

Models of policy making



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I think the whether policy process is incremental or non-incremental depends on different situation. (I think the reality is much more complicated than any theory, in order to reduce the complexity of this question we can use different theory models.)

Before we discuss whether the nature of the policy process is incremental or non-incremental, we should first think what is an incremental model of policy and what is a non-incremental model of policy process, and we should also think about both the advantages and disadvantages of these models. There are three different models here: the rationality (bounded rationality) model, the incrementalism model and the garbage can model.

Bounded Rationality Model

In Simon's bounded rationality model, the rationality is conditioned. The actual process of social activities is affected by intuition, experience, accuracy of information and value judgments. Pure objective and rational decision-making model is only a hypothesis model, it doesn't exist in reality. In the bounded rationality model, the decision maker should distinguish fact from value and preferences; and he shouldn't replace the value with the fact; also, the decision maker should distinguish method from goal... In fact, the government has only limited policy options and decision-maker can only do limited cost-benefit analysis. The information, material resources, political support and time of the policy are all limited; therefore, the policy choice has been limited. According to this situation, the assessment criteria of the policy are not whether this policy is optimal or not, the criteria of the policy are whether it is satisfying and second best or not. Simon's theory doesn't say

that the decision makers can't make any non-incremental progress, however it tells us that the decision making process are limited by information and power. If the policy maker can have enough material support, political support, information and enough time then they can make some non-incremental process; if all these factors are very limited then it is highly unlikely for them to make a very no-incremental policy process.

Incrementalism model

Lindblom's incrementalism model emphasizes that the policy process is an ongoing process. Decision-making process is largely based on decision-makers' past experience with some slight modifications of existing policy. This is an incremental process, and the changes within this process seemed to be slow, but the small changes may lead into some great changes, the actual speed of changing is often greater than we thought. However, a drastic policy change from " policy A to the next policy A1" is not only unfeasible but also undesirable; a drastic change may threat social stability and will cause policy disruptions.

In his view, the decision-making and policy-making process are bounded to political factor, technical factor, and they are also constrained by existing policies. And all these constrain have determined that the decision-making process is incremental.

Garbage can model

" Garbage can model" is carried out by Marche and Olsen. They believe there is inherently irrational factor within in the decision-making process, and

sometime there is limited rationality in the incremental process. They argue that policymakers' policy targets and solutions are often not very clear.

In the policy process, the policy making organizations are facing lots of potential policy solutions, policy programs, policy participants and policy opportunities. And these factors were thrown into a policy garbage can and they are mixed together. The policy is what the policy maker finally picks out from the can. The garbage can model tried to expand organizational decision theory into the then uncharted field of organizational anarchy which is characterized by "problematic preferences", "unclear technology" and "fluid participation". There are four of those streams were identified in the model: Problem (requires attention), Solutions (has it own life.), Opportunities, Participants (not stable). They are independent of each other and there is no causal link. The theoretical breakthrough of the garbage can model is that it disconnects problems, solutions and decision makers from each other, unlike traditional decision theory. Some opportunities may cycle and some may never return. When opportunities arise, problems, solutions and participants will across and the four streams may converge. If problems and solutions are matched during this period then the problem is resolved. If they don't match, then they will wait for another decision-making opportunity. Specific decisions do not follow an orderly process from problem to solution, but are outcomes of several relatively independent streams of events within the organization. Under normal circumstances, policy makers are using his default preference with his to discovered the right questions.

Garbage can model has some advantages: on the one hand, it can explain why the bureaucracy is often inefficient. Using this model, we can

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understand that bureaucrats often lack the incentive to push reform; therefore, public policy process tends to change slowly. On the other hand this model shows that opportunities, human creativity and choice still have some space in policy process and some dramatic change can happen through a non-incremental random way.

