

Credibility of scientific expertise and decision-making

New challenges for health risk governance in a changing world

January & February 2021

ABSTRACT COVID-19 SESSION - THURSDAY 21TH JANUARY 2021

Covid-19 International Comparisons: Crisis, Knowledge, Policy

Stephen Hilgartner (Cornell University)

The evolving Covid-19 pandemic casts a stark light on an enduring concern: what makes expert knowledge credible, legitimate, and reliable for use in public policy? That question becomes even more salient when, as in this case, events are fast-moving, proliferating under conditions of scientific and social uncertainty, and dispersed across geopolitical borders. As governments across the globe have struggled to avert catastrophic outcomes, their policy responses have varied considerably, as has the political reception of their efforts to control the pandemic and manage economies. Cross-national comparison offers a powerful method for understanding the problems of translating knowledge into policy during global crises. This presentation will report the initial findings of Comparative Covid Response (CompCoRe), a 16-country study of responses to the pandemic.

Led by a team based at Cornell University and the Harvard Kennedy School, the project is a collaboration of nearly 60 researchers around the world. Based on events in the interlocking arenas of public health, economy, and politics, three categories of countries emerge: control countries, consensus countries, and chaos countries. The analysis shows how pre-existing institutional and political conditions shaped these outcomes and examines differences in how problems were framed, expertise was mobilized, and political conditions were addressed. Although the study results are most relevant to pandemics, they may also shed light on other risk issues of global concern, such as climate change and antimicrobial resistance.



anses

