



Actors and Institutions

Courses

JSM518 "Public Policy"

JSD009 „Public Policy“

JSM699 „Theory of Public Policy“

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What is the lecture about



- Actors
- Institutions
- The relationship between actors and institutions
 - Government as an institution and an actor

➤ Theory of actor-centred institutionalism

- Arenas
- Agendas

➤ Theory of actors generating agendas in arenas (A-A-A Model)

Actors



= **Individual** or **composite actors** **involved** in the **policy process**:

- they may initiate it or influence its course or outcome.
- they are characterized by their:
 - **preferences** (which may change through persuasion),
 - **perceptions of the problem** to be addressed (which may change through learning),
 - **capabilities** – the resources at their disposal.
- their **action** is **motivated by their interests**.

(Scharpf 1997, p. 43)



Actors – overview

- **Global level** (WB, WTO, IMF)
- **European Union** (Green and White Papers, Open Method of Coordination...)
- **National-level government and public administration** (central government, Parliament, President, courts, regions, municipalities)
- Media
- Businesses
- NGOs, churches, political parties
- Mafias
- Epistemic communities, think-tanks
- Interest groups
- Personalities: politicians, celebrities, leading intellectuals...





Institutions

= **Regulators** (rules, norms) of **actors'** behaviours

➤ **Implicit (unwritten)**

- ethical and social norms,
- expectations and customs



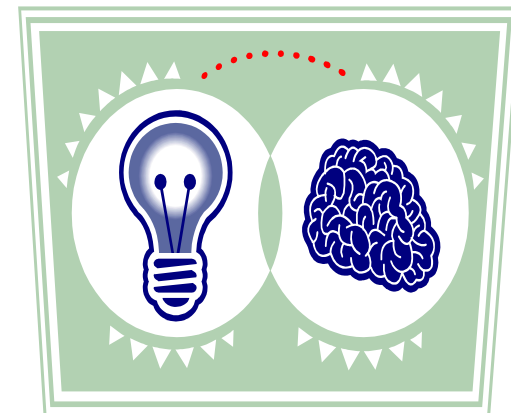
➤ **Explicit (formalized)**

- the constitutional-legal system
- organizational structures



Critical Thinking Question

- Can ***unwritten institutions*** play a ***more important*** role in policy implementation ***than formalized ones?***
- Give examples supporting or refuting this proposition.





The relationship between actors and institutions

- **Change** depends on **actors'** agency,
 - yet actors exist in an environment, facing different external constraints and **institutional contexts** they have to respect.
- Some **institutional environments** are more advantageous for effective policymaking than others (Stoker 1989, May 1993).

Formalized & non-formalized policy actors & institutions

Level of formalization	Actors		Institutions
	Individual	Composite	
Formalized	Political leaders Policy analysts	Political parties Government, public administration bodies Firms Civic sector organizations Policy analysis organizations Media	Constitutional-legal system Organizational structures (e.g., administrative areas of a state, the Tripartite)
Non-formalized (unwritten)	Opinion leaders Policy entrepreneurs	Interest groups Epistemic communities Policy communities	Ethical norms, social norms, expectations, customs

Exercise

- *For each cell of the preceding **table**, give examples for the **global level of governance**.*



Government as an institution & an actor

- Government executes **key functions**:
 - develops the **constitutional-legal framework** of social life and enforces it among other actors;
 - guarantees internal and external **security**;
 - sets the **institutional framework of economic activity**;
 - ensures the provision of public social services;
 - protects the environment.
- **Changing government authority** in recent decades
 - gradual shift from positive to **regulatory** state (Majone 1997).





