Scarecrows and Decoys. — Why Suppose
Political-Administrative Hierarchy?

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A great number of people are eager to describe modern western societies as mixed economies, as multi-actor-societies with fuzzy borders between public and private organizations and institutions. In this article it is argued that if we aim at understanding the processes of policy making, we have to start our investigations from a point of departure where we do not unreflectively assume that political-administrative hierarchy is prevailing. We have to take our own descriptions seriously. The relevance of formal political institutions has to be proved, not taken for granted. It is also argued that despite the fact that no one admits that he or she has adopted a naive "stage-model" of the policy making process, this image of the process is still vigorous in the minds of a great number of researchers dealing with policy analysis. These circumstances can be explained not only by the history of political science, with its focus on formal institutions, but also by the fact that hierarchy is a human way of simplifying a complex environment. Finally the Implementation Structure Approach is suggested as a methodological device for resisting this hierarchic temptation.

It has been argued that policy research has had a fairly limited impact on the process of creation of policies (Wittrock, 1982, Dunn & Kelly, 1992). What is the reason for this? Are theories on policy making inappropriate for the everyday activities of policy making, or is the answer simply built into the very essence of social and political science. If the latter is true, an answer can be proposed. — Social sciences cannot *explain* (like natural sciences do) the peculiarities of society. Therefore no theory of policy making can be used for prediction. Since the theories are useless for prediction, they cannot lay claim to any attention from the policy makers themselves, whose aims are to predict outcomes. This is also the reason why theories on policy making rarely can be used for policy making by themselves, even though we can identify some efforts, as instrumental proposals, in that direction (Sabatier & Mazmanian, 1979). Furthermore, if one takes some existing theoretical concepts seriously, they can hardly be used at all. This is due to the aims of the theories, which are to *explain* ongoing activities, in order to understand rather than to compose law-like systems. Can anyone, for instance, be thought to behave "incrementally", to govern "garbage-cans", or to manage "implementation structures" in a proper way? If this is a significant objection, how can theories on policy making ever be able to gain a foothold among politicians and bureaucrats?

In this article, however, it will be argued that, despite the lack of policy making theories suitable for prediction, there is in fact an outstanding theoretical concept, still living within the sphere of politics. Here it will be labelled as *the normative theory of political governance.*

This theory, dressed like a decoy, but reflecting a certain model of the policy making process, is still tempting scholars, practitioners and politicians to behave as if they were living in the simplest of worlds, tempting them to predict specific outcomes, although no sure predictions are possible. The basic idea behind this article is that, if we pay lip-service to the existence of a mixed economy, with a high degree of complexity, we must behave as if we believed in our own conceptions, at least those of us who call ourselves researchers within the field of policy analysis.

Two images of policy making

The process of policy making and its scientific attendant, policy analysis, has been performed and analyzed, in a great number of ways. Since the Second World War, and especially in the seventies and eighties, policy analysis has been a fast growing section of political science (Heclo, 1972, Brunner, 1991, Hasenfeld & Brock, 1991) Many schools of thought have developed in order to achieve a more complete understanding of the creation of politics in modern western society (Sabatier, 1991a, Dunn & Kelly, 1992). Descriptions of society as a mixed or as a negotiated economy, have lead to a growing methodological awareness of how to detect and describe ongoing processes of policy making. Basically these schools of thought also reflect different perspectives on the designation of political science. For the purpose of this article these schools of thought can be cleft into two categories, although one can admit that notable power is required to drive a wedge between them. Therefore it would be wise only to propose candidates for one of these groups, namely the second one.

The first broad group consists of those who describe the policy making process as a rational activity aimed at the creation of specific and intended outcomes. Metaphors like "policy circle" or notions like "phase model" cover this approach. The basic idea, described in a rough outline, is that rational, calculating decision units, with a normative support of an ideology, shape and implement policies. According to this image, the process of policy making can be compared to a train, following a track, stopping at particular stations, with the ultimate end of reaching the final station. Even though no one pleads that this is a proper way of describing the process, this image is still a powerful one. With the aim of improving the process, scholars have also suggested "how to behave" in order to prevent perversion of the political intentions. As a consequence of this image of the process, scientific investigations have focused on identifying troublesome links in the policy making process, for instance the "implementation link". The ultimate objective seems to be to reach a stage of excellence characterized by a unity of political power and command.

