

## ***Critical Policy Studies***

Michael Orsini and Miriam Smith, Editors  
UBC Press, 2007

**Reviewed by Seong Gee Um**

In the opening chapter of their edited book *Critical Policy Studies*, Michael Orsini and Miriam Smith explain that the term "critical policy studies" is used as a container for an ensemble of approaches and perspectives that they believe are best suited to the changing Canadian public policy context. This book is a timely publication to bring new concepts, perspectives and analysis tools to the traditional policy world, which is shifting its ground due to challenges from inside as well as outside the nation-state. Orsini and Smith point out that the main sources of such challenges are globalization, the transition to a knowledge-based economy and the rise of new technologies.

This volume is divided into four themes: political economy; citizens and diversity; discourse and knowledge; and risky subjects. Each of the fifteen chapters constitutes a high-quality contribution to policy studies in conceptual, theoretical and/or empirical ways. Overall, the range of this volume provides many alternatives to conventional approaches and the individual chapters contribute to broadening the field of policy studies. However, despite the advantages of including various topics and approaches in one volume, such a broad range may be a shortcoming; the chapters in this volume show only a loose relation to each other, even those on the same theme. Since it is difficult to capture the contributions of every chapter in this paper, this book review will focus on one chapter within each theme that is particularly important to the current Canadian policy discourse.

Part One on "political economy" discusses new challenges to Canada's political economy tradition. The essay by Mahon, Andrew, and Johnson illuminates recent discourse around the rescaling of political economy in an era of globalization, a critical challenging point to mainstream policy studies. They question the appropriateness and competence of the conventional uni-scalar approach, which places the nation-state at the centre of analysis and leaves provincial, municipal, and civil society out of analysis or treats them as sub-national scales. Concerning the process of rescaling in the global era, Mahon et al. introduce a valuable perspective for public policy studies called "multi-scalar perspective", in which the concepts of "scale" and "mutability" are at the centre. This is a re-conceptualization process that readers will find useful in that it draws the relationships among various supra-national, sub-national, as well as national bodies. The authors urge policy researchers to be aware that scale is not a fixed space, but rather a set of dynamic relationships.

In Part Two on "citizens and diversity," four chapters discuss the politicization of diversity, including topics of citizen engagement, lesbian and gay citizens, gender,

and race and ethnicity. Among them, Hankivsky's chapter on gender mainstreaming develops an interesting argument against the traditional gender-based approach. She contrasts the common belief that Canada is a leader in the advancement of gender equality with the under-development of engendered policies in Canadian practice. She points out the following as contributing factors to this under-development: the lack of necessary infrastructure for integrating the gender-mainstreaming strategy; the weakening women's movement as a result of internal struggles and government funding cuts; and the growing criticism towards the gender-mainstreaming strategy. Hankivsky cautions that the gender-mainstreaming strategy might fail to capture diversity issues stemming from other important characteristics, such as race, class, culture, and sexuality. In order to overcome this shortcoming, she introduces an alternative direction, "diversity mainstreaming," which underlines the intersecting factors of discrimination and oppression rather than considering other factors as "add-on characteristics" to gender. However, her approach seems controversial; it possesses a risk of underestimating the element of gender in policy studies which is crucial to understanding the gender inequality embedded in relationships among all kinds of differently oppressed characters.

The contributors in Part Three, "discourse and knowledge," discuss how new knowledge is integrated into the policy process and ask whether new ways of knowing require us to redraw the lines of the policy field. The new knowledge explored in this part includes a wide range of topics such as Foucault's governmentality, media-focused framing and agenda-setting, the role of non-state actors in the policy process and indigenous knowledge. Murray's chapter introduces Foucauldian-inspired studies of governmentality as a new approach in Canadian policy studies which will shed light onto the study of communities in social welfare research. In discussing the list of example studies through a governmentality lens, the author effectively shows the benefits of the governmentality approach to studying the role of communities in governmental practices. The interesting point in this chapter is that Murray illuminates the strengths of studies of governmentality by pointing out the limits of another new paradigm in Canadian policy studies (discussed in a later chapter of the book) called the "social investment state" paradigm. In this chapter, I found the Foucauldian approach most valuable for community studies in that it views the state and community as not juxtaposed but "overlapping and interconnected discursive sites shaping new modes of rule" (p.176), which contrasts with the conventional approach based on a dichotomy between the state and community. This enables Foucauldian-inspired studies to show that how expert knowledge is deployed through developing communities as a form of technologies of power, that is, a means of governing people.

In the final part, "risky subjects," four authors explore risks that have permeated Canadian policy discourses, such as populations "at risk", "risky" environments, and "risky" lifestyles. Saint-Martin's essay explores the new emerging paradigm of the

social investment state that was briefly introduced in Murray's paper. Unlike the other three chapters reviewed in this paper, Saint-Martin in part returns to the conventional unisecular approach in that he places the state at the centre of his policy analysis. He explains that the distinguishing feature of the social investment state is that the future is its ideological and political justification. Saint-Martin further emphasizes that the social investment state develops strategies to integrate people in society through active economic participation. In other words, the social investment state aims to integrate people into the market, whereas the welfare state emphasizes protecting people from the market. He analyzes that this model does not view risk as a danger, but as "an opportunity to ameliorate a situation" (p.289), and the role of the social investment state is to encourage the development of an entrepreneurial culture where citizens must learn to become responsible risk takers. Saint-Martin's critical reflection on the social investment state paradigm in his conclusion is noteworthy: "if the social investment state was born of the convergence of partisan positions regarding the free market, [it is paradoxical that] its implementation is likely to intensify the politicization of disagreements concerning non-economic issues" (p.294).

In spite of the lack of cohesion among the chapters which is mentioned above, *Critical Policy Studies* is an excellent book for Canadian students, giving an overview of emerging critical insights in shifting policy domains. This book offers useful alternatives that Canadian scholars and policymakers should consider in their policy studies at this time when a conventional research paradigm is no longer valid for observing and analysing the current policy world. In addition, it is a great source for international readers who want to understand the Canadian context since it overarches the concepts, theories, and methodologies between conventional and alternative paradigms of Canadian policy studies.

***Les organismes communautaires et la transformation de l'État-Providence. Trois décennies de coconstruction des politiques publiques dans le domaine de la santé et des services sociaux.***

Christian Jetté

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**Recension par Jean Proulx, Université du Québec à Montréal**

Tiré de la thèse de doctorat qu'a défendue l'auteur en 2005, cet ouvrage porte sur l'évolution des organismes communautaires oeuvrant dans le domaine de la santé