

A Methodology for the Comparison and Evaluation of Public Policies

CORINNE LARRUE & KATIA HORBER-PAPAZIAN

Introduction

The comparative approach to policy analysis developed by Peter Knoepfel belongs to the studies carried out from the 1970s by political scientists interested in questions surrounding the implementation of public policies in different political-administrative contexts. This trend, which unfolded initially in America (see in particular Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973; Bardach, 1984), subsequently spread to Europe (Ashford, 1978; Lundquist, 1980; Maintz, 1980; Vogel, 1983). The application of this type of analysis concerns "emerging" policies or policies that are "under construction", such as, for example, environmental protection policy, health promotion policy and unemployment policy, and necessitates analyses of a qualitative nature.

The comparative analysis of public policies therefore positioned itself in contrast to the approaches previously developed in "comparative politics", which focused on entire political systems. The latter were published in the journal "Comparative Politics" (under the editorship of LaPalombara), in particular.

The comparative policy approaches are based on case studies involving a more or less significant number of cases (see, in particular, Ashford, 1978; Vogel & Kun, 1983) and/or statistical analyses relating to an extended period of time and large number of countries (in particular Castles, 1998). Furthermore, quali-quantitative analyses that systematically combine these two types of methodological approach have emerged since the late 1980s (Ragin, 1987, *Revue Internationale de politique comparée*, 1994).

One of the publications that is most typical of the thinking in this regard is Ashford's book: "Comparing Public Policies: New Concepts and Methods" (1978). The main questions raised here concern the capacity to produce a "comparative theory of states" based on the observed permanence of the structural elements associated with the policies adopted by different governments. However, this objective has scarcely been attained.

These approaches quickly prompted questions in relation to the relevance of a comparative approach, which were rapidly followed by questions relating to its feasibility. In effect, the question of the comparison of policies

implemented on one and the same topic in different countries refers back to that of the relevance of a comparison, considering the number of variables to be taken into account ("*many variables, small number of cases*" cf. Lijphart, 1975). However, from the early 1980s, the *Revue internationale de politique comparée* would constitute for the Francophone world a forum for debate on the comparison of public policies. The journal published accounts of the different methodological approaches applied to specific policy fields such as health, social policy and environmental policy. Finally, in more recent times, both the study by Lallement and Spurk (2003) and issue 2004/3 of the *Revue internationale de politique comparée* presented an assessment of the approaches developed in this regard.

What emerges from these various assessments is, first, that the development of comparative policy analysis may be observed at different levels: i.e. on the level of researchers but also on that of decision-makers and the media (Hassenteufel, 2005). The latter two levels favour the use of the comparative approach to identify the best policy "models". This development contributed, on the one hand, to providing inputs for reform strategies in different countries (this is particularly applicable to the work of the OECD on New Public Management) and also, in the case of the researchers, to the formulation of comparative strategies and methods (Lima, Steffen, 2004).

More generally, several contributions associated with these comparative policy processes may also be reported (Lallement & Spurk, 2003; Lima & Steffen, 2004): a distanced view of the researcher's own country enabling the advance identification of the non-identified variables; the capacity to test (and, therefore, revitalize) hypotheses on the causality of the phenomena observed in the different countries; and, finally, the clarification of comparative intersectoral, national and international strategies and analytical methods.

Peter Knoepfel's work constitutes a particular methodological contribution in this context. The comparative analytical framework developed by this author stands out on the basis of the level of detail of the analyses carried out and the cross-referencing of the variables used. To be more precise: first, this analytical framework relates not only to the development of public policies but also to the process of policy implementation and therefore always leads to the creation of a specific analytical grid; and, second, the variables used in the analysis are threefold: the emphasis is placed on the actors and their configurations, the institutional rules and the resources mobilized.

We shall return to these different dimensions. We will revisit the analytical grids produced in this way while systematically questioning their operationalization, their contributions and their limits. In doing this, we will present the new paths opened up by these studies for the construction and stabilization of analytical methods in the area of comparative policy analysis and policy evaluation. Thus we will explore: (a) the production of normative frameworks; (b) policy implementation; and, finally, (c) evaluation.

A method for the comparative study of policy programming

"To enable the comparison of the data collected in different countries, all comparative research that would like to go beyond a simple juxtaposition of national Reports should determine accurately the dependent variables to be explained and use a necessarily limited number of explanatory variables." (Knoepfel, Larrue 1985, p. 54).

The comparative approach to policy analysis as developed by Peter Knoepfel is based, therefore, on the identification and construction of dependent and explanatory variables which are defined *a priori* as a basis for the collection of empirical data. Applied to the development of public action programmes, this analytical framework enables us to understand the processes behind the production of these programmes and to link them to their respective content. The proposed methodological framework seeks, therefore, to define the analytical variables in a rigorous way and to produce reliable hypotheses which the analysis will attempt to test empirically.

The analytical frameworks used in comparative policy research generally aim "to compare the characteristics of a national system with those of other systems and, in this way, to refer to the established universals and differences" (Sartori, G., 1994). To do this, according to Giraud (2004), "*the comparative analysis of public action has numerous and diversified theoretical frameworks at its disposal today. The institution-based approaches, the cognitive approaches, the analytical frameworks based on policy regulation, the socio-historical approaches based on policy tools or, again, focused on the observation of practices*" (Giraud, 2004, p. 149).

