

**Agenda-Setting Tools:
State-Driven Agenda Activity from Government Relations to Scenario Forecasting**

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Abstract

The literature in the policy sciences on policy tools or instruments historically has focused almost exclusively on implementation tools. However each of the stages of the policy process is also subject to government action and distinct sets of policy tools can be identified in each of the non-implementation stages of policy-making. This paper addresses the situation with respect to agenda-setting or the stage in which policy issues and problems are first brought to the attention of policy-makers and included as subjects of possibly government policy-making activities. While many accounts of policy-making assume agenda-setting to be a process driven entirely exogenously and thus outside of the purview of government activity, detailed analyses of agenda-setting issue formation and behaviour have not supported this view. Rather these studies have all identified common practices whereby governments control or attempt to control issue prominence and agenda-entry patterns in the effort to manage or direct their own policy timetables and agendas. This paper examines this literature and focuses attention on several tools commonly employed in these efforts, ranging from funding for and regulation of stakeholder and interest group formation to information and public opinion formation through government advertizing to media control or influence through freedom of information and privacy legislation. The paper highlights the significance of these efforts and the utility of using frameworks and taxonomies developed in the study of implementation tools for their analysis.

Introduction: Non-Implementation Tools and Public Policy-Making

The literature in the policy sciences on policy tools or instruments historically has focused almost exclusively on implementation tools (Hood 1986; Salamon 2002; Hood and Margetts 2007; Howlett 2011). However each of the stages of the policy process is also subject to government action (Wu et al 2010) and distinct sets of policy tools can be identified in each of the non-implementation stages of policy-making.

This paper addresses the situation with respect to agenda-setting or the stage in which policy issues and problems are first brought to the attention of policy-makers and included as subjects of possible government policy-making activities (Cobb and Elder 1972; Kingdon 1984).

While many accounts of policy-making assume agenda-setting to be a process driven entirely exogenously and thus outside of the purview of government activity,

detailed analyses of agenda-setting issue formation and behaviour have not supported this view (Cobb et al 1976; Howlett 1997; Baumgartner and Jones 1993). Rather these studies have all identified common practices whereby governments control or attempt to control issue prominence and agenda-entry patterns in the effort to manage or direct their own policy timetables and agendas (Rocheffort and Cobb 1993). This paper examines this literature and focuses attention on several tools commonly employed in these efforts, ranging from funding for and regulation of stakeholder and interest group formation to information and public opinion formation through government advertizing to media control or influence through freedom of information and privacy legislation. The paper highlights the significance of these efforts and the utility of using frameworks and taxonomies developed in the study of implementation tools for their analysis.

What are Policy Tools?

Policy alternatives are composed of different sets or combinations of the policy elements described above. Policy instruments¹ are the techniques or means through which states' attempt to attain their goals. They are the subject of deliberation and activity at all stages of the policy process as they affect both the agenda-setting and policy formulation processes as well as being the subject of decision-making policy implementation, and evaluation (Howlett 2005; Howlett, Ramesh and Perl 2009).

They have a special place in the consideration and study of policy design because, taken together, they comprise the contents of the toolbox from which governments must choose in building or creating public policies. Policy design elevates the analysis and practice of policy instrument choice - specifically tools for policy implementation - to a central focus of study, making their understanding and analysis a key design concern

