



**3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference  
on Public Policy (ICPP3)  
June 28-30, 2017 – Singapore**

**Panel T02P20 – Formulating Policy  
Session 1 Policy Advice and Policy Formulation:  
Comparative Analyses**

**Title of the paper**

Preparing policy designers: Can effective formulation of policies be taught?

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**Date of presentation**

Thursday, June 29th 08:15 to 10:15 (Block B 4 - 1)

*Abstract*

*In the last two decades, new empirical findings together with theoretical reconceptualization about policy work and policy design led to quite different view on how policies are and should be designed. However, the preparation of future policy designers rests upon many assumptions formulated when policy analysis originated. It leads to misfit between what we know about policy design and policy work, and how we prepare for it. The paper deals with seven traditional assumptions of policy analysis that have been challenged by recent advances in theory and practice of public policy. It also shows implications and challenges for the instruction of policy formulation.*

## 1. Introduction

Our knowledge of how public policies are formulated has been substantially advanced during the last two decades. We know much more about policy design (Howlett 2011), the use of various public policy instruments (Salamon 2002), policy workers who design policies (Howlett & Wellstead 2011), processes through which people can be nudged to do what is desired (Sunstein & Thaler 2008) as well as about the population that is targeted by public policies (Schneider & Ingram 1993). New empirical findings together with theoretical reconceptualization led to quite different perspectives on how policies are and should be designed. For instance, it has been argued that if the design of public services is to be effective, it must be co-designed or co-produced with professionals and people using public services (Bason 2016). This perspective is at odds with traditional dictum “think first – then act”, i.e. idea that first we must carefully analyze the situation, then formulate in detail the proposed course of action and then implement it step-by-step.

New approaches to policy design, such as coproduction and nudge, are now not only academic craze, but are actually realized in practice. Various policy labs and behavioral units experiment with designing public policies on principles that are quite different from the ones upon which policy analysis has been built. The social world is now assumed to be extremely complex and largely unpredictable (Cairney 2012). Together with now generally acknowledged bounded rationality of all actors, the view that it is possible to rationally design the society is strongly challenged.

Surprisingly, these substantially new perspectives on policy design have had very limited effect upon the teaching and preparing of future policy designers. Policy design is usually taught as a part of policy analysis which is still predominantly positivist (He, Lai & Wu 2016). The core textbooks used worldwide include those by Weimer and Vining (2016), Bardach & Patashnik (2015), Dunn (2016) and Patton, Sawicki, & Clark (2016)<sup>1</sup>. These textbooks have been revised many times, and some efforts have been made to make them more in accordance with current development. However, all these textbooks inevitably remain deeply rooted in the time of their origin. The misfit between the textbooks and reality has been recognized for long time. A decade ago Colebatch (2006: 311) noted that “the most common explanation of this [misfit] is that the textbook account represents a norm, an ideal to which policy workers aspire but which circumstances may prevent them attaining”. Thus, the reality itself was wrong, not the analytical framework and assumptions of policy analysis. Colebatch (2006: 311) concluded with a bit of irony that “there’s nothing wrong with the analytic framework, it’s the foreigners that have the problem.”

Now we know that not the reality, but rather the traditional textbooks are to be questioned. In this paper, I argue that the way how policy design is predominantly taught is largely incompatible with both practice and current knowledge about policy design and governance. I challenge several assumptions upon which traditional instruction of policy analysis and design have been constructed, and which are not in congruence with recent research findings and practice. I show the implications of this misfit for instruction, and discuss the concrete problems that we face when preparing future policy designers. In doing so, I employ not only theoretical literature on policy design, but also empirical research on policy work. I also draw upon thirteen years of extensive personal experience in teaching policy analysis and policy design as well as my personal experience of being policy analyst and policy advisor. I have also benefited from informal interviews with other policy analysis and policy design instructors, and of course also from the literature on the topic. Although my experience might be specific and bound to my cultural and political context, I believe that the

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<sup>1</sup> The first three mentioned textbooks are now available in their 5th edition. Patton, Sawicki, & Clark (2016) is now published in 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

challenges for policy design instruction presented in this paper are of more general nature, and stems from the misfit between traditional policy analysis and current nature of policy design.

