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A Theory of Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means

Seminar

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Aula 3, Scuola
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Abstract

Administrative burdens are consequential to public sector outcomes and matter to inequality across and within groups. For these reasons, their study should be central to the field of public administration. We propose a causal framework for understanding and studying administrative burden, one that shows how the micro behavioral processes of policymakers, service providers and citizens matter to broader macro governance outcomes. The following claims arise from our framework. First, the administrative state constructs burdens, via processes of both policy

design and implementation. Second, state-created burdens give rise to, but are distinct from, individual experience of burdens as learning, compliance, and psychological costs. Third, individual experience of burdens affects macro outcomes, such as access to social benefits and political efficacy. Fourth, both non-governmental third parties and human capital are key factors in shaping the experience of administrative burdens. A variety of illustrations from US public policy and politics are used.

