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Policy Making

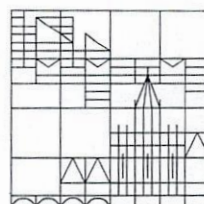
Christoph Knill and Jale Tosun

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"Institutional building and the role of policies."

- Do policies create institutions?
- Do policies require institutions to come about?

Policy making

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Abstract: The process related to public policy making touches the core function of democratic politics, namely the elaboration and discussion of solutions to societal problems. This article provides an overview of the different stages of policy making. In doing so, we seek to offer a theoretical entrée to the analysis of policy making as well as to highlight the determinants of 'real' policy choices. To this end, we combine the illustration of the policy cycle framework with an analysis of some country-specific factors. Further, we discuss the effects of international factors on the design of domestic policies and present empirical findings for the relative importance of both national and international factors.

Introduction

Public policies follow a particular purpose: they are designed to achieve defined goals and present solutions to societal problems. More precisely, *policies* are government statements of what it intends to do or not to do, including law, regulation, ruling, decision, or order (Birkland 2001: 132). *Public policy*, on the other hand, is a more specific term, which refers to a long series of actions carried out to solve societal problems (Newton and van Deth 2005: 263). Hence, (public) policies can be conceived of as the main output of political systems. But how are these policies actually made? Does policy making differ across policy fields or countries?

The classic policy analysis literature approaches these questions by using policy typologies as 'analytical shortcuts' for the underlying processes. The most influential approach to this has been the typology developed by Lowi (1964), who distinguishes between (1) *distributive policies* (i.e. measures concerning the distribution of new resources), (2) *redistributive policies* (that is, measures that modify the distribution of existing resources), and (3) *regulatory policies* (i.e. measures that specify conditions and constraints for individual or collective behaviour, for instance, standards for car exhaust emissions or requirements applicants have to fulfil for obtaining an authorization to trade goods or offer specific services on the national or international market).

Another widely used concept is Wilson's (1973, 1989, 1995) typology in which costs and benefits related to a policy are either widely distributed or narrowly concentrated. Accordingly, each of the four possible combinations yields different implications for policy making. When both costs and benefits of a certain policy are widely distributed, a government may encounter no or only minor opposition, indicating majoritarian politics as the likely outcome. When both costs and benefits of a certain policy are concentrated, a government may be confronted with opposition of rivalling interest groups, which signals interest-group politics; i.e., political processes are dominated by the lobbying activities and strategic interaction of the involved interest groups. If costs are concentrated and benefits diffused, a government may encounter opposition from dominant interest groups. In this case, entrepreneurial politics are the probable outcome. This implies that policy change requires the presence of 'political entrepreneurs' who are willing to develop and put through political proposals despite strong societal resistance. When costs are diffuse and benefits concentrated, a government is likely to face a relevant interest group favourable to its endeavour, which makes clientelistic politics the likely outcome.

There exist, in fact, many other ways for classifying public policies, which also make implicit assumptions about the corresponding policy making process (cf. Anderson 2003: 5–13). Another related concept is the analysis of *policy instruments*, which links instrument choice – i.e. the selection among voluntary, compulsory, or mixed instruments – to the likelihood of resistance to a particular policy (cf. Howlett/Ramesh 2003: 195).

Box 20.1 Types of policies

(A) Lowi's typology (1964)

Type of policy	Definition	Examples
Regulatory policies	Policies specifying conditions and constraints for individual or collective behaviour	Environmental protection; migration policy; consumer protection
Distributive policies	Policies distributing new resources	Agriculture; social issues; public works; subsidies; taxes
Redistributive policies	Policies modifying the distribution of existing resources	Land reform; progressive taxation; welfare policy in more general terms

(B) Wilson's typology (1973, 1989, 1995)

		Benefits	
		Concentrated	Diffuse
Costs	Concentrated	Interest Group Politics ('zero sum game')	Entrepreneurial Politics
	Diffuse	Client Politics ('iron triangles')	Majoritarian Politics

Opposition or consent to policy by the addressees of the same policy is of course an essential question of general interest. Nonetheless, there is more analytical leverage to the analysis of public policies by focusing more explicitly on the political processes since this perspective enables us to gain a fuller understanding of their causes and consequences. This *politics* perspective involves scrutinizing the roles of the executive and legislative branches of government, whose relationship is at the heart of policy making. But it also implies theories of decision making and the exploration of public policy structures for understanding how besides political forces, social and economic interests shape the content of policies. Thus, studying policy making in terms of comparative politics can enhance our scientific understanding as it gives us powerful tools for scrutinizing both the determinants and impacts of policy decisions.

~~I'm applying for a MPP in order to~~

Motivation:

- ① I come to BSC to attend a MPP armed with lots of questions - - - - -
- ② I quest an opening of my mind, a deepening of my

① To acquire knowledge on public policy as a discipline, a practice and a tool for achievement good governance, enhancing democratic governance and ~~opening~~ development.

② Bridging of competency gap in LDCs like Nigeria.

③ To understand & relate between internal policies, ~~politics~~ national politics and universal developments such as globalization.

- ② * What would an ideal Policy look like?
- * What factors must be considered in developing sound policies?
- * How is policy a tool for development?
- * What is the vantage connecting policy to such issues as governance, politics, political economy?
- * How does affect or/and shape policy?

→ understanding an expansion of my inspiration - a total equipping of my intellect with the knowledge, skills, competencies & tools necessary for engaging the public sector as an analyst & adviser who understands the subject on one hand and is conversant with the context of application and other

It grants us the possibility to analyse the effects of new developments, such as globalization or 'internationalization', on policy arrangements. Further, this theoretical approach to policy making may be used for solving real-world policy problems, and hence improving the overall quality of public policies.

Key points

- Public policies are the outputs of the political system; they come along in different forms, including laws, regulations, or rules.
- The policy analysis literature relies on policy typologies and distinction between policy instruments as 'analytical shortcuts' for the underlying policy making process.
- By studying the policy-making process from a comparative politics perspective, we gain a fuller understanding of the causes and consequences of policy decisions.

Conceptual models of policy making

What would an ideal policy look like? What is the best policy design that can be achieved? Both questions are crucial to policy making. The first one refers to the functionality of a policy to be made, i.e. which design a particular policy should have in order to meet an *ex ante* defined goal. The second one touches upon the constraints that appear when policies are actually made, which are principally given by politics, i.e. the process by which the actors involved make decisions. Therefore, it is essential for our purpose to examine how politics shapes public policies.

There are a number of conceptual models that help to clarify our understanding of the relationship between politics and public policies. The major models that can be found in the literature are (1) the institutional model, (2) the rational model, (3) the incremental model, (4) the group model, (5) the elite model, and (6) the process model. These models are not competitive but rather complementary as they focus on different aspects of political life, and hence help us to understand separate characteristics of public policies (Dye 2005: 12).

~~The influence of politics~~

- The political economy of institutional building in ~~developing countries~~ Nigeria.

Focus:

① The influence of politics on policy making and building strong institutions.

②

- The Political Economy of Citizenship and its effect on institutional building in Nigeria.

What is Policy?

What is Political Economy?

What is Politics?

What are institutions? (distinguished from systems, processes, frameworks etc)

The main implication of these models is that they make different assumption about the importance of the actors involved – institutions, politicians, bureaucrats, interest groups, and the public – and their rationality. If we conceive of policy makers as entirely rational actors that search for maximizing solutions to policy problems, our analytical focus would rather be on the quality of available information, decision procedures, etc. If we, however, model policymakers as imperfectly rational actors, the research interest should rather shift to the role to other aspects, such as mechanisms of finding compromises. We now shortly explain these models – expect the process model, which we address in the next section – for providing an initial theoretical access to policy making.

Institutional model

For a long time, the central interest of political science was on how institutional arrangements influence the content of public policies. The institutional model conceives of policies as institutional outputs. The focus of analysis is primarily on the balance between executives and legislatives, which show notable variation across political systems. In this context, the United Kingdom is generally perceived to have a dominant executive, whereas Denmark, Switzerland are generally regarded as balanced systems (Newton and van Deth 2005: 106). From the institutional perspective, public policies are formulated and implemented exclusively by these institutions. Hence, policy making should be a rather smooth and largely technical process, which merely involves executives and legislatives. All the intra-institutional processes, however, remain a 'black box'.

Rational model

First developed in the field of economic analysis, the rational model of decision making formulates guidance on how to secure 'optimal' policy decisions, which means that a decision is rational if no other alternative is better according to the decision makers preferences (Shepsle and Bonchek 1997: 25). To select a rational policy, a policymaker should

- 1) define a set of societal problems that are independent from other problems,
- 2) formulate goals that guide the decision- makers,
- 3) examine all feasible alternatives,
- 4) investigate all alternatives in terms of their outcomes, and the costs and benefits,
- 5) compare all alternatives with the other alternatives, and
- 6) make the best choice among the alternatives so that optimal outcome can be achieved (cf. Anderson 2003: 121).

The rational model is also associated with a particular mode of learning, namely Bayesian learning. According to this perspective, governments update their beliefs on the consequences of policies with all available information about policy outcomes in the past and elsewhere and choose the policy that is expected to yield the best results (Meseguer Yebra 2003, 2006: 39). Rational policy making involves a number of demanding assumptions, e.g. policy makers are expected to have perfect information, which provoked strong criticism (cf. Simon 1955). Nonetheless it remains important for analytical purposes as it helps to contrast ideal policy decisions with actual ones.

