Policy Sciences (2004) 37: 339–356
DOI: 10.1007/s11077-005-0156-9

Policy and power: A conceptual framework between the 'old' and 'new' policy idioms

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Abstract. During the last few decades, both policy practices and policy idioms have drastically changed. Concepts such as interactive planning, network management, stakeholder dialogue, deliberative democracy, policy discourses, governance, etc. have replaced older ones such as public administration, policy programmes, interest groups, institutions, power, and the like. Although we recognise the relevance and importance of this shift in vocabulary, we also regret related 'losses'. We particularly regret that the concept of power has – in our view – become an 'endangered species' in the field of public policy analysis. We therefore will develop a framework to analyse power – being a multi-layered concept – in policy practices in this article. We will do so on the basis of the so-called policy arrangement approach, which combines elements of the old and new policy vocabularies. In addition, we draw upon different power theories in developing our argument and model. As a result, we hope to combine the best of two worlds, of the 'old' and the 'new' idioms in policy studies, and to achieve our two aims: to bring back in the concept of power in current policy analysis and to expand the policy arrangement approach from a power perspective.

Key words: policy analysis, policy arrangements, political modernisation, policy innovation, power analysis

Introduction

Recently, the policy studies have undergone a process of renewal. New vocabularies have been introduced and new theories have emerged. As Hajer (2003: 39) notes:

> *During the last decade, terms as 'governance', 'institutional capacity', 'networks', 'complexity', 'discourses', 'trust', 'deliberation' and 'interdependence' have captured our analytic imagination, whereas terms as 'state', 'government', 'power' and 'authority', 'loyality', 'sovereignty', 'participation' and 'interest groups' have obviously lost their attractiveness.*

These shifts in vocabulary reflect a number of trends in policy studies in general (Kumar, 1995; Hajer, 2000; Nelissen et al., 2000; Risse, 2002). Firstly, there is a tendency to re-value the contents of policy-making vis-à-vis organisational aspects (the 'argumentative' or 'cognitive turn'). Politics (and policy) is often portrayed as being situated between 'power' and 'rationality', between the furthering of crude interests and substantive argumentation. It seems as if the policy studies emphasised the former during the 1970s and 1980s, and have re-valued the latter since then. Secondly, the dominance of rational choice and structural approaches in the discipline during the 1970s and 1980s has been challenged by institutional analyses (Marsh and Olson, 1989; Scharpf, 1997). Rationalism, voluntarism and determinism have all been criticised for offering poor conceptualisations of the 'policy subject'. Today,

policy making is preferably conceptualised at the level of institutional arrangements, as the interplay between the agent and the structural level. Thirdly, the so-called 'post-modern condition' has reshaped policy analysis by making 'grand theories', 'essential knowledge' and 'scientific truth' suspect categories. Instead, we theorise about 'small stories', discourses, different interpretations of phenomena, fluid processes, the changing and multiple identities of actors and the social construction of 'facts'.

The introduction of new concepts raises the question whether we deal with 'newspeak' and 'hypes', or with notions referring to 'real' transformations in society. Although it is difficult to disentangle concepts and practices, it seems as if all kind of changes in current policy practices legitimise the introduction of new policy concepts. In their state-of-the-art on governance, Van Kersbergen and Van Waarden (2001) distinguish a number of shifts in policy practices. Horizontally, they refer to a (partial) shift from 'government' to 'multi-actor' or 'network governance', as all kind of new (private) actors have entered policy arenas and co-determine policy processes and outcomes nowadays. Vertically, there has been a (partial) shift from 'intergovernmentalism' to 'transnationalism', 'supranationalism' (EU) and 'multi-level governance'.

Although the new vocabulary does indeed capture current developments in policy practices, it also – in our view – tends to overlook phenomena that were so well analysed by the old vocabulary. One example is power, often neglected in the governance literature (see also Hewson and Sinclair, 1999). However, as Lasswell and Kaplan (1950: 75) note, 'the concept of power is perhaps the most fundamental in the whole of political science: the political process is the shaping, distribution, and exercise of power'. As we tend to fully agree with this quote, we believe that the concept of power is of the utmost importance to understand and explain policy practices. Besides, politics and policy making have in our view definitely not become more 'rational' or 'deliberative' today (something the new paradigm seems to suggest). Also, power games are an intrinsic part of argumentation processes. The capacity 'to argue, to name and to frame' on the basis of which outcomes in deliberations can be achieved is probably as uneven distributed among agents as 'hard' resources such as money, technology, knowledge, etc. are.

