a), which could function as a protective policy instrument for them, unlike other preschool services (Foreman, 2016b). Output from a philosophical conceptual analysis comparing local and national levels will be aggregated and input into Royal College of Psychiatrists’ guidance, which is influential across scale. This guidance will be evaluated by reviewing the convergence of attitudes, intentions & perceptions of epistemic justice among service users, clinicians and policymakers.

The 2019 Prayagraj Kumbh Mela of India. A case study in ‘artifactual perspective’

Luciano Andrenacci (Universidad Nacional de General San Martín)

This paper presents the results of a study on the two-year campaign set up by the State government of Uttar Pradesh, India, to organize a better Kumbh Mela, the largest of all Hindi traditional religious festivals in the state and the country, in 2019. The Prayagraj’s Kumbh Mela of 2019 (hereon, PKM 2019) is credited to have received more than 200 million visitors in about 5 weeks, and perhaps up to 240 million according to official sources. It was arguably one of the biggest human gatherings on the planet to that date, and presumably will remain so until the next version takes place in 2025.

Relative to the context, the set goals and the multiple problems endemic to previous versions of the festival, organizational challenges and political stakes were extremely high. But everything rolled exceeding expectations, even for critical observers. Although PKM 2019’s features and outcomes have been studied in different fields, the publicly available research does not engage directly with the traditions of public administration in general and public management in particular, and their double-pronged, scientific and professional interest. This study presents a plausible explanation of the campaign’s success and the way this is related to its design and operationalization, based in a post-event reconstruction of the case through field research.

The research material was analyzed with what will be called an ‘artifactual perspective’. Such a perspective views human organizations and initiatives as artificial organisms (Simon, 1996) or purposeful phenomena (Barzelay, 2019), “artifacts” that need to solve socio-political and material reality conundrums through their internal (organizational) and external (contextual) interfaces. These interfaces work through a variety of systems and mechanisms designed to align or fit outcomes to purpose, and managed throughout implementation to provide their intended results in the limited conditions of visibility and operationality that characterize social agency. Mixed methods linked to public administration’s heterogeneous epistemic traditions are usually the best options for such a treatment (Riccucci, 2010; Barzelay et al, 2022).

Cases thus treated have a double value for the field of public administration. Beside deserving the production of evidence-based hypotheses aiming to establish causality for communities of scientific interest, they are fertile sources of hypotheses on the value of its circumstances and features as precedent for communities of professional interest (Bardach, 1994; Barzelay, 2007).

(Virtual) Institutional logics of policy innovation labs: Can design and implementation meet?

Esti Hoss Golan (Reichman University)

Anat Gofen (Hebrew University)

Adam Wellstead (Michigan Technological University)

Introduced worldwide to address public problems, Policy innovation labs (PILs) are new emergent

organizational structures characterized by innovation, collective co-design and experimentation (Wellstead, et al. 2021; Blomkamp, and Lewis 2023). Devoted to ‘user at the center’ approach (e.g., Lewis et al. 2020; Olejniczak et al. 2020; Whicher, and Crick 2019), PILs exemplify policy design processes during which implementation considerations are taken into account. To better understand PILs as an intersection of design and implementation, this study focuses on the responsiveness of European PILs to sustainable development goals (SDGs) and especially on labs’ motivations and practices. Data draws on a unique database of 211 European PILs and specifically on the labs’ websites content as well as on semi-structured interviews with 25 senior PILs’ employees. Preliminary results indicate that PIL responsiveness to the SDGs often demonstrates an internal consistency that reflects an institutional logic, exemplified in the role SDGs play in the lab day-to-day work. Our analysis identified three distinct institutional logics that a lab exemplifies, namely, professional, political and instrumental. The three logics differ in three aspects of the PIL day-to-day work, namely assessment, orientation and evidence-based policymaking. Shifting attention to PILs’ institutional logics provides two main contributions. First, PILs’ current literature emphasizes characteristics, methods, approach, and influence, whereas the institutional logic of a PIL is understudied. Second, linking motivations and practices for PILs’ responsiveness to SDG shifts attention to PILs at the intersection of design and implementation.

