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### 3. PUBLIC POLICY AS A PROCESS

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The view of public policy as process allows a separate analysis of their individual stage and therefore more lucidly. Despite this it is logical and rational to proceed from recognising a problem to its solution, we must not forget that the reality cannot disrupt this rationality (for example as a consequence of elections). The following chapter will gradually present the basic concepts of the public policy process, problems of the design of policies, its implementation and assessment.

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#### 3. 1. Theory of the Public Policy Process

This subchapter represents the basic theory of the public policy process. Above all they focus on the historically oldest approaches which form the basis of contemporary knowledge. Given the extent of the problems, newer approaches are represented in more detail in the fourth chapter.

**Keywords:**

PUBLIC POLICY PROCESS, STAGE MODEL

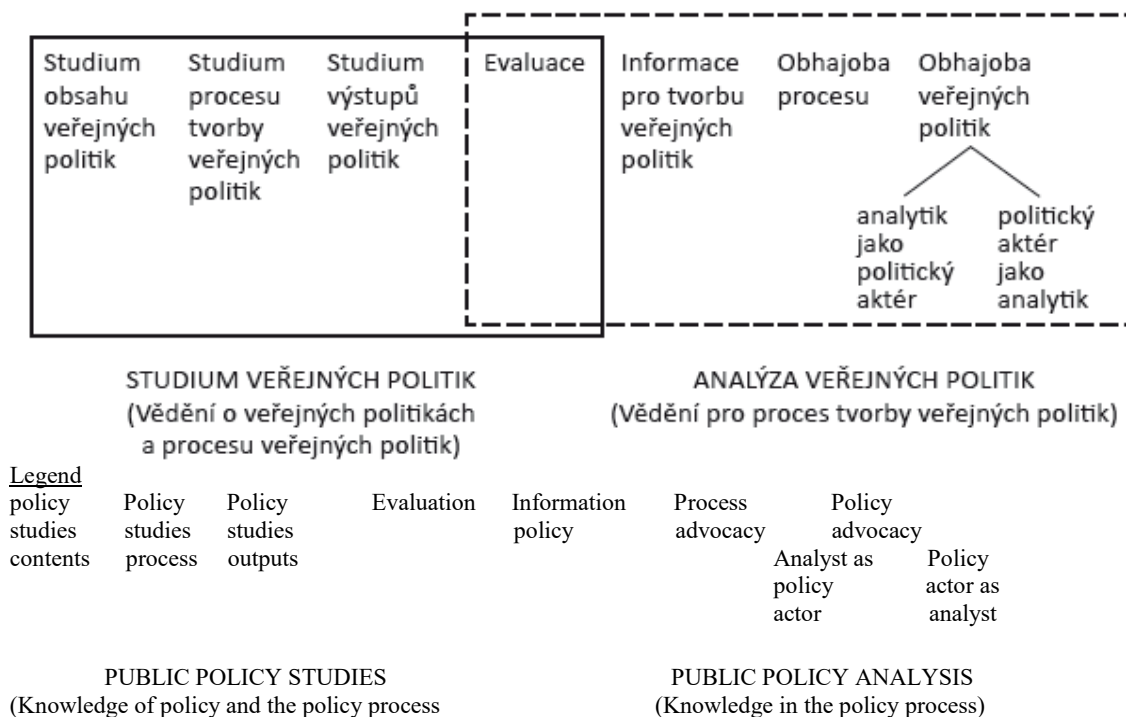
**Introduction**

The public policy process represents an extensive field of research interest. Thus it will firstly be appropriate to include it in the context of the study of public policies which represent an extensive and comprehensive area which requires its own analytical organisation. Its basic

analytical division was already outlined when designing policy sciences by Harold Lasswell, who noted that the study of public policies contains two complementary, but analytically distinguishable components in the form of the knowledge in the policy process and knowledge of the policy process (Lasswell 1951 and 1971).<sup>1</sup> This distinction over time became the basic division of policy studies into policy studies and policy analysis which was paradigmatically elaborated by Hogwood and Gunn (1984, p. 29).

The following diagram presents a view of the differences between the policy studies and its analysis.

Diagram 3.1: **Types of policies**



Source: Hogwood and Gunn; 1984, p. 29.

Knowledge of the public policy process focuses on practically orientated advice of policy decision-makers in the area of public policies. It particularly focuses on the public policy problem which needs to be solved. In its essence it attempts to determine the most appropriate solution to a public policy problem and recommends it to the policy decision-makers. Today we can come across terms such as ‘policy analysis’, ‘policy work’ (e.g. Colebatch, 2006) or ‘policy research’ (see Weimer, 2008, particularly p. 493 note 4), which attempts to cover this area.

The knowledge of the public policy process, called policy studies, is more theoretically based on analysis focusing on the context of public policies, i.e. on understanding their complexities. The knowledge of the process places emphasis on the procedural aspect as opposed to searching for the best solution of the given problem in a given policy. This direction of research endeavours to bring answers to questions why and how, i.e. how the given public policy developed and why it is the way it is. Individual approaches attempt to organise the interaction

<sup>1</sup> For Czech on the topic see Veselý (2007, p. 21-24) and the development overview Novotný (2012a, p. 44-47).

of individual elements (e.g. actors, organisations, ideas, dynamics of change, etc.) so they explain the policy outcomes.

In practical terms, this dimension is fundamental because it enables us not only to arrange the complexity of the public policy process, but also helps us to reveal the potential of the passage and realisation of solutions we designed in the public policy analysis. From this broader view it is not what solution is the best for the given problem, but what factors have to be taken into consideration if we want to enforce some solution. The objective of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with the development of the theoretical coherence of the public policy process.

We will be engaged in the interpretative framework of the public policy process, or overview of the theoretical approaches to the study of this phenomenon. While looking at the development of this area, we can distinguish what can be further called three generations of approaches to public policy studies: 1) stage model paradigm, 2) plurality of sophisticated research programmes, and 3) work with more approaches.<sup>2</sup> This structure corresponds to the qualitative and chronological development. The given composition also corresponds to the layout of the chapter – first of all we will deal with the stage model or stage heuristics or also with the policy cycle. This represents the most important and in its time also the hegemonic display of this process. The stage model was gradually replaced by more elaborate research programmes of the policy process, so here we present the three approaches in greater detail – the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework (IADF), the Multi-stream Theory (MST) and Advocacy Coalitions Framework (ACF) which will show us not just examples of leading research programmes in this area, but also will outline the extent of the possible approaches toward conceptualisation of this issue. However, they are far from the only ones and we will end the chapter with a short list of further approaches which can be applied to analyse and illustrate the public policy process.

### **First Generation Approach: Stage Model of the Process of Public Policies as a Basis for the Fundamental Interpretative Framework**

If we deal with the conceptualisation of the public policy process, then we must first devote attention to the stage model which represents the dominant display of the public policy process and is an indispensable component of any discussion about this issue. In the 1970s and 1980s it was enforced as a ‘paradigm’ of disciplined described as conventional wisdom or the textbook approach and to date it probably represents the most influential conceptual framework for understanding the policy process, which is based on the tradition of Lasswell policy sciences. The stage model emphasises the procedural aspect according to which the given policy is proposed, tested, carried out and sometimes terminated. It characteristically divides the process into a series of consecutive stages (the usual setting of agenda, design, decisions, implementation and evaluation) and deals with one of the factors affecting the process in each stage. It is also significant that it has become the subject of an important ‘identical’ debate in the discipline from the end of the 1980s.

In this part we will first focus on the conceptual development and subsequently on discussion about the suitability of this model for the study of the public policy process. We will not deal in more detail here with the individual stages because these will be examined in a different chapter (see Chapters 3.2 to 3.5).

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<sup>2</sup> The parallel with the falling, dominating and rising approaches serves as a basis here (see for example Clarke 2004).

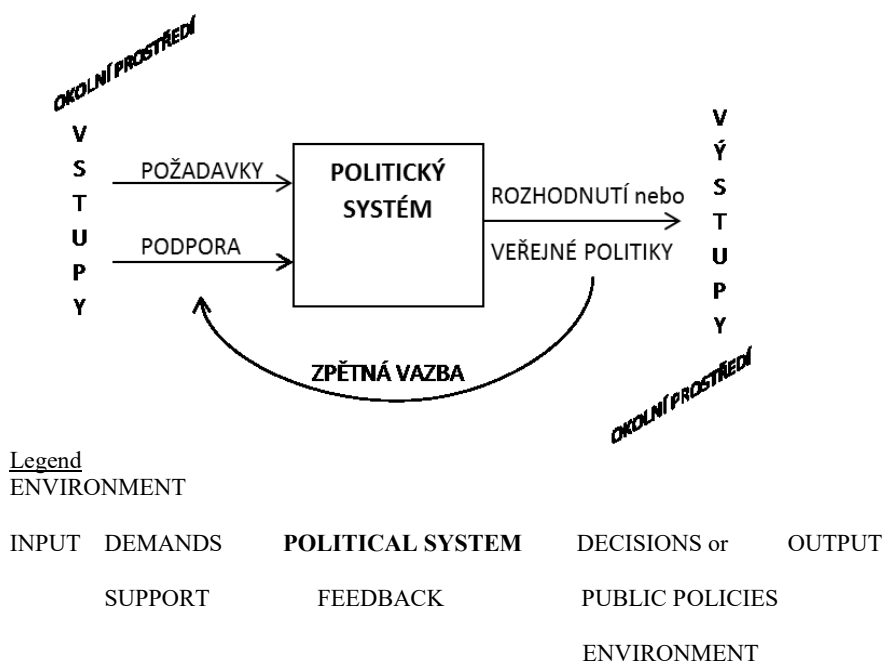
## Two Impulses for the Development of the Conceptualisation of the Stage Model

The foundations of thinking about the stage model are based on two basic impulses. The first represents an outcome of the Lasswell thinking of policy sciences, especially as a partial outcome of the concept of “the knowledge of the policy process”. Lasswell designed it as one of the operationalisation of ideas of how to improve the quality of governance through the improvement of the quality of information provided to ‘public administration’ (*government*). According to him it is possible to regard the policy process as a linear chronological stage of the given public policy through which it should pass during its ‘life’. The model should be applied as a part of the conceptual map which is to provide a general idea of the main stages of each collective procedure (Lasswell, 1971). This conceptualisation can, to a certain limit, resemble a legislative process.

