

Introduction to Public Policy

Week 14

Conclusions:

Future Challenges for Public Policy Analysis

Knill & Tosun, pp. 280-294.

What have we learned?

- Policy-making is a complex process.
- Analysis of policy-making usually focuses on single stages of the policy-making process.
- Possibility of influencing the agenda – along with defining the nature of a social problem – is an important source of power (first movers).

What have we learned?

- Several groups of actors compete with one another in order to be able to set the agenda in accordance with their preferences.
- There is often a substantial gap between the passage of new legislation and its application, which is addressed by implementation research.

What have we learned?

- There is often a substantial gap between the passage of new legislation and its application, which is addressed by implementation research.
- Actors who had designed or supported the adoption of a certain public policy have a strong interest in declaring it a success, while those actors that could not realize their policy preferences will usually strive to draw a negative picture.

What have we learned?

- Economic and technological interdependencies have created a range of problems that exceed the scope of national sovereignty and can therefore no longer be sufficiently resolved by the unilateral action of national governments.
- On the other hand, the emergence of globally integrated markets poses new challenges for the regulation of domestic problems.

What Needs to be Done?

- Approaching well-established key concepts from a fresh perspective.
- This involves revisiting the use of typologies and taxonomies, the development of more integrated theoretical models, the combination of different research methodologies as well as the systematic linking of policy outputs, policy outcomes and policy impacts.

What Needs to be Done?

- Many of the classifications used in public policy analysis do not meet the standards, i.e. they are not exhaustive and/or not exclusive.

What Needs to be Done?

- We are hence confronted with a broad range of different theories that explain the development, adoption and application of a policy. This is – as such – plausible and appropriate.
 - However, so far, few theoretical attempts have been made to investigate potential linkages between these different theories.
- Although the policy cycle framework is analytically helpful as it helps to disaggregate policy-making in order to make it explainable.
 - Yet, perhaps it is now time to reconsider this approach and suggest process-related explanations for policy choices and their implementation.

What Needs to be Done?

- Approaches can operate at different levels of analysis
 - ‘on the spot’
 - versus ‘bird’s eye’
- Hence arrive at different explanations and interpretations that are – in fact – compatible with, rather than contradicting, each other.

Linkage of Quantitative and Qualitative Research Designs

- The study of public policies is characterized by a bifurcation between qualitative analyses investigating policy-making (with in-depth case studies for a small number of cases) and macro-quantitative studies focusing on policy patterns over longer time periods and analysing a large number of countries.
 - The macro-quantitative tradition of policy analysis typically concentrates on the comparative analysis and explanation of governmental activities in different countries.
 - In Qualitative policy studies, by contrast, in addition to single case studies, we find small-*n* designs that compare one or more policy sectors for a few countries, sometimes entailing comparisons over time.

What Needs to be Done?

- Both research strands of policy analysis could benefit from integrated research designs in which both approaches are effectively combined.
- The systematic linkage of quantitative and qualitative research designs constitutes a major challenge for future policy studies and bears high potential to improve our theoretical understanding of public policies.

Measurement Problems

- The assessment of policy change suffers from problems of eclectic and potentially insufficiently valid measurements.
- Solution:
 - To measure policy change on the basis of outputs rather than outcomes or impacts. This way, validity problems can be overcome.

Preferences for Policy Instruments & Institutional Forms of Governance

- Whether policy-makers in different countries also have different preferences for certain policy instruments or institutional forms of governance, such as **hierarchy, markets or networks**.
- For example, can we observe that some countries are more likely to rely on authoritative tools (e.g. command-and-control regulation) for reducing the number of traffic accidents than to employ tools that are based on the use and distribution of information?

Discussion Topics

Suggestions for:

1. Improvements for this class
2. Final exam questions

FINAL EXAM

- Final Exam Information:
 - True False Questions
 - Short Essay Questions
- Online or Face to face?
 - To be determined