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WORKING
for
POLICY

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Preface

There is a substantial body of literature on how policy elites engage in policy-making. Moreover, there are numerous textbooks that purport to teach students the proper methods and techniques of policy analysis. However, empirical studies of the work of 'ordinary,' mid-level policy workers, inside or outside government, remain rare. This book is part of a small, but growing body of research that seeks to remedy this situation, which includes Page and Jenkins' *Policy Bureaucracy: Government with a Cast of Thousands* (2005), and more particularly, Colebatch's *The Work of Policy: An International Survey* (2006). This book builds on these earlier studies of policy work, adding new perspectives and findings.

First, we have tried to detect whether contemporary accounts of policy work deviate from traditional accounts of policy-making and policy analysis or not. We trace the potential influences of government reforms, such as the drive for New Public Management and the shift towards network governance. We looked at policy work in different countries (mostly the Netherlands, but also Canada and the United States) and in different settings where these trends occur. This includes policy work in the increasingly important setting of transnational regimes, particularly the European Union.

Second, from a more analytical angle, the book explicitly focuses on processes of account giving in the study of policy-making. It focuses on how we – both observers and participants – perceive, frame and actively construe the intrinsically ambiguous phenomenon known as 'policy.' It also shows that we are politically and professionally socialized to apply a few standardized and taken-for-granted accounts.

Third, by focusing on the account giving of both observers (scholars and researchers) and participants (practitioners and policy workers), the book seeks to improve the troubled dialogue between the scientific study of public policy and practical policy work.

Fourth, the book focuses primarily on individual policy workers, and on the day-to-day practices that make up policy. We are especially interested in

the potentially innovative capacity of policy work. Although policy workers have to act within the constraints of organizational routines and the structured interactions of politics and administration, they must be seen as essentially 'agents' that enact policy realities that structure and potentially innovate and change subsequent policy acts.

Fifth, the book aims to be reflective and self-critical, avoiding the assumption that policy can be understood simply as a product of the activities of policy workers. It takes into account the social, cultural, administrative and political phenomena within which policy is put together, reflecting upon interpretive policy outlooks themselves, and in this way, showing that we may need to broaden our perception of how we understand 'policy domains.'

The book resulted from an intensive collaborative project that took shape at the margins of the Interpretative Policy Analysis (IPA) conference in Amsterdam, 2006. Several scholars and 'reflexive' practitioners came together in order to discuss papers on the nature of policy, and on how to represent and interpret policy work. In subsequent years, this group started to organize discussions and to produce more developed papers, which evolved into the chapters of this book. This means that most of the empirical material reported here is drawn from Dutch policy experience but we make no apology for this: no account of policy work is context-free, but nothing in the research reported here suggested that this experience is idiosyncratic or irrelevant to policy work elsewhere.

The realization of this book would, of course, not have been possible without the authors' inputs and contributions. We thank them for their high-quality cooperation. We also thank Laura Opraus, student at the Utrecht School of Governance, University of Utrecht, for her valuable editorial support.

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A

Introduction

1   Understanding Policy Work

Hal Colebatch, Robert Hoppe and Mirko Noordegraaf

Policy as a handle on government

'Policy' has become one of the central ways in how we talk about government, presenting the process of government as a pattern of systematic action oriented to particular collective concerns. It is a central concept in a narrative of governing in authoritative and instrumental terms: Governments recognize problems and make decisions to bring public authority and resources to bear upon these problems, with 'policy' as the expression of these decisions. As we will see, this perspective embodies questions and puzzles for both practitioners and observers, but it occupies centre stage, constituting a framework within which policy concerns are discussed.

In a way, the policy perspective is an alternative to the more traditional 'politics' perspective on government that sees it as a competitive struggle for power and the capacity for allocation which goes along with it. Of course, the two cannot be totally separated, as the politics perspective considers one of the fruits of political success as the capacity to steer government through policy, and the policy perspective assumes that political leaders will want to shape the direction of government activity through policy choices. But the politics perspective tends to focus attention on the competitive struggle for the right to choose, while the policy perspective is more concerned with problem solving.

In this narrative of 'authoritative instrumentalism,' a central place is given to 'policymakers,' although it is not always clear who is being referred to. It also envisages that the policymakers will have 'policy advisers' and may also draw on the work of 'policy analysts.' We find this unduly specific and limiting in its vision. There are many people whose work is oriented toward policy: political leaders, bureaucrats, professional experts, advocates, interest group representatives, and others. These are the people we call *policy workers*. They may be employed by the government, or one of a range of bodies concerned about how the authority of government can be brought to bear on problems: think tanks, interest groups, professional bodies, community associations, in-

ternational organizations, etc. They may be activists, not employed in this sector at all, but committed to policy as a major part of their lives, though, in many cases, these people are drawn into paid employment, often because governments offer grants to issue-focused groups so that they can employ staff and more easily bring their perspective to bear in official circumstances.

Policy work is how these participants bring their diverse forms of knowledge to bear on policy questions but how this work is done is something that is learned from practice rather than from study. 'You learn on the job,' as one policy worker put it (Howard 2005: 10). This may be related to differences in the sorts of knowledge we have of the policy process, particularly between the detached, codified knowledge of the academic observer and the involved and (possibly tacit) experiential knowledge of the practitioner. This book presents both forms of knowledge to illuminate the work of policy, both for the outsider who wants to understand it and the insider who has to make it happen.

This introductory chapter first discusses the ways in which policy is understood and what these mean for the nature of policy work. It goes on to discuss the way policy work is institutionalized, and the collective nature of policy work, which can mean that policy workers find different sorts of accounts of their practice are presented, and that different accounts may make sense in different contexts. It then identifies the questions that this book raises – about policy, policy work and policy workers – and shows how the chapters in the book contribute to our growing understanding of policy work.

The policy narrative and policy work

The term 'policy' conveys a sense of clarity and stability, but its exact meaning (and its implications for policy work) is not always clear. It is generally situated within a paradigm that we can call 'authoritative instrumentalism,' which sees government as a mechanism for official problem solving, centered around decisions made by authorized leaders, with official practice seen as the 'implementation' of the decision (Friedrich 1963; Dye 1972; Hale 1988; Anderson 1997; Althaus, Bridgman and Davis 2008). Within this paradigm, policy is used to refer to:
- the goals or strategies of the leaders;
- specific acts such as decisions, announcements and statutes;
- an overriding logic of action (e.g., 'our policy on the environment');
- a structure of practice (e.g., 'the school's policy on late essays').

In some of these uses, policy refers to something specific and tangible, that is expressed in a document, but used in other ways, it is more diffuse and has to be inferred from practice, so we find people distinguishing between 'formal,' written policy, and tacitly-understood unwritten policy. Or they may play one usage against another – e.g., criticizing structures of practice because they operate to undermine efforts to achieve stated goals. As a concept, policy would have to be considered what Levi-Strauss termed 'a floating signifier': its meaning depends on the context and the people involved.

So, to understand the work of policy, we have to look at the specific context in which it is done. The narrative of authoritative instrumentalism focuses on the leaders, who 'make policy' by the exercise of their authority; policy is said to be made when leaders or groups of leaders approve a proposal. But the narrative also recognizes that these proposals emerge from the work involved in governing, and are channeled through officials, whose function is to 'advise' political leaders. This means the recognition of a variety of 'policy advisors.' There are the functional experts in the field under review – medical scientists, social workers, marine ecologists, etc. – some of whom may well have been the instigators of the policy moves. There are also the people who can be called 'process experts,' skilled at generating policy proposals, steering them through the complex world of procedure and stakeholder opinion, and responding appropriately to the proposals of others. The policy movement in the US gave rise to a new cadre of 'decision experts' or 'policy analysts,' who were trained in graduate schools and claimed two linked forms of expertise. One was problem-focused – what is the nature of the problem that needs to be resolved, what do we know about it, what are the possible responses – and policy analysts were trained to generate data, about the problem, the responses, and the impact they might have. Their second field of expertise involves decision-making technology, so that alternative courses of action could be compared in terms of the resources needed to put them into effect and their probable outcomes. The policy analyst was considered an expert adviser who clarifies the problem, identifies the alternative courses of action, and systematically determines the optimal response: he or she would be comparable to the scientist in the laboratory, and engaged in 'speaking truth to power' (Wildavsky 1979).

The idea that systematic analysis should be incorporated into the governmental process was well received in the US, and 'policy analysis' was soon a recognized term, and became institutionalized both as a body of knowledge and as a field of practice, so that by the turn of the 21st century, Beryl Radin was reporting that policy analysis had 'come of age' (Radin 2000). The increased use of policy analysis by government induced non-government bodies to hire policy staff members who could 'speak the language.' The discourses

and norms of policy analysis became increasingly normalized through graduate programs subject to accreditation, through the homogenizing effect of conferences with attendees like the Association for Public Policy and Management, and through their incorporation into 'normal practice' (e.g., requirements that the federally funded activities of community groups be formally evaluated). Even academic writers who had reservations about this 'normal practice' sometimes felt obliged to instruct their readers in its use (e.g., Clemons and McBeth 2001: chapter 8).

At the same time, it was not clear that what these people were actually doing was policy analysis. Radin discovered that people employed as policy analysts were usually engaged in a wide range of tasks, ranging from doing non-partisan research for legislators to educating the general public to lobbying for specific measures. This took them well beyond the realm of the formal methodology of choice in which they had been trained, which meant that (Radin 2000: 183):

> There seems to be a disconnect between the analyst's perception of self-worth (often drawn from the rational actor model) and the real contribution that the actor makes in the nooks and crannies of the policy process. ... They seem to need a language to describe what they do and to convince themselves – as well as others – that they contribute to the process.

Some have concluded that their textbooks were 'really about theory rather than practice' (Howard 2005: 10). This friction between teaching and experience finds it way back into the texts, where it is found in the argument about rigor and relevance, which wonder whether is it more important to conform to the canons of social science research or to have an impact on the process even if it means that the research is 'quick and dirty.' Should the policy analyst build support for the optimal course of action based on the analytical data? This became an important question because policy analysts and researchers noticed that carefully crafted policy analyses were seldom used by decision makers. This generated a demand for policy analysts to make their findings more accessible to busy decision makers (e.g., Edwards 2005), but also to discuss the various ways that research findings might have an impact (e.g., Weiss 1982; 1991). Apparently, the demand for analysis was not simply meant to generate information on which to base decisions.

> Information is gathered, policy alternatives are defined, and cost-benefit analyses are pursued, but they seem more intended to reassure observers of the appropriateness of actions being taken than to influence the

actions. ... choice in political institutions is orchestrated to assure its audience ... that the choice has been made intelligently, that it reflects planning, thinking, analysis and the systematic use of information (March and Olsen 1989: 48, 50).

In any case, it was clear that government employees who work on policy had numerous tasks including formal analysis, writing texts, managing the demands of the governmental process, and above all, interacting with other players involved in the issue. We will now turn to this dimension of policy work in the following section.

Governing as collective activity

In the narrative of authoritative instrumentalism, governing happens when 'the government' recognizes problems and decides to do something about them; what it decides to do is called 'policy.' The narrative constitutes an actor called 'the government' and attributes to it instrumental rationality: it acts as it does in order to achieve preferred outcomes. This is not necessarily the way that practitioners experience the policy world, however. One group reported: 'We identified over 100 organizations involved in creating Australian illicit drugs policy. Some are national, some at the state/territory or local community level, and others are international organizations' (McDonald et al. 2005: 11). There are many players in the game, not all of them are involved in supporting a single political leader, or even a collective called 'the government,' and not all of them are trying to 'make policy.' They may come from other public agencies, community organizations, professional bodies or business groups. They may be near-permanent players or they may be only involved in a specific issue. They may be skilled policy operators or new to the game. But the game is not random, and over time, it has a tendency to stabilize. The players develop relationships based on familiarity and trust, find common ground in the policy area, and recognize their mutual interdependence. Richardson and Jordan (1979) identified this process of clustering as 'the policy community.' Others have described 'issue networks' (Heclo 1974), 'sub-governments' (Coleman and Skogstad 1990), and 'advocacy coalitions' (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), in any case, policy is now widely recognized as a multi-player game.

This dimension of policy has become more widely recognized. People in positions of authority are more likely to accept the fact that other participants are also involved in policy development, considering them 'stakeholders,' and

valuing the accomplishment of collectively generated outcomes. Even policy professionals probably spend more of their time negotiating with their counterparts in other agencies than they do in advising their bosses (Radin 2000). It is through these interactions with other participants that appropriate outcomes are arrived at. There is a clear link here between the interaction and the discourse because shared discourse facilitates interaction, and interaction tends to generate shared discourse. Haas (1992) argued that the international policy accomplishments involving chlorofluorocarbons reflects the existence of an 'epistemic community' of scientists who share a common understanding of the problem.

That is why this book is oriented toward 'policy work' as a broad field of practice, and to 'policy workers,' including the full range of those who find themselves engaged in the mobilization of public authorities involving issues of collective concern – that is, in the creation of policy. The focus is primarily on what they do rather than on the outcome – that is, on 'doing policy work' rather than 'coming up with a policy on X.'

Policy development as discursive construction

This last example points out the importance of policy development that involves a shared understanding of the problem. Policy work is about solving problems, but it is also about identifying areas of concern and applying known techniques of governing. This often has less to do with discovering phenomena than with re-evaluating already known phenomena. For instance, in a number of Western countries, policy on smoking has changed radically in recent decades, with restrictions on where smoking is permitted, massive increases in taxation, and widespread curbs on advertising. But these changes in regulations were only possible because of changes in the shared understandings about smoking; as smoking became less socially acceptable, it became increasingly possible to impose restrictions on it (and in turn, these made it even less acceptable). The changing attitude toward smoking reflected the activities of health professionals (some of whom worked for government agencies, many, however did not) and anti-smoking activists, but also complementary actions by insurance companies, trade unions and commercial landlords, many of whom do not commonly engage in policy development, but who contributed to the changing perception of smoking and the eventual regulatory framework.

Multiple accounts of policy work

This book recognizes that there is no one simple 'good account' of policy work; it involves a broad range of activities that can be described as policy work, and a variety of ways to make sense of these activities. A helpful distinction can be made between accounts that explain *outputs* and those that seek to explain *activity*. To describe the action as 'policy-making' is to highlight the apparent output – 'developing a policy on X' – and to see the participants as contributors in this development. In an 'authoritative instrumental' account, the action may be considered a sequential progression toward a desired output: identifying the issue, collecting data, framing options, evaluating, consulting, deciding and implementing. But an account focused on activity might reveal, that for many participants, participation is not about a policy on X, but on resisting it, or trying to use the interest in X to affect change in governmental practices in relation to p, q or r. The account would be framed in terms of interaction or conflict regarding the nature of the problem and the appropriate response, or resistance and distraction, or the search for a broadly acceptable outcome, or the ambiguity about the decisions made, and the potential for continuing the discussion.

The interest is not so much in how the participants collaborated to achieve a known and desired result, but how the ongoing interaction between the participants – involved in various ways, to various extents, and for various reasons – was marked by points of apparent firmness ('decisions'), which were then taken to come up with a 'policy' on a particular issue.

Both of these accounts of policy work are valid; it just depends on the context ('locus') and the perspective adopted ('focus'). The output-based account makes sense of the *result* ('the government has decided...'); the activity-based account makes sense of the *experiences*. The output-based account is told from a single point of view; the activity-based account is told from a number of different perspectives. The output-based account reflects a systematic and orderly understanding of governing, while the activity-based account reflects experiential knowledge. And it is clear that different types of accounts can be given of the same activity. Policy work on climate change, for instance, could be described as 'advising the Minister,' 'negotiating an agreed course of action with key stakeholders,' 'shifting the parameters of public attention,' or even 'tracing public perceptions' or 'spinning the effects of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*.' In any case, they can all be considered equally descriptions of the activity. This suggests three things:

1. that accounts of policy work are not neutral; they reflect contexts and perspectives;

2. that giving accounts of policy practice are part of that practice and will involve experiential knowledge;
3. that analyzing policy work requires an understanding of the practices involved in producing accounts, both by the participants and by outside observers.

That is why this book seeks to place policy work in the broader narratives of governing, present systemic and experiential insights into policy practices, and reflect upon the nature of accounts given.

Our agenda for inquiry

This multiplicity of accounts points to the importance of empirical policy work studies, comparable to Mintzberg's pioneering research on the nature of managerial work (Mintzberg 1973) and the work of writers like Forester (1993) and Healey (1992), who showed that town planning was less about making plans than about mediating between players with different concerns who discovered they were participants in a broad process of urban change. Noordegraaf (2000a; 2000b; 2007) tracked how policy managers dealt with the demands of the job. Hoppe and Jeliazkova (2006), drawing on interviews with middle-level policy workers, identified a number of quite distinct styles of policy work. A key question has been 'why is the policy work being done?' Tao (2006) showed that both elected members and permanent officials in American local government use policy analysis to support programs that they favor and resist programs that they oppose. As Radin (2000) noted, policy analysis has become the 'dueling swords' that policy workers use in negotiations with other policy workers. In other words, they don't use it to generate a clear solution but to facilitate discussion.

This book focuses on policy as a *continuing process*, rather than as the production of completed outputs called 'policies,' and addresses a number of problematic aspects of policy and the processes that produced it. It highlights the tension between the perception of policy as consisting of episodes of instrumental choice ('interventions') as opposed to the continuing management of problematic aspects of social practice (which may at times involve the mobilization of state authority). Accounts of policy shifts are commonly described in terms of government intention ('the government has decided …'), but policy workers often find that these 'intentions' involve the endorsement of painfully negotiated understandings among stakeholders. We can also see that while policy is considered an attribute and product of sovereign national

governments, the process of producing it reaches upwards (i.e., to inter- and supra-national bodies), downwards (to regional and local levels of government), and outwards (to business and non-governmental bodies), involving a range of 'non-state' bodies in the business of exercising state authority. So, there may be a variety of policy accounts in circulation, and the account in use may differ from the practitioner's experience of the process. This is because the accounts of policy practice are themselves part of the practice, and this has to be borne in mind in the analysis of policy practice.

There are similar ambiguities and tensions in the study of policy work. In the narrative of authoritative instrumentalism, policymaking is very much considered to be an official preserve: outsiders may request or propose or advise, but it is for the authoritative leaders to decide and to 'make policy.' But there is a counter-narrative that focuses on the connections between the participants, and considers governing as the product of networks that categorizes participants in various governmental or non-governmental organizations and considers policy as something that emerges from this interaction, rather than something that is independently determined by the governmental members of these networks. This counter-narrative of 'governance' has come to dominate the analyses of government in the liberal democracies of Western Europe and many other countries (Rhodes 1997; Stoker 1998; Kjaer 2004; Offe 2008), and raises many questions about the analysis of policy work, including:

–   the relationships among governmental policy workers;
–   relations between policy workers and non-governmental actors;
–   the importance of non-governmental bodies in the construction of regimes of rule;
–   how the outcomes of these linkages are 'enacted' through the forms and practices of authoritative instrumentalism, which will be recognized as 'policy.'

It focuses attention on the dynamics of these interactions and on the structures through which these linkages operate, the practices by which they are maintained, and the shared meanings, which they give rise to, and which, in turn, sustain the ongoing collaboration.

These tensions and ambiguities about policy and policy work are reflected in the self-awareness of policy workers who experience conflicting action cues. To what extent should they see their task as the application of expert knowledge, or knowledge of the field of action being governed (e.g., health or transport or migration) or of knowledge about methods for choosing (i.e., as taught in US-style policy analysis courses)? To what extent does one ne-

gotiate with representatives of other stakeholders in order to get results that will at least be tacitly accepted by the stakeholders? To what extent is it concerned with the management of the official structures and practices , which produce policy outcomes – advising leaders, and generating and processing documents? The government-employed policy workers have questions about their relationship with their non-governmental counterparts, who are likely to share their professional background and whose cooperation they hope to secure; how will the need to maintain a cooperative relationship with non-governmental bodies affect the way they relate to the government's agenda?

The structure of the book

This shows us that we have to be attentive not only to what policy workers do, but also to how they (and others) make sense of this activity, in a variety of contexts. This book aims to track the nature of policy activity and the accounts of it in different contexts. It asks what it is that policy workers do in particular situations and why is that the appropriate thing to do, what does it contribute to policy activity, what impact does it have and what can we learn from this about the skills and knowledge that policy work requires?

As we have seen, the identification of policy as a dimension of government, and of policy work as a field of practice that generates and sustains policy, is a particular account of government, which has to contend with other accounts, both in the shaping of practice and in the explanations of the practice. Therefore, our analysis begins with Colebatch's investigation into how accounts of government are framed, how 'policy' is distinguished from other aspects of governing, and how these accounts are used in the shaping of practice. Noordegraaf presents a survey of academic research on policy work, identifying the different levels of data on which researchers draw, the concerns that they investigate, and the picture of policy work that they have thus far assembled.

We then move to accounts of particular aspects of policy practice in particular contexts, and the questions that these accounts raise about policy work. Some of these are accounts of academic research (Geuijen, De Vries et al., Shore), some are accounts by policy workers of their own practices (Woeltjes, Metze), and some combine elements of both (Loeber, Sterrenberg, Williams). These accounts highlight the multiple cues and pressures experienced in policy work, how policy work is concerned with continuity, but also with disruption, the range of meanings that policy activity can have

for the various participants, and how practitioners (particularly consultants and evaluators) locate themselves in relation to these different meanings and mediate between them. There are shared elements across these accounts, as well as distinct differences, which can be divided into three particular themes:

– *Policy workers are involved in constructing shared meaning.* Metze's account of a redevelopment project shows how consultants acted to generate innovative and shared meaning among the various interested parties. In this case, the outcome was interesting to anyone outside of the circle of participants, and a relatively open learning process was possible. By contrast, De Vries, Halffman and Hoppe found that the economic forecasts of the Netherlands Central Planning Bureau were held in great esteem because of its high level of expertise and autonomy; it was considered an offering of unbiased expertise in a contested policy field. The practitioners knew that there was considerable uncertainty about these forecasts, and there was some debate about them among bureau experts and ministry officials, but it was important to keep this private and that the bureau's predictions be presented purely as the outcome of its own calculations. The most important element in the construction of meaning was the meaning attributed to the bureau's predictions by political leaders and the 'attentive public.'

– *Policy workers are involved in mediation* between different participants and agendas, where institutional questions can be particularly important. Sterrenberg analyzes a case in which 'insiders' initiated a policy review of a long-established independent institute that regularly advises the Parliament. They encountered deep-seated cultural and institutional divisions among the participants and found that policy change required new relationships between the various actors. Their policy work involved looking for windows of opportunity to foster these relationships. In Loeber's case study a new public body was to develop policies for sustainable development. It was generally accepted, but specific implications remained unclear. The policy developers mediated between the desire for change and the understanding and skills of the present practices. Meanwhile, the evaluators who were involved in the project from the outset, mediated between detachment and involvement. All of those involved in the project constructed relationships across different meanings as they discovered that they were engaged in both 'collective puzzling' and 'powering' (Heclo 1974).

– Policy is seen as a state function, while *policy actually operates beyond the nation-state*. Political leaders preside over an apparatus of state officials,

but these officials often discover that they have to reach 'upwards' to the international level, 'sideways' to business groups and non-governmental organizations, and 'downwards' to local communities and social groups. Sterrenberg's chapter reveals that policy activity reaches downwards, and Loeber's chapter shows it reaching sideways. This has been particularly evident in Europe with the development of policy at a European level through the European Union, but it can be seen throughout the world, both as ad hoc incidents such as the outbreak of SARS, which initiated an expansion of the policy surveillance role of the World Health Organization, and more systematically, in the standardization of the regulation of commercial practice through the World Trade Organization. When policy workers operate in these broader fields, they are subject to a wider range of cues for action, which have to be balanced against traditional norms of professional skills and the responsiveness to political leadership. We present two case studies that investigate how national officials respond to the challenges of European-level policy work; one is a practitioner account, the other is comprised of academic research. Woeltjes's study of the practitioner discovers that, in this trans-national context, policy work is rarely concerned with strategy, and much more with negotiations through complex institutional provisions that allow varying degrees of maneuverability. Policy workers are engaged in the maintenance of relationships among the various players, maintaining a flow of information and engaging in an ongoing conversation through which problems are 'discovered' and appropriate responses are negotiated. This account is supported by the academic research of Geuijen and 't Hart, which stresses the importance of political preference in the domestic policy dynamic and notes its relative absence at the European level, where policy workers receive multiple cues for action without an overriding political 'steer.' This means that, as Tenbensel (2008) would describe it, they are involved in a 'no trumps' game, in which a range of policy workers with multiple identities manage an ambiguous policy field on an ongoing basis – a process that the authors describe as 'professional *bricolage*.' They have to be credible in the European context without finding themselves exposed at home.

Our analysis shows that policy work is traversed by multiple, overlapping and sometimes conflicting accounts of practice, which requires policy workers to negotiate their reality within these different accounts. But differences arise between the various accounts that policy workers give of their own practice and the accounts that outside observers (i.e., academic researchers)

might give. We have already noted the distinction between output-based and activity-based accounts; we can also distinguish between accounts that are grounded in the logic of the system and those derived from the observation of activity, as well as those between 'sacred' accounts for public consumption and 'profane' accounts that are shared between trusted associates. Practitioners and academics will probably pose different questions about policy work and address them in their own ways in different timeframes. The outcome is a widespread complaint from practitioners that academic research is not 'useful,' to which the researchers respond by pointing out that their research is seldom used.

The last two chapters address this conflict between academic and practitioner knowledge. Williams (who is both an academic and a practitioner) argues that while academic and practitioner perspectives may differ significantly, they are both valid and every effort should be made to encourage communication across barriers. She reviews the criticisms that the two have of each other, and the barriers that they raise against learning from each other, and then outlines steps that could be taken to build 'a culture of engaged communication' between academics and practitioners. Shore is an academic who mainly responds to the claim that academic research is not useful and that researchers should 'learn to think and talk like policymakers.' He points out the tension between the 'authoritative instrumental' framework that practitioners are (at least publicly) committed to and the more critical views of the academic researcher. He argues that the value of academic research lies in its openness to alternative explanations which are tested against the evidence, which, in turn, yields a better understanding of the process that mobilizes the concept of policy in the management of practice.

Policy, as both a sphere of practice and as a field of knowledge, has undergone considerable changes over the last few decades, as has the type of work it is associated with. The areas that need to be analyzed are only just now being marked out, and there is currently no established body of knowledge. This book emerged from a gathering of academics and policy practitioners who wanted to combine the knowledge of the academic and the practitioner to create policy work that is more informed, and policy research that is more practical. This book is only the beginning, but we hope that it will contribute to both the study and the practice of policy work. We hope this will foster further studies that will lead to a more critical and self-aware practice.

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B

Accounts of Policy Work

Introduction

In this book, scholars and (reflexive) practitioners will tell their 'stories' about their work in the field of policy, but first we need to consider the nature of the stories and 'accounts' of policy. Talking about 'policymakers' implies identifiable actors creating a clearly visible product: 'policy.' But when policy is seen in more ambiguous terms, it becomes more difficult to objectively define what the policy 'is' or the work that created it. Representing this ambiguous reality as policy is an exercise in interpretation, which is accomplished by policy practices themselves, but also through the scholarly endeavors that analyze the policy-making processes. What is considered 'policy work' is part of this process of representation engaged in by both practitioners and observers. So neither 'policy' nor 'policy work' can be seen as neutral phenomena, instead, they are part of the process of learning how people attempt to understand and shape practice, and relate this to the broader attempts to 'govern' societies and channel political processes. This means that values and interests are at stake, and that the outcomes of policy processes will produce both winners and losers, which will no doubt affect the various interpretations. Critical forms of policy analysis, for example, aim not only to represent policies as openly as possible, but also to disclose the processes involved in the creation of policy, the voices heard (and not heard), and to inform and involve those left out of the process. Policy work is an exercise in the social construction of meaning, but the *deconstruction* of policy through analysis is also part of this policy process.

This section thus focuses on meta-accounts, observations of how accounts of policy work are constructed and utilized. But first we must understand 'policy' as a meta-account within our understanding of governing, and within this account, the sort of practices that are explained and validated. Hal Colebatch shows that there are distinct and overlapping accounts of policy that focus on different aspects of the process of governing. Policy can be seen as a process of *authoritative choice* that emphasizes the positions of leaders, decisions and programs. It can be seen as *structured interaction* that focuses on the interplay between different participants with distinct agendas. Policy can also

be seen as *social construction*, which entails the 'collective puzzling' regarding problems and the appropriate responses. He shows how these accounts are constructed and how they are mobilized by both practitioners and observers to 'make sense' of policy activity. The policy process thus involves managing the interplay of distinct and potentially conflicting accounts, the fuzzy and contested outcomes, and the activity that generated these uncertain and un-demarcated outcomes (i.e., 'policy work').

Secondly, we must understand the processes involved in giving an account of policy work itself. Rather than presenting policy work in terms of its con-tribution to a putative goal, we start with the actual work being performed and try to get as close as possible to policy workers. Mirko Noordegraaf shows how this can be accomplished, by first distinguishing three types of accounts: the personal accounts of participants (first-order accounts), observ-ers' analyses of participant behavior (second order accounts), and systemic ac-counts of policy processes (third-order accounts). He emphasizes the impor-tance of second-order accounts because they delicately steer a course between the Scylla of loose stories and the Charybdis of impersonal abstractions. He shows how policy workers and policy work are discussed in these second-order accounts and distinguishes between the studies of *dispositions* of policy workers (including elite dispositions) that influence day-to-day behavior, the studies of *contexts* and how policy workers *cope* with circumstances, and the studies of the *functions* of policy workers, stressing the importance of infor-mation and interpretation. Together, these insights add up to a well-rounded picture of the multifaceted nature of policy work.

In this sense, the two types of meta-accounts are complementary. The fuzzy and contested nature of policy work as governing is reflected in differ-ent accounts of policy workers and behavior. It also explains why real policy work looks and feels as it does – interactive, iterative and erratic. Developing policies is not just about analysis and making plans and decisions; it is also about understanding and realizing governing. This underscores the focus of this book, which is the importance of developing accounts and organizing dialogues between academic and practitioner accounts.

2   Giving Accounts of Policy Work

Hal Colebatch

Policy as an account of governing

This book focuses on how we account for the work of policy, recognizing that there is more than one type of account, and that different accounts may 'make sense' in different contexts. In this perspective, we need to recognize that 'policy' is itself an account of government, a construct mobilized, both by academic observers and by practitioners, to make sense of the activity of governing. It presents government as a process of instrumental decision making, in which actors called governments address problems and identify goals; the practice of governing is then explained by referring back to these decisions, seeing it as the 'implementation' of the choices made by governments. Dye described public policy 'whatever government decides to do or not to do' (Dye 1985). The basic assumptions underlying this description are seldom examined because it seems like 'common sense,' but this is precisely why we need to examine these (and other accounts): in how (and why) they 'make sense' of the process?

This account of government as a pattern of official problem solving is not the only version available. A much older interpretation (e.g., from Hobbes to Oakeshott) believes that government is concerned with *order* or the maintenance of stable relationships and practices as well as dealing with disturbances. The dominant paradigm in welfare economics considers government to be a mechanism that deals with *market failure*, while the processes of choice are simply devices that enforce calculated solutions to problems of collective action. A third interpretation sees government as a struggle for partisan benefit: 'who gets what, when and how,' as Lasswell (1936) described it. Linked to this, but also distinguished from it, is a perception of government as a *competitive struggle for dominance among leaders*, with statements about goals, choices or benefits being largely tokens in this continuing struggle. More recently, the term *governance* has been used to suggest that governing is the outcome of a complex interweaving of both official and non-official organizational forms, that often mobilizes different frameworks of meaning and rationales of ac-

tion. All of these perspectives remain relevant, and they show that seeing government in terms of outcome-oriented instrumental choice is not the only available explanation.

Having recognized 'policy' as a particular presentation of the process of government, we can then see that there are a number of different ways in which it is used to make sense, and we can identify three overlapping accounts of policy: authoritative choice, structured interaction, and social construction (see Colebatch 2006a; 2006b). *Authoritative choice* is the account that we identified at the beginning of the chapter. Policy is understood as the outcome of actors (governments) making choices about how to achieve their goals. This account is embedded in the field's language because it focuses on 'decisions,' and on the people who make them, the 'decision-makers' or 'policymakers,' and to some extent, on the 'implementation' of these decisions. A process described as 'backward mapping,' allows present practice to be seen as the consequence of previous decisions, and current problems as the result of incorrect decisions (or the absence of decisions) in the past. The policy process is seen in terms of identifying problems, choosing appropriate responses, and ensuring that these are implemented.

While this account of policy as the choices made by a government is universally accepted and is seen as the basis for public discussion, policy practitioners tend (perhaps in private) to provide an alternative account of the process, one that stresses the broad range of participants with diverse agendas and values, who are thrown together in various ways to produce ambiguous and provisional outcomes; in this account, policy is a process of *structured interaction* among 'stakeholders.' In this account, participants do not start by identifying a problem; rather, they find themselves in a continuous flow of action, much of it initiated by others. They find that the pursuit of their own projects will probably involve seeking the cooperation of other participants, and they, in turn, will become involved in the projects of others. They are not so much solving problems as managing areas of concern, seeking mutually acceptable outcomes, which can be seen as improvement. Lindblom (1959) called this process 'partisan mutual adjustment.' Policy is seen as an ongoing process with numerous purposes that may overlap and conflict with each other, with outcomes that are provisional and ambiguous.

But the terrain on which these organized stakeholders conduct their negotiations – the matters that are the focus of attention, and the courses of action that may be appropriate – is neither self-defining, nor is it fixed and agreed upon. Governing is based on frameworks of understanding of what is problematic and worthy of attention, what bodies of knowledge are relevant,

what technologies of governing can be applied, and which actors are allowed to speak. 'Environmental policy,' for instance, cannot be reduced to the instrumental choices of governments or the deals reached between competing stakeholders, but reflects broader shifts in understanding about what is normal and what is problematic, and whose opinions are considered 'sensible speech,' as Bourdieu described it (see Rose and Miller 1992; Dean 1999; Colebatch 2002). In these terms, policy is a process of *social construction*, marked by conflict and ambiguity regarding the problems to be addressed, which voices should be heard, and what activities may be appropriate. It can be argued that social construction is actually a meta-account, which makes the other accounts possible, but it is justifiable (and convenient) to use it to denote the dimension of policy which relates to shared understanding, norms and problematization. Are smoking, traffic jams, and traffic accidents considered policy problems? If so, whose problem is it and who can talk authoritatively about the issue? In this perspective, policy is less about making a decision than about discourse, which, in turn, is linked to the question of participation: the question of who participates in the policy process will shape the nature of the discourse, and the discourse will, in turn, identify the appropriate participants. In this account, policy is a process of 'collective puzzling' (Heclo 1974), driven by a desire to identify and solve problems, and marked by uncertainty and disagreements about the nature of the problems and the effectiveness of the responses to them.

> We do not live in a governed world so much as a world traversed by the 'will to govern,' fuelled by the constant registration of 'failure,' the discrepancy between ambition and outcome, and the constant injunction to do better next time (Rose and Miller 1992: 191).

Making sense with multiple accounts

Employing multiple accounts may be considered confusing, but, in fact, both practitioners and observers are accustomed to using more than one account of policy. In Allison's groundbreaking study of the Cuban missile crisis (Allison 1971), he argues that we need to draw on three models to make sense of an activity:

1. a 'rational actor' model, which defines the actors as 'the US' and 'the USSR,' each pursuing its own objectives;
2. a 'governmental process' model, which defines the actors as particular agencies (e.g., the Pentagon, the CIA, the State Department), working

independently of each other with their own perceptions and standard operating procedures;

3. a 'bureaucratic politics' model defines the participants as rivals in a continuing struggle for influence, resources, and the ability to define the problem.

Each of these models, Allison argues, helps explain some aspects of the process, but none of them can sufficiently explain the entire process, which implies that they should be used in various combinations.

Policy practitioners also tend to recognize the various accounts, although they are less likely to articulate this experiential knowledge. They recognize that the 'authoritative choice' account has a moral ascendancy because it involves a 'sacred' language and is appropriate for public use, where the discussion of structured interaction is 'profane,' and can be employed privately among trusted associates. Laboriously negotiated deals among mutually distrusting stakeholders will thus be presented as 'the government has decided…'; in other words, outcomes which have been accomplished through structured interaction will be presented as authoritative choice, a process of 'enactment' (Weick 1979). And the same action can be accounted for in different ways. Holding a public inquiry can be seen as calling for information to enable the government to make a decision (authoritative choice), creating an arena in which key stakeholders can advance claims and negotiate an outcome (structured interaction), or constituting an opportunity for discourse, testing alternatives, and public learning (social construction) (see Degeling, Baume and Jones 1993; Holland 2006).

There are thus multiple accounts in circulation, and the question is not 'which is the best account?' but rather 'How is each one utilized and what is their impact on policy practice?'

Accounts and the framing of practice

Each of these accounts frames the policy process in a specific way, and makes some types of practice (and some practitioners) appropriate, and others less so. The authoritative choice account presents policy as the result of 'policymakers' choosing to 'intervene' by making 'decisions,' which will lead to some beneficial outcome, while focusing on the prospective outcomes and on the practices that give rise to these decisions. It sustains a public discourse of instrumental rationality, linking outcomes to the intentions of 'the government,' e.g., in advocacy ('if the government seeks to reduce youth unemployment, it should make the school curriculum more work-oriented') and critique ('the

government has announced a lot of measures to reduce youth unemployment, but it continues to increase').

It specifically focuses on official practices, framing governmental activity in terms of decisions. Since these are presented as the prerogative of the legitimate political leaders, the work of the state bureaucracy is described as 'advising' the leaders before the decision, and of 'implementing' the decision after it has been made. Papers are prepared as 'submissions' for approval, and any suggestion that the bureaucracy has its own preferences is firmly rejected. When (some years ago) a senior Australian federal bureaucrat was asked to identify his department's objectives, he responded angrily 'I have never previously encountered the suggestion of objectives for a department of state' (Hawker, G.N., pers. com.); the department was simply there to advise the minister and administer legislation.

In this context, policy work is of an advisory nature, although this label is attached to a wide range of practices (see Radin 2000; Hoppe and Jeliazkova 2006). So-called 'classical' policy analysis (as taught in US graduate schools) considers the tasks as defining the problem, generating a range of options for solving it, and subjecting these to rigorous comparisons grounded in welfare economics. This approach usually generates a recommendation regarding the optimal course of action. More austere versions insist that the analyst should do no more than table the comparison. Radin (2000) concluded that, while policy workers had been trained in this sort of analysis, they were more likely to be engaged in tasks other than analysis, ranging from negotiations with other agencies to public education functions.

By contrast, the structured-interaction account is reflected less in official titles and public discourses than in the experiential knowledge of policy practitioners. These practitioners have found that the policy world is a constant flow of activity, much of it initiated by other people, and regardless of whether they pursue their own projects or respond to those proposed by others, they end up negotiating with fellow policy practitioners. They also realize that the development of policy on any topic usually concerns a few specialists – some governmental, some non-governmental – that relationships of familiarity and trust tended to grow between these specialists over time. They also notice that the policy process seemed to work better when expectations of these specialists to get a seat at the policy table were met. Richardson and Jordan (1979) called this coalition of the interested 'the policy community,' which has been readily adopted, as was the term 'stakeholder' (adopted from the management literature – Mitroff 1983), which recognizes the relationships involving shared interests and mutual dependence in policy fields. In the official discourse, terms like 'consultation' and 'coordination' are used to describe the interaction

that takes place during attempts to achieve a favorable outcome, but these terms attempt to express the interaction in a language of authoritative choice; as one practitioner observed:

> These words are so neutral. It's not about consultation. It's really about stakeholder engagement (Howard 2005: 10).

In this account, the focus of policy work is less on the prior preferences of the actor ('the government') and more on the generation of an outcome considered acceptable to a sufficiently broad range of stakeholders to win endorsement by the relevant political leaders. Policy work is concerned with identifying players and their institutional support, the stances they have taken and the discourses used. Policy work also engages in the sort of interaction that may lead to a successful outcome (which may be why so many want ads for policy staff insist on 'superior communication skills'). Documents are produced to facilitate and express the mutual understanding that is created in this process. Noordegraaf (2000) found that policy managers led lives of 'meetings and papers.' Expert analysis may play a role in this interaction, but less as conclusive proof than as a vehicle for continuing the discussion. Tao (2006) observed that local elected and appointed government officials in Florida were more likely to use policy analysis against each other – as Lindblom had already noted in 1968, when he pointed out that policy analysis is not a substitute for political struggle but a means of pursuing it (Lindblom 1968: 34).

In the social-construction account of policy, attention is focused on how situations become policy concerns, the recognition of authoritative knowledge, and the identification of appropriate responses. One variant of this account links it to authoritative choice, where governments play a role in articulating 'the big picture' of the public purposes – a meta-narrative, as Roe (1994) puts it. This forms the basis for the writing of large-scale plans (e.g., a 'National Language Policy'), and occasionally, has led to the creation of high-level policy advisory bodies, such as the Central Policy Review Staff, established in the UK in the 1970s (although like many of these bodies, it was relatively short-lived). At a more mundane level, it was interesting to note that during Tony Blair's term as British Prime Minister, the Press Office at 10 Downing Street included a Head of Story Development, who focused on managing the meta-narrative that the government presented to the public.

Another variant of the social-construction account looks at policy development in terms of the change in the shared understandings on which it rests. When Professor Ross Garnaut was commissioned by the Australian government to prepare a report on climate change policy in 2007, he presented his re-

port to the Prime Minister, but also immediately began a series of public meetings to stimulate public debate on the issue. In the US, former Vice-President Al Gore's impact on the climate change debate through his film *An Inconvenient Truth* led to calls for his to return to the political arena as the Democratic presidential candidate, which he resisted. One commentator observed that:

> [Gore has] also come to believe that even a US president is powerless to act on climate change unless public opinion has moved, that acting as a teacher and advocate can have a greater political impact. And in a way the Nobel jury has just proved him right (Freedland 2007).

But the social-construction account of policy is not simply about governments marketing already-formed policy positions: it focuses attention on how issues are problematized, how they are understood, and who can speak authoritatively about them. Officials either play a leading role or they don't. As Ian Marsh (1995) has pointed out, some of the most important policy shifts in Australia in recent years (including those connected with gender and the environment) originated in various social movements, not government or political party initiatives. Ballard's study (2004) of the development of smoking policy in Australia reveals a long trajectory of agitation by activists and medical authorities, which was accompanied by public opinion shifts, and over time, the anti-smoking lobby secured various forms of action on various levels of government, which, in turn, contributed to (but did not directly cause) a decline in smoking (Chapman 1993). In this context, an activist with a spray can defacing a Marlboro billboard is clearly contributing to the social construction of smoking, and hence, to policy development. This is reflected in the emerging school of 'interpretive policy analysis' (see Fischer and Forester 1993; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Colebatch 2004), which focuses on how policy subject matter is 'framed' (Rein and Schön 1994).

The implications this has for policy work are that much of the work of policy development happens over time, in the consciousness and attitudes of both the immediate participants and of the broader public. In the last quarter of the 20th century, agricultural policy in Australia changed from protecting farmers from both domestic and international competition, to a policy that promoted efficiency through more competitive markets at home and abroad, but this cannot be traced to any one governmental decision. Instead it involved a slow process that evolved over several decades of discussion, which eventually led to a shift in the shared understandings and values of the main players. This stimulated a series of incremental changes at various levels of government in the way that public authority was deployed in relation to

agriculture. The formal structures of government may play only a very small part in this process of social construction. Metze (in this volume) shows how the redevelopment of industrial sites in Amsterdam was facilitated by the relevant ministries agreeing to commission consultants to work with the various stakeholders to develop plans for new uses. The consultants used various strategies to generate visions of an alternative future to which the stakeholders could relate. The policy task in this instance was not to secure an agreement on the plan but to generate a vision amenable to the stakeholders. Policy workers are not technical analysts who compare programs, or even, as Majone (1989) suggested, skilled rhetoricians, who come up with good reasons for doing things, but facilitators of long-term social processes that are beyond their control. As Hoppe (1999) noted, policy analysis has evolved from 'speaking truth to power' to 'making sense together.'