Those who need proofs of the existence of candidates for this group, can have a quick glance in the Social Science Citation Index, using the keyword, *implementation,* as a suggestion.

The second category contains theoretical concepts resting on a different logic. The interest of the authors representing this group is in the processes of interaction between loosely coupled units rather than in administrative activities within predefined hierarchies. They view the policy making process as an open system, and the system itself, as a result of conscious problem solving, not as an extension of a sovereign political will. In this group a great number of authors can be included, for instance Lindblom (1959), Cohen et al. (1972), Pressman & Wildavsky (1973), Elmore (1978), Hanf & Scharpf (1978), Mintzberg (1978), Wittrock et al. (1982), Hjern & Porter (1983), Sabatier (1986²*) and Chisholm, (1989). Some of them to a greater and others to a lesser extent The lowest common denominator, however, is their image of the implementation process. They are all discussing whether it is useful to speak of a separate implementation phase at all.

Some of the authors have taken this stand as an methodological point of departure. This is the case with Hjern & Porter, for instance. They have introduced the "implementation structure" as an alternative unit of analysis. Some research, with this unit of analysis in focus, has also been performed (Hull & Hjern, 1987, Bostedt, 1991, Carlsson, 1993). But this way of conducting policy analysis is by no means common, it is rather the images of the first group which dominate the community of research.

The normative model of political governance

The first of the groups mentioned above has adopted a view emanating from a *"dominant paradigm of the policy process-the stages heuristic"* (Sabatier, 1991b:31). This image of the policy making process can be labelled as normative. It is normative in three ways. (1) The relevance of formal political institutions is taken for granted. (2) Other aims or intentions, than those under focus, are looked upon as irrelevant or as disturbing the "real" process. (3) Finally, the view covers the presumption that people automatically are bounded by democratic authorities. All these assumptions can be questioned of course, although it is not the purpose of this article to discuss all of them.

The image of the process of policy making as "stages" or "cycles", viz. *"agenda setting, problem definition, formulation, implementation, evaluation and termination"* (Kelly & Palumbo, 1992:651), coincides with a presupposed gravity of political-administrative hierarchy. The main thesis in this article is that this normative model of political governance exhibits a quality which gives shelter to an assumption of the significance of formal political-administrative hierarchy, and that this assumption

deludes rather than clarifies the processes of policy making in con-, temporary society. The model reflects the idea that political decisions and programs are "implemented", implying "carried out". This image of the process has been heavily criticized. At the same time, however, the considered absence of a separate implementation phase has also been regarded as an obstacle to scientific analysis of the policy making process. Some writers have attached importance to the seductive words of Pressman & Wildavsky that there *"must be something out there prior to implementation."* (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1979:xix) Others have asked: *"If there are no goals enacted, how could there be anything to be implemented?"* (Lane, 1988:67). But the origins of the "implementation-wave" themselves, however, also suggested an answer. *"But [as] policies normally contain both goals and the means for achieving them. How, then, do we distinguish between a policy and its implementation?"* (Pressman & Wildavsky, ibid.).

Since Pressman & Wildavsky, no "phase" in the policy making process has been discussed as much as implementation. A great number of serious questions have been put forward. Does implementation exist? If it exists, how can it be done effectively, without perverting the political will, etc.? Interesting questions and qualified answers have occupied the scientific discussion on the subject of implementation and creation of policy. The big hurdle, however, is not the notion of implementation. The main problem for understanding the processes of policy making is rather a common, unreflective, meta-theoretical point of departure, namely, the presupposed existence of political hierarchy-

Why suppose hierarchy?

Hierarchy is considered as the "normal way" in which political authority exhibits itself. Unity of power and unity of command are considered as the ideal solution to the question of how to govern a society (discussed in Ostrom, V, 1991), According to this view of policy making, the political system can be described in terms of production of deliberate outcomes. In order to produce comprehensive outcomes, individual preferences are supposed to be aggregated and refined within the realm of the political system. The image of hierarchy is a necessary analytic tool for the purpose of describing the political system in this way, i.e. consisting of a collection of units aimed at production of politics. — "Politics in" and "administration out" is a straightforward way to summarize the concept. This is also the view of policy making as it appears in the described "cycle model", anticipated as a traceable track from agenda setting to termination of political programs. This picture of the process, however, is not possible without the inherent assumption of hierarchy.

