

IPSA (RC 32) 2013 Conference
‘Europeanization of public administration and policy:
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University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Social Sciences
PhD program in Policy Analysis

HOW MUCH DOES CIVIL SOCIETY MATTER?
BUILDING A MODEL FOR ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF CIVIL SOCIETY
IN YOUTH POLICY-MAKING

PhD Research proposal

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Rationale and background

Public policy is considered to be one of the most propulsive fields in social sciences over the past several decades (Fischer, Miller, Sidney, 2007). Analogue with the development of public administration and increased complexity of modern Western states, public policy analysis has rapidly started finding its spot at universities, civil society organizations, governmental bodies etc.

Countries on the territory of former Yugoslavia do not have a long tradition in policy studies. In our languages, just as in many other European languages, there is no difference between terms politics, policy, polity as in English. Thus descriptive phrase *javne politike* is used to describe a “purposive and consistent course of action produced as a response to a perceived problem of a constituency, formulated by a specific political process, and adopted, implemented, and enforced by a public agency” (Hayes, 2009). In Croatia first texts on public policy¹ appeared in the late 1980s by Ivan Grdešić (1987), Marko Baskin (1987) and Kasapović and Grdešić (1987). First books on policy analysis in Croatia were published in the mid-1990s; in Croatia *Političko odlučivanje* by Ivan Grdešić in 1995 and in Slovenia *Analiza politika* by Danica Fink Hafner and Damjan Lajh (2002). Lately there has been more and more young scholars writing on the issue of policy in different contexts such as Ana Petak, Krešimir Petković, Anamarija Musa, Danijela Dolenc, Anka Kekez Koštro and Nikola Baketa in Croatia and Simona Kustec Lipicer, Matej Knep, Urška Štremfel, Novak Meta and Topolinjak Simona in Slovenia.

This study seeks to contribute the study of public policy, especially in the youth policy field. The main goal of this study is to assess the impact of civil society actors on various stages of policy process.

Research questions and hypothesis

¹ For more references on the development of public policy in Croatia and Slovenia see texts: *Javne politike u Hrvatskoj i svijetu* by Zdravko Petak, published in the book *Izlazak iz množine*, ed. Mirjana Kasapović (2007) and Fink-Hafner (2009) *Policy analysis developments in Slovenia*.

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- 1 Is it possible to build a model which will compare inputs of non-state actors in the decision making stage with outcomes of a certain policy by using (upgraded) policy style approach?
- 2 Can this model be applied for the analysis of youth policy?

Hypothesis 1: There is a compatibility of civil society’s inputs in policy process and outcomes of policies with policy style theory.

Hypothesis 2: Youth policy, due to its characteristics, is suitable for the analysis. Groups and individuals gathered around youth issues

Novelty and relevance

This dissertation is relevant because it tackles two existing policy issues. The first one is an evaluation of outcomes. In the study I will analyze the possibility to expand policy style approach and put it in a context. By combining civil society theories and evaluative research features, I will try to get a comprehensive insight in the relationship between government and civil society, as well as evaluate their effectiveness. The second policy issue I am dealing with is youth policy-making. This study tends to explain how government uses inputs given from civil society and what their impact on young people are. Moreover, there is a public perception that measures for young people do not work and civil society actors blame a government for that, whereas a government argues it accepts most of inputs from civil society. In order to understand what the case is, I am proposing a framework for the analysis.

The novelty of this dissertation is following. Firstly, Richardson’s, Gustafsson’s and Jordan’s policy style approach (1982) in its original does not include outcomes. My study’s intention is to include outcomes in review of actors within policy style perspective. By doing that, I believe, one would get a better and detailed insight in results and responses of policies and correct possible weaknesses in their implementation. Secondly, this research focuses on youth policies in Croatia, an area not scientifically covered adequately. In Zagreb there are few researchers dealing with young people (V. Ilišin and D. Potočnik) however there is a lack of researcher focused on policy perspective of youth issues. Apart from the importance of the topic, even the European Union in its White Paper A New Impetus for European Youth (2001: 75) addressed

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evidence based youth research as factor of improving status of young people. Tendency of this dissertation is to help in that.