Accounts of policy and the experience of policy

It is widely noted (particularly among policy practitioners) that the systematic accounts of the policy process found in textbooks and reflected in official presentations often diverge from actual experiences involving the policy process. Adams, reviewing one of these texts, reflects that after having hired new people to fill various policy positions (Adams 2005: 103):

> I often ask them after a few years if their views of the policy process have changed. The invariable response is that the reality differs from the texts. People describe to me policy processes constituted not by order and rationality but by uncertainty, interpretation, contested meanings, power, volatility, compressed views of time and space and partial information. ... practitioners are confronted with constant paradoxes.

Similarly, Radin reports that policy analysts in the US are often uncomfortable with the 'disconnect' between the self-image derived from their training and the nature of their practice. 'They seem to need a language to describe what they do and to convince themselves – as well as others – that they contribute to the process' (Radin 2000: 183).

One reason for this 'disconnect' is that the aim of a structural separation between analysis and the processes of government – such as the idea of creating a small top-down policy group that would 'advise the Prince' – was never achieved in practice. Top level 'all-encompassing government' policy units, like Lord Rothschild's Central Policy Review Staff in the UK, were sometimes

established but rarely survived as permanent features of the system of govern-ment. The dynamics of organization also had its impact: when a CEO used policy analysts to evaluate proposals, the heads of subordinate units hired their own policy analysts so that they could meet the boss's expectations and compete with rival claims from other units and organizations. Policy analysts found that they were being used not so much to evaluate proposals as to ad-vocate and defend the preferred course of action against the alternatives and that policy analysis had become, as Radin (2000) described it, the 'dueling swords' that are employed during these encounters.

For policy workers, this raises the question of whether one should be an outside expert or an inside participant, particularly when this is seen in terms of being technically correct or having a practical impact, in other words, 'getting your hands dirty.' Patton and Sawicki (1991) argue that the policy worker should be prepared to sacrifice the methodological precision of the social sciences in order to produce immediately useful advice – to do 'quick and dirty' analyses. Bardach, in his *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis*, goes further by tentatively raising questions about whether policy analysts should become participants in the process and then suggesting that policy analysts should 'sometimes' try to recruit support for their work and thus neutralize potential opponents, and 'where appropriate,' they might in this way 'become more of a partner in the process than an outside observer and diagnostician' (Bardach 2005: 14-15).

In any case, this interplay between participants becomes a recognized part of the policy process. We have already noted that Noordegraaf's policy man-agers live a life of 'meetings and papers,' trying to negotiate a mutually accept-able outcome. Recognition of the interplay is often institutionalized in the processes of government – for instance, when considering policy proposals, political leaders are likely to demand evidence that the stakeholders in this policy area have been consulted as well as ask how they are likely to react to the proposal. The exercise of authoritative choice is best done when it follows the norms of structured interaction.

What can policy workers learn from this?

Perhaps the first lesson for the policy worker is that the apparent disorder and the widely felt frustration that occurs in the policy process are not the re-sult of poor institutional design or human failings, but of structural tensions that are inherent to the process of governing. Policy workers have to confront these tensions but they do not all respond the same way, leading to a broad range of practices, as well as uncertainty about the appropriate practices and

the management of conflict, and a certain amount of ambiguity about the outcomes of policy practice.

While the dominant account of policy (authoritative choice) describes policy in terms of clear choices made to accomplish known outcomes, the experience is of the diversity of meanings in use. This explains these structural tensions. Not only does the authoritative choice account have to contend with the structured interaction and social construction accounts in framing the policy process but there are also competing framings of the nature of the problem and the appropriate responses. Should policy on child care, for instance, be seen in terms of the reconstruction of gender roles, increasing workforce participation, the provision of opportunities for socialization, early childhood education, or as an opportunity for re-shaping the nature of work? All of these views may be voiced, although none of them will simply disappear if a decision ultimately excludes it from further consideration. Thus, the policy workers have to deal with a continuous diversity of meanings.

Policy workers have to manage this diversity in the face of tensions between perception and practices from the account of authoritative choice and those from structured interaction. In recent years, the dominant theme in the public discussion about the process of governing has been 'governance,' which argues that governing by authoritative choice is no longer effective or appropriate, and that it has already been or is in the process of being replaced by 'governance,' which relies on negotiation among interested parties both inside and outside of the realm of government (see, e.g., Rhodes 1997; Stoker 1998). This is associated with the mobilization of non-official voices both in the discussion of the problem and the framing and execution of the response. At the same time, there are strong pressures for the demonstration of authoritative choice. Political leaders want to be seen as decisive and as capable of achieving goals, particularly since the media presents the process of government as an ongoing struggle between various factions (see Anderson 2006). Bureaucrats have increasingly become subject to the same pressures, discovering that their work is increasingly defined by 'performance indicators,' and need to showcase their responsibility for various desired outcomes. Boxelaar et al. (2006) explored efforts by agricultural extension workers to mobilize farmers to collectively reshape their harvesting practices to reduce fire risks. They showed how this was frustrated by the rhetoric by the agency's management, which essentially focused on official outputs. The extension workers were well aware that only the farmers could actually alter their own harvesting practices, and that the task of policy was to encourage them to take greater responsibility for their practices; the agency's management, however, wanted to be able to point to 'deliverables' that the agency had rendered to its 'customers.'

These tensions and ambiguities are a source of stress among policy workers who have been taught to define the problem and then find appropriate responses. They may find that competing responses are being advocated well in advance of any agreement regarding the problem, and that an appropriate response remains unclear and context dependent. Tenbensel (2006), drawing on Flyvbjerg and Aristotle, argues that we can distinguish three distinct sorts of policy-relevant knowledge: *episteme* (derived from study), *techne* (derived from practical experience) and *phronesis* (practical-ethical decisions), and cites cases in the area of health policy to show that policy workers need to be able to deploy the right sort of knowledge at the appropriate time.

This means that policy work is probably going to be iterative and interactive. It may involve the creation of a document that establishes a case for a certain course of action, but the influence of this document depends on the extent to which it reflects the understanding and commitments of the various parties whose collaboration is necessary to make it work. Policy workers are involved in both creating this framework of shared understanding and commitment, and in securing the 'enactment' of the outcome via the appropriate forms of authorization – a Cabinet-level decision, a statute, an inter-governmental agreement, etc. It is an exercise in making sense, which generates an outcome that 'makes sense' to all of the parties involved, both the immediate participants and the political leaders and commentators. Policy work is hindered by the conviction that policy workers have the right answer. The greatest policy assets are a capacity for creating shared understanding and a tolerance for ambiguity.

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3 Academic Accounts of Policy Experience

Mirko Noordegraaf

Introduction

There is no shortage of texts on policy making, policy analysis, policy processes and policy implementation (e.g., Dunn 1994; Parsons 1995; John 1998; Radin 2000). They show us how policy decisions emerge from policy-making institutions – such as policy bureaucracies – and how circumstances influence the policies that are made. They focus on the policy networks, circles, triangles and rings that constitute policy domains, and determine participants and positions. They describe the policy steps, phases, cycles, and rounds that are necessary to go from initial ideas to policy measures, and they trace how decisions are adapted when plans are implemented by executive agencies. They explore how policies affect citizens and companies. Although these texts are important for providing perspectives on policy, and for getting 'the bigger picture,' they tell us little about what happens inside policy bureaucracies, how policy plans emerge, what negotiations take place, which relations are formed, how policy categories are formed, how policymakers think and act.

Texts on 'real' policy work and on day-to-day policy experiences are scarce. This may be understandable, but it is far from satisfactory. Of course, the phenomenon of 'policy' does not equal individual policy acts, and policy is larger than the life of individual policymakers, so merely looking at what policymakers do and feel will not be enough to fully capture policy dynamics. However, policy comes from real people and human action, so it makes no sense to separate policy dynamics from acts and experiences. Therefore, this chapter will start the other way around – it will analyze how policy work is done, what acts and experiences contribute to what we see as policy, how bundles of acts and experiences make up policy dynamics, and how this might affect society. It will draw from available academic texts in order to reveal the 'smaller pictures' that can be sketched when it comes to public policy.

This is not an easy task because academic accounts of policy work are not merely or directly about policy work. People appointed to make policy can be observed and studied, but understanding *who* the relevant players are, *what*

they do and *how* they do it, calls for conceptual constructs that do not emerge directly from daily behavior. Even the simplest of meetings, for example, can be interpreted in different ways, depending on the perspectives applied and concepts used (e.g., Alvesson 1996). Academic accounts of policy work, in other words, are also *accounts* (see chapter 2) or textual artifacts that can 'get close to,' but never mirror policy realities exactly. In order to understand policy work, we need to understand how scholars produce representations and which representations are meaningful for understanding and improving policy practices.

Understanding policy work

This chapter *distinguishes* between first-, second- and third-order accounts of policy (see table 1) and focuses on second-order accounts. *First-order* accounts start from individual policy experiences: individuals who are involved in policy describe what policy looks like. *Third-order* accounts, on the other hand, might focus on policy workers, but see them as policy 'actors' who are involved in bigger policy processes. *Second-order* accounts see policy people as agents – individuals with institutional positions and powers – and try to analyze how these agents are involved in policy practices that generate (meaningful) policy results. This chapter focuses on second-order accounts of policy work: interpretations by academics who stay close to real work, but use systematic methods to study policy practices and use more or less abstract terms, models and schemes in order to understand how policy occurs. This can be separated from *first-order* experiences, that is, direct, anecdotal accounts by the people who 'do policy' (see other chapters in this volume), as well as more abstract, *third-order* accounts by academics who offer perspectives on policy-making and bigger policy pictures (see chapters 1-2). Our focus is on *policy work, produced by policy agents in observable policy practices.*

Box 1   Multiple accounts of policy

Level	Focus	Example
First order	Policy workers as individuals	(Autobiographical) accounts of policy making by policy people
Second order	Policy work by policy agents	Academic understandings of policy practices
Third order	Policy processes through structures and actors	Perspectives on the nature of policy and policy processes

Of course, second-order interpretations cannot be neatly separated from first order policy experiences and third-order perspectives on policy processes. Second-order accounts that present more or less detached understandings of real policy people and day-to-day policy acts are fed by actual policy experiences, but also deal with policy perspectives, especially in the finding of alternatives for 'rational' or 'functional' perspectives on policy processes (e.g., Colebatch 2006a). This in itself highlights the added value of second-order accounts. Policy administrators often feel there is a lack of rationality and that it is difficult to relate their policy behavior to problem solving. When policy administrators try to make sense of their work by applying (third-order) rational policy perspectives, second-order accounts enable us to analyze how this happens, and how the search for policy solutions is played out. When alternative perspectives are developed in order to get away from rational perspectives, such as 'institutional' or 'bureaucratic politics' perspectives (cf. Allison 1971), or 'deliberative' perspectives (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003), second-order analyses enable us to understand how such abstract perspectives relate to the real work that is done on a day-to-day basis, by real people who occupy positions in regulated or routinized policy games.

We can see this interplay between accounts in the academic analyses of iron triangles, policy subsystems, policy networks, etc. (e.g., Marsh and Rhodes 1992; Jordan 1990; Kickert et al. 1997). Although these academic accounts deviate from those by policy people, and also from rational accounts that portray policy-making as sequential and instrumental, they sketch bigger policy pictures that privilege *systemic* features. They try to conceptualize the structures and arenas that constitute policy processes, as well as institutionalized connections between policy actors that determine policy outcomes. They lack any *experiential* sensitivity, however, which enables us to understand those people with positions who are subjected to bigger forces, but also (actively) shape policy processes.

Getting this experiential sensitivity is *not* just a matter of combining perspectives with first-order experiences, of being 'in between' first- and third-order accounts; it is also a matter of the *distinctive* scholarly stances that are considered when policy work is studied. Instead of focusing on individuals who are engaged in policy processes, and the policy 'structures' or roles that are played by 'policy actors,' second-order accounts focus on policy 'agents' who are part of day-to-day policy practices, producing what is generally seen or experienced as 'policy.' Heclo's treatment of 'issue networks' is illustrative (1978: 88):

> Based largely on early studies of agricultural, water, and public works policies, the iron triangle concept is not so much wrong as it is disastrously incomplete. ... Preoccupied with trying to find the few truly powerful actors, observers tend to overlook the power and influence that arise out of the configurations through which the leading policymakers move and do business with each other.

A similar approach can be found in the empirical work that tries to show how things really work by starting with the agents that 'do policy' in order to show how policy outcomes are molded and manufactured. Scholars who focus on real work and practices may come from political science or sociology, but often have behavioral (Rose 1989), psychological (Hammond 1996; Tetlock 1985; 2005), psychoanalytic (Mitroff 1983) and ethnographic or anthropological 'biases' (e.g., Hammersley 1994; Shore and Wright 1997; Colebatch 2006b). They stress constructivist epistemologies (Estes and Edmonds 1981; Edelman 1988), strongly favor relational and argumentative outlooks (e.g., Fischer and Forester 1993) and prefer qualitative methods such as observation (see Rhodes et al. 2007). As a consequence, they focus on distinctive components of the policy phenomenon, such as 'thoughts, experiences and emotions' (Heclo 1977), 'coping mechanisms' (Lipsky 1980) or 'language, objects, and acts' (Yanow 1996) that are seldom used in systemic texts that focus on policy arenas and policy outcomes.

Three types of second order accounts

These second-order representations, however, also imply that the understandings of policy work take different shapes. When scholars get close to policy practices, there is no one clear account of policy work and policy experiences. In the first place, scholars study different sorts of policy agents, which, in addition to policy analysts, include policy contributions by political executives, policy administrators, policy managers, and policy advisers. Secondly, scholars rely on different methodologies; policy practices are studied by using surveys, interviews, documentary analysis and observation. Thirdly, different disciplinary backgrounds and vocabularies produce distinct understandings, each portraying policy work in its own distinct ways. We can identify three different approaches to the understanding of the experiential basis of policy work, each combining a certain academic stance and terminology.

Firstly, some scholars try to *personalize* policy processes by studying the agents who are expected to form and implement policies. They explore per-

sonalities, longings and the experiences of policy people, to better understand the human side of public policy. This is less about individuals than human *dispositions* that are formed through education and socialization.

Secondly, some scholars try to *contextualize* policy work, by analyzing how policy agents deal with circumstances. They show how certain policy conditions influence the work of policy officials, and how officials seek coping mechanisms to survive. The reciprocal relations between *contexts* and coping mechanisms are emphasized.

Thirdly, other scholars try to *functionalize* policy acts by seeing policy processes as webs of information and streams of interpretation, through which meaningful policy realities are enacted. They show how policy agents continuously exchange information, rework interpretations, and manufacture meaning in the face of ambiguous objectives. The informational *functions* of policy workers are stressed.

Box 2   **Three types of second order accounts**

Account	Focus	Example
1. Dispositions	Policy work as thought and behavior	Empirical analysis of traits, the attitudes and behavior of policy agents
2. Contexts	Policy work as coping with conditions	Empirical analysis of the impossibilities of policy work, and how agents cope
3. Functions	Policy work as making issues meaningful	Analysis of how policymakers interact, exchange information, and enact policies

Dispositions

The job of the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary is to 'nobble' an MP: 'The Prime Minister would like you to ask this question.' Nonetheless, the Prime Minister can confidently expect two-thirds to three-quarters of questions to be hostile. And the most awkward questions of all frequently came from the government side – from disappointed, disaffected and sour senior backbenchers who have either been overlooked or sacked from office (Lynn and Jay 1990: 405).

The first type of academic account of policy work tells us a lot about *who* engages in policy acts, and what these policy officials think, feel and experience when they make or do policy, and how this affects policy. Although these accounts start with individuals, and their values and behaviors (just like first-order accounts), these accounts represent more than individual features – they might reveal how individual thought and action are part of the *social* action.

In some cases, the social dimension of individual administrative action is accentuated by an emphasis on the moral stature of real policy administrators, e.g., in studies of administrators who are 'exemplary' (Cooper and Wright 1992). These administrators have certain traits, attitudes and behavior patterns that enable them to be remembered as exceptional policy people. In other cases, it is accentuated by an emphasis on the political sides of policy action, such as the importance of institutional craftsmanship (e.g., Terry 1996). These studies may also reveal a lot about the *'typical'* civil servant and the 'career service' and bureaucratic 'elites' to which these civil servants belong. Many elite studies show how *'elite'* features differ from country to country – not in the least because of differences in education, training and selection. They also explore important aspects of policy processes that are affected. Particular emphasis is placed upon politico-administrative relations – upon interactions between policy officials (as members of career services and elites) and political executives.

The well-known study by Aberbach et al. (1980), for example, provides an extensive cross-national overview of bureaucrats and their features, not least of all to clarify how politico-administrative interactions are structured. Aberbach et al. distinguish between various models, varying from the traditional hierarchical model, with clear distinctions between policy administrators who administer policy, and politicians who make policy, to a 'pure hybrid' in which clear dividing lines are absent. The other models are located between these extremes, and show how administrators and politicians contribute different things to policy making. In the 'facts/interests' model, administrators contribute facts and knowledge, while politicians contribute interests and values. In the 'energy/equilibrium' model, politicians 'articulate broad, diffuse interests,' whereas administrators 'mediate narrow, focused interests.' Other cross-national overviews of bureaucrats have been presented by e.g., Van Braam 1957; Dogan 1975; Van der Meer and Roborgh 1993; Page 1992. Peters' typology of politico-administrative interaction (Peters 1987) shows how politicians and administrators can be part of 'village lives.' These studies often compare countries like the US (least Weberian, most hybrid) with countries like the UK (career service), Germany and France (professional 'corps'), and the Netherlands and Denmark (village lives).

In other studies, empirical explorations are limited to certain groups of policy officials. These may involve lower-level officials who are engaged in 'everyday politics,' as opposed to 'high politics' (Page 2001), or central policy functionaries who have a certain 'professional self-image' that influences how they work (Hoppe and Jeliazkova 2006). More often, they concern top officials (Page and Wright 1999; 2007; Rhodes and Weller 2001), who might be *seen* as an 'elite' (cf. Page and Wright 1999) with a certain position vis-à-vis elected politicians. Rhodes and Weller (2001) wonder whether these top officials must be seen as 'mandarins or valets.' Page and Wright (1999) focus on 'political control,' wondering 'How can one ensure that bureaucracies are responsive to the governing party or parties?' (p. 270). The well-known BBC comedy series '*Yes, Minister*', about life at the top of a British government ministry (Lynn and Jay 1990), popularized this perspective. The attempts of the Minister of Administrative Affairs (and later, Prime Minister) Hacker to really determine policy courses and steer the ministry, and the subtle and covert attempts of his Permanent Secretary, Sir Humphrey Appleby, to align policy preferences with administrative considerations, routines, and longings have come to symbolize the tensions between conflicting policy worlds: the world of elected officials who are the innocent bystanders and victims of smooth-running policy systems, and the world of appointed officials who run these systems, backed by 'old boys networks' and certain socio-cultural antecedents. These stories show the conflicting accounts of policy worlds, while different views on policy processes are consciously mobilized by the participants. Explicit attempts by Sir Humphrey to preserve the integrity of mandarin behavior are backed by publicly stated accounts of 'proper' policy-making. This is especially visible when the minister's principal private secretary, Bernard Woolley – a civil servant – has 'explained' to him how things work.

No wonder then that most of the studies mentioned not only focus on policy behavior or administrative values, but also on these *antecedents* of policy activity. How policy officials are educated, for example, may have significant influence on policy dynamics. In the *Yes, Minister* series: the 'old boys network' that connected British top officials was reinforced by their Oxford and Cambridge educations (which the ministers did not necessarily share). Thus, the forming or reforming of individual policy behavior and values can not be detached from structural factors, such as how policy officials are selected, appointed and trained. Some studies, especially those of the UK, France and Germany (Drewry and Butcher 1991) primarily focus on these factors because these countries traditionally have distinctive, rather 'narrow' routes to policy apexes. UK class distinctions and 'Oxbridge' schooling, French elite education

(especially at the Ecole Nationale d'Administration – ENA), and German legalistic training mean that policy officials have distinctive characteristics that affect the way they perform policy.

Reforms and dispositions

Management reform (e.g., Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004) has started to change these policy landscapes. Consequently, many scholars explore policy behavior in light of changing (organizational) parameters. They investigate, for example, how 'public service motivation' is affected by management change and the 'contractualization' of managerial work (e.g., Perry, Perry and Hondeghem 2008), how (policy) managers 'pursue significance' (Denhardt 1995), or which 'competencies' are developed by civil service systems in order to improve policy behavior (Lodge and Hood 2005). In many countries, policy elites have turned into Senior Executive Services (SES), which may be subjected to improvement programs like the so-called British 'Professional Skills Program.' Although this does not automatically change bureaucratic antecedents and policy acts, it influences selection, appointment and development processes, which – in the longer run – may influence how policy occurs. From an academic point of view, this may reinforce the emphasis on policy experience – namely, on how the so-called *managerialization* of policy processes and its consequences are experienced. Managerialization constitutes the means through which the structure and culture of public services are being recast. In doing so, it seeks to introduce new orientations, remodels existing relations of power and affects how and where policy choices are made (Clarke et al. 1994: 4).

> These new paths have not, by and large, been of the civil service's own choosing, and it may not like some of the prospects that can be seen on the horizon (Drewry and Butcher 1991).

The extent to which this has actually happened that new managers with new dispositions and orientations have started to overtake, recast or reinvent policy formation, has hardly been studied, however. Rhodes and Weller (2001) conclude that 'Change is uneven. Not every country rushed to embrace the new public management and, of those that did, there are big differences in their aims, measures and outcomes ... the impact of change on senior officials over the last 20 years is overstated' (p. 230). Having studied departmental secretaries in various countries, they concluded that contemporary secretaries look a lot like their predecessors, but their roles have changed significantly.

Their monopoly of advice, for example, has ended. 'Policy contestability is the order of the day', Rhodes and Weller conclude (p. 238). Moreover, departmental secretaries have become 'managers,' although the exact meaning of management differs from country to country, and, more specifically, they have to 'manage networks' (pp. 240-241). Country differences are explained by governmental traditions. Page and Wright (1999), also stressing variation and national traditions, conclude that relations between bureaucratic and political elites show signs of a 'deinstitutionalization or personalization of political trust' (p. 277). To be able to trust that appointees as well as personal ties become more important, also in countries that have experienced substantial managerial reforms.

Contexts

> Public service workers occupy a critical position in American society. Although they are normally regarded as low-level employees, the actions of most public service workers actually constituted the services 'delivered' by government. Moreover, when taken together, the individual decisions of these workers become, or add up to, agency policy (Lipsky 1980: 3).

As well as focusing on how personal attributes affect policy work, scholars also focus on the nature of the work itself – on the conditions that policy workers face, and on how they cope. The most famous example is Lipsky's *Street-level Bureaucracy* (1980), which focuses on street-level bureaucrats, and reveals that policy is often made at the street-level, especially involving decisions about individual cases. Lipsky showed how service workers find themselves amidst complex and contradictory demands and how they develop certain *coping mechanisms*. They may categorize or actually 'stereotype' clients in order to speed up the decision-making process. The bosses of certain street-level bureaucracies have also been studied. Hargrove and Glidewell (1990), for example, showed how public managers like welfare managers or police commissioners deal with so-called 'impossible' circumstances.

Links between context and coping behavior can also be found in studies that involve national policy-making arenas; this includes, for instance, Heclo's exploration of bureaucratic and political behavior in Washington (Heclo 1977), Allison's identification of 'governmental processes' and 'bureaucratic politics' (e.g., Allison 1971), the 'messiness' of certain policy settings (Dryzek 1982), and the 'symbols, rituals and power' of crisis management ('t Hart 1993). Heclo (1977) portrays policy bureaucrats as 'people in

the machine,' with certain preferences and dispositions – for gradualism, indirection, independence, political caution, and relations – and contrasting job orientations – program bureaucrats, staff bureaucrats, reformers, and institutionalists. He then explores the working relations between various bureaucrats and political executives. He approaches these relations in terms of 'conditionally cooperative behavior' (p. 193), which 'rejects any final choice between suspicion and trust, between trying to force obedience and passively hoping for compliance.' Certain strategic resources, such as political clout, setting goals and building support, are used to 'create commitments to mutual performance' (p. 194). From a more general point of view, Dryzek (1982) stresses the importance of appropriate policy analysis, i.e., modes of analysis that match policy circumstances. He highlights what he calls a 'mode VI' analysis, or 'hermeneutic' analysis, appropriate for a 'residual category of circumstances ..., defined by a pluralistic decision process made up of a multiplicity of actors and interests which is not producing manifestly good outcomes' (p. 321).

How policy people cope

The emphasis on coping mechanisms that originated in studies of street-level bureaucrats but could also be applied to public (policy) managers, and political executives can further also be applied to specialist policy staff – policy advisors, policy analysts and policy administrators. Here, the analysis can focus on roles and behavior as well as cognition and judgment, in order to highlight processes of generating policy results. Meltsner (1972), who was one of the first to study the *behavior* of policy workers, how *they* experience 'politics,' and how they are able to cope with the politics of framing and selecting policy alternatives, *stressed* the importance of 'political feasibility' and *how* analysts might strengthen their 'political expertise.' Maley (2000) has studied the work and behavior of policy advisers, and came up with five policy roles: agenda-setting; linking ideas, interests and opportunities; mobilizing; bargaining; and 'delivering' (pp. 455-468). Edwards (2001), a former policy advisor, has shown how policy advisors can enhance their effectiveness. During various policy phases or 'stages,' different challenges had to be tackled to 'break up the policy process into clear steps in order to manage the complexities of developing policy' (p. 4).

 With respect to the process of coping with policy challenges, such as ill-structured or dreadful problems, others have studied behavioral mechanisms (e.g., Hisschemöller and Hoppe 1995). Policy analysts have attempted to structure problems as much as possible, which runs the risk of over-simplify-

ing the problem. Against this background, Hisschemöller and Hoppe show the importance of 'problem structuring,' of organizing 'political participation of actors with different views on the problem, and argued problem choice' (p. 40). A comparable emphasis on 'problem definition' can be found in studies such as Rochefort and Cobb (1994), which shows how defining problems is 'intertwined with the political process throughout the activities of issue initiation, program design, and legislative enactment' (p. 56). Dealing with policy problems can also be approached from (socio)psychological angles. Adelman et al. (1975), for example, introduced their 'social judgment theory' in order to understand policy quarrels and conflicts. 'The basic thesis is that such quarrels often occur because policymakers possess different cognitive representations of the relations between variables in the environment' (Adelman et al. 1975: 138). Tetlock has studied the 'integrative complexity' of policy communication and rhetoric in order to understand the relation between complex contexts – such as international relations or crises – and the perceptions of government leaders. Communications may consist of 'simple responses, gross distinctions, rigidity, and restricted information usage, and at the other by complexity, fine distinctions, flexibility, and restricted information search and usage' (Suedfeld and Tetlock 1977: 169).

International contexts

Geuijen et al. (2008) approached it from a different angle; they studied how national (Dutch) administrators operate in international arenas, most specifically in EU policy-making (see also Geuijen and 't Hart's chapter 9). They call these administrators 'new Eurocrats,' and they traced their complicated working conditions and how they cope. Complications mainly follow from their distinctive roles in transnational networks. They possess specific expertise that is not easily accessible, their hierarchical superiors seldom pay attention to them, and they have to reach an 'international consensus' when engaged in multilateral negotiations. Geuijen et al. show how different role orientations produce different behavior at different loci. So-called *back-office coordinators* are involved in national departmental interactions, in order to establish departmental and national positions. *Bureaucrat-diplomats* are active in EU-policy processes – i.e., committees – trying to defend national interests and minimize costs in the field of veterinary policy, for example. *Street-level entrepreneurs* are problem solvers who exploit situations in order to get things done, often in issue-based networks that transgress national borders, in situations like when there is a need for improved police cooperation across nations. Policy workers establish links between policy options and implementation,

which has also been highlighted by others (McLaughlin 1987). The emphasis on Eurocrats nevertheless adds something to the more traditional emphases on ambiguous circumstances, namely the internationalization of policy work. Increasingly, policy happens in transnational policy networks.

Functions

> Briefly, I claim that the analysts who produce the information would like to produce clear and straightforward analyses or interpretations that could be used to make decisions or solve problems. By contrast, the way that the process works results in a type of information that is much less decisive than that (Feldman 1989: 2).

Feldman focused on the bureaucrat analysts who are engaged in 'problem solving and issue interpretation' and whose analyses are sometimes directly used in policy-making, in order to better understand how policy agents grapple with *ambiguous* circumstances. Although there are common perceptions regarding certain issues such as AIDS, national security, medical care, these perceptions may be poorly defined, and new information does not necessarily resolve the technical and ethical questions. Policy-making, then, is a process of interpretation through which agreement about how to view and define issues is negotiated. Mere content in this situation is not enough, which means that analysts and policymakers will have to rely on organizational *routines* in order to produce the necessary information, which includes concurrence processes, paper-writing routines, and the organization of expertise (Feldman 1989). Bureaucratic analysts are less problem solvers, than 'negotiators' (ibid.: 118-124) or 'boundary spanners' (ibid.: 125). When they contribute to policy formation, they 'negotiate agreements on a given issue,' which means they not only need to know a lot about the substance of issues, but also about positions and organizational contexts. Moreover, they also act as 'liaisons between interdependent organizations.'

These findings are echoed by other empirical studies of policy processes which show that it is not so much individuals or their coping behavior that are at stake, but how policy agents operate within webs of information and processes of interpretation. Following the interpretative turn in policy analysis, Tenbensel (2006) shows how policy workers deal with different types of knowledge. Earlier he showed how policy workers can never use clear 'evidence' to ground specific policies (2004). Weiss (1989) described problem definitions as 'packages of ideas' that include 'at least implicitly an account of

the causes and consequences of some circumstances that are deemed undesirable, and a theory about how a problem might be alleviated' (p. 97).

This emphasis on informational or interpretative processes parallels the empirical interests in organizational and *managerial behavior* (Mintzberg 1973; 1975), including the day-to-day behavior of policy managers such as federal bureau chiefs (Kaufman 1980) or high-ranking policy directors (Noordegraaf 2000; 2007). These studies show us the high-paced, lively and erratic nature of organizational environments, as well as how managerial work consists of a steady stream of contacts, interactions and information exchanges that follow a variety of institutional norms and procedures in order to produce outcomes. Mintzberg showed how managers face a continuous stream of people, texts and acts, and perform certain institutionalized, interpersonal, informational and decision-making 'roles' to make things happen. Kaufman noted that bureau chiefs engage in informational activities, inside and outside their own organizations, which are constrained by fixed rules, regulations and cycles. Becoming a federal bureau chief in American public administration is, according to Kaufman, like 'stepping in[to] a fast flowing river.'

Interpretation and institutions

All of this means that Feldman's emphasis on policy analysts – also visible in related policy and managerial observations – has two sides: an interpretative emphasis on policy issues as texts and conversations, and an institutional emphasis on routines and procedures, formed in order to enact *'appropriate'* policy behavior (cf. March and Olsen 1989). These sides have also been observed in other works as well, although here either the interpretative or the institutional outlooks may have been emphasized. Lynn (1987), for example, shows how policy work – particularly policy management – is a matter of institutionalized 'games,' played out in order to fabricate shared understandings of policy issues. 'Managing public policy is the deliberate effort of a public official with executive responsibilities to create favorable interpretations of governmental actions by influencing (a) the nature of the actions, (b) the consequences of those actions, and (c) the perceptions of those actions and their consequences by important constituencies' (p. 43). The 'daily lives of public executives,' as Lynn calls it, should not be judged by their *substantive rationality*, which entails 'sequentially choosing goals and subsequently designing actions to fulfill those goals' (p. 29) – but by their *procedural rationality*, which means 'their success in changing the character of governmental actions and in bringing about more favorable interpretations of governmental actions' (p. 31). This calls for the appropriate use of goals, resources such as time, atten-

tion and influence, and constraints. Likewise, Hall and McGinty (1997) show how policy can be seen as 'the transformation of intentions,' as a 'flexible process whereby many actors with different intentions, interests and interpretations enter into the process at different points along its course' (p. 441). Difficulties that arise during the process can be very mundane, involving such things as how to categorize responsibilities, for example, when career ladders for teachers are being devised? Certain *conventions*, like committees with chairs, make cooperation and coordination simpler, as they establish linkages, which enable participants to 'create their own practical arrangements for the furtherance of their intentions' (p. 462). 'Through attempting to see their intentions reflected in the policy process, policy actors create conditions that can become consequential at linked future sites and phases of policy activity' (p. 463).

Tenbensel (2002) also privileges institutions: 'The chief concern of policymakers ... should be to concentrate on the structures and institutions through which information is interpreted' (p. 192). By studying the role of mediating bodies in setting priorities in health care, he shows how these bodies 'interpret the public voice' (p. 174), which is essential for enhancing the rationality and legitimacy of setting priorities. Such findings are utilized in critical-interpretative research views, which – like Tenbensel – extend their analyses to spheres beyond the formal policy circles, but also alter our understanding of interpretative processes (see also Shore's ch. 11). Yanow (1996), for instance, did not analyze 'what' a policy means, or 'why' policy officials act as they do (cf. Lynn), but *how* a policy means, how acts and objects, such as buildings, enact policy realities. Policies are not made in a vacuum simply to accomplish set goals, but in environments where policy actions are read as 'expressive statements' or 'texts' by various stakeholder groups. Policy is not just about information exchanges in policy circles. It is primarily about 'meaning making,' *outside* of the usual policy circles. This is also highlighted in the *dramaturgical* approaches to policy processes in which political processes are seen as 'sequences of staged performances of conflict and conflict resolution' (Hajer 2005: 624). Settings and their design affect 'what is said, what can be said, and what can be said with influence' (p. 624). Hajer applies this perspective to participatory policy-making, which – like Yanow's observations – not only changes our understanding of how policy meanings are produced, but also *where* meaning is generated. Policy-making cannot be isolated from the public, although 'the public becomes what the setting makes it' (p. 642).

Contours of policy work

These various clusters of insights add up to a distinctive understanding of 'real life' policy practices, although they offer multiple understandings of policy people and their work. We started with exemplary administrators who bring moral integrity to policy processes, and we ended up with policy work that generates meaningful texts and acts outside policy work. Academic accounts of policy work are diverse and heterogeneous. Nevertheless, there are also overlaps and most accounts have much in common. Before we highlight the important differences, we will sketch the contours of a second-order understanding of policy work.

Policy is 'real' but does not really 'exist'

Second-order studies of policy work show that it is difficult to define and grasp policy accurately. We can study policy practices using conversations, meetings and texts, produced by policy functionaries – advisers, executives, managers, analysts, administrators – but real people and their encounters do not automatically generate policy or policy outcomes. The shapes and dynamics of policy work depend on where these people come from, how they (are forced to) think, how they deal with contingencies, and how and where meaningful outcomes are generated. Even an emphasis on individual policy agents and how they think is not an 'actual' affair, as these individuals have positions, backgrounds and forms of expertise that enable them to participate in policy processes, or even prevent them from participating, e.g., when policy analysts lack the proper political expertise.

Second-order accounts enable us to focus on 'real' things like meetings and texts, but also force us to 'see through' these real things in order to understand why they are there, how they evolve, and how collections of meetings and texts constitute policy patterns over time. This clarifies the added value that was hinted at before: day-to-day policy experiences (first order) are insufficient for truly understanding what is going on, especially over time, but bigger pictures of arenas and structures (third order) miss the actual day-to-day encounters that constitute policy practices.

Policy work is connective and transformative

In order to contribute to or 'make' policy, raw policy material such as concerns, information and proposals must be transformed into something that is recognized or perceived as 'policy.' Policy practices consist of people, texts, acts, and

objects, and how they are configured determines what new texts, acts and objects are produced. How politico-administrative relations are structured, for instance, influences how policy-making happens. Basically, this means that policy workers must enter into relations with other policy actors, which explains why policy 'sites' like meetings and texts are so important. They are sites at which some sort of 'input' is transformed into something else. Intentions, for example, are transformed into options, problems are transformed into problem definitions, and alternatives must be transformed into transferable categories. This means that relations or connections as such are insufficient. Signals, events and ideas must be translated, in order to generate some sort of policy 'outcome.' Policy cues must be picked up, (political) conditions must be taken into account, options must be negotiated, and interpretations of actions (by relevant others) should be influenced. Policy analysts, for instance, will have to present 'correct' policy options, but also move options ahead by keeping an eye on political feasibility.

How policy work happens, is 'malleable,' but constrained

Policy agents have a certain amount of leeway to act, but all of the accounts also stress the limits of policy action. Policy work is highly routinized: many parameters determine the course of interactive and interpretative processes such as the social and educational backgrounds of officials, the organizational routines of agencies, and the recognized points for discussion and choice. Various work-related mechanisms and organizational routines constrain policy work; *while* they enable policy agents to act in the face of complexity and ambiguity, they reduce behavioral options. Policy administrators cannot suddenly negotiate with members of Parliament, or contact outsiders, they cannot by-pass their superiors or come up with creative changes in paper flows. Work-related mechanisms also 'protect' administrators – e.g., street-level bureaucrats alleviating work pressures by stereotyping clients.

In short, policy work is a highly institutionalized phenomenon and for good reason: the structuring of policy processes mitigates ambiguity and facilitates the production of shared understandings. Certain rules for using resources help policy officials to change the course of governmental action. At the same time, institutional *insecurities* may increase. Managerial reform affects traditional working methods, the rise of transnational networks confuses policy mandates, and the normality of participatory processes accelerate policy exchanges with people outside policy circles. Flexibility and networks affect *why* policy is formed, *what* officials do, *where* actions occur, and *how* policy happens.

Differences

Despite these commonalities and 'overall' results of studying policy practices, there is no one definitive second-order view of policy work. The accounts differ because they are backed by different theoretical notions (and by different academic positions that legitimate such notions). This means that the notion of 'everyday processes' differs for different scholars. For some scholars, the 'everydayness' of policy formation is a matter of individual features such as values, opinions and interactions. For some, it is a matter of behavioral mechanisms that relate contexts and consequences: of coping mechanisms and roles. For others, it is a matter of interpretative acts, which enact and reproduce the policy realities of ambiguities and conventions. This implies that different scholars take different stances and find distinctive ways to show what 'really' happens when people do policy.

This does *not* mean that all three accounts offer well-rounded pictures of policy work. Different scholars find different things, even if they share stances and conceptual outlooks and 'belong' to a certain account. This is partly a matter of contingency, which depends on times and places (such as countries) so that studies may end up producing distinctive images of policy processes. In contemporary public administration, relations between politicians and administrators have changed over time because contacts between policymakers in different countries have increased and citizens often play more prominent roles in policy-making. But it is also a matter of how scholars frame and present research. Accounts that favor dispositions, for example, might emphasize individual traits, like moral integrity, but also the social formation of individual behavior, e.g., through education. Researchers might frame politico-administrative relations in terms of distinctions like energy/equilibrium, or in terms of metaphors like 'village life.' Accounts that focus on contexts and coping behaviors may highlight the roles of policy agents or the processes aimed at taming the general messiness and structuring problems. Accounts that stress the interpretative functions of policymakers may reveal how texts are made meaningful or how institutions generate meaning.

More generally, these various accounts may highlight episodic outputs (policy behavior and activities) *or* the continuing process by which they are produced and made meaningful. But even then, scholars often differ in terms of their critical inclinations. Some open up the black boxes of policy formation in order to show how things are working when policy is 'made.' They may end up showing how politico-administrative interactions work or how policy analysts get a grip on messy circumstances. Other researchers open black boxes in order to improve our understanding of policy-making and perhaps

to improve policy outcomes. In-depth analysis of the problem-defining policy behavior may, for example, help analysts to find improved problem definitions. Some researchers may attempt to alter our understanding of where relevant black boxes are. Instead of focusing on policy making and asking 'what' policymakers and others do in order to generate meaningful policy options, they may alter our understanding of where policy occurs and how it happens. This may be motivated by a search for 'just' policies.

Conclusion

Despite the differences between second-order accounts of policy work, we can see the relevance of studying policy work through outlooks that stay close to day-to-day policy practices. Although second-order accounts are situated between real, day-to-day experiences and more abstract scholarly perspectives on policy processes, they do more than combine experiences and perspectives. They focus on the nature of policy and the evolution of policy processes, also *over time*, by showing how policy becomes 'real' through 'real' texts, acts and objects that make up normal working days. The things that structure the policy worker's perceptions – earlier encounters, experiences and events, certain configurations of people, established ideas, routines and sites – such as certain scheduled meetings or paper flows – reproduce routines and procedures, but also enable policy agents to come up with new ideas, respond to new cues, and generate new outcomes. On the one hand, these structures enable the predictable interactions, which generate shared meaning, transforming ideas into commitments and proposals into authoritative policy texts. On the other hand, while structure frames action as appropriate, it does not determine it, and policy workers have to plot their own course in a contingent, contested and ambiguous world.

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C

Constructing Meaning

Through Policy Work

Introduction

Policy is a way of giving meaning to how we are governed; it is an account of governing that focuses on collective concerns, the specialized knowledge of problem areas, and the application of public authority. This account emerges not only in the statements of political leaders and senior bureaucrats (loosely labeled 'policymakers'), but also from how community and sectional activists make claims, experts are recognized and listened to, officials define and apply categories, and journalists construct stories about the public drama of governing. The questions to be addressed include 'What is this "all about," whose responsibility is it, and what can, or should, be done about it?' Those who are working in policy, whether inside or outside of government, find that their work is concerned with the construction, negotiation and propagation of meaning, which includes discussing problems, identifying and debating appropriate responses to these problems, framing plans, and relating the specific practices of governing to these broader frameworks of meaning in which they are located. Majone (1989) argues that the work of a policy analyst is less like that of a laboratory scientist and more like that of a courtroom lawyer who must table ideas, explore their application, test the utility of competing frameworks, probe their persuasive power to different audiences – in short, he or she must find good arguments for doing things.

This 'sense-making' takes place in a variety of ways, not all of them explicitly focused on 'making policy,' but policy workers are particularly concerned with two of these ways: writing documents and negotiating with interested parties ('stakeholders'). The two are closely related because writing documents relates the claims of stakeholders to one another and to existing practice, and stakeholders assert their claims to consideration by producing documents of their own and contesting or endorsing the documents produced by others. So, a large part of policy work is concerned with interaction around the production of authoritative documents. As Noordegraaf (2000) noted, policy managers lead lives dominated by 'meetings and papers,' with meetings being held to discuss papers and papers being prepared for meetings. Indeed, some would argue that policy requires an authoritative paper, which is 'the policy.'

Two of our case studies focus on this process of meaning making, but in quite different contexts. In Tamara Metze's study of the redevelopment of former industrial sites in Amsterdam, the various participants had very different views of what the story was 'all about,' and the policy process was focused on the construction of shared meaning. In this case, specialist policy workers were recruited with the explicit task of developing among the interested parties shared (or at least mutually compatible) understandings of the redevelopment, and they went about this by explicitly presenting it as an exercise in collective learning. In this process, documents were produced as part of the meaning-making, but not only texts: at particular points, graphic artists were engaged to visually express the shared vision that was being generated by these discussions. Collaborative project teams were constituted and their working procedures were framed to encourage innovative thinking and collective responsibility for the outcome. It was perhaps unusual in that it was so explicit about the intent, but we can see the commissioning of public inquiries or the establishment of consultative bodies as technologies for the generation of shared understandings and collective commitment – a process which, over time, leads to the emergence in specific fields of concern of 'policy communities,' characterized by shared understandings and mutual recognition.