Kingdon creates the multiple stream models from the garbage can model to explain why there are major shifts in the agenda, and why these changes could be non-incremental change to existing policy. Kingdon's model identifies three streams in the system: problems, policies, and politics. Each stream is flowing during the policy process. And each stream is independent from others, and each stream has its own dynamics and rules. However, in a critical time point all these streams will merge into one single package. Usually, a focusing issue will bring this critical time point, also the change of political structure will also bring the critical time point to the policy entrepreneurs. And the policy entrepreneur will use this package to promote their policy solution. If the solution of the issue has been received by the policy makers, then there will be even a dramatic change within the policy process.

As I discussed above, Lindblom's incrementalism model can work good in a stable situation. However, it has some limitations and inadequacies. Firstly, it is a conservative approach; it is generally suitable for relatively stable environment. In order to make the policy process work well, the former policy should be good. However, once the social conditions and the environment changed dramatically, the incremental decision-making model may not work well. History has shown that certain moment in social

development requires substantial policy adjustments, and sometimes it is even necessary for the policy makers to abandon former policy. In these situations, the incremental method could be useless or even has some negative effects. In these cases, I think the bounded rationality policy model can work better. Because in this model, policy maker can make new policy by using limited information through careful calculations. Although in the bounded rationality model, the first trial of new policy is not perfect, but it can provide a useful base for further improvement for next incremental process or at least it can provide a potential policy alternative for the garbage can. At some degree, I think the incrementalism approach and the garbage can approach are method directed which means these two policy process don't require a certain policy goal; while the bounded rationality approach is goal directed which means there is a certain goal.

In conclusion, I think whether policy process is incremental or non-incremental should depend on different situations. Also, in order to discuss whether a policy process is incremental or non-incremental we should limit the time span of the policy process. The incremental process works better in a stable environment and it does not require a clear policy goal; if the policy process is theoretically limited within a short policy period, then there will be no major changes. The non-incremental process may work better in a rapid changing situation. The bounded rationality model shows that the policy makers could make useful policy with limited information and resources.

5) Some criticize policy theories for being better at explaining policy stability than policy change. Evaluate this claim with respect to some leading thinkers from our course.

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No, I think there are some theories can explain policy change as well as policy stability.

Here are some theories which can be used to explain policy changes:

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and Policy Change

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory attempts to describe the progressive policy changes and significant change. When the policy issues are addressed by the political sub-system, we usually can observe the existence of incremental changes; conversely, when dealing with policy issues to be raised to the macro political system, there may be a significant policy change, and we often observe a major policy change (True, Jones, and Baumgartner, 1999: 102).

In the process of policy change, the policy entrepreneur is trying to change recognized/accepted ideas of the public (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993: 42).

Although the Punctuated Equilibrium Theory has pointed out when the image of the existing policy is challenged the opportunities will be created, but the theory hasn't tell why policies will be challenged.

We can observe a policy change when there are new way of policy thinking, a mobilization of new policy supporters and a institutional change within the policy structure. Whether these factors appear together or they appear alone will make policy maker change their former incremental and stable policy process at different degrees. These factors will punctuate the equilibrium of policy stable developing process; and these factors will bring turbulent and unstable policy process. The definitions of policy issue, the boundary of

policy problem, the agenda setting of policy are the key factors in policy process. Different interpretation of policy issue will also reinforce policy supports or bring doubts to existing policy. The model emphasizes policy change is punctuated equilibrium, the change is motivated by a complex combination of internal and external factors.

Advocacy Coalition Framework and Policy Change

Advocacy Coalition Framework was first proposed by Sabatier (1988).

Sabatier suggests that we should focus on the interaction of the policy advocacy. Sabatier suggests that within the coalition those members share the mutual belief in a set of policy beliefs. Based on this hypothesis, policy change can be understood as a function of the relationship between the competing advocacy coalition and outside factors (Sabatier, 1999: 9; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993: 5). The policy change is a result of advocacy coalitions' competition, interaction of beliefs and outside factors.

