

Chapter Five

Kingdon à la Carte: A New Recipe for Mixing Stages, Cycles, Soups and Streams

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Introduction: a mixture of metaphors about the policy process

The academic pursuit of policy analysis often relies on metaphors to simplify complexity and illuminate policy dynamics (Pump 2011; Bardach 2000; Edelman 1988; Stone 1988 and 1989; Schlesinger and Lau 2000; Black 1962). However, these conceptualisations run the risk of confusing a metaphor with a model, which can constrain the development of testable theories and impede theoretical advance (Dowding 1995; Pappi and Henning 1998).

This is true of the multiple-streams model developed by Kingdon (1984) from March and Olson's earlier work on decision-making theory (1979). This conception has been utilised in many studies, both as a metaphor for agenda-setting, as Kingdon originally intended it, and as a larger model for interpreting policy-making as a whole. More recently, McConnell (2010a, 2010b) used a similar approach in his studies of policy success and failure. However the application of Kingdon's framework to wider policy-making dynamics, which extend beyond those found in agenda-setting, poses some questions as to what exactly constitutes a 'stream' and how streams 'flow together' to produce agenda-entrance or subsequent policy outcomes.

This is also true of the classic metaphor about policy-making: the 'stages' model. This process metaphor originated with the earliest scholarship on public-policy analysis but received varying treatment by different authors. Its attempt to explain policy-making has been criticised for focusing too narrowly on decision-making within government and having little to say about external or environmental influences on government's behaviour, since decision-making is assumed to be limited to a small number of participants working inside government.

This chapter revisits the early literature that used the metaphors of policy streams and policy stages and explores in detail the variables which flow over time and affect instances of policy-making. It suggests that both Kingdon and McConnell's three-stream models offer perspectives that are suited to illuminating the specific aspects of policy-making they examine; but such approaches require augmentation in order to engage the full range of practices that characterise policy-making as a whole. This chapter develops and refines work undertaken by the authors and already published in the *European Journal of Political Research* in

a forum section devoted specifically to the multiple-streams framework (Howlett, McConnell and Perl 2015).

The stages model

The conceptual advantages of breaking the policy-making process down into a number of discrete stages for gaining insight into complex public policy-making dynamics were first broached in the early work of Harold Lasswell (1956 and 1971). Lasswell posited that the policy process began with intelligence-gathering, that is, the collection, processing, and dissemination of information needed by those who make policy decisions. It then moved to consider how particular options were assessed by those involved in making the decision. In the third stage, the decision-makers formally ratified a plan of action. In the fourth stage, the approved plan was enacted as a set of sanctions to enforce compliance with the prescribed course of action. The policy was then applied by the bureaucracy and overseen by the courts until it was terminated or cancelled. Finally, the results were appraised and evaluated against the aims of the original policy and the goals of the decision-makers.

One shortcoming of this model was its ordering of stages. The placement of appraisal or evaluation following termination fails to recognise that governments usually evaluate policy *before* winding it down rather than afterwards (Brewer 1974). Nevertheless, with suitable amendment, this model and metaphor influenced a great deal of thinking as the policy sciences developed and Lasswell's formulation served as the basis for numerous similar models put forward in succeeding years (Lyden *et al.* 1968; Simmons *et al.* 1974; Anderson 1975; Jones 1984).

Typical among these was a simplified model created by Gary Brewer (1974). Brewer suggested that the policy process was composed of only five or six stages: 1) invention/initiation; 2) estimation; 3) selection; 4) implementation; 5) evaluation; and 6) termination. According to Brewer, invention or initiation characterised the earliest stage in the sequence, when a problem would first be recognised. In Brewer's model, the initiation stage would be characterised by an unfocused definition of the problem and inchoate solutions. In the second stage, known as estimation, there is a calculation of the risks, costs and benefits associated with each potential solution identified in the earlier stage. Both technical assessment and normative perspectives would guide such estimation. Estimation would facilitate policy development by excluding unfeasible options and thus narrow the range of plausible policy-options to a manageable number whose desirability could be ranked. In the third stage, choices would be made to adopt one, or none, or some combination of solutions that had advanced through the estimation stage. The remaining stages focused on implementing the selected policy option(s), evaluating the results of the subsequent policy and then terminating or modifying the policy, based on findings revealed through policy evaluation (Brewer and deLeon 1983).

