REVIEW ARTICLE
https://doi.org/10.20901/pp.13.1.03

Submitted: 14.9.2022.
Revised: 9.1.2023.
Accepted: 10.3.2023.

Political sociology meets public policy: exploring policy formulation as a locus for assessing power of policy actors[1]

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Abstract

The uplift of a governance paradigm opened the door for different non-formal actors to join the policy-making process. This proliferation of actors posed some new questions about the relationship between them. One of the aspects of this relationship is the power of actors. The paper seeks to contribute to public policy literature in a way to explore if a policy formulation stage of a decision-making process can be used as an arena for assessing the power of the aforementioned actors. The argument this paper suggests is that policy formulation as a stage where the confrontation of actors is most visible and prominent is in fact an appropriate place for studying actors' dynamics and should be taken into consideration when discussing the power of policy actors.

Keywords: governance, policy formulation, policy actors, power

Introduction

For centuries, government, the embodiment of the state, had a pivotal and fundamental role in the process of making decisions. Political theorists have praised the role of government in assuring stability and security of the social system, while other actors often held a relatively marginal role. However, this paradigm completely changed in the late 20th century.

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1 Parts of this paper were derived from the author's doctoral dissertation "Governance in youth policy in Croatia – the Aspect of Power", defended at the University of Ljubljana.

The principle of horizontality had taken a more prominent role and had started to become a desirable objective in public policy and public administration sectors. A number of various actors that obtained the opportunity to actively participate in the process of policy-making has culminated in the production of new structural patterns that resulted in novel institutions with unique approaches, relationships and stakeholders. The role and function of these new institutions were now to be studied, analyzed and explained by the policy scientist.

Governance is a term simultaneously used by and for different organizations. It is one of those omnipresent concepts that has acquired its popularity both in the academic sphere as well as in the "real life" policy practice. Even though there is no unanimous agreement, it is safe to say that the core of the governance conceptualization is the change in behavior of the actors. Governance holds the idea of enabling diverse actors to participate in the processes in which they have interest. Hence, it is, from my point of view, the quintessence of a democratic political ideal.

In the following paper the goal is to explore structural elements of policy formulation stage of the policy cycle model in the context of uplift of a governance paradigm and discover if it can be used for assessing power of policy actors. It is justified to be curious to know how we can conceptualize the relationship between two types of players- state actors and non-state actors – and how we could further highlight the importance of this relationship as an essential intersection in public policy. Despite the fact that academic literature in this field tackles certain actors' strategies in policy-making (Beyers 2008) and uses power as a variable (Shore and Wright 2003), what it does not examine is the nature of power play in policymaking when it comes to governance. Often, these studies on power did not follow changes that had occurred in the public policy discipline (a tendency towards more horizontal policy-making, interpretivism, and pluralism of actors). In order to contribute to public policy literature, this paper seeks to densely describe changes that have happened in the last half of century in regard to policy-making process and offer a new point of view on policy formulation stage. This objective is relevant because only after the systemic literature review one can propose a sound argument hence this paper aims to offer exactly that – a literature review as a foundation for further exploration of policy formulation and power interaction. This objective is not only puzzling for public policy but it also contributes to political sociology literature as it showcases the relationship between notions relevant for both of the mentioned subdisciplines of political science. Hence, I argue that policy formulation in the collaborative governance setting is the most suitable stage of the policy cycle to evaluate actors' interests and how they influence policy outcomes.

The paper consists of two building blocks – *what* and *where*. As the goal of the paper is to explore the potential of policy formulation as an arena for assessing the power of actors, firstly we need to see how the policy-making process is happening in the new context. This is the mission of the *What* pillar. The *Where* part focuses on policy formulation as a location for assessing power. Here not only structural conceptualization is offered but also an argument of why this is a viable strategy.

The uplift of governance

Every now and then, a new "buzzword" appears in academic circles. Most of the time, these words are attached to some societal issues that are prevalent at the time, such as recession, political capital, information society, capacity building or stakeholders. In the last twenty to twenty-five years, governance has gained enormous popularity as a dominant buzzword thrown around enthusiastically to validate ideas and hypotheses on the workings and interconnectedness of systems that explain the changing state of world affairs. This vague, omnipresent term has been a part of mandatory vocabulary in published papers of political science and public policy academia since the early 1990s and still pervades as a quite fashionable concept (Hewitt Alcantara 1998; Peters 2001; Treib, Bähr and Falkner 2005). Additionally, Rhodes (2000) claims that governance is now everywhere and appears to mean anything and everything.

Governance, or the nexus of "regimes, laws, rules, judicial decisions, and administrative practices that constrain, prescribe, and enable the provision of publicly supported goals and services" (Lynn, Heinrich and Hill 2001, 7), has started to capture the interest of policy and political scientists during the second half of the 20th century. Frederickson (2004) claims that one can be grateful to Harlan Cleveland for the first usage of the word 'governance' in 1970, alluding that Mr. Cleveland said that what people want is less government and more governance. With this exclamation, Cleveland ignited the focus shift of policy and political science scholars from the process of transforming vertical, state-centric system of public administration into a more horizontal, inclusive and open horizontal decision-making scheme. Based on the relevant literature (Peters and Pierre 1998; Pierre and Peters 2005), it can be argued that there are two pillars of the same argument that elucidate the emergence of governance as a practice in the public sector. The first one is the domestic and relates to citizens' demands, while the second places the focus on the private sector and relates to issues in the international context. Stephan P. Osborne (2010) divided literature on governance into five different areas, (1) socio-political governance; (2) public policy governance; (3) administrative governance; (4) contract governance and (5) network governance.

