# **Public Interests and Public Policy**
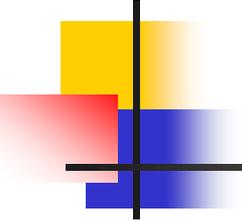
Courses

JSM518 "Public Policy"

JSD009 „Public Policy"

JSM699 „Theory of Public Policy"

Martin Potůček

# What the lecture is about





- Examples of conflicts between public and private interests
- What are public interests?
- What is public policy?
- Basic terminology
- Polity, policy, politics
- Founding fathers

# Examples of conflicts between public and private interests

> E 1:



> E 2:



> E 3:



> E 4, 5, 6....

# Public, group and private interests – conflicts

***What kind of value contexts might an elected representative (Member of Parliament) operate in?***

- ➢ Own conscience (internalized values)
- ➢ Public interests, e.g. as articulated in general programmatic documents (government policy statement, election programmes of political parties)
- ➢ Group interests (lobbying, corruption)
- ➢ Benefiting one's own political party and/or harming others
- ➢ Private self-interest
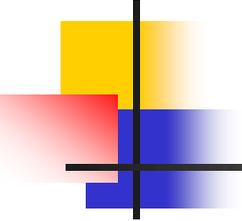
# Public interests...

*"Living adults share, <span style="color:darkred">we must believe</span>, the same <span style="color:green">public interest</span>. For them, however, the <span style="color:green">public interest</span> is mixed with, and is often at odds with, their private and special interests. Put this way, we can say, I suggest, that the <span style="color:green">public interest</span> <span style="color:darkred">may be presumed</span> to be what men would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, acted disinterestedly and benevolently."*

(Walter Lippman, Essays in the Public Interest Philosophy. Boston, Little, Brown and Co. 1955, p. 42).
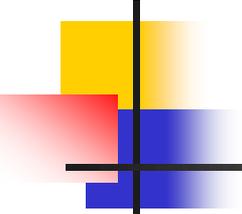
# Public interests: context and related terms

➤ In every society, competing value orientations and visions are reflected in the different value backgrounds of different public policies.

> Example: **debates about the form of government budgets** (always achieve a balanced budget v. support science and education at the expense of a budget deficit)

➤ Common good (social teaching of the Catholic Church)

➤ Public good (Martenas 1991)

➤ Supraindividual interest (Ochrana 1999)

➤ General interest (EU Lisbon Treaty)
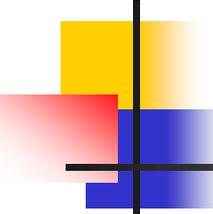
# Characterising public interests

- they pertain to the quality of life of a given society's members, or other values they find important;
- they can be related to the quality or the effects of functioning of society as a whole;
- they are embedded historically, in a given stage of civilization development, and may change;
- they enter an arena where they clash with differentiated individual, group and institutional interests and come to be identified, articulated, acknowledged and fulfilled. Decisions adopted affect the ways public goods are made, distributed and used; the quality of life of large social groups; and the satisfaction of the functional needs of society as a whole;
- they are related to current social problems or possible futures (reactive v. active public policy, e.g. applying the concept of sustainable development);
- their fulfilment often goes beyond the competences of a single institution or an entire department of government.
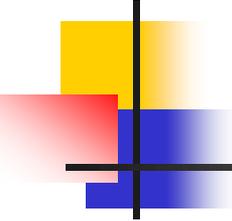
# Critical Thinking Question

- **Are the various efforts to regulate the Internet in the *public interest*?**
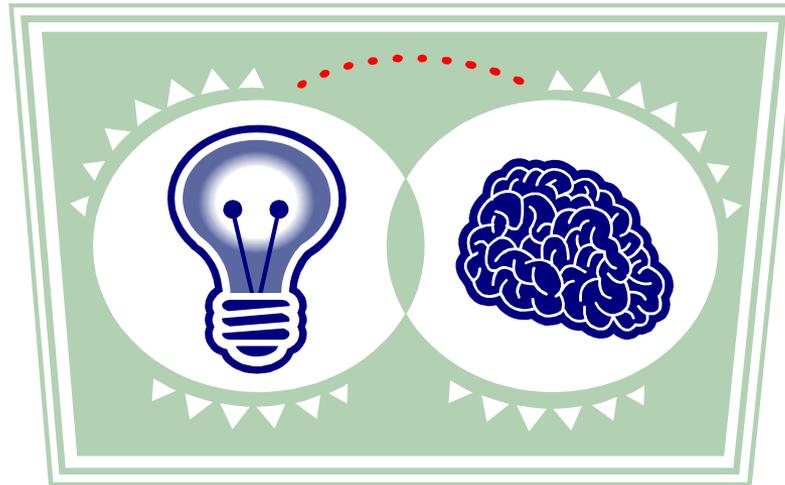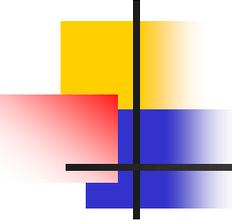
# What is public policy? Theory…