Brewer's conceptualisation of the policy process enhanced the insight of Lasswell's pioneering effort. This analytical perspective expanded the search for

influences on policy beyond the bounds of government by recognising the dynamic of problem-recognition; and it specified more precise terminology to describe each stage of the process. Moreover, Brewer introduced a second metaphor to assist in thinking through the stages of policy-making: that is, the image of this process as an ongoing 'cycle'. This metaphor recognised that most policies did not go through a linear development from birth to death but, instead, tended to reappear in slightly different manifestations, as one policy succeeded another through incremental modification. Brewer's contribution precipitated several variants of the policy-cycle metaphor that were developed during the 1970s and 1980s. The best known of these were expounded in widely adopted textbooks written by Charles O. Jones (1984) and James Anderson (1975). Both these textbooks varied in their specification of the names, number, and order of stages in the cycle but embraced the same underlying metaphorical construction.

The multiple-streams model

A significant advantage arising from the policy-cycle metaphor is that it offers an analytical approach that facilitates the understanding of policy-making by reducing complex processes into component stages and sub-stages, which can be studied directly or in relationship to any or all subsets of the policy-cycle. This segmentation contributes to theory-building. It enables the evidence from multiple case studies, as comparative examinations of different stages, to be aggregated and the findings from these investigations to be synthesised. The model generated through the use of this metaphor can then be applied to all jurisdictions and places where policy is made, from local boroughs to international political organisations (Fowler and Siegel 2002; Bogason 2000; Billings and Hermann 1998). Furthermore, the cycle model facilitates analysis of the contribution of all actors and institutions to policy development, not just the work of governmental agencies formally accountable for policy.

Despite its aforementioned merits, however, the principal shortcoming of the policy-cycle metaphor is that it also creates the impression that policy-makers pursue solutions to public problems in a straightforward and essentially linear fashion (Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1993). Yet we know that in the real world, such a pattern is far from the norm. While the policy-cycle's logic may be elegant in the abstract, in practical applications, stages are often condensed or passed over entirely. Identifying problems, as well as developing and implementing solutions, is often an *ad hoc* and idiosyncratic process, shaped by ideologies, interests and strategies and, at times, beginning with putative solutions (as per 'garbage-can' theory) (March and Olson 1979). The order of operations in practical policy-making may thus bear little resemblance to that specified by the policy-cycle's conceptual logic. For example, the cycle may not run as a single iterative loop but, rather, proceed through a series of smaller loops, in which the results of prior decisions and implementation shape the course of subsequent policy formulation, regardless of the agenda-setting specifics of a specific case.



While the policy-cycle metaphor retains a prominent position among policy researchers, other metaphorical constructions that grapple with this more complex policy-making reality have attracted interest in the effort to overcome these limitations. An elaborate set of policy-making metaphors, for example, can be found in John Kingdon's book, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy* (1984). Kingdon proposed a means of understanding agenda-setting based upon first-hand and secondary (see, for example, Walker 1977) examinations of agenda processes in the US Congress. His model highlighted the influence of a specific category of policy-actors in subsystems – policy entrepreneurs – who generated policy initiatives both inside and outside of government by taking advantage of agenda-setting opportunities – *policy-windows* – to move items on to government's formal agenda. Kingdon's writing is replete with vivid metaphors, such as 'the *primeval policy soup*' and, most significantly for later work, the images of '*policy streams*' and '*policy-windows*'.¹

Kingdon's treatise on policy-making dynamics in the US Congress was focused on agenda-setting and formulation but the concepts put forward in his book were soon embraced by others in order to develop explanations of the entire policy process (Zahariadis 1995; Barzelay 2006). Kingdon's model posited that substantive issue characteristics combined with the organisational characteristics of political institutions, and with the development of policy solutions, in a manner which triggered the opening and closing of *policy-windows* that could enable these issues to enter on to the agenda. Such opportunities could be realised if, and only if, policy-entrepreneurs were able to recognise and act upon them. This 'multiple-streams' model, and its variants, yielded an ongoing analytical tradition that both describes policy-making and seeks to explain it in terms of the confluence of key factors or variables at particular moments in time.