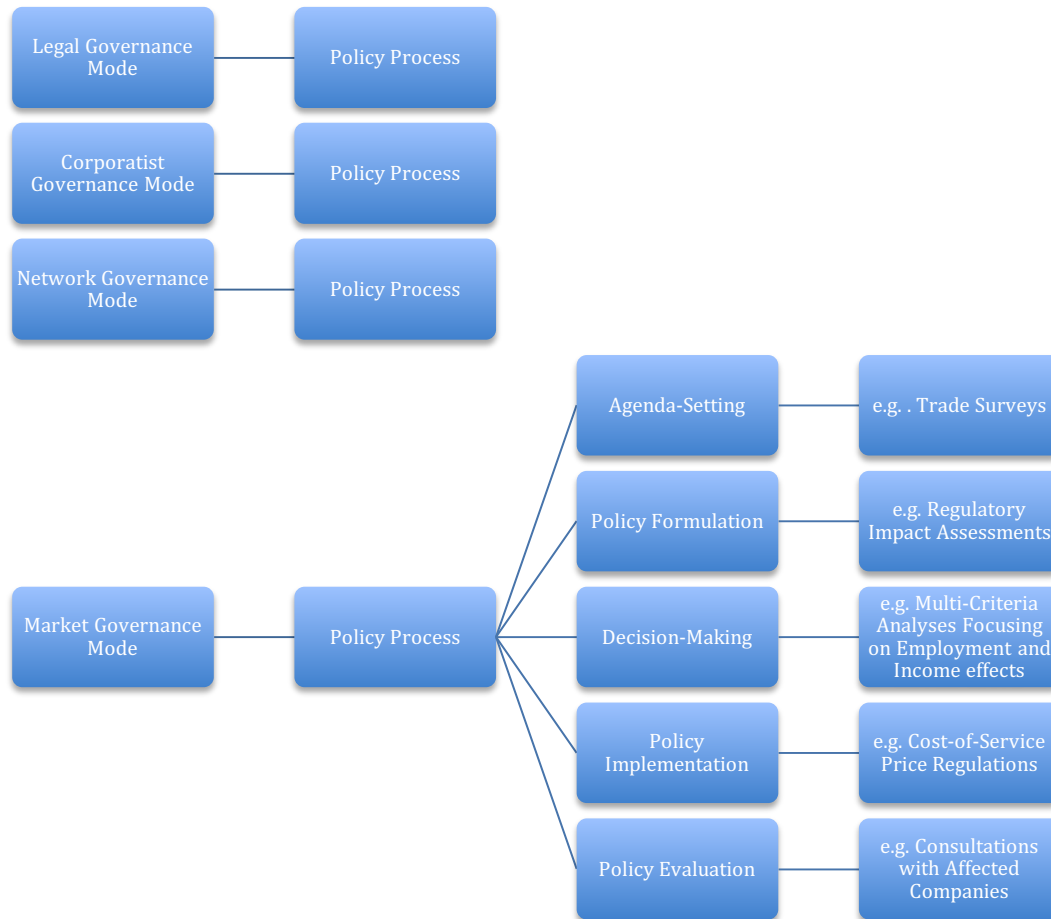
(Salamon 1981; Linder and Peters 1990). Instrument choice, from this perspective, in a sense, *is* public policy making, and understanding and analyzing potential instrument choices involved in implementation activity *is* policy design. The role of a textbook in policy design thus is one of assisting "in constructing an inventory of potential public capabilities and resources that might be pertinent in any problem-solving situation" (Anderson, p. 122).

It is important to repeat, however, that policy instruments exist at *all* stages of the policy process - with specific tools such as stakeholder consultations and government reviews intricately linked to agenda-setting activities, ones like legislative rules and norms linked to decision-making behaviour and outcomes, and others linked to policy evaluation, such as the use of ex-post, or after-the-fact, cost benefit analyses (see Figure 5).²

Although policy instruments appear in all stages of the policy process, those affecting the agenda-setting, decision-making and evaluation stages of the policy process, while very significant and important in public management (Wu et al 2010), are less so with respect to policy design activities. This is because policy design largely takes place at the formulation stage of the policy cycle and deals with plans for the implementation stage. Thus the key sets of policy instruments of concern to policy designers are those linked to policy implementation, in the first instance, and to policy formulation, in the second. In the first category we would find examples of many well known governing tools such as public enterprises and regulatory agencies which are expected to alter or affect the delivery of goods and services to the public and government (Salamon 2002), while in the second we would find instruments such as regulatory impact or

environmental impact appraisals which are designed to alter and affect some aspect of the nature of policy deliberations and the consideration and assessment of alternatives (Turnpenny et al 2009).

Figure 1. - The Full Range of Policy Instruments



What is an Agenda-Setting Tool?

What is Agenda-Setting

As Cobb and Elder put it in their early studies of the subject in the United States; ... pre-political, or at least pre-decisional processes often play the most critical role in determining what issues and alternatives are to be considered by the

polity and the probable choices that will be made. What happens in the decision-making councils of the formal institutions of government may do little more than recognize, document and legalize, if not legitimize, the momentary results of a continuing struggle of forces in the larger social matrix... From this perspective, the critical question becomes, how does an issue or a demand become or fail to become the focus of concern and interest within a polity?(Cobb and Elder 1972).

