1   Introduction to critical policy studies
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1.   EMERGENCE AND THEORETICAL EVOLUTION

Critical policy studies, like policy studies generally, focuses on the poli-cymaking process. That focus includes two key concerns: one involves how policies are decided in a political setting and the other is focused on the practices of policy analysis, specifically on how they address the formulation and assessment of particular policies and their outcomes. As such, critical policy studies has emerged as an effort to understand policy processes not only in terms of apparent inputs and outputs, but more importantly in terms of the interests, values and normative assumptions – political and social – that shape and inform these processes (see Barbehön et al., Chapter 13, this volume; Lejano and Park, Chapter 15, this volume; and Åm, Chapter 16, this volume). Rejecting the assumption that analysis can be neutral, entirely uncommitted to and removed from interests and values, critical policy studies seeks to identify and examine existing com-mitments against normative criteria such as social justice, democracy and empowerment (see Fainstein, Chapter 10, this volume).[1]

Basic to policy analysis generally are two very old ideas – namely, the ideas that government decisions should be based on sound knowledge, and that such knowledge should rise above politics. Although these ideas have their roots in the ancient notion of rule by philosopher kings, in the modern world these ideas point instead to the conception of a governing elite of technical experts – or technocracy – working as a neutral instru-ment on behalf of human progress. Critical policy studies throws the ideas of 'expertocracy' and technical governance into question, regarding them as advancing both an unrealistic promise and a threat to practical knowledge and democratic governance.

One of the most important issues for critical policy studies, then, has to do with the nature of knowledge, both the knowledge used to shape policy and the kinds of knowledge and assumptions that guide the implementa-tion of policy decisions. Basic to this approach has been a critique of the positivist conception of knowledge that has long informed the theory and practice of policy studies and policy analysis in particular. Critical

policy studies, drawing on studies of the cultural and historical context of knowledge, largely adopts an interpretive, culturally and historically constructivist understanding of knowledge and its creation.

With regard to knowledge of the policy process, critical policy studies examines the implications of the social construction of knowledge for policy decision-making (see Ingram and Schneider, Chapter 14, this volume; and Paterson and Scala, Chapter 25, this volume). It seeks to reveal the ways in which particular kinds of policy analysis – together with their findings and recommendations – have different sorts of impacts on the political and policy processes. This is the case whether analysis projects an image of neutrality that leaves unexamined and unchallenged the context of power relationships in which it is undertaken (see Luke, Chapter 8, this volume); or whether, in contrast, inquiry is explicitly undertaken with normative criteria that follow an emancipatory interest seeking to empower participation and enhance democracy.

In the decades following World War II, Harold Lasswell introduced the 'policy orientation' and a call for the 'policy sciences of democracy' (see Torgerson, Chapter 2, this volume). But the approach that actually emerged in the political and social sciences was inspired by a technocratic notion of social engineering and political steering. The idea of technocracy itself goes back to nineteenth-century positivism in Europe, and France in particular, a school of thought that influenced progressivism in the United States during the early twentieth century.[2] After World War II, the accent on social engineering in the United States came with an expansion of the role of policy analysis in government, associated with the War on Poverty and the Vietnam War (see Fischer, Chapter 3, this volume). But these experiences were not without problems, giving rise to skeptical responses from various quarters of society. These responses arose in part due to concern about the growing prominence of unelected and largely unknown policy experts in governmental decision processes and in part as a consequence of the failure of policy analysts and expert advisors to provide the promised results. One important strand of response by the later 1970s was reflected in a new orientation in policy inquiry – variously called post-positivist, interpretive, or critical.

Critical policy studies, and critical policy analysis in particular, were an academic response to the social and political turmoil of a particular period, roughly from the middle of the 1960s into the 1970s and beyond. During those years Western societies, and especially the United States, experienced a sustained period of turmoil resulting from a wide spectrum of political unrest. Beset with tensions – created by the civil rights struggle, the War on Poverty, the Vietnam War, the threat of nuclear holocaust, student unrest, the emergence of the women's movement,

health and safety problems, recognition of the environmental crisis, and more – society seemed to be unraveling at the seams. At the time, the social sciences appeared to many to be irrelevant to these pressing issues. Seen as being focused on abstract issues pursued from the ivory tower, the social sciences faced criticism by increasing numbers of students and professors in the United States and Europe. The critics, of whom there were many, began to call for a different sort of social and political research, a kind that was socially relevant to the issues in the streets. The call for relevance led to epistemological turmoil in the social sciences, even for a while taking the form in the disciplines of social science as a politics of methodology between empiricist and the normative theorists.

Fundamental to this call for new methods was a challenge to the 'rational' model of positivist policy analysis and its fact–value dichotomy. Critics argued that the problems confronting society were lodged in under-lying value conflicts that were not readily accessible to empiricist methods; this shortcoming blocked the deliberate and sustained interpretation of the common understandings through which these conflicts appeared. Martin Rein (1976) in policy analysis and Richard Bernstein (1971, 1976) in the philosophy of the social sciences maintained in the 1970s that the failure to adequately address the relationship between facts and values was a major barrier to a social science capable of understanding, and thus effectively contributing to, the solution of policy problems (Fischer 1980, p. 10).

To a growing number of political theorists and policy scholars, the sharp separation of facts and values and the value neutrality that positiv-ists insisted upon obscured the role of norms and values and the ways they need to be approached (e.g., Taylor 1967). This insistence placed severe limitations on efforts to design a discipline to assist in addressing the important issues confronting decision-makers – issues concerned as much, or more, with appraising and proposing goals and ends. That is, a discipline that would move beyond narrow technical issues about how to efficiently achieve pre-given, unexamined ends to broader questions about how ends are actually instituted and how they might be established through participatory processes. As one writer put it at the time, 'it seems unfortunate to have rational procedures available for the relatively less important decisions of life and to have none for dealing with the most important decisions' (Diesing 1962, p. 1; Fischer 1980).