In Kingdon's particular explanation of how agenda-setting worked in the United States, three categories of independent variables were said to interact. These problem, policy, and political streams were said to have the following characteristics:

- The *problem stream* is filled with perceptions of problems that were seen as 'public' in the sense that government action was needed to resolve them. These problems usually came to the awareness of policy-makers because of dramatic events such as crises or through feedback from existing programmes that gained public attention. People come to view a situation as a 'problem' based upon its variance from their understanding of some desired state of affairs.
- The *policy stream* is filled with the output of experts and analysts who examine problems and propose solutions to them. In this stream, the myriad possibilities for action and inaction are identified, assessed and narrowed down to a subset of ostensibly feasible options.

1. Of course, he also uses other less dynamic metaphors, such as 'windows of opportunity' and 'policy-entrepreneurs'.

- Finally, the *political stream* is comprised of factors that influence the body politic, such as swings in national mood, executive or legislative turnover and interest-group advocacy campaigns.

According to Kingdon, these three streams flow along different paths and remain more or less independent of one another until, at a specific point in time, a *policy-window* opens. Only then do their paths cross. As Kingdon viewed agenda-setting: 'The separate streams of problems, policies, and politics come together at certain critical times. Solutions become joined to problems, and both of them are joined to favourable political forces' (Kingdon 1984: 21). Only then does an issue become a recognised problem on the official (or institutional) agenda and the public-policy process begins to address it.

Under certain circumstances, *policy-windows* can be used by particular actors in a policy subsystem in order to advance the engagement of the issues they care about. These policy entrepreneurs play an important role in shaping the course of multiple streams by linking or 'coupling' policy problems and policy solutions together with political opportunities. Kingdon suggested that window openings could sometimes be triggered by apparently unrelated external '*focusing events*', such as crises, or accidents; or the presence or absence of 'policy-entrepreneurs' both within and outside governments. At other times, these windows were opened by institutionalised events such as periodic elections or budget deadlines (Birkland 1997 and 1998). As Kingdon argued:

windows are opened either by the appearance of compelling problems or by happenings in the political stream. ... Policy entrepreneurs, people who are willing to invest their resources in pushing their pet proposals or problems, are responsible not only for prompting important people to pay attention, but also for coupling solutions to problems and for coupling both problems and solutions to politics (p. 21).

This streams metaphor has proven valuable in helping us to explain policy dynamics and envisage the convergence of multiple societal phenomena to precipitate an 'idea whose time has come'. And applying the concept of multiple streams has become common practice in the policy sciences. Among the subjects it has been applied to have been US foreign-policy-making (Woods and Peake 1998); public enterprise privatisation in Britain, France and Germany (Zahariadis 1995; Zahariadis and Allen 1995); US efforts to combat illegal drug use (Sharp 1994); collaborative pollution-control partnerships between business and environmental groups in the US and Europe (Lober 1997); and the wide-ranging dynamics of policy reform and -restructuring in Eastern Europe (Keeler 1993). McConnell (2010a) has applied a similar model in his studies of policy success and failure.

However, the concepts applied in many streams analyses, while appearing similar, have not been identical. For example, the alternative three-stream model developed by McConnell (2010a, 2010b) in his study of policy success and failure

uses ‘processes, policies and politics’ streams (see also Marsh and McConnell 2010; Howlett 2012).

This raises the question of which phenomena should be categorised as ‘streams’ as well as how these streams flow together and interact to produce policy outcomes. There remains also the question of whether, or how, ‘streams’ analysis fits in with the earlier understanding of policy-making as a process, which grew out of the policy-cycle or ‘stages heuristic’ (Jann and Wegrich 2007). These questions have usually been ignored by the multiple-streams literature, which has often viewed itself as antithetical to the stages model. However, as discussed below, this is not the case; and a more subtle interpretation of what a stream is can help reconcile the apparent differences between these two approaches to policy studies.

Kingdon à la carte: towards a new recipe connecting cycle and stream models

Some scholars have called for an integration of ‘streams’ and ‘cycle’ models, anticipating that incorporating the stream metaphor into policy process models would provide causal insight necessary to move policy studies beyond competing metaphors and to advance from description to explanation of policy dynamics. Barzelay, for example, proposed in a 2006 symposium that the two approaches simply be synthesised, as is. He argued that Kingdon’s work would benefit from a process approach while incorporating elements of a multiple-streams framework would similarly improve policy-cycle models. As he put it:

Kingdon’s book exemplifies the quest for a process understanding of public policymaking (in addition to providing analytic generalizations about statutory change in substantive policy domains within the institutional setup of the U.S. federal government). Kingdon’s analytical approach examines the policymaking process systemically, while disaggregating the whole into component processes, drawing on the concept of a policy cycle (Barzelay 2006: 253).