The question of how a problem comes to be interpreted as a *public* problem requiring government action raises deeper questions about the nature of human knowledge and the social construction of that knowledge and the policy sciences took many years to evolve a position or theory on the nature of social problems.³

It has long been generally agreed, however, that a variety of political (Castles and McKinlay 1979; Castles 1982; Hibbs, 1977; King, 1981; von Beyme 1984) epistemological (Hilgartner and Bosk 1981; Holzner and Marx 1979; Rochefort and Cobb 1993), and ideological (Edelman 1988; Stark 1992; Fischer and Forester 1993; Stone 1988 and 1989) factors in addition to the unfolding of basic socio-economic processes can affect which social problems gain access to the formal policy agenda of government. This conceptual agreement on the basic outline of significant policy determinants, far from representing the culmination of analysis in this area of public policy-making, merely sets out the general types of variables which analysts should take into account when investigating the subject. In this same vein, a wide-variety of analysts from a disparate range of fields have endorsed a model of agenda-setting first put forward by John Kingdon in his 1984 work on the operation of the U.S. federal legislative system.

His model deals with the question of state and non-state influences on agenda-setting by focusing on the role played by policy entrepreneurs both inside and outside of government in taking advantage of agenda-setting opportunities - *policy windows* - to move items onto formal government agendas. It suggests that the characteristics of issues - the *problem stream* - combine with the characteristics of political institutions and circumstances - the *politics stream* - and the development of policy solutions - *the policy stream* - in a fashion which can lead to the opening and closing of windows of opportunity for agenda entrance. Such opportunities can be seized upon or not, as the case may be, by policy entrepreneurs who are able to recognize and act upon them.

Kingdon's model of agenda-setting represents the orthodoxy in policy studies. Among other subjects, it has been used to describe and assess the nature of U.S. foreign policy-making (Woods and Peake 1998); the politics of privatization in Britain, France and Germany (Zahariadis 1995; Zahariadis and Allen 1995); the nature of U.S. domestic anti-drug policy (Sharp 1994); the collaborative behaviour of business and environmental groups in certain anti-pollution initiatives in the U.S. and Europe (Lober 1997); and the overall nature of the reform process in Eastern Europe (Keeler 1993). It leaves open, however, the key questions of which policy actors are involved in agenda-setting and the manner in which the highlighted variables combine to affect the actions of these actors.

Beginning from the observation that the process of agenda-setting involves discussion, debate, and persuasion among policy makers, who present a variety of evidence and argument in support of their position (Majone 1989), scholars such as Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones developed models of agenda-setting which focused on the significance of policy subsystems (Baumgartner and Jones 1991, 1993, 1994). That is, the

two key actors in agenda-setting are governments and the "public" and the relationship set out between them was one in which the government responded to public concern. Both sets of actors are often assumed to be driven largely by self-interest: the government by its political wing and politicians' interest in re-election in a democratic polity and the public by rational calculations of what individuals felt could be accomplished as a result of their devotion of scarce political resources to particular problems. The key element in the process of agenda-setting, in this view, revolves around the ability of state and societal actors to control the interpretation of a problem and thus the manner in which it is conceived and discussed (Howlett and Ramesh 1995).

Many other models similarly focused on the nature of the actors involved in the process and the general characterization of agenda-setting "styles" in terms of typical relationships of power and influence existing between significant actors (Cobb, Ross and Ross 1976; Rochefort and Cobb 1994). These studies tended to support the view that agenda-setting in democratic states is largely a matter of governments responding to social pressures and focused their attention on how the activities of interest groups could facilitate this process. Other studies, however, pointed to a much larger role played by government agencies and a variety of "boundary-spanning" organizations, such as the media, in blocking, filtering or otherwise affecting the development of public concerns, undermining the notion that agenda-setting was a relatively simple, one-way, transmission process (Downs, 1972; Howlett 1997 and 1996; Hogwood 1992).

That is, there is as much evidence that the government agenda drives the public as there is for the reverse situation.

What is an Agenda-Setting Tool?

