

## Policy analysis, policy practice and political science

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*Bridgman and Davis have responded to criticism of their widely-used model of the policy process as a cycle, 'a series of interlocking steps' by describing it as 'pragmatic', a 'toolkit', 'not a theory'. This article asks what makes for 'practical knowledge' of the policy process. It identifies the theoretical basis for the 'policy cycle' model, and asks how this model relates to research on policy and to policy practitioners' own knowledge. It argues that we need to recognise the way that underlying theory about policy forms part of policy practice, and to give more attention to the relationship between research, experiential knowledge, and formal maps like the 'policy cycle'.*

### Theory and policy practice

Those who work in government often say that what they know about it is 'not theoretical'. In the same spirit, Bridgman and Davis (2003) say that their widely-used presentation of the policy process as a cycle (2000; 2004), is 'a toolkit, not a theory' (2003: 102). But any model of government embodies a theory – that is, a set of abstract categories and assumptions. Giving an account of political practice means attributing significance to some things rather than others, recognising some participants and some practices as being important and valid – e.g. 'decisions' and 'decision-makers' – in preference to others. It is an exercise in 'framing' (Rein and Schon 1994) in which the analyst imposes an order on the array of phenomena involved in the process of governing. As Bridgman and Davis themselves say 'policies are theories about the world' (2004: 2).

So there is no simple division between 'theory' and 'practice'. The practitioners are drawing on abstract formulations, and the analytic constructs of the academics can become part of the practice. The 'policy cycle' is one such construct. Because it is presented as a way for practitioners to make sense of the policy process, it is important that we should be clear about the sort of map it is. This paper examines the 'policy cycle' presentation in

the light of our knowledge of the policy process, and discusses its role in policy work; the 'practical theorising' of which the practitioners themselves are often unaware.

### The dominant paradigm of policy

The dominant paradigm presents government as a process of authoritative problem solving: there are actors called governments, they confront problems and make choices, which are then enforced with the coercive power of the state. This defines the 'normal expectation' of government, and in so doing, discloses 'problems'. Government is meant to be coherent, so if different public agencies have multiple and conflicting agendas, this is evidence of a 'problem' of 'fragmentation'. If the work of the bureaucracy cannot be presented as the execution of commands from superiors, this is a 'problem' of 'control'. And if it is difficult to discern pre-existing objectives, this is a major 'failure' on the part of government (i.e. a failure of reality to conform to the tenets of the model) and both academics and practitioners should busy themselves with the task of defining objectives (Stewart 1999).

In this way, the model shapes the way that policy is discussed: it frames the

discourse about policy. It is not necessary to show that there is an actor called 'the government', that it has objectives, and the work of government can be understood as the pursuit of these objectives: these are assumptions built into the model, not empirical observations. They express a particular way of framing social practice so that it may be talked about in terms of instrumental rationality.

The social scientists' interest in 'policy' is relatively recent, starting perhaps with Lasswell's call (Lerner and Lasswell 1951) for a 'policy science' which would be interdisciplinary, engaged and problem-oriented. This was a call for the application of instrumental rationality to the governmental process: social scientists should apply themselves to the clarification of goals, the definition of problems, the identification of options, the selection of strategies and the assessment of achievements (Stone 1988). The academic response to this call was a flourishing of the literature (Parsons 1995), the emergence of graduate programs (Wildavsky 1979), and the production of a new generation of textbooks - though as Hale (1980) pointed out, these texts often seemed to be the repackaging of material previously known as American government.

The practitioners were also giving more attention to 'policy'. Policy units were established at the centre of government, like the UK Central Policy Review Unit (Blackstone and Plowden 1988), as support staff for ministers (RNSWGA 1979) and throughout the bureaucracy itself (Prince 1983). There was also a mushrooming of non-government policy organizations, which became known as 'think tanks' (Weiss 1993; Stone 1996). 'Policy analysis' was now seen as an established profession (Radin 2000). These institutional supports for policy thinking both reflected and reinforced the presentation of government as a coherent process of solving known problems.