Preliminary literature review

Meta-approach that will be used in this study is systems theory which sees political process as a processual activity. Hence, I acknowledge Easton’s idea of political process in which, as he claims, a political system is an interrelated set of activities, roles, and institutions that operates within an environment which provides inputs to the political system and then translates these inputs into policy outputs (Easton, 1974). E. O Vendung (in 1997 and later elaborated in 2002) adopted Easton’s *black box model* and proposed an evaluation model based on three main stages: inputs, outputs and results. Vendung proposes policy cycles starts with inputs from interested public, than administration implementing some of inputs which ends with certain results. He distinguishes two types of results – outcomes (the impact of the specific policy on the target group) and effects (the general scope of changes in given society). I seek to explore the role of civil society in those three stages. Whereas there has been theoretical attempts to evaluate the role of civil society in the early phases of policy process, the novelty of this study is the fact it focuses on outcomes. In other words, this dissertation will answer the question: “How many inputs of civil society is there in outcomes of a specific policy and how can we frame that?”

For building a model for the assessment of the role of civil society, three theoretical concepts will be combined: civil society theories, more concretely non-state policy actors’ theories; policy style approach for the identification of the relationship between non-state actors and government and outcome evaluation framework.

Civil society as a policy actor

Kustec Lipicer in her text on typology of policy actors in the EU (2006) emphasizes the criterion of attachment to state as a pivotal for the analysis of policy actors. Therefore interaction between state and non-state actors is relevant for a comprehensive understanding of policy structure to be

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studied. The term civil society usually refers to the ‘state-society’ relations in a regime. It is considered to be a sphere in which there are active citizens with the basic principle of freedom of association and solidarity. Perhaps the most comprehensive, concise and analytically the most appropriate definition for the terms of this thesis is one by the Philippe Schmitter. According to him, “civil society can be defined as a set or system of self-organized intermediary groups that: 1) are relatively independent of both public authorities and private units of production and reproduction, that is, of firms and families; 2) are capable of deliberating about and taking collective actions in defense or promotion of their interests or passions; 3) do not seek to replace either state agents or private (re)producers or to accept responsibility for governing the polity as a whole; and 4) agree to act within pre-established rules of a “civil” nature, that is, conveying mutual respect” (Schmitter, 1997; 240).

The study of civil society attempts to “identify and explain the emergence of social forces which play a political role in establishing the state-society relationship“. (Baker, 2002). Civil society organization, together with experts, unions, political parties² in democratic societies should be involved in decision making process throughout consultation and expert advices. As Casey states:

The intervention of NGOs as policy actors must be founded upon a solid base of political and cognitive legitimacy; i.e., they must have the capacity to demonstrate that they have a broad political base and that they are experts in the theory and practice of the policy in question. They must also have the ability to "play" the game of participation. [...] Cooperation is articulated through commissions, advisory boards and other formal channels of liaison, consultation and oversight as well as other mechanisms, such as public hearings, which allow actors to comment formally on legislative and administrative proposals.

(Casey, 1998: 22)

The idea of this research is to address actors and their specific knowledge on the issue, therefore only civil society organizations (think tanks, national youth councils, and voluntary services) will be taken into consideration. The question needs to be answered for the purpose of this study is: why is civil society important enough for being an independent variable of the research? I argue that only civil society, particularly a part of civil society dedicated to youth topics, in comparison

² For the purpose of this study from the concept of civil society political parties and unions will be excluded.

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with other actors such as unions and/or political parties, has a relevant knowledge on youth issues. Their specific interest in the topic and knowledge is, in my opinion an argument strong enough to put it in the given perspective of this study. Accordingly, Vendung’s approach, in order to elaborate policy-making process thoroughly, will be supplemented by Hood’s typology (1983) and nodality (the way how government acquire knowledge or use information to affect behavior) addressed as a realm throughout youth policy making will be investigated. Moreover, from my point of view, youth policy is only declaratory important to politicians in Croatia. Political parties still do not realize a true potential and importance of it. Thus they are not motivated to fully understand needs and problems of youth population. All of that leaves civil society as one actor the most interested and competent for dealing with youth. In the dissertation this argumentation line will be elaborated in details.

