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A framework for public policy analysis and policy evaluation

M. Theo Jans

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Policy analysis

- Public policy focuses on ‘the public and its problems’ (Dewey, 1927)
- The study of ‘how, why and to what effect governments pursue particular courses of action and inaction’ (Heidenheimer, 1990)
- ‘What governments do, why they do it, and what difference does it make’ (Dye, 1976)
- ‘The study of the nature, causes, and effects of public policies’ (Nagel, 1990)



Policy analysis

- Public policy concerned with:
 - How are problems and issues defined and constructed?
 - How are they placed on political and policy agenda?
 - How policy options emerge?
 - How and why governments act or do not act
 - What are the effects of government policy?
 - ...
- No single discipline, integrates what seems useful for understanding



Policy analysis

- Multi-method (quantitative, qualitative)
- Multi-disciplinary (social sciences)
- Problem-focused
- Mapping the context
- Options and effects
- Analysis:
 - Of policy => theories (determination, content, evaluation)
 - For policy => prescriptive, applied (techniques)

Agenda-setting (Howlett & Ramesh: adapted and altered)

		Nature of public involvement	
		High	Low
Initiator of debate	Public	Outside initiation	Consolidation
	State	Mobilisation	Inside initiation



Agenda-setting Reasons for inclusion

- **'Serious'**, 'important', 'real' problems
- Issues that manage to overcome the **gatekeepers** (discontent, demands, solutions, public agenda, extension, inclusion) = policy entrepreneurs
- **Convergence thesis**: Issues on the agenda are determined by the time and context. States with similar welfare levels will deal with similar agenda items
- **Economic cycles** determine issues: crisis= labour flexibility / efficiency increases; growth= quality of life / worker welfare



Agenda-setting Reasons for inclusion

- **Electoral cycles:** issues on agenda determined by election timing / party in office
- Issues that fit the '**policy mood**' or 'policy paradigm' or 'the leading policy ideas' (eg. competitiveness, global warming,...)
- **Multiple streams and policy windows** (Kingdon)

Agenda-setting: Kingdon's multiple streams

Research Kingdon:

- 300 interviews period 4 years
- Executive, parliament, interest groups: policy community
- What are the main policy issues and why?
- What policy issues, problems are of lesser importance and why?
- Compare year per year.



Agenda-setting: Kingdon's multiple streams

- Origin is necessary but unclear, follow-up is much more important for inclusion
- “I can trace the paths of ideas. But my personal theory is that people plant seeds every day. There are a lot of ideas around, and there is no lacking of ideas. The real question is, which of these ideas will catch hold ? When you plant a seed you need rain, soil, and luck.” (Kingdon, 81)
- Streams of recognised problems, of policy solutions, stream of political events.



Agenda-setting: Stream of recognised problems

- Stream problem recognition by actors in- and outside government
 - Indicators: volume, change (IM scoreboard, week-end traffic accidents)
 - Focus events: 9/11
 - Policy feedback: evaluation, complaints (speeding fines, small arms legislation)
- Conditions become problems
 - Clash with norms, values, principles
 - Unfavourable comparisons with other countries/situations
- Problems can go back to being social conditions again
 - Something was done, time and effort was spent on the issue (BHV)
 - Indicators decrease, crisis dissolves
 - Acceptance and getting used to problem (high unemployment levels, racism)
 - Other problems take priority and absorb the attention



Agenda-setting: Stream of policy solutions

- Stream Policy Community
 - Administration, academics, policy advisors, think tanks, interest groups: formulate policy proposals
- Primeval policy soup: multitude of ideas are debated, combined, tested, exchanged, and evaluated
- Selection mechanism: ‘survival of the fittest’
 - Technical and administrative feasibility
 - Congruence with dominant values
 - Anticipation of probable resistance (budget, public opinion, political receptiveness)



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Agenda-setting: Stream of politics

- Events (ex. dioxine in poultry, prison escape Dutroux, coalition negotiations)
- Elections
- Governmental majorities
- Activities of interest groups
- The political climate
- ...



