

---

# Introduction: the notion of policy implementation and why it is important

*Fritz Sager, Céline Mavrot and Lael R. Keiser*

---

## INTRODUCTION

The foal of a white horse is born black but changes to white as an adult. This is quite an amazing observation as – given its adult color – one would expect the foal to be white as well. However, nature has it that beings do not remain the same over time. Things develop over time and they change, be it foals or public policies. Public policy is a set of actions taken to address a societal problem that policymakers believe needs to be solved. Formally speaking, policy implementation is the part of the policy process that follows once a decision has been taken on how to solve a problem and the relevant authorities are called upon to put the agreed policy into practice. Of course, given the messiness of political reality, things are more complex than that. A lot can go wrong, or at least differently as planned. A political program can be met with the indifference of the politicians in charge and never be applied, it can encounter the opposition of implementing agents, produce unintended negative effects, be contested by the population, happen without formal political decisions ... As the saying goes, a paranoiac is just a person who knows what they are talking about, which undoubtedly applies to political scientists, who are well-aware of the gap between a policy on paper and in practice. These uncertainties make policy implementation a worthy and rich field of study to understand collective human behavior and the construction of society. Public policy implementation is a core element of the policy process. It is a highly political phase in which policies already decided upon undergo fundamental changes due to the discretion that policy programs provide to the implementing actors. Policy success and effectiveness depend on the implementation process as much as it depends on the policy design that stands at the beginning of the implementation process. The purpose of this handbook therefore is to shift the focus away from the merely institutionalized arenas of policymaking, and to bring a wide collection of cutting-edge knowledge to shed light on the everyday chaos of policies on the ground.

Public policies upon decision are mere plans based on hypotheses (e.g., expectations). For example, if the state intervenes in a given manner (e.g., raise gas taxes), the target population (e.g., internal combustion engine car drivers) will respond in a way (e.g., drive less or switch to an electrically powered car) that its behavior no longer causes a situation that society deems ill and wants it to end (CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and climate change). The two hypotheses therein are the “problem causer hypothesis” and the “intervention hypothesis” (Rossi et al. 1988: 120–22; Pleger et al. 2018). The problem causer hypothesis identifies the target population of the policy that needs to change their behavior so they no longer cause the problem. The intervention hypothesis identifies the policy instruments that shall make the target group respond in a way that they no longer cause the problem. Both hypotheses are, as their label states, mere assumptions. For a policy to work, both assumptions must be corroborated. It is no help if a target group responds to an intervention the way it is expected if its behavior does not cause

the problem. And it is futile to identify the correct problem causes if the policy intervention does not make the causers change their behavior. Both hypotheses therefore are necessary conditions for a policy to work. There may be good reasons (e.g., in the form of empirical evidence or practical experience) to believe the two hypotheses are correct. However, the reality test does not take place until the policy is put into practice. Implementation consequently is the decisive process for a policy. Both intervention and problem causer hypotheses of a policy may be correct – if the implementation fails, the policy fails. Public policies are only as good as their implementation. Linder and Peters (1987) famously distinguish concept failure and implementation failure to understand failure and success of a public policy. A poor concept, no matter how well implemented, will still fail to achieve its goals. And a policy, no matter how sophisticated and well thought out, will achieve its effects only if it is well put into practice.