To understand shifts in governance on the one hand and to preserve some of the relevant classical concepts on the other, we developed the so-called 'policy arrangement approach' (Van Tatenhove et al., 2000; Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2000; Leroy et al., 2001; Arts and Leroy, 2003). We did so in dialogue with, reflecting on, and by criticising other policy approaches. We addressed theoretical notions such as 'policy networks' (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992; Van Waarden, 1992; Kickert et al., 1997), 'discourse coalitions' (Hajer, 1995; Dryzek, 1997), 'advocacy coalitions' (Sabatier, 1987), and 'power in policy processes' (Goverde et al., 2000). In addition, we were inspired by discussions about the agent-structure problematique in the social sciences, about Europeanisation and globalisation processes, and about the social construction of societal problems, knowledge and risks (Giddens, 1984; Beck, 1994; Held, 1995; Castells, 1996, 1997, 1998; Knill, 2001). As a consequence, the policy arrangement approach puts emphasis on: (1) the institutional embeddedness of multi-actor policy processes; (2) the manifestation of structural developments, such as globalisation, in

concrete policy practices; (3) the role of different faces of power in policy-making; and (4) the importance of both substance and organisation, as well as of change and continuity in policy practices.

With the policy arrangement approach, we intend to present a comprehensive framework building upon the Lasswellian commitments to the policy sciences. According to Lasswell (1971), policy sciences are concerned with knowledge *of* and *in* the decision making processes of the public and civic order. Moreover, policy sciences must strive for three principal attributes: contextuality, problem orientation and diversity (Lasswell, 1971: 1–4). The policy arrangements approach is contextual and problem oriented, because the key assumption is that policy decisions and policy making processes within *policy arrangements* (referring to the ordering of a specific policy field in terms of agents, resources, rules and discourses) are the result of the interplay of contextual processes of structural political and social change on the one hand (*political modernisation*) and problem-oriented renewal of policy making by agents in day-to-day practices on the other (*policy innovation*).

In this article we will further elaborate upon the concept of power. Although it is already an important element of the policy arrangement approach, yet – in our view – it is not fully developed so far nor put into perspective of the power literature in general. The objective to do so is not only to enrich the approach itself, but also to bring back in the central notion of power in current policy studies (compare: Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950). However, before we elaborate upon the concept of power itself, we will start with a general overview of our approach to inform the readers about its general characteristics. Next, in our framework of power, we draw upon Giddens' structuration theory and Clegg's three circuits of power (Giddens, 1984; Clegg, 1989), while being informed by the notions of power of other scholars, such as Weber, Dahl, Elias, Lukes and Foucault. Let us finalise this introduction by acknowledging that this paper is highly theoretical in nature, but that it will refer to empirical cases now and then. Given our expertise, these cases all relate to environmental politics, which does *not* imply that our policy approach is only applicable to this field.

The policy arrangement approach

Policy arrangements

A policy arrangement refers to the way in which a policy domain is shaped, in terms of organisation and substance, in a bounded time-space context. As an analytical concept it is comparable with Giddens' *practices*, Bourdieu's notion of *field* and the notion of *figuration* of Elias, because it tries to grasp the dynamics of policy making as the interplay of day-to-day interactions on the one hand and of macro-processes of social and political change on the other (Elias, 1970; Bourdieu, 1980; Giddens, 1984**)**. The definition of a policy arrangement allows for analysing substance *and* organisation as well as change *and* stability of policy making at different geographical and administrative levels. As far as the first dyad is concerned, one should acknowledge the fact that policy does not exist without *substance* (principles, objectives, measures etc.) or without *organisation* (departments, instruments, procedures, division of tasks

and competence etc.). In addition, a time-space notion that bounds policy arrangements is part of the definition. On the one hand, any shape of a policy domain is only temporary, as arrangements are under pressure of constant change, either by policy innovations on the ground or by processes of political modernisation (see below). On the other hand, policy arrangements are characterised by specific spatial boundaries, although this does not imply that these cannot transcend traditional ones, such as the nation state. Therefore, policy arrangements may evolve at different levels of policy-making – local, national and transnational – or interconnect these levels, e.g. as specific forms of *multi-level governance*.

The substantial and organisational characteristics of a policy arrangement can be analysed on the basis of four dimensions: policy coalitions, 'rules of the game', policy discourses, and resources (see for argumentation and theoretical underpinning: Van Tatenhove et al., 2000) . A *policy coalition* consists of a number of players who share resources and/or interpretations of a policy discourse, in the context of the rules of the game. As a consequence these coalitions identify (more or less) similar policy goals, and engage in policy processes to achieve those goals. In doing so, some coalitions may support the dominant policy discourse or rules of the game, while others might challenge these (*supporting* versus *challenging* coalitions). Given this definition, the concept of policy coalition is broader than for example Haas' conception of 'epistemic community' or Wengers' conception of 'community of practice', which particularly focus on the role of experts and learning in policy processes (Haas, 1990; Wenger, 1998).