### The evidence base

But this account of government was being undermined by social science research. In political science, the focus shifted from 'the

government' as an actor to 'governing' as the outcome of a process of collective interaction. It was clear that there were many hands on the wheel, not all of them 'government', and that the ones which were governmental were not necessarily steering in the same direction. It became clear that political outcomes emerge from complex and long-running processes of interaction among specialists. Davies saw the political process less as the imposition of solutions by detached 'policy-makers', and more as the collective normalisation of the problematic:

It is as though there were a political gateway through which all issues pass. Disputed from the moment they are in sight of it - and more hotly as they approach - they pass (if they pass) through, and drop out of controversy for a time. Managing the procession are certain 'gatekeepers' - not just the Cabinet of the day, but bureaucrats, journalists, association heads and independent specialists camped permanently around each source of problems. To talk of a political process is to recognise some hint of pattern in the way in many different fields the controversial is transformed into the routine. (Davies 1964 3).

This loosely-linked but widely-recognised array of organised voices who could expect to be heard in the formulation of state activity was recognised and labelled. Richardson and Jordan (1979) coined the term 'the policy community' to describe it, and the concept was elaborated by others (Jordan 1981; Jordan and Richardson 1983; Jordan and Schubert 1992; Atkinson and Coleman 1992). Some researchers identified distinctions within the policy community (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993, van Waarden 1992, Pross 1992, Homeshaw 1995). Others used different terms: 'issue network' (Heclo 1978), 'implementation structures' (Hjern and Porter 1981), and 'policy domains' (Laumann and Knoke 1987). In political economy, researchers identified the complex institutional order underpinning economic activity, and spoke not of 'government regulation' but of the 'governance of the economy' (Campbell *et al* 1991; Thompson *et al* 1991).

Not only was difficult to understand policy as the result of choice by 'the policy-makers' it was not clear that there was a single problem

that was being addressed. It was clear that different organizations (including the various parts of 'the government') have distinct and potentially conflicting concerns (and may have been established for this very reason – e.g. the creation of authorities for the protection of the environment). Even when there was a clear focus on a single problem, it became a distinct problem for each of the participants. Silverstein, an academic working with a Senate committee, noted that the 'Swine Flu problem' dissolved into a number of linked problems: 'what caused the disease and what medical remedy could be found?' (a concern for medical scientists); 'if a vaccine could be found, who should it be given to, and how would this program be managed?' (the concern of public health administrators); and 'is there political support for such a program?' (the concern of politicians and their staff) (Silverstein 1982). And for all of these participants, Swine Flu is an incident in a continuing and more important game – of medical research, of public health management, and of the mobilisation of political support. Kingdon took a similar perspective, identifying a 'problem stream' ('what is going on?'), a 'policy stream' ('what can we do about it?') and a 'political stream' ('what can we get support for?'), with 'policy entrepreneurs' finding 'windows of opportunity' to make links between the streams and so make policy change possible (Kingdon 1984).

This changing understanding of the nature of policy can be seen in the development of one of the landmark texts of policy studies, Pressman and Wildavsky's *Implementation* (1973). In the first edition, the book took a top-down, instrumental perspective – and an ironic voice: the sub-title announced that it told 'how great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland'. When Wildavsky brought out a second edition six years later (Pressman had since died) it included a new chapter by Wildavsky and Giandomenico Majone entitled 'Implementation as evolution', which drew on biological imagery to draw a more complex picture of the implementation process. The relationship between intention and outcome, they argued, is reflexive rather than linear. Policies do not grow from small-scale but complete versions of their mature form, but grow in response to the forces brought to bear

