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INTERNATIONAL REVIEW OF PUBLIC POLICY
VOL.2 — NUMBER 1 — 2020

IRPP

Table of contents

Articles

Navigating the policy stream: Contested solutions and organizational strategies of policy entrepreneurship 5
Livia Johannesson / Martin Qvist

A social network perspective on the interaction between policy bubbles 24
Moshe Maor

The Dismantling of Family Farming Policies in Brazil and Argentina 45
Eric Sabourin / Clara Craviotti / Carolina Milhorance

Expertise, politics and public opinion at the crossroads of the European Commission's decision-making: The case of Glyphosate 68
Giulia Bazzan / Marta Migliorati

Can power be made an empirically viable concept in policy process theory? Exploring the power potential of the Narrative Policy Framework 90
Tjorven Sievers / Michael D. Jones

Forum

The Rise and Spread of Behavioral Public Policy: An Opportunity for Critical Research and Self-Reflection 115
Holger Straßheim

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Navigating the policy stream:
Contested solutions and organizational strategies of policy entrepreneurship

Livia Johannesson
Stockholm Center for Organizational Research, Stockholm University

Martin Qvist
Department of Political Science, Stockholm University

Abstract
In the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), policy entrepreneurs are primarily defined by their ability to promote and seek support for policy solutions. Recent research, however, points to the importance of policy entrepreneurs as "arena shapers" who attempt to create favorable conditions for their solutions in conflictual policy settings. In this paper, we seek to incorporate such strategies into the MSF by drawing on the organizational foundations of the original garbage can model. The main question is what role do policy entrepreneurs play in "organizing out" opposition from pre-decision processes, as a way of advancing contested policy solutions. We answer this question in a case study of a controversial hospital "mega-project" in Stockholm healthcare that shows how a small but influential team of entrepreneurs used the project as an opportunity for policy change. The study helps to identify three different organizational strategies: 1) regulating participation in order to neutralize opponents: 2) specializing attention to limit the "searchlight" and 3) sequential attention in order to reduce complexity and build commitment. While effective for advancing solutions in the face of conflict and entrenched positions, organizational strategies also have important democratic implications for the legitimacy of pre-decision processes and the prospects for broad deliberation.

Keywords
multiple streams framework, policy entrepreneurs, garbage can, organizational strategies, mega-project

Introduction

How, and under what conditions, contested solutions become viable political alternatives have been key questions in the literature on agenda-setting in public policymaking (Kingdon 1984; Keeler 1993; Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Zahariadis 2003; Zohlnhöfer & Rüb 2016). Researchers often find that policy entrepreneurs play a vital role in these processes by preparing and refining solutions and by promoting them when opportunities appear (see, e.g., Mintrom & Norman 2009; Guldbrandsson & Fossum 2009; Meijerink & Huitema 2010; Oborn, Barrett & Exworthy 2011; Spohr 2016; Saetren 2016a). In John Kingdon's (1984) original formulation of the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), proposals rise to prominence in a gradual process of "softening up" and "emerging consensus" within policy communities. Later research has developed this understanding, emphasizing that the character of policy communities and the ways they generate alternatives can vary significantly between different policy settings (Zahariadis 2003; Herweg 2016). Policymaking is increasingly characterized by complex problems and knowledge claims that are contested and politicized (e.g. Wolf & Van Dooren 2017; Griggs & Howarth 2018; Daviter 2019). Therefore, policy entrepreneurs sometimes find themselves in situations where they face resistance and competition from other teams of entrepreneurs (Mintrom 2013; Cohen 2016; Brouwer & Biermann 2011; Saetren 2016a; Reimer & Saerbeck 2017).

One key question in such oppositional contexts is the extent to which policy entrepreneurs not only develop, and seek attention for, their solutions but also apply strategies for maneuvering out rival solutions and "opposition players" (Cohen 2016). More specifically, the question we address here is what role policy entrepreneurs play in "organizing out" opposition from pre-decision processes and how such strategies can be incorporated into the multiple streams framework.

Previous research on policy entrepreneurs has pointed to the importance of the "arena strategies" that are sometimes used to manipulate the access structure (Brouwer & Biermann 2011; Meijerink & Huitema 2010), with particular emphasis on the significance of coalition building (Mintrom & Norman 2009; Mintrom 2013) and the role of venue shopping (Baumgartner & Jones 1993) — seeking out the most favorable conditions for advancing a solution (Brouwer & Biermann 2011; Cairney 2018). These discussions, however, have only been incorporated with the MSF to a limited degree, a reflection of the fact that the concept of policy entrepreneurs is often used without connecting it to the full framework (Zohlnhöfer, Herweg & Rüb 2015).

We seek to contribute to the MSF literature by demonstrating how *organizational strategies* can explain how policy entrepreneurs manage to exclude rival solutions and potent opposition from important arenas as a way of advancing contested policy solutions. Furthermore, we argue that organizational strategies can be incorporated into MSF by reconnecting with the organizational foundations of the original "garbage-can model" (Cohen, March & Olsen 1972). The concept of organizational strategies combines the garbage-can component of *organizational structures* — which was not incorporated in Kingdon's (1984) adaptation of the model — and the actor-structure dynamic which he created by introducing the concept of policy entrepreneurs (Saetren 2016b; Zahariadis 2003).

We develop the concept of organizational strategies based on a case study of how a hospital "mega-project" was used to promote a set of highly contested policy ideas in the Stockholm healthcare sector. We demonstrate how a small but influential group of policy entrepreneurs managed to "organize out" opposition in order to advance their package of ideas in the process

of generating alternatives. We identify three different organizational strategies based on this empirical study: 1) regulating participation in order to neutralize opponents, 2) specializing attention to limit the "searchlight" and 3) sequential attention in order to reduce complexity and build commitment. We conclude with a discussion of conditions under which policy entrepreneurs' organizational strategies can play an important role and we also provide suggestions for further research.

Multiple Streams Framework and policy entrepreneurs' organizational strategies

The multiple streams framework offers a dynamic approach to policymaking and is more relevant than ever when policymaking is increasingly characterized by complex problems and disagreements between experts about appropriate courses of action (see, e.g., Zohlnhöfer & Rüb 2016, 3). The framework is still centered around the key concepts that John Kingdon (1984) developed, based on an adaption of the garbage-can model (Cohen et al. 1972). In this framework, agenda-setting is seen as a function of the confluence of three streams — problems, policies and politics — that flow through the political system relatively independent of each other. Alternatives rise to the decision-agenda when "a problem is recognized; a solution is available and the political climate makes the time right for change" (Kingdon 1984, 93). A policy window opens either in the problem stream (for example, when a problem gains policymakers' attention as the result of a crisis) or in the political stream (for example, as a consequence of a change of government). Favorable alignment of the three streams creates a window for change, but the coupling of the streams requires an intervention by policy entrepreneurs — resourceful experts and innovative networkers in the policy community (Kingdon 1984; see also Mintrom & Norman 2009; Cairney 2018).

Despite the merits of this policy perspective, there is broad agreement among policy scholars that many of the concepts and subcategories of MSF are in need of further theoretical refinement (Zahariadis 2016a). The policy stream, which is our focus here, is no exception (Herweg 2016). In the original version, Kingdon famously compared the development of alternatives within policy communities to a process of natural selection. Kingdon describes an incremental "softening-up" process whereby ideas and proposals are refined and modified in order to gain legitimacy, resulting in an "emerging consensus" among specialists and experts around one, or a few, viable alternatives (1984, 127-29; 139).

There are, however, cases that do not fit this picture: for instance, situations that involve multiple policy communities with varied and conflictual interests, agendas and values. Both the pace of alternative generation and the development of solutions, in either collaborative or competitive modes, can vary depending on how well integrated the policy community is (Zahariadis 2003). Describing the selection process as a struggle between multiple players corresponds well with later contributions to the literature on policy entrepreneurship, which emphasize that policy entrepreneurs are not merely passively waiting for the right chance to pitch their ideas — they are often active in influencing the policy environment in all three streams (Cairney 2018; see also Oborn et al. 2011). With this in mind, we will discuss the role of policy entrepreneurs in more detail, focusing on strategies of manipulating access and seeking out favorable conditions, identified in previous research.

Policy entrepreneurs and the manipulation of access in the policy stream

Policy entrepreneurs are defined by their actions, rather than their positions, and thus they can be found in both the public and private sectors, as well as in civil society. They are individuals

who succeed in influencing policy outcomes without having the formal resources required to achieve these changes on their own (Cohen 2016, 180). Apart from policy entrepreneurs' personal characteristics and attributes, the literature has pointed out a large number of strategies that policy entrepreneurs use to promote their preferred solutions within the policy stream (Frisch Aviram et al., 2019). Many of these strategies can be categorized as attention- and support-seeking activities that they use to promote a particular solution. Widely used strategies include various rhetorical moves, such as the framing of solutions and problems (Zahariadis 2003; Mintrom & Norman 2009, 661; Aukes et al. 2017; Frisch Aviram et al. 2019) and the strategic use of symbols to create a shared emotional and cognitive understanding of a policy solution (Zahariadis 2003,156).

Of particular interest for our purpose here are coalition and arena strategies, which seek to reduce the influence of the opposition and in some cases actively shape policy arenas and make strategic use of time and place in the policy process (Baumgartner & Jones 1993; Zahariadis 2003, 156; Meijerink & Huitema 2010; Brouwer & Biermann 2011; Reimer & Saerbeck 2017). Coalition-building strategies have been described as one of the most important tools for successful policy entrepreneurship. Policy entrepreneurs need to build coalitions and form alliances in order to mobilize the strength and resources they need to make their solutions viable (Meijerink and Huitema 2010). Brouwer and Biermann (2011) demonstrate how policy entrepreneurs sometimes opt for broad coalitions when disseminating their ideas, but at other times deliberately form small groups of closed networks in order to exclude unwanted opposition. This indicates that they can influence the access structure within the policy stream. Saetren (2016a) makes a similar point when discussing how policy entrepreneurs, if possessing sufficient power positions, can use "policy design" strategies, which means eliminating the institutionalized process of negotiating policy suggestions by turning an open access structure into a closed process. The purpose of such strategies is "organizing influential adversely affected stakeholders out of the policy formulation process" (Saetren 2016a, 86).

Arena strategies have been identified as one possible way of manipulating time and space within the policy stream (Brouwer & Biermann 2011). By choosing the places where the "policy game" is played out — venue shopping (Baumgartner & Jones 1993) — policy entrepreneurs attempt to secure the most favorable conditions for advancing a specific policy solution (Cairney 2018). Meijerink and Huitema (2010), in their study of multiple cases of water policy, highlight that policy entrepreneurs not only exploit existing arenas but also engage in manipulation and the formation of venues in order to create favorable conditions for policy adoption.

Time is another factor which policy entrepreneurs' strategies can manipulate, by either slowing down or speeding up the policy-formulation process. Brouwer and Biermann (2011) mention the strategic use of deadlines to slow down policy processes, and strategic choices of when to include stakeholders, as examples of timing strategies used by policy entrepreneurs in the case of regional water management in the Netherlands. Another strategy aimed at manipulating time is what Zahariadis calls "salami tactics" — policy entrepreneurial activities that "slice" decision-making into distinct stages to enhance the "chances of agreement" in a step-by-step process (2003, 156).

Previous research on policy entrepreneurship points to the importance of strategies for manipulating the conditions for advancing a proposal. A recurring component in several studies is the arena-shaping activities of policy entrepreneurs. This component, however, has not yet been fully integrated into the MSF framework and many contributions do not explicitly seek to do so. Some strategies, however, have been developed within the MSF, such as the notions

of "salami tactics" (Zahariadis 2003) and "policy design" (Saetren 2016a), and will be used to inform our discussion on organizational strategies.

Organizational strategies

In order to create an approach to arena-shaping strategies that can be fully incorporated into the underlying premises of MSF, we draw on the organizational component of the original garbage-can model. As Saetren argues (2016b; see also Zahariadis 2016b), the concept of *organizational structure* was lost in Kingdon's adaptation of the model. This was a key concept for adapting the model to different types of institutional contexts (see Olsen 1983). Later applications to public policy emphasize that most decision processes do not display the character of a pure garbage-can process (e.g., March & Olsen 1976; Olsen 1983). Instead, a key feature of the garbage-can model is the distinction between three types of organizational structures: *open structures* (with unsegmented access from problems, solutions and participants), *specialized structures* (where a limited number of participants have legitimate access to the decision arena), and *hierarchical structures* (where important decision makers have access to more arenas than do less important ones) (Cohen et al. 1972; March 1994).

Including organizational structure in MSF offers a way to conceptualize the often segmented and highly specialized nature of decision arenas in political systems (Saetren 2016b). As Schattschneider argues (1975), political organization reflects the exercise of power through the allocation of attention in a political system: some conflicts are exploited, while others are suppressed by being kept off the agenda. In a corporatist system, for instance, decision-making occurs in a specialized structure where only certain organized interests have legitimate access (Olsen 1983; see also Spohr 2016). This arrangement privileges the conflict between labor and capital and at the same time "organizes out" issues related to other types of conflicts.

A significant advantage of MSF over the garbage-can model is that the MSF framework offers an important actor-structure dynamic in the role of policy entrepreneurs. This facilitates the analyzing of organization not just as a structural property but also in terms of *organizational strategies* (Weick 1979). Hence, the concept of organizational strategies combines the organizational component of the garbage-can model with the actor-structure dynamic introduced by MSF.

While policy entrepreneurs are rarely in a position to alter formal institutional structures, we argue that they can play an important role in organizing and designing preparatory processes and activities. In terms of concrete manifestations of such strategies, policy entrepreneurs can engage in the organization of events, campaigns and study visits, for example; they can form meeting groups and committees and they can gain influence over the design of various bodies for preparatory planning and investigations (see also Kingdon 1984, 122).

It is important to note that organizing, as a stand-alone strategy, is not necessarily connected to policy entrepreneurship. By definition, policy entrepreneurs advance specific solutions. We therefore should expect to find organizing alongside the other strategies mentioned in the literature. It is a strategy that aims at improving the odds of a solution surviving in a context of competition and its criterion for success is the ability to "organize out" rival solutions and potent opposition. From this, it follows that organizing can also be used to influence the pace with which alternatives are generated by creating better-integrated subsets of policy communities (cf. Zahariadis 2003).

Based on this examination of the garbage-can model and its possible application to policy entrepreneurial strategies, the empirical part of this paper seeks: 1) to determine the type of

organizational structures (hierarchical/specialized/open) in which solutions are developed, and 2) to explore how and to what extent this structure is influenced by the actions of policy entrepreneurs.

Case selection and methods

Focusing on organizational strategies of policy entrepreneurship, we apply MSF to a case of mega-project planning in Sweden — namely, the initiation and preparatory planning of a new university hospital within Stockholm County Council, called Nya Karolinska Solna (NKS). Mega-projects tend to be controversial and therefore represent an interesting class of cases for studying how contested solutions gain prominence in the policy stream. Miller and Lessard (2008, 146-47) describe them as "dynamic, iterative and often chaotic systems" composed of episodes with different dynamics (see also Flyvbjerg 2014). Moreover, mega-projects generally involve a broad range of policy specialists and different sector-specific policy communities and thus solutions are likely to meet resistance from rival teams of entrepreneurs promoting their alternatives.

The NKS project was, from the start, surrounded by controversies and conflicting interests, especially among different segments of the healthcare professions. The process leading up to the formal decision, in 2008, to build a new world-class university hospital began in the late 1990s and, to date, the project has been one of the most publicly debated and widely criticized decisions in the history of Stockholm healthcare. The building was completed in 2016 and the hospital is now in operation. However, the implications of the whole policy package that accompanied the construction of the new hospital are profound and will have consequences for the organization of Stockholm healthcare for many years to come. The pre-decision process of the NKS case can therefore be described as existing within a conflictual policy setting with many powerful, and oppositional, actors.

The case-study approach is motivated by the aim of developing a more in-depth understanding of organizational strategies of policy entrepreneurship rather than testing previous propositions (Gerring 2004). Our case is theoretically relevant to this aim because policy entrepreneurs were directly involved in organizing the pre-decision phase. This was possible because of several intervening conditions. First, this case concerns sub-national level policymaking, where there are often, at least in Sweden, more opportunities to adapt the organizational arrangements for pre-decision processes situationally compared with national-level decisions. Second, the extraordinary nature of mega-projects often involves ways of organizing the preparatory processes and procedures that are not standardized (Flyvbjerg 2014).

Methods and material

This case study builds on a qualitative analysis aimed at reconstructing the processes within the policy stream, from the initiation of the project around the turn of the millennium until Stockholm County Council made the formal decision to build the hospital in April 2008.

The empirical material consists of policy documents (reports, decisions, protocols from assembly debates, statements, missions, proposals and letters found in the archives of SCC) and interviews with key actors in the early stages of the NKS project. A document analysis reconstructed the formal process and provided information about the key actors, including policy entrepreneurs, and the organizational setting for the process. Interviewees were selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Apart from a few central politicians who had passed away, or were unreachable for other reasons, we received ac-

cess to all the people we had identified as key actors. We also asked each interviewee who they considered to be the most significant actors in the agenda-setting phase of the NKS process. This double sampling strategy enabled us to verify and correct our initial list of interviewees during the course of data collection. Additionally, we were able to include people who were formally responsible for early planning in the process and also individuals who were part of the "hidden clusters of specialists" (Kingdon 1984, 68) and who therefore affected the NKS decision-making process in informal ways.

Ultimately, 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted with high-level Stockholm County Council civil servants and politicians, representatives of the Karolinska Institute (KI) medical university and representatives of the medical profession at the old Karolinska University Hospital. Most of the interviewees had retired from these positions by the time of the interview. Each interview lasted between one and two hours and was guided by themes rather than predetermined questionnaires, since the questions needed to be tailored to fit the competence and experience of each interviewee. We asked about the rationales and ideas behind the initiation of the project, which organizational stages the project went through in its transformation from visionary ideas to concrete decision and what challenges and difficulties the involved actors, in their respective roles and positions, faced during this process. We corroborated the information we received from interviews against other interview accounts, as well as against available documents. We also paid attention to whether interviewees described first-hand experiences or not and whether they might have reasons to present a biased picture of their own or other actors' roles in the process (Morris 2009). The analysis of the transcribed interviews and the policy documents made full use of the MSF. The coding scheme was set up around the three streams and also included a chronological categorization that allowed for analysis of developments within each stream over time. However, this paper focuses particularly on the role of the policy entrepreneurs in organizing the policy stream.

Policy entrepreneurs were coded as an actor category in the policy stream and these actors were connected to the policy solutions and entrepreneurial strategies during the coding process. Through this we could understand which entrepreneurs promoted which particular ideas and how they linked complementary ideas to each other, as well as how they framed problems to fit the ideas. Drawing on discussions by Saetren (2016b) and Zahariadis (2016a; 2016b) on the roles of institutional and organizational structure in MSF, *organizing* was added as a separate coding category in the analysis of policy entrepreneurial strategies. This means that, from the outset, organizing was not connected to the actor category of policy entrepreneurs. This connection instead emerged during the course of analyzing the empirical material. This category was further refined in order to differentiate between different types of organizational strategy, using a fairly simple inclusion/exclusion dichotomy. It was also coded for participants' access to different venues and arenas, as well as for what problems and solutions were included in the set-up of an investigation or were put up for discussion in committees. We also considered the timing of inclusion/exclusion, as well as how and when policy suggestions were presented to policymakers. Together, this coding strategy resulted in the three different organizational strategies we present here in the case-study analysis.

The NKS pre-decision process: Case description

Sweden is divided into regions, with Stockholm County Council (SCC) being the largest region in terms of population and tax resources. As with all county councils, SCC is composed of an elected council assembly (*Landstingsfullmäktige*), a formal executive committee (*Landstingssty-*

relsen) headed by the executive member for finance and an administrative organization headed by the administrative director. In Sweden, county councils (and municipalities) have relatively broad autonomy from the national government to make their own budgets and to decide on local tax levels. The municipalities are responsible for a wide range of welfare services, while the county councils' primary responsibility is healthcare. The national and local political systems are similarly organized in terms of proportional representation and collective decision-making and the same political parties dominate at both national and local levels.

Before turning to the analysis of policy entrepreneurs' strategies, we provide a brief overview of the pre-decision process in the NKS case, which involved a large number of preparatory activities and produced a number of reports. The key phases and events leading up to the decision in 2008 can be summarized as follows:

- Report on renovation costs — a problem window for policy change (May 2000)
- Initiation of preparatory investigations (November 2001)
- Initial inquiry — developing the concept of NKS (2001-2002)
- Second inquiry — restructuring the healthcare system (2003-2004)
- Competition among architectural firms on conceptual design (2005-2006)
- Formal decision to build a new hospital (April 2008)

At the beginning of the new millennium the old Karolinska University Hospital, located in the northern part of Stockholm, was in need of substantial renovation. The main hospital building had been completed in 1940 and the other hospital buildings were all more than 50 years old. SCC's property-management company conducted an investigation into the renovation needs and in May 2000 it presented calculations on the aggregated renovation costs (Locum 2002, 4). These calculations immediately caught the policymakers' interest as they presented the renovation costs as comparable with the costs of building a new hospital (IP6, IP8, IP5). While the renovation needs had been known for a long time, they had not been presented in this way and this suddenly opened up a policy window in the problem stream.

This coupling of problem and politics meant that the possibility of a major hospital reform rose on the agenda; however, there was not yet a worked-out proposal to attach to the problem, other than the renovation plans which senior management at the old Karolinska Hospital continued to develop (Karolinska Hospital 2002). This renovation proposition, however, was not in line with the type of reform that policymakers had in mind. Instead, some influential actors from the medical university of Karolinska Institute (KI) put forth a conceptual idea of building a smaller, research-intensive university hospital that could offer highly specialized and internationally competitive care in a global healthcare market. This idea was picked up by the executive member for finance, conservative politician Ralph Lédel, who in November 2001 sent a letter to the SCC executive committee, suggesting that it investigate the possibility of building a new university hospital close to the KI (SCC, 2001). At this time, a team of dedicated policy entrepreneurs was assigned to the process and refined the original idea into an ambitious reform package.

This team of entrepreneurs was tasked with conducting an initial inquiry to investigate the possibility of developing the conceptual idea in more detail. A year later, in November 2002, the final report from the investigatory committee confirmed that the best option would be to build a new university hospital, following the same conceptual vision as that suggested by the executive member of finance (SCC 2002).

Around the time that this report was completed, the conservative alliance lost the SCC elections and a social democratic-led political majority took control. However, this change in the political stream was not decisive for the future of the NKS project. On this issue, the political conditions have been characterized by stability. In fact, there was a stable consensus among all the political parties regarding the concept of building a new, smaller, research-intensive hospital during the whole period between 2001 and 2008. It was only after the decision was made to build the new hospital that conflict erupted between the political parties; however, this conflict centered around the choice of financing model and not the project per se.

The second inquiry, initiated in 2002, focused on the consequences of building a smaller and more specialized hospital for the healthcare system in Stockholm. At this stage the hospital became part of a larger reform package, which was needed to demonstrate that a downsized hospital was technically feasible and that its consequences were acceptable in terms of providing adequate access to healthcare for the citizens of Stockholm.

The technical aspects of the proposal were also developed through a *design contest* from 2005 to 2006, in which selected architectural firms were invited to develop suggestions for the hospital's conceptual design. Politicians had not previously taken a hands-on role in the process, but at this point they became more actively involved. Leading politicians were part of the contest jury and the winning proposal was decided by a unanimous vote (SCC 2006).

The process became more formally organized in late 2006 with the installation of a special NKS program office. At this point, the focus was solely on developing and refining the NKS proposal to the point where it was ready to be presented to the SCC assembly for decision. It was subsequently adopted in April 2008, with near full agreement between all the political parties (SCC 2008).

Policy entrepreneurs' organizational strategies

In order to answer our research question about the role that policy entrepreneurs play in "organizing out" opposition from pre-decision processes, we divide our analysis into three parts. First, we show how policy entrepreneurs use well-known strategies, such as framing, team-building and combining ideas into the reform package that became NKS. Second, we analyze the organizational structure of the pre-decision process and conclude that it constitutes a specialized structure, which has implications in terms of the inclusion and exclusion of actors, problems and solutions. Third, we demonstrate that policy entrepreneurs were able to shape this specialized structure and identify three different strategies that they used in the NKS case.

Combining ideas and framing the solution

Policy entrepreneurs played a very pronounced role in creating and promoting the NKS project so that it became the "winning" solution. A handful of specialists representing different but closely related policy ideas formed a well-integrated team (cf. Mintrom & Norman 2009) that combined these ideas into a single solution — a new, downsized, research-intensive university hospital specializing in advanced medical treatment. The ideas in themselves were not unique — they reflected broad trends in the international field of healthcare management — and had long been discussed among healthcare specialists, academics, bureaucrats and politicians in and around the SCC. The ideas that together formed the basis for the solution are summarized as follows: [1]

1 — In addition to these four reform ideas, the NKS also became an opportunity to test a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model for the financing of the new hospital (which has later been subject to heated debate and widespread criticism over cost escalations). The decision-making on this financing model was a parallel process in the planning of the NKS, which will not be covered in the present paper.

1) Promoting Centers of Excellence. This idea reflected the trend in research policy around the turn of the millennium towards emphasizing competition and performance-based funding and promoting strong research environments (e.g. Hallonsten & Silander 2012). The policy entrepreneurs saw an opportunity to use the Nobel Prize — which is intimately associated with the KI — as a powerful symbol for advancing the idea of a research-intensive hospital near the medical university.

2) Innovation and economic growth. With inspiration from "triple helix" thinking about collaboration between academia, industry and government (e.g. Ranga & Etzkowitz 2013), Stockholm had, by the beginning of the millennium, started to brand itself as a hub for life-sciences research and industry. A new and modern top-tier university hospital would further the goal of creating an internationally competitive life-sciences cluster in the northern part of the city, forming a new city district with residential and commercial development.

3) Healthcare restructuring. As a consequence of increased specialization, increasingly advanced treatments and technological progress, the cost of highly specialized healthcare increases. Responding to this development, the NKS was used as a means of realizing the idea of an increasingly stratified healthcare system, organized as a pyramid whereby the most expensive and resource-demanding treatments would be delivered from the most specialized hospitals and less specialized treatment could be delivered in less costly facilities such as community hospitals or health centers.

4) Network organization. The new university hospital was meant to pave the way for the gradual introduction of a patient-centered model of hospital organization, altering the traditional clinic structure into a theme-based network structure. The idea of the university hospital as a hub in a larger healthcare network, with strong integration between research and healthcare, drew inspiration from top-ranked role-model hospitals such as the Cleveland Clinic and the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, United States.

When the possibility of a grand hospital project debuted around the turn of the millennium, the most important policy entrepreneur was the president of KI. Although he did not have a formal position to influence the SCC agenda, he was widely seen as the prime visionary behind the NKS project, especially the reform ideas of research excellence and innovation and economic growth (IP1; IP12; IP13; IP14; IP3). His vision was to create a dynamic and competitive life-sciences cluster in the area surrounding the KI medical university. At the time, he and some colleagues had a worked-out proposition for this life-sciences initiative, which they pitched in different political forums. They were well connected to high-ranking officials and politicians and were successful in framing their solution in relation to the problem of Swedish medical research lagging in international research rankings (IP4; IP13). At this early stage, the NKS was only a conceptual idea of building a top-class hospital with a strong focus on research near the KI campus — one that would be smaller, in terms of hospital beds, compared with the existing university hospital. It was this idea that the executive member of finance presented in his letter to the SCC executive committee, but although this concept was sufficient to create some momentum, it was far from being a worked-out proposition.

The politicians did not take a hands-on role at this point and instead applied a strategy of appointing and engaging the right people to develop this conceptual idea into a proposal (IP13). In addition to the KI president, who took on a consulting role, a couple of director-level SCC civil servants, who were strong proponents of healthcare restructuring, were appointed to this

investigation (IP3; IP8). Another important policy entrepreneur appointed to the group was a medical advisor who was an advocate of network organization. In practice, although not formally, the group was led by this medical advisor, who was described by others in our interviews as one of the most persuasive actors in this process (IP8, IP11). Also connected to the group was a professor from KI who, together with the KI president, promoted the idea of research excellence. He was also widely viewed as a policy entrepreneur for network organization (IP1; IP4; IP6; IP9).

The KI president, the medical adviser, the KI professor and the SCC directors can all be seen as policy entrepreneurs in the way that they were active advocates and developers of the main ideas behind NKS. They promoted these ideas long before the NKS project took shape, but they also became involved in one way or another in the process. They were not mandated to make any decisive formal decisions, but they did have considerable leeway in influencing the organizational structure of preparatory planning. While they were each connected to different reform ideas, they worked as a team to develop the whole reform package and were collectively involved in organizing activities. The KI president, however, was mainly active in framing the vision and his role diminished in later parts of the process following his retirement as head of KI in 2003.

The organizational structure of the pre-decision process

Although the NKS was founded on ideas that were connected to broad policy trends, the ideas were still highly controversial in the context of Stockholm healthcare. Most notably, the questions about healthcare restructuring and network organization were highly contested within the healthcare community (IP11). Furthermore, the idea of a highly specialized research hospital stood in contrast to the views of specialists who emphasized the importance of catering for the needs of the broader Stockholm population: for instance, by expanding the provision of acute care in the region (IP7).

The idea of innovation and growth was not controversial in itself but could have led to a conflict between different municipalities in the Stockholm area — each of which had its own group of specialists — over where the hospital should be located. There were other potential candidates for locating a "crown" hospital, such as the university hospital in Huddinge, south of Stockholm. Some municipalities in the Stockholm area approached the SCC asking for their own municipality to be a potential site for the new hospital (IP1; IP5; IP6; IP7).

In practice, however, these potential conflicts were never allowed fully to develop during the pre-decision process. In order to understand why, we must look at the organizational structure within which the first initiatives and preparatory activities took place. We would expect that the organizational structure of a process might change over time and, in particular, that it might assume a more formal and hierarchical structure the closer it comes to the formal decision (Zohlnhöfer et al. 2015). Our main focus here, however, is the developments in the policy community at the time that the proposal emerged on to the agenda and was still in the process of becoming a viable solution.

In a *hierarchical structure*, only high-ranked actors can participate in the process. Problems are hierarchically ordered so that only important problems have access to the significant arenas (Cohen et al. 1972). As Olsen argues (1983, 32), a hierarchical structure in policymaking is characterized by a concentration of power within a legislature. Transferred to our case, we would expect politicians taking a hands-on role and a process that was retained close to the political center. For policy entrepreneurs to be able to create or influence such a structure, they

would most likely have to be high-ranking politicians or senior members of the core executive. The case of the NKS did not display such characteristics of a politically run process. Instead, its early stages were characterized by considerable discretion and the use of ad-hoc organizational arrangements that operated at arm's length from the political level and were largely separate from the permanent offices of the SCC administration as well. It was not until the design contest that the politicians became more actively involved.

An *open structure*, on the other hand, is characterized by unsegmented access for participants, solutions and problems (Cohen et al. 1972). If the early stages of the process had been characterized as open, we would expect that latent conflicts around geographical location and ongoing debates between specialists on healthcare restructuring would have been played out within the arenas of preparatory planning. One likely scenario would have been that different solutions would have been articulated, rivalling the one originally presented by the KI president and subsequently developed by the team of entrepreneurs. This, however, only happened to a limited degree. While there were parts of the process that were relatively open to different participants, especially the second inquiry of 2003-2004, this relative openness was coupled with a very restrictive access structure regarding which problems were legitimate subjects of debate. The second inquiry focused solely on problems that might emerge from building a hospital smaller than the existing one and the consequences of this alternative for the Stockholm healthcare system as a whole.

While it is difficult to speculate about solutions that never had the chance to develop fully, a better indication of how rival solutions were "organized out" comes from looking at the one that actually became a potent rival. This alternative was developed by the management of the old Karolinska University Hospital, together with the construction company at the SCC, Locum (IP5, IP6; IP9). This option consisted of a worked-out proposition for an ambitious reconstruction of the existing stock of hospital buildings (Karolinska Hospital 2002; Locum 2002). The old Karolinska University Hospital's proposal was well developed and integrated with dominant reform trends, such as flexibility and network organizing, and therefore had the potential to mobilize parts of the healthcare community and possibly gain prominence in the policy stream. The management of the old Karolinska University Hospital, however, was deliberately kept outside the preparatory planning for the NKS. The policy entrepreneurs, and others within the SCC, perceived the medical professions inside the old Karolinska University Hospital to be both difficult to control and reluctant to embrace change (IP3; IP5; IP8; IP13; IP14). Even in the more open parts of the process, where staff from the Karolinska University Hospital were invited to participate, such participation was on the basis of their specialties and not on the basis of their being representatives of the hospital or specific clinics (IP1).

The way that access was constrained within the second inquiry fits the characteristics of a *specialized structure*, where a specific arena is devoted to only one or a few problems and where participation is organized into a segmented structure (Cohen et al. 1972): for instance, in the form of subprojects where participants work on different subsets of a topic. Just as in an organization, segmenting preparatory activities around specific purposes and restricting access for participants facilitates action and reduces the risks of conflict or of arenas becoming overloaded with problems and solutions (Olsen 1983, 183; Salet et al. 2013).

Hence, we conclude that the pre-decision process for the NKS best approximates a specialized structure, although the degree of segmentation varied across the different stages of the process. In this case, the structure was not a given at the outset and was instead largely shaped to support the development of the policy entrepreneurs' package of ideas. The organizational

strategies that the policy entrepreneurs applied to achieve a specialized structure will be described in detail in the next section.

Regulating participation, neutralizing opposition

Both in the first, exclusive inquiry and in the more inclusive second inquiry, the team of policy entrepreneurs played a key role in shaping the organizations that were established to conduct the preparatory planning activities. In these parts of the process, one key organizational strategy was the strategic manipulation of access for different participants. In the first inquiry, the entrepreneurs wrote the report and input from other specialists — including actors with diverging views — was primarily collected through interviews (IP1; SCC 2002). A more open process — for example, broad participatory seminars and collaborative dialogues inviting participation across healthcare communities — would probably have benefited the main rival solution developed by the management of the old Karolinska University Hospital, since it was better developed in terms of its financial calculations and detailed technical plans for renovation of the existing facilities. This alternative proposal would also likely have been more firmly anchored within the healthcare professions at the old Karolinska University Hospital, since it was less radical in its ambitions to change staff working conditions. At the very least, a more open access structure would have given opponents of the radical NKS agenda the opportunity to slow down the pace at which the alternative was refined (Zahariadis 2003, 46-47). Policy entrepreneurs regulated participation as a means of isolating their main opponents, thereby reducing their ability to mobilize other stakeholders (cf. Schattschneider 1975). While this strategy was not without problems, in terms of gaining widespread support and legitimacy for the project in the longer run, it effectively neutralized the rival solutions — among which the old Karolinska proposal was the most potent — at an early stage. The group swiftly managed to put together a short report which confirmed the need for a small, highly specialized hospital and showed that it could be technically feasible to locate it close to the KI campus (SCC 2002).