By assuming that all political actors behave rationally, i.e. reduce costs and maximize benefits, the rational model also provides the starting point for public choice approaches to policy making. Public choice theory examines the logic and foundation of actions of individuals and groups that are involved in the policy making process. In this regard, the main objects of analysis are voting behaviour and party competition, coalition and government formation, the involvement of interest groups and bureaucracy in policy making (cf. e.g. Buchanan and Tullock 1962; Dunleavy 1991; Laver and Hunt 1992; Mueller 2003).

Moreover, game theory, which is also related to the rational model, serves for analysing decisions in situations in which two or more rational players interact, and where the outcome depends on the choices made by each (cf. Munck 2001). The most widely used games for analysing strategic situations are the 'prisoner's dilemma' and the 'chicken game'. In both games, the mutual solution is unstable

since both players individually tend to stray from it (cf. Axelrod 1984; Rapoport and Chammah 1996).

Incremental model

Incrementalism emerged as a response to the rational model. Rather than an ideal, it purports to be a realistic description of how policy makers arrive at their decisions (Lindblom 1959, 1979; Wildavsky 1964). This is related to its foundation on 'bounded rationality', i.e. an alternative concept to rational choice that takes into account the limitations of both knowledge and cognitive capacity of decision makers. Incremental decisions involve limited changes to existing policies (cf. Anderson 2003: 123).

Similar to rational learning, there is also a concept of bounded learning. In that case, governments likewise engage in information gathering activity but do not scan all available experience and instead use analytical shortcuts and cognitive heuristics to process the information (cf. Meseguer Yebra 2003, 2006; Weyland 2004). An example of such heuristics is the adoption of policies from countries that are considered as being particularly successful or the emulation of policies that have already been adopted by a large number of other states.

The Achilles heel of the incremental model is that it does not explain how decision makers arrive at these incremental adjustments. In response to this central shortcoming, Jones and Baumgartner (2005) propose a model of choice that combines incrementalism and punctuated equilibrium theory, which states that political processes are generally characterized by stability and incrementalism, but occasionally produce large-scale departures from the past. In fact, this explanatory model performs well for explaining the development of the US budget.

Group model

Group theory hypothesizes that policies are the result of an equilibrium reached in group struggle, which is determined by the relative strength of each interest group (Truman 1951; Latham 1956). Groups can be distinguished concerning several aspects, such as income, membership size, membership density and recruitment,

organizational aspects, whether they are united, e.g. by 'umbrella institutions', divided, whether they use sanctioning mechanisms, and aspects of leadership (Newton and van Deth 2005: 170). Accordingly, changes in the relative strength of the single interest groups involved may trigger policy changes. Group theory presupposes that policymakers are constantly responding to group pressures, which motivates politicians to form majority coalitions for which they have the competence to define what groups are to be included (Dye 2005: 21).

More importantly, the potential effect of groups for policy making depends on particular structures. Generally, in (neo) corporatist systems, for instance, economic interests are strongly integrated in policy making (cf. Schmitter/Lehmbruch 1979). The pluralist model regards politics as marketplace with more or less perfect competition, where individuals, political parties, and interest groups compete for influence over policy domains. It assumes equal access to the policy-making arena, fragmentation of the marketplace, a competitive process for the determining policies, and the neutrality of government (cf. Thomas 1993).

Elite model

Related to group theory is the view that policy making is determined by the preferences of governing elites (cf. Mills 1956). The elite model is narrower in a sense as it claims that the electorate is generally poorly informed about public policies and that the elites shape the public opinion on policy questions. It mainly highlights the potential source of bias in policy making in terms of the adoption of policy alternatives that rather correspond to the preferences of the elite than the general public. This view, however, contradicts the popular median voter theorem, which conveys that – under the condition that simple majority rule is used – opinion held by the median voter will become the policy decision (Black 1948; Downs 1957).

Key points

- The literature of political science offers a number of conceptual models of policy making, which enhance our understanding of policies and politics.

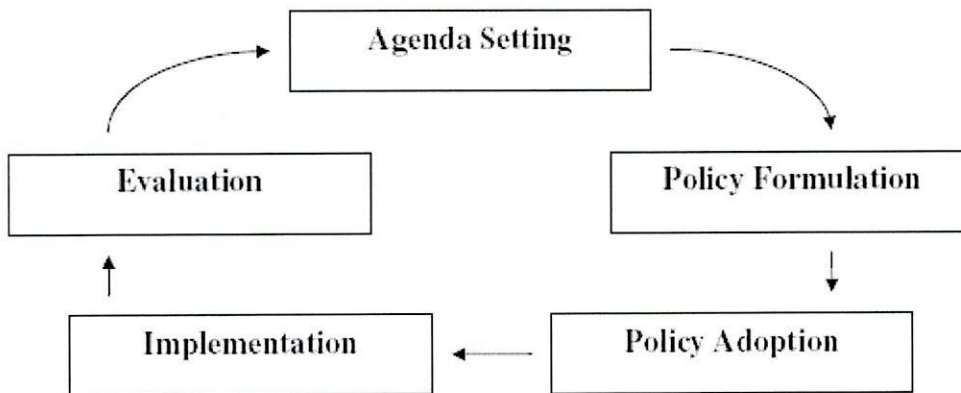
- The models can be separated in terms of their model of policy makers as either as either fully or partially rational actors.
- Further, the models differ concerning their focus on the relevance of political institutions and societal groups.

Analysing policy making as a process: the policy cycle

What are the main characteristics of policy making? Basically, three features can be identified. Firstly, policy making occurs in presence of *multiple constraints*, e.g. shortage of time and resources, public opinion, and of course the constitution. Secondly, policy making involves the existence of *various policy processes*. Governments are no unitary actors but consist of different departments that overlap and compete with each other. Thirdly, these policy processes form an *infinite cycle of decisions and policies*. Current policy decisions are not independent of decisions taken before, and policies under discussion today may have 'knock-on effects' leading to further policies tomorrow (Newton and van Deth 2005: 265–66).

Given this nature of policy making, it is convenient to conceive of policy making as a process model, which is also often labelled *policy cycle*. It models the policy process as a series of political activities, consisting of (1) agenda setting, (2) policy formulation, (3) policy adoption, (4) implementation, and (5) evaluation. Each policy cycle begins with the identification of a societal problem and its placement on the policy agenda. Subsequently, policy proposals are formulated, from which one will be adopted. In the next stage, the adopted policy is taken to action. Finally, the impacts of the policy are evaluated. This last stage leads straight back to the first, indicating that the policy cycle is continuous and unending. This sequential model of the policy cycle represents a simplification. In the real world different political actors and institutions may be involved in different processes at the same time. Yet the policy cycle provides a useful heuristic for breaking policy making into different units for being able to illustrate how policies are actually made.

Figure 20.1 The policy cycle



Agenda setting

The first stage in policy making refers to the identification of a public problem, which requires the state to intervene. In fact, there are many problems, but only a small number will be given official attention by legislators and executives. Those public problems that are chosen by the decision makers constitute the policy agenda. In this context, Cobb and Elder (1972: 85–86) distinguish between the systemic agenda and the institutional agenda. The systemic agenda refers to all societal problems that demand public attention, hence forming the 'discussion agenda'. The institutional agenda, by contrast, contains a set of problems that are up for the serious consideration of decision makers. Thus, the institutional agenda is the 'action agenda', which is more specific and concrete than the systemic agenda. Setting the agenda is an important source of power as it is policy consequential, i.e. legislative institutions grant an advantage to the first movers as compared to the second movers (Shepsle and Weingast 1987).

The factors determining whether an issue reaches the agenda may be cultural, political, social, economic or ideological. In this respect, Schattschneider (1960) argued that disadvantaged groups need to expand the 'scope of conflict' if they want to gain access to the agenda. A notable advance was contributed by Bachrach and Baratz (1962), who studied decision making with particular emphasis on what was excluded from the agenda, i.e. 'non-decisions'.

However, none of these *univariate* models generated testable hypotheses, which triggered the development of multivariate *models* (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 131). These approaches include, for instance, the *funnel of causality model* (cf. King 1973), which integrates several variables into a unified framework. A major theoretical achievement is based on the three policy initiation models formulated by Cobb et al. (1976):

1. The *outside-initiative model* refers to a situation where citizens groups gain broad public support and get an issue onto the formal agenda.
2. The *mobilization model* describes a situation, in which initiatives of government need to be placed on the public agenda for successful implementation.
3. In the *inside initiation model*, influential groups with access to decision makers present policy proposals, which are broadly supported by particular interest groups but only marginally by the public.

According to Kingdon (1995: 19), agenda setting can be regarded as '[...] three process streams flowing through the system – streams of problems, policies, and politics. They are largely independent of one another, and each develops according to its own dynamics and rules. But at some critical junctures the three streams are joined, and the greatest policy changes grow out of that coupling of problems, policies, and solutions'.

The result of the convergence of the three streams is the opening of a 'policy window', which gives advocates of a certain issue to put it on the policy agenda. Similar to the *garbage can model* (cf. Cohen et al. 1972), Kingdon's conception of agenda setting emphasizes the relevance of chance, and therefore qualifies the notion about the rationality of agenda setting.

