INTERPRETIVE POLICY ANALYSIS CONFERENCE 2021

Panel Title:
P3 - Policy making and democracy in an era of post truth

Panel Convenors:
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Abstract
In the age of post-truth, the spread of alternative facts, which is the making false claims that seem true (Frankfurt 2009; Sterling et al. 2016), may have a de-democratizing effect by closing down and polarizing public debates about, for example energy and climate change (Dunlap and Jacques 2013; Dunlap et al. 2016; Fraune and Knodt 2018). Alternative facts in these policy debates and controversies seem to contribute to an emotional polarization in which the false dichotomy between facts and emotions (Durnova 2019) becomes ever more problematic. While social constructivism has been blamed for contributing to the acceptability of spreading alternative facts (Fischer 2019; Braun & Dodge 2019), in our view, it is uniquely positioned to better understand what is taking place when political actors assert false narratives and discourses that become undisciplined by the facts or some kind of verifiable reality, and the effects this has on public discourse, policy making and political engagement. In this panel we explore how studies from a social constructivist point of view, contribute to better understanding the rise and circulation of alternative facts (Fischer 2019), and their influence on democratic decision making and policy making.

We are looking for a broad range of papers, for example those that address (1) the ontological and epistemological questions put forward in discussions about the role of social constructivists in the post truth era; (2) a better understanding of the interpretive processes through which 'truth' becomes credible, or discredited, in democratic decision making, policy making and society; and (3) the action repertoires for policy makers, politicians, and other societal actors for coping with these alternative facts and further democratize policy making. In relation to the credibility of facts and truth, for example, we are interested in the challenges post-truth policy making poses to scientists and others "to make public facts credible," and support the procedural values of transparency and fairness (Jasanoff and Simmett 2017, p.275). We also seek papers that address the issue of easy circulation of information across the world through the internet and social media, and other modes of communication that might give a particular boost (or dampen) post-truth communication, or that aim to conceptualize and empirically study digital democratization (Metze 2020; Ellis et al 2020) in a post-truth context.

Key references

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