Implementation tools are the policy instruments most often studied. They affect either the content or processes of policy implementation, that is, which alter the way goods and services are delivered to the public or the manner in which such implementation processes take place (Howlett 2000). Many of the distinctions and categorizations developed to examine implementation tools remain useful in examining other types of tools as well.

One common category of implementation instrument thus, for example, proposes to alter the actual *substance* of the kinds of day-to-day production, distribution and consumption activities carried out in society, while the other focuses upon altering political or policy behaviour in the *process* of the articulation of implementation goals and means. '*Substantive*' implementation instruments are those used to directly affect the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in society while '*procedural*' implementation instruments accomplish the second purpose (Ostrom 1986; Howlett 2000 and 2005).⁴

That is, at their most basic level, all government tools fall into two types depending on their general goal orientation: one type proposes to alter the actual *substance* of the kinds of activities carried out by citizens going about their day-to-day tasks, while the other focuses more upon altering political or policy behaviour in the *process* of the articulation of policy goals and means. '*Procedural*' policy tools are used to accomplish the latter purposes, while '*substantive*' policy instruments are those used to more directly affect the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services in society (Howlett, 2000). Substantive instruments are thus expected to alter some aspect of the production, distribution and delivery of goods and services in society: broadly

conceived to include both mundane goods and services (like school lunches) as well as a range of vices and virtues from crude vices (such as gambling or illicit drug use) to more common individual virtues (such as charitable giving or volunteer work with the physically challenged); to the attainment of sublime collective goals (like peace and security, sustainability and well-being) and are found at the implementation stage of the policy cycle, although, of course, discussed and decided upon elsewhere.

Procedural tools, on the other hand, affect production, consumption and distribution processes only indirectly, instead affecting the behaviour of actors involved in policy-making. These actors are arrayed in policy networks which are comprised of very simple arrangements of nodes (actors) and links (relationships), but which can result in very complex structures and interaction patterns. Policy networks include sets of formal institutional and informal relational linkages between governmental and other policy actors which are typically structured around shared beliefs and interests in public policy making and implementation. In order to pursue their preferred policy initiatives, governments must interact with other state and non-state actors who might possess diverging interests (Leik, 1992). They use procedural tools to alter the behaviour of policy network members involved in policy-making processes. They are only tangentially related to productive or consumptive behaviour, if at all and figure more clearly at stages such as agenda-setting.

Types of Government Agenda-Setting Tools

This paper presents the different types of policy tools governments can use at the agenda setting stage of the policy cycle. By examining the toolset available to the

government at this stage, we can better study and understand how governments control or attempt to control issue prominence while trying to manage or direct their own policy timetables and agendas.

Christopher Hood presented a toolset that governments use to govern which he called the NATO scheme and argued that governments tend to possess four basic resources by virtue of being government: 'nodality', 'authority', 'treasure' and 'organization'. (Hood, 1986) Nodality denotes the use of government information resources to influence and direct policy actions through the provision or withholding of 'information' or 'knowledge' from societal actors. Authority denotes the possession of legal or official power, i.e. the power officially to demand, forbid, guarantee, adjudicate. Treasure denotes the possession of a stock of moneys or 'fungible chattels'. Organization denotes the possession of a stock of people with whatever skills they may have (soldiers, workers, bureaucrats), land, buildings, materials, computers and equipment, some how arranged. (Hood and Margetts, 2007)

We can use Hood's NATO taxonomy to identify examples of the different agenda setting tools available to governments. Figure 2 below lists several specific types of agenda setting tools available.

Figure 2 – Examples of Agenda-Setting Tools by Resource Used

Nodality	Authority	Treasure	Organization
Government	Sunset Clauses	Charitable Deductions	Scenario planning
Communications	Periodic Review		Strategic foresight
Issue Management			

Specific Types of Procedural Agenda-Setting Tools

Nodality Tools; Government Communications and Issue Management

Government communications are the 'sermons' in the 'carrots, sticks, organizations and sermons' formulation of basic policy instrument types. Evert Vedung defines these 'sermons' as:

“Efforts to use the knowledge and data available to governments to influence consumer and producer behaviour in a direction consistent with government aims and wishes” and/or “gather information in order to further their aims and ambitions” (Vedung and van der Doelen, 1998).

This definition, while useful, is limited in that it conceals or elides several dimensions of information tool use and the general purposes to which they can be put.