This strategy of influencing access to the important arenas for these early preparatory initiatives meant that only selected parts of the policy community were included, while other parts of the policy stream were effectively dammed off. The process of consensus building was then facilitated within these selected segments of specialists. A key enabling factor for the policy entrepreneurs to be able to exert this type of influence was their repeated use of ad-hoc organizational arrangements.

Specialization of attention: Limiting the searchlight

In addition to the strategic inclusion and exclusion of different actors, organizing also sought a specialization of attention (Cyert & March 1963; March & Olsen 1976). The organizing of events, working groups, workshops and other planning activities served as a means of reducing the number of problems and solutions to which policymakers gave their attention at different stages of the process. One important example of this strategy was the organization of a large number of study visits to leading role-model hospitals and research centers around the world, mainly between 2000 and 2004 (SCC 2004). The policy entrepreneurs were the main organizers of these visits. The KI professor and the medical advisor took on the role of "tour guides" for groups of leading politicians and senior civil servants, using their wide international networks in the medical community to open doors (IP1; IP12). By influencing not only which hospitals to visit but also the focus of the visits (for example, patient-centered care or collaboration between hospitals and medical research centers), these visits directed attention and limited the search for other types of solutions. Thus, this became an effective organizational strategy

that reduced the number of policy options generated at this early stage (Salet et al. 2013) and avoided "information overload" (De Bruijn & Leijten 2007).

The policy entrepreneurs also used their role as organizers of workshops, and other meetings where stakeholders and experts were invited, to shape the agenda and purpose of these events. The events were an opportunity to test and refine the NKS proposal, but policy entrepreneurs' power over the agenda also meant that some problems could be organized out of the discussion. One example was the strict focus, in the second inquiry, on the question of the consequences of building a smaller hospital, as described above. Another example was the notable lack of attention to problems of recruiting healthcare personnel, especially nurses, which was a known challenge at the time and which has since become an acute and important problem in Sweden (IP7; IP11).

Sequential attention: reducing complexity and building commitment

The third organizational strategy identified in the NKS case was sequential attention, which is already a well-known strategy of policy entrepreneurs, known as "salami tactics" in the MSF literature (Zahariadis 2003; see also Hinterleitner 2018). We have opted here to use the term *sequential attention* from the Carnegie school of organizational theory (e.g. Cyert & March 1963; March & Olsen 1976; March 1994; see also Zahariadis 2016b), which formed the basis for the garbage-can model, simply for the purpose of conceptual coherence, given our focus on organizational structure.

Sequential attention is an important mechanism for reducing complexity by attending to one sub-goal or sub-problem at a time (Cyert & March 1963). In the NKS process, the policy entrepreneurs applied this strategy by influencing the sequencing of the different stages in the pre-decision process. This, in turn, facilitated the translation of the conceptual idea into a fully developed proposal by enhancing its technical feasibility and value acceptability — two key criteria for a solution's survival in the policy stream, according to Kingdon (1984). Rather than focusing on both criteria at the same time, preparatory activities alternated between the two. One important purpose of the first investigation was to confirm that it was technically feasible to erect a building of the size envisioned on a parcel of land on the periphery of the existing Karolinska property, near the KI (SCC 2002). No detailed technical planning was required at this stage; it sufficed merely to conclude that building was possible in order to settle the matter of where in Stockholm the hospital was to be built.

The next stage of the process, resulting in the second investigation, focused on the issue of how to organize the Stockholm healthcare structure and largely concerned the proposal's value acceptability. For the NKS project to be accepted, politicians had to be able to assure the public that access to emergency care would not suffer in replacing the old Karolinska University Hospital with a smaller, highly specialized university hospital. Hence, during this second stage, the NKS project was developed into a larger package of solutions that also involved expanding emergency care at other hospitals and investing in healthcare centers (SCC 2004).

The third stage again turned the focus on to the technical matters of the construction project by the announcement of a design contest between different architecture firms to propose an architectural concept for the hospital. When a winner was announced in this contest, a formalized NKS program office was established with the objective of preparing the NKS project for formal decision-making in the political assembly. With that office in place, attention turned to the internal organization of highly specialized care within the new hospital (SCC 2006).

Sequential attention was also a way of *creating commitment* through stepwise adoption (Zahariadis 2003). A key concern for the policy entrepreneurs was to balance the level of detail in the refinement of the proposal. It had to be sufficiently detailed to be placed on the decision agenda, but at the same time they wanted to keep it as general as possible in order to avoid getting into a detailed planning process (IP11; IP18). The latter scenario would have required the involvement of a much larger group of specialists and hence a much more open process. Furthermore, one of the most controversial issues in the project was the question of which medical specialties were to be included within the new hospital. This question was, however, deliberately set aside for the future. The directives for the NKS program office stated that the new hospital would be constructed in as flexible a manner as possible, so that the decision on exactly which treatments would be offered there could be postponed (SCC 2006, 6). The postponing of this decision was justified by arguing that technical progress in healthcare treatments was so rapid that it was impossible to know in advance what treatments would be considered as being highly specialized when the hospital was completed. This strategy also avoided miring the process in controversies over this matter (IP1). Postponing the decision on the detailed planning of the care programs to be offered at the NKS meant that the solution was accepted bit by bit. This strategy fits well with Zahariadis's (2003) discussion of salami tactics as a way of facilitating the adoption of controversial decisions by timing the more controversial aspects so that they occur after decision-makers have already put so much effort, time and prestige into the project that it becomes uncomfortable for them to withdraw.

Concluding discussion

This paper has developed the concept of organizational strategies to account for policy entrepreneurs' attempts to shape the organizational structure of pre-decision processes in order to "maneuver out" opposition and rival solutions. Together, the three strategies identified in the NKS case restricted participation from the main rival team of entrepreneurs, focused attention within the process so as to favor their own solution and split the process into stages in order to reduce complexity and create commitment. This is an example of how consensus can be actively created, even in the face of conflict and entrenched positions in the wider policy community.

These findings connect to previous research on policy entrepreneurs, which has pointed to the importance of various types of "arena" strategies, including those that aim to shape the venues in which entrepreneurs promote their solutions (Brouwer & Biermann 2011; Meijerink & Huitema 2010). In relation to the broader literature on policy entrepreneurs, the concept of organizational strategies can be used to add an organizational dimension to policy entrepreneurship. The main contribution of our approach, however, is to the literature that uses the concept of policy entrepreneurs within the multiple streams framework. Drawing on previous research, which has suggested reconnecting to the original garbage-can model as a way of creating an organizational component in the framework (Saetren 2016b, Zahariadis 2016a), the concept of organizational strategies offers a way to integrate policy entrepreneurs' arena-shaping with the underlying foundations of MSF.

It is likely that the conditions under which policy entrepreneurs' organizational strategies may play an important role will vary considerably between different contexts. The possibility of using ad-hoc and temporary organizational arrangements was a key factor in our case and it must be emphasized that the NKS process was particularly distinguished by such arrangements — something that clearly increases the relevance of this type of strategy in our results. At the same time, when seen as something exceptional — as in the case of a large policy re-

form — they can become projects which are cut off from regular organizational structures and have their own leaders, staffs and budgets. This is often done with the argument of enhancing efficiency and leverage. Hence, instances of "extraordinary policymaking" (Keeler 1993) may also be opportunities for extraordinary organizational arrangements. In processes more firmly shaped by robust institutional arrangements, such as the passing of laws, the opportunities to manipulate the structure may be more limited. This, however, is also likely to depend on the position of policy entrepreneurs who, in some cases, have been shown to be capable of circumventing the regular institutional process (Saetren 2016a).

The case-study design was useful for identifying specific organizational strategies and for developing a deeper understanding of how they are connected to organizational structure. However, further research is needed in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the conditions within which organizational strategies may play an important role in advancing contested solutions. As suggested, institutional factors are likely to be important and there may also be important variations between different levels of policymaking (e.g., between national and sub-national levels), as well as between policy areas and factors related to the characteristics of policy communities.

Lastly, we must emphasize that the notion of policy entrepreneurs' organizational strategies has considerable democratic implications. While the team of entrepreneurs identified in our study acted on a public mandate and within broad frames set by the SCC politicians, the organizational strategies they applied reduced opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the early stages of the process. Such strategies can have consequences for the legitimacy of policy processes and for the prospects of broad deliberation. More generally, this form of exercising influence raises normative concerns about the power that policy entrepreneurs may have in preparatory processes — power which may not always be deployed in the public interest. For policymakers, this calls for efforts to ensure that urgency and prospects of realizing grand visions do not obscure commitment to transparency, accountability and democratic control.

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Interviews

id-number	Interviewee's position during the early stages of the NKS process	Interview date
IP 1	Medical advisor	2017-10-18
IP 2	SCC politician, Liberal Party	2017-12-13
IP 3	Deputy administrative director, SCC	2017-10-13
IP 4	President of Karolinska Institutet (KI)	2017-10-31
IP 5	CEO, Locum (SCC property company)	2017-10-09
IP 6	Manager, Locum (SCC property company)	2017-11-16
IP 7	Chair of the medical union, Huddinge Hospital	2017-10-11
IP 8	Deputy health director, SCC	2017-11-02
IP 9	Deputy hospital director, Karolinska Hospital	2017-11-09
IP 10	Director of finance, SCC	2017-10-30
IP 11	Manager, Karolinska Hospital	2017-10-05
IP 12	Professor, Karolinska Institutet (KI)	2017-12-12
IP 13	SCC politician, Christian Democratic Party	2017-11-13
IP 14	Administrative Director, SCC	2017-10-30
IP 15	SCC politician, Social Democratic Party	2018-01-16
IP 16	SCC politician, Moderate Party	2018-01-17
IP 17	SCC politician, Social Democratic Party	2018-02-19
IP 18	Manager, SCC	2018-02-27

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A social network perspective on the interaction between policy bubbles

Moshe Maor
Department of Political Science, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Abstract
Studies of policy bubbles have so far ignored the possibility that a policy bubble in a given policy domain or jurisdiction may constitute an information event for another policy bubble that has been inflated elsewhere. In addition, studies of policy diffusion have paid little attention to the transmission of imperfect and wrongful policy valuations through social networks. To bridge these gaps, this article develops a theoretical framework and methodological toolbox for explaining the potential impact of interbubble dynamics on the sustainment of policy bubbles. This is achieved by focusing on: (i) the diffusion of interbubble connectivity information through social networks characterized by varying levels of segregation; (ii) the perceptions of distorted or corrected information by individuals at the receiving end as being factual, thus requiring no gap-filling by policy actors, or as an opinion that therefore requires gap-filling; (iii) the derived consequence in terms of simple or complex contagion; and (iv) its impact on the sustainment of policy bubbles. The main contribution of the article lies in unpacking the potential causal mechanisms through which a policy bubble can be sustained, even if positive feedback processes and contagion in the jurisdiction within which it developed no longer bolster its support bases.

Keywords
interbubble dynamics, connectivity information, social networks, network segregation

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In recent years there has been growing interest in the efficiency of policymakers in matching the intensity of policy tools to the intensity of problems in the long term. In this regard, one of the most intriguing complex public-policy phenomena is that of policy bubbles. Jones et al. (2014), as well as Maor (2014), defined and conceptualized this phenomenon as a policy overinvestment or overreaction that is sustained by positive feedback processes and contagion over a relatively long time period. Furthermore, preliminary findings, based on "likely examples" of policy bubbles, have revealed that US crime policy, as well as contracting and privatization, constituted bubbles (Jones et al. 2014). Moving beyond this basic finding has proved difficult and, in fact, no empirical study to date has systematically identified and examined policy bubbles, or developed a reliable and useful methodology for measuring these phenomena. These lacunae notwithstanding, this conceptual article unpacks the potential causal mechanisms through which a policy bubble can be sustained — even if self-reinforcing processes and contagion in the jurisdiction wherein it developed no longer bolster its support base — in order to guide scholars who seek to address the aforementioned empirical gaps.

Studies of policy bubbles have so far analyzed standalone bubbles by focusing mainly on the policy domain as the unit of analysis. Little attention has been devoted to the connective tissue that may exist between policy bubbles, namely the shared information set that potentially links one policy bubble to another. Drawing on this idea, the present article develops a theoretical framework and methodological toolbox for the study of interbubble dynamics. The analytical framework focuses on: the diffusion of interbubble connectivity information through social networks characterized by varying levels of segregation; the perceptions of distorted or corrected information by individuals at the receiving end as being factual, thus requiring no gap-filling by policy actors, or as an opinion that therefore require gap-filling; the derived consequence in terms of simple or complex contagion; and its impact on policy bubble sustainment.

The article is structured as follows. The next section introduces a motivational example; the second reviews existing scholarly literature on policy bubbles; and the third describes the analytical premises, components and considerations underlying the study of interbubble dynamics. The sections thereafter outline the theoretical framework and the derived hypotheses. The methodological section subsequently proposes three research strategies. The last section suggests avenues for future research.

Motivational Example

A salient example of a shared information set linking one policy bubble to another is the culture of fear — exacerbated by media coverage adopting the immigration threat narrative — that was highly evident during the 1990s and 2000s as the US experienced a period of heightened activity in three policy domains. First, were the domains of *crime and punishment* — leading to a policy bubble (Jones et al. 2014). Second, was the domain of *immigration* — leading to record deportations during the Obama administration and an unprecedented rise in anti-immigrant legislation at state level in the period between 2005 and 2012 (e.g., Ybarra et al. 2016). And third, there was the policy domain of *education* within those states with large and swiftly growing Latino populations (i.e., those with the greatest need for public spending) — leading to a negative policy bubble that manifested in a long-term propensity to disinvest in this policy area (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015).

The culture of fear of immigrants provided a foundation upon which threat narratives — stories, songs, jokes, theories and explanations that have "emotional resonance and that can eas-

ily be conveyed in casual conversation" (Shiller 2019, xi) — were formulated by policy actors and transmitted from one domain to another. These false narratives solidified (Andreas 2000; Abrajano and Hajnal 2015; Chavez 2008; Martinez-Brawley and Zorita 2018; Massey and Pren 2012), enhancing the misalignment between public perceptions about the policy problem, on the one hand, and data regarding the severity of the problem, on the other. The culture of fear may have also lowered the *forgetting rate* (Shiller 2019) of these narratives.

The analytical value of modeling this process becomes more pronounced when considering the transmission of housing bubbles through the credit market to other economic sectors. Based on data from the massive boom-bust cycle in Spanish housing prices between 1995 and 2015, Martín, Moral-Benito and Schmitz (2019) found that "housing bubbles initially crowd out credit from other sectors, but eventually — if they last long enough — crowd it in [by providing collateral or attractive assets for securitization]." *The culture of fear in the aforementioned example may have operated as a symbolic and ideational credit market*. It easily enabled policy actors to build up false policy narratives that resonated emotionally and these, in turn, crowded out correct policy valuations because they were more contagious. Furthermore, these narratives may have continued to affect policy investment long after they were corrected because they were more contagious. The culture of fear, therefore, may have linked different policy domains, refocusing individuals' attention and policy investment decisions on policy problems whose value could easily be distorted by triggering threat narratives. Traditional policy bubble theories do not offer a model for this process.

Policy Bubbles: Relevant Literature

A critical aspect of policy development over time is policymakers' inability to respond proportionally to information that indicates a change in a problem's severity. As leverage, the concept of *policy bubbles* has entered the policy lexicon (Jones et al. 2014; Maor 2014) and has been defined in terms of sustained policy overinvestment, which occurs when a government invests in a single policy instrument beyond its instrumental value in achieving a policy goal (adapted from Jones et al. 2014, 149), or sustained *policy overreaction*, which is a policy that "impose[s] objective and/or perceived social costs without producing offsetting objective and/or perceived benefits" (Maor 2012, 235).

To facilitate the distinction between the phenomenon and its explanation, Maor (2019, 14) recently defined the term as "a socio-psychological phenomenon which occurs when policy overinvestment or overproduction due to distorted policy valuation is sustained by positive feedback processes and contagion over an extended period of time." Distortion of policy valuation occurs when political and/or policy interests shape the presentation of policy-relevant scientific facts, which are based on objective measures, to fit distinct models of "reality" (Jasanoff 1987, 195; Nisbet and Mooney 2007; Oreskes and Conway 2010; Pielke 2007), thereby undermining an accurate assessment of the risks and benefits associated with the policy instrument at hand. Recently, the notion of policy bubbles was conceptually extended by focusing on the role of emotions in processes of sustained policy underreaction, termed negative policy bubbles (Maor 2016).

Studies of policy bubbles have so far analyzed standalone bubbles by focusing mainly on the policy domain as the unit of analysis (Jones et al. 2014; Maor 2014; Baumgartner 2015; Behn et al. 2015; Gillard and Lock 2017). Little attention has been devoted, however, to the potential connective tissue between policy bubbles, namely the shared (factual and/or symbolic/ideational) information set that potentially links one policy bubble to another. This may have

occurred because the concept of a policy bubble is itself relatively new, or because this phenomenon appears to be an instance of path dependencies and policy legacies interfering with policymakers' efficiency in reflecting genuine supply and demand for policies. Jones et al. (2014) went even further, omitting the symbolic and ideational components in the definition of a policy's instrumental value, although recognizing that "[p]olicies may come to be valued (or devalued) for reasons that may have little to do with the ability of the policy to affect goals, because much of politics is conducted at the symbolic or ideological level" (Jones et al. 2014, 149). This omission, in turn, has directed the radar away from the potential influences that one bubble may have on another. Once one recognizes that policy bubbles may share an information set, a new causal mechanism for the sustainment of policy bubbles emerges.

Yet, before conceptually uncovering this potential causal mechanism, an important question is in order: Given the expansive literature on policy diffusion — defined as the "process through which political [or policy] phenomena spread from one jurisdiction to another" (Karch et al. 2016, 83), why do we need a theoretical framework dealing particularly with diffusion in relation to policy bubbles? This is necessary because diffusion explanations in policy sciences focus on: (i) governments' adoption of new policies (Berry and Berry 2018, 254) rather than the sustainment of new or old policy bubbles; (ii) intergovernmental dynamics rather than socio-psychological processes at the societal and elite levels; (iii) accurate policy information or perceptions thereof (Shipan and Volden 2008; Gilardi 2010; Seljan and Weller 2011), rather than distorted policy valuations that shape policy perceptions; and (iv) the spread of information rather than the spread of behaviors (Centola 2018), which may be highly important when an ends-means relationship between the intensity of the policy problem and the intensity of the policy instrument is replaced by a self-sustaining process. Current diffusion studies tell us little about: the kinds of social networks that are best suited to spreading imperfect or wrong information regarding a policy; the specific features of the network structure that affect the diffusion of distorted information, which cannot easily be corrected; and the diffusion of behavior, which does not follow the disease theory of diffusion (Centola 2018).

Interbubble Dynamics: Analytical Premises, Components and Considerations

Underlying this conceptual article is the premise that, by abstracting from a policy system in order to explain a standalone policy bubble, we risk severely misunderstanding the full spectrum of factors that may determine the sustainment of policy bubbles. To counteract this tendency, we require a deep understanding of: (i) how policy-relevant information and behaviors spread; (ii) which aspects of a policy's distorted valuation enhance or impede diffusion; and (iii) which aspects of the network's topology enhance or impede diffusion.

The analytical framework advanced here draws on one of the major findings emerging from empirical and theoretical analyses of how social structure relates to behavior: social-network structure affects how information flows, what access individuals have to various types of information, how policy choices are made and how actions are diffused. Notable examples have been recorded in sociology (e.g., Granovetter 1985; Smelser and Swedberg 2005), economics (see the review in Goyal 2016; Jackson 2016), and politics, public policy, public administration and international relations (see the review in Victor et al. 2018). Likewise, fruitful investigations concerning the effects of social networks on policy outcomes have been published during the last two decades (for a review, see Boucher and Fortin 2016, 280–3; see also Desmarais et al. 2015).

The analytical framework integrates a variety of policy actors, including policy entrepreneurs — individual or collective actors who seek to bring about policy changes that either alter the status quo in given policy domains (e.g. Kingdon 1984) or block such changes (Ackrill and Kay 2011). Policy entrepreneurs influence information flows by gathering, centralizing, shaping and distorting information, as well as by strategically disseminating that information to policy participants (for a review, see Boasson and Huitema 2017; see also Maor 2017). In addition, a crucial function includes the delivery of information to decision-makers who need guidance in making sense of ambiguous policy problems (e.g., Kingdon 1984). Recently, Arnold et al. (2017) found that "the ability to access and deploy novel, policy-relevant information and resources is particularly important when policy entrepreneurs are seeking to disrupt a policy equilibrium [...]" (p. 433).

The analytical framework follows Baumgartner and Jones's (2015, 15) broad definition of information as referring not merely to statistical evidence but also to qualitative information regarding the policy problem, the solution and the policy process itself, as well as to beliefs that motivate professionals and mobilize the public. The analytical framework also accords pride of place to the socio-psychological dimension in information diffusion, the importance of an idea's emotional quality (Cox and Béland 2013) and the derived leverage enjoyed by emotional entrepreneurs (Maor 2017; Maor and Gross 2015). These elements have recently been highlighted in a study concerning polarizing issues in US public-policy debates over gun control, same-sex marriage and climate change. The study demonstrated that the presence of moral-emotional words in messages increased their diffusion by a factor of 20% for each additional word and that moral-emotional language increased diffusion more strongly *within* liberal and conservative networks and less strongly *between* the two networks (Brady et al. 2017). Skillful policy entrepreneurs can therefore use social networks to influence flows of distorted policy valuations and, thereby, policy perceptions at the societal and elite levels. Further, introducing emotions into interbubble dynamics highlights the possibility that the source (bubble) and the recipient (bubble) may not be purely coincidental, because policy investment in some policy areas may be more vulnerable to emotion regulation by emotional entrepreneurs.

In the analytical framework, much weight is placed on the spread of human behaviors. When policy response is not directly sensitive to changes in the rate or severity of the policy problem over an extended period of time, attention should be directed toward the behaviors of policy actors and individuals involved in this self-sustaining process (e.g., political participation; policy compliance). Studies have demonstrated that behavior simply does not spread in the way that information does. They also show that different types of networks confer different kinds of benefits and disadvantages. Perhaps most relevant to our study is the differentiation between *simple contagions* which can be spread by a single contact — such as measles or a tweet (e.g., a new policy belief, fad, or fashion), in a process that often involves minimal effort or cost — and *complex contagions* which require social reinforcement (e.g., nudges) from multiple neighboring contacts in a social network (Centola and Macy 2007; Centola 2018) in a process that may be costly. Local processes of social reinforcement, which are involved in complex contagions, may also be time-consuming, especially when some individuals require numerous recommendations and others refrain from action until every single person they know — which may amount to tens or hundreds — has acquired the information and acted upon it. Weighing adopters against non-adopters by reputation-sensitive individuals and policy actors may make individuals relatively conservative and less likely to act on the information that they acquired early on (Centola 2018).

Understanding the puzzling aspect of interbubble dynamics thus requires a more nuanced theoretical approach than the "orthodox" policy-diffusion explanations. We cannot impose the default way of thinking about the transmission of policy ideas — which uses epidemiology as a reference point because of its convenience, while disregarding the role of social reinforcement — especially when we know that *human behavior* is involved in self-sustaining processes in policy development and that human beings are wary of manipulation on social media and other outlets.

The Analytical Framework

The premises underlying this conceptual article are that: (i) policymakers' efficiency in matching the intensity of the policy instrument to the intensity of problems over the long-term can only be defined relative to an information set and a timescale, similar to market efficiency (Sohn and Sornette 2017); (ii) dynamic social networks are interconnected rather than isolated, that is, a given social network depends on the dynamic processes that occur in some other social networks; and (iii) the causes of policy problems are "matters of interpretation and social definition" (Cobb and Elder 1983, 172). Given a shared information set, a policy bubble in a certain policy domain or jurisdiction may constitute an information event for another policy bubble that has inflated elsewhere.

An information event in a policy system which shares an information set with another policy system refers to the diffusion of new information through a social context that can potentially change people's sensitivities regarding policy-related aspects at the receiving end. One example is information contagion which spreads fears from one network to another. Another is contagion through interlinked or related public goods and strategies, for instance when some governments are forced either to reduce/stop or begin/accelerate the production of certain public goods, leading to cascades of losses/gains which spread, through exposure, to common factors. Consequently, a policy bubble in a given domain could potentially cause a gradual or, alternatively, a large and sudden inflation or deflation of a policy bubble in the same domain elsewhere (i.e., in another jurisdiction), or in another policy domain in the same jurisdiction or elsewhere. This may be the case particularly when information contains contagious narratives that are largely creative and innovative, or that resonate emotionally, and are therefore easily transmitted from one policy bubble to another.

The framework advanced here incorporates independent variables on two different levels: (1) bubble-bubble (or interbubble) connectivity information as perceived by network members; and (2) the social-network structure. For the former, *interbubble connectivity information* refers to policy-relevant information transmitted from one bubble to another. This information may reflect either a correct policy valuation or a distorted one and each of these policy valuations may be perceived as either a fact or as an opinion. This focus on perceptions of information is analytically necessary because differentiating between facts, which help us to determine whether something is true or false, and opinion — which reflects the beliefs and values of whoever expresses it — has proved a challenge for large segments of society. A recent survey found that Republicans and Democrats in the US are more likely to think that news statements are factual when they appeal to their side — even if they are opinions (Pew Research Center 2018).

The theoretical framework advanced here focuses on *distorted* interbubble connectivity information because the direction of change in interbubble dynamics is not obvious, as is likely in the case of correct information which is perceived as fact and is most likely to facilitate bubble termination. Accurate interbubble connectivity information that is perceived by network

members as an opinion is fully integrated into the analytical framework.

Distorted interbubble connectivity information that is perceived by individuals as fact allows for no (or very little) gap-filling by policy actors and/or by ordinary people. This characteristic has two consequences. First, regarding network hub function, this distorted valuation is likely to be transmitted via simple contagion: hubs are likely to become infected early on because they have many contacts and, once infected, are likely to act as accelerants, simply spreading the "infected" information to everyone they know (Centola and Macy 2007). Second, the behaviors of policy entrepreneurs and other policy actors may remain passive or be understood as exogenous because no gap-filling is required. Furthermore, when distorted information is perceived as a fact, it leaves relatively little leeway for highly connected policy actors to manipulate information in order to shift the opinions and actions of others deliberately. Social networks that are exposed to distorted interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as fact may therefore lack the additional layer of strategic interactions (e.g., Jackson 2008).

In contrast, when distorted interbubble connectivity information is perceived as an opinion, people must interpret the information they receive from others, compare it with other opinions that they encounter and decide with whom to conform. In other words, *the perception of distorted interbubble connectivity information as an opinion opens a window for gap-filling by policy actors* that aims to provide answers to questions posed by network members, such as: Is the policy instrument used properly?; Is this the right policy instrument? The answers to these questions — one relating to the intensity or scale of use, the other to the type of policy instrument used — may change policy dynamics and, at times, also the dynamic of contagion.

Regarding policy dynamics, changes in the salience assessment of a policy by policymakers, citizens, interest groups and the media may lead to an alteration in the level of mobilization (e.g., because of a change in the inclination to test new ideas) and in the cognitive commitment of citizens, social groups and public officials to the policy at hand. Further, a change in the dominant "image" of the policy instrument can lead to a shift in the venue of decision-making and this may bring about an ideational change, undermining the bases of support for the prevailing policy valuation. Such a change will depend, among other factors, on policy-image resilience (Mondou et al. 2014). New interpretations may also divert public attention to what (influential) network members who supported, or chose not to oppose, the policy's initial overproduction consider unanticipated adverse outcomes. They can likewise expand electoral opportunities for politicians, as well as the political coalition for policy change, or undermine those opposing it by producing alternative cost-benefit calculations or by leveraging more popular mechanisms (e.g., market or non-market mechanisms).

Regarding changes in the dynamics of contagion, gap-filling of distorted information that is perceived as an opinion may increase the complexity of the information, thereby increasing the need for reputation-sensitive individuals to seek social enforcement before deciding to adopt and act upon the new information (Centola 2018). Once individuals pay more attention to a behavior's relative prevalence among most or all of their social contacts, weighing adopters against non-adopters, hubs are likely to become "infected" much later on and, once infected, will not be able to act effectively as accelerants. This is because, having spread the "infected" information to everyone they know, those recipients will weigh adopters against non-adopters before deciding to adopt the new information and act upon it.

Distorted interbubble connectivity information which is perceived as an opinion also provides a great deal of leeway for strategic interaction and information manipulation by policy actors,

in ways that are rapidly changing according to technological developments. Further, those social networks exposed to such opinions may manifest multiple layers of strategic interactions. Highly connected policy entrepreneurs may withhold or distort information that will prove useful in understanding the objective value of the policy instrument. They may also attempt to change how people think about what is true and important, thus exerting a profound impact on the diffusion of information and social learning (Golub and Sadler 2016). They may interact with the media and utilize word of mouth, with important implications for social learning. Likewise, they can increase the likelihood of information awareness and act as amplifiers of supporting or undermining policy overproduction signals.

However, to what extent and in what direction are policy dynamics likely to change? To answer this question, we integrate into our framework the role of *network segregation* in a social network that occurs "[...] when all the members of one class of persons are cut off from all relationships with all members of other classes" (Freeman 1978, 414). This term grasps agents' tendency to associate with other agents who share similar characteristics, such as race, nationality, gender and cognitive and behavioral characteristics — including personal tastes and the propensity to cooperate with others — as well as genetic traits. One example is separation in geographical space according to a slight ethnic preference in friendships and social interactions (e.g., Schelling 1971).

In segregated networks, social ties tend to be limited within groups of similar people and largely fail to expand to groups that differ in terms of some traits or sets of traits (Moody 2001). This, in turn, inhibits communication and learning across groups (e.g., Centola 2010), causing knowledge and behaviors to become localized in social space (McPherson et al. 2001). This has been increasingly noticeable with the advent of online social networks, particularly related to phenomena such as informational bubbles, opinion polarization and fake news (Lee et al 2014). In addition, segregated networks may witness a relatively low level of tolerance towards members of other groups, inducing an additional level of heterogeneity (e.g., Aits et al 2019).

Hypotheses

The variations in bubble connectivity information and patterns of social network segregation generate numerous hypotheses, as follows.

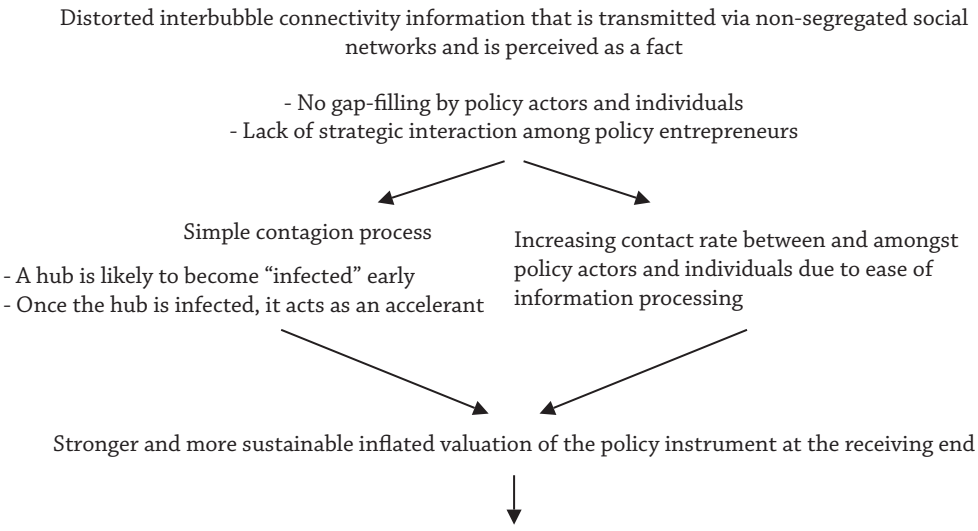
> H1. Distorted interbubble connectivity information which is perceived by individuals at the receiving end as a fact is likely to lead to a simple contagion process, thereby resulting in a stronger and more sustainable inflated valuation of the policy instrument and, thus, a relatively stable and self-sustaining policy bubble at the receiving end.

Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of the relevant processes depicted here. The premise underlying this hypothesis is that, when distorted interbubble connectivity information is perceived by individuals at the receiving end as a fact, there is no need for gap-filling. They do not need to interpret the information they receive from others or decide whether they intend to adopt and act upon the new information. The source bubble therefore operates as an exogenous factor, facilitating the diffusion of distorted information and limiting the effects of network segregation, if such effects indeed exist.

In addition, the ease of information processing, which is characteristic of this relatively simple and clear type of perceived information, increases contact rates among network members at the receiving end, likewise limiting attempts by highly connected policy entrepreneurs to interfere with the transmission of information that undermines the prevailing policy valuation

at the receiving end. Furthermore, increased contact rates among network members and the simplicity of perceived information can lead to more individuals joining the network, thereby increasing the number of "infected" members. These processes, combined together, may be likely to lead to a simple contagion process whereby the spread of information is viral in nature and nearly automatic, with minimal effort and cost. This process solidifies the already distorted policy valuation at the receiving end, thereby contributing to bubble sustainment.

