

The Implementation of Public Policy Concerning Space: A General Outline

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1. Introduction

The theme of space and politics is examined with respect to the implementation of urban public policies. Reference is made to those policies having an objective to intervene in structuring space within a society.

Notably, and with respect to the articles published in this issue, the question is about regional policies (Quevit; Brugger), urbanism and architecture (Mlinar; Martinon), construction of public housing (Bassand, Chevalier & Zimmermann), highways (Burnier & Stüssi) and the protection of the environment (Knoepfel).

This introduction presents a discussion of public policies and implementation; the preliminary definitions will be developed, illustrated and discussed in the articles that follow.

The general context of these policies for the organisation of space consists of two important changes: the advent of a new politico-economic regime in the world and that of an increasing international division of labour. These changes lead to an unification of nations and to a restructuration of space in both macroscopic and microscopic perspectives.

From the early 1960's as a result of these changes, most European countries rapidly increased their urbanisation. This trend implied an increasing involvement by public authorities, which was particularly obvious in urban planning. At first research considered planning as a subject of concern, and little by little it became a research topic. Concurrently, the concept of planning evolved. At first it thrived on a precise objective and it gradually became a tool for the administration of rare urban, economic and human resources in the dynamics of socio-economic change.

2. Public policies and the State¹

2.1. *About the State*

It is impossible in this introduction to enter a debate on the nature of the State, but it is equally impossible to attempt an understanding and an explanation of the dynamics of public policies without reference to the State. The State is the supportive structure of the political power in contemporary societies. Within the limits of the territory of a given society it claims the monopoly for legitimate physical actions. From this definition by Max Weber follow two dimensions:

Because of its monopoly for unlimited constraints the State is responsible for war and peace *and* for law and order. This second dimension does not solely consist in the production of laws that guarantee freedom and an optimized justice for every individual. The maintainance of order implies that the State should also make decisions about current and future social, economic and cultural life. Therefore, the State has necessarily a function of economic regulation, social justice and the maintainance of the cultural vitality within a nation. The State is the institution that elaborates, takes and implements legitimate decisions – *i.e.* public policies – concerning war and peace, law and order, and the general goals of economic, social and cultural development (in order to start them or follow them up).

It is evident that an institution of such importance does not leave any actors indifferent. The State is at stake; it is the subject of debates, of confrontations and sometimes of violent struggles. The groups and classes of a society struggle in order to appropriate and control the State. For example, State autonomy should be ensured by the elections – as a means of dividing Society and State, by the division of powers and by the belief of general interest. However, these measures can only refrain the dominant groups of society from also controlling the State. In other words, it can be repeated here that the State is similar to Janus, the two-faced god: on the one hand, it contributes to the integration and development of a society; on the other hand, it shows the power structure of this society and the conflicts that are thereby implied (Duverger, 1964; Touraine, 1978; Burdeau, 1970; Miaille, 1978).

2.2. *Public policies*

From the notions outlined above one can define the State, not in an exclusive manner of course, by its production of public policies. One way of describing how the State functions is to examine the dynamics of its public policies. By public policies we mean the processes of elaboration, of decision-making and of implementation. This definition

¹ This introduction results partly from long debates in a research group called Management of Public Affairs and Planning (Bassand *et al.*, 1978) which is pursuing interdisciplinary research on implementation of public policies (see also: Bassand, Chevalier & Zimmermann; Burnier & Stüssi).

can be made more explicit. Let us reconsider the decision-making model proposed by Lapierre (1973) that is partially reproduced here (Fig. 1). This model has the advantage of including the numerous criticisms that have been addressed to the functional and systemic approaches of decision – making analysis. Although it does not appear in Lapierre’s diagram, he makes it clear in his study that decision-making does not solely imply an exchange of information and views, but includes, at every stage of the process, power relations that require the use of the concepts of class relations and political culture. We accept, as a departure point, this model for a definition of public policy, although it is insufficient as such. The five following points will complete it.

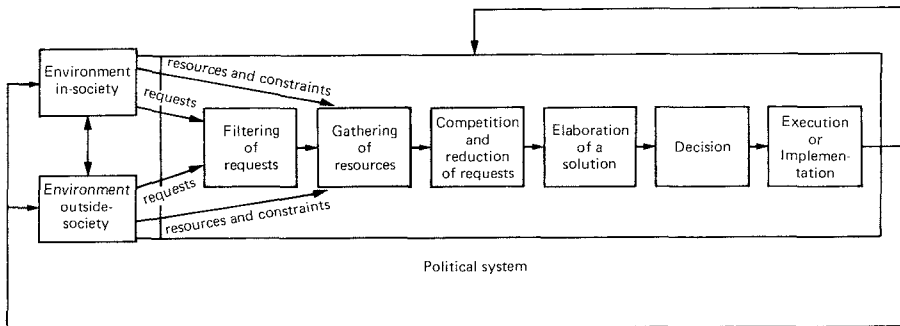


Fig. 1. Model for decision inspired by W. Lapierre.