Baumgartner and Jones (1991, 1993, 1994) modified Kingdon's model by extending it to the notion of 'policy monopolies', in which particular subsystems control the interpretation of a problem. These subsystems comprise both governmental and societal actors. The members of specific subsystems seek to change policy images in order to weaken the stability of existing policy arrangements. In doing so, the subsystem members can either publicize a problem and encourage the public to demand its resolution upon government ('Downsian strategy'), or they can modify the

institutional arrangements within which the subsystem operates ('Schattschneider strategy') (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 139).

In most cases, the policy agenda is set by four types of actors: (1) public officials, (2) the bureaucracy, (3) the mass media, and (4) the interest groups (Gerston 2004: 52). Elected public officials, e.g. the president, the parliament, the ministries and courts, are the most obvious agenda builders since their position enables them not only to make policies, but also to place certain issues on the agenda. However, actual agenda-setting is related to the larger political game in terms of power and the intensity of ideological conflict both within and between the (coalition) government and parliament. In this context, it must be highlighted that there is a high degree of variation of rules and practices of agenda building in Western European parliaments (Döring 1995: 224; 2001).

In the literature there is a virtual consensus that bureaucracies have an impact on policy making at both the planning and implementation stage (cf. Hammond 1986). However, recent studies have shown that bureaucrats also have the ability to affect the organization of the political agenda. In this context, Schnapp (2000) demonstrates that bureaucracies can stand in as effective agenda setters under clearly identified circumstances, i.e. if no political actors put forward a proposal on a certain problem, and therefore chances exist for the bureaucracy to increase its utility by advancing a policy proposal, and if the minister is willing to sponsor the bureaucratic proposal into the political process of decision making.

Agenda setting is also frequently associated with the role of mass media (cf. McCombs and Shaw 1972; McCombs 2004). However, not all media topics are placed on the policy agenda, which highlights that a public discussion of a more or less relevant societal problem must not necessarily become a political problem.

This leads us to the fourth source of agenda setting power, the interest groups. Agenda setting theory generally requires advocates to expand interest in a particular issue or policy (Cobb and Elder 1983: 105–08). That interest groups place issues on the public agenda seems to be indisputable, yet the question emerges whether to what extent their interests are compatible with public needs. Most importantly, the success of various interest groups depends on those in positions of power.

Over the years, research on agenda setting has become increasingly sophisticated. More recent works cover a wide range of new research questions. In this regard, various scholars ask how representation affects agenda setting (cf. Jones and Baumgartner 2004; Penner et al. 2006). Another aspect is about the role of political parties for agenda setting (John 2006; Walgrave et al. 2006; Green-Pedersen 2007). A further fashionable perspective on agenda setting scrutinizes the effects of experts and the scientific community (Pralle 2006; Timmermans and van Scholten 2006).

Policy formulation

The second stage in the policy cycle – policy formulation – involves the definition, discussion, acceptance or rejection of feasible courses of action for coping with policy problems. Generally, policy formulation is strongly related to policy adoption – the subsequent stage here – and in fact a clear-cut distinction between them is often impossible. However, we decided to present them separately since they still refer to different stages. Policy formulation deals with the *elaboration of alternatives of action*, whereas policy adoption refers to the formal adoption to take on a policy.

Hence, policy formulation implies the definition of policy objectives and the selection of the most appropriate policy instruments as well as their settings (Hall 1993). It takes place within the broader context of technical and political constraints of state action. The political constraints can be either substantive or procedural. Substantive constraints refer to the nature of the problem, while procedural constraints are about procedures involved in adopting a policy adoption. These procedural constraints are related to both institutional and tactical constraints (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 147–48).

Policy formulation generally involves a number of actors.

Box 20.2 Formulating policy

'Policy formulation occurs in government bureaucracies; interest group offices; legislative committee rooms, meetings of special commissions; and policy-planning organizations otherwise known as "think tanks". The details of policy proposals are usually formulated by staff members rather than their bosses, but staffs are guided by what they know their leaders want ' Thomas R. Dye (2005: 42).

But basically policy formulation brings the relationship between executives and legislatures into the forefront. There are in fact good reasons to believe that there is a dominance of executives over legislatures and parties. Executives can rely on more resources than parties and their representatives in the legislature. Especially with regard to deepening European integration, it is expected that the weight of executives in relation to parliaments increases (cf. Fabbrini and Donà 2003). Though conversely, the dominance of the executive in national political systems paved for the success of European integration.

With their comparative analysis of legislative activity in Belgium, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom between 1986 and 2003, Bräuninger and Debus (2007) yet show that the legislature is also highly involved in policy formulation. These findings suggest that the influence of the opposition and of parliaments in particular is at least not as insignificant as often argued.

Table 20.1 Legislative bills by initiator and country

Country	Government	Government Parties	Opposition Parties	Government and Opposition Parties	Total
Belgium	1,010	1,700	2,089	297	5,096 (100%)
	(19.8%)	(33.4%)	(41.0%)	(5.8%)	
	[90.9%]	[8.7%]	[4.2%]	[36.7%]	
France	1,444	1,867	2,421	14	5,746 (100%)
	(25.1%)	(32.5%)	(42.1%)	(0.2%)	
	[67.9%]	[5.7%]	[0.9%]	[7.1%]	
Germany	1,573	426	658	110	2,767 (100%)
	(56.9%)	(15.4%)	(23.8%)	(4.0%)	
	[90.2%]	[79.6%]	[2.0%]	[84.6%]	
UK	519	705	785	16	2,025 (100%)
	(25.6%)	(34.8%)	(38.8%)	(0.8%)	
	[95.0%]	[12.6%]	[4.2%]	[93.8%]	

N=15,634.

Note: Figures are numbers of bills introduced by government or (groups of) MPs of lower chamber of parliament. Share of bills by initiator in parentheses; share of successful bills in brackets.

Source: Bräuninger and Debus (2007).

Earlier studies (cf. Dogan 1975) emphasized the role of ministerial bureaucracy and top civil servants in policy formulation. However, policy formulation can rather be conceived as a more or less informal process of negotiation between ministerial departments and interest groups (Jann and Wegrich 2006). Interest groups play a major role in policy formulation as they often work with executive and legislative officials to develop a policy draft. Interest groups may play a big part in formulating legislation about complex and technical issues, and when government institutions lack time and staff to cope with such matters (Anderson 2003: 105–07). This is, for instance, the case with the European Commission, which has developed sets of informal and formal rules that emphasise the key role that consultation with interest groups plays in European policy making (cf. Mazey and Richardson 2001). This illustrates the relevance of bargaining among different actors for policy formulation.

Another aspect of policy formulation refers to the impact of policy advice and scientific knowledge (Martin and Richards 1995). In this regard, it is an interesting research question how this division of tasks between policymakers and advisory organs affects policy outcomes, which might be modelled in game theoretical terms. In this context, the role of ‘think tanks’ also started to call considerable attention.

Their functioning is related to ideas about policy networks, epistemic communities and policy learning (Marin and Mayntz 1991; Haas 1992; Meseguer Yebra 2003, 2006). For being able to influence policies, think tanks can only rely on the generation of ideas to policy problems. Thus, in contrast to interest groups that also offer resources, think tank merely operate by using communication (Stone 2005)

Policy adoption

In contrast to preliminary stages of decision-making, the final adoption of a particular policy alternative is determined by government institutions. The adoption of a policy option is determined by a number of factors. Of these, two sets of factors are of major relevance. First of all, the set of feasible policies can be reduced by the necessity to build majorities for the approval of a policy option, which implies considerations about values, party affiliation, constituency interests, public opinion, deference, and decision rules (Anderson 2003: 126).

Party loyalty is an important decision-making criterion for most members of parliament (Bowler et al. 1999; Benedetto and Hix 2007 for qualifications). Therefore, party affiliation is an important indicator for the likelihood of a member of parliament to approve a policy draft. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that commonly there is a considerable variation in the cohesion of parties within national parliaments (e.g. Janda 1980). According to a comparative study by Bräuninger and Debus (2007), there is a small but significant share of law proposals initiated by bipartisan or even opposition parties that is adopted by a parliamentary majority (cf. figure 20.2). This finding somewhat contradicts the branch of research that argues that the government is the sole and decisive actor in policy making (see, for example, Döring 1995, 2001; Döring and Hallerberg 2004).

Another important decision criterion is given by the expected costs and benefits of a policy proposal for the constituency. In this context, Weingast et al. (1981) show in the case of distributive politics, a strong reliance on a re-election constituency may imply larger projects and programs than are economically efficient. Generally, a member of parliament is expected to adopt a policy option, if the benefits for the constituency prevail. Further, considerations about the public opinion also affect policy choices as well as decision rules, values and perception of deference. Generally, however, policy adoption should be dominated by bargaining and

compromise, and, therefore, the most plausible decision-making theory appears to be incrementalism rather than rational models (Hayes 2001).

The second set of factors refers to the allocation of competencies between the actors involved in policy making. Cross-national research concludes that the type of state organization, whether federal or unitary, affects the success, speed and nature of governmental policy-making.