For its part, the approach proposed by Peter Knoepfel emphasizes the *substantial content* of action programmes and the game played by the actors that leads to their definition. The prism of the proposed analysis remains, nonetheless, that of institutions which are understood in terms of the rules, constraints and opportunities they offer to actors who mobilize different action resources in this context (Chapter 1, Knoepfel, Larrue & Varone, 2000).

However, Peter Knoepfel's approach is specific in that it considers the normative framework and its production as a simple stage in the development of a policy, for which it merely constitutes one product among others. Thus, it does not constitute an intermediary product or a final product whose referents must be understood as proposed, for example, by the cognitive approach to policy analysis.

According to the "Knoepfelian" approach, a policy programme is constituted, therefore, of all of the legislative and regulatory decisions of both the central state and the local authorities necessary for the implementation of public policies.

The prism of implementation orients the comparative analysis of public policy programmes. It is the capacity to frame implementation that is central in the analysis of public policy programmes and therefore implicitly constitutes the comparative structure. The public policy programmes and their production

process are not compared in themselves but in relation to what they tell us about the capacity to frame the implementation processes.

The constitutive elements of a public action programme as identified by Peter Knoepfel and Helmut Weidner from 1982 (Knoepfel, Weidner, 1982) are, therefore, keys to the comparison of this framework capacity.

Five constitutive elements were identified by the two authors. First and foremost of these are the **policy objectives**. They "*define the status to be attained by the adopted solution that would be considered as satisfactory. They describe the desired social status in a field of action once the public problem is resolved*" (Knoepfel, Larrue & Varone, 2000 p 154). In terms of the framing of the implementation of a policy, the definition of concrete options is therefore supposed to generate stronger framework capacity: "*The more concretely the values are formulated, the easier it is to establish whether they have been effectively realised (or not). This increases the opportunities open to a policy's end beneficiaries to demand the best solutions to the problems affecting them, through either political or legal means*" (Knoepfel, Larrue & Varone, 2000, p. 155).

However, the concept of an objective remains difficult to tackle. The discussion of the objectives refers back to the finality of the action undertaken and the logic of the action to be taken. The pluralist nature of the processes of formulation and legitimation of policy programmes creates space for numerous divergences between the actors or for contradictions in relation to the definition of objectives. This is even truer if the process takes place within different geographical, political and institutional frameworks. Therefore the identification and comparison of objectives between different programmes can prove a very difficult exercise.

However, with respect to environmental policies, to which the analytical framework was applied in particular, this kind of identification was not only possible but actually productive in the majority of cases. Thus, for example, the analysis of clean-air policies carried out by Peter Knoepfel and Helmut Weidner in the 1980s resulted in the demonstration of the fact that these very concrete objectives were defined in all countries in terms of SO₂ per m³ of air (immission limit value). While these objectives were clearly established in the German legislation on air quality, for example, in the case of the French regulations, they were based on highly opaque technical calculations. Thus, it was the research of this "constitutive element" of the policy programme which, although it does not correspond to a formal decision-making category in France,¹ made it possible to demonstrate the – *de facto* if not legal – existence of this element within the public policy programme. Furthermore, this type of analysis enables the consolidation of the concept of an objective as an analytical category.

¹ The lack of definition of objectives in terms of a enforceable air quality standard was even presented at the time as doctrine by the Minister of the Environment, who argued the fact that the definition of air quality objectives could be interpreted as granting the right to pollute in areas in which pollution lay below the envisaged threshold values.

It should be noted, however, that one of the main consequences of European integration was the harmonization and, above all, institutionalization, of the definition of the objectives to be attained by the policies of the EU Member States. The case of the Water Framework Directive (WFD: Directive 2000/60/EC of 23 October 2000) is particularly illustrative in this regard. The promulgation of the WFD gave rise to a formalized, concerted and negotiated process in all of the Member States of the European Union for the definition of water policy objectives at national level and at water-basin level. It would be very interesting to carry out a comparative analysis of these processes, similar to that carried out by Bouleau on France (Bouleau, 2007). In effect, analyzing to the processes of definition of these objectives also enables a return to the construction of the "sense" of the action to be carried out and its capacity to channel the implementation processes.

The second element identified in the analytical framework is the **evaluative elements**. According to Peter Knoepfel and Helmut Weidner's analytical grid, what is involved here is "*data to be collected so as to facilitate the ascertainment of the extent to which the defined objectives have been fulfilled*" (p. 155). This constitutive element is, again, particularly suited to technical policies such as policies for the prevention of pollution. In fact, *ex ante* evaluation exercises, which are formalized to a greater or lesser extent, increasingly result in the identification of indicators and other numerical elements to be quantified for the evaluation of the policy implementation programmes. The use of this analytical category makes it possible to demonstrate, for example, the extent of the influence of the European Union on the definition of these elements in each Member State. Indeed, the very consideration of the existence of such a category prompts the research and presentation of the debates surrounding policy evaluation in each country. However, in many countries these debates and evaluation processes are carried out *ex post*, i.e. after the implementation of the policy. In these cases, the data to be collected for the evaluation of the policy effects are also defined on an *ex-post* basis. The analytical category "evaluative elements" emerges, therefore, as inoperative or artificial: depending on the countries or policies involved, the concept of evaluative elements is not constitutive of a normative framework or of the process of development of a public policy programme. Its use as an analytical category may prompt the analyst to over-estimate its role in the framing of the policy implementation process.