Figure 1. Distorted interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as factual in non-segregated social networks (Hypothesis I)



Source: the Author

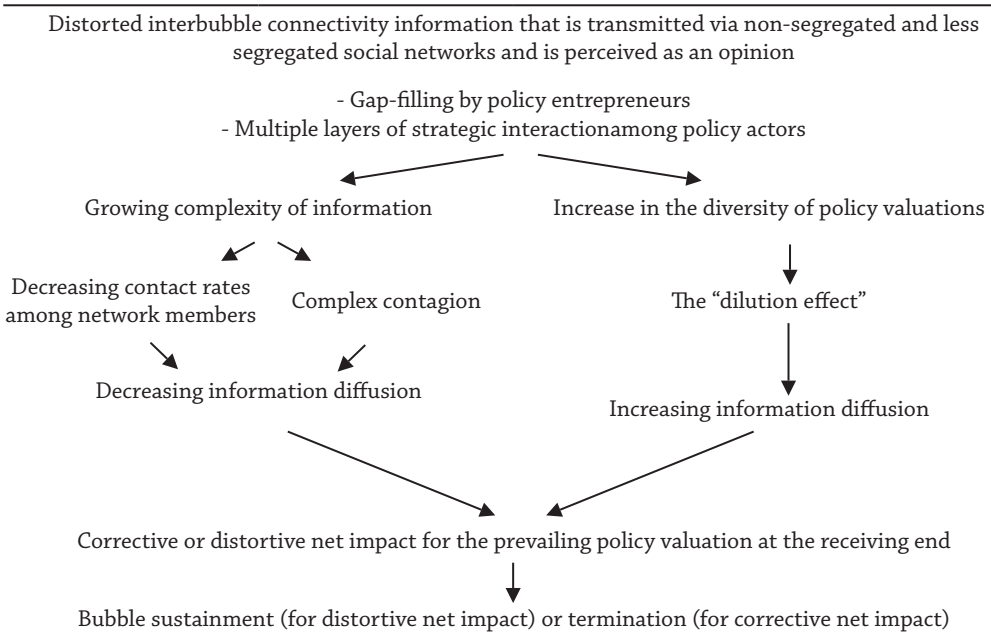
Even when distorted interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as a fact is introduced via a new medium and/or at a level of intensity that crosses a tipping-point (e.g., a relatively high visual-emotional degree), the weak ties activated and/or the new ties created among network members do not interfere with the diffusion and social-learning processes. Rather, they create more channels for social/emotional contagion and amplification of the distorted information transmitted from the source bubble.

Distorted information that is perceived as a fact may also help people from similar backgrounds predict others' behavior with more accuracy, as the rationale of the prevailing distorted policy valuation at the receiving end solidifies. Subsequently, this introduces another common dimension shared by supporters of the overproduction of the policy at hand and reduces the potential for loss of confidence and for coordination failure, which occur when people are unsure of others' actions or beliefs.

> H2. In non-segregated or less-segregated social networks, distorted interbubble-connectivity information which is perceived as an opinion is likely to lead to highly complex types of diffusion processes, the net impact of which can be either corrective or distortive insofar as the prevailing policy valuation at the receiving end is concerned.

Figure 2 offers a graphic representation of the relevant processes depicted here. The network topology and the type of perceived information can influence information diffusion by modifying contact rates, the dynamics of contagions and the diversity of policy valuations. When policy entrepreneurs fill the gaps in distorted interbubble-connectivity information that is perceived as an opinion, this increases the complexity of interbubble connectivity information. This, in turn, may have two consequences. First, growing information complexity may decrease contact rates among network members as a result of increased difficulty in information processing. This may inhibit information diffusion, leaving peoples' opinions intact and, consequently, sustaining the prevailing policy valuation. Second, growing information complexity may increase the need of reputation-sensitive individuals to seek social enforcement before deciding to adopt and act upon the new information (Centola 2018). Consequently, rather than spreading like viruses, hubs are likely to become "infected" much later (relative to cases involving simple information). Once infected, they will not be able to act effectively as accelerants because, having spread the "infected" information to everyone they know, these recipients will also weigh adopters against non-adopters. This, in turn, may stymie the spread of behaviors that play a role in the sustainment of the policy bubble at hand.

Figure 2. Distorted interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as an opinion in non-segregated and less-segregated social networks (Hypothesis II)



Source: The Author

However, such gap-filling of distorted interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as an opinion may also trigger a process with a contradictory outcome. In non-segregated or less-segregated networks, gap-filling of such information may increase the diversity of policy valuations, thereby *"diluting" the prevailing policy valuation* by allowing the correct policy valuation, or competing distorted valuations, to invade social networks successfully. For example, a correct policy valuation, or competing distorted valuations perceived as an opinion, may trigger controversy within the professional community. Senior civil servants, themselves

policy entrepreneurs who are attuned to controversy in the professional community, may act to correct the prevailing policy valuation, or deflate the policy bubble unilaterally, rather than rubber-stamping inflated levels of policy production. By the same token, correct interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as expert opinion may decrease the number of distorted hosts. This, in turn, may signal to network members that correction of policy valuation is in order, thereby deflating the policy bubble.

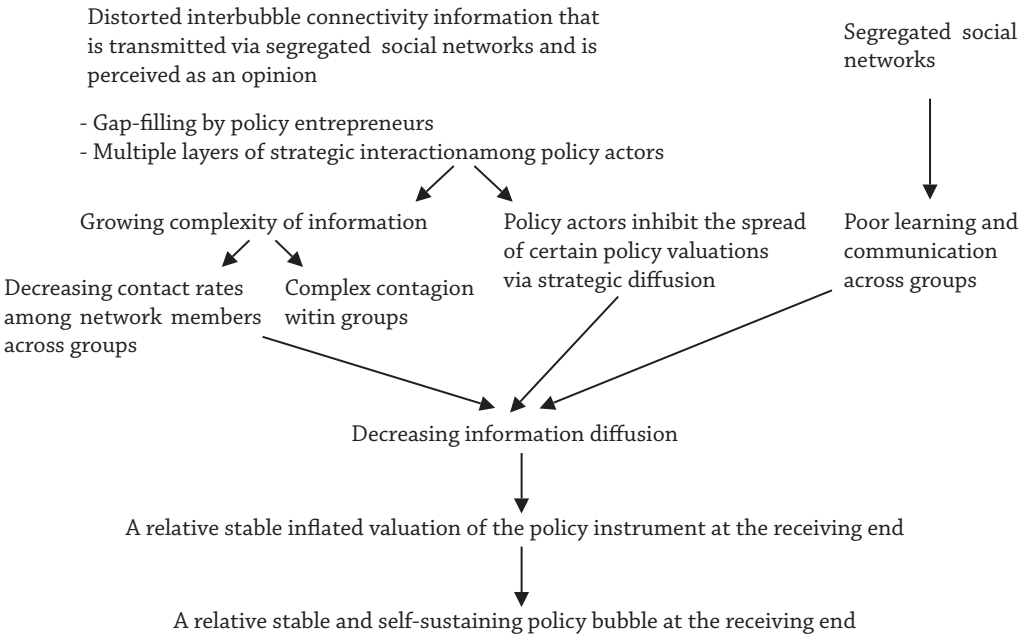
In addition, certain interpretations of interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as an opinion can cause a negative change in peoples' perceptions regarding the worthiness of given policy-related actors or institutions and this, in turn, can have a knock-on effect on the worthiness of other actors, thus creating a form of information contagion that undermines the prevailing policy valuation. High policy-valuation richness can therefore reduce the risk of "infection" via the "dilution effect". Increasing diversity in policy valuations might therefore increase information diffusion, the impact of which may undermine the prevailing policy valuation. This may be a very slow process because "a new story correcting a false story may not be as contagious as the false story, which means that the false narrative may have a major impact on [...] activity long after it is corrected" (Shiller 2019, 97).

The net impact of decreasing information diffusion as a result of decreasing contact rates and the change in the dynamic of contagions caused by the growing complexity of new information, on the one hand, and increasing information diffusion due to increasing diversity of policy valuations, on the other hand, can be either corrective or distortive insofar as the prevailing policy valuation at the receiving end is concerned. It depends on the relative importance of the former process versus that of the latter.

> H3. In segregated social networks within policy domains, distorted interbubble information that is perceived as an opinion is likely to lead to strategic diffusion accompanied by decreasing contact rates among network members, thereby resulting in a stronger and more sustainable inflated valuation of the policy instrument at the receiving end and, thus, a relatively stable or growing policy bubble at the receiving end.

Figure 3 provides a graphic representation of the relevant processes depicted here. In such contexts, policy actors can limit the expansion of imaginable, workable and plausible policy alternatives within particular social groups in the following ways. First, they can take advantage of the multiple layers of strategic interactions by incorporating social network information in the design of *influence strategies* in a way that reduces waste of resources (e.g., targeting/campaigning costs) and generates greater impact. This can be undertaken by *strategic diffusion*, that is by increasing or decreasing the optimal influence strategy (i.e., targeting individuals with low or high connections) depending on the content of the interaction (Galeotti and Goyal 2009; see also Galeotti et al. 2013; Bloch et al. 2018; and Chatterjee and Dutta 2016; see also Galeotti and Goyal 2009).

Figure 3. Distorted interbubble connectivity information that is perceived as an opinion in segregated social networks (Hypothesis III)



Source: The Author

Second, policy entrepreneurs and other policy actors can take advantage of the fact that information can pass relatively slowly to inhibit the spread of certain interpretations deriving from competing opinions. Slow transmission of information may be caused by the growing complexity of information — the derived consequences of which may be decreasing contact rates among network members across social groups and complex contagion within groups — as well as by the poor learning and communication across social groups that characterizes segregated social networks. Slow transmission of information allows policy actors more time to counterframe the status quo as the safer option, distort scientific facts, regulate populations who are at risk of becoming "corrected" (e.g., concerning closure in small social networks, see Coleman 1988) and interfere with the transmission of particular policy valuation. Overall, these processes support the inflated valuation of the policy instrument at the receiving end, leading to a relatively stable policy bubble at the receiving end.

When investigating the aforementioned processes, it is important to distinguish between the level of social network connectivity and the segregation patterns within a policy system, on the one hand, and the level of connectivity and segregation patterns among elite decision-makers on the other. Both may be of vast significance in amplifying or dissipating information shocks to the system; yet, at the same time, such shocks can be triggered at one level. Gauging the net effect requires recognition of the conditions under which opinions will spread across the entire interacting network system, as compared with a spread to only one type of network (e.g., a social or elite network), with minimal isolated "distortions" on other network types. It also requires consideration of a situation wherein two or more pieces of distorted interbubble connectivity information, which are perceived as opinions, spread within the same social network or within different networks and interact dynamically with one another. Depending

on the characteristics of social-network structure, network type can have either a profound or a minor effect on the spread of information from one policy bubble to another. Identifying the conditions in which these cases occur is vital to our understanding of interbubble dynamics. Needless to say, the effects of these patterns may vary according to policy contexts.

To sum up, a careful examination of network interaction patterns should help us disentangle information originating in one policy domain (e.g., wherein the target bubble originally developed) from that which is the product of another policy bubble (i.e., the source bubble) — both fuel the target bubble, together or separately. It also allows us to gauge deliberate choices made by policy entrepreneurs and other policy actors, operating within social network contexts, when spreading different types of information, and also their policy implications. Needless to say, the behavior of highly skilled policy entrepreneurs/actors operating in a network may affect not only policy investment and production but also the evolution of the network and the resulting transmission of shocks and crises (e.g., Jackson 2016, 75). We now turn our attention to the relevant methodological toolbox.

Methodology

Before discussing the methodology, let us first articulate more accurately the relevant network characteristics necessary for empirical measurement. The actors in the theoretical framework are individuals. However, it is not impossible to have multi-modal networks, such as two modes — individuals and policy-relevant organizations — wherein individuals can also belong to organizations. Network mapping will reveal the level of influence wielded by policy entrepreneurs, or "hubs," which depends in part on the level of inter-nodal connections in his or her area of activity. This connectivity may be captured using Bonacich's power centrality. More power means that a policy entrepreneur has a larger number of connections to less-connected nodes, while less power means that he or she has a larger number of connections to more well-connected nodes.

Regarding the boundaries of the network, the policy actors in the framework advanced here are bounded by specific policy bubbles. The social tie used in the framework is information sharing (e.g., Facebook friends), but the information is not necessarily related to the policy bubbles. The criteria for segregation are the same as for the relational ties, namely information sharing. Measuring diffusion of information may rely on behaviors that can be obtained from metadata, or inferred from messages. Measuring the impact of this diffusion can rely on policy-investment decisions in real and controlled settings. Identifying causal associations between social networks and outcomes of interest presents empirical challenges. These concerns may be addressed by pursuing multiple research strategies. I elaborate three options: big data analysis, agent-based modeling and experimentation.

Analyzing the information spreading patterns in multiple social networks can take advantage of the modern advances in data science. Important in this regard are the models developed so far to analyze the adaptive process in information diffusion, which are used to characterize the dynamic of opinion formation, such as models concerning social segregation (Gross and Blasius, 2008; Nardini et al. 2008). Complex network structures can be uncovered by analyzing the online social networks that constitute the most important information spreading platforms. Complex patterns of information-spreading can likewise be gauged by analyzing instant messengers, Twitter, blogs and Facebook, as well as other networks that embed the rich information spreading phenomenon, such as Instagram, Flickr, YouTube and so on. It is possible to analyze information spreading by focusing on information broadcasting, information sharing

and so on.

Opinions also compete on social networks. Different opinions are distributed in the networks and interact with one another. This calls for the use of agent-based models (ABM) for understanding opinion competition dynamics and competitive diffusion processes on multiplex networks, where the networks are made up of different layers that comprise the same nodes and a given type of edges in each layer. As a hypothesis-generating method, ABM is an efficient way to examine theoretical explanations formally, to construct new expectations and gauge potentially surprising findings, to concretize theoretical puzzles by transforming hypotheses to mechanisms and to enrich networked experiments. There is abundant research on opinion dynamics over multiplex networks wherein agents interact with bounded confidence. A number of scholars have provided comprehensive surveys of this stream (Lorenz 2007; Castellano et al. 2009; see also Myers and Leskovec 2012; Antonopoulos and Shang 2018). This method may be relevant for understanding social contagion processes during which individuals who hold opinions regarding a policy instrument exchange views and compromise, if their opinions do not differ by more than a given threshold. It can also infuse meaning to empirical analysis of deductive- and ABM-derived expectations of interbubble dynamics by using massive date sets which represent large-scale social systems.

Networked experiments provide another possible methodology that can help us to explore the implications of interdependencies for policy investment and production. Social settings may be randomized and engineered to enable exploration of the outcomes of social interaction and the unpacking of nuanced behavioral mechanisms that explain social effects. The ability to test complex dynamic hypotheses concerning social behavior has radically increased with the growth of digital tools such as Facebook applications and Amazon Mechanical Turk, as well as increasing collaboration with platform developers and website administrators (for a review, see Aral 2016). Notable examples include digital experiments concerning information sharing and diffusion (Bakshy et al. 2012). The design of networked experiments (i.e., setting, sampling, randomization and treatment assignment), as well as the analysis of such experiments, are discussed elsewhere (Aral 2016). Lab experiments manipulating policy bubbles provide a further avenue for testing the analytical framework advanced here (for a review of lab experiments in information flows through varying network structures, see Choi et al. 2016, 465–7). Lab experiments could be used, for example, to gauge the extent to which factual information is transformed into opinions as it is transmitted through the network (e.g., whether an individual believes "official statistics" depends on the source from which he/she hears them). Researchers can also gauge causal estimations of network effects by implementing exogenous network structures in the lab (Choi et al. 2016).

Regarding the identification of interbubble dynamics and the measurement of policy bubbles, the focus should be placed on the shared information set, as well as on the direct indicators of the policy problem and on government investment in a policy instrument in order to gauge the degree of overinvestment in a policy tool relative to the severity of the policy problem. In addition, changes in the macropolitical agenda might be gauged by measuring fluctuations in the extent of media coverage because media attention plays a key role in processes of social and emotional contagion and, subsequently, links fluctuations in media attention to the life-cycle of a policy bubble.

A potential shared information set is, for example, the basic emotion of disgust (Kam and Estes 2016). Scholars may draw on recent findings regarding how individual differences in disgust

sensitivity (Inbar, Pizarro, and Bloom 2009; see also Inbar et al. 2012; Terrizzi et al. 2010) inform demand for policies in different domains that are designed to protect citizens from physical, moral and imaginary contamination (Kam and Estes 2016). They may therefore examine the existence of potential interbubble dynamics in the policy domains of food protection, water pollution, immigration, abortion, gay marriage, stem-cell research, euthanasia and medical marijuana. These policy areas are of interest because: (i) they are independent from economic bubbles and therefore are not the consequences of economic bubbles and thus they can develop under a variety of circumstances; (ii) they are characterized by strong indicators of the severity of the policy problem; and (iii) they are distinct and very different policy areas in substantive terms, thereby increasing the potential of generalization, should common patterns of interbubble dynamics emerge across policy sectors. Utilizing the aforementioned research strategies may highlight patterns and provide confirmation or disconfirmation of the assumptions and hypotheses advanced here.

Conclusions

Over the past few years, political scientists established the plausibility of policy bubbles, principally claiming that such bubbles are fueled by self-reinforcing processes and contagion, yet ignoring the possible impact of interdependence between complex policy systems on the sustainment of policy bubbles. To improve our understanding of such a complex phenomenon, this article utilizes robust findings in the study of how information and behavior spread in the social sphere to develop an analytical framework in which one policy bubble is viewed as a site for producing information that may fuel another. Regardless of the dynamics at play, the mere act of locating information sets that are shared among policy bubbles across policy sectors, levels of government, states and other jurisdictions brings the problem of bubble sustainment into sharper focus than ever before. It can assist efforts to identify policy bubbles and potentially contribute to the debate concerning how to respond to suspected policy bubbles.

Considering that diffusion processes "tie in very closely to the basic architecture of a population's network" (Jackson et al. 2017, 66), the article develops a social network perspective on interbubble dynamics. A social network perspective provides powerful tools for analyzing information diffusion processes, as well as the extent of contagion which depends to a great extent on network structure. It captures the potential effects of large-scale network structure on aggregate behaviors and outcomes, in addition directing attention to variations between societies with regard to the sustainment of policy bubbles (e.g., fragmented societies may exhibit more fragmented networks). Further, such a perspective allows us to develop conceptual insights of a realistic nature. One reason for this lies in the network concept that "does not imply equilibrium orientation, and involves much lower integration" (Schneider and Bauer 2016, 74). Another relates to the fact that, even when people are not familiar with the details of networks, they instinctively impart information to others who share their demographics. As complicated objects, the article considers it useful to simplify networks by focusing on one property, namely network segregation. This conceptual strategy enables demonstration of the potential importance of network segregation in transmitting interbubble connectivity information.

Taken together, the added value of a social network perspective on interbubble dynamics can potentially explain empirical regularities manifesting in policy bubble processes. Specifically, by applying a multi-network logic and imposing multiple policy domains on bubbly policy processes, a social network perspective can widen the number of mechanisms that may exist for policy bubble sustainment. An empirical examination guided by this perspective can reveal the

role played by interbubble dynamics (or the lack thereof) alongside self-reinforcing processes and contagion. This is the article's main contribution.

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The Dismantling of Family Farming Policies in Brazil and Argentina

Eric Sabourin

Socio-anthropologist at CIRAD, UMR ART-Dev, MUSE University, Montpellier, France and visiting professor at the Center for Sustainable Development-University of Brasilia

Clara Craviotti

Sociologist, research fellow at CESOT, Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of Buenos Aires; National Council of Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET).

Carolina Milhorance

Research fellow at the Center for Sustainable Development – University of Brasilia. Her research currently focuses on topics such as policy integration and the strategies of adaptation to climate change, policy networks in the policy process, south-south cooperation and policy transfer.

Abstract

This article examines the recent processes of dismantling public policies oriented to promote or regulate family farming in Latin America. It addresses two main questions: How and why were these policies dismantled? Drawing on Bauer et al.'s (2012) analytical framework, the article examines the modalities and stages of the process of dismantling family farming policy instruments in Brazil and Argentina. Likewise, it analyzes the process's causes by delving into structural, contextual and institutional factors. It adopts this framework, originally developed for social policies in Europe, to analyze rural policies in Latin America. From a theoretical point of view, the study suggests the importance of analyzing the resilience of policies and the mechanisms and strategies of resistance to governmental shifts as these affect the degree and direction that the process of dismantling may take.

Keywords

family farming, public policies, policy dismantling, Latin America, Brazil, Argentina

Introduction

The first decade of the 21st century was marked by the consolidation of specific family farming policies in several Latin American countries. These policies combine a set of policy instruments targeted at a specific segment of farmers, those whose production units are associated with five characteristics/criteria: limited area; predominance of family labor; family management; gross income primarily from agricultural production; and residence on or near the farm (Sabourin, Samper, Sotomayor, 2015). Family farming-specific policies generally include three types of instruments (e.g., credit, technical assistance and organizational support), forming policy portfolios (Howlett & del Rio, 2015).

The development of these policies in Latin America resulted from coalitions involving social movements and public actors, which benefited from the election of left-wing governments and seized windows of opportunity favorable to family farming groups (Sabourin, Samper, & Sotomayor, 2015). However, since the early 2010s, these coalitions have lost space, resources, political weight and legitimacy, which has led to a progressive (and sometimes radical) dismantling of family farming policy instruments (Mattei, 2018, Nierdele et al., 2019; Nogueira, Urcola, & Lattuada, 2017). While public policy studies have commonly addressed the assessment and explanation of different degrees of policy change, less attention was paid to the directions of change. Policy dismantling refers to a specific direction of change in which the patterns of "decrease" (or even reversal) of existing policy arrangements are taken into account. Comparative studies of this process have shown that the politics of dismantling varies significantly across different policy fields (Bauer & Knill, 2012).

This article examines the processes of dismantling public policies oriented to promote or regulate family farming in Latin America. It addresses two main questions: How and why were these policies dismantled? Drawing on Bauer et al.'s (2012) analytical framework, the article examines the modalities and stages of the process of dismantling these policy instruments in Brazil and Argentina. Likewise, it discusses the causes of this process by delving into structural, contextual and institutional factors. It adds to the current literature by adapting the framework to a policy field and region that has received hardly any attention and by further elaborating the causes and processes of dismantling. It also provides insights into the resilience of these policies and into the mechanisms of resistance to short-term political pressures and governmental shifts.

This article argues that, in both countries, family farming policies carry a specific meaning related to struggles and agreements with historically dominant coalitions, which impacts on perceptions of the costs and benefits of dismantling. Moreover, both Brazil and Argentina face challenges in terms of institutional fragmentation, which restrains their systems of checks and balances in the assuring of basic rights, enabling power imbalance towards the executive branch of the government. Finally, it stresses that dismantling starts with discreet strategies before it reaches more active and disclosed forms. Brazil and Argentina were chosen as case studies as the agricultural sector has major importance in both countries' economies and politics and family farming groups are predominant in the agrarian structure of both countries, acquiring major political resources over the past decade, thereby reversing a previous situation of marginalization.

The first section presents the analytical framework of the study. The second section identifies policy instruments that have targeted family farms across Latin America and have led to their consolidation over time. The third section discusses the modalities and causes of policy dismantling in Brazil and Argentina. And, finally, the fourth section provides some potential responses to change and a possible future research agenda.

1. Analytical framework for policy dismantling

1.1. Theoretical background

Despite increasing accounts of policy dismantling and rupture processes, these issues have not been systematically addressed by policy research (Jordan, Bauer, & Green-Pedersen, 2013). Indeed, welfare-state retrenchment and the weakening of social policies have been addressed by institutionalist scholars (Pierson, 1994). Likewise, notions of rupture and critical moments have been mobilized by the neo-institutional economy, arguing the path dependence of policies (Mahoney, 2001). Finally, Rosanvallon (2014) and Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) analyzed the regression of democracy and the generalization of neoliberal policies and new capitalist evolutions in Europe and the United States.

On the other hand, Howlett (2019) discusses means for improving the resilience and robustness of policies over time or, in other words, mechanisms for preventing policy dismantling. Resilience is the ability to adapt to major internal/external perturbations, while robustness refers to the ability to maintain the same performance in the face of a variety of contexts. According to Howlett, achieving both requires duplicating some resources and adding procedural policy tools (for monitoring and revising policies) in order to deal with unforeseen events and to "patch" policies over time. Nevertheless, while it is plausible that more institutional constraints and "lock-in" tools generally reduce chances for direct dismantling (and vice versa), this does not mean that, in such contexts, policy dismantling is not feasible (Jordan et al., 2013). The resilience of a given policy is therefore an important issue to analyze in the context of governmental shifts.

Rather than focus on the occurrence or non-occurrence of dismantling, it is crucial to analyze how, and to what extent, dismantling processes occur. However, most of these studies fail both to identify empirically the main causes and patterns of change and to provide an analytical framework for policy dismantling and comparative analyses (Jordan et al., 2013). Bauer, Jordan, Green-Pedersen and Héritier (2012) address this gap by developing a comprehensive framework for analyzing policy dismantling mechanisms, causes and outputs. Policy dismantling is thought of as a direction of policy change, implying the "reduction", "decrease", "diminution" — even reversal — of existing policy arrangements. These authors are concerned with two specific and interrelated sets of questions: first, under which conditions do political actors engage in policy dismantling? And second, given other actors' preferences, institutional constraints and opportunities, and specific situational factors, which strategies do they choose? Both questions are relevant to the case studies presented in this article and both provide analytical elements for answering the question of why and how family farming policies in Brazil and Argentina have been recently dismantled. These will be further developed below.

Structural, institutional and situational factors

The factors leading to policy change through dismantling may be separated into three different types: i) external factors and prevailing macro conditions, such as the stability of the financial system, technological change, the spread of certain ideas of reform and unforeseen elections; ii) situational factors, which are primarily background issues; and iii) institutional constraints and opportunities, particularly those related to opportunity structures comprising the features of the political system (the polity). Depending on the specific combination of factors affecting the preferences of political actors and their capability to pursue policy dismantling, distinct strategies may be chosen (Bauer et al. 2012).

The first set of factors refers to socio-political or economic changes or events, including but not limited to major economic shocks, supranational policy pressure, governmental shift and change in policy paradigms. These factors are characterized by the fact that they are beyond

the direct influence of policy actors and can shift the balance of power within the policy field, thereby supporting or undermining policy dismantling (Gürtler et al., 2019). The second group mainly relates to the political economy of the specific policy field, including the structural features of the sector, the configuration of actors and their interests and political power. According to Gürtler et al (2019), these factors also include the specific patterns of policy design, which shape the distribution of costs and benefits across those affected by a policy. Regarding the design of policy portfolios, the notion of resilience may add to the analytical framework. The notion refers to the ability to deal with opposition and conflict that may emerge over the medium-to-long term (Howlett, 2019). The design of "lock-in" tools that can reduce the changes for direct dismantling is considered here.

This point aligns with the third set of factors, which refers to the institutional constraints specific to each political system. According to Bauer et al. 2012, the electoral system, the party system and the strength of veto players (such as constitutional courts), among other factors, affect if, and to what extent, the government expects to be able to realize its dismantling objectives. Moreover, actors' perceptions of dismantling may be affected by election cycles and by the partisan positions of policymakers, which are ultimately related to the varying composition of governments and legislatures. An additional explanation for policy dismantling is the possibility of shifting the blame to subnational, supranational, or international actors and structures. Finally, the main factor refers to the extent to which the costs and benefits of dismantling are perceived to be dispersed or concentrated across affected actors. This perception is influenced by the policy features and the organizational and institutional structures characterizing the political system.

According to these arguments, dismantling policies that are perceived to have concentrated costs and diffused benefits (such as environmental policies) may be rewarding for some political actors, depending on the strength of the interest groups bearing the costs (for instance, well-organized economic groups opposed to environmental regulation groups). Meanwhile, interventions perceived to have diffused costs and concentrated benefits, such as social policies, are commonly led by politicians' blame-avoidance. This pattern is aligned with much of the welfare-state retrenchment literature; for instance, in the context of economic austerity, when politicians are "forced" to withdraw public funds from vulnerable beneficiaries. Note that these costs and benefits distributions reflect political actors' perceptions and are not an objective indicator.

Family farming policies comprise instruments of social participation and protection, productive inclusion and protection of minorities and are therefore theoretically comparable to the social policies type. However, as discussed in Sections 2 and 3, the distribution of the costs and benefits of dismantling is not straightforward in this case.

Dismantling processes

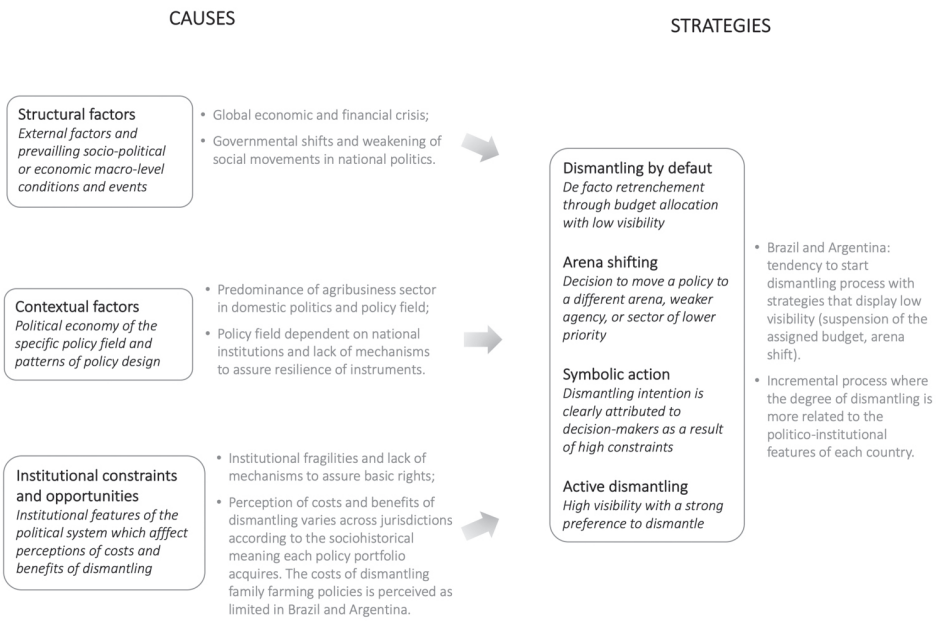
Regarding policy-dismantling stages and modalities, Bauer et al. (2012) identify four main approaches that differ according to the extent to which the process is consciously undertaken, as well as the extent to which political actors wish to hide or reveal their activities. First, *dismantling by default* relies on de facto retrenchment through budget allocations with low visibility and the absence of any decision attracting political attention. Second, *dismantling by arena shifting* refers to an actual decision to move a policy to a different arena such as another government level (i.e., decentralization), weak agencies, or another sector where the policy may receive lower priority. Water privatization in Europe would be an example of exempting public authorities from the responsibility of implementation.

Third, *dismantling by symbolic action* consists of ensuring that any dismantling intention is clearly and directly attributed to political decision-makers as it may be important to many ac-

tors; therefore, political declarations do not necessarily lead to outputs but remain symbolic. This type of strategy may be the result of high institutional constraints, or of the heterogeneity of political actors' preferences. Finally, the most apparent strategy is *active dismantling*, which displays high visibility with a strong preference to dismantle. In this case, dismantling might be rewarding for political actors as a result of incisive demands or ideological positions. This movement may entail dismantling in one area along with expansion in others.

The theoretical framework presented above was predominantly applied to cases in Europe and the United States. The present study draws on this framework; however, it provides an original example by turning to Latin America. It highlights some of the particularities of these countries, namely the politicization of rural social (and productive inclusion) policies, resulting from the historical conflict with economic sectors and the institutional distinctions of their policy systems. Note that the comparative lens between Brazil and Argentina is particularly interesting from an empirical point of view. First, as mentioned earlier, the agricultural sector has a major importance in both countries' economies and politics. Second, family farming groups, which are the most relevant sector in quantitative terms and whose production is strategic for domestic consumption, have acquired major political resources over the past decade. Third, both Brazil and Argentina adopted targeted-family farming policy instruments in the early 2000s and began the dismantling processes in 2015-2016. Fourth, these two countries engaged, in the late 2000s, in an effort to promote the regional diffusion of these policy instruments. Finally, despite the similar trajectories of development, diffusion and the early steps in dismantling family farming policies in the two countries, the causes and late evolution of dismantling are different in each context. In Argentina the process started after general elections and an overt change in the government's political and economic orientation, while in Brazil it has been part of a major crisis of the political system. The Figure 1 summarizes the analytical framework.

Figure 1: Policy dismantling framework



Source: Bauer et al., 2012; Gürtler et al., 2019; Howlett, 2019.

1.2. Data collection

The empirical data of this article was mainly provided by three collective studies carried out in various countries by the Research Network "Public Policies and Rural Development in Latin America" (PP-AL Network) between 2013 and 2018. The first study adopted a common framework to analyze the development of family farming policies in eleven countries. The second study, held in 2016, detailed the constraints of these policies, particularly regarding instruments of promotion of organic farming and agroecology (Sabourin, Le Coq, et al., 2018). Between 2016 and 2018, the third study analyzed the influence of Brazil and Argentina in the regional diffusion and transfer of family farming policy instruments (Sabourin, Grisa, et al., 2020; Sabourin, Grisa, and Lopez, 2018, Sabourin and Grisa, 2018). A brief update was conducted in 2018 (Grisa, Sabourin, & Le Coq, 2018) and in 2019, after the election of far-right groups to the presidency of Brazil and the expansion of the economic crisis in Argentina.

The aforementioned studies used process-tracing methodologies, based on semi-structured interviews with policymakers and social actors and on official documents. For the purpose of this article, additional primary information was collected specifically for the cases of Brazil and Argentina and a qualitative cross-case analysis, focused on the causes and processes of the dismantling of family farming policy instruments, was held. By shedding light on the trajectories of the development and dismantling of these policies, their specific content, main actors and coalitions, the article shows that the causal mechanisms and processes proposed by Bauer et al. are consistent with the evidence from the case studies and further elaborates the framework to facilitate future in-depth and regionally based analyses.

2. Emergence and consolidation of family farming policies in Latin America

This section identifies a variety of policy instruments that have targeted family farming across Latin America over time, including — but not limited to — the distinctive policies in Brazil and Argentina. The emergence of these policies has been distinct according to the country, in terms of time period, supporting coalitions and windows of opportunity (Adib & Almada, 2017). Most of the policies reveal the role of rural social movements which, at certain times, managed to form coalitions able to influence public decisions.

The emergence of family farming policies in Latin America can be divided into three broad generations (Sabourin et al., 2015). The first generation (1950s–1980s) was guided by the goals of promoting access to land and developing the economic and technical capacities of family farmers and included the promotion of land reforms and, to varying degrees, agricultural credit and technical assistance. Most of these policies were either interrupted or stunted by periods of military dictatorship. Alternatively, in countries like Brazil, Uruguay, Peru and Bolivia, these goals were converted to policies of colonization of public lands on the agricultural frontiers of the Pampas or Amazon regions. In these countries, land-access initiatives were supported by international organizations (such as the Food and Agriculture Organization-FAO and the World Bank) and accepted by dictatorship governments as they were intended to prevent "communists" from advancing into the countryside.