As social and political pressures intensified, some leaders in the social sciences, especially in political science, recognized the need to respond and called for the study of public policy in a way that addressed questions of relevance (e.g., Easton 1969). The study of public policy, as such, came to be seen as a way both to understand the conflicts in society and to bring the social sciences to bear on the effort to find solutions. The only caveat

was that such research should be conducted with rigorous empiricist methods of the social sciences, aided by a relatively new systems approach to problem solving and by the emerging promise of computers to handle large bodies of data. Indeed, this came to be and still remains the primary methodological orientation in policy studies. The emphasis has been particularly clear, both theoretically and methodologically, in the work of leading figures such as the late Paul Sabatier. In his highly influential work on advocacy coalitions, Sabatier (1988; also see Weimer and Vining 2010) called for a rigorous empirical search for causal relationships as the essence of valid policy research.

This development of this field of inquiry appeared attractive to many, as it offered a way to do social science research and be socially useful at the same time. The appeal was reflected in the rapid expansion of the sub-field of public policy, especially in political science. Within a very short period of time, the policy focus became one of the leading specializations in the discipline, perhaps even the leading specialty in political science. At the same time, however, the insistence on rigorous empiricist investigation failed to actually address the concerns that had been raised by critics, particularly by social and political theorists focused on problems of norms, values and practice (see, e.g., Bernstein 1976). For them, the crisis in society could not be comprehended from an objectivist orientation to social reality that failed to understand the subjective and intersubjective human dimensions of the crisis. The crisis in society fundamentally involved a 'crisis of values' that could be approached only through the common understandings among different social actors interacting with one another. Rather than seeing a promise of solutions through the formulation of policies based on the explanation of political behavior in terms of causal relations, these critics saw the answer to be more deeply connected to intersubjective understandings, with the consequent need for methods of '*verstehen*' in order to develop forms of practice able to respond effectively to social problems (e.g., Taylor 1971).

The intellectual crisis in the social sciences only intensified as it became clear into the 1970s that the great outpouring of policy research – thanks in particular to monies made available by the struggle to end poverty – was unable to solve the many pressing problems confronting society. In frustration, leading policy scholars, such as Charles Lindblom, came to ask, what is 'usable knowledge'? That concern opened up deeper epistemological questions about the nature of knowledge and its relationship to the political and social organization of society (see Fischer, Chapter 3, this volume).

Indeed, a group of young policy scholars, initially North American but increasingly European, began in the 1980s to look for alternatives that

built on the epistemological critique advanced earlier by philosophers and political theorists. Bringing theoretical questions of knowledge to bear on the more practical concerns of policy problems, these scholars set out to develop a critical perspective on public policy. Of crucial importance to this effort was the critical theory of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas – whose work had begun appearing in English translation during the early 1970s – particularly his critique of scientism and the legitimation crisis in modern society (see Saretzki, Chapter 4, this volume). Drawing on his early turn to language and communication, for example, writers such as Fischer and Forester (1993; also see 1987) outlined the 'argumentative turn' in planning and policy analysis. Although there were many other influences, this work helped to promote a turn away from a purely empiricist approach to include an understanding as well of the assumptions informing – and the communicative processes mediating – the formulation and implementation of policy.

The critical orientation has since expanded to include theoretical and empirical work on discourse analysis, policy deliberation, deliberative democracy, citizen juries and consensus conferences, participatory governance, and the politics of expertise, as well as participatory policy analysis and collaborative planning, local and tacit ways of knowing, interpretive and ethnographic methods (see Dubois, Chapter 24, this volume). Such lines of investigation were also further developed by the emergence of a feminist approach to critical policy studies (see Paterson and Scala, Chapter 25, this volume). Even though, as Fischer and Gottweis (2012, pp. 1–2) point out, these research foci of critical policy studies 'are hardly synonymous, they share the special attention they give to communication and argumentation, in particular the processes of utilizing, mobilizing and assessing communicative practices in the interpretation and praxis of policymaking and analysis'.

2.   CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN CRITICAL POLICY STUDIES

Emerging from such developments, critical policy studies today has moved beyond an initial concern with criticizing technocracy and positivism to a sharpened focus on effectively enhancing both practical knowledge and democracy. Central to the policy turn in the social sciences, as we have noted, was the ideal of a dominant, if not exclusive, reliance upon scientific knowledge. Indeed, this still remains the prevailing orientation in policy analysis, as reflected in the use of evidence-based policymaking and the prominence of cost–benefit analysis as a decision-making methodology

(see Strassheim, Chapter 17, this volume; and Elgert, Chapter 18, this volume). It is obvious in engineering, for instance, that scientific knowledge can be successfully applied even though detached from the context of application. That is far from obvious, however, in the case of technocratic social engineering. Indeed, from the perspective of critical policy studies, the idea is simply misbegotten.

Critical policy studies, as such, emphasizes the importance of contextual understanding, ordinary knowledge, narrative storytelling, emotional expression and communicative practices generally. This emphasis has especially resonated with critical policy approaches emerging from political science – a discipline in which many political theorists have continued to stress the importance of political understanding for inquiry as well as practical judgment and action.[3] Political understanding, so understood, is by no means the exclusive province of experts; it belongs even more fundamentally to the domain of citizens. A focus on political understanding (as opposed to political *explanation* as formally understood in the social sciences) thus helps open the door to a participatory orientation in the relationship between experts and citizens, breaking with the technocratic conception (see Dubois, Chapter 24, this volume). That reorientation favors democratization through approaches such as deliberative democracy and participatory governance.[4]

In the critical approach, the goals of enhancing both practical knowledge and democracy are connected by a focus on the idea of democratizing policy inquiry – a link that has become especially apparent with the 'argumentative turn'. With that turn, there is a shift in focus from empirical analysis to the communicative practices of argumentation and discourse, including discourse coalitions (Hajer 1995). Hence we see efforts at designing and employing means to encourage debate, deliberation and participation in policy inquiry (see Durnová, Chapter 12, this volume).