In analyzing this aspect of the policy-making process, Tsebelis's (1995, 2000, 2002) concept of 'veto players' is particularly useful. In presidential systems, 'divided government' can impede decision-making as there are generally insufficient incentives for political parties to cooperate and build policy-making coalitions. But also other states are prone to his kind of constraint. Germany's bicameral legislature limits governmental policy-making to the consent of a set of veto players (Tsebelis and Money 1997). In this context, Bräuninger and König (1999) show that German governmental potential for policy change is determined by the formal rules of bicameralism as well as policy domain-specific distribution of legislators' party-orientated policy positions.

Implementation

Implementation represents the conversion of new laws and programs into practice. Without proper implementation, policy has neither substance nor significance. Thus, policy success depends on how well bureaucratic structures implement government decisions. At the first glance, implementation appears as an automatic continuation of the policy-making process. Nevertheless, there often exists a substantial gap between the passage of new legislation and their application, which reveals that the relationship between decision making and implementation is tenuous at best (cf. Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Hill and Hupe 2005).

Consequently, it is the explicit objective of implementation research to open the 'black box' between policy formation and policy outcomes. To this end, various theoretical approaches were elaborated to the study of implementation, which Pülzl and Treib (2006) divide into three categories (cf. also Hill and Hupe 2005: 41–84):

- (1) Top-down models (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Bardach 1977; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983) primarily emphasize the ability of policy makers to produce unequivocal policy objectives and control the implementation process;
- (2) Bottom-up models (Lipsky 1971, 1980) regard local bureaucrats as the central actors in policy delivery and view implementation as negotiation processes within networks;
- (3) Hybrid models (Mayntz 1977; Windhoff-Héritier 1980) integrate elements of both previously mentioned models and other theoretical models.

For successful implementation, there must be an entity with sufficient resources, which is able to translate the policy objectives into an operational framework and that is accountable for its actions (Gerston 2004: 98). Often bureaucracies emerge as principal actors during implementation. In his study of the US bureaucracy, Meier (2000) finds implementation depends on the policy type, i.e. whether it is regulatory, distributive or redistributive in nature (cf. Lowi 1972). Hence, when implementing regulatory policies, most agencies are responsive to the communities over which they preside, while distributive policies are implemented with some bureaucratic discretion, with congressional subcommittees and organized interest groups exercising continuous oversight. In the area of redistributive policy, however, little discretion is left to bureaucracy since Congress puts a lot of effort when designing these policies. In conclusion, the very design of a policy seems to be of relevance for implementation success.

Related to the policy types is the choice of policy instruments used in legislation. According to Mayntz (1979) different policy instruments are vulnerable to specific kinds of implementation problems. This finding stimulated a notable body of literature on the effects of policy instruments for reducing the 'implementation deficit' of European Union policies (Knill 2006).

But it is not only the policy design and the instrument choice that determines the likelihood of proper implementation. In federal systems, for instance, implementation efforts may move between the levels of government as well as within levels of government (Gerston 2004: 103). If implementation is a matter of horizontal

implementation, in which a national legal act must be applied solely by an agency in the executive branch, the number of actors remains low and implementation can be attained smoothly. But if vertical implementation is concerned, implying that various segments of the national government must interact with different levels at the sub-national level, the undertaking may become challenging.

The relevance of bureaucracy during the implementation phase reveals a contradictory picture of great interest. On the one hand, bureaucracies are essential for making policies work. On the other hand, senior bureaucrats are often more experienced and better trained than their political masters (Newton and van Deth 2005: 118), which paves the way for 'bureaucratic drift'. This term describes the phenomenon that bureaucratic policy will drift towards the liking of bureaucracy and away from what was originally intended by legislation. The threat of a bureaucratic drift is mainly given in cases of coalition governments as the bureaucratic might drift easily to the ideal position of one of the coalition partner without being suspected (Hammond and Knott 1996). Sometimes, this discrepancy between intended and actual results is also referred to as 'agency problems', originating from the principal-agent theory (Grossman and Hart 1983).

In this context, Schnapp (2001) reveals that the possibility of a bureaucratic drift is likely in countries with coalition government that have a high number of coalition parties, namely Finland, Switzerland, Belgium and Japan. By contrast, this seems unlikely for Spain, Canada, New Zealand, Greece and the United Kingdom since their governments are composed of one party only. Aware of this, a number of instruments were introduced to control bureaucrats: politicians can appoint their own political advisors, bureaucrats are trained in a public service ethos, scrutiny and auditing schemes were introduced as well as 'open government' and ombudsmen (Newton/van Deth 2005: 130).

Evaluation

After a policy is passed by the legislature and implemented by the bureaucracy, it becomes a subject of evaluation. The main question at this stage is whether the output of the decision making process – a given public policy – has attained the

intended goals. Evaluation is often a formal component of policy making and is generally carried out by experts who have some knowledge about the processes and objectives pertaining to the issue undergoing review (Gerston 2004: 124).

Evaluation can be carried out in different ways. In this context, Munger (2000: 20) differentiates between (1) purely *formal* evaluations (monitoring routine tasks), (2) *client satisfaction* evaluation (performance of primary functions), (3) *outcome* evaluation (satisfaction of a list of measurable intended outcomes), (4) *cost-benefit* evaluation (comparison of costs and impacts of a policy), and (5) evaluation of *long-term consequences* (impact on the core societal problem, rather than symptoms alone). In more general terms, policies should be evaluated for their efficiency (using the least resources to the maximum effect) and effectiveness (achievement of the intended goals).

Policy evaluation provides a feedback loop, which enables decision makers to draw lessons from each particular policy in operation. This feedback loop identifies new problems and sets in motion the policy making process once again, creating an endless policy cycle. This turns policy evaluation into a powerful tool of the policy making process: it possesses the potential to reframe an issue once thought to be resolved by policy makers, but as we will see in the next paragraph, it can also lead to the termination of public policies. In this respect, policy evaluations can pave the way for policy learning and evidence-based policy making (Sanderson 2002).

The systematic evaluation of a policy – or more specifically of a program – comprises five areas, namely (1) the need for a particular problem, (2) the program's design, (3) its implementation, (4) its impact or outcomes, and (5) its efficiency (Rossi et al. 2004: 18). These domains are mainly dealt with in scientific evaluation, which must be distinguished between administrative evaluations conducted or initiated by the public administration and political evaluation carried out by diverse actors in the political arena, including the public and the media (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 210–16). Most government agencies make some effort to evaluate their own policies and programs. The most common type of evaluation is based on hearing and reports. Another common approach is to evaluation is given by the analysis of citizen's complaints. Occasionally teams of high-ranking administrators or consultant visit

sites and collect impressionistic data about how policies are carried out, or government agencies themselves gather data on policy output measures. And in some policy fields, governmental entities evaluate the performance of certain policies by comparing them with professional standards. However, most policy evaluations are unsystematic and do not satisfy minimal requirement formulated by scientific evaluation research, e.g. before and after comparison (Dye 2005: 335–39). The need for systematic policy evaluation is expected to grow since contemporary concern over the allocation of scarce resources makes it essential to evaluate the effectiveness of policy interventions.

In practice, policy evaluation presents numerous challenges to the evaluators. Citizens and governments alike tend to interpret the actual effects of a policy in a way that it serves their own intentions. Often governments avoid the precise definition of policy objectives because otherwise politicians would risk taking the blame for obvious failure (Jann and Wegrich 2006). Further, public policy decisions cannot be limited to intended effects only. In fact, they are often characterized by a number of unintended effects (Newton and van Deth 2005: 272f.). However, evaluators can be confronted with more general problems: 'Program circumstances and activities may change during the course of an evaluation, an appropriate balance must be found between scientific and pragmatic considerations in the evaluation design, and the wide diversity of perspectives and approaches in the evaluation field provide little firm guidance about how best to proceed with an evaluation' (Rossi et al. 2004: 29).

The results of the evaluation procedure can also lead to the termination of a certain policy. In theoretical terms, policy termination should be likely when a policy problem has been solved, or if evaluation studies reveal the dysfunctionality of a policy. Nonetheless, the empirical findings show that once a policy is institutionalized within a government, it is hard to terminate it (Bardach 1976; Jann and Wegrich 2006). This immortality of public policies stems from various sources. The most rampant view – which is analogous to Wilson's (1973, 1980) policy typology – is that the continuation of inefficient programs is that their benefits are concentrated in a small, well-organized constituency, while their greater costs are dispersed over a numbers over a large, unorganized group. Moreover, legislative and bureaucratic interests may impede termination. This is also related to the concept of incrementalism, which

implies that attention on proposed changes rather focuses on parts of existing policies and not on its entirety (Dye 2005: 344–44.). Further reasons are cognitive aversion, institutional longevity, dynamic conservatism, anti-termination coalitions, legal obstacles and high costs of initiation (Biller 1976; deLeon 1978). Thus, termination should become more likely if there a government experiences some kind of shock, justifying drastic measures, such as economic crises (Geva-May 2004).

Studies of policy termination are therefore frequently concerned with the question why policies and programs continue to exist (Jann and Wegrich 2006). The systematic explanation for the persistence of policies in light of their obvious inefficiency is a further challenge and could substantially complement the revised policy termination approach – in particular by means of systematically integrating non-termination phenomena in the face of the sub-optimal provision of services (cf. Bauer 2006). Overall, the analysis policy termination needs further theoretical and empirical substantiation.

Key points

- In analytical terms, it is helpful to view policy making as a series of political activities encompassing agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation.
- The number of actors involved decreases when we move from agenda setting to implementation.
- Evaluation is a rather formal component of policy making and often carried out by experts.
- The concept of policy termination yields some interesting implications, however, this aspect is both theoretically and empirically still underdeveloped.

