

T06P06 / Observing the Policy Implementation in the Field: A Closer Look at the Street-Level Bureaucrats

Topic : T06 / Policy Implementation

Chair : Gizemnur Özding (Sciences Po Grenoble)

Second Chair : Manon Pesle (University of Grenoble Alpes and Research Center PACTE)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Use of the methodological and conceptual tools of sociology is neither new nor unproductive in public policy analyses. On the contrary, problems in the implementation process of public policies have long been subject to studies of those who come from the tradition of sociology of organisations. Organisational ethnography masterfully demonstrates the distortions between different institutional and hierarchical levels in the implementation of formal decisions. Yet, those who privilege the ethnography of policy implementation remain in minority within the community of public policy analysts.

The difference between the input (decision) and output (delivery of services) can be, on one hand, explained through a top-down approach. The hierarchical levels through which the decision is diffracted are often put forward as explanation, alongside of scarce resources and means. On the other hand, the lower rank participants', or as we now all use as a reflex "the street-level bureaucrats", of policy implementing institutions discretionary power is no secret to the scholarly arena. These participants at the front line do not only shape the organisational rules and norms through daily practices, but also have an active relation with norms. The law or simply organisational rules deviate from the text in the hands of street-level bureaucrats. They determine the quality of services by taking strategic decisions such as speeding up or delaying the process. As any strategic actor of collective action, they make use of their expertise, the advantageous position that allows them to access to critical information, and relations with the organisational task environment.

A closer scrutiny of daily exchanges amongst the lower rank participants, of relations between them and their organisational superiors and with the users of public policies would help understanding the latent dynamics of many other problems that find their place in policy analyses; e.g. horizontal and vertical accountability of implementation processes, the factors that shape public perception of policies, and bottom up reformulation and production of norms and public policies.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Public policy analyses often focus on policy-making and decision-making processes at the international, national and local levels. Yet, in-depth understanding of public policies and their outcomes requires an analysis of implementation processes. Sociology of public action and sociology of organisations and institutions provide us with a tool box to understand the interactions on the field of implementation through observations. These daily exchanges are also subjects to political analysis for the fact that they demonstrate how the political or institutional decisions are interpreted and reproduced by the street-level bureaucrats in their daily work.

In this panel, we seek to discuss the discrepancies between formal decisions and implementation of public policies in the hands of the agents on the field. Can these street-level bureaucrats be considered as norm-makers and/or policy-makers? What are their sources of power and their degree of manoeuvrability? What are the different usages of discretionary power by these lowest rank participants? How the higher rank participants use the tools of organisational control as a response? How the interaction between the lowest rank participants and the users transform not only the professional practices but also the public policies themselves?

The panel attaches a great importance to papers based on empirical evidences through a concrete and rigorous fieldwork. Nevertheless, papers that present methodological aspects in the study of policy implementation by the street-level bureaucrats will be also taken into consideration.

Key words: street-level bureaucrats, implementation, organisational ethnography, discretionary power

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Session 1

Wednesday, June 28th 14:00 to 16:00 (Block B 3 - Lecture)

Street-Level Bureaucrats and Accountability: A case of delegated primary care commissioning in the National Health Services (NHS) in England

Imelda McDermott (University of Manchester)

The street level bureaucrats: the policy-makers of local international actions

Mary GELY (Université Toulouse 1 Capitole)

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES UNDER THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE STREET LEVEL AGENTS IN EDUCATION: HOW EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS HAVE INFLUENCED PUBLIC SCHOOLS ORGANIZATION IN BRAZIL?

Breyner Oliveira (Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto)

The Challenge of Public Participation in Public Policy Implementation: Case Studies of Child Friendly Integrated Public Space (RPTRA) Development Process in DKI Jakarta, Indonesia

Daisy Indira Yasmine (LabSosio FISIP UI)

Riena Surayuda (Sociology Department, University of Indonesia)

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Session 2

Wednesday, June 28th 16:15 to 18:15 (Block B 3 - Lecture)

Individuals or teams as unit of analysis in street-level bureaucracy research

Kim Loyens (Utrecht University)

Propensity to be Prosocial: Understanding Street-Level Bureaucrats' Performance through a Public Policy Lens

Shuchi Srinivasan

Ankur Sarin

Implementing labour market perspectives through talk – analysing institutional interaction in meeting talk between street level bureaucrats and hard-to-place unemployed

Dorte Caswell (Aalborg University)

Practising discretion under experimentalism

Lianne Visser (Radboud University)

Jan-Kees Helderman (Radboud University, Department of Public Administration and Political Science)

“What is there for me” Opportunistic Behaviors of Street level Bureaucrats and Implementation Gap in India’s National Health Insurance Scheme.

Dayashankar Maurya (T A Pai Management Institute)