

T17aP09 / Implications of behavioural policy making in health promotion

Topic : T17a / Sectorial Policy - Health

Chair : Benjamin Ewert (Heidelberg School of Education)

Second Chair : Kathrin Loer (Fernuniversität Hagen)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Since the declaration of the Ottawa-Charter (1986), policy-makers are commissioned to promote health through public policy by 'making healthier choices easier'. Challenged by a steep increase of non-communicable diseases (e.g. cardiovascular diseases, diabetes or obesity), the charter's crucial dictum attracts new attention. Policy-makers are eager to develop, test and implement behavioural policy approaches emanating from the theory of libertarian paternalism. The most prominent example for in this regard are 'nudges' (Sunstein/Thaler 2009) which intend to guide people towards healthier lifestyles and are broadly promoted across policy fields. For instance, so-called 'nudge units', working at arm's length of governments, explore strategies on how to influence people's behaviour without diminishing their overall set of lifestyle choices. Criticized as 'governance by stealth' nudge-based policies differ much from former health promotion strategies based on individuals' empowerment and participation.

This panel aims to investigate theoretical and political implications of behavioural policy-making in the field of disease prevention and health promotion. In this respect, three research-guiding questions are from particular interest:

1. *What are the underlying assumptions when it comes to behavioural policy-making with regard to 'healthy lifestyles' and risk avoidance?* The panel seeks to debate, both, explicit and implicit norms and values of current behavioural health policies. Moreover, it will be asked who is seen as being responsible when it comes to risk avoidance and health promotion (the state or the individual?). While 'health nudges' are neutral policy instruments in general, they are based on rather strong assumptions on what makes up a healthy lifestyle. By analysing these assumptions the nature of behavioural health policies and its implications for policy-makers and individuals shall be revealed.
2. *Are there cross-sectorial overlappings and intersections between approaches of behavioural health promotion and adjacent policy fields?* Behavioural health policies have different repercussions for neighbouring fields and impacts on them, especially with regard to environmental policies, food and agriculture policies, consumer policies and labour market policies. For instance, a policy to extend bicycle paths in the public space, initiated by the department of traffic in order to improve inner-city mobility, may also be effective as a measure of behavioural health promotion. Based on international examples of behavioural policy-making, preconditions and challenges of cross-sectorial collaboration shall be analysed in the panel.
3. *Who are the policy-makers of behavioural health promotion and what are their interests?* Several state and non-state actors are involved in the process of behavioural policy-making. It is intended to analyse policy-makers agendas, instruments and strategies and discusses them in a broader view on health promotion and prevention. Likewise, conflicting interests and trade-offs of policy-makers constantly balancing health-promoting measures (e.g. rewarding healthy behaviour) with those that are potentially hazardous to health (e.g. allowing an industrial usage of the environment) should be critically reflected.

Ideally, the panel will bring together 'behavioural insights' from political scientists and public health experts from Asia, Australia, Europe and the US. Selected contributions to the panel shall be published within an edited volume or a special issue of an international journal of public policy.

CALL FOR PAPERS

When it comes to health promotion behavioural policy-making has become a booming trend in recent years. Despite profound evidence concerning the significance of 'social determinants of health', individual lifestyles are identified as a major source for the spread of non-communicable diseases. Moreover, in the face of squeezed public budgets behavioural policies are useful to prove policy-makers' capacity for political action. Dependent on countries' political contexts and political cultures, the array of behavioural policies applied ranges from rather simple 'health nudges' influencing people's life-style choices (e.g. in terms of eating habits and physical activity) to more complex strategies combining previously separated policy fields and aims (e.g. urban planning,

environmental protection and health promotion).

The panel seeks to reveal theoretical and political implications of this policy shift and its interplay with other policy interventions. Panel contributions could study behavioural policy-making in the realm of public health from a variety of perspectives. Analytical approaches shall include, but are not limited to:

Underlying assumptions: What is perceived as a healthy lifestyle and by whom? How are respective norms and values mirrored in concrete behavioural health policies?

Cross-sectorial policies: What are recurrent patterns of collaborations with regard to behavioural policy-making? Are explicitly new or rather mixed policy approaches for health promotion evolving?

Policy-makers: Which stakeholders are involved in the design and implementation of behavioural health policies? Are there conflicting interests and trade-offs in the policy process?

The panel especially invites papers analysing countries' health promotion profiles, comparing international case studies of nudge-based health promotion or reflecting broader implications of the 'behavioural turn' (e.g. concerning the state-citizen relationship). Besides scholars from the fields of political science, public administration and public health, practitioners working at the interface of behavioural policy planning, implementation and evaluation are encouraged to contribute to the panel.

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Session 1

Thursday, June 29th 10:30 to 12:30 (Block B 3 - 6)

Discussants

Benjamin Ewert (Heidelberg School of Education)

Kathrin Loer (Fernuniversität Hagen)

Evaluating the (in)Efficacy of Behavioural Levers on Field Agents' Performance under Rural Sanitation Policy in India

Shuchi Srinivasan

Personal and social responsibility for health: A cross-sectional study of attitudes in a Norwegian population

Gloria Traina (University of Oslo)

Eli Feiring

Nudging and population-based cancer screening

Eli Feiring

Approaches and instruments in health promotion and disease prevention

Kathrin Loer (Fernuniversität Hagen)

From protected citizens to nudged consumers? Re-examining rationales of public health policies in the light of the behavioural turn

Benjamin Ewert (Heidelberg School of Education)

The Politics of Behavioural Policy-Making in Health Promotion: Exploring Recent Developments in Australia

Anne-Maree Farrell (La Trobe University)