Such efforts to democratize inquiry are part of the larger project to 'democratize democracy' (Santos 2007; also see Fung and Wright 2003, on 'deepening democracy'), in contrast to the famous contention arising from the Trilateral Commission that there is a 'crisis of democracy' because emerging social movements overburden the democratic political system with demands, resulting in 'system overload'. The crisis of democracy, then, was 'too much' democracy (Crozier et al. 1975). Indeed, such rhetoric continues to be heard as journalists, scholars and politicians speak of the 'crisis of representative government'. The rationale for developing democratic designs in inquiry is, in contrast, that effective practical knowledge often requires such movements. Democratizing inquiry, of course, cannot democratize society and governance on its own, but it has to be an important component of genuine democratization, particularly

in helping to develop cognitive and deliberative capacities among citizens and institutions. The agenda of critical policy studies thus is influenced by, and supportive of, social movements with agendas supporting democratization (see Mendonça and Ercan, Chapter 11, this volume).

The concern to enhance democracy largely follows from the conviction that a 'democratic deficit' is typical of not only nominally democratic countries, but the more advanced Western democracies as well. Critics of elitist, technocratic liberalism have often focused on the specter of an oligarchy of experts while proponents have imagined a benign elite. Both views now seem naive. Experts, as Foucault has made clear, are indispensable in societies that are technologically advanced or advancing, but experts always operate within structures and relations of power (see Lövbrand and Stripple, Chapter 5, this volume). Although critical policy studies remains concerned about a ruling elite of experts, it is even more interested in the role experts play in serving or challenging established elites, whose power is at the root of democratic deficits.

A significant problem here is that the technical mystique can obscure actual power dynamics by enveloping experts with a misleading aura of objective rationality. The concern in critical policy studies that elites dominate existing democracies has, as we have noted, coincided with the rise of a host of new social movements. These movements have directly challenged technocratic governance with the fact that their voices are routinely discounted or ignored by the political powers that be. In contrast to those who take such movements to be problematic, especially as they threaten existing power relationships, the critical policy perspective embraces them not only as an opportunity to develop the focus of investigation, but also as an opportunity to advance democratic governance and the democratization of policy inquiry.

Democratizing inquiry can be understood as part of the politics of expertise. Because it depends on a notion of unequivocal, objective knowledge, the ideals of 'expertocracy' do not recognize or face up to the problem of persistent disagreements among experts. This issue is particularly reflected in the rise of 'think-tanks' and their discourse coalitions, often gravitating toward opposing ideological commitments in a way that clearly undermines an otherwise unquestioned objectivity of experts (see Plehwe, Chapter 19, this volume). This concern has been underscored by the fact that social movements have themselves entered directly into the politics of expertise, often employing their own movement experts – as 'counter-experts' – and giving explicit attention to language as they work to reframe and redefine policy problems (see Ojha et al., Chapter 20, this volume; and Braun, Chapter 23, this volume).

Aiming to enhance practical knowledge together with democratic

politics, critical policy studies takes a special interest in the concept of practice. The earlier term 'critical policy analysis' indicated a focus on the inadequacies of conventional policy analysis in providing applied knowledge. That focus is maintained in critical policy studies, but attention also clearly moves beyond it to encourage perspectives that have less direct interest in application than in understanding the institutional, cultural, historical, political and philosophical contexts and implications of policy inquiry (e.g., Orsini and Smith 2007).

From the above sketch it is not difficult to note that this critical approach has not developed into a unified field that can be categorically defined or reduced to a single theoretical perspective. Rather it is marked by differences and contentions, which may well be inherent aspects of its agonistic nature. Theoretical issues and controversies will remain important for future developments, however concrete they may become. Although different theoretical approaches indeed continue to emerge, there are three that stand out: interpretive, critical and poststructuralist. These approaches – while sharing a common point of departure in language and communicative practices – differ to the extent that they stress, or acknowledge, an interest in political emancipation. Nonetheless, such an interest appears as implicitly or explicitly involved in each. Rejecting the prevailing model of an elitist, technocratic liberal democracy, all offer support for projects designed to further the processes of democratization.

Interpretive policy analysis proceeds from the advent of interpretation in the social sciences more generally (Jennings 1983). Departing from the positivist insistence that social science must depend on objectively given 'hard data', the interpretive approach has maintained that the necessary source of access to evidence in social science is a grasp of the common understandings in a cultural context (Taylor 1971). The conduct of interpretation proceeds from these understandings, but by no means necessarily remains 'common' – often offering uncommon insights by throwing into question what is normally taken for granted. Such insights can follow from a self-reflective acknowledgment of the 'world' as a human artifice or of the 'social construction of reality' (Arendt 1958; Berger and Luckmann 1967). In a policy context, that acknowledgment can prompt a 'defamiliarization' or 'denaturalization' of conventional categories, typifications and procedures that would otherwise simply be taken for granted. With the conventional thrown sharply into question, attention can turn to examining the contingent processes of its construction and impact in specific circumstances of the policy process. Reflexivity of this kind can become particularly potent and illuminating when policy analysts focus attention on the 'framing' and 'reframing' of policy problems (Schön and Rein 1994). An interpretation, however, does not necessarily embrace

an emancipatory interest and can in fact serve to reinforce traditional authority – as is evident, for example, from the history of hermeneutics, which has influenced the interpretive approach. Nonetheless, interpretive policy analysis (see Yanow, Chapter 21, this volume; Wagenaar, Chapter 22, this volume; also see Wagenaar 2011) clearly indicates an emancipatory interest in its critique of contemporary techno-empirical policy analysis, as in the case of evidence-based policymaking. With its methodological orientation, moreover, interpretive inquiry also poses a direct challenge to policy elites in contemporary society by calling into question taken-for-granted assumptions.

