

U Do models of behaviour
change allow for
conditionality? **B**

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**International expert panel on 'Understanding behaviour change and the role of
conditionality', 12 May 2014**

Overview

- Contexts for rise of conditionality and behaviour change
- Nudge and Think as behaviour change ideal types.
Consider:
 - Model of the agent
 - Role of the state
 - Compatibility with conditionality?
- Initial conclusions/discussion start point

Broad (contested) assumptions behind conditionality

- Agential rationality and capacity for responsibility
- Contractual state-citizen relation
- Ethic of 'rights and responsibilities'
- Retrenchment from universalism

Context of behaviour change agenda

- Social complexity and ‘wicked’ problems
- Societal individualisation
- Hollowing out of state capacity
- Developments in behavioural sciences

Nudge and human agency

- Modern policymaking has relied on unrealistic 'Econ' (homo economicus): rational, calculating, strategic
- Policy should instead 'go with the grain' of the all too human 'Human':
 - impulsive, short term, emotion driven
 - inertia in face of complexity
 - individualised but subject to social norms
 - subject to choice architecture: nudging...

The Nudging state

- Ethic of libertarian-paternalism
- Intervene in choice environment: nudge subjects into choices that serve their best interests *as if judged by themselves*
- Does transparency affect efficacy?
- Attracts libertarian *and* paternalist critics

Nudge and conditionality?

Nudge undermines the contractual basis of conditionality:

- The 'Human' not capable of taking sustained responsibility in a contractual relationship
- Conditionality needs longer term commitments, the Human (and nudges) are short term
- Conditionality requires a transparency that can render nudges ineffective
- Some practical insights from behavioural science *might* be compatible with conditionality (re efficacy, not philosophy)

Think and human agency

- Think draws on deliberative, participative democratic theory
- Retains idea of rational, purposeful agent (but not necessarily utility maximiser)
- Focuses on capacity for collective deliberation to determine preferences, objectives, behaviours
- Theory tends to assume outcomes will have collectivist character

The Thinking state

- Does not presume to know citizen's 'best interests' in advance
- State as facilitator, enabler of citizen deliberation
- Can learn with/from citizen deliberation?
- Focuses on optimising institutional settings/procedures for deliberation

Think and conditionality

- Agents are capable of entering contractual relations, taking responsibility, civic minded
- Conceivable that conditional policy could be outcome of citizen deliberation
- Could be used to engage those subject to conditionality in different fields. Policy learning
- BUT what if deliberation leads to a rejection of conditionality per se, and/or radical alternatives governors don't like?

Preliminary conclusions

- ‘Conditionality’ and ‘Behaviour change’ have different philosophical, political and evidential lineages (although critics will also point to resonances)
- Nudge’s vision of the agent and state action seems incompatible with conditionality – and even undercuts it
- Think’s deliberative model potentially more amenable to conditionality: but in ‘thicker’ and potentially subversive forms
- Normatively, deliberative theorists imagine ‘free’ deliberation. But could participation in deliberative processes be made a condition: a controversial ‘deliberative paternalism’??

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