2.2.1. Lapierre’s model illustrates in a relatively complete manner the phases that precede the decision itself; moreover implementation is reduced to execution according to Lapierre. However, a number of recent studies show that implementation is as complex and perhaps even more than the preparation of the decision. Implementation is not only the rational execution of the decision by political dependent public administrations, but always implies political processes, power relations, filtering, reduction and competition processes as well as some other political decisions. This is what most of the following articles do show (e.g. Martinon; Bassand, Chevalier & Zimmermann; Burnier & Stüssi; Knoepfel; Hill).

2.2.2. The influence of what Lapierre calls the “intra-societal” and “extra-societal” is not only evident at the beginning of the process but at every stage of the preparation of the decision, of the decision itself and of its implementation.

2.2.3. Public policy consists partly of a collection of processes, of cultural and technical models, of constraints and resources that are connected in a more or less linear and coherent manner. Each of these processes implies actors that are linked to a structure of power, defined by an

identity, and orientated by a project. It is impossible to understand a policy without conceptualizing its system of actors.

2.2.4. The model by Lapierre does not show the dialectics between centre and periphery. Yet, whether the State might be unitarian or federal, a public policy implies at every stage a coming-and-going upwards (bottom up) and downwards (top down) between central, regional and local organisations.

2.2.5. Furthermore, it is necessary to eliminate an idea that the model of public policy presented might suggest the dynamics of a public policy are sequential and linear. Each phase has a place of its own, phases followed each other inevitably. Thus, in short firstly, policy starts with the preparation of a decision; secondly, a political decision is reached; thirdly, it is implemented and, fourthly, evaluated. This might not necessarily be the case. The succession of stages might be totally different as well as their sequence. Some stages might never materialize.

Thus, public policy implies a system of actors, who start actions that either follow and complement each other, or are opposed and contradict each other. These actors and this system influence all levels of the political system.

2.3. *Typology of public policies*

It is now necessary to add precise details to this definition. Three more criteria specify a public policy; they are its *objectives*, its *goals* and its *means*.

The objectives are multifarious; they are the more concrete and relevant criteria of a policy; for example to stimulate public housing construction (Bassand, Chevalier & Zimmermann), to build a motorway system (Burnier & Stüssi), to build cultural equipment (Martinon), to reduce regional disparities (Quevit; Brugger).

The goals enable the distinction of at least three major sorts of public policies:

- *social policies* which contribute to the improvement of social justice, and therefore to the elimination of injustice of all kinds;
- *socio-economic regulation policies*, which tend to support or to reequilibrate the mechanisms of a failing market. They often serve also as a substitute for it, because it is inadequate and inoperant;
- *civic policies*, which consist mainly in the organizing, reforming or revolutionizing of the political system.

These goals and objectives may be achieved by different means: this is the subject of the second typology. In terms of means we suggest four different types of policies:

- *statutory policies*, which aim at the preparation of norms, laws,

rules which will guide or channel the practices of private and public actors (Knoepfel);

– *persuasive policies*, which attempt to modify the practices of actors by persuasion, propaganda or publicity;

– *incitement policies*, which try to carry out their objective by financial incentives that are mainly for private actors (Bassand, Chevalier & Zimmermann; Quevit);

– “*voluntary*” *policies*, which provide the authorities with the necessary means to act instead of private actors (Martinon; Burnier & Stüssi).

In short, the objective of a policy is directly linked to its means, it might be checked at short-term or medium-term by the dynamics of public policy, whereas the goals rarely depend on only one policy. However, in the debate raised by a public policy, it is practically always the goals which are decisive.

The definition of the objectives and goals is of crucial importance, because both orientate the dynamics of policy and both are criteria for the evaluation of the policy, even though both might change. Finally, let us add that a public policy has very seldom one objective, only one type of goal and only one type of means. Policy implies a complex bundle of these criteria in a more or less explicit way.

3. Implementation and its actors

Few are the authors who would not subscribe to the following statement: “Tell me to whom official decision makers address themselves for the implementation of their orders? As a result I will draw my conclusion about the State in question and my evaluation of the forces with which the authorities must deal. The characteristics of a State vary in accordance with the institutions and mechanisms by which materializes that which has been said” (de Jouvenel 1963, 208 – our translation).

There is a more or less general consensus about the importance of implementation and its place in public policy (that is the mechanisms whereby what has been decided becomes a fact). This consensus fades away or even breaks down when the question is about defining the nature of implementation.

As a result of a study of the literature on this subject we found two conceptions that are totally opposed. For some, implementation is a system of autonomous specific actions, with rules that reappear frequently in most public policies. For others, implementation can be identified, but this process does not imply any rule, nor specificity; it changes from one policy to the other without any repetition. For the tenants of this position this does not mean in any way that implementation would not be the subject of considerable stakes. (The articles by Hill and Davies present the most relevant problems about implementation, therefore, nothing more is needed to be said about them here). We do not believe that

implementation is a specific system of action. There is an autonomous system of action at the level of a given public policy, but not at its various stages (whether at the formulation of the policy, the decision, or the implementation). Yet, it is beyond all question that each of these stages is characterized by certain types of actors.