Specifically, Lasswell attempted to design the chronological linear model of the policy development process in policy sciences studies as a decision process (Lasswell, 1956 and 1963). In this idea, Lasswell’s concept is based on ‘five logically distinguishable steps’ when dealing with problems: 1) a sense of perplexity; 2) the definition of a problem; 3) identification of alternative solutions; 4) consideration of alternative solutions in terms of their implications; and 5) testing out of alternative solutions, which were designed by his inspirer, pragmatist John Dewey in *How We Think* (1910) (according to Torgerson, 1995, p. 232). Lasswell’s linear decision process has seven ‘stages’: 1) intelligence; 2) promotion; 3) *prescription*; 4) invocation; 5) application; 6) termination; and 7) appraisal (Lasswell, 1956), and according to everything probably represents the most acceptable concept of his policy sciences approach.

The second fundamental impulse for policy process studies is represented by David Easton’s behaviourism and theory of the political system. The system theory applied to policy studies in the form of the political system significantly influenced thinking about policy and policy processes. The political system model became a sort of paradigm of this area.

Diagram 3.2: Easton’s political system model



Source: Easton 1957, p. 384.

David Easton's political system model significantly changed thinking about the public policy process, especially making it possible to incorporate feedback between the end and start of the chronologically ordered development stages of public policies. By adding feedback the linear chronological stage model becomes a cyclical model. This is synonymously called 'the policy cycle'. Apart from this the behaviourist turning point of the 1950s and 1960s brings not only important emphasis of scientific standards along the natural sciences model as the basis of research work, but with its crisis at the end of the 1960s opens up room for the final assertion of public policy studies as a full part of policy analysis (*policy turn*).

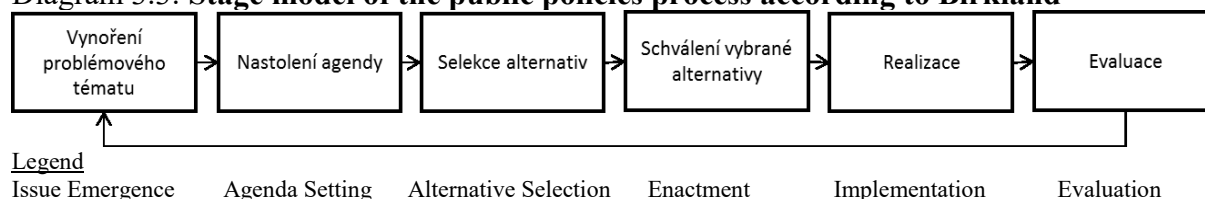
### Two Trends of the Development of the Stage Model

The theoretical conceptualisation of the stage model developed in the late 1960s and the stage model gradually became the hegemonic interpretative framework of the public policy process. We can trace two main trends in the development of the stage model.

The first applies to the conception of the common theory of the public policy process. This focus on the comprehensive grasp of the process paradoxically contends with the problem of fragmentation because almost every author who needed to express his opinion of this issue came up with his own division and naming of the stage,<sup>3</sup> although several works appear here which can be considered paradigmatic for this trend. This concerns Charles Jones' *An Introduction to the Study of Public Policy* (1970), James Anderson's *Public Policy Making* (1975), and above all Garry Brewer's and Peter deLeon's *The Foundations of Policy Analysis* (1983). The importance of these works, which became classics in the field, is that they influenced the research activity of one generation of researchers who studied the process and its individual stages.

The culmination of stage model thinking can be considered the stage model of Lasswell's pupils, Garry Brewer and Peter deLeon (see deLeon 1999, p. 29, note 1), who project into their model discussion about the sequence of the termination and appraisal stage which we can see in the specific case of the included feedback from Easton's model. Their model presents an elaborated concept of six stages: 1) initiation; 2) estimation; 3) selection; 4) implementation; 5) evaluation; and 6) termination (Brewer and deLeon 1983).

Diagram 3.3: Stage model of the public policies process according to Birkland



Source: Birkland 2005, p. 215.

The second trend of research which seems to be more beneficial to public policy studies focuses on the analysis of the individual stages of the process. The theoretical elaboration of the stage model reflected academic and practical impacts and began to offer a way of how to integrally consider public policy not just as a theoretical concept, but also about practice. The stage model

<sup>3</sup> Fiala and Schubert (2000, p. 78) aptly illustrate this by providing an example of the comparison of approaches taken by several authors.

brings an altogether objective distinction of the stages. Its elaboration in the 1970s and early 1980s contributed to the division of a highly comprehensive public policy process in separate stages and stimulated some emerging research within the individual stages such as initiation (Cobb, Ross, and Ross 1976; Kingdon 1984; Nelson 1984; Polsby 1984), estimation (Rivlin 1971; Quade 1983; Weimer and Vining 1989; implementation (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Hjern and Hull 1982; Mazmanian and Sabatier 1983); evaluation (Suchman 1967; Titmuss 1971); termination (Kaufman 1976; Iklès 1971) etc. (cf. Sabatier 2007 and deLeon 1999).

The development of interest in the individual stages can be placed in the context with social demand for findings corresponding to the individual stages. For example, design and decision in the 1960s (the Big Society and War on Poverty programme in the USA), implementation (problems with the realisation of these programmes in the early 1970s), termination (response to the oil shocks of the 1970s and on the onset of the New Rightwing) and evaluation (from the mid 1970s with the onset of *New Public Management*).

Currently there is general agreement that the stage model represented a hegemonic interpretative framework of the public policy process in the 1970s and 1980s. However with the gradual knowledge of this area, this conceptualisation is more strongly considered an obstacle to the development of the discipline and intelligence of the studied issue. The problem is that researchers have begun designing their interpretation of the public policy process more as a goal than a condition which they try to describe. Since the late 1980s, the stage model has been a subject of strong criticism (above all Nakamura 1987; Sabatier 1991; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993), which is becoming a way of establishing the identity of this discipline (see for example deLeon 1999).

## **Criticism and Advocacy of the Stage Model**

Criticism of the stage model comes above all from the area of the study of implementation. Firstly, there is Robert Nakamura (1987), who points out that the stage model cannot be considered a paradigm, because the individual stages do not always correspond to how they are defined. Nevertheless, a more substantial and elaborate attack comes from Paul Sabatier (1988, 1991), who claims that the stage model has significant limitations as a basis for research and teaching, but also omits the role of ideas in the development of public policy. Sabatier gave a more detailed formulation of his reproaches to the stage model or stage heuristics – as he described the model together with Jenkins-Smith in 1993.

According to them the stage model:

- 1) does not represent a causal model at all because it is unsuitable even to predict or indicate how one stage leads to the next;
- 2) does not provide a clear basis for empiric testing of hypotheses, i.e. it is not that adaptable to their confirmation, adaptation or disproof;
- 3) suffers from descriptive inaccuracies in laying the continuity of the stages;
- 4) suffers from the inherent 'top-down' distortion;
- 5) inappropriately stressed the public policy cycle as a temporary unit of analysis because it omits the concept of system of intergovernmental links;
- 6) fails to provide a good instrument for integrating the role of public policy analysis and public policy-orientated teaching through the public policy process.

According to them, the stage heuristics has outlived its use and needs to be replaced by better theoretical conceptual frameworks (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993).

The advocates of the stage model faced this criticism. For example, in his advocacy deLeon draws attention to the merits and weaknesses of the stage model for the *policy sciences* research agenda. According to him, the model does have its weak points. Firstly, there is the focus of researchers only on one stage. The next problem is the perception of the public policy process as strictly separated sets of activities. A weakness is also the distortion of the process as discontinuous and episodic. Last but not least, there is the suggestion of simplistic linearity.

On the other hand, the stage model is full of undeniable merits. Firstly, it introduced a new impulse into public policy studies unlike the approaches in classic political science (*politics*) and economics. It also diverted public policy research from being too reliant on the study of public administration and institutions helping to rationalise a new orientated perspective of the problem. The advantage of the approach was also that it easily allowed the explicit integration of social norms and personal values into the public policy process (deLeon 1999).