Policy implementation was long seen as an apolitical and rather mechanical process that takes place after policymaking. This perception changed radically in the 1960s with the discovery of public administrators as political actors in their own right. Policies change fundamentally as they are implemented. This is due to the discretionary power of the implementing actors, who are not neutral machines, but who have values and self-interests that come into play during the implementation process. Furthermore, elected officials and interest groups continue to try to shape policy in line with their preferred outcomes after policies are adopted. The implementation process determines the way in which services are delivered and is therefore crucial to the achievement of policy goals (Kaufmann et al. 2020). Implementers, most of whom are administrative actors, therefore have a highly political role. In other words, implementation is a highly political process. The implementation of policy decisions necessarily involves room for maneuver and interpretation for enforcement actors (Thomann et al. 2018). This room for maneuver is unavoidable, as no law can anticipate all potential situations that may arise in its implementation. But they are also necessary because they allow implementers to adapt the policies to be implemented to real-world circumstances and to respond to unforeseen challenges. The organizational structures that set the framework for implementation are of paramount importance because they play a key role in defining the scope for action (Droic and Keiser 2021; Sager and Gofen 2022). The implementation process determines the way in which services are delivered and is therefore crucial to the achievement of policy goals. Finally, implementation is when policies meet people, who react to these encounters in a way that equally shapes the result.

This *Handbook* therefore seeks to cover the multifaceted phenomenon of public policy implementation from various angles. The remainder of this introduction provides a short overview over the development of the social scientific engagement with public policy implementation before we outline the structure of the book, explain its overall rationale, and present the content of the chapters that follow.

## THE STUDY OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation research is rooted in Lasswell's (1956) seminal proposal of the policy cycle as a dynamic policy process heuristic. This heuristic encompasses not only the traditional focus of mainstream political science on agenda-setting and decision-making, which is characterized by formal politics and influenced by institutions, but also the stages of implementation, effectiveness and evaluation that ultimately lead to the termination of a policy (because the

problem is resolved) or to the redefinition of the original social problem and the adaptation of the policy. Lasswell (1956) used the term policy sciences to describe the interdisciplinary and problem-focused study of public policy. One of the first studies to explicitly focus on policy implementation was Pressman and Wildavsky's (1984 [1973]) analysis of the implementation of social policy programs in the U.S. federal system. The title of their celebrated book, *How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland; or Why It's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All*, suggested that the mechanisms at work in the implementation phase determine the success or failure of government programs, and that policymakers have only limited influence over these mechanisms (see Colebatch, Chapter 2 in this *Handbook*). Pressman and Wildavsky's book marked the beginning of public policy implementation as a new field of research.

There have been many attempts to theorize the process of implementation. Goggin et al. (1990) distinguish three 'generations' of implementation research (see Sætren, Chapter 1 in this *Handbook*). The first generation was empirical rather than theoretical. The second, theory-building generation of implementation research began in the 1980s. It involves two contrasting models of analysis: top-down and bottom-up approaches (see Buzogány and Pülzl, Chapter 9 in this *Handbook*). Top-down approaches take a 'hierarchical' view (i.e., the perspective of decision-makers). They analyze the implementation of a law or policy program from this perspective. Thus, the focus of top-down approaches is on a particular policy decision and its path through the various instances of the implementation process (Winter 2012: 266; Sabatier 1986). A key question here is to what extent the activities of the implementing actors are consistent with the aim and purpose of the underlying policy decision (Matland 1995: 146). In this perspective, the discretion of implementing units is a control problem. It interferes with the original decision. The politics of implementing, from this perspective, is seen as a story of potential noncompliance (Sager and Thomann 2017). Sabatier and Mazmanian's (1980) framework of successful implementation is one of the most prominent proponents of the top-down approach to implementation.

Bottom-up approaches, on the other hand, take as their point of departure the interaction between a formulated policy and the institutional context at the level of "micro-implementation" (Matland 1995: 148), where local administrative units and other agents responsible for implementation deliver the policy to its intended audience. The bottom-up approach focuses on the contextual factors involved in implementing the policy. Policy makers have a limited amount of control over the implementation process. Another feature of some bottom-up approaches is that they attribute significant influence on the actual implementation of the policy to the actors in charge of implementation. These approaches assume (see especially Lipsky 2010 [1980]; Matland 1995: 149) that policy implementation can only be understood by analyzing the goals, activities and strategies of actors at the lowest levels of government. From the bottom, prudence becomes opportunity, and the politics of implementation becomes the story of creativity rather than domination (Thomann et al. 2018). Lipsky's (2010 [1980]) concept of street-level bureaucracy is the most prominent strand of the bottom-up literature (see also Gofen et al., Chapter 39 in this *Handbook*).