This needs further comments.

We mean by "actor" a unity of action by an individual or a group, that is defined by at least three interdependent and irreducible parameters: identity, project and power (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977; Touraine, 1978; Bassand, 1981; Bassand & Fragnière, 1978).

Only the parameter "project" needs further explanation: we mean the relation between an objective established by an actor and the resources he uses to attain it; both presuppose interests and values. It is evident that an actor cannot be understood unless he is placed in his different systems of action. For the study of public policies, three systems of action are considered: the social relations, the State, the public policy that is concerned. All three overlap and the actor's identity and projects will vary considerably in strength, intensity and clarity according to the position that he will occupy in each system. In other words, the position in the systems of action define the levels of autonomy and anomy of the actors.

Two other aspects of the actor ought to be clarified now:

1. The actor is continually looking (obviously with unequal success) for an interpretation of his actions and relations.

2. It is very often when the actor is in action that he defines his identity and his project, which define the rules for his future behaviour.

To revert to implementation of public policy and by using these different criteria we might distinguish seven types of actors who intervene in the process:

- *the politicians*: particularly those elected for the legislative and executive bodies;
- *the public executors*: public administration;
- *the private executors*: private executors who carry out public policy;
- *the controllers*: notably juridical and parliamentary bodies yet also administrations;
- *the addressees*: actors who explicitly and directly are concerned positively or negatively;
- *the rejected or taken-for-granted*: actors who are forgotten by public policy or who suffer from its perverse effects;
- *the experts*: actors who advise the preceding categories and who evaluate a policy.

Let us add the following to this rather functional typology: according to the policy considered, these actors will act at the national, regional as well as local level and will be defined according to their privileged level of action. The project and identity of these seven types of actors vary

according to the objectives, the goals and the means of the policy; it is not relevant to specify them outside a specific context.

This applies also to power, which makes it possible to distinguish between central and peripheral actors. The former actors dominate the dynamics of the policy in an obvious manner, according to varying modalities, whereas the peripheral actors have a dependent and marginal role.

None of these types of actors are specific for implementation in an exclusive manner: we find them in all the other stages of a policy. However, the public and private executors as well as the controllers are, without doubt, the more specific for implementation. This issue is specifically discussed in the articles by Knoepfel, Burnier & Stüssi; Bassand, Chevalier & Zimmermann.

4. Acknowledgements

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The Lausanne Conference follows several meetings organised by the Group of Experts in Urban and Regional Research of the CEE, which included the Tällberg Conference (Swedish Council for Building Research, 1979). Within the framework of these meetings a provisional research group was formed in order to study the role played by planning in the transformation of local economies.

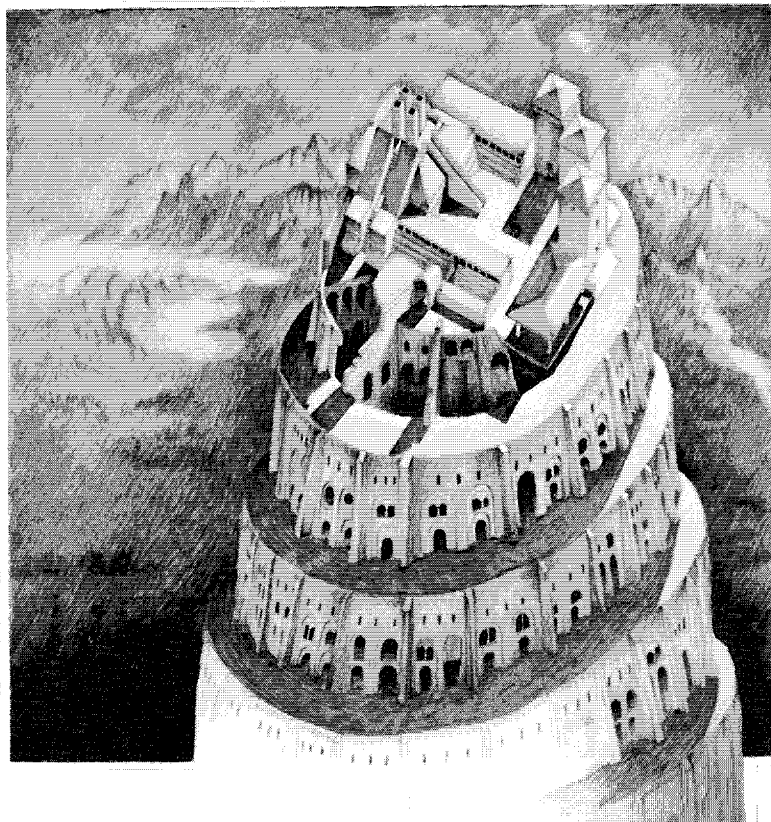
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