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From Instrument to Policy: Observing the Meaning Process to Make a Decision

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Summary

From 1950, a lot of researchers try to understand what is policy, how to define it and what kind of knowledge we can produce about it. When Harold Lasswell in 1942 proposed to develop the policy science, he established a strong connection between the development of policy sciences and democracy. He deemed that there was a complementary relationship between knowing policy and the political system. With policy analysis at the end of the century, two kinds of knowledge have been developed. First, knowledge about the substance of policy, the different kind of instruments which compose it, their effects, meaning and goals. Second, knowledge of the policy process, to understand how and why policy changes. Each knowledge has its own dynamics. But the problem is always the difficulty to link the two kinds of knowledge: knowledge of instrument analysis and knowledge of policy dynamics analysis. We can choose between work which understands the substance of policy but does not examine policy dynamics, and work about policy dynamics that does not take into account the specific substance of policy. Finally, a lot of researchers who produce knowledge of instruments never understand why their knowledge has so little influence. The paper aims to review the complex relationship between knowledge of instruments and knowledge of policy dynamics, and proposes to open a new way by considering the role of knowledge of instruments inside policy dynamics. The main idea is to focus on the discursive process of actors who transform instruments into policy by making sense of the instruments, and to illustrate this by some empirical examples.

Keywords: policy knowledge, policy-making process, policy analysis, policy instruments, prescriptive policy knowledge, predictive policy knowledge, post-modern policy analysis

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Since the middle of the 20th century, researchers have been investigating different questions about policy and contributing to the development of the scientific discipline of policy analysis (Peters and Pierre, 2006; Parsons, 2003; Moran *et al.*, 2008; DeLeon, 1997). But since the founding of the discipline, researchers have been developing knowledge in two very different ways.

First, some researchers work on the substance of policy and consider policy analysis as consisting of the identification of different kinds of instruments that comprise policy, their effects, their meaning, and their goals. In this category, one can find contributions to policy studies that seek to clarify the ends, to understand problems, to inventory means, to identify consequences, and to track the realization of policy goals. Analyzing policy consists of helping participants to define methodological approaches to solving problems.

Second, other researchers focus on the policy process. The main idea is to observe the empirical dynamics of policy and to model it. The work of researchers who study the policy process is more descriptive and their analysis consists of isolating some variables, like interest, ideas, and institutions, in an effort to identify causal links between them. A lot of research, in this case, uses the positivist method inspired by natural science to grasp the policy process. The incrementalism model was probably one of the first models that corresponded to this kind of analysis.

But the problem is always the difficulty in linking the two kinds of knowledge: knowledge about instruments and knowledge about policy dynamics. We can choose between work which understands the substance of policy but does not examine policy dynamics, and work about policy dynamics that does not take into account the specific substance of policy. Paradoxically, on the one hand, researchers use the knowledge of policy substance in a prescriptive way to influence the process by proposing new arguments. On the other hand, researchers use the knowledge of the policymaking process in a prospective way, and never consider that any prescriptive argumentation process could influence the determinist orientation of policy dynamics.

This article aims to review the complex relationship between knowledge of instruments and knowledge of policy dynamics and to propose a new direction by considering the fundamental role of knowledge of instruments inside policy dynamics. The main idea is to focus on the discursive practices of policymakers who transform instruments into policies by making sense of the instruments, using this sense to convince each other and build coalitions, and, finally, use coalitions to legitimate power and impose decisions.

In the first part of this paper, we focus on policy analysis as a scientific discipline which produces knowledge on policy substance in a prescriptive way. In the second part, we describe policy analysis of policy dynamics in a prospective way.

In these two parts, we invoke the work of some classical policy analysts in order to grasp the two approaches. In the third part, we show how the two kinds of knowledge are not compatible, and in the fourth part, we endeavor to open a new way of reconciling these two areas of knowledge. In the two last parts, we use an empirical case, the policymaking process with regard to the Parisian tramway, to help us demonstrate our arguments.

Policy Analysis as Prescriptive Knowledge on Policy Substance

As we explained in the introduction, there are two kinds of policy analysis. As suggested by Charles Lindblom, we can say that there is analysis for the policy process and analysis on the policy process.