Recognizing that integrating top-down and bottom-up approaches is a more promising approach than juxtaposing the two theoretical strands with a mutually exclusive perspective, the third generation of implementation research emerged. This led to the emergence of 'hybrid' theories that sought to bridge the gap between the top-down and bottom-up approaches by integrating the insights from both sides into new theoretical models (Pülzl and Treib 2007: 89).

These combined approaches go back to the first generation of implementation research, which aimed to understand the process rather than to make specific claims based on theory. This integrative view, which was able to include politics in both directions from decision-makers to implementers and back, proved useful for understanding the politics of implementation (Meier and O'Toole 2006). An example is implementation in multilevel regimes such as the European Union, where the implementation process involves many steps from EU directive to local implementation (Thomann and Sager 2019). Both at the level of decision-making and at the level of implementing units, politics plays a central role (Keiser and Droic 2022; Meier and O'Toole 2006; Sager and Thomann 2017), although multilevel processes are highly political *per se*.

A more recent strand of literature follows up on this third generation and more explicitly than former research puts politics at center stage. Sticking to the generation taxonomy, we propose to label a fourth generation of implementation studies as 'implementation politics approaches'. While particularly the bottom-up approach identifies implementers as policy-makers and acknowledges their political role in the shaping of public policy, implementation politics approach studies identify the politics of implementation as their actual subject of study (Sager and Hinterleitner 2022). There are several contributions that fall under this category even though they focus on different aspects of the politics of implementation. Cohen (2021; see also Cohen, Chapter 12 in this *Handbook*) is the main representative of the street-level bureaucracy entrepreneurship literature that studies the political role of implementers beyond their policy-defining role during service provision in that implementers become policy entrepreneurs who seek policy change in the formal policy decision. Addressing implementation controversies, Mavrot (2023; see also Mavrot, Chapter 26 in this *Handbook*) also focuses on the implementers as policy entrepreneurs, but concentrates on the implementation politics within the implementation system (i.e., on the struggle among implementers of different reference systems). Hinterleitner and Wittwer (2022) take on the somewhat inverse perspective of Cohen and study the political pressure on implementers. Also focusing on the intersection of politics and implementation, Meier and Rutherford (2016) argue that politics determines who implements policy, which in turn affects how policy is carried out and its impact. This approach posits that formal politics understands the political role of implementation and accordingly tries to interfere with the implementers' discretion, or shape how that discretion is used, in order to enforce their respective constituencies' political preferences. Lotta et al. (2023; see also Story et al. 2023) embed the discussion of external pressure on evaluators in the wider debate of democratic backsliding and authoritarianism and link implementation research with the question of democracy. All these strands are connected in their concentration on the politics of implementation.

A large body of theory building, frameworks and empirical studies exist focusing on understanding implementation. Although this has not led to a unifying theory of successful policy implementation (Meier 2009), it creates a rich body of work to draw on to understand not only how implementation creates the policies that citizens experience, but also the factors practitioners must pay attention to and manage to be successful.

In the following, we present the structure of the *Handbook* and present the chapters therein.

## RATIONALE, STRUCTURE AND CONTENTS OF THE *HANDBOOK*

The goal of the present *Handbook* is to provide a deeply informed overview of the breadth of research on policy implementation. The *Handbook* is designed to be of use to an audience of academics, researchers, and students of public policy, public administration, political science and sociology, as well as policy practitioners and implementing agents themselves. It aims at serving both research and teaching purposes.