The **operational elements** are the third constitutive element of a public policy programme. What is involved here are measures planned with a view to fulfilling the policy objectives. The operational elements reflect the dominant intervention hypothesis, i.e. the hypothesis formulated in relation to the levers that make it possible to alter the behaviour of the target groups. These operational elements define specifically the target social groups of the public action. The approach in terms of policy tools is relatively traditional in public policy analysis, including in the comparative approaches. It has prompted numerous analyses, in particular to highlight the links between the dominant conception of the problems to be resolved and the instruments selected to

overcome them. Thus, for the supporters of policy analysis based on instruments, a policy instrument constitutes "a both technical and social tool that organizes the specific social relations between state authority and its target group based on the representations and meanings associated with it" (L. Boussaguet et al., 2006, p. 269).

The four modes of action presented as operational elements by Peter Knoepfel et al. refer to mechanisms which are well identified today: regulatory mode, incentive mode, persuasive mode and the direct provision of goods and services. Of course what is designated as a tool here refers, in reality, to generally mixed mechanisms and, strictly speaking, constitutes very general categories which are subdivided into multiple sub-categories. Nevertheless, the comparison of these combinations of operational elements between different action programmes enables the identification of "policy styles" (Morand, 1991, Richardson, 1982), and, above all, the comprehension of the contingencies behind the choices made in each country. Furthermore, the identification of these modes of action makes it possible to anticipate the different resources necessary for their implementation (cf. Chapter 3, Knoepfel, Larrue & Varone, 2000).

Thus, while incentive mode requires resources of a more monetary nature, regulatory mode generally requires resources of a legal, human and interactive nature and, above all, the resource "confidence" for its implementation. Similarly, persuasive mode requires cognitive type resources or "confidence" and it would appear that the direct provision of goods and services requires property assets and/or monetary resources. The capacity to structure the implementation process will depend, therefore, on the level of the different resources that can be mobilized by the actors responsible for the application of the policy in question. The comparative analysis of policy tools enables, therefore, the identification of the configurations best or worst suited to the implementation processes.

Finally, recent policy analyses demonstrate an evolution in the conception and production of the frameworks for public action: i.e. the emergence of the public as a new policy operator. This new figure, the implications of whose emergence in terms of the procedural elements will be seen later, is linked with what is known as "empowerment", that is "the process whereby an individual or group acquires the means of strengthening its capacity for action and emancipating itself" (Bacque, 2005). These developments have led to the emergence of policies of a *constitutive* nature aimed at giving the actors the capacity to mobilize consultation bodies, which are institutionalized to a greater or lesser extent, so as to anticipate and/or manage conflicts. They have also resulted in the adaptation of the modalities of public action and in their being based on the capacity of the target groups to appropriate the required behaviours and even propose new types of public action (for example in the context of participative budgets). Here too, it is the mobilization of the analytical category of operational elements that enables the comparison of modalities of public action and the highlighting of their similarity and differences.

The fourth constitutive element identified in the analytical framework of public policy programmes is the **political-administrative arrangement**. This concept of an arrangement or configuration of actors echoes that of the public action network largely developed by other authors (e.g. Le Gales & Thatcher, 1995). In this regard, the comparison between the *potential* implementation arrangements instituted in the framework of national public action programmes constitutes an original analytical element. It is not so much the network of actors effectively involved in the implementation of the policy that is identified here but that identified *a priori* during the formulation of the policy. As in the case of policy tools, the comparison of these actor configurations between countries or between different policies makes it possible to anticipate the framing of the implementation processes.

Lastly, the fifth constitutive element of a programme is the **procedural elements**. Identifying the specific forms of interaction between political-administrative actors and between the target groups and beneficiary groups makes it possible to apprehend the allocation of different resources at the disposal of the parties involved in the implementation of a policy. These procedural rules, which underlie the interactions between actors during policy implementation, vary in nature: i.e. constitutional principles, administrative law and modes of legal recourse. They do not prevent the development of more informal modes of interaction throughout the implementation process but have the capacity to structure these processes (hence the procedures constitute a mandatory framework for the production of formal and information interaction). It is possible to observe, moreover, an ever-increasing profusion of these procedural elements which are supposed to impose more significant restrictions on the implementation processes. This kind of development results therefore in the establishment of processes of co-construction of public action as is the case, for example, with the planning contracts between the state and regions in France (*contrat de plan Etat Région*) and the agreements between the Federation and Provinces in Canada.

By way of summary, it may be said that this analytical grid of policy programmes enables the demonstration of the *scope* of a policy programme. In identifying the five constitutive elements and in attempting to identify their content for each country, the analytical framework makes it possible not only to identify the missing elements but also to understand why they are missing by comparing the processes that led to their definition. Moreover, the application of this grid to numerous policies of different types has enabled the confirmation of its robustness.

The grid produced in this way enables the framing of the analysis of the process of policy formulation. This "pro forma" approach to the identification of programmes makes it possible to take the challenges and tensions at the heart of the processes involved in policy development into account in greater detail. The interactions between the different actors are therefore associated with each of the constitutive elements and lead to the identification of the coherencies and incoherencies between them and, above all, the configurations of actors at the centre of these "detours".