The *rules of the game* delineate a policy domain. Although the different strains in new institutionalism have all different conceptions of rules, they all consider institutions as sets of rules that guide and constrain the behaviour of individual actors. According to theorists of the normative approaches within new institutionalism, rules work by determining 'appropriate' behaviour. For rational choice institutionalists, rules determine the basis of exchange between utility-maximising actors, whereas historical institutionalists look at how choices regarding the institutional design of government systems influence the future decision-making of individuals (March and Olson, 1984; Stone Sweet et al., 2001; Van Tatenhove and Goverde, 2002; Lowndes, 2002). Because new institutionalism is concerned with the informal conventions of political life as well as with formal constitutions and organisational structures, it is not only possible to grasp the interplay of formal and informal rules, but also to focus on 'rules of the game' outside the classical modernist institutions. In general, rules define the way the game should be played: which norms are legitimate, how issues may be raised; agendas set; interests articulated; policies formulated; decisions made; and measures implemented, e.g. by which procedures, by which allocation of tasks, and by which division of competencies between actors and organisations. In general, actors constantly draw upon rules that provide them with guidelines to act properly and legitimately. In fact, these rules generate the definition of meaningful and justified circumstances. They define those agents who are the 'right' political players to be involved, and those who are not. In addition, they define the interrelations between actors, and, as a consequence, they delineate the boundaries of policy coalitions: who is in and who is out; how one can get in, and what the relationship with outsiders is.

The dimension of *policy discourse* refers to the interpretative schemes actors make use of. A policy discourse can be defined as: 'A specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities' (Hajer, 1995: 44). On the basis of this definition we define policy discourses as dominant interpretative schemes, ranging from formal policy concepts to popular story lines, by which meaning is given to a policy domain. The dimension of *resources* is intrinsically linked to the concept of power. The concept of power will be extensively discussed in Section 3. In general, power has to be regarded, on the one hand, as the ability of actors to mobilise 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. The former refers to political power as a more or less permanent capacity of agents-in-interaction to achieve certain policy outcomes (Giddens, 1984; Guzzini, 1993; Held, 1995). However, to conceptualise power as capacities, relationships and outcomes at the agent level tends to ignore all those cases in which power is 'covertly', 'unnoticed' or 'unconsciously' exercised (Lukes, 1974). Power is also about the asymmetrical distribution of resources in a society (domination as a structural phenomenon), revealing itself in positions of autonomy and dependency between actors (dispositional phenomenon).

Political modernisation

To understand change of policy arrangements at the *structural* level, we developed the concept of political modernisation, which refers to processes of transformation within the political domain of society (Van Tatenhove, 1999; Van Tatenhove et al., 2000). Inspired by Held (1989) we define 'the political domain of society' as the setting in which different groups (from state, civil society and market) produce and distribute resources (power and domination), rules (rules of the game), and meaning (discourses) to shape public life.

Political modernisation is an analytical concept to understand structural transformations in relation to day-to-day political practices. Although we analytically distinguish between different phases of political modernisation, it is important to stress that political modernisation is *not* a simple, diachronic and evolutionary process, but is in our view complex, synchronic and (largely) unplanned. Political modernisation concerns the shifting relationships between the institutions of state, market and civil society in political domains within countries and beyond, implying new conceptions and structures of governance.

To grasp the dynamics of the process of political modernisation, we analytically distinguish between the first and the second phase of political modernisation. The first stage is closely linked to the project of 'early' modernity. This phase of the post-Second World War era is nation-state centred and is characterised by great optimism about the possibility of progress and the control over both society and nature (manageable society). In the political domain these discourses of progress and manageability are translated in the application of rationality and in a state machinery that should have the capacity to solve societal problems by rational policy making and comprehensive planning (*etatist* policy arrangements). This phase of political modernisation reflects

a relative insulation of state, market and civil society, with each sphere functioning according to its own rationales: bureaucracy, competition and solidarity, respectively.

The second phase of *political modernisation*, is closely linked to what some call post-modernity and others late or reflexive modernity (Beck, 1994, 2000; Albrow, 1996; Gibbins and Reimer, 1999). This phase of political modernisation reflects the redefinition of the 'manageable society', due to processes of globalisation and individualisation. Late and reflexive modernisation theorists understand contemporary changes as an accumulation *of* and *within* modernity (e.g. Giddens, 1990; Beck, 1994; Castells, 1996, 1997, 1997). The unforeseen consequences of the globalisation of risks are put at the forefront (e.g. climate change, GMOs, BSE), as these risks ever more shape politics and society. The side-effects of modernisation, captured by Beck (1996, 1998) as the emergence of the 'risk society', have become the pivot of governance for two reasons. First of all, the state can in part be held responsible for the fact that these risks were not properly regulated in the past, the so-called 'organised irresponsibility' of the modern state. Secondly, one may argue that some modern risks cannot be dealt with by the classical, state-centred system of the industrial society *in principle*. This situation has led to the decreasing centrality of the state as a political actor, and to an increasing role of politicisation within other spheres of society. Therefore, this phase of political modernisation assumes an increasing interweaving of state, market and civil society in new institutional arrangements, and an inevitable interference and co-operation between their respective agencies in policy making.