The *Handbook* is divided into five parts that lead from the general to the particular in the study of policy implementation. The idea was to gather the state of the knowledge on policy implementation that is scattered across numerous sub-disciplines and traditions, and provide the readership with a general overview. It goes without saying that it is impossible to be exhaustive, but we hope the *Handbook* can provide a useful synthesis on the state of research and stimulate future thinking. The authors were therefore asked to sketch paths for future research on their topics, which are stimulating invitations to continue the dialogue in our field of study. The five parts aim to cover both mainstream approaches and specific and emerging takes on implementation. Part I presents the conceptual basics and the most up-to-date theoretical tenets of policy implementation. Part II locates the implementation stage in the dominant theories of the policy process and the methodological take on comparative implementation. Part III links the policy process to the different branches of government and presents the influence of the latter on policy implementation. Part IV looks at the system level and investigates the form of policy implementation in different (inter)national political systems and the ways they are studied. Finally, Part V focuses on the organizational and the individual levels of implementation. In the organizational perspectives, the way implementation structures the impact of policy is detailed. Finally, the individual level approaches study implementers' dilemmas, motivation and their coping strategies at the intersection between policy and target groups and addresses policy reception.

### The Basic Tenets

Part I starts with Harald Sætren's systematic historical literature review about the development of implementation research. Hal Colebatch situates implementation in the basic heuristic of the policy cycle and points out the tension between an instrumental authoritative versus a procedural negotiating understanding of policy that implementers must reconcile. After these two overviews, the part's chapters focus on specific aspects of implementation that the literature considers and with what theoretical approach. Eva Heidbreder highlights the performative demands that come with the implementation of any public policy and connect to the political obligation to comply. Eva Thomann and Eva Lieberherr shed light on the question of accountability, which is particularly virulent as implementation stands between policymakers' decision and its delivery to the target population. The needs of both policymakers and the target population may largely differ. Daniel Engster delves into the ethical aspects of implementation, by discussing how research has theorized the main principles that frame public administrations' discretion in their implementation activities. In the same vein, Jourdan Davis discusses the question of social equity in policy implementation while Samantha Larson and Mary Guy follow up with a feminist approach to policy analysis, showing how intersectionality should be taken into account in the future practice and theory of policy implementation. Leona Vaughn and Alex Balch present and analyze a decolonial perspective and provide

a framework for knowledge production that promotes inclusive and equitable policy analysis research processes. Aron Buzogány and Helga Pülzl present the classic two implementation perspectives of top-down and bottom-up approaches and discuss recent literature streams that have attempted to integrate them. Nandiyang Zhang and David Rosenbloom put a special focus on the implementation conflicts that go along with multi-level and cross-sectoral policies that produce complex vertical and horizontal interactions. Theofanis Exadaktylos and Nikolaos Zahariadis highlight the importance of political and social trust in policy implementation before Nissim Cohen concludes Part I with his discussion of entrepreneurship in policy implementation.

### **Implementation in the Theories of the Policy Process**

Policy studies predominantly are concerned with policymaking and policy change. This vivid strand of political science has produced an established canon of theories of the policy process most prominently assembled in Christopher Weible's (2023) recurring editions of the collection *Theories of the Policy Process* originally edited together with Paul Sabatier. Implementation is not the main focus of these theories and some of them reject the stage heuristic of the policy cycle altogether. However, scholars refer to these theories to study implementation as a part of the policy process and Part II assembles accounts of these contributions. One of the most prominent political science theories in general is the new institutionalism and B. Guy Peters starts the part with a discussion of the institutionalist approach to implementation. Nicole Herweg and Reimut Zohlnhöfer then sum up the applications of the Multiple Streams Framework in the study of implementation. Christopher M. Weible, Manuel Fischer and Karin Ingold show the Advocacy Coalition Framework has been employed to gain a better understanding of policy implementation. Bettina Stauffer, Johanna Kuenzler and Michael Jones present the use of the Narrative Policy Framework in the study of implementation. Implementation is when policy interventions are put into practice. Consequently, policy instruments are of core importance. Philipp Trein presents the contribution of the policy instrumentation literature to the study of implementation. Stephanie Moulton and Jodi Sandfort reflect on the strategic action field approach to policy implementation with a focus on the collective action problem to solve what they call messy problems. Johanna Hornung and Patrick Hassenteufel discuss the emerging, sociologically inspired Programmatic Action Framework's contribution to implementation research, highlighting the importance of shared social identities among policy actors to promote specific programs, and, more generally, policy change. Renaud Payre and Gilles Pollet present the socio-historical approach to public action, in discussing the US/American and French traditions that have paid close attention to the sociological and historical dimensions of policies. Implementation ultimately is the solution of societal problems. Erik Neveu consequently provides an account of the problem-centered study of implementation, providing insights on how to close the gap between the study of policy formulation and policy implementation, also from a sociological perspective. The different theoretical approaches come with great empirical challenges. Iris Geva-May and Guillaume Fontaine conclude Part II with a methodological discussion of comparative implementation research.

