



SEMINAR
Comparative Public Policy Research:
Concepts, Theories, Empirics and Methodology
Autumn 2009
Tuesdays, 8.45 – 10.45
Seminar room 3

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It is the objective of the seminar (a) first to discuss different concepts and theories employed in public policy research. What is the difference between policy, politics and polity and how are these concepts linked in political science policy research? How helpful are analytic distinctions between different policy types, such as distributive, redistributive and regulatory policies that are commonly used in the policy research literature? How are analytic concepts such as policy network, policy community and policy arena used in order to grasp particular actor constellations and cleavage structures in specific policy or issue areas? From a process perspective we ask: how do policies develop over time? How helpful is the policy-cycle heuristic in this context, i.e. the distinction of a phase of problem definition, agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, policy evaluation and possibly policy termination? Which are the typical features of these stages, what are the underlying processes and how are they theorized and made accessible to empirical investigation? A number of different conceptual and theoretical approaches go beyond the cycle heuristic and seek to account for longer-term developments of policies. How, for instance, do theories such as policy learning and diffusion differ from a rational actor-based institutionalism in accounting for policy developments and do the latter two, in turn, differ from a multiple streams approach and an evolutionary theory of policy developments? Which are the particular methodologies and toolkits typically linked with the different approaches?

(b) The seminar will, then, focus on fundamental issues concerning the *scope, theories, and methods of empirical analysis of comparative public policy research* in different areas and at different levels. It is the objective of comparative public policy research to explain policy outcomes by comparing different political units, be they national governments or subnational governments in the context of international, European or national developments. One important question would be: why do countries' responses to the crisis of the welfare state vary across countries? Or: Why do some countries engage more successfully with economic liberalization and liberalize their capital markets, but others do not? Or: Why do countries establish diverging regulatory governance structures when reacting to the liberalization of the network industries such as telecoms, aviation, energy and transport?

By comparing individual political units and the policies they produce, we submit that different causal factors may account for differential outcomes. These factors may be

of political, institutional nature, of an economic or social and cultural nature. Scholars hold widely divergent views regarding which factors account for different outcomes across countries and how these factors should be *theorized*. How should *theories* be generated to account for differential policy outcomes across polities and across time; or which existing theories should be applied? In the absence of a single dominant theory, how should one deal with theoretical pluralism? Should hypotheses be developed deductively or inductively?

The *methods of empirical analysis* applied in comparative public policy research widely diverge, too. Some research focuses on the methodology of qualitative research opting for in-depth case studies. Other scholars use large-n quantitative analysis to identify the factors causing different policy outcomes across a large number of polities.

The method applied will be closely linked to question of the level of analysis of a policy: If one wishes to study policy outputs, defined as legislative and administrative decisions, a large-n, quantitative study correlating a range of factors with particular outcomes in a multiple regression analysis may be appropriate. If, by contrast, the interest focuses on policy outcomes and, even more so, policy impact, then investigative steps need to be taken into the implementation process in each political unit. This will require qualitative methods of process analysis.

The seminar will discuss selected texts which cover the wide range of theories and methods used in comparative public policy research, reaching from large-n quantitative cross-country studies, to in depth (historical) qualitative case comparisons and focusing upon different policy areas.

Participants are expected to participate actively in the seminar discussions and present and critique one or two selected publications from the syllabus. They also have the possibility to present their own research on (comparative) public policy.

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Session 1: October 6th 2009

1. Introduction: Conceptualization: Public Policy, Policy cycle, Policy types

Sabatier, P. (1999) The Need for Better Theories, in P. Sabatier ed., *Theories of the Policy Process*, Westview Press, 3-19

Saetren (2005) Facts and Myths about Research on Public Policy Implementation: Out-of-Fashion, Allegedly Dead, But Still Very Much Alive and Relevant

Smith, K.B. (2002) Typologies, Taxonomies, and the Benefits of Policy Classification, *Policy Studies Journal*, 30, 370-395

Nilsson et al. (2008) The use and non-use of policy appraisal tools in public policy making: an analysis of three European countries and the European Union;

Session 2: October 13th 2009

2. Methodology and Research design

Seawright J. and Gerring J.(2008) Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options; *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol.61, pp.294-308