As stated earlier, governance is a concept widely used by government officials, civil society practitioners and political scientists and is most generally defined as the "development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within public [voluntary] and private sector become blurred" (Stoker 1998, 1). The pivotal value of democracy is equality; analogue governance rests on equally involved actors in a political process.

Public demands require making partnerships in service provision between public administration and other non-state actors. Governance thus assumes government is just one of the actors that is important for effective and efficient output of production. Kooiman (1993) writes that there is no single actor who has the knowledge resource capacity to tackle problems unilaterally, while Peters and Pierre similarly conclude that the state actually loses the capacity for direct control and replaces that faculty with a capacity to influence (2005, 226). Governments ultimately realize that due to demands made upon them which they cannot meet, they require reliable partners in order to maintain (or regain) their efficiency in results delivery. This argumentation is in line with the central argument of the proponents of mostly neoliberal ideology, which proposes that governance is a necessary shift from the bureaucratic state to the hollow state (Salamon 2002, Rhodes 1997; Milward and Proran 2000). Quoting Rhodes (1997), "governance is mutual resource dependency". Governments understand that due to all the demands made upon them which they cannot meet, they require reliable partners in order to maintain (or regain) their efficiency in service delivery. Furthermore, the concept of governance implies that there is greater number of actors involved in the process of policymaking. While Jessop (2004) views the policy arena as an "unstructured complexity", Kenneth (2008) warns that the policy arena has become visibly more crowded (4). This change does not only consider the question of the number of actors involved, but also their specialization. In this complex take on policy-making, public and private stakeholders work together in collective forums with public agencies and engage in consensus-oriented decision-making. In policy science, this is known under the name collaborative governance (Ansell and Gash 2007).

The emergence of governance concept had tremendous impact on the development of political science thus Peters (2008) claims the early understanding of governance is closely related to functionalist approach. Peters furthermore argues that with the development of governance the focus of political scientists, and particularly policy scholars focused on functional need to understand steering within the democratic decision-making process. This notion evolved into one of the most important distinctions relevant for political science – difference between government and governance (Rhodes 1997). The question of differentiation between these

concepts stayed a central analytic question for scholars concerned with governance (Peters 2008, 4).

Keeping this in mind, within the last 25 years, several schools of thought were developed, whose mission was to, contribute to the better understanding of societal reality by expanding the mainstream methodological and conceptual focus. Thus, within policy literature, a plethora of terms such as interpretative policy analysis, deliberative policy analysis, participatory policy analysis, discursive policy analysis and argumentative policy analysis had found their place. Although these concepts are far from being interchangeable, one can place them under the same umbrella, since actors play a central role in all. Whereas in the classical policy analysis the principle idea was to explain and analyze the process of decision-making, the nature of outputs and evaluation of policies, the current approaches, such as participatory policy making o deliberative policy making, acknowledge non-state actors as relevant stakeholders and focus on structural characteristics of their behaviour, interaction and influence on the policy-making process.

This rather big shift from the classical rationalistic understanding of policy analysis pushed through two very important aspect relevant for the societal and political sphere in a contemporary life. Firstly, proponents of interpretative policy analysis introduced the idea policy-making should be embedded in diversity of its publics. Such stronger orientation on link between policy-making and diverse social groups that got the legitimacy to participate in policy-making is, argue, one of defining principles of contemporary democratic regimes. Therefore, this legitimizes interpretative policy analysis to be relevant and useful approach in modern public policy analysis. Secondly, interpretative policy analysis focuses on so-called collective entities (Petković 2008). Collective entities such as traditions, narrations, discourses and worlds of lives are essential segments of interpretive policy analysis. On the one hand they depend on a certain social setting, they are constructed based on actors' perception and intersubjectivity, however they exist independently from the individual in their raw conjures. From my point of view, this finding is particularly important because it reminds researchers to be sensitive for difference, but also to comprehend those certain human universalities. The relevance of this duality lays in the political sphere of contemporary life where sovereignty and call for national particularities is important and present in the public sphere, while at the same time there is an imperative of unity and cooperation. In such a delicate time, interpretative analysis which compromises between these two ontological stances might be useful in offering acceptable policy solutions.

Even though new approaches in policy analysis focus on power, they still remain limited in the interpretation of its perpetuation within the governance structure. In other words, prominent policy scientists engaged in the new wave of policy analysis such as Fischer, Hajer, Wagenaar or Yanow, or even Foucault and Dryzek, brilliantly explain the structure of policy analysis, the societal context and the methodology of the processes, but do not offer a plausible conceptualization of the distribution of power within the new paradigm of policy-making. Hence, what lacks is the actual explanation of concrete, implemented policymaking, particularly as it relates to the theory of how actors behave in such unpredictable circumstances.