In the case presented by Annick de Vries et al., the context of the meaning-making was quite different but it was equally important in the construction of policy. This study focuses on the economic forecasts produced by an autonomous research institute, which carry particular weight in policy discourse in the Netherlands because the institute is considered to have the technical expertise while remaining completely free of bias, while its policy workers are anxious to protect this reputation. Other policy workers respect this concern, recognizing the importance of this reputation in the validation of policy outcomes. But economic forecasting is not an exact science and experts will readily concede that their predictions depend on assumptions that may turn out to be unwarranted, and that nominating a range of likely outcomes would be more accurate than picking a single figure, but a clear figure carries more weight in policy discourse than a range of possibilities, so there is a tension between technical precision and political utility. A single-figure prediction is open to challenge technically but remains useful in policy development. At the same time, policy workers in other institutional locations might produce different forecasts but they may also want to avoid the appearance of public disputation over something that is presented as the product of technical expertise.

The result is a delicate process of deliberation between experts from the institute and interested policy workers from other institutional locations. This is marked by an openness among the 'policy community' to the possibil-

ity of alternative and equally-defensible predictions. It is also marked by a shared commitment to the production of a single, expert prediction. Annick et al. show that participants employ different discourses in different contexts, producing a 'sacred,' 'front office' discourse that stresses expertise and impartiality, and a 'profane,' 'back office' discourse that admits to a divergence of predictions and the importance of keeping the public stances of different participants in alignment.

The two cases are set in rather different contexts, and display different characteristics. Metze's case shows a more variegated construction of meaning, in which the validity of the distinct perspectives of the various participants was recognizable, and the process of weaving a shared meaning could take place in public. De Vries et al., by contrast, analyze a situation in which particular value was attached to a single, authoritative statement, so that the process of negotiation among the participants about the terms of this statement had to be done in private, and the outcome explained differently in official, 'front office' settings and more private 'back office' ones. But, in both cases, we can see the construction of a shared and public account of governing as an important part of the work of policy.

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4 New Life for Old Buildings: Mediating Between Different Meanings

Tamara Metze

Introduction

Policy work begins with problems and with the way people perceive and respond to these problems. This is a story about a flour mill, a cookie factory, a gasworks, and a shipyard; all old industrial sites in the Netherlands that over the years have lost their function as more and more industrial production has moved to low-wage countries. In a modern capitalist economy the usual response of landowners, financiers, developers and government agencies is to demolish these old deteriorated buildings and replace them with shopping malls, condominiums and offices. This development strategy has long been considered the most lucrative, the quickest, the most market-responsive, and the easiest to regulate. But sometimes, artists, filmmakers, musicians, graphic designers and so on, find innovative new functions for these sites before any development plans have been made. These innovative functions may inspire the relevant actors – government officials, planners, architects, but also project developers, financers, and housing corporations – to maintain these sites. This can open the eyes of project developers and governments to the fact that these artists and their cultural activities not only add cultural value but also financial and economical value. The artists and small businesses can attract new audiences and new potential users and buyers from the 'creative class' to the location but also the surrounding areas (Florida 2002). In these cases, the owners and financers may propose reconstructing rather than demolishing the characteristic buildings with their high ceilings, big windows, and strange silos. They may want to form a coalition with the artists and small creative businesses to cooperate in the renovation.

However, coalition formation is often difficult due to the rules and regulations that guide formal planning in the Netherlands; the dominant ideas of making quick profits in the world of project development; and the squatters' and artists' distrust of the government and project developers. This poses a challenge to policy workers inside and outside government: How to overcome the barriers of routines and procedures to enable traditionally adversarial ac-

tors to work out an innovative solution? At this point, governmental actors may hire external consultants to work out an alternative approach. This was the case for seven of these Dutch industrial sites. A coalition of national and local governmental actors together with project developers and housing corporations hired external consultants to create an alternative route for policy-making in a learning network. These external consultants are policy workers (see chapter 1 and Gill and Colebatch 2006), specialized in mediation, consensus-building and coalition-formation. They know how to facilitate the creation of shared meaning, a process that includes a reframing of the problem at hand (Rein and Schön 1993: 164). This enables cooperation amongst otherwise adversarial actors. Shared meaning can facilitate the fruitful mediation of conflict between the different interests and creates an alternative route for redevelopment.

In the redevelopment of the old industrial sites, the consultants created a learning network based on Wenger's idea of a community of practice (CoP). They facilitated the formation of coalitions across boundaries between actors. Rather than a negotiation with winners and losers, the interested parties entered a process with a goal of creating outcomes that benefited everyone and were acceptable to all. In other words, the specialized policy workers induced participating actors to move from a 'political view' to a 'cooperative view' (Rein and Schön 1993: 160) with the aid of the 'staging of learning settings' (Hajer 2005: 626).

This chapter offers an account of how these specialized policy workers created and maintained this learning network across the seven sites. Moreover, it describes in detail how external policy workers induced participants to move from a political view in which their interests are conflicting and need to be negotiated, to a cooperative view in which the mediation of different meanings and a communal learning effort about these meanings was developed as an alternative policy approach.

Specialized policy workers: creation of a learning network

In 2004, some consultants in mediation and consensus building brought together several local government agencies, housing corporations, financers, and project developers that were all involved in the development of an old industrial site in the Netherlands. While working on other projects, these consultants had seen that these actors shared ambitions and ran into similar problems in their attempts to redevelop these old industrial sites. The consultants launched the idea of starting a 'Community of Practice: Pilot Cases for

the Creative Economy.' The consultants persuaded this group to learn from similar ongoing projects across the Netherlands that had all experimented with this new type of redevelopment.
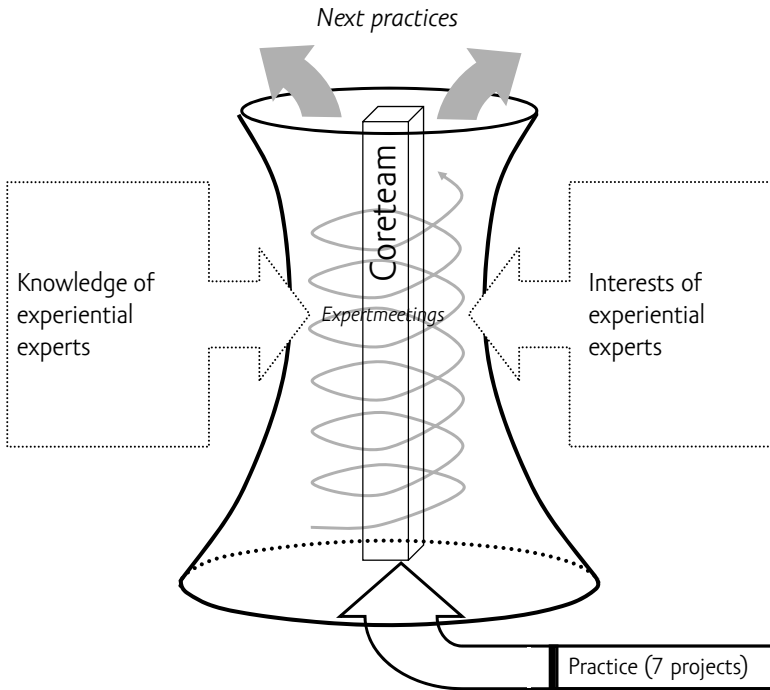
In total, seven projects were included in the learning network: the Haze-meijer factory for electronic appliances in the east; a flour mill factory in Leiden; an old school in Rotterdam; a chemical factory in Amersfoort; and two projects that were related to the strategies of governments and private partners for attracting the creative industry in specific neighborhoods in Arnhem and Amsterdam. Hence, the group of project developers, housing corporations, governmental actors and financers formed a core team that consisted of at least seven practitioners, each representing one project. The members of the core team were all people with some financial investment in one of the seven projects; no artists or creative entrepreneurs were included in this group. The individual core team members had decision-making powers over their own projects, but the core team had no power as a collective body. The team members financed the learning network with resources from their organizations and with additional resources from Habiforum,[1] a national program.

Habiforum is a collaboration of the Ministry of Transport and Traffic, the Ministry of Housing, and the Ministry of Agriculture, whose objectives are to stimulate sustainable and innovative land use (Habiforum 2007). It is a program that fosters the formation of learning networks amongst practitioners and scientists to obtain these objectives. In the late 1990s, Habiforum was inspired by Etienne Wenger's concept of a community of practice. Wenger developed this concept to better understand learning processes in networks. As Wenger argued, these communities learn through equal apprenticeship and they create their own visions based on their practical experiences. According to Wenger, a Community of Practice is a group of people who share a common concern or passion and want to learn how to do it better. They are part of a community; they share a domain and a practice (Wenger 1998). What started out as an attempt to understand learning as situated practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), evolved into a tool for knowledge management that could be further cultivated (Wenger et al. 2002).

The consultant was inspired by this idea of the community of practice and designed a structure to guide the learning process called *de opwerkingsfabriek* (the enrichment factory). As is the case in communities of practice, learning in the enrichment factory was closely linked to problems encountered and lessons learned in the practice of redevelopment. The consultants designed the enrichment factory to facilitate the iteration between learning and practice without undo interference by external experts. The members of the network

were to advise each other. The goal of this design was twofold: to guide the improvement of the overall concept of the project development of old industrial sites for the creative economy and to stimulate the improvement of local projects (see figure 1).[2]

Figure 1   The Enrichment Factory

Next practices

Coreteam

Expertmeetings

Knowledge of experiential experts

Interests of experiential experts

Practice (7 projects)

Source: De Stad bv (2008)

In this design, two learning groups were created consisting of the core team and the experiential experts including the artists and creative entrepreneurs involved in the projects. The core team met four or five times a year and monitored the general learning process. The second learning group consisted of experiential experts (Kolb 1984) from each of the seven projects who had learned valuable lessons from practice, which they combined with a more general knowledge of project development. They all had a stake in one of the seven projects. This group included the investors but also artists, musicians, filmmakers, etc. The latter were included because they represented the

present and future end users of these locations. The project developers were convinced that these users would add cultural value to these old industrial sites. The experiential experts met twice at on-site expert meetings, fostering learning exchanges amongst the participants. The experiential experts eventually suggested general lessons that the core team could draw from these cases.

Moving from the political to the cooperative: staging the learning settings

The policy workers created a learning environment, which they saw as consisting of equal apprenticeship among the partners. They supplied various tools as part of the core team and during the expert meetings to induce participants to learn and not to bicker. The specialized policy workers had the expertise to create a setting that could 'construct people as collaborators' (Hajer 2005: 625). As such, they 'staged' a learning setting to influence how the participants behaved (Hajer 2005: 626). The policy workers encouraged participants to interact in ways that were different from their normal routines. For example, the consultants organized the meetings on site and not in offices. At most of the meetings a meal was served while the participants created scenarios and artists came up with their impressions of the deliberations. These tools and strategies were to ensure that everyone worked together indirectly, to avoid sitting at a table and negotiating face to face. John Forester calls them 'strategies for indirection' (Forester 2000; 2009), which also include 'making time and space for the rituals of sharing food and storytelling, the time and spaces enabling parties to acknowledge and learn new things about one another at the same time' (Forester 2009: 249).

The aim of these preparations was to encourage participants to shift away from a political view on policy-making procedures and redevelopment, which is based on an adversarial relationship between rivals with conflicting interests where negotiation is necessary, toward a more cooperative view in which the action involves multiple-conflicting frames, each of which is perceived as legitimate (Rein and Schön 1993: 163). Rein and Schön argue that the tension between cooperation and conflict is inherent in political action, but when the involved parties take a more cooperative view, it becomes easier to generate a mutually acceptable outcome. Rein and Schön see conflicts between frames as reducible through the reflection of the participants on these various frames (Rein and Schön 1993: 164), by creating a shared understanding and reframing of the problem, or in our case, constructing a shared value of a location.

Rein and Schön argue that these two views have different implications for the role of policy analysis in policy controversies because in the political view, policy analysis has to provide rational knowledge to resolve a conflict, while in the cooperative view, policy analysis can facilitate inquiries into a common problem and also stimulate frame reflection and reframing. In the political view, the participants and policy analysts believe that 'being rational' will solve the problem (Rein and Schön 1993: 162); any policy analysis that aims to contribute to conflict resolution needs to provide rational information. However, in the cooperative view, being rational is not enough. To understand the different frames of interpretation, it is necessary to reframe the problem and to generate outcomes that are more than acceptable to all participants. In this kind of reframing process, the function of policy analysis is to 'facilitate the inquiry into the common problem' (Rein and Schön 1993: 160). But the case of the Community of Practice for the Creative Economy demonstrates that Rein and Schön's distinction between 'political' and 'cooperative' is not simply an analytical distinction but can also be seen as part of policy practice. The participants can interpret a situation as political or cooperative, which influences their willingness to cooperate and learn. It is not just their understanding of the problem, or in our case, their understanding of the value of the old industrial site, that shapes the outcomes; it is also their idea of being involved in a political conflict or in a cooperative situation. In her study of storylines on participation in deliberative settings, Carolyn Hendriks showed that storylines about who should participate and how and when, affected the quality of the deliberations (Hendriks 2005). In our case, the specialized policy workers attempted to stage settings in which participants were induced to move from a political view to a cooperative one, and at the same time this meant a reframing of their normal frames.

Two learning settings and four strategies to induce a cooperative view

As we have already seen, the policy workers created at least two different types of meetings to facilitate a shift from a political to a cooperative view: the expert meetings and the core team meetings. They also applied at least three different strategies of staging to induce participants to remain in or move towards a more cooperative view where they can learn from each other: indirection, co-creation of a learning-and-knowledge document, and the co-creation of learning stories.

The consultants introduced the strategy of indirection (Forester 2000; 2009) at both the expert and core team meetings. These included: meeting

outside of normal office hours, meeting at informal locations, sharing a meal, and having a drink together. These rituals were evaluated by the core team participants, who found them valuable and helpful.[3]

Second, a learning-and-knowledge document was co-created in which the core team tracked and traced the general lessons. Rather than have an academic researcher document the lessons, the core team members deliberated several times about the lessons learned, and adapted it and the conclusions. This document served as both an agenda and as documentation so that new questions and problems periodically appeared on the agenda while answers to earlier questions were being formulated. This document facilitated knowledge gathering as well as collectively exploring and diagnosing problems. This agenda and the midterm review successfully traced the learning process of the community of practice. It helped redefine the problem – converting old, ugly and useless buildings into great new locations for the creative economy. It also contained practical information for the practitioners and it generated general lessons on how to conduct project developments in the creative industry for future projects.

A third strategy that fostered the learning environment involved encouraging the core team practitioners to not only gather knowledge but also to reflect on their own practices, which led the consultants to introduce the notion of 'learning stories.' Learning stories are the minutes of meetings plus additional observations and reflections, which may provide an agenda for sense making, and stimulate new questions and decisions (Kleiner and Roth 1996; Metze and Ermers 2002). The learning stories strategy was less successful than the learning and knowledge document, however. The consultants only succeeded once in organizing a discussion of this nature.[4] The core team preferred to deliberate on the learning-and-knowledge agenda, considering it more important to develop knowledge and competences that might be helpful in the negotiations with people from outside of the community of practice, than spending time on a learning process inquiry within the community.

Fourth and last, the consultants came up with different mediation and communication tools for each meeting, especially the expert meetings. For example, they would apply scenario thinking to stimulate creativity; they created a fish bowl setting in which the local stakeholders sat in an inner circle where they could be questioned by the experiential experts from other projects in an outer circle; they hired actors to visualize the future; they hired cartoonists to visualize participants' views.

To illustrate how the consultants utilized these strategies to stage learning environments, I will use one of the projects, the NDSM-wharf East, as an

example to explore how consultants applied various tools and strategies to encourage participants to rely on the learning model to negotiate between conflicting meanings and interests.

Cooperating and learning at the NDSM-Wharf East

At the NDSM-wharf in Amsterdam Noord (North Amsterdam), located on the banks of the river IJ, young independent artists had organized events: exhibitions, concerts, and theatre-festivals for over ten years. These events attracted large audiences but also interested investors to the area. Because this old shipyard and its surroundings were used informally and sometimes illegally, the city could transform this area into something more attractive. The city, together with a consortium of project developers (Red Concepts), started investing in this wharf area and helped facilitate cultural programs. For example, MTV Networks Northern Europe moved its headquarters to the old carpenters workshop there, and other entertainment industries have also moved their offices to this up and coming area.

At the first expert meeting at the NDSM site, the consultants hired two actors to perform and present various future scenarios. The first scenario envisioned the commercial development of the site. In this scenario, MTV figured as a main player. This private company would determine which events would be held here. The area would only be accessible to invitees. The independent artists who are the current residents cooperated with MTV in developing this vision. The second scenario envisioned something at the other end of the spectrum: a theatre festival would receive grants from a philanthropic organization, which would make them the major player and the independent artists would be invited to cooperate with this organization.

These two scenarios provided an opportunity to discuss the various (future) values of this site to the different users and developers. The reactions of the participants at the meeting ranged from: 'the shipyard is more than just a décor' and 'the public space belongs to the local government and should thus remain public,' 'the area has an urban dynamic that should be maintained and stimulated.'[5] This discussion allowed the consultants to identify the common values that the participants attributed to the site:

– All of the involved parties wanted to foster the *bottom-up dynamics* (activities) of this area.
– The *public-ness* of the area should be maximized.
– Many things are possible, but all of the involved parties need to have *access* to the area.

-   There is enough space at this site to host many *different cultural events at the same time.*
-   The cultural agenda, including all of the organized events, need to be *subsidized* by more than one sponsor.
-   A shared identity needs to be developed to ensure that the site does not become some plaything for various trend-mongers.[6]

The chief value of this site appears to be its public-ness, the great variety of activities and users. The consultants came up with a list of the values that the participants all agreed on.

At the same time, this exercise made it clear what the differences were. For example, some wondered whether it was necessary for this site to be world-famous and attractive to everyone. Perhaps a somewhat more exclusive urban site would be attractive as well?[7] The consultants chose not to emphasize these differences in the minutes, preferring to focus on the similarities and to stage a learning situation. They feared that emphasizing the differences would lead away from a learning environment.

At the second meeting, the consultants used the conclusions arrived at the previous meeting, which meant a general consensus regarding developing the significance of the area. The consultants deliberated with the city and the project developer and decided to continue the mediation process of different values and to construct an 'identity.'[8] This had become more important as the area became increasingly popular among more commercial enterprises, such as the Dutch retailer, HEMA. This made the need to establish the kinds of activities and businesses that would contribute the most creative value and identity to this site all the more urgent in order to prevent it from being transformed into an ordinary business site.[9]

The consultants facilitated learning at the second expert meeting by staging a discussion of how the site might look in 15 years. Each of the three groups addressed a specific question: (1) what types of activities will take place here? (2) What will the public areas look like? (3) How will the different users of this shipyard interact?[10] Each group had its own *'beeldkunstenaar,'* a draughtsman. Two preferred a more cartoonist style, while the third opted for a more futuristic architectural style. The drawings distilled the major images that each of the participants envisioned for the site. The draughtsmen produced an estimated ten images per interest group.

After this first round, experiential experts from other projects were asked to select the drawings they believed best expressed the core value of the NDSM shipyard and it surroundings. They selected, among others, a drawing of 'raw

meat', a workshop that included an auto mechanic atmosphere and a bar; and a 'mobile hotel' (see images). The selection process provoked a stimulating sense-making conversation (Weick 1995) in which the images that best expressed the values and identities were discussed.

Figure 2   Raw-ness

Figure 3   Industrial Romance (for everyone)
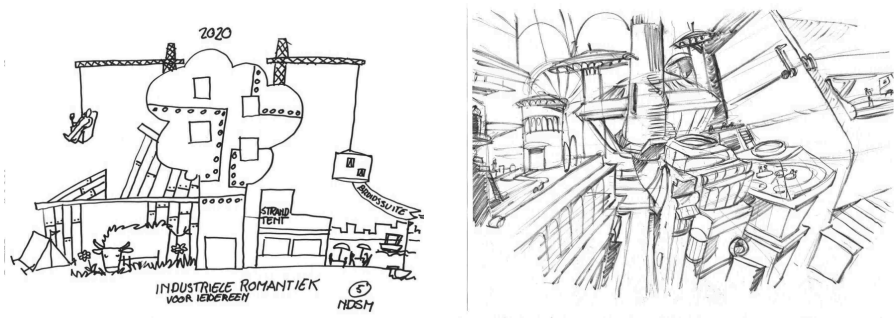
Source: De Beeldleveranciers (Image Suppliers)

The consultants synthesized and combined the different values and elements of identity in the minutes of this second expert meeting. They constructed an identity for the area based on the drawings and discussions, which included an inter-connected island of 'rawness' that would combine the industrial

character, a sense of incompleteness and imperfection, with the 'character of a well-connected island in the city.'[11] Again, the consultants withheld the values that stakeholders disagreed on, again, fearing that drawing attention to them would change the nature of the interaction from one of learning to one of negotiation and possible conflict, and transform the cooperative process into a more political one.

It is still uncertain how the cooperative view that was constructed in the learning setting will be used in the redevelopment of this site. One option would be to make it part of a formal covenant between public and private partners, including agreements on the development and maintenance of the private and public buildings and areas: what creative industries will be permitted to establish or expand, and under what conditions? For example, the public use of the canteens of these private companies could be one condition, or permission to exceed a certain decibel level during certain organized events. Another option would be to include this constructed identity in local government policy on area development.

We can conclude that the consultants' tools to stage the learning setting in the two expert meetings at the NDSM-Wharf East were successfully employed. There was collaboration among the potential rival participants; they stopped negotiating and began a collaborative process to resolve the issues at hand regarding the differing values that the various end users and owners attached to the area. The consultants played an important role in facilitating this learning process as they mediated the different values and applied different strategies to stage learning settings and construct a shared meaning of the area.

Understanding the consultants job: Balancing learning and relevance

We have seen how policy workers created a learning network to bridge differences in meanings and interests amongst actors who all wanted to develop various old industrial sites, but for different reasons and perhaps in different ways. The policy workers had a threefold task:
1. to induce participants to move from a political view to a cooperative view;
2. to mediate between different frames, the various kinds of meaning, that the participants attached to these old industrial sites;
3. to remain relevant to the policy making and planning processes regarding these industrial sites.

To achieve these tasks, the policy workers created an alternative approach to policy making and planning with regard to these old industrial sites. They

created a learning network and staged two learning settings, 'safe havens' in which actors could refrain from negotiating and where they could share their experiences and ask 'what are we doing' (Rein and Schön 1993: 160). The two learning settings were, for the most part, successful; although in different ways. First, the core team focused on the generation of more general lessons and knowledge, while at the expert meetings, a mediation of the different meanings took place. This difference can be explained by mentioning a third challenge and how the policy workers resolved it.

The third challenge to the policy workers was to keep the lessons from these learning settings relevant to the practice regarding the specific projects. The focus on real-time projects where something is at stake for participants, made it impossible to deny the conflicting interests. The expert meetings were directly linked to negotiations in the seven projects. It was at these meetings that consultants had to introduce more advanced strategies and tools to foster the cooperative view of actors. The consultants made an effort to direct the communal learning process, emphasizing what the practitioners had in common by employing a strategy of indirection, which entailed cartoonists distilling the shared core values of the practitioners and then visualizing them. They also chose to suppress the differences in core values, emphasizing the shared meanings instead. The consultants encouraged a process from a cooperative point of view among the participants. The core team members were further away from the negotiations. As they drew more general lessons which did not have to be applied to these specific projects, they did not need a strategy to bridge differences between frames. They preferred to co-create knowledge on how to redevelop old industrial sites and express it in a learning-and-knowledge document.

The aim of the learning network was to stimulate cooperation through shared meaning to an agreed-upon outcome. All of the actors agreed to participate and were aware that the cooperative outcomes were the aim. Moreover, they were free to leave the learning network at any time. In one of the projects, a group of artists, in fact, did so. They successfully turned to normal decision-making procedures to regain their position within the learning network. But overall, the consultants and the more powerful participants – the investors, governmental actors and project developers – all made an effort to include all of the interested parties, even those with no significant financial stake in the projects. They agreed that the inclusion of these otherwise less powerful actors in real-time project development and in the learning processes was a condition to not only encourage collaborative learning but also to improve the quality of urban redevelopment of these particular industrial sites.

In this sense, the learning network also had a politically more strategic, and even democratic goal because the core team members and rest of the participants wanted to partake of this new type of redevelopment of old industrial sites which would include minority frames consisting of artists, filmmakers, musicians, and other creative entrepreneurs. They wanted to demonstrate that this new type of redevelopment could be financially, culturally and socially successful. Although some of the parties may have played a dominant role because they were ultimately the ones who could decide whether the less powerful parties should or should not be included – the artists and creative entrepreneurs were still taken seriously in the redevelopment process of the seven sites. Artists and other creative entrepreneurs also had a stake in participating in the learning network; their participation made the 'creative identity' of the seven sites stronger. This enabled the investors, project developers and governmental actors, with the support of the artists and other creative entrepreneurs, to maintain this identity in the negotiations with other possible occupants of the sites. These potential newcomers would then need to meet the conditions set by the artists and creative entrepreneurs as well as by the developers. Moreover, the core team members and other actors used the lessons they learned in how to convince other participants to participate in a broader debate on urban redevelopment in the Netherlands to convince others that this type of redevelopment is indeed credible.

There are plenty of other questions that need to be answered about the democratic legitimacy of this learning network such as: was it transparent, did the participants represent all of the interests concerned with this type of redevelopment, did people have equal amounts of time to make their point, did the artists have real decision-making powers or were they sometimes overruled by the commercial investors? Unfortunately, I cannot answer all of these questions in this chapter. I merely wanted to demonstrate that policy work can be about managing processes in the face of power (Forester 1989), which, in this case, means in the face of ongoing tensions during negotiations. Policy work is always political and the aforementioned consultants were exercising their power by suppressing contrary views, but, in this case, it was less about engineering a victory for any one actor, than about constructing a shared meaning amongst potentially rival actors to enable them to create a stronger coalition in the negotiation process. The role of consultants as specialized policy workers was here defined as managing practices, meanings, relationships, and staging settings to induce actors to cooperate and learn.

Notes

1   Habiforum (2007). *Website Habiforum*. Retrieved October 30, 2007, from http://www.habiforum.nl.
2   Published with permission from *Critical Policy Analysis*. The first place this figure was published: *Critical Policy Analysis* 1(4).
3   Stad bv, d. (2006b). *Vragen aan kernteamleden voor telefonisch interview inclusief resultaten 13-02-2006/23-02-2006* [Questions to core team members for telephone interview including results 13-02-2006 / 23-02-2006]. Amsterdam.
4   Stad bv, d. (2005). *Noties Kernteam 12-09-2005* [Notions Core team 12-09-2005]. Amsterdam.
5   Stad bv, d. (2006a). *Proeftuinen Creatieve Economie – Verslag Expertmeeting I NDSM-Oost Amsterdam* [Pilot projects Creative Economy – Report Expert Meeting I NDSM-East Amsterdam]. Amsterdam.
6   Stad bv, d. (2006a). *Proeftuinen Creatieve Economie – Verslag Expertmeeting I NDSM-Oost Amsterdam* [Pilot projects Creative Economy – Report Expert Meeting I NDSM-East Amsterdam]. Amsterdam.
7   Stad bv, d. (2006a). *Proeftuinen Creatieve Economie – Verslag Expertmeeting I NDSM-Oost Amsterdam* [Pilot projects Creative Economy – Report Expert Meeting I NDSM-East Amsterdam]. Amsterdam.
8   Stad bv, d. (2007a). *Proeftuinen Creatieve Economie – NDSM Werf Oost: Programma expertmeeting II* [Pilot projects Creative Economy – NDSM Dock East: Program Expert Meeting II]. Amsterdam
9   Stad bv, d. (2007a). *Proeftuinen Creatieve Economie – NDSM Werf Oost: Programma expertmeeting II* [Pilot projects Creative Economy – NDSM Dock East: Program Expert Meeting II]. Amsterdam
10   Stad bv, d. (2007a). *Proeftuinen Creatieve Economie – NDSM Werf Oost: Programma expertmeeting II* [Pilot projects Creative Economy – NDSM Dock East: Program Expert Meeting II]. Amsterdam
11   Stad bv, d. (2007b). *Verslag Expertmeeting II NDSM-Oost* [Report Expert Meeting II NDSM-East]. Amsterdam.

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5   Policy Workers Tinkering with Uncertainty: Dutch Econometric Policy Advice in Action

Annick de Vries, Willem Halffman and Rob Hoppe

Experts and civil servants at work, together

Every year, on the third Tuesday of September, the Dutch cabinet presents its plans to Parliament for the coming year. There is much pomp and circumstance, which is unusual for a political culture that is otherwise proud of its modesty and restraint. The Queen is transported to the Parliament buildings in a golden carriage, cheered on by the masses and accompanied by an extensive corps of mounted guards. The horses are brought in from all over the country for the event, because the state no longer owns enough horses. The Queen's state of the nation speech then kicks off weeks of Parliamentary bickering over the budget, which assesses the work of the government in great detail. MPs of the various parties in Dutch politics bicker over each and every detail in the budget, but one feature of the budget is beyond debate: the assessment of future economic growth by the nation's official econometricians is considered not only the very best estimate but the only one that really matters. In spite of obvious and acknowledged uncertainties that could make or break the nation's wealth – such as wars, bank crises, or simply bad weather – the assessments made by these experts keeps the level of disagreement to a minimum: everyone ends up agreeing on the state of the economy, both currently and in the near future.

This situation is pervasive in Dutch politics and is all the more remarkable because the relationship between specialized experts and policymakers is generally a difficult one. Civil servants and politicians typically complain that experts do not provide 'useful' knowledge or do not appreciate the context in which knowledge will be put to work. Conversely, experts complain that policymakers abuse their findings or fail to understand the qualifications and uncertainties of the advice. In order to maintain cooperation, both parties need to adjust mutual expectations and negotiate their roles.

This chapter analyzes how this 'boundary work,' as we call it, occurs at one particular body that provides economic expert knowledge to the Dutch government, the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis. This

government institute has a key role in Dutch public policy in that it provides knowledge that is considered highly reliable and is invariably deployed as such in public debate. We will try to understand how experts and policymakers together manage to produce economic assessments that are widely accepted as correct for all practical purposes, in spite of the considerable uncertainties involved. In spite of these uncertainties, acknowledged by both experts and policymakers alike, these actors manage to produce what are considered solid cognitive foundations for economic policy. They channel political energy into what needs to be done rather than into the current state of affairs. The focus of this chapter is on how this cooperation is structured.

Advisory relationships are productive when experts and policymakers work together. Empirical studies of expertise for public policy have shown that expertise that is unceremoniously dropped at the doorstep of the policymaker rarely leads to any kind of policy learning (Cash, Borck and Patt 2006; Huberman 1987; Landry 2003; Weiss and Bucavalas 1977). However sensitive experts may be to immediate policy needs, effective use of new information relies on actual interaction, on *working together*.

Work implies *meaningful* and purposeful activity, directed at the creation of a collective product. Experts do not work on policy reports by blindly and thoughtlessly following recipes, but through an understanding of the problem at hand; a meaningful comprehension of the knowledge available; the context in which this knowledge is to be used; as well as what kinds of statements are justifiable, given professional standards and values. In other words, experts operate in a social world, not as computing actors in a Euclidean void (Strauss 1988; Wenger 1998).

Working *together* means policymakers and experts have to negotiate tensions and disjunctions between their respective social worlds. Their respective ongoing concerns and projects never quite coincide, no matter how policy-oriented the expert or how knowledge-sensitive the policymaker. Working together implies the negotiation of work across boundaries between social worlds, mutual adjustment, and tinkering with new problems as they occur. Advising policy is complex, professional work, where all of the eventualities have not yet been resolved and all of the role conflicts have not yet been settled. Civil servants negotiate complex streams of thinking and powering, in which expert advice is but one parameter in a fuzzy set of undefined equations. Because this work occurs across the boundaries of policy and expert worlds, we call it boundary work. Boundary work can more formally be understood as the attempts of actors to define practices in contrast to each other through demarcation; as well as the attempts of actors to find productive

cooperation across these boundaries through a division of labor that is more or less accepted by the actors involved (Gieryn 1995; Halffman 2003; Hoppe 2005; Star and Griesemer 1989).

This chapter describes the tinkering involved in boundary work for econometric advice to government departments in the Netherlands. Through extensive participatory observation and interviews during the production of two policy reports, one of us (AdV) has observed what occurs in these practices when new issues arise that require alignment work between social worlds (De Vries 2008). We wanted to know how economic experts tinker with their tools, tailoring advice to policy needs, while carefully maintaining the standards of their trade. From the perspective of civil servants, we wanted to know how they formulate their need for econometric knowledge and integrate that knowledge into policy projects.

Our analysis focuses on what happens when the advisory work is confronted with uncertainties. Policy may wish for accurate numbers predicting annual GNP growth rates for purposes of budgeting, for example, but economies suffer from unexpected crises, experience sudden windfalls, and even surreptitiously resist precise measurement. A skirmish on a Middle Eastern border, the fall of an unstable dictator, or the unmasking of a corrupt megacorporation, can send shudders through the world's economies, play havoc with the oil price, or send currencies into a spin. The consequences for a small and open economy such as the Dutch one can be enormous.

Both experts and civil servants involved in the advisory process are well aware of the uncertainty that underlies their predictions and they have found ways to accommodate it in their work. Uncertainties are particularly challenging to the division of labor between experts and policymakers, as this division often relies on the argument that experts provide certain knowledge, leaving policymakers to make value-based choices in the remaining areas where experts cannot provide hard knowledge. At the same time, *although* uncertainties about the economic future are obvious and undeniable, decision makers want to convey certainty, if only to legitimate choices or provide public assurance. Unpredictable fluctuations in the oil price, the mood swings of economic conjuncture, or even the fickle mind of the national consumer are issues that cannot easily be divided between the remit of the expert and the policymaker. Sociologically, uncertainty is a monster, as it challenges the social ontologies of public expertise.

In this chapter, we want to describe how civil servants and experts together deal with this monster. They have found ways to tame uncertainties in an advisory relationship that otherwise stresses the certainty of expert knowledge. In the next section, we will describe the role of the Dutch planning bureaus

to show how important certainty is for their contribution to national policy making. In the next two sections, we will analyze the production process of two reports and show how uncertainties were addressed. In the final section, we draw conclusions about how uncertainty is managed in this dense interaction between experts and policy workers.

Our research sites: Economists and their clients

Economists of the Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis provide the national executive with authoritative analyses of the Dutch economy and how it is expected to develop in the future. Its staff of 200 produces about 100 reports per year, with the Departments of Economic Affairs and Finance as its main patrons. The Bureau operates at some distance from the Ministry, where it carefully guards its reputation as an independent institute for the analysis of policy outcomes *ex ante and ex post*, based on the calculative reason of econometric models. For example, the bureau will assess the expected effects of tax changes on income distribution, the economic benefits of infrastructure projects, or the state of the government's budget in light of European monetary agreements.

The Bureau has a remarkable role of authority in the Dutch policy world. Its regular economic growth predictions are featured prominently in the media and form crucial interventions in the periodic adjustment of national policies. Political parties submit election manifestoes to the Bureau to assess the likely effects of their political plans on the Dutch economy. Its econometric analyses also form an input to negotiations between the social partners and at several points in policy cycles for major issues such as the national budget, government is legally required to submit its plans to these experts. The Bureau has so far been able to maintain its role as a neutral arbiter of economic realism, even against criticism of technocracy or against challengers among Dutch economists (Halffman and Hoppe 2005).

The economists of the Bureau trace back their role definition to their founding father, the Dutch economist Jan Tinbergen, the first director of the Bureau in 1947. Tinbergen defended the role of economics in policy making by invoking the typical sacred narrative: policymakers formulate the desired policy outcomes, while economists can advise on what policy instruments can provide these outcomes. For example, in the traditional Keynesian economics of the era, economists could suggest how to achieve a desired balance between unemployment and inflation, but it was up to the politicians, not the economists, to identify the desired outcome (Don 2004).

Although the establishment of the principles for policy analysis by the planning bureau is presented as a historical discontinuity by a stroke of genius, the debate over the role of a planning bureau already started in the 1930s, when 'economic planning' was seen as a way to tackle the profound economic crisis after the stock market collapse of 1929. By the time the Bureau was established, centralist planning had already lost many of its credentials, but differences of opinion on the role of economics in policy continued to exist. When the Bureau produced its first reports, the notion of 'planning' in its name was already being frowned upon, but its Dutch name, which literally translates as 'Central Planning Bureau' was anchored in law and has remained unchanged since (Van den Bogaard 1998).

The economists at the Bureau guard their role carefully and are quick to distance themselves from any notion of 'planning,' seen as technocratic and 'not of this time.' For this reason, the English name of the Bureau refers to 'Economic Policy Analysis' rather than the 'Central Planning' of the Dutch name. Senior members of the bureau will also vehemently object to terms such as 'assessment' or 'policy advice' to describe their work, as these imply normativity, telling politicians what to do, or taking sides in political disagreements. They see their role purely as one of analysis: a neutral study of the likely outcomes of policies (Hoppe 2008).

However, in the practice of policy debates and shifting governance structures, these principles require further elaboration. In 1996, a protocol for planning bureaus was published, formalizing some of the principles about the kinds of tasks that experts can and cannot perform for policymakers. There have also been some recent skirmishes at the sister institute for the environment about how preliminary, but not yet accepted policy should be assessed in the analysis of expected policy outcomes. Experts in planning bureaus are not expected to question the political acceptability of policy intentions. They may have doubts about civil servants trying to exaggerate future policy effects by including intended policy rather than established policy, but if the experts were to question the political acceptability of these policies, this could potentially undermine the position of the responsible minister in Parliament.

Conversely, there are also limitations to what civil servants are allowed to do in this respect. The expert economists insist that civil servants can ask questions or suggest alternative scenarios for the future, but that the outcome of their calculations will not be changed. In this sense, even the large econometric models of the Dutch economy that form the linchpin of their toolkit serve to organize the science-policy boundary. Civil servants can have a say on the input side of the models, or even request the construction of expansions of the model, but what happens in the models is considered the domain of the economists.

Here too, the general principle requires negotiation in concrete cases. For example, policy proposals that are going to be 'analyzed' by the planning bureaus may not always fit into the models, or may not even be sufficiently articulated to allow for a calculation of the results. In such cases, the economists tend to accommodate policymakers with suggestions on how to further articulate policy or advise on policy instruments that will produce the desired effects. Huitema has described the careful maintenance of neutrality when planning bureaus provide this kind of advice to political parties in the analysis of election manifestoes (Huitema 2004).

Thus, the role of the Dutch planning bureaus, and that of the Central Planning Bureau in particular, can be understood as being a linesman of politics: by predicting the likely outcomes of policies that are being considered, the planning bureaus define what is at stake in policy making (Halffman and Hoppe 2005: 140). The exceptional level of cognitive authority of the Bureau is partly a matter of convention: senior policymakers are aware that these analyses are best guesses that are not always as precise and certain as presented in the media. Nevertheless, there is a broad-ranging consensus among policy practitioners that it is best to accept these assessments, in order to enable the complex negotiations that have long characterized Dutch politics, from coalition formation to negotiations with socio-economic partners. Challenges to these assessments do occur, but these are often seen as politically weak, as a way to hide weaknesses in policy proposals by attacking the expert messenger. The cognitive certainty the planning bureaus provide seems to simplify the political negotiation, that can focus on bargaining rather than bickering over what is the state of affairs (Halffman 2009).

In light of the importance of neutrality and certainty, the accommodation of uncertainty in this advisory practice is a fascinating puzzle. If the key element in the role of econometric 'policy analysis' is to provide stable ground for budgeting, coalition formation, or wage negotiations, then too much obsession with uncertainties in predicting the economic future would paralyze the endeavor. However, ignoring uncertainties would undermine the epistemological legitimacy of the advisory project, as there are obvious inaccuracies in any predictions. The Bureau's economists, at the insistence of an international expert evaluation committee, have acknowledged these inaccuracies. Assessments of past one-year predictions of GNP shown an average accuracy of about 1.5% in the period 1971-2002 (Kranendonk and Verbruggen 2003).[1]

For purposes of government budgeting, even fluctuations of a few percentage points can affect departmental budgets by millions of euros. So, how do these economists contain uncertainties, acknowledging their relevance without letting them run rampant?

Uncertainty threatens the advisory relationship in a more profound way as well. If the experts are responsible for the creation of certainty and the policymakers for choice in light of political and value-based preferences, then uncertainties constitute an uncomfortable grey zone. More explicit attention to uncertainties requires new accommodations in the division of labor between experts and policymakers. In this sense, uncertainty is also a footloose mongrel that ignores the carefully nurtured enclosures in the maze of power/knowledge. How do civil servants discipline this mongrel by boundary work?

Economists and the budget cycle: the Central Economic Plan

One of the most important reports the Bureau produces is the Central Economic Plan (CEP), which is a statutory annual report for the government that provides a national economic forecast for the current and subsequent year. The CEP contains crucial figures on important economic variables, such as the expected inflation rate and the gross domestic product (GDP). Above all, it is crucial in the construction of the national budget because it provides the data that support budgetary negotiations within the administration. Because of its key importance in economic and financial policy, the Bureau is keenly aware that it needs to provide econometric projections that are both accurate and policy relevant. We observed and analyzed the production of the CEP edition of 2005.

In order to guarantee coordination of the report with policy needs, there is intensive interaction between the Bureau experts and civil servants over its content. This interaction starts in so-called 'scoping meetings' during the early stages of planning the report, where the main topics are established. From the very beginning, uncertainty has been on the agenda of these meetings. The CEP team and the policy staff involved cooperated to manage uncertainties in such a way that the demand and supply of uncertain information were in agreement.

The issues addressed involved textual matters, technical questions about the quality of data, but also more substantial concerns. Especially the creation of uncertainty variants shows how uncertainty fine-tuning between the CPB and the ministries was realized. The CEP team asked civil servants which uncertainties for the coming year required closer attention. Both experts and civil servants considered selective uncertainty variants to be a useful tool for analyzing and communicating uncertainty.

Two particular moments in which these suggestions could be made were the technical meeting (with the financial-economic policymakers) and the

contact persons meeting (with more ministries and a broader approach). The writing of the CEP is a relatively open process (Borstlap et al. 2007) and the (draft) uncertainty variants were presented to the policy workers involved in advance, giving them an opportunity to react and to ask for additional variants or for alterations in the variant subjects.

In the technical meeting, a discussion arose about the adequacy of econometric projections due to large fluctuations of the oil price. The draft version assumed a decrease in the oil price, which was questioned by many participants. After sending out this draft version, the oil price had already risen considerably. Furthermore, civil servants argued that the negative and the positive risks or uncertainties had to be in balance to avoid a view of the economy that would be considered too optimistic. This reflected the concerns for budget austerity of the civil servants from the Ministry of Finance involved in the meetings. Since the ministries' representatives thought the CEP created a carefree atmosphere while the risks were enormous, their suggestion was to nuance this positive tone by paying more attention to 'downward risks' and, in particular, to the price of oil. This led to the following request with regard to uncertainty information:

> CPB1: 'The certainty concerning the oil price in 2006 is lower than in 2005.'
> FIN: 'Are you willing to make uncertainty variants on that?'
> CPB2: 'Yes. We don't know the precise interpretation yet, but we will work on that.'