In the first case, we find different studies that can help the policy process by producing scientific recommendations (Lindblom, 1980). The main idea of this kind of work is generally to undress policy by removing values, goals, and ideology until a neutral instrument is found that can then be considered by researchers. The researchers' work consists of separating facts from values, means from ends, goals from alternatives, output from outcome, consequences from effects, and to define policy as an assembly of all these components. For example, knowledge production about housing policy is equivalent to identifying all the instruments that the government can use and, for each instrument, selecting the corresponding goals, consequences, values, and ideologies.

Producing specific knowledge on policy is not really new. A lot of researchers think that this is very important, as producing policy knowledge enables policymakers to make good decisions. Alexis de Tocqueville studied prison policy in the United States (Beaumont de La Bonnière and Tocqueville, 1833) to produce knowledge on this kind of policy and enlighten France to ameliorate its own policy. Charles Merriam studied policy against crime for the municipality of Chicago (Merriam, 1915). Eugene Schattschneider analyzed tariff policy (Schattschneider, 1974). Harold Lasswell aimed to develop a policy science, which acts as "medicine" and attempts to help solve problems (Lerner and Lasswell, 1951; Arens and Lasswell, 1961). Thus, policy analysts serve as advisors to policymakers.

We cannot, however, understand the development of the advice aspect of policy analysis without showing interest in the complex relationship between this new discipline and the success of the rational choice paradigm. Since the 1950s, some economists and political scientists have been investigating new methods of solving problems. In the 1960s and the 1970s, PPBS (Planning Programming Budgeting System), building on the rational choice paradigm, was successful in the American system (Wildavsky, 1969; Botner, 1970). The main idea of PPBS was to transform policy into goals, alternatives and consequences, and to design a rational process

for hierarchically organizing choices by using a common value to compare cost and performance at the same time.

Contesting the success of this economic and quantitative paradigm, different authors pointed out the limitations of PPBS and tried to prove that there was a way of doing “real” policy analysis that was more qualitative and took into account the complexity of specific situations and the political aspects of the decision-making process. For political scientists, the proposed rational and methodological approach to knowledge raised two problems: the disappearance of politics from the forefront of rationality and the gap between theoretical models and “real” empirical situations.

Aaron Wildavsky is one of the most important contributors to this movement. At the end of the 1960s, following Lindblom’s paradigm, he wrote several articles in which he explained how PPBS is a problematic approach, and argued for another possible way – “policy analysis” (Wildavsky, 1964, 1969). Wildavsky developed an important critique of PPBS. First, he considered policy analysis not only incapable of nullifying political aspects, but able to proceed only after the prior establishment of political choices. Similar to other authors, like David Easton or Yehezkel Dror (Easton, 1965a; Dror, 1968), Wildavsky criticized the idea that policy is only factual and considered rationality, as well as integrated values and primary objectives, to be aspects of policy that only politicians can prioritize. Choosing between health goals and educational goals for children, for example, is rationally impossible. So, the main idea of Wildavsky is to reintegrate the question of values into policy analysis and abandon the idea that policy analysis is slowed by politics. Contrary to what PPBS experts think, Wildavsky argued that policy analysis follows political choice.

If Wildavsky aimed to take into account values and politics, he would have considered them as two distinct concepts separated by a clear boundary. This distinction allows for a clear separation and identification of the respective roles of politicians and policy analysts. The policy analyst, in Wildavsky’s perspective, must produce knowledge about facts after the values are chosen by politics. His job consists of illuminating choice by producing information about means and ends – to clarify goals and engage a strategic process in which policy objectives are the reference point.

The second aspect of PPBS that Wildavsky criticized is its inability to achieve its objective. Returning to Lindblom’s and Simon’s remarks about the synoptic and rational approaches, Wildavsky showed how this kind of analysis is impossible: it would be impossible to rigorously evaluate the amount of data and make all the necessary calculations, the consequences of alternatives would be difficult to estimate, the objective would always be difficult to specify, and the ability to draw a

comparison would be compromised by both the difficulty of collecting data and the varied types of – often not even comparable – data that exist.

Wildavsky criticized the rational choice paradigm, which aims to produce absolute knowledge as a substitution for politics. In PPBS, politics and knowledge are contradictory. In policy analysis, politics and knowledge are complementary. The condition of this complementarity is the capacity to mark a clear boundary between facts and values and to center the production of knowledge around facts.

