EDITORIAL

Symposium: Affect and emotions in policy dynamics

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This symposium tackles pressing and intellectually challenging questions bringing research on affect and emotions in the examination of policy dynamics. What does it mean to have affective processes intertwined in policymaking processes? How do affective processes increase or decrease policy value, or shape chances to pursue particular policy opportunities, and to achieve policy success or failure? Where do policy-relevant emotions come from? How do we measure them? How do we utilize and manage them? What happens when we misunderstand or ignore them?

Over the last decade, acquiring answers to these questions has become increasingly important for policy scholars and practitioners seeking to understand the role of affect as a mental process parallel to cognition (Lodge & Taber, 2013), and the function and impact of specific emotions such as anger, fear, enthusiasm, anxiety, hope, confidence and trust in policy contexts (i.e., spaces where policy solutions are designed to solve policy problems involving target populations, and where problems and solutions are subject to different dynamics) (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015; Capelos et al., 2016; Pierce, 2021).

Many decisions undertaken in times of crises, during emergencies, or in regular, placid contexts involve understanding, delivering, interpreting, and managing emotional content generated and accessed by policymakers and takers. This is because our thinking and our feeling are intertwined (Capelos, 2011, 2013; Lodge & Taber, 2013; Frijda, 1986) and "many people rely on their emotions as the most readily accessible, accurate, and immediate source of truth precisely because analysis of abstract knowledge requires so much additional effort" (McDermott, 2019, p. 219; see also Robinson and Clore, 2002; Schwarz et al., 2016). Indeed, "many psychological scientists now assume that emotions are, for better or worse, the dominant driver of most meaningful decisions in life" (Lerner et al., 2015, p. 801). Emotions matter for the determination of policy preferences in the wake of crises and wars, how citizens consume political news, which policies they support, who they trust, and how they perceive risk and their ability to separate facts from artificial stories (Albertson & Gadarian, 2015; Feldman et al., 2015; Huddy et al., 2002; McDermott, 2019;

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Slovic et al., 2004). The prevalence of "fake news"—"false or misleading content intentionally dressed up to look like news articles, often for the purpose of generating ad revenue" (Guess et al., 2019)—opens a space for policy and emotional entrepreneurs (Maor & Gross, 2015; Cairney, 2018) to manipulate public sentiments.

The recent recognition of the role of affect and emotion in policy sciences should not divert attention from the fact that the blossoming of research in emotions has begun in the early 1990s and since then has been recognized as essential aspect of the study of individuals, groups and collectives, and their interactions in psychology and political psychology domains (Marcus & MacKuen, 2001). Furthermore, since the early 2000s, the value of studying emotions—as they interact with the other two mental functions of cognition and conation, as well as with personality, group dynamics, and societal structures and factors—has become obvious for all. Indeed, we have examined emotions in the context of the global financial crisis, the challenges of EU integration, terrorism, international conflict, political radicalization and political communication practices, and global challenges like HIV/AIDS and the COVID-19 pandemic (Capelos & Katsanidou, 2018; Capelos et al., 2018; Capelos & Van Troost, 2012; Capelos and Smilovitz, 2008; Huddy et al., 2002; Maor, 2016; Maor and Howlett, 2020).

The value of emotions has been steadily gaining appreciation, starting from a handful of leading public policy scholars and informing the scholarship of following generations. Characteristically, Simon (1967, 1983) noted that thought processes, decisions and everyday behaviors may be significantly affected by emotion. Jones and Baumgartner (2005) argued that bounded rationality leads to disproportionate information processing, and that emotion is the gateway to selective attention. Beyond the *Punctuated Equilibrium Theory*, all actor-centric theories of the policy process rely upon broad definitions of bounded rationality (Heikkila & Cairney, 2017), meaning that they take into account affective factors and processes to varying degrees, either directly or via their reliance on the bounded rationality assumption (Schlager, 2007). Cairney and Weible (2017, p. 623) pointed to three ways that emotion is used in policy process research: emotions and stories draw attention to public problems; the impact of emotions on decision making during the social construction of target populations; and the tendency of advocacy coalition members to romanticize their own causes and demonize opponents. Relatedly, a recent study situates emotions as a critical component of belief systems and discourse about public policies (Gabehart et al., 2023). The role of emotion has also been addressed by focusing on the emotional quality of an idea, which explains why some ideas are more successful than others (Cox & Béland, 2013). This is related to the affect heuristic, which refers to people's tendency to base their judgment of a product, activity, or policy on what they feel about it rather than a calculated consideration of what they think about it (e.g., Finucane et al., 2000).