However, this type of analysis is based on a relatively cumbersome investigation process involving the detailed analysis of the different products (documents, discourses, media etc.) generated in the course of policy development. Thus, to apply such a grid in an effective way, it is necessary to mobilize analysts specialized in the area of policy in question in each country under examination. This enables the combined use of a shared grid and the detailed analysis of the processes involved.

On the other hand, as a result of its sometimes excessive simplification, the application of this analytical grid may result in the cognitive dimension of the country's policies being missed out on and to an extent, therefore, in the falsification of the results of the analysis. For example, the use of incentive instruments in the context of environmental policy in France can be explained more by the structural weakness of the Ministry of the Environment than by an *a priori* reflection on the efficacy of this type of instrument. The comparative analysis of the public policy programmes on the basis of the proposed analytical grid does not always enable the consideration of this type of factor.

A method for the comparative analysis of processes of implementation

As we have seen, the main interest of the comparative policy analysis method is its focus on the implementation processes. Overall, it is the combination of case studies in different regions and localities of different countries, carried out on the basis of a common protocol, which constitutes the main contribution of the methodological framework proposed by Peter Knoepfel. In effect, this framework makes it possible to demonstrate the variations that exist not between countries but between the different regions and localities within these countries. The comparison of several implementation configurations enables, therefore, the identification of common factors between these processes and, in this way, the relativization of the impact of the normative framework on these implementation processes.

More precisely, the focus of interest of the comparative analysis of implementation processes as proposed by Peter Knoepfel derives from both the analytical dimensions used and the conclusions it sanctions in terms of the building of local public action.

With regard to the analytical dimensions, the proposed framework rests on the identification of the interaction between the political-administrative arrangement established for the implementation of the policy, the target groups and beneficiary groups, which Peter Knoepfel et al. identify as the triangle of actors of a public policy. This kind of focus makes it possible to reach a detailed understanding of the definition of the problem to be resolved for each of these actors and the processes of opposition or collaboration that exist between them. This kind of analysis also facilitates the combining of the contributions of the sociology of organizations with the more legal

conceptions of policy implementation processes as, in effect, the attention is focused not only on the production of outputs arising from the administrative activity but also on the power relationship related to this production and their effects. Moreover, the proposed approach claims also to incorporate an explanatory or demonstrative aim. However, to apply this, the analyst faces a dilemma between the detailed and precise reproduction of the cases involved and generalization through a consistent number of cases. Furthermore, the question also arises as to the comparability of actors in a political-administrative world that is becoming more homogeneous in formal terms: for example, although regional parks are found in many European countries, even if they play similar roles, they do not correspond to the same political-administrative reality. Finally, the categories of social actors used in this analytical grid remain reasonably fluid and merit a more precise definition.

With regards to the construction of local public action, the proposed approach enables to demonstrate of the importance of the development of implementation strategies which are formalized to a greater or lesser extent. It is the research and identification of "action plans", the existence of which is often anything but transparent, that makes it possible to apprehend these strategies. Thus, such analyses enable the demonstration of the adoption of managerial type approaches to policy implementation processes – even if such an approach often remains an imponderable in relation to public policies (at implementation level in any case). Furthermore, they make it possible to attain a more detailed understanding of the bilateral relations established and the processes of exchange between the administration and target groups. Such analyses facilitate the disclosure of the different relations between the administration and civil society, in the different regions and countries, and the place of the stakeholders in the policy process.

From a comparative point of view such analyses enable the definition of the specific features of the implementation processes in each research area and the demonstration of the relevant invariants. In this way, it has been possible to clarify the relations between governments and the governed in the area of environmental policy, the emergence of para-structures, the importance and role of decentralized actors etc. with the help of studies carried out in different fields of the environment by analysts using this analytical grid.

However, particular attention may be paid to the conduct of this type of research. In order to apprehend concretely the policy implementation processes in several locations and/or regions of several countries, it is necessary to mobilize national teams to carry out case studies on their individual countries and/or regions and to involve them in the interpretation and comparison of the case studies.

In effect, the strength and subtlety of this type of analysis rests on the establishment of a network of researchers who have been working together for several years: the process requires a long period of learning process in collaborative research which enables the development of a comparative framework based on mutual knowledge of the thematic (in this instance environmental protection) and national contexts.

This linking of collective and individual practices makes it possible to avoid the pitfall of inadequate knowledge of national and local contexts, on the one hand, and the juxtaposition of local and/or national situations, on the other.

This type of process also rests on the choice of concrete cases for specific analysis. This raises important questions in relation to the methodology of the selection of case studies and their representativity.

To illustrate this work and the questions that arise in connection with it, we would like to return to the research protocol created and used in the context of the analysis of the implementation of nature conservation policies which we coordinated in the framework of a European project (Larrue & Knoepfel, 1998).

As part of this project, it was planned to select two case studies in each of the four countries studied: Spain, France, Italy and Switzerland.

- first, cases involving an environmental protection policy that resulted in the imposition of a significant economic and land-related restriction at local level and a more diffuse environmental benefit for the entire community; a case involving the protection of a wetland was selected.
- second, cases involving a spatial planning policy that triggered significant environmental pressure at local level and a more diffuse economic benefit for the entire community; cases involving the construction of transport infrastructure were selected in each of the countries under examination.