Thus, for these reasons the stage model is not defunct. For example, Howlett and Ramesh came up with a successful attempt at synthesis and a certain ‘renaissance’ of the stage model (Howlett and Ramesh 1995, 2003 and 2009 (with Perl)). They attempt to combine the solid concept of the stage model with the benefits of the analysis of the individual parts. According to them, it is appropriate to use the improved public policy process stage model aimed at a sector level for several reasons. Firstly, the model should focus on the way public policy subsystems affect the public policy cycle. Secondly, the model should provide some explanation of how and why the activity of many policy actors arranged in the public policy subsystems focus on a common formula ‘punctuated equilibrium’ of public policy dynamics. Thirdly, focus on the stage level will also enable a better grasp of the complexity of the behaviour of actors and dynamics of the public policy process which was lacking in the older models. Fourthly, each stage of the process can be analysed by asking questions applying to the actors, institutions, instruments and ideas concerned. Fifthly, the careful analysis of each stage of the cycle and drawing up of the determining variables will allow us to create typical styles of public policy significant for many areas of public administration (*government*) activities. According to them, such an analysis will contribute to the development of public policy studies not just by providing an improved overview of activities in each stage of the process, but also offer far better intelligence of why public administration (*government*) decides to do what it does or does not (Dye) (Howlett and Ramesh 2003, pp. 16-17).

Their concept idea is also based on the original Lasswell idea because their concept of the stage model is derived from the ‘applied problem-solving’ concept where the individual stages correspond:

**Table 3.1: Stages of applied problem-solving and stages in policy cycle**

<b>Stages in applied problem-solving</b>	<b>Stages in policy cycle</b>
1. problem recognition	1. agenda-setting
2. proposal of solution	2. policy design
3. choice of solution	3. decision-making
4. putting solution into effect	4. policy implementation
5. monitoring outcomes	5. policy evaluation

Source: Howlett, Ramesh, Perl 2009, p. 13.

We can sum up that the stage model represents a firm part of public policy studies. Currently probably five stages are most enforced: agenda-setting; alternatives designs; decision-making; implementation; and evaluation (see for example, Jann and Wegrich 2007). Today the stage model, despite the strong criticism and design of more elaborate interpretative frameworks, is

still a dominant display of the public policy process. In view of these circumstances, I would regard its contribution above all in representing suitable heuristics for work with the public policy process which allows us to work analytically with its complicated and comprehensive area (see Howlett, Ramesh and Perl 2009; Araral et al. 2013). It is also important to point out that the stage model interpretative framework ceases to be a dominant interpretation of the public policy process and is considered more as useful heuristics. Nevertheless, the paradigm of the political system embodied, above all, by the public policy cycle remains in the succeeding approaches which we will deal with in Chapter 4.3.

### **Test questions:**

*What is the conceptualisation of the public policy design process stage model?*

*What are the two substantial contributions of the stage model for the study of the public policy process?*

*What are the advantages of the stage model?*

*What are the weaknesses of the stage model?*

*What are the weaknesses of the perception of public policy as a process (cycle)?*

*Define the specific problem on a general level and identify the individual stages of its solution.*

*Do you think some of the stages of the policy cycle can overlap?*

*What does the term 'termination' mean?*

### **Recommended reading:**

deLeon, Peter. 1999. The Stages Approach to the Policy Process. In Sabatier, Paul (ed.). *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder: Westview Press, s. 19–32.

Howlett, Micheal; Ramesh, M.; Perl, Anthony. 2009. *Studying Public Policy: Policy Cycles & Policy Subsystems*. 3rd ed. Don Mills (Ont.): Oxford University Press.

Parsons, W. *Public policy*. Edward Elgar publishing 2003. ISBN 1-85278-554-3 (selected parts)

Sabatier, Paul (ed.). 1999a. *Theories of the Policy Process*. Boulder: Westview Press.



## 3. 2. Definition of Public Political Problems

Before we begin to solve some problem, it is good to define it well first. This is where the stumbling block occurs in public policy (as a scientific discipline and social practice). Dunn (1988, p. 720) remarks here: “*Public policy analysts fail more often because they deal with a bad problem rather than selecting a bad solution.*” We will begin by considering the problem as such. Then we will continue discussing the social problem, public policy problem and their relationship. We will end the chapter with the characteristics of processes which result in the recognition of the public policy problem.

### Keywords:

SOCIAL PROBLEM, PUBLIC POLICY PROBLEM, PROBLEM RECOGNITION

### What is generally a problem?

The problem can be understood to be a **contradiction** between the way things are and the way we want them to be. Although the existence of a contradiction between the present state and desired (required) state is a necessary condition for the existence of a problem, it is not the only condition. A further condition is that the contradiction embodied in the problem is **difficult** to overcome because many intentional activities directed at achieving the desired state, which we perform, cannot be described as a problem because these are basically routine activities not requiring any intellectual or other effort. Another condition is that this contradiction is so **important** that it becomes a part of the ‘agenda of problems’ and incites considerations about its solution. Finally the last condition is the **solvability** of the problem – ways have to be found to remove the contradiction between what is and what we would want. We do not describe unrealistic and unattainable goals, as much as they can motivate us towards action, usually as a ‘problem’, but more as ‘wishful thinking’.

### What is a social problem?

The definition of the public policy problem was and is considerably affected by findings and approaches of sociology to social problems. In the sociology of social problems at least two main approaches can be distinguished: traditional (also the ‘objectivistic’) and constructivist (also the ‘subjectivist’). According to the **traditional concept**, social problems represent conditions which are a) according to a trained and objective observer undesirable in some sense, b) changeable in some way (Mauss and Jenness 2000, p. 2759). The **subjectivist approach** is based on totally different epistemological preconditions than the traditional concept. Simply speaking, according to the subjectivist paradigm, social problems do not lie in objective reality, but in a subjective view and perception of people. Certain social *conditions* can be real (e.g. unemployment, inequality, etc.), but it is individual evaluation that turns them into *problems* which is not itself present in these conditions. So according to the traditional approach: “a social problem arises during a considerable difference between the ideals of a society and its actual outcomes”, whereas according to the constructivist approach “a social problem arises when a considerable number of people believe that certain conditions really are a problem”. (Kerbo and Coleman 2006, p. 363):

But both approaches and definitions have their own problems (Petrušek 1996, p. 846). The advantage of the subjectivist concept is that it does not require from the researcher a determination of the social ideal and social problem. It is the ‘public’ that makes such a

decision. Of course, the pitfall of this approach is that the public is often uninformed and can be easily manipulated. In a mass society it is certainly not decided what topic will become a social problem, the actual gravity of this problem, but more the method of presentation of the situation and events by the mass media.

So the objection of the objectivists is that if a problem is considered what most people subjectively consider it to be, there is the danger of the design of artificial problems: some conditions can be formulated as a totally purposeful problem, although there are no objective reasons (politically motivated dramatisations of certain situations and tension) for this. On the other hand, conditions can be overlooked which are serious (and can be felt by the people), but are not formulated as problems (e.g. because people to which a given problem applies, are incapable or do not have the authority of asserting their conditions as a ‘problem’).

Therefore, the constructivist concept has greatly helped in the analysis of processes of how problems are construed, but it has not offered an answer to the practical question of what already is and what still is not a problem, and how we can measure the gravity of a certain problem. Thus, it is no coincidence that whereas in current academic literature the constructivist approach (albeit in different forms) clearly prevails, in social policy the standpoint prevails that some social conditions are social problems *from definition* (Mauss and Jenness 2000, p. 2764).

Some authors have attempted to merge both competing paradigms. According to Mauss and Jenness (2000) such a merger is, of course, impossible because both approaches are based on different epistemological bases and study different topics. Of course, in practical terms such an interconnection is highly desirable. Public policy practitioners need to know how to distinguish the serious and less serious social problems, i.e. to what degree the given construction is based on actual social conditions. They need to know to what degree they are to make the given social situation a part of the policy process – **public policy problem**.

### **What is a public policy problem?**

It can be said that a social problem becomes a public policy problem the moment when we can do something with it using public policy instruments. It is this ability *to solve* the given problem that is the defining trait of public policy problems for most authors. According to Dunn (2003, p. 72): “*public policy problems are unrealised needs, values or opportunities for improvement which can be resolved through public measures*”. Also according to Wildavsky (1979): “*...the problem relates to its solution; the problem becomes a problem only if we can do something with it.*”

#### **Example 3.1: Polio**

Without the possibility of its effective treatment polio was a serious health and social problem. But it became a policy problem only when the discovery of an effective vaccine made effective prevention of the disease possible. The introduction of compulsory vaccination of all children in the given population was the main instrument of the subsequently realised public policy. (Freely quoted according to Birkland 2006, p. 71 and Veselý 2009, p. 79)

Hisschemöller and Hoppe (2001, p. 50) provided a similar definition of the problem: “*The problem in policy is most often understood as a contradiction between what exists and a certain normatively appreciated condition which can be dealt with through the state or public sector. Public policy problems are not some objective phenomena because people differ in which conditions and situations they assess as unpleasant or problematic. The problem is a social and policy construction. These constructions are formulated as facts and values.*” Briefly speaking,

a public policy problem is: “*an unacceptable contradiction between a normative ideal or aspiration on the one hand and current or future situation on the other.*” (Hoppe 2002, p. 308) This means that the problem has an objective and subjective aspect and consists of three elements:

- 1) ethical standard (i.e. goals and values),
- 2) current or future situation,
- 3) intellectual construction connecting the standard and situation and understanding it as a contradiction which needs to be overcome.