Policy actors and their power

With the proliferation of the governance paradigm, various actors interested in the policy process or its outcomes started to be greatly drawn to being a part of this process. This had, as seen in the previous section, resulted in fostering the creation of new rules within the policy. The role, position, function, task and possibilities of all actors had changed accordingly and policy actors have started to be studied in the context of cooperation, negotiation, deliberation, debate, argumentation, and coordination. However, all those approaches that relay only on horizontality and consensus have turned out to be inefficient.

Definitions of policy actors generally do not differ much in encompassing the essence of this phenomenon. Enserink et al. (2010) in their book on policy-making in multi-actors environment describe an actor as "a social entity, a person or an organization, able to act on or exert influence on a decision." (79) Hence, they add that their assumption is that no individual single actor is able to act solely and unilaterally in imposing their interest to others but that cooperation is needed in order to solve a policy problem. M. Cahn begins his relatively basic analysis of policy actors in the US context (1995, 199) by stating, "policy actors are those individuals and groups, both formal and informal, which seek to influence the creation and implementation of these public solutions". This rather straightforward definition of policy actors, despite the complexity of this area within policy science, manages to pinpoint the quintessence of their role and intentions. Kustec Lipicer (2006, 29) argues that policy actors or policy players are a crucial part of policy analysis and, delving deeper than Cahn, claims that different actors participate in different policy stages.

One of the most important characteristics of policy actors is their attachment to the state (Petek 2012, 92; Kustec-Lipicer 2006. 28–29). Within policy science, there is a clear distinction between state actors (also known as formal) and non-state actors (in literature, terms non-state and

non-formal are used interchangeably). While the formal actors' jurisdiction is territorially limited, their behaviour is based on the notion of sovereignty, in that they possess autonomy in their actions and have the power of cohesion/repression. On the other hand, the non-formal actors emerge from the private sphere, with no territorial or state jurisdiction, and are predominately active as civil society, non-profit organizations and think-tanks). Both of those actors share the common principle of interest as a criterion for participation in policy development. They use their resources (for more on resources and actors' power, please see the next chapter) to drive and deliver policy outcomes. However, due to vastly different functionalities and methods of participation (as well as the goals they are pursuing), both actors have distinct roles to play depending on the stage of the policy process. Ana Petek (2012), in her dissertation, summarized Birkland and Howlett and Ramesh's categories of actors in order to demonstrate the loci of three categories of actors – society, between society and state and state (table 1). As the chart below illustrates, most of the policy players reviewed were allocated in either formal or non-formal categories, which confirms their relevance in the public policy discourse. Even though here we find both categories s consisting of three sub-categories ("in", "outside", and "between" state and society) to show the complexity of policy stakeholders, many other policy texts offer only two categories – state and non-state actors – due to issues of pragmatism and quality analysis (Grdesic 1995).

Table 1. Comparison of categories of actors

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Birkland</th><th colspan="2">Howlett and Ramesh</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Formal actors</td><td>Legislative</td><td rowspan="2">Elected officials

Legislative
Executive</td><td rowspan="2">Actors located in the state</td></tr>
<tr><td>Executive
President/ government
Public administration
Agencies</td></tr>
<tr><td>Courts</td><td>-------</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Non-formal actors</td><td>Individuals</td><td>Voters</td><td rowspan="2">Actors between the state and society</td></tr>
<tr><td>Political parties</td><td>Political parties</td></tr>
<tr><td>Interest groups</td><td>Interest groups</td><td rowspan="3">Actors located in society</td></tr>
<tr><td>Research organizations</td><td>Research organizations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Media</td><td>Mass media</td></tr>
</table>

Source: Petek (2012, 125)

It is often claimed that state (or formal) actors have exclusive right to formal decisions (Hill 2010; Sabatier 1999; Kustec-Lipicer 2006; Petak 2008). Even though this argument is in its essence correct, it is relatively reductionist from the point of view of contemporary governance understanding of the decision-making process. As seen from the previous chapter, even though the state (actors) have the mandate to make decisions, they cannot do that solely on their own, due to limited resources they possess. Within the governance framework, state actors are bound to cooperate with non-state actors in order to produce policies beneficial for the whole society, which by *de facto,* limits their decision-making monopoly. Nevertheless, Kustec-Lipicer (ibid) is right when she argues that state actors' decisions have effects on the whole population of a certain country and due to that, their behaviour has to be guided by specific procedures of transparency and predictability. The main goal of state actors, as the argument goes, is to assure welfare of its constituents; however, the downside of the state apparatus is bureaucracy and its perpetuation of rigidity, inefficiency and sluggishness. Another feature of formal or state actors is their duty, or legal obligation, to create public policies, which, according to both Birkland (2001) and Howlett and Ramesh (2005) influence the activity of the legislative, the executive and the judiciary branches. Over time, the role of the state in the process of making decisions has been changing. As described in earlier, with the emergence of governance and realization that some societal and/or political problems are rather too complex, the state had to focus on the collaborative modi. Different actors got the access to the policy/making due to their particular characteristics which are needed in a specific case. Colebatch (1991) understands policy as a nexus which consists out of three pillars – authority, order and expertise. Authority means the right to produce legitimate policy outputs, order refers to institutions that are devoted to an issue policy wants to tackle and expertise is a knowledge on a specific issue. In other words, Colebatch the conception of powerful government as the only important actor and introduces other stakeholders as relevant in the decision-making process. As a result, the state and non-state actors create collaborative relationships where the former can achieve specific policy goals with assistance from the latter, even while pursuing their own interests (Rhodes 1988).