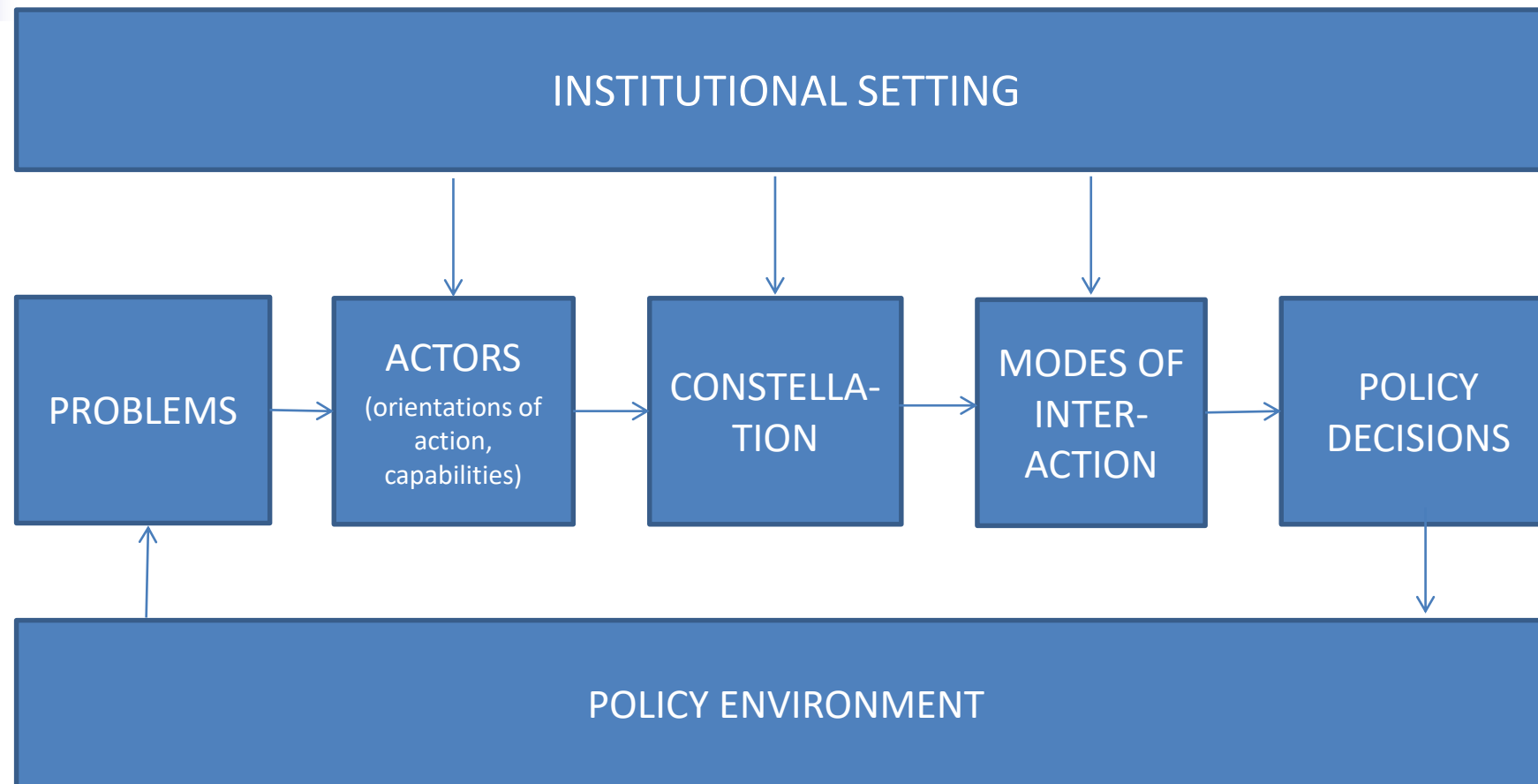
Theory of actor-centred institutionalism

- **Actors formulate and implement policies by way of politically feasible measures and/or institutional change.**
- Basic assumptions:
 - **actors' actions** are strongly (but never fully) **determined by** the ways **existing institutions** (both formalized and unwritten ones) influence their perceptions, preferences and capabilities;
 - even individuals working in formalized institutions follow their internal rules.

"Rules and systems of rules in any historically given society not only organize and regulate social behavior but make it understandable – and in a limited conditional sense – predictable for those sharing in rule knowledge."

(Burns, Baumgartner, Deville 1985, p. 256 in Scharpf 1997, p. 40)

Theory of actor-centred institutionalism



CONSTELLATION – structure of actors in their mutual policy interactions with alternative goals and ways of attaining them.

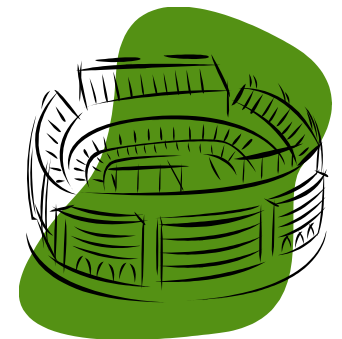
MODES OF INTERACTION – ways actors accomplish policy action: unilateral action, negotiated agreement, majority voting, and hierarchical direction.

Source: Scharpf (1997, adapted).



Arenas, policy venues

= **specifically delimited spaces** in which different **policy actors** **interact** in **cooperative/consensual** or **competitive/conflictive** ways.

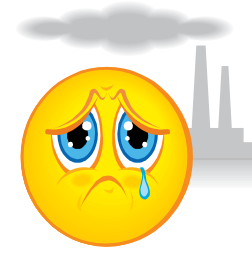


■ **Typology:**

- Traditional: legislature, executive, political parties
 - + general public, bureaucracy, interest groups (Jordan & Richardson 1987)
 - + media
- distributive, redistributive and regulative; constitutive, auto-regulative and persuasive.

(Lowi 1972 and Salisbury 1968, in Fiala & Schubert 2000, pp. 67–75).

Agendas



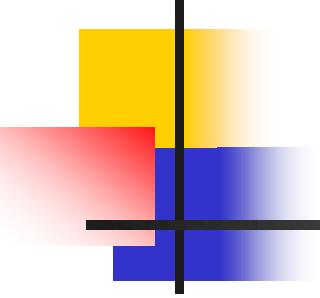
= **formulated**, solved, or postponed social (public) **problems** + the ways they are **perceived** and **communicated** by actors in given **institutional environments**

- They are constantly shaped, modified and complemented by various specific **issues**.
- **Current** (e.g., the Euro crisis) vs **prospective** (strategic – e.g., global warming)

Exercise

- ***Give examples of a **policy agenda** and issues on the agenda.***





Theory of actors generating agendas in arenas (**A-A-A** Model)

- Studies the links between and dynamics of policy **Arenas** + policy **Actors** + policy **Agendas**.
- Actors (through mutual interaction in arenas) establish and maintain relations with actors from other arenas
different **flows of communication**
- **Actors** articulate and initiate **issues on the agenda**, but also suggest the ways to address them
- An articulated issue gets onto the policy agenda when actors with a threshold potential of influence are mobilized



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