Policy innovation

To understand change of policy arrangements at the *agent* level, we introduced the concept of *policy innovation*. Policy innovation refers to the renewal of policy making in day-to-day interactions in arrangements. The basic driving force of policy innovation is the decision of policy actors 'to do things otherwise'. They may do things otherwise, because – for example – the conditions of policy making may have changed, policy-makers may have experienced the ineffectiveness or unintended consequences of policy making, agents may develop new policy intentions, or 'shock events' may alter the daily perceptions of agents. However, to avoid a 'voluntarist pitfall', we presuppose that human action is highly routinised and patterned, due to the fact that it is embedded in institutional structures and processes (Giddens, 1984).

An example of policy innovation in the environmental field is the reformulation of nuclear energy policy after the Tjernobyl disaster in most Western Europe. This shock event unmasked the unintended consequences of nuclear energy at European level, and most countries – confronted with nuclear fall-out – decided to phase out their nuclear programmes, and put more emphasis on sustainable energy based on wind, water and sun power (although still moderately). In other words, policy-makers decided to do things otherwise on the basis of a shock event. Another example is the introduction of bottom-up approaches in environmental policy making in the Netherlands (and other countries) (Driessen and Glasbergen, 2002). Due to the fact that the old, top-down style of policy making turned out quite ineffective in the 1980s, as stakeholders did not feel committed, policy-makers started experiments with interactive policy making in the 1990s. Stakeholders were frequently consulted, and even allowed to actively

participate in policy formulation and decision making themselves. At the same time, we know that (environmental) policy making is highly routinised. So-called SOPs (standard operation procedures) are operative in bureaucratic policy making, and remain to be operative, while old-fashioned policy styles survive. Policy-makers may even fall back on old routines, as Dutch agricultural policy making shows. Whereas this sector embraced network steering a few years ago, it partly fell back on top-down policy styles after the outbreak of classical swein fever in 1998 (Van Tatenhove, 2001).

Policy innovations can be initiated from each of the four dimensions of a policy arrangement. Policy agents may decide: (1) to allow more or new actors to participate in policy making or in coalition formation; (2) to reshape power relations, for example by adding to, or withdrawing, resources from a policy arrangement; (3) to reformulate the rules of the game on the basis of which policies are made; and (4) to reformulate the policy discourse concerned, for example by redefining its core concepts (Arts and Van Tatenhove, 2000). However, innovations in one dimension tend to have consequences for other dimensions, and even for the arrangement as a whole. In other words, in some cases changes have been initiated by new coalitions (e.g. the participation of citizen groups), whereas in other cases they are provoked by innovative discourses, or reinforced by rules and resources, setting off a chain reaction of changes in all dimensions. Finally, this chain may lead to the change of *entire* policy arrangements.

The renewal of policy arrangements

The interplay between political modernisation and policy innovation may lead to the renewal of policy arrangements. To analyse this process of change, we need a classification of policy arrangements (which we have to keep simple in this paper, given its objective to analyse the concept of power). In *etatist* arrangements, the traditional state institutions are the ultimate loci of authoritative power and they therefore largely determine the contents and the organisation of policies. In *(neo-)corporatist* arrangements political authority is shared by the state and some acknowledged intermediate organisations of 'stakeholders' in certain policy domains, especially trade unions and employers' organisations (e.g. social security and welfare policies). *(Neo-)liberal* arrangements are characterised by the domination of market agents. However, late modernity, as we have seen in the above, is characterised by the intermingling of state, market and civil society, thus giving shape to mixed and new policy arrangements, such as *civic, private, network* and *interactive* ones.

Policy arrangements at international level are of a rather different nature to domestic ones, and the above notions – statist, corporatist, liberal – are therefore less applicable. Traditionally, the *intergovernmental* arrangement is predominant. In these arrangements state agents – heads of state, prime ministers, diplomats, government representatives – determine political outcomes (Ray, 1987; Hocking and Smith, 1990). However, private organisations have played (minor) roles in international policy making for a long time, and did so even in the days of the League of Nations (Woods, 1993). Since the Second World War, though, the position of non-state actors – NGOs, business lobbies, 'epistemic communities' etc. – has certainly been strengthened, both in the EU and the UN. Simultaneously the power of these international organisations has increased. Also, the distinction between 'the domestic' and 'the international' has

become blurred, as international politics has ever more become characterised by multi-level games (Putnam, 1988; Hooghe and Marks, 2001). Authors therefore refer to a (partial) shift from one-level, intergovernmental arrangements to multi-level *transnational* and *supranational* ones in global and European arenas, respectively. Today, a wide range of private and public actors – governments, intergovernmental organisations, supranational institutions, market parties and/or civil agents – co-determine political outcomes within these arenas (Keohane and Nye, 1971, 1989; Risse-Kappen, 1995; Hoogenboom, 1998; Arts et al., 2001).