Non-formal (or non-institutional/ non-state) actors are the second category of relevant players within the policy process. Even though they do not have legal duty to participate in the decision-making process, they have every right to do so, according to some concepts, such as collaborative governance. As shown, in order to have more sustainable, effective,

and just policies, non-state actors are vital in the policy process engagement. Good governance requires a plethora of actors participating in the process in order to construct better policies. Petek (2002, 127–128) analyses four reasons why non-formal actors participate in decision-making process, which were originally postulated by Donahue and Zeckhauser (2006). He argues that sparse governmental resources, limited productivity of state actors, issues with information acquisition for formal actors and legitimacy in terms of need for support of non-state actors are the essential reasons why a government would open a policy arena for a wider circle of stakeholders. In addition to those reasons, Hill (2005) points out that non-state actors (he calls them non-system actors) are particularly influential and necessary when policy discourse becomes complex. By demonstrating this assertion with the example of education policy, Hill argues that non-system actors help in acquiring changes to outdated policy practice and translating sometimes abstract policy to an implementable adaptation. As seen in Table 1, there are various kinds of non-formal actors.

With the emergence of good governance and the policy network approach, civil society has gained more attention as a policy actor to an extent that some authors such as Matthew Cahn claim that policy is "a result of institutional processes influenced by non-institutional actors" (Cahn 2012: 203). In democratic societies, civil society organizations, together with experts, unions and political parties should be involved in the decision-making process through consultation and expert advice, and this is exactly the key to the governance and the policy network approach. However, with the transformation of the decision-making process, the *modi operandi* of the civil society organization (at least declaratory) has changed. Sørensen (2002) argues that new actors that got the opportunity to participate in policy-making were forced to leave their particular interests outside the polity and, at least nominally, started to claim to advocate for the public good. Thus, it can be concluded that both the government and civil actors needed to adapt to a new reality.

Civil society organizations, as explained by Kochler-Koch (2010) are not involve in the process of policy-making as representatives, but their potential is more their active participation. M. Novak (2017) in their text on civil society organization's accountability elaborate Kaldor's differentiation on accountability by claiming there are two types of accountability when it comes to CSOs – "Procedural accountability (internal, functional or management accountability), which refers to the responsibility for resources, and moral accountability (external, strategic, political accountability), which refers to the receivers and beneficiaries of services provided by CSOs" (Novak 2017, 131). According to this author, civil society organizations, in order to increase the trust in civil society, should be taken

accountable because they do not solely represent "their members but also beneficiaries, funders, supporters and donors" (ibid: 141). Different actors imply different and often competing interests thus in order to understand the relationship among actors and the sole dynamic of a policy-making process power as a variable should not be ignored.

Arts and Tatenhove (2004) claim "in general, political power has to be regarded, on the one hand, as the ability of actors to mobilize resources in order to achieve certain outcomes in social relations, and, on the other, as a dispositional and a structural phenomenon of social and political systems." Therefore, they offer their definition of power as "the organizational and discursive capacity of agencies, either in competition with one another or jointly, to achieve outcomes in social practices, a capacity which is however co-determined by the structural power of those social institutions in which these agencies are embedded." (2004, 347)

In the light of all this, Brugha and Varvasovszky (2000, 240) claim it can be said that political scientists have viewed decision-making process as determined by how power is structured based on:

- *Elitism* (power is concentrated in the hands of influential few; Lasswell, Bachrach and Baratz)
- *Pluralism* (power is distributed among various groups; Lindblom, Dahl)
- *Marxism* (power is distributed among classes and the state is the instrument of class power; Marx, Lukes, Gramsci)
- *Corporatism* (state has the power to overcome the conflict between labour and capitalism; Schmitter, Siaroff, Lipjard)
- *Professionalism* (power is concentrated in the hands of professional elites who may give preference to their own interests over those of the public they serve; Chambers; Lauder, Light, Marshall)
- *Technocracy* (governing using principles of scientific rationalism; Lowi, Olson, Lindbloom, Radaelli)

In the governance related understanding of polity, where there are lots of actors who pursuit various interests, power as a variable should not be ignored. The topic of power in policy studies is often associated with one specific approach of studying policy-making – stakeholder analysis. Stakeholder analysis is focused on questions about the position, interest influence, interrelations, networks and other characteristics of stakeholders, with reference to their past, present positions and future potentials explain Brugha and Varvasovszky (2000, 239). Even though this method has been used mostly to support project management within the corporate sector, its implications have proven to be rather important for contemporary understanding of a policy-making process. As previously pointed out, looking