Advocacy Coalition Framework shows that belief system can be divided into three levels, deep core, policy core beliefs and secondary aspects.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999: 147) pointed out that major changes in a policy actually is a change of core beliefs, while a smaller change of policy reflects changes in the policy beliefs or the secondary beliefs . Basically, deep core values are fixed, and it is more like an exogenous variables; policy core beliefs are formed and it serve as advocacy's adhesives, it often take a decade or more time to change, and it can be considered as part of the endogenous variable. Substantial policy change is the result of the changes

in policy beliefs. And the changes in secondary level will lead to small, incremental policy change (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 131).

Also policy Change is divided into two types: incremental policy changes and significant policy changes. Incremental change can be the result of policy learning. Because the goal of policy learning is not to shake the foundation of core beliefs, therefore there will not be major policy changes (Sabatier, 1988: 149; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999: 123). And the leaning process is often used to reinforce and support the policy belief and core belief.

Another way to think of the learning process

Subject of Learning

Object of Learning

Consequence

Governmental

Gov't Officials

Intelligent policy process

Institutional Change

Experimental

Policy Network

Methodology

New Policy Solution

Societal

Policy Community

Idea and Concept

Shifting Paradigm

However, if the core belief is shaken, then the advocacy coalition may collapse. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999: 147-49) pointed out that the cause for major policy changes include: changes in socio-economic conditions, changes in governance system, etc...

Multiple Streams Model and Policy Change

Multiple Streams Model is developed based on the garbage can mode (Cohen, March and Olsen (1972). Multiple Streams Model is proposed in 1984 by Kingdon. According to this model, when policy maker are facing uncertainty and time pressure, the most concerned issue for them is the time point rather than rational or optimal output. From this perspective, the key point for policy change is the right time point. If policy maker can grasp the key time point, then he can make some policy changes.

Multiple Streams Model indicates that the policy process consists three processes/streams; and these processes are made by different actors: the first problem streams includes different information and solutions proposed by their supporters; the second policy streams includes government official's concern of policy alternatives and policy formation; the third politics stream

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includes political consideration by the elected officials and elected representatives (Sabatier, 1999: 9).

These three processes flow inside and outside the federal government, and each is an individual process operation for most of the time, they are unrelated to each other (Kingdon, 1994: 216). In a crucial time point, policy entrepreneur will combine the various processes (coupling into a single package, and it will greatly enhance a policy issue attention and even create a policy opportunity) (Zahariadis, 1999: 73). And in this critical point, policy window will be opened.

Kingdon (1994: 216) has described, when the policy window open, a policy issue will come out. Some policy solutions which can be used to address the policy issues have already existed, and the time for this policy is correct. Policy window is an opportunity to promote a particular policy program, they will appear by themselves, but it is a very short time for people to notice and use this opportunity (Kingdon, 2003: 166). Kingdon (2003: 168) further pointed out that under the Multiple Streams Model, policy window may flow from the political stream or problems stream. If the policy window is opened for political reasons, it is because of president changed, there are changes of the administrating party, there is change in congress, etc... If the policy window is opened from the policy stream, it is mostly because some issues have caught the attention of government officials.

Whether policy makers are seeking solutions to promote existing policies or seeking alternatives to replace existing policies, the policy maker will always provide some opportunities for policy advocates to sell their policies. This

means that as long as those policy advocates can make policy makers believe that their program is a feasible option to address policy issues or their solutions can help to accumulate political prestige and resources of the new policies; sooner or later, their policy proposals will have the chance to enter the policy agenda. It is possible for these proposals to be legitimized and carried out as the government's policy (Kingdon, 2003: 172). Zahariadis (1999: 82) argues that, if the policy window is opened in the political stream, then the combination of the various processes are more likely to be doctrinal. It is an existing policy to help find solutions to solve policy issues. If the policy window is opened in the problem stream, then the combination of the various processes are more likely to be consequential, that is a process for finding a viable solution.

Kingdon (2003: 94-95) also pointed out that the policy problems may not seem obvious to every person. Sometimes a problem is noticed because there is a focusing event which has provided it with a policy window. Kingdon (2003: 97) the focus of the event will be made as symbol in political world; and a symbol will draw attention and strengthen the role for certain issues.