However, results of empirical research in different sub-domains of policy making, for example in environmental policy making such as climate change, infrastructure, nature conservation and agriculture, show that there is no clear, evolutionary path of arrangement development (Van Tatenhove et al., 2000). At least in environmental policy making, there is no predominant movement away from traditional, (inter)statist arrangements, in which the state plays the dominant role, towards innovative policy arrangements, in which the influence of market and civil society stakeholders has increased. In other words, there is no diachronic development from etatist, intergovernmental, corporatist and liberal arrangements to civic, private, network, interactive, multi-level, transnational and supranational ones. Instead, we observe a synchronic plurality of policy arrangements, existing within a policy domain and between policy domains. In some areas we see the state withdrawing (energy and waste), while increasing its influence in others (infrastructure, agriculture). We see new arrangements between state and civil society being established, while elsewhere the state adheres strictly to its privileges. We see patterns of traditionally privileged interaction between state and market being broken down, while such patterns are re-established in other domains. And we see unexpected *private* arrangements emerging, such as 'green alliances' of NGOs and firms (Arts, 2002).

Power: A multi-layered concept

One dimension of a policy arrangement is 'resources', a concept intrinsically related to the one of 'power'. Policy-making presupposes power, in the sense that in policy domains agents need to mobilise resources in order to be able to act and intervene. At the same time, the structural properties of the arrangement in which they are embedded (unequally) constrain or enable them in so doing. Likewise, the *change* of arrangements is related to power. Policy change presupposes strategic intervention, based on agent power, as well as a process of re-institutionalisation, based on structural power. In order to analyse this linkage between change and power, we will develop a three-layered model below. But before we will elaborate upon this framework, we shortly go into the general power debate, in order to be able to position the model as well as to design it step-by-step.

The power debate

The concept of power is essentially contested (Lukes, 1974; Baldwin, 2002). It seems as if there are as many definitions and approaches as there are power analysts. Some

define power in terms of 'having resources', or *dispositional* power (money, knowledge, personnel, weapons, reputation, etc.), while others define it in terms of achieving outcomes, or *relational* power (e.g. A influencing B); some consider power in mere *organizational* terms (organizations, resources, rules, bargaining), while others consider it in *discursive* terms (knowledge, story lines, discourses, deliberation); some relate power to conflict-oriented zero-sum games, or *transitive* power (A achieves something at the cost of B), while others relate it to social integration and collective outcomes, or *intransitive* power (A and B achieving something together); and some situate power at the level of the acting *agent* (the swimming fish), while others situate it at the level of *structures* (the water putting pressure on the fish) (Clegg, 1989; Brouns, 1993; Hajer, 1995; Goverde et al., 2000). In addition, different authors distinguish different dimensions in the concept of power: one face, two faces, two levels, three dimensions, three circuits, etc. (Dahl, 1957, 1961; Bachrach and Baratz, 1962; Weber, 1964; Lukes, 1974; Giddens, 1984; Clegg, 1989).

This paper takes the following positions into this power debate. First of all, the focus is both on agents *having* resources in policy arrangements as well as on agents *achieving* policy outcomes. Therefore we take Giddens' definition of power – the capacity of agents to achieve outcomes in social practices – as a starting point (Giddens, 1984). Yet one cannot equate resources and outcomes (Keohane and Nye, 1989). To have (access to) resources is one thing, to use them and become effective another. Secondly, power will be considered both in organizational and discursive terms below. After all, policy agents may become influential not only by organizational resources, like money, personnel, tactics, but also by arguments and persuasion, or by both. At first glance, this seems quite obvious. Yet some scholars in political science do not relate arguing and persuasion to power, as in the end the one who should be influenced simply agrees with you. For them, power is always exercised *against the will of others* (Weber, 1964). However, arguing and persuasion, if successful, nonetheless imply the 'power of arguments', and hence transcend 'simply agreeing' (Risse, 2002). Thirdly, power games are not necessarily zero-sum games, although this may be the case. For example, policy coalition A may win in certain political struggles at the cost of policy coalition B, and vice versa. In other circumstances, however, these coalitions may also join hands, and achieve something *together*. Obviously, different political processes raise different power games, either transitive or intransitive. Fourthly, the power concept used in this paper is definitely multi-layered. Actors do have and exercise power, but are always embedded in historically and socially constructed structures, e.g. in terms of institutions and discourses. These to a substantial degree constitute their identities as well as enable and constrain certain types of behaviour more than others. Given the above considerations, the concept is, for the moment, defined as follows: *power is the organisational 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.*

Substantial part of the power debate is dedicated to the question of what dimensions the concept consists of. One milestone in this debate has been the well-known article *Two Faces of Power* of Bachrach and Baratz (1962), who criticised the one-dimensional view of Dahl. Whereas the latter focused on how community leaders

influenced certain issues in local political decision-making in his famous book *Who Governs?* (1961), the former argued that power is not only exercised through decision-making itself, but also by excluding issues from the political agenda, hence by *non*-decision-making. Therefore power consists, according to Bachrach and Baratz, of two faces, and not of one. For Weber (1964), power consists of two faces as well (although he himself does not use the vocabulary of 'faces'). On the one hand, he conceptualises power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber, 1964: 152). On the other hand, Weber puts this power concept in the context of 'structures of domination', based on the (uneven) distribution of economic resources and social and political authority. These structures of domination form the basis on which the actual exercise of intentional power rests (see also: Gerth and Wright Mills, 1982; Clegg, 1989).