only at policy networks in the study of policy actors has a limited potential to explain policy changes if it is not complemented by an analysis at the lower level in terms of actor properties (Rhodes and Marsh 1992, 196). Stakeholder analysis brings into the study of policy process perceptions, values and resources as vital components of contemporary policy-making process. Together with the network level, aforementioned components allow one to understand and analyze decision-making process in details. Stakeholder analysis thus helps us understand how interests of stakeholders are being channelled into objectives. Dahl (1957; 2003) in his attempt to operationalize power argues that power is relationship which includes base, means, amount and scope. He claims that the base of an actor's power consists of all resources – opportunities, acts, objects that one can exploit in order to affect the behaviour of another. Means are defined as instruments which allow behaviour of others to be altered. It is more active category than base and includes treats and treats as *modi operandi*. If power is seen as relationship between A and B, the Scope consists of B's response, while the Amount can be represented by a probability statement (the chances are 9/10 that if the A promises something to the B, the B will comply). Purdy (2012, 410) elaborates certain Dahl's points and among other aspects, argues that resources are important in operationalization of power. She claims resources include tangibles such as financial resources, people, technology, and supplies and intangibles such as knowledge, culture and capabilities. Purdy believes that in collaborative processes organizations and individuals use resources to influence other participants by rewarding them for support or compliance or by punishing them for dissension or noncompliance (2012, 411). As we have seen power and authority are closely linked, thus Purdy (2012) claims that the determination of who may participate in a certain stages of policy process can be considered power as well.

Probably the most influential theorist of power in the late 20th century is *Michel Foucault*. His understandings of power can be found in his two pieces *Discipline and Punish* (1977) and *The History of Sexuality* (1980). Sadan in her analysis of M. Foucault, Sadan (2004) claims, "Foucault was influenced by Weber and Marx, but unlike them did not feel committed to a comprehensive analysis of organizations or of economic aspects, he chose each time to analyze a different social institution." For the star it should be noted that Foucault thought that there is no need to develop a theory of power. He believed there is no objectivity of the researcher and need for standing outside the social order.

Foucault believes power is inseparable from interaction. However, he sees power as "not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes

to a complex strategical situation in a particular society." Foucault (1980, 93). For him, power is not wielded by individuals nor classes nor institution, it is dispersed, subject-less as "elements of broad strategies but without individual authors. Further on, power is present in every moment of social relations, it is not necessarily repressive, negative, but also positive. Power, in Foucault's view is inseparable from knowledge, hence his term power/knowledge is taken from Nietzsche's ideas about the connection between knowledge and power. Foucault writes on discourse as well and argues it is a channel through which knowledge and subjects are constituted, hence "power relations are dependent on culture, place and time, and hence Foucault deals with power discourse in contemporary Western society" (Sadan 2004, 57). Power, for Foucault, is not intentional, meaning individuals' intentions have little bearing on this conceptualization of power. Gaventa (2003) argues: "in this interpretation of power, the diffuse nature of power effectively transcends the bi- polar power/powerlessness division." Foucault claims that the split between structure and agency is effaced, in other words, both structures and agents are constituted by and through power.

Keeping this in mind, the motivation for this paper is to explore the suitability of a policy formulation as a stage of a policy-making process for assessing power. To be more precise, a research question I am curious to answer is – *can we use policy formulation as a stage in a policy-making process to assess power of different stakeholders*? In order to build a solid argumentation line, in the next section I contextualize policy formulation within the policy cycle model and then conceptualize policy formulation as a justifiable arena for assessing the power of actors.

Policy cycle model

There are very few models and approaches that have had such a great impact on the development of a discipline as had the policy cycle or policy stage model. This simplified version of a real-life scenario public policy process that was initially proposed by H. Lasswell, has had several upgrades and variants over time in order to boost its validity and proximity. The versions developed by Brewer and deLeon (1983), May and Wildavsky (1978), and Jenkins (1978) are among the most widely adopted ones. Today, the concrete differentiation between agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation (eventually leading to termination) has become a conventional way to describe the chronology of a policy process (Werner and Wegrich 2007: 43). Nevertheless, in almost all of those stages of the policy model, three main phases can be detected, namely, pre-decision, implementation and evaluation of a policy. The policy stage model, no matter how many levels it has and no matter how

it was understood over time within the policy process, it was and still is, the focal point in almost every policy analysis. As Werner and Wegrich explain, "according to such a rational model, any decision-making should be based on a comprehensive analysis of problems and goals, followed by an inclusive collection and analysis of information and a search for the best alternative to achieve these goals" (44).

However, the critics have been vocal and have directed some severe critiques to the policy stage model. P. Sabatier and H. Jankins-Smith argue that it is not a causal model at all, and it does not allow setting hypotheses that can be empirically checkable; likewise, it is imprecise and is based on implicit, top-down perspective rather than a bottom-up approach and is determined largely by legal perspective, without taking societal context into consideration (deLeon 1998). Additionally, "Everett (2003) argues that the model represents a revision to the classic rational paradigm of policy making, which emphasizes formal procedures and ignores the complex, value-laden nature of the policy process, as well as the primary role of political power in determining the direction of public policy. Because of this, the policy cycle model is allegedly impractical and inappropriate for most cases of decision making" (Howard 2005, 3). Additionally, the policy cycle framework, according to Werner and Wegrich (2007, 56), ignores the role of knowledge, ideas and learning in the policy process as influential and independent variables affecting all stages of the policy process.