**Public policy** (sometimes also policy studies or policy science) is defined as a discipline which elaborates and applies the interpretative frameworks of sociology, economics, political sciences, law, management theory, and other disciplines in analysing and forecasting the processes of formation and assertion of public interests with respect to solving differentiated social problems. It primarily deals with the institutional mediation of those processes by the public sector, the civic sector and, to some extent, also the private sector, in a form that is useful for political practice.                    (Potůček at al., 2016)
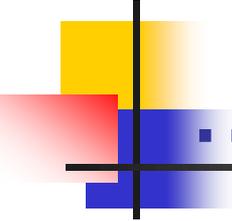
# ... and practice:

**The mission of public policies can be understood as an effort to fulfil public interests by solving social problems.**

For example, family policy responds to social problems caused by the occurrence of family dysfunction or breakdown where society defines good family functioning as public interest.

**Important distinctions of public policy as social practice (on the case of family policy):**

- *Active versus reactive* (family planning advice versus v. foster/residential care)
- *By regulatory principles or instruments applied* (family law, child benefits, preschool establishments, parenting education)
- *Global/EU/national/local* (family policy is mostly implemented at the national level, sometimes at the regional or municipal level)
- *By actors involved* (departments, civic sector service providers, churches, schools, police, courts, family members)
- *By target group* (future families, families with dependent children, families with handicapped members, lone-parent families)
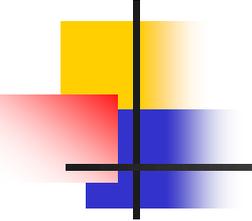
# Distinguishing public policies

- **Liberal** public policies intervene only as far as a recognized public interest is jeopardized by the pursuit of individual/group interests.

- **Paternalist** public policies pursue a recognized public interest irrespective of the changing nature of social problems or harm to individual interests.
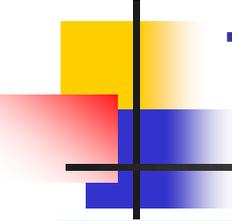
# Transdisciplinarity of public policy

| | Example topics |
|---|---|
| **Sociology** | Understanding society as a whole, social structure in terms of classes and other groups, social status, social problems, social interests, social exclusion |
| **Economics** | Instrumental rationality, institutional economics, behavioral economics, cost-benefit analysis, political economy, monetary policy, fiscal policy |
| **Political science** | Political processes, institutions and actors |
| **Public administration** | The role of bureaucracy in shaping policies and implementing decisions |
| **Legal sciences** | Law as a normative and regulatory framework |
| **Management theory** | Processes of decision making, implementation and evaluation |
| **Philosophy** | Logics, values and ethics, theory of justice |

(Potůček et al. 2017)

# Critical Thinking Question

- ***Why is the scope of*** <span style="color:green">***public policy***</span> ***broader than that of*** <span style="color:#c0392b">***public administration***</span>***?***
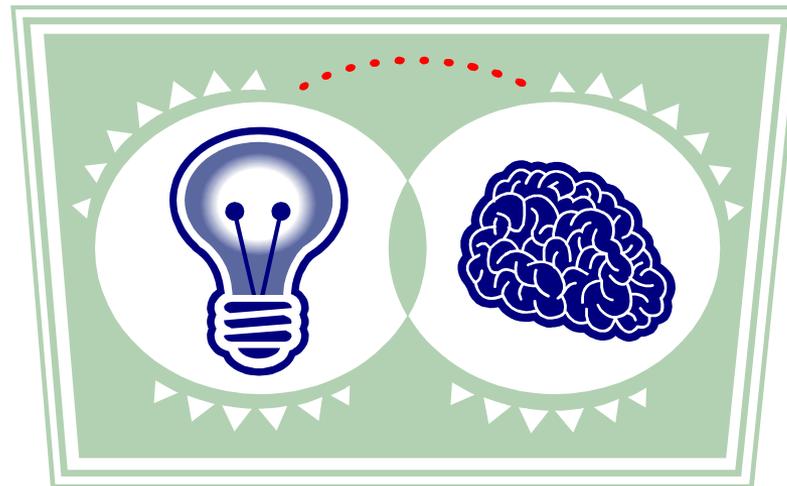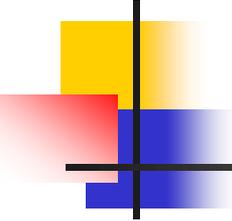
# …Conceptual cluster: "public…"