Barzelay advocated a straightforward merger of the cycle model and multiple-streams framework, suggesting that:

[i]n the overall process, agenda-setting events influence alternative-specification events through two causal channels. First, problem definition trajectories influence the construction and winnowing of alternatives, through the influence of issue framing and the assignment of issues to distinct venues for alternative specification. Second, the prospect of policy change, inferred from an agenda-setting event’s past and anticipated trajectory, spurs the efforts of participants in alternative-specification events, whether they are policy entrepreneurs, protectors of the status quo, or just doing their job. The trajectories of decision-making events are, in turn, influenced by agenda-setting and alternative-specification events. This aspect of the overall policymaking

process arises because the rendering of alternatives, in combination with pressures responsible for an elevated issue status, may open the gates to decisional venues and their corresponding decisional agendas (Barzelay 2006: 253–4).

While innovative, such a proposal does not derive directly from the principles found in the multiple-streams framework. Rather, it rests upon an interpretation that abandons some of the presuppositions and postulates from the ‘garbage-can’ perspective on decision-making (March and Olson 1979; Mucciaroni 1992) which Kingdon incorporated in his work. As such, there remain some lingering problems from this pioneering effort to reconcile the metaphors of stages and streams. Kingdon can be oversold as providing the key for understanding all, or most, policy-making dynamics when, in fact, his analysis was explicitly focused on agenda-setting (Zahariadis 1995; Zahariadis and Allen 1995; Zahariadis 2007). And Kingdon’s application of garbage-can metaphors to policy-making becomes murky when it engages the garbage-can model (Mucciaroni 1992). He seems to imply that agenda-setting embraces wider dimensions of policy-making since ‘an idea whose time has come’ will often be a problem that was dragged out of the garbage can and used to rationalise a solution that was favoured by some subset of policy participants. This linkage between agendas, issues and policy-making doesn’t come to grips with the actual dynamics of the processes, in which ideas compete for the attention and engagement of policy-makers (Bache and Reardon 2013).

Given its widespread application, it is surprising that Kingdon’s model has received such limited conceptual interrogation. For example, what exactly is a ‘policy stream’ and what happens to the stream once a problem has made its way on to the formal agenda? Can the stream metaphor continue to explain policy dynamics once problems, politics and policy options move beyond agenda entrance? And if so, what then happens to these ‘fluids’? Could certain streams suddenly run dry? Or do they flow differently, with new volumes of policy, problems or politics joining at a particular confluence? Can the waters be transformed through new streams being created?

Notwithstanding these challenges, we believe it is possible to connect these two models and reconcile their insights and assumptions. There is much to gain by seeing how far Kingdon’s streams metaphor can be extended to help answer the ‘what happens next?’ question in policy-process studies, which is so often addressed through application of the stages metaphor in the policy-cycle model. However, this requires re-examining in some detail the adoption and application of the ‘soup’, ‘streams’, and ‘windows’ metaphors that were used by Kingdon.

What is a stream and how does it function?

One of the defining characteristics of a ‘stream’ in Kingdon’s work is its more or less independent trajectory. As a result, events that are initiated by specific actors can occasionally ‘intersect’ to affect each other and trigger new events;

but without losing their fundamentally autonomous nature. Although some of these questions have been pursued elsewhere (see, for example, Howlett 1998 on types and predictability of policy-windows), a key question embedded within the ‘streams metaphor’ which is engaged in this chapter is the primordial search for ‘how many’ and ‘what type’ of key factors influence the policy processes and how they relate to one another.

Kingdon’s focus on the interconnection between a flow of problems, policy and politics to explain policy-making, for example, builds upon Cohen, March and Olson’s earlier foundational work on garbage-can decision-making (1972) and has inspired many assessments of policy agenda-setting, as well as more ambitious attempts to illuminate the entire process. A ‘stream’ in this sense is a collection of variables parameters which develop and change over time. This temporal focus is what differentiates Kingdon’s work from many earlier agenda-setting studies (see, for example, Cobb, Ross and Ross 1976; Cobb and Elder 1972) and is what later analysts and students of policy-making found to be intriguing and useful in his work (John 2003).