In the 1970s, this power dimensions debate continued, and Lukes, in his much-cited *Power: A Radical View* (1974), added a third one. He criticised both Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz for focusing too much on actors, behaviour and observable conflicts, while neglecting the subtle, often hidden power mechanisms through which issues are kept out of politics. This is also referred to as 'the mobilization of bias', which occurs through (hidden) individual actions, social forces or institutional practices. This power process, both through agency and structure, favours, according to Lukes, certain interests over others, even though 'the dominated' are not aware of that most of the time. Particularly this last position, which comes close to the Marxist view on the 'false consciousness' of the ruled classes, has been criticised. For example Giddens (1984) rejects this view and considers agencies being 'capable' and 'knowledgeable' in principle, which implies that (groups of) people cannot simply be dominated at their own expense for long, as if this is the 'normal' situation. Sooner or later, people will acknowledge and re-act. Therefore Giddens returned to Weber as well as to Bachrach and Baratz, stripped Lukes' third dimension, and re-framed the two faces of power and domination in the context of his structuration theory (see below).

Unhappy with Giddens' view, which he considers too much of an agency-oriented approach, Clegg (1989) introduced his three circuits of power, which consists of *episodic*, *dispositional* and *facilitative* power, respectively, building on Dahl, Parsons, Weber, Foucault and Laclau and Mouffe, amongst others. The first 'episodic' circuit relates to agency, causal mechanisms and outcomes, the second 'dispositional' one to social integration, discourses and rules of the game in organizations, and the third 'facilitative' circuit to system integration, disciplinarian power and domination at the systemic level of societies as a whole. These three circuits are highly interdependent. Episodic power produces – through agencies – certain outcomes, potentially affecting the other two circuits of power, dispositional power 'fixes' agencies in organizations in terms of meaning, rules and resources (they prescribe certain positions, roles and views), and facilitative power enable and constrain agencies in social relations (they define what is normal and legitimate in social practices, although agents may of course resist).

Although this model is highly sophisticated and inspiring, we do not adopt it in this paper unchanged. What we do adopt is the *general format* of Clegg's three-circuit model, as we consider it an innovative step compared to earlier multi-layered models.

It transcends the outdated decision/non-decision debate in which Dahl, Bachrach and Baratz and Lukes were engaged, the Marxist heritage in Lukes' writings as well as the rather abstract, meta-theoretical 'duality of structure' model of Giddens, which, moreover, tends to overemphasise the role of agency vis-à-vis structure. However, Clegg in our view does the opposite: undertheorizing the role of agency. By importing (aspects of) the post-structuralist power theory of Foucault in his scheme, particularly in his third circuit of facilitative power, Clegg seems to de-centre the subject and tends to deny its agency. For Foucault (1984: 89–90): 'Power is not an *institution* nor a *structure* nor a certain *capacity* which some possess: it is the name which is given to a complex strategic situation by a certain society' (translation and *italics* by the authors). For Foucault, power is a flow-like, diffuse characteristic of social practices, which operates through *discourse* – instead of through the Government (actor) or the Law (rule) – and which *disciplines* – instead of subordinates or excludes – ordinary people. Discourses define what normal and legitimate behaviour is. In their construction, mainstream (scientific) knowledge plays a crucial role: the social sciences define appropriate social behaviour, the medicinal sciences a healthy life style and normal sex life, criminology the treatment of deviant people, etc. These discourses penetrate the minds and bodies of individuals. With that, power produces effects much more subtle and invisible than through 'A influencing B'.

Although we consider Foucault's power framework thought-provoking, we nonetheless still prefer to attach the concept of power to social actors on the one hand and (changeable) structures of domination on the other (such as Weber and Giddens do). We fear that with a Foucauldian power concept the knowledgeability and capability of human agencies to intervene in social systems – an important premise for any meaningful policy analysis – will be too easily denied. Hence, although there are feedback loops between the different circuits of power in Clegg's model, and although Clegg considers resistance to domination a relevant option for human beings, we still consider his model (potentially) too determinist in nature. Therefore, as far as *substance* of the three-circuit model is concerned, we go back to Giddens' structuration theory. This is not to say that we prefer a voluntarist approach. In our view, structures do exist, but they are *internal* to human action, manifest themselves *in* human action, are to be (re)produced and transformed *by* human actions, and are *changeable* in principle, although they transcend individual life histories, and therefore seem to exist independent of human agency. Yet, to understand the institutionalisation of policy arrangements, we are convinced that we need a conception of power that makes it possible to acknowledge *both* the influence of actors on the development of policies in policy arrangements *and* the impact of the structural context in which actors operate (compare Goverde and Van Tatenhove, 2000: 107). Therefore, in the next section we will develop a three-layered model on power to grasp this link.