Closely related to interpretive analysis has been the turn to stories and narratives, which do not exist outside of the political, cultural and social environment in which they are constituted. Narrative policy analysis tends to focus on the issue-oriented stories told by policy actors. The goal, as Yanow (2000, p. 8) puts it, is to use 'such analysis to clarify policy positions and perhaps mediate among them'. Such investigation 'analyzes the structure either of the policy and agency stories told by various actors or of their content, allowing comparisons across different versions'. With some exceptions, narrative approaches tend to analyze storytelling from the perspective of actors seeking to influence or shape policy and politics with their version of events. As with interpretation generally, a focus on narrative is not inherently critical. But, as with interpretive analysis, the approach of narrative policy analysis can be practiced in a critical manner.

A standard reference in the development of a critical perspective was Bernstein's *The Restructuring of Social and Political Theory* (1976). Offering a powerful critique of positivism and 'technocratic consciousness', this book took up an interpretive perspective, but culminated with a focus on the potentialities of Habermas's approach to critical theory. For Habermas, indeed, interpretation is necessary as a point of departure, but is insufficient for critical inquiry without an analysis of the forces shaping the context of common understandings and interactions – in other words, without an examination of the established 'power structure' (1970a, p. 111) that constitutes the '*objective context*' (1988, p. 174, emphasis in original). It is not clear whether Habermas's objectifying move here must ultimately involve a shift to a standpoint beyond a cultural context of interpretation.[5] Nonetheless, his account of the 'ideal speech situation' is based upon the conception of a general structure of language use – or 'universal pragmatics' – focused on the very presuppositions of communication (Habermas 1970b, 1979). Habermas here offers the image of an idealized argument as a norm by which to identify and assess distorted patterns of communication.

When John Drzyek used the term 'critical policy analysis' early on, he

distanced himself from a strictly interpretive posture and explicitly invoked Habermas's ideal speech situation: 'Critical policy analysis devotes itself to the elimination of distortion, which can occur through suppression, debasement, or deception' (Bobrow and Dryzek 1987, p. 169; also see Dryzek 1990, chapter 6). Habermas's move to posit a transcendental standard by which to assess actual language practices has met many objections and may, indeed, ultimately fall prey to its own formalism (Morris 1996). However, his image of argument under the conditions of a level playing field remains relevant to practical efforts to design settings for a reasonably fair debate. Here an emancipatory interest remains obvious but a practical problem potentially arises if emancipation is to support democratization. This is because – as Habermas himself acknowledges (1974, p. 40) – a project to emancipate and enlighten society introduces the specter of elitism resulting from the very distinction between those who are enlightened and those who are not.

In his seminal critique of technocratic policy discourse during the early 1970s, Laurence Tribe (1971, 1972, 1973) invoked Foucault to demonstrate an 'elemental fallacy' in the objectivist contention that there could be neutrality in 'naming categories' because discourse 'imposes its own categories and paradigms on the world of experience' (1972, pp. 98, 72). Although the influence of poststructuralism in critical policy studies has been relatively recent, it is now one of the key theoretical orientations in the field (see Howarth and Griggs, Chapter 6, this volume). Foucault, in particular, has emerged as a unique focus of attention (see Lövbrand and Stripple, Chapter 5, this volume).[6] There is often a particular emphasis on his analysis of power as a 'multiplicity of force relations' (Foucault 1980b, p. 92) that is immanent to a field, in which comprehensive categories – such as 'state' or 'society' – are decomposed in favor of indeterminate networks examined at minute and interstitial levels. Foucault's famous notion of 'power/knowledge' (Foucault 1979) also clearly disrupts the technocratic presupposition that knowledge can be neutral. The question of power is further pursued in critical policy studies with attention to his problematization of 'discipline' (1980a) and 'governmentality' (1991a). Foucault is typically understood to be critical, implicitly in any case, especially in regard to his approach to power. As with poststructuralism generally, however, he tended to be equivocal, ambiguous or coy about an emancipatory interest. Nonetheless, in explicitly associating his late turn to the question of 'enlightenment' with the critique of enlightenment in early Frankfurt critical theory, Foucault (1991c, pp. 116–124; 2007, pp. 51–55; also see Horkheimer and Adorno 2002) came to a similar point of ambivalence. Although he questioned whether the 'critical task' still requires a 'faith in Enlightenment', Foucault nonetheless left no

ambiguity that his effort was animated by an interest in emancipation. As he put it, 'this task requires work on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty' (1984, p. 50). If we can find no explicit political project in Foucault (e.g., 1991b), such a project nonetheless becomes central to Laclau and Mouffe's influential effort (1985) to combine features of Foucault's discourse theory with Gramsci's accent on hegemony (see Howarth and Griggs, Chapter 6, this volume; Sum and Jessop, Chapter 7, this volume). Laclau and Mouffe explicitly advance a strategy for a 'radical democracy' that accentuates antagonism as opposed to consensus and thus rejects a common tendency in deliberative democracy. As such, they sharply distance themselves from the prevailing model of liberal democracy.

With an accent on contexts of shared understandings, those who adopt an interpretive approach are sometimes troubled by the tendencies they detect in the critical orientation, insofar as it can suggest a potential distancing from the common world. This concern is not only methodological but also political, identifying a propensity in critical inquiry toward an elitist posture of enlightenment. Strikingly, Habermas expresses much the same concern, saying that although the 'superiority of those who do the enlightening over those who are to be enlightened is theoretically unavoidable', it is also 'fictive' and needs to be corrected: 'in a process of enlightenment there can only be participants' (1974, p. 40). The 'theoretically unavoidable' problem that arises here points back, however, to a practical context of common understandings among participants – to a return, that is, to an interpretive domain and to the 'action oriented self-understanding' that Habermas himself has praised in Gadamer's hermeneutics (1988, p. 162).