Keywords: Policy innovation labs, Institutional logics, Sustainable Development Goals, policy design, implementation

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W02 / Policy Implementation Studies

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Session 2

Wednesday, June 26th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 10B)

Discussants

David Gomez Alvarez (University of Guadalajara)

Explaining Policy Implementation Success and Failure: A Systematic Review

Jonas von Pfister (Humboldt Universität Berlin)
Maria Proestou (Humboldt Universität Berlin)
Nicolai Goritz (Humboldt Universität Berlin)
Alexandra Gottinger (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

Over the past decades, three generations of researchers have studied policy implementation with different objectives and methodological approaches. They have identified a vast collection of factors that influence the success or failure of policy implementation. However, a systematic review of the literature that considers how different methodological approaches and implementation settings influence the relative importance of factors in implementation success or failure is missing. Our study addresses this research gap by systematically reviewing 150 empirical articles that examine the factors that influence implementation success and failure. We identify several analytical and contextual dimensions, including research methods, types of instruments, definitions of policy implementation success and failure, policy areas, target groups and geographical contexts. We then classify the influencing factors and analyse their distribution across the identified contextual dimensions, revealing patterns of policy implementation success and failure. In doing so, the paper contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the existing factors influencing policy implementation success and failure in the cross-disciplinary policy implementation literature, thereby contributing to better policy design and ultimately policy implementation success.

Challenges in the Construction of Megaprojects: The Pitfall of Implementation without Technical Leadership

Jose Alberto Nochebuena (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

This study delves into the inherent challenges associated with contemporary megaprojects, highlighting the fallacy rooted in the belief that the mere formulation of these projects is sufficient for their implementation. A concerning trend is observed where the formulation of megaprojects primarily originates from politicians or technicians lacking direct experience in the execution of public works. Over time, this results in seemingly endless constructions, excessively prolonged execution timelines, insurmountable obstacles, and significant cost overruns. These circumstances, in turn, lead to project modifications, partial inaugurations, opposition movements, and substantial financial losses to the public treasury. The hypothesis posited is that the lack of technical leadership represents a critical impediment to the effective implementation of megaprojects. Consequently, the article is grounded in a case study of the Deep Drainage Project in Mexico City, unraveling its network of stakeholders during the implementation phase to concretely illustrate the impact of technical leadership on the execution of the most challenging segments of the project. In concluding terms, the imperative need is underscored for decision-makers to provide effective empowerment to technical

professionals responsible for the execution of megaprojects. This proactive measure is presented as an essential requirement to prevent the modification or cancellation of megaprojects with evident potential to contribute significantly to social development and the overall well-being of the population on a significant scale.

Coping with limited capacities for policy expansion: mechanisms for public sector organizations to fill capacity gaps

Cynthia Michel (El Colegio de México)

Governments continuously face new challenges that result in policy expansion. Implicit in this process is the expectation that there will be a bureaucracy with the corresponding capacities to implement the new, expanded, policies. Even when strong policy coalitions succeed in advancing a new issue, policy expansion is not automatically implemented. Rather, implementation is contingent upon the existing policy capacities of the agencies in charge of transforming the new mandate into a reality. Although empirical works frequently pinpoint policy capacities as independent variables, they are often ambiguously defined, let alone operationalized, thus generating partial explanations of implementation outcomes.

In this paper I study with analytic rigor the influence of policy capacities in the implementation process, to provide insights that allow us to reflect on the potentials and pitfalls of the key elements of the third paradigm of policy implementation research. This study responds to the general question of how public sector organizations fill capacity gaps while implementing policy expansion, and specifically to the overlooked process of coping with capacity deficits for policy change in general, and for policy expansion in particular. In this paper I argue that existing policy capacities influence the type of coping strategy that agencies develop to implement the new policy, thus shaping the type of policy expansion.

To develop my argument, I first explore the theoretical assumptions where the literatures on policy implementation and capacities are built. To make sure that I was not excluding any coping strategy deployed by implementing agencies when experiencing capacity deficits, the resulting categories next structure a systematic literature review where I identify instances of limited capacities in implementation processes, and the organizational responses to such shortfalls. I find that shortages of policy capacity render three possible coping strategies: either implementing agencies develop the capacity, they outsource it or they alter the mandate to fit their extant capacities. In order to make empirically observable the coping strategies derived from the theoretical analysis, based on a comparative research design I analyze three cases of policy expansion where implementing agencies face capacity deficits. By analyzing the dynamic nature of capacities and their potential to influence the implementation process with analytical rigor, this paper contributes to the discussion of the merits and demerits of the so-called third generation of policy implementation research.