The importance of institutions, framing and policy styles

While we scrutinized rather generally the different stages of policy making in the first section, we now refine our analytical focus and examine how certain structures in different countries can impact policy decisions. This perspective adopts a comparative perspective on the analysis of the policy-making process. In doing so,

we concentrate on the institutions, cognitive and normative determinants, and national policy styles (cf. Jamison and Baark 1999).

The role of institutions

In a broader sense, we can interpret policy making as a strategy for resolving societal problems by using institutions. At the same time, however, it is also a process for modifying those same institutions in order meet these goals. Generally, policy institutions serve to reduce complexities inherent to the policy making process (Simon 1957; March and Olson 1984; Luhman 1985). They shape the behaviour of actors and the use of policy instruments (Weaver and Rockman 1993). From a rationalist perspective, institutions can structure the interaction and avoid the sub-optimal solutions as they are for instance given by the prisoner's dilemma. From a sociological point to view, institution can support cooperation through the provision of moral or cognitive template (Hall and Taylor 1996).

Hence, the relationship between public policy and institutions is a close one since policy does not become a public policy until it is adopted, implemented and enforced by government institutions. Institutions lend legitimacy, universality and coercion to policies (Dye 2005: 12). The core institutions in democracies and semi-democracies – elections, executives and legislatives – are important for framing the entire policy making apparatus. 'These core institutions provide the method by which rulers and those being ruled accept some understood rules of the game and then seek to employ these rules to make policy' (Considine 2005: 105).

As policy interventions in democratic systems originate in electoral systems, it is the most essential formal institution when scrutinizing policy making. Electoral competition is largely party competition, which turns political parties into important actors. Their main function is about structuring and articulating the public opinion. Most frequently, political parties are described by a left-right dichotomy, implying that they have diametrically opposed policy preferences. In fact various studies – based on expert judgments as well as content analysis of party manifestos – found a level of consistency with this dichotomy (cf. Laver and Hunt 1992; Budge and Klingemann 2001; Laver et al. 2003; Debus 2007).

Strongly related to this is the relevance of the voting systems, of which we can distinguish between three main types:

- *plurality-majority systems*, in which the elected candidates get more votes than any other (example: United Kingdom);
- *proportional representation*, in which seats are allocated according to a formula that seeks to ensure proportionality (example: Germany);
- *semi-proportional systems* that combine plurality-majority with proportional representation aspects (example: Japan).

Each system has strengths and weaknesses. While the proportional system ensures the representation of all societal groups, including small parties, plurality-majority systems are usually associated with stable and effective governments. These aspects have strong repercussions on the quality of policy making.

The relationship between legislative and executive is also of crucial importance for policy making. In parliamentary models, the executive is a group of ministers elected from the very parliament, while in pure presidential systems, the two branches of government are separate. In this context, Lijphart (1999) claims that despite strong variations among countries, democratic systems tend to fall into two categories: majoritarian and consensus democracies. The majoritarian system – which is generally associated with the United Kingdom, and hence is also known as the ‘Westminster Model’ – concentrates power and fuses executive and legislative powers in the classic parliamentary manner (examples: Colombia, Costa Rica, France, Greece, New Zealand (before 1996), and the United Kingdom). By contrast, the consensus model focuses on sharing power by separating and balancing executive and legislative power (examples: Austria, Germany, India, Japan, the Netherlands, and Switzerland). Remarkably, consensus democracies score higher in terms of democratic quality as well as the state’s generosity in social welfare, environmental policy, criminal justice, and foreign aid (Lijphart 1999: ch. 16).

Role of cognitive and normative frames

The concepts on normative and cognitive frames are crucial for explaining how actors understand and interpret policy making situations. Cognitive frames refer to the schemes through which actors view and interpret the world (Campbell 1998: 382). Normative frames are about values and attitudes that shape the actors' view of the world (cf. Fischer 2003). Both cognitive and normative frames can enable but also constrain policy action.

Thus, for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of policy adoption, we need to supplement our analytical framework – which is mostly the rational choice model – by the consideration of normative and cognitive determinants. Although rational motivation may explain the adoption of new policies, cognitive and normative factors may be essential for understanding better the decision making at each stage of the policy making process (Miller and Banaszak-Holl 2005: 214). The characteristics of cognitive and normative frames can be linked to the sociological institutionalism, in which legitimacy-seeking actors are confronted with institutional pressures to conform a set of cultural rules, norms and expectations (Miller and Banaszak-Holl 2005: 195).

In this context, Surel (2000) discusses three concepts, i.e. those on *policy paradigms* (Hall 1993), *advocacy coalitions* (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Sabatier 1998), and *référentiel* (Jobert and Muller 1987). According to Hall (1993), there are certain policy paradigms present in the real world that imply distinct policy goals. These goals – that are intertwined with the paradigm – then define the choice and specification of instruments. The advocacy coalition framework, by contrast, assumes a similar construct to affect the entire society, which is the 'deep core'. Subordinated to it is the 'policy core', which refers to the belief systems within a subsystem of public policy. From this perspective, 'secondary aspects' are the instrumental decisions that are necessary to implement the policy core. The *référentiel* equals a paradigm as it comprises values and norms.

Cognitive and normative frames produce a sense of specific identity. However, certain actors have a privileged role in public policy making as they generate and

diffuse cognitive frames. Since elites and other privileged actors frame policy ideas to convince each other as well as the public, they are important for the adoption policies (Campbell 1998: 380). This category of actors is labelled as 'mediators' (Jobert and Muller 1987) or 'policy-brokers' (Sabatier 1998). Further, cognitive and normative frames help to reduce tension and conflict by making out "the terrain for social exchanges and disagreements, rather than simply supporting an unlikely consensus" (Surel 2000: 502). Dobbin (1994), for instance, shows that the differences in how decision makers promoted railway development in the late nineteenth century can be explained by variations in cognitive frameworks. An instructive approach is presented by Campbell (1998), who models the role of ideas for policy making against the background of cognitive and normative framing. In this way, he shows that ideas can both enable and constrain policy making. At the cognitive level, ideas can either help policy makers to define a clear course of action, or they can impede policy making if they are used cognitive constraints. As concerns the role of ideas at the normative level, they possess the ability to legitimize policy solutions to the public, but simultaneously, ideas can potentially constrain the normative range of legitimate solutions.

National policy styles

The concept of policy styles – or also regulatory styles – refers to the routines and choices of actors involved in policy making and implementation (Richardson et al. 1982: 12). In a certain extent, this concept takes up the discussion about institutional characteristics (cf. Lijphart 1999) as well as Dyson's (1980) elaboration on 'strong' and 'weak' states.¹ Further, it is related to the ideas of 'policy communities' and 'administrative culture' (Hill 2005: 69; van Thiel 2006: 118). Thus, it is the main idea of this section to elucidate that for the analysis of policy making nations matter (Feick and Jann 1988).

Richardson et al. (1982) distinguish policy styles along two dimensions. The first dimension is about how policy-makers respond to the issues on the policy agenda. Do decision makers anticipate societal problems (technocratic approach), or so they merely react to them (diplomatic approach)? The first notion presupposes that the government is perfectly informed and able to foresee and forestall policy problems

before they become critical. By contrast, the second notion about the government's approach is build around the concept of imperfect information and hence seems to be more realistic. The second dimension is about the relative autonomy of the state vis-à-vis other actors involved in policy making and implementation. Here, the question is whether decision makers seek to ensure consensus among the parties involved, or whether they simply impose their decisions on the executing actors (Richardson et al. 1982: 12f.).

These core elements of their analytical framework can also be found in other conceptualizations. Van Waarden's (1995) typology of regulatory styles, for instance, comprises six sub-dimensions that refer to the 'what', 'how', and 'who' questions of policy making:

- (1) Liberal-pluralist versus étatist versus corporatist style: The first style prefers 'market' solutions to policy problems, while etatism implies a preference for 'state solutions'. Corporatism, by contrast, favours 'associational' solutions to policy problems.
- (2) Active versus reactive styles: Active styles are higher in their degree of intensity, radicalism as well as innovation as compared to reactive ones.
- (3) Comprehensive versus fragmented or incremental styles: Comprehensive policies are integrated into larger plans, while the latter are not.
- (4) Adversarial versus consensual paternalistic styles: The first type strongly relies on coercion and imposition, while the latter is based on consultation.
- (5) Legalistic versus pragmatic styles: Legalistic styles are characterized by formalism, detailed regulation, and rigid rule application. The pragmatic style, on the other hand, is informal and flexible in both policy formulation and implementation.
- (6) Formal versus informal network relations between state agencies and organizations of state agencies.

In comparison, the typology proposed by Knill (1998) is more parsimonious. National regulatory styles are basically defined by the mode of state intervention and administrative interest intermediation. With respect to state intervention, he further distinguishes between (1) *hierarchical versus self-regulation*, (2) *substantive versus*

procedural regulation, as well as (3) *uniform and detailed requirements versus open regulation allowing for administrative flexibility and discretion*. In a similar way, he sub-divides administrative interest intermediation in (1) formal versus informal, legalistic versus pragmatic, and (2) open versus closed relationships between administrative and societal actors.