When interpretive social science was beginning to have an effect on policy analysis, Bruce Jennings (1983) ironically likened policy analysts to the famous bourgeois gentleman in Molière's play who was pleasantly surprised to learn that he had been speaking prose all his life: policy analysts were surprised to learn that they were doing 'hermeneutics'. They thus learned the obvious: that, contrary to what their training and professional status might suggest, they were part of a common world where everyone found their way through the interpretation and understanding of one another. With that came the recognition that a focus on interpretation basically only made explicit much of what they were already doing. It was a short step from that realization, according to Jennings, to an appreciation of the inescapable relevance of political understanding and judgment, as these had come to be associated with the Aristotelian conception of *phronēsis*.[7] Indeed, if critical policy studies is to be relevant for projects of democratization, it appears that debates involving political understanding

and judgment – in contrast to the narrower emphasis on political explanation that has long informed mainstream social science – offer an indispensable reference point in linking theory with practice.

3.   THE *HANDBOOK*

With this volume, we hope to further advance the development of critical policy studies. To that end, we begin with essays that give a clearer definition to the field by examining its emergence both in a practical context and in connection with the varied theoretical influences and initiatives that make for its continuing commonalities and differences. This focus is meant both to inform readers of the *Handbook* and to stimulate debate among those who are interested in shaping the orientation and issues that are to guide the project of critical policy studies in the future. The essays in the book thus range from those that are more theoretical in focus to those that are distinctly concerned with practice. The significance of power is a topic that runs through many of the essays, together with concerns about justice, democracy, deliberation, discourse and empowerment. Policy processes, from agenda-setting, problem definition and formulation to implementation are viewed from critical perspectives. Attention also turns to the politics of expertise, including think-tanks and participatory research, while methodological and epistemological problems arising from social construction, gender, ethnography, emotions and interpretation are all given explicit treatment as part of the critical project. With that, we can briefly introduce the six parts of the volume and the particular essays in each, together with their importance for critical policy studies.

Part I   Origins and Theoretical Development: From Lasswell to Habermas and Foucault

Focused on the origins and evolution of critical policy studies, the first part of the volume opens with an essay by Douglas Torgerson, 'Harold D. Lasswell and critical policy studies: the threats and temptations of power', that offers an account of Lasswell's early project for 'the policy sciences of democracy' in terms of both its advances and limitations. Torgerson argues that, despite common misunderstandings of his work, Lasswell anticipated many aspects of what now seems new with critical policy studies. Nonetheless, Lasswell's commitment to a critical project advancing the democratization of society ultimately embroiled him in perplexing problems, particularly in connection with what he called 'the threats and temptations of power'. Focusing on these problems in Lasswell allows

us to see more clearly how similar difficulties now also confront critical policy studies.

Frank Fischer's chapter, 'In pursuit of usable knowledge: critical policy analysis and the argumentative turn', examines the history of the critical orientation in policy analysis while introducing the argumentative turn, which was influential in paving a new way for policy analysis based on communication. Along the way, this chapter explains what the argumentative turn has meant for standard models of policy analysis, and in particular what makes it critical. The perspective, Fischer argues, has evolved over two decades, moving from a focus on argumentation to include deliberation, discourse, citizens panels, participatory expertise, interpretation, transformative learning, a recognition of the importance of emotions in policy deliberative processes, among other topics. A four-level model of policy discourse is presented, with particular reference to the limitations of the advocacy coalition framework. It concludes with a discussion of the relationship of argumentation and discourse to politics, with an emphasis on policy change.

As the argumentative turn took its initial impulse from the work of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the third essay by Thomas Saretzki, 'Habermas, critical theory and public policy', focuses on this foundational contribution to the study of language and deliberation. Habermas influenced the development of critical policy studies by stimulating insights on epistemological and methodological issues and on the relation of theory to practice. The chapter starts with a short recollection of the program for the policy sciences of democracy and the conceptual problems it presents concerning the relationship between scientific objectivity and democracy. Recalling Habermas's interventions in the positivist dispute, the technocracy debate and the controversy on the relation of hermeneutics and critical theory, the chapter then explains why policy scholars committed to democratizing policy deliberation took an interest in Habermas and how his theoretical perspectives and concepts played a role in policy evaluation. The chapter ends with a critical reflection that considers some of the problems that have been experienced by those who have recommended his concepts for democratizing processes of policy analysis and policymaking.

Next comes a discussion of the seminal contribution of Michel Foucault by Eva Lövbrand and Johannes Stripple, 'Foucault and critical policy studies'. They argue that Foucault's work paves the way for a decentered form of policy analysis by asking how we govern and are governed in micro-settings, including at the level of the individual subject. The focus on the 'how of governing' stems from Foucault's rejection of any *a priori* understanding of the distribution of power or location of government,

turning instead to an interest in – and awareness of – the historically situated practices, rationalities and identities by which governing operates. Viewed in this manner, Foucault-inspired policy studies neither offers us a substantive theory about the forces that shape public policy (e.g., actors, interests, structures) nor does it tell us what constitutes public policy. The primary role of the critical analyst is instead to interrogate how these political spaces come about, how power – including disciplinary power – operates through them and, ultimately, how they could be different.

