Reviewer’s report

Title: The implementation of Health in All Policies initiatives: a systems framework for government action

Version: 1 Date: 02 Oct 2017

Reviewer: Eric Breton

Reviewer's report:

Dear authors,

I totally agree with you that HiAP is, as a strategy, key in improving population health. Your paper is therefore a much needed contribution of the sort that I would like to see published more.

I must say that I had a hard time reviewing your paper. I came out of my first reading thinking that you did not deliver on your promises but then after going through it once again I changed my mind after realizing that your contribution is indeed of a heuristic value and does not ambition capturing processes. What I would say is hard to fit in your manuscript is the description you give of the systems and critical theories. I have no doubt these are at the roots of your investigation. However, and besides references to the system/ sub-system concepts in figure 1, one finds little in the results that can actually be traced back to the theories. It is very difficult to see how the critical theory shed lights on the case of Finland. This is all to say that in my humble opinion more room should be given in the text to the theories so readers can better see the link between the theories and the results. If you need to sacrifice one of the theories then I would say that the part on critical realism seems the least addressed and therefore could be deleted?

Here are a few other minor problems I came across in your manuscript:

In the abstract you state that "Although not intended to completely predict the implementation process…" Well if you do stick to the systems theory and account for the nature of complex systems you would say that you definitely cannot predict much.

In Table 1, and being a bit familiar with the literature on the policy change process, I have a hard time not reading under the policy agenda item a more explicit view that events outside government's control can actually impact and put in shamble their priorities.

For the political ideology item, you draw a quite homogeneous picture of the policy elite. Unless you only consider the world view of a very small circle of people, one is likely to find there more
than one political ideologies. Compromises will need to be forged so differing views (e.g. on the role of state (minor vs. sustained state intervention), on the primacy of individual responsibility (as opposed to society's)) can still produce some coherent sets of actions.

Pg 8, line 150 "of these of…" the second "of" is one too many.

Pg 10, line 10 "HARMONICS" is misspelled.

Pg 12, line 243 "HiAP" not "HIAP".

I do think this paper is of a high interest for both research and practice but the results need to be more explicitly rooted in the conceptual framework.

Kind regards

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An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

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