It should be noted that I do *not* aim at discussing the intricacies of different epistemology and ontology of positivist versus post-positivist policy analysis. Neither do I claim to provide complete overview of the current development in policy design. My goal here is more practical rather than theoretical. I take here the “classroom perspective”, i.e. I review some of the core problems we are facing in our daily practice, and try to unfold their roots. I formulate seven propositions on policy design that seem to be incompatible with traditional approach to policy analysis, and show the instruction problems that stem from it. I conclude with some preliminary implications for policy design instruction.

## **2. Changing policy landscape and its challenges for policy design instruction**

### *2.1 Policy design is a diverse and non-routine activity*

In the last decade, number of quantitative and qualitative studies researched the real world policy analysts, i.e. what they actually do (Colebatch, Hoppe & Noordegraaf 2010; Howlett & Walker 2012). The research has convincingly demonstrated that the reality is far from what is suggested in policy analysis textbooks. It was found that work of policy analysts include much more than rational analysis. Consequently, the word “policy worker” instead of “policy analyst” started to be used. The research revealed that policy work is even more heterogeneous and varied than we had been able to imagine before. While some policy workers do use “rational” analytical techniques, much of their daily work is about communication, coordination and “making sense together”. These different types of activities are often combined in unexpected and often idiosyncratic ways, leading to a fact that most policy workers are in fact “multi-taskers” (Vesely 2014).

Diversity and heterogeneity of policy work can be found at all levels: individual, organizational and country level. Policy workers are facing hugely diverse circumstances and situations. It is not only because of cultural diversity, but also because policy-making process is taking part at different places simultaneously. Policy worker is rarely facing unoccupied terrain. More often she enters a terrain packed with different interpretations of the problems as well as possible solutions. And she enters the terrain in different time points of the policy process. Sometimes the space for solutions is quite constrained (e.g. the task is to consider pros and cons of some particular and concrete measure, such as introducing new regulation). Sometimes the scope for design is more open. But it is rarely possible to completely redefine the issue at hand.

In my experience, at least in our context, there is no such thing as “*typical* policy work”. On the contrary, even the same people in the same department report different activities over time, depending upon political circumstances and current head of the department. Their role is changing and so are the expectations from them. Sometimes they are asked for “fire-fighting” solutions, sometimes they are supposed to give more strategic advice. Sometimes more technical analysis is required (such as economic analysis of different options trade-off), sometimes more creative and out-of-the-box thinking is expected. Students sometimes asked me to provide them with some “typical and good policy analysis paper” which is, however, impossible because the requirements can be so diverse<sup>2</sup>. What counts as good and useful policy paper depends upon particular situation and context. And the context differs profoundly.

Policy analysis is depicted as profession similar to lawyer or doctors (Geva-May 2005). But the situations policy workers are facing are much more diverse, and so are the activities

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, in Anglo-Saxon countries there is a tradition of “policy briefs” and “policy memos” which are considered as more or less standardized. However, even in these countries policy work is strongly diverse activity that cannot be captured in simple steps.

they undertake. Policy analysis is usually assumed to be realized in steps (recall Bardach's eight steps). Real policy formulation, however, usually does not proceed in clearly defined steps, and the requirements of policy workers might be various. Policy work activities are combined in many different ways, and several "steps" are often missing.

The implication of this diversity is that we are not preparing for one specific occupation and role. Our current students will fulfill multiple tasks and roles. Consequently, their toolbox must be very broad. Policy analysis textbooks include number of techniques, but it still does not seem to be sufficient. It was argued that toolbox of current designer "should not contain not a grand theory or single big idea, but 'expandable set of little methods', each grounded in empirical and detailed understanding of the context (Durose and Richardson 2015: 13). Following the distinction of Isaiah Berlin, policy design is an activity for "foxes" (those who know lots of little things), and not for "hedgehogs" (those who know one bog thing). In my experience, it is true that students need different tools, depending upon their problem and its context. Sometimes, Q-methodology or Delphi-method seem as good options, sometimes more "old-style" methods like cost-benefit analysis seem as the best choice. However, it is not easy to teach a number of small things, if only because of logistics reasons in the classroom. Also, it places high expectations upon the teacher who should be familiar with the range of methods and tools.