Nevertheless, authors agree that the policy cycle framework still has a lot to offer. Bridgeman and Davis (2003, 98), for example, agree with this argument and claim that its biggest value in the realm of policy and public administration studies is that it helps public servants make sense of the policy task. In their publication on the policy cycle model, Werner and Wegrich (2007) summarize its role in contemporary policy science by arguing the following, "the policy cycle perspective will continue to provide an important conceptual framework in policy research, as long as the heuristic purpose of the framework is considered and the departure from the hierarchical top-down perspective and the receptivity for other and new approaches in the wider political science literature is taken into account" (Werner and Wegrich 2007, 57). Werner and Wegrich definitely have insight into the relation between the policy cycle model and governance, "the whole debate on (new forms of) governance and the development from government to governance builds on results of and debates within policy research [...]. Research on implementation has prepared the ground for the governance debate by detecting non-hierarchical modes of governance and patterns of co-governance between state and social actors, and through the recognition of the crucial role of civil society (organizations) for policy delivery. [Hence,] in terms of democratic governance

and from the perspective of public administration research, it remains of central relevance in which stage which actors are dominant and which are not" (57–58).

In the following paper, I agree with Schlanger (1999), who highlights the openness of the cycle perspective for different theoretical and empirical interests in the field of policy studies. Therefore, the policy stage model will be used as a proxy for the assessment of the role and power of actors in the policy process. As I will argue in the next sections the policy stage model, if complemented by the contemporary insights on the structure and dynamics of the public policy process, can keep its heuristic value. It can help illuminate various aspects of the policymaking process that are still inadequately analyzed and described, and in that capacity, be assistance to both policy practitioners as well as to policy scientists.

Policy formulation as a power arena

If a policy cycle model is to be used, one suggests that the policy process can roughly be divided into three meta-phases: pre-decision, implementation and post-decision. In the pre-decision phase, the main activity is to identify problems and arrange a suitable platform for the implementation and decision-making activities to come. Hence, different stages have their particular characteristics relevant for understanding a decision-making process in whole. Yet, according to literature (e.g. Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayer 2015; Howlett, Perl and Ramesh 2009), there is discrepancy in amount of literature covering different stages, at the same time emphasizing that a policy formulation stage is "arguably one of the most poorly understood of all the policy process stages". (Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayer 2015, 5). Building on that, Wu et al (2010, 47) recognize that policy formulation "is critically important but relatively inscrutable stage of the policy process". Furthermore, Petak and Petek (2009, 59) claim that since "that phase includes the estimation of alternative options in the implementation of policy, therefore [it] is regarded as vital in the making of the policy itself".

The policy formulation stage of the public policy cycle is a stage, defined by Sidney (2007, 79), which "involves identifying and/or crafting a set of policy alternatives to address a problem, and narrowing that set of solutions in preparation for the final policy decision." Since government already selects actors based on procedures stipulated by governance principles and depending on policy types, it is to be expected that within policy formulation, consensus and agreement will be the main impetus for formulating policy. Perhaps Hai Do's (2013) summary of the idea of policy formulation is the most thorough. He reminds us that the focus of policy formulation is embedded in the work on the subsystem, advocacy coali-

tion, networks, and policy communities (Weible and Sabatier). The policy formulation process was taken up in the agenda- setting works by select researchers from 1995 to 1998 (Kingdon and Birkland); however, the policy formulation process is exclusively executed in the policy communities and policy networks (Howlett and Ramesh, 2002, 3).

One of prevalent trends in the discussions on policy formulation is policy design. The genesis of this concept dates back to the mid-20th century, the era of rationality when potential causes of failure in implementation were explained in terms of failures in formulating effective policies. Howlett (2014, 191) claims that the sole focus on the economic considerations of the implementation tools led to separation of formulation from implementation, which ignited "the origin of modern design studies". Paralleling the causal approach, in which implementation outcomes are seen as a direct consequence of formulating policies, policy design approach tries to perfect the policy-making process and influence decision-making overall. Even though the design approach did take into consideration the pre-decision stage of the policy process, it mainly prioritized implementation as a focal point, and embraced reductionism, disregarding external influences on the policy-making process and the role of policy actors. Nevertheless, researchers in the arena of policy design have embraced new insights of deliberation, political environment and policy tools and have continued to "hope to improve the process of designing policy alternatives. They propose that improving the search for, and generation of, policy alternatives will lead to more effective and successful policies" (Sidney 2007, 80).

Today, work on policy design "aims to identify aspects of policy making contexts that shape policy design" (ibid). Papers on policy design usually rely on "institutional theories that suggest laws, constitutions, and the organization of the political process channel political behavior and choices. That is, institutions shape actors' preferences and strategies by recognizing the legitimacy of certain claims over others, and by offering particular sorts of opportunities for voicing complaints[...]" (Sideny 2007, 81). Other work focuses on discourse and dominant ideas. Capano and Lipi (2005) argue that the current debate on policy design "includes the policy mixes by which policy makers perceive and decide which instruments have to be selected. In the recent literature, the instruments seem to be addressed by an ongoing scientific propensity to examine the presumed emergence of 'new' tools in governing beside to the 'old' ones already embodied in former classifications" (4). However, policy design can be thought of as an ideal-type, as M. Howlett argues (2014, 193), and before we address this issue and offer a potential solution, it is necessary to take a closer look at the mere nature of policy formulation. This further investigation of policy

formulation uncovers features inherent to this specific stage, namely policy tools or options, participants, and their models of influence. A new policy design school of thought takes into consideration governance shift in policy-making; however, it lacks "methodological sophistication and conceptual clarity" (Howlett 2014, 1999). Additionally, the context in which policy tools are being used should be better explained, particularly in regards to influence and/or power in order to grasp complexity of contemporary policy-making.