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Session 3

Thursday, June 27th 09:00 to 12:15 (AULA 10B)

(Virtual) The Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF) Programme as an Innovative Street-Level Bureaucratic Intervention: An Extended Case Study

Swetcha Poladi (Indian Institute of Management Bangalore)

The study examines the Mahatma Gandhi National Fellowship (MGNF), conceived in India as part of the Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) scheme supported by the World Bank. The MGNF programme was one of the largest "fellowships" carried out by the state-academia praxis involving 581 "fellows" who were deployed into the district administrations of almost all the states and union territories in India. The study argues that the MGNF programme was an innovative intervention not just in terms of its design of involving non-state actors to support the existing street-level bureaucracy but also in producing a new cadre of street-level bureaucrats in the form of these fellows. Given the overarching demographic and institutional challenges, they were groomed to be the catalysts of social change with the primary responsibility of augmenting the state's capacity. A preliminary field examination of the MGNF programme has revealed elements consistent with the street-level bureaucracy theory, following which the study has used the extended case method to examine this programme further through in-depth interviews and secondary data. By investigating the involvement of non-state actors acting as street-level bureaucrats, the study makes a case for extending our understanding of the street-level bureaucracy theory to accommodate newer phenomenon like the fellowships that are carrying out important responsibilities of the state.

Keywords: Developing Countries, Street-Level Bureaucracy, Non-State Actors, Extended Case Method

(Virtual) Understanding the who, why and how of implementing strategic long-term regional academic-policy engagement in London

Sarah Jasim (London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London)

In London, the University of London and Greater London Authority have founded the London Research and Policy Partnership (LRaPP). Working closely with London Councils, the LRaPP is aimed at promoting greater joint working between London government and London’s academic research community.

As part of a realist evaluation, the author collected extensive ethnographic data (n=127 survey responses, n=96 interviews) to map the existing ecosystem of ad-hoc, informal and short-term knowledge brokerage, between academic researchers and policy professionals London government. This contextualised data provided evidence on various knowledge brokerage practices (and combinations of several): what works, for whom, in which context, to enable long-term academic policy partnerships. The purpose of the realist evaluation was to design a knowledge brokerage service for LRaPP, to enable improved, more strategic, long-term regional academic policy engagement in London. The current landscape of largely, ad-hoc, informal and short-term engagements between academic researchers and London government (GLA, London Councils, London Boroughs) policymakers is not working for London (as well as it could be), and both the policymaking and academic research communities seek to establish and sustain longer-term academic-policy partnerships to address London’s strategic policy challenges.

Realist evaluation offered insights about why academic-policy engagement works, for whom and under what circumstances. In London, both communities are not currently structured in a way that enables knowledge

brokerage to be easy, or simple. Most approaches are initiated informally through personal contacts and relationships and are subject to barriers such as funding models / availability, staff turnover, and misalignment between the culture, and ways of working of the two communities. This messy reality takes place within the fast-paced political and policy context of London, and its need to respond to urgent, short-term policy priorities, as well as the capital's medium to longer term strategic challenges, through innovative, collective solutions, in an equitable and accessible manner.

Building on the realist evaluation, further evaluation data on various knowledge brokerage activities co-ordinated by LRaPP were collected to better understand the link between design of these activities, their implementation, and the impact on knowledge brokerage and academic-policy engagement.

(Virtual) Policy intervention in metering infrastructure: A case study of AMR meters in Bhopal

Riyadun Naseem (Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay)

Electricity meters are one of the most ubiquitous objects associated with the electricity supply infrastructure. Meters are the primary artifact of governance for the utilities and can also be equated to the measuring scale used by the traders and shopkeepers to trade their goods. Further, with newer functionalities they are also acting as silent digital watchdogs that keep a constant vigil on the system and the consumers. The electricity meter has also been an object of intense experimentation worldwide and has witnessed enormous transitions both in its technology and capabilities. This has been primarily driven by the state's pursuit of disciplining, rationalizing, and ordering the electricity consumers and thereby shielding the infrastructure from the attempts to subvert it. The complexity of electricity measurement makes the electricity bill totally vague and incomprehensible to the consumer. Absence of proper implementation in replacement or Up-gradation of meters might result in policy failure, also any change in the metering policy directly affects millions of consumers.