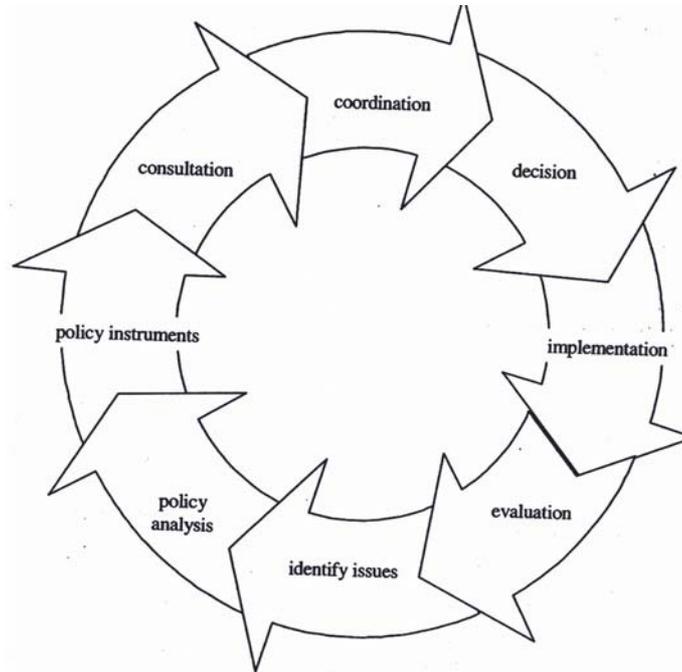
upon them. By the third edition (1984), Wildavsky had moved even further from the instrumental perspective, and in new chapters, co-authored with Angela Browne, discussed 'Implementation as mutual adaptation' and 'Implementation as exploration'. By this stage, Wildavsky was prepared to challenge the presentation of the governmental process as the pursuit of known objectives:

If, as we claim, implementation takes place within an evolutionary framework, it becomes difficult to assume the prior existence of objectives against which to assess accomplishment. Objectives cannot be held constant while they are changing. Neither can the policy preferences of different people. It is intelligent to alter objectives to fit resources, to adjust programs to face facts, as well as to fit resources to objectives. (Pressman and Wildavsky 1984: 204)

Similarly, policy analysis broadened from a narrow methodology of comparison grounded in microeconomics to a more expansive set of concerns about argument and the construction of meaning. Majone, for instance, argued (1989) that policy analysis was concerned with constructing rationales for action, and was more like the work of a courtroom lawyer than a laboratory scientist. Rein and Schon (1994) pointed to the importance of the way that problems are identified and defined and Stone identified the process of constructing 'causal stories' as part of the way in which participants make sense of their world, and explain and validate their actions (Stone 1989; Roe 1994).

Some social scientists presented a more fundamental challenge to the dominant paradigm, arguing that government is accomplished not by simply hierarchical direction, but by a complex pattern of understandings and practices among official and non-official participants:

To the extent that the modern state 'rules', it does so on the basis of an elaborate network of relations formed among the complex of institutions, organizations and apparatuses that make it up, and between state and non-state institutions. (Rose and Miller 1992: 176)



**Figure 1: The Australian Policy Cycle (Bridgman & Davis 200:27)**

They also stress the importance of the way in which situations come to be seen as 'problems', needing to the governed, and the range of voices involved in problem construction:

... problems do not exist in themselves. They become known through grids of evaluation and judgment about objects that are far from self-evident. ... the study of government involves the examination not only of normative principles derived from political philosophy but also of the expertise and know-how of policymakers and specialists of various sorts, including academics, economists, accountants, psychologists, bureaucrats, social workers, law enforcement officers and so on. Government exists in the medium of thought, of mentalities and rationalities of government (Dean and Hindess 1998: 9). They call this approach 'governmentality'.

This calls for a re-examination of the way in which 'policy-making' is viewed: what is good practice, what are problems and what can be done about them:

Government is seen as a machinery for

solving problems; it could more accurately be described as a machinery for finding problems – that is, for framing the world as a set of problems to which present (or prospective) patterns of collective action can be seen as an answer (Colebatch 2002: 431-2).