This opens up room for searching for instruments and methods of solving the social problem by means of public policy. We called the first stage of the public policy cycle the definition and recognition of the public policy problem. The definition of the public policy problem is more a cognitive role for analysts, whereas its recognition represents a task for politicians (and – usually mediated – also the public). Although both are interconnected in practice, just as various engagements of participating actors, it will be appropriate to expound them gradually.

### **Defining a public policy problem**

It can be stated with some exaggeration that a well-defined public policy problem is already half resolved. However, it is a far more demanding task than would appear at first sight. Michael Polanyi already knew this (1958, p. 120): “*To recognise a problem that can be solved and is worth solving is actually a discovery in itself*”.

Vesely (2009, p. 65) describes the term **problem definition**: “*...intended and unintended process of naming, specifying and systemising hitherto disparate, dispersed or vaguely named problem situations and difficulties into a form claiming the existence of a problem which needs to be solved. The definition of the problem is therefore a process which creates and construes problems on the basis of real data and on the basis of their subjective explanation and interpretation.*”

Part of the definition of the public policy problem is also its structuring and the mapping of various aspects of a certain area and the perspectives from which it can be viewed. Diverse even conflicting views of the problem are sought. The result is a definition of the nature of the problem and the degree of its complexity, sometimes also a structured set of problems. Structuring often also contains alternatives and instruments of solution.<sup>4</sup> Actors often formulate the solution rather than the actual problem. The structuring of a problem is always subjective to a considerable extent while the set of problems can be structured in various ways. But it must take place systematically and draws from empirical evidence (Vesely, Nekola, 2007). The outcome of structuring reflected the reality as seen by actors.

Some problems are structured easily and others put up great resistance (see the following table). Good structuring is one of the preconditions of finding their effective solution. A public policy analyst tends to be faced with a role to express the public policy problem as briefly, intelligibly and convincingly as possible so other actors, particularly politicians and the public, can also understand it (Vesely 2005; Vesely, Nekola 2007). This is also one of the preconditions so the analyst’s vision can also be implemented in practice, since practice will accept this vision, at least respect it or leave it unnoticed.

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<sup>4</sup> This creates the preconditions for the transition to the second stage of the public policy cycle – to decision-making.

Table 3.2: Structuring of public policy problems

		Agreement with corresponding standards and values	
		yes	no
Certainty based on relevant recognition	yes	A well-structured problem (for example road maintenance)	A moderately structured problem – agreement over sources of recognition, disagreement over goals (for example abortions, euthanasia, or right of vote for immigrants)
	no	A moderately structured problem – agreement over goals, disagreement over sources of recognition (for example road traffic safety)	Unstructured problem (for example traffic congestion)

Source: Veselý (2009) according to Hisschemöller and Hoppe (2001), adapted.

### Recognition of the Public Policy Problem

No simple or direct path leads from the recognised public policy problem to its acknowledgement. There is no exception that politicians strenuously address less urgent agenda, whereas they neglect or directly ignore those more serious public policy problems in terms of the public or experts. How is this happening? The theory of agenda setting offers a guide on how to answer this question.

If a public policy problem is set, this also opens the way to its acknowledgement. This takes place in various arenas, routinely, for example with the adoption of a concept, programme or resolution on the ground of political parties or government, adoption of new laws, activities of public institutions, budgetary measures or a combination of these.

#### Test questions:

*What is the difference between a social and public policy problem?*

*Can a social problem be defined by the considerable difference between the ideals of society and its actual outcomes or by what a considerable number of people believe?*

*A social problem becomes more urgent, but is not addressed. Why is this happening - and what will be the consequences?*

*Why is it difficult to find agreement about what is a public policy problem?*

*Which actors and how do they participate in defining a public policy problem and which actors and how do they recognise it?*

*How and why does the structuring of a public policy problem relate to its solution?*

### **Recommended reading:**

Birkland, T. A. Agenda Setting. In Fischer, F., Miller, G., Sidney, M. S. (Eds.). *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*. New York : Taylor and Francis, 2006.

Dunn, W. N. *Public Policy Analysis: An Introduction* (3rd edition ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.

Veselý, A., & Nekola, M. (Eds.). (2007). *Analyza a tvorba veřejné politiky: přístupy, metody a praxe*. Praha: SLON.

### **3. 3. Design of Policies and Decision-making**

We often make decisions in our life. But we do not always think about this. This is also the case in public policy. It can even be stated that both the majority of our personal decisions and the decisions of a public policy nature is routine – it arises from common personal or institutional habits, from the framework of social conventions and stereotypes.

But sometimes we and society reach a crossroads. It is here that questions begin to mount. Do we know which way we are going? Do we know which way is the best? Do we know what obstacles can appear in it? Do we know how much time and energy we will have to exert? Will we go there alone or with somebody? And what can we expect once we reach our goal?

In science it is cybernetics, control theory, game theory and administrative science, for example, that specialise in the recognition of decision processes. Management theory is also used to clarify decision-making directly tied to practical control process. Here we implement, above all, those aspects which are beneficial in solving public policy problems. The objective of the chapter is to understand the policy stage and decision-making stage of how to enforce policy.

#### **Keywords:**

POLICY DESIGN, DECISION-MAKING, POLICY SUBSYSTEM, RATIONALITY, INCREMENTALISM

#### **Decision-making: the concept of rational or incremental?**

Before we present the fundamental approaches to illustrate the decision-making process when designing public policies, we will stop at the crucial choice characterised according to Lindblom (1977) by two different concepts of public policy.

**Concept 1: Society governed by reason.** This approach continues the enlightened tradition of faith in reason and the thesis of Marxism about the possibility of understanding and use of mechanisms of social mobility. It is based on the optimistic precondition of human rational capacities. It depends on the reason of the elite, expertise and scientific recognition. It answers

the question: “What is best for society?” The basic regulation on which it relies is enlightened administration.

**Concept 2: The limitation of human knowledge results in incremental decision-making.**

This approach is based on the implementation of two concepts: concept of **bounded rationality** and concept of **incrementalism** of the policy process. The author of the concept of **bounded rationality**, Herbert Simon claims that the rationality of decision-making is limited by the availability of information, chosen method of consideration and time. This limitation may fundamentally affect the outcomes of the entire decision-making process. Another giant of our field, Charles Lindblom, supplements it with the concept of ‘**disjointed incrementalism**’ as a pluralistic game of actors’ interests which is realised in mutual interactions. The authors of policy negotiate together only when a public policy problem arises. Decision-making is based on the preferences of actors and is based on the outcomes of their social interactions. The resulting image is ‘**muddling through**’. Instead of big changes, actors adopt gradual measures which come close to the monitored goals with the sense that the problem can never be perfectly recognised. Decision-making is extremely pluralistic and decentralised. The diversity of individuals and groups is positively evaluated. The fundamental regulations on which it relies is the market, or (not of course necessarily) democratic instruments of mediating interests. See the following table.

Table 3.3: **Types of political-economic systems**

Political system → Economic system ↓	democratic	authoritarian
market-orientated	democratic capitalism	countries with a functioning market, but without guaranteed human and civil rights
centrally planned	-----	socialist countries

Source: Lindblom 1977, p. 161; adapted.

Public policy would not be a scientific discipline if it were not to try to extend the possibilities of asserting reason for finding better solutions. But it would also (and rightly) be accused of escape from reality, if it were to pretend that scientific recognition has no limits beyond which we simply – do not know...

**The mixed-scanning method** is based on the criticism of both mentioned concepts as unilateral – and implement them both (Etzioni 1967, Vickers 1965). “*The incremental and rational approach complements one another and represents alternatives which help to understand the complexity of decision-making process and its diversification.*” (Malíková 2003, p. 77)

**Possibility of Changes to Public Policies**

It is not right to be too much of an optimist, or, on the contrary, succumb to scepticism. If we look into history, it is not difficult to state a whole number of examples when the enlightened rationality (Concept No. 1) is implemented, positively and negatively.

**Example 3.2:**

**Positive examples:** gradual expansion of human rights guaranteed by society: abolition of slavery, abolition of serfdom, introduction of universal suffrage, eight-hour working day, the policy of President Roosevelt’s *New Deal* as a reaction to the Great Depression in the United States of the 1930s, the establishment of the European Communities in 1957.

**Examples of deterrents:** communism in cultural symbiosis with tsarist autocracy: policy processes, five-year plans of economic development.

Concept No. 2, which relies above all on market economic mechanisms, appeared to be so successful after the collapse of the Soviet bloc that it led to Francis Fukuyama’s prediction in the early 1990s of the ‘end of history’ as the rivalry of various socio-economic systems (1992, Czech 2002). He assumed that in future no other social systems would get the historical chance of survival. Of course, subsequent developments later led to the unequivocal revision of this standpoint and, on the contrary, to considerations about the rationality of the administration of public affairs mediated by the state – i.e. an inclination towards Concept No. 1 (Fukuyama 2004).

Let us lay aside emotions and look at the decision-making situation in the viewfinder of both concepts, i.e. depending on the level of available recognition.

Table 3.4: Correlation of the level of knowledge with the approach to decision-making

Possibility of changes in public policy		Approach to decision-making	
		INCREMENTAL	NON-INCREMENTAL
Knowledge of the problem and possibility of its solution	CONSIDERABLE	Rational decision-making is possible in the solution of lucid public policy problems	Fundamental change is possible. Low risk of failure
	INADEQUATE	Most of the addressed public policy problems are found here	Fundamental change is possible. High risk of failure

Source: Hayes 1992, adapted.