A three-layered model on power and policy

Table 1 gives an overview of our three-layered model on power and policy. The first layer – which is very much alike Clegg's first episodic circuit – refers to *relational power*, and hence to agents who are capable of achieving outcomes in interactions. This layer is also referred to as 'power as capacity' or as 'agent power' in the literature,

Table 1. Three layers of power.

Type of power	Focus	Policy concept
Relational (transitive & intransitive)	Achievement of policy outcomes by agents in interaction	Policy innovation
Dispositional	Positioning of agents in arrangements mediated by rules and resources	Policy arrangement
Structural	Structuring of arrangements mediated by orders of signification, domination and legitimisation	Political modernisation

but it does not make sense to speak of power as if it were an amulet of one single actor (Lasswell and Kaplan, 1950; Weber, 1964; Elias, 1970; Goehler, 2000). *Power is always constituted and exerted in social relationships*. Therefore we prefer to use the notion of *relational* power with regard to this first layer, implying actors, resources, outcomes and interactions as the constitutive elements of power at this level. However, two sub-types can be entangled here. As already referred to in the above, Goehler (2000) distinguishes between *transitive* and *intransitive* power. The former refers to power struggles, to actors achieving outcomes *against* the will of others in a zero-sum game, the latter encompasses the ensemble of relationships constituting a group of people as a community. It exists in the *joint practices* of actors. This distinction is also an important one in the context of this paper, as both forms of relational power are to be linked to policy making. In policy making, actors struggle for certain individual outcomes, and a victory for one may be a loss to another (transitive power). At the same time, policy making aims at achieving common ends for the benefit of a policy community as a whole (intransitive power).

The second layer, as in Clegg's model, refers to *dispositional* power, which shapes the 'agency's capacity to act' (Clegg, 1989: 84). Through this type of power, agents are positioned in organisations vis-à-vis each other, and these positions co-determine what agents may achieve in terms of relational power. Rules and resources mediate this process of positioning. Organisational rules define and legitimise what position agents in an organisation may occupy, and the division of allocative and authoritative resources determine the relative autonomy and dependency of an agent in a certain position. It should be noted here that positions, shaped by rules and resources, should not be objectified or reified, as agents through relational power always produce organisations. However, the constitution of an organisation transcends the day-to-day relational power of agencies, and therefore organisations seem to have a life of their own. And they *have*, e.g. in terms of constraints organisations pose on human action in the real life world. At the same time, we should not disentangle organisational structures from human action, as the latter constitute the former. This view also has the advantage of offering possibilities to theorise about intentional, organisational change.

The third layer, finally, refers to *structural* power, that is the way macro-societal structures shape the nature and conduct of agents, being both individuals and collectivities (organisations!). This layer differs from Clegg's third facilitative power circuit in the sense that meta-theoretically we relate our model to Giddens' structuration theory.

Hence, in our model, structural power refers to orders of signification, legitimisation and domination, which are 'materialised' in discourses as well as in political, legal and economic institutions of societies (Giddens, 1984). Mediated by these discourses and institutions, (collective) agents give meaning to the social world, consider some acts and thoughts legitimate, and others not, and are enabled or constrained to mobilise resources to achieve certain outcomes in social relationships. This mobilisation process is based on 'structured asymmetries of resources', which is given in any order of domination. This means that agents have uneven access to the constitution and use of resources. Here again, the 'capacity of structures' should not be subjectified or objectified. Structures, orders and institutions cannot *act*, nor do they mechanistically *determine* the conduct of agents. They affect human conduct *through* human conduct, although – more than in the case of organisations – structures generally have a *long durée*, which transcend the lifetime of an individual agent or of collective organisations, and from that perspective these *exist*. Yet structures are linked to human action, albeit indirectly and in a distantiated time-space context.

Power, change and stability in policy making

Policy making is a dynamic process, which takes place in the context of processes of political modernisation and day-to-day policy innovations. In interactions between a variety of agents, problems are being defined, solutions are being suggested and measurements are implemented, both with regard to substance and organisation in issue-areas. These outcomes are however always biased, favouring some agents more than others. In other words, policy activities, policy change and political power have to be studied and analysed in one framework. In doing so, the link between structure and agency needs to be grasped in an interconnected way.

At the level of *policy innovation*, agents (may) have the capacity to enforce its will on others and/or the capacity to act in concert to achieve common ends. On this level relational power is the most dominant kind of power. It concerns the capacity of agents to 'name' and 'frame' societal problems as political and policy problems, and to mobilise resources to formulate and realise the most desirable solutions. In doing so, policy agents may decide to 'do things otherwise', and renew policy making, either by overruling 'conservative forces' that defend the *status quo* (transitive power), or by collectively changing rules of the game and/or policy discourses (intransitive power).