The second generation (1996–2000s in Brazil, early 2000s in other countries) corresponds with a period of diversification of instruments targeting family farmers. In general terms, a common portfolio for supporting family farming comprised: i) registration mechanisms to define beneficiaries (sometimes legally binding); ii) agricultural credit specifically targeted to family

farmers; and iii) capacity-building programs (basically, rural extension and support for local organizations). These policies were commonly supported by progressive left-wing governments that invested increasing amounts of public funds in family farming support (Alves & Rocha, 2010). Paradoxically, the main difference between countries resided in the definition of the "family farming" category, which varied according to the specificity of the land structure, the history of the peasantry and the type of social and political support that the national government sought to preserve (Sabourin et al., 2015).

It is worth noting that public support for family farming received low opposition during the 2000s as the potential competitors for the public budget — the agribusiness sector — benefited from the expansion of commodities' international markets during this decade. Moreover, several programs relied on the integration of a productive family farming elite with commodity value chains, a model that received the endorsement of liberal governments. For instance, the National Program to Strengthen Family Agriculture in Brazil (Pronaf) provided support by issuing credit to family producers who were already inserted into commodity agri-food chains for their technological modernization (Aquino & Schneider, 2010).

The third generation (from 2005) comprises policy instruments addressing global development challenges, such as food and nutrition security, adaptation to climate change, sustainable or territorial development and global poverty alleviation. These instruments are not explicitly focused on the family farming category; however, they have been recognized as being promising for the empowerment of family farmers through the implementation of consultative bodies and compensation contracts, such as payments for environmental services (Ezzine, Le Coq, 2017). They are particularly relevant for diversifying and completing family farming policy portfolios and for addressing adapted support to specific segments: the rural poor; the native, peasants', or fishers' communities; women and youth, etc. (Sabourin & Grisa, 2019).

Table 1 summarizes some of these policy instruments established in Brazil and Argentina. Their evolution, as well as their appropriation and advocacy by distinct political and economic groups, will, over time, affect the constellation of the costs and benefits of reinforcing or dismantling them, which is discussed in the following sections.

Table 1: Main policy instruments affecting family farming in Brazil and Argentina, by field of intervention

	Brazil	**Argentina**
1- Generalist agricultural policy instruments	- Agrarian reform and land colonization by the Ministry of Agriculture, 1962-1998.	- Generalist agriculture policy shaped for business farming by Secretary of Agriculture (mid-1980, replaced by MINAGRI in 2008).
2- Specific targeted family farming policy instruments	- Establishment of the National Program Supporting Family Farming (Pronaf), including agricultural credit specifically targeted at family farming and a family farming national register, 1995;	- Establishment of distinct programs: Minifundio (Small Units), 1987; PPNEA (Program for small producers of the northeast); Cambio Rural (Rural Change), Programa Social Agropecuario (Agriculture Social Program), 1993;
	- Creation of the Ministry of Agrarian Development, focused on family farming and land policies, 1999;	- PROINDER (Rural Initiatives program), 1998;
	- Technical assistance and rural extension policy, 2004.	- National Family Farming Register, 2007; - Secretariat of Rural Development and Family Farming, 2009; - Social Agricultural Monotribute, 2009.
3- Sustainable development and rural-territories policy instruments	- Support for the development of rural territories (PRONAT and Citizenship Territories Program), 2004-2008;	- National Rural Sustainable Development Program (PROFEDER), 2011;
	- Technical assistance and financial support for the development of agroecology and organic farming (PNAPO), 2012.	- PROINDER, second stage, 2009.
4- Food security and reduction of rural poverty policy instruments	- Social protection combined with public food purchases (Zero Hunger Program, National Food and Nutritional Security Council, Food Acquisition Program, School Feeding Program), 2003, 2009.	- Program of Provision of Running Water, Social Help and Basic Sanitation (PROPASA), 1999; - National Food Security Plan, 2003.

Source: Sabourin, Samper & Sotomayor, 2015

3. Crisis and dismantling of family farming policies in Brazil and Argentina

3.1. Strategies and stages

In Brazil and Argentina, a common feature of the policy dismantling process is the orientation of its early steps by diffuse and unnoticeable strategies. Even though, in both countries, the dismantling process subsequently reached an active and "credit claimer" approach, the process began with dispersed institutional changes, which is consistent with Bauer et al.'s claims regarding the expected degree of resistance to dismantling (Bauer et al., 2012). This observation also aligns with recent literature on the weakening of democratic systems worldwide. Levitsky and Ziblat (2018) describe how governmental efforts to subvert modern democracies are approved by legislative power and by the courts. There is no coup d'état or turning point: change is almost invisible. Keeping in mind the due proportion of association between democratic systems and specific policies, the argument refers to the initial invisibility of the dismantling process for policies which are committed to basic rights.

This section discusses the sequencing of Bauer et al.'s categories of dismantling. Most dismantling processes begin with discreet strategies, which are usually justified by economic austerity in the face of a budget crisis. In the case of family farming, however, the dismantling process reached an active approach using undemocratic strategies based on the denial of the legitimacy – and even criminalization – of the political opponents. This has been particularly apparent in the case of Brazil where the dismantling process followed major changes in the politico-institutional system.

Brazil: from default to active dismantling

The first signs of the dismantling of family farming policy instruments in Brazil came during the second mandate of Dilma Rousseff (2014–2016). Her administration made ambiguous decisions about land reform, as it prioritized the titling of already allocated land instead of allocating land to new beneficiaries (Sabourin, 2018). There was also a reduction of funds, attempts to merge the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) and the Ministry of Social Development (MDS), and paralysis of the new National Agency for Technical Assistance and Rural Extension (ANATER) (Niederle et al., 2019). These actions resulted from the weakening of parliamentary support for the government in the congress, the prioritization of support for agribusiness[1] in the context of economic recession, and a decrease in public resources for these policies. Drawing on Bauer et al.'s categories, this was the beginning of a "dismantling by default", which relates to the diminishing of financial or political resources. This kind of strategy can, in principle, bypass political opposition for a long time, but certainly not forever (Bauer et al., 2012).

Other important signs of dismantling included lawsuits against the rural movements, including family farmer cooperatives. For example, in 2014, the conservative sectors in the states of Paraná and São Paulo obtained a series of administrative-zeal measures from the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Brazilian Federal Court of Audit that concealed a mechanism for criminalizing movements; this was based on excessive control and a literal interpretation of the contracts for public purchases of food coming from family farmers (Hentz and Hespanhol, 2018). Thus, by the end of the first Rousseff mandate, several cooperatives and associations that managed the Family Farming Food Acquisition Program (PAA) contracts had their leaders convicted and imprisoned for having delivered boxes of lettuce in place of cabbages for schools' canteen supplies – they were finally absolved in 2017. Also, the director of the National Supply Company (CONAB) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Supply (MAPA), responsible

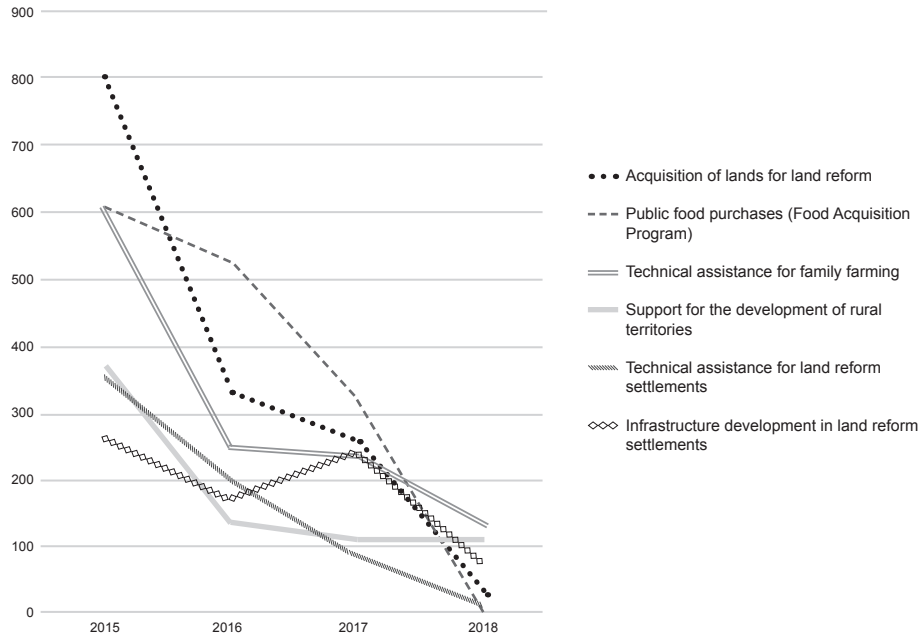
11 — The Minister of Agriculture was the former President of Brazil's Confederation of Agribusiness, the main representation body for large agricultural companies.

for the PAA, was fired.

Rousseff was impeached by congress in 2016, a process led by a right-wing coalition particularly aligned with conservative and ultraliberal ideas. Michel Temer took office in October 2016 and, since then, the country has witnessed the active and rapid dismantling of family farming policies. The MDA was dissolved and its programs were transferred to the Ministry of Social and Agrarian Development (MDSA), in accordance with the proposal of researchers who affirmed that family farming should be assisted by social rather than productive policies (Alves & Rocha, 2010). According to this argument, the family farming category included too many types of non-productive segments (indigenous communities, traditional peasant people, small fishermen, etc); hence, productive support should be limited to farmers integrated into the agri-food chains (Alves et al, 2010; Navarro & Pedroso, 2011).

Subsequently, as a result of the inability of MDSA civil servants to manage agricultural programs on the one hand and, on the other hand, the reactions of social movements, the former MDA secretariats were brought together in a single entity, the Special Secretariat for Family Agriculture and Agrarian Development (SEAD). Pronaf's credit lines had been maintained, but without technical assistance, and it ended up running very slowly due to the suspension of the assigned budget. There was a call by interest groups supporting this government that these credit lines should further benefit middle-income and agribusiness farmers. The graphs of the evolution of the budgets for family farming instruments and for land-reform actions clearly illustrate the decrease in resources (Figure 2). On the other hand, instruments of support for the development of rural territories became completely paralyzed and the land-reform program that had just been revised was transferred to the Civil House as a means of centralizing the control of its evolution. Thus, the process initially driven by a strategy of arena-shifting was later replaced by an active dismantling.

Figure 2: Financial resources allocated to family farming and land reform policy instruments between 2015 and 2018, BRL million



Source: Niederle et al., 2019

After the 2018 Bolsonaro election, the dismantling process was expanded to additional sectors, including environmental and education policies, and pursued an even more radical and open strategy. The SEAD was renamed Secretariat of Family Farming and Cooperativism and subordinated to the Ministry of Agriculture (Decree 9667/2019), the institution historically identified with the interests of agribusiness sectors and recognized as participating in political tensions with the former MDA. Furthermore, most of the funds for family farming remained frozen by austerity measures and the councils for the design and monitoring of these policies were extinguished by presidential decree, particularly the National Council of Food and Nutritional Security (Decree 9759/2019). Traditional peoples have been consistently attacked by presidential speeches, which accuse them of blocking development activities and colluding with foreign actors at the expense of national sovereignty (Sauer et al., 2019). Finally, land titling (to landless farmers and indigenous populations) was obstructed. Regarding the indigenous populations, the institutional body responsible for recognizing their lands and receiving their demands was initially transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, which was blamed for hindering these policies' implementation.

Therefore, the dismantling process has exhibited high visibility in recent years, as politicians wish to pursue a clear and strong tactic. Brazilian far-right partisans are ideologically convinced that dismantling is the most appropriate solution and their electoral base, which is partially composed of conservative groups from the agribusiness sector, showcases a clear preference for dismantling.

Argentina: an intertwined process of dismantling

The process of the dismantling of policy instruments showed certain ambiguities in the case of Argentina. The Family Farming Law enacted in 2014 during the Cristina Kirchner administration was not modified by the neoliberal orientation of the Macri government which attained power in December 2015. A suspension of land evictions of peasants with precarious access to land was extended to 2019 by the Legislative power. Some programs were also maintained as a means of avoiding increasing conflicts and preserving certain commitments at the international level.

However, and very quickly after the new government reached power, some relevant changes were introduced in the institutionality related to family farming, implying a process of arena-shifting with low visibility in terms of mainstream public opinion. The former Secretariat of Family Agriculture (under the Ministry of Agroindustry) was merged with the Secretariat of Coordination and Territorial Development. Other components of the institutional framework were retained, such as a council composed of government officials and representatives of organizations (*Consejo de la Agricultura Familiar, Campesina y Indígena*), but its internal composition changed, and the number of meetings diminished. By 2018, meetings ultimately ceased and were replaced by decentralized contacts with selected groups. In addition, a specific instance of public-private dialogue concerning agrarian conflicts was abandoned (Nogueira et al., 2017; Montón, 2018).

A different kind of strategy was pursued through the changes instituted in the mechanisms for the implementation of certain policy instruments. For instance, registration in the National Registry of Family Farmers (RENAF) enables access to government programs; in 2017, the need for a new registration process was announced. Organizations claimed that they were excluded as registration entities and that new parameters were established, leading to a reduction in the number of registrants (Montón, 2018; Vigil, 2019). In the case of the Monotributo

Social Agropecuario (MSA), a new form of operation was introduced by the government; again, the consequence was an abrupt reduction in the number of farmers enrolled in the system. MSA was initially conceived as a specific tax system that gives farmers the possibility of issuing invoices and facilitates their access to health services and social security. The government, through the Ministry of Agroindustry, covered part of the individual contribution needed for sanitary insurance payment. In 2018, beneficiaries were required to update their registration within 40 days. Additionally, MSA was transferred to the Ministry of Social Development and Agroindustry ceased its contributions to beneficiaries' insurance. Thus, both instruments were maintained but their effective scope was diminished.

At the same time, other measures could be interpreted as dismantling by arena-shifting. New programs oriented to family farmers and those remaining from previous years were reoriented towards more capitalized segments, assisted on an individual basis (Bertoni and Soverna, 2018; Vigil, 2019). Support for family producers' organizations was reduced or ceased, affecting the smallest ones (Vigil, 2019). In addition, an entrepreneurial view, focused on productive and commercial issues, displaced the emphasis on access to rights that dominated the 2012-2015 period (Bertoni & Soverna, 2018; Nogueira et al., 2017).

This bias can also be observed in the requisites for accessing certain instruments. Legislation that began to be promoted during the second mandate of Cristina Kirchner, such as a norm creating a family farming seal, was taken up by the Macri administration. However, the criteria adopted imply strong barriers for small, less capitalized family farmers if there is no public support to facilitate compliance[2].

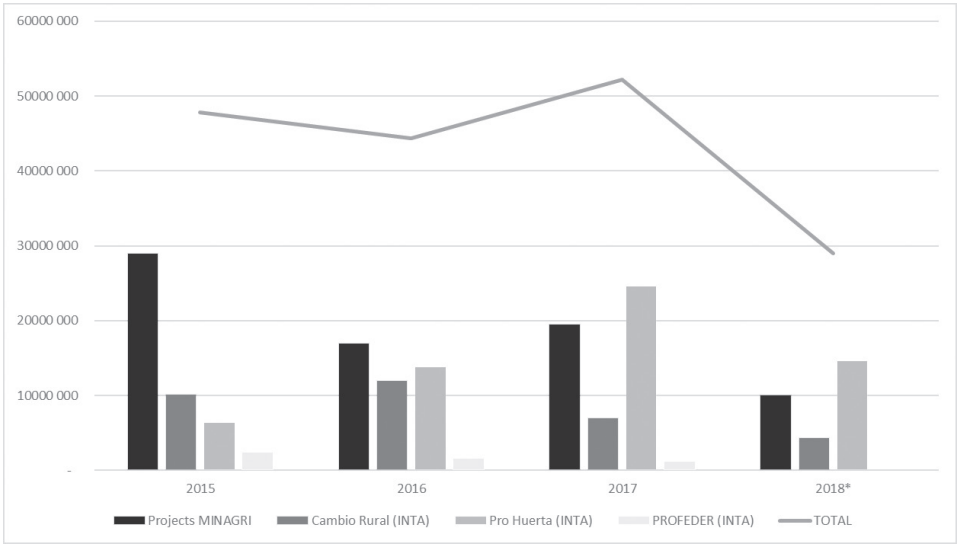
Along with these policy measures, other dismantling mechanisms could be subtle, implying a dismantling by default. For instance, the budget allocated to programs was not updated according to inflation (which reached more than 20% in 2017 and nearly 50% in 2018). Changes of officials in charge of executive areas at national and provincial levels paralyzed or postponed actions; in some cases, there were complaints about their lack of experience and their designation by partisan policy criteria (Vigil, 2019).

At the same time, a more overt process of active dismantling took place through the drastic reduction in the number of technicians assisting family farmers. Between 2016 and 2018, about 850 workers — nearly 60% of the total — were fired and some areas were left with virtually no technical assistance (Rang et al., 2018). Organizations denounced the budget reductions to programs oriented to the sector (Montón, 2018). In practice, technicians' field work was minimized, or even paralyzed, affecting subsistence producers to a great extent (Vigil, 2019). The absence of further regulation concerning the Family Farming Law enacted in 2014 facilitated this situation, an issue that will be taken up later.

A proxy of the family farming policies' budget evolution is provided in Figure 3, which includes the programs carried out by the Ministry of Agroindustry financed by external credit and those under the framework of the National Institute of Agricultural Technology (INTA). The figure shows that 2018 saw the most striking cut in funds; however, the ProHuerta program, which is oriented to poverty alleviation in urban and rural areas, was prioritized.

2 — For instance, good production practices and traceability of products must be certified. The application to obtain the seal must specify the production process, who is involved, and the volume produced (Resol. 330/17).

Figure 3: Argentina. Evolution of funds oriented to family farming



Funds in pesos argentinos were converted to dollars at the exchange rate in the beginning of each year. The budget assigned at the end of each year was considered except for 2018, when the assigned funds were considered.

Source: Authors, based on data provided by DIPROSE (Ministry of Agroindustry) and INTA

Considering the overall process, Nogueira et al. (2017) refer to an *emptying* of policies related to family farming behind the maintenance of an apparent institutionality. Bertoni and Soverna (2018) speak of a process of de-institutionalization. Beyond this characterization, the regressive evolution of the policy instruments oriented to family farming in Argentina should be evaluated in consideration of the whole picture: taxes on agricultural exports (mainly soybeans) were reduced, the exchange rate was released and a marked devaluation of the Argentine currency took place (of about 400 percent between 10/12/15 and 28/12/18). All these measures benefited export-oriented agribusiness while increasing agricultural input costs for farmers oriented to the domestic market. In addition, the orientation of the Macri administration was clearly expressed through the appointment of a representative of Sociedad Rural Argentina — the organization that represents the nation's big landowners — as Minister of Agroindustry in 2017.

Common stages in the process of policy dismantling

Drawing on the previous cases, the process of dismantling in Brazil and Argentina can be summarized in three main stages, although these are not always linear or mutually exclusive. First, the maintenance of institutions was followed by changes in policy content, or targeted beneficiaries. In the initial steps, preventing social protests and resistance may be a common strategy. This process is characterized by the preservation of instruments, but also by adjustments in the mandate, position, or name of the responsible institutions. The reduction of funds, human resources and institutional strength is gradual, or even discreet. This is expected, for instance, to preserve economic interests by maintaining farmers as providers or buyers, or even by transferring the benefits that were originally assigned to family farmers to entrepreneurs, according

to the "arena-shifting" modality. This was the decision made by the Macri administration in Argentina where the institutional framework was gradually downgraded. In Brazil, the Temer administration followed a similar path by first merging the two social and rural development ministries (MDA and MDS).

Second, policy dismantling relied on the severe contraction of both institutions and resources. In Argentina, the most striking features have been the reductions in field technicians, in operational resources to assist family producers and in transferred credits or subsidies. In Brazil, the Temer administration entrusted the management of the family farming and land-reform portfolio to Solidarity, a union competing with the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Contag) and the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), the social basis of the former MDA. However, this small union had neither human resources nor social support and so the initiative failed. The alternative was to place the new Secretary of Family Agriculture close to the central power in order to facilitate both political and judicial control of the category. In this context, programs such as Pronaf, which benefited from the interest of some agribusiness groups, was maintained, although with fewer resources, while programs based on alternative approaches (territorial development, support for traditional populations, land reform, indigenous lands) were paralyzed.

The third and final stage of policy dismantling is the suppression of institutionality and the criminalization of rural movements. These strategies rely on the straightforward extinction of family farming policies and on judicial control of reactions to dismantling. This stage corresponds to active dismantling and is currently underway in Brazil, but also in other Latin American countries such as Paraguay and Nicaragua (Freguin-Gresh and Perez, 2018; Friggeri, 2017).

The case studies provide evidence that policy dismantling is more often an incremental process of policy change. Although there are cases of sudden ruptures, a process of sequential stages of growing intensity is more likely to happen. Even in Brazil, where a major political shift and a process of institutional fragilization took place after the 2016 presidential impeachment, dismantling started imperceptibly, initially led by minor institutional changes.

3.2. Causes of dismantling

The factors leading to dismantling include structural conditions and contextual and institutional constraints regarding the features of the political system. Brazil and Argentina share several features regarding the macro-level determinants, the politics of the rural sector and the process of development of family farming policy portfolios. A slower pace of economic growth, coupled with a decrease in the dividends coming from agricultural exports, affected state incomes and weakened the ruling coalitions, which were composed of left-wing parties. The subsequent shift in the political orientation of governments — which, in the case of Brazil, has been accompanied by a substantial process of change in the institutional system — was the turning point that affected the dismantling of family farming policies. Finally, support for the family farming category during the 2000s lacked further institutional and political weight in terms of representing a countervailing power to the agribusiness commodities-export sector.

Structural and contextual factors

Both Brazil and Argentina experienced economic growth during the 2000s, which was partially sustained by the promotion of internal consumption and the export of primary products, particularly to Chinese markets. This economic model was accompanied by a major governmental effort to distribute dividends in order to reduce poverty and social inequality — an effort that

was maintained after the 2008 financial crisis as growth characterized Brazil and other countries in the global South, while economies of the global North faced recession. Nevertheless, the distribution of income and wealth remained uneven, especially in rural areas, and these countries' economies remained unstable in the international markets (Milhorance, 2018; Sabourin et al., 2015).

Furthermore, a few years after the global financial and economic crisis, the effects of recession also hit commodities export-oriented countries such as Brazil and Argentina. This initially resulted in budget cuts at the national level, which were applied in particular to policies linked to minority groups such as indigenous peoples, peasants' groups and landless farmers. Other Latin American countries followed a similar path, namely Bolivia, Uruguay, Costa Rica and Nicaragua (Sabourin and Grisa, 2018). Some scholars believe that, in the early 2010s, Brazil, Argentina and other emerging countries closed the expansion cycle that was initiated in the 2000s (Salama, 2014).

Along with the economic crisis, these countries faced political instability and governmental shifts. In Brazil, these factors led to the impeachment of the Workers' Party president, Dilma Rousseff, in 2016. The progressive left-wing government was replaced by conservative and ultraliberal political groups, reaching a higher degree of radicalization after the election of the far-right candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, in 2018. In Argentina, the progressive character of the Kirchner administrations, which ruled the country between 2003 and 2015, was replaced by the neoliberal administration of Mauricio Macri who promoted several austerity policies. These governmental shifts reinforced economic and political groups opposed to the development of family farming, which created an increasingly conflictive, or de-legitimizing, environment and led to the reduction of public investment in the sector. This process contributed to the dismantling of the family farming policy portfolio that was beginning not only in Brazil and Argentina, but also in other Latin American countries (Grisa et al., 2018; Vergara-Camus and Kay, 2017).

The external drivers of this dismantling process include the global wave currently contesting social democratic models and multilateralism (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018), which has reached Latin America and particularly Brazil. This wave paved the way to challenging the basis of social democracy, as well as the principles inherent in family farming policies, such as social participation in public policies, productive inclusion and protection of minority groups. In parallel, there has been a fragmentation of traditional social movements in Latin America, particularly trade unions, national federations and grassroots movements (Fachin, 2010).

In some countries, the co-opting of popular leaders to assume responsibilities in left-wing governments affected their leadership, or weakened their vigilance, and consequently reinforced the sector's political fragmentation. In Brazil, a distinction can be made between the so-called "new social movements" (environmentalists, indigenous groups and agroecologists) (Touraine, 1978) on the one side, which are less aligned with governmental efforts, and traditional unions on the other side (Gohn, 2011). The former have managed to mobilize broader sectors in society; however, they have more recently faced attacks, including criminalization by the judiciary power (Sauer & Mézsáros, 2017). In Argentina, together with the constitution and the legal formalization of the Federation of Family Farming Organizations (Fonaf) in 2011, other alternative initiatives led by landless producers, peasants and members of indigenous communities have emerged which questioned the "close ties" between Fonaf and the national government (Nogueira et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, the final, decisive structural factor in the dismantling process is the lack of rupture with the dominant economic model that drove the main agricultural policy strategies.

Even during progressive administrations, the support of governments and banks that was given to the agribusiness commodities-export sector remained untouched. Both in Brazil and Argentina, income redistribution to family and peasant farmers, as well as to other traditional peoples and communities, was marginal, sometimes corporatist, and related to specific social bases (Sabourin, 2018; Vergara-Camus and Kay 2017). In general terms, the governments' initial goal was to use the positive trade balance of commodity exports to finance social compensatory or pro-family farming policies. This was feasible during the early 2000s, given the high prices of agricultural commodities and the tacit agreement between states and the agribusiness sector; but it was a compromise that ultimately changed after the economic crisis.

As stated by Bauer et al. (2012), if there is little opposition, dismantling can be pursued to attack the core of a policy directly. Power relations changed in the mid-2010s and governmental support for family farming groups was no longer a priority. As discussed, the dismantling process was gradual, beginning with discreet budget cuts, justified by the economic crisis, until reaching an active and open political strategy. Therefore, depending on the power relations between beneficiaries, or between sectors, as well as on the capacity of government or affiliated media to sway public opinion, dismantling may not be "inherently unpopular" or "extremely treacherous" (Pierson, 1994).

Institutional constraints and opportunities

In addition to the structural factors, the weight of the institutional constraints confronting policymakers should be considered. These include not only those aspects related to the political system's features, but also the perception of costs and benefits, which varies according to the types of policies being considered. The greater the number and power of veto players, the lower the probability that an active dismantling strategy will be used, or that it will succeed (Bauer et al., 2012). For instance, Bauer et al. refer to the features of the US polity — namely legalism, distributed power and many checks and balances — that constrain dismantling and prevent "unilateral strategies." Indeed, the more that politicians need to seek consent from institutional, party, or other societal actors, the more costly the process becomes. Therefore, the institutional — even constitutional — context influences not only the mode, but also the concrete target, of policy dismantling (Bauer et al., 2012).

Overall, both Brazil and Argentina have faced institutional drawbacks, along with political and economic crisis. A detailed analysis of the governmental shifts in these countries is beyond the scope of this article. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting some of their trends: the fragilization of the progressive governments in place; the active role of media groups largely represented by conservative actors; the denunciations of left-wing leaders' corruption (Fuser, 2018). In Brazil, the process of dismantling went through a deeper process as it resulted from the fragilization of its political institutions. There has been a growing tension between the fragmented political system, which is characterized by a multi-party coalition presidentialism (*presidencialismo de coalizão*), and the legal system which has progressively acquired the prerogative of regulating political debate. All this has led to the politicization of legal institutions and the judicialization of national politics (Vilhena, 2018).

Neither public opinion, nor the perception of the distribution of the costs and benefits of dismantling, are objective; they are significantly affected by the institutional structures that obtain a certain momentum in a political system. Moreover, as Bauer et al. (2012) discuss, the features of each policy matter. According to the authors, the costs to be imposed on vulnerable (and deserving) beneficiaries when dismantling social policies may be concentrated, while the benefits are diffused across the rest of society. This particular feature would exert a powerful

and constraining influence on the way in which such policies are dismantled. In other words, the dismantling of this kind of policy would commonly start by way of more discreet paths.

Nevertheless, the preferences of the potentially affected political actors differ and the perception of the costs and benefits varies greatly depending on the historical meaning that a certain group of policies acquires. In Latin America in general, and particularly in Brazil, family farming policies were built largely thanks to the active role of social rural movements and their ability to form coalitions with governmental actors in specific periods. These policies were built on social struggles and on the institutionalization of a dual system that promoted concurrently distinct (and sometimes divergent) rural-development models (Milhorance, 2018). This led to tensions and contradictions between different state agencies, which remained unresolved and ultimately left space for the dismantling of actions when new administrations reached power.

An additional institutional factor observed in Brazil is the Bolsonaro administration's inclination to govern using presidential decrees. This leaves the congress and the constitutional court with the decision of whether to accept or refuse some of the daily policy options and reinforces the gradual judicialization process mentioned above (Vilhena, 2018). The role of Brazil's Constitution in protecting basic social rights was also questioned when congress approved a constitutional amendment that created a new fiscal regime for reducing health and education spending (95/2016). In the same way, although the right to adequate food was approved as constitutional in 2010 (amendment 64/2010), there is no consensus in Brazil regarding the relation of this right to family farming policies.

Apart from the features of each political system, the specific institutionality in the design of family farming policy portfolios may influence their resilience; in other words, it may affect their ability to resist opposition over the medium-to-long term. In Brazil, this institutionality relied on the federal government (ministerial guidelines), which is also the main source of funds used to implement them. Rousseff's impeachment in 2016 weakened these institutions at the national level. The lack of sufficiently powerful veto players in subnational institutions and in the (predominantly conservative) congress reduces prospects for constraining their dismantling. In Argentina, despite the increase in funds devoted to family farming policies during the 2000s, there was a frequent reliance on international subsidies or loans (Sabourin et al., 2015; Grisa et al., 2018). In this country, a family farming law was enacted in 2014 (Law 27.118/2014), but it did not include an allocation of specific funds to the sector; to be in effective operation, a law must be accompanied by a legal measure that establishes the way by which the recognized rights are exercised.

If the dismantling process began with the reduction of funds in the context of economic crisis, it was later shaped by voluntary, intentional dismantling as a portion of the political groups that took office actually perceived family farming policies not only to be ineffective but also to be on the opposite side of their preferences. The cost of such a process is perceived as limited as a common issue in Latin America is the lack of political weight of family farmers in terms of organizations and alliances among/with the broader society when facing agribusiness-sector resources and power (Sabourin, Sotomayor and Samper, 2015).

Therefore, the case of family farming policies in Argentina and Brazil aligns with Bauer et al.'s findings regarding the weight of political and structural factors in policy dismantling, particularly in political systems marked by institutional fragilities and by veto players who are limited in number (and in power). However, the results differ from the authors' theoretical expectations regarding the "type" of policies. Evidence in Brazil and Argentina shows that perception

of the costs and benefits of dismantling varies across jurisdictions — and not only across policy "types" or "sectors". This relates to the features of the political systems and to the socio-historical meaning of each policy portfolio in this system, their recognition in public opinion and in dominant coalitions. Finally, the relevance of institutional constraints may also be discussed within the broader context of the increasing fragilization of democratic institutions. As stated by several constitutionalists, the system of checks and balances is key; however, this system is not sufficient to prevent attacks against democratic institutions, as their resilience also relies on "informal" norms or, in other words, on both society's and politicians' commitment to these institutions (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Vilhena, 2018). In this context, the mobilization of social movements and their impact on national and international public opinion are the remaining options for resistance.

4. Perspectives and a future research agenda: reactions and resistance

The framework developed by Bauer et al. (2012) comprised the discussion of the outputs in terms of policy retraction (density and intensity) resulting from policy dismantling. Yet studies regarding not only the outcomes of this process, but also the reactions to it, are still underdeveloped. Although this issue needs a specific study, some general trends and points for defining a future research agenda are sketched out below.

It is important to highlight that reactions have not been homogeneous, given the diversity of resistance movements at the national level and the existence of distinct loci of social, land and socio-environmental conflicts. Despite this heterogeneity, three main trends were observed and these deserve further theorization and empirical analysis:

- **Bureaucratic adaptation**: in some cases, there is a relatively passive adaptation of civil servants and staff involved in the implementation of policies being dismantled. This also applies to the portion of social movements and trade unions supposedly interested in the maintenance of certain policies. This was the case with Contag, the main representative of family farming in Brazil, which preferred to negotiate with the Temer Government in order to maintain the specific credit allowance allotted to family farming.
- **Active and passive social resistance**: Active resistance may take several forms, ranging from conflicts in the countryside to long-term mobilization processes. The major campaigns are commonly organized by groups historically involved in social struggles (such as the landless, traditional communities and peasant movements) and comprise the protection of basic rights. This kind of resistance may involve strategies to gain public visibility and the forging of alliances with urban actors. In Argentina, several entities have gathered to promote joint actions; organizations such as the Union of Land Workers (UTT) carried out several "*verdurazos*" in main cities (the selling of groceries at very affordable prices) as a form of protest. In Brazil, large free meals prepared with agroecological products ("*banquetaços*") were organized in public spaces in 2019 as a means of attracting attention to the extinction of the National Council on Food Security. Maintaining political interaction is an additional passive-resistance strategy. In Brazil, despite the extinction of the territorial citizenship program, several councils continue to meet and discuss policy decisions informally at the state or municipal level, or with the support of the Federated States, as in the Northeast region (Milhorance, Sabourin and Mendes, 2019).
- **Label change by international/national organizations**: Relabeling family farming projects as a means of addressing global challenges is an additional reaction to policy dismantling. No longer able to fund family farming projects in collaboration with con-

servative or neoliberal governments, international cooperation agencies, such as IFAD, IICA and UNDP, began to raise funds for "climate-change adaptation," support of "low-income rural populations," promotion of "regional development" and "technological innovation" as a pretext for maintaining their technical and financial support to this group. For instance, FIDA-Mercosur, anticipating the crisis, decided to transfer an institutional strengthening and training project for the Confederation of Family Producers' Organizations of the Mercosur countries to its Rome-based office.