The conceptual apparatus of public policy includes several terms with the adjective "public" as their common denominator.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Public interest, public affairs** | Sociology, political sciences |
| **Public space** | Political sciences, communication theory |
| **Public sector, public finance, public goods** | Economics |
| **Public law, public interests** | Legal sciences |
| **GOVERNANCE** | Public policy |
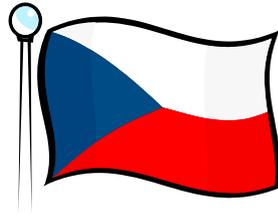
🇬🇧 vs 🇨🇿 terminology

| English | Česky |
|---|---|
| Public affairs | Veřejné záležitosti |
| Public interests | Veřejné zájmy |
| Public tasks | Veřejné úlohy |
| Polity | Obecná idea a strukturálně-funkční rámec politického procesu; „Volba společnosti" |
| Politics | Politický proces střetávání a vyrovnávání zájmů |
| **Public policy** (policy, policy science, policy studies) | **Veřejná politika** |
| Policy analysis | Analýza politiky |
| Policy design | Tvorba politiky |
| Policy evaluation | Hodnocení politik |
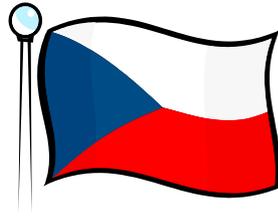
# vs terminology

| English | Česky |
|---------|-------|
| Policy issues | Veřejně politická témata |
| Policy networks | Veřejně politické sítě |
| Policy research | Veřejně politický výzkum |
| Political science | Politologie, politické vědy |
| Governance | Vládnutí |
| Government | Vláda |
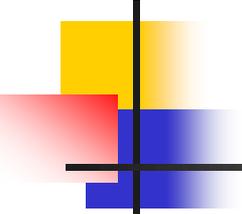
# Polity, policy, politics!

*"The political order constitutes a framework (**polity**) in which the material element (**policy**) arises from strategies of political conflict and consensus (**politics**)."*

Fiala, P., K. Schubert. 2000. *Moderní analýza politiky. Uvedení do teorií a metod policy analysis.* Praha, Barrister & Principal. p. 19.

| Polity | The general foundation or orientation of a society, „choice of society" |
|---|---|
| Policy | Public policy |
| Politics | Processes in which actors cooperate, clash, negotiate and reconcile their conflicting interests through political institutions |

# Exercise

Try to assign the following examples:

- *introduction of tuition at universities*
- *adoption of a new constitution*
- *voting down a state budget bill by the Parliament*

| Polity | |
|---|---|
| Policy | |
| Politics | |

# Founding fathers, their followers and main contributions

| | |
|---|---|
| **Arrow, Kenneth J.** | The logic of collective action |
| **Axelrod, Robert** | Cooperative and noncooperative behaviour |
| **Dahl, Robert A.** | Theory of democracy, polyarchy |
| **Dahrendorf, Ralf** | Individual rights and social commitments; social liberalism |
| **Dror, Yehezkel** | Rational policy model; strategic governance |
| **Dunn, William** | The concept of *policy analysis* |
| **Easton, David** | Political system |
| **Etzioni, Amitai** | Ethics in the economy; communitarianism |
| **Fischer, Frank; Forrester, John** | Argumentative turn in policy analysis |
| **Heclo, Hugh; Hughes, Owen E.** | Issue networks, policy networks |

# Founding fathers, their followers and main contributions

| | |
|---|---|
| **Kingdon, John W.** | Theory of agenda setting; three streams theory |
| **Lasswell, Harold** | The concept of *policy sciences* as comprised of *policy studies* and *policy analysis*; the "stages" model of the policy cycle |
| **Lindblom, Charles E.** | Incremental model of public policy; relationship between market and government |
| **Lowi, Theodore J.** | Model of arenas of power |
| **Ostrom, Elinor** | Institutional Analysis and Development Framework |
| **Peters, Guy** | Institutionalism; horizontal governance |
| **Rose, Richard** | Citizens in public policy; policy programs implementation |
| **Sen, Amartya** | Goal functions of public policy; human potential; models of development |
| **Sabatier, Paul A.** | Advocacy Coalition Framework |

# Founding fathers, their followers and main contributions
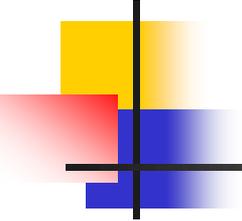
| | |
|---|---|
| **Simon, Herbert** | Human aspects of the working of bureaucracy |
| **Schneider, Anne L.; Ingram, Helen M.** | Social constructions of target groups |
| **Weimer, David L.; Vining, Aidan R.** | Methodology of policy analysis, relationship between market, government and civic sector |
| **Wildavsky, Aaron** | Policy analysis as science and art; implementation; the ethics of the relationship between policy advisors and politicians |
| **Wilenski, Harold** | Comparative analysis; corporatism |

*All of the above authors have in common the effort to transcend the boundaries between scientific disciplines productively.*

# Sources in English
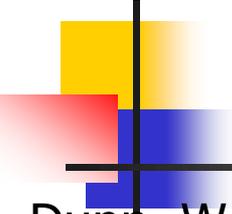
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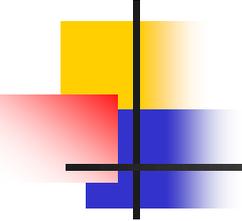
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