Two types of cases were studied for each of these policies: i.e. cases involving the local and/or regional promotion of nature conservation (four cases) and cases involving the centralized promotion of nature conservation (four cases). The protection of natural areas had to be established in each case study selected. This voluntary selection of "success" stories enabled us to study the conditions behind effective nature conservation under fundamentally different institutional configurations.

Finally, during the comparison of the selected cases we prioritized the demonstration of the permanence of certain conditions of policy implementation that were similar in contexts that differed *a priori* in terms of the allocation of powers² and decentralization.³

This type of process requires the surveying of the entire national territory in the quest for cases that satisfy the defined criteria. A necessarily rapid survey of this kind may result, therefore, in the identification of cases that will not defy detailed analysis, on the one hand and in missing out on more representative cases of the national policy implementation conditions, on the other.

² The criteria for the selection of the cases made it possible to attain a variance in terms of the environmental protection and spatial planning competencies (central vs decentralized).

³ In effect, the selected countries represent a diverse spectrum with regard to this criterion: France (predominantly centralized), Italy (in the process of regionalization), Spain (mixed), and Switzerland (federal).

The protocol then concerned the **analytical method** and comprised five phases:

- Phase 1: analysis of the national policy context
- Phase 2: reconstruction of the chronology
- Phase 3: analysis of the actors involved
- Phase 4: reconstruction and analysis of processes of interaction between the actors
- Phase 5: interpretation of the results: identification of conditions for the implementation of the analysed policy

These five phases were carried out simultaneously in the five countries studied and in the two cases selected for each country. Each phase gave rise to the production of intermediary documents: analytical reports of national environmental policy over a period of around 20 years in each country; presentation of the different phases of the decision-making processes analysed; monograph of each (main) actor identified; report presenting the interaction between the actors in the course of the process.

Coordination between the teams through joint seminars for the presentation of these elements enabled the progressive appropriation of each case by all of the researchers from the national teams. This appropriation was a prerequisite of the interpretation of the case studies to be produced jointly at the end of the analysis of the different national situations.

Finally, the **comparison** was also the subject of a specific protocol. Based on the collective interpretation of the cases, a number of comparative hypotheses were formulated which were then worked on and reported by each team. These hypotheses related for the most part to:

- the types of protection provided based on the cases in question (reactive protection vs. proactive protection, decentralized protection vs. central initiative);
- the actors and their modes of cooperation (centre/periphery relation);
- the resources mobilized by the different actors and the challenges of the process;
- the impact of national and European environmental protection policy;
- the institutional contexts (centralized vs. decentralized).

The product of the comparison should lead to the identification of common conditions for success found in the different cases.

This experience illustrates the difficulty involved in such a comparison: the *outputs* to be analysed are generally numerous as are the actors to be interviewed. The historical context of each case must be apprehended in detail to enable the researchers to reach a good understanding of the interaction between administrations and target groups or beneficiary groups. Thus, the application of a protocol for the conduct of case studies enables the demonstration of the multiplicity of the modes of public action and their effects and the comparison of the actor configurations at work.

However, the application of this approach to local configurations may be too rigid and may lead to the neglect of more subtle role of social regulations (outside of the political-administrative sphere), which are ignored in the analysis framework but remain, nonetheless, a significant factor of understanding.

Nonetheless this type of process which is enriched gradually by its applications enables the comparative analysis of complex implementation processes and the apprehension of the effects.

Finally, the comparative analysis of implementation processes facilitated by the analytical framework developed by Peter Knoepfel et al. has led to the identification of differentiated implementation strategies for one and the same policy both between countries and between different implementation localities in one and the same country. These analyses have also paved the way for the highlighting of factors that explain the differences or similarities identified and, among these, the role played by the regulatory system of each country (rights to the ownership and use of land and natural resources, in particular).

A method that can be used for policy evaluation

It is not possible to evaluate public policies, programmes or action plans without analysing and contextualizing them. Therefore the third section of this chapter is devoted to the contribution made by the model developed by Peter Knoepfel in the area of policy evaluation.

For specialists in policy evaluation, *evaluating a policy, programme or action plan means passing judgement on one piece of data in reference to another (Rangeon, 1993) while applying research procedures originating from the social sciences (Rossi, Freeman, Lipsey, 2004) so as to collect information for specific users in a systematic way with the aim of reducing uncertainty, improving effectiveness and supporting decision-making (Patton, 1997).*⁵

Thus the question arises as to whether the evaluator can base his or her activity on the analytical model proposed by Peter Knoepfel. This analytical model is, in effect, very effective for all evaluative processes as it enables the examination of a policy, programme or action plan from the phase of their agenda-setting to the point at which they trigger their effects. Therefore, this model could also become a reference for policy evaluators who may be led to compare the observed reality with the model in the course of their work.

The effectiveness of the grid for the analysis of public policies lies in the fact that, like the actor configurations, each element of the public action programme may constitute an explanatory variable in an evaluation model.

⁴ A programme operates one or more policy objectives which justify the policy from which they arise. It is demarcated in terms of schedule and budget.

⁵ This definition was developed for the policy evaluation course given by Katia Horber-Papazian at the IDHEAP.