This is where the headache of us – teachers of future policy designers – starts. Obviously, there still must be some decision about what to include into the curriculum. What should and should not be included in the curriculum? The instruction time is severely limited, and mastering of any particular technique (such as cost-benefit analysis, Q-methodology, impact assessment etc.) takes often lot of time. It is well-known that "it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail" (Maslow 1966: 15). Therefore the choice of technique can influence the reality. The choice of techniques must fit the purpose of the given activity. Thus policy work inevitably includes thinking about what technique is to be used in certain circumstances. In policy analysis textbooks, however, various tools are presented as generally applicable techniques, and the students do not get any advice on how to assess the relevance of a given tool.

## 2.2 *The use of design tools is not neutral*

There are number of techniques that have been developed in policy analysis (and related fields) to assist in policy decision-making. The general aim of developing and using these techniques was to make the policy-making more rational: "There was a great hope in the early years that these techniques would squeeze some if not all of the politics out of the decision making—perhaps relegating it to higher-order value choices—and lead to improvements not only in the way that policies were made but of course in the results as well" (Pal 2006: 378).

This hope never really materialized. One reason of this is that policy analysis take form of *heuristics*, rather than methods. According to one definition, a heuristic is a "rough-and-ready procedure or rule of thumb for making a decision, forming a judgement, or solving a problem without the application of an algorithm or an exhaustive comparison of all available options, and hence without any guarantee of obtaining a correct or optimal result" (Oxford Reference Online 2007). Heuristics are little formalized procedures for problem solving and discovering new knowledge in the absence of strict rules. As rather loose guidelines, they tell us how we should proceed. Since they are not based on any strict algorithm, heuristics may or may not lead to a solution and, more importantly, different users of the same heuristic may achieve quite divergent results. Though many tools (such as SWOT analysis or goal tree) are sometimes referred to as methods, they are in fact heuristics. Even if the procedure for conducting a heuristic is prescribed with maximum precision, another group will achieve different results under different conditions. This is because the application of a heuristic is

always to some extent based on subjective assessment of what is and what is not considered as facts as well as what is good and what is bad.

In spite of that, heuristics are highly valuable for the policy analyst and, if applied creatively and critically, may guide her thinking in the right direction<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, if the tools are arbitrary, and their use depends upon critical thinking, then it is not enough to explain the *tool* itself. If we teach students, say, linear regression analysis we teach the technique as such. Provided that all assumptions are fulfilled, regression analysis might be used in any domain (e.g. education, health ...) without actually knowing the substance. Effective application of heuristics, on the other hand, requires certain level of understanding of the domain.

This is not such problem when the user of the heuristic is knowledgeable both of the heuristics and the substance. However, this does not have to be the case if the students choose the topics of inquiry. For a teacher, it is very difficult to judge the proper application of the heuristics if she is not familiar with the topic. When I started to teach courses on policy analysis and policy analysis I was focusing on the use of methods per se<sup>4</sup>. The general message to the students was that it is a *methodological* course, and that the proper use of tools is more important than detailed knowledge about the particular policy issue. Of course, the basic rationale of policy analysis – to provide the client with useful advice – was still the major purpose of the final paper. Nevertheless, gradually I have become aware that the excellence in mastery of particular tool (such as scenario writing) is not necessarily associated with the overall result: clear and persuasive advice on what to do.

As a consequence, I have started to be more and more involved in substantial debates. I have cut the number of techniques, and began to spend more time on discussing the actual issue at hand when applying particular heuristic. It now seems clear to me that most policy\ design tools are inseparable from the substance, and the context of its usage. You must know the field quite well to use the tools properly.<sup>5</sup> Context-dependent knowledge and intimate knowledge of concrete cases is necessary for any type of expertise (Flyvbjerg 2001: 71).

### 2.3 *Effects of interventions are hard to predict*

All policy analysis textbook include some sort of predicting the outcomes. For instance, Weimer and Vining (2005: 345) argue that this task is to “predict, or forecasts, how each alternative will perform in terms of each goal and, if a goal has a multiple impacts associated with it, all of the impacts”. They give an example of solving the congestion problem. The policy analyst should predict, among other things, what percentage automobile use for commuting will change as a result of a 1 percent change in price. But how can we get such prediction? Weimer and Vining suggest predicting price elasticity of automobile use from similar changes in other cities (natural experiments, as they call it) or from the literature. At last resort, they recommend to ask some experts to help you an educated guess, or simply make a best guess yourself.