The garbage-can model and the multiple-streams framework appear to posit different relationships among their streams, however, with Kingdon seeing a more structured interaction than was posited by March and Olson. As John puts it:

Kingdon uses evolutionary ideas to highlight the dynamic and contingent aspects of his account. It is a useful component of his account of policy change, without being an evolutionary model. There are, however, some useful clues as to how one could emerge. Kingdon argues that possibilities and limits of combinations create unique outcomes because ‘[e]verything cannot interact with everything else’ (John 2003: 488).

In other words, there are certain combinations of ideas and proposals that have the potential to evolve, but not others (2003: 488).

Equally significantly, some streams, for Kingdon, appear to carry more weight than others. In his analysis of agenda-setting, for instance, Kingdon suggested this would occur but never explained exactly why. Thus the opening of a window for agenda-entry was thought by Kingdon to be triggered by one of two flows, in either the ‘problem’ or ‘political’ streams rather than in the ‘policy’ one, although why this would be the case was not examined:

[b]asically a window opens because of change in the political stream (e.g. a change of administration, a shift in the partisan or ideological distribution of seats ... or a shift in national mood); or it opens because a new problem captures the attention of governmental officials and those close to them (Kingdon 1984: 176).

Although it could also be plausible to suggest that something flowing through the ‘policy stream’ could open a window for change in the agenda – such as when market mechanisms are proposed to address an existing problem without a change in the problem or the politics surrounding it *per se* (for example de-regulation or

privatisation) – this possibility was not considered by Kingdon, despite his well received observation that ‘solutions can precede problems’.

Another question that was left hanging in the multiple-streams framework is whether any window is likely to open or close with greater predictability than any other (Howlett 1998). While arguing that random events can be significant, Kingdon stressed that institutionalised windows create more predictable dynamics in the US agenda-setting process than one would expect given a pure garbage-can approach. As he put it ‘there remains some degree of unpredictability. Yet it would be a grave mistake to conclude that the processes ... are essentially random. Some degree of pattern is evident.’ (Kingdon 1984: 216). This led him to conclude that a majority of policy-windows open on a more or less predictable cycle:

[w]indows sometimes open with great predictability. Regular cycles of various kinds open and close windows on a schedule. That schedule varies in its precision and hence its predictability, but the cyclical nature of many windows is nonetheless evident (Kingdon 1984: 193).

and

[s]ometimes, windows open quite predictably. Legislation comes up for renewal on schedule, for instance, creating opportunities to change, expand or abolish certain programs. At other times, windows open quite unpredictably, as when an airliner crashes or a fluky election produces unexpected turnover in key decision-makers. Predictable or unpredictable, open windows are small and scarce. Opportunities come, but they also pass. Windows do not stay open long. If a chance is missed, another must be awaited (Kingdon 1984: 213).

While such perspectives on the dynamics of policy change may be more or less accurate, depending on the setting they are used to explain, it is not inherent in the idea or metaphor of multiple streams that a particular stream influences the prospects for change in policy-making more than any other, or that any type of window should be inherently more significant or common than any other. Incorporating aspects of policy-cycle models into the streams framework, however, helps to explain why this should be the case. However it also requires, *contra* Barzelay, that some fundamental aspects of the multiple-streams model, such as how many streams there are and how they interact, be modified.

Is ‘process’ a stream? How many streams are out there?

As Kingdon acknowledged in his 1984 work, the idea of ‘policy streams’ was inspired by the earlier work of Cohen, March and Olson (1972; see also March and Olson 1979) to explain administrative decision-making processes in complex and fluid organisational environments. But when they created this analytical antecedent to the multiple-streams framework, Cohen, March and Olson posited that there were *four* streams, not the three that Kingdon incorporated into the

multiple-streams framework. Cohen, March and Olsen presented policy ‘windows’ or ‘choice opportunities’ as another stream which flowed more or less independently of the other three. The original streams were defined by them as:

- *Problems* Problems are the concern of people inside and outside the organisation. They might arise over issues of lifestyle; family; frustrations of work; careers; group relations within the organisation; distribution of status, jobs, and money; ideology; or current crises of mankind as interpreted by the mass media or the next-door neighbour. All of these require attention.
- *Solutions* A solution is somebody’s product. A computer is not just a solution to a problem in payroll management, discovered when needed. It is an answer actively looking for a question. The creation of need is not a curiosity of the market in consumer products; it is a general phenomenon of processes of choice. Despite the dictum that you cannot find the answer until you have formulated the question well, you often do not know what the question is in organisational problem-solving until you also understand its answer.
- *Participants* Participants come and go. Since every entrance is an exit somewhere else, the distribution of ‘entrances’ depends on the attributes of the choice being left as much as it does on the attributes of the new choice. Substantial variation in participation stems from other demands on the participants’ time (as much or more than from features of the decision under study).
- *Choice-opportunities* These are occasions when an organisation is expected to produce behaviour that can be called a decision. Opportunities arise regularly and any organisation has ways of declaring an occasion for choice. Contracts must be signed; people hired, promoted, or fired; money spent; and responsibilities allocated (Cohen March and Olson 1972: 2).

Thus Cohen, March and Olson (1972: 3) noted that *all four* sets of dynamic variables were ‘relatively independent’ that is: ‘although not completely independent of each other, each of the streams can be viewed as independent and exogenous to the system’. This differs significantly from treating a policy-window as the exclusive point of intersection among the other three streams, as in Kingdon’s framework.

McConnell (2010a, 2010b) also described a policy process in expansive terms, reaching beyond the problem-definition stage of the policy-cycle. A policy process was thus meant to extend beyond the agenda-setting stage to encompass the stages where problems are defined, options examined and decisions taken, implemented and evaluated (Lyden *et al.* 1968). Thus the policy process offers an extension of analytical and political activities on multiple fronts, addressing what Kingdon would characterise as the ‘problem’ stream but also paying attention to policy solutions and political events that could influence them.

Such variation between Kingdon’s original formulation and subsequent applications of the multiple-streams framework reinforces the possibility that

utilising only ‘three streams’ of influence on policy-making dynamics may fail to capture relevant drivers of change, and that more streams – at least four – would better capture key aspects of policy formation, by representing a more complete set of the configurations among variables that could open a window for moving policy on to, or between, the stages of policy deliberation, decision and deployment.

The minimum four would be: *politics*, *problem*, *policy* and *process*. ‘Process’ in this formulation bears a strong resemblance to Cohen, March and Olson’s ‘choice opportunity’ stream but is centred on the stages of the policy-cycle, with each stage providing a particular intersection point for the other three. This variable flows from the bureaucratic capacities and cultural norms that orient both the state and society in shaping preferences on how to meet the needs of a particular policy context. This choice-opportunity stream thus captures the structural variation that can lead policy subsystems in very different directions when engaging a policy issue as seen through the policy-cycle construct.

This is quite compatible with Kingdon’s vision, since he was not driven to engage this fourth ‘P’: his analysis focused explicitly on understanding only the dynamics of one stage of the policy process: agenda-entrance. Although his book considered plenty of policy formulation efforts, these were addressed by the logic of the garbage-can model (March and Olson 1979), in which the distinction between agenda-setting and formulation effectively disappears. Expanding the three streams to four and looking beyond the agenda-setting stage is logical if we are attempting to apply a multiple-streams logic to the entire range of policy-making activities beyond agenda-entrance.

But adding an additional process stream poses problems for Kingdon’s original model, in that the manner in which these four streams interact is not immediately apparent. One way to realign three- and four-stream models is to replace the ‘problem’ stream with a ‘policy’ stream after agenda-setting occurs. In this perspective, the ‘problem’ maintains independent significance during dynamics prior to agenda-entrance, as Kingdon posited, but after the policy process moves on to developing options for dealing with the problem, it drops out and is replaced by the ‘process stream’, which influences subsequent dynamics as an effort is made to generate a solution to this problem. The temporal shift also carries the streams framework beyond its garbage-can epistemological and ontological foundations, towards a logic that is consistent with conceptual trends in policy studies, which have focused more on the manner whereby institutions affect decision-making and policy development in routine and predictable ways (Araral *et al.* 2012). In this perspective, ‘process’ takes on a different character from ‘politics’ or ‘problem’ or ‘policy’, since it becomes internal to the policy-making process, rather than an external factor contributing to it.