Working in the same direction, but at a national level, civil servants committed to family farming have tried to develop solutions to circumvent internal opposition, such as employing resources assigned to technological projects to support broader objectives related to family farming and to maintaining their presence at the territorial level.

Another type of resistance came from the Latin American regional-integration bodies, Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and, more particularly, the Community of States of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAC), which established a Ministerial Meeting on Family Agriculture and Rural Development. The latter reinforced its commitment to support the Plan of Action for Family Agriculture in El Salvador in December 2017 (Declaración Ministerial de la CELAC sobre Agricultura Familiar, 2017).

Conclusion

Family farming policies developed significantly in Latin America between 1995 and 2015, often promoted by rural social movements. Despite their results in terms of the promotion of food and nutritional security and productive and social inclusion, a process of dismantling has recently taken place. This paper has analyzed the causes and mechanisms of this process and provided elements to answer the question of why these relatively new and socially oriented policies have been so quickly and smoothly dismantled. Several structural, contextual and institutional factors were presented.

First, the article discussed the lack of rupture within the dominant agricultural policy model which is based on the allocation of resources primarily to the commodity export-oriented agribusiness. Family farming policies benefited from an increase in political legitimacy and funds during the 2000s and early 2010s; however, this was possible only as far as they were able to reduce social upheaval, or did not compete with the interests of national agrarian capitalism (Sabourin, 2018). Once opposing coalitions took office in both Brazil and Argentina, these policies lost importance in government and in parliament. Other factors included the global financial and economic crises, which contributed to the deepening of political instability in Brazil and Argentina. It is worth highlighting that, in both countries, the dismantling process occurred in a context of political changes that, in the case of Brazil, were also linked to the extranational interests of international financial capitalism, particularly land-grabbing (Sauer et al., 2019). Finally, the dismantling of family farming policies — and other policies as well — goes hand-in-hand with the global wave of fragilization of democratic institutions and the arrival in power of right-wing conservative groups.

Although the structural and contextual factors are more relevant in explaining the causes of the dismantling process, its speed and degree were related in particular to institutional fragilities in policy design and to the limited number (and power) of veto players in both countries. Therefore, although dismantling first began with discreet strategies such as default dismantling, particularly justified by budget cuts and the economic crisis, they quickly acquired visible and active features. Lastly, the results of this study differ in certain terms from Bauer et al.'s

framework as the perception of the costs and benefits of dismantling varies according to the socio-historical and political meaning of each group of policies.

The results call for a more detailed analytical framework of the causes, modalities and stages of policy dismantling to facilitate future in-depth and regionally based analyses. The notion of resilience in the design of policy portfolios may also add to this literature and deserves further research. Moreover, combining the theoretical framework with traditional policy-change theories (institutionalism, internationalization), democracy-regression theories and resistance strategies (reshaping, bypassing and overt and passive resistance) seems promising.

In terms of policy proposals, this study shows that it is strategic to overcome the corporatism of certain unions, to expand and strengthen coalitions of family farming with urban movements, such as environmentalists or those promoting ecology, food and nutrition security, education and health, and — in particular — to develop alliances with consumers willing to support family production of quality and healthy food. These kinds of policies can be considered reformist in the sense that they aim to improve current situations without fundamentally altering existing structures (Vergara & Kay, 2017). Nonetheless, in the present scenario, they seem important for supporting strategic actors in the rural sector and sustaining their connections with other sectors.

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Expertise, politics and public opinion at the crossroads of the European Commission's decision-making: The case of Glyphosate

Giulia Bazzan
Public Administration and Policy Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, Netherlands.

Marta Migliorati
Hertie School, Jacques Delors Centre, Berlin, Germany.

Abstract

With the growing politicisation of European Union (EU) integration, the European Commission is increasingly facing a tension between technocratic and responsive decision-making. How does this tension play out in the process of supranational implementation under comitology rules? We argue that the tension between the Commission´s role as a technocrat and as a responsive bureaucrat takes place during the implementation process when the issue at stake becomes politicised. We test our argument through the analysis of the Glyphosate renewal procedure (2015-2017). We process-trace the case by means of semi-structured interviews, media and document analysis. We find that with the increase of issue visibility and subsequent politicisation, the Commission progressively abandons a purely technocratic behaviour. First, it puts in place political strategies such as delays and blame-shifting to release itself from the burden of unpopular decisions. Secondly, it seeks to respond to concerns expressed by consumers by proposing compromise-based measures closer to public interest. Ultimately, we show how the outcome of the policy process is mediated by politicisation and characterised by a shift from technocratic to responsive decision making.

Keywords

EU Commission, decision-making, comitology, public opinion, politicization, consumer protection, responsiveness

Introduction

Among the plethora of existing ´non-majoritarian institutions´ (Majone, 1996; Thatcher & Sweet, 2002) engaging in policy-making and regulation world-wide (Gilardi, 2009; Majone, 1994), the European Commission has received some of the greatest attention in scholarly literature. In fact, its evolving features and role within the European Union (EU) system of governance makes it a particularly interesting object of investigation for several branches of political studies, ranging from organisational approaches to public policy analysis.

While the Commission was largely conceived as a technocratic, elite-driven institution in the early days of EU integration, operating outside the public's eye, an increasing bulk of literature looks at this institution as a ´politicised bureaucracy´ (Christiansen, 1997a) facing contrasting demands from the priorities of EU member states on the one hand, and from European citizens on the other. In fact, the originally technocratic institutional design of the EU, functional to the achievement of credible commitments to effective policy outputs (Majone, 2001, 2005; Moravcsik, 1998), has been subjected to growing politicisation (Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2009; De Wilde et. al 2016) that has fundamentally challenged insulated, technocratic, decision-making. (Haverland et al, 2007, p. 891). This view is corroborated by recent empirical evidence showing that the Commission displays a propensity to be responsive towards public opinion during its policy-making activities (Hartlapp, Metz, & Rauh, 2014; Haverland, de Ruiter, & Van de Walle, 2018; Rauh, 2016), by upholding diffuse public interests where the public notes the respective policy choices (Rauh, 2016)

Whereas, under growing politicisation, the tension between technocratic and responsive decision-making by the Commission has been mainly analysed from an agenda-setting standpoint, it has proved harder to observe within the context of supranational implementation, as the latter functions in a highly secretive manner through a system known as "comitology". Moreover, the system applies to very technical areas of policy-making that are expected to be dealt with in a very technocratic and consensual way (Joerges & Neyer, 1997). Against this background, throughout this article we argue that the tension between the Commission´s role as a technocrat and as a political actor also takes place during the process of supranational implementation, when the issue at stake manages to overcome the protected walls of comitology and enter the public arena. In support of our theoretical arguments, we provide a thorough empirical analysis of the development of a recent case of supranational implementation under comitology rules, i.e. the license renewal of the pesticide Glyphosate between 2015 and 2017.

With this study, we aim to contribute to several scholarly debates: first, we add significantly to the literature on EU public policy by offering original empirical evidence for the Commission´s responsiveness in the context of supranational implementation. Second, we contribute to the specific field of consumer protection by analysing a highly relevant case in this area. Finally, we enrich the wider discussion about normative and practical implications of non-majoritarian actors´ responsiveness in policy-making.

The article is structured as follows: after an overview of the institutional landscape and procedures under which the Commission operates when implementing supranational legislation, we will present our theoretical arguments relating to the Commission´s decision-making. We will then present the research design and measurement before testing our framework through process tracing.

In our case we find that with the increase of issue visibility and subsequent politicisation, the Commission progressively abandons purely technocratic behaviour. First, it puts in place po-

litical strategies such as delays and blame shifting to release itself from the burden of unpopular decisions. Second, it seeks to respond to concerns expressed by consumers by proposing compromise-based measures closer to public interest. Ultimately, we show how the outcome of the policy process is mediated by politicisation and characterised by a shift from technocratic to responsive decision-making.

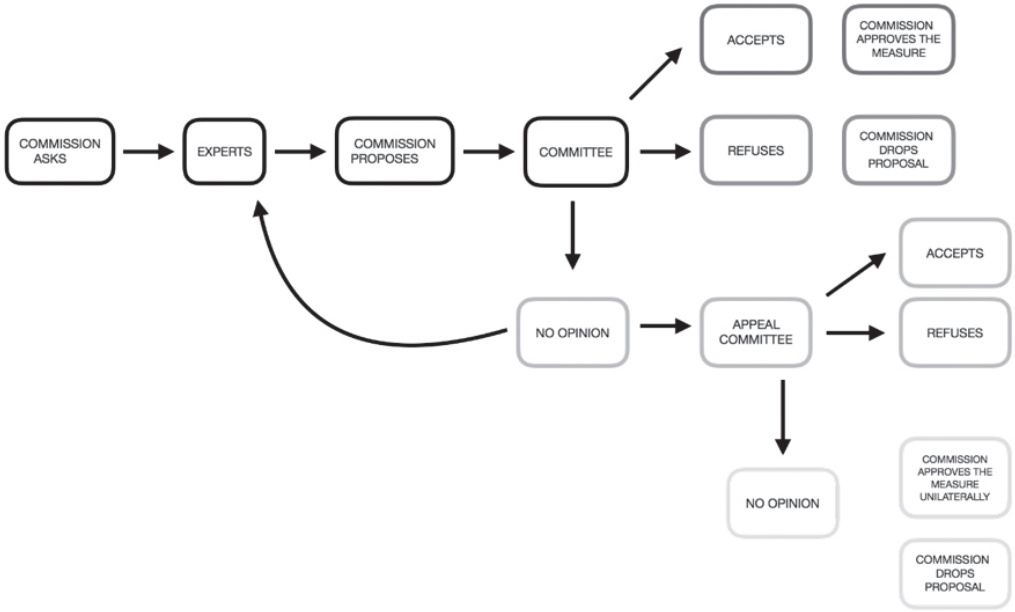
Mapping the institutional landscape: The Commission's decision-making under comitology

The dynamics at play in the process of supranational (EU-level) implementation are naturally influenced by the formal procedures and actors involved. Hence, in this section we provide an overview of the system under analysis.

The approval of implementing acts in several areas of EU law relies on ´comitology´ procedures. They apply when the Commission has been granted implementing powers in the text of a law, in order to discuss the implementation of measures before they are adopted, so as to ensure that these measures are applicable to the situation in the member states (Groenleer, 2011). Comitology committees are listed among the ´least transparent policy-making processes in the democratic world' (Shapiro, 1997), and are traditionally conceived as means of intergovernmental control of the functions of the Commission (Ballmann, et. al. 2002; Franchino, 2000; Pollack, 2003b; Steunenberg, Schmidtchen, & Koboldt, 1999). Yet, functionalist approaches have looked at them as channels of expertise, which are detached from political bargaining, and which serve the purpose of efficient problem-solving (Majone, 2005; Scharpf, 1988; Wessels, 1998). On a different note, Dehousse (2003) has showed how comitology committees work as ´transnational bureaucratic networks´, upon which the Commission exerts considerable power.In a more recent study (2014), the same author claims that comitology decision-making can be politicised and actually appears to be much more conflictual than it seems (Dehousse, Pasarín, & Plaza, 2014).

In sum, views on comitology differ and open multiple avenues of interpretation of what kind of power the Commission can exercise within them. Yet, besides the informal and often non-observable dynamics that may take place, under a legal standpoint, the Commission may have more or less power to decide upon the implementation of laws, according to the rules applying to different comitology procedures. These, in turn, depend on the issue under discussion. In particular, the ´examination procedure´ is able to produce three different outcomes, two of which may leave the Commission with considerable room for maneuver. According to this procedure, the Commission proposes a draft measure to the committee. When dealing with particularly technical policy areas, it bases its assessment on the advice of EU decentralised agencies (see for instance Groenleer, 2009; Kelemen, 2005; Migliorati, 2019), that is, 'EU-level public authorities with a legal personality and a certain degree of organisational and financial autonomy that are created by acts of secondary legislation in order to perform clearly specified tasks' (Keleman, 2002). Once the draft proposal is ready, member states' representatives in the committee can either adopt or reject it by qualified majority (55% of EU countries representing at least 65% of the total EU population). When they fail to reach the required threshold, however, they have the possibility to deliver a 'no opinion' vote and, if this happens, the same proposal is voted in an 'appeal committee', composed of government ministries. In this case, two alternative scenarios may unfold, as displayed in Figure 1. In the first one, the Commission approves the measure unilaterally. In the second, it seeks the approval of member states by either dropping the proposal, or by proposing modified measures until a qualified majority is reached.

Figure 1: Steps in the Examination Procedure



Source: European Commission's Website. Authors' illustration

Empirical evidence (Joerges & Neyer, 1997; Dehousse et. al 2014) shows that cases of ´no opinion´ happen especially in the field of product safety, because these areas are characterised by considerable tension between scientific opinions and policy preferences (Ansell, 2006; Weingart, 1999). The reasons underlying these voting outcomes derive from the uncertainty with regard to the potential adverse effects on public health and the environment of some of these substances, and the consequent resorting to the precautionary principle[1] of some member states (Tosun, Lelieveldt and Wing, 2019).

Previous empirical work (see Klika et al., 2013) shows that, especially in the context of GMO regulation, states are unable to decide by qualified majority, because they are deeply divided on these matters. Moreover, committee members have rigid negotiating mandates from their government. As a consequence, the responsibility of making decisions often rests on the Commission.

Under the present comitology regime, the Commission has the chance to ´take into account the deeply divided preferences of Member States´ (Klika et al. 2013, p. 333). What factors, then, shape the Commission´s decision-making in these situations? In the next section, we present our theoretical arguments in this regard.

When technocracy meets politics: The Commission's logics of decision-making

This section introduces the theoretical arguments in support of our expectations about the Commission's decision-making logics in the process of supranational policy implementation under the above-described comitology rules. Mainly, we claim that, when facing increasingly

1 — Art. 191 TFEU

politicised situations, the Commission is torn between its role as a non-majoritarian actor on the one hand, and a responsive one on the other. With this argument, we align with a view of the Commission as a 'politicised bureaucracy' faced with a dilemma between its duty to develop and apply common rules and continuous political pressure for deviation (Christiansen, 1997, p. 77).

First, we posit that in standard policy implementation scenarios, the Commission has a priori no reason *not* to act according to a technocratic style. The Commission is a non-majoritarian, technocratic actor by definition, which is delegated tasks by member states (Moravcsik 1998; Pollack 2003a; Franchino 2000; Franchino 2007) in order to produce credible and efficient policies, according to evidence-based criteria and scientific knowledge. When the Commission receives tasks from the member states, it is expected to perform them with different degrees of discretion (Franchino 2007) within the boundaries dictated by primary and secondary law. Especially when it is delegated tasks in very complex areas, requiring expertise that its officials do not have, the Commission relies substantially on the advice of EU agencies (Migliorati, 2019). Previous scholarly accounts have stressed how, for example, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) has gained de facto decision-making powers over time, and in most instances the agency's recommendation is simply adopted by the Commission as policy without any further investigation (Sabel & Zeitlin, 2008). Moreover, although it is difficult to quantify the extent to which the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) opinions are systematically included by the Commission in the policies it adopts (Groenleer 2009), different scholars suggest that the EFSA actively *makes* policy instead of simply delivering expertise to the Commission (Boin and colleagues, 2014; Hartley, 2016).

Against this backdrop, we argue that when the Commission has to implement legislation, it relies upon the best expertise available to it, by following technical advice and pursuing evidence-based measures (Schrefler, 2010). The standard decision-making style in the implementation of a supranational measure will be, in sum, based on evidence and largely technocratic.

- H0: In standard policy implementation scenarios, the Commission enacts a technocratic decision-making style, by following technical advice and evidence-based criteria.

Yet, the Commission may find itself in situations in which its reputation, intended as the 'set of symbolic beliefs about the agency's capacity, history, and mission' (Carpenter, 2010:33), is at risk. According to van der Veer & Haverland (2018), a regulator's reputation is a vital asset to the safeguard of its institutional position. In line with this claim, recent studies suggest that the Commission not only derives its legitimation from the added value it produces for its stakeholders (Majone, 1996; Menon & Weatherill, 2002), but also responds to public preferences, particularly in the field of consumer policies (Rauh, 2019). The implementation of consumer-related policies is particularly pressing for the Commission, as the primary objective of the General Food Law (Regulation 178/2002) is *consumer*'s and *public* health protection. Given that the Commission is the most important actor taking risk-management decisions at the EU level, for example to renew a license or to withdraw a dangerous substance, it does bear high political costs for unpopular decisions. Hence, if the Commission is exposed to public scrutiny, it plays a role not only as a technocratic actor, but also as a political one. If an issue debated in comitology comes into the public domain, the Commission has reputational incentives to protect its image by enacting political strategies such as delaying and blame-shifting on the one hand, and by seeking compromise-based solutions in response to concerns raised by consumers on the other.

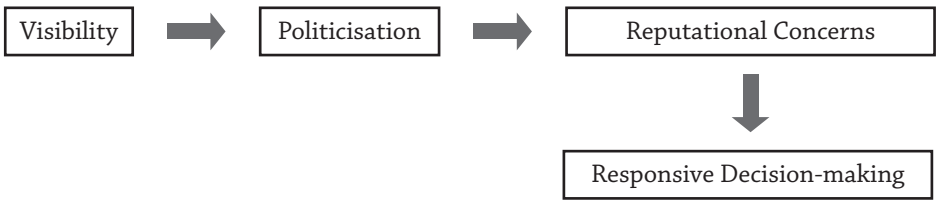
We argue, in sum, that reputational concerns in supranational implementation become a reality for the Commission when the issue at stake manages to travel outside the ´protected walls´ of comitology. When the issue becomes growingly politicised, namely visible, polarised and an object of public mobilisation (De Wilde 2011; Hutter et al. 2016), the Commission faces growing reputational concerns that, in turn, produce political behaviour and ultimately responsive decision-making.

- H1: When the Commission has to face reputational concerns, it shifts from a technocratic decision-making style to a responsive one.

Table 1 summarises our main hypothesis and the mechanisms underlying it. In the next section, we present our research design.

Table 1: Hypothesised mechanism

Hypothesis	**Mechanisms**
H1: When the Commission has to face reputational concerns, it shifts from a technocratic decision-making style to a responsive one.	During the process of supranational implementation, issue visibility triggers politicisation, which, in turn, exposes the Commission to reputational threats. Therefore, the Commission shifts from a traditional technocratic decision-making style to a responsive one by implementing measures closer to diffuse public interests.



Research design

Method

Drawing on Klijn and colleagues (2010), we seek to focus on the procedural mechanisms, i.e. the system of actions and interactions, in time and space, between the different actors along the decision-making process in relation to specific outcomes (Kaufmann & Majone, 1986; Righettini & Bazzan, 2017: 312). According to Mayntz, mechanisms state how and by which intermediary steps a certain outcome follows from a set of initial conditions (2004: 241). Mechanisms are widely recognised as factors that have specific consequences for specific actors in a decisional network (Barzelay 2007:533). We hence undertake a causal reconstruction of real-world events pointing to the activation of the hypothesised mechanisms (Barzelay, 2007: 528) by means of theory-testing process tracing (Beach & Pedersen, 2013: 56-60). This is a deductive approach recognised as ideal to grasp the interlocking parts of a mechanism leading from X to Y. We are aware that this methodology maximises the internal validity of causal inferences, whereas it does not generate any external validity per se, and therefore makes generalisation

harder (Schimmelfennig, 2015:103). In spite of these limitations, we deem this methodology as the most suitable to detect the critical point at which a mechanism is ´unlocked´- in this case, the mechanisms leading the Commission´s decision-making from technocratic to responsive.

Data

The selected case presents a great advantage in comparison to most comitology procedures, because the salience that the renewal of Glyphosate acquired over time put the decision-making process under the spotlight. A considerable amount of data therefore exists. This includes extensive media coverage, European Parliament debates, publications, open letters and public statements. In order to increase the overall robustness of the study, we triangulated the available empirical information with semi-structured interviews, conducted with actors directly involved in the process. We opted to gather perspectives from several sides of the policy spectrum by including: one legal expert in EU politics and advocacy; one highly-ranked Commission representative; one attaché member of the Committee of Plants Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF); two civil society members directly involved in the case, and a Member of the European Parliament working in the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development. We were unable to talk with members of the European Food Safety Authority, as they refused to be interviewed to avoid further controversies due to the excessive politicisation of the matter[2]. We did not talk with farmers' organisations and industry representatives, as their unified pro-Glyphosate position emerged clearly from public statements and documents. Table 2 displays a list of interviewees (anonymous), roles, dates, places and durations of the interviews.

Table 2- List of interviewees

Interviewee id	Role	Place, Date	Duration
Interviewee 1	Lawyer (EU policies and ECI expert)	Phone interview, 20 February 2018	15 minutes
Interviewee 2	European civil society member (10-year experience in agrarian and environmental justice)	Phone interview, 28 February 2018	30 minutes
Interviewee 3	European civil society member (ECI coordinator).	Phone interview, 23 March 2018	30 minutes
Interviewee 4	European Commission member, former PAFF Committee Chair	Phone Interview, 5 April 2018.	
Interviewee 5	Member of the European Parliament, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development.	Phone interview, 28 March 2018	30 minutes
Interviewee 6	PAFF Committee Member (Agriculture and fisheries attaché)	Phone Interview, 18 May 2018	30 Minutes

2 — Email with EFSA Senior Legal Officer, date: 19 February 2018

A final methodological remark relates to the impact of the case selection on the generalisability of our findings. Being particularly salient in comparison to most cases of comitology procedures, the representativeness of the case may be reduced and, as a consequence, its generalisability as well. However, we maintain that if the theorised mechanisms find empirical corroboration in this specific case, the same mechanisms could occur during any examination procedure, if the latter is subjected to the same conditions of politicisation. In sum, the peculiarity of the case makes it possible to observe dynamics that may potentially occur, although they often do not. In addition, given the increasing politicisation of EU issues, we cannot exclude that this kind of case will take place more frequently in the future.

Measurement

In applying process tracing to our single-n case, we detected a series of observable manifestations (i.e. indicators) of our main variables of interest.

Our dependent variable, that is the Commission´s decision-making style, varies from technocratic to responsive. If technocratic decision-making is in place, we expect to observe that the Commission proposes measures in line with agencies´ opinions and with limited engagement with the public (Schrefler, 2010; Groenleer 2009). In case of public engagement, we expect this to be only limited to evidence/science-based claims (Boswell, 2009). Conversely, if the Commission behaves as a ´responsive bureaucrat´ (Rauh, 2016), we expect to observe political behaviour including blame-avoidance strategies, where the Commission tries to avoid or to postpone position-taking (Hartlapp et. al, 2014) and direct public engagement through statements and press releases (Muhlbock and Tosun, 2018). Finally, a policy outcome driven by responsive behaviour would be observable in case the Commission´s proposal reinforces the regulatory distribution of rights and risks among producers and consumers, in favour of consumers (Rauh, 2016).

Theoretically, we claim that issue politicisation plays a crucial role in triggering the Commission´s behaviour in supranational decision-making. According to previous research, the politicisation of EU integration in general is composed of three dimensions. The first one is salience, i.e. the degree to which European integration is visible and important to citizens. The second is polarisation, intended as the degree to which public opinion diverges. The third is mobilisation, meaning the extent to which the public engages with EU integration-related issues (De Wilde et al. 2016; Rauh 2016: Chapter 2). In the context of our empirical analysis, we look at politicisation along these three dimensions while focusing on one specific issue. Hence, we identify salience as the extent to which our object of investigation is visible in the media and debated in public. When an issue becomes salient, we expect to observe increased visibility through news, media and public debates on the subject at stake. Second, we identify polarisation in high disagreement about the topic under discussion, resulting in conflict among member states and politicians, manifestly diverging preferences, and no opinion votes in comitology. Third, we identify mobilisation in advocacy activities, public protests and the use of instruments of democratic participation such as the European Citizens´ Initiative. Table 3 summarises the indicators mentioned above.

Table 3- Variables and indicators

Scope conditions: Scientific uncertainty, issue complexity/technicality, examination procedure		
Variables (steps in the causal chain)	**Indicator (observable manifestations)**	**Literature**
Technocratic decision-making	Evidence-based criteria, no/very limited engagement with the public, reliance on available expertise, science-based claims	Schrefler, 2010; Groenleer 2009; Rimkutė & Haverland, 2015; Joerges & Neyer 1997; Boswell, 2009
Politicisation	**Salience/Visibility:** Media coverage (newspapers, tv, internet); public debates (politicians, civil society, sector specific actors…) **Polarisation**: generalised disagreement about the topic, interstate conflict, no consensus in comitology, contrasting public statements by politicians **Mobilisation:** Protests, advocacy activities, European Citizens' Initiative)	
Responsive decision-making	The Commission´s direct engagement with the public through public statements and press releases, delay strategies (e.g. delaying a vote), blame avoidance through public statements. The Commission's proposal reinforces the regulatory distribution of rights and risks among producers and consumers, in favour of consumers	Muhlbock and Tosun, 2018; Hartlapp et al., 2014; Rauh 2016

In the next section, we proceed to the empirical reconstruction of the Glyphosate renewal process, followed by an analysis in light of our theoretical expectations.

The Glyphosate renewal process

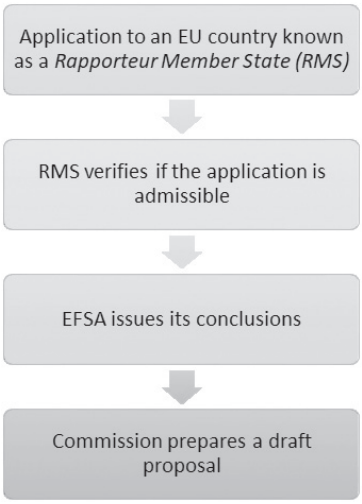
Product safety rules in the EU

The approval of active substances[3] in the EU explicitly requires the concerted action of the European Commission and one EU agency in particular, the European Food Safety Authority

3 — The active component against pest/plant diseases contained in pesticide products. Glyphosate, the object of our empirical analysis, belongs to this category.

(EFSA), to implement supranational provisions applicable in the member states' territories. The procedure starts with an application issued by the producer to a designated Rapporteur Member State (RMS), whose competent authority verifies if the application is admissible. Within 12 months from the notification of admissibility, the RMS prepares a draft assessment report (DAR), assessing whether the active substance can be expected to meet the approval criteria. The DAR is then submitted to the Commission and the EFSA. The EFSA then proceeds to peer review and has to adopt, within 120 days, a conclusion on whether the substance can be expected to meet the approval criteria. Within six months of receiving the conclusion, the Commission presents a review report and a draft regulation on approval or non-approval of the active substance. This is when the comitology procedure starts and member states' representatives are asked to either adopt or reject the Commission's draft proposal by qualified majority, following the comitology rules mentioned previously. Figure 2 summarises the approval procedure.

Figure 2- Active Substances Approval Procedure



Source: the Authors

T1. A standard renewal procedure

In 2012, the 15-year license of the active substance Glyphosate was about to expire and required re-approval through the above-described procedure. Hence, several companies, under the name of 'Glyphosate Task Force', notified the Commission about their wish to renew it[4]. The Glyphosate rapporteur's competent authority, the German Bundesinstitut für Risikobewertung (BfR), delivered its first draft report in December 2013[5]. At the time, some civil society activists were already interested in Glyphosate because it is usually associated with intensive agriculture and Genetically Modified crops, but the issue was mostly ignored by media outlets and largely unknown to the wider citizenry.

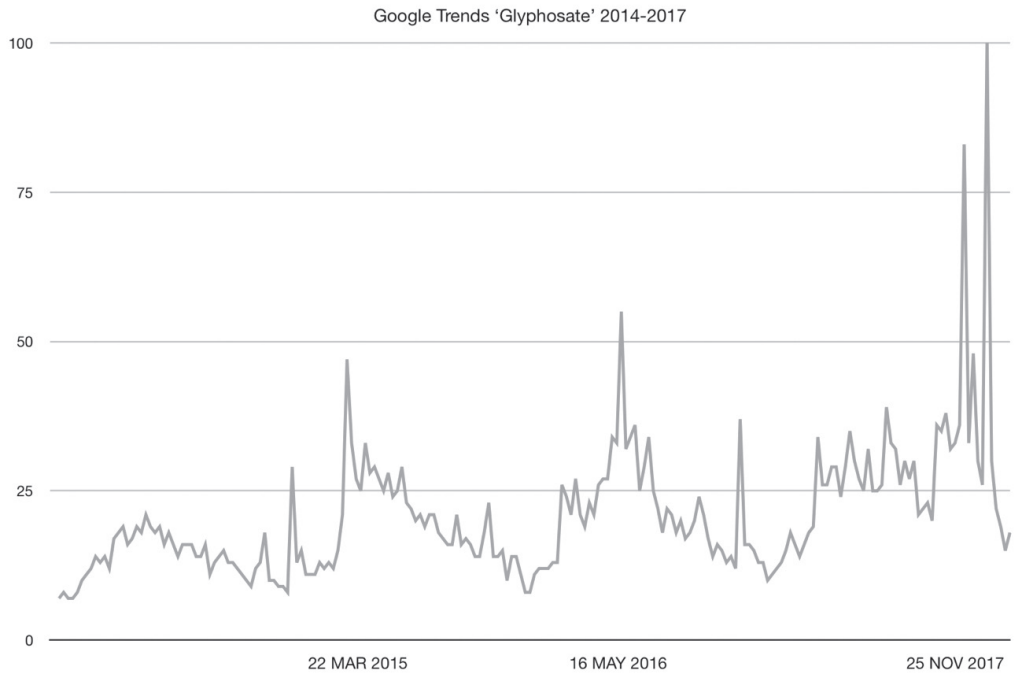
4 — The Glyphosate Task Force published also a position paper on May 2013 to stress its position in favour of the renewal of the substance: http://www.Glyphosate.eu/system/files/mc-files/position_paper_of_the_Glyphosate_task_force.pdf (accessed: October 2019)

5 — https://www.bfr.bund.de/en/the_bfr_has_finalised_its_draft_report_for_the_re_evaluation_of_Glyphosate-188632.html (accessed: October 2019)

T2. EFSA vs IARC and issue visibility

While the EFSA was conducting its assessment, on 20 March 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) published a report stating that Glyphosate was 'probably carcinogenic to humans' (IARC, 2015). The IARC's report served as a catalyst of visibility. Given that Glyphosate, employed by the multinational Monsanto in the preparation of a pesticide known as Roundup®– is the most widely used herbicide across the EU territory, the effect of this assessment had high resonance on worldwide and EU media[6]. The chart in Figure 3 displays Google trends indicating how salience started increasing sensibly exactly from March 2015 onward. This is also shown by news trends[7], and confirmed by our interviewees (interviews with interviewees 2 and 3).

Figure 3– Google trends Glyphosate 2014-2017



Source: Google Trends

From then onward, the diatribe about the dangerousness of Glyphosate was inserted at the centre of a wider debate about the alleged flaws attributed by civil society to the system of pesticide approval in the EU (interviews with interviewees 2, 3 and 6). The IARC's report therefore signified an ideal opportunity for civil society to make health safety issues connected to pesticide use more visible.

6 — The search for news related to Glyphosate in the period 20 March 2015 – 30 April 2015 on Google news produced a record of over 70 pertinent items from all over the world

7 — The search for news related to Glyphosate in the period 2013-2014 (when the standard renewal process started) on the Euractiv portal produced a record of 1 item (https://www.euractiv.com/?s=Glyphosate&year=2013&monthnum=&post_type=&sections= accessed: October 2019).
The same search in the period 2015-2017 (after IARC's report publication) produced a record of 266 items (https://www.euractiv.com/?s=Glyphosate&year=2015&monthnum=&post_type=&sections= accessed: October 2019)

The Commission initially responded to this escalation in visibility in a largely technocratic way, without releasing public statements, and by simply giving to the EFSA, on 30 April 2015, a further mandate to consider the IARC's publication in its final assessment[8]. For this reason, the EFSA's deadline was extended[9], and the agency delivered its risk assessment report on 12 November 2015 arguing that 'Glyphosate is unlikely to pose a carcinogenic hazard to humans' (EFSA, 2015). This opinion, which went utterly against the IARC's assessment, met on the one hand an outraged reaction from the scientific community, exemplified by an open letter sent by a scholar, Professor Christopher J. Portier, and co-signed by 95 scientists on November 27, 2015[10]. On the other, it was welcomed by farmers' associations and Glyphosate producers[11], for which the stakes of renewal were very high.

T3. The long road to the first examination procedure

The license re-approval was pending, at this point, upon a vote in the committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (PAFF). In March 2016, the Commission sought to reapprove the substance for the 15-year period in line with the EFSA´s assessment[12], but Italy, France, Sweden and the Netherlands informally opposed a new 15-year license for Glyphosate. The Commission then postponed the meeting until further notice. Visibility grew stronger in April 2016, when the European Parliament voted, on the first reading, a motion for a non-binding resolution urging the Commission to renew the marketing approval of Glyphosate for just seven years, instead of 15[13]. The motion was adopted with 374 votes in favour, 225 against and 102 abstentions[14]. On 19 May 2016, the vote on Glyphosate renewal was once again delayed by the Commission. Indeed, although most member states were in favour of a re-approval (EU Commission, 2016), they would not have obtained the required majority. This time Germany (whose vote is often crucial under QMV, being the largest EU country) announced its intention to abstain due to divisions within the government on the matter, and so did France (De Carbonnel, 2016)[15]. As the license was due to expire on 30 June 2016, Commissioner Andriukaitis gave a press release on 1st June, wishing a rapid agreement and claiming that the ´ball is now in the Member States' court´[16] as regards the re-approval.