Similarly, the desire for another uncertainty variant was also expressed in a meeting with civil servants at other ministries a few weeks later. Amongst others, the representative of the Ministry of Economic Affairs explicitly suggested highlighting the uncertainty surrounding the oil price. The majority of ministry representatives agreed that the uncertainty regarding the oil price was too important to not create a variant for. The CEP team leader replied that they were fully aware of the uncertainties and risks, and that they were '... busy creating an additional uncertainty variant regarding the oil price.' Although originally raised as an issue related to budget concerns by civil servants at the Ministry of Finance, the oil price variant became a project that was supported by other civil servants as well as the Bureau's economists because there was general agreement that the oil price was an important issue for the forecasts.

This mutual consultation is not created from scratch for every individual report. In fact, the production of the CEP and similar periodic reports has become a well-structured process, with a well-rehearsed protocol which, al-

though unspoken, is generally known by the civil servants and experts involved. This standard mode of operation allows, the policy workers to be well informed about their roles and they have time to prepare for the CPB gatherings. The protocol routinizes meeting plans and the production process of a report, which clarifies what both parties in this cooperative situation can expect.

Similarly, both civil servants and experts share an understanding of what variants are and how they can be used to address uncertainties. Since making uncertainty variants was a routine way of dealing with uncertainties that appear in short-term reports and because of the close contacts with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Ministry of Finance in particular, the policy workers involved knew beforehand that they would have the option to suggest topics for the uncertainty variants. They prepared uncertainty variant suggestions by consulting specialized colleagues in order to get a clear picture of the important developments that were affecting the economic situation at the time. The ministry representatives gathered the variant suggestions internally. At both the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the topics suggested by the CEP matched specialisms and interests of the policymakers. The ministries had a specialist for each 'standard' CEP topic, which could foster the development of suitable uncertainty variants. This knowledge made it possible to thoroughly prepare these suggestions prior to the CPB meetings. Policy workers could anticipate how the bureau was going to address uncertainties in the CEP and hence formulate their questions and concerns in ways that the experts could handle.

This shared knowledge came about through the well-honed cooperation and personal networks that were available. Civil servants and the Bureau experts have historically had close contacts with one another. Personnel exchanges are also common and it is not unusual for social networks to link back to a handful of university departments that train these economists and financial experts. These close contacts create a shared discourse and understanding of the world, which enable interaction during the writing process of the CEP, allowing for the systematic transformation of wild uncertainties into uncertainties that may be useful for policy.

An ageing population: A non-routine policy report

Apart from standard reports, the Bureau also produces a large number of non-routine reports, ranging from brief ad hoc papers that respond to specific policy questions, to extensive dossiers on major policy issues. One such issue that deals with public finance that has been high on the policy agenda

in recent years is the ageing of the Dutch population. The report Ageing and the Sustainability of Dutch Public Finances (AS) is a long-term CPB study that looks ahead to 2040. Population ageing means that the number of pensioners will continue to increase, creating increasing financial burdens. Rising financial burdens are the result of a gap between government expenditures and revenues ('sustainability gap'), which requires budgetary adjustments. The study assesses the sustainability of public finances as a consequence of ageing and explores several policy options that address the restoration of fiscal sustainability.

As in the CEP case, frequent interactions with policy workers were facilitated by the use of a shared understanding of how uncertainty can be addressed. However, the task at hand was much more complex in this case. The issue required a projection of several decades, rather than just one year. Moreover, there was no standard protocol available, the range of ministries and expertise was larger and some aspects required the development of a new computer model. This level of complexity created a certain amount of stress on the cooperative nature of the situation, but, at the same time, it gave a more accurate picture of how civil servants and the experts might be able to manage uncertainties more productively.

We found that an important heuristic underlying successful uncertainty management is the use of a shared classification scheme for uncertainties and uncertainty tools. This involves a general division of types of uncertainty that helps civil servants to thematize uncertainties. This translates into a clear set of instruments that the experts use, reducing uncertainties to a manageable set, while, at the same time, resolving potential conflicts regarding the science-policy boundary. Thus, the classification scheme facilitates cooperation by aligning policy uncertainties with cognitive resources and capacities of experts, while organizing the division of labor between policy-makers and experts.

The main classification principle focuses on the distinction between sources that can affect projections. Policy intentions are a source of change that can alter econometric projections, which have to be treated as a given, however. For purposes of policy analysis, alternative measures can be 'calculated through.' A second source consists of changes in the world that are considered unpredictable, such as changes in lifestyles or wars. These are dealt with via variants, as we saw in the CEP case. The last source originates in the inaccurate nature of knowledge and data, which raises concerns about the sensitivity of any policy analysis. Even though this classification is shared and seems relatively straightforward, the practice of writing reports still requires significant adjustments and tinkering so that the monster fits into these boxes. The AS

team's struggles with the uncertainty of interest rates in the future shows that there is a limit to these kinds of adjustments. Deviations from the basic classification scheme create confusion and undermine cooperation.

When the writing of the AS report began, the most likely interest rate was 3%. However, the Bureau experts faced important issues like the justification of the level and future changes in the interest rates. Discussions emerged about the uncertainties involved, the sensitivity of the outcomes, and how these issues could be resolved.

One serious option was to create an extra baseline projection of 3.5%, in addition to the 3% figure. The reason they chose 3.5% was that the team wanted to remain attuned to the European Commission's interest rates. Meanwhile, the assessments of other policy experts were considered other frames of reference (e.g., Tetlock 2005). The team considered this a good solution because they expected policy workers to only look at the baseline projections and not at the sensitivity analyses. They argued that the two baseline projections were more important in illustrating uncertainties than the sensitivity analyses. The main drawback was that policy workers would only be focusing on one baseline projection. This is reflected in the following discussion:

> CPB 1: 'Thus, you are showing us that [the baseline] is uncertain.'
> CPB 2: 'But policymakers will then just take the average, which would be 3.25%, which would make the presentation of two baseline projections worthless.'
> CPB 3: 'But 3.25% is actually a very good figure.'

Another team member with regard to the two figures 3% and 3.5% wanted to know:

> CPB 4: 'Does this bandwidth represent reality or is it just politically desirable?'
> CPB 5: 'If you use 2.75% to 3.75% you are no longer in line with Brussels. If you use the more cautious 3% to 3.5%, you make it politically more viable. Otherwise, the study group will end up facing even more pressure. So, just accept the 3% to 3.5%.'

By the end of the meeting, the Bureau's experts had come to an agreement. Rather than present just one discount rate and one variant, the team chose two baseline projections with different discount rates. It is obvious that the AS team took the interest rate calculations of the Economic Policy Committee in Brussels into account, despite the fact that the authorities used different

ways to calculate the interest rate. A senior official at the Ministry of Finance was able to convey (without actually saying it) that this was a good decision because the interest rate figures of the two authorities were still comparable with each of the two calculations coming up with an interest rate of 3%.

Thus the AS team tried to reduce interest rate uncertainty by effectively creating two different scenarios for the future. Concerns about the perception of this policy approach was part and parcel of the decisions made because this included not only the creation of a realistic projection, but also prevented the inclusion of an easy way out for policymakers by refusing to revert to overly optimistic scenarios. The experts were effectively attempting to force the civil servants into what they saw as good policy making. The relationship that the experts had with the civil servants may be productive and geared toward the communication of useful uncertainty, but this does not mean there are no attempts at mutual disciplining.

Nevertheless, usefulness remained a dominant concern. One specific audience for this report was an interdepartmental study group of civil servants, consisting of specialists on issues related to aging. The AS team was aware that its report would serve as input to the study group and the team was constantly aware that their analysis had to be useful to these civil servants. A larger range between the two baseline projections was considered more problematic for the study group to deal with because it would create a much wider range of future predictions. This implies that the AS team intentionally provided the study group with (supposedly) 'manageable' information and clear figures, narrowing down options and uncertainties.

These pragmatic interventions in the packaging of uncertainty also had to be justified to their peers. Beside the discussion within the project team, the authors also consulted other CPB experts on the interest rate problem. One expert criticized the (relatively) small range between the two interest rates and noted that the two baseline projections should deviate more significantly. Another expert argued that the smaller the difference between the figures, the higher the probability will be that 'you will have to take full responsibility for it in autumn,' implying that, in this case, there was a greater chance of coming up with inaccurate [faulty?] calculations, which might require recalculations later that same year. A presentation of a baseline with little attention to uncertainty increases the probability that one will end up having to recalculate it periodically, for example, through updates. This is already the case for the periodic CPB reports such as the CEP, but the updates for long-term studies such as AS, would be more complex and time-consuming.

One team member, who was also on the CPB's management board, and a CPB expert (not on the AS team) discussed the uncertainty range and wheth-

er the message would be properly understood by the end-users. The CPB analysts in this situation had to consider how much room to leave for the politicians. In other words, the interpretation option for politicians increases when extensive uncertainty information is provided instead of just one baseline projection.

> 1: 'OK, we have to accept 3% in any case, because of Brussels, and then, well, let's also include a rate of one percentage point higher. But then the average is not 3.25% any more [CPB's best estimate]. If you accept 3% and 4%, then the politicians will use 3.5% and that will not be the most likely rate.'
>
> 2: 'You wouldn't want to reduce the uncertainty regarding the interest rate just in favor of the output, would you? You should focus on the uncertainty in the input, not on the uncertainty in the output!'

Another team member agreed that by accepting the smaller bandwidth (of 3% to 3.5%) 'you leave the choice to the politicians'. The issue continued to haunt the team. It was difficult to keep politicians informed, and to stay in line with peers, as well as Brussels projections. Practical concerns of how to present information also clearly played a role. During a subsequent meeting, the team eventually decided to accept the 3% and 4% interest rate figures for the two baseline projections:

> 1: 'In order to resolve these discussions about the current rate, we'll take 3 to 4%.'
>
> 2: 'Wouldn't it be easier, for the sake of communication, to accept just the 3?'
>
> 3: 'For the graphics, it doesn't make any difference whether you use one or two figures.'
>
> 1: 'And, if we use [only] the 3% figure, we are leaving ourselves vulnerable; we have to be able to explain [the large fluctuations in interest rates].'
> 'And, actually, I don't want to stimulate too many technical discussions about the interest rates.'

A few weeks later, the AS team had to present its proposal for the two baseline projections to get the opinion of the ministries' representatives. Finally, there was going to be a decision made in this discussion. The main questions were how the civil servants were supposed to interpret the two baseline projections and the status of the baseline projections in relation to variants that had already been proposed. For example, a Ministry of Economic Affairs

representative, because of the political significance of this matter, wanted to know whether these projections and the variants could be considered equivalent. The team leader replied explicitly that the projections were more important than the variants. The 'basic' baseline projection (based on the 'original' discount rate of 3%) was slightly more important than the 'alternative' baseline projection (based on a discount rate of 4%). Another team member also unambiguously emphasized that the two projections were not equivalent. This meant that, despite the acknowledgement of large uncertainties, the team obviously prioritized the outcomes of the 'basic' baseline projection while the 'alternative' projection was 'only' calculated to illustrate uncertainty.

By coming up with alternative baseline projections, the team had transgressed the shared acknowledgement of uncertainties. Policy workers did not understand the status of this new category and were also clearly concerned about how this would affect their own work. Eventually, directors from both sides (i.e., the department directors at the Ministries of Finance, Economic Affairs and Social Affairs and Employment, and the director of the CPB) met to discuss the interest rate and how the information was going to be presented. The Economic Affairs representatives advocated the presentation of two interest rate projections, but the other ministries had their own opinions. For example, a senior Ministry of Finance official explained that they did not favor the presentation of two projections. They felt that two projections would be ineffective since the base projection (or CPB's 'best estimate') would remain unclear if presented in this way. An official at the Ministry of Economic Affairs explained that the AS team then tried to find a balance between the various opinions of the policymakers and their own views. The final AS report presented only one baseline rate but, after serious consideration, the AS team stuck to its 'initial' classification scheme (which consisted of the tripartite distinction between baseline projection, sensitivity analyses, and policy analyses).

The profane work of taming uncertainty

Producing uncertainty information in policy analyses that is actually useful for policy workers and politically accountable decision makers is not a precisely defined, deductive system. In spite of attempts to formulate uncertainty *analysis* by experts and uncertainty *assessment* and *management* by policy workers in the more sacred fact/value language of protocols, guidelines, detailed taxonomies, or analytic structures, taming uncertainty uneasily straddles the fact/value divide. Hence, it requires careful negotiation, not only of the treacherous terrain of (future) economic processes, but also of the

boundary work concerning policy, and the practical aspect of writing readable reports that are finished by the deadline.

We have shown how this complexity is managed through frequent interaction between policy workers and experts; a well-designed writing process that helps to establish mutual expectations; a shared world of personal contacts and knowledge; and, crucially, a shared framework for organizing uncertainties. The latter could be found here in the form of a relatively robust, shared classification of uncertainties. In the boundary work between economic experts and policymakers, we see these elements as crucial heuristics that enhance the alignment between the planning agency and the ministries. The following section describes how this works.

Box 1   Taming uncertainty through boundary work between experts and policy makers
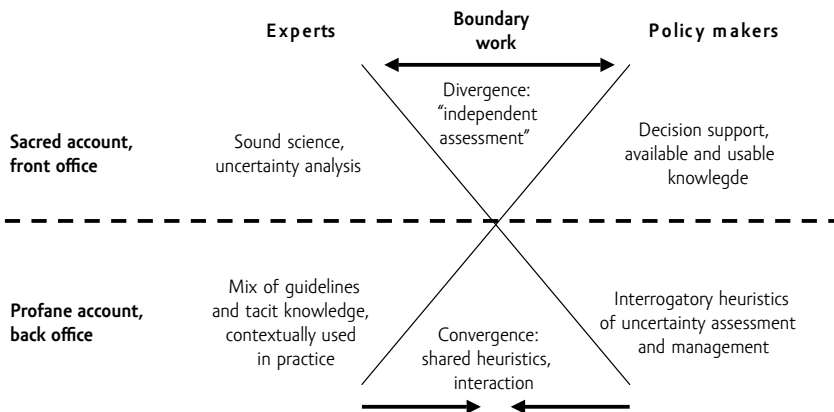
In the research into discourses of boundary work among Dutch experts and policy workers, Hoppe (2008) replicated the findings of Bal et al. (Bal, Bijker and Hendriks 2002), which discovered that experts and policy workers use two kinds of accounts of their daily activities. They activate a sacred, front-office account for 'outsiders' – i.e., parliamentarians or journalists – who expect explanations about what, how, and why they do the things they do. Among colleague 'insiders' and in the boundary work between experts and policy workers, they use a more profane, back-office language.

In public, the experts at the Netherlands Bureau of Economic Policy Analysis usually stress their autonomy in their activities. For example, they clearly reject the idea that their clients co-define the relevance of the knowledge;

similarly, they claim uncertainty analysis as their exclusive domain, which is uninfluenced by the views of clients or stakeholders. However, in the sheltered environments of their communities of practice, they acknowledge that in their long-standing pragmatic relations with their clients, and guided by the rules of the advisory game that emerged over a long period of time from their practical experiences, they *serve* politics and are willing to qualify 'sound science' using terms like 'available and usable' knowledge.

Similarly, policy workers at the Departments of Finance and Economic Affairs publicly portray themselves as the exclusive advisors providing decision support to their political superiors: 'We span the boundary between analysts and politicians' (Hoppe 2008). They do not deny that science plays an important role in uncertainty reduction. However, while formally tasked with the responsibility of uncertainty assessment and management, they claim that, if necessary, 'we keep our expert centre on course' (Hoppe 2008). But, informally they also describe their practices as using the interrogatory heuristics of expert reports and they translate expert views into politically acceptable and administratively feasible policy proposals.

Conclusion

As shown in the previous accounts of dealing with uncertainties in the short and long run, in both standard reports on the future of the Dutch economy and a non-routine study of the issue of an ageing population, both experts and policy workers appear to practise boundary work on the basis of their respective profane self-understandings. This appears to be a necessary condition for productive boundary work at the science-policy interface. The well-known, oft-repeated list of complaints about science-policy misunderstandings in the 'two communities metaphor' of knowledge utilization (see Williams' chapter 10) accurately describes what happens when scientists and policy workers steadfastly cling to their sacred narratives; and are unable to admit that behind the incompatible front-office images there are more easily alignable back-office practices.

What this alignment facilitates is a working relationship that provides policy workers with information that can be used as the relatively stable basis for making decisions and for negotiations, while continuing to explore a limited set of uncertainties. We have tried to describe this process without passing judgment. However, as is usually the case in pragmatic approaches, there is a certain grey area where pragmatism becomes transgression. In all honesty, we should signal that this advisory practice has been criticized, for example

for overly restricting political choice through a particular take on economics (Van den Berg, Both and Basset 1993) or for a tendency to discipline politicians (Pesch, Hisschemöller and Huitema 2006). Inversely, criticizing these practices from the perspective of sacred accounts (Morgan and Henrion 1992) or utopian rationalities (Ezrahi 1980; 1990) runs the risk of sacrificing effective contributions of knowledge to policy making – what Jasanoff has called 'serviceable truths' (Jasanoff 1990). By documenting pragmatic approaches to the taming of uncertainty, we hope to encourage debate over the development of practical and communicable but not overly restrictive forms to frame uncertainty.

Notes

1   This means that the absolute mean predicted error amounts to 1.5%, which means only the amount of error is taken into account. This implies that the CPB forecasts about economic growth deviate 1.5% on average from the realized growth. Furthermore, the assessments concluded that the CPB forecasts slightly outperform a naive projection of the (estimated) national income growth for the previous year. A naive forecast implies that the estimated GDP growth for the year concerned equals the growth of the previous year (Kranendonk and Verbruggen 1999; Kranendonk and Verbruggen 2003).

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D

Policy Work as Mediation

Introduction

The previous part, 'Constructing Meaning through Policy Work,' emphasized the ambiguities of policy-making, but the enactment of policy realities remained rather 'local.' Chapter 4 mainly focused on the construction of meaning in concrete 'learning networks' that were formed in order to redevelop buildings. Chapter 5 focused on working relations between economic experts and policymakers within (and around) one organization, the Dutch Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis. Although the next two chapters also emphasize policy enactment, they deviate in a few major ways. First of all, they are less 'local' in the sense that they describe policy practices that *cut across* many institutes, agencies and organizations. Although the perspectives are clear – the roles of two 'hybrid' science and policy institutes are highlighted (the Rathenau Institute, and the National Initiative for Sustainable Development) – these institutes have had to work with many other actors and parties in order to accomplish certain goals.

Secondly, the chapters are less 'local' in the sense that it was difficult to *localize* the issues that were being addressed. In the two chapters, the hybrid institutes encountered difficulties in finding and fixing the issues. In both cases, the issues were only clear in a very general sense: the Rathenau Institute had to advise members of the Dutch Parliament about future 'sustainable water management' in the Netherlands, while the National Initiative for Sustainable Development was called upon to improve the Netherlands as a 'sustainable society.' These grand, vague goals not only produced major ambiguities – what does it mean? It also produced tensions between finding the right technical expertise and the appropriate political rationales, or, in Heclo's terms, between 'puzzling' and 'powering,' and between changing ideas about the future, as well as stable and institutionalized ideas and interests on the part of the parties involved. Their accounts are much more institutional than the ones we have thus far looked at.

Lydia Sterrenberg and Anne Loeber, who were themselves very involved in shaping the policy practices mentioned, both show and analyze what happened and what was done to arrive at certain goals, as well as the mistakes

that were made. In fact, they mainly show how policy work involves *institutional management*, in the sense of attracting attention, influencing agendas and concerns, involving the right parties, and finding channels for securing a follow up. They show that sustainable water management and a sustainable society require sustainable channels and procedures for new and durable interactions. The thread that runs through both of their accounts, however, is the continuous *'in between-ness'* of their acts. They were forced to continuously mediate between insights, ideas and interests.

6 Managing the Problematic in Policy Work

Lydia Sterrenberg

Introduction

This is an account of policy work that aims to put new things on the political agenda and disrupt institutions. It was an exercise in constructing policy advice about sustainable water management in the Netherlands, undertaken between 1999 and 2002 by the Rathenau Institute, an independent institution for technology assessment, which gives policy advice to the Dutch Parliament.

The origins of the project

In early 1998, some people involved in the field of water management contacted the Rathenau Institute, which is a small, independent think tank funded by the Dutch government to advise Parliament, and is traditionally involved in technology assessment and sustainability studies (Van Eijndhoven 2000). They were involved in innovative spatial projects for more sustainable regional water management, but had problems getting the various levels of government to cooperate, found that the local residents rejected their plans, and they were also unable to convince the various national policymakers that new policies were necessary. They were hoping that the Rathenau Institute would be able to influence policymakers and the Dutch Parliament.

Water management in the Netherlands, a delta area of which about two-thirds is below sea level, had reached a turning point. It had aimed to adapt the water system for the needs of building, shipping, agriculture, recreation and nature development and relied on technical measures. But climate change confronted the Dutch water management with increasing flood risks due to rising sea levels, and more local excesses and shortages of water, because of increased periods of intense rain and drought. It challenged the technical *'water follows function'* approach. For example, wherever the Dutch had depended

on their dikes along the main rivers for their safety, raising them in response to increasing river discharges due to climate change would only increase the effects of flooding, if they ever broke. Meanwhile, the problem of land subsidence and the salinity of peat areas in the western part of the Netherlands, due to permanent drainage requirements for agriculture, made them more prone to flooding especially with rising sea levels.

Box 1   Key actors in modern Dutch water management

Key actors in Dutch water management by 2000 were (Van Rooy and Sterrenberg 2000b; Van der Ven et al. 2003; Sterrenberg 2009): The *Water Boards* ('*Waterschappen*'), which bore the responsibility of maintaining local water systems, and, by 2000, they were also responsible for water quantity and water quality issues and the 'everyday' maintenance of local dikes. The first Water Boards were established about 700 years ago and their number grew over time to over 1000, but in a series of mergers this number was reduced = to 56. The Boards are considered to be a fourth level of government and one of the first examples of Dutch democracy; they also collect their own taxes.

The *Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management* defines overall water management policies and takes primary responsibility for water safety management. Meanwhile, the Dutch national government has 'systemic responsibility' for local water quantity issues and water quality affairs, which became an issue in Dutch water management in the 1970's.

The *Public Works Agency* ('*Rijkswaterstaat*'), the executive organization of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, is responsible for river and coastal management (especially management of flood prevention). Until 2001, when a stringent division was made between policy-making by the Ministry and the execution of the Public Works Agency, it was also involved in policy-making.

The *provinces* (12 in total) are formally supervisors to the Water Boards and responsible for regional spatial policies.

The *municipalities* (ca. 500 by the year 2000) are responsible for local spatial plans and water sewerage systems.

Finally, two other departments should also be mentioned because of their role in (spatial) water management: the *Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment,* which is responsible for spatial planning policies and policies involving chemical pollution and the *Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries*, which is responsible for wetlands policies.

This is why, in 1995, the Public Works Agency ('Rijkswaterstaat'), one of the central actors in water management (see also box 1), concluded that the task of water management would have to become more variable. It had suggested

new strategies of spatial solutions to deal with local excesses and water shortages and river spates (Public Works Agency 1995). These ideas were included in the national *Policy Memorandum on Water Management* of 1998 (Ministry of Transport, Public Work and Water Management 1998), which had already been issued by the time the innovators contacted the Rathenau Institute. However, they felt that the report neglected to address the issue of implementation.

The issue raised by the innovators fit into the Institute's goals of performing politically relevant work and operating within the water management domain – new for the Institute – could be defended because it was concerned with (changes in the use of) technology. Since the Board could freely decide the Institute's program, no additional authorization was necessary for a request for policy advice that explored the question of why sustainable water management had not been pursued earlier.

Designing the right project?

I was appointed the project leader. Lacking both a network in the field and expertise in water management, I only had the hypotheses that were generated by earlier Rathenau projects on sustainable development: that cultural and institutional issues mattered and that sustainability implied new actor relations and new rules. I started attending symposia and interviewing researchers, on the one hand, to check my hypothesis, and, on the other, to find someone who was acquainted with water issues, had a network in the field, and could do research work for the Institute. I found an innovative researcher-advisor and accomplished networker who was enthusiastic about the project and whose experience confirmed the Rathenau perspective. He became the external project leader and main researcher in relation to policy advice while I was responsible for the management of the project, including its quality and political orientation.

Together we began to define a project. We could see that we would need factual information and assessments of practitioners to better understand why practice was stalling despite many good intentions, and we envisaged analyzing policy plans, as well as holding interviews and three workshops. We decided to focus the case study on a functional water management area rather than an administrative area of one of the Water Boards. The sub-basin area chosen was in the centre of the Netherlands and partly below and partly above sea level. All relevant stakeholders were present here and a wide variety of Dutch water management situations and problems could possibly occur. That would provide us with an excellent starting point for understanding

problems of unsustainable water management, and for exploring improvement options. A practical reason for choosing this specific area was that the external project leader had many contacts there, and the Water Board people agreed to cooperate.

The next step entailed checking whether the proposal was robust enough to serve as the basis for policy advice. From the interviews with parliamentarians we learned that starting with an analysis of local practices was a good approach. The members of the parliamentary Standing Committee on Water Management were convinced by the Fourth Policy Memorandum that government and Water Boards had adequately adapted their policies for sustainable water management. However, comments issued by the Ministry were negative. The head of the Water Management Division of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management reacted by noting that 'Everything has already been examined for the Fourth Memorandum on Water Management,' and that 'A problem was suggested that does not exist' (Van Rooy and Sterrenberg 2003: 5). But others we spoke to did not agree, or at least not fully. Who were we supposed to believe then?

To explore whether the Ministry's negative reaction was primarily a show of resistance to interference by the Rathenau Institute, we organized a meeting to discuss the feedback. The Ministry representatives responsible for the feedback were invited to this meeting as well as some of the innovators that had been in contact with the Rathenau Institute. The discussion convinced the project leaders and the Director that the Institute should continue, although with some small adaptations to the project. The Rathenau Board agreed, but stressed that more people from spatial planning needed to be involved in the project to more satisfactorily address the issue of more 'space for water.' Knowing that the Water Boards were defensive about their autonomy and unwilling to publicly discuss any of the problems, the Rathenau Board also demanded a guarantee that the Water Boards in the basin area would cooperate. This could be arranged due to the excellent contacts that the external project leader had and, by the end of 1998, the Board had given us a formal 'go-ahead.' However, some Board members had lingering doubts about whether the project would succeed or not. Neither the Parliament nor the government were formally obligated to react to policy advice from the Rathenau Institute, and there was skepticism about whether Rathenau's advice regarding local practices would be sufficient to convince the ministry and the Parliament when the innovators ultimately failed in their aims.

Working on a problematic

Research commenced at the beginning of 1999. Data on regional water management and spatial planning were collected and analyzed and the policies of the relevant organizations were screened. Interviews dealing with both the problems and opportunities in the area of sustainable water management in the basin area were held with representatives of the Water Boards, the provinces, municipalities, and environmental and farmers' organizations. These were followed by three workshops consisting of 10-15 participants each. The first workshop consisted mainly of water managers and it was here that we checked our assessments regarding the water management situation in the basin area and we further discussed the both the positive and negative aspects of pursuing sustainable water management in the area. The second workshop explored these questions with spatial planners. In the third workshop, which consisted of a variety of participants, the visions of the two groups were presented and we began exploring policy options. By the end of 1999, a problematic had been arrived at (Box 2). Overall, several non-sustainable situations had been found in the area and we realized there were a number of

Box 2   Problems of unsustainable water management in the catchment area

- Several unsustainable water management situations (short-term solutions, buck-passing, etc.) were found.
- Innovation with respect to water management was limited.
- Available information on the state of the water system was incomplete.
- An abundance of plans existed, sometimes in conflict with one another. For instance, there were two provincial water balance plans in the area, two water boards' maintenance plans, one maintenance plan by the Rijkswaterstaat Utrecht for the Amsterdam-Rijn canal in the area, two plans presented by water pipeline firms, 29 municipal water and/or sewage plans and one integral, multi-stakeholder plan for the Vecht River and its borders.
- Difficulties involving cooperation between the various actors were found, due to established task divisions and (separate) funding streams.

- Participants confirmed that contacts that water management experts had with physical planning actors were limited; and proactive actions by the 'water people' regarding spatial planning were missing.
- Cultural differences between the 'engineer-like,' 'fact-focused' water sector and the 'creative design'-oriented physical planning sector were evident and hampered fruitful interaction.

Source: Clewits et al. (2000)

factors that impeded innovation for more sustainable water management. A key factor was that water management was divided between various organizations, each with their own plans and interests. There was a lack of interaction between the spatial planners and water managers, particularly in the early phases of spatial planning, which was further exacerbated by the cultural differences between the two groups.

Dealing with a lack of openness

We had several closed-door interviews with water managers. This was due to the reigning morality among the interviewees in the sector, which included not speaking publicly about internal problems. This meant that it was not self-evident that our problematic would be discussed by the sector in an open way. We decided on an offensive strategy and used our external project leader who was a member of the organizing committee of the annual congress of the Society of Water Managers. He persuaded his colleague organizers that he should give a keynote speech on the case study results. Aware of the risk of collective denial and de-legitimization of the Institute's work (and for the external project leader, whose job and livelihood depended on the sector, there was also a financial risk) we carefully designed the presentation, being extra sensitive to its tone. We even checked this aspect with some supportive water managers. We were relieved to learn that, although some of the congress participants disagreed with our results, the majority did not.

Enhancing the project's political relevance and robustness

An advisory committee was formed at the start of the project. Members were principals or people involved in innovation for sustainable development and with a stake in water management or spatial planning. Two of the members were former parliamentarians and thus were well aware of how Parliament functioned. By January 2000, the advisory committee had discussed the interim results and first thoughts on policy options. It did not consider the results and recommendations as convincing enough for politicians and governments and thus suggested performing more case studies on how water issues were dealt with in spatial planning. This was considered an important focus because Parliament was about to consider the national Spatial Planning Memorandum, and this would provide an opportunity for Parliament to assess the advice offered by the Rathenau Institute. The committee also suggested dis-

cussions with leading figures in spatial planning and water management, both to test the results and to make them more politically robust.

But the extra money and time that the Rathenau Board made available was limited. We had to make do with five smaller studies on local water policy-making and spatial planning, based on a limited number of interviews. Moreover, four smaller regional meetings were held with some eight key figures (local politicians, water firm directors, and representatives of water boards, provincial governments, NGOs and farmer organizations) at which time the problems of unsustainable water management in the basin area were presented and the policy options were discussed. The options linked to the more general policy discussions were developed by the project leaders from the workshops and had been pre-tested in the project leader's network.

Balancing between criticism and adaptation

We were planning to produce a journalistic report on the case studies, which we felt would be the best way to communicate the findings to parliamentarians. But a draft, which had a critical tone and was based on limited research, antagonized our interviewees, who were offended by the critical tone and what they saw as a failure to acknowledge the initiatives that had been taken for sustainable water management. We were accused of *'gossip journalism'* and we were compelled not to disseminate the report. The core conclusion from the case studies, however, that water interests were only marginally considered in spatial planning decisions was not refuted (Box 3).

Box 3   **Results of the mini-case studies**

The additional case studies confirmed that sustainable water management was *not* a major issue in spatial planning decisions. The continuous drainage of the *Horstermeerpolder*, for example, was causing deterioration of the soil, salt water problems and was disturbing the *Naardermeer* lake ecosystem, a nearby protected nature preserve. There were discussions on the creation of wetlands in the polder, but none focused on a sustainable water management alternative that involved a small body of water. Even the nation's major conservation organization, which managed the Naardermeer area, had avoided discussion of this option because they feared the reactions from local residents. The case of extending *IJburg* in Amsterdam further into the IJmeer lake, in the north of the catchment area, water managers had been keen to intervene because of algae risks, but had not advised spatial planners to seek alternative locations due to increases in

water levels and an increased need for water storage facilities because of climate change. The national Public Works Agency interfered at a late stage and managed to ensure that IJburg was constructed half a meter higher. The IJmeer's reduced water storage capacity due to the IJburg extension only became a political issue in 2007-2008 after most of IJburg had already been completed. In the case involving the extension of the city of *Utrecht*, the location that was chosen was relatively appropriate from the viewpoint of sustainable water management, but a planned extension near the city of Nijmegen would have led to a bottleneck in the river, which only became an issue long after the plans had been formally agreed to. The last mini-case showed how the fragmentation of tasks among different organizations weakened the response to problems involving water quality and water quantity near the city of Hilversum.

Dealing with conflicting frames and delegitimation

In one of our meetings with stakeholders the chairman of one Water Board criticized us for having packed our observations 'in a lot of rhetoric and sometimes even nonsense,' and being 'wrong in making it an institutional debate in advance.' What was really at stake, according to him was that water interests had not sufficiently been taken into consideration and should now be highlighted. A local alderman supported his criticism, which made it difficult to continue our discussion; participants ultimately did agree that research problems were not specific to this area, although the hostile atmosphere in this case did not disappear. Later conversations with the chairman, which were possible only after completion of the project, made it clear that his main fear was that Water Board taxes would be abolished and he wanted to protect the Water Boards' financial autonomy, to make them immune to what he saw as the whimsical policy priorities of the government. He also claimed that he was concerned that institutional debates would delay necessary responses to climate change. This shows the complex and partly conflicting agendas and institutional interests through which this policy issue was being addressed. We feared that a negative assessment of our project was going to be disseminated by the participants and after the meeting we decided to approach some supportive and influential people involved in the water sector to explain our project.

Searching for political windows of opportunity

In early 2000, we began thinking about how and at what moment we were going to address Parliament, which, without any major comments, had agreed with the Fourth Memorandum. New parliamentary debates on water

management involving the Rathenau Institute were not forthcoming. It was not clear when the policy memorandum on Spatial Planning would eventually emerge. We decided to approach the national ad hoc Committee on Water Management in the 21st Century, which had been formed in 1999 by the government and the Union of Water Boards in response to serious local flooding in 1998, which was the third such major event after the floods of 1993 and 1995. The Committee was asked to offer is advice on sustainable water management in the Netherlands, and the government would react to this advice and discuss its stance with Parliament. Backed by the Rathenau Board, I offered to make the yet-unpublished project results available to the Committee in the spring of 2000. The Committee, by then, had commissioned numerous technical studies on the consequences of climate change and was considering its advice. It invited us to make a presentation, which convinced its members of the relevance of the institutional aspects of sustainable water management. The Committee decided to subsidize the Rathenau case studies, and began commissioning studies on public awareness, as well as planning some workshops on institutional matters. In referring to the Rathenau Institute's studies(Committee Water Management for the 21st Century 2000: 30), the commission concluded that Dutch water management 'was not ready for the 21st century. Politicians had to acknowledge its importance, and institutional and strategic behaviors had to be confronted, including fragmented steering (divisions between water management and spatial planning) and the lack of commitment of spatial planners and citizens. The commission also criticized the water management sector for being insufficiently concerned about the related costs. It also recommended greater involvement by citizens and spatial planners, a water assessment instrument to assess the consequences of spatial decisions involving sustainable water management, a more influential role for the provinces and a reduction in the levels of bureaucracy.

Combining concerns in the policy advice

The Rathenau Report was being prepared for presentation to Parliament. We had to deal with several concerns. Politicians, who were unaware of the problems that hampered local sustainable water management, had to be informed about these issues, but we had make sure that we did not antagonize the involved stakeholders, who (we had discovered) were very sensitive to any criticism. For instance, one employee at the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management who had seen a draft of this report

criticized it for being too negative, for fixating on the problems, and that if it were to be published in the then present form, he would advise his State Secretary to reject it. A compromise was reached by adding a disclaimer that the research was ongoing and nowhere near complete, but that it needed to be expedited and that it needed political support. The Director of the Rathenau Institute advised that we also include a more attractive vision of what sustainable water management could be in the future, a vision that included floating homes and greenhouses and hilly landscapes, where water could be periodically stored. To justify the Institute's involvement in water management policies, we included technical information on the current water management system. We shied away from any statements involving formal changes in the roles of the provinces and the Water Boards, which touched upon a number of complex and sensitive issues, which certainly needed further exploration. Finally, to enhance the attractiveness of the Report for politicians, we added some comments that were based on our local practices study and on the conclusions made by some of the relevant committees. These committees (including the 'Committee 21st century', whose draft report we had seen) had recently made comments about water management organization and financing.

Box 4   **Major Issues Contained in the First Report to the Parliament**

The Rathenau Institute's report to Parliament included summaries of the results from the basin study and additional case studies. It is stressed that water is only marginally considered in spatial planning, due to the fragmentation of tasks and lack of contacts between spatial planners and water managers. It suggested that sustainable water management also provided opportunities for the future.

   The policy recommendations included: stimulating cooperation and integrating spatial planning with water planning; reducing fragmentation in the water management system by allowing for more avenues for forming so-called 'water chain firms' (against a background of an emerging discussion on the liberalization of the water chain firms); a stronger coordinating role for the provinces who are central players in Dutch spatial planning policy; and an innovation fund. Furthermore, the report suggested that citizens be better informed about the new policy paradigm and be encouraged to become more involved in interactive planning procedures. Finally, the report also recommended a monitoring system and evaluations of the process of change in practice.

Trying to attract the attention of parliamentarians

We decided to publish the Rathenau report, in August 2000, on the eve of the publication of the recommendations to Parliament by the Committee on Water Management in the 21st Century. Two reputable national newspapers covered the Rathenau results and several radio programs invited the Rathenau Institute to discuss the issue of water management and the Committee's conclusions. But a real political debate had to wait. The government's views were published in December 2000 under the title 'Dealing differently with water' (Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management 2000). It endorsed the new social and more spatial perspective on water management as promoted by the Committee on Water Management in the 21st Century, and accepted a National Agreement between the national government, the provinces, the municipalities and the Water Board for a more sustainable local water management policy, a Water Assessment Instrument as recommended by the Committee 21st Century and a public information campaign, but it did not urge a major reorganization of the Dutch water management system. A discussion in Parliament followed a few months later. By then we had updated the project results (Van Rooy and Sterrenberg 2001), based on new developments and we were invited to give a presentation to the Committee on Water Management in Parliament, with some members posing questions about the Rathenau results in a debate with the State Secretary. But no formal amendments to water policies were made at that time; politicians were apparently ready to rely on the government's new water management policies.

Using and creating opportunities for a follow up

The Institute had limited financial resources and capacities for a follow up to this project, but fortunately the national Advisory Board on Public Administration approached the Institute because it had been asked to make recommendations on the reorganization of the water management sector. The Board's recommendations quoted the Rathenau report extensively, concluding that the reorganization of the water management sector (actor configuration, rules and resources) was necessary (Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur 2001).

Another channel for a follow-up was an informal platform consisting of politicians, managers, board members and experts, which had just elected a former Minister of Transportation, Public Works and Water Management as its chair. She wanted to revive this platform and transform it into a place of innovation. After a presentation by the project leaders, she decided that

'politics could no longer beat around the bush,' and, citing the Rathenau findings, which pointed out that the fragmented nature of the water management organization was breeding inefficiency, she contacted the Minister of Finance and her party's spokesman to discuss the creation of a more efficient water management infrastructure. This led to the launch of an interdepartmental research project in which the Rathenau external project leader was invited to participate. The project report recommended four options for reorganizing the water management sector. The government chose the option that allowed the present players to hold onto their tasks but with demands for increased financial accountability among the Water Boards (Interdepartementaal Beleidsonderzoek 2004).

A third channel was via Habiforum, an independent organization founded by the Dutch government to produce research on 'multiple land use.' Our projects external leader was involved in this project and Habiforum's adjunct director was sensitive to the findings of the Rathenau Institute regarding the fact that 'water needs' were ignored by the spatial planning experts. A contest called 'Future Water Landscapes' was organized in 2001 to produce innovative ideas in the area of sustainable water management. The Ministry of Transportation, Public Works and Water Management co-sponsored the contest. Habiforum, meanwhile organized various design sessions with the relevant stakeholders. Some of these sessions stimulated development planning processes that included 'water assignments.' The external project leader was requested to give presentations to the Water Board and other provincial civil servants. He also chaired various courses on sustainable water management.

Summary and Reflection

This case mirrors Carol Weiss's findings (Weiss 1980; 1991), which basically noted that policy analysis is rarely used directly and instrumentally – and is certainly not applied in cases of conflicting interests – but more often has a different, conceptual impact ('enlightenment'). Indeed the impact of the Rathenau Institute's policy analysis was chiefly conceptual.

Our case study also revealed the complex and conflicting agendas and institutional interests through which sustainable water management was being addressed. Donald Schön and Martin Rein have suggested that, when it concerns complex and controversial cases like this one, the policy design approach should be based on triadic policy analysis and a situated analysis. Essentially, their rational design approach entails three layers (Schön and Rein 1994: 166-173): At the most *basic layer* the individual designer(s) iterate(s) between de-

fining the substance of the problem in a particular context and constructing appropriate ways to deal with it. This involves 'backtalk' including ex-ante testing of solutions in view of the opportunities and constraints implied in the context's material and political features. The *second layer* encompasses the actual design and maintenance of the design network. Here design rationality becomes a form of '*double designing*': both the substance and the design network itself have to be designed. The *third layer* is where the design process finds itself embedded in social debate and stakeholder conflicts.

An essential condition for success, however, is, the development of mutual trust between the members of the coalition or design network. Trust, however, has been generally lacking when we look at the Rathenau Institute's policy analysis and thus the second and third layers of rational policy design became interwoven. The various stakeholder frames produced power struggles that involved the (de)legitimization and (de)authorization of the policy analysis, which offered no easy resolution. As a consequence, Schön and Rein's recommendation that '*the substantive design moves must not threaten the integrity of the designing system*' (Schön and Rein 1994: 186) was difficult to accomplish. The strategies were, on the one hand, applied as reactions to the delegitimizing efforts by creating a more robust body of knowledge, and coming up with minor adaptations to the reports regarding style and content. On the other hand, we also witnessed strategic coalition building, which means the use of various design coalitions based on the phase of the policy analysis project and various developments in the social and political debate. It was a strategic coalition and 'advocacy coalitions' with other favorable (outside) change agents, including the influential Committee 21st Century – and Habiforum that helped legitimize the project's conclusions on institutional change. This case reflects another of Carol Weiss's conclusion that policy analysis is generally part of a process of 'decision accretion' in multi-actor processes (Weiss 1991).

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Evaluation as Policy Work: Puzzling and Powering
in a Dutch Program for Sustainable Development

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Introduction

The pursuit of sustainable development is a major goal of Dutch environmental policy. To facilitate this development in the new millennium, a highly experimental independent body was created: the National Initiative for Sustainable Development (in Dutch: NIDO). NIDO was established as a temporary, publicly financed foundation which operated at arm's length from the government, and whose purpose was to 'structurally anchor' initiatives in society that would facilitate dramatic changes leading to a more sustainable society.

This meant that the organization had to engage in a very specific form of policy work. While all policy endeavors may be described as a combination of 'puzzling and powering' (Heclo 1974) or, alternatively, of design and instigation (Hoppe 1993), in the case of NIDO, this combination was more complicated because of the temporary nature of the organization. What sustainable development might entail was and remains quite unclear, but the concept implies a fundamental break with current unsustainable social dynamics. The designs NIDO was hired to produce thus had to foster radical (economic and technological) innovation in the long run. However, they had to be designed so that, in the short run, they would encourage actors ('change agents') to instigate immediate change.

NIDO set out to elaborate this challenge by identifying and strengthening so-called sustainable initiatives in society. It coordinated two to three-year programs that brought together forward-thinking people from industry, government, scientific community, and social organizations to foster collaborative attempts to translate the concept of sustainable development within the contexts of their own professions. In doing so, NIDO embarked on what later became known in Dutch academic circles and policy jargon as 'transition management' (Rotmans 2003; Grin et al. 2009), that is, as a coherent series of activities intended to help bring about a transformation in policy involving types of development that thrive on sustainable dynamics.