Linking political emotions toward leaders with policy evaluations, Capelos (2010) examined experimentally how negative and positive affect shape the way citizens process information about policy issues. In addition, the role of emotion in policy has been particularly addressed in climate change, wherein the experience of negative affect was found to be related to climate change policy support (Leiserowitz, 2006; Smith & Leiserowitz, 2014), and the incidental occurrence of emotions—triggered by events unrelated to climate change—was found to influence mitigation policy preferences (Lu & Schuldt, 2015). Durnová and Hejzlarová (2018) document how considering the contradictory emotions like anger–resignation and shame–pride of policy intermediaries during policy design, impacts policy success. The role of emotion has also been conceptually integrated into the study of policy valuation (Maor, 2017c), policy over- and under-reaction (Maor, 2012, 2014a), policy bubbles (Jones et al., 2014; Maor, 2014, 2016, 2017a, 2019), disproportionate policy

response (Maor, 2017b, 2019, 2020, 2021), and emotional entrepreneurs (Maor & Gross, 2015).

Emotions and affect have been featured in a few articles in *Policy Sciences* over the years, in discussions of social identities (Hornung et al., 2019), threat and policy entrepreneurship (Arnold, 2021), policy bubbles (Maor, 2016), evidentiary bias (Parkhurst, 2016), stakeholder dialogue (Cuppen, 2012), deliberation of mini-publics (Roberts et al., 2020), understanding inaction, under-reaction and incapacity (Attwell et al., 2021), and making sense of the rational alongside what is often labeled 'irrational' inpolicy making and practice (Cairney & Weible, 2017). These publications set the stage for appreciating the need to study further the function and role of affect and emotions in policymaking and practice.

It is clear to us that the study of emotions in policy dynamics challenges the rational model of policy decision making (Slovic et al., 2004). What is rational is also emotional, and rationality cannot be understood without appreciating the role of affect in determining decision-making processes and outcomes (Lodge & Taber, 2013; Damasio, 1994). Much of the research is dedicated toward understanding how well (or poorly) policymakers and citizens in democratic regimes make decisions and the degree to which they deviate from the normative ideals of rational decision making. The study of affect and emotions in public policy dynamics challenges views that see affect and emotions as inferior to cognition. Such views rest on the outdated notion that affect is more dangerous than reason, and thus needs to be controlled *by* reason (for a discussion see Capelos, 2010).

Charting changes in public policy raises an intriguing set of analytical challenges that requires bringing affective processes to the fore. By the same token, charting changes in policymakers' emotions and in emotions held by citizens yield vital understandings of their support for the production of public policies, as well as for the over- and under-production of policies. Dealing with policy change through the lens of affective processes, and vice versa, also facilitates evaluation of shifting policy problems or changes in collective moods (e.g., experiences of fear due to changes in residential patterns for racial groups), respectively. Ultimately, however, the analytical goals center on change, either in emotions themselves or in public policies, and the linkages between these processes.

Given the growing level of interest in the role of emotions in policy processes, it is a good time to pursue their investigation in the following pages in our symposium. The featured contributions share a common aim: to examine the role of affect and emotions in public policy dynamics. The contributions also explore the role of specific emotions (for example, anger, fear, shame, hope, pride) as disruptors or instrumental factors in policy processes and discuss how to manage or regulate them. In elaborating on these issues, the symposium moves forward the study of affect and emotions in policy dynamics, by addressing pressing theoretical and empirical questions; resolving derived problems of definition and differentiation; identifying areas that need further research and suggesting future research directions.