## Decision-making Structure

As we know, design of public policies and policy decision-making depends on the definition of the social problem (social problems). Later public policy alternatives to its (their) solution are designed.<sup>5</sup> “*Design is usually the outcome of a combination of creative thinking, available information, possible policy instruments and our and foreign experience.*” (Drhová, Veselý 2007, p. 256) It is also possible to anticipate the consequences of the adoption of various policies, assess them in advance – often on the basis of a set of prepared criteria – and on the basis of this finally decide for one of them.

Of course, this in itself is a highly abstract idea. What is also important is the social and situation context in which decision-making takes place, the available level of recognition of the given

<sup>5</sup> There is hardly ever just one solution; nonetheless decision-makers either do not know of other alternatives or take an *a priori* negative attitude to them.

issue, rules of powers, competences and proceedings, composition of the actors, clashes of their values and methods of their negotiation. Assessment of the possible solutions is not based only on whether the preconditions can handle the problem. In addition, it must be considered whether they are politically clear and viable (Majone 1975, 1989; Dror 1969).

### **Decision-making in Public Policy Subsystems**

Decision-making tends to be limited to actors who have a reason to deal with the solution of the given public policy problem – and also have access to it. Unlike the problem definition stage in which many others can be involved, actors contributing to decision-making operate usually in the relevant **public policy subsystem**.

#### **Example 3.3: USA**

In the United States such a public policy subsystem is the field of decision-making about the reform of the American healthcare system. The main role here is played by the president, Congress and its relevant committees – and also the American Medical Association which, for long decades blocked all government attempts to extend American healthcare so that it is publicly available to all (just as is the case in all other development countries). The reason is simple: in the liberal American healthcare system doctors could easily maximise their profits. President Obama managed to finally begin this reform only as of January 2014 after great efforts and a number of compromises.

The impact of the public policy subsystems on decision-making was proved in a number of studies (e.g. Howlett 2002, Kingdon 1984). According to Sabatier they are an important factor supporting or, on the contrary, limiting public policy changes. Marsh and Rhodes (1992) and Zahariadis and Allen (1995) speak of the cohesion and finality of public policy subsystems as of important circumstances affecting the tendency to a new innovative solution. The subsystem structure is fundamental. If the status quo is constantly maintained, it can be deduced from this that the same actors are still involved in the public policy process for a very long time. Their openness for new actors and new solutions is analysed (Howlett, Ramesh 2003, p. 158).

In decision-making processes where in mutual interactions participants assert their preferences, the ‘obligation’ factor plays an extraordinarily important role in which the actors can be mutually and credibly bound by certain acceptable future behaviour. For the reason that: *“...customs, habits, traditions and further preferences which are directly dependent on past elections, partly control and predictably determine future behaviour. The customs and the like can in fact be good substitutes of long-term contracts and other explicit obligation mechanisms.”* (Becker 1997, p. 176) However this is not simple or unequivocally predictable. Hence it plays a big (sometimes even crucial) role of a degree of trust between the decision-makers.

#### **Example 3.4: Decision-making ‘Prisoner’s Dilemma’ Model**

The decision-making model of the prisoner’s dilemma considers the game of two prisoners suspected of jointly committing a crime. Both have two possible choices – either blame the crime on the other or keep quiet – while each one must make his choice without knowing the choice of the other player. The rules of the game are such that if they both keep quiet, their punishment will be minimal. If both blame the other they will share a higher punishment. But if one keeps quiet and the other blames him for the crime, he as the informer will escape punishment whereas the accused co-offender will receive a higher punishment.



This way it is possible to analyse and illustrate various interactions of the deciding actors, above all their cooperative and uncooperative behaviour and its consequences (Axelrod 1984, 1997).

### **Example 3.5: One of the Causes of the Chinese economic miracle**

Fukuyama (1995) noted that the low transaction costs of Chinese family firms, where most in-house operations are informal because family members trust each other, results in their success in competition with firms of different cultural circles.

#### **A decision on public policy usually involves:**

- the characteristics of a goal (goals), which is to be attained;
- definition of the affected population;
- determination of the responsibility for its realisation: who, what, when, how and with what sources and limitations;
- structure of implementation (choice of instruments and methods by which the process of their realisation will be ensured);
- justification of its need.

In recent years their impact is being asserted and assessed constantly more (however not always).

All decisions made in the execution of public administration must have a legal basis and their content must comply with the law. A public policy decision can also be the adoption of a law or regulation since it changes the rule of behaviour of the actors. If doubts arise these are dealt with as part of the administrative judiciary.

#### **Decision-making actors**

In public policy based on democratic principles three main entities **above all** contribute to the decision-making: **politicians** (on the assumption that they represent the differentiated interests of the **citizens**), **officials** and **experts**. Besides them, public and social service workers, local civil elite, representatives of interest groups (Winkler 2007), lobbyists (see further) and any further actors also enter the decision-making process. The individual actors were represented in greater detail in Chapter Two and the following passage merely recapitulates the partial findings.

**Politicians** are technologists of the exercise of authority. They are expected to skilfully and effectively defend and assert the interest of their voters and the programmes of the parties they represent while respecting the legal restrictions. In political competition and concert they can, together with other politicians, also assert *public interests*. Politicians have the decisive word in *setting agendas*. **Statesmen** differ from politicians because apart from the stated dispositions they can intelligibly express ‘the needs of the time’ (which can, but do not have to conform to *public interests*) and thanks to their guiding qualities they can convince a decisive part of the actors and public.

Technical knowledge and enforcement of procedures are expected from **officials** who prepare, adopt and later, based on a political decision, also realise decisions (for example when drawing up a new bill or creating the budget). They themselves actively participate in these processes and affect them.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See the successful British television series ‘*Yes Minister*’ (Lynn, Jay, 2002, 2003).

**Experts** usually have profound knowledge of the nature of social problems and methods of their solution by a public policy instrument. They tend to be those who rarely appear in public however they have great influence on the final form of the chosen solution,<sup>7</sup> whether in defining alternative solutions to a public policy problem, in the assessment of their possible impact or in the tender process of one of them.

While experts contribute to the decision-making process by available findings, politicians bring in their priorities. The findings can be solid or shaky and the goals of politicians can be close or can differ completely. This is reflected even in a decision-making situation.

**Table 3.5: Decision-making situation**

Correlations of the conflict between knowledge and goals in decision-making		Goals	
		CONFLICTING	SHARED
Nature of knowledge	CONFLICTING OR DISPUTABLE	Common incremental decision-making (approach 2 prevails)	Problem of an insufficient basis of knowledge (approach 2 prevails)
	CONSENSUAL	Problem of a conflict of values (approach 2 prevails)	Conditions for rational decision-making (approach 1 prevails)

Source: Hayes 2001, adapted.

**Citizens** occasionally contribute to the choice of policies; if they think this is insufficient they can become involved between elections in civil sector organisations, in public debates or even directly (see the table).

**Lobbying**

Lobbying is an activity specialising in influencing decision-making to the benefit of specific interests. According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica this is *“any attempt by individuals or private interest groups to influence the decisions of government; in its original meaning it referred to efforts to influence the votes of legislators, generally in the lobby outside the legislative chamber.”*<sup>8</sup> This definition can be amended by stating that civil sector advocacy organisations are private, but can assert not just group interests (civil sector mutual-benefit organisations) but also public interests (civil sector general-benefit organisations).

**Example 3.6: Regulated and Unregulated Lobbying**  
 In the USA lobbying has been regulated by the law since 1946. Later other, above all European countries did likewise. For example, Great Britain regulates the conduct of MPs in relation to lobbyists by law and the British Association of Professional Political Consultants – Lobbyists regulates their activity in the form of a code of ethics. Although lobbying in the Czech Republic is accepted by the public with considerable mistrust (and the word ‘lobbyist’ alone has strong negative connotations), proposals for regulation of lobbying in parliament have failed several times. Is it possible to distinguish the interests of lobbyists and the lobbied behind this

<sup>7</sup> Above all in this stage, in the decision-making stage public policy, analysts or advice centres can implement their knowledge (and in recent years are more frequently implemented).  
<sup>8</sup> Quoted according to <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/345407/lobbying> (7 April 2014).

hesitation? Therefore lobbying is easily degraded: *“into inadmissible and uncontrolled influencing of decision-making processes”* (Riha 2012, p. 86).

Actors are not equal in the absolute majority of decision-making situations. Some actors can even find themselves in such a privileged position that without their approval the given decision cannot be implemented at all.

Overcoming the conflict of ideas between all actors is almost impossible. The ‘**overlapping consensus**’ which despite this, make the adoption of decisions possible, arises if there exists a common value background which is approved by all the principal religious, philosophical and moral teachings that are implemented in the given society from one generation to the next (Rawls 1987, 1989). It is not about one of the conflicting alternatives winning, but about finding a solution which will end all conflicts (Richardson, Kimber 1978). As was noted by the former long-term US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger: *“The test of (successful) public policy is not absolute satisfaction but balanced dissatisfaction.”*

### Who does a decision apply to?

Every decision in public policy changes people’s living conditions. It has a differing impact on the people it applies to you. It is rare to manage to conceive public policy so it can help everyone and not have a negative impact on anyone. Thus politicians carefully consider what changes they finally decide to support: *“Since public policies were and are still more often used for political and ideological purposes than to find the best ways of solving social problems, public policy analysts should thoroughly study not solely their rationality, but also who will get what, who will win and who will lose, or if the image is embellished or who is blackened, and what signals are sent out (by this policy) towards the population and the general public.”* (Schneider 2013, p. 227)

Table 3.6: **Picture of various social groups in public opinion**

Typology of the population affected by public policy		Groups	
		“DESERVING”	“UNDESERVING”
Political influence	BIG	values accepted by a diligent, creative society	deceitful hoarders
	SMALL	good, but weak, without help	devious, lazy, dangerous

Source: Schneider 2013, adapted.

