

# T08P06 / Argumentative Turn 2.0: Ideas, Narratives and Deliberation in Environmental Policy

**Topic :** T08 / Policy Discourse and Critical Policy Research

**Chair :** Ching Leong (Institute of Water Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Singapore)

**Second Chair :** Frank Fischer (Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The 'Argumentative Turn' in its first iteration in 1993 by Frank Fischer and John Forester provides a counterpoint against a value-neutral, positivist policy reality, arguing that policy-making takes place within and through narratives or policy stories. This panel locates itself within the field of environmental policies given the significance of such policies in an increasingly physically-stressed world; this also aligned itself with the original planning and socio-ecological origins of the Turn.

Three important characteristics of narratives are given by Fischer (1993). First, narratives are qualitatively understood. "It is not the knowledge in belief systems per se that holds the members of such coalitions together, but the "storylines" the symbolically condense the facts and values basic to a belief system." Unlike beliefs, these storylines cannot be analysed quantitatively but can only be understood qualitatively.

Second, they can possess a non-logical structure "Rather than a stable core of cognitive commitments and beliefs, they share story lines that often tend to be vague on particular points, and at times, contradictory on others." Last, they are normatively constituted. "Storylines are not just about a given reality. While they typically give coalition members a normative orientation to a particular reality, they are as much about changing reality as they are about simply understanding affirming it."

Since then, an increasing number of policy scholars have called for a systematic use of narrative analysis in policy studies (Hampton, 2009, Feldman, 2004, Hajer, 2003, Yanow, 2007, 1992). In terms of empirical investigations, these have ranged from regulation (Bridgman and Barry, 2002), poverty (Cassiman, 2006), the role of science in public policy (Garvin and Eyles, 1997) and recycled water (Leong, 2010).

This panel is related to updating, challenging and expanding the role of narratives and rethinking the argumentative turn; in particular, but not limited to, a rethinking of the three characteristics of policy narratives outlined by Fischer.

First, advances in narratives methods have led some to investigate narratives quantitatively as well as qualitatively – for example, the Q methodology has been increasingly used in quantitative studies of narratives. In the water sector, Asquer (2014) has used Q Methodology to provide evidence of the different opinions about the quality of water services provision, its performance and the most adequate form of regulation for local governments in Italy. Forouzani et al. (2013) used it to identify different understandings from farmers and agricultural specialist about agricultural water poverty and its causes in Iran. Leong and Lejano (2016) used it to conduct an exploratory study of stakeholders' perceptions about the apparent successful use of Integration Water Resources Management (IWRM) in the China Yellow River.

Despite these advances however, it could be argued however, that there remains an irreducibly important role for qualitative understandings, as argued by Yanow who argues that in public policy, some goals are "verboden" – that is "publicly unspeakable because there is no explicit public consensus underlying them". (1992:400).

A more serious challenges comes from the logic of narratives - while it is true that some narratives have a non-logical structure, those public narratives informing deliberative discourses appears to require some objective logic and meaning – to have a place at the policy-making table, narratives cannot be wholly subjective; as Ricouer says, a narrative has an objective meaning that can be "constructed in various ways." He noted that, in a public discourse, the problems of right understanding can no longer be solved by a simple return to the alleged intention of the author. (Ricouer, 1973) but must be construed by a process. "A text has to be construed because it is not a mere sequence of sentences, all on an equal footing, and separately understandable. A text is a whole, a totality."

Last, a second line of argument on the value-laden-ness of Fischer's narrative approach. In his "deliberative governance" model, which the goal of public policy is to improve the policy making process by improving the democratic process. For his, this is essentially a participatory process with the goal of the analyst then is to serve as a public learning and political empowerment." For Fischer then, policy making is rooted in a particular context – that of Western liberal societies, which have the wherewithal and the social inclination for widespread civic participation. Yet, in a Lasswellian fashion, the task of understanding narratives can be taken in a politically

neutral fashion, for example, as suggested by Feldman et al (2004)

This panel aims to kick off the discussion on Argumentative Turn 2.0 with the frameworks, policy models and methods to engage in the research of policy narratives. While the panel has been conceived along the narrative elements of the Turn, we are also interested in general theory building on the role of narratives in policy studies, as well as the accumulation of the empirical evidence on the impact of narratives.

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- Hajer, M.A. and Wagenaar, H., 2003. *Deliberative policy analysis: understanding governance in the network society*. Cambridge University Press.
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## CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel aims to update, refine and expand the scope of the Argumentative Turn particularly in its narrative elements. Both theory and empirical papers are welcome; also papers that use both quantitative and qualitative methods. This panel is part of a larger consortium of Critical Policy Studies panels and will work within the tradition.

A narrative therefore is a reality constructed through a deliberative discourse – such discourses may encompass emotional, contradictory elements, as well as meaningful, rational and scientific arguments.

This panel also aims at a critical challenge at the Turn. For example, many scholars have argued that Fischer's ideas on narratives cannot be used in policy analysis without a more formal notion of "knowledge". Not all stories are equally believable, and not all narratives equally persuasive. How then can we evaluate public narratives? What is the relationship between narratives and policy change?

Papers are therefore invited on the normative incentives provided by narratives. What have we learnt about normative components of narratives - of values, ideas and emotions? This panel therefore welcomes discussion on the role of ideas and emotions in policy narratives.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to the following areas:

1. Qualitative and quantitative methods of investigating narratives
2. Narratives of resource planning and use
3. The role of public perceptions and emotions on institutions.
4. Arguments and Institutional change
5. Evaluating narratives and discourse – how do we tell between good and bad?



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## Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 13:30 to 15:30 (Block B 3 - 4)

### **The Narrative Construction of Environmental Realities: The Opposing Discourses About Chilean Ecological Modernization (1990-2015)**

Fernando Campos Medina (Núcleo Científico Tecnológico en Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades)

### **Just a marketplace of ideas? Climate change (policy) skepticism in light of transnational networks**

Dieter Plehwe (Berlin Social Science Research Center (WZB))

### **Deliberative Policy Analysis: the case of khon Kaen**

Frank Fischer (Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany)

Piyapong Boossabong (Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy)