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When and why do governments integrate policy sectors? A comparative analysis of eleven countries and four policy areas

English title	When and why do governments integrate policy sectors? A comparative analysis of eleven countries and four policy areas
Applicant	Maggetti Martino
Number	162832
Funding scheme	Project funding (Div. I-III)
Research institution	Institut d'études politiques, historiques et internationales (IEPHI) - Faculté des SSP Université de Lausanne
Institution of higher education	University of Lausanne - LA
Main discipline	Political science
Start/End	01.03.2016 - 31.12.2019
Approved amount	493'399.00

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Keywords (5)

Policy integration; Comparative politics; Public policy; Delegation; Public administration

Lay Summary (French)

Lead

Depuis quelques années, les gouvernements des pays développés ont commencé à re-intégrer certains secteurs de politiques publiques, surtout dans des domaines considérés comme prioritaires. Par exemple, la politique de la santé fait l'objet de tentatives de coordination accrue avec la politique en matière de migration. Ce projet vise à étudier ces nouvelles dynamiques.

Lay summary

Contenu et objectifs du travail de recherche

La littérature scientifique a mis l'accent sur la fragmentation croissante de l'autorité de l'Etat, sur la délégation de certaines de ses prérogatives à d'autres niveaux de décision, et sur la mise en place de réformes administratives visant à réduire la bureaucratie étatique. Par contre, la re-intégration et coordination des secteurs de politiques publiques n'a pas encore été étudiée de manière systématique et comparative.

Ce projet répond à cette lacune en étudiant la re-intégration de quatre secteurs prioritaires dans onze pays sur une période de 34 ans. Plus précisément, ce projet couvre la sécurité intérieure, la politique environnementale, la politique migratoire et la santé publique. Les pays à comparer sont les suivants: Allemagne, Australie, Autriche, Belgique, Canada, Etats-Uni, France, Italie, Nouvelle-Zélande, Royaume-Uni, Suisse, sur la période 1980-2014.

Dans ce cadre, il s'agit d'examiner la variation entre pays et secteurs, et d'identifier les facteurs politico-administratifs qui facilitent, ou, au contraire, qui entravent la re-intégration des politiques publiques.

Contexte scientifique et social du projet de recherche

En combinant des approches politologiques avec l'étude des administrations publiques, et grâce à l'utilisation de méthodes mixtes, cette recherche vise à développer une nouvelle théorie concernant l'intégration des secteurs de politiques publiques. Qui plus est, les résultats de ce projet pourront aider les décideurs et les citoyens à mieux comprendre les défis et les avantages de la coordination des politiques publiques.

[Direct link to Lay Summary](#)

Last update: 06.02.2016

Responsible applicant and co-applicants

Name	Institute
Maggetti Martino	Institut d'études politiques, historiques et internationales (IEPHI) - Faculté des SSP Université de Lausanne

Employees

Name	Institute
Trein Josef Philipp	Institut d'études politiques, historiques et internationales (IEPHI) - Faculté des SSP Université de Lausanne
Meyer Iris	
Assanti Stefano	

Abstract

Nowadays it is well known amongst political science researchers that governments have delegated authority upwards to the supranational level, downwards to subnational jurisdictions, and sideways to independent regulators and private actors (Hooghe and Marks 2001b). Whereas the instrumental goal of delegating power is to reduce bureaucracy while improving governance capacity in an increasing complex society and in a globalized economy, delegation also came along with coordination problems, due to the fragmentation of state power. In this context, another emerging strand of research has been referring to a renewed concentration of state power, denominated as joined-up government, or whole-of-government. Especially for pressing problems, such as domestic security, or immigration, where the downsides of new public management have become apparent, the (re)integration of policy sectors is a key issue. Whilst the literature has already pointed to integration processes and related concepts in single countries, a systematic comparative assessment, especially over time, is still in its beginnings. This project addresses this shortcoming by putting together a research plan that compares the (re)integration of policy sectors (dependent variable) in four issue areas, in eleven countries over a period of 34 years. Specifically, we are going to look at domestic security, environmental policy, immigration and public health. The countries that we are going to compare are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, New Zealand, Switzerland, UK, USA, in the time period from 1980 to 2014. The reason for this choice is quite simple. The selected problems pose important challenges to policymakers and have already been subject to policy integration in some countries. The time period we are looking at corresponds with the conventional onset of new public management reforms. Our country sample is a selection of comparable nations regarding economic development and political institutions, but which present substantial variation in the explanatory variables. Based on a combination of political science and public administration theories, we created a theoretical model that expects different outcomes concerning policy integration in these countries. First of all, we argue that in order to consider policy sectors for integration, governments need to be alarmed about a problem. Then, there are two elements that should make policy integration more likely: Firstly, the general extent of prior delegation of power, and secondly, fiscal centralization, namely the power to raise taxes. On the other hand, there are two factors that should impede policy integration, namely the presence of many political constraints and a highly politicized bureaucracy. Our research design consists of a mixed-methods approach combining multilevel regression analysis with case study research. We begin with the former. To collect the data on our dependent variable (policy integration) we use secondary literature, reports by international organizations such as the OECD, WHO, or the EEA, as well as research from the country's governmental and parliamentary databases. Missing information can be complemented with expert interviews. For the independent variables, we will use statistics and existing datasets. Following the longitudinal regression analysis we select instances on policy integration (crucial cases, extreme cases etc.) to make a number of case studies, in which we are going to trace the policy process that lead to sectorial integration. The case studies will help us to examine causal mechanisms and improve causal inference. Two collaborators will be hired on the project: One postdoctoral and a doctoral researcher. The project runs for 36 months and the expected output are about five journal articles and one Ph.D. thesis. We are fully convinced that the project makes important theoretical and practical contributions. By combining theories of public administration and political science we contribute a new theory concerning the integration of policy sectors. What is more, our research will help policymakers to better understand the challenges and advantages of policy integration.

Contact

Swiss National Science
Foundation (SNSF)

Wildhainweg 3
P.O. Box
CH-3001 Bern
Phone +41 31 308 22 22

Contact

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