In conclusion, I think from a philosophic aspect the theories of policy stability and theories of policy changes are the two sides of the same coin. Also, I think the relationship between different theories is not only complete but sometime different theories are complementary to each others. I think the problem for some policy scholars is that they often focused on one theory instead of looking for different explanations from different theories

4) Deborah Stone calls the struggle over ideas the "essence of policy making." Discuss this claim with respect to leading theories of the policy process.

I name my answer to question as "Idea and Deborah Stone", I want go through her book and explain why ideas are so important.

According to Deborah Stone, idea will help people to define alliance, strategic considerations also idea will help people to get the legitimacy and draw policy boundaries. (Deborah, P 34). According to Deborah Stone, idea will decide "who will be affected", "how will they be affected" and "will they be affected legitimately" (Deborah, P. 34).

In the first Chapter, Stone starts her analysis at the city-state (the Greek term polis) level. The public policy is considered as an attempt to achieve a certain community goals (Deborah, P 21). However, due to the fact that everyone has his own understanding of ideas, therefore the political community has become a place for internal debates over "who will be affected", "how will they be affected" and "will they be affected legitimately" (Deborah, P 34). The policy-making process has thus become a continuous interaction between the conflict and cooperation.

In Stone's model, individuals may pursue their goals through collective action. The motivation is not only based on self-interests but also based on public concerns. This is because the public interest is related to the goal of survival (Deborah, P 33). However, when there is a contradiction between self-interest and public interest, the policy process will be more complicated (Deborah, P 33). When the group is motivated under common ideas, the

group will get more strength, and there will be a balance between private interests and public interests in the conflict.

Stone directly uses the "idea" as the core concept of this book. In her construction of "polis community vs market individual" (Deborah P 33) model, ideas have become the focus. Stone tries to use struggle of idea to explain all stages of policy-making process. Policy-making is followed by a continuous constantly struggle to fight for the classification of standards, types of boundaries, and guide people to conduct the ideal typical definition.

The struggle of idea can be seen in several policy levels. According to Stone's theory, idea defines what people want from the policy; it is the foundation for people to cognize and understands what the policy is. Idea provides a relationship between advocators and advocacy coalitions; Idea provides "causal relationship" for these people and groups, and ideas will be reflected to their policy objectives through their actions of obtaining support. And these people with the shared idea will persuade decision-makers to meet their preferences. As mentioned above, Stone sees idea as a constantly changing dynamic and resources of construction. And by given different interpretations of ideas, the concept of the ideas will also change. She points out that the politics of policy is to choose the interpretation (Deborah P 75). Stone argues that the authority to interpret idea is the key factor in the policy-making process. Only legitimated idea can be transformed into policy. And using the legitimacy, people's knowledge or behavior can be changed. And policy change can also be made through this interaction of ideas. Ideas affects how people cognized politics, and the change of politics will also

feedback on ideas. To Stone, idea is not static; idea is an ongoing of constructing and reconstructing process of concepts.

Now I will try to exam whether Deborah Stone's idea theory can fits with other policy process theory.

In the punctuated equilibrium theory, Baumgartner and Jones also argue that idea is a potential power in the policy making process. According to their book " Agendas and Instability in American Politics", " a powerful supporting idea is associated with the institution" (Baumgartner and Jones, P 7); In page 16, they also write" the tight connection between institution and idea provides powerful support for prevailing distribution of political advantage". These statements mean that idea will help people understand " what is at stake and how will they be affected (Stone, 2002)", policy advocators will use institution arrangement to make their idea be legitimate. Also, in order to gain more power those policy actors will manipulate images and ideas. To Baumgartner and Jones, ideas are important because they provide some potential undergirding institutional arrangements; and the struggle of idea is the struggle over legitimate institution arrangements.