Second, at the level of *policy arrangements*, power is a dispositional phenomenon. Policy agents are positioned vis-à-vis each other in arrangements on the basis of the rules of the game as well as on the basis of an asymmetrical division of allocative and authoritative resources. This positioning co-determines what agents may achieve in terms of relational power and policy innovation. Yet these positional characteristics of policy arrangements may change as well. For example, coalitions may challenge the rules of the game in case they consider these as outdated or discriminating, and try to realise the most suitable organisational design for politics. Through a process of political emancipation, these agents may achieve that certain policy arrangements will become more responsive to them as well as to their preferences and demands. For example, an arrangement may change from a more elitist to a more pluralist one.

Also, modernisation processes – through certain political agencies – may pressurise policy arrangements 'to adapt' to the demands of a new era. As was referred to in the above, the classical *etatist* approach of policy making, based on a ideology of rational design and a manageable society, does for example not match the era of late modernity and the risk society very well.

Third, at the level of *political modernisation* structural power is predominant. Structural power refers to meta-discourses on governance (signification), to the 'right way' of doing politics (legitimisation), and to structured asymmetries of resources (domination). These orders, substantiated in the institutions of the state, market and civil society, shape the nature of policy arrangements. In the above, it was shown that these orders and institutions have changed over time, which has implied a 'synchronic pluralisation' of policy arrangements (instead of a 'diachronic evolution'). This process has definitely enabled some policy agents more than others. However, political modernisation refers to the – at first sight – *autonomous* change of orders and institutions, with consequences for the nature of policy arrangements and policy making. However, structural change is never 'autonomous', but linked to human conduct, as was already explicated in the above several times.

So far the concept of power has been related to policy *change*, both at the agent and structural levels, in this section. However, power is also an appropriate tool to analyse *stability* in policy arrangements. In fact, policy arrangements are orders of domination. For example, in the first phase of political modernisation, the state is the predominant 'power container'. This means that political authority is concentrated in the hands of the state, leaving other public players with much less leverage. Such a situation can be very stable, and may to a large extent determine political outcomes. Yet one can distinguish different types of policy arrangements within the nation state model, implying other (stable) power structures and relations. Corporatist arrangements, for example, can be characterised by a typical institutional form of power exchange relations between the state and (a small number of) interest groups, to which a formal, representative status is granted in policy formulation, decision making and implementation. While the state provides information, entrance, influence, status and a quasi-monopoly, the interest groups provide expertise, co-operation, discipline and legitimisation (Frouws, 1993: 43). This allocation of power to a large extent determines the capabilities of these actors (and of those not involved), and thereby the political outcome of this kind of arrangement. In other arrangements (e.g. liberal, civic, private or transnational ones) the allocation of authoritative resources and, therefore, the division of political power is different, leading to other kinds of resource dependencies (Liefferink, 1995). In liberal arrangements, for instance, state authorities are dependent on those who control resources they do not have themselves. For example, the need for economic expertise and investment capital makes state agencies dependent on companies, private consultants, banks etc. In other cases, NGOs such as Amnesty International or Greenpeace International provide the necessary political legitimacy to state agencies, thus exercising political influence (Willets, 1982; Arts, 1998). It goes without saying that in such cases of mutual resource dependency political power is less concentrated and more diffuse.

Conclusion

In this paper we discussed the relationship between power and policy. As the vocabulary of the policy studies has recently changed, due to amongst others the cognitive and post-modern turns in the social sciences, we thought it opportune to discuss this issue. After all, the concept of power has lost importance in this new idiom, something we regret. Therefore this article not only aimed to bring back in this classical concept into the policy studies, but also to combine insights of both the old and the new vocabularies of the policy studies in order to increase our understanding of the relationship between power and policy. We did so by presenting a specific model, which builds on our policy arrangement approach, Clegg's circuits of power and Giddens' structuration theory. As a consequence, we presented three layers of power: (1) relational power linked to agencies-in-interaction at the level of policy innovation, either in its transitive form (zero-sum power games) or intransitive form (power games in joint practices); (2) dispositional power linked to organisational rules and resources at the level of policy arrangements; and (3) structural power linked to orders of signification, legitimisation and domination at the level of political modernisation.

Policy making is a dynamic process, in which the organisation and the substance of policy constantly change. To understand these processes of change, we introduced the concepts of policy arrangement, political modernisation and policy innovation. With these concepts, we have tried to combine an analysis at the level of structural, social and political change and an analysis at the level of strategic conduct and social interactions. The first level focuses on the formation and institutionalisation of policy arrangements as a result of changing relations between state, civil society and market, the second level emphasises the arguments actors use in interaction, the norms and values actors stand for and their definitions of problems and possible solutions. At the same time, we assume that policy-making is a multi-level power game. Therefore, in our view, and in accordance with our policy arrangement approach, power has to be studied and analysed at three interconnected levels: at the level of policy innovation (relational power); at the level of policy arrangements (dispositional power) and at the level of political modernisation (structural power). With that, power is not restricted to the relational mobilisation of resources or the achievement of outcomes by actors alone, but it also includes dispositional and structural phenomena.

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