In public policy decision-making, the interests of those who cannot directly participate in this decision-making must be taken into account apart from the interest of directly involved actors.

#### **Example 3.7:**

Children, mothers – single mothers, people with mental illness, animals and plants.

This is particularly evident where we want to implement the criterion of sustainable living which must also respect the interests of the hitherto unborn generation. Cognitive preconditions of strategic decision-making with prospects of not just months, but years and decades, gain importance.

## Strategic Decision-making

Strategic decision-making cannot go without research of possible future, without systematic analytical but necessarily also **prognostic activity**. The need for such an approach to the preparation of public decisions on a global scale was pointed out by the report of the Club of Rome (Dror 2003); in the Czech Republic the publication of Potůček et al. (2007) deals with the capacities of strategic governance and the publication Ochrana (2010) deals with strategic management.<sup>9</sup>

### Example 3.8: How to decide strategically

Decision-making with respect to a longer time horizon of the consequences of our decisions is based on identified social and public policy problems and includes:

- analysis and forecast of relevant internal and external factors;
- definition of long-term goals;
- definition of means to achieve them;
- definition of powers and responsibilities of the participating actors;
- generation of alternative solutions and choice of one of these based on set criteria;
- schedule of progressive steps (realisation trajectory) of an adopted decision.

Strategic decision-making obviously also applies to the life-cycle of us the living since it can affect our future life also in a horizon of entire decades. Particularly in the support of our health, education or security in old age...

### Test questions:

*How do you explain the fact that even the best prepared public policy can fail in the end?*

*Clarify how the limitation of human knowledge relates to a disconnected superimposed decision!*

*Why is the precondition of rational control of human affairs so strong that its implementation in decision-making is almost ruled out?*

*What is the public policy subsystem and how does it relate to the decision-making process?*

*Public policy decision: what does it usually involve and why?*

*Characterise the principal decision-making actors and their role.*

*What are the typical forms of democratic mediation of interests?*

*What is strategic decision-making, why is it needed and what components does it encompass?*

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<sup>9</sup> The Center for Social and Economic Strategies of the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University (<http://www.ceses.cuni.cz>) has been devoted to the creation of a vision and strategy for the Czech Republic since 2000. Apart from the abovementioned publication it has also published a series of further studies. Cf Vize (2001), Průvodce (2002), Frič, Veselý (2010), Potůček (2003, 2005, 2007, 2010), Potůček, Mašková (2009), Potůček, Musil, Mašková (2008).

### **Recommended reading:**

Colebatch, H. K. 2005b. *Úvod do Policy*. Brno: Barrister & Principal.

Ochrana, F. (ed.) 2010. *Strategické řízení ve veřejné správě a přístupy k tvorbě politiky*. Praha: Matfyzpress.

Potůček, M. et al. 2009. *Strategic Governance and the Czech Republic*. Praha: Karolinum.

## **3. 4. Implementation**

Implementation or the execution or realisation of set policy goals. With a bit of an overstatement, implementation is that stage of policy where everything is spoiled which could not be spoiled earlier. However, before accepting this overstatement as our own, we need to understand the importance of implementation, the ambiguity of this term or its broader correlation. The objective of this chapter is to explain the importance of this stage of the policy cycle, demonstrate the principal approaches to the analysis of the process of implementation and help to gain a deeper insight into this issue.

The establishment of the term implementation and impulse to systematic analysis was given by the study of Pressman and Wildavsky (1973), which showed the failure that can arise when realising a programme on which almost everyone agreed, had sufficient financial support but despite this met very few goals for which it was set. Although issues associated with the success of the realisation of some policy or programme were certainly the subject of considerations undoubtedly even earlier, the development of interest in realisation is associated with this groundbreaking study.

### **Keywords:**

IMPLEMENTATION, IMPLEMENTATION DEFICIT, TOP-DOWN, BOTTOM-UP

### **The Term Implementation and its Correlations**

Implementation as a term is not unequivocally understood. The principal cause of the differences in understanding these contents lies in the initial approaches which are often very different. Winkler (2002) states that the very **term of implementation** can be understood two ways:

- Implementation as a *state of execution*; it is assumed that a public programme is realised as part of some sequence of activity. It is assumed that the biggest programme makers have an impact on goals and this impact weakens as the stage progresses
- Implementation as a *process of realisation* of the public programme is defined as the outcome of mutual relations and interaction between the actors of the entire process. The outcomes of the programme depend on the nature of the relations between actors.

It is evident that these two different concepts correspond with different approaches to public policy which is better illustrated in the following table.

**Table 3.7: Comparison of theoretical basis of public policy and implementation**

<b>Implementation as</b>	<b>Approach to public policy</b>	<b>Decision model</b>	<b>‘Dominant’ policy dimension</b>
State of execution	Policy cycle theory	Rationalistic approach	Vertical dimension
Process of realisation	AAA model, policy networks model	Incrementalist approach	Horizontal dimension

Source: Pavlík, 2010.

### **Implementation and its Efficiency**

It is not possible to be engaged in an analysis of the process of implementation and assessment of the causes of the origin of an implementation deficit without a definition of the term of the relationship between the implementation deficit<sup>10</sup> and efficiency of the implementation process. It is evident from the common understanding of the contents of these terms that inefficiency during the implementation process also means an implementation deficit. In addition, a situation may arise when ‘bad’ goals are implemented ‘effectively’. The relationship between efficiency and implementation is relatively fundamental even when analysing policies and its impacts from the government’s point of view.

In the context of literature we can, for example come across terms such as ‘effective implementation’, ‘efficient implementation’, ‘successful implementation’, ‘perfect implementation’ and so on. The fundamental qualitative distinction between these terms lies in the definition of efficiency.

The term ‘efficiency’ is relatively often based on the concept ‘Pareto efficiency’. For example, Peková (2002) states that: *‘An economic decision is effective when a change cannot occur during which some entity would gain without another losing something’*. Samuelson and Nordhaus (2008) then define efficiency as: *“such application of economic resources which bring a maximum level of satisfaction gained with given inputs and technology”*.

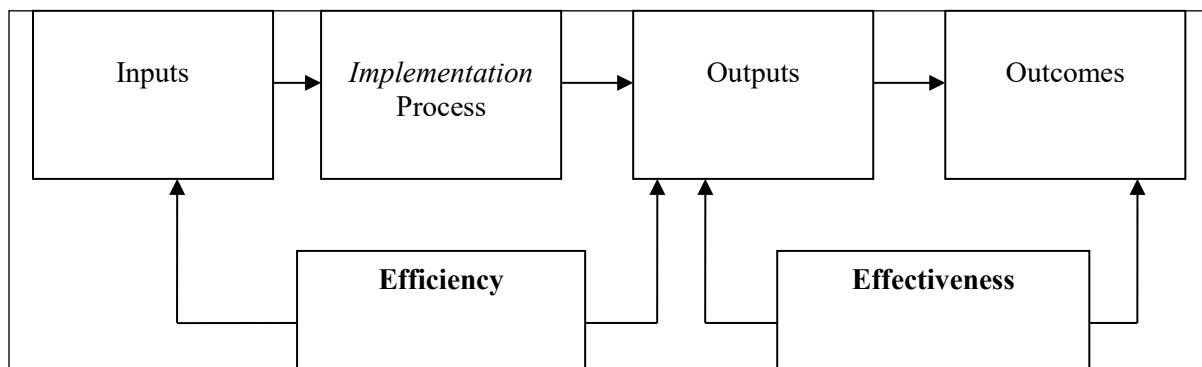
Given the term ‘efficiency’ in relation to public policy outputs, most authors define efficiency as a relationship of policy outcomes compared to outcomes that were planned (Deniston a kol. 1968, Stein a kol. 1968), or as a relationship of policy outcomes to the actual amount of inputs (Deniston a kol. 1968, Cochrane 1972).

Two previous views of the term ‘efektivnost’ are relatively clearly expressed by the following diagram. The term ‘efektivnost’ is possible either as a synonym of the English terms “efficiency” and ‘effectiveness’, or the term ‘effectiveness’ is translated into Czech as ‘účinnost’ and in terms of the Czech language it is given a different dimension.

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<sup>10</sup> This term means the differences between the originally conceived objectives and purposes of public policy and the achieved state.

Diagram 3.4: The relationship between the terms Efficiency and Effectiveness



Source: Matheson 2001 [online], adapted by the author.

The issue of ‘efficiency’ is relatively more complicated than as indicated by the above text, nevertheless it is adequate for initial understanding. When we consider the ‘efficiency’ of the implementation process, we can apply evaluation to the intended outputs or outcomes. Evidently badly set goals can be efficiently met and therefore will not achieve the desired outcome. In addition, we can assume that to achieve the ‘**perfect implementation**’, i.e. a state when everything was fully met as was intended without side effects, is basically unrealistic. The term ‘**successful implementation**’ then means that the main goals were met even though they could be partly ineffective or could lead to unintended side effects.