Finally, Wildavsky wanted to produce a policy analysis that continued to be scientific but different from rational choice by taking values, political aspects, and the complexity of reality into greater account. But, similar to other researchers who wanted to distance themselves from rational choice, he faced real difficulty in defining a scientific position.

If this kind of work produced normative knowledge that influenced the policy process, then there would be difficulties with respect to producing effects. A lot of researchers want to tell “the truth” to politicians, but it is difficult to persuade them of such truth. This process of producing knowledge consists of considering that science produces and tells the truth, and politics can only fabricate such truth if the scientific recommendation is not followed. The main operation is to create a theoretical and normative point of view.

Policy Analysis as Predictive Knowledge on the Policy Process

If the first kind of work is to produce knowledge for the policy process without effect, the second kind of work studies the policy process itself. The scientific process is more empirical. Researchers try to understand the process of policy change by identifying some variables that provoked the change and by examining the relationship between these variables inside a model describing a dynamic movement.

In policy analysis studies, we can identify and also subsume different kinds of models. Each model implies the transformation of policy into an object inside a change process and the identification of certain, possibly causal, variables. Each model represents a different way of grasping the policy process.

The first model is the stage approach. In this model, the main idea is that policy change is the result of a succession of stages (Hupe and Hill, 2006). Generally, the first step identifies the agenda-setting problem, and the last step decides the policy change and implementation. Each stage has a rational link to the previous one. In this case, the main causality of policy change is the appearance of a new problem or the definition of a new objective. Dividing the policy change process into different stages allows for the ordering of reality and highlights the change process more clearly. Every author that tries to develop this stage approach constantly oscillates

between two positions: on the one hand, viewing the stage model as a descriptive model of the policy process and, on the other hand, recommending the stage model as a heuristic method for analyzing policy – which is actually the third category of policy analysis. In our point of view, this oscillation corresponds to the difficulty of confining empirical reality to a model.

Herbert Simon provided a good example of these difficulties. In *Administrative Behavior* (1947), Simon explained how the complexity of the environment, the uncertainty of the future, and the limited capacity of human thinking combine to make any objective and rational method of choosing the best problem-solving instrument impossible. He developed a demonstration by contradiction, showing that no reality can correspond to the rational process. Rationality, he observed, is always subjective, contingent, and bounded. Throughout his life, he tried to find a model for grasping human rationality. If no reality corresponds to a rational model, the problem is that, as Kenneth Arrow explained, no theory corresponds to reality:

The problem with accepting the hypothesis of bounded rationality is not its reality but its adequacy as a theory. I'm sufficiently an old-fashioned positivist (as was Herbert Simon) to hold that a theory that cannot be falsified is no theory. The gap is filled in practice by specific hypotheses about the particular form the bounds on rationality take in different contexts. But there is no general criterion for determining which limit on rationality holds in any given context and therefore the building of a complete theory of the economy on the basis of bounded rationality is a project for the future. (...) I conclude, though tentatively, that this project is not successful. (Arrow, 2004: 54)

In another way, Harold Lasswell tried to find a model to describe the reality of the policy process (Lasswell, 1956, 1970). With the concept of the policy cycle, Lasswell developed the idea that we can define seven stages of the decision process: intelligence, recommendation, prescription, invocation, application, appraisal, and termination. In his work, Lasswell presented two kinds of models: the first is a descriptive model in which each stage follows the last one. The second is a prescriptive model in which Lasswell explained the importance of following this cycle for amelioration of the policy process. There is a contradiction between the two kinds of models. If it is a descriptive case, Lasswell does not recommend following the model. If it is a prescriptive case, Lasswell cannot explain that reality follows the model. Sometimes he argued that this cycle was heuristic, and at other times a model of reality.

Many authors, such as Charles Jones, Charles Anderson and Robert Mack (Jones, 1970; Anderson, 1975; Mack, 1971), have encountered the same difficulties. When they presented their model, they always oscillated between a descriptive and a heuristic model for ordering reality.

The second model is dynamic or incremental. With the incrementalist approach, Charles Lindblom opened a new way to analyzing policy change (Lindblom, 1958a, 1958b). The main difference between this approach and the previous model is that the main variable with which to understand policy change is not the agenda-setting problem, but the previous policy. The object “policy” has its own motion and we can use the concept of “dynamics” to underline this autonomous move. Incrementalism is a dynamic process, which considers that policy feedback is the first constraint for policy change. This approach also takes into account historical neo-institutionalism and path dependency.