Mahoney J. (2008) Toward a Unified Theory of Causality, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, pp.412-436

Steinberg, P.F. (2007) Causal Assessment in Small-N Policy Studies, *The Policy Studies Journal*, 35, pp.181-203

Session 3 : October 20th 2009

3 Long-term policy development, punctuated equilibria, multiple streams; path-dependency

Scharpf F.W 1997, *Games Real Actors Play. Actor-Centered Institutionalism in Policy Research*, Westview, pp19-68

Sabatier, P. H.C. Jenkins-Smith, (1999) The Advocay Coalition Framework: An Assessment, in P. Sabatier, ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*, Westview, pp. 117-168

Baumgartner F., Green-Pedersen C., Jones B. (2006) Comparative studies of policy agendas. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 13, 1086-1103

Kingdon, J. 1995, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, HarperCollins 222-230

Zahariadis, N (1999) Ambiguity, Time and Multiple Streams, in P.Sabatier, ed. *Theories of the Policy Process*, Westview, pp. 73-93

Pierson, P. (2000) Path Dependence, Increasing Returns, and Political Science, in *American Political Science Review*, Vol 94, p. 251-267

Session 4: October 27th 2009

4. *Welfare State (vertical)*

Iversen, T. and Stephens, J.D. (2008) Partisan Politics, the Welfare State, and Three Worlds of Human Capital Formation, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 600-6

Ganghof, S (2007) The Political Economy of High Income Taxation: Capital Taxation, Path Dependence, and Political Institutions in Denmark, *Comparative Political Studies*, 40, 1059-1084

Jacobs (2008) How Do Ideas Matter? Mental Models and Attention in German Pension Politics, *Comparative Political Studies*, 2009, 42, 252-279

Ha, E (2008), Globalization, Veto Players, and Welfare Spending, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 783-812

Session 5: November 3d 2009

Guest lecture: Prof. James A. Caporaso (University of Washington, Seattle) will introduce a session on

“Is There a Quantitative-Qualitative Divide in Comparative Politics? The Case of Process Tracing”

Session 6: November 10th 2009

6. *Welfare State (horizontal)*

Starke, Obinger and Castles (2008) Convergence towards where: in what ways, if any, are welfare states becoming more similar? *Journal of European Public Policy*, 15, pp.975-1000

Franzese R. and J.Hays (2008) Interdependence in Comparative Politics: Substance, Theory, Empirics, and Substance; *Comparative Political Studies*, 2008, 41, 742-779

Session 7: November 17th 2009

7. *Political Economy (vertical)*

Baccaro and Simoni (2008), Policy Concertation in Europe: Understanding Government Choice, *Comparative Political Studies*, 41, 1323-1347

Callaghan, H. (2009) Insiders, Outsiders, and the Politics of Corporate Governance: How Ownership Structure Shapes Party Positions in Britain, Germany, and France, *Comparative Political Studies*, 2009, 42, 733-762

Session 8: November 24th 2009

8. Political Economy (horizontal)

Alter K. and Meunier S. (2009) The Politics of International Regime Complexity, *Perspectives on Politics*, , pp. 13-24

Davis, C. (2009) Overlapping Institutions in Trade Policy, *Perspectives on Politics*, pp. 25-31

Drezner, D. (2009) The Power and Peril of international Regime Complexity, *Perspectives on Politics*, pp. 65-70

Simmons, B., Dobbin F., and Garrett , G. (2006) Introduction: International Diffusion of Liberalism, *International Organization*, 60, 781-810

Session 9: December 1st 2009

9. Environmental Policy (vertical and horizontal)

Andersson, K.P. and Ostrom, E. (2008) Analyzing decentralized resource regimes from a polycentric perspective, *Policy Sciences*, 41, pp. 71-93

Holzinger, K., Knill C. and T. Sommerer (2008) Environmental Policy Convergence: The Impact of International Harmonization, Transnational Communication, and Regulatory Competition, *International Organization*, 553-585

Baettig M. and Bernauer, T. (2009) National Institutions and Global Public Goods: Are Democracies More Cooperative in Climate Change Policy? *International Organization*, 63, 281-308

Session 10: December 8th 2009

10. Students presentations / Discussion and Conclusion