Policy tools options

In their explanation of policy formulation, Corchan and Malone (1999) claim that this stage can be summarized with a simple question- "what is the plan?" (46). In order to achieve the best possible solution for a policy problem, we need to assess and evaluate different options for solving this problem. Various actors involved in this stage, based on their interest and specializations, might have different ideas of the best ways to achieving policy objectives. Thus, policy formulation is a "critical phase", claimed by Sidney (2007). Here, pathways and the destiny of the whole policy process are being determined, which has wide implications not only on the policy process, but on the part of society to which this public policy is directed. Wildawsky, a key public policy investigator, argues that policy formulation is about the understanding of the relationship between "manipulable means and obtainable objectives", which is inevitably "the very essence of public policy analysis." (Wildawsky 1987, 15)

The policy formulation stage of the policy process is, in fact, a decision-making arena where various options on how to solve a concrete problem are presented, assessed and contextualized. In their description of the policy design, Kraft and Furlong (2007, 98) argue that there are five successive steps in their description of the policy design: (1) the definition and analysis of the problem; (2) the generation of alternatives related to a policy problem; (3) the development of the criteria for future policy evaluation; (4) the estimation of alternative solutions; and (5) a decision about what policy option is the most effective solution to the problem the political community faces. This ideal type of a categorization might serve as a viable starting point, but it disregards several points which are central to this paper. Foremost, the fifth step of Kraft and Furlong's description is impaired by reductionism, which is, as the argument goes, inherent to most authors who write on policy formulation, given that it disregards the characteristics of agency. In other words, in order to understand what is actually happening in policy formulation, it is necessary to take into account the interests and tendencies of actors engaged in the process. Even though those interests are oftentimes complementary to the needs

of the political community, they can also the interests can be jeopardized by different restrictions, particularities or short-sightedness of involved parties. It is therefore reductionist to observe policy formulation exclusively as an arena for solving community needs and problems. That being the case, it is necessary to examine the distinct participants within the policy formulation stage, their role in the contemporary policy-making process and how these attributes lead to behavioural outcomes.

Participants, models of influence and formulation tools

In the prevailing literature on policy formulation, it is not rare to refer to the concept of 'policy advisory system' (Banfield 1980; Craft and Howlett 2012). Policy advisory system literature focuses on the "nature and kind of advice provided by decision-makers and see them as originating from a system of interacting elements" (Craft and Howlett 2009, 79). Within this scope of subject-matter, little is known about the non-institutional actors of policy advisory systems (Hird 2005), since most scholars focus on the knowledge utilization in government (Dunn 2004; Hoppe and Jeliazkova 2006). However, as Craft and Howlett write, "it is [still] not clear in any given situation which actors are likely to exercise more influence and prevail over others in a formulation process" (2012: 81). They continue that the "understanding of the structure and functioning of policy advice systems" as well as "detailed specification of the nature of their interactions in terms of amount of influence" is required (ibid). In my perspective, in addition to the requirements expressed by Craft and Howlett, it is important to first define that influence, then to distinguish power from the influence and finally to increase the number of empirical findings in various policy fields that would shed more light on the position and constellation of policy actors in the policy formulation process. One of the main questions in the context of policy formulation is, "who are the policy formulators?" Sidney (Sidney 2007, 79) compares agenda-setting and policy formulation and argues that "we expect fewer participants to be involved in policy formulation than were involved in the agenda-setting process, and we expect more of the work to take place out of the public eye." Given the assertion that there are fewer actors in policy formulation and the process is more private, it highlights the importance of actors in this stage and begs the question of how this opportunistic context motivates actors' agenda, and in turn, policy formulation outcomes.

The points often overlooked in the analyses of policy formulation are mechanisms or techniques policy actors use in their attempts to achieve policy goals. Policy tools and instruments exist in all stages of the policy process; however, the most visible are instruments for implementation such as regulations, subsidies, taxes or voluntary agreements (Hood, 1983). Howlett (2000) argues that a second category of implementation instru-

ments has recently been identified, and he calls them procedural tools. These include education, training, provision of information and public hearings. The common denominator of these instruments is that they seek to affect outcomes indirectly throughout the policy process. Together with these two categories of policy tools, there is a third kind that. Radin (2013) and Turnpenny Jordan, Benson and Rayer (2015, 3) conceptualize as so-called analytical tools, or tools which have largely remained outside of the mainstream policy research. These analytical tools became known under the name 'policy formulation tools', since their task is "the collection of as much information and data as were available to help decision-makers address the substantive aspects of the problem at hand" (Radin 2013, 23).

In 2015, Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayer analyzed various approaches to utilizing policy formulation tools and explaind the most common ones. They argue that in contemporary policy-making, policy tools have become more important due to complexity of governance perspectives. In the preface, they list the most important policy tools and state the following Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayer (2015: xiv):

This book includes tools for forecasting and exploring the future (for example, scenarios), tools for identifying and recommending policy options (for example, cost–benefit, cost-effectiveness and multi-criteria analysis) and tools for exploring different problem conceptions and frames (for example, participatory brainstorming). These tools have typically been developed to perform a different set of tasks, namely collecting, condensing and interpreting different kinds of policy relevant knowledge.