Following Herbert Simon’s hypothesis about bounded rationality, Charles Lindblom suggested that, in order to get around the difficulties of rational objectivity and the synoptic model, actors develop cognitive strategies to simplify reality and solve problems (Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1963). This hypothesis is derived from observing reality, and Lindblom suggested that in most cases participants are “muddling through” when they propose policy. Thus, Lindblom not only describes the reality of “muddling through”, but also suggests a rigorous method for taking it into account: the “science of muddling through”. Here, science is not just a description, but also a prescription for going through reality. Lindblom had real difficulties being understood and he continued, twenty years after the first article, to try to clarify and correct these misunderstandings (Lindblom, 1979). The difficulty comes from a double paradox: if “muddling through” is the reality of participants and the synoptic model a simple illusion, why did Lindblom continue to fight against it and regret its success? If “muddling through” is the inescapable reality, how could Lindblom suggest a specific way of escaping it?

More generally, Eugene Bardach considered that a certain dynamics begins when a policy system’s output becomes its input (Bardach, 2006). Hence, in dynamic approaches, the irregularity of the movement as a variation of policy change disappeared.

The third model is a mix of the stage and dynamic approaches. David Easton was one of the first authors to develop this mixed model. Easton began by considering all political interactions as a behavior system (Easton, 1965a, 1965b). According to him, the political system is made up of complex interactions that must react to a lot of perturbations. He rejected the hypothesis that actors in the political system seek to produce or return to “equilibrium”, and rather advocated understanding the system as being in perpetual motion.

Easton imagined two kinds of “perturbations”. The first perturbation comes from society and other systems. Easton’s description of this perturbation is very close to that of the agenda-setting process. He considered that a problem comes from a collective group who can formulate a problem. He insisted that formulating

a problem is not enough. The problem needs to be translated into an issue that participants believe can be solved by a public authority. But this collective demand is not enough to stress the system. The collective group needs to amass enough support to intensify their problem. In a certain way, the demand is the substance of the stress, and the support is its intensity. Hence, David Easton insisted on the role of the “spokesperson” for translating the problem and aggregating enough actors.

According to this argument, the first kind of input can be compared to the stage approach, because the input is the cause of the system’s perturbation leading to an outcome which is usually a policy. But Easton’s main idea is to combine this first kind of perturbation with another kind: the feedback from the outcome. Because he refused the idea of returning to equilibrium, we can consider the system to be dynamic.

The punctuated equilibrium model from Jones and Baumgartner also tries to combine the agenda-setting process and the feedback effect (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991). Their primary goal is to explain why policies are stable most of the time. They argue that:

[P]olicy stability is a function of two distinct sources. The first is ‘friction’ in the ‘rules of games’ that make it difficult to take place in political system. The formal rules that govern policy require a great deal of energy to overcome. (...) The second source of stability may be found in the cognitive and emotional constraints of political actors – the bounds of their rationality. (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993: XXIII)

Thus, the work of the two authors is very similar to the incrementalist approach, which understands policy changes as marginal and taking place within a stable system. This stability is produced by the presence of fixed institutions and policy monopoly, which are “structural arrangements that are supported by powerful ideas” (*ibid.*: 4).

Nevertheless, the most original aspect of the punctuated equilibrium system has to do with its capacity to mix this stable system with the stage approach, whereby specific attention to a problem may suddenly cause a significant change and destabilize the otherwise stable system. Studying the agenda-setting process, Baumgartner and Jones suggested that attention to a problem in the political arena provides an opportunity for observing controversies between old and new ideas, and sometimes for modifying institutions, ideas, and actors’ powers inside a policy subsystem. “In the end, we depict a political system that displays considerable stability with regard to the manner in which processes issue, but this stability is punctuated with periods of volatile change” (*ibid.*).

Mixing the two models, as Easton and Baumgartner and Jones have done, does not serve to solve the difficulties posed by each model. Firstly, these scholars, if they

are to build a model, always need to objectify policy and transform it into an object in repetitive motion. If Easton had tried to take into account the political question by taking into account the importance of the “political system”, he would have needed to preserve the boundary between policy and politics as means and ends, and thus he would have faced the same difficulty in confining cases to the model.