Generally we speak of hierarchy in order to signify a system consisting of superior and subordinated units. Contrary to a non-hierarchic system (for instance a network), each unit can be studied as a separate part. A hierarchic system can also be labelled as decomposable (Simon, 1962, O'Neill, 1984). Note that one can hardly speak of implementation as a separate phase without regarding the policy making process as hierarchic and decomposable! Some writers have argued that the idea of hierarchy is only "figments of our methodological framework" (Sahal, 1979:139). Others have proposed, in the same spirit, that the image of hierarchy as "rational-legal bureaucracy" has no historical reality (Friedson, 1980:92).

It can be noted, however, that the concept of hierarchy can be very ambiguous, at least beyond the scope of biology. The term 'hierarchical system' can refer to different phenomena.

(1) It may be a way of *understanding* a system, i.e. a hierarchical conceptual structure is imposed upon a problem to reduce its complexity and make it understandable.
(2) It may refer to a particular organization of a system.
(3) It may refer to a particular principle for the control of a system. (Brehmer, 1991:335—336)

There are, however, no self-evident connections between the three phenomena. It is, for instance, possible to analyze non-hierarchic systems in a hierarchic way. This is precisely the case when we are describing the processes of policy making without noticing that we are surrounded by a dynamic "multi-actor-society", a society without any clear-cut relations between political decisions and local outcomes. In a society it cannot, in fact, be presupposed that formal political hierarchies are *relevant* for the problem being studied.

The normative model of political governance, with hierarchy as a cornerstone, is still vigorous in the minds of numerous writers on implementation and policy analysis. Many do not remember the scientific mark of nobility, that things shall not be taken for granted! Even though the very existence of formal political institutions is evident, their function as relevant units of analysis has to be proved, not taken for granted by the analysts (Sabatier, 1986b). For the same reasons historians, for instance, stopped counting the guild system as a relevant unit of analysis, when industrialization had made it obsolete. With reference to Max Weber (Weber, 1987) it can in fact be argued that there are no political hierarchies at all, if they are obsolete for the process of problem solving, if people do not refer to them, and certainly not if relevant administrative arrangements rather can be described as non-decomposable systems without superiors and subordinates. So why suppose hierarchy in the first place?

Hierarchy and loosely coupled systems

An analytic model can be proposed, for a further discussion on the subject. Figure 1 displays the relation between formal hierarchy and the degree of "tightness" within specific spheres of politics. Each square in the figure illustrates some distinctive features connected to certain administrative arrangements within a particular sphere of politics. Administrative arrangements are defined as a system of rules in use (Kiser & Ostrom, 1982), The concept of hierarchy has been defined above.

For the purpose of analysis, a loosely coupled system can be described as a system free from of a central co-ordinator, with sporadic exchanges between actors and units, and a lack of formal rules to regulate the activities (Weick, 1976). A tightly coupled system can, for our purpose, be referred to as just the opposite. The logic of the matrix is supported by the accumulated experience of numerous studies concerning implementation and policy making. This experience can be compressed into one sentence. —The amount and degree of formal administrative hierarchies generally do nt tell us anything about *the functional* couplings between the units.

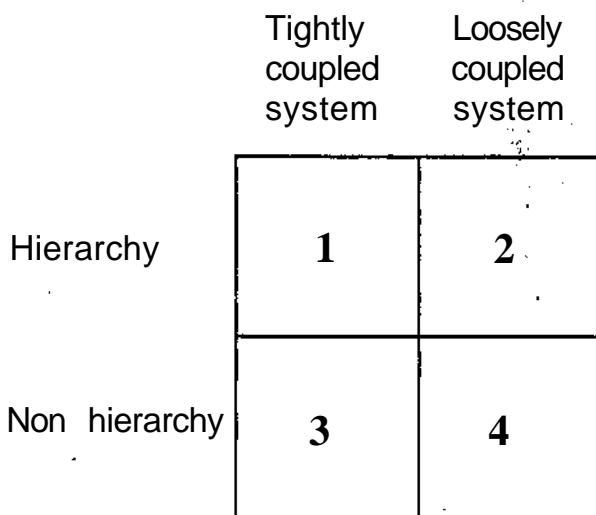|	Tightly coupled system	Loosely coupled system
Hierarchy	1	2
Non hierarchy	3	4

Figure 1. Hierarchy and strength of couplings in institutional arrangements, an analytic model

Hierarchy-tight couplings. Square 1 reflects the normative model of political governance, i.e. an image of democracy as a hierarchic system consisting of formal decision units and a tightly coupled administrative apparatus.