The first committee vote eventually took place in spite of the controversies (6 June 2016), on a Commission proposal of ten years instead of 15, in view of compromising with such concerns and securing a swift decision (interview with interviewee 6, Commission Press release 1 June 2016)[17]. On that day, the committee delivered a 'no opinion' vote, with 20 members in favour,

8 — https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2015.4302
9 — Ref. Ares(2015)3342030 – 11/08/2015 Subject: EFSA peer review of the active substance Glyphosate – Your request for extension of the target date to consider the findings by IARC as regards the potential carcinogenicity
10 — http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Prof_Portier_letter.pdf (accessed: October 2019)
EFSA replied to Professor Portier's letter on 13 January 2016: http://www.efsa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/EFSA_response_Prof_Portier.pdf (accessed: October 2019)
11 — http://monsantoblog.eu/the-european-food-safety-authority-Glyphosate-is-unlikely-to-pose-carcinogenic-hazard-endefrnlesro/#.VkTOkVNVhBc (accessed: October 2019)
12 — The Guardian, 8 March 2016 (https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/mar/08/eu-vote-on-controversial-weedkiller-licence-postponed-Glyphosate accessed: October 2019)
13 — http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2016-0119_EN.html (accessed: October 2019)
14 — http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/CRE-8-2016-04-13-ITM-012-09_EN.html (accessed: October 2019)
15 — https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-eu-glyphosate/eu-delays-vote-on-weed-killer-glyphosate-licence-amid-cancer-row-idUSKCN0YA1M1 (accessed: October 2019)
16 — https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-16-2011_en.htm (accessed: November 2019)
17 — https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/commission-says-10-year-glyphosate-extension-is-a-starting-point-for-debate (accessed: October 2019)

one against (Malta) and seven abstentions (Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Austria, Portugal and Luxembourg)[18]. On 24 June 2016, the appeal committee failed to deliver an opinion once again. This time, France joined Malta in its opposition, while Bulgaria joined the abstention side[19].

T4: The temporary re-approval

The Commission then had to decide by 30 June 2016 whether to keep Glyphosate on the EU list of approved active substances. Otherwise, after a six-month 'grace period', member states would have been obliged to remove Glyphosate from the market[20]. Eventually, it decided to extend Glyphosate's license for an extra 18 months, pending a further assessment of the substance classification by the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA). On 15 June 2017, the ECHA's Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) submitted its scientific opinion to the European Commission, concluding that the available scientific evidence did not meet the criteria to classify Glyphosate as a carcinogen (ECHA, 2017)[21].

T5: Mobilisation: the European Citizens' Initiative and the EFSA under the spotlight

In spite of the scientific evidence gathered by EU agencies against carcinogenicity, the debate over Glyphosate escalated, and a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI)[22] was launched in January 2017. The ECI asked to ban the herbicide from the internal market and had high resonance in several countries, eventually reaching over one million signatures in July[23]. Controversies reached their peak when, in September 2017, a number of European media outlets published articles questioning the integrity of the EFSA risk assessment of Glyphosate, as the EFSA had allegedly copied and pasted large portions of the dossier from the Monsanto application to BfR (The Guardian, 2017)[24]. The European Parliament's Environment and Agriculture Committee held a public hearing on the 'Monsanto Papers' on 11 October 2017[25] and subsequently called on the Commission to 'adopt necessary measures' to phase out the use of Glyphosate 'no later than 15 December 2022' (European Parliament, 2017)[26]. The day after, the Commission decided not to proceed on a formal committee vote on the ground that committee members were still deeply divided on the matter[27], and proposed a new text asking for a seven- to five-year renewal (interview with interviewee four).

T6: The third comitology vote and a five-year renewal

As the grace period was about to expire once again after the ECHA's positive assessment, on 9 November 2017 the third vote on Glyphosate renewal took place. Pressured from different

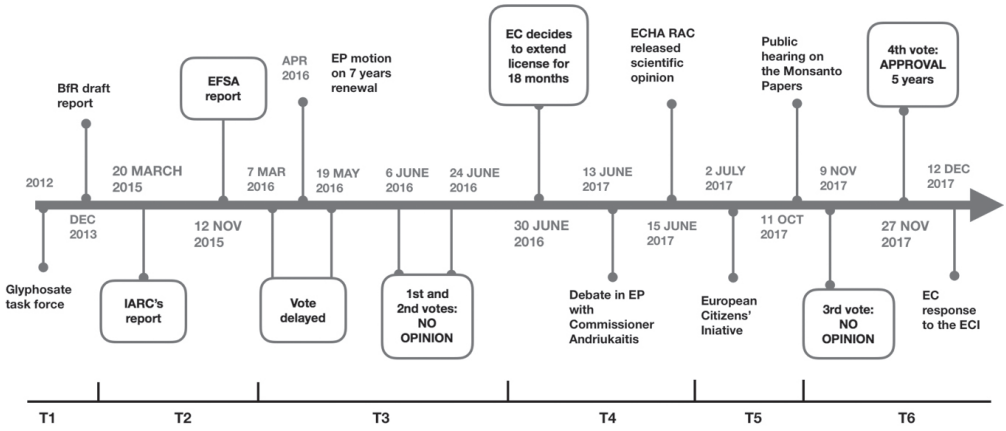
18 — https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm?do=search.dossierdetail&Dos_ID=12899&dos_year=2016&dc_id= (accessed: October 2019)
19 — https://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm?do=search.dossierdetail&Dos_ID=12970&dos_year=2016&dc_id= (accessed: October 2019)starting-point-for-debate (accessed: October 2019)
20 — https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-2012_en.htm (accessed: October 2019)
21 — https://echa.europa.eu/-/glyphosate-not-classified-as-a-carcinogen-by-echa (accessed: October 2019)
22 — The ECI is an instrument through which one million EU citizens who are nationals of at least one quarter of the member states can call directly on the European Commission to propose a legal act
23 — https://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/initiatives/successful/details/2017/000002 (accessed: October 2019)
24 — https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/plant/docs/pesticides_glyphosate_paff_meeting_sum_20171005.pdf (accessed: October 2019)
25 — http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/agri/events-hearings.html?id=20171009CHE02661 (accessed: October 2019)
26 — http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0395_EN.pdf?redirect (accessed: October 2019)
27 — https://euobserver.com/health/139634 (accessed: October 2019)

fronts, including the European Parliament and citizens, the Commission proposed a renewal of five years. The meeting resulted in a no-opinion outcome[28], and this time the Commission had to face an even stronger opposition than in 2016: Belgium, Greece, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria. While Romania, Poland, Germany, Portugal and Bulgaria abstained, and the remaining 14 member states backed the proposal (interview with interviewee 2).

Against all odds, given the impasse, the appeal committee that reconvened on 27 November 2017 eventually approved the renewal of Glyphosate for five years[29], thanks to Germany´s agricultural minister who, unexpectedly and in contrast with his own government's directions, voted in favour of the renewal instead of abstaining[30].

On 12 December 2017, the Commission finally adopted the license renewal for five years, and published a response to the European Citizens' Initiative[31], concluding that 'the Commission has no basis to submit the co-legislators a proposal to ban Glyphosate' (European Commission, 2017). It added that, in line with the European Parliament and citizens´ demands, the five-year renewal period was 'significantly shorter than the maximum of 15 years foreseen in EU legislation' (European Commission, 2017). Figure 4 summarises the case timeline.

Figure 4- Timeline



Source : the Authors

Analysis and Discussion

The case reconstruction depicts a standard comitology decision-making procedure that shifts

28 — https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/plant/docs/sc_phyto_20171109_pppl_summary.pdf (accessed: October 2019)

29 — https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/plant/docs/sc_phyto_20171127_pppl_summary.pdf (accessed: October 2019)

30 — Since the beginning, Germany's line had been to abstain given the divisions between the social democrats (anti-Glyphosate) and CDU. When the government crisis started, after the September federal elections, the Agriculture minister Schmidt took the decision "on his own" in spite of Merkel's directions and the veto of the Environment minister Hendriks https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/streit-um-unkrautvernichter-minister-schmidt-hat-glyphosat-alleingang-monatelang-geplant-1.3769947 (accessed: October 2019)

31 — https://ec.europa.eu/food/sites/food/files/plant/docs/pesticides_glyphosate_eci_final.pdf (accessed: October 2019)

into an increasingly politicised one. The Commission initially pursued a technocratic decision-making style, exemplified by its reliance on technical advice and evidence-based criteria. When the IARC published its report, the Commission´s first reaction was to assign the EFSA more time to carry out its assessment, and to avoid delivering public statements or press releases of any kind (T1). However, it progressively had to face multiple concerns, including the European Parliament's call for a license reduction (and later on, license withdrawal), concerns of several member states about the IARC's report, and public mobilisation culminating in the European Citizens' Initiative.

Facing such a thick wall of 'dissensus', the Commission progressively abandoned its technocratic decision-making style in favour of political moves and, eventually, responsive behaviour. First, it put in place delaying and blame-shifting strategies. The reconstruction of the case shows how, after cancelling *two votes* because it knew that states would not reach the required majority, the Commission's first official proposal was of ten years, and was anticipated by an official statement by the Commissioner in person, claiming that states had the ultimate responsibility on the matter (T3). In absence of a favourable vote in the committee in June 2016 (T4), the Commission faced the first direct threat to its reputation, and the first high tension between the two decision-making logics. Formally, the Commission could have renewed the product's licence at least for the proposed ten-year period. In fact, the EFSA had confirmed its previous assessment about non-carcinogenicity[32], the examination procedure granted the Commission decision-making power over the matter, and the European Parliament was formally unable to stop any decision in comitology. However, following the EFSA´s opinion *tout-court* and reapproving the substance for the full period would have damaged the Commission´s reputation as a consumer protector by going against civil society and European Parliament demands. Further, to ban it would have meant applying the precautionary principle excessively strictly, by putting the IARC's assessment before EU agencies' and challenging the reputation of its own experts. Hence, between the choice of being entirely technocratic or entirely responsive, the Commission opted to delay the decision until further notice. It renewed the license for just 18 months pending the ECHA´s assessment and, eventually, a re-approval in comitology[33]. Alongside this extension, it continued to shift the blame for the renewal upon states (interview with interviewee 6). This emerges from our direct interviews, but also from Mr Juncker's speech about the state of the Union in 2016, stating that 'It is *not right* that when EU countries cannot decide among themselves whether or not to ban the use of Glyphosate in herbicides, the Commission is *forced* by Parliament and Council to take a decision. So, we will change those rules – because *that is not democracy*' (Juncker, 2016, emphasis added)[34].

The pressures posed by the numerous signatories of the ECI, accompanied by a very vocal European Parliament[35] (T5), finally (T6) led the Commission to propose a renewal as short as possible (interviews with interviewees two and six), i.e., five years (given that the renewal procedure itself lasts between three and five years). Such a proposal was the result of behaviour that had ceased to follow a technocratic logic. The Commission based its decision neither on agencies' assessment, nor on member states' preferences. Not only, at that point, had multiple assessments by the EFSA and the ECHA corroborated the non-carcinogenicity of the substance, but

32 — https://efsa.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.2903/j.efsa.2017.4979 (accessed: October 2019)

33 — https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/commission-prolongs-glyphosate-licence-by-18-months/ (accessed: October 2019)
https://ec.europa.eu/food/plant/pesticides/glyphosate/earlier-assessment_en (accessed: October 2019)

34 — https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-16-3043_en.htm (accessed: October 2019)

35 — http://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2017-0395_EN.pdf?redirect (accessed: October 2019)

several states were also *not* in favour of a slim five-year re-approval. All our direct sources confirm that Romania, Poland and Bulgaria did not back the five-year proposal because they did not see any valuable reason not to have a 15- or ten-year renewal, given the positive assessments by the agencies (interviews with interviewees two, three, five, six). Belgium and Austria, on the other hand, had decided to oppose the proposal due to the strong resonance of the European Citizens' Initiative in their countries (interview with interviewee five). Given that Romania, Bulgaria and Poland represent 13% of EU population, while Belgium and Austria about 3%, the Commission would have benefited more, if seeking a larger consensus, from sticking to a ten-year proposal instead of proposing five years. In sum, with the escalation of politicisation, the Commission progressively shifted from a technocratic style to a responsive one, in order to secure its reputation vis-à-vis European consumers, represented by civil society organisations and the European Parliament (interview with interviewees one, three and six). Commissioner Andriukaitis in particular, made clear, before the last vote, that the Commission had followed all legal rules, that it simply could not ban the substance even if it wanted to, and that it had no intention of taking any decision without support from the member states[36].:

> I am legally obliged to finalise the situation about Glyphosate, obliged by the law adopted by this very house. We cannot phase out the substance because there is no legal ground to do that. Who will pay fines if I take such a measure? They will go to court, because I am the one legally responsible. What can we do here? For me, it is crystal clear, science-based arguments are on the ground. Some say I am avoiding the precautionary principle – NO! I asked ECHA to assess once again because of the precautionary principle, and now I have no grounds to use it! (Andriukaitis, 2017)[37]

At the end of the process, the Commission did not ban Glyphosate, because there was no legal ground to do it, given agencies´ multiple assessments of non-carcinogenicity. Yet, it did propose a ten-year license reduction, which goes in the direction of reinforcing the regulatory distribution of rights and risks in favour of consumers. The Commission was thus able to secure its reputation regardless of the final outcome in the Committee vote: even in case of a unilateral approval, the Commission could have claimed to have done everything in its power to reduce the license to a minimum.

Conclusions

The Glyphosate license renewal is an example of increasingly politicised disputes about public health and environmental protection on the one hand, and the economic interests of both pesticides' producers and users on the other. During this conflict, an increasing level of public attention was paid to the issue, and a turbulent decision-making process followed. This case shows how such disputes can heavily affect the policy process by modifying not only the preferences of states, but also of non-majoritarian actors such as the Commission.

Hutter and colleagues (2016) argue that if an issue is not debated in public and is not articulated by political organisations, it can only be politicised to a limited extent. In the scenario we described, visibility generated a snowball effect producing politicisation and, eventually, created tension between technocratic decision-making on the one hand and responsive decision-making on the other. The process shows, ultimately, how the progressive escalation of an EU-

36 — https://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/committees/video?event=20171113-1900-COMMITTEE-AGRI (accessed: October 2019)

37 — The legal ground mentioned by the Commissioner is true to a certain extent, namely, the Commission can take decisions which are different from what the agency recommends, but only if the Commission explains the reasons in detail.

level issue from hardly visible to very visible, influenced the Commission in its decision to delay the process, to do everything possible not to take responsibility for a renewal, and to reduce the proposed amount of years of the herbicide's license to the very minimum. The delays and blame-shifting game that the Commission and national governments played with each other, and the Commission's ultimate unwillingness to take an autonomous decision, highlight how issue salience triggers politicisation, which makes the Commission face reputational threats and causes it to shift from technocratic to more responsive decision-making.

Process tracing, therefore, corroborates our main hypothesis, H1: when an issue is severely politicised, this can influence the decision-making style of a non-majoritarian actor, even in the rather obscure EU comitology system. In sum, when expertise, politics and public opinion intertwine, purely 'evidence-based' policy-making is simply not attainable, even though it might be more efficient. Member states' governments, but also the Commission, need to consider diffuse public concerns, carried out by actors (such as citizens and the European Parliament) that are normally overlooked in the process of supranational implementation.

What are the lessons we can draw from this case? First, we may find it instructive from a normative perspective, as politicisation seems to be able to produce responsiveness from different sides of the policy-making spectrum. This, in our view, can enhance the quality of the regulatory outcomes under the principle of openness[38], which imposes on the EU institutions 'a prescriptive, proactive duty to seek broader participation [...] in order to attain broader democratic objectives' (Alemanno, 2014: 85). While democracy is based on legitimate consensus, free elections and participation, technocracy recognizes expertise as the sole basis of authority and power (Radaelli, 1999). Hence, being responsive may represent a way forward to uphold the legitimacy of non-elected bodies vis-à-vis the citizens. Yet, a shift towards higher responsiveness may produce sub-optimal policy outcomes by hindering bureaucrats´ ability to find cooperative policies (Rauh, 2016: Ch. 1).

Second, the ability of the public sphere to enter such a secretive procedure as comitology, thanks to visibility, makes us speculate about whether, under the growing politicisation of EU integration, this might happen again in the future. Third, we find the case highly informative, as it shows how the tension between efficiency and responsiveness plays out in the process of policy implementation. In line with previous findings, the European Commission embodies an actor who has to perform different functions at the same time, and its logics of behaviour are multiple and dictated by efficiency and scientific rigour, but also by reputational concerns. Finally, we ought not to overlook the implications for the specific policy field we are analysing. The area of consumer protection – specifically related to food and agriculture – constitutes a particularly important dimension of public policy, providing a lens into a set of contemporary questions (Ansell and Vogel, 2006: 5) related not only to European integration, but also to the politicisation of risk assessment and regulatory science, and to the phenomenon of agricultural protectionism. Recently, scholarly literature has started investigating how conflicting actor rationalities and the overlap of several regulatory roles undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of the decision-making and implementation of food and agricultural policies (Thomann, 2018).

This article has sought to contribute to all the debates mentioned above, by analysing a very complex case of supranational implementation in the European Union. Future research might be able to enrich this study through new empirical and theoretical work focusing on bureau-

38 — Art. 15(1) TFEU: "In order to promote good governance and ensure the participation of civil society, the Union's institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible."

cratic responsiveness in and outside the EU, political mobilisation, politicisation, and how these issues relate to policy learning processes and policy change (Schmidt and Radaelli, 2004; Schmidt, 2008).

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Can power be made an empirically viable concept in policy process theory? Exploring the power potential of the Narrative Policy Framework

Tjorven Sievers
Ph.D candidate, School of Public Policy, Oregon State University.

Michael D. Jones
Associate Professor, School of Public Policy, Oregon State University.

Abstract

Despite the range of analytical foci in current policy process theory, the idea of an empirically sound power concept has not received much attention. While scientifically oriented process frameworks tend to be either implicitly or explicitly based on a pluralist understanding of power, critical theory focused approaches frequently point to power inequality in the policy process but remain vague on its conceptualization. As a result, the concept of power remains underspecified, which renders theoretical understanding of policy-making incomplete. In this article, we argue that it is necessary to integrate an empirically viable power concept into policy process theory which allows researchers to systematically assess the role of structural power imbalances in policymaking, without compromising scientific rigor. To that end, we examine how power has been treated in policy process theory, with focus on the Advocacy Policy Framework (ACF), Social Construction and Policy Design, and—primarily—the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF). In a second step, we explore how Steven Lukes' three-dimensional power concept can be leveraged by the NPF to bridge the gap between different understandings of power, while also articulating a concept of power amenable to scientific testing within policy studies.

Keywords

policy process theory, Narrative Policy Framework, policy design, social construction, Advocacy Coalition Framework, power, inequality, Steven Lukes

Introduction

Despite the wide range of analytical foci in policy process theory, none of the approaches in the current collection of canonical frameworks address the concept of power in analytical detail (Herweg et al., 2017). In fact, while power as a theoretical concept received a fair share of attention in policy theoretical research in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Kellow, 1989, 1988; Lowi, 1979; Schneider and Ingram, 1993; Spitzer, 1987), it now seems to have more or less dropped off the radar (but see, for example, Cook, 2010). While the most popular policy process-oriented theories (i.e., Weible and Sabatier, 2018) rely on implicit pluralist power assumptions, other approaches such as Social Construction and Policy Design (Ingram et al., 2014; Schneider and Sidney, 2009; Schneider and Ingram, 2005) and, to a lesser extent, the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) (Jones and McBeth, 2010; Shanahan et al., 2017) do explicitly address the concept of power in the policy process. However, the latter either do not conceptualize power as a central aspect (NPF) or do not operationalize the concept sufficiently, as we will argue is the case with Social Construction and Policy Design. As a result, the concept of power remains underspecified and leaves a theoretical gap in the respective frameworks' understanding of the policy process.

In this article, we posit that we must begin integrating an empirically viable power concept into policy process theory in order to better assess how, when and where structural power imbalances in a society, e.g. based on class, race, ethnicity or gender, impact policy, and do so without compromising scientific rigor. We recognize the concept is 'essentially contested' (Gallie, 1955) and difficult to operationalize; however, we argue that it is not justified to sideline the concept of power in policy theory because of said difficulty, nor because of a rift between scientifically oriented policy process theory and critical policy process theory,[1] in which empirical testing seems to be more a domain of the first and assessing the impact of inequality more a task of the latter. We argue that in order to make multiple dimensions of the concept of power empirically testable, it is necessary to analyze the interaction of beliefs and power in policymaking, i.e. to examine how the beliefs of those in power are expressed and how they affect the outcomes for those not in power. The potential structural dominance of certain beliefs among individual policy actors and coalitions, and its impact on relevant populations, should be part of the analysis, which goes beyond merely identifying different beliefs.

Furthermore, we also argue that using power as an explicit theoretical concept, rather than an implicit assumption, would help to clarify the blurred distinction between empirical and normative understandings of power, which tend to align with scientifically and critical theory-oriented approaches, respectively. As succinctly put by Jorgensen, the classic form of pluralism (Kelso, 1978), which is easily identified in the ACF and other policy process frameworks, constitutes "more a normative theory of democracy than …an empirical investigation…" (Jorgensen, 2017: 451). If such normative undercurrents are not transparent, we run the risk of reproducing existing biases in policy research (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962).

In order to find a way forward, we propose using Steven Lukes' classic three-dimensional power conception as a starting point (Lukes, 2004, 1974) for integrating an empirical analysis of power into policy process theory, with focus on the NPF. Despite criticism on the notion of

1 — For the purpose of this article, we compare and contrast what we here term scientifically oriented policy theory and critical policy theory. However, the terminology used to describe these approaches varies, e.g. these two schools of thought have also been described as process vs. content-oriented approaches and as normative vs empirically focused policy theory. While emphases differ, these juxtapositions all serve to highlight similar key differences in the compared theoretical approaches.

false consciousness and agency (Bradshaw, 1976; Clegg, 1989; Hayward and Lukes, 2008; Isaac, 1987), Lukes' breakdown of power can provide a useful guide for empirically analyzing different facets of power by helping steer researchers from more obvious and visible expressions of power (first dimension) to less visible expressions, such as issues that do not get put on the agenda (second dimension), and how preferences themselves may be shaped by beliefs, institutions, and other societal structures (third dimension). Furthermore, we illustrate that a Lukes'-based analysis of power could be operationalized via the vehicle of the NPF's policy narratives, which connect power to policy makers' belief systems, and allow for the assessment of the impacts those belief systems have on public policy—both scientifically and normatively.

In the following, we first examine how power has been treated in policy process theory, specifically in the ACF, Social Construction and Policy Design, and the NPF. We focus on these specific approaches because they represent broader schools of thought within policy process theory. The ACF serves as a notable example for scientifically oriented approaches with an underlying pluralistic power conception, while Social Construction and Policy Design takes a critical and explicitly normative view on structural power imbalances. Finally, the NPF unites both elements of scientifically oriented and critical policy process theory, which we argue is valuable when empirically analyzing power dynamics within policymaking. In a second step, we discuss the theoretical implications of this treatment, with a focus on the implications of the pluralist roots of policy process theory. We then elaborate on Steven Lukes' three-dimensional power conception and show how aspects of it have been implicitly used in Social Construction and Policy Design research, as well as the NPF, albeit without sufficiently conceptualizing and operationalizing it. Following from this, we discuss the potential of Lukes' power theory to serve as an empirically viable concept and outline what the role of power theory could be going forward, focusing on the NPF. We argue that the NPF has the potential to bridge the gap between scientifically oriented policy theory and critical policy theory, both of which have substantial shortcomings in their current treatments of power in public policy. For this purpose, we leverage existing policy process research on in-state tuition eligibility of undocumented immigrants in the United States through the lens of the NPF and suggest several *power propositions* to illustrate an approach to operationalization that can capture all three dimensions of power while maintaining standards of scientific rigor.

Power in Policy Process Theory

In the introduction to the fourth edition of *Theories of the Policy Process* (TOTPP4), Christopher Weible names power as a concept that, while not part of the volume, is "deserving attention" (Weible, 2017:7). This remark indicates that even though power is generally considered a valuable idea, it has also been sidelined as a supplementary and "ambiguous" (Heikkila and Cairney, 2017: 304) concept, which does not fulfill the criteria of a scientific theory as outlined by Weible's mirroring of the late Paul Sabatier in the introduction of TOTPP4.[2] Interestingly, going beyond the more explicit discussion in the introduction, the frameworks do reference the concept. In fact, all of the theories featured in TOTPP4 use the word power at least once. For instance, the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) (Herweg et al., 2017: 33), Policy Feedback Theory (PFT) (Mettler and Sorelle, 2017: 104) and the NPF (Shanahan et al., 2017: 189) mention "powerful interest groups". Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) refers to the "power of specialized communities of experts" (Baumgartner et al., 2017: 58) and the ACF describes

2 — Paul Sabatier identified a number of criteria for including theories in earlier volumes of TOTPP, such as "meeting the criteria of a scientific theory"(Sabatier, 2007: 8). Christopher Weible mirrors this approach by outlining five criteria for selecting theories to be included in TOTPP4.

how actors strategically "exaggerate the power and maliciousness of their opponents" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017: 140). However, despite these references the authors do not specify what their understanding of power entails. As a result, the theoretical treatment of power remains largely superficial within TOTPP4's policy process approaches.

In the following we briefly examine the ACF, Social Construction and Policy Design, and the NPF, with attention to the role power plays within each. We focus on these three approaches for several reasons.[3] The ACF is one of the most developed and commonly applied policy process theories, with meta reviews pointing to at least 241 applications since its inception (Pierce et al., 2017; Weible et al., 2009). While the TOTPP4 chapter on the ACF includes only very few references to power, the ACF has previously been criticized for its underlying pluralist assumptions (James and Jorgensen, 2009; Jorgensen, 2017; Parsons, 1995), which cause it to sidestep potential power inequalities and makes it an interesting framework to examine when arguing for a more explicit power concept. Chosen as our representative for a critical theory oriented approach within the policy process literature, Social Construction and Policy Design (Ingram et al., 2014, 2007)—an expressly normative approach—argues that some groups are disadvantaged in public policy and emphasizes that policy outcomes are best understood when both ideology (social constructions) and political power are considered. Even though the approach was not included in TOTPP4, it was part of the second and third editions and is arguably the policy process framework that pays the most attention to the concept of power.[4]

Lastly, if thinking about power as a continuum upon which the various approaches in policy process theory are situated, the NPF can be located between the ACF and Social Construction and Policy Design. ACF-sympathetic in its theoretical structure and empirical applications to-date (e.g. Shanahan et al., 2011), the NPF is at the same time founded upon the notion that social constructions are critical to understanding public policy (Jones and Radaelli, 2015) and acknowledges the use of power to omit and manipulate policy narratives (Peterson and Jones, 2016). While the NPF currently underspecifies the role of power, its theoretical 'middle ground' gives it the unique potential to accommodate both the roles of social constructions—which are driven by and expressed through narratives—in creating lasting power imbalances in policymaking, as well as the concerns raised in more scientifically oriented frameworks, such as the ACF.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework, Social Construction and Policy Design, and the Narrative Policy Framework

Like all research programs (Lakatos, 1970), the ACF is founded upon a set of explicit and implicit assumptions. One of the explicit assumptions is that policymaking is best understood by examining policy subsystems, which contain actors who are non-trivially cooperating within coalitions to advance a policy position, as the central units of analyses. These non-trivially cooperating actors are, by definition, policy elites. Policy elites can consist of representatives of government departments and select interest groups, as well as involved individuals from the private sector, academics and non-profit organizations (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Moreover, while the ACF explicitly assumes policy actors are

3 — We are aware that the analysis of power in policymaking goes beyond these approaches, which have emerged in the U.S. context as 'policy process theory'. For example, Power Resource Theory, which is rooted in a European welfare state context, attributes variation in countries' social policy regimes to the distribution of power (resources) between classes (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi, 1983).

4 — Here we would like to emphasize the term "arguably," as a strong case can also be made for other process frameworks (for example, see Mettler and Sorelle, (2017)).

boundedly rational individuals (i.e., Simon, 1947), it also puts emphasis on the importance of understanding their belief systems as motivating forces in decision making (Pierce et al., 2017; Weible et al., 2009). Thus, at its most basic level, the ACF aims at "describing, explaining and, sometimes, predicting" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017: 138) how belief systems influence the decisions of policy elites to form or join advocacy coalitions and how this affects policy change and learning.

To operationalize belief systems within the ACF, beliefs are assumed to be hierarchically structured, ranging from more fundamental and general to more instrumental and specific. More precisely, the ACF distinguishes between deep core beliefs, policy core beliefs, and secondary beliefs. While deep core beliefs are strongly ingrained in the individual and highly resistant to change, this is less the case for policy core beliefs, which can perhaps be best thought of as 'applied' deep core beliefs. Finally, secondary beliefs, which describe views held on more specific details of policy, are considered the most susceptible to change. The ACF assumes actors form advocacy coalitions within policy subsystems based on the above outlined belief systems. Coalitions compete in policy subsystems, often disagreeing on policy proposals and strategies as a result of their different belief systems. In short, "policy debates…revolve around diverging preferences" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017: 145). It is important to note that not all coalitions have the same levels of influence, that coalitions do not necessarily remain stable, and that defection is common (ibid).

As previously noted, the ACF does not acknowledge power as a causal driver in the policy process. However, despite the lack of an explicit power conceptualization it is possible to identify a pluralist tendency within the framework, which implicitly assumes that policy in an ACF subsystem is "the outcome of a free competition between ideas and interests" (Parsons, 1995: 134). Scholars who argue from a pluralist perspective posit that power can be best measured by analyzing which actors succeed in furthering their own interests in a given situation, by defeating the preferences of their political opponents. Such preference competitions are considered observable expressions of power and thus amendable to measurement. However, it should be noted that power in a pluralist system is often assumed to be openly (not necessarily evenly) distributed between different groups and thus there is at least the potential for all relevant interests or beliefs in a society to participate (Dahl, 1961; Kelso, 1978; Truman, 1981). Whether implicit or explicit, this assumption about power allows for the justification to focus on the observable preference/interest competitions.

An understanding of the distribution of power can be teased out of the ACF. Policy subsystems allow different coalitions of elites to compete and strive for influence, where the accessibility of said subsystems is rarely a focus of ACF scholarship. In this context, the ACF attributes policy stability to dominant belief systems (Pierce et al., 2017). Despite the fact that power is not explicitly discussed, the ACF implicitly connects the concepts of beliefs and power by emphasizing the importance of shared beliefs by majority coalitions. However, there are opportunities for minority coalitions to increase their influence, for example in moments of internal or external crises (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). This distinction is important because while a coalition may come out 'on top', causing its belief system to be dominant in shaping a policy, this domination is still considered the result of an observable belief-system competition and not the structural entrenchment of certain values among elite actors, which, for example, might allow for control of the agenda, where non-decisions are at least as critical as decisions, if not more so (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962). Importantly, that a minority coalition might come out on top still only speaks to non-trivially cooperating coalition participants in the policy subsystem, and

not those that might fall into the ACF's trivial category, who remain theoretically—and thus empirically—invisible to the ACF.

In contrast to the ACF, which concentrates on policy change and learning driven by coalition belief systems, Social Construction and Policy Design (Ingram et al., 2014, 2007) focuses on policy designs as a reflection of policy makers' social constructions, derivative of beliefs and underlying social norms and their ability to have those derivatives reflected in public policy. Furthermore, the idea of political power is used explicitly and constitutes one of the two theoretical dimensions used to understand populations targeted by policy. These two dimensions are *political power* and *perceived deservedness*. When the dimensions are intersected, a two-by-two of four quadrants of target populations is illuminated: Advantaged (high power/high deservedness), contenders (high power/low deservedness), dependents (low power/high deservedness) and deviants (low power/low deservedness).

According to Social Construction and Policy Design, the location of a target group within the two-by-two matrix can have a lasting impact on the way it benefits from or is burdened by policy. The approach further proposes that both the perceived deservedness and political power of target groups will not only impact policy designs, but also influence future policy stasis and change (Ingram et al., 2014: 129). In short, Social Construction and Policy Design is a transparently normative approach which focuses on how political power manifests itself in policy designs via dominant value paradigms (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). The two-dimensional typology explains why belief systems have an impact on policy, but it also examines why belief systems alone may not be enough to explain an actor's or a coalition's actions, if power is not considered. This, for instance, becomes relevant when looking at dependents, who are generally considered deserving of policy support, but do not possess much political power. Consequently, deserving target populations may be less likely to receive benefits, despite the driving force of sympathetic belief systems. Conversely, Social Construction and Policy Design also rejects the notion that power alone is sufficient to explain the distribution of benefits, as the power "capacity" might be there, but the belief system's willingness to deploy that capacity may not. When political power—in a pluralist sense—is considered in isolation, researchers are likely to focus only on the easily observable expressions of power and neglect the role of structural elements and societal norms in policymaking and how they can create disadvantages and advantages for various groups (Ingram et al., 2014; Schneider and Ingram, 1993). By integrating these two dimensions, the approach touches upon what Lukes terms the second and third dimension of power, which are elaborated further below.

Finally, the main goal of the NPF is to describe the role of policy narratives at different points in the policy process and determine how policy narratives shape public policy (Shanahan et al., 2017). In particular, the NPF aims to analyze how policy narratives shape policy at the macro (e.g., institutional and cultural), meso (e.g. subsystem), and micro (individual) levels of policymaking and how the different levels potentially interact. To accomplish this, the NPF treats policy narratives as objects (i.e., "things" in the world) that have distinct components (form and content), within which are narrative structural elements of a setting, characters, plots, and a moral, as well as content elements such as belief systems and policy narrative strategies (Jones, 2018; Jones et al., 2014). This structural approach to policy narratives is necessary to make the NPF's various policy narrative components and elements amenable to quantification.[5] As such,

5 — Debates attempting to discern what a narrative actually "is" tend to fall into two camps: structural and post-structural, where structural positions emphasize narrative as generalizable objects in the world, while post-structuralists view each narrative instance as unique (see Jones and McBeth, 2010 for a succinct discussion; see Jones et al., 2014 for a discussion of NPF's approach to moderating the post-structural critique of narrative relativity).

the NPF has been shown to be quite compatible with policy process theories such as the ACF (Shanahan et al., 2011) or PET (Peterson, 2019), which have similar "positivist" tendencies. Derivative of Jones (2018), Table 1 lists the NPF elements and their definitions.

Table 1: NPF Policy Narrative Elements

Narrative Form	
Setting	Consists of policy consequential phenomena such as legal codes, geography, demographics, evidence, etc., some of which are agreed upon and some of which are contested.
Characters	Consists of victims who are harmed or potentially harmed, villains who are the source of the harm, and heroes who offer solutions to the harm.
Plot	Organizes the characters relative to each other, the setting, and situates the narrative in time and space.
Moral of the Story	Typically a call to action or a policy solution.
Narrative Content	
Beliefs	The content of narrative varies substantially, but people make sense of it in systematic ways despite that variation. In the NPF this is captured by robust belief system theories and measures which identify how groups of people interacting with narrative content interpret said content. Common belief system approaches in the NPF include ideology and cultural theory, among other possibilities.
Strategies	Consist of the goal seeking patterns of narrative organization, which typically focus on the use of narrative form elements as well as belief system content.