The fourth model is the random model. This model was developed by Cohen, March, and Olsen (Cohen *et al.*, 1972) to study decision-making processes, and was imported into policy analysis by John Kingdon (Kingdon, 1995). The model is based on the hypothesis that there are independent movements between four independent streams: problems, solutions, energy from participants, and choice. To understand the decision-making process, Cohen, March and Olsen suggested considering the fact that each stream looks for another, albeit not in a rational manner. In this model, there are a “collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they can be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be an answer and decision makers looking for a work” (Cohen *et al.*, 1972: 294). This allows them to break with the rational idea that solutions come from problem-solving activities or from the dynamics of the decision. Their complex model supposes that the four streams are in such a phase as to allow a decision.

Based on empirical case studies, e.g. inside universities, the random model shows how the previous models are wrong in some situations, especially when they try to see policy change as the outcome of a problem or a specific feedback. These studies aim to highlight specific cases in which there are problematic preferences, unclear technology, and fluid participation. As John Kingdon explained (Kingdon, 1995), a lot of decisions inside the process of changing public policy correspond to this kind of situation, thus signifying that a lot of policy decisions are not predictable and depend on the random meeting of the above-mentioned streams.

It is interesting to note how these four kinds of models propose contradictory explanations. A particularly easy way to understand this is to consider that each approach corresponds to specific situations. In this way, we forget the universal vocation of the process of modeling. For example, if we consider the link between a problem and a solution in the policy process, each approach suggests a different way of conceptualizing it. For some, the solution comes from the problem itself, while for others it does not. No model or meta-model has the capacity to explain two cases. In reality, the different models are contradictory and each one shows how the others do not take into account some aspects.

Beyond the contradiction, apart from the random model, these different approaches have several common points which can explain their failure to describe reality. First of all, these models try to transform a chaotic, specific, and com-

plex reality into an ordered and universal world. Second, all these approaches are based on the separation of facts from values, policy from politics, and object from subject. The process of modeling needs to identify universal objects and regular transitions. Third, all these approaches exclude the specificity of participants, meaning, for example, the influence of their arguments, their knowledge, and their discourse.

Only the random model takes into account some specific and contingent elements, like the spirit of participants, the specificity of the decision, and the specific process whereby a solution seeks an issue. As John Kingdon explained in the second edition of his book, the limitation of this model has to do with the emphasis placed on opportunities and randomness, which Kingdon found to be insufficient as explanations of policy change.

From the Paradox of the Science of “Muddling Through”...

On the one hand, researchers try to produce knowledge on policy and to transform this knowledge into arguments to influence policymakers. On the other hand, when researchers examine the policy change process, they neither consider knowledge or argument as a causality of policy change.

The main problem comes from a paradox of reconciling the two approaches. In order to consider the possible impact of scientific advice on policymakers, researchers must consider that the argumentative process can, in general, have an impact on policy. If scientific advice can influence policy, why can policy not be influenced by the advice of an expert, politician, or bureaucrat? But if everyone can influence a process and if policy change depends on the number of influential participants as well as the efficiency of arguments, how is it possible to grasp a model which needs regularity? In other words, researchers who subscribe to the first kind of policy analysis need to be aware of the limitations of models that do not take into account the ways actors influence policy.

This impossibility of reconciling the two approaches comes from three findings. First, policy analysis as knowledge for the policy process is not a science. A lot of authors remark that analyzing policy is never really rigorous and scientific, as policymaking participants have difficulty doing anything apart from “muddling through” or “crafting”. Lindblom, for example, explains that this kind of knowledge, whether produced by scientist or other participants, is always a “muddling through”. Wildavsky, after looking for a definition of policy analysis, concluded that policy analysis is more a craft than a science (Wildavsky, 1987).

Second, if knowledge on policy is not a science, the scientist does not have any superiority or specificity over the knowledge of laymen. The problem of scientists who investigate this knowledge-making process lies in differentiating their know-

ledge from the knowledge of the participants. Policy analysis is nothing more than the traditional language used by participants.

Third, policy analysis as knowledge about the process cannot be determinist and positivist. Because the knowledge of participants is a “craft” and because there are many subjective ways to determine the participants’ choice, the process cannot be modeled as a dynamic process in which policy is treated as an object. All the models suppose that participants cannot display specific behavior or surprising influence on the process.