## Policy Implementation and the Branches of Government

Implementation is a political process and therefore of concern to actors in different political institutions of a polity. Part III discusses how the different branches of government and the corresponding actors and processes are interlinked with the implementation process. The main decision-making body in a representative democracy is the legislature. Tansu Demir and Christopher G. Reddick therefore discuss the connection of the US Congress and policy implementation and show through which instruments and procedures the legislative power exercises oversight over the activity of public agencies. Most policies are codified in laws and they must comply with a country's constitution. The resulting importance of the judiciary in implementation is the subject of Nicholas Bednar, Paul Gardner and Sharece Thrower's contribution. The execution of policy decisions is the core task of the executive, hence the name. Martin Smith, David Richards and Sam Warner discuss the role of the executive in policy implementation in-depth in their contribution. The involvement of the various formal political instances and institutions underscores the political character of the implementation process. In her contribution, Céline Mavrot develops how this political relevance makes the implementation process prone for politicization. One important action in policy implementation is the adoption of regulations, and policies exist that formalize the process of adopting regulations. Jeroen van der Heijden concludes Part III by unraveling the close interlinkages between regulation and implementation.

## Policy Implementation in Different Political Systems

Implementation takes place within a given institutional political structure that restricts and enables implementers in their work. Implementation therefore differs depending on the political system in which it takes place. Part IV does justice to this variance and presents policy implementation in different liberal democracies. A crucial system difference for implementation is federalism as it defines the autonomy of subnational units in the way they implement federal policy. The part therefore includes both centralized and decentralized political systems. France ranks high in centralization indexes. Julie Pollard and Claire Dupuy provide an account of the functioning of policy implementation in this highly centralized country that however experiences regionalization at the subnational level and European integration at the supra-national level. On the other end of the scale are polities that are both organizationally decentralized (what Hans Keman [2000: 196] calls the "right to act") and grant high political decision autonomy to their member units (what Keman [2000: 196] calls "the right to decide"). The three poster systems of these institutional idiosyncrasies are the European Union, the USA and Switzerland. The respective implementation processes are presented in the chapters by Eva Thomann and Asya Zhelyazkova on member state implementation in the EU; Lael Keiser and Susan Miller on member state implementation in the USA; and Fritz Sager and Lisa Asticher on member state implementation in Switzerland. Canada and Germany also are marked federalist systems that differ however to a certain degree from the ones named above. Charles Conteh provides an account of member state implementation in Canada with a focus on concerted action across jurisdictions in this multiple-tier system. Simon Fink and Eva Ruffing present the particularities of member state implementation in Germany. Finally, it is not only nation states and subnational systems that do public policy but also international

organizations. Yves Steinebach, Christoph Knill and Christian Severin conclude Part IV with their chapter on international organizations and policy implementation.

