



## **MARKET SQUARE**

**Cambridge University Business and Society**

**Interdisciplinary Research Group**

<http://marketsquarecambridge.org>

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

6th workshop of the Cambridge Business & Society Research Group

## **EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY-MAKING AND THE REAL WORLD**

### **A DIFFICULT MATCH?**

25th May 2011

University of Cambridge

Over the past decade, the concept of evidence-based policy making has been popularised across the globe, in mainstream research and policy arenas. Abandoning old dichotomies between market and state, policy-makers now follow the formula “what matters is what works.” Thus, the evidence-based approach is advocated as a desirable way of providing rigorous solutions to pressing problems as well as incorporating analytical techniques in policy design, monitoring and evaluation.

However, serious questions remain in the underlying assumptions of this practice. While quantitatively measured and analysed data are respected as scientific ‘evidence’, qualitative accounts tend to be ignored. As a consequence, attention may be shifted towards easily measurable goals (e.g. the direct impact of a policy on a certain population), away from hard-to-measure aspects (e.g. positive and negative externalities of that policy). Whatever analytical techniques are employed, evidence-based policy making requires effective communication and knowledge transfer systems, as well as developed state capabilities and political support.

Moreover, there is little discussion of the conditions under which evidence collected in one context can be used in another: the complexity of social and political reality requires the contextualized identification of feasible alternative policies rather than the passive implementation of so called *best practices*.

This one-day workshop provides a platform for leading researchers and practitioners in the various fields of social and political sciences to critically reflect and discuss the challenges and opportunities of evidence-based policy making. We invite papers that engage with, but are not limited to, the following sub-themes:

- *The Making of Evidence-Based Policy*

What constitutes 'evidence'? What counts as evidence and what doesn't? Under what conditions can evidence from one context be used in another? Whose stories are constructed as evidence and how is this process related to the existing power relations? What are the pro and cons of analytical techniques such as randomised controlled trials or mixed methods currently adopted in policy design? We welcome contributions from philosophers, historians, social scientists and practitioners with critical perspectives on knowledge and power, conventional scientific methods, and the utilitarian turn in research.

- *Public Policies and State Capability Traps*

Discovering what works under what conditions is not sufficient. Public institutions may be stuck in capability traps which undermine their chance of implementing effective evidence-based policies. What capabilities do states need to develop in order to design, implement, monitor and evaluate policy measures? How can they foster effective implementation of evidence-based designed policies? How can they transform the process of monitoring and evaluation in a learning experience? Contributions from social scientists, practitioners and politicians involved in development programmes are welcomed.

- *Evidence-Based Policy in Practice*

In what context has the concept of evidence-based policy gained its momentum? How is evidence-based policy formulated and implemented in the real world? Does the process reflect evidence-based policy making or policy-based evidence making? How does the evidence-based approach affect the boundaries of problems for investigation as well as solutions? Researchers and practitioners are encouraged to discuss the issues in specific fields (e.g. international relations, international development, energy policy, healthcare policy) and/or in a country of focus.

## **FORMAT**

Following the interdisciplinary mission of Market Square – the Cambridge Business & Society Research Group, the workshop provides a forum to connect researchers (faculty members and graduate students) from different disciplines as well as practitioners. Participation will be limited to 50 people in order to facilitate interactive discussion.

Presentations will be grouped into panels according to theme. Speakers will have 20 minutes to present their papers. Each session will be opened by a key note speaker. A discussion between the panellists, discussants and the audience will follow the presentations. A final round table will close the workshop.

We welcome participation from researchers and practitioners beyond Cambridge and the UK.

### **SUBMISSIONS**

Please send an abstract of your paper (not exceeding 500 words and containing contact details) to [info@marketsquarecambridge.org](mailto:info@marketsquarecambridge.org) no later than **2 May 2011**. Notification of acceptance will follow by 9 May 2011 at the latest.

While it is not necessary to send your full paper in advance, you are encouraged to do so in order to facilitate in-depth discussion. Should you wish to have your paper made available electronically on the Market Square website, please e-mail a copy of the full paper by 25 May 2011.

Please address your submissions and enquiries to: [info@marketsquarecambridge.org](mailto:info@marketsquarecambridge.org)

### **KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**

**Prof. Nancy Cartwright** (London School of Economics)

**Dr. Michele Clara** (UNIDO – Development Policy Unit)

### **CONVENORS**

**Hassan Akram**, Department of Sociology, University of Cambridge

**Antonio Andreoni**, Department of Land Economy, University of Cambridge

**Ivano Cardinale**, Judge Business School, University of Cambridge

**Helen Coskeran**, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge

**Anna Kim**, Judge Business School, University of Cambridge