To understand this impossibility, we must take an empirical example. The French housing policy is considered by actors to be a very complex domain that only a few actors can understand (Zittoun, 2000, 2001). These experts come from bureaucracy, politics, science, and interest groups. It is not epistemologically possible to distinguish policy analysts from this different group of actors. To evaluate instruments of policy, all actors use the same kind of process – they do what they can to identify goals, alternatives, and consequences to compare different instruments. In 1977, there was a really important controversy over the housing policy between actors who defended a specific instrument to finance the construction of government-funded housing, and another instrument to directly finance assistance to people to rent housing. Each instrument had its own advocacy coalition that supported it and we find different kinds of actors inside each coalition, each of which had a repertoire of arguments that are impossible to compare objectively.

Another example is derived from an empirical study of the tramway in Paris (Zittoun, 2007, 2008). There was an important controversy between traditional transport economists, who developed a specific position to defend one layout, and planners who defended another layout.

In the first case, knowledge production began by transforming each layout into a series of indicators. The experts produced a list of crucial variables, i.e. those selected indicators that allowed the projects to be quantified, and thus compared, so that they could be seen as “alternative” responses to the same problem. The figures given in this table are based on technological transport engineering models compared using an expert system (Giddens, 1994), the application of which involves making assumptions and reducing uncertainties. Nine variables were selected, and they had to be simultaneously manipulated. The length of the line was a basic parameter, of course, but also the population served and the expected number of morning rush-hour users. Each variable involved calculations, assumptions, and more or less complex choices; for instance, the idea of a “working population within 600 meters of a station” was based on an assumption about the potential pool of transit riders. This gave a figure of 240,000-250,000. Then, using a process which reduced levels of uncertainty about future behavior, the “population” was converted into a “total number of users during the morning rush hour”.

The job of the transport experts was to define a problem, to express it in figures, and to connect the result to plans that could be compared on a hierarchical basis. This led to the creation of a “public” consisting of people “who want to go as fast as possible”, with a relationship between this public and the physical integration of a tram system into a territory. This relationship was merged by means of a rationalization which offered neither a space of discussion nor a method of negotiation. “The figures cannot be distorted. Even someone who knows very little about transport can see that one system will work better than another. After that – well, it’s up to the politicians.”¹

In the second case, urban planners were particularly keen on a “2-in-1” project. The “indicators” had rendered the projects comparable, as we have seen, but the contributions of urban-planning experts shed new light on the question. To the “performance” dimension of transport they added the urban dimension of a tramway as something which was not simply a means of transport, but which also modified and transformed the urban fabric. The experts recalled that the peripheral railway line occupied a separate territory and that to install a tramway there would not modify the urban landscape as such. This non-urban character of the proposal, which was regarded as a considerable asset by the transport experts (for whom speed was the paramount consideration), was viewed as a handicap by the town planners. In other words, the performance criteria which made it possible to compare the two proposals were now compounded by urban problems which disqualified one of the two.

The two positions look like two different kinds of policy analysis that mixed scientific method and technical device to grasp the different instruments. Each method arrived at a different conclusion and each method appeared like a rigorous method and scientific paradigm. But when we observe the method of building this knowledge, it suggests a process similar to that of “muddling through”.

... to the Science of the Craft of Muddling Through and the Spread of a Policy Statement

To escape this paradox, we propose a different scientific way to reconcile the two kinds of knowledge. Our understanding of the policymaking process requires shifting our attention to the subjective knowledge process. We propose taking into account the influence of knowledge produced during the policy process – knowledge that is produced through the process of “muddling through” by participants.

More precisely, we suggest three central hypotheses to structure an approach which takes the question of knowledge, and the discourse that carries it, seriously. With these hypotheses, we want to follow recent post-positivist approaches (Fischer

¹ Interview with an official of the RATP.

and Forester, 1993; Yanow, 1996; Schmidt and Radaelli, 2004; Zittoun, 2009; Hajer and Laws, 2006; Bevir and Rhodes, 2003). First, the participants need to produce their own policy analysis to grasp instruments and transform them into policy statements. Second, this process of deriving meaning is the key to understanding the development of advocacy coalitions around policy statements and the strategies used by participants. Three, this process needs to be considered as a political process to legitimate a government and order society. In this way, we propose understanding the policymaking process through the observation of the game of language, the game of actors, and the game of power, all of which work together.