Moshe Maor in 'From institutional tipping points to affective and direct tips: mythical institutions, policy ineffectiveness, and non-linear political dynamics in East Germany, 1989–1990' introduces the new concept of "mythical institutions" and examines nonlinear political dynamics, such as regime change, through the collapse of mythical state institutions which traditionally enjoy unquestioned legitimacy in the public's eye. Maor focuses on the emotional responses generated when mechanisms that sustain mythical institutions collapse, namely anxiety, fear, anger, and can serve as tipping points after which citizens update their evaluation of the regime. The outcome depends on whether the regime's counter-response is perceived as effective or ineffective. Maor uses the study of the 1989 collapse of East Germany's emigration restrictions system as a plausibility probe to illustrate

the function of emotions, particularly anxiety, in setting affective tipping points that trigger non-linear dynamics. Emotional waves, in this sense, have the power to bring on political instability, by challenging mythical state institutions typically perceived to be immune to the effects of stressors.

Simon Fink, **Eva Ruffing, Tobias Burst**, and **Sara Katharina Chinnow**, in 'Emotional citizens, detached interest groups? The use of emotional language in public policy consultations' take a close look at the emotional content of public policy consultations. They study the emotional displays of citizens in comparison to professional actors in environmental debates involving the German electricity grid construction plan. The authors measure mentions of contempt, anger, disgust, sadness, fear, joy and surprise, and compare the presence and hue of emotionality across contributions that mention concrete policies versus contributions that focus on the abstract policy framework. Using dictionary-based sentiment analysis, they find that fear, disgust, and sadness are prominent emotions in citizens' contributions, heightened in statements that are concrete with clear cost–benefit implications rather than abstract consultations that involve the policy framework. Furthermore, corporate actors engage in 'dry' (less emotional) talk, constrained by organizational norms and expectations. Thus, the article shows a way to conceptualize and measure the link between public policies and citizens' emotional displays in the institution of public consultations.

Stefania Ravazzi in 'Beyond plans, governance structures, and organizational strategies: how emotional mechanisms can make a difference in emergency response process' examines emergency response policies to COVID-19 and explains their resilience and robustness based on managers' fear and anxiety versus pride. Using Italy as a case study, Ravazzi shadowed emergency management staff, analyzed committee meeting documents and reports, and conducted interviews with personnel involved in emergency response operations during the pandemic. She found that emotions were related to the way emergency managers and personnel acted during response operations. Feelings of fear and anxiety among policy makers were associated with appraisals of uncertainty, lack of control, frustration, pessimism, and blaming others, and less robust policies. On the other hand, feelings of pride among policy makers was associated with appraisals of control and legitimacy, optimism, and positive interpersonal interactions, yielding emergency responses which high level of robustness.

Rosa Sanchez Salgado in 'The many faces of the politics of shame in European policymaking' examines public shaming as common currency in policymaking debates in the European Parliament (EP). Sanchez Salgado examines how the word 'shame' has been used by European officials and members of the EP across policy areas, and when shaming generates social pressures and leads to compliance, non-compliance or shame backlash in debates of social and economic policy. Her analysis of EP transcripts on debates regarding budget, competition policy, and employment and social affairs spans from 1994 to 2014 shows shaming is frequent in European policymaking and compliance after shaming depends on moral value consensus and audience favorability, whereas shaming of controversial cases generated backlashes.

Anna Durnová and **Eva Hejzlarová** in 'Navigating the role of emotions in expertise: public framing of expertise in the Czech public controversy on birth care' focus on the relationship between expertise and emotions in public debates. Focusing on birth care debates in Czechia, they compare the emotionally laden language of midwives with the emotionally averse approach of obstetricians, the later favored by media public frames of expertise. Here home-birthing narratives about expertise appear delegitimized when containing emotionality, which flags the significance of gender stereotypes in media frames as

well as the way emotional contexts and experiences can be ostracized from policy debates in the public domain.

