

The Politics of Non-Proportionate Policy Response

Workshop Outline, ECPR Joint Sessions, Warsaw, 29 March - 2 April 2015

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Outline of the Topic

The punctuated equilibrium theory suggests that policy responses will oscillate between periods of underreaction to the flow of information coming from the environment into the system and overreaction to it due to disproportionate information processing (Jones and Baumgartner 2005). The aim of this workshop is to take this promising research agenda further by focusing on the dynamics of overreaction and underreaction in enacting policy solutions, and on the varieties of policy over- and underreaction. The workshop also revolves around the life-cycles of longer-term over- and underreaction which are propelled by self-reinforcing processes, as well as around the analytical reach of concepts which aim at capturing these phenomena, namely, policy bubbles (Maor 2013; Jones, Thomas & Wolfe 2014) and policy anti-bubbles (Maor 2014).

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

- To what extent are cost-benefit analyses, subjective evaluations, analysis of indicators of policy problems and investment level by government (Jones, Thomas and Wolfe 2014), and comparison of countries' policies with recommendations for standards by expert committees (Tosun 2013a,b,c), able to capture the extent of non-proportionate policy response?
- How do cognitive, emotional, organizational, and institutional factors interact to explain non-proportionate policy responses?
- How does the state of emotion towards a particular policy change over time, and what is the extent to which such changes impact upon the supply of the policy?
- What is the role of the media in the emergence of non-proportionate policy responses?
- What are the differences between processes of ideational and emotional contagion that generate non-proportionate policy response and those that do not?
- Could non-proportionate policy responses be policy successes?
- What are the significant normative dimensions of policy over- and underreaction?
- What are the relations between policy overreaction and underreaction?
- How do members of the public make judgments about non-proportionate policy responses?
- To what extent do policymakers learn from non-proportionate policy response?
- What are the consequences of non-proportionate policy responses in terms of policy outcomes and the penalty imposed on policymakers by the general public?
- Why do some bubbles and anti-bubbles deflate on their own while others continue to grow?
- Are there specific measures that governments could take to respond to bubbles and anti-bubbles and to restrict their potential damage?

We hope that the papers presented at the workshop will shed light on the interaction between self-reinforcing processes and the contagion of ideas and emotions which reinforces the confidence of the general public and/or policymakers in the policy, or its lack thereof; on the ways media attention and policymaking activities become intertwined in self-reinforcing processes; on the ways policy bubbles and policy anti-bubbles are identified, and on the role of symbolic and ideological factors in processes by which policies come to be overvalued or devalued. We are fully aware of the difficulties in estimating non-proportionate policy responses, but we want to discuss ways of addressing them in an analytically rigorous way.

Relation to Existing Research

This emerging subfield of public policy is inspired by the work of the 2013 Nobel laureate Robert Shiller on financial bubbles (e.g., Shiller 2005); Bryan Jones and co-authors' work on policy bubbles (Jones and Wolfe 2010; Jones, Thomas and Wolfe 2014); Robert Cox and Daniel Béland's (2013) study of the emotional qualities of policy ideas, and Moshe Maor's conceptual works on policy overreaction (2012), policy bubbles (2013), policy underreaction (2014a) and policy anti-bubbles (2014b).

Likely Participants

Our aim is to stimulate a seminal discussion across a wide range of sub-disciplines in political science, such as political psychology, political sociology, political economy, political geography, international relations and political theory, as well as in public policy, public administration and public management.

Likely Policy Areas

Our aim is to stimulate a discussion across a wide range of policy areas, such as environment, climate change, energy, transport, foreign affairs and so on.

Funding

The workshop can expect some funding from on-going EU-related research projects.

Recommended Texts

Baumgartner, F. R., & Jones, B. D. (2005). *The Politics of Attention*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cox, R. H. & Béland, D. (2013) Valence, Policy Ideas, and the Rise of Sustainability. *Governance*, 26(2), 307-328.

Jones, B. D. & M. Wolfe (2010). Public Policy and the Mass Media. In *Public Policy and Mass Media: The Interplay of Mass Communication and Political Decision Making*, eds. Sigrid Koch-Baumgarten and Katrin Voltmer. London: Routledge, 17-43.

Jones, B. D., H.F. Thomas & M. Wolfe (2014). Policy Bubbles. *Policy Studies Journal* 42(1): 146-171.

Maor, M. (2012). Policy overreaction. *Journal of Public Policy*, 32(3), 231-259.

Maor, M. (2013). Policy Bubbles: Policy Overreaction and Positive Feedback. *Governance*, DOI: 10.1111/gove.12048.

Maor, M. (2014a). Risk and Policy Underreaction. Working Paper, Department of Political Science, Jerusalem: Hebrew University. Available online at: www.moshemaor.net.

Maor, M. (2014b). Policy Anti-Bubbles: Policy Underreaction and Self-Reinforcing Processes. Department of Political Science, Jerusalem: Hebrew University. Available online at: www.moshemaor.net.

Shiller, R. J. (2005). *Irrational Exuberance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tosun, J. (2013a). *Environmental Policy Change in Emerging Market Democracies – Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America Compared*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Tosun, J. (2013b). *Risk Regulation in Europe: Assessing the Application of the Precautionary Principle*. New York: Springer.

Tosun, J. (2013c). How the EU Handles Uncertain Risks: Understanding the Role of the Precautionary Principle. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 20(10): 1517-1528.

Biographical Note

Moshe Maor is Professor of Political Science and holder of the Wolfson Family Chair of Public Administration at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His areas of expertise are bureaucratic politics, public sector reforms, public policy dynamics and comparative politics. He is the author of *Political Parties and Party Systems* (Routledge, 1997) and *Parties, Conflicts and Coalitions in Western Europe* (Routledge and LSE, 1998), as well as has numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals including the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Governance*, *Public Administration*, *European Journal of Political Research*, *Journal of European Public Policy*, *West European Politics*, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, *Public Administration Review*, *Administration & Society*, *Democratization*, *Disaster*, and *Israel Affairs*. Maor is also a member of the Council for Higher Education in Israel.

Jale Tosun is Assistant Professor of International Comparative Political Economy at the Institute of Political Science at the University of Heidelberg, Germany. Her research interests comprise a wide range of topics in comparative public policy and political economy as well as public administration. Her areas of expertise include decision making on environmental, energy and climate change policies in international and transnational contexts, risk governance, and actors and institutions in the European Union. She has published her research in several international peer-reviewed journals such as the *European Journal of Political Research*. Her current books are "Environmental Policy Change in Emerging Market Democracies" and "Risk Regulation in Europe".