Policy styles provide an analytically useful concept for determining the design of policies, e.g. the choice of instruments (Howlett 1991; Arentsen 2003) as well as the mode of implementation (Freeman 1985). Yet, assessing the extent of impact of national policy styles augers for systematic comparative analysis (Freeman 1985). Different policy styles can exist within countries, at different government levels as well as in different policy fields (Richardson et al. 1982; Howlett and Ramesh 2003).

Richardson's (1982) volume itself, however, could not deliver empirical evidence for existence of national policy styles. In fact, the single case studies showed remarkable degree for intra-national variations in policy styles. Conversely, when evaluating the success and failure of four policy areas (Steel, Health Care, Finance, HIV and the Blood Supply) in six European countries, namely France, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, Spain and Sweden, Bovens et al. (2001) find some evidence that different national policy styles affect how policies are formulated. Most importantly, policy styles in some countries tend to be more stable and clearly defined than are those of others, even though very much also seems to depend on the policy sector.²

Figure 20.2 Richardson's (1982) typology of policy styles

	Anticipatory	Reactive
Consensus-seeking	Netherlands, Spain,	Germany, Sweden
Imposing	United Kingdom	France*

* Concerning financial regulations, the French style is anticipatory.

Source: Based on Bovens et al. (2001: 645-47).

The concepts of national policy styles are linked to legal, political and administrative institutions and cultures. And given this strong rootedness, national regulatory styles are generally expected to be resistant to change, even with increasing economic and political internationalization (van Waarden 1995). These persistent differences in national regulatory styles can have important effects, especially with respect to European integration. This aspect explains why the study of national regulatory styles has been expanded to the study of Europeanization research (see, for example, Mazey and Richardson 1996; Knill 2001; Jordan and Liefferink 2004).

In sum, we can conclude that the notion of national policy styles is not unproblematic. Similarly to the concept of policy cycles, we should rather refer to it as a heuristic tool for identifying common policy making patterns, but not as explanatory factors.

Key points

- Policy making can be thought of as a strategy for resolving societal problems by using institutions; simultaneously policy making is also a process for modifying those same institutions for attaining these goals.
- Cognitive and normative fulfils important functions during the policy making process.
- Similar to the policy cycle, the concept of policy styles also serves as a useful heuristic tool for identifying common policy making patterns among countries; nonetheless, it must also regarded as another 'analytical shortcut'.

The role of international factors for domestic policy making

In this section, we dismiss the assumption that policy making is merely influence by domestic factors and concentrate on the impact of international factors on domestic policy making. The notion that countries do not constitute independent observations has been known for a long time in comparative politics, and became discussed as 'Galton's problem' (Naroull 1961; Braun and Gilardi 2006; Jahn 2006).

In consequence, scholars are increasingly paying attention to how actors, institutions and economic forces that extend beyond state border can shape domestic politics

and hence public policies (Bernstein and Cashore 2000: 67). This recognition has led researchers to scrutinize more carefully the link between domestic policy processes and the international arena (Risse-Kappen 1995). Such scholarship is, however, still at an early stage and the challenge before political scientists is to develop theoretical conceptions of how internationalization affects domestic public policies and policy making (Howlett and Ramesh 2003: 55).

Despite these limitations in terms of theoretical literature, we can approach the policy effects of internationalization 'through the backdoor' by turning to the concepts of policy diffusion and policy transfer, and to the analysis of cross-national policy convergence as related concepts.

Theories of policy diffusion, policy transfer, and cross-national policy convergence

Diffusion is generally defined as the socially mediated spread of policies across and within political systems, including communication and influence processes which operate both on and within populations of adopters (Rogers 1995: 13). Diffusion studies typically start out from the description of adoption patterns for certain policy innovations over time. In a subsequent step, they analyse the factors that account for the empirically observed spreading process. According to this context of diffusion, no distinction of different forms of 'spread mediation' is made.

In terms of the domestic policy-making process, diffusion mainly affects the stages of agenda-setting, and to a lesser degree policy formulation. However, the mere placing of these issues on the policy agenda does not imply that they will be adopted. Therefore, some authors emphasized that the likelihood of policy adoption increases if the policy proposal originates from a country that is culturally similar to the receiving country (Strang and Meyer 1993; Strang and Soule 1998). Other scholars stress the relevance of administrative traditions and capacities (Kern et al. 2000). Lenschow et al. (2005) argue that the extent to which a policy innovation is accommodated by a given country can be explained by three aspects: institutional, cultural and socio-economic factors. In their analytical framework, institutional factors – defined as organizational structures, formal and informal rules, and policy-making procedures – are expected to facilitate or constrain policies (Thelen and

Steinmo1992). Culture is included for understanding how policy discourses are developed, interpreted and eventually integrated into the domestic policy-making context, whereas socio-economic structure and development points to the general capacity of state for policy actions.

However, we have to keep in mind that once a diffusing policy idea – either with or without modifications – has been placed on the agenda or became a policy proposal, its further development is then mainly influenced by domestic politics. Hence, domestic factors, such as considerations about values, party affiliation, constituency interests, public opinion, and decision rules come into play again.

Policy transfer can best be described as “processes by which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system” (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 5; cf. also Rose 1991; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996; Radaelli 2000). Policy transfer is not restricted to merely imitating policies of other countries, but can include profound changes in the content of the exchanged policies (Rose 1991; Kern et al. 2000). In fact, there are basically four degrees of transfer (Rose 1993; Dolowitz and Marsh 1996: 351, 2000: 13):

- (1) Copying (direct and complete transfer);
- (2) Emulation (transfer of the ideas behind the program);
- (3) Combinations (mixture of different policies);
- (4) Inspiration (final policy does not draw upon the original).

The focus of transfer studies is on the analysis of the specific processes and factors that influence the way and degree to which one country learns from other countries with regard to policy making in a certain area. Here again domestic factors come into playing. In terms of decision-making it is important which actors engage in policy transfer, which negotiation power they possess, and therefore whether they can build a supportive coalition for adopting a policy developed elsewhere. Another crucial aspect for the success of a policy import might be its regulatory legitimacy (Majone

1996: ch. 13). It is indeed reasonable to hypothesize some countries have more problem to regard policy external policy proposals as legitimate than others.

Policy diffusion and policy transfer share a number of assumptions, e.g. that governments do not learn about policy practices randomly, but rather through common affiliations, negotiations and institutional membership (Simmons and Elkins 2004). Both transfer and diffusion processes hence require that actors are informed about the policy choices of others (Strang and Meyer 1993: 488). Given these conceptual overlaps, diffusion is often equated with policy transfer (Kern 2000; Tews 2002).

Notwithstanding these conceptual overlaps, however, analytical differences between diffusion and transfer should not be overlooked. Diffusion studies typically start out from a rather general perspective. While analyses of policy transfer investigate the underlying causes and contents of singular processes of bilateral policy exchange, the dependent variable in diffusion research refers to general patterns characterizing the spread of innovations within or across political systems. The diffusion literature focuses more on the spatial, structural and socioeconomic reasons for particular adoption patterns rather than on the reasons for individual adoptions as such (Bennett 1991: 221; Jordana/Levi-Faur 2005). Diffusion studies often reveal a rather robust adoption pattern, with the cumulative adoption of a policy innovation over time following an S-shaped curve (cf. Gray 1973; Berry and Berry 1990).

Both transfer and diffusion represent processes that might result in policy convergence, which can be defined as "any increase in the similarity between one or more characteristics of a certain policy (e.g. policy objectives, policy instruments, policy settings) across a given set of political jurisdictions (supranational institutions, states, regions, local authorities) over a given period of time" (Knill 2005: 768). It has close proximity to the concept of isomorphism which has been developed in organization sociology. Isomorphism is defined as a process of homogenization that "forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 66). The central question underlying studies on isomorphism refers to the mechanisms through which organizations become more similar over time. There is thus a broad overlap between

studies on policy convergence and isomorphism, with the major difference between the two concepts being on their empirical focus. The literature on isomorphism concentrates on increasing similarity of organizational and institutional structures and cultures. Studies on policy convergence, transfer or diffusion, by contrast, focus on changes in national policy characteristics.

But transfer and diffusion must not necessarily lead to converging policy outputs. This would imply that policy ideas were equally transposed into domestic policy proposals, and subsequently adopted through the same or similar political processes. Admittedly, this is an unrealistic scenario. Van Waarden (1995: 334), for instance, points out that policy diffusion does not automatically lead to convergence as foreign models usually need to be modified to correspond to national institutional structures and regulatory styles. Thus, how can we explain similar policies across different countries otherwise? Apparently, there are different sources of international influence with a varying degree of constraints on domestic policy making and public policies.

International sources that affect domestic policy making

Internationalization (Hirst and Thompson 1996) does not only affect policy sectors that are generally associated with externalities, e.g. environmental policy, but also policy fields with no immediate international connection, such as social policy. Yet, internationalization is a highly complex phenomenon with varying effects on different policy sectors and states. For disentangling the mechanisms behind internationalization, we rely on the concepts introduced by Holzinger and Knill (2005), who distinguish between (1) imposition, (2) international harmonization, (3) regulatory competition, and (4) transnational communication.