Two dimensions of government communications activities, in particular, are often incorrectly juxtaposed in the literature on the subject. First, whether the communication activities are intended to serve as devices primarily oriented towards the manipulation of policy actors (Saward, 1992; Edelman, 1988) or social and economic ones (Hornik, 1989; Jahn et al., 2005) and, second, which stages of the production process or policy cycle different communication tools focus upon (Howlett, 2009). Both missing dimensions require further elaboration in order to develop a workable definition and classification of communication tools for comparative purposes.

With respect to the first “substantive” dimension, much existing literature focuses very much on the manipulation of the behaviour of economic actors – namely consumers and producers – to the neglect of the effects such tools can and do have upon other kinds of policy and policy network actors and activities. With respect to the second

“procedural” concern, many studies focus exclusively on the role of government communications as part of the agenda-setting process in government (Mikenberg, 2001; Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2007) or on its role in policy implementation (Salmon, 1989a, 1989b), or upon their effect on consumption activities and actors versus those involving productive or distributive activities. These are quite different roles and functions within the policy and production processes, however, and should be carefully distinguished from each other in order to understand the links and linkages that exist between government communication strategies and activities and policy outcomes such as accountability and policy efficacy and in order to assess any trends or directions in the use of these instruments, either cross-sectorally or cross-nationally, or over time, or both.

Organization-Based Tools: Scenario Planning and Strategic Foresight

Scenario planning is a policy tool used to plan for uncertain times in the future. It is a process of positing several informed, plausible and imagined alternative future environments in which decisions about the future may be played out, for the purpose of changing current thinking, improving decision making, enhancing human and organization learning and improving performance (Chermack, 2005). Within Hood's (1986) NATO taxonomy, scenario planning can be seen as an 'Organization' resource used by the government to set the agenda for planning for the future. The government can use its resources such as people, information and materials to study various scenarios for the future and how it can better manage and prepare for them.

Scenario planning has become an important agenda-setting tool in recent years. Given the uncertainties of public policy-making, it has the potential to prepare and better manage complex decisions, and spot early warning signals about future problems. It can

also be used to identify and manage conflicts and to try find common ground for future action when there are diverging societal interests and values. As an agenda setting tool, it is important as it can first be used as a policy risk-free space to visualize, rehearse and test the acceptability of different strategies without being implicated by the actual constraints of day-to-day policy-making (Volkery and Ribeiro, 2009).

Even though people have been interested in the future and have used scenarios indirectly to explore it, scenario planning as strategic planning tool is firmly rooted in the military and has been employed by military strategist throughout history. Modern day scenario techniques however, only emerged in the post-war period in the 1960s with the emergence of two geographical centers in USA and France (Bradfield et al., 2005). Scenario planning is still not used extensively by governments and is usually executed in a rather ad-hoc and isolated manner. Volkery and Ribeiro (2009), in their review of evaluative scenario literature in public policy-making find that it is mostly geared towards indirect decision support in the early phases of policy-making such as agenda-setting and issue-framing but not in later phases such as policy design and implementation. They conclude that political and institutional context factors need to be treated with greater care in the future as making decisions under conditions of deep uncertainty does not only require rigorous analysis, but also political will and more stable institutional settings and organizational capacities to build up trust and experience with adaptive, flexible process formats.

Future forecasting and strategic foresight are agenda setting tools used to help decision-makers develop future-oriented policies in uncertain times. Habegger(2010) differentiates between the two stating that future forecasting tries to capture and

anticipate potential future developments and to generate visions of how society evolves and what policy options are available to shape a desired future, while strategic foresight can be seen as a deliberate attempt to broaden the boundaries of perception and to expand the awareness of emerging issues and situations. It aims to support strategic thinking and decision-making by developing a range of possible ways of how the future could unfold. Like scenario planning, both future forecasting and strategic foresight also fall under the 'Organization' resource in Hood's NATO taxonomy, as the government uses its available organized resources to plan for uncertain times in the future.

