AUSTERITY and its ALTERNATIVES

Who Is Heard?

Non-government Policy Actors in the Policy Process

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Research Questions

- What is the state of co-governance in the Canadian context?

- What is the role of non-government organizations in the policy process?

- When and where do non-state actors participate and how frequently?

- Is there a hierarchy of engagement?

- What does this say about the state of policy co-construction?

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Assessing New Public Governance

- Susan Phillips (2007): ""Are policy processes in Canada actually as open and as participatory as this model of 'governance' suggests?"

- NPG scholars contend "we are witnessing a fundamental shift in governing models" marked by a "pluralization of policy making," (Phillips and Smith 2011).

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Outline

- Non-government policy actors do have a significant role, but it is largely focused on implementation and service delivery rather than participation in strategically important design work.

- We explore two concepts – co-construction and implementation – that differentiate NPG and NPM respectively.

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Data and Methods

- Two online surveys (Government and NGO)

- 2458 government and 1995 NGO.

- 3 provinces (Ont, BC, Sask.) in four policy fields (health, environment, immigration, labour)

- Emphasis was on engagement between government and NGO respondents

- Response rates of 34%

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Engaging Stakeholders

- One indicator of a more inclusive policy-making process is the extent to which NGOs participate in the policy process.

- Two forms of engagement: formal and informal.

- Robust engagement entails quarterly or monthly policy related meetings.

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Frequency and Type of Policy Engagement (Government)

Inviting stakeholders to assist	Informally		Formally	
	N	%	N	%
Never	103	19.4	100	18.8
Annually	52	9.8	113	21.2
Semi-annually	99	18.6	116	21.8
Quarterly	121	22.7	122	22.9
Monthly	157	29.5	81	15.2
Total	532	100	532	100
Missing System	150		150	
Total	682		682	

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Frequency and Type of Policy Engagement (NGO)

Invitation for input		Informally		Formally	
		N	%	N	%
	Never	132	28.0	146	30.3
	Annually	103	21.8	125	26.1
	Semi-annually	78	16.6	102	21.3
	Quarterly	96	20.4	78	16.3
	Monthly	62	13.2	29	6.0
	Total	471	100.0	480	100.0
Missing	System	132		123	
Total		603		603	

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Stages of NGO Participation in the Policy Process

- The stage in the policy process at which NGO policy actors are invited to participate is indicative of the government's interest in genuine engagement.

- NGO contributions at the early stage of the process can be considered to be indicative of a more authentic effort to broaden input.

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Stages of NGO Participation

Stage of participation	N	Percent
At all stages	121	25.8
Early stages	80	17.1
After Design issues determined	169	36.2
Implementation stage	48	10.3
Not at all	50	10.6
Total	468	100
Missing	System	135	
Total	603	

Who in Government Listens? NGO Perspective (Gov)

How often do the following consult with stakeholders:	N	% weekly or monthly
Minister/Minister's staff	435	62.3
Deputy Minister	430	61.4
Assistant Deputy Minister of the relevant division	439	65.7
Senior level civil servants (e.g. Directors)	462	71.0
Middle level civil servants (e.g. Policy Analysts, researchers)	476	62.9
Working level staff (e.g. field officers)	458	69.0

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NGO

How often do you interact with the following in the course of your policy related work:	N	% quarterly or monthly
Minister/Minister's staff	478	18.5
Senior level provincial government management	472	21.1
Middle level provincial government management	476	43.1
Professional government staff	470	40.3
Front line staff	476	59.4

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Acceptance of NGO Input

How willing are the following to accept input or use reports from NGOs when they are making policy:	N	% willing or very willing
Minister/Minister's staff	439	33.4
Senior level provincial government management	440	35.3
Middle level provincial government management	445	44.8
Professional government staff	441	53.0
Front line staff	442	50.6

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What Makes Advocacy Effective

How important are the following stakeholder actions when dealing with your department:	N	% important or very important
Presenting background briefing material that is based on solid empirical research and evidence	491	80.4
Stakeholders with the support and trust of the political leadership	486	70.5
Media attention to stakeholder's cause	490	70.0
Stakeholders with strong links to the communities they seek to assist	491	67.5
Providing 'stories from the field'	495	52.9

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Conclusion

- General observation: NPG framing of the process is only partially correct in the Canadian context.

- Significant minority of non-governmental policy actors are seriously engaged in the process (43% all stages or design stage).

- NGO role leans toward the operational (46.5%).

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Conclusion continued

- Co-construction and co-production evident.

- However, there is considerable space for much more robust co-construction if governments are serious about this.

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