Despite indisputable importance of various impact assessment techniques, in practice they have many limitations. They are expensive and time-consuming while policy analysis is usually realized in a short time span. More importantly, it is more and more difficult assess

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the relation between the terms “heuristic” and “scientific method” should be understood as a continuum with very loose recommendations for independent thinking (heuristics), on one side, and scientific methods with highly formalized procedures that have to be followed rigidly and guarantee that any analyst will reach the same result, on the other side.

<sup>4</sup> Our master program in public policy started in 1993, and from its beginning there are two courses on policy analysis. First course is labelled, literally translated, as “Methods of analysing policy”, the second course is called “Methods of designing policy”. Each course include four hours per term (term includes thirteen weeks).

<sup>5</sup> One of the crucial questions that arises from that is whether we should allow students to analyze only topics that we are sufficiently familiar with? My personal response to this challenge is that I have tried to widen the portfolio of topics I am sufficiently familiar that is in which I am able to make some reasoned judgment. We also started to have external opponents that are deeply knowledgeable about the substance.

the impact of particular policy options. It is so for two basic reasons. First, as argued by many, we live in increasingly unpredictable world, sometimes referred to as VUCA (Bennett & Lemoine 2014). VUCA is an acronym for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. These four components are believed to characterize the general conditions of the current world. From these four, complexity has deserved the most attention (Cairney 2012). Complexity means that there are many interconnected parts and variables. Some information is available or can be predicted, but the volume or nature of it can be overwhelming to process. It is argued that it is necessary to shift analysis from individual parts (such as individual decisions whether to use or not to use car for commuting) to the system as a whole.

The second reason, connected to the previous, is that people are humans rather than “econs” (Thaler & Sunstein 2008). Compared to what could be expected from neoclassical economic theory, people do a lot of “misbehaving” (Thaler 2016). That means that predictions based upon idealized (and simplified) model of behavior, are likely to be wrong. The assumptions upon which the predictions should be made are often difficult to formulate. Consequently, it has been suggested that we should base our predictions on randomized control trials experiments or natural experiments. The problem is that context often matters a lot, and the experimental findings are often hard to generalize (external validity problem). It is for instance questionable to what extent the findings from experiments, say in U.S., can be applied in other contexts (say, central Europe). Yet, in practice we usually lack *any* experimental findings on the impact of particular measure. Consequently, impact assessment is in fact often based upon the mere guesses of the analysts. In other words, despite the sophisticated procedure, the data we are using are usually quite questionable<sup>6</sup>.

Detailed planning, if possible at all, is suitable for a short term and relatively small scale interventions. It seems impossible to formulate a systemic change with detailed “milestones” that are step by step achieved. It should be acknowledged in the policy design. For instance, it seems that it is inevitable to leave some maneuver space for the people who actually realize the policy: “while top-down implementation models might link success to simplicity, to one clear goal and a select number of officials to carry it out, complexity theory suggests that this process could not be separated and made immune from its wider context. Rather, implementing officials will have to adapt policy in response to this dynamic process” (Cairney 2012: 349).

But we know, at the same time, that devil is in the details and that even very small changes might influence the effects of a given policy (there are many examples on that in behavioral economics). Policy workers, however, lack any techniques that would help them in considering how much detailed and specific the policy should be.

#### 2.4 *Complex problems need policy design mix not one alternative*

The logic of policy analysis relies upon clear formulation of alternatives, and their careful systematic comparison vis-à-vis the formulated goals. According to Oxford Dictionary alternative is “one of two or more available possibilities”<sup>7</sup>. The policy analysts are reminded that “you should *ensure that alternatives are mutually exclusive*; they are, after all, *alternative policies*” (Weimer and Vining 2005: 347, emphasis in original)<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that this problem is not unknown in policy analysis textbooks. Weimer and Vining (2005: 355) admit that “Rarely will you be able to predict and value impacts with great certainty. The score you give alternatives for the impact categories usually constitute your best guesses”. Similarly, Bardach admits that “This [projecting the outcomes] is the hardest step in the Eightfold Path. Even veteran policy analysts do not usually do it very well” (Bardach 2000: 27).