Hierarchy-loose couplings. In our present multi-actor-society most spheres of politics are composed of, or filled up with formal institutions.

However, in order to "get things done" politicians and public admini-strators are forced to establish chains of actions along with, or sometimes contrary to formal paths of action. Weick, for instance, uses the school system in exemplifying his concept of loose couplings.

Non-hierarchy-tight couplings. Within the realm of the multi-actor-society it is also possible to exemplify institutional arrangements consisting of tightly coupled, non-hierarchies. Quangos (quasi non-governmental organizations) can be proposed as an example (Hood, 1986) of this feature. It can also been argued that some other arrangements, for instance self-organized systems, possess this quality (Ostrom, 1990).

Non-hierarchy-loose couplings. Finally, with reference to square 4 in the figure, a great number of arrangements can neither be described as hierarchic nor as tightly coupled. So-called emergency organizations fulfil this criterion. For the purpose of solving some emergent problem people tune their actions together. As they do so they create short-lived organizations which can also be viewed as administrative arrangements. It can be supposed that many problems in our society are commonly solved in this way, i.e. that people are actually solving societal problems without the assistance of formal political institutions. In the effort to underpin the subject of this article, the image of policy making, it is also possible to place so-called "implementation structures" in this square of the matrix. An implementation structure is defined as people trying to solve a common policy problem. This phenomenological constructed unit is considered as an antidote or alternative to formal political hierarchies as units of analysis. Implementation structures are supposed to reflect the process of problem solving in a multi-actor-society in a better way. Policy as produced by non-hierarchic implementation structures is considered as a typical way of creating specific outcomes, not solely by means of formal political decisions or programs. (Hjem & Porter, 1983)

Figure 1 illustrates that the process of policy making can be many-headed. Each square in the matrix reflects a certain status of policy, more exactly the concept of policy defined both as a process and a product (Ham & Hill, 1987). In a mixed economy, or in a negotiated economy as some authors puts it, many actors participate in the process of policy-making. The term 'mixed' refers to a society where separate spheres fraternize, whereas a 'negotiated economy'[1] can be characterized to a greater extent by the existence of common bargain arenas without any clear borders between different spheres (Nielsen & Pedersen, 1989). These arenas rest on another logic than the "mixed" ones. They can be viewed as cognitive fields rather than formal administrative units. The great challenge for political science is to develop some unitary theoretical concepts suitable for the analysis of these types of phenomena. This challenge, however, is still in an initial stage. One point of departure is to exclude the underlying assumption of political hierarchy from the notion of policy.

If policy is defined as *"ideas and efforts to create institutional arrangements in order to realize them"* (Hjern, 1987), it is acceptable to admit the existence of policy even *without* the presence of formal, political decisions, programs and institutions! If one accepts this point of departure, two questions must be asked by policy analysts dealing with any sphere of politics. The ongoing debate on whether a bottom-up or a top-down approach (Sabatier, 1986a) is the most convenient tool for this purpose is beyond the scope of this article, even though I would venture lots of coins on the former. The two questions are:

1) What is (are) the problem(s) to be solved?
2) Who are participating in the creation of *institutional arrangements in order to solve them?*

The logic behind the questions is very simple. If we pay lip service to the concept of a mixed or negotiated economy, i.e. the idea of a multi-actor-society, we ought to behave as we believe in pur own conceptions. Note also that the questions reflect a much deeper insight than a methodological awareness of a mixed economy, namely the incorporation of time-space-relations into political science. The approach mirrors a consciousness concerning the fact that social institutions are continuously recreated, that *"[the] structural properties of social systems exist only in so far as forms of social conduct are reproduced chronically across time and space."* (Giddens, 1984:xxi) Those who take formal political hierarchy for granted do not have to pay attention to this fact, namely that institutions are doomed to a process of constant recreation (North, 1991).

It has been shown, with reference to Figure 1, that it is possible to find empirical evidence of different appearances of institutional arrangements. However it is difficult to detect some of them if the analysis does not start with the first question. "What is the problem to be solved?" For instance if the school system (square 2) is the matter of concern, one basic question is how the pupils receive relevant education, not foremost what types of formal institutions are designed for this purpose. With reference to square 4, the analysts may ask how problems connected with the development of small firms are solved, not the way in which political programs are constructed to achieve that goal, etc. (Hull & Hjern, 1987). Observe that the analysts are free to formulate any kind of relevant *policy problem.* They are not bound by formulations presented by political authorities.

The second question, "Who are participating?", is a crucial one. This question makes it possible for the analyst to determine which actors participate in the process, and more precisely, whether *political* authorities contribute to the process of problem solving or not. If they do, one has to analyze to what extent, in what way and with what kinds of measures. However, if they do not it must be appropriate to talk of policy

making without formal political institutions. This "null result" is not obtained if the investigation starts from the top of the presupposed hierarchy, in the formal institutions themselves.

The conclusion so far is an old lesson: as our questions are formulated, we receive our answers, and if a mixed economy is supposed, at least the analysts must ask suitable questions. If we, on the other hand, presuppose that the process of policy making is a feature fitting into just one square in the matrix above, namely number 1, is it unnecessary, of course, to ask questions appropriate for the other ones. The concern of the analysts can, figuratively speaking, be summarized in the following sentence. "How does political agency X create policy Y in order to implement it on subjects Z?" The appropriateness of agency X and the predefinition of policy Y is taken for granted. Remaining are only subjects Z, who are defined and pointed out by the agencies themselves. Suddenly, the analysts are trapped in vicious circles whose boundaries cannot be dissolved.

The ultimate concern of policy analysis is to understand (not to predict) the process of creation of politics in our society. However, how do we define politics? Is it not merely a question of government, but also a matter of governance? According to Max Weber, acting *politically* is a matter of giving, taking away, redistributing and assigning political power (Weber, 1978). If we are claiming to be engaged in scientific research we must acquire an empirical stance which includes the possibility that formal political institutions sometimes can be obsolete, unsuitable, powerless, insufficient, etc. for the process of policy making. This, however, is not possible if we unreflectively take political institutions for granted.

A non hierarchic way of analyzing policy making

It is not an innovative approach in political science to focus on policy making processes beyond the scope of formal political hierarchy. In his book "The intelligence of democracy" Lindblom, for instance, used the notion "policy-making-system" in signifying policy making as processes of co-ordination between formal political decision units (Lindblom, 1965). He also noted that creation of policies is the product of *different* co-ordination processes, even as a result of non-interactive adjustments between political agencies. This description of the process is also a cornerstone in research dealing with inter-organizational policy making. The notion "policy-making-network" is connected to this tradition of research (Hanf & Schapf, 1978:364).

Adopting the same non-hierarchic view on the policy making process, Hull & Hjern (1987) introduced the *implementation structure approach*. They argue that implementation structures, compared with traditional units of analysis, are able to reflect the process of policy making in a

mixed economy in a better way. Combining a bottom-up approach with interviews based on a snowball technique, they displayed a method for mapping and detecting, *something* structured and structuring, (i.e. implementation structures) beyond the spheres of formal organizations, something can neither be labelled as organizations nor as institutions."

Implementation structures, however, are not equivalent to systems of co-ordination between formal agencies as Lindblom argues. They are formed by acting *individuals,* not necessarily by the aspirations of formal organizations, in order to establish "domains" of influence (Thompson, 1967). *An implementation structure is a set of people trying to solve a policy problem.* Although this approach is an individualistic one, the concept is free from psychological devices. The basic assumption is. very simple. Creation of policies is due to the behavior of acting individuals, not to metaphysically "acting wholes", i.e. organizations. This idea has some important methodological implications, which shall be discussed later on, but at the present stage our endeavor is to clarify what kind of phenomena implementation structures really are. How are they to be detected, and separated from the environment? Can they be labelled as visible, acting units or objects? If they can, what type of object are they, if not, how can non-objects create policies?

Implementation structures as units of analysis

The logic of the implementation structure approach is based on two major assumptions. The first assumption is that, given a mixed or negotiated economy, it can consequently be supposed that the ongoing processes of problem solving in society is a mixed business, formed by activities *within, between, among and outside the boundaries of formal political hierarchies.* Secondly it can, given the fact that a great number of actors are co-present, be deduced that there is no reason to appoint the formal political agencies as the most important. In a mixed economy it should not be presupposed that (a) their formulation of the problem is significant to those affected by it, or (b) that the agencies themselves are relevant for the process of problem solving. The implementation structure (IS) approach is based on this characterization of the welfare societies. These assumptions are the reason why policy analysts using an IS approach start their investigations by formulating a significant *policy problem,* rather then using the problem formulation of the agencies themselves (they can coincide off course.)

Like all types of empirical research, the IS approach is tied to the fact that one have to analyze past events. The IS approach deals with re-constructing patterns of actions within some specific sphere of politics. However, implementation structures (IS) are *constructed* units of

analysis, made by the *analysts* in their efforts to describe and analyze how policy problems are solved in society.

The IS approach is basically an anthropological attitude. Anthropologists do not take a given culture, a given apparatus of formal institutions, or formal and predefined administrative functions for granted. They usually start their investigations with their focus on certain problems to be solved or particular functions to be carried out (which depends on whether they are structural functionalists or not). Anthropologists do not ask questions such as how a headman "implements social security policies". They start their investigations from another starting-point, for instance with the question, "How elderly people are taken care of?" Some one has to propose serious objections why this approach cannot also be used, by policy analysts, in contemporary *multi-actor-societies!* Is there really any other way to obtain knowledge of what way society is governed than to be open minded concerning the relevance of formal institutions? They are truly not eternal constructions, designed for never changing problems or tasks. Scientists who, for instance, are mapping the wild fauna of Africa cannot presuppose that all the beasts are lions, so why should political scientists dealing with policy analysis appoint formal institutions as their *master-creatures?* Policy analysis focuses on the processes of creation of *politics,* and irrespective of what, kind of definition of politics the analyst prefers, for instance Webers, Lasswells, Eastons, or Deutch's, this question is relevant. The main obligation of the analysts is to investigate if and in what way public problems are solved in society and within the realm of political science these phenomena are viewed as processes of *institutionalization.*

However, since institutionalization is not a "single-track journey", dissolving processes also have to be taken into account. Formal and informal institutions become unpurposeful, obsolete, and they decompose or just fade away (North, 1991). Therefore it may not be wise, in the first place, to tie our analysis up to some easily identifiable units, i.e. formal agencies, programs or decisions. We have to focus on *who gets what, when and how,* as processes of *organized efforts to govern the development of the society.* We have also to pay special attention to whether *formal institutions can contribute with their authoritative power* in the processes of *allocation of goods* in the society. (The emphasis, in order of appearance, refer to definitions of politics by Lasswell, Deutch, Weber and Easton.)

Mapping relevant units of analysis

The IS approach is a network approach. The members of an IS are mapped by the members themselves. The pre defined policy problem is the cement holding the structure together, not literally, but in the eyes of

the analyst. Each participant can of course be unaware of, or possess an inability to reach direct knowledge of other actors within an IS, which is comparable to so-called "extended networks" (Boissevain & Mitchell, 1973:5). Only actors mentioned to the researcher will be regarded as participants of an IS. Those not pointed out by the members, however, have not participated in the process of problem solving, and are by definition not members of the IS, However, is it not possible then that the members are unaware of some important actors, working behind the scenes of the problem solving process? Despite the fact that many devices can be used to counter-check this, the question must be taken seriously. One way of answering it is to reformulate the question and ask whether there *is* any *other* world than the one perceived by human beings. However, before discussing this difficult question, it may be convenient to be ascertain what types of appearances ISs can possess.

First however, one must recapitulate that ISS are mapped on the basis of individuals acting in order to solve a policy problem. The policy problem, which is an analytic notion, is formulated by the researcher, in accordance with some significant, empirical problem. Note that the notion "problem" is used in a broad sense, also signifying concepts like *needs, challenges* and *strains*.

These prerequisites are based on the desire to describe and analyze the way in which problems are solved in society, leaving it as an open question who are contributing to this process. Given this 'postulate' it can be deduced what types of ISS there are to be found, i.e. what types of appearances one can anticipate. Some proposals can be made.

ISS can be (similar to) extended networks.
ISS can possess the quality of action sets, originating from bigger networks.
ISs can be temporal structures, people tuning their actions together in order to solve some emergent or temporary problem.
ISs can be persistent patterns of co-ordination emanating from structural deficiencies of the formal institutions.
ISs can also, and this is a very clarifying memorandum, be equivalent to formal political institutions!

This last remark, must be explained. The IS approach derives from the idea that if a mixed economy is anticipated, it should not, a priori, be supposed that formal political institutions are "the central ones, not even in the processes of creation of policies. However, if the researcher finds that formal agencies are solely contributing to the process of problem solving, no one ought to complain. — What has been found is simply that those very agencies are relevant for the problem solving process! The IS approach does not presuppose that political agencies, decisions and programs normally are *irrelevant* as units of analysis, just that their rele-

vance has to be verified by scientific research, especially if we are eager to describe our society as a mixed economy. It can, of course, be confusing to label formal institutions as ISs. This is the reason why we still ought to separate the notions institution, organization and IS.

The implementation structure approach rests on the tradition of methodological individualism. Acting individuals are supposed to be the carriers of the properties (norms, rules and resources) shaping ISs. Perhaps the word *structure* is misleading, however. Structure refers to something persisting.

Given the different possible expressions of ISs, it can be more convenient to use the concept "concrete systems of action". This concept lays no claim to durability, although it covers the same phenomenon, i.e. people unified by a problem to be solved, the same policy problem (Crozier & Friedberg, 1980:24). The basic idea, however, is to signify patterns of problem solving without presupposing the relevance of formal agencies. For that purpose IS will be satisfactory.

Given this clarification it can be deduced that the implementation structure approach is mainly a methodological conduct without theoretical aspirations. It is in the first place aimed at the endeavor of *searching* for processes of policy making, but as a *result* of this research, however, it is also possible, of course, to build theories concerning the process of government in the modern welfare society. The construction of a coherent *implementation theory,* however, is still in its pre-natal stage.

Are implementation structures touchable objects?

To summarize, implementation structures can be labelled as creatures with many faces, sometimes appearing as "tangible" objects (formal institutions) and on other occasions describable as groups of people forming a structure solely in the eyes of the researcher (for instance labelled as extended networks). This raises the question whether ISs are *real* objects or not.

The question whether ISS are tangible objects or not is, however, not particularly important for the understanding of the approach. In what way is any social construction "real" at all? There are some researchers who wish to consider organizations as exhibiting the quality of realness, almost like bicycles and hot dogs, but many authors do not agree with this approach.

> If you look for an organization you won't find it. What you will find is that there are events, linked together, that transpire within concrete walls and these sequences, their pathways, and their timing are the forms we erroneously make into substances when we talk about an organization. (Weick, 1979:88)

ISS are no more real, or unreal, than organizations. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that ISS are *constructed* units of analysis, and that they are constructed in a *phenomenological* way. This means that ISs are the analytic consummation of individuals telling the researcher with whom they have interacted, in what way and what purpose. These records are considered as *facts* by the analysts, and these facts are the empirical material to be analyzed. To sum up, an IS is consequently real, only to the extent that conscious individuals are assessing their partners as real.

> [,..]what is perceived by a conscious individual adequately reveals what is. Being is confirmed as existing only through our experiences. It is idle chatter to suggest that an objective world exists apart from our conscious experiences. This is the most distinctive and important principle uniting all phenomenologists. (Gornian, 1976:496)

This position of phenomenology is not equivalent to phenomenalism á la Bishop Berkeley, i.e. that the world only exists as long as we are looking at it. The world is not *caused* by our impressions. It can be argued, however, and in forcible words, that there are no other ways of perceiving and understanding the world than the human way. This is an anti-fundamentalistic stand, saying that no science can claim to describe the world as it really is. *"[…] the fact that Newton's vocabulary lets us predict the world more easily than Aristotle's does not mean that the world speaks Newtonian"* .(Rorty, 1989:6) To sum up, no one can argue that his very description of the world is more connected to what things really are than others, and that the "key bolt" of society has been found. This is not to say that all people have the same *ability* to articulate a stand, or that all of them are equally good. The first requirement is that people have to be present. This demand of presence is the basic argument in favour of choosing an phenomenological attitude in the pursuit of mapping ISs Those who are dealing with the substantial business of problem solving can be supposed to be the most suited ones to describe what they are doing. Note that those who start their analysis with an unreflective judgment of the adequacy of formal political agencies in the creation of politics must rely on an assumption that "someone else" has constructed a suitable analytic screen.

Finally it must be emphasized that the phenomenological features can be used in an limited way, only for the benefit of *identifying* ISS. This approach does not have to be completely developed. As soon as ISs are found, the analyst may use any scientific measures for the purpose of explaining, describing, analyzing or understanding the problem solving process, for instance hermeneutics or some hypothetical-deductive method. The IS approach is *only* a way of finding relevant units of analysis in the business of policy analysis!

How then are ISS able to create policies? Although it is not the task of this article to elaborate on this question, a short answer will be given. ISS

are no metaphysical objects, but are composed by sets of individuals, occupied by the endeavor to solve a particular policy problem. It is this comportment which can be regarded as processes of policy making. The argumentation is very simple. If the analysts are able to formulate policy problems, corresponding to significant problems in society, and if they are able to apply a method in order to detect and analyze the processes of problem solving, connected to these problems, then they are engaged in the business of analyzing the creation of policies. However, if we distance ourselves to the processes of policy making by putting on to strong heirarchic glasses, we are making ourselves unable to discover the ongoing processes of creation of politics in society.

Conclusion: Scarecrows and Decoys, scaring and tempting

In this article it has been argued that, given the existence of a mixed economy, a multi-actor-society, we must behave as we believe in our own conceptions. Consequently we must choose suitable units of analysis, without relying on an unreflective assumption of the relevance of political-administrative hierarchy.

It can be argued, however, that it is to "smash open doors" to suggest that unmentioned fellow researchers are breeding the "hierarchic serpent" by their chests, since no one really believes that the processes of implementation and policy making follow the trajectories of formal administrative hierarchy. It has also been argued that it is pointless to criticize the ideal-type hierarchy for the shortcomings of concrete implementation procedures, the so-called "scarecrow-mistake" (Vedung, 1991, 174). This objection is significant and should not be questioned here. The Weberarian concept is certainly not an everlasting recipe for the project of democratic governance, and this was obviously not the idea of Max Weber either.

Here it is argued, on the contrary, that no one is denying the very existence of formal hierarchies or their capacity to participate in the process of policy making. The aim of this article, however, has been to pinpoint the theoretical and methodological consequences of accepting that the processes of policy making are going on in all the squares in Figure 1 above. It is not a matter of being afraid of the "hierarchy-scarecrow". It is basically a question of methodology, a matter of accepting the existence of other "creatures" in the wild-grown fields of policy making in our society. If we do accept this, our next duty is to find some method to detect and analyze these processes, although it can be argued that this endeavor is to a great extent a business that can newer be finished.

One step forward is to utilize the experiences from the so-called implementation structure approach.

Why is it then that the image of political-administrative hierarchy has occupied central areas of policy analysis for such a long period of time? Why has it become such a decoy, tempting us to look other ways than we ought to? Two answers can be proposed.,

The *first* is to be sought in the history of political science, with its predominance of constitutional law and formal institutions. This heritage has played a very important role for the methods we have chosen to analyze and understand the institutionalization of society, since World War II. The most significant feature of the rise of the welfare state is, doubtlessly, the establishment of a multitude of formal political-administrative agencies. In order to analyze this process, it has of bourse been an ingenuous method to focus on the qualities and amount of these institutions.

The welfare state, however, has developed along with the multi-actor-society. In such a society the political authority is fragmented, and its institutions are sometimes woven together in invisible policy-making networks, not seldom with private agencies as central elements. This type of arrangement is not as manifest as formal institutions with their fancy buildings, their staff of white-collar workers, decision boards, etc.

A *second* explanation can also be proposed, and perhaps this explanation is the most important one. With reference to the former argumentation concerning the image of hierarchy, it can conceivably be anticipated that an uncritical view of the policy making process, with its predefined importance of political-administrative hierarchy, is simply due to our inability to handle complexity (Dorner, 1987). Formal hierarchies are visible, we think, but policy making networks or implementation structures and other soft units are much harder to grasp. This (with reference to the quotation from Brehmer above) can be the main reason why analysts, in their strivings to understand what is going on in the spheres of politics, are tempted by hierarchy as by a decoy. — If things are too messy, pretend that hierarchy is prevailing, then the complex phenomenon is much easier to understand. This is of course not an outspoken strategy, it is just the human way to handle complexity. Given the existence of a multi-actor-society, however, this "human" conduct is inappropriate to apply, at least within the project of policy analysis aimed at uncovering society.

In this article it has been argued that the scientific way of performing policy analysis would benefit from a more "un-human" attitude towards the process of policy-making in our society. If political science claims to be developing significant theories, and a more complete understanding of our society, the image of hierarchy as the point of departure must be abandoned. No one, and certainly not skilful scientists, ought to be confused by scarecrows or decoys!

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