### **Organizational and Individual Levels of Implementation**

Below the system level are the levels where implementation ultimately takes the form of concrete service delivering actions. The respective levels of analyses are the organizational and the individual levels of implementing agents. The respective schools of thought typically belong to the bottom-up approaches of implementation studies. However, they are very diverse and open to inspiration from exogenous strands of literature such as management studies or psychology. Public management is a core approach for the understanding of the public sector. Adrian Ritz and Srinivas Yerramsetti outline the managerial take on policy implementation and underscore how public sector digitalization marks this field's future. Given the diversity of public agencies involved in contemporary's public governance, coordination is a crucial precondition for implementation. Thurid Hustedt and Ina Radtke take stock of the research on coordination and policy implementation. Furthermore, the state no longer has the monopoly on policymaking and delivery. Susanne Hadorn shows how collaborative structures impact the way policy is delivered and highlights different process management strategies that implementation networks can use to organize their collaboration. In the same vein, the boundaries between the public and the private sectors have blurred, giving way to new hybrid arrangements of service provision. Anka Kekez, Michael Howlett and M. Ramesh give an account of the hybrid forms of coproduction of public services. Within this great variety of organizational structures, it still is individuals who are at work. The individual level found its place in the analytic limelight with Lipsky's (2010 [1980]) seminal work on street-level bureaucrats. This basic notion has triggered a plethora of research that in the mid-2020s builds the bulk of implementation research. Anat Gofen, Gabriela Lotta, Oliver Meza and Elizabeth Pérez Chiqués bring this research together and provide an overview of the state of the art of street-level bureaucracy research. Behavioral public administration is interested in how individuals in the public sector act and respond to different kinds of stimuli. Kathrin Loer and Paula Neher look into how behavioral approaches have enriched the study of implementation, and detail the tools used to influence individual behavior through policies and the challenges such a perspective raises. Finally, the individual level not only regards implementers but also the targets of the implemented policies. The reaction of target groups and the analysis of policy reception still is an understudied dimension in policy implementation. Anne Revillard therefore concludes this *Handbook* with her presentation of a people-centered approach that takes into account the recipients' experience of public policy.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

We want to thank all contributors who agreed to write a chapter and thereby made it possible to put together this encompassing collection of policy implementation research. The making of this *Handbook* began during the COVID-19 lockdowns, which made it even more exciting to launch a large-scale collective conversation about the state of implementation research. We acknowledge the authors' engagement in this journey and want to thank all of them from the bottom of our hearts. Several contributors had to wait an extraordinarily long time for their



chapters to be published because they were among the earliest to deliver. Eva Heidbreder and Nissim Cohen were the very first and therefore deserve a special thanks as they not only showed engagement but even more so patience.

Finally, the book would not have seen the light of publishing day without Lisa Asticher who besides working on her research project kept the overview of the state of affairs, stored all chapters at all stages in a place at least she was able to find them, sent out water level reports to the authors and finally helped us submit the full batch of chapters to the publisher (whom we thank too, of course). Thanks so much, Lisa. We are positive that the readers of this *Handbook* will acknowledge your work just as much as we do.