Agenda-setting: When streams meet

- The three streams exist and develop relatively independent from each other
- Events (political streams) may occur for which the policy community is unprepared (ideas, solutions) , and vice versa.
- “The separate streams come together at critical times. A problem is recognized, a solution available, the political climate make the time right for change, and the constraints do not prohibit action.” (Kingdon, 94)



Agenda-setting: Policy window

- Policy windows are the moments when the three streams meet, and the issue can achieve high agenda priority
- Policy entrepreneurs need to act in the policy window:
 - Policy entrepreneurs have solutions and are waiting for problems and right climate to implement them
 - Policy entrepreneurs have problems, are waiting for solutions and the opportunity to settle them.
- Policy windows are opened by:
 - Problems, Political stream, coincidence



Agenda-setting: Policy window

- Policy window allows for full coupling
- Partial coupling is also possible:
 - Problem and a solution: but is politically not interesting
 - There is a solution and a political willingness to apply it, but no real problem
 - Problem and political will to tackle it, but no policy solutions



Policy formulation

- The definition, evaluation, acceptance and discarding of policy options.
- Policy formulation is both a technical-rational as well as a competitive phase.
- Who develops options? issue networks, iron triangles, advocacy coalitions
- Openness to new ideas/actors

Policy formulation (Howlett & Ramesh)

		Entrance of new actors	
		Yes	No
Entrance of new ideas	Yes	Policy renewal Policy goals (open subsystem)	Program reform Specification (contested subs.)
	No	Experimentation with instruments (resistant subs.)	Instrument tinkering (components) (closed subs.)



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Decision-making

Three models

- The rational model
- The incremental model
- The irrational model



Decision-making: rational model

- Problem identification, organization and classification of values, goals, and objectives relevant to problem
- List all possible ways to solve problem and to realise goals
- List possible consequences for each policy alternative with probability of occurrence
- Compare consequences with previously formulated goals and objectives



Decision-making: rational model

- Select the policy solution:
 1. With consequences most closely aligned to goals
 2. That provides highest level of 'problem resolution'
 3. That provides most benefits at equal costs
 4. That provides lesser costs in case of equal benefits
- The reasoning constitutes the basis of most rational decision models

Decision-making

Bounded rationality (H. Simon)

- Policy makers are limited in the information and policy alternatives they can process
- Policy makers lack complete information and knowledge of all policy options
- Consequences of options are unknown and ‘educated guesses’ at best
- Individuals have cognitive limitations (memory, attention, processing)
- Complete rationality can not be assumed in policy making === “**satisficing**”

Decision-making: incremental model (C. Lindblom)

- Lindblom starts from ‘bounded rationality’ but draws different conclusions
- Rational, planned goal realisation is not possible nor desirable in decision making
- Decision making requires bargaining and negotiation – systematic evaluation of policy options hampers that dynamic
- Policy requires feasible and supported decisions rather than decisions that maximally established a desired state of affairs



Decision-making: incremental model

- Rational model does not correspond to real decision making processes
- Decision making occurs step-by-step, piecemeal, through trial-and-error
- Incremental decisions are to be preferred:
 - smaller scale, less radical and ambitious
 - policy measures can be tested and adjusted as they are implemented
 - modesty of decisions limits possible negative consequences



Decision-making: incremental model

- Gradual policy changes
- Decisions have limited applicability: they are amended, adjusted, re-adopted, etc.
- Only familiar policy options are considered (no radical change or innovation)
- Policy options disappear as result of lacking consensus rather than rational selection
- Policy makers concentrate on avoiding disadvantages or problematic situations rather than goal achievement
- Gradual decision processes stimulate policy learning
- Decision making is a constant negotiation and adjustment process



Decision-making: irrational model

- March, Cohen, Olsen: analysis of decision making in universities
- Non-rational, nor incremental decision-making
- Rather coincidental congruence between problems, solutions and choice opportunities
- Problems, solutions and choice moments are 'dumped' in garbage cans



Decision-making: organised anarchies

- Unclear preferences and goals: organisation is a loose collection of ideas with few clear goals (multiple goals)
 - No clear preferences: would lead to conflict
 - Preferences and strategy are developed through action, rather than that action is guided by preferences or strategies
 - Often organisations have multiple goals (quality research, education, many students, income, smooth running administration, happy alumni)