Imposition – sometimes also labelled ‘coercive isomorphism’ (DiMaggio and Powell 1991), or ‘penetration’ (Bennett 1991) – occurs whenever an external political actor forces a government to adopt a certain policy. This presupposes asymmetry of power, and often policy adoption is accompanied by an exchange of economic resources. Policies can either be unilaterally imposed on a country by another, or imposition can occur as conditionality of an international institution (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 9). Unilateral imposition happens rarely and only in extreme situations,

such as wars. Conditionality, on the other hand, can be observed more frequently. An example for conditionality is the necessity of applicant countries for membership in the European Union to adopt the entire *acquis communautaire*, i.e. the total body of European law accumulated thus far. Imposition implies that the country forced to adopt a certain model has not much choice in modifying the policy. As a consequence, imposition can generally be expected to lead to complete similarity of the policies of the submitting country and the policies of the imposing country or institution. In such cases, domestic politics are mainly bypassed.

International harmonization refers to a situation in which member states voluntarily engage in international cooperation, and hence corresponds to 'negotiated transfer' (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000: 15). This mechanism implies that countries comply with uniform legal obligations defined in international or supranational law. International harmonization presupposes the existence of interdependencies or externalities which push governments to resolve common problems through cooperation within international institutions, thus sacrificing some independence for the good of the community (Drezner 2001: 60; Hoberg 2001: 127). Once established, institutional arrangements will constrain and shape the domestic policy choices, even as they are constantly challenged and reformed by their member states. As a result, international institutions are not only the object of state choice, but at the same time consequential for subsequent governmental activities (Martin/Simmons 1998: 743).

Box 20.3 International harmonization and domestic politics

'The importance of domestic politics is largely limited along this path to the stage of rule creation/ratification and to the decision of whether to comply or not in specific circumstances. In the two-level game of international negotiations, governments balance, and sometimes play off, the interests of their negotiating partners and domestic constituencies. Domestic policy-making structures are also important when states require domestic ratification of international agreements or implementing legislation.

However, once rules are in place, assuming states view them as legitimate, they create a "pull toward compliance" regardless of domestic political factors.

Contravening the rule could result in costly disputes in international adjudication bodies or domestic courts or sanctions of various sorts. It could also erode the legitimacy of other related rules that a state may want others to obey or, in utilitarian terms, erode general reciprocity that creates a broad incentive to obey international rules in the long run. The rule also becomes a resource on which transnational and/or coalitions of domestic actors can draw when governments do not comply. For example, they can publicize non-compliance, pressure governments to live up to their commitments or press governments to launch disputes against other countries which do not fulfil their obligations' Steven Bernstein and Benjamin Cashore (2000: 79-80).

The mechanism of regulatory competition is closely related with the notion of internationalization as economic globalization. Regulatory competition is expected to homogenize the policy outputs of countries when these are mutually faced with competitive pressures. Thus, this mechanism presupposes economic integration among countries. The competitive pressure arises from (potential) threats of economic actors to shift their activities elsewhere, inducing governments to lower their regulatory standards. This way, regulatory competition among governments may lead to a race to the bottom in policies (Drezner 2001: 57-59; Hoberg 2001: 127; Simmons and Elkins 2004).

Theoretical work, however, suggests that there are a number of conditions that may drive policy in both directions (Vogel 1995; Scharpf 1997; Kern et al. 2000; Holzinger 2002, 2003), including, for example, the type of policy concerned (e.g. product or process standards), or the presence of other interests than business in national politics.

Often a distinction is made between product and production process standards (Scharpf 1997; Holzinger 2003; Murphy 2006). In the case of production standards, we find a widely shared expectation that states will gravitate towards the policies of the most laissez-faire country (Drezner 2001). If the regulation of production processes implies an increase in the costs of production, potentially endangering the international competitiveness of an industry, regulatory competition will generally

exert downward pressures on economic regulations (Scharpf 1997: 524). It is assumed that governments are ready to lower environmental standards in the face of lobbying and exit threats exerted by the respective industry (cf. Hahn 1990).

Expectations are yet less homogeneous for product standards. While industries in both low-regulating and high-regulating countries have a common interest in harmonization of product standards to avoid market segmentation, the level of harmonization can hardly be predicted without the examination of additional factors. Most important in this context is the extent to which high-regulating countries are able to factually enforce stricter standards. If it is possible to erect exceptional trade barriers, as for example for health or environmental reasons under EU and WTO rules, stricter policies can be expected (Vogel 1995; Scharpf 1997). Otherwise competitive pressure may induce governments to lower their standards (Holzinger 2003: 196).

So far, most empirical findings for different policy sectors, such as environmental and social policy, do not support the race to the bottom scenario but rather give hints for the occurrence of a race to the top, i.e. upward ratcheting of regulatory standards. International economic factors alone yet do not determine the direction of policy responses. Various domestic factors, e.g. the nature of policy making institutions, mediate internationalization (Bernstein and Cashore 2000: 73). In this respect, Risse-Kappen (1995) stressed the mediating function of domestic policy networks.

Transnational communication consists of a number of mechanisms, which are purely based on communication among countries, namely lesson-drawing, transnational problem-solving, emulation and the transnational promotion of policy models. Lesson-drawing refers to constellations of policy transfer in which governments rationally utilize available experience elsewhere in order to solve domestic problems (Rose 1991). This concept is closely related to rational decision-making and Bayesian learning (Meseguer Yebra 2003, 2006).

Transnational problem-solving is also based on rational learning. It is driven by the joint development of common problem perceptions and solutions to similar domestic problems as well as their subsequent adoption at the domestic level. In doing so, transnational elite networks or epistemic communities, international institutions, and

common educational and normative backgrounds play an important role in forging and promulgating transnational problem-solving (cf. DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Haas 1992; Elkins and Simmons 2004).

Emulation, on the other hand, is motivated by the mere desire for conformity with other countries rather than the search for effective solutions to given problems. States might sometimes copy mimetically the policies of other states simply to legitimate conclusions already reached (DiMaggio and Powell 1991; Bennett 1991). Finally, policy adoption can be driven by the active role of international institutions, e.g. EU, the OECD or the World Bank, that are promoting the spread of distinctive policy approaches they consider particularly promising (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The adoption of internationally promoted policy models can be a tool for policymakers to reduce uncertainty by simply doing what other governments have done (Tews et al. 2003: 594).

Similar to all the other mechanisms, the effects of transnational communication strongly depend on mediation by domestic politics (Radaelli 2005). Thus, as concerns the national effect of these mechanisms of internationalization, we must conclude that the political context matters (Steinmo et al. 1992). As already argued for policy diffusion, it can be expected that if the cultural, institutional, or socio-economic similarity between communicating countries and international institutions is high, the adoption of the corresponding policy proposals should become more likely. Another strategy for enhancing the likelihood of policy adoption is given by the infiltration of the domestic policy making process, e.g. by penetrating domestic policy networks (Bernstein and Cashore 2000: 83). However, general statements are hardly possible.

Empirical illustration

In this final section we seek to show that internationalization and its related mechanisms actually occur in the real world. As this has increasingly been recognized by scholars, there is a considerable body of empirical literature, which we cannot discuss in extent (but see Heichel et al. 2005 for a systematic overview).

Therefore, we rather limit ourselves to some selected empirical examples for underlying the analytical concepts presented beforehand.

1. *Policy diffusion*.—Guler et al. (2002) show that the adoption of ISO 9000 quality certifications can be explained by diffusion theory and isomorphism. Their results support their hypothesis that states as well as foreign multinationals are involved in coercive isomorphism. Additionally, there is also evidence for the importance of mimetic isomorphism, which leads to policy imitation.

The diffusion of regulatory agencies has also attracted notable attention. Gilardi et al. (2006) examine the diffusion of economic and social regulatory agencies across Europe and Latin America. An interesting implication of their research is that the main explanatory factor depends on the type of regulatory agency. As concerns the spread of economic agencies, the theory of regulatory competition fits well. By contrast, the diffusion pattern of agencies operating in the field of social policy can best be explained by the essential role of transnational networks of professionals. Thus, transnational communication appears as the central causal mechanism in the latter case.

Oberthür and Tänzler (2002) concentrate on the role of international institutions in processes of diffusion by examining their effects on the spread of three climate policy instruments, namely climate protection plans and strategies, emissions trading schemes, and carbon dioxide energy taxes. International institutions generate pressure and provide incentives for the adoption of policy innovations. Hence policy promotion at the international stage does matter. This finding is substantiated by Tews et al. (2003), who analyze the diffusion of eco-labels, energy or carbon taxes, national environmental policy plans or strategies for sustainable development, and free-access-to-information. Moreover, the authors present empirical support for the upward-driving effects of regulatory competition for product standards.

As concerns the diffusion of pension privatization, Brooks (2005) suggests that policy decisions in states are strongly interdependent on policy actions undertaken by peer nations, i.e. countries that are structurally comparable and that participate in the same economic and political organizations. This finding can be interpreted in two

ways. First, since peer nations usually trade extensively, this result can point to the relevance of competitiveness considerations for policy adoption. Thus, her results would show the relevance of the regulatory competition. Or, secondly, adoption can also be triggered by cultural similarity. These findings match with the outcomes of a study by Simmons and Elkins (2004) on the spread of models foreign economic policy making. The authors show that economic competition as well as the policies of a country's socio-cultural peers determine the adoption of liberal economic models.