With the ushering in of Neo-liberal era, legislative and structural reforms were brought in India to improve the health of the electricity sector. These reform efforts were aimed at liberalizing the sector and depoliticizing it, concept of power trading and efforts to introduce competition in the sector. Also, the government introduced schemes like APDRP & IPDS for technology up gradation in the sector. Despite all these efforts the Electricity distribution sector in India has been struggling with inefficiencies, losses and indebtedness, and the results of sectoral reforms and technology up gradation have been ambiguous. This seminar report intends to present a case study of one such policy dealing with the up gradation of metering technology which ended up in arbitrary outcomes, if not in complete failure.

This case study was conducted on the meter replacement/ up gradation policy of the central zone electricity distribution company of the central province of Madhya Pradesh in central India. The distribution company is officially known as the Madhya Pradesh Madhya kshetra vidyut vitaran co ltd (MPMKVVCL) and 16 districts of the state come under it, covering around 20 million populations with more than 3.3 million electricity connections. This case study takes up the case of an area in the city of Bhopal in MP to unpack and discuss the policy and its outcomes. The case study of the policy of Madhya Pradesh's central zone electricity utility of replacing the existing meters of the high value consumers with the new AMR (Automatic meter reading) combined unit meters discussed, revealed the issues in the top down policy approach that the field staff and consumers faced during its implementation on the ground. Through this the case study also examined whether the goals and objectives set by policymakers actually persist and are realized during and after implementation.

Looking back to look towards a more power-sensitive approach of policy implementation: investigating planning policies in Zurich and Geneva

Sebastien Lambelet (York University)

This article addresses two criticisms to implementation studies from the third generation. First, they put too much emphasis on "predicting the type of implementation behavior that is likely to occur in the future" (Goggin et al., 1990:18). In contrast, drawing on seminal studies from the first generation of implementation studies (Cohen et al., 1972; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1984), I argue that non-linearity and unpredictability are two key features of any policy process. Thus, what matters for implementation studies is to differentiate how policy stakeholders react to these unexpected events, and whether their reactions lead to a greater or to a lower fulfillment of policy objectives. Therefore, I will rely on Deborah Stone's (2012) typology of causal mechanisms to also consider unintended consequences of policy actions (i.e. accidental and inadvertent causes) in my analysis.

My second criticism to third generation studies is their binary vision of policy outcomes. Indeed, Goggin et

al. (1990: chap. 7) evaluate the failure or success of policy programs based on the initial objectives set by the legislator, without analyzing who benefits the most from policy successes and policy failures. In other words, Goggin et al. (1990) consider that any public policy pursues the common good, and seems to ignore that getting access to legislative arenas and implementation resources is easier for some actors like corporate businesses, than for others like civic and cultural organizations (see Hunter, 1953; Schattschneider, 1975; C. N. Stone, 1989).

To go beyond third generation studies, I draw on two recent studies that have called for more scholarly attention to be paid to a) the various streams of actors and events (Howlett, 2019), and to b) the power dynamics that are shaping policy implementation and its rules in use (Sager & Gofen, 2022). Thus, I apply the Multiple Streams Framework of Kingdon (2003), with a particular attention to the stream of politics. I focus on the impact of two federal policies in the planning policies of two Swiss cities (Zurich and Geneva) over a period of two decades (1999-2020). The first federal policy is the liberalization of network industry of 1999. It was not designed to influence the planning policies at cantonal and municipal levels, but finally had a tremendous impact on them. The second federal policy is the revision of the Federal Spatial Planning Act of 2014 which ask cantons and cities to reduce urban sprawl and foster the densification of urban centers.

My overall hypothesis is that implementing agents are not equal when it comes to reacting to the unexpected. Those benefitting from a long-term vision of planning policies and of more implementation resources will react by creating critical junctures of the three streams (policy, problem and politics) which will foster the implementation of other policy objectives (case of Zurich). In contrast, implementing agents with a short-term vision and less implementation resources will favor solutions aligning with their interests, but undermining the fulfillment of other policy objectives (case of Geneva).

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Session 4

Thursday, June 27th 14:00 to 17:15 (AULA 10B)

Conclusions

Luciano Andrenacci (Universidad Nacional de General San Martín)

CCL

An Invitation to Recovering Designs in Cases

Michael Barzelay (London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London)

An Invitation to Recovering Designs in Cases

Michael Barzelay

London School of Economics (LSE)