The associated notion of transition *management*, which was coined by the research group of Jan Rotmans and Rene Kemp, indicates the 'governance principles, methods and tools' that deal with transitions (cf. Loorbach 2007: 17). It has provoked quite some criticism because of its 'grand design' connotations, implying large-scale social engineering (Shove and Walker 2007). In our current networked society, where power is polycentric and knowledge quintessentially contested, the idea of 'malleable' social developments that can be influenced by some higher managerial powers, seems oddly anachronistic. Given that 'sustainable development' is a fairly elusive policy ambition, the challenge for policy workers is enormous.

The managers and academics whose task it was to give shape to the NIDO experiment were well aware of the challenging nature of their assignment. In the first few months of NIDO's development, they produced two fundamental design choices to deal with the issue. First, NIDO used existing social developments and 'sustainable initiatives' as a point of departure in the design of its programs, and further developed these. Secondly, NIDO was further designed to function as a learning organization where it could reflect on its own experiences and activities as part of its operational procedures, allowing it to generate systematic feedback loops and establish an evaluation and monitoring program. Policy scientists from the University of Amsterdam were contracted to evaluate the program.

This chapter argues that both NIDO managers and evaluators were engaged in policy work, which involved both puzzling and powering. The NIDO managers' puzzling and powering concentrated on a range of social actors, mostly from the corporate sector. And while the evaluators initially envisioned their activity as detached research, objectively analyzing NIDO's work from an academic perspective, they also found themselves engaged in puzzling and powering, both in relation to NIDO's managers and the NIDO organization itself. We begin our analysis by tracking how NIDO policy workers constructed and pursued 'transition management,' and then shift to how the evaluators developed their own roles in relation to the policy workers and the organization itself.

Ambitious plans in the polder: Transition management as a new area of Dutch policy

The Brundtland Commission's notion of sustainable development, defined in 1987 as a development of increasing productivity that does not deprive future generations of their natural resources (WCED 1987), fits in well with the Dutch environmental policy of those days. Disappointment with policy achievements

since the 1970s, which built on traditional administrative regulatory strategies for pollution control, set the stage for the development of an entirely new approach to institutionalized environmental policy in the Netherlands. In the mid-1980s, policy combined environmental concerns with economic interests. Pieter Winsemius, who was the Environmental Minister during the 1982-1986 period, spoke of the need to stimulate an internalization (*verinnerlijking*) of environmental responsibility (Winsemius 1986). If environmental notions could be integrated into the economic behavior of various market players (consumers and producers), it would better ensure that economic decisions reflected environmental concerns along with criteria like profit and efficiency.

The WCED's new discourse of sustainable development presented economic and environmental goals as being compatible and provided a suitable storyline for the new shift in environmental policy. In 1989, the incoming Dutch government adopted the notion of sustainable growth and proposed that 'sustainable development had to be accomplished within one generation' (*Staatscourant*, 27 November 1989, cited in WRR 1994: 27). The ensuing policy was laid out in a series of Environmental Policy Plans (the NEPPS) and was based on a range of newly developed principles and notions such as the 'standstill' principle, which marked the current state of environmental degradation as the absolute bottom line of pollution levels for the future, the 'polluter-pays principle,' the principle of 'abatement at the source' and the policy of the 'closing of substance cycles.'

Despite these well-developed principles, which were internationally appreciated (Weale 1992), some ten years later, the envisioned sustainable society was still nowhere in sight. Among the barriers that were identified was the very structure of society in which the actors operate privately and professionally. Even if environmental considerations were incorporated into both personal morality and economic activities, the actors tended to fall short of their goals because the transaction costs of enacting them were considered too high. Even the most conscientious public transportation user may end up buying an automobile if public transportation does not perform reliably and efficiently. As a result, society is faced with a number of persistent structural problems that arise from patterns and processes that are deeply embedded in, and privileged by, the current institutions of state, science, market and civil society (Grin and Weterings 2005). Mere behavioral changes enacted by the various actors, some authors and commentators concluded (Rotmans 2003; Kemp et al. 2007), were not enough to have a sizeable impact on sustainable development. This requires a drastic re-organization of the entire structure of society. More importantly perhaps, it requires a fundamental re-thinking of how (economic) progress and development are defined and validated in present-day society (Grin 2005).

A new paradigm that offered possible solutions for persistent problems focused on how society needed to shift from its present course to a more sustainable one and was developed by various academic authors. It eventually made its way into the environmentalist policy arena (Kemp and Rotmans 2009). By 2001, its catch phrase 'transitions' had been adopted as part of the fourth National Environmental Policy Plan: 'transitions.' In a review of the events that led to the inclusion of these academic views on sustainable social transformations by policymakers on the national level – itself an interesting discussion on boundary work – the academics involved concluded that '[t]he NEPP4 needed an overarching concept and a vocabulary for a discourse on persistent problems' (Kemp and Rotmans 2009). The notion of transition seemed to provide an apt narrative, and was officially adopted by the Dutch government in 2001 with its 'transition policy for sustainable energy.'

Transitions were considered ongoing, long-term processes of change that fundamentally alter culture, structure and practices in specific social subsystems (cf. Rotmans et al. 2001; Geels 2002). Efforts undertaken to co-influence these processes of change from the perspective of a sustainable future were dubbed 'transition management' (Rotmans 2003). By adopting this language, the NEPP4 effectively identified the persistent problem areas (the loss of biodiversity, climate change, overexploitation of natural resources, health threats and threats to external safety, deterioration of the environment) and named the transition processes that would deal with these as the transition toward sustainable energy, a transition toward sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources, a transition toward sustainable agriculture and a transition toward sustainable mobility.

It is within this highly dynamic context of science-policy interactions that involved designing new governance approaches for sustainable development that an experimental program for fostering sustainable change took shape. It commenced in December 1999, well before transition management was officially endorsed in NEPP, and the National Initiative for Sustainable Development may be regarded as a program that pioneered transition management before the term became more common.

NIDO's emergent design for managing transitions

The National Initiative for Sustainable Development has a remarkably short history. In hindsight, one could argue that it was designed 'too early' to benefit from the government-wide focus on shifts towards a sustainable development that was institutionalized with the NEPP4. NIDO may be considered one

of the first off-shoots to develop in what later developed into the 'transition tree,' preparing the way for further growth only to be overshadowed by other programs – in 2004, NIDO failed to receive adequate subsidies for its second five-year term and was dismantled just as it was becoming a significant factor. Its defeat was built into its structure, some might argue, from the very start.

At the time of its formal establishment, NIDO was little more than an idea. The idea was that sustainable development was something that could be consciously aspired to, and that government could have a role in its conceptual development. How this could happen, and which role government would take, were questions that the newly established organization needed to answer. NIDO was formally instituted to initiate 'leaps towards a sustainable society,' and in doing so, it would also contribute significantly to the Dutch knowledge base on sustainable development.

The individuals hired to create this institute began struggling with this dual challenge. The first objective came from the Ministry for the Environment, which wanted to establish a worthy sequel to a highly appreciated experimental program that addressed questions of sustainable development from the perspective of technological innovation (the interdepartmental Program on Sustainable Technological Development, cf. Weaver 2000). The second objective was formulated because NIDO was set up with government money derived from the country's natural gas supply revenues that had been earmarked for developing the Dutch infrastructure. That goal was now broadened to include the 'knowledge infrastructure,' in its pursuit of sustainable development.

The dual objective reflected the two challenges of 'sustainable development' as a policy goal: it requires insight into what sustainability may entail in a particular field, and involves the practical necessity of bringing about social change. The initial NIDO staff and advisors, with their backgrounds in academia, marketing communications and business, opted for a practical approach to this design-*cum*-stimulation mission. They chose to develop insights into what the concept means, in collaboration with professionals already working on this question rather than elaborating the idea of 'sustainable development.' By combining their research with that of others, they hoped not only to develop plans, but also to increase the chances that initiatives for change would actually follow.

Sustainability as an outcome of joint puzzling

NIDO developed its core axioms on puzzling and powering in the early months. First, they decided to focus on existing trends as a starting point for elaborating program themes. The aim was to accelerate and strengthen the ex-

isting dynamics of innovation rather than introduce new developments. The initial idea was that NIDO would function as a kind of broker organization, to link representatives from governments, NGOs, business and academia, to make their efforts in dealing with the concept of sustainability a shared struggle. NIOD consulted its most trusted advisors and decided that private firms should be its primary partners, thus maximizing its chances for affecting actual change.

Thus NIDO consciously tied the 'puzzling' part of its policy work to the 'powering' part. This practical approach would enable NIDO's staff to link the substantive question of what sustainable development might entail with regard to a specific theme, business or policy area to the procedural issue of how to design programs that could produce the desired 'leaps' toward a sustainable society. The meaning of the notion of 'sustainable development' thus became the outcome rather than its point of departure. The sole substantive a priori elaboration was that sustainable development should be understood in so-called 'Triple P' terms (Elkington 1997), indicating a balance between economic prosperity ('profit'), ecological quality ('planet') and social well-being ('people'). Rather than being a conscious act of program-building, this focus emerged implicitly from the choices made within NIDO's first program on corporate social responsibility.

In this vein, some eight programs were launched in the first two years (to which two programs developed outside NIDO were added and were considered promising). Each program was run by a 'program manager', and assisted by a 'process manager', all hired for the duration of the program. They came from academia, consultancy or commercial organizations. The process managers met weekly to exchanges views and experiences. The full team, including NIDO's director, convened once a month. The idea behind this set-up was that the program managers would bring in specific networks and knowledge on, say, urban innovation, logistics or marketing. The process managers provided insight into the operations of the program. NIDO began taking shape because of their collective efforts, despite being comprised of only a director, and administrative staff in a prestigious office building.

It was in the daily operations of running the programs that the tensions built into NIDO's strategy of 'puzzling through powering' and vice versa came to the fore. The strategy of using existing trends as a point of departure was considered a strategic choice to ensure the cooperation of various change agents, dubbed 'forerunners,' but soon proved to have some serious drawbacks. A program manager recalled that her open approach to new ideas from her partners was quickly perceived as a lack of direction on the part of NIDO. 'They don't have a clue what sustainable development is and how

they're going to handle it' was an example of a common reaction, and NIDO dreaded losing its reputation before it had even had a chance to prove itself.

To avoid an impression of indecisiveness, the manager of the program on corporate social responsibility consciously limited the initial discussions to a small circle of trusted and valued partners. It was only after decisions had been made on the main features of the program that she opened up the discussion to a broader range of actors. The 'sustainable marketing,' program underwent a similar fine-tuning round but it did not turn out as expected. Here, the question of 'what is our focus and how are we going to organize this program' was the central issue of the first two or three meetings. Representatives from various firms that sought to produce sustainable consumer goods in a commercially viable way attended these meetings. They were all seeking to expand the market segment for sustainable consumer goods (from paint to foodstuff) beyond the 'alternative consumer' niche market. They considered the program's added value vague and attendance at the meetings declined rapidly. The same 'join them or lead them' tension was evident at gathering of another program, but the results were quite different. In the urban renewal program, which, unusual for NIDO, was aimed at the public sector – program managers were surprised when they met a wall of indifference among the potential participants. Efforts to develop this program failed time and again because they refused to answer the question 'so what does sustainable urban renewal actually mean?' The program's staff wanted to raise awareness on the issue of housing and urban development from a different perspective than the typical technical approach. Most of the professionals from the field had received their professional training at the Delft University of Technology. To them the term 'sustainable' meant material innovations and energy reduction, using available and conventional urban extension plans. The program's staff was able to break through mainstream technical engineering beliefs, and they readjusted their ambitions to a 'pre-programming' phase. An optional course on sustainable urban renewal was eventually developed and introduced into the curriculum at the Delft University of Technology as a spin-off of NIDO's program.

Almost all of NIDO's programs adopted the language of their respective participants and sparring partners to reach the professionals in the private and public sector, and to launch NIDO's 'puzzling' activities. For instance, the urban renewal program shed typical NIDO jargon to such an extent that even the word 'sustainable' in the program's agenda and activities became taboo. This shift had two different but equally unproductive effects. First of all, it contributed to the enormous diversity within NIDO, in terms of program themes, objectives and approaches. These themes varied so greatly that

NIDO's staff sometimes found it difficult to communicate with one another. This meant that outsiders never got a clear picture of NIDO's identity.

A second effect, related to the latter, was that parties operating in the particular fields that NIDO programs targeted were often frustrated about what the added value of NIDO actually was. As one program manager pointed out, one discussion partner once responded quite bluntly: 'If the government wants us to develop a more sustainable policy, why not just give the tons of money that NIDO now receives directly to us [established players in the field], then we can begin to achieve some miracles.' This kind of criticism was reinforced by NIDO's position as a newcomer and a temporary one at that, with a decidedly generic philosophy – which was further fuelled by NIDO's strategy of invisibility. This leads us to a discussion of NIDO's 'powering' activities.

(Em)powering initiatives towards a sustainable transition?

NIDO chose to adopt an aforementioned facilitative role that sought to strengthen nascent sustainable initiatives. In an early brainstorming discussion at the time of its establishment, NIDO's role was defined as 'not standing on a table' and, instead, consisted of 'sitting around a table together with all of the stakeholders,' which would stimulate and strengthen *their* learning processes. Moreover, NIDO also chose its role by shifting program results to other players in order to relate outcomes to the dynamics dominating a particular field. The discrepancy in terms of duration between a two-year program period and NIDO's long-term objectives forced program staff to consciously manage the social embedding of their program's findings and dynamics.

NIDO's potential impact on specific program dynamics essentially hinged on how it was received in specific domains. In turn, the way NIDO was perceived varied between programs and was largely dependent on both the characteristics of the field and the ability of the program's staff to carve out an identifiable niche for itself. In a fully developed field, such as urban renewal, which was already dominated by a set of well-established institutions, NIDO faced more resistance than in areas such as corporate social responsibility, where the contours of a new domain were still emerging and no institutional arrangements were yet in place. NIDO's position was much stronger when a program manager could clearly define the assets NIDO's program could bring to the field.

For instance, NIDO arrived at the right time in the case of corporate social responsibility. Incidents such as Shell confronting public and environmen-

tal organizations (Brent Spar) and human rights organizations (in Nigeria), showed that corporations were increasingly being pressured to accept responsibility in the public interest and not simply comply with current social and environmental legislation. In addition to developments in the financial world (i.e., the launch of 'sustainable' investment funds) and philosophies and strategies regarding 'good entrepreneurship' might entail, public pressure created incentives for increasing numbers of firms to take social needs into greater consideration. However, it remained unclear how these firms could convert this into actual practice, and what the implications were for the corporate strategies. NIDO stepped into this 'institutional void' (Hajer 2003) left by tension between expectations and traditional settings, to develop ideas, provide a clearinghouse for information to stimulate the exchange of ideas on relevant developments elsewhere, and to help establish standards that could help pave the way.

In contrast, the added value of the program on 'sustainable outsourcing' had to be consciously identified but also hidden – at least the staff felt. Under the apt title 'Who will take the curtain call?' (literally: 'Who gets the flowers?') program manager De Kuijer presented his views during a NIDO staff meeting to stimulate long-term changes. Because the impact of NIDO's programs was going to outlast their duration, it was imperative that other parties in the field with a permanent presence, would take the initiative to both implement the plans assume NIDO's role as designer cum instigator. This implied that identification of these parties (dubbed '*trekkers*,' literally 'pullers') was to be part and parcel of a NIDO program. These parties had to see and present themselves as the 'owner' of the ideas developed, and they had to engage in stimulating activities.

The positive effects of passing the baton as part of NIDO's strategy of its eventual dissolution had two distinctive drawbacks, in hindsight. It contributed significantly to NIDO's poor visibility, from the perspective of prospective NIDO stakeholders who were to assume the status of full partners in a specific program, because financing requirements by the Ministry of Economic Affairs made co-funding by participating firms mandatory. As a result, it became increasingly difficult to launch programs because it was limited by the requirement to establish co-funding with corporate partners before anything could happen. NIDO found it increasingly difficult to find partners willing to sign these co-funding agreements.

Moreover, its 'strategy of modesty' also contributed to NIDO's poor visibility among its political patrons. It significantly weakened its own position when the transition concept took hold, a few years after NIDO was founded. By then it was too late to take credit for earlier actions.

The evaluators' evolving role in monitoring NIDO's learning-while-doing

NIDO's aim was to generate knowledge by implementing learning-by-doing programs. It took an active role in developing and documenting lessons learned from its programs. An evaluation and monitoring project was set up to enable systematic reflection on NIDO's experiences and to reap the fruits of its experiments.

This project aimed to build on the theoretical insights regarding the analysis and interpretation of the interplay between processes of social change and technological development generated within the University of Amsterdam's Political Science Department (see, e.g., Grin and Van de Graaf 1996; Aarts 1997; Loeber 2004). These insights were to be used in two ways: firstly, they would serve as a theoretical point of reference in guiding the empirical work, providing 'sensitizing concepts' to direct the data collection (Blumer 1969); secondly, they would be used as a kind of 'mirror' for encouraging reflection on the part of NIDO's staff, to ultimately improve the puzzling and powering aspects of the various programs. The activities to trigger reflection-on-action among NIDO's staff were part of a so-called 'advisory trajectory' of the evaluation project, for which the senior researcher was responsible. While I was employed as a postdoctoral researcher in the University of Amsterdam's Political Science Department, evaluated NIDO experiences, by setting up a comparative case analysis.

The evaluation and advisory projects commenced in October 2001 and would take five years. The initial design and the project's focus changed drastically relatively soon after its launch. The evaluation eventually produced a learning experience that was as experimental as the programs it was evaluating and supporting. In retrospect, three phases can be distinguished in the evaluation's design.

Watching a NIDO program develop: Evaluation from a fly-on-the-wall position

The evaluation's original design included two in-depth case studies, to be conducted on the basis of participant observation, document analysis and interviews, in order to provide an answer to the project's chief research questions: How are NIDO's programs designed and implemented; how do they relate to the theoretical and methodological insights regarding the management of 'transitions towards a more sustainable society' (based on empirically studied experiences elsewhere); and what can we learn from these programs about actually organizing 'leaps' towards this kind of development?

The first case I selected was NIDO's corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. The program's objective was to initiate and support processes of change among companies wishing to create a link between their financial performance and their ecological and social concerns (Cramer and Loeber 2004). The program ran from May 2000 until December 2002 and focused on the interactions between nineteen participating companies and their stakeholders. The program consisted of two projects: (1) implementing CSR in business practices and (2) marketing communication efforts about CSR (Cramer 2003). NIDO organized monthly four-hour meetings for both project groups in order to share experiences in the area of CSR implementation in business practice, discuss common problems and interact with external stakeholders. Moreover, every participating company carried out a specific in-house project on the issue during the period January 2001 – July 2002. These projects were discussed and evaluated during the meetings. The discussions and conclusions of these meetings were documented in extensive minutes. The program manager visited the participating firms every five months to trace their progress. In addition to coordinating both project groups, NIDO also participated in various CSR initiatives, in order to reinforce both the NIDO program and these initiatives. The participating companies and NIDO disseminated the program results to other companies and the public, through conferences, media exposure and publications (among them, Cramer 2003).

A more elaborate description of the CSR program and the evaluations have been published elsewhere (Loeber 2003; 2007). The focus here is on the evaluation process. I felt like an anthropologist in NIDO land during the first meeting I attended in October 2001. The program manager formally welcomed me to the meeting, and then, as we had discussed beforehand, they carried on as usual. This set the tone for the way I participated in subsequent meetings; I seldom spoke, preferring to observe the deliberations from my fly-on-the-wall position.

Representatives from all nineteen participating firms shared their insights from their experiences in introducing and implementing CSR in their respective companies. I observed and took notes on what was said in relation to the issues I considered relevant based on earlier fieldwork on the studies performed by University of Amsterdam colleagues. Moreover, I identified and 'tagged' new notions that seemed important in understanding the process, developing (in a Grounded Theory-like fashion) a repertoire of what could be considered CSR-related learning. I recorded the group dynamics, the program manager's role, the influence of some specific setting and so on.

The program's participants and the program manager appreciated my position and accepted my silent presence, which did not in any way (I am con-

vinced) disrupt or influence the project meetings. Thus, I was able to observe both the management style of the program manager and witness the formal but cordial exchanges of the business representatives. Towards the end of the program, the program manager asked me to present my research to the participants, which I was happy to do.

However, my presentation completely failed in its efforts to justify my attendance. I had organized it based on the theoretical insights that guided my empirical work and used the language and concepts derived from the political science and organizational learning literature. I could not have made a poorer decision. The academic language and my perspective were alien to most of the participants and downright annoying to some. They (politely) expressed their annoyance over the fact that I presented what was dear to them in a way that made no sense to them at all. The event did not have a negative impact on the final stages of the research, due to my good relations with the program manager However, I considered my experience the first sign that in recording practice-based experiences, the use of context-specific wording and the acknowledgement of an actor's intent are essential.

This lesson was further hammered home during the 'advice and consultation' trajectory that ran parallel to the evaluation process. The advisory and evaluation processes were planned for NIDO's full staff meeting held every six weeks. These meetings formed the backbone of NIDO because they were the only occasion when the entire staff was present to exchange ideas and information, and learn from each others experiences. The idea of the advisory process was to share information on relevant political science concepts and public administration and transition theory literature with NIDO's staff. That information would then provide the basis for evaluating NIDO's own concepts and activities. To that end, the evaluation project leader sent out selected readings prior to the meetings.

The reasoning behind promoting self-evaluation among NIDO's staff was that even the most innovative and creative ideas – i.e., designing 'leaps towards a sustainable society' – could be undermined by the very conditions one seeks to change. These conditions were not only institutionalized in the ('unsustainable') socio-economic and technological organization of present-day society, but were also embedded in the actor's assumptions of what is a reasonable, feasible and justifiable way to act in a certain situation. These fundamental assumptions and beliefs may implicitly limit an actor's (say, a NIDO manager's) ability to overcome system failures and persistent problems and embark on a genuinely innovative journey towards fundamental, 'sustainable' change.

The literature on organizational learning (e.g., Argyris 1990; Schön and Rein 1994) consistently argues that the degree of self-reflection that is re-

quired to become aware of one's basic assumptions (and thus to potentially engage in a process of reviewing these) is difficult to achieve on one's own. The advisory meetings were established to create conditions where a fundamental evaluation process could take place.

Despite being informative and agreeable, the meetings did not have the desired effect according to numerous attendees who never suggested that we had succeeded in creating a learning atmosphere. First, the need to include 'scientists' (us) in the development of NIDO's mission statement and its strategy was strongly questioned by some of the managers. One of the program managers observed that 'we are just the guinea pigs running for your tests. Well, as long as you leave me to my devices, you're welcome to look over my shoulder. But don't bother to tell me what you think about what I do.'

Another reason for the lack of success was that the concepts we wanted to discuss and the phrases we used to describe the staff's activities and intentions never struck a chord. Our depiction of the work that the NIDO managers performed in terms of 'system innovation,' 'system delineation,' 'future visions,' or even 'problem definition' did not hit home with most of NIDO's staff. This became clear, for instance, when I presented my findings on the corporate social responsibility program at one of the full staff meetings.

With the dismal presentation of the CSR program evaluation fresh in mind, I now tried to organize my research into categories that were based on the ideas and concepts developed in that very program, reflecting the practical experiences gained as well as invoking insights from the relevant literature. To my surprise, several of these 'categories of intricacies' in what was now loosely called 'managing transitions,' which, in my view, seemed to leap from the pages so self-evidently made no sense to some of the staff members. It was not just our conceptualizations based on academic literature that were not easily recognized. Key notions and perspectives developed within the CSR program were also not shared by other NIDO managers. In other words, what we said only very remotely had anything to do with the managers' individual projects. It was high time to re-evaluate the advisory trajectory, and the entire evaluation itself.

Evaluation through active engagement: puzzling along

The first adjustment we made was to eliminate the notion of informed discussions during the full staff meetings. Instead, we began attending the small, informal staff meetings of the process managers to discuss our views about the precise kind of advice that was necessary. It became clear that the

process managers mostly needed a way to communicate their ideas and experiences with one another despite the significant differences between their programs.

Secondly, these differences forced me to relinquish the notion that the design of a corporate social responsibility program was synonymous with 'the' NIDO approach. The assumption was not only wrong, but it also irritated the other managers. It turned out that they were annoyed by the pressure to use the NIDO approach as a template for their own projects. The presentation of my research findings had unwittingly reinforced that pressure. While the corporate social responsibility program was highly appreciated and respected, many felt that their own programs called for a different approach or management style.

I set out to re-design the format of the evaluation project to include all of NIDO's seven programs, in a way that would enable NIDO staff to meaningfully communicate their experiences to one another. I dubbed my design the 'view master,' after that plastic slide viewer toy:

> The view master: the magic lamp from the 1960s. A story is told in a series of images, brought together on a carbon disk. Each image has its own frame. Put the disk in the stereo viewer, and the image gains perspective. One push on the button, and the next frame is visible. Please note, in 3D: not merely the theme and perspective of a program-activity become visible, but also the way in which it is experienced by the person telling the story. Action, objectives as well as (learning) experience all become visible to the interested observer (Loeber 2002).

The idea was that, regardless of the differences between the programs, the various activities of the program's staff could be evaluated from a limited number of angles. The format was organized by categorizing the program staff's 'reasons for action' along with a list of goals. The resulting format has been described in greater detail elsewhere (Loeber 2007). The focus here is on the experience with the new evaluation process.

The design and the evaluation project's new strategy were met with great enthusiasm. The evaluation's objective was now to assist NIDO managers to reflect on their modus operandi, to help facilitate an exchange of ideas and experiences and to help develop a common language and identity. Furthermore, the idea was to record and thus disclose the learning experiences for others outside NIDO to enable them to learn from the NIDO experiment.

The new evaluation format was explicitly intended to serve as a 'search design,' providing a basis for structuring the discussions on experiences

gained. The design itself was also the subject of further discussion (I emphasized time and again that we were talking about a 'view master' and not a 'master view'), and, indeed, the design subsequently underwent several more drastic changes. The process managers found the design workable, and they were fairly satisfied with having someone think along with them on a regular basis to evaluate their activities. The main question for the process managers was whether they were on the right track, or more fundamentally, how would they know they were even on the right track. Moreover, if each program demanded its own approach, what would that mean for 'the NIDO approach'?

I had to find answers to these questions. I had left my fly-on-the-wall position and found myself in the 'puzzling' game, swimming along (rather like a fly in the soup). One thing was clear: none of the concepts developed in the literature were 'ready to wear.' They needed significant alterations to satisfactorily fit the contours of any one specific program. While process managers requested literature suggestions on specific topics, they used the material provided mostly as a general reference point, to 'benchmark,' so to speak, their own ideas and experiences, and place these in a more general context, rather than using them as a concrete source of inspiration.

The lessons learned were then shared. For instance, there was a considerable amount of tension between the desire to influence actual strategies and the participants' operating procedures in the short run, and NIDO's long-term aim of fostering genuinely sustainable change. This tension was reinforced by the need to encourage firm to invest financially, and the difficulty of effectively articulating NIDO's poorly phrased objectives. As a consequence, program staff members were tempted to reap the 'low hanging fruit,' that is, to actively contribute to the attainment of concrete goals set by their respective partners. Attaining long-term objectives proved to be much more difficult.

Another point was that the 'triple-P' interpretation of sustainable development (implying a balanced approach in terms of 'planet' and 'people' as well as 'profit') in practice seldom led to any concrete action. Time and again, NIDO managers were confronted with project plans by participating firms that either incorporated two of the three P's (*people* and *profit*, such as an 'employee in the classroom' project; or *planet* and *profit* such as investing in a small harbor near a factory to gain access to shipping lanes).

The collective 'to and fro' between theory and practice as well as the structured yet frank exchanges on NIDO-specific themes (based on the evaluation categories) were inspiring. So much so that some program managers – the NIDO staff members who met every six weeks, in contrast to

the process managers who met every week – occasionally asked if they could participate to discuss their work in a constructive atmosphere. Apparently, the full staff meetings every six weeks proved to be too much of a naval review, with programs presented as tall ships, leaving little room for the discussion of uncertainties and the formulation of innovative ideas and questions.

But it was almost no easier to discuss failures and uncertainties during the process manager meetings dedicated to the evaluation project. While these provided the most valuable lessons, the pressure to appear successful increased over time. A mid-term (external) NIDO evaluation was due, and dark clouds could be seen gathering over the sustainability issue in The Hague. However, there was hope among the NIDO staff who were convinced that their work had contributed convincingly to the attainment of the two objectives, a conviction that I shared then and still do. This is particularly due to the fact that NIDO's learning approach and dedication to self-reflection developed a vast amount of knowledge on translating sustainable development ambitions into policy practice. It was high time to disclose these insights to a wider audience.

Evaluation as part of the power games over the 'transition' agenda

During the long evaluation process, the 'search design' had been altered and adjusted to fit NIDO's practices of designing and instigating changes towards sustainable development. By grouping sixteen identifiable themes into three sets of activities – analysis, intervention, and output management – the 'view master'[1] gained its final shape.

Although some of the participants always identified their activities more with the presented outcomes than others, by that time, a shared identity was being embraced. The director definitely felt some relief after 'the NIDO approach' had been identified and recorded (namely as a route through these sets of activities). While creativity and innovation had always been encouraged, the ever-present pressure to comply with the standards set by the first program (on corporate social responsibility) at times seemed like pure 'group think.' Two programs in particular that were built on entirely different premises from the rest of the programs were often criticized. The evaluation project aimed to develop a common language and identity, but inevitably became part of these dynamics.

Box 1   The 'view master' search design for evaluating NIDO's sustainability policy work

Goals Motives	Positioning	Creating / explicating added value	Knowledge production	Developing 'clout'
Problem identification	Exploring trends and opportunities	Identifying problems and bottlenecks	Exploring and identifying motives and desires	Exploring mutual relations and positions
Project design	Exploring one's own space and role	Designing experiments and settings for learning	Helping to connect long-term focuses with daily practices	Mobilising people, money and other means
Engaging others	Exploring long-term orientations and focuses	Linking people and activities; creating new spaces for 'novel encounters'	Developing new insights and understanding	Producing concrete, tangible results (books, training courses et cetera.)
Anchoring dynamics	Exploring possibilities for structurally embedding NIDO-initiated action	Initiating new platforms; 'bestowing' others with the role of taking the lead	Strengthening the 'knowledge infrastructure'	Influencing policies and markets

With the format finally in place, it now began to function quite differently, namely as an organizational principle for disclosing the lessons that NIDO staff had learned to outsiders. These lessons were supposed to be narrated as 'learning histories,' a format for recording a series of events as well as the reflections on these events by those involved, as developed by Roth and Kleiner (1998). NIDO's director had picked up on that idea while discussing sustainable development governance schemes in the United States. I adjusted the concept to fit the NIDO context, and we (by then, an assistant had also been assigned to the evaluation project) set out to record learning histories based on new interviews and previously collected material.

At one point, NIDO requested that the evaluation project present its main finding in a small brochure, explaining what 'the NIDO approach' entailed. During the drafting of this brochure, more and more information was requested to substantiate the claims NIDO was making. By the time I was finished, the result was a small booklet. However, the abundance of information was appreciated, and at that time, it was decided to elaborate the issue in a book (Loeber 2003). Instead of the originally planned scientific output, the

evaluation project produced a NIDO publication, with much consideration going into its layout and presentation. I wholeheartedly agreed with the suggestion that the ideas be developed into a book, because the insights would be very informative to everyone involved in 'transition management' and policy plans in that particular field. We were not aware at that time that NIDO's fate was already being debated. That we had a role in the sustainability/transition policy goals became painfully clear when the external review decided not to use any of NIDO's publications regarding the involved programs. For the assessment of 'knowledge infrastructure on sustainable development' only the evaluation project's products (and not those of the managers) were considered. We as 'scientist-advisors,' suddenly discovered that our work was necessary to legitimate (and protect) NIDO as an organization.

This was not a comfortable position to be in because failure was not an option. But the race had already been concluded before we even started. Working documents and e-mail exchanges from that period show how little political clout NIDO and its patrons had. The political and research agendas for sustainable development were to be set at that time. Political ambitions, combined with new financial resources (large amounts of natural gas earnings) caused conflicts between sustainable development approaches. In one e-mail exchange regarding information relevant to the political debate in Parliament, someone from NIDO suggested that 'in order to sharpen the argument, we use terms like "transitions" and "transition management"'. These phrases had acquired strategic meaning. They had gained so much prominence in the policy discourse on sustainable development that the NIDO book highlighted these terms throughout. Despite this development, the book and the website based on the evaluation were of no avail. NIDO was dismantled by the end of 2004.

Conclusion

NIDO was set up to address the challenges of sustainable development goals. It was designed, not in advance, but in and through its activities. The general idea was to help realize public policy ambitions by tapping into the dynamics of private organizations, and focusing on facilitating learning processes among the involved stakeholders. The function of the NIDO managers consisted of combining puzzling and powering vis-à-vis the various sectors in society, especially the corporate sector. The puzzling notably included efforts to help these parties think 'beyond the obvious,' stretching ambitions beyond conventional wisdom. The powering function involved creating leeway for in-

novative and creative ideas in the immediate contexts of NIDO's partners and more in society in general. Among the many activities they developed, was the brokering between the various networks to help the involved parties benefit from each other's ideas and opportunities.

Several of the organization's features were conducive to puzzling and designing and contributed to its relative weakness when it came to inspiring and, eventually, ensuring its own practical survival. The organization's unstable arrangement as a temporary, partly privately funded 'initiative' (note that the 'I' in NIDO did not stand for institute) operating at arms' length from the government, meant the NIDO staff had a considerable amount of leeway in developing creative approaches to what was later dubbed 'transition management.' Its feeble institutional position, however, also required NIDO to carve out its own niche time and again in the face of more established institutions operating in the particular domains that its programs focused on, as well as in the 'transition' field as such.

The evaluation project, which had been designed to evaluate the NIDO experience and gains lessons from it, became entangled in the policy work of its object of study. While the evaluation commenced as a regular 'objectifying' research project, the evaluators were rapidly equally engaged in the process of puzzling and powering, namely in relation to NIDO's managers and NIDO's organization as such. Puzzling, in their case, involved efforts to encouraged self-reflection among NIDO's staff regarding their operational procedures. While the development towards 'co-puzzling' was a conscious step that enhanced the evaluation program's effectiveness, the step towards 'co-powering' was not. However, the evaluators eventually found themselves deeply entangled in the organization's struggle to survive.

NIDO's dismantling was untimely from the perspective of several of its programs. Many of these, however, found a new institutional setting along with former partners, which matched NIDO's original goals. In spite of NIDO's untimely demise and lack of proper impact studies, in hindsight, its heritage includes its focus on 'competences' in and for transition management, which has been institutionalized in the shape of the Competence Centre for Transitions (employing some former NIDO staff), a lasting national interest and focus on learning histories as a method of recording experiences involving transition management, and a fragmented, although ongoing, appreciation of the lessons learned regarding what it means to perform 'transition policy work' in practice.[2] As for the role of the social sciences and policy science with regard to sustainable development, the NIDO experience made it clear, once again, that it is only through actual policy work that we learn about how policies work.

Notes

1   First published in *Critical Policy Analysis* 1(4), published with permission from CPA.
2   See: www.inbrekeninhetgangbare.nl (in Dutch).

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E

Policy Work Beyond the Nation-State

Introduction

Discourse about policy tends to be cast in a form that assumes 'the government' – either the national government itself, or a body operating on its behalf – which is comprised of authorized leaders who determine goals or set norms, which are then applied in practice by officials. In these accounts, policy can be traced back to sovereign authority.

Increasingly, however, policy work is conducted across national boundaries. New regional bodies are emerging whose ability to make rules can override national government authority, such as the European Union. There are also global regimes such as the World Trade Organization, to which governments yield some of their sovereign authority. There are also areas where sovereignty is disputed, like the Antarctic, but governments have sought to construct acceptable regimes of governing. Two of our case studies concern policy work within the European Union, which is perhaps the most developed of these trans-national regimes. One study is by an official (Woeltjes) reflecting on her own work; the other (Geuijen and 't Hart) reports on research on Dutch officials who deal directly with the EU. They offer a particularly interesting perspective because the policy workers involved in these cases can draw on a number of identities – as officials of functional national agencies, as part of a national engagement with the EU, as 'good Europeans,' constructing the new regime, and often, also, as professional experts whose professional knowledge is shared across national boundaries.

There are a number of common themes that emerge from these studies. As Woeltjes points out, the problems that this policy activity is concerned with cannot be contained within national boundaries, and we can see the development of a body of specialized knowledge regarding this problem and its management. Geuijen and 't Hart suggest that the institutionalization of these concerns creates new sites for policy practice, with their own norms, rules and specific practices. This gives rise to ambiguity in the relationship between these locations for international rule-generation and the constitutional formulations, which validate rules by referring back to the national political leadership. In these cases, political leadership remains ambiguous because the

leaders may have no particular views on the issues under discussion, or may even avoid taking a position when the issue is considered a 'hot potato.' Questions may be described as 'technical' when leaders approve of what the officials are doing, and 'political' where they disagree. It is assumed that officials should be voicing a national position, but they often find it difficult to discern what this is, not having been advised by their national leaders. National stances may have to be improvised and sometimes represent long-held positions, even when the rationale for these positions can no longer be recalled. The potential for tension between professional, agency, national and European perspectives means that policy workers often find themselves playing a mediating role, trying to show players in one institutional context why it is necessary to take note of the meaning and significance of the issue in other contexts.

In any case, the issues should not be seen as preceding policy action. They do not create the need for structures to deal with them so much as reflect the activity of these structures. Woeltjes argues that an important element of policy work at this level is 'problem formation,' which is an interactive process, partly negotiation, but partly a process of exploration, searching for framings which are consistent with the perceptions of the participants and the contexts in which they have to work. Policy work is a continuous stream of activity. National officials may sometimes pro-actively raise issues; while at other times, they may react to the initiatives of others, or to matters that 'just pop up' in the ongoing process of interaction. For these policy workers, directives and cues from political leaders are only a part of their stimuli– certainly, an important part, but not important enough as a point of departure for analysis.

These policy workers continuously find themselves in dynamic circumstances, and their activity is less concerned with strategic vision than with responding appropriately to an immediate situation. Networking is important, particularly when it involves international partners. Policy workers do not try to solve problems so much as attempt to construct and maintain relationships through which problems can be addressed. They may be expected to frame and pursue national positions without much firm ground to stand on. This is why Geuijen and 't Hart argue that their activity is not so much a series of responses to official directives – the classic image of bureaucracy – as 'professional bricolage,' constructing an acceptable outcome from the materials readily at hand.

That the accounts of a practitioner and a researcher in this new field of policy work are so compatible is very significant and raises questions about what this means for the analysis of policy work. A widely shared view is that the development of the EU has generated new forms of policy practice, but we should also be open to the possibility that there have been changes in

how we account for policy practice. The EU, certainly a new site for practice, has an explicit goal of creating new regimes in a wide range of areas of social activity (with often tacit resistance from existing regimes). So we can expect policy work to adapt to the new challenges, to be marked by more fragile links between political and bureaucratic activity, and more ambiguity about the outcomes.

At the same time, we should ask whether these characteristics that have been identified as a unique new European mode of policy activity have previously been used in national contexts, but seen as deviant and not reflected in analytic accounts of policy. It is not unusual to hear policy workers complain that the interest of the political leaders in the issues with which the policy workers have to contend is fragmentary, disconnected and ambiguous. They will point out how they seek to accommodate the needs of different institutional players and will often talk about the importance of personal relationships in the accomplishment of policy work. To be sure, these elements are not part of the generally accepted account of policy and policy work, but perhaps this suggests that there are different accounts of the policy process – and policy work within it – in use.

We can see that policy workers may offer different explanations of policy – e.g., the same policy outcome may be characterized as something that 'meets the standards of the profession,' 'is acceptable to all the major stakeholders,' and implements the government's policy on x.' Three distinct accounts of policy have been identified (Colebatch 2009). The dominant account in public discourse is one of *authoritative choice*, which presents policy as the result of a decision by the appropriate political or bureaucratic leaders to achieve some objective. In less public contexts, policy workers are more likely to use an account of *structured interaction*, which sees policy as the outcome of interplay between institutionalized participants with distinct agendas and understandings and varying dispositions to collaborate. They will probably also recognize an account of *social construction*, which sees policy as 'collective puzzling' (Heclo 1974), identifying problems (e.g., 'global warming' or 'domestic violence'), the valid knowledge about them, and appropriate responses to them. They know that authoritative choice is a 'sacred' account, and policy outcomes should be presented as the work of authoritative decision makers. That these outcomes may reflect hard bargaining between stakeholders inside and outside government (structured interaction) and parameters of public acceptance (social construction) is more 'profane' knowledge, which can be deployed in more private discourses among policy workers.

But while policy workers have become adept at distinguishing between 'sacred' and 'profane' accounts ('front office' and 'back office,' as De Vries et al.

(see chapter 5) put it) in national contexts, it may be that learning to do it in an international context is, for many of them, a new game. In the national context, public agencies tend to be based on the institutionalization of specific forms of knowledge with their own regimes of practice, and a good deal of policy activity is concerned with defending agency stances against the claims of other agencies and competes for the ability to define the position of 'the government.' In the new context of the construction of a European regime, the tensions between the different institutional frameworks are more evident and there is less scope for smoothing them over with sacred presentations; 'the government has decided' seems a more acceptable and achievable position than 'the EU has decided.' Perhaps the newness of the context makes the tensions more evident, and the work of managing them more challenging.

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8   Policy Work Between National and International Contexts: Maintaining Ongoing Collaboration

Tanja Woeltjes

Introduction

Policy is often seen as a form of 'problem solving': the government (and thus the policy advisor) faces a social problem for which solutions are needed. In everyday practice, however, policy workers face a more complicated world, and it is the nature of this more complicated practice that will be discussed in this chapter. It will address policy-making in international and European contexts, and focus on two specific policy issues: the transport of dangerous goods, and measures taken in anticipation of natural and man-made disasters, known as 'civil protection.' Both of these policy issues are of an international nature, and highlight the significance of context for policy work.

Transport of dangerous goods

The safety regarding the transport of dangerous goods is a global problem, which can not be dealt with by individual nations. Transport usually does not stop at a nation's borders, which means that national regulations only apply to those transporting goods within the borders of that one nation. Policy work regarding the transport of dangerous goods therefore involves regulations across national borders, in fact, it concerns safety addressed at an international level, which means that national policy workers will become increasingly engaged in various international negotiating structures.

In the case of the transport of dangerous goods, the national policy advisor will attend meetings at the United Nations, the leading international organization in this policy field. The United Nations has a well-established system for framing international safety standards; general recommendations are made by expert groups, and these recommendations are then adopted by the rule-making bodies for specific modes of transport. The UN Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (UN SCETDG) meets semi-annually. Here recommendations are discussed for every type of

transport, be it by rail, road, air or sea. Although these recommendations have no formal status, they frame the rules for consideration and are the starting point for the discussions in the formal rule-making bodies for the different modes of transport. There is, for example, a formal meeting of the dangerous goods subcommittee of the International Maritime Organization (DSC subcommittee of the IMO) on the transport of dangerous goods via containers on ships, and there are similar meetings for other modes of transport. The recommendations of the UN SCETDG are discussed in these meetings and are usually immediately translated into formal rules.

Civil Protection

Civil protection, or the provision of assistance after a natural or man-made disaster occurs, provides another example of international policy making. Although national governments are primarily responsible for the safety of their own citizens, when a crisis overshadows the capacity of a member state to respond, other EU member states will provide assistance, and structures are in place to facilitate this assistance.