2. *Policy transfer.*—Dolowitz (1997) uses the policy transfer framework for explaining the main changes in the British employment policy during the 1980s, which culminated in the enactment of the Social Security Act in 1989. The government's motivations for policy transfer were (1) growing public concern over high level of unemployment, hence problem pressure, (2) electoral uncertainty and related to it the threat of electoral defeat, (3) competition pressure, and (4) perceived dysfunctionality of the existing system. In response to these challenges, the British government transferred core elements of the American and Swedish welfare-to-work systems.

Jones and Newburn (2002) clarify the impact of the United States on recent developments of British crime control policy. To this end, they conduct document analysis and find evidence that in this case policy transfer actually took place. Also dealing with the United Kingdom, Pierson (2003) scrutinizes the policy transfer between the British and the Australian Labour Party in terms of welfare-to-work systems and student funding during the 1990s. His review of empirical evidence reveals that the main driving force behind policy transfer was the desire to solve policy problems, and hence the main mechanism turned out to be learning. The relevance of policy-oriented learning is also emphasized by Hulme (2005), who clarifies the use of the policy transfer approach for the analysis of social policy.

Lavenex (2002) shows how Central and Eastern European candidate countries have transferred refugee policy from the European Union, despite practical difficulties in their implementation and important differences with regard to past and present experiences with refugee. While domestic factors explain variation with regard to the timing of the countries' implementation of asylum laws and the general asylum practice, the mainly triggering factors for this reform can be in conditionality.

3. *Policy convergence*.—Holzinger et al. (2008) analyze the development of 40 environmental measures across 24 countries between 1970 and 2000 by concentrating on international economic and institutional interlinkages between nation states. Whereas economic interlinkages are associated with regulatory competition, institutional interlinkages refer to both international harmonization and transnational communication within institutions, which stimulates learning processes among member countries. Their results show that in general similarity grows considerably from 1970 to 2000. These developments can be explained in particular by the effects of international harmonization and transnational communication.

International harmonization contributes most to the explanation of convergence. In this context, the explanatory power of the EU variables is much less pronounced than accession to international institutions, which is a rather surprising result. The effects of transnational communication on environmental policy convergence are of almost the same size as those of international harmonization. Communicative interaction within international organizations obviously has very strong effects on the convergence of environmental policies. Hence compared to the institutional variables, there is little support for effects of regulatory competition on cross-national policy convergence. The explanatory power of the other variables controlled for in the analysis is limited. In fact, only income and cultural similarity seem to matter, but their effect strongly depends on the model specification.

Key points

- As internationalisation is a complex phenomenon, it is useful to approach its underlying mechanism via the concepts of policy diffusion, policy transfer, and cross-national policy convergence.
- There are four main mechanisms: imposition, harmonization, regulatory competition, and transnational communication.
- There is considerable empirical evidence that internationalization affects domestic policy making, especially the effect of international harmonization and transnational communication.

- For candidate countries for EU membership, conditionality is an essential driving force for adopting external policies.

Conclusion

Policy making is extremely complex. Therefore, the analysis of policy making usually focuses on single stages of the complete policy making process. But this simplification is not a genuine cure. In fact, policy processes with the single stages remain complex. Problem definition and agenda setting ensure important strategic advantages, turning this stage into a highly competitive one. Many actors – formal and informal ones – participate in the selection of suitable items from an undefined universe of societal problems. Power fragmentation also affects policy formulation and adoption, which are characterized by negotiation and the search for compromise. If the political system is a rather cooperative one, decision making in the political process remains unchallenging. Otherwise, there can be harmful delays in decision-making. The number of actors involved decreases at the implementation stage. However, legislators always feel discomfort with regard to the dominating role of bureaucracy at this stage. In the subsequent evaluation stage, the floor is opened to experts and their appraisal of whether a policy performs well or poorly.

We must also keep in mind that there are structures present in the political sphere that help to reduce the complexity of policy making. Political institutions, for instance, fulfil such a function. In a similar manner, framing mechanism, such as cognitive or normative schemes, serve to structuring politics. Finally, the development of routines and particular styles of making public policies help to establish a stable negotiation framework and hence ensure the continuity of policy making.

However, policy making cannot be conceived in domestic terms only. It is not exclusively a response to policy problems or the outcome of domestic bargaining processes. As we discussed, policy making is also affected by internationalization, implying a variety of stimuli and corresponding reaction patterns. In more general terms, internationalization can either enable or constrain policy making. How these effects are translated into policy outcomes, however, mainly depends on domestic

policy making processes. In light of the analytical challenges outlined in this article, research on policy making will remain stimulating for scholars of comparative politics.

Questions

1. How can we think of policy making in terms of theory?
2. In which ways are policy typologies related to the policy making process?
3. What are its main stages of the policy cycle, and how does this concept enhance our understanding of policy making?
4. Which actors – societal and political ones – participate, or even dominate, in the single stages?
5. What is the role of political institutions in policy making?
6. How we define normative and cognitive frames?
7. What are national policy styles, and how do they better for the policy output?
8. Which theoretical concepts cope with the effects of internationalization on domestic policy making?
9. What are the mechanisms behind these concepts? And how do they interact with domestic policy making?
10. Does internationalization matter empirically?

Guide to further reading

Arce, Moisés (2005). *Market Reform in Society: Post-Crisis Politics and Economic Change in Authoritarian Peru*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State Press.

This is an excellently written in-depth analysis of neoliberal policy reform in Peru, which combines theory and process tracing in a remarkable way. It is really worth reading – and not only for those interested in Peruvian politics.

Baumgartner, Frank R. and Bryan D. Jones (1993). *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

This is an important book that provides several new ways of looking at politics and policymaking.

Bryce, Herrington J. (2005). *Players in the Public Policy Process: Nonprofits as Social Capital Agents*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

This book develops a convincing framework for scrutinizing the increasing role of nonprofits in governance.

Compston, Hugh (ed.) (2004). *Handbook of Public Policy in Europe: Britain, France and Germany*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gives a comprehensive overview on the content of public policy in Britain, France and Germany across a wide range of policy fields.

Fischer, Frank, Gerald J. Miller and Mara S. Sidney (eds.) (2006). *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

A valuable volume that successfully fulfils to explore methodologically the policy making process methodologically under theoretical considerations.

Gilmour, Robert S. and Halley, Alexis A. (eds.) (1994). *Who Makes Public Policy: The Struggle for Control Between Congress and the Executive?* Chatham: Chatham House.

Consists of a number of case studies on a variety of policy issues, providing insightful illustrations of policy making in the United States.

Lijphart, Arend (1999). *Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

This is simply a 'must read' book.

Munger, Michael C. (2000). *Analyzing Policy: Choices, Conflicts, and Practices*. New York/London: W.W. Norton & Company.

This is an accessible and comprehensive introduction to the principles of public-policy analysis from an economics perspective.

Sabatier, Paul A. (ed.) (2001). *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder: Westview Press.

A remarkable anthology that gives a great overview of theoretical approaches to the study of policy making.

Weiner, David and Aidan R. Vining (2004). *Policy Analysis: Concepts and Practice*. Upper Saddle Rive: Prentice Hall.

A superb textbook with a very instructive section on 'doing' policy analysis.

Web links

policyangedas.org The Policy Agendas Project.

webhost.ua.ac.be/m2p/ Media, Movements and Politics research group.

www.uni-konstanz.de/FuF/Verwiss/knill/projekte/envipolcon/project-homepage.php
Environmental Policy Convergence in Europe.

www.defendingscience.org/ Project on Scientific Knowledge and Public Policy.

www.policyhub.gov.uk/ British Government Social Research Unit.

ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_en.htm 'Your Voice in Europe'

Key terms

Public policies A long series of actions carried out to solve societal problems. They are the main output of political systems.

Agenda setting Processes through which attention is directed towards a particular public problem.

Policy formulation The definition, discussion, acceptance or rejection of feasible courses of action for coping with policy problems.

Policy adoption The formal adoption to take on a policy.

Implementation The conversion of new laws and programs into practice.

Evaluation Asks whether the output of a given public policy has attained the intended goals.

Decision making The rational process through which the 'optimal' policy decision is taken.

Policy learning A 'change in thinking' about a specific policy issue.

Institutions Serve to reduce complexities inherent to the policy making process. They shape the behaviour of actors and the use of policy instruments.

Internationalization Describes the processes of policy diffusion, policy transfer and cross-national policy convergence.

Notes

1. Dyson's (1980) proposition about the strength of a state is about how power is exercised. The strong state is characterized by an authoritative way of exercising power, while the weak state displays strong elements of pluralism, representation and a debating culture.
2. A similar observation is also made by van Thiel (2006). In her study on the differences in the creation of quasi-autonomous organizations in the Netherlands, she finds support for her hypothesis that sectors have a dominant style of reform. Nonetheless, her analysis does not involve cross-country comparison so that we cannot say anything about national policy styles as compared to sector-specific ones.

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Policy concern

Employment Policy of the Federal Government into Public Service.

What is it?

What are its features?

What are its outcomes?

What are shortcomings?

Why does it bother me?

- ① Identity based rather than individual competency driven.
- ② Seeks to be predicated on the presumption of public service as a distributive institution rather than provider of public goods.
- ③ Creates competition predicated on a zero sum ~~and~~ thinking underpinning it.
- ④ Undermines attainment of full citizenship.

Note

Disturbance of concerns, distinguish the outcomes which are detrimental and the unintended consequences equally counter-productive.