In addition to actors’ theory of civil society in policy process and in order to examine the relationship between a government and interest groups I will use policy style concept.

Policy style

Jeremy Richardson in his well-known book *Policy Styles in Western Europe* (1982) offered his perception of policy style model that has become a focal point of research in that matter within policy studies. He argues that policy style of a certain country “identify the main characteristics of the ways in which a given society formulates and implements its public policies” (Richardson, 1982: 2). He bases the distinction of policy styles on two criteria: (1) a governments’ approach to problem solving (can be anticipatory/active and reactive) and (2) a relationship between government and various interest groups (imposing vs. reactive) (ibid 12-13). Simplified, this distinction is about the way different policy actors interact mutually, particularly non state and state actors. Thus the concept of policy style was dedicated to the study of “policy-making and implementation style “and was oriented towards the analysis of “deep-rooted values in society” (Ibid: 2). In that sense; France stands for an étatist policy style, the United Kingdom for a liberal policy style and Germany and the Netherlands share a rather similar neo-corporatist one (van Waarden, 1997).

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Apart from model proposed in Richardson’s book, there has been several other relevant ideas on policy style and their position in policy studies. German author Jürgen Feick (1990) provides an analytical discussion of the existing literature on policy styles and shows how policy styles are “the processes of decision making and/or implementation, in which actors handle in interaction with each other, according to institutional rules, to their own cognitive and normative orientations, to their personal preferences for different procedures and according to their own interests positions” (Ibid: 209). In his text *Policy instruments, policy styles and policy implementation* (1991) Michael Howlett is primarily concerned with the development of theory of policy instruments. In order to examine policy instruments in different countries he puts his analysis in the context of policy style. Howlett argues Richardson’s model is too broad, therefore he introduces “observed preferences of national governments for certain types of instruments given the nature state-society relationship” (Howlett, 1991: 16) as a factor in the study of policy style. This innovation suggests the existence of subjectivity of the government in their choice of ways for implementation of public policies.

Bearing this in mind there are several advantages of using policy style as an approach for the study of political process. As Freeman states “the ultimate goal of the analysis of policy styles is to develop generalizations about the consequences of adopting one style over other (Freeman, 1985: 476). It is suitable for the analysis of policy process due to its capacity to embrace institutional, cultural and individual factors in a specific political process. Policy style approach can help scholars to comprehend eclecticism of the social and political world. Furthermore, policy style is an adequate tool for mapping various groups in society and their impact on decision-makers. This is a system model that puts government in the center of the political process and observes relationships from that point of view. Study of policy styles reverses Lowi’s argument (1964) on policy determined by politics into politics determined by policy.

However, despite all advantages of policy style approach, there are some shortages. The first one is that this approach focuses only on pre-decision-making stage of the policy process. It is difficult if not impossible to analyze outcomes using only policy style. Moreover, policy style approach has difficulties to explain variations in the relationship between interest groups and government after the government and/or regime change. In addition to those critiques, there is

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one the most severe - sectoral critique. Proponents of this critique (Freeman, 1985) argue that national policy style is difficult to determine due to variations in sectors within a government. There are different sectors in government with different organization forms and organization culture. Due to those differences a single policy style cannot be identified.

Outcome evaluation

Lots of policy work does not focus on outcome evaluation, however outcomes are perhaps the most important part of policy process. Outcomes are derived from outputs and can be defined as effects of a certain policy on a group that that policy had an intention to effect (for example young people are a group to which youth policy tackles). Outcome based evaluation is a way how to identify whether target group benefits from programs, taxes, laws and other outputs. One of reasons why outcome evaluation is yet unexplored is difficulty of measuring them. Outcome evaluation is often referred as *measuring the difference* and it is “a type of evaluation that investigates whether changes occur for participants in a program and if these changes are associated with a program or an activity” (Allen, Bronte-Tinkew, 2008).

This study seeks to unified analysis which synthesizes the various approaches outlined.

