

T03P02 / Disproportionate and Instable Forms of Policy Outputs

Topic : T03 / Policy and Politics sponsored by Policy & Politics Journal

Chair : Eva Thomann (University of Exeter)

Second Chair : Achim Kemmerling (Willy Brandt School of Public Policy - University of Erfurt)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

In this panel a selection of papers may be considered for the Policy & Politics journal.

Disproportionate policy response denotes a misfit between the costs and benefits, or the between the ends and means of a policy, resulting in policy over- and underreaction (Maor 2012, 2014) or chronic instability. Sustained patterns of these policy responses are termed policy bubbles (Jones et al. 2014). Recently, several studies have illustrated the repertoire of disproportionate policy options, namely, policy over- and underreaction rhetoric and doctrines. These problems are closely related to another well-known issue in public policy making: chronic form of instability both in the amplitude of changes, as well as the frequency. The policy literature has long acknowledged the problem of output instability in policy making. Policies which are adopted and implemented might not last long and may be reversed immediately. These can result in large problems in so far as vital economic, social and political resources are wasted in over and under-reacting compared to a more 'proportional' response to social, political or other kinds of concerns.

There are numerous approaches explaining this kind of policy instability, some of which are quite old. Rational choice scholars, for example, have long analyzed cases of problematic preference aggregation of individuals and groups and the cyclical policies of partisan-electoral pandering that may follow (Riker 1982; McFarland 1991). Valence issues have also been a long-standing topic in political science research (Beland and Cox 2011). Institutional researchers have been concerned with when and why policy instability is more likely than stability in outputs (Tsebelis 2002). Many researchers have also detected cycles in issue attention which culminate in ups and downs of policy making (Downs 1972; Vries 2010; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). Public policy scholars have long illustrated the structural and psychological roots that lead to well-known of patterns of punctuated equilibria (Jones and Baumgartner 2004). Moreover, this instability is often found in combination with excesses in terms of amplitude, i.e. they are signs and consequences of instances of disproportionate policy responses (Jones, Thomas, and Wolfe 2014; Maor 2012, 2014). Important examples are bubbles in financial markets or any other form of excessive under- or over-addressing of policy problems.

Focusing on the dynamics of disproportionate policy response, this panel aims to shed light on policy valuation processes; on the interaction between self-reinforcing processes and the contagion of ideas and emotions which reinforces the (lack of) confidence in the policy; on the ways media attention and policymaking activities become intertwined in self-reinforcing processes; on identifying (negative) policy bubbles; and on the role of symbolic and ideological factors for how policies come to be overvalued or devalued. solutions do we see in mitigating excessive forms of instability and the prospects for more 'efficient' policy-making?

References

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CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel focuses on the dynamics of disproportionate policy response, meaning a lack of "fit" between the costs of a public policy and the benefits that are derived thereof and the potential to lead to chronic forms of instability. It aims to shed light on policy valuation processes and the role of symbolic and ideological factors therein, the interaction between self-reinforcing processes and the contagion of ideas and emotions, how media attention and policymaking activities become intertwined in self-reinforcing processes, and how (negative) policy bubbles are identified.

We are seeking both conceptual and empirical papers that revolve around the following questions:

- *What does it mean to over- or underreact in policy terms?* How does policy over- and underreaction in amplitude and frequency manifest itself at different stages of the policy cycle? How can we tackle the challenges in empirically observing patterns of sustained over- or underreaction (e.g., establishing the relevant counterfactual of "proportionate response"; long-term vs. short-term disproportionate responses)?
- *What causes policy over- and underreaction and instability in more general?* How do cognitive, emotional, organizational, and institutional factors interact? To what extent are proportionality judgments by policymakers and the general public subject to ideologically-biased information processing? How do contextual factors impact on policy over- and underreaction? How does the concept of policy bubble enhance our understanding of policymaking?
- *What are the implications of volatile policy response?* How do sustained policy over- and underreaction create or destroy value for policymakers and for society? How do policy over- and underreaction shape chances to pursue particular opportunities? To what extent do policy over- and underreaction indicate that governments continue to play a pivotal role in policy making? How does the concept of policy bubble enhance our understanding of policy outcomes?

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Session 1

Friday, June 30th 13:45 to 15:45 (CJK 1 - 2)

Discussants

Eva Thomann (University of Exeter)

Achim Kemmerling (Willy Brandt School of Public Policy - University of Erfurt)

Disproportionate responses to European Union policy? Customized problem-solving in the food safety sector

Eva Thomann (University of Exeter)

A study on the policy stance of president and political salience of the central administrative agencies

Changho HWANG (Kunsan UNIVERSITY)

M. Jae Moon (Yonsei University)

State management issues in Latin America. Assessing “patterns of mismanagement” through empirical evidence from Argentina (2007-2015)

Luciano Andrenacci (Universidad Nacional de General San Martín)

Julian Bertranou (National University of San Martín, Argentina; National University of Cuyo)

Proportionate adaptation for climate risk management under uncertainty

Sreeja Nair (National University of Singapore)