Handbook on Complexity and Public Policy

Handbooks of Research on Public Policy series

Edited by Robert Geyer, Professor of Politics, Complexity and Policy, Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion, Lancaster University and Paul Cairney, Professor of Politics and Public Policy, Division of History and Politics, University of Stirling, UK

Though its roots in the natural sciences go back to the early 20th century, complexity theory as a scientific framework has developed most rapidly since the 1970s. Increasingly, complexity theory has been integrated into the social sciences, and this groundbreaking Handbook on Complexity and Public Policy has brought together top thinkers in complexity and policy from around the world.

With contributions from Europe, North America, Brazil and China this comprehensive Handbook splits the topic into three cohesive parts: Theory and Tools, Methods and Modeling, and Application.

‘Over recent years Complexity Science has revealed to us new limits to our possible knowledge and control in social, cultural and economic systems. Instead of supposing that past statistics and patterns will give us predictable outcomes for possible actions, we now know the world is, and will always be, creative and surprising. Continuous structural evolution within such systems may change the mechanisms, descriptors, problems and opportunities, often negating policy aims. We therefore need to redevelop our thinking about interventions, policies and policy making, moving perhaps to a humbler, more ‘learning’ approach. In this Handbook, leading thinkers in multiple domains set out these new ideas and allow us to understand how these new ideas are changing policymaking and policies in this new era.’

– Peter M. Allen, Cranfield University, UK

‘Complexity Theory has come to the fore because the world we live in is complex and many of the issues which confront us cannot be handled by the conventional tools of science, including social science. In public policy and professional practice, we are well aware of wicked issues where simple interventions often make things worse instead of better. The chapters in this excellent Handbook put complexity to work where it matters - in informing our thinking and action across governance and public policy.’

– David Byrne, Durham University, UK

2015 496 pp Hardback 978 1 78254 951 2 £163.00 £146.70 $240.00 $216.00
Elgaronline 978 1 78254 952 9