<sup>7</sup> <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/alternative>

<sup>8</sup> But compared with Bardach’s statement: “Alternative does not necessarily signify that the policy options are mutually exclusive. Policy analysts use the term alternative ambiguously. Sometimes it means that choosing an alternative implies forgoing another, and sometimes it means simply one more policy action that might help to solve or mitigate the problem” (Bardach 2000: 19). However, as it is clear from the example further in this paper, for Bardach alternatives are mutually exclusive.

The problem is that in facing the complex problems, the alternatives are rather rarely mutually exclusive. In fact, we face either-or question usually only in discussing regulation; for instance, whether the smoking in the public places, such as restaurants, should be banned or not. It is clear that there are really mutually exclusive alternatives – smoking can be allowed or banned, not both. But more often we deal with complex problems that need to be dealt with number of *mutually related* interventions.

According to Bardach (2000: 16) it is important to distinguish between a basic alternative and its variants. The basic element in many policy alternatives is “an intervention strategy, such as regulatory enforcement *or* a subsidy *or* a tax incentive, that causes people or institutions to change their conduct in some way” (Bardach 2000: 16, emphasis added). Bardach (2000: 17) gives an example of decreasing the prevalence of heroin, and he suggests three basic alternatives: methadone maintenance, law enforcement pressure and drug education. But clearly, the government can, and perhaps *should*, do all of these “alternatives”. They do not contradict one another, but rather they are complementary or even supporting. Methadone maintenance (or similar measure) is necessary for already addicted, while any prevention is hardly conceivable without some kind of education.

In reality, the analyst is usually not choosing one alternative, but rather combines together different interventions and try to assemble them into coherent strategies (May 1981). In reality, policy-makers often suggest package of different interventions (variously labelled as “intervention package”, “policy package” or “package of measures”). In other words, as literature on policy design informs us, policy tools or instruments are usually bundled or combined into “policy portfolios” or “policy mixes” to attain policy goals (Howlett & Rayner 2013). It has been argued that some instruments are mutually reinforcing (Hou & Brewer 2010). Some interventions, however, might also counteract each other (Grabosky 1995). It is not rare to see that different policy interventions aiming at one particular population are prepared at the same time, but without any coordination. The work of the thoughtful analyst is thus not only to promote his intervention, but also to take into account other attempts to influence the target.

Nevertheless, policy analysis textbooks are virtually silent on how to *put together* the various interventions. Policy analysis is based upon *distinguishing* among the interventions, not combing them. Considering alternatives is generally useful way of approaching policy problems. But alternatives usually can be specified only at rather concrete and specific level (e.g. should the policy be realized by the government agency *or* by non-profit organization). When facing complex problems (and this is usually the case), distinguishing alternatives is not a useful approach. For instance, consider the problem of high level of graduate unemployment. This is a complex problem that needs a combination of simultaneous interventions. For instance, it seems necessary to improve the education system, but without increasing the demand for labor, we might end up with even more frustrated graduates. The question is not whether we should intervene in the education *or* labor market. The question is what should be done (and *not* should be done) where and when. The question is also how these interventions should be *sequenced and structured*. Again, policy analysis textbooks do not provide us with any procedure how to do this<sup>9</sup>.

## 2.5 Normative claims about policy-making are multiple and often contradictory

Policy analysis originated in the 1960s in the U.S. and it still shares normative assumptions from this era and cultural context. Most importantly, it places high value upon

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<sup>9</sup> My personal response problem in the classroom is that I first help students to cluster interventions according to their internal policy-making logic. For instance, regulation is not only specific type of instrument, but also require special procedure to be followed (usually legislative process). So it makes sense to have one cluster of intervention called “changes in legislation”. Another cluster of interventions might be information campaign. I do not recommend trying to distinguish which general cluster should be preferred. Instead, concrete alternatives are formulated *inside* these general types of interventions.

rationality, systematic method and transparency, and tends to prioritize this over ambiguity and bounded rationality, which is inevitably included in participation and deliberation. It is clear that not all scholars, politicians and citizens share values and beliefs of traditional policy analysis. The so called “argumentative turn” and the emergence of interpretive policy analysis have been driven not only by epistemological concerns, but also by quite different beliefs about how policy-making *should* look like.