### The impact of the evidence

While research has changed the way that many academic observers analyse the policy process, it has had little impact on the textbooks, where the dominant paradigm rules: policy is a process in which the government solves problems. This can be seen in the trajectory of Bridgman and Davis's *Australian Policy Handbook* (2004), which is the leading Australian policy text, now in its third edition. But while Wildavsky's analysis developed through his three editions in the light of research, Bridgman and Davis see no need for change; for them, the policy process is about the selection and execution of authorised objectives (2003). They present policy as a cycle of stages, usually culminating in a decision by Cabinet (see Figure 1).

The process is instrumental - 'Public policy is ultimately about achieving objectives.' (2004: 6) - and authoritative - 'Public policy is how politicians make a difference.' (2004: 3). But the authors are ambivalent about the status of this model. At some points, they present it as an empirical description: 'Australian experience suggests that a policy cycle is likely to begin with issue identification ...' (2004: 26). At others, though, they concede that 'the world does not always allow for the careful, sequential policy cycle described in the following pages' (2004: 2) and refer to authorised instrumental choice as a 'deceptively simple formula' (2004: 7). There are also claims for instrumental efficacy ('a policy process that does not include everything from problem identification to implementation to evaluation has less chance of success' - 2004: 24) and straight normative exhortation ('A policy cycle is something of an ideal - worth striving for, if not always attainable.' (2004: 2). The book goes on to discuss policy purely in terms of processing documents through the process of cabinet approval (which may, however, include some element of consultation with selected non-officials.) As one policy practitioner has noted:

The perspective is a closed systems one, where policy ideas mainly originate within government and policy professional within the public service are the key players in the development of policy. Venturing outside this system is regarded as a carefully controlled exercise with many attendant risks (Curtain 2004: 35).

Bridgman and Davis recently explained (2003) that their concern was simply to give baffled bureaucrats some guideline for action. A graduate trainee in the health department 'had been instructed to "write a food nutrition strategy for Queensland quickly" to meet an overdue intergovernmental obligation' (2003: 98); what should she do? The policy cycle gave her a clear set of steps to follow for the production of a paper which could then be taken to the next intergovernmental meeting on nutrition.

The first thing to note about the example is that clearly, the policy document produced in this way is in no sense the pursuit of the

government's objectives ('It is possible that the Minister for Health had not given much thought to the topic until a cabinet submission on good nutrition policy arrived for formal consideration' - 2003: 101), but is an exercise in compliance with the demands of a larger bureaucratised system. And it does not seem very likely that a document produced in this way by a graduate trainee in the Health Department would have a great impact on the eating habits of Queenslanders. Researchers of the 'governmentality' school (and many others) would argue that the issues involved in nutrition go right back to the way we govern ourselves, and reflect the understandings and practices of ordinary people and the range of voices that they listen to, and that seeing the policy problem as pushing a piece of paper through a set of bureaucratic hoops is not likely to change practice very much. But Bridgman and Davis's concern is with the establishment and maintenance of official routines: 'to fill a gap in the broader architecture of health initiatives' (*loc.cit.*).

### **The policy cycle as an account of governing**

Government is made up of the accounts that people give of practice: explanations of what matters are of concern, why, what may be done about them, who should be involved, and what inducement and coercion may be applied in dealing with these concerns. 'Policy' is a particular account of government, seeing it as coherent, hierarchical and instrumental, using its resources of knowledge, organization and wealth to maximise the collective utility. It can be contrasted with accounts of government as driven by custom and routines, or by the professional skills and values of the dominant occupational group, or by a partisan struggle for benefit. It is an account which stresses the importance of specialised knowledge, of the identification of options, and of the central place of authoritative, informed choice.