Source: Jones 2018

However, even though the NPF shares a familial resemblance to the ACF in its methodological orientation, the framework also leverages social constructivism as one of its foundational assumptions, which has facilitated the NPF's use of interpretive approaches to the study of public policy (e.g., Dupuis, 2018; Jones and Radaelli, 2015; Gray and Jones, 2016). The scientifically oriented approach is adept at assessing the observable, while critical theory and interpretive approaches are adept at capturing the unobserved. There have also been explicit integrations of the NPF and Social Construction and Policy Design, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, demonstrating the capabilities of merging the two approaches (e.g., Husmann, 2015; Lybecker et al., 2018). In short, the NPF has already demonstrated an epistemological

and methodological flexibility that regularly pairs scientific and critical policy approaches at multiple levels of analysis, using a variety of methodologies. Consequently, we argue that the NPF presents a rather unique opportunity among existing policy process approaches to generate a rigorous conceptualization of power that captures multiple dimensions of the concept. Our argument builds off of Peterson and Jones (Peterson and Jones, 2016), who have taken the NPF steps in this direction by examining how elites use the power of narrative to shape opinions and preferences to control and manipulate agendas, which we discuss more below.

Theoretical Implications

The above exploration has shown that the examined policy process approaches all reference some form of power: power as a shared resource, divided among interest groups in an openly competitive policy arena (ACF), power as an unequally distributed resource, which in connection with beliefs and social norms has a lasting impact on policy design, and power as a policymaker's tool for manipulation of opinions and policy preferences (NPF). However, none of the approaches currently use a clear concept of power. This section aims to show that the absence of a clear theoretical power concept, paired with dominant pluralist roots in positivist policy process approaches, runs the risk of falsely portraying the policymaking process as an open field-type competition, in which every affected group is potentially and perhaps fairly represented. Furthermore, we argue that the ever-present divide between scientifically oriented and critical policy theory within the field of public policy adds to the difficulty of discussing power inequality as an important aspect in the empirical analyses of the policy process.

For some time now (e.g., Dahl, 1961; Truman,1981), pluralism has been one of the most dominant theoretical approaches for explaining the U.S. political system. Its critics have been manifold (e.g., Kelso, 1978; McConnell, 1970; Olson, 1965), and the gist of those criticisms have stayed remarkably consistent. From the initial criticisms (e.g., Lowi, 1979, 1972; Schattschneider, 1960), to the more recent (e.g. Jorgensen, 2017; Schneider and Ingram, 1997), critics observe that competition is not open, participation is contingent, and the results of policy systemically favor those with resources. One of the more salient criticisms to the argument we present here is voiced by Schneider and Ingram (1997) and Jorgensen (2017), who argue that utilizing pluralism as a theoretical explanation amounts to conflating a normative a priori assumption with empirical observations—that is, because a researcher starts with a pluralist assumption, what they see is a pluralist reality. Simply put, these critics argue that pluralism constitutes an "idealized way of policymaking that no longer exists or has never been realized " (Schneider and Ingram, 1997: 18). If this claim is correct, then it renders theoretical frameworks with pluralist underpinnings normatively pluralist rather than objectively so. We think this to be the case. Extant policy process theory is simply ill-equipped to see otherwise.

Even though the above identified shortcomings of a pluralist view on politics in the U.S. context may seem dated or well-known, they are relevant when analyzing power conceptions within current policy process approaches. For instance, despite the fact that the ACF takes precise steps to outline its underlying assumptions, it is silent on pluralism as one of the guiding principles, even though parallels between classic pluralist theory and the ACF's perspective on policymaking are easily identified (e.g., Jorgensen, 2017). Not making transparent that one of the underlying premises of the framework is disputed is problematic when one's framework aims to describe and explain the policy process in both an empirical and generalizable fashion.

What is left out due to the ACF's—or any process framework's—pluralist assumptions? For starters, only non-trivially cooperating actors are counted in the ACF's coalitions. By definition,

this leaves 'trivial' actors invisible. Trivial actors include the general public, which is treated as a resource by the ACF (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017; although see Jones and Jenkins-Smith, 2009), as well as weakened groups such as single mothers or sex workers, who might find themselves the target groups of subsystem policies. As a result, the ACF researcher might never ask questions such as: how do dominant belief systems within a subsystem affect populations - both internal and external to the subsystem - who are not meaningful parts of coalitions? When these beliefs dominate, do they drive policy outcomes over long periods of time (see Crenson, 1971: 173)? Which decisions get made because they fit a belief system and, conversely, which decisions are never made because they do not (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962)? In such a scenario, policy learning may only occur within a restricted set of options, guided by a narrow spectrum of values, and that may in turn limit or even precisely direct the possibilities of policy change or stasis.[6] At the moment the ACF does not offer the theoretical tools to examine these more complex expressions of power and their interaction with belief systems. As a consequence, we believe more established power theories may offer a way forward.

According to Steven Lukes (2004, 1974) a pluralist understanding of power is one-dimensional[7] because it only focuses on observable behavior. This one-dimensional view of power was most notably contested by Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, who argued that conceptions of power also need to account for who has control over the agenda. According to Bachrach and Baratz it is possible to identify certain "rules of the game" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962: 950), which are based on the beliefs of those in power, and which lead the powerful to exclude non-conforming issues and parties from the political agenda. As a consequence, dominant beliefs in policymaking are re-enforced and lead to the "mobilization of bias" (ibid). While Lukes agrees with Bachrach and Baratz on the importance of including agenda setting as an expression of power (he refers to this as the second dimension of power), he posits that the exercise of power goes beyond decision-making and non-decision making. He argues that a comprehensive conception of power would capture the processes through which preferences in a society are shaped, or manipulated, by means of domination, which he calls the third dimension of power. In this extended view, Lukes defines domination as "the ability to constrain the choices of others, coercing them or securing their compliance, by impeding them from living as their own nature and judgment dictate" (Lukes, 2004: 85). In this context, it is important to note that Lukes acknowledges that his work focuses on 'power over' rather than 'power to', or what Wartenberg terms transformative power, meaning the use of power to enable and empower others (Wartenberg, 1990). Consequently, Lukes does not claim to comprehensively define the concept of 'power' but rather "addresses the question: 'How do the powerful secure the compliance of those they dominate?'" (Lukes, 2004: 110).

While decision-making and agenda setting power are rather concrete phenomena, the third dimension of power is comparatively abstract because it manifests itself through dominant beliefs and social norms, which are challenging to observe at all, let alone measure. Moreover, the notion of false consciousness, which describes individuals acting against their 'real interests' because their preferences have been manipulated, has further been rightly criticized as disregarding the agency of those who are dominated (e.g., Benton, 1981; Bradshaw, 1976; Clegg, 1989; Hayward and Lukes, 2008; Isaac, 1987). However, we would like to note that we follow John Gaventa's line of argument regarding the term false consciousness. Gaventa, a student of

6 — Recent ACF scholarship has expended considerable effort operationalizing cultural theory as ACF belief systems (Ripberger et al., 2014), which provides a currently unexplored opportunity to examine the implications of certain cultural types, or belief systems, being dominant over time.

7 — It should be noted that Lukes also considers classic elite theory (Mills, 1956) to be one-dimensional.

Lukes, rejects the notion of 'false' consciousness on the grounds that an individual's consciousness constitutes reality for the person in question. However, he emphasizes that it is important to analyze the "content, source or nature of the consciousness" (Gaventa, 1980: 29) as it may become apparent that an individual is only aware of a restricted spectrum of possible interests. The question asked by Gaventa is why this might be the case, and whether a limited scope of perceived possibilities may be the result of power being exercised as domination. Following this argument, moving away from a discussion of false consciousness, the shaping of preferences as an expression of power must be seen as important when attempting to understand the interaction of beliefs and power (Lukes, 1974), less one be left with only observable behavior and non-agendas. For instance, as previously touched upon, the NPF refers to the use of power to shape narratives with the aim of manipulating individuals' opinions on issues such as climate change, which could ostensibly be considered contrary to their 'real' scientific interests (Shanahan et al., 2017). To get a full view of power, Gaventa stresses that the three dimensions of power interact and that they must be understood by examining all three in tandem (Gaventa, 1980: 256). For instance, when issues are kept off the policy agenda in a second-dimension expression of power, this may occur because policy preferences have been shaped by specific beliefs or norms, which constitutes a third-dimension expression of power.

Even though no policy process approach has fully embraced Lukes' three-dimensional power concept, Social Construction and Policy Design comes closest to a multidimensional power understanding. While it does not offer a detailed conceptualization of what constitutes power and how it can be empirically tested, Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram's earlier work does refer to some of the theoretical foundations of power research in the social sciences. Schneider's and Ingram's 1993 article on Social Construction and Policy Design portrays the approach as an extension of Theodore Lowi's concept of *Arenas of Power*, which criticizes limiting the focus of policy research to a pluralist form of democracy and argues that elitism plays a significant role in U.S. policymaking (Lowi, 2009, 1979). Furthermore, Schneider and Ingram reference Gaventa, who uses Lukes' third dimension of power to understand the (absence of) resistance among citizens in Central Appalachia (Gaventa, 1980). Gaventa and his application of the second (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962) and third dimensions of power are further referred to in Schneider and Ingram's book *Policy Design for Democracy* (Schneider and Ingram, 1997).

However, while the earlier iterations of Social Construction and Policy Design allude to some of the intellectual roots of its concept of power, the most recent outlines of the approach are less specific. In the third edition of *Theories of the Policy Process*, the political power of a target group is defined as "the extent of its political resources, such as whether it is large, united, easy to mobilize, wealthy, skilled, well positioned, focused on issues of concern to it, accustomed to voting and contacting public officials, and so on" (Ingram et al., 2014: 109 f.). It should be noted that, as previously outlined, the authors qualify the use of this definition by stating that it needs to be considered hand-in-hand with the positive or negative social constructions or images of the respective group, i.e. whether elites and/or the general public approve of the target population receiving a benefit and are willing to frame the benefit allocation accordingly (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Nonetheless, in spite of this integration of overt political power and interpreted deservedness, the concept of power is not expanded upon, which makes it difficult to see what a fully operationalized theory of power in policymaking would actually look like within this approach. While Pierce et al. (2014) argue that all three dimensions of power are present in Social Construction and Policy Design, this terminology is not used by the authors themselves, even though it may be implied. Additionally, while likely interacting, political power and social constructions are treated as orthogonal elements within the approach.

However, if following Lukes, both should be seen as different dimensions of the same general power concept and the consolidation of social constructions through policy can be considered second and third dimension expressions of power. In this context it is noteworthy that Lukes' work is not explicitly referenced by Schneider and Ingram.

As previously shown, the most recent overview of the NPF only makes limited references to the concept of power and its theoretical foundations. However, in a 2016 book chapter on the NPF and agenda setting, Peterson and Jones argue that policy actors and coalitions operating at what the NPF calls the meso level (e.g., policy subsystem) "strategically manipulate policy narratives in order to obtain, alter, or prevent agenda access and content" (Peterson and Jones, 2016: 115). The text references Lukes,' Schattschneider's (1960), and Riker's (1986) work on agenda setting as theoretical jumping off points. Given that the meso level is at the heart of a number of policy process approaches, including the ACF, this angle potentially offers the opportunity to examine the manipulation of narratives as a function of the second and third dimensions of power within policy subsystems, as well as at the NPF's macro level, which we argue is also suited for third dimension power analysis.

The above discussion has shown how different facets of power theory permeate current policy process theory and how different understandings of power can lead to diverging explanations of policymaking, roughly demarcated by what are commonly considered scientifically oriented policy process approaches (e.g., ACF) and critical policy theory (Social Construction and Policy Design). On the one hand, classic pluralist thinking lives on relatively unchanged in the ACF (and other process theories not addressed here), which leads to blind spots regarding more complex understandings of power inequality. We do not think that these blind spots should be regarded as conventional research efforts to maintain objective neutrality. Rather, it is an omission of important normative aspects of public policy that are the core of democratic concerns—or, why it is that so many care in the first place. On the other hand, Social Construction and Policy Design is rooted in the very normative concerns we reference—or more formally, in critical policy theory—and puts great emphasis on the interaction of power and value in producing or overcoming inequality, albeit without explaining how power operates in a way that is readily operationalized and measured. Finally, the NPF raises the issue of preference manipulation, but does not elaborate on this notion in detail. However, as referred to above, Peterson and Jones (2016) raise some aspects which can potentially be helpful to make a multidimensional power model empirically viable. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the NPF takes a 'hybrid' position between scientifically oriented and critical policy theory, which potentially opens the door for incorporating a power concept that is both aware of structural power inequalities and the need for empirical rigor in operationalizing them, which is the focus of the sections below.

Making a Multidimensional Power Concept Empirically Testable – Pipedream or the Way Forward?

While a multidimensional power concept is theoretically intriguing and allows for more complexity in the discussion of power in policymaking, the question remains how it can be used in scientifically oriented policy research. In the following, we argue that power can in fact be operationalized using Lukes' power concept and why we think that this is a valid approach. For this purpose, we draw on the work of Matthew Crenson and John Gaventa, who have done empirical work on the second and third dimension of power respectively. Upon publication, Bachrach and Baratz as well as Lukes faced considerable pushback, with critics doubting that non-decisions and domination through preference manipulation can be empirically observed,

let alone tested (Merelman, 1968; Polsby, 1963; Wolfinger, 1971). These reservations are not unfounded, as it is certainly challenging for researchers to pinpoint the role of social norms and beliefs in policymaking and determine whether they act as causal drivers when policy issues are left off the agenda or when people acquiesce to detrimental policy with no resistance. Nonetheless, we argue that even though an empirical treatment of complex power dynamics presents a challenge, it should not be disregarded by policy process scholars. Put in Crenson's words: "It is hardly more objective and scientific to ignore non-decisions and non-issues than to account for these phenomena" (Crenson, 1971: 4).

It is important to stress that we do not claim that Lukes' power concept fully defines power, and nor does it capture all its facets. Put differently, we are not trying to settle the age-old question regarding what power truly is and fully recognize that power has been and can be conceptualized differently. In particular, we acknowledge that as a result of using Lukes' conceptualization of power our focus is on 'power over' rather than the potentially transformative or empowering aspects of power identified in the many works of Michel Foucault. While we recognize that there are important differences between these two conceptions, we consciously choose to set aside this debate—and the associated disagreements about ontology and epistemology—in the interest of pursuing our central aim, which is to present an empirically viable concept amenable to scientific operationalization.[8]

In line with what Adcock and Collier (2001) term a systematized concept, we argue that Lukes' three-dimensional power conceptualization offers a theoretical frame amenable to the operationalization of power using the NPF. In the pursuit of making power empirically testable, we find that a power conceptualization, which distinguishes between decision-making power (i.e. observable political power), agenda setting power, and preference-shaping power allows policy process scholars to capture power in greater complexity than has been the case thus far, while still enabling operationalization and allowing for further refinement of the concept of power down the road. In fact, existing in-depth studies by Crenson and Gaventa applying aspects of Lukes' conception of power have already described approaches to measure the second and third dimensions of power and recently a similar method has been suggested by Peterson and Jones (2016) in the context of the NPF, all of which indicate possible ways to integrate a power concept into policy theory. Here we revisit some of this classic power literature to help illuminate a path.

In The Un-Politics of Air Pollution (1971), Crenson identifies key aspects of the second dimension of power by exploring why air pollution is a 'non-issue' in some U.S. cities, but of concern to others. He does so by comparing the "local political climate" (Crenson, 1971:22) in cities which neglect the issue and those that have taken political action. Criticizing pluralism, Crenson posits that focusing on overt political action shows the researcher a limited range of involved actors, and uses survey data to illuminate the stance of political elites on air pollution to show that the dominance of some actors (perhaps identified in an "overt" power observation) likely played a role in which issues are represented. He found that the issue of pollution was likely not included on the policy agenda if elite groups 'behind the scenes' opposed action, even

8 — Michel Foucault characterizes power as being omnipresent, i.e. it is not limited to certain actors who exercise power over others (Foucault, 1980). Foucault's power understanding also finds expression in the literature on governmentality, which discusses the 'conduct of conduct', i.e. how individual behavior in a society is shaped through different means of power, such as coercion, persuasion and discourse (e.g., see Foucault, 1991). Lukes referred to this position as an "ultra-radical" constructivist lens (2004:12), viewing it at odds with his conceptualization of power. We concur, finding Foucault's approach less amenable to scientific operationalization than that of Lukes' three-dimensional approach.

if the general public considered it important, thereby limiting "the scope of decision-making" (Crenson, 1971: 178).

While Crenson's quantitative methodology constitutes a possible research strategy for investigating the second dimension of power, it does not take into account the third dimension of power, in which individuals could have been subjected to power in the form of preference shaping. Gaventa's ethnographic study *Power and Powerlessness* (1980) examines why citizens in Central Appalachia remain passive in the face of inequality, or conversely, why they rebel against it. A student of Lukes, Gaventa puts emphasis on the importance of understanding the interaction of all three dimensions of power. In order to counter criticism that the third dimension of power cannot be empirically specified, Gaventa details what he argues is a falsifiable methodological approach (Gaventa, 1980: 28). Similar to Crenson, Gaventa argues that non-issues usually occur under circumstances in which individuals experience inequality and as a consequence cannot make their dissent heard. To be able to show a relationship between inequality and apathy, Gaventa borrows Lukes' idea of counterfactuals, offering strategies for how these can be observed. In particular, Gaventa argues that it is not sufficient to limit research to the policy arena or subsystem, but that researchers interested in complex power dynamics should inquire into the experiences of affected target populations, who are "non-actors and non-leaders" (Gaventa, 1980: 27), and compare those with how the issues are framed on the policy-agenda. Gaventa's assigned importance to impacted target groups outside of the decision-making sphere stands in stark contrast to the ACF, which posits that research should focus on policy subsystems precisely because they "demarcate the integrated and non-integrated actors on a given policy topic"(Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017: 139). Gaventa suggests that the researcher should examine whether the ideology of those in power and the actions or non-actions of groups outside of the decision-making realm can be put in relation to each other. He further proposes comparing cases where the power of a dominant group weakens and to observe the actions of populations, which were previously not in power. Gaventa argues that when a group acts differently in a situation of changing power dynamics, compared to a group which faces similar inequalities but has no room for intervention, it can be determined that the third dimension of power has played a significant role in suppressing or even manipulating opposition. If, however, none of these methodological steps are successful in identifying variation, one can conclude that there is 'true' agreement with policy-decisions.

In summary, these two examples make clear that social scientists have explored how a multidimensional power concept could be operationalized and tested, both quantitatively and qualitatively. While it is ostensibly possible to make the argument that both Crenson's and Gaventa's in-depth case studies are dated and therefore do not pertain to the current policy process, it is interesting to note that Peterson and Jones come to a similar conclusion in their 2016 chapter on the NPF and agenda setting. Even though it may often not be feasible to conduct in-depth research on the scale of Gaventa's case study, the presented research nonetheless provides us with a strong point of reference that outlines avenues for testing complex power dynamics in policymaking and the interaction of power and belief systems. In the following, we make a case for how Lukes' three-dimensional concept can be leveraged in conjunction with the NPF to provide an empirically robust depiction of power in the policy process. In order to illustrate how the NPF could be used to achieve such an operationalization of power, we first examine and compare two policy process studies, one using ACF and the other Social Construction and Policy Design.

The NPF and Lukes' Three Dimensions of Power: Operationalizing a Multidimensional Power Concept

In this section, we analyze two applications, one of the ACF (Dougherty et al., 2010) and the other of Social Construction and Policy Design (Reich and Barth, 2010), with a focus on expressions of power therein. Both applications discuss in-state tuition eligibility of undocumented students within the U.S. An analysis of these applications allows us to see how different policy process approaches address the same policy area in diverging ways and how they (implicitly) treat power. We then transition into an illustration of what an analysis of the same policy issue and its inherent power dynamics could look like when the NPF is employed as a theoretical lens. In doing so, we formulate specific but generally applicable power propositions for the second and third dimension. Following Adcock's and Collier's seminal work on measurement validity of complex concepts (Adcock and Collier, 2001), Table 2 highlights how each dimension of power can be integrated with the NPF at the micro, meso and macro levels of analysis and provides suggestions on which methods would be appropriate to collect data, enabling researchers to operationalize the indicators, primarily through the NPF's well-established protocols for operationalizing policy narratives (i.e. form and content), discussed more below.

Table 2: Conceptualization & Operationalization of Power using the NPF

Conceptualization	**Operationalization**	
Systematized concept: Three-dimensional power (Lukes, 1974)	**Indicators Narrative Policy Framework**	**Example Methodologies**
First dimension: Decision-making power	*Policy elite narratives*: Analysis of policy debates & texts, media coverage (meso/subsystem level)	Content analysis, elite interviews, survey
Second dimension: Agenda-setting power	*Policy elite vs target group narratives*: Comparison of policy narratives on micro (individual) & meso (subsystem) level to identify non-decisions	Elite and target group interviews, focus groups, survey
Third dimension: Preference-shaping power	*Historical narratives*: Tracing of macro narratives over time to identify dominant value paradigms, comparison with current subsystem and micro level narratives, identify potential power shifts	Historical content analysis, event history analysis, elite and target group interviews
	Target group narratives vs data on policy effects: Analysis of potential discrepancies between 'normalized' micro level narratives and projected policy effects	Elite and target group interviews, focus groups, (economic) data analysis

Source: the Authors

Both Dougherty et al. (2010) and Reich and Barth (2010) compare a U.S. state in which undocumented students were granted in-state tuition with one where a similar policy proposal failed and ask how this difference in outcome can be explained. Reich and Barth argue that the implementation of a policy granting in-state tuition eligibility in Kansas and the failure of the bill to pass in Arkansas can be explained by the social construction of the target population as well as by examining the political authority to frame the policy issue. In Kansas, undocumented students were portrayed as deserving young people striving for education, with the potential to positively contribute to Kansas' economy. In Arkansas, on the other hand, the debate was framed in terms of legality, meaning whether in-state tuition for illegal immigrants is compatible with the state constitution. As a consequence, Reich and Barth argue that it is important to recognize how the target group in question is socially constructed by policy actors, but that such an analysis is not sufficient without taking into account which actors have the legal authority—or power—to frame the issue and to thereby create a "perceived reality" (Reich and Barth, 2010: 425).

Dougherty et al. apply the ACF (as well as policy entrepreneurship theory) to Texas and Arizona and find that the Hispanic population in Texas was politically more powerful than in Arizona and hence able to form a successful advocacy coalition. They further note that this finding partly reflects a relatively accepting attitude towards immigration in Texas, i.e. it illuminates one of the belief systems which allowed the coalition in favor of in-state tuition eligibility to be successful. On the contrary, the general attitude towards immigration in Arizona is found to be more negative and this belief has been expressed through the action of policy makers, who have mostly taken action to restrict the rights of undocumented immigrants. In this context it is interesting to note that the first bill, which would have given undocumented students the right to in-state tuition, died in committee and hence never even reached the floor. Later Arizona passed a house bill which actively prohibits the granting of in-state tuition to undocumented students, instead of merely rejecting one that would allow it.

While it should be noted that an in-depth analysis of power dynamics is not the aim of these studies, it is notable that both applications do not address the kinds of questions that could emerge when leveraging a more nuanced understanding of power such as that provided by Lukes (1974), which would allow an analysis of why a policy issue does not make it onto the policy agenda—as initially happened in Arizona—or how structural inequalities, in particular concerning race and ethnicity, potentially shape the dominant belief system in a state. In fact, the authors of the two illustrative studies themselves note the limitations regarding an analysis of power dynamics within their respective studies. Dougherty et al. critique both the ACF and policy entrepreneurship theory for their pluralist bent, which sees power "as dispersed and, even if not equally distributed, not concentrated" (Dougherty et al., 2010: 164). Reich and Barth, on the other hand, point out that Schneider and Ingram do not define the complex concept of power in their framework and end up making assumptions as to its meaning for the purpose of their research. Consequently, both applications focus on the most visible expressions of power, i.e. its first dimension: in one case from a policy content perspective and in the other from a process-oriented perspective. In the case of Reich and Barth, this can potentially be attributed to the under defined nature of power in Social Construction and Policy Design, while ACF's pluralist assumptions do not allow Dougherty et al. to dig deeper into unequal power relations without consulting other theories. As a result, both applications are essentially forced by their theoretical lenses to neglect issues of non-decisions and preference-shaping, which could very well play a significant role in immigration policy.

For instance, a focus on agenda setting, or the second dimension of power, would allow a more meaningful analysis of why the non-documented immigrants were not successful in advocating for in-state tuition eligibility in Arizona, going beyond elite belief systems. Put differently, it can be hypothesized that the omission of the policy issue from the agenda and the subsequent restrictions of rights for undocumented immigrants might have cemented the status quo by 'mobilizing bias', meaning that policy elites were able to shape the policy agenda in line with their own beliefs to the exclusion of others. In addition, a focus on the third dimension of power would potentially make it possible to not only examine if mobilization of bias occurred, but to explore why a certain belief system, or constellations of social constructions, remain dominant in one state, but not in another, by considering cultural norms; or, in power parlance, the shaping of preferences over time.

According to John Gaventa (1980), the full extent to which power dynamics play a role in policymaking can only be understood if the different dimensions of power are analyzed as a whole. For instance, if we posit that non-decisions occur when policy-makers cement the status quo at the expense of disadvantaged groups, it is necessary to identify whether these non-decisions in fact go against the preferences or interests of the target (or untargeted) population. Furthermore, it is important to be able to show whether an identified power imbalance continues to shape beliefs inside and outside of a policy subsystem over time or whether shifts in power dynamics and belief systems can be observed. In the following, we aim to illustrate how these 'blind spots' could potentially be addressed in an analysis which uses the NPF as a theoretical lens. We argue that the epistemological flexibility of the NPF, together with its structural clarity (i.e. the distinction between micro, meso and macro narratives in policymaking), make it well equipped to explore these dimensions. In order to make our illustration easy to follow, we have formulated what we term *power propositions* for both the second and third dimension of power.

Current applications of the NPF already capture the first dimension of power (i.e. the decision-making process) quite well. At the policy-subsystem meso level, the NPF has a long standing tradition of specifying policy narratives through examinations of interest group narratives (e.g., Shanahan et al., 2013), legislative hearings (e.g., Smith-Walter, 2018), media (e.g., Crow et al., 2017) and other "non-trivially" cooperating elite actors, to use the language of the ACF. Embracing the language of the ACF is appropriate, as the NPF was very early on shown to be compatible with the ACF's coalitional approach at the meso level, especially in terms of identifying coalitional beliefs (see Shanahan et al., 2011), and has since regularly implemented research designs mirroring the ACF (see Shanahan et al., 2017). Such designs inherit the ACF's pluralist assumptive baggage. To see a multi-dimensional conception of power the NPF must engage questions that explicitly move beyond observable decision-making processes and the elite focus they entail. It is important to note that the primary aim of our illustration is not to endorse specific methods or research designs. Rather, we seek to illustrate how the NPF's concepts and constituent theories can be leveraged abstractly to study Lukes's three dimensions of power. For those interested in discussions of appropriate NPF methods and research designs, we would steer the reader toward Shanahan et al. (2018) and Gray and Jones (2015). The former addresses issues of research design and methodology from a scientific perspective, while the latter does so from an interpretive perspective.

The NPF and the Second Dimension of Power

We summarize our above review of the relevant policy and power literatures to indicate that if policymakers wish to control the policy outcome on a policy issue and have the capacity to sup-

press opposition from groups and individuals, without their opposition becoming visible, non-decisions occur. This is likely to happen at the expense of disadvantaged (target) groups. Thus:

> *NPF second dimension power proposition*: It is likely to be able to observe non-decisions when policy elites' and target groups' beliefs, *as represented by their policy narratives on the meso and micro level*, are incongruent.

With regard to the second dimension of power, or agenda setting power, Gaventa suggests inquiring into the perspectives of "non-leaders" (Gaventa, 1980: 1927) to identify potential rifts between their interests and the actions of those in positions of power. For the NPF, this translates into examining and comparing the policy narratives of elite and non-leaders, either from a scientific perspective (see Shanahan et al., 2018) or an interpretive perspective (see Gray and Jones, 2015).[9] In practice, the application of these kinds of comparisons would map out the structural narrative elements (i.e., setting, characters, plot, and moral) and the content elements (e.g., belief systems, causal mechanism and strategies) of elite and non-leader narratives, and then compare how the two differ and along what dimensions. We posit that said comparisons would help illuminate the extent to which non-leader perspectives are expressed by elites. Comparisons of these policy narratives to actual policy debates in authoritative forums (which may already be the case, dependent on the data sources of the elite narratives), as well as to actual policies (see James and Jorgenson, 2009), could further show to what extent mobilization of bias occurs, or the extent to which "some issues are organized into politics and others are organized out" (Schattschneider, 1960). Classic NPF micro-level methodological techniques such as interviews (e.g., Gray and Jones, 2015), focus groups (e.g., Jones et al. 2015; Smith-Walter et al., 2019) and/or surveys (e.g., Jones, 2014; Jorgensen et al. 2018) are all applicable for these kinds of research designs.

In the context of the immigration issue illuminated by our two illustrative studies above, the NPF can be used to examine the extent to which elite narratives on in-state tuition for undocumented immigrants at the meso-subsystem level differ from those of non-leader target populations at the micro level. However, it needs to be emphasized that in order to capture these potential 'non-agenda narratives' in the form of detailed first-hand accounts of undocumented immigrants, it is necessary for NPF researchers to step out of the policy subsystem and engage those not immediately involved in the policy process. Subsequently, if the researcher can identify substantial differences in terms of the structure and content of the narrative elements (e.g., characters, plot, moral, strategies, etc.) between the elite and non-leader narratives it is possible to conclude that only 'one side of the story' received attention in the policy subsystem. Put differently, we may witness the phenomenon of "narrative closure [which] results in a routinization of problem formulation and resolution" (Bennett and Edelman, 1985: 169) whereby policy elites ignore narratives that are not in line with their own preferences and beliefs, thus creating a non-decision. If the NPF is applied from a scientific perspective, all of the traditional methods mentioned above are likely applicable. However, we recognize that in some instances obtaining data from vulnerable populations can be quite difficult. In these instances, methodologies and data will be more limited, perhaps best served by interviews or participant observations and research conducted from an interpretive perspective.

9 — We do not mean to invoke an image of elites who at all times neglect the preferences of non-elite actors. Rather, we argue that all political leaders have the *capacity* to exercise power as domination, i.e. in a way that aligns with the second and third dimension of power.

The NPF and the Third Dimension of Power

Recall that preference-shaping power is the ability of a dominant group or entity to shape the beliefs and preferences of a target population, potentially against their own interests. Here the NPF can be used to identify policy narratives reflective of beliefs and preferences at the micro (individual), meso (group or coalition) and macro (institutional or cultural) level. The micro and meso level can be examined much as we describe above for the second dimension of power. Of particular interest for a third dimension of power analyses is the macro level, where the NPF has sought to examine enduring policy narratives emanating from cultural and institutional sources, the rationale being that historical macro policy narratives are proxies for underlying societal belief structures, which slowly change over time, if at all.[10] These macro-narratives can serve as a baseline of societal beliefs, how contested these beliefs are, and to what extent they manifest in public policy. Stated differently, macro-narratives become proxies for the social and institutional mobilization of bias: i.e., the extent to which certain narratives are embedded in social and institutional norms (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962).

Once the policy narratives at their respective levels have been identified, the next step is to determine what the target population's "true" interests are. In our estimation, this can be accomplished in two ways. The first possibility is that the target population provides information that indicates that they feel as if they are unable to express their true preferences, most likely due to some negative consequence or threat of reprisal when queried about their respective narratives regarding the policy issue under examination. However, when queried this population may reveal that their preferences and beliefs are in line with societal and/or elite preferences and beliefs. In this situation, the researcher may wish to compare these expressed preferences with information from an exogenous authority to identify potential discrepancies. This second approach is traditionally the domain of some critical theory approaches and controversial in that it assumes away individual agency and makes the researcher the authority on whether stated preferences equal a population's true interests or not. For example, a population may be found to hold a belief or set of preferences that run counter to their economic interests, which could be shown by citing research and literature that shows the population would benefit or suffer hardship from a particular economic policy, as was argued in the case of Republican voters in the U.S. who vote against their economic interests (Frank, 2007). We expect that this third-dimension expression of power is most likely to occur when macro and meso narratives are both congruent and homogenous, meaning the dominant macro narrative, which is taken up by policy elites, is (largely) not questioned by target populations and therefore not opposed Thus, we offer our first third dimension power proposition:

> *NPF third dimension power proposition 1*: When macro (cultural and institutional) and meso level (elite) policy narratives are both congruent and homogenous, target populations are more likely to express preferences and beliefs for policies that are harmful to the target population.

Regarding our ACF and Social Construction and Policy Design studies examining in-state tuition eligibility of undocumented students, such an approach could be illuminating. While we expect that it is highly unlikely that undocumented immigrants would not support in-state tuition eligibility, our conjecture is that this kind of analysis could, however, reveal a great deal about the preferences and beliefs of documented immigrants who may have come to their legal

10 — These structures are often black boxed by the ACF as "relatively stable parameters" and treated ad hoc in Social Construction and Policy Design research.

status via similar routes to those currently undocumented. In such a scenario, it is possible that the expressed preferences and beliefs of a disadvantaged population are shaped through 'standard policy narratives' which support commonly accepted cultural beliefs and as a consequence prevent individuals from realizing that a policy may be harmful to them longer-term (Bennett and Edelman, 1985). After performing a three-level NPF power analysis, the researcher may find that many of these legally documented immigrants genuinely support in-state tuition but feel they must be against it, less they suffer negative consequences in terms of their social standing, employment, or the like. Or it might be the case that they simply do not acknowledge that their situation was similar or analogous to the undocumented immigrants and thus hold preferences that are detrimental—if not to them directly, at least to people like them. In such a case, the researcher would need to complement their micro and meso policy narrative analyses with sufficient evidence showing that the policy in question actually does harm the population.

We now turn to our second third dimension power proposition. While we may see ongoing conflict in the policy subsystem, macro-level narratives, which often serve to maintain or 'normalize' structural power inequalities, tend to persist and be less visible, which impedes change in the overall power dynamics (Bennett and Edelman, 1985). Comparing and contrasting historical institutional and cultural policy narratives from the macro with the meso and micro level could allow researchers to highlight whether beliefs expressed in narratives of target groups and policy elites are reflected in overarching macro narratives and to track under which circumstances changes on the macro level occur.

