European Union Public Policy

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Lecture 3
Policy formulation: the policy communities and policy networks models, policy-making uncertainty, expertise and epistemic communities

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Additional source:

Michalowitz, I. (2007) 'What determines influence? Assessing conditions for decision-making influence of interest groups in the E.U.', ***Journal of European Public Policy***, 14:1, pp.132-151.

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1. Policy communities model;

2. Policy networks model.

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THE CONTEXT

a) The development of the E.U. public policy process is still at a ***relatively*** early stage;

b) As a result, attempts to develop theoretical models describing that process will not capture 'whole picture' – only a few aspects of it.

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- Models allow us to look at the 'bigger picture' (to identify the wider factors influencing policy formulation)

  - not just the 'interests' of individuals and groups

    BUT also to see the role of:

    - *ideas;*

    - *knowledge;*

    - *expertise.*

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- Policy communities model and Policy networks model both focus on sets of *'actors'* (groups and individuals) who are seen as *'stakeholders'* in the policy process.

- These *'actors'/'stakeholders'* are influenced in their policy formulation preferences by 'ideas', 'knowledge' and their 'private interests'

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- E.U. public policy process not a *'straight-line journey'*

    - it is a *multi-level, multi-arena 'game'.*

    - lots of processes and factors at
        work at different institutional
        and non-institutional levels,
        and at differing periods in time

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THE POLICY COMMUNITIES MODEL

- 'community' = 'joint ownership of goods, identity of character, fellowship … (of interest)

- groups and individuals sharing a common interest – a common policy interest

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THE POLICY COMMUNITIES MODEL

- Describes long-term and stable relationships (in discussing and developing policy) between groups and institutions in particular policy sectors (i.e. education, health).

- These groups and representatives are fairly tightly defined in their interests

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THE POLICY COMMUNITIES MODEL

- So, it means *'stakeholders'* in particular policy areas discussing, debating and developing policy arguments and policies relevant to them and their interests

- It suggests a *more consensual style* of policy formulation overall

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THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

- policy networks **'much more loosely integrated'** than policy communities.

- A (public) policy network is a collection/cluster of groups, institutions, individuals that share a common (public) policy area interest;

- share a common (public) policy area issue;

- share a common knowledge of that issue and (public) policy area

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THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

-    Members of policy networks share a common understanding of how knowledge is gained about a (public) policy area

-    and of how problems are identified in that area and in formulating a policy

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THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

- Public policy networks are basically groups of various representative bodies and agencies in particular public and social sectors of society (and can also include individual experts/academics in the particular public policy area)

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THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

For example:

a)   the education sector

- university representative bodies;

- lecturers' trade unions and representative bodies;

- student representative bodies;

- teachers' unions

- parents' associations (at schools) and representative bodies;

- and increasingly now, employers representative bodies

- education experts

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THE POLICY NETWORKS MODEL

For example:

b) the health and social security sectors

- medical associations;

- doctors' associations and representative bodies;

- hospital management bodies;

- nurses and health workers' trade unions and representative bodies;

- social services agencies;

- social services workers' trade unions and representative bodies;

- social security workers' trade unions and representative bodies;

- health and social security experts and academics

- and increasingly, food company representative bodies, pharmaceutical industry representatives

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- Take policy networks framework, examine each network/policy area, and ask a series of research questions:

1. Who has an interest in this public policy problem?

2. How are they mobilised and organised?

3. What is the timing and nature of their involvement in the public policy process?

4. How are their preferences determined?

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5. Are those preferences really fixed (or fluid)?

6. Do the groups and agencies in the policy network develop stable relationships with each other?

7. Who is likely to gain from different policy outcomes?

8. Who is likely to lose from different policy outcomes?

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INTERACTION BETWEEN:

STRUCTURE   **AND**   **AGENCY**

(Institution   *(stakeholders groups*

- E.U. Commission)   *in policy networks)*

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-E.U. Commission attempts to ensure that relationship between 'stakeholders' groups and agencies in policy networks is based on:

1. recognition of each other as legitimate 'stakeholders' in the policy area/issue;

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2. Recognition between 'stakeholders' groups and agencies that collaboration is the best means of gaining mutual advantage and acceptable outcome in policy formulation

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3. (ensure) that the 'stakeholders' groups and agencies desire negotiated and stable policy environments in preference to continued conflict, instability and uncertainty

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Policy networks will have:

1. A variety of inconsistent and ill defined preferences – a loose collection of ideas;

2. (it will have) to operate in extremely complex and complicated E.U. organisational structures;

3. (it will have) 'fluid' participants within it (with varied time and effort)

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<u>Expertise and epistemic communities</u>

- a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular policy area, who have an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that policy area.

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"members of an epistemic community share intersubjective understandings, have a shared way of knowing, have shared patterns of reasoning, have a policy project drawing on shared values, share causal beliefs, and the use of discursive practices, and have a shared commitment to the application and production of knowledge"

(Haas, P. (1992) 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Co-ordination', in *International Organisation*, 46/1, p.3.)

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"members of an epistemic community share intersubjective understandings *(common knowledge about policy area),* have a shared way of knowing *(common sources to gain that knowledge),* have shared patterns of reasoning *(common forms of analysis),* have a policy project drawing on shared values, share causal beliefs *(common values and beliefs),* and the use of discursive practices *(common belief in discussion and debate),* and have a shared commitment to the application and production of knowledge *(common commitment to investigation and application of information on policy area)"*

(Haas, P. (1992) 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Co-ordination', in *International Organisation*, 46/1, p.3.)

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Factors contributing to E.U. public policy makers using experts and epistemic communities

1. The dynamics of uncertainty in policy formulation;

2. The need for specialist interpretation of information/knowledge;

3. Institutionalisation of information and knowledge (in E.U. bureaucracy)