It meshes with the spirit of the times, and with the image of themselves and the society in which they live which is shared by the bureaucrats and many social scientists - 'the

rationality project', as Deborah Stone calls it (Stone 1988: 4). So it is perhaps not surprising that Bridgman and Davis saw it as a 'simple' and 'accessible' model, 'organising observations into familiar patterns' (2003: 99). And they are patterns which reassure the bureaucrats of the validity of their actions: they fall into a 'logical' pattern. It is an account congenial to a cabinet secretariat, concerned with drawing the 'thousands of small questions welling up from operational units within the bureaucracy' into 'an orderly Cabinet process' (2003: 101).

In constructing this account, Bridgman and Davis drew on the social sciences – or those elements of them which supported their project. They went back to Lasswell's 1951 assertion that the policy process consisted of a chain of logical steps: intelligence, recommendation, prescription, invocation, application, appraisal, and termination (2003: 99). They appear to have been unconcerned that Lasswell had no empirical support for his assertion, nor did they consider that any social science since 1951 had challenged this account in any way – such as, for instance, Scharpf's observation twenty-five years ago that:

... it is unlikely, if not impossible, that public policy of any significance could result from the choice process of any single unified actor. Policy formulation and policy implementation are inevitably the result of interactions among a plurality of separate actors with separate interests, goals and strategies (Scharpf 1978: 347).

They did not consider whether a model of individual instrumental rationality could simply be applied to the intersection of a range of corporate actors, or whether it was sufficient to assert that these actors were addressing a single and unambiguous problem. Their concern was to construct a good story for bureaucrats.

At the same time, it operated to devalue the experience of these officials. If their experience clashed with the assumptions of the cycle model, the model prevailed: it was the fact that experience did not reflect the model that was the problem. If practitioners found it difficult to state their objectives in unambiguous terms, and were relatively unconcerned with monitoring their

achievement, this was seen as a problem with the practitioners rather than with the model. If the experience of the governmental process did not look like the execution of authorised directives, there was a 'problem of implementation'. If different public organizations pursue their own specialised agendas rather than working smoothly together for the accomplishment of shared purposes, there was a 'problem of coordination'. If it was difficult to determine what these shared purposes were, there was a need for government to specify its goals. The instrumental account has become the standard against which all other accounts are judged. Consequently, the cycle model takes on a hortatory tone: this is what practice should be like.

But in doing this, the model sets up a gap between the different sorts of knowledge which officials hold, between 'sacred' accounts, which emphasise authority and purpose, and 'profane' accounts, which focus on conflict and its continuing management (Colebatch and Degeling 1986a). Officials recognise the importance of the 'cycle' in giving a formal account of their activity, and in engaging in discourse with other players with whom close relations have not been established. But they are quick to point out that the world is not 'really' like that, and Bridgman and Davis are anxious to join them, describing the policy cycle as 'an ideal type from which every reality will curve away' (2003: 100).

And it is not only Bridgman and Davis's policy trainees and puzzled professionals who experience this clash of accounts. Radin's account of 'policy analysis' as an occupation in the US finds a disjunction between the policy analyst's experience of the policy process and the instrumental model which they have been taught:

There seems to be a disconnect between the analyst's perception of self-worth (often drawn from the rational actor model and the real contribution that the individual makes in the nooks and crannies of the policy process. ... They seem to need a language to describe what they do and to convince themselves – as well as others – that they contribute to the process (Radin 2000: 183).

The central puzzle is why the cycle model has retained its dominance of the discourse in the face of the empirical and theoretical research which has undermined it. Hill and Hupe note Scharpf's conclusion that despite the empirical evidence that policy does not emerge from an authoritative decision-maker, but insist that 'public policy making is still the only vehicle available to modern societies for the conscious, purposive solution of their problems' (Hill and Hupe 2002: 59). This raises questions about how matters are constituted as 'problems', and how the outcomes generated become 'solutions'. What, for instance, made 'the environment' a policy 'problem'? Or the measures taken under this heading a 'solution'? But as March and Olsen point out –

...it is hard to imagine a society with modern Western ideology that would not require a well-elaborated and reinforced myth of intentional choice through politics, both to sustain a semblance of social orderliness and to facilitate change. (March and Olsen 1989: 52)