Assuming that narratives are attached to dominant societal (and policy) beliefs, we offer the following second proposition on the third dimension of power and the NPF:

> *NPF third dimension power proposition 2*: If a previously disadvantaged target group gains access to decision-making and agenda setting, this can indicate a shift in macro narratives and therefore a shift in the dominant (policy) belief system.

For instance, it is possible to imagine a situation where the undocumented immigrant populations in Texas and Arizona start out from a similarly weak position of political influence, but the population in Texas (target group A) becomes able to overtly exert influence on the decision-making process (first dimension) and the placement of issues on the policy agenda (second dimension), whereas the equivalent target group in Arizona (target group B) continues to be unable to make its voice heard. In such a scenario, we argue that it is possible to determine a change in the power of target group A by examining whether the micro narratives of said target group, which were not congruent with elite policy narratives at time 1, are represented in elite policy narratives and consequently appear on the policy agenda at time 2, meaning we no longer witness "narrative closure" (Bennett and Edelman, 1985: 169).

In order to analyze whether such change can potentially be associated with a long-term shift in dominant societal beliefs, which the NPF assumes to be reflected by (historical/institutional) macro narratives, it is then helpful to examine the individual elements of narrative form through which narrative content is expressed. For instance, the researcher can trace whether the predominant portrayal of characters (e.g., villain, victim, hero), the plot (i.e., how the story is organized), as well as the moral of the story (e.g., call to (policy) action), have shifted long-term in a way that has given voice to target group A and has thus enabled a transfer of power to said group (Gaventa, 1980).

While such an approach will not definitively establish a causal link between the increased power of a target group and changing macro narratives, identifying a correlational long-term shift

in these narrative elements can indicate a connection between the changed power distribution and shifts in dominant societal beliefs. Conversely, in the case of target group B, which did not see an increase in its decision-making and agenda-setting power, a researcher may not witness a shift in the relevant macro narratives should they examine the elements of narrative form over time.

While macro-level studies within the NPF are not as ubiquitous as micro and meso, the NPF has shown it can be used to track this kind of variation in preferences over the course of many years by describing the macro policy narratives of the prevalent culture (e.g., Ney, 2014; Tuohy, 2019) and/or institutions with jurisdiction over the target populations (e.g., Veselková and Beblavý, 2014; Peterson, 2019). In a next step, identified macro level narratives can then be compared to both meso (e.g., subsystem) and micro (i.e., target populations) level policy narratives. This could, for example, be done by a longitudinal analysis of narrative texts by those advocating for the rights of undocumented immigrants and the narrative texts of policy elites in hearings, press statements, etc. on immigration and to compare the respective beliefs or preferences to overarching accounts, such as State of the State addresses. This could be accomplished by means of content analysis and retrospective interviews, but ostensibly it is also feasible to apply quantitative methods, perhaps time series approaches (e.g., Peterson, 2019) or event history analyses (Büthe, 2002) to test whether changes in macro narratives are statistically significant.

Conclusion

Existing policy process theory does not pay much attention to the concept of power and sometimes even dismisses it as too abstract or too complex to play a role in empirically anchored public policy research. However, while operationalizing a multidimensional power concept may be challenging, working towards an empirically viable power theory should not be dismissed out of hand based on its complexity. Even though they may be dated, the in-depth case studies by Matthew Crenson and John Gaventa show that it is possible for social science scholars to find evidence for processes such as selective agenda setting, non-decisions, and preference shaping by policy elites through means of empirical research. In this article, we have aimed to strengthen this argument by illustrating the drawbacks of existing policy process theory, which either does not clearly define its understanding of power (as domination) and thereby makes itself vulnerable to criticism, or which focuses on visible expressions of power in a pluralist subsystem. We have further taken a first step towards making a complex theoretical understanding of power applicable to empirical public policy research. In particular, and following Lukes, we have developed suggestions for operationalizing the three dimensions of power as domination or power over, which leverage the epistemological flexibility of the NPF through its differentiation between micro, meso and macro narratives to tease out the second and third dimension of power in the policy process. More specifically, we argue that an analysis of cultural or institutional (macro), and elite (meso) narratives, can help to understand how dominant narratives shape individual-level preferences of target populations—possibly to their disadvantage—and how shifts in these narratives can potentially give previously excluded target groups access to the agenda setting arena.

While it is beyond the scope of this article to realize the suggested approaches, which admittedly relegates our argument to remaining theoretical in nature, it is pertinent to recognize that disadvantaged and minority populations continue to face structural power inequalities in different policy contexts. However, we would like to note this article is by no means equipped

to provide a final definition of power, but instead uses an existing definition to enable an operationalization of power that is amenable to scientifically oriented policy research. We further acknowledge that by focusing on 'power over' or power as domination we do not discuss the transformative potential of power. While we do not wish to dismiss the potential of analyzing power as a potentially productive, agency-enhancing force, analyzing these facets of power is not the main aim of this article. That said, even though power remains a complex and multifaceted concept, policy process theory needs to be able to analytically dissect power dynamics if it wishes to remain relevant, and we see this article as an initial step in this direction. Future research is needed to put our suggestions to an empirical test and to further develop the empirically viable power concept we envisage.

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Forum

The Rise and Spread of Behavioral Public Policy: An Opportunity for Critical Research and Self-Reflection

Holger Straßheim

Professor of Political Sociology and Co-Director of the Institute for World Society Studies at Bielefeld University.

Abstract

Some argue that the global rise of behavioral approaches challenges the rationalist tradition in public policy. Others fear that it could undermine deliberation and public reasoning. This paper focuses on the worldwide rise and spread of behavioral expertise and behavioral public policy. It provides a general insight in terms of the role of expertise, the science-policy nexus and the distribution of epistemic competences in public policy. Based on an extensive literature review, the emergence and consequences of behavioral-expert networks are assessed. It will be suggested that it is necessary to break free from the microfocus proposed by behavioral public policy and to pay more attention to the institutional and cultural constellations of knowledge- and decision-making in democracies.

Keywords

behavioral public policy, nudging, expertise, epistemic communities, instrument constituencies, epistocracy, deliberative democracy

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Introduction

Over the past 70 years, public policy has always been closely interlinked with the study of human behavior. Following a temporal pattern of recurring waves that suggests the existence of issue-attention cycles among academics, top public policy journals were repeatedly fascinated by psychological and behavioral analysis (for a bibliometric analysis, see Rawat, 2019). Major contributions by scholars such as Lasswell (1951), Simon (1957) and Lindblom (1959) provided a deep understanding of cognitive limitations in decision-making. In the 1970s, policy experts were already discussing non-regulatory interventions to influence behavior in traffic-safety regulation, environmental protection and health policy (Graf, 2019). When, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Kahnemann, Tversky and others contributed to the emerging field of behavioral economics with their experimental findings on 'heuristics and biases', both public policy analysis and practice could already build on a rich and controversial debate concerning behavioral perspectives (Straßheim, 2019b; Torgerson, 2019).

In the past decade, however, there has been a remarkable increase in behavioral studies and interventions in public policy on a global scale (for an overview, see Straßheim & Beck, 2019). Public-policy journals are publishing more experimental studies than before and the interest in behavioral research seems to equal that in top economic journals (Rawat, 2019, p. 55). The OECD has concluded that behavioral approaches in public policy are 'more than a fashionable foray' and 'have taken root in many ways across many countries around the world and across a wide range of sectors and policy areas' (OECD, 2017, p. 13).

Behavioral public policy, as understood here, includes all means and modes of public policy aiming at influencing human behavior by using insights from behavioral economics, behavioral sciences, psychology or neurosciences. The spectrum of policy instruments is large, including governmental simplification to reduce the cognitive burden on citizens, risk-education programmes, techniques of social-norms marketing and behaviorally informed regulation to prevent the industry from manipulating consumers (Howlett, 2019; Loer, 2019; Oliver, 2015). Nudges are probably the most prominent subtype of behavioral public policy (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008): the rearrangement of fruit and vegetables in cafeterias to focus our attention on healthy options; graphic warnings on cigarette packages; messages to stop people from using too many paper towels, or urging them to switch off the light when they leave the office – these and other interventions have become part of everyday life.

While the US, the UK and Singapore are among the forerunners, behavioral public policies can nowadays be found in many countries across Western Europe, Central America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. In more than 70 behavior-expert organizations, mostly organized as small teams in chancelleries, as consultancies, or as networks between ministries, behavioral insights are translated into policies (John, 2018). The close entanglement of scientific and political claims, of analysing and governing behavior, is a common feature of all forms of behavioral public policy. Expertise and evidence-based policy have become essential resources for this movement (Straßheim, Jung, & Korinek, 2015). The awarding of the Sveriges Riksbanks Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel to the behavioral economist and author of 'Nudge', Richard Thaler, in 2017 (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008), and to the experimental economists, Michael Kremer, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, in 2019 (Banerjee & Duflo, 2012), highlights the rapidly increased relevance of behavioral approaches in both science and policy.

Researchers argue that behavioral public policy is at the core of a debate that challenges some foundational principles and conceptualizations of public policy. Set against the rationalist,

utilitarian orientation 'which has been generally pervasive in the policy sciences from the very founding of the discipline' (Howlett, 2019, p. 80), nudging and related concepts are addressing the limits of rationality by targeting biases in human behavior. In this way, applications of behavioral economics and behavioral psychology may help to 'undermine the utilitarian paradigm' (Howlett, 2019, p. 80) and to strengthen the non-utilitarian tradition in public policy. Others are sceptical: Kahneman and Tversky were particularly successful because they found their way into mainstream economics by accepting the model of 'homo economicus' as a benchmark for identifying biases in behavior (Graf, 2019; Sent, 2004). Critics argue that behavioral public policy could have far-reaching consequences for democracy by dismissing citizens' preferences as biases and by offering both policy elites and experts a way to realize their goals (Schubert, 2017). With its critique of public deliberation as amplifying individual and collective biases (Sunstein, 2004b), behavioral public policy could even slowly come to replace the classical procedures of deliberative democracy (Straßheim, 2020). According to this view, behavioral public policy might even lead to a continuation of the technocratic tradition and its 'politics of expertise' (Fischer, 1990).

Following the call once made by Lasswell, this article takes the global rise of behavioral public policy as an 'opportunity for prolonged self-scrutiny' (Lasswell, 1977 [1930], p. 201). What can we learn regarding the foundations of both rationality and reasoning in public policy? More specifically, what insights can be gained concerning the role of expertise, the relation between knowing and governing and the distribution of 'epistemic competences' in public policy (Fischer, 2009; Goodin & Spiekermann, 2018)? Conceptually, this paper is anchored in theories of 'political epistemology' (Fischer, 2009; Jasanoff, 2012; Straßheim, 2015; Turner, 2007). These theories are aimed at reconstructing the various ways and mechanisms by which both knowledge-making and decision-making are intertwined. They ask about the multiple practices which connect claims of validating and justifying beliefs about the world to claims of collectively ordering it. While 'objectivist epistemologies' (Majone, 1989) might hope for a rationalization of politics by science, political epistemologies are more careful. Proponents assume that, depending on the collective configurations and institutional contexts of policy-making, there are always multiple and potentially contested ways of how science and politics interact and how rationality is defined (Straßheim, 2015). Empirically, this contribution is based on an extensive review of research literature and of multiple primary sources such as policy papers, guidelines, annual updates and thematic reports issued by more than 60 behavioral public-policy units all over the world. Moreover, this material was used to identify cooperative relations and interactions between different behavioral public-policy units, such as conferences, collaborative workshops, common projects or advisory relations. These links were collected to get a better understanding of the global collaborations of behavioral expertise (for a preliminary analysis, see Botzem & Straßheim, 2016).

The next section of this article takes a closer look at the networks of behavioral expertise and policy across countries and policy areas. This lays the foundation for an assessment of the various mechanisms that contribute to the emergence and the shape of expert communities and the fabrication of behavioral insights under the conditions of the 'postnational constellation' (Habermas, 2001). I will then discuss some recent findings concerning the symbiosis between science and policy in the context of 'evidence-based policy' and the implications that this has for policy pathologies and failures. Following this, the implications of behavioral perspectives regarding the relations between policy elites, experts and citizens in democracies will be explored. Finally, I will outline some public-policy possibilities beyond behavior. I suggest breaking free from the microfocus proposed by behavioral public policy and paying more attention to collective and cultural constellations of knowledge- and decision-making in democracies.

Global Expertise and the Fabrication of Public Policy

The landscape of behavioral public policy is extremely diverse (Whitehead, Jones, & Pykett, 2019). Transnational organizations, such as the World Bank, the European Commission and the United Nations, are using behavioral insights across a large and diverse spectrum of policy areas. In the United Kingdom, the rise of behavioral public policy is associated with the creation of the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT) by David Cameron in 2010, an organisation that has gained both national and international influence by experimentally developing and disseminating behavioral interventions (Jones, Pykett, & Whitehead, 2013). It has become a paradigmatic example, cooperating and consulting with similar project units in other countries, such as the former Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST) at the White House, the New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet Behavioral Insights Unit (NSW BIU) in Australia and the project group, Wirksam Regieren ('governing effectively') at the German chancellery. In Denmark and Norway, 'nudge units', such as iNudgeyou or Greenudge, engage in research projects focusing mainly, but not exclusively, on environmental policy and public health, such as reducing food waste, changing littering behavior or decreasing smoking.

An overview of behavioral-expert organizations across the world shows that the 'varieties of behavioral public policy' are multifaceted and complex (for the following, see Botzem & Straßheim, 2016; Straßheim & Beck, 2019). Three major developments are characteristic of the past 10 years: In a first phase of *interaction and institutionalization* between 2010 and 2012, several British government departments established small behavioral-research teams. At that time, the BIT had already developed well-established contacts with the US Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), the central unit reviewing the executive branch regulations, headed by Cass Sunstein from 2009 to 2012. In particular, David Halpern, formerly at the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit (COSU) and now head of BIT, worked as a kind of policy entrepreneur by keeping close relations not only with OIRA but also with the Scandinavian forerunners of the behavior-policy movement. At the European level, the BIT was interlinked with a small group of behavioral specialists at the Institute for Health and Consumer Protection in the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. Around 2012, the BIT started several long-term partnerships with other early adopters, such as the Government of New South Wales in Australia and the Ministry of Manpower in Singapore. A second phase of *standardization and internationalization* between 2014 and 2018 can be characterized by the international emergence of new behavioral-expertise organizations and by the expansion of existing links and collaborations. The number of staff at the BIT has grown impressively, especially since its partial privatization in 2014. Multiple international partnerships have been established between the BIT and, for example, the Behavioral Insights Network in the Netherlands (2014), the Mexican Ministry of Finance (2016) and the New York City Housing Authority (2016). Other behavioral units are also multiplying their collaborations with national, international and transnational actors. In a third phase of *diversification* since 2018, it has become clear that behavioral science is operating in, and embedded in, complex regulatory regimes consisting of multi-level, decentralized procedures, interactions between states and networks of non-state actors and multiple modes of societal coordination. As in the Dutch case, these may collaborate in a loose form of informal networks, knowledge-exchange groups, working groups or strategic projects (Feitsma, 2019). Inter- and transnational organizations, such as the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Population Fund, but also NGOs and multinational organizations, such as the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-Pal), are playing an important role in the spread of behavioral approaches in different regions of the Global South.

Particularly in the early phase, behavioral expertise seems to have formed an epistemic community (John, 2018; Zito, 2018). Following the criteria developed by Haas and others (Haas, 2013, 351-352), an inter- and transnationally active circle of behavioral experts has formed a 'knowledge-based community with an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge' (2013, 351-352). Members such as Sunstein, Thaler or Halpern 'share knowledge about the causation' of biases in citizens' behavior, as well as a 'common set of normative beliefs' (2013, 351) about the interventions and tools that might help to de-bias public policy (D. Halpern, 2016; Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). Despite some differences in interpretation of the scientific and political implications, this circle was based on principled beliefs about the need to translate insights from behavioral economics and psychology into public policy.

The idea that 'all tools are informational now' (John, 2013), however, holds together an increasingly large collective of highly diverse actors that goes far beyond the clear-cut belief system of an epistemic community. During the past few years, behavioral re-design of policy instruments has covered an ever broader spectrum (Howlett, 2019; Loer, 2019; Oliver, 2015). This multifaceted industry that produces behavioral interventions is increasingly divergent in terms of principled beliefs, modes of validation, problem definitions and even policy solutions.

Simons and Voss (2018) have suggested interpreting such arrangements as 'instrument constituencies'. In instrument constituencies, tools such as emission-trading become the vantage point for forming and holding the collective together. Embedded in a 'web of practices', such as instrument design, experimentation, training, standardization and implementation, these tools bring together actors from very different backgrounds. As instruments are constituted and shaped by multiple actors, they also actively shape and 'nurture' the collective that emerges from these activities. Simons and Voss have made it clear that instrument constituencies are not based on core beliefs. Instead, the instruments themselves both constitute and catalyse the formation of relations between heterogeneous practices by experts and instrument designers, policy-makers and civil servants, consultants and civil-society organizations. Instrument constituencies provide solutions chasing problems (Béland, Howlett, & Mukherjee, 2018; Voss & Simons, 2014). They go against the grain of rationalist and functionalist assumptions about the problem-solving perspective in public policy. The instrument constituency comes to life and works as a collective by searching for problems for an already existing solution.

Indeed, behavioral public policy follows a very similar logic. Especially in the second phase of standardization and internationalization, blueprints of behavioral tools travel to very different contexts where they are implemented and reproduced by highly divergent sets of actors. Global standards and practices of professionalization transform the small community of experts into a global industry of policy instruments. Findings on pension defaults, tax-collection letters, university-application programmes, or reducing prescription errors, are presented in simple bar charts, demonstrating the efficiency of behavioral instruments. The success of such tools is instantly graspable. They establish a kind of politico-epistemic interlinkage in which actor groups, behavioral evidences and practices of validating and implementing indeed exist 'for and by' behavioral instruments (Voss & Simons, 2014, p. 4).

Professionals who engage in the 'common policy enterprise' (Haas, 2013) of de-biasing society may still be active, but they are slowly integrated into a constituency of professionals and procedures that primarily design behavioral policy tools and constantly work at identifying suitable problems for this purpose. When looked at closely, the principled beliefs and notions of behavioral professionals are highly divergent (John & Stoker, 2019). The original epistemic community, it seems, may have 'failed successfully' by laying the ground for, and later giving

way to, a much larger collective encompassing a high diversity of policy actors and competing discourses. This is indeed the 'irony for experts – their foundational knowledge opens the door to myriad actors and contending interpretations' (Dunlop, 2017a, 228). The next two sections discuss some of the consequences of the behavioral constituency coming to life.

Knowledge- and Decision-making Reconsidered

The research carried out by Kahneman and Tversky was originally motivated by the question of how the intuition of experts and professionals works (Kahneman, 2011). This question, however, seems to have faded away in the debate about nudging. In their reports on the role of behavioral insights in development policy, both the World Bank (2015) and the United Nations (2016) have shifted the attention back to the following question: What are the cognitive limitations and biases of experts and decision-makers (for the following, see Straßheim, 2019a)? The most recent report by the Behavioral Insights Team on 'behavioral government' argues that elected and unelected officials are themselves influenced by the same heuristics and biases that they try to address (Hallsworth, Egan, Rutter, & McCrae, 2018). Integrating a large corpus of already existing policy literature on the problem, the report identifies a multiplicity of decision-making biases (Bellé, Cantarelli, & Belardinelli, 2018; Bovens & 't Hard, 2016; Sheffer, Loewen, Soroka, Walgrave, & Shaefer, 2018):

- Politicians and civil servants choose risky policies depending on how problems are presented (framing effects);
- Independently of their importance, certain issues and solutions are more salient than others to policy actors, leading to overreactions and the neglect of less visible but potentially more challenging problems (attention and salience);
- Professionals in governments have a tendency both to perceive and interpret evidence in line with existing views (confirmation bias);
- In groups, people tend to self-censor and conform to the group-majority view, while the arguments of other groups are rejected (group reinforcement and inter-group opposition);
- The more people are in favour of a policy, the more they assume that others have similar views (illusion of similarity);
- Decision-makers might overestimate the likelihood of future success and their ability to control outcomes (optimism bias and illusion of control).

Lodge and Wegrich call this the 'rationality paradox of nudging': '[A]t the heart of nudge is a basic paradox: It assumes bounded rationality, but offers a comprehensive vision of rationality to address problems caused by bounded rationality' (Lodge & Wegrich, 2016, p. 253). While nudge and other behavioral public policies show awareness of the cognitive limitations of citizens, proponents seem to be too optimistic on the decision-making capacities of nudgers themselves. The BIT (Hallsworth et al., 2018, p. 11-12) suggests strategies to overcome these biases, such as transparency about the evidence base used, the building of networks to access expert advice and insight, the assembling of teams that are cognitively diverse, or the integration of experimental trials into policy execution 'wherever possible'.

The call for an even more systematic integration of experimental evidence, however, seems also to be somewhat over-optimistic. As 'gold standard' randomized controlled trials (RCT) have become the universal currency for evaluating policies, Behavioral interventions are tested in

experimental or quasi-experimental designs, comparing treatment groups and control groups. The global wave of RCTs, managed by organizations such as the Behavioral Insights Team (BIT) in the UK, or the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-Pal) in the US, has already raised some criticism (Donovan, 2018; Pearce & Raman, 2014). RCTs create a controlled environment in which the social and cultural context is bracketed out in favour of internal validity. Or, in the pointed judgement made by Deaton and Cartwright: 'RCTs are not capable of telling us what would happen if these policies were implemented to scale, of capturing unintended consequences that typically cannot be included in the protocols, or of modelling what will happen if schemes are implemented by governments […].' (Deaton & Cartwright, 2016, p. 61). The implicit premise of RCTs is their micro-instrumentalism, i.e. their myopic focus on tools that target individual behavior as a unit of analysis. RCTs assume that 'small' instruments – adding a specific sentence to a tax letter or changing the design of pension enrolments – are superior to macro-level, structural interventions (M. Halpern & Mason, 2015).

The call for RCTs to be a means of de-biasing behavioral government reflects the widespread belief in evidence-based policy-making as a way of depoliticizing ideologically loaded problems and identifying the most effective policy instruments. Many studies, however, have shown that the use of evidence to trigger mechanisms of policy learning is not enough to prevent policy failures (Dunlop, 2017b; Straßheim & Kettunen, 2014). One reason is that scientific experts are not immune to those biases that the BIT has identified in policy-making. Just like policy-makers, they are prone to cognitive and collective biases such as framing effects, confirmation biases or an illusion of control (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2015; Kahneman, 2011; Tetlock, 2005). More problematic, however, may be the collective biases that can result from the interaction between experts and policy-makers. While scientific experts often try to 'draw an artificial line between facts and values, or science and policy', understanding the mechanisms that are closing the 'science-policy gap' could be essential for understanding behavioral public-policy failures (Wellstead, Cairney, & Oliver, 2018, p. 2). Research on expertise and policy advice has identified the multiple mechanisms of symbiosis or 'co-production' that may lead to technocratic tendencies, a collective black-boxing of complex contexts, a silent depoliticization of value-loaded questions and a mutual reinforcement of political and epistemic authority (Boswell, 2009; Kennedy, 2016; Koppl, 2018; Straßheim, 2018). This may lead to a collective illusion of control (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2015) among experts and policy actors, reinforced by the unquestionable and undeniable evidence of experimental trials. In complex policymaking environments, these mechanisms of science-policy 'groupthink' may lead to a de-politicized and de-contextualized view of policy-making (Wellstead et al., 2018). Despite the seemingly neutral perspective of evidence-based policy, behavioral approaches may have mobilized an elitist discourse on deliberative democracy.

Against Democracy?

Part of the discourse on behavioral public policy is also a critique of democratic deliberation (for the following, see Straßheim, 2020; Crouch, 2004). Repeatedly, some of its proponents have argued against democratic deliberation as a mode of decision-making, pointing to collective biases and 'reasoning failures': 'Those who practice deliberation, or celebrate it, have not adequately engaged with existing knowledge, both theoretical and practical, about how individuals and groups actually behave' (Sunstein, 2006, p. 221). In the past decade, behaviorally informed studies have continuously pointed to multiple psychological and cognitive mechanisms leading to failures in deliberation and democratic procedures (Button, 2018; Rogers, Fox, & Gerber, 2013; Sunstein, 2004a, 2004b, 2006): In group deliberation, pre-existing errors

are amplified instead of corrected. Informational and reputational cascades lead people to follow the actions of their predecessors. Political participation may suffer from group polarization and the interaction between like-minded people with the consequence that participants in debates and public fora shift their attitudes in accordance with group pressures. Extreme positions that existed before the deliberation process are amplified and group polarization is increased. Learning might be limited because shared information is crowding out unshared information. In a similar way, voting behavior is seen as being influenced by social pressure and social norms, social-identity dynamics and cognitive dissonance.

Based on these and other observations derived from psychological and behavioral experiments, Sunstein comes to the conclusion that 'the mechanisms that underlie group polarization raise serious questions about the view that deliberation is likely to yield correct answers to social questions' (Sunstein, 2000, 118). As a consequence, nudges and other behavioral micro-interventions are recommended to 'de-bias' deliberative democracy and activate citizens' voting motivation in elections (John, 2018; Rogers et al., 2013; Williams, Allpress, & Rootham, 2018). Instead of engaging in deliberation procedures, advocates of behavior strategies recommend nudges in multiple areas such as health, environment and sustainability, or welfare to work. To avoid biased deliberation in collectives, deliberation itself is individualized: 'The argument is that an enhanced nudge is much more desirable than full-on deliberation, which takes up too much time, assumes too much capacity, and only selects a minority of the population' (John, 2018, 122-134). As Thomas has shown, behavioral public policy thus implicitly introduces a notion of rational asymmetry between biased citizens and nearly omniscient experts and policymakers (Thomas, 2019, p. 12).

Critics argue that behavioral public policy could have far-reaching consequences for democracy (Straßheim & Beck, 2019; Thomas, 2019): Because deliberation procedures are increasingly perceived as amplifying cognitive distortions in collectives, modes of cognitive and behavioral correction by both policymakers and experts are slowly replacing the classical procedures of deliberative democracy. Analysing the 'political economy' of nudging, Schubert assumes that citizens' preferences can more easily be dismissed as biases while they offer policy elites a way to realize their goals (Schubert, 2017). When these elite preferences are implemented through nudges, they might be less visible, less controllable and less likely to become the topic of political debates or conflicts. Moreover and as already discussed above, policymakers and experts themselves are not free from cognitive limitations and could even mutually reinforce each other in biasing the policy process (Koppl, 2018).

These problems of biased decision-making also enhance the 'risk of cognitive capture by experts' (Thomas, 2019, p. 17). Policy advisors might be influenced by alterations in their very own choice architecture, e.g. by consultancies or agencies 'legislating in the shadows' by providing evidence and interpretative assistance in drafting legislation (Walker, 2017). Finally, the reliance on expertise in policymaking could result in epistemic monopolies, undermining the mechanisms of knowledge diversification in democracies and underestimating the value of local and contextual knowledge (Thomas, 2019, p. 18-22). From a critical perspective, it could be argued that the project of de-biasing democracy has its own biases.

It seems that the debate on behavioral public policy has already changed the interpretation of democratic deliberation. Drawing on insights from behavioral studies, authors such as Brennan are explicitly arguing 'against democratic triumphalism' (Brennan, 2016; see also Khanna, 2017). Instead, a technocratic instrumentalism is proposed, which values effectiveness and 'epistocracy' as means of correcting the biases and irrationalities of collective decision-making.

Epistocracy, the 'rule of the knowledgeable' (Brennan, 2016), takes the asymmetries between the biased and the unbiased (or de-biased), proposed by behavioral approaches, seriously. Proponents are suggesting establishing the right for expert bodies to veto rules passed by democratic bodies ('epistocratic veto'), to restrict suffrage to those who are competent or sufficiently well-informed ('restricted suffrage') and to weight the votes of citizens based on their 'objective political knowledge' proved by the ability to pass a knowledge test ('weighted voting') (Brennan, 2016). Behavioral forerunners such as Singapore may provide ample evidence that some of these post-democratic ideas are already part and parcel of political practices (Khanna, 2017; Low, 2012).

In most countries, current behavioral public policy is far away from this kind of political instrumentalism. It has helped in understanding some of the limits and side-effects of deliberation and informed the critical discussion on deliberative democracy (Hendriks, 2019). It has also evolved conceptually and developed a complex understanding of the potential of subjects for action, learning and reflection in a social environment (John, 2018; Sunstein & Reisch, 2019). Its protagonists should, however, be well aware of the post-democratic tendencies that the behavioral discourse has already mobilized under the conditions of global communication.

Conclusions: Beyond Behavior

Experts and policy-makers may pave the way to new forms of democratic self-governance. As the case of behavioral expertise and public policy shows, however, they might also empower actors that favour technocratic and epistocratic ideas of governance in the hope that the flaws of democratic systems can be overcome by a more rational 'rule of the knowledgeable' (Brennan, 2016). Experts and professionals should be well aware of the normative implications of their work – and of the fact that, especially under the conditions of the post-national constellation, the instruments they are proposing might develop a political life of their own. Adler and Haas have pointed to this self-undermining mechanism when they are arguing that communities of experts 'create reality, but not as they wish' (Adler & Haas, 1992, p. 381).

The case of behavioral public policy may also provide some general lessons for public policy. It might be important to shift the attention again from individual behavior to the conditions of collective action. Mirroring the decades of debate on the psychological and cognitive foundations of decision-making, some authors seem to equate public policy mostly with both channelling and changing behavior (Anderson, 2014; Knoepfel, Larrue, Varone, & Hill, 2011, p. 26). Public policy, however, needs to break free from the micro-focus proposed by behavioral economics and to pay more attention to institutional, cultural and discursive dynamics (Howlett, 2019; Straßheim, 2020). Lasswell was already well acquainted with the mechanisms and problems of collective action. His contextual orientation included group dynamics, institutions, symbols, cultural configurations and long-term dynamics in a historical perspective. Science and politics would always have to search for 'cultural patterns in terms of their human consequences' (Lasswell, 1977 [1930], p. 200). Some of the failures and side-effects of nudging and other behavioral-change strategies are a direct outcome of the methodological and conceptual shortcomings of an undersocialized perspective. Even more problematic, however, are those mechanisms leading to collective failures and myopia in the relationship between science and policy. RCTs and the quest for ever more robust and value-free evidence are one expression of these pathological mechanisms in the science-policy nexus. Finding ways to overcome such biases and to develop 'regulatory humility' (Dunlop & Radaelli, 2015) could be more important than ever.

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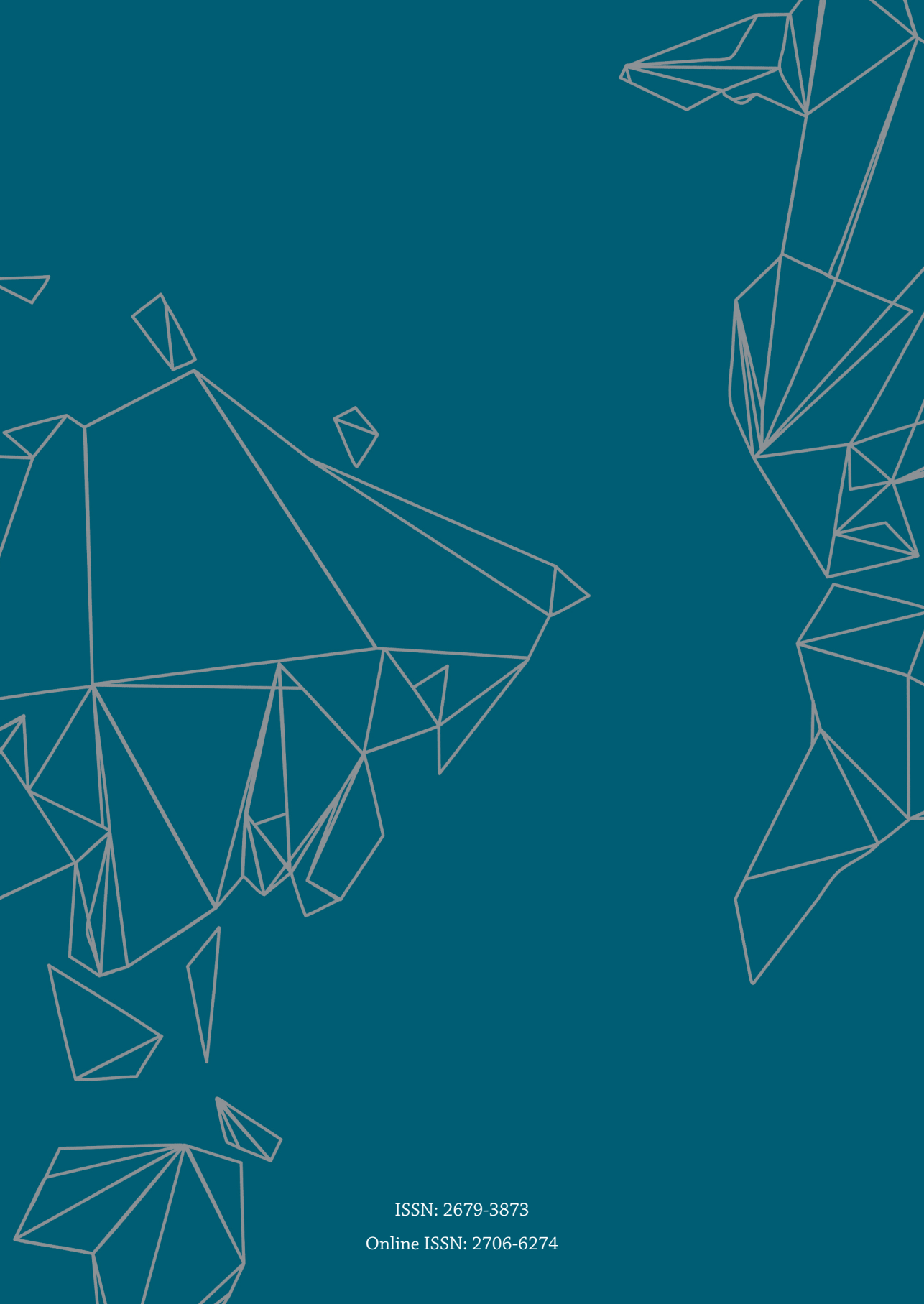

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