In order for EU member states to offer assistance through the EU, some basic structures and rules are necessary, and policy work is needed to develop and maintain these structures. This is done through the negotiating structure of the EU. Proposals for the civil protection structure must come from the European Commission, be discussed and decided upon in the Council of Ministers, and then implemented by the Commission. The policy views of member states may be raised in the Council of Ministers, but before the Commission proposal reaches the Council of Ministers, a lot of preparatory work is done by the policy advisors of the various member states in the meetings of the Council Working Group on Civil Protection, which is 'the proper gateway' to the Council of Ministers.

The institutional framework of policy work

The work of a policy advisor can either be reactive or pro-active, depending on the issue, and in particular, on the international institutional structure. Policy work on the transport of dangerous goods in the United Nations is an example of a pro-active policy area. Countries participating in the expert group are free to make national proposals or joint proposals with other participating countries. The proposals may take the form of official documents,

or participating countries may decide to present informal papers in which they react to the formal papers of other participants. Official papers and especially the joint papers of different countries have more impact in the international negotiations than the informal papers that are received at a later stage.

For the civil protection policy area, however, the ability to maneuver is different because of the constitutional structure of the European Community, which provides for very different decision-making procedures in relation to various sorts of policy issues, and policy workers in the European environment have to be aware of the category and the decision-making procedures that apply in each case. The structure is complex and proposals for change are ongoing, with the Treaty of Lisbon having been signed in 2007 but not yet fully ratified. The EU's three pillars that form its basic structure are the:

1. First or Community pillar, which covers the original concern to develop a common market. Only the Commission can submit proposals regarding these matters. These go to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, and a qualified majority is sufficient for a Council act to be adopted.
2. Second pillar, which is devoted to the common foreign and security policy, which comes under Title V of the EU Treaty.
3. Third pillar, which is devoted to police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters. It falls under Title VI of the EU Treaty. In matters covered by the second and third pillars, both the Commission and the Member States can submit proposals, and unanimity in the Council is generally necessary.[1]

In practice, this means that for first pillar matters, the work of a policy advisor is mostly concerned with seeking or preparing instructions on how to participate in the international meetings, and whether or not to intervene on a subject. Since the right of initiative on these matters lies with the Commission, the activity of a national policy worker in this area is much more reactive, and it is less common for policy workers to be involved in the preparations of national seminars in order to bring a new subject to the attention of the EU. But, in the second and third pillar environments, more time is spent on the preparation of proposals and so the work is more pro-active.

A complicating factor is that some policy areas do not entirely fit under one pillar. For instance, with civil protection, which is seen as a first pillar issue, the Commission has the right of initiative, but the final decision is made in the Council of Ministers (the Justice and Home Affairs Council, JHA Council) in which decisions must be unanimous, as is the case with third pillar policy matters, so the policy advisor must navigate carefully amongst the re-

quirements of the first and third pillar worlds. In practice, this means that the policy advisor does the preparatory work for the national views, which may be expressed in the Council of Ministers, through the preparatory work in the Council Working Group on Civil Protection, where the proposals of the Commission are discussed and may be changed, but the policy work largely reacts to the Commission's original proposal.

The possibility of putting a national theme on the EU agenda is limited. The best option for a policy worker is for the member state to organize a seminar or conference on a theme it wishes to raise. For instance, in 2007, the Dutch Ministry of the Interior organized a conference on civil-military cooperation, in conjunction with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. The aim was to improve cooperation between military and civil agencies, and to bring the subject to the attention of the international community. This was achieved by bringing the relevant NATO and EU stakeholders together. In meetings like the Directors-General Conference on Civil Protection, policy workers from a member state may give a presentation on a new topic and this may arouse the interest of the Commission, which may subsequently make a new Commission proposal.

The impact of the international environment on policy work

Policy work in an international context requires constant adjustments between national preparations and international structures. A policy advisor working on the transport of dangerous goods spends some time preparing for meetings (programmed and ad hoc) with the transport sector, with other ministries, or the Transport Inspectorate. These are the national meetings in which problems are framed. Some meetings are informal in nature and characterized by 'brainstorming,' other meetings are more formal, such as the 'national pre-meetings' at which the civil servants of the policy department of the Ministry, civil servants of the Inspectorate and representatives of trade and industry come together to discuss the upcoming international meetings – what is to be discussed, and what position the national representatives should take.

Problem finding

While problem-solving policy is common, in practice, policy workers are just as concerned about problem finding – identifying the issues that warrant attention. Problems 'pop up' without any formal selection process even in relatively formal meetings. Some problems become real policy items and some

problems just disappear; it depends on the conditions: whether the problem has been mentioned before in another setting, the standing of the speaker or party who brings the problem to the table, the consequences if the problem is not resolved in a short period of time, and just sheer gut feelings. Sometimes a problem is not identified in national meetings but is presented by foreign colleagues, the media, the public, scientific research or major incidents. For instance, the explosion of a fireworks warehouse in the Dutch city of Enschede, which killed 20 people, led to lengthy discussions on the transport of fireworks. Again, without a formal selection process, the policy advisor seemed to present the problems, which appeared to be serious and fitted the policy area for which he or she was responsible.

The policy work is not simply to identify the problem, but to clarify the nature of the concern, where it may be a matter of 'sense-making,' which can link different participants together. For instance, the regulation of the transport of infectious substances was defined in 1995 on the basis of risk groups, which were developed by the World Health Organization. Soon after the introduction of these regulations, problems arose, which reflected the fact that the groups at risk were based on laboratory conditions, which are different from the circumstances in which these substances are transported, and people working in the transport sector who were not familiar with infectious substances, did not quite understand the meaning of the risk groups and the correct way to apply them. This obviously posed problems in the international transport sector, and to achieve greater compliance, the regulations were simplified, so that there were just two categories: A (very infectious) and B (less infectious). In 2002, the Transport Inspectorate in the Netherlands visited several organizations to inspect their compliance with the transport regulations on infectious substances. The Inspection process uncovered problems with both category A and B systems. For instance, diagnostic specimens (samples of blood and tissue for routine testing of cholesterol and diabetes, for example) were not clearly excluded from the regulations. Moreover, some of the organizations that were inspected complained to the National Health Inspectorate about the regulations and the Health Inspectorate contacted the Transport Inspectorate and the Ministry of Transport to request changes in the regulations. The policy advisors at the Ministry then hosted several meetings with the Health Inspectorate, the Transport Inspectorate, and national and international colleagues to evaluate the complaints and explore alternatives, which led to an agreement among the involved parties. In the end, the conclusion was that the issue was important enough to present to the United Nations. In all of these cases, policy work focused on identifying the problems that deserved attention and the appropriate venues for pursuing the process.

Negotiation and preparation of proposals

Much of an international policy worker's time is spent negotiating – the 'meetings and papers' that Noordegraaf (2000) identified. Sometimes the negotiating is initiated by the Netherlands, but more often the Netherlands is responding to the negotiations initiated by other countries.

When the Netherlands takes the initiative, the negotiations start with the identification of the problem in the national meetings and an agreement that the regulations need to be amended. A proposal will usually be presented at an international meeting, to be drafted (and redrafted) by the policy advisor in consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The relevant stakeholders concerning the transport of dangerous goods are primarily dangerous goods experts, the inspectorate and trade and industry representatives, and they attend the official national meeting to finalize the Dutch position before the international meeting is called. Issues of public concern like a policy on fireworks as a consequence of the Enschede tragedy, consume even more time, because the relevant civil servants, the minister and the national parliament all require a lot of information.

The initial opinion regarding the transport of infectious substances was that the regulations were too strict and this led to a series of lengthy negotiations. Numerous proposals were made and discarded before the first draft for the United Nations appeared on the table. The policy advisors had to carefully navigate their way through the various interests of the relevant stakeholders. Health care organizations wanted as little regulation as possible. The transport sector was resistant to change, but above all wanted results that would ensure the safety of its employees, while the packaging industry saw the commercial advantage of having some form of regulation on packaging. The international community, as represented by the United Nations SCETDG, were reluctant to change regulations that had only just recently been adopted. Therefore, the policy advisors contacted Canada (an important player in the adoption of these new regulations) to help persuade the international community to make changes in the regulations. Good working relations with other international partners such as the World Health Organization were also important.

After thorough national and international preparations, the first proposals were discussed in the UN SCETDG, but when they were first presented, the proposals did not pass and, despite their redrafting in ad hoc working groups and lunch breaks, had to be resubmitted at the next SCETDG meeting six months later. During the period between these two meetings, the negotiations on the proposals continued and the regulations were ul-

timately changed. Routine diagnostic specimens were excluded from the regulations; but to accommodate the concerns of the transport sector on health risks, a strong recommendation insisting on leak proof packaging was included.

Negotiations in the policy field of civil protection are slightly different. Because the work in the Council Working Group on Civil Protection is more reactive than those at the international transport meetings, no national proposals are drafted here. Instead, national instructions on the current state of an issue in the Council Working Group are prepared in which the various national points of view are recorded as well as possible interventions during the negotiations. Most of the time is thus spent on negotiating with the other ministries to prepare the strategy and instructions for the Council Working Group, as well as reports and letters on the subject submitted to national parliaments. The policy advisor on civil protection will draft an initial instruction or paper that he or she will send to the partners in the other ministries. To draft a good instruction paper the policy advisor assembles the relevant facts and figures and comes up with an effective line of argumentation. The partners from the other ministries usually respond to the initial paper and add arguments or proposals to amend the instructions. Sometimes, a short telephone call will resolve the issue, but sometimes lengthy meetings are necessary to resolve certain details of an issue. For instance, drafting the instructions for the Civil Protection Financial Instrument required thorough consultation sessions, especially with the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance. When a disaster occurs, member states may offer equipment to help the stricken country cope with the situation. In the Commission's proposal, the transport of this equipment would be financed by the EU. The Netherlands (as well as some other member states) objected to, first because it would run against the principle of subsidiarity (each member state is responsible for its own civil protection), secondly because the budgetary implications were unclear, and thirdly (and most important) because experience suggested that 'free transport' distorted the provision of aid, with unnecessary assets being shipped to the stricken country.

In these circumstances, it was crucial for the policy advisor to have access to important international partners, and to be absolutely certain that the various ministers supported the policy advisor's actions in Brussels. During the discussion the advisor wrote several documents to high officials at the Ministry of the Interior as well as the minister himself to make sure that the objections were fully supported. Meanwhile numerous meetings with the ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs were necessary to ensure that they supported the initiative. The Netherlands had to petition its allies, i.e., Germany, the

United Kingdom, Sweden and Estonia for their support. Several meetings during the breaks of the Council Working Group and a high level meeting in Bonn were used to develop strategies for the upcoming negotiations. At that point, the Netherlands and some of its allies were considering a variety of scenarios, solutions and negotiating strategies. The Council Working Group remained divided about the EC's financing of transport, which meant that the issue had to be addressed during a meeting of the ambassadors and eventually the Council of Ministers. The ambassador and minister's involvement in the meetings were prepared by the policy advisor. The bloc of five member states was eventually divided by an ingenious maneuver by the Finnish Minister, which meant that the Netherlands ended up having to agree to a compromise of the EC financing 50% of transport costs.

Domestic diplomacy

There are also policy tasks that involve the national government within its own borders. The policy advisor was called upon to offer advice on the broad international context of this policy area. The policy process relies on good communications between stakeholders, other ministries, and within the policy worker's own ministry. For instance, the directorate for civil protection requested that the International Cooperation division produce a short overview of the civil protection structures in various other countries. If the policy worker used his or her international experience and contacts, the task could be executed in a reasonable amount of time.

The policy advisors responsible for the transport of dangerous goods at the Ministry of Transport, were able to participate in the formal meeting preceding an international meeting on insurance against damage to cargo because of their experience of the meetings on dangerous goods on ships. Actual participation in this international meeting was, however, reserved for a policy advisor from another department at the Ministry of Transport.

Policy workers may also be called upon to use their networks to facilitate projects. The Ministry of the Interior, for example, wanted to contact European training facilities to find out whether it would be wise to develop a big training facility in the Netherlands to train relief workers to handle crisis situations, or whether it would be more efficient to use existing national and European training facilities. Meetings with representatives of the foreign exercise facilities were held with the assistance of the Civil Protection Council Working Group. Considering national developments at that time, it was concluded that there were already enough appropriate private initiatives to meet the facility needs.

A great deal of time was spent maintaining contacts concerning the policy area, which meant producing presentations for visiting foreign guests, responding to e-mails, offering advice to the relevant stakeholders *and* writing articles on new rules in relevant trade journals. Moreover, advice on relevant international workshops and seminars was offered and whether or not it was relevant for the domestic policy advisor to attend a particular workshop or seminar. Policy work also involves supporting the minister in responding to parliamentary questions and sending updates to the Council of Ministers or Parliament on the international policy theme. Policy work also involves ensuring that United Nations rules and European directives are implemented into national law. Because of the facilitating character of these tasks, most of the policy worker's tasks are 'reactive.'

There is little room for genuine 'new' national policy during the implementation of European directives. An example is the implemention of Directive 2001/96/EC on the safe loading and unloading of solid bulk carriers into national law.[2] The European Commission issued a directive on the safe loading and unloading of solid bulk carriers because there had been numerous accidents in the past. When a bulk carrier is loaded or unloaded too quickly, the (un) loading process may structurally weaken the ship; this may not be noticed in the harbor, but later, in heavy open seas, the ship may actually crack and ultimately sink. The European directive followed the Bulk Loading and Unloading Code (BLU-Code) of the International Maritime Organization, which was not mandatory. At the time of implementation, the directive applied to only one ship sailing under the Dutch flag, but it had to be implemented as written; not implementing the directive, or implementing it in such a way that it would apply to more ships under Dutch flag, was not allowed. Most of the implementation process was spent writing the explanatory memorandum. Because the directive was so specific about how a ship's captain and the terminal representative must exchange information, as well as the specific characteristics of the bulk carriers to which the directive would apply, a clear and thorough explanatory memorandum was necessary. The accurate drafting of this law and memorandum required several meetings with the industry and Transport Inspectorate.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the international policy environment has created the need for negotiations and collaborative relationships; how applicable this is in domestic policy processes is something for researchers to judge (also see Noordegraaf 2000) and may depend on the policy area.

From conventional policy accounts, one would think that a policy advisor was particularly concerned with strategy or vision, but most policy advisors are rarely concerned with long-term strategy. In everyday practice, policy advisors who work for the government are mostly concerned with the development and maintenance of a capacity for collective action in a complicated 'policy world.' Policy work is concerned with negotiating, developing strong working relations and facilitating work that is done in other parts of the ministry. Most of the time is consumed with daily business like informing the involved parties, preparing instructions for meetings and then negotiating them.

There is no one single problem that needs to be solved. A variety of issues are always being considered at any one time. The illustrations in this chapter showed that policy making in practice is not simply about finding solutions for policy problems, but also deals with problem finding – generating a shared recognition of a need for collective action. Time for actual strategic thinking is rare. Policy work has much more to do with communications and negotiations with relevant partners, via the domestic or international negotiating structures, or the less complicated answering of emails and giving presentations on a specific policy topic.

The international context for a large part determines the room that a policy advisor has to maneuver in. The illustrations in this chapter have shown that the policy work regarding civil protection legislation is more 'reactive' because of the pillar structure in the EU: the Commission has the right of initiative. In the policy area of the transport of dangerous goods, national proposals are accepted. This policy area may thus be characterized as more 'pro-active.' However, the example of the deregulation of the transport of infectious substances showed that the policy problem was introduced by an external organization, in this case, the Health Inspectorate, and the solution had to be found in conjunction with the national and international stakeholders. In other words, the policy advisor's tasks in the Ministry of Transport were not that pro-active because the policy advisor was responding and 'reacting' to the policy problem that had been introduced by another institution. But what topics become policy issues, and who takes responsibility for them, is not completely determined by the institutional structure, but reflects the continuing interaction among the participants, in which policy workers tacitly accept responsibility for matters that are clearly within their policy area and seem serious enough.

This chapter shows that it is essential for a policy advisor to have good working relations with other policy workers. At the national level, there is a need for good relations with fellow policy advisors within the ministry and in other ministries, as well as groups outside government, not only for the support they may need in international negotiations, but also to strengthen

the capacity for collective action. At the international level, these links are of vital importance, particularly the relations with the international policy advisors and the policy advisors of the other relevant national ministries. In official European meetings, the *national* point of view is presented, instead of the view of a particular minister or ministry. When international negotiations become difficult, it is essential *to have good* working relations with fellow international policy advisors as well as high officials within the ministry and in partner countries.

To paraphrase Marx, policy workers make policy, but not as free agents. They are not completely free to identify the policy problems that need to be solved or to choose the arena in which the solutions are found. Policy workers are engaged in predefined structures, in which policy problems can be put on the table by external pressure or network relations, and the negotiating structures and working relations basically define the solutions and the correct endorsement of negotiated outcomes.

Notes

1   Europa glossary, http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/eu_pillars_en.htm, consulted January 2009.
2   Europa Treaty of Lisbon website, http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/glance/index_en.htm, consulted January 2009.

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9 Flying Blind in Brussels: How National Officials Do European Business Without Political Steering

Karin Geuijen and Paul 't Hart

Flying blind: A policy bureaucrat's predicament

Most democratic governments have a well-established norm concerning 'politics' and 'bureaucracy' in the executive branch: ministers set goals and assign priorities whereas civil servants advise them and strive to implement ministerial and cabinet decisions. Decades of research into the relations between politics and administration in numerous countries have shown that this norm is alive and well, but, at the same time, it does not accurately describe practice at either the national or local government levels (Savoie 2003; Peters 2001; 't Hart and Wille 2006). Politicians cannot keep track of, let alone explicitly direct, everything their vast, complex, highly specialized bureaucracies are involved in. Hence many officials, even those working in governmental departments that are relatively close to the political executives, spend a lot of time and energy anticipating, second-guessing or actively seeking 'a steer' from their superiors, who, in turn, will seek to obtain ministerial guidance (Page and Jenkins 2005). The further away from the political centre civil servants operate, the more fictitious the idea becomes that their work is dictated by explicit political decisions or directions.

Many civil servants in service delivery agencies, particularly 'street-level bureaucrats' have learned to cope with this, to the extent that they would regard political 'micromanagement' of their day-to-day work processes as highly undesirable interference in their professional domain (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). But, for departmental civil servants, acting without a clear sense of political direction amounts to 'flying blind.' What should they be engaged in when politicians don't know, don't care, or don't lead? What coping mechanisms have they developed for dealing with this normatively anomalous situation? And what does this mean for the shaping of public policy and for the nature of the politics-administration nexus within the executive branch?

These are the questions that inspired this chapter. To explore it empirically, we have chosen what we regard as a clear-cut case of civil servants working in a 'political leadership vacuum': the policy work engaged in by national

officials who participate in processes of international governance in 'low politics,' 'technocratic' areas. We shall present an in-depth study of Dutch officials who are involved in cooperative European policing efforts. Below, we briefly introduce the case, its relevance for our present purposes, and the research methods used to study it. Then we go on to examine how European police cooperation takes shape. We do so first by offering a 'thick description' of how a particular aspect of police cooperation, namely the management and protection of sensitive data on national citizens and entities is processed. The case vignette illustrates how difficult it is to fashion, articulate, let alone defend, a coherent 'national position' on it. We then go on to let Dutch officials who 'do' European police cooperation speak about their experiences, focusing in particular on how they experience and cope with handling an issue area where clear, politically sanctioned policy compasses are lacking. We conclude by discussing the implications of 'professional bricolage' replacing 'political responsiveness' as the main principle of civil service practices in this kind of setting.

Eurocrats in transnational networks: Serving who or what?

Politics and bureaucracy have shifted to new locations. The well-known and mostly well-entrenched national arena is no longer the only one in which ministers and departmental civil servants work. As Slaughter (2004) has observed, international cooperation has intensified and international regimes have proliferated in recent decades, both in number and in scope and depth. As a result, transnational networks of civil servants have come into being who breathe life into these international regimes and the bodies that epitomize them.

The civil servants who populate these networks have to juggle multiple identities and roles. On the one hand, they are policy experts, specialized in certain, often rather technical, areas, exchanging information, cooperating on enforcing regulation, and jointly constructing laws, regulations and practices that they as experts all believe will work. On the other hand, these civil servants are not free-floating intelligentsia. They participate in these networks with a mandate from their national ministries or agencies to represent the national government.

One of the new sites where these transnational networks emerge is within the European Union. Although agreement among experts about figures turns out to be surprisingly difficult to obtain, there is little question that in recent decades a significant portion of hitherto national regulation and policy development is now being produced in European arenas. These European-

ized policy-making processes involve an intricate and often complex interplay between actors and institutions at the (sub)national and EU level. Europeanized policy arenas have developed distinctive rules, norms and practices that govern this interplay (Richardson 2006). Knowing how to exploit these distinct features is a crucial condition for any actor – be it a national ministry, a trans-national pressure group or a multinational firm – seeking to wield influence over European policy-making processes (Van Schendelen 2003).

A sophisticated policy management capacity at the European level is something that all member states seek to achieve. They know that in order to safeguard their national interests, they need their representatives to understand and manipulate the peculiar agenda-setting mechanisms, institutional rhythms, opportunity structures and veto points of European policy making. It is what ministers whose portfolios are in highly Europeanized policy domains expect their civil servants to deliver. These expectations are not always met: studies in various countries show that knowledge, institutional capacity and effective coordination at the national level are often patchy and variable (Hanf and Soetendorp 1998; Kassim et al. 2000; Laegreid et al. 2004; Geuijen et al. 2008).

Building up this type of coherent policy management capacity is difficult, partly because the European project as such places pressures on one of its chief agents: the civil services of the member states. When operating in EU arenas, national civil servants are not acting solely as national representatives; they are also encouraged to engage as technical experts. Eurocrats, defined here as national civil servants for whom dealing with and acting in EU bodies is their main task, have to juggle two (or sometimes three) identities: as 'servants of the (national) crown,' as 'members of professional fraternities that transcend national boundaries and interests,' and every now and then as 'supranationals' or 'Europeans.'

How much of each role guides their beliefs and actions depends on the kinds of settings in which they operate. There is, for example, a world of difference between national civil servants participating in expert Commission committees dealing with the implementation of EU regulations and those who attend Council working parties; the former fosters a 'postnational' identity as a member of a profession whereas the latter's position and procedures conduces toward a role conception as national representative (Beyers and Trondal 2004; LaRue 2006; Thedvall 2006; Trondal 2002). From Beyers (2005). However, we also know that Belgian civil servants who participated in Council working parties and who felt that they had received unclear instructions, experienced poor domestic coordination and policy preparation, and had a relatively strongly developed supranational role conception.

So, Eurocrats qua national bureaucrats are supposed to take their cues from the political-administrative hierarchy, which employs them; Eurocrats qua experts are driven to cooperate with colleagues to solve common or transboundary problems and thus foster a 'European project' in their professional realm. Given these conflicting imperatives, it becomes essential for their political (and hierarchical) superiors to provide direction and constrain inclinations to 'go native' in Brussels. Yet, for a variety of reasons ministers (and their political staffers) often fail to do so. When this happens, whom *do* Eurocrats take their cues from? We answer this question by looking at a particular case: Dutch Eurocrats working in the field of European police cooperation.[1] It is part of a larger study in which we wanted to find out which civil servants in the Netherlands were involved in European policy processes, how they approached their European tasks, what they actually did, and how their beliefs and practices were shaped by the organizations in which they worked (Geuijen et al. 2008).

We examined these issues using five different, complementary methods of data collection. We studied the relevant reports, documents and academic literature. We incorporated several questions into a large survey on job characteristics, satisfaction and public sector motivation administered by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior (the so-called POMO survey). The survey was conducted in the first months of 2006 and was completed by 4502 civil servants working in central government organizations. It gave us a unique, quantitative assessment of the number and type of civil servants involved in EU decision making, as well as their judgment of the organizational aspects of their tasks. Thirdly, we conducted structured, thematic interviews on police cooperation with 21 middle-ranking and top officials from the relevant ministries, executive agencies and the Dutch Permanent Representation in Brussels. We asked them about their experiences in 'doing' European policymaking (and, to a lesser extent, policy implementation) in The Hague, in Brussels, and anywhere else that their jobs took them. Fourthly, we engaged in observation of the Europe-related work routines of officials in different parts of the Dutch police, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice. Finally, we conducted five expert meetings with middle-ranking and top-level officials throughout the Dutch government, in order to check on the broader salience of these initial findings, and further deepen our insights on what it means to be, and organize, national 'Eurocrats.' A total of 27 officials participated in these sessions, which lasted 2.5 hours each. They were taped and transcribed.

Before turning to the case study, it may be helpful to first get some more information about the organizational setting they work in and on the mandate Dutch civil servants receive when going to Brussels. Depending on how much

time their officials spend on average on EU-related activities, we classified the ministries into three categories: Eurocratic bulwarks, Eurocratic runners-up, and national champions (or Eurocratic laggards). Eurocratic bulwarks (e.g., the Ministries of Agriculture, and Economic Affairs) have more than 50% Europeanized civil servants, Eurocratic runners-up (e.g., the Ministries of Social Affairs, and of Finance) have between 30% and 40% Europeanized civil servants, and Eurocratic laggards have well below 30%. The Ministry of Justice is a Eurocratic laggard with no more than 17% of its civil servants involved in EU-related work, spending about one hour a week on this task (median time). European police cooperation is one of the EU-related tasks that officials are responsible for at the Ministry of Justice. This task is taken up by a small number of specialized civil servants. Large parts of police work and criminal policy are (or seem) firmly domestic in scope.

Table 1   Response by civil servants working in ministries with different levels of Europeanization to the statement 'When I participate in EU-level meetings, I receive a clear negotiation mandate.'

	Degree of Europeanization	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	N
Mandate	Low	26%	38%	36%	47
	Moderate	28%	52%	21%	239
	High	22%	36%	42%	176

Source: Geuijen, 't Hart, Princen and Yesilkagit (2008: 47)

We asked civil servants in our survey to what extent they would agree with the following statement: 'When I participate in EU-level meetings, I receive a clear negotiation mandate.' As the table above shows, it turned out that there were some differences in how mandates were handled between ministries with a high, moderate or low level of Europeanization. Only a bit more than one third of these civil servants who participate in EU-related tasks say their mandate is clear, and about a quarter thinks it is not clear at all. The rest do not agree or disagree. The really interesting question is how civil servants who do not have a clear mandate handle this situation when they are in Brussels. To put it bluntly: How do they know what to do and say?

Governing without politicians: Inside a Eurocratic outpost

> I am here to represent the Netherlands, and my colleagues back home sometimes have difficulties in appreciating that. They do the individual ministries' bidding. Their arena is about pulling and hauling between ministries. Here the arena is about pulling and hauling between countries (An official at the Dutch Permanent Representation to the EU).

Since the expansion of the EU to 25 (and now 27) member states, cooperation in the sensitive field of justice and home affairs is hampered by concerns about sovereignty and lack of trust among member states. Some years ago, the Dutch Minister of Justice, Piet-Hein Donner, launched a rather bold plan to develop European cooperation towards a common European legal space. This plan received little support amongst the member states of the European Union, and nothing similar has replaced it, so there is no European vision for increasingly 'post-national' legal cooperation. Nor is there a Dutch one, with the responsibility for policing historically split between two ministries, which have at best maintained a 'complicated' relationship because of it. National politicians – Dutch or otherwise – perhaps conscious of the strong public sentiments attached to policing which make it a political 'hot potato,' and operating in the open, young, not yet highly institutionalized field of Justice and Home Affairs, are evidently either unwilling or unable to produce a coherent post-national policy on police cooperation. Let us see how civil servants in this field cope with this fact.

The case of data availability

Data availability is one of many topics on the agenda of European Justice and Home Affairs institutions. The transnational sharing of information on anything – people, communication data, (stolen) vehicles, arms, explosives, poison, money – that might lead to a threat to safety and security in member states is widely considered vital to all EU governments. But plans to facilitate this information sharing have aroused serious privacy concerns, fears about a loss of sovereignty in this key domain of state activity, as well as charges that these measures may undermine the rule of law. Different national viewpoints on data sharing have surfaced repeatedly in the preparations for the European Council of JHA Ministers, and, as such, this case provides us with a poignant view on how Dutch Eurocrats deal with such a topic. Below we report on our observations and interviews in a low-level, working party and a high-level committee where this issue was processed.

A low-level committee: The Working Party on Police Cooperation

On 25 January 2006, a meeting was held at the Dutch Ministry of the Interior in The Hague. Its purpose was to prepare the Dutch position on a proposal from the Austrian Presidency for a European Council decision on improving police cooperation between member states of the European Union. A major part of the proposal concerned procedures for improving transnational information sharing among police forces. The leader of the Dutch delegation was supposed to present the Dutch position on the proposal the day after, during a meeting of the Police Cooperation Working Party, one of the countless committees that prepare and help implement European policies and programs. The delegation leader, who was a senior official from the Interior Ministry, chaired the discussion. Four of his counterparts at the Ministry of Justice (the Ministries of Interior and Justice share responsibility for Dutch policing policy) also attended the meeting. There were also two representatives from the Dutch National Police, both of whom were veterans who had seen their last active duty years ago.

These were the people effectively making Dutch policy on European police cooperation: a small group of specialized civil servants. They worked within a ministry and within the National Police Force, neither of which, for the most part, were particularly interested in this topic. But the EU Working Party on Police Cooperation exists and every member state has to be present at its meetings and present the national position on the items to be discussed. At the preparatory meeting, the Dutch Eurocrats constructed the national position. But they had to do so without having a clear political position, and without a clear political lead, because top civil servants are not inclined to construct a position either. As one mid-level civil servant, the head of this unit, told us: 'We stick to the last known political position on the issue. Sometimes we are against a proposal because we have always been against it even if no one knows exactly why.'

During the preparatory meeting, the participants discussed an Austrian proposal. There was much talk about what seemed to be technical aspects: could the Dutch police departments meet the requirements envisaged in the proposal, would they have to adjust their information systems, and could one expect other countries' police forces to do likewise? From this it became clear that for them a major goal of bargaining was that national systems did not need to be adjusted. The relevant treaties, which might bear upon the measures proposed, were presented. No mention was made of ministerial or parliamentary decisions or opinions on the subject. There was no real debate about anything on the agenda: the participants seemed to agree, and the

'Dutch position' simply emerged from that consensus. It involved 'wheeling and dealing' and the coordination – in fact, the piling up – of interests. The result seems to be a fuzzy position. One of the policemen present did not seem to be fully aware of the procedural 'nitty-gritty' of European policymaking, asking about the role that the European Parliament plays in all of this. With thinly veiled disdain, one of the civil servants at the Justice Department suggested he attend 'a course on European matters' that would be taught soon.

The next day, the meeting of the Police Cooperation Working Party took place in Brussels. A full-day affair, it was set in the same enormous conference room where the Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council of Ministers meets, the eventual 'end station' for all these preparatory meetings. All of the participants were allowed to speak in their native language as interpreters translated to and from all of the official languages of the member states, and everyone wore headphones throughout the meeting. Cameras were an essential part of the interaction process because everyone had a screen on their desk on which the speaker appeared in close up, for everyone to read his/her facial expressions. There were also several enormous screens hanging from the ceiling on which the same images appeared. The Dutch delegation consisted of three members. There was the delegation leader, sitting at the conference table, with an official from the Dutch Permanent Representation to the EU sitting next to him, and the third member sitting behind them.

The most striking part of the meeting ritual was that participants were referred to not by their own name, but by the names of their countries. The delegations were seated at a huge oval table, behind shield with the countries' names. A participant who wished to make a statement had to put his shield on its side. The chairperson would then grant him permission to speak, saying things like 'The Netherlands, the floor is yours,' and would close the interjection with words like 'Thank you, the Netherlands.' There was little contact between members of the various delegations. Everybody was polite but controlled, and stuck strictly to the accepted format. There were few informal greetings or casual asides. The Dutch delegation leader did leave his lunch before the others to meet with the Irish delegation on a project the Irish proposed, which partly overlapped with a Dutch proposal that was also up for discussion.

Previous studies of council working groups portrayed the meeting process in comparable terms: they are diplomatic events rather than technocratic meetings of experts who share a common professional background and a 'sense of urgency' to solve operational problems. Our observations and interviews strongly suggest that they are still first and foremost about countries talking to countries, through their representatives. The multinational perspective is reinforced by the meeting's rituals.

During the meeting, the various parts of the proposal on the agenda were discussed in depth. It was a long day with arcane technical matters receiving sustained attention. The key proposal under scrutiny had been discussed before in other Council working groups like ENFOPOL, ENFOCUSTOM, CRIMORG and COMIX. Remarkably, hardly anyone ever referred to these discussions in other forums; it appeared as if the participants had not been briefed about them. One of our informants characterized it as an example of the so-called third pillar's[2] 'organized anarchy.'

The Austrian chairperson meanwhile tried to reach an agreement on as many parts of the proposal as possible. She had a few private discussions with her assistants and members of the Secretariat of the Council and would then propose differently worded parts of the proposal. This meeting was about weighing, shaping and bending words until everybody agreed. The goal was clearly to get an agreement on as many issues as possible within the so-called technical setting of the lower-level working party. At the end of the discussion, the chairperson gave a short summary of the suggested changes to the proposal, on which she assumed there was general agreement. She also summed up issues for which no consensus-inducing words had been found. The proposal was then forwarded to the *Comité de l'Article Trente-Six* (CATS), a co-ordinating committee of senior civil servants. CATS would focus on those parts of the proposal on which no consensus had been reached, i.e., what were now referred to as the more 'political' parts of the proposal as opposed to what would be defined as being the more 'technical' parts since civil servants were able to reach consensus on them (cf. Fouilleux et al. 2005). After CATS had discussed, perhaps modified and signed off on it, the resulting proposal would be sent further up the European policymaking hierarchy, to the *Comité de Représentants Permanents* (COREPER), the committee of the member states' ambassadors to the European Union. Once approved there, the proposal would finally come up for a political decision in the JHA Council of Ministers.

A high-level committee: CATS

An official from the Ministry of Justice and formerly from the Permanent Representation in Brussels who participated in the preparation of the CATS committee pointed out that he was acutely aware of the disjointed nature of the working group system. He thought the European Commission actually exploited the 'organized anarchy' in the third pillar by offering its proposals to different working groups, hoping that at least one of these channels will serve

to lead this proposal up to the Council. However, the leader of the Dutch delegation to the CATS committee disagreed. He did not feel the Commission was playing the system. He thought it would be a great improvement if all of the proposals to the Council in the third pillar were made by the Commission. This would at least bring some consistency to this messily disjointed terrain. Currently there was none. His chief concern with the current system was that ad hoc political pressures led high-level actors in CATS and JHA to choose hasty, patchy proposals coming 'from nowhere.' According to him, 'the culture of the European arena is such that any decision is better than no decision at all.' He deplored the adhocracy this tended to produce, citing instances in which some decisions clearly conflicted with prior CATS decisions or decisions made by another forum in the JHA field. He summed it up poignantly: 'In this policy process, lack of decisiveness is less of a problem than lack of coordination.'

The Dutch delegation leader also observed another important form of pressure on the CATS committee process. At the end of the day, all of the participants in CATS are accountable to their own national bureaucratic constituencies. Hence, he and his counterparts from the other countries vet each proposal put before them with one key criterion in mind: is there something in it for 'us'? The bottom line of the CATS meetings is that the participants are first and foremost national civil servants, and feel compelled to act as such – or face uncomfortable questions from colleagues and superiors back home.

The CATS delegation members identify themselves first and foremost as national civil servants, just like the participants in the Working Party on Police Cooperation described earlier. They seemed to know each other better than their lower-level counterparts did, addressing each other (by way of the chairperson) by their first names during the meeting. The Dutch delegation leader said that he would prefer acting more like a genuine 'European,' siding with the common good rather than Dutch national interests as his reference point for assessing proposals and taking positions. Unfortunately, he said, his colleagues in The Hague, as well as his counterparts in forums such as CATS are overwhelmingly locked into their national perspectives. They seem primarily intent on preserving their existing national policies, procedures and judicial systems. He welcomed the pressure put on his colleagues by the Foreign Ministry and the Permanent Representation, 'who regularly argue that something has to happen, some improvements have to be made. If it wasn't for that, everybody would simply lie back and wait.'

The CATS delegation leader considered himself lucky to at least have an 'EU-minded' minister at the time. This gave him a lot of support in urging his colleagues to 'get on with it.' The Dutch Minister of Justice had made crime

fighting his top priority and was very aware of its European dimension. The CATS delegation leader pointed out that this provided him with opportunities. 'Within the Netherlands, you often act as the representative of an EU position: you overact your European allegiance in order to create some room to maneuver. You do the reverse in Brussels, by saying: "I cannot possibly take this back to my superiors at home."'

Navigating and re-interpreting mandates was part of the job. He was very aware that the national position that he was supposed to represent had been only constructed by himself and his colleagues, not a cast-in-stone translation of clearly expressed ministerial preferences. So, he took it with a grain of salt and tweaked it depending on the setting in which he was operating. He made on-the-spot decisions about what to say when and to whom, even though he in fact did have written instructions that had been discussed in some detail and agreed upon in the preparatory meeting before the CATS meeting.

Getting by without direction: Eurocrats reflect

There seem to be at least two different reasons for a lack of political steering towards a future of European cooperation in the field of police activities, at least in the Dutch case. The first is that political superiors are simply not interested. The other is that political superiors may take an active interest but feel they lack the power to make a difference because relevant parties at both the national and European level are not interested in pursuing cooperative solutions to joint problems. One civil servant reflected on how the JHA Council of Ministers operates: 'The ministers don't say: "this is how we're going to do it," they just cannot come to an agreement. In practice, they send a proposal back to the working parties with some vague directions for "technical" revisions. But it just went from these working parties to the Council of ministers so that they could make a political decision.' A member of the Permanent Representation confirms this point of view: 'There is very little vision regarding what direction to take when it comes to police cooperation. The general idea is to try to avoid inconveniences due to anything new. However, it would be so much better to try to benefit from new initiatives.' As a result, civil servants are, to some extent, left in the dark. In response, they generally choose to stick to existing national systems and practices as their point of reference. A colleague from the Ministry of Interior hints at why civil servants seem to act the way they do: 'As long as there is no clear political vision about a certain theme, there isn't much vision that is developed among civil servants either.'

At the national level, relevant Dutch actors are consistently unable to arrive at a unified national viewpoint on the European future in police cooperation.

A former Dutch CATS delegation leader who subsequently became delegation leader for the Management Board of Europol sighed: 'Now that it is clear that there isn't going to be a positive attitude toward further cooperation at either the national level or at the European level, it makes no sense to develop a substantive vision on the European future on cooperation regarding police and judicial affairs ... There is no national position on this, neither on the formal level, nor anything that is internalized by civil servants.' But with or without a coherent political position on the issue, Dutch Eurocrats have to anticipate and respond to ongoing moves at the EU-level policy game on police cooperation. They have to attend the meetings that are organized by the presidency, with each presidency hoping to achieve some tangible results.

And so they have to be creative in inferring a position where there really is none. For example, a senior Eurocrat at the Ministry of Justice argued that there is, in fact, a Dutch national position on European police cooperation, only it can't be found anywhere on paper. It is more of an established mindset, which he sums up as follows: 'It is clear what we do not want: no violation of the principle of territoriality [national sovereignty on criminal justice affairs], no minimum standards for punishment. But it is not very clear what we do want ... We do want a clear division between first and third pillar affairs, we want to push back the influence of the European Commission.' He also referred to the plan a former Dutch Minister of Justice proposed some three years ago, which was a common European legal space for criminal justice. This plan was shot down by a broad coalition of other member states. It was proposed again to the Cabinet of JHA Commissioner Frattini after some revision, but here they felt that 'the time wasn't ripe for this yet.'

With these efforts having come to naught, the Dutch attitude toward European police and judicial cooperation has turned predominantly negative. Optimizing one's own performance and making pragmatic trans-border deals with neighboring countries are now the priority. Police ministries have reached an anti-Europe Eurocratic consensus: 'We want to be bothered as little as possible by Europe.'

There are exceptions to this general picture. More explicit political steering does occur from time to time, primarily on particularly sensitive issues such as drugs policy and organized crime where ministers and top civil servants have intense discussions concerning their positions. Moreover, during the preparations for the Dutch Presidency of the EU, not only were ministers personally involved in a much wider range of issues, but many top-level civil servants in the ministries were also interested in various European agendas. Time and energy were devoted to making the period of the Dutch presidency a success, and it was: in the JHA field, The Hague Programme[3]

was often mentioned as one of the European successes of the Dutch civil service.

The activist mood and the perceived need to act in unison at the EU level to be successful, however, quickly evaporated after the Dutch presidency ended. The system simply returned to 'normal.' During our fieldwork period (2005-6), we noticed a decided lack of political steering most of the time concerning most of the police cooperation issues agenda. So, what did the involved civil servants do in this case? How did they cope? How did they know what to do?

One Eurocrat observed that council working party civil servants like himself simply decided what the national position on a certain theme would be. They did not receive written mandates. 'It is often difficult to prepare a position. We receive the relevant documents for meetings very late, generally only a few days before a meeting is scheduled. A revised version is often received just before a meeting is about to begin. There is seldom any time left to discuss things. And it is difficult to predict what will even be on the agenda.' Another civil servant said she often wrote her own instructions the day before a working party meeting. 'I mail some ideas to our representative at the Permanent Representation, then we call each other in the evening and then I write it all down.' At the technical level, there were often no interdepartmental negotiations either: individual civil servant acted as they saw fit. They used some of the policy documents on related themes to read up on earlier decisions, recommendations or directives they needed to keep in mind when formulating their own instructions.

They might even tell the delegation superior about their positions and the outcomes of a working party meeting as the proposal ascends the ladder to the level of the COREPER, where a minister has little discretion left for steering the proceedings. Although this situation provided them with a significant amount of scope to influence policy, most of the Dutch Eurocrats we spoke to were not very satisfied with the current situation. One of them observed that 'it does not reflect what the relationship between a minister and the civil servants should be ... Ministers should ultimately have the first and last word. They should set the parameters to be developed at the level of the working parties. But, in practice, this is not how things proceed, sometimes it actually works the other way around.'

Our data availability case shows that issues do go through preparatory meetings in which a national position is discussed. But how do civil servant operate in these types of situations? It depends. In the preparatory meeting for the working party on police cooperation we saw that a national position was constructed via a series of discussions between departmental civil servants and Eurocrat representatives from the national police (not

representative of the entire Dutch police force). One of the problems with these practices is that there is simply too much bureau-political wheeling and dealing. This produces fuzzy positions that accumulate and do not integrate or prioritize various parochial views and issues. Consensus tends to be achieved at the lowest common denominator with many insisting that new EU policies should interfere as little as possible with existing national systems. The civil servants involved in this process were not particularly happy with this 'freedom,' because they felt that they lacked strategic ministerial support.

Dutch civil servants were responsible for constructing their own national position even in situations such as the CATS delegation in which there was an active and interested minister willing to make a phone call to a colleague from another member state to expedite the decision-making process or generate support for the Dutch position.

These observations stand in stark contrast to another policy sector we studied in depth for another, larger study (Geuijen et al. 2008). Veterinary policy, an old and deeply Europeanized first pillar field, is an policy area where the civil servants can depend on well-developed and clear political choices made by the minister and the policies established by the department's management board. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries' administrative routines are geared towards incorporating and facilitating EU policy-making processes. Here civil servants are sometimes also required to write their own instructions, but they always have clear policy markers, which establish the limits of their discretion. In Brussels they can be trusted to keep the 'national position' in mind. Moreover, veterinary policy is part of a close-knit expert community in which officials have considerable leeway in determining their own priorities and positions. Veterinary experts deliberate with one another at the departmental level, at the level of the 'field' – i.e., industry, veterinarians, laboratories, etc. – and also at the regional, national, and EU levels. They accept each other as experts, sharing a similar educational and professional background.