Part II   Theoretical Perspectives: Critical Reflexivity, Hegemony and Power

In 'Poststructuralist discourse theory and critical policy studies: interests, identities and policy change', David Howarth and Steven Griggs argue that the explanation of policy change need not be caught in a stand-off between those who privilege interests or those who advance ideas, or those who foreground either agency or structure. Rejecting these oppositions, the chapter demonstrates how poststructuralist discourse theory offers a novel articulation of the role of ideas, interests, agency and structures in accounts of policy change. Moreover, it recognizes the centrality of politics and power in the forging of policy frames and discourses in particular social and historical contexts. This involves the articulation of the concepts of hegemony, rhetoric and Lacan's concept of fantasy to account for the emergence and formation of policy discourses.

The chapter by Ngai-Ling Sum and Bob Jessop, 'Cultural political economy and critical policy studies: developing a critique of domination', advances their theory of cultural political economy and its contribution to critical policy studies. The chapter introduces cultural political economy to explore the interconnected semiotic and structural aspects of social life. Their approach offers a preliminary set of basic sensitizing concepts and positive guidelines that are relevant to historical description, hermeneutic interpretation and causal explanation. It aims thereby to overcome the often compartmentalized analysis of semiosis/culture and structuration/institutions by integrating semiosis into political economy and applying evolutionary and institutional analyses to semiosis. This has important implications for understanding the limits of constructivist and structuralist analyses, lived experience and lesson-drawing, the relations among polity and policy, and specific fields of public policy. Finally, drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, they show the ways in which their theoretical framework can also provide the basis for critiques of ideology and domination in political and policy processes.

The final chapter in this part is by Timothy Luke, titled 'The interpretation of power'. When it comes to the discussion of policy decision-making, or adoption and legitimation, policy studies has typically borrowed from theoretical work in political science and sociology on pluralism and the power elite, including structured pluralism and its account of the business bias in liberal capitalist systems. In this essay, borrowing from more contemporary theoretical work, Foucault in particular, Luke demonstrates the limits of those perspectives under modern circumstances. The chapter explores how critical policy studies could productively approach the challenges of interpreting power as an object of political analysis by re-evaluating the sites and settings in which power typically is studied by policy analysis. Luke makes a case for interpreting power as a set of directive relations, which is co-evolving and co-constituting in agent-structure interactions with knowledge. He encourages critical policy analysis to contest technocratic uses of power in policymaking, and endorses the acceptance of more flexible and fluid interpretations of power at work in multiple sites and settings at all levels of governance.

Part III   Discursive Politics: Deliberation, Justice, Protest and Emotion

Policy discourse and deliberation constitute a primary focus in critical policy studies, having emerged early with the impetus given by Habermas's theories of ideal speech and communicative ethics. A different emphasis on discourse followed as the contribution of Foucault entered political and social theory and began to influence the policy field.

Part III leads off with Vivien Schmidt's chapter on 'Discursive institutionalism: understanding policy in context'. Schmidt offers her prominent theory of discursive institutionalism as an umbrella concept for approaches concerned with the substantive content of ideas, their social construction and the interactive processes of discourse in institutional contexts. The chapter illustrates the relevance of discursive institutionalism to critical policy studies by considering both the wide range of ideas in policy discourse and the ways in which political and policy actors articulate such ideas in policy construction and attempt to politically legitimate them. Along the way, she theorizes about the nature of the power of ideas, particularly as they are played out through discourse.

The second chapter, by Susan Fainstein, 'Social justice and urban policy deliberation: balancing the discourses of democracy, diversity and equity', puts the focus on the discourse of social justice in urban policy politics. Although the identification of social injustices has always been part of urban policy, politics and planning, there has been all-too-little effort to

specify what constitute 'just' policies. Choosing justice as the norm for urban policy, she explains that it is a response to the growing inequality and social exclusion resulting from the application of neo-liberalism to public policy and its insistence on the normative criterion of efficiency. Instead, she uses the three general principles of democracy, diversity and equity to define justice and, with the assistance of case illustrations, derives from them more specific metrics by which to judge the policymaking processes and outcomes of particular policies.

Ricardo Mendonça and Selen Ercan take up a central topic in contemporary political theory, deliberative democracy. By questioning one of the basic tenets of most work devoted to the topic – the fundamental role of consensus as the goal of deliberation – they illustrate in their chapter, 'Deliberation and protest: revealing the deliberative potential of protest movements in Turkey and Brazil', that political conflict can actually facilitate rather than hinder the processes of deliberation. Taking into consideration the important fact that protest movements have become primary events across the globe since the beginning of the century, they pose as problematic the dichotomy of a consensus-oriented deliberative democracy versus an agonistic politics that emphasizes opposition and conflict. They argue, in contrast to such a dichotomy, that the adversarial nature of the protests can promote rather than hinder the prospects for deliberation. Drawing particularly on experiences related to protest movements in Brazil and Turkey in 2013, the authors present them as important illustrations of the centrality of agonistic politics to political deliberation and deliberative democracy.

Finally, Anna Durnová's chapter, 'Lost in translation: expressing emotions in policy deliberation', turns to one of the crucially important topics to emerge in policy studies in recent years, namely the role of emotion. Once seen as the enemy of rationality, emotion now is increasingly portrayed as more closely linked to rationality than previously believed. Indeed, there is research showing that they are dependent on one another. As an important theorist in opening up this line of investigation in policy studies, Durnová draws attention to recent research on policy discourse and deliberation to show that emotions represent a crucial point of intersection between the individual and the collective dimensions of discourse, one that structures deliberation. Emotions are portrayed as affecting the nature of the knowledge at stake in deliberation and as shaping both the social configuration and attitudes of actors who take part in these processes and the ways in which they participate.

IV   Policy Processes: Problem Definitions, Evidence and Social Construction

Although policy studies has long been organized around the 'stages model' of the policy process, this approach has also been criticized as lacking empirical rigor and causal connections. Nonetheless, the model still remains a useful heuristic in addressing various aspects of the policy-making process. As such, the model represents policy as moving through a series of stages, from agenda-setting and policy formulation to policy adoption, implementation and evaluation. The authors in this part examine various stages from critical perspectives to illustrate the political, discursive and constructivist character of the policy process.