#### **Example 3.9:**

Consider the ‘success of implementation’ of the so-called 3-cards. What is the relationship between the card and solving of the problem for which the card was introduced?

### **Approaches to Analysis of the Implementation Process**

These approaches are based on practical efforts to recognise the implementation process while both combine the endeavour to identify key factors or determine the conditions when the implementation process should be successful (i.e. goals met). In terms of development the first top-down approach was formerly asserted in specialised literature. Since the early 1980s implementation processes are beginning to be analysed also by using the bottom-up method. The subsequent stage began to be asserted by the so-called synthesising approach which attempted to combine parts of both approaches together. Eventually alternative approaches were developed which accepted further elements during the analysis of the implementation process.

#### **Top-down Approach**

Historically the oldest approach arises simply from the assumption that the goals set by the hierarchically highest unit should be met. Van Meter and Van Horn (1975, p. 44) states: “... *the study of implementation tests factors which contribute to the realisation or non-realisation policy goals*”. In the top-down approach policy is simply designed by a decision-maker and subsequently transferred hierarchically downwards to those who implement it. Most of the first top-down analyses were motivated in an effort to provide policy-makers with some sort of guide or recommendation of how policies are shaped so they have a greater chance of success.

Analysis begins decisions of government officials and then, according to Winkler (2002), searches for answers to the following questions:

- To what extent were the activities of implementing officials and target groups consistent with the goals and procedures proposed and prescribed from decision makers at ‘central’ level?
- To what extent were the planned goals achieved? This means to what degree were the outputs and outcomes of the programme consistent with these goals?
- What were the main factors which affected the outputs and outcomes of the programme? Factors are analysed that affect the implementation of the official programme, just as factors and conditions affecting unexpected and unplanned programme outputs.
- In what way was the policy programme revised on the basis of continuous information?

In the research, which was carried out in the 1980s, a **set of conditions necessary for effective implementation** was identified. (Mazmanian and Sabatier 1989)<sup>11</sup>:

1. Clear and consistent goals must exist which provide at least minimum basic criteria for solving the conflict of goals.
2. Basic factors and causality must be identified which affect policy and implementing officials must have sufficient powers over the ‘target group’.
3. The structure of the implementation process must be directed to a maximum so the behaviour of implementing officials and target groups can be directed at meeting the goals. This includes ensuring support of other policy entities, sufficient financial resources, government support, etc.
4. Implementing officials must have sufficient managerial and political skills and must also support the set goals.
5. The policy must be supported by key executive and legislative actors (under simultaneous neutrality or support from the courts).
6. The basic goals during the period of realisation must not be disrupted by conflicts with other policies or changes of relevant socio-economic conditions which would cause the weakening of the causal theory or loss of political support.

A cursory glance at the stated conditions indicates that their fulfilment or current fulfilment is highly problematical. Thus, alternative or additional approaches to implementation are being designed lately since the criticism of the top-down approach. However the top-down approach remains useful above all where it assesses a clearly defined programme and there is a clear hierarchical structure from the centre to the subjected units. According to Mazmanian and Sabatier (1989) the top-down approach can be used despite this to evaluate efficiency. It comes with the concept of ‘acceptability space’ marked by the penetration of a series of acceptable values, each from many evaluated dimensions. *“Sabatier also agrees with the findings of Van Meter and Van Horn (1975) that the probability of effective implementation is indirectly proportionate to the expected and planned deviations from the status quo ante”*<sup>12</sup>.

What indirectly arises from this basic characteristic of the top-down approach is the assumption that it is possible to achieve at least ‘successful’ implementation. Thus, it is necessary only to analyse under what conditions and what causes the observed deviation from the set goals. A completely different approach to this starting point has a series of critical approaches developed in further periods.

Crucial to the top-down approach is its rationality: the problem-proposal, solution-execution, solution-resolution of the problem. Likewise, we can see one more level behind this which is the relationship of the voter and his vote versus policies and his pledge of what he will do. The

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<sup>11</sup> Translated and adapted by the author.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted according to Winkler (2002, p. 70).



rationality of the vote for a pledge leads to expectations of the fulfilment of the pledge, i.e. execution of the policy. At a moment when the policy goals will be executed, an implementation deficit arises – this is a different view from the bottom-up approach.

### **Bottom-up Approach**

This approach focuses, in contrast to the top-down method, on individual policy actors and their impact on the success of implementation. Winkler (2002, p. 72) characterises the starting point of this approach as:

- Identification of the networks of participants involved in providing services in one or more local areas.
- Analysis of their goals, strategies, activities and contacts.
- Use of ascertained contacts as a means for the identification of local, regional and national actors involved in the planning, financing and execution of government and non-government programmes.

During the analysis this method begins with a government programme, but with the problems which individual actors feel and the strategies created for their solutions. This approach allows finding all the impacts of the programme, in other words does not confront the outcome only with the resulting goals. Hjern<sup>13</sup> states that: *“The aim of the ‘exercise’ carried out by Mazmanian and Sabatier is to help the federal government and state to create better control of public administration. However, it is not necessary to ensure effective implementation”*.

The bottom-up approach places new emphasis on policy as a dynamic process of understanding goals, actors and factors as a dynamic element at a time of impossible requirements to fulfil precisely designed goals. Barrett and Fudge (1981) consider the strict division of the policy design stage from its implementation to be impossible and equally the division of policy designing actors from policy implementing actors.

The weakness of this approach can also become the greatly overestimated impact of individual actors and periphery (in relation to the centre). According to Winkler (2002) the use of this approach is appropriate where a greater number of power independent institutions contribute to the implementation of the programme or where unequivocal legislation of the given policy process does not exist.

### **Synthesizing Approaches**

These approaches use the findings of both firstly mentioned directions but individual authors differ in their methods and procedures. Implementation here is understood as ‘system management’ or as a ‘bureaucratic process’. The division proposed by Lane (2000) and the supplemented and adapted in the following table serve to provide a systematic organisation of synthesizing approaches.

The overview in the table services above all as a demonstration of a broad spectrum of approaches by individual authors. A more in-depth presentation of the individual approaches goes beyond the scope of the textbook text and can be supplemented by the study of original sources.

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<sup>13</sup> Hjern (1982) – quoted according to Hill, Hupe (2003, p. 54).

Table 3.8: **Classification of implementation approaches**

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Representatives</b>
<b>Top-down</b>	Implementation as a perfect administration	(Hood 1976)
	Implementation as management of the policy programme <sup>14</sup>	(Sabatier, Manzmanian, 1979)
<b>Bottom-up</b>	Implementation as evolution of goals	(Wildawsky and Majon,
	Implementation as a learning process	(Brown, Wildawsky, 1983)
	Implementation as structure	(Hjern, 1982)
	Implementation as the outcome	(Barrett and Fudge, 1981)
<b>Synthesizing approaches</b>	Implementation as a perspective	(Williams, 1980)
	Implementation as a political symbol <sup>15</sup>	(Barret and Fudge, 1981)
	Implementation as coalition negotiation	(Sabatier 1986)
	Implementation as ambiguity	
	Implementation as reverse mapping	(Elmore)

Source: Compiled by the author according to the Lane classification (2000).

### **Comparison of Implementation Process Approaches**

The purpose of the following comparison is to demonstrate the scope and mutual contradiction of the main approaches to the analysis of the implementation process. Although the synthesizing approaches (based on bottom-up foundations) are prevalent, it must be emphasized that the top-down approach, or synthesizing approaches arising from it, still has its advocates. Although the focal point of the analysis can be transferred in the direction of the behaviour of individual actors, as regards the negotiation or creation of policy networks, it does not mean that the original questions established by the top-down approach are already answered. If the government has promised a specific form of policy or fulfilment of some goals in exchange for voter's votes, then any non-fulfilment of this commitment should not be ignored a priori or this state should not be considered naturally constant or desirable.

Table 3.9: **Comparison of the fundamental approaches to the implementation process analysis**

	<b>Top-down</b>	<b>Bottom-up</b>	<b>Synthesizing approaches</b>	<b>Negotiation models and evolutionary models</b>
<b>Main goal</b>	Attainment of goals set "in the centre"	Find out how policies are implemented	Variable, rather the attainment of main policy ideas than precisely given goals	Explain policy as a negotiation product between actors that monitor their interests
<b>Main viewpoint (key actor)</b>	Government (different actor	Street-level bureaucracy	Government and other actors that	Negotiation place. The role

<sup>14</sup> Based on the translation of Winkler (2002, p. 80).

<sup>15</sup> Based on the translation of Winkler (2002, p. 80).