This is what underlies Hill and Hupe's argument quoted above: the instrumental model provides an explanation of present arrangements and a justification for change: there was a policy decision. It presents a world in which someone is responsible for the outcome, which preserves the principle of accountability. And the policy cycle structures the account which practitioners give of their actions in terms of the instrumental model. 'What we are doing is negotiating with other agencies in an attempt to secure their cooperation: this must be 'coordination', and the course of action we are following must have flowed from 'analysis' which led to the selection of 'instruments': certainly, this is the way that we will write it up.' The policy cycle, then, has to be seen as an essential 'policy myth' in Yanow's terms: 'a narrative created and believed by a group of people which distracts attention from a puzzling part of their reality' (Yanow 1996: 191).

### Policy knowledge and policy practice

In the course of rejecting criticism of their work by Everett (2003), Bridgman and Davis declare that they are open to 'informed debate about the nature of explaining public policy to

practitioners' (2003: 102). What is 'practical knowledge' about the policy process?

Perhaps the first thing to note is that while much is made of the 'practical' nature of Bridgman and Davis's text, it is essentially a prescriptive text, and there is not much concern to demonstrate that these prescriptions are derived from practice, or that following them will lead to better outcomes. Indeed, when they do give three pages of their 160-page text to a concrete policy issue (the Sydney airport case), it is presented as a hypothetical account of 'how the Commonwealth government might respond to the changing patterns of aircraft usage at Sydney airport' (2004: 29). This contrasts with the account of another practitioner, Meredith Edwards (2001), who grounded her conclusions about the policy process in a detailed analysis of policy processes in which she had been involved.

Secondly, Bridgman and Davis are practitioners of a particular sort: officials of the chief ministers' departments and cabinet secretariats which have attained a central position in Australian government in the last couple of decades, supplanting the traditional dominance of Treasury and the Public Service Board. They are very much concerned with the relationship of different exercises in governing to one another, and their impact on the public image of elected leaders, and stress the importance of central control to ensure 'coordination' and 'procedural integrity'. There is, of course, nothing wrong with this as a bureaucratic agenda. But other practitioners might give different accounts of the process, which did not begin with 'the government' identifying a 'problem' and looking for a solution. They might see a longer pattern of interaction between a range of organizational forms, inside government, outside it and in between, in which participants sought to structure action in various ways, frequently invoking state authority, which lead to the sort of actions described by Bridgman and Davis as 'the policy cycle'. For these policy practitioners, the policy cycle model is not so much a good way of making sense of their own practice, but more an appropriate way to present their practice to central agencies like the cabinet secretariat. Even Bridgman and Davis concede that the

policy cycle is a formal model 'an ideal type from which every reality must curve away' but insist that it will tell the policy practitioner 'what do I do now?' (2003: 100).

Perhaps, as Bridgman and Davis claim, policy practitioners are reassured by a map of policy as 'a series of interlocking steps' leading to a government decision, though few of the practitioners with whom I have discussed this question express this view. But in any case, would they get even more reassurance from a realistic presentation of policy, one which reflected the social science research on policy since Lasswell's 1951 call for a policy science, and which resonated with their own experience, rather than 'curved away' from it? What would such a presentation look like?

A practice-oriented guide to policy could well begin with the recognition that the policy process is an exercise in social construction (Berger and Luckman 1975). Framing the governmental process as the pursuit of specific objectives is a quite recent reformist discourse, to which there are alternatives. And 'the government' is not an omnipotent actor at the end of the line, but a construct around which a variety of participants circle and negotiate. It is not so much an actor as an arena for action. Within this arena, 'policy' is part of the shaping of action, a way of drawing attention and seeking commitments.

Similarly, the problem (or 'issue') is also socially-constructed. The participants have varying perceptions and concerns, and come together for different reasons. The question is not so much how everyone can work together to solve the common problem, but how people who are working on different problems can find a basis for working together. This is neither as difficult nor as exotic as it might sound, and this is in fact part of the working knowledge of skilled policy practitioners, who realise that achieving concerted action means building both the team and the shared understanding that makes it work.