Moreover it is interesting to note that each policy phase predetermines the next to a certain extent. Thus, the application of the model makes it possible to understand the consequences that an erroneous hypothesis regarding the causes of a public problem may have for the hypothesis regarding the state intervention and, hence also, its capacity to resolve the problem. The same applies to the lack of action resources at the disposal of the actors which will have a direct impact on the quality of the outputs and effects triggered by the policy. Therefore, this model has a predictive value for the evaluator who will examine it based on the example of Figure 1 below.

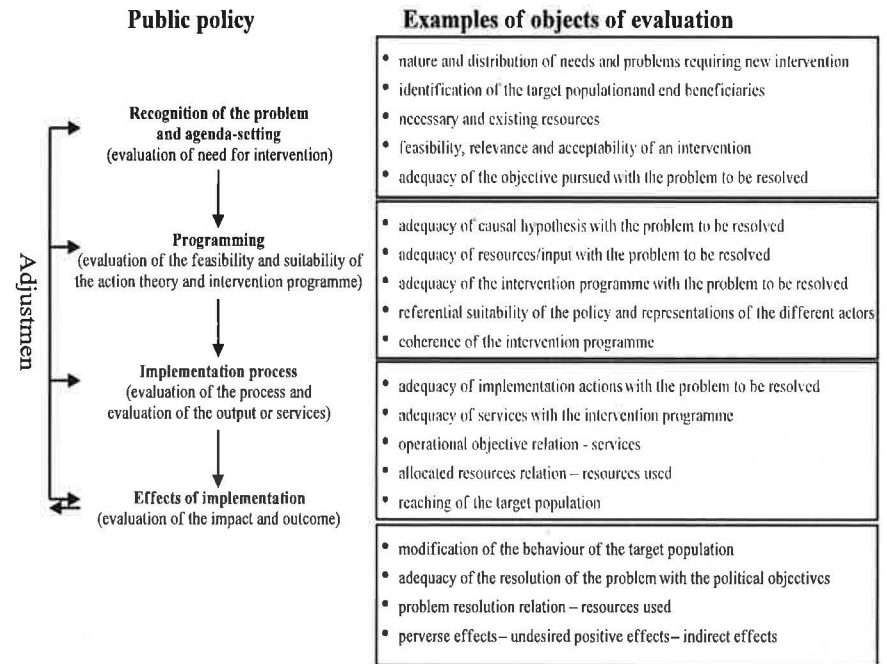


Figure 1 Policy evaluation objects⁶.

Thus, what is of interest in this model for all evaluators is that it enables them to take inspiration from a very rich range of explanatory variables which give them access to the mysteries of public policies and to what has been considered as their "black box", i.e. the political and administrative processes that shape them. Every causality model constructed as part of the evaluation of a policy, programme or a specific measure may, therefore, take inspiration from the analytical model developed by Peter Knoepfel by adding other explanatory variables defined on the basis of the questions posed by the evaluation and the implementation context. This model is also very robust when it comes to proposing adjustment measures.

⁶ This table was developed for the policy evaluation course given by Katia Horber-Papazian at the IDHEAP.

However, the application of the analytical model is not exempt from issues and uncertainties for evaluators who attempt to use it.

The Swiss political system is characterized by executive federalism. In this context, the formulation and implementation of a policy involves the intervention of federal actors who define a political framework in most cases. This policy is then concretized by the cantonal actors in the cantonal implementation laws. The cantonal spatial planning policies, for example, enable the cantons to appropriate the objectives defined in the context of the substantial federal policy, often re-interpret and complete them, prior to delegating a part of the implementation to the municipalities, on the basis of the cantonal-municipal division of tasks. The latter, in turn, pass regulations while re-appropriating the objectives of the superior level. In this federative case in point, the application to the letter of the analysis based on the triangle of actors proposed by Peter Knoepfel may perturb evaluators. As rightly stressed (Sager/Rüefli 2005) in this context, the model should be adapted to multi-level governance; in the case of spatial planning, for example, land owners constitute the target groups or actors, whose behaviour needs to be changed to resolve the problem or respond to a social need from the point of view of the political-administrative actors. However, it may be considered that the cantons also constitute a target group for the Confederation as the federal legislation enjoins them to define crop rotation areas or cantonal master plans which are accepted or rejected by the Federal Council in the same way as the cantons pass measures aimed at obliging the municipalities to change their behaviour in the management of their development zones to ensure appropriate land use. Therefore, in this case, the political-administrative actors are also a target group of the Confederation just as the municipalities are a target group for the cantons.

The application of the model not only surprises the evaluator in the case of a multi-level approach but also in the context of the evaluation of social policies, for example professional integration policy where the unemployed person may be both the target group and beneficiary of the measures implemented. Like every other model, the model proposed by Peter Knoepfel needs to be adapted by evaluators so as to take the multifunctional roles of the actors into account. Furthermore, rather than allow himself / herself to be disturbed by the problems in applying the model, the evaluator may draw highly instructive conclusions from this multi-functionality for the analysis, which this model allows to emerge. The place of evaluation in Peter Knoepfel's model is open to discussion. He presents evaluation in his analytical model as the fourth stage in the policy cycle and as the sixth policy product, which is referred to as "scientific evaluative statement". *"The scientific evaluative statements on the effects of the public policy aim to demonstrate the (eventual) changes in the behaviour of target groups (impacts) and the effects triggered among the end beneficiaries (outcomes) and to evaluate scientifically and/or politically the relevance,*

*effectiveness, efficacy and efficiency of the policy which has been applied to a greater or lesser degree."*⁷

The aim of this definition is to demonstrate that the scientific evaluative statement may be the circumstance of a multitude of actors and rest on different foundations, including an evaluative process carried out on the basis of a rigorously scientific approach. This implicitly raises the question as to the utility and use of evaluations carried by experts in decision-making processes as has frequently been demonstrated by past experience (in particular Weiss, 1998; Widmer, 2004; Förnerod, 2001) and reminds us that the results of evaluations may influence decisions but are rarely their only determining element.