The opening piece by Marlon Barbehön, Sybille Münch and Wolfram Lamping, 'Problem definition and agenda-setting in critical perspective', delineates the crucial nature of the politics of problem definition in the agenda-setting process. Arguing that agenda-setting cannot be explained by rationalistic, positivist models, they show problem definition in agenda-setting to be a discursive process – part of the social construction of a political world – that attributes responsibility to political actors or institutions. Problem definition and agenda-setting are constructions of reality that can be identified within the larger policymaking process.

The discussion then turns to policy formulation, which in contemporary practice is largely dominated by cost–benefit analysis. Knowledge of costs and benefits, as well as other forms of evidence-based information, is important to decision-making. But when it is utilized independently of the social and political context to which it applies, it tends to serve an ideological role by simply accepting, and thus implicitly legitimating, the given set of governing arrangements. Critical policy analysis seeks to set such data in political context and explicate its implications. In their chapter, Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider offer an important illustration. In 'Making distinctions: the social construction of target populations', they demonstrate the socially constructed character of the target populations as they become delineated in the policy formulation process. As a path-breaking contribution to policy studies generally, they show how political actors assign particular social definitions to the populations to be served by a policy in ways that give meaning to the distribution of costs and benefits. The definitions, as they show, attribute the status of deserving or underserving to different members of the public. The process, they argue, often works insidiously to undercut possibilities of democratic governance.

Raul Lejano and Sung Jin Park follow next with 'The autopoietic text' to show the ways in which policy texts, as narratives, often mediate between the crafting of a policy and its implementation. Such texts can

serve as boundary objects that afford close interaction among policy actors. At the same time, strongly textualist policy domains can rigidly disempower these same actors, leading to shallow, rather than deep, approaches to implementation. At the most extreme, 'autopoietic texts' function as vehicles furthering ideological systems of thought.

Finally, Heidrun Åm in 'Co-production and public policy: evidence, uncertainty and socio-materiality' draws on the theory of co-production in science and technology studies to enhance the explanatory power of a poststructuralist approach. Examining the construction of newly emerging technologies, she rejects rational-choice approaches as unable to explain negotiations of regulatory policies in a context of uncertainty. Specifically, Åm shows that technoscientific developments, such as nanotechnology, confound evidence-based policymaking efforts. In the face of an 'institutional void', she argues that a combination of poststructuralist and co-productionist approaches helps to illustrate how proactive regulatory frameworks have become the authoritative mode of regulation in the nanotechnology field.

Part V   The Politics of Policy Expertise: Knowledge, Think-Tanks and Action Research

The relationship of expert knowledge to society is underscored in this part as a central concern of critical policy studies. The key questions are these: Who is considered to have such knowledge and who is not? What forms does such knowledge take? What are its social and political implications? Part V begins with Holger Strassheim's chapter on 'Politics and policy expertise: towards a political epistemology'. Strassheim acknowledges a need for educated advice from specialists in a world confronting complex problems such as global warming and food insecurities. Nonetheless, he points to the fact – paradoxical for some – that, along with this need, citizens are today questioning the role of expertise in society more than ever. In that regard, he points to tendencies toward both the expertization of democracy and the democratization of expertise. Critically exploring these relationships among science, policy and society, he asks how policy expertise is generated, communicated and justified. How do cultural contexts shape and constrain the politics of policy expertise, and how do we explain changes in that regard? To answer these questions, Strassheim conceptualizes expertise as a nexus of authority attributions embedded in discursive and institutional cultures. With an emphasis on 'political epistemologies', he seeks to open up opportunities for a critical re-examination of the production of public knowledge.

Continuing with a further exploration of the politics of expert

knowledge, Laureen Elgert focuses on the construction and use of sustainability indicators in contemporary global governance. In 'Global governance and sustainability indicators: the politics of expert knowledge', she argues that conventional approaches to the relationship between knowledge and policy employ expert indicators as a means of packaging and presenting knowledge in objective and universally valid ways for transparent and democratic policy analysis. Toward this end, she employs the case of 'responsible soy' certification standards to analyze the political role of indicators in the knowledge-policy interface, both as technologies of knowledge production and technologies of governance. She concludes that indicators are better understood as a way of disseminating norms and values than as mechanisms of transparent and efficient global governance.

In the third chapter, 'The politics of policy think-tanks: organizing expertise, legitimacy and counter-expertise in policy networks', Dieter Plehwe explores the role of policy think-tanks, which have become prominent organizations in political processes at national and international levels. He examines two competing perspectives. One of these praises think-tanks for their capacity to conduct policy-relevant research, for their ability to innovate, and for their capacity to reach out to practicing politicians. The other is a more critical perspective that points to the fact that many think-tanks not only fail to significantly contribute to research, but also form discourse coalitions that mainly serve elite, government or business interests far removed from any conception of the public interest. Although the two perspectives are clearly at odds, the contradiction can be resolved by recognizing different types of think-tanks, together with their diverse roles in particular policy communities at various stages in policy processes. A necessary part of such recognition is to sort out the political dimension of the knowledge and expertise produced and processed by think-tanks. A social network approach, Plehwe contends, can identify and clarify resources relevant to think-tank knowledge production, with respect for example to specific academic, political, corporate or ideological backgrounds. Gaining a critical understanding of the political character of think-tank knowledge, he argues, helps to improve policy deliberation and decision-making through the greater transparency and accountability of policy actors.