We hope the reader will benefit from the definitional clarity, as well theoretical and empirical advances to this area put forward by the authors of these contributions. Each of these articles offers valuable insights and specialized knowledge, and together, as a symposium they offer guidance about where scholarship can advance when taking into consideration affect and emotions in policy dynamics. These contributions are also the product of interdisciplinary knowledge exchange. Early versions of Fink et al., Maor, Ravazzi, and Sanchez Salgado were presented in two workshops hosted by the European Consortium of Political Research (ECPR, 2020, 2021). We want to thank the workshop contributors for providing valuable internal peer review feedback which advanced the theoretical and empirical rigor of the articles hosted in this symposium, and extend our sincere thanks to the anonymous reviewers who provided constructive feedback to the submitted manuscripts.

Taken together these contributions offer guidance on new directions for future research on affect and emotions in policy dynamics. In each article, the dedicated section on 'extension for future work' is bound to stimulate further scientific enquiry, extending the value of its contribution beyond their featured research. Bringing together these valuable insights, we identify key areas that in our assessment offer promising opportunities for further investigation.

The primary consideration across the five contributions is the need to better understand the role of emotionality in the policy process. Future scholars need to ask not whether affect and specific emotions are significant in policy processes or the degree thereof, but *how* and *when* affective processes and their resulting emotional responses influence policy dynamics. By exploring and explaining variations in emotional response such as anger, fear, hope, pride, but also less-examined complex emotions such as resentment, humiliation, envy, or gratitude, and their interactions (Capelos et al., 2022), future research can map success or failure across different policy domains, taking into consideration which emotions are elicited, how long they last, and which affective contexts such as threat, uncertainty, elation, contain or amplify them. Focusing on emotional mechanisms and their function in transmuting input emotions like envy, shame and inefficacious anger into different output emotions like resentment, indignation, or hatred (Salmela & Capelos, 2021; Salice & Salmela, 2022), policy scholars can take a rare peak into the black box of emotional transformations and their function on decision making. The consequences of affective processes and emotional mechanisms in the policy process are especially crucial for future research because support or disruption of policies due to emotional reactions can be profound for policymakers as well as for those on whom policy is enacted upon. The fallout, in terms of emotion-driven over- or under-production of policy over an extended period of time (i.e., years and decades), termed policy bubbles (Jones et al., 2014; Maor, 2014b, 2016, 2019) is an important avenue for future research.

The contributions also highlight the realization that policy scholars should not restrict their research to policy contexts that exhibit heightened emotional polarization. While emotional polarization is a 'loud signal' which captures attention, affective processes can operate 'quietly' and be consequential for public policy outcomes, output, actors, and target populations, even when they remain at our conceptual background. At the end of the day, emotions per se are not the subject of political science and public policy research. It is the depth and profundity of their political and policy-relevant consequences, coupled with their ubiquity and their interaction with cognition and motivation that make them so indispensable to understanding policy processes. To be viewed as relevant, the responsibility

will fall to the policy scholar to convince us whether an emotion-driven policy may carry deeper policy-relevant implications.

An important insight across the contributions is to empirically propose emotions as independent as well as dependent variables. Policy scholars should not become overly concerned with explaining how emotion influence policy, but also, with how policy shapes emotionality. The interactive and iterative relationship between emotionality and policy poses theoretical and empirical challenges we are all invited to tackle. Future research can examine the reciprocal dynamics between policy makers and takers and the affective processes that shape and are shaped by their decisions. We recognize that scholars themselves oscillate between interesting their colleagues in the relevance of emotions research to more standard topics in this area, such as advocacy coalitions and policy diffusion, but urge them to disregard the continued impulse in this area to ignore emotionality, its processes and its mechanisms. For example, although numerous scholars address the link between public policy and cultural contexts, they give low priority to how emotions are culturally scripted to "what" to feel, "when" to fill and "how to feel", as well as to what forms are used in adjusting emotional responses to the situation (e.g., feeling rules) (Hochschild, 1979). Our suggestion is to bring to the fore the role of collective and culturally shaped affective processes in public policy dynamics.