It would be, however, mistake to narrow the disagreement about policy-making to clash between positivists and post-positivists. The terrain is much more colorful and the disagreement about how the policy-making should be realized, include many dimensions. For instance, the core of most problems lies in the individual behavior and culture. How far can we get with the interventions? Is intervention, like nudging, always legitimate? Should we always follow the citizens’ voice, or are there issues which are too technical to be decided by the public? Should we recommend only incremental policies, or more complex and holistic policies is the only way how to cope with the problems? Knowing that complex changes are often associated with a lot uncertainty, should we propose such a holistic change despite the risk of big failure?

These are not questions that are likely to be answerable at a general level. This depends not only upon the personal views and values, but also upon the given governance context. Peters and Pierre (2016) have recently described different dimensions of government (goal selection, resource mobilization, decision-making, implementation and feedback and learning) that in their total lead to different types of governance (such as *étatiste* governance, liberal-democratic governance, state-centric governance or interactive governance). Each jurisdiction has its own idiosyncratic way of governance that is to be taken into account when attempting to answer such questions. For instance, in the Czech Republic, there is a long tradition of governing through “strategic documents”. It is also generally assumed that policy problems are to be tackled in their complexity. At the same time, however, it is generally believed that it is the (central) state that is responsible for solving policy problems. It is expected that ministries will formulate and then implement concrete and specific strategies. It is very difficult to go against these routines (and cognitive stereotypes) on how the policy-making should be realized.

The routines are pervasive and hard to change even in cases there is general agreement they are not optimal (recall American election system ...). There are usually many ongoing changes attempting to change the governance system. For instance, recently there is a strong movement towards inclusion of clients in service delivery. Yet, the practice is often quite far from this ideal. Should we teach for tomorrow (that will perhaps never materialize)? Or should we rather prepare for current and real – but unsatisfactory – present? Whose normative beliefs about the proper policy-making should be followed?

## 2.6 *Problem analysis does not have priority over problem solution*

Policy analysis textbooks differ in the number of proposed steps. For instance, while Bardach famously proposes “eightfold path”, Patton and Sawicki delimit six steps. In reality, however, all these textbooks have similar structure, and they consists of “problem analysis” and “solution analysis” (Weimer and Vining 2005: 328). Although it is often acknowledged that policy analysis is iterative process, it is clearly assumed that analysis of the problem should always precedes the formulation of what should be done. Textbooks on public policy analysis congruently stress the key role of correct formulation of problems for policy design: ‘policy analysts fail more often because they formulate the wrong problem than because they choose the wrong solution’ (Dunn 1988: 720).

Nevertheless, such distinction between problem and its solution is artificial, because solvability is necessary condition for any social condition to become a policy problem.



According to Wildavsky (1989: 42), ‘difficulty is a problem only if something can be done about it . . . analysts, who are supposed to be helpful, understand problems only through tentative solutions . . . for analysts, problems do imply the real possibility of solution, for there would be no policy analysis if there were no action to recommend’. Similarly, Dunn defines policy problems as ‘unrealized needs, values, or opportunities for improvement that may be pursued through public action’ (Dunn, 2004: 72). In other words, formulation of problems deals with undesirable conditions and opportunities that are both solvable and worth solving. It involves searching, creating and initially examining ideas for solutions.

It is very hard, and if not impossible, to define a problem without actually knowing whether viable solutions exist. For instance, consider the low percentage of female CEOs. It is certainly something that is not acceptable for many citizens. But how should we structure such problematic condition? Our definition will necessarily be determined by *measures* we find as appropriate and legitimate. For some people some kind of affirmative action (positive discrimination) is perfectly acceptable, for others it is not.

In reality thus problems are interlinked with their solutions. In my experience, policy making process is more often activated with “invention” of solutions then with problems. Actually, problems are sometimes found *ex post* – to proposed solutions. Politicians are assumed to do something, to be agile. They are in favor of proposing solutions that are relatively easy to introduce and that are highly visible (such as introducing or changing legislation). Thus policy analysts are more often confronted with question “to do or not to do particular policy” than with “try to solve this complex problem”.