First, we must be attentive to the empirical meaning process in which participants speak about instruments and make sense of them. As Wittgenstein suggests, the process of deriving meaning comes from the game of language that we use (Wittgenstein, 2005). The production of categories and links between different statements is not imposed by reality, but is rather built inside the discourse to produce meaning, or sense (Douglas, 2004). The first function of language is to carry knowledge and to be the site in which we try to order and put together ideas to produce sense.

One of the most common ways to produce meaning with an instrument is to produce a causal link between it and a problem. For a lot of authors, the question of this link is difficult. For some authors, like Simon and Lindblom, the solution is the result of muddling through the problem-solving cognitive method. For other authors, like Cohen, March and Olsen or Kingdon, the solution to a problem emerges through luck and opportunity (Kingdon, 2002; Cohen *et al.*, 1972). Nonetheless, if the solution does not require a problem to exist and be formulated, why does a solution continue to necessitate the identification of a problem? Why do participants formulate a solution without the existence of a problem? Kingdon and others never address this question.

A policy instrument can be perceived as problem-solving. If the linking process is not objectively rational, then one has to observe the efforts made by participants to demonstrate to others, as well as to themselves, that a specific solution is appropriate. In other words, if the problem and the solution are independent, we can suppose that participants need to glue both of these together using some convincing argument.

For example, let's return to the tramway case. There are different ways to make sense of the tramway. In the first case, with the transport economy, the tramway became the solution to a transport problem. In the second case, with the urban planners, the tramway became the solution to an urban problem of a neighborhood in Paris. To link one problem to one solution, the participants needed to merge the two aspects into a single statement and develop arguments to prove this link.

Intuitively, we can say that the tramway was the solution to the two problems, but in this case each manner of linking the two had a cost and produced a different result. In the first case, the transport economy produced indicators to determine the “best” way between the two layouts. In the second case, urban planners produced an analysis to distinguish the two layouts and to choose the one that resolved the urban problem.

Second, the game of language is not only interesting in terms of observing the process of knowledge production, but also in observing the game of actors, in which the actors develop argumentative strategies to persuade others and build coalitions (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1958; Fischer, 2003). Discourse is not only a framework of knowledge, but also a means to structure interaction between actors. We speak about discursive practices to suggest that the discourse empirically exists only inside interactive practice (Mead *et al.*, 2006). A discourse is carried by a speaker to an audience in a specific time-space and expresses an intention, the intention of the speaker, which can have an effect that is not necessarily reflective of the intention. In this idea, discursive practice is an action and an interaction. With the concept of discursive practices, we refute the separation between discourse and practice delineated by researchers who produce semantic analyses, and thus seek to separate discourse from practice in an effort to study only the discourse – even the researchers who want to study the practice behind the discourse, which bears little significance.

With respect to the policymaking process, we aim to develop the hypothesis that the only way to disseminate a policy statement is through direct contact, discussions, and the persuasion process. We do not suppose that every participant wakes up on the same morning with the same proposition, but rather consider that each policymaker needs to be convinced by a policy statement before appropriating it. This hypothesis reinforces the role of sense in constructing and debating policy instruments. How can one communicate an idea about a policy instrument without first making sense of it? Explaining that an instrument is the solution to a problem helps to convince an audience.

Let's return to the tramway. To understand the policymaking process, we must examine how instruments are initiated. In the beginning, only very few actors defended the idea of a tramway in both the first and second layouts. The most common point of view was not to oppose the tramway – it was disinterest in the tramway. The task of each group was to interest other actors in taking their position.

The persuasion process consists not only of changing the point of view of the others, but also of identifying specific arguments that could influence other actors. There are those scientific and technical arguments designed to convince others of the validity of the statement, i.e. that an instrument is the solution to a problem, and there are also interesting arguments whereby speakers explain to an audience how

the appropriation corresponds to their interest. A discussion is like a truth and identity trial.

What is really interesting in the tramway case is that the two positions were present inside each institution. The two points of view existed inside the municipality of Paris, RATP (the organization that manages the subway), the state, the Urban Agency of Paris (APUR), the users association, etc. So the participants organized their strategy to choose arguments and opted to adjust the policy statement to take into account the views of the audience. The persuasion process is a process of appropriation that allows each actor to mark his footprint inside the policy statement.

Following the dissemination and adjustment of a policy statement, the statement serves to link policymakers and initiate coalition-building. The policy statement binds the actors to each other inside a coalition, and the coalition helps to consolidate the policy statement and make it credible.