	<b>Top-down</b>	<b>Bottom-up</b>	<b>Synthesizing approaches</b>	<b>Negotiation models and evolutionary models</b>
	standing at the top of the hierarchy)		can significantly influence the implementation process	of the key actor can vary
<b>View of other actors</b>	Subordinated units	Influences the forming and implementation stage. Potential innovators or problem solvers	If they have the potential to influence the implementation process, their behaviour needs to be considered	Attempt to anticipate the behaviour of other actors that are in mutual interaction
<b>Success criterion</b>	Meeting policy goals	Attainment of local goals	Attainment of long-term positive impacts of policy, minimisation of negative impacts	Not objectively determined
<b>View of the implementation deficit</b>	Implementation deficit is the outcome of not meeting the set goals i.e. failure during the implementation process	Implementation deficit is 'unavoidable', it is the sign of change of policy, not its failure	Implementation deficit appears unavoidably, nevertheless in the long-term the overall effect of policy are substantial	Does not operate with this term. The policy is the result of negotiation
<b>Understanding policy</b>	Policy as an independent variable	Policy depends on interaction between actors at local level	Policy as a given vision whose specific form is influenced by interaction between actors	Policy depends on the negotiation process
<b>Policy outputs</b>	Predictable – if the implementation process is well structured	Unpredictable – depends on the outcome of interaction between actors	Partly predictable	Unpredictable – depends on the outcome of negotiation
<b>Basic methodological approach</b>	Deductive	Inductive	Deductive and inductive	Deductive and inductive

Source: the top-down and bottom-up columns and the models based on negotiation, adapted according to Jordan (1995), synthesizing approaches and other approaches drawn up by the author.

## **Implementation Deficit**

This term tends to be used relatively often and not just in a specialised text. However its contents tend to be understood broadly and unequivocally. Certain difficulties have already been pointed out in the part devoted to the definition of the relationship between efficiency and implementation. Further ones were already pointed out by the previous subchapter devoted to the comparison of individual approaches.

**The implementation deficit is the differences between the originally conceived goals and purposes of public policy and the achieved state.** In other words, the outcomes can be completely different from the expected ones. They also appear when considering the degree of fulfilment of the policy programmes of individual parties or the government's policy statement. Part of the implementation deficit can also be the fact that the goal may have been fulfilled, but by exceeding the allocated capacities. The meaning of the content definition of the term implementation deficit will be derived from the term implementation.

## **Top-down Approach**

In English courses this term is either 'implementation deficit' or 'implementation gap'. The same idea as implementation deficit is expressed by the term 'implementation failure'. Linder and Peters (1987) understand implementation deficit as one of three components of 'policy failure'. According to them this failure is basically of three types:

- Implementation failure;
- Policy design - crippled at birth;
- Policy failures – goals will be attained, but many negative side effects will be formed which can be more difficult to remove than the previous problem.

In connection with this term, it is important to mention the fact that for example 'an implementation deficit in healthcare policy' will be significantly influenced by the definition of the term 'healthcare policy'. The definition of this term determines the understanding of the implementation process and possible emergence of an implementation deficit.

## **Bottom-up Approach**

Although the previous comparison of approaches indicates that in terms of the bottom-up approach an implementation deficit appears (of the defined top-down approach) virtually unavoidably, it is interesting to focus on the term implementation deficit strictly from the bottom-up approach.

The bottom-up approach stresses the role of individual actors and particularly actors on a hierarchically lower level (*street-level bureaucracy*). Their interest is then logically projected into a form of realisation of goals set by the centre. It is this motivation that is an element which unavoidably causes an implementation deficit. Nevertheless, what appears an implementation deficit from the centre does not have to be equally perceived at street-level bureaucracy. In terms of individual actors an 'implementation deficit' is a situation when their interests are not satisfied.

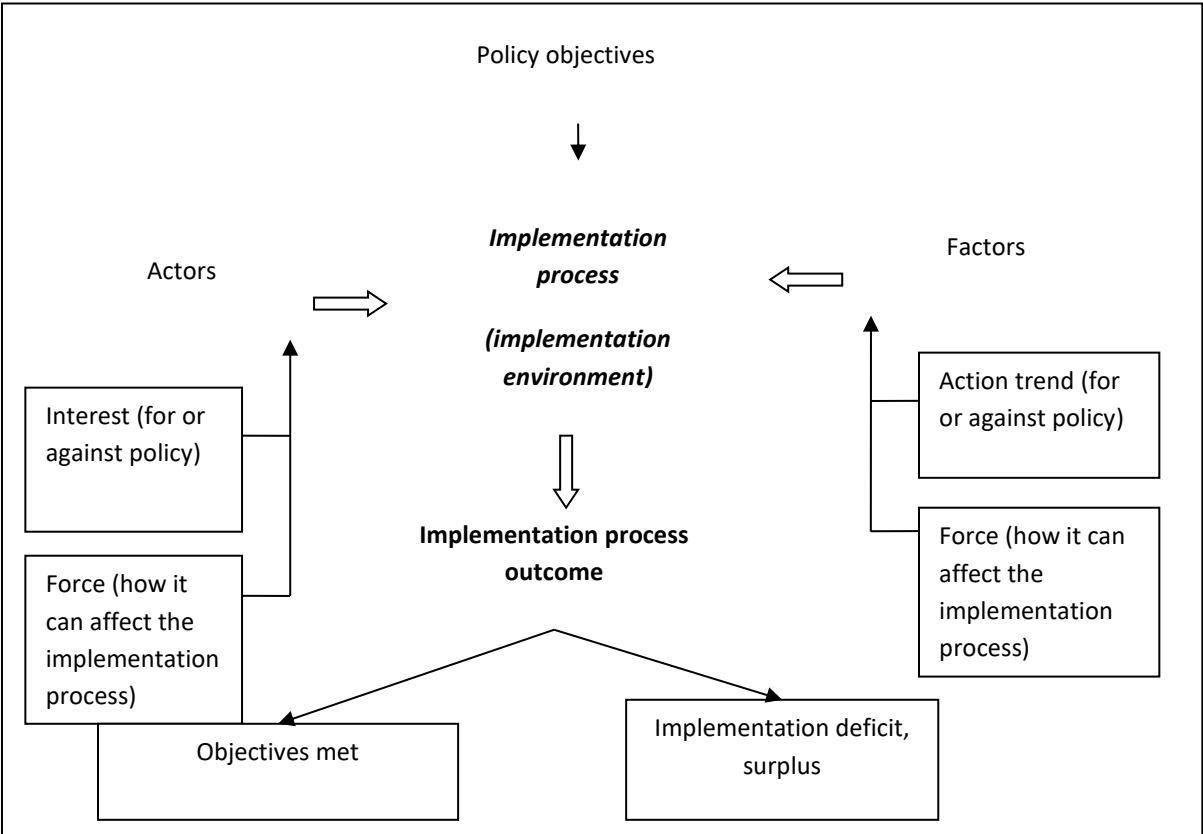
A situation can also be described as an implementation deficit when the realisation of a given policy deepens the degree of dissatisfaction of the interests of individual actors or when a further problem is generated requiring further correction of the policy.

The ‘perfect implementation’ category cannot be clearly defined. A situation can be described as ‘successful’ when individual actors would satisfy their interest and the solution would not cause any additional unintended impacts. A necessary condition would then be the attainment of economic efficiency during this implementation.

**Implementation Process**

The implementation process is not a closed system which would be subject to the impact of the action of external circumstances. In other words, the attainment of set goals can be influenced by the behaviour of actors concerned with the realisation of the goals as well as the impact of further external factors which can change over time. The following diagram expresses the basic consideration of the impact of actors and factors on the realisation process.

Diagram 3.5: **Implementation process**



Source: Pavlík 2010, adapted.

Theoretically it is possible for an ‘implementation surplus’ to arise which in reality is not very likely. Actors (animate) and factors (inanimate) act together on the implementation process. Individual theoretical approaches differ above all in how great a significance they ascribe to individual actors and factors capable of influencing the implementation process.

In terms of the presented diagram, it is appropriate to realise that the very impact of actors can be mutually affected by information asymmetry. This problem is described by the **Principal – Agent theory**. This is based on the information asymmetry between the principal and agent. The agent can, but need not act in the interest of the principal. Typical examples are client-lawyer, patient-doctor and politician-official relationships, etc.

The Principal-Agent theory cannot be understood as an independent approach to analyse the implementation process. However this theory appears useful for broadening the spectrum of starting points especially for the area of healthcare, or healthcare policy. The ‘gap’ between the legislative or political intent and administrative practice is considered in terms of the top-down approach as a fundamental reason for the failure of policy. By contrast, in the Principal-Agent theory this ‘gap’ is considered an unavoidable consequence of the structure of political-administrative institutions in modern states; a certain framing structure can be found for some bottom-up approaches.

We can demonstrate this approach on an example of the law which the government will enforce and approve, nevertheless its realisation is regulated by detailed administrative decrees which results in its adaptation. This legal framework then creates the Principal-Agent relationship between politicians and administrators. Howlett and Ramesh (2003 p. 193) understand the principal-agent relationship as a relationship in which the ‘principal’ is dependent on the agent’s goodwill which is to follow the client’s interests which, of course, need not be identical to his interests. In terms of the implementation process this theory can serve as an explanation for the internal disharmony between (politicians) setting goals and (officials) creating formal procedures that are prescribed for attaining the goals.

### **Test questions:**

*Consider if there is a difference between ‘ineffective implementation’ and ‘implementation deficit’?*

*Identify using the environmental protection policy example as many actors and factors as possible which could affect the implementation process and describe what is probably their interest (trend) and what is its force.*

*Why does an unavoidable implementation deficit appear in the bottom-up approach?*

*What is the difference between successful implementation and perfect implementation?*

*What is the principal – agent theory good for in the event of the implementation process analysis?*

### **Recommended reading:**

Howlett M., M. Ramesh. 1993. ‘Patterns of Policy Instrument Choice: Policy Styles, Policy Learning and the Privatization Experience.’ *Review of Policy Research* 12 (1-2): 3–24.