There are certainly political constrains on the definition of problem. Sometimes the primeval limitation (such as focusing upon introduction of one particular measure) is cleared off, sometimes it lasts. The analyst does not know the actual constrains until she explores this. In my experience, it is sometimes very difficult to estimate what should be taken as *external* limit that is unchangeable and what is possible to overcome. It should be noted that the traditional policy analysis is aware of this problem. Policy analysts are encouraged to consider the status quo as viable alternative, and if the only proposed solution (such as affirmative action) has too many adverse effects, “doing nothing” should be recommended.

While sympathetic to this transparent process, often it is not very practical one. If the condition is generally understood as unacceptable, sooner or later you will be asked to consider other solutions. Consider again the example of low percentage of female CEOs. If affirmative action is not viable solution what can be done about it? To tackle this problem we need to reformulate, or reframe the problem. Perhaps there are other conditions that *are* amenable to acceptable public intervention. If the general purpose of policy analysis is to provide a client with useful advice, reformulation of the conditions to the acceptable form might be more useful than systematic and transparent analysis what should *not* be done. Unfortunately, traditional policy analysis textbook provide little advice on reframing of initial conditions<sup>10</sup>. Structuring of problems is based upon decomposition of the problem to the small parts. But reframing usually assumes completely new perspective, more holistic view, ability to synthesize. But as it is clear from the very title of the discipline, analysis has primacy over synthesis.

### 2.7 *Policy formulation cannot be made without actors*

Policy analysis originated in the years when the most central – often the only actor – in policy design was the state. The state was assumed to be exclusive designer of the policy as well as its main implementer. Although, some policy analysis textbooks sometimes mention

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<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that rejection of some proposed solution is sometimes also extremely useful. So again, the argument here is not that traditional policy analysis should be completely discarded, but rather that the situations that it can be applied are rather limited.

stakeholders or actors, and encourage the policy analysts to take them into account, they are taken as more or less passive receivers of the policies. For instance, it is argued that inclusion of the stakeholders might increase the analyst's knowledge about the problem, it is still the *analyst* who designs the policy, and the state bodies that will implement it.

The view on the role non-governmental actors in policy-making has changed profoundly since the times when policy analysis originated. Many functions and activities traditionally undertaken exclusively by the state increasingly involve variety of non-governmental actors. This has reduced government capacity for independent action and limited their design choices (Howlett & Lejano 2012). Despite the fact that the discourse on the demise of the same is certainly exaggerated, there is no doubt that governments (at least in the most democratic and developed countries) have to cope with variety of actors who require more participation in designing policies, but are also more willing to take a part in actual participation. "New policy design" literature that originated in the 2000s reflects these changes. Design thinking places the citizens or the user at its core (Durose & Richardson 2015: 11). Rather than "being wedded to a 'policy presumption' design opens up the possibility to experiment and learn through doing and possibly failing".

Traditional policy analysis textbooks do not cover participation of stakeholders. Policy analysis is defined as work for a client, but by client is meant someone who required the analysis (and often also paid for it). Nevertheless, the importance of public participation in policy analysis is sometimes acknowledged. For instance Geva-May (1997: 19) stresses that clients and other likely members of a study's audience should be involved from the beginning stages of the analysis. Here, however, the advice stops. It is not clear who should be included, how and, most importantly, what to do with such participation. Policy analysis is predominantly taken as an expert activity. But what to do if the experts' findings are not in congruence with what is suggested by the expert?

In practical terms, the crucial question is how participation of actors and learning-by-doing can be realized in *classrooms* settings. The new design thinking weakened the distinction between thinking and acting. It has been argued that you can advance and improve your thinking only if you actually act. You cannot precisely design the policy until you *do* something. For instance, it is assumed that you cannot design the policy and programs for unemployed youths unless you are actually working with them on the problem. Policy design here is seen as ongoing real experimenting and fine-tuning action. Yet, if we should take this point seriously, it would mean that students should work only on real ongoing policies. In some programs, policy analysis is taught through integrated client-based projects (Meltzer 2013). Nevertheless, it leads to new problems and questions. First of all, the timing of education and policy-making might be quite different. It is not likely that policy-makers would be willing to realize policies according to terms in universities (imagine the requirement that "this policy must be adopted by the end of fall semester"). Second, it poses question on what the students can actually learn. It is likely that as novices they will be more *observers* of the process than active *designers*. In a classroom, the student has a chance to play to be a "real" designer (e.g. he *himself* can write proposal on the change of legislation). In practice this is something it is unlikely to happen until he holds certain position and had demonstrated certain skills.

