

## **The Role of Theories in Policy Studies and Policy Work: Selective Affinities between Representation and Performance?**

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### ***Abstract***

*In this article, we intend to take a few steps to mending the disconnect between the academic study of policy processes and the many practices of professional and not-so-professional policy work. We argue, first, that the “toolkit” of academically warranted approaches to the policy process used in the representative mode may be ordered in a family tree with three major branches: policy as reasoned authoritative choice, policy as association in policy networks, and policy as problematization and joint meaning making. But, and this is our second argument, such approaches are not just representations to reflect and understand “reality”. They are also mental maps and discursive vehicles for shaping and sometimes changing policy practices. In other words, they also serve performative functions. The purpose of this article is to contribute to policy theorists’ and policy workers’ awareness of these often tacit and “underground” selective affinities between the representative and performative roles of policy process theorizing.*

**Keywords:** *governing, policy, policymaking process, policy analysis, policy work, representation, performance*

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