

T02P01 / Policy Styles in Theory and Practice

Topic : T02 / Comparative Public Policy sponsored by Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis

Chair : Michael Howlett (Simon Fraser University)

Second Chair : Jale Tosun (Heidelberg University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The concept of policy styles has existed in the policy sciences since Richardson et al's groundbreaking work on Policy Styles in Western Europe appeared in 1982. However the concept remains under-developed both theoretically and empirically. This panel will bring together scholars from around the world to discuss aspects of the concept, including its purview and unit of analysis - sectoral, national, institutional - and its content and components in different countries.

CALL FOR PAPERS

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Session 1

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

Discussants

Jeremy Rayner (University of Saskatchewan)

The Concept of National Policy Styles

Michael Howlett (Simon Fraser University)

The “Concept of National Policy Styles” is the theme of this paper which summarizes the concept as first introduced in 1982 by Richardson et al., and discusses why it needs updating. The paper utilizes a typology of key policy actors and the staffing of the decision-making institutions to highlight the nature of different political regimes found around the world and asks how they differ in terms of process, outcome and instrument choices. The model differentiates between democracies that are representative or consultative as well as between closed-centralist systems and competitive authoritarian ones. Each of the resulting four types of regime is illustrated and analyzed through examination of several case studies.

National welfare state policy styles

Carsten Jensen (Aarhus University)

Georg Wenzelburger (TU Kaiserslautern)

A core insight of Richardson et al.’s (1982) work on national policy styles is that they will vary across issue domains. To develop the notion of policy styles and bring it into the 21st century, we need to take issue characteristics seriously. Our paper, hence, zeros in on the main redistributive issue of modern democratic societies, namely the welfare state. We have collected exceptionally fine-grained data on legislative changes on old age pensions and unemployment protection, including the precise policy instruments used, for five European countries: Britain, Denmark, Finland, France, and Germany since the 1970s. These countries represent widely different administrative traditions, as explained by Painter & Peters (2010), and with our new dataset at hand, we can explore a number of issues pertaining to welfare state policy style. These include the use of reform packages, particular combinations of certain policy instruments and temporal dynamics in reform processes. Our analysis reveals specific patterns of welfare state policy-making which can be attributed to varying policy-styles in the countries under review.

Grasping the policymaking style in an uncertain world

Philippe Zittoun (LAET-ENTPE, University of Lyon)

Patrick Hassenteufel (University of Versailles-Paris-Saclay/Printemps)

Inspired by Lowi’s works that proposed a typology of public policies (1964; 1972) and, thus, by a wide range of comparative studies since the 1970s (Smith, 1975; Heidenheimer et al., 1975; Hayward & Watson, 1975; Feldman et al., 1978), the heuristic concept of ‘style’ aims to transform an incomparable and singular policy or policy process into a comparable one through the identification of a relevant characterization (policy domain, time period, policy tools, etc.). By allowing the commensurability of policy, this concept contributes also identify the divergence or convergence between “different systems of the decision-making process, different procedures of making societal decisions” (Richardson et al., 1982, p. 2). One of the best-known usages of the concept of ‘policy

style' is Richardson et al.'s (1982) comparison of national policy styles across two dimensions: the kind of relationship between government and interest groups (conflict or negotiation) and the dominant time horizon of public policies (short-term reactive policies or long-term anticipatory policies). Based on this analytical framework, Richardson et al. identified a "British style", corresponding to "broad characterizations of the British (and possibly European) policy processes, particularly in terms of the relationship between government and interest groups" (Jordan and Richardson, 1982[LB1]).

The concept of 'style' can be considered as a heuristic method of building a typology and transforming incomparable objects or processes into comparable ones. Following the perspective proposed by Craft and Howlett (2012), our paper proposes to use the concept of policy analytical style to provide a heuristic channel to reconsider the whole policymaking process, from policy analysis to policy formulation and policy debate. While we consider, like Mayer et al. (2004), that the concept of 'style' can be useful to grasp the different types of policy analysis, we do not seek to go beyond the antagonism between different academic policy paradigms as the aforementioned authors suggest, but rather to categorize different kinds of usable knowledge and to better understand their use, their circulation and their role in the policy process. To this end, we will propose a matrix which can allow us to categorize the different style of policymaking to characterize the policymaking process in different countries.

The Concept of Policy Styles and its Application in Mexico: Comparative Case Studies at the National and Subnational Level

Raul Pacheco-Vega (Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE))

The notion of policy styles has been used primarily to describe "modes of policy-making that are inherently relevant to a specific country/region". Different governments have varied policy toolkits and therefore, their policy style will differ. Using two cases of Mexican cities' environmental policy in two issue areas (water governance and solid waste management), I show the subtle and not-so-subtle differences in policy styles, specifically analyzing instrument design, selection of policy instruments and implementation strategies. I compare the subnational cases with the national-level strategies in both issue areas to make a case for divergence in policy styles at the national and sub-national levels.