The expertise needed to discuss the issues at the committee and working party levels is sometimes so specialized that even their heads of department may not fully comprehend the technical complexities. As a result, officials receive only a certain limited amount of steering leeway from the department's political and administrative leadership. But they know what to say and do because they perform within an agreed-upon policy framework, which means that they can be trusted by their superiors as well as by their (transnational) colleagues.

Responsiveness or bricolage?

Doing business on European police cooperation is not an easy task for Dutch Eurocrats. A cogent policy framework and the attendant set of institutions have yet to be developed. In fact, it is not clear that the EU as such will be the main forum for police cooperation; there are many smaller regional, ad-hoc, issue-based groups (such as police forces and judicial agencies) who are already collaborating. Moreover, as we have seen, Eurocrats – at least the Dutch ones – are more often than not left without any specific political guidance during the preparations for deliberations with their colleagues from other member states. One proviso is in order, however. The field of our case study is still a relatively new European policy area. So it is perhaps not so surprising that the policy processes, politicians, and civil servants are still finding their way in these loosely related, multi-level networks through which EU governance evolves, particularly in the third pillar where the European Commission's role is very limited in the intergovernmental model.[4]

In this study, we have tried to show how the setting in which Eurocrats operate forces Dutch civil servants in the field of police cooperation to act in certain ways. There are a number of crucial aspects to this scenario. One, neither Dutch political leaders nor civil servants were very inclined to strive for an increase in European cooperation in this field. Instead, they preferred to focus on 'what is in it for us' in the short run and to cling to their sovereignty in this field in the long run. Thus, Dutch civil servants are not always provided with a clear mandate other than 'we don't want ...' Another point is that national representatives in general do not approve of European Commission efforts to steer the bargaining processes or propose new policies of its own accord. Another aspect is that whichever nation has the presidency at any point usually seeks tangible results during its presidential term, rather than focusing on what expert would call a 'high-quality agreement.' All this is done within a regulated rhythm of meetings within which the national positions are expected to be presented and bargained. This results in a 'messy' process without any clear sense of direction (Ekengren 2002).

Civil servants have to learn to cope with this situation. In national settings they probably have no problem adjusting to changing circumstances because policy processes usually have some political steering. However, in an EU setting, meetings are scheduled and have to be attended and national positions have to be satisfactorily represented, even though there may be no clear declared national position. Civil servants become part of this ongoing 'machine.' They have no choice in this respect – they are obligated to participate.

We have attempted to show how civil servants in this setting cobble together an understanding of the situation and establish possible courses of action. Lévi-Strauss's concept of '*bricolage*' may be an interesting concept for better understanding the logic of this process. Lévi-Strauss constructed a comparison between the *bricoleur* and the engineer. The engineer invents new concepts, whereas the *bricoleur* perceives his universe of instruments as finite. The rules of the *bricoleur* are to always make do with 'whatever is at hand,' in other words, make something out of one's limited resources. His resources or 'material' are heterogeneous because they bear no direct relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but are the contingent result of earlier occasions and actions. A *bricoleur* can rely upon an available set of tools and materials and choose certain materials for the problem at hand (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 28-29).

The point of *bricolage* is making the most out of what is at hand to accomplish a specific goal. The resources on hand consist of the accumulation of previous manipulations and one's experience and knowledge in the context of a specific goal, which influence the process. The items in the set are not limited to a single use or a single meaning, but their properties limit their options. Eurocrats are often required to act like *bricoleurs* because their goal is to construct a national position to enter European negotiations with based on limited resources and input. They are forced to adopt resources from the national setting (with variable degrees of political steering from ministers and control by parliament) and to a Europeanized setting. In this new setting, civil servants do not act as policy experts with clear instructions and ministerial guidance, striving for transnational epistemic consensus. Instead, they construct their own national position on a theme that will be discussed in Brussels. They have an intuitive 'antenna' for this, ensuring they don't go too far, and act both 'effectively' and 'appropriately' (March and Olsen 1989) in these less-institutionalized, unregulated fields.

They piece together several resources in this context: (inter)departmental bargains among civil servants; meetings with experts from the field; policy documents on related subjects; decisions taken earlier in other forums, and recognized political positions taken on related subjects (by a minister, or opposition parties in parliament). They attempt to come up with a suitable position despite contradictory signals, which includes the positions of various political and administrative leaders, their colleagues, the European working parties, etc. Some of them may be more concerned with not doing the wrong thing, to protect their jobs. Others, who are less risk-averse, may try to stretch the limits of possibility, which may end up being accepted by the various stakeholders. All in all, *professional bricolage* seems to fairly accurately describe 'public service responsiveness to political direction' as a key modus operandi among these Eurocrats.

The civil servants in this process seemingly move seamlessly between acting as a unit or as a department civil servant involved in intra- or interdepartmental agency politics, as a domain expert involved in developing a professionally sound position, and as a 'classic' civil servant serving his superiors and the hierarchy in general. Once they join the European Union arenas, the dominant identity of these civil servants again undergoes a metamorphosis. Although they are aware of the *bricolage* process, they are expected to perform as national representatives who articulate and defend the national position vis-à-vis national representatives from other member states and Commission civil servants. However, this last dominant identity continues to show traces of other identities related to one's unit, department, profession or government when the delegation leader re-interprets the 'national position' in the process of intergovernmental bargaining that produces Council policies.

We have attempted to show that Dutch Eurocrats who operate in areas with low levels of political (or hierarchical) political steering identify themselves as national representatives, not as experts or supranationals. This observation differs from what Beyers (2005) found in his study of Belgian civil servants participating in Council working groups who experienced their instructions as weak. These civil servants were inclined to adopt a somewhat more supranational attitude. Why were our findings different in this study of Dutch civil servants in the field of police cooperation? This might be better understood if we take note of the setting in which they operate.

The problem these civil servants face in the field of European police cooperation is that, at the national as well as at the European level, there is no political will to develop a coherent perspective towards greater supranational cooperation. In the absence of a larger European vision, they have no real opportunity to identify with some kind of European project. This leaves them with no alternative but to identify with their nation. They learn to cope with a situation that finds them working in a setting, which requires them to act as national representatives, by constructing the national position that they subsequently continue to represent. In this way their dominant identity as a national civil servant can be maintained.

Conclusion

In this chapter we presented a case study of 'goal-less' policy work, of national public servants improvising, inventing and interpreting political mandates as they take part in transnational policy networks. Our study portrays a situation of structured improvisation: all of the involved players know that there

is no sheet music, no conductor, but they have a general understanding of the music they are supposed to produce and of the roles they are expected to play in this production. The Eurocrats we studied had mastered this art of improvisation to perfection. But that does not detract from the problems of this style of policymaking and the significant amount of discretion they wield in making it work. Who or what do they represent? In the absence of political or strategic managerial guidance, how do they know they are serving 'the public interest'? How are their actions controlled and accounted for? The Eurocratic policy work we observed may be admirable in its professionalism and for its ability to produce pragmatic, jointly constructed solutions for that 'work,' but its practices barely contribute to allaying the misgivings that European citizens continue to harbor about the fundamentally technocratic nature of large swathes of EU policymaking.

Notes

1   Formally the Dutch national government's EU coordination mechanisms have been scrutinized repeatedly, and their strengths and weaknesses have been clearly articulated (Andeweg and Soetendorp 2001; Raad voor het Openbaar Bestuur 2004; De Zwaan 2005). In this study, we regard the Europeanization of national policymaking not just as a coordination challenge but as an emerging, differentiated set of political and professional practices that participants in European policy processes need to master in order to be effective (Heritier et al. 2001). Europeanization, in this sense, has been much less researched in the Netherlands (Schout 1998; Sie Dhian Ho and Van Keulen 2004) than in some other countries (Smith 2000; 2001; Jacobson, Laegreid & Pedersen 2004; Baetens and Bursens 2004a; 2004b).
2   The main characteristic of the so-called third pillar is its intergovernmental structure.
3   The Hague Programme is the agenda for 2005-2010 in the JHA field. It was adopted at the end of the Dutch presidency in November 2004.
4   For an analysis of various forms of committee governance cf. Egeberg, Schaeffer and Trondal (2003).

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F

Linking Systemic and Experiential Knowledge

Introduction

We have seen that there are different ways of giving an account of policy, and have distinguished between first-, second- and third-order accounts. This section asks the questions: *Do these different accounts speak to each other? And if so, how or, how should they speak to each other?* This reflects the notion of applying of the 'double hermeneutic' to policy. This is a well-known strategy in the social sciences whereby the social practices and the terms that scientists use to describe them, have impact on one another. Policy scientists interpret the language and actions of policy workers; scholars describe these interpretations for practitioners; and practitioners talk to each other, often in the terms introduced by the policy scientists, but they also talk back to the policy academics – and the fact that it is, generally speaking, the policy practitioners who finance the work of the scholars makes these exchanges particularly relevant for an understanding of policy work.

The founding fathers of the policy studies approach in the 1950s and 1960s would have considered this an odd question. Policy *science* is usually traced back to Harold Lasswell's endeavor to systematically and methodically link the (social) sciences to the needs of long-term, strategic, public policymaking. The first 'policy analysts' saw themselves as simply drawing on scientific knowledge (concepts and theories), and giving objective advice to decision makers. This is well expressed in Wildavsky's 'speaking truth to power'. In subsequent decades, society began talking back louder and louder to science's claims on 'truth', a development known as the move from Mode-1 to Mode-2 science, or from normal to post-normal science, or from mono- to multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary science. For policy studies this implied a move from 'speaking truth to power' to 'making sense together.' Of course, there are still some who believe in objective policy advice that rests upon evidence-based analysis. But changing views on the nature of rationality from monologic to dialogic, and from the scientist as a privileged advisor to just one of the many different voices informing politics, have ushered in many new modes of argumentative and interpretive policy analysis.

A key issue for researchers studying policy has become how should scholarly research relate to the needs and interests of policy practitioners? The dominant perspective is collaborative and instrumental: research should be concerned with how to best deliver research results so that they have an impact on the policy community and serve to engage policymakers more effectively. Invoking the two-communities metaphor to empirically describe the tenuous nexus between university research and public policymaking in Canada, Williams seeks to bridge this perceived gap. Assuming that policymakers and researchers share an aim to create effective policies that meet citizens' needs, she embarks upon a survey of promising ideas for fostering a culture of engaged communication between researchers and practitioners, improved strategies for the dissemination of scientific evidence, and incentives for the acceptance of research in policy.

In chapter 11, Shore takes the opposite position, asking: 'Should social scientists follow the policy gaze or seek to critique it?' As in Williams's case, asking the question betrays the answer: policy analysts should not be concerned with learning to think and talk more like policymakers; rather, by exploring different, even deliberately opposing paths of understanding, they may play the role of critical scientists, changing policymakers' views of social and political problems in the long run by creating new sensitizing concepts, paradigms and solution alternatives.

Thus, this section brings together two diametrically opposed views. Shore as the esteemed opponent views science as the countervailing power to government and politics. This resembles the enlightenment model of science, where new insights slowly trickle down through the policymaking process, and scientists bear no responsibility for the use or abuse of their findings. Williams chooses co-production models, where scholars and policy workers, in a negotiable division of labor, share responsibility for knowledge production, dissemination and use. This diversity of views should not be all that surprising. There are after all many different views of the science-politics interface both in theory and in practice. Loeber (chapter 7) shows the difficulty of trying to be a candid critic and still maintain an audience. The challenge is to accept these different perspectives of policy work, as well as the emphasis on an interactive Mode-2 model of science in governing circles, while determining the appropriate framework for knowledge utilization in the 21st century.

10   Is Evidence-Based Policy Making Really Possible? Reflections for Policymakers and Academics on Making Use of Research in the Work of Policy

Amanda Williams

Introduction

It has been persuasively argued throughout this book and elsewhere (Colebatch 2006; Radin 2000) that mainstream Western accounts of the policy-making process often bear little resemblance to the realities of those who 'accomplish' the actual policy work on a daily basis. The discussion that follows examines an area where the disjuncture between outcome-focused accounts of how things ought to work, and interpretive descriptions of how the policy process is experienced is pronounced. It involves the translation of academic research into something that is useful in policy work.[1] In this case, the lack of congruency between process challenges and outcome expectations occurs at all levels of the knowledge-creation process (i.e., in the production, dissemination and utilization of results), and differently by different participants, thereby increasing the level of complexity associated with attempts to understand and resolve this problem. This discussion seeks to illuminate this topic by highlighting the different concerns that researchers and policymakers bring to it.

This chapter examines the exchange of knowledge between university researchers and policymakers (such as elected officials, advisors and civil servants), drawing on successful examples of research use in the Canadian context, the insights from organizations dedicated to thinking about these issues, and current empirical findings on this subject. In Canada, the nature of the university-policy nexus is of particular concern because it has been suggested that the federal government presently lacks a strong in-house capacity for conducting research (Howlett 2007; Perl and White 2007), while public funding bodies are trying to induce academic researchers to give a higher priority to the utilization of their research. Nevertheless, I do not address the case of think tanks or the advisory bodies (formal and informal regional, national, and or international) established to provide specific information to governments, which are sites where the transfer and utilization of research also occurs. My discussion assumes that:

- creating effective policies for citizens is a goal that policymakers and academic researchers often share;
- both researchers and policy workers tend to overlook the challenges for 'the other' when thinking about using research in policymaking;
- both groups need to think critically about the role they play in perpetuating divisions;
- specific strategies can be pursued which may encourage more successful collaborations.

While this chapter draws on the knowledge-translation literature, it is also based on personal experience. I have occupied many positions within the academy and government; consequently, the concepts that are emphasized[2] are those that resonate the most with my experiences as a Canadian policy worker and scholar.

I begin by considering the dilemmas associated with trying to be a policymaker who effectively uses evidence, and a researcher who produces policy-relevant research. Next, I identify the types of claims made by both groups against the 'other' when trying to promote successful collaborations. Finally, I provide several recommendations for moving forward.

The central problematics for the modern day policymaker and researcher

Problematic one: To be 'ruled by evidence' or to be 'managed by measurement'?

Policy workers are urged, on the one hand, to use evidence in making policy decisions (Black 2001; Solesbury 2002), and, on the other, to 'manage via measurement' – what Noordegraaf and Amba (2003) describe as the urgent search for 'objective' indicators as the basis for initiating and evaluating action. Both these expectations are outcome-focused but are often incompatible. Consequently, policy workers are often forced to decide what is of greatest value: activities that promote the systematic integration of research into policy decisions and require a significant investment of human and financial resource, or appearing to be a responsible manager of funds? It is not easy to present the use of research as a return on investment (a central rhetoric in business, and increasingly in government), although some organizations have begun to try to quantify the impact of research (Grant 2006), and examples of fiscally responsible, research-rich, policy environments are hard to find. Moreover, Sanderson (2003) argues that we must not only question whether being 'ruled by evidence' and 'managed by measurement' are mutually attain-

able but also whether these objectives are desirable in light of the complexity, ambiguity, and the moral/ethical dimensions of contemporary policy issues.

Problematic two: How to cope with disorder while still maintaining legitimacy?

A second dilemma arises from the fact that accounts of policy are also part of the policy process and a narrative may be 'a good account' for reasons other than its descriptive accuracy. In the conventional account of policy as the authoritative choice of goals by the government, there is a role for research first, in identifying appropriate goals, and second, in ascertaining the extent to which they have been reached: research can deliver 'objective answers' to these questions, and in doing so help policymakers to achieve better results. Nevertheless, interpretive policy scholars such as Fischer (2003), Stone (1988; 2001) and Yanow (2000) have demonstrated the need to view policy not as a simple process of instrumental choice that can be guided by academic research, but rather as an interactive, discursive and negotiation arena, in which academic research is only one of the valid meaning-frames possible. This means that policy workers may be uncertain about what makes research 'useful.' On the one hand, they may appreciate an interpretive reading of their activities because this more accurately describes their everyday practice, however they still must rely on the trappings of authoritative instrumentalism (such as cost-benefit analyses, environmental impact assessments, and ex post evaluations) to make policy actions credible and valid. In this context, the current enthusiasm for evidence-based policy can be useful as part of the rhetoric of validation, but it is also a potential constraint on the policy worker's room to maneuver, to be treated with 'cautious skepticism' when it does not fit comfortably into the interactive reality of daily activities (Sanderson 2003). Policy workers must contend with a core dilemma: if they acknowledge the messiness of policymaking – which Colebatch (2006) calls the 'profane' (i.e., the 'interests,' 'contests' and 'ambiguity' inherent in policy work) – will the policies that are the outcomes of these contests be seen as legitimate? The dominance of 'instrumental rationality' in current 'acceptable public discourse' about government reflects social expectations of how democracies ought to operate as a means to build trust (Colebatch 2006). Citizens in a rationalist Western democracy expect to be assured that the application of public authority is determined by clear decisions arrived at through informed and systematic choice; it thus may not be 'helpful' to describe these decisions as provisional and ambiguous outcomes reached through the interplay of partial and partisan perspectives.

Problematic three: How is 'impact' to be weighed against other norms of inquiry?

While policy workers are often urged to integrate research more fully into policy, academics are subject to more explicit resource pressures to make sure that their research has a policy impact. For example, in Canada,[3] public funding agencies are calling for evidence of the impact of research. Our leading grant agency, the Social Sciences and the Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) recently stated that 'maximum knowledge impact' and 'interactive engagement' would guide all future funding decisions (SSHRC 2005). This means that researchers who study policy need to consider how best to structure their research so that it has a visible impact on policymakers. Nevertheless, while SSHRC's expectations will guide its funding decisions, such values are not those of the traditional norms of independent critical inquiry by which scholarly work is judged and academic careers are built in Canada and elsewhere, academics develop their research around their personal curiosity about the social world, and are expected to engage with a small group of other intellectuals in a specialized research domain, attending conferences and producing publications in peer reviewed journals; all activities for which they are rewarded. There is also the issue of who the policy actors are for whom the research is expected to be relevant and useful. While internal and external funding expectations have started to encourage Canadian academics to structure their research agendas so they meet the strategic priorities of the federal government, in the academic sphere there has also been a growing interest in seeing research subjects as the primary users of research with methodologies such as participatory action research promoting precisely this ambition. Moreover, researchers acknowledge that there is a distinction between *relevance* and *impact*; for instance, a criminologist's research may show that 'getting tough on crime' does not reduce its incidence but this rarely has much impact on political leaders and this is not always because the research results are expressed in some obtuse academic language. Consequently, academics are not sure that the interest in the impact of research is entirely appropriate. This discomfort was evident in a response to SSHRC's desire to produce research with an impact when scholars asked: how should research mobilization be measured; who would determine success; and, most importantly, how can we maintain intellectual endeavors of a more theoretical, non-practical nature that may be of value, given the requirement to have an impact (Knowledge Mobilization Symposium 2005)?

Problematic four: How can research-based knowledge have an impact if it acknowledges the validity of other forms of knowledge generation?

The two demands that policy be based on evidence and that academic research be shown to have an impact on policy are grounded in an assumption that research will produce a higher-order, 'objective' knowledge that will therefore produce better policy outcomes. Nevertheless, this widely shared assumption has itself been challenged by academic research. The 'postmodern turn' in the social sciences has argued that the knowledge academics produce is not the only knowledge of any value and that experience (for instance) can also produce valid knowledge. Many researchers still claim that they maintain an appearance of 'objectivity and trustworthiness that is incontrovertible' (Huberman 1994: 13) and strive to mask the messiness of both their process and final results (Law 2004). But, if postmodern social scientists question the objective status of social science research, social science quickly loses its capacity to 'claim superior knowledge and privileged expertise' (Huberman 1994: 13). Researchers are thus required to exchange their findings 'on equal footing with practitioners, both in terms of their status and in the validity of their data' (Huberman 1994: 13). This type of equality questions both the validity of academic research and the demand that evidence be the basis of policy.

The barriers to collaboration created by the 'other'

Attempting to balance efficiency and research utilization, legitimacy and disorder, impact and curiosity, and relevance and multiplicity are among the most challenging problematics that policymakers and academics experience when they consider how best to integrate research into policymaking. Moreover, as a result of these broad institutional barriers, these groups have been highly critical of each other. Identifying these key points of contention supplies additional insights into why these two communities tend to function as 'unlinked' and 'asynchronous' entities (Lavis 2006).

The problems with policymakers (as seen by academics)

- *Access.* Academics are acutely aware that they have limited access to government documents, people and processes, particularly the core artifacts that help move policy forward (within the Canadian context this includes Cabinet correspondence, briefing notes, consultation papers); many of these objects remain protected (even with the additional *flexibility* that

legislation around access to information permits) and are not available on public sites (Atkinson-Grosjean 2006). Even for those actually engaged in ethnographic work, in which they observe the daily activities of policymakers, there is a great deal of what they see that cannot be reported or which they choose not to reveal due to the nature of their relationship with their research participants (Schrecker 2001). This means that academic descriptions of particular policy situations may not capture all that has been observed, making it difficult for those academics on the outside looking in to appreciate how the policy world operates and anticipate where specific gaps in information exist.

– *Communication of needs and awareness/respect for the research process.* Academics have accused policymakers of making insufficient effort to tell the research community clearly what information they want, why they would like particular findings, and how they intend to use research (Whitehead et al. 2004). Moreover, when policymakers do seek out precise knowledge, they often treat research as a product and position themselves as consumers that should be able to pick from a series of pre-packaged research products in order to help answer complex questions in a short time frame. As Lomas (2000) notes, 'This view recognizes neither the depth or breadth of studies that could be done, nor the numerous stages involved in choosing which of those studies to do and how to do them' (p. 141). Huberman (1990) expresses the discomfort academics feel with policymakers' awareness of the research process: 'if it takes a research team two years to get hold of its study conceptually, why should we assume that reading a single research report in a few days ... will bring enlightenment (for the decision maker)' (p. 22)? Moreover, some policymakers have fairly negative attitudes towards the research process, and lack the skills and to interpret and use results (Lavis 2006). In sum, academics have difficulty in knowing how their research can help policymakers, and often feel that policymakers lack awareness of, comfort with, and respect for, their research contribution.

– *Misuse.* Researchers spend a great deal of time selecting the appropriate theories and methods they will use in their work. Since research probably has professional and personal value for most scholars, a fear that sometimes manifests itself regarding the use of their findings in policy deliberations is that their results will be taken out of context, misunderstood, or misrepresented. Policymakers themselves admit that they sometimes use research for quite different purposes than was intended, illustrating that this concern is by no means unfounded (Petticrew et al. 2004). Public policy is developed and delivered explicitly 'through the use of power'

and that the coercive influence of the state remains in the hands of 'demo-cratically accountable politicians' (Solesbury 2002: 95). The utilization of research in the art of persuasion is not something that all academics are comfortable with, making some scholars less likely to produce results that can easily become an integral part of the 'policy spin.'

The problems with academics (as seen by policymakers)

– *Awareness and political savvy.* In a study of public officials' attitudes to integrating research into the policy process, academics were described as 'blissfully unaware' and 'politically naïve' (Petticrew et al. 2004). Among the key factors that researchers tend to underestimate when thinking about decision making are: the pressures of the legislative calendar, the stress of managing competing interest groups, the shifts associated with media attention, and the short terms of political appointees (Rist 1998). It has been suggested that academics' biggest mistake is that they remain committed to a view in which policy is conceptualized as an event, 'as if policy were made by a small discrete group of actors clustered in a room at a specified time, perhaps until a puff of white smoke is emitted' (Lomas 2000: 140). By treating decision-making as a discrete moment rather than an extended process, academic researchers often miss out on contributing in areas where their input could be quite constructive (Rist 1998). When thinking about how best to contribute to the policy world, academics *tend to ignore or* underestimate the complex pressures faced by their counter-parts and fail to appreciate the diffuse, and sometimes unpredictable, decision-making realm.
– *Relevancy/Applicability of Research.* In relation to the sorts of work that most researchers are producing, policymakers have been critical of the general relevance and applicability of the studies that are presently avail-able. The current body of research that exists has been described as 'pol-icy free' (Petticrew et al. 2004) and criticized for being 'inward looking, too piecemeal, too supplier driven ... rather than focusing on key concerns to policymakers' (the DfEE cited in Sanderson 2003: 334). As one poli-cymaker asserted, 'many researchers do not see it as their responsibility to think through the policy implications of their work – they need to move beyond preaching to other researchers' (Petticrew et al. 2004: 813). Researchers have been encouraged to 'give up the gold standard' and de-velop methods that are appropriate to the policy area they are interested in assessing (Petticrew et al. 2004). Among the type of information that policymakers have suggested might be of the greatest use to them are

evaluations of the cost effectiveness of programs and initiatives (money always talks in the policy world), predictive studies, the development of indicators to achieve targets, and systematic reviews (Petticrew et al. 2004).

– *Communication/Dissemination Strategies.* While the academic community devotes a great deal of time recognizing the limitations when presenting their research much of the policymaker disapproval is focused on most scholars' inability to effectively communicate their results in a comprehensible and useful format to other audiences (Petticrew et al. 2004; Puchner 2001; SSHRC 2005). A shift in thinking has been recommended because questions regarding 'methodological soundness' and 'degree of uncertainty' (which remain central in typical journal articles and dissertations) often 'cloud the message' (Petticrew et al. 2004: 814). Policymakers want clear, straightforward narratives, not carefully qualified accounts of academic research; in a recent study, a policymaker claimed that 'what is important is how convincingly the evidence is presented, and how interesting you make it … The face validity of a good story is an example of how policy style can influence politics' (Petticrew et al. 2004: 812). They also tend to favor the establishment and maintenance of knowledge relationships through face-to-face contact (Martens and Roos 2005).

Possibilities for moving forward and bridging the policy/research gap

The aforementioned discussion illustrates that there are a number of pressures that make it difficult for policymakers to use evidence effectively, or for researchers to produce policy-relevant findings. However, change is possible, if both academics and practitioners are willing to change their daily practices and make additional efforts to increase interaction between the two communities. So we conclude with a consideration of those strategies that may improve collaboration between policymakers and researchers.

First, we need to *lay the groundwork for supporting a culture of engaged communication across academic and policymaking communities*. While studies that evaluate specific initiatives aimed at fostering partnerships are somewhat limited and spread across many different disciplines (Landry et al. 2001), what is apparent in the reviews available is that the early and active engagement of policymakers throughout a research project (including the investment of funds) dramatically increases the likelihood of its findings being used at some point within policy deliberation. Direct involvement fosters a much stronger sense of ownership and accountability becoming attached

to the research process (Lavis 2006; Lomas 2000; Martens and Roos 2005; Nutley et al. 2002).

There are at least two major steps involved in establishing a solid foundation for exchange between the two communities (Nutley et al. 2002). The first is to *reach* a common understanding of what constitutes evidence. This means taking stock of the policy problems we can actually expect to be able to research; encouraging an 'openness to methodological pluralism' in which both qualitative and quantitative studies are perceived as valuable; and, accepting that knowledge generated from other sources (including the experience of policymakers) is worthwhile. In doing so it is expected that a wider climate of respect and trust can be fostered. The second step involves a more targeted activity in which a focused effort is made to develop research and development (R&D) strategies around policy issues. The overall aim here should be to determine how best to produce a rich and robust knowledge base upon which policymakers can depend. Formulating a corpus of research such as this means confronting such questions as:

– what both policymakers and researchers consider sound research;
– how to balance new primary research with the secondary analysis of existing data;
– given the need to produce timely findings of practical relevance, what are the criteria of validity and reliability for research;
– how can gaps be identified in our current knowledge base;
– how should we prioritize which issues require the most urgent attention; and
– how might we balance the need for researchers to remain free from political coercion with the desire for close cooperation between the providers and users of research? (adapted from Nutley et al. 2006: 4).

Policymakers and researchers need to address these issues if they want to work together effectively. Researcher-organized workshops, government-led, priority-setting exercises, and scoping activities designed by funding agencies, are the sorts of venues where these types of exchanges might occur (Lavis 2006). In addition, encounters in which researchers and policymakers are exposed to the daily routines and pressures of the other may be another valuable tool for promoting a sustained dialogue (Nutley et al. 2002; Whitehead et al. 2004). These strategies, which help to take stock of specific policy areas, are designed to assist researchers and policymakers establish some common goals. In doing so, researchers are offered a greater sense of awareness of what type of research is needed (making them less likely to focus on irrelevant concerns), while policymakers are forced to actively reflect upon where they

could best use the academic findings (requiring them to have a much stronger sense of their own organizational needs and abilities).

Secondly, we need to *find new and creative solutions for dissemination and access*. For researchers, this means being amenable to generating their research findings in diverse formats, for a variety of audiences, using multiple channels (particularly different kinds of media), but this must be done cautiously and realistically. Fenwick (2008) provides a thought-provoking account of her efforts to present social science findings differently, and argues that new ways of presenting knowledge often require skills that go far beyond the typical expertise of academics, particularly when it comes to using alternative formats such as theatre. She suggests providing accessible summaries of research (executive summaries, take home message handouts, short sound bites); using language that will engage readers; and, always aiming to draw out policy implications from research findings (Nutley et al. 2002; Petticrew et al. 2004; Lavis 2006; Martens and Roos 2005). Scholars are also encouraged to 'be proactive' and make concerted efforts to stay in contact with relevant policy and delivery bodies (Nutley et al. 2006). Funding agencies might allow dedicated resources within research grants to be deployed for alternative dissemination activities (beyond conference attendance and peer reviewed publication); consult policymakers when commissioning research; and, provide funds for research synthesis and evaluation activities (Knowledge Mobilization Symposium 2005; Nutley et al. 2006). Policymakers and bureaucrats could increase access to documents which reveal how policy decision are made; highlight research that has fed into policy decisions; and, require departments to show evidence of research use when applying for program funds (Nutley et al. 2006). Collectively, these types of solutions make it easier for policymakers to use research (since it becomes available in accessible forms) and provide academics with greater insight as to where, when, and how their research is being deployed (if at all).

Thirdly, we should *facilitate, recognize and reward the uptake of research in policy*. In terms of encouraging utilization, the establishment of 'one stop shopping' sites where policymakers have immediate access to up to date research and a rapid response to any of their questions has been recommended (Lavis 2006). In addition, researchers and policymakers may be able to work together to develop self-assessment tools that determine an organization's capacity to adapt and utilize research (Lavis 2006). It has also been suggested that policymakers can and should be given specific training about how to read and interpret findings (Lavis 2006; Nutley et al. 2002). In terms of recognizing and rewarding policymakers for using research one promising possibility is to link R&D strategies to departmental business plans (Nutley et al. 2002).

We are still struggling to build a solid knowledge base *about information exchange in the policy domain* (Abramson et al. 2007; Landry et al. 2001), but implementing these sorts of suggestions would increase the capacity of policymakers and researchers for collective learning about this process.

In Canada, an excellent example of an organization that has been a true leader in meeting all of these recommendations is the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) (Lavis 2006). Among the types of materials they supply are: 'mythbusters,' research summaries that offer evidence that tends to be contrary to accepted wisdom in Canadian healthcare debates; the 'evidence boost,' which includes brief discussions of healthcare issues where research findings point to a preferred course of action in policy; and, 'promising practices in research use,' which highlight specific healthcare organizations that have invested their time, energy and resources to improve their ability to use research. In addition, CHSRF offers the Executive Training for Research Application (EXTRA), a two-year program for capacity and leadership to optimize the use of research evidence in managing Canadian healthcare organizations. They also provide assistance for new and established academic researchers, allowing them to work with mentors in order to reorient their work toward applied health services or policy research. They also organize 'Listening for Direction,' a policy-scoping activity in which they identify short-term (one to two years) and longer-term (three to ten years) health system priorities. Finally, CHSRF's funding goes to projects that bring the best available evidence together, highlight how to act based on such evidence, and/or promote specific transformations within the healthcare system itself.

Moreover, a newly established partnership in Canada that illustrates promise in the context of such recommendations is Research Impact (Phipps 2008). This joint initiative, partially funded through the SSHRC, brings together two universities (York University and the University of Victoria). Their website supplies highly accessible research summaries in a variety of areas (education, social welfare, crime and justice), representing many different disciplines (such as anthropology, fine arts, law, philosophy, humanities and women's studies), all of which provide recommendations on some level for both knowledge users (policymakers) and knowledge creators (other researchers). They also offer a comprehensive database of Canadian and international organizations dedicated to facilitating knowledge transfers and exchanges between academic researchers and policymakers. Moreover, both universities have integrated a permanent knowledge brokering capacity into their institutional structure in which they actively seek out the relevant research issues and needs of government decision makers and then link them to appropriate researchers (faculty and students).

Conclusion

The challenges for policymakers seeking to use evidence effectively, or researchers trying to be policy-relevant cannot easily be overcome. There are divergent expectations and competing accounts of what policy and academic work ought to be. As this chapter has argued, among the biggest concerns for policymakers are efforts to balance efficiency and research utilization and find legitimacy while acknowledging ambiguity. For researchers, it involves regulating expectations around doing research with impact and satisfying the standards of general curiosity within the academic community, along with managing concerns of relevancy in an intellectual climate that embraces the multiplicity of different forms of knowledge. Moreover, for the recommendations above to become common practice both parties will have to change their behavior. On the one hand, policymakers will have to willingly provide more meaningful access to their internal processes, be prepared to learn about different methods and projects, and reflect critically about their individual and organizational needs and capacities in regards to using research. Academics (and academic institutions), on the other hand, will have to begin recognizing the practical constraints that policymakers face when trying to use research, transform how they write and what they focus upon when presenting their findings, and, be amenable to rewarding, and being rewarded for, reaching audiences beyond simply their peers.

The transformations listed above cannot be expected to occur quickly or easily. Consequently, we must be prepared to *be realistic about our expectations*. It has been suggested that 'evidence influenced' or 'evidence aware' decisions as opposed to evidence-based is a more reasonable perception of what we can anticipate attaining (Nutley et al. 2002). Moreover, we must recognize that if academic evidence is to shape policy debates, this will often occur indirectly through channels such as 'mediated dialogues' between stakeholders and through an effort to 'interpret for policymakers who inhabit one world what it is like to live in another' (Elliott and Popay 2001: 330). All told, our goal should be to work together 'to create contextual understanding about an issue, build linkages that will exist over time' and to collectively educate each other (Rist 1998: 403). Advancing such a moderate aspiration may be a disappointment to some readers, who were hoping that this chapter would contain straightforward ideas about how to ensure that research influences the policy process; yet, given the complexity of the challenges involved, this would be a target that both researchers and policymakers might aim to achieve.

Notes

1   As Landry et al. (2001) have shown, 'use' can have a variety of meanings including a basic transmission activity on the part of the researcher in which they make their findings available; cognition related activities in which researchers assume their work was read and understood; referencing in which the actual work is cited by policymakers; efforts in which an attempt is made to adopt research results; activities which suggest that results influenced decision making; and, finally, instances in which specific results seemingly give rise to an extension and application by policymakers.

2   As a policy practitioner, I have worked as a policy advisor who tries to offer the best possible information to both senior bureaucrats and political leaders about future policy directions and priorities; as a policymaker developing the parameters around regulatory and legislative changes for a specific policy initiative; and as a policy implementer, aiming to apply certain policy directives at the 'street level,' the interface with clients. Moreover, as an academic, my work has primarily focused on a consideration of the context in which policy initiatives have emerged and an exploration of ensuing controversies (such as pinpointing sites of dissonance, resistance and/or change).

3   This is happening elsewhere as well. Solesbury (2002) documents the nature of these trends in the UK.

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11 Locating the Work of Policy

Cris Shore

Getting close to policy[1]

What exactly do social scientists seek to achieve when they engage in policy work? Is it dialogue with, or influence over policy professionals? Is it a way for academics to shape the formation or implementation of public policy, or is it to analyze and deconstruct policy in order to explore deeper patterns and processes pertaining to the organization of society? In short, should social scientists follow the policy gaze or seek to critique it?

The answers to these questions necessarily depend on a host of other variables, including professional ethics, the nature of the policy in question, and one's own particular political disposition. These reflexive and epistemological considerations are central to social anthropology's methodology (Scholte 1972; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Meyerhoff and Ruby 1982; Davies 2007). But, while anthropologists excel in highlighting cultural complexity and the various sides of any argument (including their own subject-positioning), they frequently complain that government agencies and policy elites who commission research typically want simple conclusions and 'quick fixes.' For critical and interpretive social scientists, engaging with policymakers often seems like a 'dialogue of the deaf.' This has led some scholars to call for a change in the discourse and practice of the social sciences. As one prominent US professor summed it up, 'we need to learn to think and talk more like policymakers.'[2]

This chapter aims to critique that argument and question its underlying assumptions. Far from offering social scientists a way forward, learning to 'think and talk like a policymaker' may be the problem that good social science needs to overcome. What gives anthropology its analytical edge when confronting policymakers is precisely its capacity to challenge received wisdom and think *outside* of the conventional policy box. My ambition, therefore, is to illustrate how anthropological approaches and perspectives might help us to better understand what is at stake when we confront policy processes. Social anthropologists are experienced at tracking the genealogies and flows of particular policies and their impact on people's lives and everyday behavior.

But they are equally good at interrogating the meanings that those policies hold for those actors whose lives they touch and the cultural logics that structure those 'policy worlds.' In this sense, they 'relocate' or 'destabilize' seemingly well-known phenomena like policy. Instead of accepting conventional commonsense accounts – 'there are policymakers, who make policy' – anthropologists recognize other, local accounts and emphasize the plurality of meanings and contested nature of these accounts. In doing so, they also show how ordinary people who are not policy professionals construct these phenomena that we term 'policies.' To paraphrase Clifford Geertz (1973: 5), I consider the analysis of policy to be 'not an experimental science in search of a law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning.'

This chapter addresses the consequences of this anthropological sensitivity. First, I will show how anthropology and (mainstream) policy studies differ in their approach to policy, with particular emphasis on the dispositions, concepts and methods that anthropology offers. These enable researchers to come close to policy work, but also to understand it in radically different ways. Next, I will explore how we should (re)conceptualize 'policy' and what theoretical lenses are most appropriate for understanding how policies 'work.' I will argue that the way policies are objectified and used provides insight into some of the deeper cultural codes and ordering principles that structure society, particularly the regimes of power that shape the way individuals conduct themselves. Finally, I consider the problem that several contributors to this volume highlight regarding the disparity between the 'systemic accounts' of policy processes given by academics and the 'experiential accounts' of policy professionals themselves. Should we be concerned by the lack of fit that exists between outsider (academic) and insider (experiential) accounts of policy, and what are the implications of this disparity for our understanding of policy? I will also draw out some methodological lessons on how to get close to policy work, in order to understand where, how and why policy 'really' happens. I shall illustrate these themes using ethnographic examples that highlight the complexity and ambiguity inherent in all policy analysis.

Mainstream policy analysis

The dominant account of policy among policy professionals casts policy in terms of *authoritative instrumentalism*: i.e., there are objective entities called 'policies'; they are addressed to solving particular 'problems'; they are the result of decisions made by some rational authority (e.g., a government, committee, management board, chief executive etc.); and they are intended to

produce some known outcome. In this account, the work of policy consists of analyzing (identifying the problem and appraising possible responses), choosing (selecting a response on sound and rational grounds), implementing (carrying out the choice) and evaluating (checking that the action taken produced the desired outcome).

With some notable exceptions,[3] this approach also dominates academic thinking about policy. For instance, in Moran, Rein and Goodin's *Oxford Handbook of Public Policy* (2006), while the editors aim to be broad and inclusive and to give voice to the whole spectrum of different perspectives on public policy, the way the book is framed echoes much of the 'high modernism' they criticize, as in their definition of policies as programs 'by which officers of the state attempt to rule.' Public policies, the editors declare, 'are instruments of this assertive ambition,' and while they try to distinguish their approach from 'policy studies in the mode that emerged from operations research during the Second World War [which were] originally envisaged as handmaidens in that ambition' (Moran, Rein and Goodin 2006: 3), they end the book with two appendices containing a précis of the 2004 Queen's Speech outlining the British government's legislative program, and a summary of President George Bush's 2004 'State of the Union Address.' The clear message for the reader is that policy is, in Dye's classic phrase, 'whatever governments decide to do or not to do' (Dye 1972). Despite talk of 'postpositivism' in the policy sciences (DeLeon and Martell 2006: 39), the mainstream literature continues to be framed as a process in which authorized actors pursue goals and analysts measure the desirability and effects of policy in terms of their calculable costs and benefits. Some scholars do recognize the importance of language, rhetoric and persuasion as keys to understanding policy processes (Fischer 2003; Gottweis 2006; Yanow 2006). However, many continue to view policy analysis as a quasi-scientific activity that requires a clinical approach. Iris Geva-May's book (2005) *Thinking Like a Policy Analyst* epitomizes this perspective. For Geva-May (2005: 2-5), learning to 'think like a policy analyst' is not unlike learning to 'think like a doctor' or other 'clinical disciplines': both require proper professional training, mastery of the appropriate 'tricks of the trade' and the diagnostic skills of a practising clinician. Policy analysis, she opines, is far too important to be left to untrained amateurs.[4] For critical social scientists, the task is to go beyond 'learning the tricks of the trade,' and examine how they work in practice, the conditions that create and sustain them, and the kinds of relations and subjects they produce. Our aim should also be to challenge the typical view of policy that treats it as a rational, linear, top-down process that begins with policy formulation and ends with implementation and outcomes.

Anthropological understandings of policy

In contrast to the formal neatness of the instrumental model of policy, social anthropology emphasizes the messiness and complexity of policy processes, particularly the ambiguous and often contested manner in which policies are enacted and received by people in different situations. Anthropologists focus on how people make sense of things; i.e., the cultural meanings and symbolic significance that policy holds for them. They are interested in the 'natives' point of view,' i.e., the 'folk-model,' or actors' frame of reference (see Malinowski 1961 [1922]; Geertz 1983; Clifford and Marcus 1986). To understand how policies 'succeed' or 'fail,' we need to know something about how they are received and experienced by people whose lives they intersect with. What makes the State of the Union Address (or Queen's Speech) anthropologically interesting is not simply its content or use of language, but what people say and think about it, what they do with it and how it affects their everyday lives. An anthropology of policy takes the concept of policy not as an un-analyzed given, but as something to be *problematized*. In order to do so it poses a few critical questions:

– What does policy mean in this context?
– What *functions* does it serve?
– Whose interests does it promote and what are its social *effects?*
– How does this policy concept relate to other concepts, norms or institutions within the particular society?
– And what are the conditions – and preconditions – that made this policy possible?

Case Study: Locking the Dumpsters

Barbara Cruikshank's book *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* exemplifies this approach with a vivid ethnographic vignette. Around 1989, she noticed that most of the garbage bins in her neighborhood in Minneapolis had been fitted with locks. A key consequence of this was that homeless people and recyclers who relied on 'dumpster diving' (i.e., scavenging food from the large dumpster bins placed outside supermarkets or close to shopping malls) were now much less free to live on their own terms. In short, those struggling to stay outside the arms of the 'poverty industry' would now either have to steal or submit themselves to social service charity. Padlocking the dumpsters meant a whole means of subsistence was being foreclosed.

As a civil rights activist, Cruikshank set out to find out who had ordered the dumpsters to be locked, and why, in order to protest and reverse the deci-

sion. She asked cashiers at the local convenience store why the dumpster in the parking lot had been locked. They said the reason was because the store would be legally liable if anyone were to injure themselves while dumpster diving. Next, she asked a neighborhood activist, who explained that it was because local residents had complained about the noisy drunks who were congregating by the dumpsters; it was an issue of children's safety. Then she discovered that local college students in Minneapolis had been making maps of the local bins with timetables for when fresh spoils could be raided. In response to this fad, many bagel and pizza shops had stopped putting out trash at night. Local shopkeepers, by contrast, explained to her that people were dumping household garbage (including old washing machines and furniture); therefore locking the dumpsters was a good cost-saving measure. Similarly, people involved in charities and health care said locking up the dumpsters was a good thing because this was really a public health matter and not an issue of limiting individual freedoms.

