Efficient climate advocacy: The challenge of formulating evidence-based policy

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Outline

> Evidence-based policy
> Separation of the Is from the Ought
> The causal model of a public policy
> Science and politics
> Forms of evidence use
> What do we learn from the use of policy evaluations?
  — Use in public administration
  — Use in parliament
  — Use in direct democracy
> The role of public perception
> Framing and Policy Narratives
> Conclusions
> Task for the workshops
Discovered 15 years ago:
Evidence is important

“As a condition for success, it is crucial that policy choices are based and updated on the best available knowledge.”

European Commission
Communication on ‘Improving the knowledge base for better policies’, 2002 (COM(2002) 713)
Evidence is important

“Policy making should be a continuous learning process, with improved use of evidence and research, pilot schemes, evaluation and feedback.”

UK Modernising Government White Paper, 1999
Scientists at the heart of government

“Climate change is the most severe problem we are facing today – far greater than international terrorism.”

David King, UK Government Chief Scientist, January 2004
“There is an obsession with evidence-based policy. If Number 10 says bloody evidence-based policy to me one more time I'll deck them one.”

Louise Casey, Director of Home Office’s Anti-Social Behaviour Unit, August 2004
What is Evidence-based Policy-making (EBP)? White Paper 1999

> Policy making: We will be forward looking in developing policies to deliver outcomes that matter, not simply reacting to short-term pressures.

> We will:
  — identify and spread best practice through the new Centre for Management and Policy Studies.
  — Bring in joint training of Ministers and civil servants.
  — introduce peer review of Departments.
Backlash 2016

‘relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’

29.11.2016)
Boom of a word

"POST-TRUTH" FREQUENCY

FREQUENCY OF WORD USE

OCT  NOV  DEC  JAN  FEB  MAR  APR  MAY  JUN  JUL  AUG  SEP  OCT

2015  2016

Oxforddictionaries.com
Causal model of a public policy

- **Intervention of the public policy**
- **Intervention hypothesis**
  - **Policy targets**
    - Problem causes
  - **Problem causes**
- **Causal hypothesis**
  - **Social Problem**
    - Problem affected
      - Policy beneficiaries
Separation of the *Is* from the *Ought*: Cognition versus Morality (David Hume)

> „In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark’d, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz’d to find, that in stead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is, and is not,* I meet with no proposition that *is not connected with an ought, or an ought not.* This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. **For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, ‘tis necessary that it shou’d be observe’d and explain’d; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it.***

David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature III.1.i, p. 469 (Selby-Bigge, Nidditch, Oxford 1978)
Three ways science and politics work together by Jürgen Habermas (1963)

> Decisionist Model:
  — Politics dominate. Selective and casewise use of scientific evidence for political goals

> Technocrat Model:
  — Science and administration dominate: factual constraints defined by specialists.
  — Politics = implementation of scientific supremacy

> Pragmatist Model:
  — Mutual information and consultancy
  — Non-hierarchical exchange between science and politics
  — Power of the better argument
How evidence is used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Change of action based on concrete recommendations derived from research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Cognitive change (thinking, perception) due to scientific findings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Procedural</td>
<td>Concrete of cognitive changes due to participation in research process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolic</td>
<td>Use of research for the justification of a pre-existant position (no actual concrete of cognitive change of behaviour)</td>
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<td>(political, legitimizing, persuasive, tactical etc.)</td>
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Results from the study of research utilization in Switzerland in the case of policy evaluations

> Administration:
  — All forms of use
  — Use is context sensitive, especially for problem pressure and confluctuality
  — Replicability is important
  — Own experience serves as Truth test

> Parliament:
  — Hardly use but great demand for evaluation studies
  — if use, then symbolic/political: not Speaking Truth to Power but Seeking Power with Truth

> Direct democratic discourse:
  — Exclusively political use
  — Scientific arguments enter the debate only via experts and the Executive

Problem of political use

> „Facts alone cannot win political debates. Facts do not conquer hearts [Fakten alleine können aber keine politischen Debatten gewinnen. Fakten erobern keine Herzen.]“.  
— Interviewzitat Ingrid Brodnig, Autorin von «Hass im Netz», Bund online, 09.05.2018

> Policy making is the result of democratic negotiation and democratic participation.

> "Evidence [...] enters into an existing soup of values, beliefs, preferences, and needs" (Henry, 2000, S.92)
The role of the public perception of problems

Based on Soss and Schram (2007)
Framing of problems and solutions

- Public Policy as discourse and interpretive act
- Battle for the authoritative interpretation
- Frames = normative template of interpretation
- Emphasizing and accentuation in the presentation of a phenomenon leads to different perceptions of the very phenomenon
  - Focussing on certain aspects
  - Shift of attention
  - Positive or negative re-interpretation
Policy-Narrative

> „Homo narrans“: Stories are more convincing than mere facts
> Narrative play an important role in the policy process
> Content of narratives varies but there is a general structure:

1. **Setting**: Policy context: how much room for interpretation?
2. **Characters**: Victims *(the ones affected by the problem)*, Villains *(Problem causers)* and Heroes *(Problem solvers)*
3. **Plot**: storyline linking the characters with the setting
4. **Moral of the story**: Problem solution by the Public Policy

20’000 Birds as victims of the Federal Energy Strategy 2050?

> 20,7 birds per year and wind turbine die at the wind energy plant in Le Peuchapatte in the Swiss Jura
> The Swiss Energy Strategy 2050 aims at an extension to a total of 800 plants in Switzerland which may cause a maximum of 20’000 dead birds per year.
> At the same time, this expansion will be able to cover up to 10 per cent of Swiss electricity demand as compared to less than 0,2 per cent today.
  — FOE, Der Bund, 30.11.2016

> Is this good or bad?
> Are sustainable energy producers heroes or villains?
Conclusion

Habermas’ pragmatist model only partly applies:
- Administration is the best and most sensible recipient of evidence
- Parliaments and the public scarcely use evidence and if they do, they use it politically

Scientific results stand different chances to enter the policy process
- Depending on the margin of interpretation and the potential for scandalization in a Policy’s setting
- Depending on dominant framing of a Policy: Are positive aspects rather than negative ones emphasized?
- Depending on the fit in a Policy Narrative: how does evidence link the victims to the villains?
**Workshop:** The use of evidence in framing climate policy

- **Workshop moderators**
  - MA Johanna Künzler
  - Dr. Markus Hinterleitner
  - Dr. David Kaufmann
  - Prof. Fritz Sager

- **Workshop tasks:**
  - Find a policy relevant finding from your research (one or several)
  - Fit it into the causal model of a Public Policy: What problem does it solve, how?
  - What is the setting of the policy? How can you frame it?
  - Turn it into a positive policy narrative. Come up with a counter narrative to the one you identify with.