On the contrary, the positioning of evaluation as the fourth stage in a sequential model poses a particular problem for evaluators who specialise in policy evaluation. In effect, as illustrated by the diagram shown below, evaluation may take place throughout the policy cycle (*ex ante, concomitant, ex post*) through the posing of questions adapted to the given moment of intervention.

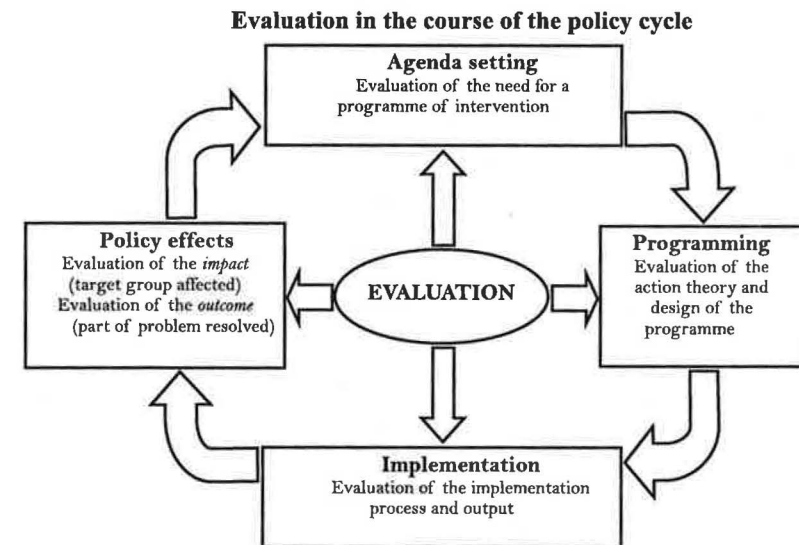


Figure 2 Evaluation in the course of the policy cycle⁸.

The importance of the role of evaluation in the processes of formulation and implementation of public policies as we understand them are neither analysed nor adequately recognized in the analytical model proposed by Peter Knoepfel, for whom evaluation only makes sense if it enables the

⁷ Knoepfel Peter, Larrue Corinne, Varone Frédéric (2006), *Analyse et pilotage des politiques publiques* (2^e édition), Volume 2, Verlag Rüegger, p. 126.

⁸ This diagram was developed for the policy evaluation course given by Katia Horber-Papazian at the IDHEAP.

demonstration of the effects of the measures based, in particular, on evaluative elements defined in the administrative programme. This limited understanding of the role of evaluation does not enable the apprehension of the increasingly significant role assumed by the latter in political-administrative reality throughout the policy cycle, the objects of which are demonstrated in Table 1 above and the objectives of which are to act as an information and, above all, readjustment tool.

As opposed to this, by insisting on the importance of evaluative elements since his early writings,⁹ Peter Knoepfel has done pioneering work within the political-administrative world, in particular in Switzerland, and paved the way for the current debate on the place and role of indicators in the decision-making processes, their use by decision-makers and the difficulty in defining targets.

The enormous contribution made by Peter Knoepfel's work resides, finally, in the fact that he succeeded in enabling his analytical model to evolve over the course of his research, consultancy and teaching activities. While it is clear that his model may be applied in the analysis of a policy, it must also be noted that evaluators who analyse policies in their entirety, e.g. health policy or environmental protection policy, are rare. As opposed to this, there are numerous evaluators who are called on to evaluate one among the programmes that constitute public policies (programme to prevent tobacco addiction, AIDS etc.). However, the concept of the "programme" has not yet been introduced into the Knoepfelian model. We wager that, like the recognition of the role of evaluation throughout the policy cycle, this concept will be introduced in a subsequent edition of the book "Public Policy Analysis".

Conclusion

The contributions of the analytical model for the understanding of the modes of agenda setting, formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies in different countries are undeniable. Both the design and application approaches developed on the basis of this model have made it possible to apprehend the conduct of these policies and provided a reference for their evaluation. The teaching of this model in Switzerland, France and Belgium has prompted students, some of whom have subsequently become policy actors themselves, to integrate all or part of the concepts and ideas used and has enabled evaluators to reconstruct the logic of evaluated policies. Of course, the use of this model cannot result in the production of policies whose content conforms completely to the analytical "model" or provides a normative framework for evaluations, however it aims to throw a critical light on public policy and the associated interaction with an aim to improving their management.

⁹ P. Knoepfel, C. Larrue, 1984.

Thus it may be confirmed that the strength of the analytical framework proposed by Peter Knoepfel lies in the concepts established and shared, for the most part, by the policy analysis community and, increasingly, by policy evaluators. Its effectiveness or efficacy depends, however, on the long-term involvement of a network of researchers. In the case in point, this network expanded over the course of time and enabled the evolution of the concepts produced.