### **3. Implications and preliminary conclusions for policy formulation teaching**

Policy analysis evolved from operations research (in the late 1940s and early 1950s) and systems analysis (in the late 1950s and early 1960s). It has been developed for dealing with relatively simple and bounded problems. In the beginning, operations research techniques were applied to problems in which there were few parameters and a clearly defined single objective function to be optimized (e.g. aircraft design and placement of radar installations).

Gradually, the problems being analyzed became more complex (Walker 2000). Yet, many of the assumptions and procedures of policy analysis remained the same. Consequently, policy analysis remains suited for small scale and well-defined problems. It is much less useful in dealing with complex issues.

It has been persuasively argued many times that “ultra-rational approach” to policy design, upon which traditional policy analysis is based, is naïve and unproductive (Yanow 2000, Fischer & Forester 1993). In contrast to technocratic perspective, current approaches to policy design aims at integrating benefits of structured planning with caution, experience, practitioners’ creativity and their reflection in action (Durose & Richardson 2015: 13). It is close to Wildawsky’s (1989) “sixth sense policy-making” which is about advanced skills in judging or sensing very specific set of circumstances. But can we really teach this “sixth sense”? And are we doing so?

In this paper, I have argued that assumptions upon which the future policy designers are prepared are outdated and not in accordance with the current state of knowledge on policy work and policy design. It should be noted, however, that this critique of traditional policy analysis textbooks and approaches does not mean that they are condemned to be forgotten. In my view and experience, they still include many useful insights. Neither do I think that instruction must be changed completely. Our experience shows that sometimes it is better to provide students with coherent but simplified framework than to expose them to all intricacies at once. Reality is always multi-faceted and complex but for newcomers it is often useful to disclose the complexity step by step. Though the clear “stages” approach is not how policy is actually designed, it may be quite efficient in teaching. In course on policy analysis for international students in which we use Bardach’s book, the clarity and structuredness is often highly valued by the students. On the other hand, our experiments with providing students with all the complexity and intricacies of policy design sometimes lead to chaos and demotivation.

Moreover, despite the new enthusiastic discourse on policy design, reality is usually very far from learning-by-doing, co-production, careful experimenting and broad participation of actors. The incapacity and unpreparedness of the practice to absorb new policy design is widespread. Some colleagues of mine believe that instruction should be turned upside down (or to be “punk” as they call it) to be in line with the most current *academic* thinking (such as systems thinking). I do not share this. We are preparing for the future and we should include the most current knowledge, but at the same time we should prepare students for *current*, certainly imperfect world. It is crucial to teach them new principles and encourage them to think critically and out-of-the-box. For instance, it is important that the students are able to formulate policies based upon the principles of co-production. However, they should also be aware that practice is often very different from these principles (e.g. usually based upon control-command principles).

In any event, I do believe that policy analysis should be substantially redesigned. The literature on policy analysis has been highly self-referential and enclosed in its internal discussion. Consequently, it does not give answers to questions that people who prepare future policy designers often ask. These questions include: How to cope with diversity of situations in which policy analysts work? How to cope with complexity and unpredictability? How to formulate effective and efficient policy packages? How to include participation in the classroom? How to cope with diverse claims on how the policy design should be done? How to cope with the clash between the normative ideal and reality? How to cope with emotions and irrationality?

The discussion about how to redesign instruction of policy formulation is rather limited. And if there are some recommendations, they are quite abstract (Cairney 2012). Nevertheless,

the practice gradually evolves even without such discussion, and it is likely that sooner or later it will have an effect upon the instruction. For instance, in many countries various policy labs and behavioral units are emerging. As they develop, they will look for graduates with other skills than are those fostered in traditional policy analysis. But we should be more active in suggesting and developing new approaches, or rediscovering old ones, such as participant observation, mapping or sensemaking (Mintrom & Luetjens 2016). Other well-known approaches include using case studies, role playing or employing academics in the classroom (Posner 2009). It seems essential that students are as close as possible to the real world problems. Policy design is learnable, coachable but not teachable (Schön 1987: 158). Students must practice in order to learn design but this practice must involve reflection-in-action.

#### 4. References

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