

## Introduction to Public Policy Class 9

# Evidence-based policy making



## Policy experiments

- Scientific method as an analogy for policy making
- We test drugs before we give them to people...why don't we test policies?
- Why don't we roll out policies to allow for with-without experimental designs?
- Why don't we continue to collect data after large-scale implementation and monitor results?

## John Stuart Mill



“There is always need of persons not only to discover new truths, and point out when what were once truths are true no longer, but also to commence new practices, and set the example of more enlightened conduct, and better taste and sense in human life.”

## Problem: Is it ethical to experiment on people?

- Case of African children and textbooks: is it right to deny some children books in order to conduct and experiment?
- Is it ethical to randomize sentencing for drug users in order to conduct an experiment?
- When would it be unethical to vary conditions for the sake of an experiment and when is it OK?

## **Problem: People interpret the “evidence” differently**

- Society is not a laboratory: there are always extenuating circumstances that are not “in the model”
- Example of High Speed Rail: The project may not pay off, but national prestige is also at issue
- Climate change: even when confronted with hard scientific evidence, some people will not believe it.

## **People and institutions have interests**

- Example: Speed cameras in the UK to reduce speeding and save lives
- Example: Needs testing of new retail establishments in Vietnam
- Example: Trans-Pacific Partnership “yarn-forward” rules

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## Obama's Double Standard on TPP

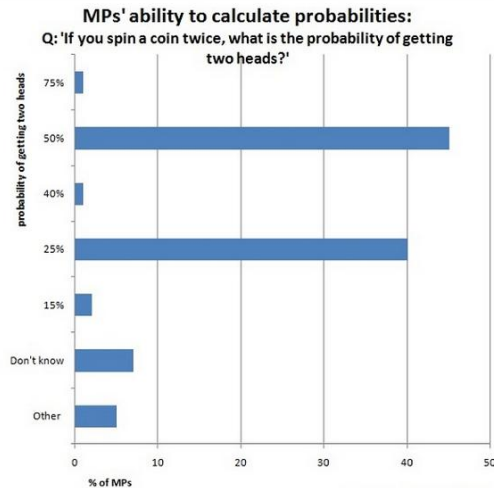
posted by [Greg Rushford](#)  
on May 7, 2012

**The president wants other countries to embrace free trade, while defending tariffs for domestic textiles.**

This means TPP signatories will only qualify for tariff concessions for their exports to the U.S. if they buy their yarns and fabrics from TPP member countries. Translation: The yarn-forward rule of origin would require clothing exporters like Vietnam and Malaysia to buy American, not Chinese fabric.

To be fair, Mr. Obama also is hardly the first U.S. president to bow to domestic textile interests. But with the TPP, he's demanding America's trading partners summon the political will to dismantle their protectionist rackets. As long as he's unwilling to do the same, we shouldn't expect much progress toward this trade agreement.

## Problem: Politicians may not understand the results



## Problem: Policy is also about values

- The analogy between science and policy is not perfect: people are not just objects to be experimented on
  - Public participation as a value in itself
  - Values shape the means and ends of policy
  - There may or may not be a consensus on these values.
- Many (most?) policies are about values, not outcomes?
  - Gay marriage as a clear example of “values” politics
  - But also issues like freedom of movement



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### **Cần nhắc siết nhập cư ở các đô thị**

**Cần suy nghĩ về việc có nên quy định một khung chặt cho các đô thị, hay các điều kiện ấy chỉ nên áp dụng cho hai địa phương có áp lực dân cư lớn là Hà Nội, TP.HCM mà thôi?**

Chuyện hạn chế cấp hộ khẩu thường trú vào các đô thị lớn giờ không chỉ là một nội dung của dự thảo Luật Thủ đô, vừa được Thường vụ QH thảo luận cuối tuần trước, mà còn là nội dung cơ bản của việc sửa đổi Luật Cư trú mà Bộ Công an đang chủ trì. Xử lý vấn đề này thế nào để hài hòa giữa quyền tự do cư trú của công dân và khả năng đáp ứng của điều kiện hạ tầng cũng như năng lực quản lý tại các đô thị?

## **Is evidence-based policy making a worthwhile objective?**

- Success stories?
- Relevance of the scientific method for policy making and politics
- Rule of experts versus rule of the people?
- Competition of ideas vs. central control of ideas?