

Beyond Nudging – Advancing the Discussion on Behavioural Governance

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Abstract

For the Section: The Politics of Bureaucracy

Ever since the publication of Thaler and Sundstein's book "Nudge" in 2008, behavioural approaches have gained salience in the study and practice of public policy and public administration. Behavioural governance uses insights about psychological micro-mechanisms to improve the design and implementation of public policies, moving beyond the assumption of rational policy targets and often using experimental methods (James et al. 2017; John et al. 2013; Oliver 2013 Thomann et al. 2018). The mushrooming body of scholarly literature and the granting of the Nobel prize in economics to Thaler in 2017 illustrate the promise of behavioural governance. This panel broadens the perspective on behavioural governance theoretically, conceptually, and empirically.

Theoretically, behavioural governance approaches typically focus on the design and implementation of policies. It has been argued that behavioural public policy needs to take into account democratic processes and move beyond the assumption of rational decision-makers (John 2018; Lodge and Wegrich 2016). Different stages of the policy process as well as different instruments and settings interact with each other. Thus, this panel invites papers that broaden behavioural perspectives to the entire policy process and link them to other areas of political research. For example: Are certain parties or coalition governments more likely to apply these instruments? Are fiscal restraints a factor when nudges are applied? How do biases shape which problems make it on the political agenda?

Conceptually, the Panel invites approaches to behavioural governance that go beyond nudging (Thomann 2018). We need a clarification of terms. There is a tendency to use a 'nudging label' for studies dealing with individual behaviour and governance approaches. Yet, are all nudging approaches behavioural and vice versa? Moreover, behavioural governance incorporates an individual and an administrative perspective. However, the mechanisms and insights of behavioural public policy and behavioural public administration need to be compared more systematically. Thus the panel encourages the use of behavioural perspectives for understanding bureaucratic behaviour.

Empirically, the Panel invites comparative perspectives of instruments or settings, using a plurality of methodological approaches and moving beyond the "usual suspects" of Anglo-Saxon and Western European contexts.

To submit a proposal, you will need to provide:

- your name, academic affiliation and email address
- a title for your paper
- an abstract of up to 500 words.

For further information or to submit a proposal, please contact either Jan Pollex at jan.pollex@uni-osnabrueck.de or Eva Thomann at e.thomann@exeter.ac.uk

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