Analytical framework

The basic unit of analysis in the proposed study is, generally speaking, the interaction between civil society organizations, government and results of those interaction. More concretely, civil society tends to influence policy in order to achieve social or/and political change. It provides some inputs towards government. Relationship between government and civil society as well as the way government solves issues is reflected in different policy styles. There has been several attempts to categorize policy styles. Starting from Richardson’s (1982) four clusters (active-consensual, active impositional, reactive-consensual, reactive-impositional) to Freeman’s distinction of subjective and objective policy style. Those policy styles produce certain outputs and consequentially outcomes. For the purposes of this study, the framework consists of three steps:

- 1 Mapping inputs of civil society organizations;

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- 2 Comparison of policy style types with outcomes they produce;
- 3 Comparison of inputs of civil society with outcomes in order to control environmental factors

The idea of this study is to test plausibility of the expansion of policy style approach to the analysis of outcomes in order to get “a bigger picture”.

In the second part of dissertation this framework will be applied to an analysis of the role that civil society plays in the development of youth public polices in Croatia.

Youth policy

Why youth policy? In Croatia there are a lot of factors affecting youth, such as a changing population structure, unemployment, and distrust towards governmental institutions. Hence, young people are mostly occupied with some other things but policy so they are not considered as veto players dangerous for political stability. Research suggest that the state does not perceive young people as a potential but as rather a problem (Ilišin and Radin, 2007). Consequentially, not much attention is usually put on their demands and requests and states’ support is usually only declarative. Nevertheless, youth organizations in Croatia are considered to be as one of the best organized (together with human right organizations). Moreover, youth policies are important because they influence future leaders and shape their point of views. It is considered to be the key factors and an important indicator for social and human development. Unfortunately, a detailed analysis of their impact on formal politics is still undone.

In addition, lately youth policy started to be more and more popular in everyday discourse, particularly youth participation issue. Research show that Croatia is an example of a country without major contentious potential (Kovacic, 2011; Veljak, 2000), however recent examples of social movements and protests³ seem to show that this fact has been changing. In the last four years there has been more protests aimed to increase democratic procedures than in seventeen years before that all together. What is the most interesting is that the main actors of those contentious actions are young people. Since then, youth issues started to matter more in public

³ High school students protest against national matura exam, studen blackade, protests against the government, Varšavska street protest.

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discourse, and more and more strategies, laws and programs has been implemented. However, it is still not clear what really happened. Did civil society get an impulse and started to be more active or did government decided to put youth on agenda. Additionally, youth organizations are dissatisfied with the products of those programs and strategies while government claims they adopted their inputs.

Methodology

The methodological goal of the study is model testing and its possible upgrade. The analysis will be mostly qualitative in nature, including analysis of documentation and interviews with both, political elites and civil society actors, on different levels of analysis. Moreover, in order to assess whether it is possible to map and measure outcomes, a focus groups will be conducted.

Documents to be analyzed include laws on youth issues, strategies, action plans, surveys, reports, analysis and recommendations. This analysis would provide an institutional dimension of youth policies in Croatia. However, such sources will primarily serve to provide context for the interviews to be taken during the course of the proposed study.

However, the official documents may not provide sufficient and adequate insight on interaction between different policy actors, i.e. the document analysis may not provide sufficient opportunity to see the interaction as dynamic and to explore the context and rationale how and why particular policy dynamics happens. Therefore, it is necessary to add an additional source of information through interviews with individuals in leadership positions as well as with civil society actors. Qualitative interview is one of the most commonly used techniques in qualitative researches. It is used in case studies, in action research, in grounded theory studies, and in ethnographies (Myers, Newman, 2007). The literature says that qualitative interview is a conversation whose main purpose is to collect the information on certain phenomena or events (Berg, 1995). In this study I plan to use a specific type of qualitative interview – elite interview.

Elite interview is a special sort of qualitative interview most characteristic for political science. Basically, the goal of this interview is to find out what are the aspirations and opinions of the key (political) actors, to find out what is/was happening behind closed doors and to discover non-

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public side of the political process. Data from the documents and journals can be enriched by the motives and the biographies of politicians in order to get more detailed and coherent picture of the certain phenomena that we are interested in.