Various authors (Leigh, 2003; Calof and Smith, 2010; Habegger2010) have identified many different factors that lead to government-led foresight success. Leigh identified five ways in which strategic foresight teams can contribute to more innovative government: anticipating emerging issues, identifying unanticipated consequences, getting a sense of the 'big picture', drawing a wide range of information sources and involving the public. Based on experiences from the United Kingdom, Singapore and the Netherlands, Habegger includes having a scientific edge in terms of specific foresight methods and processes, allowing for innovation, fostering iterative interactions between stakeholders and obtaining the trust and support of top bureaucrats to support the idea of exploring futures that may be quite different from the present conditions as elements for successful foresight exercises.

At the agenda setting phase, future forecasting and strategic foresight can also be used to inform policy by enhancing the knowledge base for thinking about and designing policies and can even help in identifying current policy gaps. In many cases, it can be

used by policymakers as a signaling device to show the public that scientific rationale and planning are used in making policies.

Authority-Based Tools: Sunset Clauses and Periodic Review

A sunset clause is a legal provision that provides for the expiry of a law or part of a law at a later date. A sunset clause does not aim at continuity, rather it 'sets the sun' on a provision or entire statute on a specific date, unless there are substantial reasons to believe that the former should be extended for a determined period (Ranchordas, 2014). Unlike most laws, the continued validity of legislation subject to a sunset clause is contingent upon some future action by the legislature (Ip, 2013).

A sunset clause can be used as an agenda setting tool as it can set an expiration date to a legal provision at the outset. Within Hood's NATO taxonomy, sunset clauses and periodic reviews can be seen as an 'Authority' resource used by the government to set the agenda, as they can use their power to introduce a policy when needed and mandate the termination date ahead of time based on a periodic review on its usefulness. Overcoming legislative inertia can be seen as one of the major rationales for sunset clauses as it changes the default position from permanent to temporary. A sunset clause provides enough leeway to extend the provision at a later date if necessary after a periodic review has taken place. But more importantly, it sets a policy termination date at the outset which can otherwise be a difficult thing to do as there can be resistance to termination (Bardach, 1978; DeLeon, 1978, 1983; Kirkpatrick et al., 1999; Geva-May, 2004) by different groups along with legislative inertia.

According to Jantz and Veit (2010), a sunset clause has two main characteristics. It creates a "threat of termination" for laws by shifting the burden of proof from those

who would terminate a policy program to those who would renew it and it requires a periodic review and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of government functions and program. The termination or renewal should only occur after an ex post evaluation has taken place, which verifies whether the objective for which it was enacted has been achieved, or whether the provision should be renewed for a determined period. Although sunset clauses can lead to the termination of a law or a policy program, it can also serve to provide a broader legislative perspective as it requires periodic review and evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of government functions and programs through the legislative branch. Ideally, it can foster evaluation activities and policy learning.

Jantz and Veit(2010) in their empirical study of the application of sunseting in four countries, the United States, Australia, Switzerland and Germany conclude that implementation of sunseting is a difficult task. They write that on the one hand, international experiences show that general sunset regimes often fail because of limited time and resources for sunset reviews, a lack of acceptance, and unrealistic expectations with regard to the effects of sunseting. On the other hand, sunset clauses are an established feature of the regulatory toolbox- they are used to bring about political compromise, to strengthen parliamentary control of regulatory activities in government agencies, or to foster better regulation and evidence-based policymaking. So sunset clauses and periodic reviews can be used as a tool at the agenda setting phase to bring about specific policies and programs for a limited time and gives the discretion to renew or terminate it as necessary.

Treasure-Based Tools: Interest Group and NGO Funding

Governments can use policy tools that give an economic benefit to a favored group, not just by appropriating money but also by exempting an event or a transaction from taxation. This way, such tools can allocate benefits and have several advantages as it will not further burden the government's budget and can also reduce the apparent burden of taxation on individuals. But economists have been quick to point out that the economic effect of such deductions can be equivalent to an appropriation of public funds, both from the point of view of the government, which is deprived of that portion of receipts from taxation, and from the point of view of the taxpayer, who is allowed to retain funds that would otherwise be taxed (Yarmolinsky, 2000).