This conceptualisation may initially appear quite promising as a means of squaring the 3P versus 4P relationship. It offers the advantage of grounding Kingdon’s three-stream model in its origins as an agenda-setting analysis, while extending it to cover all the stages of the policy process – without simply ignoring the nuances and differences in the choice-opportunities that exist at each stage (Zahariadis 2007). However, simply turning the ‘problem’ stream into a ‘process’

stream after agenda-setting has occurred raises the difficulty that it assumes a problem stream simply stops flowing once agenda-setting has occurred: namely, that the basic problem remains unchanged once policy-making gets underway and discussion focuses on policy (that is, solutions). Although Kingdon successfully avoids this conceptual difficulty by remaining focused on a single stage of the policy cycle, the option of building a problem ‘lock-in’ into the multiple-streams framework is incompatible with findings from the problem-definition and policy-cycle literature that demonstrate that competing constructs of the problem continue to co-exist through policy-making (Fischer and Forrester 1993; Hajer 2005; Sabatier *et al.* 2007; Howlett 2009).

Other possibilities exist that might be better suited to understanding this complexity, for example, the full confluence of the three streams which converge at the agenda-setting stage of the policy process and from there onwards flow together as a single stream. This confluence yields a fourth policy-making stream, which then flows along through the policy-cycle towards an outcome (Teisman 2000). However this model, too, fails to deal with the alterations of and interactions between policy and problem and politics, which occur as the policy process unfolds.

Adding another ‘stream’ in addition to the March and Olson four to create a five-stream model is a more promising elaboration that would retain ‘process’ as an independent stream while separating out a programme stream that focuses explicitly on the instrumentation that is developed to deliver policy outputs. In this model, once Kingdon’s three original streams converge and produce actions or inaction to address policy, they would be supplemented by ‘process’ and ‘programme’ streams, whose flow is generated from the issue-management and policy output dimensions of policy-making. That is, the choice and application of policy instruments creates its own influences on a policy sub-system as policy implementation influences politics, which would be captured within the programme stream’s flow. Thus the flow of the programme stream can include new instruments introduced to deal with a problem (such as public agencies to provide transport security in a number of nations after 11 September 2001) and it can cover refinements of established instruments (such as special inspection of airline passengers’ footwear after an attempt to bring down an aircraft using explosive running shoes).

Conclusion

Although the policy-stages idea has a long list of detractors (for example, Sabatier 1991; Colebatch 2006), it retains a predominant place among contemporary policy-science metaphors that influence model-construction and  elaboration (deLeon 1999; Burton 2006; Weible *et al.* 2012). As a mode of considering change or stasis in policy development, the cycle employs a metaphor invoking a temporal primacy to matching solutions to problems – breaking an extended and conflictual process into discrete stages and sub-stages whose dynamics can be assessed iteratively, and interconnected – which has been very effective in pursuing policy analyses

(Simmons 1974). Kingdon's work on the multiple-streams idea has also generated a metaphorical construction that has found favour with policy scholars, many of whom object to the linear instrumental rationality of the cycle model. The concept of limited and readily identifiable key variables – the multiple streams affecting policy-making – along with the idea that interactions between these streams create choice-opportunities that affect how policy issues are addressed by governments, has proven alluring to many looking for an alternative to the cycle orthodoxy.

As we have shown, however, Kingdon's notions cannot simply be imported *holus bolus* into stage-models of policy-making without yielding a muddled mixing of metaphors that limits the efficacy of both models. In order to attempt their reconciliation, a way is needed to reconfigure the contingent aspects of the three-streams model that Kingdon developed to make it better fit with the notions about sequential decision-making that the policy-cycle relies upon. Reconciling these two dominant metaphorical constructions requires going back to Kingdon's original treatment of policy-windows or choice-opportunities, which differs from the ideas he borrowed from Cohen, March and Olsen in their foundational work about policy-making as an expression of organised anarchy. Specifically, their idea of at least a fourth 'choice-opportunity' or 'process' stream is a key insight that Kingdon did not elaborate upon in his work, focused as it was on a single 'stage' of the policy process.

This chapter has demonstrated that extending three-stream models into four-stream constructs improves but does not ultimately resolve these challenges; but moving to a five-stream model may have a better potential for the reconciliation of the two approaches, helping to move policy studies forward beyond the present situation of competitive analytical constructs (Cairney 2013). Such a conceptual progression helps extend Kingdon's insights and offers a framework that can help advance future understandings of policy-making and policy dynamics, while also clarifying the existing literature on these subjects.

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