However, in focusing on the comparison of the modes of production of public policies, this type of approach does not enable the apprehension of phenomena that evade comparison. The analytical framework is based on the idea of a comparability of the processes studied and places the emphasis on this comparison. In this sense, the proposed framework makes it difficult to apprehend specific local or national institutional factors associated with the process being studied. It identifies them without, however, explaining them. Therefore, generally speaking, a return to what is not comparable could benefit the proposed approach. This would necessitate the challenging and re-examination of the comparative studies carried out up to now.

References

- Ashford, D. (1978). *Comparing Public Policies: New Concepts and Methods*. Sage Publication. 254 p.
- Bacque, M.H. (2005). *L'intraduisible notion d'empowerment vue au fil des politiques urbaines américaines*. *Territoires*, N° 460 pp. 32-35.
- Bardach, E. (1984) *The implementation Game: What Happens After a Bill Becomes a Law*, Cambridge: The MIT Press. 322 p.
- Bouleau, G. (2007), *La gestion française des rivières et ses indicateurs à l'épreuve de la directive cadre*, thèse ENGREF.
- Boussaguet, L. et al. (2006). *Dictionnaire des politiques publiques*. Presse de Sciences po.
- Castles, F.G. (1998). *Comparative Public Policy*. E. Elgar.
- Fornerod, S. (2001). *A quoi et à qui servent les évaluations? Une recherche sur la place des évaluations dans les processus de décision et d'apprentissage dans l'administration fédérale*. Mémoire de MPA, IDHEAP.
- Giraud, O. (2004). La comparaison comme opération de réduction de la complexité. Le cas de la formation professionnelle. *Revue internationale de Politique Comparée*, Vol. 11, N° 3, pp. 349-368.
- Hassenteufel, P. (2005). De la comparaison internationale à la comparaison transnationale. Les déplacements de la construction d'objets comparatifs en matière de politiques publiques, *Revue Française de Science Politique*, vol. 56, N° 1, pp. 113-132.
- Knoepfel, P., & Larrue, C. (1984). *Les politiques de mise en oeuvre dans le domaine de la lutte contre la pollution atmosphérique: évaluation comparée de l'action de*

- trois directions interdépartementales de l'industrie en France, Cahier de l'IDHEAP N° 18.
- Knoepfel, P. & Larrue, C. (1985). "Les politiques publiques comparées : tourisme intelligent ou vrai progrès? le cas des politiques comparées de l'environnement", *Politiques et Management public*, 1984, vol. 2, n°3, pp. 45-63.
- Knoepfel, P., & Weidner, H. (1982). Formulation and Implementation of Air Quality Control Programmes: Patterns of Interest Consideration. *Policy and Politics*, Vol 10 N°1, pp. 85-109.
- Knoepfel, P., Larrue, C., Varone, F., & Hill, M. (2007). *Public Policy Analysis*, Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Lallement, M., & Spurk, J. (Dir) (2003). *Stratégie de la comparaison internationale*. Paris : Editions du CNRS.
- Larrue, C., & Knoepfel, P. (1998). *Environmental Protection, Subsidiarity Principle and Spatial Related Policies*, Final report contract N° ENV4-CT96-0238, 205 University of Tours, mai 1998.
- Le Gales, P., & Thatcher, M. (1995). *Les réseaux de politique publique*. L'Harmattan.
- Lima, L. & Steffen, M. (2004). Comparaisons internationales en politiques publiques: stratégies de recherche, méthodes et interprétation. *Revue internationale de politique compare*. Vol. 11 N° 3, pp. 339-348.
- Lundquist, L. (1980). *The Hare and the Tortoise: Clean Air Policies in the United States and Sweden*. The University of Michigan Press. 248 p.
- Maintz, R. (Ed). (1980). *Implementation Politischer Programme. Empirische Forschungsberichte*. Königsstein, TS: Athenauer.
- Morand, C.A. (Ed) (1991). *L'Etat propulsi*, Paris : Publisud.
- Patton, M.Q. (1997). *Utilization-focused evaluation: the new century text*. 3rd edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Pressman, J.L., & Wildavsky, A. (1973). *Implementation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 290 p.
- Ragin, C. (1987). *The comparative Method*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rangeon, F. et al. (1993). *L'évaluation dans l'administration*. Centre universitaire de recherches administratives et politiques de Picardie (C.U.R.A.P.P.), PUF.
- Revue internationale de politique comparée* N° 1, 1994.
- Richardson, J. (1982) (Ed) *Policy Style in Western Europe*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Rossi, P.H., Freeman, H.E., & Lipsey, M.W. (2004). *Evaluation. A Systemic Approach*. 7th Edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Sartori, G. (1994). Bien comparer, Mal comparer. *Revue internationale de politique comparée*, N° 1, 1994, pp. 19-36.
- Vogel, D. (1987). The comparative study of Environmental policy: a review of literature. In Dirkes et al., (1987) *Comparative Policy research Learning from Experience*. London: Gower.
- Weiss, C.H. (1998). Have we learned anything new about the use of evaluation? *American Journal of Evaluation*. Vol. 19, N° 1, pp. 21-33.

- Widmer & Neuenschwander (2004). Embedding Evaluation in the Swiss Federal Administration. Purpose, Institutional Design and Utilization. In *Evaluation*, Vol. 10(4), 391-41.