## REFERENCES

- Cohen, N. (2021). *Policy Entrepreneurship at the Street Level: Understanding the Effect of the Individual*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Drolc, C. A., & Keiser, L. R. (2021). The importance of oversight and agency capacity in enhancing performance in public service delivery. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 31(4), 773–89.
- Goggin, M. L., Bowman, A. M., Lester, J. P. and O’Toole, L. J. (1990). *Implementation Theory and Practice: Toward a Third Generation*. Glenwood, IL: Scott Foreman/Little Brown.
- Hinterleitner, M., & Wittwer, S. (2022). Serving quarreling masters: Frontline workers and policy implementation under pressure. *Governance*, 36(3), 759–78.
- Kaufmann, D., Kuenzler, J., & Sager, F. (2020). How (not) to design and implement a large-scale, interdisciplinary research infrastructure. *Science and Public Policy*, 47(6), 818–28.
- Keiser, L., & Drolc, C. (2022). Managing implementation in the decentralized administrative state: The role of national professional associations. *2021 APPAM Fall Research Conference*. APPAM.
- Keman, H. (2000). Federalism and policy performance: A conceptual and empirical inquiry. In Ute Wachendorfer-Schmidt (ed.), *Federalism and Political Performance*, 196–227. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Lasswell, Harold D. (1956). *The Decision Process: Seven Categories of Functional Analysis*. College Park: University of Maryland Press.
- Linder, S. H., & Peters, B. G. (1987). A design perspective on policy implementation: The fallacies of misplaced prescription. *Review of Policy Research*, 6(3), 459–75.
- Lipsky, M. (2010 [1980]). *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Service*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lotta, G., Tavares, G. M., & Story, J. (2023). Political attacks and the undermining of the bureaucracy: The impact on civil servants’ well-being. *Governance*, 37(2), 619–41.
- Matland, Richard E. (1995). Synthesizing the implementation literature: The ambiguity-conflict model of policy implementation. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 5(2), 145–74.
- Mavrot, C. (2023). Bureaucratic entrepreneurship and morality politics: Dividing lines within the state. *European Journal of Political Research*, 62(2), 486–509.
- Meier, Kenneth J. (2009). Policy theory, policy theory everywhere: Ravings of a deranged policy scholar. *Policy Studies Journal*, 37(1), 5–11.
- Meier, K. J., & O’Toole, L. (2006). *Bureaucracy in a Democratic State: A Governance Perspective*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Meier, K. J., & Rutherford, A. (2016). *The Politics of African-American Education: Representation, Partisanship, and Educational Equity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pleger, L. E., Lutz, P., & Sager, F. (2018). Public acceptance of incentive-based spatial planning policies: A framing experiment. *Land Use Policy*, 73, 225–38.
- Pressman, J. L. & Wildavsky, A. (1984 [1973]). *Implementation: How Great Expectations in Washington are Dashed in Oakland; or Why It’s Amazing that Federal Programs Work at all*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pülzl, H. & Treib, O. (2007). Implementing public policy. In Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller, and Mara S. Sidney (eds), *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis*, 89–107. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.

- Rossi, P. H., Freeman, H. E., & Hofmann, G. (1988). *Programm-Evaluation: Einführung in die Methoden angewandter Sozialforschung*. Stuttgart: Enke.
- Sabatier, P. A. (1986). Top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation research: A critical analysis and suggested synthesis. *Journal of Public Policy*, 6(1), 21–48.
- Sabatier, P. A., & Mazmanian, D. (1980). The implementation of public policy: A framework of analysis. *Policy Studies Journal*, 8(4), 538–60.
- Sager, F., & Gofen, A. (2022). The polity of implementation: Organizational and institutional arrangements in policy implementation. *Governance*, 35(2), 347–64.
- Sager, F., & Hinterleitner, M. (2022). The politics of policy implementation: A reassessment in more conflictual times. In A. Ladner & F. Sager (eds), *Handbook on the Politics of Public Administration*, 102–13. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Sager, F., & Thomann, E. (2017). Multiple streams in member state implementation: Politics, problem construction and policy paths in Swiss asylum policy. *Journal of Public Policy*, 37(3), 287–314.
- Story, J., Lotta, G., & Tavares, G. M. (2023). (Mis) led by an outsider: Abusive supervision, disengagement, and silence in politicized bureaucracies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muad004>.
- Thomann, E., & Sager, F. (eds) (2019). *Innovative Approaches to EU Multilevel Implementation: Moving Beyond Legal Compliance*. London: Routledge.
- Thomann, E., van Engen, N., & Tummers, L. (2018). The necessity of discretion: A behavioral evaluation of bottom-up implementation theory. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 28(4), 583–601.
- Weible, C. M. (ed.) (2023). *Theories of the Policy Process*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Winter, S. (2012). Implementation perspectives: Status and reconsideration. In B. Guy Peters & Jon Pierre (eds), *Sage Handbook of Public Administration*, 265–78. New York/London: Sage.