Decision-making: organised anarchies

- Incomplete knowledge of technology and organisation: own role is known, partial understanding of other roles and of procedures within organisation
 - Knowledge of how institution is acquired through ‘trial-and-error’ or is deduced from experiences and responses in crisis situations
- Varying participation: participation and time investment varies considerably among participants: impact on outcome



Implementation

- Pressman & Wildawsky: “Implementation”
- “how great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oackland; or why it is amazing that Federal programs work at all, this being a saga of the economic development administration as told by two sympathetic observers who seek to build morals on a foundation of ruined hopes”
(1973 federal program for unemployed inhabitants of Oackland)



Pressman - Wildavsky

Top-down implementation

- Frustration felt with the failures of 'the war on poverty' and 'great society' programmes (in late sixties)
- Sentiment that rationalized decision making (Simon, McNamara) was not leading to desired policy outcomes
- Not because bad decisions were taken but rather because good decisions were badly implemented



Pressman - Wildavsky

Top-down implementation

- Multiple intermediary actors (govs., agencies) for implementation require perfect co-operation (Wildavsky)
- Less than perfect co-operation leads to an accumulation of small mishaps which trigger policy large failures
- Careful implementation design is the key to succes = top-down approach
- Monitoring and control of implementation (Military chain of command)



Michael Lipsky

The bottom-up perspective

- Implementation: analysis of front-line staff in policy delivery agencies or ‘street-level’ bureaucrats
- Policy is made as it is being administered
- “The decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out”

Michael Lipsky

The bottom-up perspective

- Street-level bureaucrats start with high service ambitions but ‘large classes’ or ‘huge caseloads’, inadequate resources, uncertainties of method, unpredictability of clients defeat their initial aspirations
- To cope with pressures, implementers develop methods of processing people in a routine and stereotyped way = techniques to salvage service and decision making values



Implementation and ambiguity: R. Matland.

		Policy ambiguity	
		Low	High
Level conflict	Low	Administrative implementation (planning and resources)	Experimental implementation (context, variation, learning)
	High	Political implementation (power and feedback)	Symbolic implementation (local coalitions)



Policy evaluation

- The stage of the policy process at which it is determined how a public policy has actually fared in action (Howlett & Ramesh) = evaluation of means being employed and objectives being served
- Problem no universal and fixed criteria
 - Spectacular failures
 - Substantive failures
 - Procedural failures



Policy evaluation

- Evaluate output in function of expectations/goals BUT failure or success is a *judgement* of events (not inherent to the event)
- Goals often vague, multiple, no ranking, shifting throughout policy stages.
- Evaluation inherent, build-in biases



Policy evaluation

- Administrative:
 - Effort evaluation: screen and monetarise inputs - “what does it cost”
 - Performance: screen outputs (graduates, publications) - “what is it doing”
 - Effectiveness: “is it doing what it is supposed to be doing” – goals vs. outputs
 - Efficiency: input evaluation / output evaluation and seek to reduce input (lower cost)
 - Process evaluation: organization methods used and possibilities for process re-engineering

Policy evaluation

- Judicial review
- Political evaluation
- Policy evaluation = increasingly perceived as policy learning
- MBO – functioning of EC
- Four evaluative styles (Cohen & Levinthal)



Policy evaluation styles (Cohen & Levinthal)

		Dominant actors in subsystem	
		Societal actors	State actors
State admin. capacity	High	Social Learning (fundamental acknowledgement)	Instrumental Learning (Lesson-drawing)
	Low	Non-learning (Political evaluations)	Limited learning (Technical evaluations)

Policy styles (Howlett & Ramesh: adapted and altered)

Agenda-setting	Outside Initiation	Inside Initiation	Consolidation	Mobilization
Policy formulation	Policy Renewal	Program reform	Policy experimentation	Policy Tinkering
Decision making	Incremental adjustment	Satisfying adjustment	Garbage can emergence	Rational search
Implementation	Administrative	Political	Symbolic	Experimental
Policy evaluation	Social learning	Instrumental learning	Limited learning	Non learning



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