Charitable deductions permit certain taxpayers to deduct their contributions to charitable, educational, and scientific organizations in calculating their taxable income. From the perspective of the government, allowing for charitable deductions can be seen as a carrot, to incentivize people to give to certain kinds of charities that may have positive externalities. As noted by Brody and Cordes (2006), the most visible way in which the federal government acts as a benefactor of nonprofit sector is by allowing individuals and corporations an income tax deduction for the value of their charitable contributions. These deductions can be viewed as providing an important economic incentive for private donors to provide financial support to a wide range of philanthropic enterprises. It can also have a direct effect of freeing the government from having to perform the same service, which can thereby be seen as the government subsidizing itself. The public service performed by the contribution may be something that

government could not have done given the lack of either the means or the will to do it and could remain untended if a charitable initiative did not intervene.

Within Hood's NATO taxonomy, charitable deductions can be seen as a 'Treasure' resource used by the government to set the agenda by using its authority while deciding what kinds of activities should be indirectly supported by giving tax-exempt status and how citizens can be incentivized to support certain kinds of programs that have positive externalities. They forego taxes to their treasury in exchange for some activity they think is good and would like to promote.

Conclusion: Agenda-Setting Tools and Policy Instrument Studies

As Linder and Peters, Davis Bobrow, Peter May, Patricia Ingraham, Christopher Hood, Renate Mayntz and the other pioneers of policy design research in the 1980s and 1990s argued, like other kinds of design activities in manufacturing and construction, policy design involves three fundamental aspects: (1) knowledge of the basic building blocks or materials with which actors must work in constructing a (policy) object and (2) the elaboration of a set of principles regarding how these materials should be combined in that construction and (3) understanding the process by which a design becomes translated into reality. In a policy context this means understanding the kinds of implementation tools governments have at their disposal in attempting to alter some aspect of society and societal behaviour; elaborating a set of principles concerning which instruments should be used in which circumstances; and understanding the nuances of policy formulation and implementation processes in government.

Establishing the nature of the policy design 'space' is therefore a crucial activity for policy designers. Designers must avoid simply advocating 'stock' solutions unless

this is called for by the limited nature of the space available for new designs (May 1981). Rather they should ‘consider the range of feasible’ options possible in a given circumstance and package these into sets of ‘competing strategies’ to achieve policy goals (May 1981 pp. 236 and 238). As David Weimer (1992) has argued “Instruments, alone or in combination, must be crafted to fit particular substantive, organizational and political contexts” (p. 373).

This is as true of agenda-setting tools as any other. While this paper has gone some way towards describing and classifying agenda-setting tools and instruments a much larger research agenda remains to describe patterns of, and reasons for, their use.

Endnotes

¹ Other terms have been developed in the field of policy studies to describe the same phenomena, such as "governing instruments", "policy tools", and the "tools of government", and while these sometimes are used to refer to different mechanisms and calibrations of policy means, they are more often used synonymously.

² Policy tools are thus in a sense “multi-purpose”, since, for example, regulation can appear in the implementation activities of several governance modes, while some tools, like impact assessments, can also appear within several stages of the cycle. However a regulation appearing within the implementation phase of a network mode of governance which mandates information disclosure, for example, serves a different purpose than a regulation found in a market mode which limits a firm to ownership of only a specific percentage of an industry. Similarly, consultations which take place in the agenda-setting stage of the policy process have a different purpose and effect than those which take place after a decision has been made. While the general terminology may be similar, pains must be taken to distinguish these tools and activities in order to avoid confusion and errant efforts at instrument selection in policy designs.

³ Most early works on the subject began from the assumption that socio-economic conditions led to the emergence of particular sets of problems to which governments eventually responded. Sharkansky 1971; Aaron, 1967; Pryor, 1968; Wilensky, 1975). This "response theory" soon proved unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons, not the least of which related to its tendency to overstate the influence of either governments or their publics in driving the agenda-setting process, to the neglect of a subtler understanding of how these actors related to each other in the policy-making process and the manner in which interpretations of policy problems are socially constructed. See Berger and Luckmann, 1966 and Spector and Kitsuse, 1987.

⁴ This distinction is apparent in common definitions of governing instruments although its significance is sometimes overlooked. Vedung, for example, has usefully defined policy instruments used in implementation activities as “the set of techniques by which governmental authorities wield their power in attempting to ensure support and effect social change” (Vedung 1997). This definition can be seen to include both “substantive” tools, those Hood (1984) defined

as attempting to “effect or detect” change in the socio-economic system, as well as those “procedural” tools designed to ‘ensure support’ for government actions.

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