Our next key point is that the study of emotions as a core characteristic of the policy process raises the importance of (positive and negative valence) emotions as setting into motion affective dynamics in groups of policymakers. The emotions that ensue when there are disagreements among policy actors, or between policymakers and democratic citizens, raise interesting research questions that challenge current assumptions of what is desirable. Questions that are significantly understudied include, for example, the extent to which fear derived from a lack of (or too much) power, is differentially distributed across policymaking bodies and policymakers (e.g., fear from inspection, audit, legal challenge, and so on), or the conditions under which such fear turns into frustration, sadness, and inaction instead of anger and its fight response during policymaking processes. Another example is related to policymakers' confidence, experienced as safety, and its difference from trust. Confidence, as an affective experience arises among policymakers who hold information that their future policy plans are under control and are predictable. Trust on the other hand, often experienced as a mix of anxiety blended with comfort, does not come with assumptions of predictability, and rather is founded on reassurance originating in interpersonal relations and interactions. Exploring when policy makers and takers respond to policy developments with confidence and/or trust can have an impact on the resilience of domestic and international policy decisions in times of information uncertainty, when confidence falters, but interpersonal trust remains strong (Capelos et al., 2018; Wheeler, 2018; Leach & Sabatier, 2005).

The emotional content of interpersonal interactions extends beyond the study of confidence and trust, to the study of emotions expressed through grievances such as anger, resentment, or frustration (Capelos et al., 2022). In policy makers' interactions, critical and constructive disagreement can be valuable as it promotes evaluation of multiple alternatives. Nevertheless, disagreements among team members might be played down or avoided as undesirable, because they can generate 'loud' and unpalatable emotions such as anger, frustration, disappointment or uneasiness. On the other hand, while agreements work to increase the flow of positive emotions like joy, enthusiasm, hope, calmness in the group and spark productivity, they can also result in erroneous practices due to lack of critical evaluation, a phenomenon cognitively identified as 'groupthink' (Janis, 1972). It is interesting to explore the emotional content of 'groupthink' across policy domains, and study

whether and how teams of policymakers manage (dis)agreement in productive and stimulating ways that accept rather than tamper emotionality. A related hot topic is the role of emotional diversity in policy making. As emotions are individual and socially constructed experiences, policy makers are likely to experience and express different policy-relevant emotions due to their gender, class, age, or socioeconomic experiences. To what extent is emotional diversity tolerated among policy makers and takers across different policy areas, whose emotions receive attention and whose emotions are deemed irrelevant, and what is the relationship between emotional expression and power in policy making dynamics, are some of the conversations started in this symposium that have significant traction for further contributions in the literature.

One more area of interest is the making and communicating of emotionally (in)sensitive policies for democratic politics. Here we refrain from the simplistic account that policies that consider citizens' emotions are 'good' or 'superior', whereas policies that ignore citizens' emotions are 'bad' or 'inferior'. The political-policy dynamics involving the supply, demand, and communication flows of emotionality are sufficiently more complex. Some political and policy actors put forward policies designed to address citizens' social, economic, and also emotional needs (feeling safe, valued, protected, appreciated) to tame anxieties and promote stability, establish confidence, and inspire trust. Other political and policy actors harness citizens' needs for electoral gain or to garner policy support, capitalizing on anxiety, anger, hatred, pride, hope and enthusiasm, and in the process generate further emotional and material consequences that impact policy making and outcomes, such as these related to COVID-19, Brexit, immigration, environment, healthcare, technology, terrorism, to name a few (Small & Lerner, 2008; Marcus, 2002; Demertzis, 2013; Groenendyk, 2011; Nacos et al., 2022; Maor & Howlett, 2020; Renström & Bäck, 2021; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010; Wodak, 2015; Zahariadis, 2015;). The politics of emotionality can construct or break democratic policy making and can therefore generate fascinating theoretical and empirical puzzles that warrant further investigation and involve the tripartite interaction between policy,emotions, and politics: how can we best measure the needs and emotional responses of citizens, how are needs and responses addressed or exploited in the policy making practice, how power involves the political and policy management of emotions, and how emotional and policy dynamics interact in producing pro/anti-democratic political outcomes (Capelos & Demertzis, 2022).

We want to thank the contributors of this symposium for their insights. We are confident that their theoretical discussions and empirical findings will stimulate future research and point to new areas of inquiry on affect and emotions in policy dynamics.

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