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0521823668 - Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society

Edited by Maarten Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar

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DELIBERATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS

What kind of policy analysis is required now that governments increasingly encounter the limits of governing? Exploring the new contexts of politics and policymaking, this book presents an original analysis of the relationship between state and society, and new possibilities for collective learning and conflict resolution. The key insight of the book is that democratic governance calls for a new, deliberatively oriented, policy analysis. Traditionally policy analysis has been state centred, based on the assumption that central government is self-evidently the locus of governing. Drawing on detailed empirical examples, the book examines the influence of developments such as increasing ethnic and cultural diversity, the complexity of socio-technical systems and the impact of transnational arrangements on national policymaking. This contextual approach indicates the need to rethink the relationship between social theory, policy analysis and politics. *Deliberative Policy Analysis* is essential reading for all those involved in the study of public policy.

MAARTEN A. HAJER is Professor of Public Policy and Political Science in the Department of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam. His previous publications include *The Politics of Environmental Discourse: Ecological Modernization and the Policy Process* (1995), *Living with Nature: Environmental Politics as Cultural Discourse* (edited with Frank Fischer, 1999), and *In Search of a New Public Domain* (with Arnold Reijndorp, 2001).

HENDRIK WAGENAAR is Associate Professor of Public Policy at Leiden University and Senior Researcher at the Netherlands Institute for the Study of Crime and Law Enforcement. His previous publications include *Worlds of the Mentally Ill: How Deinstitutionalization Works in the City* (with Dan Lewis and others, 1991) and *Government Institutions: Effects, Changes, and Normative Foundations* (edited, 2000).

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MAARTEN HAJER

University of Amsterdam

and

HENDRIK WAGENAAR

Leiden University



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Contributors

David E. Booher is a Senior Policy Adviser at the Center for Collaborative Policy of California State University, Sacramento.

Scott Noam Cook is Professor of Philosophy at San Jose State University.

Frank Fischer is Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University, New Jersey.

Herbert Gottweis is Professor of Political Science at the University of Vienna.

Patsy Healey is Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Newcastle.

Judith E. Innes is Professor of City and Regional Planning at the University of California Berkeley.

David Laws is a researcher at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ali Madanipour is senior lecturer at the Centre for Research in European Urban Environments, University of Newcastle.

Claudio de Magalhaes, is a researcher at the Centre for Research in European Urban Environments, University of Newcastle.

John Pendlebury is a lecturer at the Centre for Research in European Urban Environments, University of Newcastle.

Martin Rein is Professor of Urban Studies at the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Douglas Torgerson is Professor of Political Science at the University of Peterborough, Canada.

Dvora Yanow is Professor of Public Administration at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

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Preface

In the early 1980s critical policy analysts began to aim their arrows at one of the key claims of positivist, technocratic policy science: its alleged neutral stance towards the politically charged issues that were the subject of its investigations and analyses. In fact, from its onset as an institutionalized discipline, the strict separation of knowledge and politics has been the *raison d'être* of traditional policy analysis. Through the application of neutral, scientific methods policy analysts would be able to generate objective knowledge that suggested optimal solutions to a broad range of social and economic problems. By systematically collecting and analysing the 'facts of the matter', traditional policy analysis claimed to be the voice of rationality, even the final cognitive arbiter, in a contested political world.

A number of critical scholars, such as Douglas Torgerson, Frank Fischer and Douglas Amy argued convincingly that this foundationalist self-image of positivist policy analysis was profoundly misguided. The neutral methods of scientific policy analysis itself presupposed strong assumptions about the constitution of society. These scholars asserted that the methodology and epistemology of positivist policy analysis tacitly assumed – and required – a certain hierarchical societal ordering. A 'scientific', quantitative policy analysis was itself part of a particular institutional order in which political and economic elites, effectively insulated from the citizens' voice, sought to design economically efficient and technologically efficacious solutions to what they perceived as society's problems. By revealing the political bias in traditional policy analysis, these scholars turned the commonly understood relation between analysis and politics on its head. It is not so much the case, they argued, that analysis informs policy, but conversely, that a particular form of thin, representative democracy, in which, as deLeon puts it, the better informed few prescribe for the less-informed many,

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requires and sustains positivist policy analysis. Methodology, inevitably, entails a political stance.

Since those early days, critical policy analysis has taken off. Particularly with the publication in 1993 of Frank Fischer and John Forester's *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, studies using methods such as interpretative analysis, the analysis of policy discourse and narratives, the socio-linguistic analysis of practitioners' stories, or the careful description and interpretation of the democratic qualities of policy deliberation, had sprung up everywhere in policy and planning. Yet, despite the range and quality of these post-positivist studies of public policy, they were almost always relegated to the periphery of the discipline. As the work was dispersed over a broad range of not always easily accessible journals and collections of papers, it hardly added up to a systematic approach, a coherent, viable alternative to traditional, scientific policy analysis that offered prospects for further institutionalization in academic curricula, departmental hiring practices and grant policies. One reason for the relative lack of institutionalization of post-positivist policy analysis, we feel, is that during the rapid methodological development of the critical policy field, we have somehow taken our eye off the central importance of those early insights about the symbiosis between methodology and political organization. If a positivist methodology and a hierarchically ordered, Madisonian form of democracy presume and sustain each other, what kind of democratic organization then fits the interpretative, linguistically oriented methods of critical post-positivist analysis? Without a convincing answer to this question, it is not immediately obvious to the outside world what is the practical significance of post-positivist policy analysis for today's world, let alone its added value over traditional analysis.

The argument put forward in this book is that a close practical and conceptual connection exists between a post-positivist policy analysis and today's decentered world of governance. A critical policy analysis, with its assumptions about the inherently contextual nature of knowledge, seems more consistent with the contemporary situation in developed democracies of dispersed power, diminishing trust, ambiguous institutions, powerful transnational influences and increasing reflexivity. In the introductory chapter we assert that a policy analysis that is interpretative, pragmatic, and deliberative is both practically and philosophically attuned to the continuous give and take in networks of actors that, as a result of the changing political topography, have sprung up around concrete social and political issues. We have called such an approach 'Deliberative Policy Analysis'. The nine contributions to this book by major scholars in planning theory and policy analysis all elucidate the general argument of the editors' Introduction. In three sections of three chapters each, the contributors explore the possibilities of collaborative dialogue and democratic deliberation in situations of deep-seated conflict; the contribution of the analysis of discourse and practices to understanding various concrete policy controversies;

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and, finally, the epistemological and philosophical foundations of the critical, non-traditional methods and concepts used in this book. We are confident that this collection of papers demonstrates that deliberative policy analysis adds up, to paraphrase Hilary Putnam's characterization of Dewey's philosophy, to a practical and epistemological justification of more direct, participatory forms of democracy.

Many people have contributed to the publication of this book. First we would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who not only saw the intellectual potential of that first loosely organized draft, but also took great pains to articulate it, and to push us and the other contributors hard to actually realize a coherent book. Bob Goodin, who edits the Institutional Design series in which this book appears, has been supportive of our project from its very inception. We are grateful for that. We are appreciative of the students in our seminar on Interpretative Policy Analysis for their critical comments on earlier versions of the manuscript. We also want to thank Teun Oosterbaan for his work in preparing the manuscript, and Chantal Laurent, who has been invaluable for the meticulous way she compiled the list of references and the index. Finally we are grateful to our copy-editor, Trevor Horwood, for his indefatigable patience in rooting out textual oddities and incomplete references.

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