In the last two decades, one major concept emerged within the policy discourse which explains the behaviour of policy actors. Precisely, it is the concept of *policy appraisal* that builds on the three relevant aspects of contemporary public policy-making, namely *governance*, *administrative capacity* and *effectiveness*. It also contributes to understanding the concepts of *theoretical presumptions* and *legitimacy standards*, apparently neutral elements embedded in public policy (Lascoumes and Le Gales 2007). Focusing further on policy appraisal, we can get better insight on the shifts taking place in governance, and gain more understanding of the capacities present within public administration for effective policy implementation. Policy appraisal can likewise place g emphasis on legitimacy, accountability and justification of public action (Turnpenny, Radaelli, Jordan and Jacob 2009, 641). However, what is policy appraisal really? According to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "policy appraisal is a systematic way of bringing evidence to bear on alternative policy options, weighing up costs, benefits, their distribution between different parties and over time, uncertainties and risks, as a way of assisting the development of policy" (2008, 3). The idea behind

policy appraisal is to make the most effective use of the evidence that is available, assessing areas of ignorance and uncertainty and devising strategies for handling these uncertainties (ibid).

Contemporary policy science, at least the part that deals with policy formulation, should expand its interest and focus and go beyond sole description of actors' relationships and dynamics. Not only is it that policy had changed in its structure and function over time, but that actors had started using tools and techniques deriving from power and influence in a different manner, resulting in new outcomes to be studied by policy scientists. As Sidney (2007, 80) points out, when writing on changes occurring within policy science, "research considers particular policy tools and trends in their use, as well as their underlying assumptions about problems and groups. As scholars answer such questions, they consider the array of interests involved and the balance of power held by participants, the dominant ideas and values of these participants, the institutional structure of the alternative-setting process, more broadly the historical, political, social, and economic context." In other words, it should be taken into account that "during the formulation stage, policy analysts will typically have to confront trade-offs between legitimate public demands for action, and the political, technical and financial capabilities to address them" (Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayer 2015, 6). In policy literature, texts on policy formulation focus on factors that influence how actors craft alternatives; however, very little has been written on the operational mechanisms that actors exercise in an attempt to achieve their goals. This assertion is further supported by the following claim by Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayer (2015, 20): "the tools literature has often lacked a sense of human agency and, as noted above, the policy formulation literature tended to ignore the tools being used." All of these findings lead us to the conclusion that policy formulation is about power (Schattschneider 1960), its manifestation and its ability to influence others. As Schattschneider reminds us: "... the definition of the alternatives is the choice of conflicts, and the choice of conflicts allocates power" (1960, 68).

Conclusion

The presented literature review on policy formulation suggests that it is a platform where various stakeholders gather to decide on the most appropriate solution for a concrete societal or political problem. Hence, policy formulation is the important stage of the policy-making process where institutional and non-institutional actors meet. In policy formulation, these actors are gathered to create a specific public policy, contributing their respective experience, insight on a certain problem, knowledge and capacity to design a public policy initiative. Whether it's within the govern-

ment or the state, an actor who has the authority to invite other actors and to build a policy arena always desires to collaborate with the most competent and useful actors in order to collectively produce an effective public policy, which would adequately tackle an existing problem in society.

Policy formulation as such is designed to make an inventory of potential policy solutions and to evaluate on the appropriateness of each. In other words, policy actors in the policy formulation stage propose solutions and jointly assess the positive and negative aspects of each in order to propel the most promising into consequent policy stages. However, what interests us mostly is how they do it. I argue that policy actors often have different views on certain policy areas, and therefore, different objectives in regards to a policy problem. This would mean that policy actors employ different means and techniques (as presented in the previous section) to persuade other actors why their idea is sounder. Most recent research (Turnpenny, Jordan, Benson and Rayer 2015) shows that policy formulation is a crucial stage in the policy process. This is precisely where the most relevant decisions are made that will later influence how concrete policy problems are solved. If policy formulations are set up in a way to respect the principles of inclusiveness, expertise and participation, it generates collaborative governance at its finest. As abovementioned, collaborative governance is, in fact, imagined as a part of mutual cooperation of actors whose aim is to achieve consensus. However, the matter of particular objectives and interests always arises, and actors do not want to miss out on a chance to influence the decision-making process. In the later stages of the policy process (monitoring and evaluation), actors may play a role, but the rules of the game are more complex. Policy has already been designed specifically so that actors could implement or evaluate it. I argue that policy formulation is indeed the most suitable stage of the policy cycle to evaluate actors' interests and how they influence policy outcomes. Therefore, taking into consideration all that has been said about collaborative governance, I believe that policy formulation is the best locus for assessing power of actors.

As Vangen and Huxhan warn, there is no coherent body of literature on power in collaborative settings" (2005, 174) thus this paper helped to connecting several policy concepts relevant for better understanding of contemporary policy-making by offering a systematic review. Even though this paper is no by any mean a complete literature review on policy formulation, collaborative governance and power, it most certainly is a contribution to a body of literature and should serve as an impetus for empirical confirmation of the aforementioned problem.

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