Third, the policymaking process is not always a game of language and a game of actors, but also a game of power (Foucault, 1966, 1971). The question of power is the most difficult question for those who try to take discourse seriously. For a long time, researchers who took discourse seriously did not consider the inequalities between policymakers, and researchers who took these inequalities seriously did not consider discourse as having any importance. It is one of Pierre Bourdieu's most important critiques of discursive approaches (Bourdieu, 2001). He defends the idea that researchers forget that not everyone enjoys the right to speak and to be considered. For him, discourse is only a weapon for actors who have a dominant position.

We would like to reconcile the question of power by taking into account the remarks of Pierre Bourdieu. To understand the persuasion process, we must understand who the speaker wants to convince when he arrives at a meeting with his audience and if his audience takes him seriously. With regard to this, we defend the idea that every participant who wants to persuade an actor builds not only an argument, but also a power map to identify who he must necessarily convince in order to advance his argument.

For example, a lot of actors in the first part of the tramway decision-making process tried to convince the mayor to choose the "good" layout. They recognized the influential power of the mayor, even though the mayor did not really have the power to decide. Some actors in RATP developed a strategy to convince the director of RATP, who was able to influence the mayor. Each actor designed his own map detailing the positions of powerful and less powerful actors in order to choose whom to convince. When the mayor chose one layout and joined the respective coalition, the other coalition tried not only to pressure the mayor to change his position, but also to convince other policymakers who participated in the decision-making process to change their respective position(s). The mapping of relative power posi-

tions was based on subjective knowledge and had an impact both before and during the discussion, thereby accentuating the credibility of the argument.

The other interesting aspect of this question of power was the process of legitimization associated with the tramway. Through their support of the tramway, advocates were able to project their own legitimacy. For example, when the mayor defended the tramway project, he defended the legitimacy of the mayor to impose the tramway. The tramway and the mayor are associated in a game of power. Specifically, when the mayor hesitated to choose between the two layouts, a sense of conflict emerged because the lack of progress on the tramway project symbolized the incapacity of the mayor to govern. What is important is not whether the tramway was just an excuse to critique the political process, but rather to understand that the tramway was the means to address the question of governance.

In sum, the main idea was to focus observation on the discursive practices of the policymakers in order to understand how instruments make sense as policy statements, how a policy statement becomes a means to bind actors together inside a coalition, and how the development and stability of a coalition work together to enforce an instrument as a new decision.

Conclusion: Observing the Policymakers' Analysis to Understand the Policymaking Process

The status of policy analysis is ambiguous. For some researchers, it is just a discipline that produces knowledge on policy and, in a prescriptive way, transforms it into an argument to tell the truth to politicians. After finding the missing impact of their knowledge, those researchers discover in practice, against their will, that knowledge cannot be disassociated from the actors who carry it and can have no influence if the actors do not play three games: the game of language, the game of actors, and the game of power. Curiously, those researchers never take this reality into account. When they try to describe the policy process, they never acknowledge any influence of knowledge and of the argumentative process. The same researchers can propose a new instrument as a radical change, and describe path dependency as demonstrating the impossibility for participants to have a real influence on the policy process, except marginally. In this way, policy analysis as the discipline that describes the policy process consequentially transforms policy into an object, and it proceeds as a regular phenomenon without the direct influence of participants or context. It is a predictive way that generally functions only after policy change.

We suggest transforming policy analysis as a political science to observe the specific process of policymaking, thereby understanding the role of knowledge and subjective understanding and analyzing the strategies of policymakers inside the three games. In such a case, researchers would not analyze the substance of policy,

but would rather observe the means that policymakers use to give sense, or meaning, to policy. Furthermore, researchers would not consider the dynamics of policy, but would rather be interested in the way the policymakers try to grasp the dynamics and use it.

The policymaking process is a subjective and contingent process. Policy analysis as a descriptive science cannot be transformed into a prescriptive or a predictive approach. So what can we use policy analysis for? We would like to develop a main hypothesis based on the idea that the success or failure of a policymaking statement and the building of coalitions are good ways to understand politics in society. Policy statements must be understood as an approach by policymakers to solving problems, and further demonstrate that political will addresses social issues and problems, thereby reordering society. Policy statements link not only problems and solutions and actors and coalitions, but also order and disorder in society, which is a specific political phenomenon.

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