In the book Agendas, alternatives and public policies, Kingdon also discusses the importance. In order to make useful policy suggestions, participants in the policy process are competing to develop new ideas; and they are trying to provide their ideas in the form of potential solutions to policy makers. According to Kingdon, policy entrepreneurs " lie in wait in and around government with their solutions [already] in hand, waiting for problems to float by to which they can attach their solutions, waiting for a development

in the political stream they can use to their advantage" (Kingdon, P 165). Shared ideas make policy entrepreneurs into alliance; and these alliances are trying to make their ideas become legitimate. Kingdon's "primal policy soup" (Kingdon, P 139-143) model provides us a picture of how decision makers accept idea through coherent narrative process (ideas are flowing in the streams just as molecules flowing in the soup). According to Kingdon, a policy community creates a short list of ideas. If the ideas can go through the selecting process, softening up process and if they can pass the exam by specialists and policy makers, they may finally become policies. The whole process can be viewed as a continuing struggle of ideas. In this case, ideas are not only competing with other ideas, they are also struggling to survive in this primal soup. I also think Kingdon's policy window model is another improvement to Deborah Stone's arguments. People are now struggling to make their idea in front of the policy window at the correct time. This model discovers that the during the policy process, critical time is also important for ideas struggling.

However, I think there are also some theories which do not fully support Deborah Stone's argument. In the garbage can model, because the nature of unclear, policy is not necessarily to be the consequence of the idea's struggling. In Kingdon's *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, he describes that as "garbage can into which various kinds of problems and solutions are dumped by participants... removed from the scene" (Kingdon, P 85). In some sense, Deborah Stone's "Struggling of ideas" assumption is more based on a goal-oriented policy making process, in order to make it work, there should be a clear policy goal from all participants; while the

classical garbage can model is more like a method-oriented policy making process, it doesn't require a clear goal or solution at the beginning. In the garbage can model, people are not fighting with each other over ideas in the final solution selecting stage, however it is still correct to say that each solution in the garbage can is a result of deliberative idea thinking. I think there is a slight difference between Deborah Stone's theory and the garbage can model.

Another policy theory which doesn't fully consistent with Deborah Stone's theory is the incrementalism theory. According to Lindblom, the incremental policy process is more relied on former existing policies. According to this model, the policy environment generally remains stable. Because the incremental nature of the policy, the new policy will inherit the policy environment from previous policy, if the former policy has resolved the struggling of idea, then there will be less struggling of ideas in the new policies. Since the policy environment is stable, it will be unlikely for us to speculate a violently struggle over ideas.

The last policy process theory I want discuss in the context of "struggling over idea" is the advocacy coalition framework (ACF) theory. The central idea of this theory is that people or groups with the same beliefs (core/policy/secondary) will form a coalition. I think Sabatier's concept of belief is similar to Deborah Stone's concept of idea. Especially, I think the concept of policy belief is playing the role of idea in the policy process. I think his core belief is rooted even deeper than idea. The core belief will sometimes become unnoticeable. And using the ACF model, we can find out that the policy process is a competition among different policy beliefs, and I

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think this observation is close to Deborah's "struggle over ideas the 'essence of policy making.'" But it does not mean that the change in the secondary belief level is also a result of struggling, according to Sabatier's theory, such change is more like the result of an incremental learning process.

In conclusion, I think Deborah Stone's argument is useful for us to understand some policy process. However, by using different theories we should also notice whether "policy processes are struggle over ideas" should be analyzed in situations. The Punctuated-Equilibrium model, ACF model and Multiple Stream model indicate that Deborah's argument is valid. In the P-E model, the change of existing idea or appearance of new idea will bring turbulence to the policy process; in the ACF model, the learning process can change beliefs at different level, and these changes will bring feedbacks to the policy process; in the M-S model, policy entrepreneurs will use the opportunity to propose their ideas, and when critical time is come, the coupled stream will become policy.

Incremental Model suggests that policy process is not necessarily linked to struggling when the time span of the policy is very short. There could be no struggle when the whole policy process is already fixed. However, I think the origin/first policy in the incremental model is a result of idea struggling.

The Garbage Can model suggests that the choosing process within the policy process may appear as a random process, it is not necessarily to be the consequence of the idea struggling.

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