The final chapter of Part V, 'Critical action research and social movements: revitalizing participation and deliberation for democratic empowerment' by Hemant Ojha, Mani Banjade and Krishna Shrestha, deals with two additional points of reference for critical policy analysis: social movements and participatory policy expertise. The authors outline a critical action research approach designed to enhance the interplay among policy research, social movement practices and democratic governance. Their

concern is a general lack of effective deliberation in the policy processes. Drawing on three cases from Nepal, India and Australia, the authors demonstrate that interactive learning is crucial for revitalizing democratic empowerment across multi-scalar engagements. They conclude that there is enormous scope for revitalizing democratic empowerment in participatory policy processes, which can be facilitated by strengthening the ways in which researchers interact with communities and policy actors and by balancing epistemic and action objectives in specific contexts of application.

VI   Methodological Issues: Interpretation, Framing and Social Constructions

The methodological implications of critical approaches to policy studies are closely related to reflection on the ways to think and analyze the complexity of policy processes and the forms of knowledge that support them from the very beginning. While these canons of thought cannot be unified under one single approach, they nonetheless share common ground by opposing a positivist view of social science in favor of a 'post-positivist', interpretive perspective. As Dvora Yanow (1996, p. 5) states in her path-breaking book, *How Does a Policy Mean?*, 'We act; we have intentions about our actions; we interpret others' action. We make sense of the world: we are meaning making creatures.' Her chapter, 'Making sense of policy practices: interpretation and meaning', which opens Part VI of this volume with a detailed account of the beginning of interpretive analysis, is anchored both in a critique of mainstream policy analysis and in broader reflections about meaning and language in the social sciences. The author lays the ground for interpretive practice in policy studies and defines its guiding principles. Yanow tackles the methodological implications that arise once we take seriously the issue of the power dimensions of knowledge claims. She invites us to search for meaning-focused analytical practice that might be useful for both academics and practitioners in the field.

Such reflection then continues with another prominent figure of the interpretive policy approach, Hendrik Wagenaar, with his contribution, 'Transforming perspectives: the critical functions of interpretive policy analysis'. Wagenaar sees interpretive policy analysis as providing a kind of knowledge with a better fit with society than conventional empiricist policy analysis. Although the latter takes an unreflexive, objectivist view of the categories of analysis and is oblivious to the meaning of the data that interpretation promises, interpretive policy analysis performs a variety of critical functions, explained by the author in terms of three main categories of interpretive practice: hermeneutic, discursive and dialogical.

All these practices, he maintains, are critical enterprises that contribute to a deepening of democracy.

Kathrin Braun, in 'Between representation and narration: analysing policy frames', acknowledges the heterogeneous character of the methodological approaches in critical policy studies by highlighting the points that concepts of frame and framing have multiple meanings, and that doing frame analysis may mean very different things. Frames can be seen as having a narrative nature or a representational nature, or they can be regarded as ideological constructs that call for critical interventions into relations of power. The aim of the author is to explain the epistemological background of these differences and to guide us through possibilities and limitations of each of the classifications.

In his chapter 'Critical policy ethnography', Vincent Dubois presents a comprehensive review of the various orientations of policy ethnography, and defines four features of critical policy ethnography: to challenge mainstream positivist approaches to public policy; to confront common-sense and official views on policy; to conceive individual experiences and micro-observations from the broader perspective of power and inequality structures; and, last but not least, to unveil processes of social, economic, symbolic and political domination operating in and through policy processes.

The volume closes with a chapter by Stephanie Paterson and Francesca Scala, titled 'Making gender visible: exploring feminist perspectives through the case of anti-smoking policy'. With a feminist approach to the critical practice of policy analysis, Paterson and Scala seek to go beyond common expectations and thereby bring attention to crucial dimensions of feminist policy studies that can enhance critical approaches by making gender visible, even in regard to policies where it may not immediately appear to be a concern. In their discussion of anti-smoking policy, the authors find a relevant case to show how policy analysis often ignores or marginalizes women's voices and experiences. While women and girls tend to be the subjects of anti-smoking media campaigns, intervention strategies often rely on androcentric assumptions. By structuring their analysis around questions of power and difference, Paterson and Scala show how feminist perspectives can join forces with other critical approaches to advance the emancipatory potential of policy studies.

NOTES

1. In the context of policy evaluation, these can be understood as higher-order normative criteria (see Fischer 1995).

2.   In the 1920s Thorstein Veblen (1963) was a key American proponent of technocracy who stressed the role of engineering. On technocracy generally, see Fischer (1990).
3.   'Political life does not yield its significance to terse hypotheses but is elusive, and hence meaningful statements about it often have to be allusive and intimative. Context becomes supremely important, for actions and events occur in no other setting. Knowledge of this type tends, therefore, to be suggestive and illuminative rather than explicit and determinate' (Wolin 1969, p. 1070; cf. Beiner 1983).
4.   The theory and practice of governance is closely related to policy studies, but we do not treat it here as necessarily a part of critical policy studies. One reason is that much of it is not critical, as Davies (2011) makes clear. We do, however, see participatory governance as part of the critical perspective.
5.   Habermas (1984, pp. 109–111), in this respect, connects Giddens's account of the 'double hermeneutic' of the social sciences to the pragmatist concept, from Peirce to Dewey, of a community of inquirers (cf. Habermas 1971, pp. 101–102, 137–139; Bernstein 1971, pp. 176, 190, 201).
6.   A large stream of thought in both philosophy and the social sciences, poststructuralism has launched an investigation of the transformative potentials of knowledge (Howarth 2000; Gottweis 2003; Braidotti 2006; Glynos and Howarth 2008). Towards that end, poststructuralist political theory has developed a set of instruments to identify both how knowledge is shaped by discourses and, in turn, also shapes them – and the way in which institutions thereby legitimize their agendas.
7.   On the relationship of *phronēsis* to the development of policy analysis, see Torgerson (1995). For a recent example, see Flyvbjerg (2001).

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