More concretely, in terms of interviews to be conducted, this will include (but not exclusively) questions related to the perception of the role of civil society in policy-making process (for both civil society actors and stakeholders), their assessment of the status of youth policies in their countries, suggestions for future cooperation etc.

Focus groups are a method of group interviewing in which the interaction between the moderator and the group, as well as the interaction between group members, serves to elicit information and insights in response to carefully designed questions. Morgan & Krueger (1993) discuss instances when focus groups are beneficial:

- When the security provided by the group allows members who are lower in the 'power hierarchy' within an organization to express feelings and experiences that they would not otherwise share.
- When the target audience is so different from decision makers that different terminology and points of view can be illuminated and understood (this information can be useful when constructing questionnaires for those audiences).
- When desired information about behaviors and motivations is more complex than a questionnaire is likely to reveal. Through a series of well-designed questions, focus groups can often get at more honest and in depth information.
- When one is interested in finding out the nature of consensus. While several respondents completing a questionnaire may indicate that they 'agree' with an item, focus groups may reveal fundamental differences among group members concerning the conditions of that agreement.
- When target audiences may not take questionnaires seriously or answer them honestly. Effective focus groups will communicate a desire to obtain meaningful, honest information. Superficial or patronizing responses as well as critical responses can be challenged and or put into an appropriate context.
- In situations where there is organizational conflict and or alienation, members of focus groups and their constituencies may feel 'listened to'. This may result in an honest and meaningful exchange of information.

Following the schematic inputs-outputs-outcomes I propose a plan for studying them.

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INPUTS: To interview representatives of Croatian Youth Network, a sort of national youth organization, as well as president of National Youth Advisory Board. Questions will be directed on their efforts to influence policy-making, their assessment of their influence, evaluation of communication with stakeholders and their opinion of the status of youth policies in Croatia. Likewise I will interview: assistant to the Minister of Social Policy and Youth, official in the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in charge for youth, MP dealing with youth issues, as well as head of the Agency for Mobility and EU Funds. Those stakeholders will be asked, among other, to assess the role of civil society in creating policies regarding young people, their vision of youth policies in Croatia and their perspective on decision-making on youth issues.

OUTPUTS: In order to get a legislative perspective I will analyze the Law on Youth Advisory Boards, The Croatian National Youth Program 2009-2013, elements for the Law on Youth (at the process of making). The analysis will be done on two levels: the first one regarding the substance and its correspondence to EU Youth Strategy – Investing and Empowering as well as to White Paper: A New Impetus for European Youth. The second dimension will cover policy perspective: who proposed a concrete act; who was in favor and who against some law in the parliament; were there any serious political debates regarding acts etc.

OUTCOMES: Outcomes are the effects of some action on the target group. In order to get research that, I will use focus groups consisted of young people. It is planned to have two focus groups in each country each of 6-7 youngsters. The first one would be consisted of active high-school students, and the second one of university students. They would be asked to interpret their rights in order to see whether they are aware of them and to see if they know of the main normative acts of their country regarding youth. The main part of focus groups would be questions from seven areas of The Croatian National Youth Program 2009-2013.

Short outline of the dissertation

It is planned that dissertation consists of six building blocks together creating a coherent unit. In the introduction I will address the context of the research and point out its relevance and novelty. Hence, research questions, objectives and a hypothesis will be remarked. The first chapter will

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contain methodological remarks. Here I will explain methodological approaches of the dissertation and elaborate methodological tools for the research. In the second chapter I will give an analytical framework, firstly by presenting existing literature on it, critically examine it, and then by offering a new model for the evaluation of public policies. The next chapter will be an empirical research of Croatian case where I will combine: the analysis of the legislative on youth, interviews with key actors of youth policies and findings of focus groups with young people in order to evaluate effects of those policies on them. This dissertation will end with policy recommendations for more efficient, effective and more equal youth policies.

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The Croatian National Youth Program 2009-2013

White Paper A New Impetus for European Youth (2001: 75)