They recognise, too, that the work of governing is not so much a series of strategic 'interventions' by 'the government', but more a continuing process involving many hands. 'Stakeholders', 'policy communities' and 'governance networks' do not come into the picture after 'the government' recognises a

'problem'; they are already there, and are often the ones who brought 'the government' into the picture.

In this context, it is quite inadequate to see policy as a set of officially-endorsed objectives; it must be recognised as 'a structured commitment of important resources' (Schaffer 1975), including organizations, discourses and technologies of rule. It has to be understood as part of the institutionalisation of social practice, the way that public authority is mobilised to shape practice in multiple and diverse fields of action, such as workplace relations or child rearing or water use. The structure is contestable and contested, subject to redefinition and realignment as the circumstances in which public authority is exercised are subject to change.

It also needs to be recognised that authorised leaders like elected politicians have a strategic place in the process, but it cannot be understood simply as the implementation of their preferences. There is a continuing process; sometimes, elected leaders become involved, but often, they do not. When they do become involved, they may have preferences, but they may not. In any case, their electorally-grounded legitimacy will be invoked in legitimating the outcome ('the Minister has decided ...'), but it cannot be inferred that this was the mainspring of the action.

It must also be remembered that policy work does not begin with a tabula rasa. The 'policy-makers' do not start with a blank page on which to inscribe the optimal course of action. A range of participants are already in the field, each with their own agendas and practices and audiences. Those working in policy are part of an 'organizational field' (Powell and DiMaggio 1991). To a large extent, policy work is concerned with constituting a regime of practice which is congruent with the activities of existing players (whose concerns are legitimated by their standing as 'stakeholders'). It is about negotiation as much as it is about selection.

In this context, generating shared meaning is a critical part of the process. This has been a major concern of academic research on the policy process, which speaks of the 'discursive turn' in policy analysis (Fischer and Forester 1993), 'narrative policy analysis' (Roe 1994),

'interpretive policy analysis' (Yanow 2000) or 'deliberative policy analysis' (Hajer & Wagenaar 2003, Fischer 2003). Nor is this concern limited to the academics: Roe's interest in 'story lines' is matched by the existence in the Press Office at 10 Downing Street of a head of story development.

It is also important that there is an organizational framework within which policy participants can relate to one another. It is not that this sort of cross-organizational linkage is needed to discover attitudes to policy options, or to facilitate the implementation of a completed policy: it is a major component of the policy. LandCare groups (which bring together farmers and environmental activist and a range of officials) are not implementing an already-formed policy: it is their cooperation that is the policy.

None of this analysis detracts from the significance of the range of practices in which policy workers are engaged: gathering data, identifying options, consulting with interested parties, framing recommendations, making decisions, evaluating outcomes, etc. What it does is to raise the question of why they are significant: in what way do these practices make for 'better policy'? Here the analysis takes on board the critical research on the way that policy participants (and organizations in general) use information (e.g. Weiss 1993; Feldman and March 1991; March and Olsen 1989), and its role in making outcomes legitimate: 'enactment' (Weick 1979).

Critical analysis of this sort would generate an account of the policy process quite different to the 'policy cycle' approach, but it would not be in any way less 'practical'. It would be consistent with the lived experience of policy workers, who refer to the discourse of the cycle model as 'the theory', because it bears little resemblance to their own experience, even if it is a potentially useful myth. It would be more help to the policy participant dealing with (for instance) salination, or bullying in schools, or the consequences of population movements, than an approach which sees policy as 'how politicians make a difference'. As Radin said, what the policy practitioners need is a theorising of policy practice which makes sense of, rather than conflicting with, their experience of it. The

answer is not to retreat from theory, but to have better theory, which is grounded in practice and provides a basis for explaining it.

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