Puzzled by this diversity of explanations and still no nearer to an explanation, Cruikshank then asked the company that owns and empties the dumpsters who had instituted the lock-up policy or whether there was a law they were complying with. Nobody was able to give her an answer. She also called their insurance company and the city's administration, but again failed to find anyone able to give an authoritative account. Despite all her efforts, Cruikshank was unable to trace the source of this practice, or whether it was part of some conscious policy. Finally, she asked some of the down-and-outs and homeless people of Minneapolis. They told her that locking up the city's dumpsters was a way for 'them' or 'the system' to get street-dwellers off the streets and under systems supervision.

(Re)locating the agent in the policy process

There are a number of lessons to be learned from Cruikshank's story about the way social scientists approach policy questions. Perhaps the first is that all of the participants observed the same practice and everyone assumed that it stemmed from an authoritative decision and that it was intended to lead to some preferred outcome; this illustrates the hegemony of 'authoritative instrumentalism': everyone constructed a story within this account, although no one had any actual evidence to support their assumptions, and, when Cruikshank began to research the matter, she was unable to find a decision-maker or any decision on the matter. This is another illustration of what Elmore (1979), in a different context, termed 'backward mapping'; since there was an

observed regularity, there must have been an authoritative choice that must have been made in order to achieve some rational outcome.

Most academic writing on policy is grounded in a similar teleological account. Yet, as Edward Page observes, some policies become established without ever having been consciously deliberated on; a category of policy that arises more from 'non-decision' and inaction (Page 2006: 220). While we may recognize that systematic regularities in government do not necessarily stem from the authoritative will of a decision maker (i.e., not all policies have a sovereign 'author'), the assumption that they do nonetheless continues to frame academic discussion. As Foucault observed, 'in our political thought and analysis we have still not cut off the king's head' – that is, we attribute observed action to some prior decision. By contrast, anthropologists would seldom make these assumptions or look upon policy as a problem-solving device, but would ask instead how these ways of talking about governing influence what people do and say, and the new relations and problems these create.

We can see, too, that there are many actors in the game, and it is unclear whether any of them is actually 'in charge'. Usually, there is no single authority or agent behind policy initiatives. This somewhat Kafkaesque case study illustrates some of the problems that social scientists face in locating and identifying 'policy actors' in an age of advanced neoliberalism where so many of the State's functions have been decentralized and privatized, and where the idea of 'multi-level governance' has become an accepted idiom for describing modern regulatory regimes (Rhodes 1997).

This also has important ramifications for notions of accountability and democratic control. Minnesota was a democratic state, but the ruling that was implemented was not directed by (or even known to) the democratically elected city government. What does the lack (or invisibility) of a policy author mean for local democracy? If one cannot locate an actual cause, individual or institution responsible for a policy reform, what possibility is there for resistance? As Cruikshank puts it, 'the task for democratic theory, when faced with the facelessness of power, could be understood as the effort to give power a face or a name, to make it visible or accountable' (Cruikshank 1999: 15).

Cruickshank draws two further lessons from this story. The first is that rather than being pre-occupied with policy authorship and the activities and attitudes of policymakers, we need to focus on its wider social effects. It was not clear who ordered the locking of the dumpsters or why, but the effect was to make it more difficult for marginal people, like the homeless, to survive outside of the institutionalized forms of official welfare. Locking the dumpsters was an important act of exclusion, and the fact that neither a responsible policy actor nor policy rationale could be found, only makes this case even

more interesting. The second insight relates to the wider argument of Cruickshank's book regarding democracy, empowerment and the modern techniques of government. Despite the absence of a recognizable policy actor, the dumpster lock-ups nevertheless reflect a wider, more diffuse rationality of government in relation to the 'problem' of homelessness: i.e., one that sees solutions to the problems of poverty through the mobilization of 'community' assets and empowering the poor and homeless to help themselves. Thus everyone in the story (except the homeless), for different reasons, was able to agree that locking the dumpsters was a 'good policy.'

While there is no singular method for doing an 'anthropology of policy,' just as there is no one way to do policy analysis, anthropology is particularly useful for addressing some of the larger-scale political questions of our times such as the transformation of the modern state, the emergence of new methods of governing, and the articulation of new relations of power. In our *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power* (1997), Susan Wright and I argued that policies can be interpreted in terms of their *effects* (i.e., what they produce), the *relationships* they create, and the *wider systems of thought* in which they are embedded. This approach to policy provides a useful analytical framework for social science research as it draws attention to three critical insights about the mythical, symbolic and political nature of policy: namely, that policies work on at least three levels as 1) vehicles for producing order, 2) charters for action and 3) a mechanism for distributing and concealing power.

Policies reflect 'rationalities of governance'

Policies reflect ways of thinking about the world and acting upon it. They contain implicit – and sometimes explicit – models of social organization and visions of how individuals should relate to society and to each other. As such, policies sometimes create new sets of relationships between individuals, groups, and nations (think of the US policy of 'containment' in 1948, which marked the beginning of the Cold War; or the economic policies of the UK and New Zealand governments during the 1980s, which turned those countries into laboratories for neoliberalism). A key feature of policies is the way they work to construct new types of individual (e.g., 'citizens,' 'legal adults,' 'permanent residents,' 'over-stayers,' 'immigrants' etc.) and new categories of subjectivity. As the 'governmentality' literature demonstrates, a liberal government relies increasingly on 'techniques of the self'; i.e., on technologies that instill the norms and practices by which individuals will govern and manage themselves (Rose and Miller 1992). Mod-

ern government has become, in effect, the art of governing at-a-distance by inculcating habits of *self*-management and *self*-regulation, turning the *objects* of policy (such as unemployed young people) into *subjects*, the actors in their own regime of control. The policies associated with neoliberalization and New Public Management in the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom provide vivid examples of how this form of advanced liberal governmentality works.

Policy echoes 'myth' in non-literate societies

Drawing on Malinowski's (1926) observations about the role of myth in Trobriand society, we suggested that policies, like myths, provide a 'charter for action,' accounting for it in a way that 'makes sense.' Like myths, policies offer rhetorical narratives that serve to either justify or condemn the present and to lend legitimacy both to the holders of positions of authority and to the actions over which they preside. Like myths, policies provide vehicles for uniting past and present in a way that gives coherence, order and certainty to the often incoherent, disorderly and uncertain workings of government. Finally, like myth, policy also provides a focus for allegiance; a way of uniting people around a common goal or purpose, and a device for defining or maintaining the symbolic boundaries that separate 'Us' from 'Them.'

Policy is an expression of power, but this is masked by its being described in terms of its putative outcomes

Policy is a way of describing the application of power to manage, regulate or change social practice. Being concerned with imposing order and coherence on the world, they therefore express a certain 'will to power.' However, to describe policies as instrumental does not mean they are somehow devoid of symbolism or meaning. The dualism between the 'instrumental' and the 'expressive,' central to some schools of thought within Policy Studies, is generally absent in anthropology. Anthropologists view all policy-making – however instrumental its intent – as symbolic and meaningful for the involved different actors. The key question for social scientists should therefore be how meaning is attached to policy accounts, what is accepted as 'rational,' and whose interests do these accounts serve. To answer those questions we must focus on issues of language, discourse and power and the cultural context in which policy processes operate.

Studying Policy

We have argued that policy work should be viewed as a particular form of social and symbolic action. Articulating goals is part of this action, but policy activity cannot be fully understood as the framing and pursuit of goals. Policies themselves – like blueprints or plans – can be usefully conceived as a category of condensed symbol (Turner 1967). But the participants will see them from different perspectives, and we should recognize that they can have multiple meanings, and can be almost consciously ambiguous. This means more than 'policy means different things to different people'; it means that policy is concerned with constructing meaning in situations of contestation and ambiguity. But is also means that the perspective of the researcher will be different to that of the practitioner. If policymakers are 'professional sense-makers' operating in situations of managerial ambiguity (Noordegraaf 2000), then anthropologists are professional interrogators of other people's sense-making – including the social and symbolic worlds that policy professionals inhabit. This raises the question of how much the sense-makers want to have their activities interrogated, and in what sense academic research can be 'useful.' It may be unrealistic to hope that there can ever be a shared language or narrative that unites the diverse perspectives of academics and policymakers.

Conclusions

> If prescription (or advice) to policymakers is not based on such a foundation of understanding, it will either mislead or fall on deaf ears. In turn, understanding depends not just on seeing policy making as a strange form of theater – with the analyst in the first row of the stalls – but on trying to capture the intentions of the authors of the drama, the techniques of the actors, and the working of the stage machinery. Empathy in the sense of capturing what drives policy actors and entering into their assumptive worlds, is crucial (Klein and Marmor 1996: 893).

This quote goes some way towards mapping the contours of what an anthropological approach to policy analysis might look like. Policy is seen as a type of *'performance'* or social drama, the analysis of which requires empathy and sensitivity to other people's worlds of meaning. This emphasis on literary and theatrical techniques, recalls the approach of Geertz (1973; 1983). However, while a focus on meaning has long been a priority for anthropologists, we need to go beyond this if our goal is to explain social phenomena (as the

dumpster lock-up example illustrates). To analyze what policies *mean*, we also have to consider the wider socio-economic, political and historical contexts in which they are embedded, their preconditions, and the 'work' they perform. Rather than studying policy as an end in itself, we should remember that policy provides a methodological window for exploring wider socio-economic patterns and new and emerging rationalities of government. We should step back and look at the *idea of policy*, how it works as an organizing principle (and ideology), and the different social and political functions it performs.

This anthropological perspective *relocates* policy in multiple ways. Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of thinking outside the box of authoritative instrumentalism. Policies also have effects that may escape the designs and intentions of their authors (if indeed a 'policy author' can be identified). Once created, policies enter into complex webs of relations with various agents, actors and institutions, and these entanglements can often result in unanticipated consequences (for example, think of the problems of 'insider trading' and corruption that arose following the policies of privatization and de-regulation of financial markets during the 1990s). To echo Appadurai (1986) policies, like material objects, have 'social lives' of their own. When analyzing the work of policy, therefore, it is important to reflect on their biographies and the dynamics surrounding their translation and interpretation.

Critical and interpretive social sciences provide a valuable antidote to the traditional, normative and rationalist approaches that see policy in terms of linear models of decision making and execution. If policies serve as tools for extending the reach of government into civil society (Ferguson 2006), they can equally be used as instruments for *analyzing* the workings of government. Policies provide a lens for 'studying up' and for exploring the worlds of policymakers, not simply the peoples to whom policies are addressed. This has important methodological implications for both Policy Studies and Anthropology. One of anthropology's strengths is its well-honed method of participant observation based on long-term fieldwork. This is what enables us to observe what people *actually* do as opposed to what they *tell us* they do. This empirical approach is ideal for generating insider knowledge and high quality 'thick description' that enables us to get 'under the skin' of the socio-cultural complexities we wish to understand. However, while such microanalysis is useful for generating local knowledge, anthropologists recognize the limitations of these approaches, particularly in the context of our increasingly mobile, transnational and globalized world. Many therefore try to follow Marcus's call (1995) for 'multi-sited ethnography': conducting research in numerous field sites. A policy perspective provides a framework for achieving that goal and for exploring the relationship between local and global actors within a

particular epistemic community. It can also help us track the connections between differently situated actors, institutions and sites within a given policy community.

Secondly, an anthropological perspective reminds us that policies contain a 'will to power': they are an exercise in persuasion and legitimation (Majone 1989) and they objectify those they target, subjecting them to the anonymous gaze of experts. In so doing, policies create new categories of individual and new forms of subjectivity.

There is no single way to analyze policy work. Just as our choice of methods depends on the questions we seek to answer, so our accounts of policy work should also be tailored to suit the particular aspects of policy we wish to analyze. For scholars studying policy, the discussion in this chapter has important implications in terms of both method and attitude. The researcher should *not* try to 'think like a policymaker,' abandon disciplinary strengths or the analytical and critical distance of the scholar. It is important not to reify policy, as policymakers sometimes do, and to remember that policies are embedded cultural phenomena that are better viewed as processes than as entities. This again highlights an important methodological difference between anthropology, policy studies and political science: anthropologists focus on the *constitutive*, whereas political scientists and policy analysts focus on the outcome. As one former Norwegian diplomat and political scientist has noted:

> Anthropologists tend to define politics as a question of who we are, political scientists tend to define it as who gets what, where, why and when. In the terms of classical political theory, anthropologists focus on the preconditions for political order, and political scientists focus on how that order is maintained (Neumann 2009: 256).

This leaves the researcher's relationship with the world of professional practice open. As I have argued, researchers should not try to mimic the policy practitioners, nor be burdened by the desire to please or prove the 'relevance' of social science to policy professionals, because what makes research valuable to the practitioner is that it comes from a different perspective and can show the practitioners things that they could not see. But to communicate this requires that researchers develop ways of talking, and practitioners develop ways of listening that do not come naturally to either, and this is perhaps the greatest challenge for both groups.

Notes

1 I wish to thank the editors for inviting me to write this chapter and, in particular, Dvora Yanow and Hal Colebatch for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2 This comment was made by a keynote speaker at one of the main panels during the 2007 meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, DC.

3 See, in particular, the work of Fischer (2003), Yanow (2000; 2006), and Peters and Pierre (2006).

4 For example, the 'bounded rationality' model used by Jones, Boushey and Workman (2006: 49) is based on the 'scientific analysis of the cognitive architecture of humans.' This assessment is supposedly based on an analysis of 'how people actually behave in experimental and observational situations where comprehensive rationality makes precise predictions about outcomes.'

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Conclusions

12   The Lessons for Policy Work

Hal Colebatch, Robert Hoppe and Mirko Noordegraaf

The focus on policy work

This book has focused on the work that 'makes policy' – that is, on policy as a field of specialized professional practice rather than on policy as something created in order to bring about some desirable end. The study of policy has tended to focus on the proclaimed goals of policy, on alternative ways of achieving these goals, on the characteristics and likely outcomes of these alternatives, on the influence of other jurisdictions on policy choices ('policy transfer'), and on the relationship between proclaimed goals, outputs ('implementation') and outcomes ('effects,' 'impacts'). Less attention has been paid to the nature of the practice through which policy statements are generated and related to the ongoing process of governing, and this dimension of governing tended to be referred to in general terms like 'coordination,' which seemed to describe one of the intermediate outputs rather than the entire process through which it was achieved.

In this way, the concerns of the discipline tended to be shaped by the 'official accounts' of government, which saw governing as the exercise of authority by appropriately empowered leaders to achieve known goals. But it became increasingly clear that these were not the only players in the game. Policy work was becoming increasingly institutionalized and professionalized. There has been an increasing tendency among the governments of many liberal democracies to designate staff as policy officers or policy analysts, and to create policy branches, sometimes central policy units. This move has not been limited to government, as business and professional associations and non-government organizations appoint their own policy staff to facilitate dealings with government and other bodies. Policy has become a specialized form of professional practice, and this has been accompanied by the development of forms of specialist training and certification, particularly in North America, where graduate schools of public policy began to emerge from the 1960s. But the significance of this change, and the sort of practice in which these players engage, has attracted little attention in the literature on govern-

ment, with some notable exceptions such as the work of Meltsner (1976) and Radin (2000).

The literature has focused on the development and application of 'policy analysis,' which has been seen as a systematic, expert and unbiased identification and comparison of alternative courses of action – 'policy options' – applying a methodology of comparative benefit derived from economics, which would enable the policy analyst to advise the 'decision maker' on their optimal choices. This field of knowledge and the institutions which sustained it – not only policy positions and organizational units, but also textbooks, journals, and conferences – was developed and refined during the second half of the 20th century, and, by the end of the century, Radin observed that policy analysis had 'come of age.' At the same time, she found that the work of policy analysts in the US was quite diverse and often bore little resemblance to the systematic comparison of alternatives expounded in the texts, leaving trained practitioners rather unsettled regarding the 'disjunction' between the tenets of their training and the demands of the job. This was reinforced by other research findings, and by the oral feedback of practitioners (e.g., Noordegraaf 2000; 2007; Howard 2005; Adams 2005; Page and Jenkins 2004). Noordegraaf's policy managers focused not on the systematic comparison of options but on the 'meetings and papers' through which the diverse array of participants sought to reach a mutually acceptable outcome.

Here, it became clear that there were two very distinct approaches to thinking about policy practice. One is *teleological*, outcome-focused: the activity is about 'making policy,' and the focus of attention is on the problem being addressed and how the measures proposed would contribute to its solution. The alternative approach might be termed *relational*, or process-focused: policy activity is a continuing but variable flow of attention among a large and diverse array of participants, who have overlapping agendas, different interpretations of the problem, and varying levels of concern about its resolution. In this book, we have tried to be open to both approaches, but have been particularly concerned about outlining the implications of the second, which tends to get less attention in both the academic and the practitioner's discourse. We have been asking a number of questions such as: What is it that policy workers do? What does it mean to 'make policy'? Why do people do it? What are the resulting 'policies'? Where can these policies be found? What are the results?

The broadening context of policy work

The image of policy practice in the early discussions of policy analysis was relatively uncomplicated because policy was the responsibility of 'government' – coherent, instrumental, and hierarchical – and the policy analyst was there to advise 'the decision maker,' who was preferably located in a small unit close to the top. It was soon clear, however, that if the person at the top was using 'policy analysis' in his or her decision-making processes, lower-level managers would want to have their own policy analysts in order to convince the boss. Moreover, 'government' is composed of a variety of specialized agencies, with their own agendas and competing claims on the attention and resources of 'the government,' and policy analysts have discovered that while they saw themselves as 'advising the Prince,' they spent much of their time negotiating with policy workers from other organizations, attempting to find a mutually acceptable and justifiable outcome. Policy analysis was not so much a way of determining the optimal course of action, more a set of 'duelling swords' to be used in structuring negotiations (Radin 2000).

Policy work was also not limited to state bureaucracies. Political scientists noted that stable relationships often developed between state officials and the officials of organized interests – e.g., regarding issues of food policy, organizations representing farmers, transporters, wholesalers, retailers, consumers, etc.; this constellation of shared concern was called 'the policy community' (Richardson and Jordan 1979), and the term became popular, reflecting the recognition that, to a large extent, policy work was a continuing interaction between mutually recognized participants. Governing was less the imposition of rule by a coherent, external actor ('the government') and more of an interweaving of different structures and logics into a presentable form. In this perspective, the government's formal acts were often the 'enactment' of agreements reached within these broader policy communities, and less concerned with the accomplishment of externally determined goals than the constitution and maintenance of a structure of rules that the stakeholders were committed to.

This emerging challenge to the paradigm of government as a coherent and hierarchical instrument culminated in the proposition that 'government' is replaced by 'governance,' or rule by negotiation among self-organizing networks (Rhodes 1997). Rhodes argued (at least initially) that this was happening in the UK – that is, that governance was a descriptive term. Other researchers, meanwhile, contested the claim that government had been replaced by self-organizing networks (Kickert et al. 1997; Johansson and Borell 1999; Bache 2000; Jordan et al. 2003) and Stoker (1998) argued that governance was actu-

ally more of a heuristic or analytical term than a description that identified a form of governing in which:

– governing is accomplished by actors inside and outside government;
– boundaries and responsibilities are blurred;
– power dependence makes collaboration necessary;
– there are self-organizing networks;
– coordination is achieved without recourse to command.

The implications of this for policy work are that attention shifts from a hierarchical and instrumental, outcome-oriented focus (advising the decision makers on appropriate goals) to an interactive, process-oriented one (incorporating stakeholders and generating agreed outcomes). The term 'governance' has become a popular term, but it has so many different meanings that Offe (2008) wondered whether it had not become just an 'empty signifier.' But using it as an analytic category in the way Stoker suggests raises many questions about policy work, and in particular about how participants are to be recognized, which locations and discourses are acceptable and how policy workers should relate to the various agendas and participants involved. There are also questions about the extent to which actors from outside the official circle – from 'civil society' organizations or the unorganized 'community' – can engage in these negotiations among officials. The 'policy community' concept reflects a recognition that policy work has taken place among people who know each another. However, the widening array of participants meant that they might not know each other all that well, that modes of mutually acceptable discourse would have to be figured out, and that participants would be grappling with the complex, negotiated world in which they found themselves.

Taking an interpretive approach to policy work

The approach taken to policy in this book has been broadly interpretive – that is, rather than seeing policy as a statement of the clear choices of 'the government,' we see it as an exercise in meaning-making, in which participants, from inside and outside government address questions in which they share an interest, but which they approach from different angles, for a range of reasons, and apply varying criteria to define both the problem and the appropriate response. Policy texts – statements, plans, and programs of action – are produced in this process of interaction, but their significance can only be understood in relation to the interaction. Participants

employ a variety of frameworks of meaning to 'frame' the problem in ways that make sense to them and validate the courses of action that they prefer, so that the meaning of policy texts is, in effect, negotiated between the participants, and that the relationship between texts and subsequent action is itself part of the practice, not something that follows by definition ('implementation').

We can see, too, that there is a close relationship between institutions and meaning in policy work. A department of agriculture is not simply an instrument to achieve the government's goals in relation to agriculture; it is a location where the dominant framework of meaning privileges agriculture as an activity, in contrast to other frameworks such as planning, the environment or sustainability. The policy process is likely to involve encounters between these different frameworks or, more specifically, between policy workers coming from agencies which institutionalize different frameworks. The department of agriculture is likely to have established close relationships with agricultural interests outside government, which probably have their own policy workers and seek to involve themselves in the definition of policy questions. If the outcome is a 'government decision,' it will be a reflection of the way that these different institutionalized participants – i.e. specialized policy workers who represent organizations –interact to produce statements on problems, actions and resources.

Policy workers thus tend to discover that they are not making detached and context-free comparisons of policy options, but are engaged in ongoing interactions with other policy workers about points on which their respective institutionalized concerns intersect. Together with other policy workers, they have to negotiate the meaning of concern, the terms used to describe them, the way that these terms are used to express commitments to action and to validate the actions that need to be taken. They are not so much 'speaking truth to power,' as Wildavsky (1979) had hoped, but 'making sense together' (Hoppe 1999).

What can we learn from these accounts?

There are a number of common themes running through these accounts. Taken together, they oppose the central assumption of authoritative instrumentalism that policy can be understood as political leaders in positions of authority involved in a goal selection process. Among the specific themes that emerge are the following:

a   The ambiguity of authority

One of the reasons authority is ambiguous is that it's not necessarily political, as Geuijen and 't Hart show in their analysis of 'professional' authority in EU policy making. In chapter 9, we can see policy workers struggling with the conflicting 'authority claims' of their own agency, their profession, their country, and the EU. As a Dutch Brussels-based official put it:

> I am here to represent the Netherlands and my colleagues back home sometimes have difficulties appreciating that. They do their individual ministries' bidding. Their arena is about pulling and hauling between ministries. Here the arena is about pulling and hauling between countries.

This is mirrored in the practitioner's account in chapter 8, which shows the overlapping forms of political authority – the national government, the EU and the UN – and even within the EU, the different patterns of authority and decision-making procedures that apply to economic activity, foreign policy, and police and judicial matters.

Authority structures can also be ambiguous in national settings. The account of policy innovation in the water industry (chapter 6) shows the tensions between the authority of parliament, the ministry and the long-established water boards. The bureau responsible for economic forecasting (chapter 5) jealously guarded its autonomy, since its authority depended on its being seen as expert and immune to political pressure, but felt that it should take note of positions that had been reached in EU policy circles in Brussels. So, policy work calls for detailed knowledge about these formal authority structures, and judgment about the appropriate way to frame the policy activity.

One of the reasons that authority is unclear is that political leaders are sometimes not anxious to assert it. In some cases, as Geuijen and 't Hart show in chapter 9, they are simply not interested in the matter under discussion, or they don't feel that their participation has an impact, and they are content to leave it to officials to work out an acceptable resolution, unless they fear that the issue may become a political liability. If officials manage to reach a consensus, it is described as 'technical'; if they cannot, it is described as 'political' and passed back to the politicians. Because public support for the EU was uncertain, Dutch political leaders were reluctant to be too closely identified with EU rule making. These Dutch officials often felt that they weren't receiving any 'steer' from their leaders. Whenever policy is being developed in unfamiliar territory, political leaders are likely to become wary of being too

closely identified with it. Loeber's study (chapter 7) shows that while political leaders were happy to embrace the rhetoric of sustainable development, the vehicle chosen to pursue it was a temporary, publicly financed foundation which could easily be abolished (which was what happened). In uncertain areas of governing, political leaders may want to keep their distance.

At the same time, the authoritative instrumental view has great normative power and this is how it should be. Both chapters on the EU show officials looking for a 'steer' from their political leaders; without which they are inclined to play it safe, and stick with the established positions. But the dynamic of negotiations in Brussels means that they have to speak on behalf of their respective countries and defend national positions, which have to be 'invented'. This causes great concern among these officials because as one official noted, 'it does not reflect the way the relationship between a minister and the civil servants should be.' Political leaders should lead, and officials should follow their lead. When officials realize that this is often not the way it happens in can make them very uncomfortable about their policy work. 'Eurocrats', however, learn how to manufacture policy stances – they turn into 'bricoleurs'.

b   Policy work as a continuing process

One obvious characteristic of policy work in these accounts is the importance of recognizing that it is an ongoing process. In the authoritative choice paradigm, policy is seen as a series of discrete episodes with the policymakers identifying a problem, considering the alternatives, choosing, and implementing; it is a story with a beginning and an end. This is a convenient way to tell a story, but it is not necessarily the way that the participants experience it, and the beginning and the end are, in a sense, artifacts of the way we tell a story. They single out some elements for attention (e.g., the actions of 'the policymakers' in identifying a problem) and marginalize other aspects (e.g., the historical experience, ways of thinking, and interactive context, all of which make this issue appropriate). As one of the negotiators in Brussels said (chapter 9), 'Sometimes we are against a proposal because we have always been against it even if no one knows why exactly.' As Woeltjes points out (chapter 8), 'There is no one single problem to be solved. A lot of different issues are running at the same time.' Each episode is part of the continuous flow of action, and how matters command attention, and the sort of attention they get, reflects past experience – and also, to a certain extent, expectations of future dealings ('the shadow of the future,' as it has been called) (Axelrod and Dion 1988). While it may be convenient (and conventional) to begin the story with

a choice by the policy actor in question, as Woeltjes points out, policy work is reactive as well as proactive, and policy workers will just as likely respond to the agendas of other players as they will pursue their own initiatives. 'With or without a coherent political position on the issue, Dutch Eurocrats have to anticipate and respond to ongoing moves in EU policy on police cooperation' (chapter 9). Policy work is part of a pattern of structured interaction and these responses take place in a more or less stable framework of expected behavior. As de Vries et al. showed (chapter 5), 'a well-rehearsed (tacit) protocol' has developed over a long period of working together, which governs the way that civil servants and experts interact in the production of a policy document. And in the water management case study (chapter 7), the question that evaluators had to answer was how to find a location in the continuing process where their perspective could be presented because, after all, their evaluation was part of the policy process, not something external to it. So it is important to have good relationships with other participants; even if they are not allies, it is important to understand their positions, and to be taken seriously by them. Policy workers thus spend a considerable amount of time maintaining relationships, keeping relevant others 'in the loop,' to facilitate the pursuit of consensus when necessary.

c   The leading role of specialists

Even though it might make some of them uncomfortable, policy work is mainly considered the domain of specialist officials. As we have seen, this is often because the issues are not interesting to political leaders or the general public, and it is up to specialist officials from different organizational bases to reach a consensus on a workable outcome, which leaders can then endorse. This reflects the fact that most governing involves the routine adjustment of established patterns, and is accomplished through low-key negotiations between interested specialists – the 'policy community' that Richardson and Jordan (1979) identified. But specialists also take the lead, as in Metze's study of the redevelopment of redundant industrial land (chapter 4), where the initiative came from the consultants who were then hired to work on the project; they assembled the various stakeholders and secured finance from a friendly government agency. Similarly, the water management project (chapter 6) originated with policy specialists hoping that the seeking of policy advice from an independent institute would offer an opportunity to advance innovative policy directions. The initiative to redevelop industrial land turned out to be relatively successful while the water management project was only moderately so, which may reflect the absence of an 'organized counterfactual' in the land

use case – i.e., there were no strong alternative uses for the sites – whereas the water management initiative contested the domain of a well-entrenched segment of the public bureaucracy.

d   The role of goal statements

In the discourse of authoritative instrumentalism, policy is primarily about the 'big picture' – the strategic plan or vision that leaders pursue – but it is strikingly absent from these accounts. Both accounts of policy work in the EU context stress that policy workers were forced to operate despite the absence of any clear strategy and a defining strategy did not seem essential in the domestic cases either. In Loeber's study (chapter 7), one recognized a 'vision' of sustainable development, but no strategy toward its achievement. Meanwhile, the policy work was not concerned with defining a strategy, but with supporting and learning from approaches that were already in place. In the land redevelopment case (chapter 4), the policy task was not to develop and implement an overarching strategy, but to enable the project teams in the different sites to develop their own, and to learn from one another in the process. The policy workers in the water management case (chapter 6) developed a strategic perspective, but struggled to find a location where it would be noticed and considered significant. They managed to find a fringe audience, but the mainstream never saw the need for a new strategy.

But in contradiction to the previous point, there is a sense that the management of ongoing professional interactions can actually create a need for objectives. The Dutch officials involved in EU negotiations needed a 'Dutch position' to present and defend at the meetings, so an important part of their policy work was constructing a position through negotiation, consensus, the inertia of past practices, and sheer improvisation.

e   Policy work as constituting meaning

In all of these accounts, we can see policy workers creating meaning, often in ambiguous and contested contexts, where the outcome has to be compatible with the diverse understandings of the participants. In the EU context, national representatives had to first construct an understanding that was acceptable to their constituents at home, and then find the words that all of the various national delegations could reach a consensus on. In the redevelopment of industrial land case (chapter 4), the need to create meaning was openly recognized, and the process was considered an exercise in collective learning. However, in the economic forecasting case (chapter 5), it was impor-

tant that the outcome was seen as the product of disinterested expertise. In the sustainability case (chapter 7), the policy workers asked 'how would this broad objective be reflected in our practice?' and sought to convert existing attempts at innovation into learning opportunities. In the water management case (chapter 6), the task was to reinterpret existing practice and generate a new shared meaning. In this case, meaning interacted with institutionalized practice. The EU processes created a need for a 'national position' on the issue. National officials meet in advance, and these meetings then become exercises in 'problem finding' (chapter 8) at which 'some problems become real policy items, and some problems just disappear.' The policy innovators in the water management case (chapter 6) had to search for opportunities to find an audience for their re-framing of meaning in relation to water management. The innovators in the industrial sites case were less constrained by established procedure, and were able to adopt unusual means (like visual artists) as a way of discovering and expressing shared meaning. There is an interplay between meaning and structure where meaning informs structured action, and structure informs appropriate meaning.

Policy workers are thus engaged in creating and disseminating accounts of the process of governing, and there is more than one way of giving 'a good account.' Talking 'policy' is itself a particular account of governing, one that highlights the coherence of the process, its authoritative character, and the beneficial outcomes that can be expected. It can be contrasted with other accounts, which might focus on the divergent and competing agendas of the stakeholders, or the force of institutional inertia, or the personal motives of some of the individual participants. As we have seen, we can distinguish accounts of policy in terms of *authoritative choice*, which focuses on the intentions of leaders, *structured interaction*, which focuses on the interplay between stakeholders, and *social construction*, which focuses on the development of shared problematization which frames and justifies collective action.

Policy workers therefore have to know how to use these distinct accounts, and to be able to mobilize the appropriate account in each context. An inquiry into a policy question may be set up less to find out the nature of the problem (social construction) than to generate consensus and commitment among stakeholders (structured interaction). So policy workers may use a 'sacred' or 'front office' account in public, and a 'profane' or 'back office' account among insiders like themselves.

And policy workers are particularly concerned with the 'enactment' of critical points in the policy process, framing them in the appropriate (usually official) account: the ministerial announcement, the National Plan, the budget

allocation, etc. They have to constitute the context, which gives meaning to the policy action. As we saw in chapter 5, this may be a large public occasion with a queen and a golden carriage, or a dry formula about projections and variations, both of which are understood ways of creating significance.

Implications for research

What does this mean for future research in relation to policy work? In what follows we do not set a specific and elaborate research agenda. Instead, we identify certain research puzzles that can perhaps be investigated in future research, which would also include methodological aspects.

a   Institutions and meaning

Perhaps the first thing to note is the importance of institutions, and the relationship between institutions and meaning. By institutions we mean not simply organizations, but also structured ways of acting across organizational boundaries. Policy work is concerned with creating meaning, and because of the close relationship between shared meaning and organization, sharing meaning across organizational boundaries can be problematic. But as these cases show, it can be done. Woeltjes' account (chapter 8) suggests that long-established patterns of working, backed by strong international linkages, and aided by the technical complexity of the subject matter (and a lack of public interest), can make for shared understanding and fruitful collaboration. This can also occur at the national level, as officials prepare for their international meetings. Research into policy work, therefore, needs to be attentive to the interplay between meaning and institution, and particularly to how this operates across organizational and national boundaries. This also concerns the interplay between continuity and change. Institutions tend to stabilize social behavior, whereas (new) circumstances might call for new forms of collective behavior. Such behavior has to be enacted, and how exactly this is done in complex policy situations is not self-evident.

   The question then is how institutionalized ways of thinking and working can be changed, and a number of these cases pointed to the potential for 'outsiders' to facilitate the re-thinking of the nature of the problem and possible responses. In the 'sustainability' case (chapter 7), responsibility for this policy concern was given to a temporary 'quasi-outsider' organization, perhaps reflecting the ambiguous nature of the political support for the policy goal, but while this helped to facilitate innovative ways of thinking, the organization

remained marginal and was allowed to expire without having accomplished its purpose. In chapter 6, we saw that innovative policy workers turned to an independent institute to initiate the re-thinking, but, although the innovators acted strategically and sought to present their proposals in the most friendly terrain, they were unable to secure support for radical policy change. In the industrial land case (chapter 4), the outsiders were more successful, perhaps reflecting the absence of a strong agenda among the major stakeholders in government, and the fact that, for most of the participants, it was about adding something rather than taking something away.

b   Relations and rationality

This suggests that research should be particularly concerned with *relationships*, and the shared understandings that are produced by them, and how this interplay between relationships and understandings is challenged by conflicting norms of rationality and validation. Writing on policy tends to focus on problems, proffered solutions and outcomes, but in these accounts of practice, more attention seems to be given to process, and the relationships through which it is accomplished. 'Maintenance work' on collaborative relationships is important, both for the present and the future. Having an institutional framework that facilitates collaboration is important. As we have already noted (p. 8), the Brussels-based official found that agencies generally experience domestic politics as a conflict, whereas in an EU context, they needed to collaborate to create a national position. The water management reformers (chapter 6) struggled to find a location for collaboration and tended to be seen as disruptive, whereas the land developers (chapter 4) had the good fortune to be outside the main concerns of the interested parties and were able to develop new institutional forms in which collaboration was valued. To achieve this collaboration, however, required a 'tolerance for ambiguity,' that minimized the differences in beliefs and values in the minutes and final document. In the EU working party (chapter 9), attention was focused on what elements consensus could be reached on, which were then described as 'technical'. In the areas where a consensus could not be reached, the issues were described as 'political,' and transferred to another forum.

c   Stories and practices

In this respect, it can probably be compared to sociology of science or science, technology, society studies (STS) in some ways. There was a gradual shift in these fields, from seeing science as rule-governed, 'algorithmic' practice to-

wards a more 'heuristic' and 'socially' structured view of scientific activities. What the epistemologists philosophers of science (like Popper, Lakatos) and methodological textbooks claimed was that 'science' was seen as an ex post rationalization and justification for what science claimed to be. Historical (e.g., Kuhn), or empirical (e.g., Latour, Knorr-Cetina) studies of what scientists actually do in their laboratories, show a rather ordinary workaday world of discussions and practices, in which the aspiring young scholar is gradually 'enculturated' into a process of learning-by-doing; a process in which he gradually hones his assessment skills, which allow him to function in a world of the similarly enculturated world of his/her 'peers.' Practices and practical assessments, not algorithms and step-by-step methods, dominate his life. Nevertheless, the epistemological and research-methods-and-techniques textbooks are essential for 'front-office' conversations about the 'sacred story' of what science is as well as getting research funding. Reality, however, is the 'back-office' talk about the 'profane story' of the practices and routines of his or her colleagues.

The comparison to policy analysis is clear; policy analysis, as originally conceived and largely still taught in American universities, is a set of 'algorithmic' professional practices, dominated by post-positivist convictions about reality and how important statistics and economics are for political and administrative decision making. The shift from policy analysis to policy work advocated in this book is comparable to the shift from epistemology and the philosophy of science to the sociology of science and STS: this book has argued that the leading concern of the scientific study of what policy professionals do should not be methodological rules of self-justification, but the observation of and immersion in what policy workers are really doing most of the time and achieve by their activities. Just like science is what scientists do, policy work is what those professionally engaged in policy actually do, in other words, how policy is done and how policy practices evolve.

d   Distant, but close

This also suggests that an important task for researchers of policy work is not to devise more intellectually satisfying ways of solving problems, but to understand the process of discovering the problems. In these accounts, the policy process 'uncovered' the problems. The problems were not the pre-existing reason for the institution of a policy process. The problems emerge from the frames that are applied to experience. These accounts do not suggest a need for more finely crafted analytical techniques, or more elaborate ran-

domly controlled trials of policy options. The economic forecasters in chapter 5 did not need more accurate forecasting tools; they needed an institutionalized and trusted way of relating their calculations to the other expert players. In chapter 9 we saw that policy workers could draw on different institutional identities – agency, profession, national and European – in the process of framing a situation. Much of the policy work related to overcoming differences between these framings. Where the practice of cross-organizational collaboration was well-established (e.g., chapter 8), concern emerged in a process of 'problem finding,' in which some issues become identified as problems to be attended to and others disappear.' The study of policy processes can, of course, involve the use of many research methods, but 'getting close,' as others (Rhodes et al. 2007) have already argued, is particularly relevant. Employing policy practices and in-depth interviews of policy participants are especially recommended because of their added value in tracing the evolution of policy work over time but also because of their demanding and time-consuming nature. Entering the policy world via ethnographic means has rarely been attempted.

Implications for teaching

Finally, what lies at the basis of all of this is a problematic relationship that exists between research and practice, and between the researcher and the practitioner. As Loeber discovered (chapter 7), it was impossible to research policy practice without becoming part of the practice. And becoming involved means coming to terms with the differences between practitioners and academic ways of describing and evaluating practice. Of our two EU case studies, the academic account (chapter 9) revealed the issue of political leaders being unavailable to actually lead and no one actually knowing what 'the Dutch position' was. While in the practitioner account (chapter 8), there was an agreement about characterization of practice: officials simply manage the demands put upon them when no clear 'steer' is offered. The first account is framed in terms of implicit constitutional formulations, while the second is framed only in terms of the requirements of competent practice. This divergence between academic and practitioner accounts is addressed in our final section, where Williams (chapter 10) tries to mediate between the two by outlining how a 'culture of engaged communication' could be constructed between practitioners and researchers. Shore (chapter 11), on the other hand, sees the cognitive gap between the two as inevitable, and actually fruitful, as the academic's utility to the practitioner is not that the academic thinks like a policymaker,

but that (s)he does not, and can act as a candid critic, making sense of the policy workers' practice with empathy, but in terms which are not limited by the constraints of an official position. But, as Loeber discovered, talking to practitioners in academic analytical terms risks alienating them rather than enlightening them.

Since we have been discussing what can be learned from these cases, we should address the question of how students can learn from them – in other words, how teachers of policy might incorporate these lessons into their curricula. However, we should note not only of what there is to be learned, but also of how compatible these lessons are in the format of conventional university teaching – segmented into 2-3 month courses, taken part-time, defined by content, and tested via essays, projects or examinations.

There is an established format for teaching policy work, which is the North American Policy Analysis style, which teaches a method derived from economics and statistics for the systematic comparison of 'policy options.' These courses are popular, tend to be required courses in Master's programs and are supported by textbooks. But the policy work accounts presented in this book do *not* suggest that policy workers need more training in formal policy analysis.

What they need, first of all, is to recognize that policy work is as much concerned with process as with outcome. It is a game with many players, divergent agendas, varying levels of skill and attention, with ambiguous and provisional outcomes and where the game never stops. Perhaps the first thing to teach would be how to make sense of the *multiplayer* games to properly identify the participants, their agendas and practices, and the locations in which they interact. This calls for anthropological approaches to policy work (see, e.g., Shore and Wright 1997; Yanow 1996), which reflect the aforementioned emphasis on 'getting close.' In this multiplayer game, policy workers are concerned with the translation between the *life-worlds* and *meaning-frames* of the different participants, which means that students need to be well-grounded in the interpretive approach to policy or the framing, narrative, discourse analysis, etc. skills (see, e.g., Majone 1989; Fischer and Forester 1993; Roe 1994; Dryzek 1997; Yanow 2000; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003).

Most importantly, they need to learn that the policy process is context-dependent, which is easy to say but hard to teach, particularly in a university environment traditionally oriented toward the mastery of content. It calls for confronting the student with the *complexity* of a specific policy situation, which is difficult to do in a classroom; case studies and simulations are attempts to meet this need, but tend to be formal and detached both from the

life-world of the student and the policy world from which they are drawn. Another way of trying to link the student to a specific policy context is to draw practitioners into the classroom. However, it is a rare practitioner who can step out of his or her role and enter the classroom and present oneself in a rigorously introspective and self-critical manner. An alternative is to seek some form of practical involvement in a policy workplace. One way of doing this is through class projects in a workplace; these are usually defined and managed by the teaching staff, but it is possible (though usually difficult) to negotiate with a policy workplace to define a project that would be within the competence of the students and still be useful to a particular workplace. The internship is even more involved in that it usually lasts at least a couple of months, and the student actually becomes part of the workforce. All of these require the development of a shared understanding between the academy and the workplace about the role of each in structuring the activities, drawing the lessons and assessing the learning, which is one of the reasons why internships play relatively insignificant role in university teaching programs. But the effort that has to go into organizing such activities is the price to be paid for teaching an understanding of the significance of real-life contexts. Since learning is an important part of policy work, as we have already seen, it is also important that we challenge the assumption that learning only occurs on campus and policy work only happens in the workplace. This is a challenge for both practitioners and academics.

Concluding remarks

We began this book by emphasizing the importance of developing knowledge to 'illuminate the work of policy, both for the outsider who wants to understand it and the insider who has to make it happen.' By stressing the importance of account giving, by summarizing available accounts of policy work, and by presenting new accounts, by both outsiders and insiders, we would probably draw the same lessons that we drew above. We hope this will give rise to new and (even) better accounts of processes that are central to modern processes of governing societies and thus social welfare and human well being.

We must make one final remark on the major theme of this book. There is one consistent observation that we found amidst the variety of terms, insights and messages, including the varied lessons for research and teaching, and that is that understanding policy work calls for an acknowledge-

ment of *multiplicity*. There will never be one, definitive account of policy work because policy is too ambiguous and contested to be defined in neutral ways, and because policy is an ongoing process, that evolves over time and eschews fixed and static demarcations. Of course, some accounts may emerge as more authoritative and in/outsiders may speak convincing truths about how truth is spoken to power; but all of these accounts have only relative value. This implies that both outsiders and insiders can never be told precisely how things ultimately work; they will need to invest considerable amounts of time and hard effort in developing the competencies to make sense of ongoing policies in confusing (policy) worlds. Working for policy not only means working *in* or *close to* policy and thus contributing to (better) policies – it also literally means working *for* policy, in other words, we must do work before policies can be captured and understood. We hope this book also works in that way.

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