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ABSTRACT   The analysis of public policy has recently been characterized by the development of an approach which emphasizes the influence of cognitive and normative elements in public policy-making. The main purpose of this article is to offer a critical review of different models related to this approach, based on notions of paradigm, of *advocacy coalition*, or of the *référentiel*. In spite of some differences, these conceptualizations all shed light on the influence of 'world views', mechanisms of identity formation, principles of action in public policy analysis. These models, separate from those informed by a rationalist position, are also capable of explaining the processes of 'extraordinary' change in public policy. However, an excessive emphasis on cognitive and normative variables has sometimes underestimated the forms of mobilization to which these frames are subject. This article tries to integrate certain neglected variables: the interests of actors, and the role of institutions.

KEY WORDS   Frames; paradigms; policy change; politics; public policy analysis.

There has been an increasingly important shift in the analysis of public policy in recent years, with the development of an approach which emphasizes the influence of ideas, general precepts and representations, over and above social evolution and state action. This approach is based on the belief that cognitive and normative elements play an important role in how actors understand and explain the world, and has stimulated a variety of works from various approaches. However, what these have in common, be it more or less explicit, is the goal of establishing the importance of the dynamics of the social construction of reality in the shaping of historically specific and socially legitimate frames and practices (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

This new research orientation, emphasizing the importance of cognitive and/or normative elements, has been the object of attempts at modelling, with a view to systematizing and conceptually constructing the role of these logics of the social construction of knowledge and meaning in state action. Among numerous works, three approaches can be identified, informed by a recognition of the importance of values, ideas and representations in the study of public policy. Developed separately in the course of the 1980s, albeit informed by quite different perspectives, these

conceptual models are primarily based on notions of paradigm (Hall 1993), of *advocacy coalition* (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; Sabatier 1998), or on the notion of the *référentiel*, as defined by Bruno Jobert and Pierre Muller (Jobert and Muller 1987; Faure *et al*. 1995). According to Peter Hall, recourse to such conceptualizations is especially well suited to the analysis of political phenomena, and in particular to public policy in so far as

> politicians, officials, the spokesmen for social interests, and policy experts all operate within the terms of political discourse that are current in the nation at a given time, and the terms of political discourse generally have a specific configuration that lends representative legitimacy to some social interests more than others, delineates the accepted boundaries of state action, associates contemporary political developments with particular interpretations of national history, and defines the context in which many issues will be understood.
>
> (Hall 1993: 289)

In spite of what are at times important differences, these conceptualizations all share a macro-level questioning which aims to shed light on the influence of global social norms on social behaviour and public policy, and to integrate into the analysis at times previously neglected normative variables (cf. in particular the voluminous literature which focuses exclusively on cognition and expertise – Radaelli 1995). Cognitive and normative frames, which as a general expression bring together paradigms (Hall), belief systems (Sabatier) and *référentiels* (Jobert and Muller), are intended to refer to coherent systems of normative and cognitive elements which define, in a given field, 'world views', mechanisms of identity formation, principles of action, as well as methodological prescriptions and practices for actors subscribing to the same frame. Generally speaking, these frames constitute conceptual instruments, available for the analysis of changes in public policy and for the explanation of developments between public and private actors which come into play in a given field.

The main purpose of this article is therefore to offer a critical review of these different models, by isolating their internal characteristics, and to see what type of research orientation they give rise to, explicitly or implicitly, for the analysis of public policy.

ELEMENTS OF COGNITIVE AND NORMATIVE FRAMES

The three notions discussed below include very similar elements, albeit grouped differently. Within each grouping we can make an analytical distinction between three or four elements which may be located on a hierarchical scale (see Table 1) established with reference to the original definition of the notion of paradigm (Kuhn 1970; Chalmers 1987; Surel 1995). These different elements, which combine to produce a coherent paradigmatic frame, include: metaphysical principles, specific principles, forms of action, and instruments.

Table 1 Elements of cognitive and normative frames

	Paradigm	Advocacy coalition framework	Référentiel
Metaphysical principles		Deep core	Values, images
	Policy paradigm		
Specific principles			Norms
		Policy core	
Forms of action	Choice of instruments		Algorithms
Instruments	Specifications of instruments		
		Secondary aspects	

Metaphysical principles

The different models evoked here are first built on the belief that values and metaphysical principles define what is sometimes called a 'world view', abstract precepts circumscribing what is possible in a given society, identifying and justifying the existence of differences between individuals and/or groups, and locating various social processes on a hierarchical scale. For Sabatier, for example, the *deep core* includes 'basic ontological and normative beliefs, such as the relative valuation of individual freedom versus social equality, which operate across virtually all policy domains' (Sabatier 1998: 103). This first grouping of elements can therefore be located in the normative stratum where we also find elements which condense values specific to a given frame, in the form of representations, beliefs, etc.

For example, in his study of the macro-economic policies pursued in Great Britain in the 1970s and 1980s (Hall 1992), Peter Hall identifies a shift from Keynesian-inspired principles to neo-liberal or monetarist ones. Underlying each of these models was a different world view. In the neo-liberal model, the rational and responsible individual was placed to the fore, the model thereby allying itself to a simplistic form of social Darwinism ('the beneficial effect of the market will ensure that the best come out on top, who will thus enhance the prosperity of all'). On the other hand, the Keynesian paradigm recognized the existence of collective duty to cure the ills of modern society, starting from a vision of economic processes which challenge the necessary and beneficial nature of the free hand of the market.

Specific principles

In second place, these cognitive frames comprise specific principles, which in various ways follow from the most general and abstract principles. Drawing on Kuhn, this second layer includes elements, notably hypothetical-deductive statements, which allow the operationalization of values in one domain and/or particular policy and/or subsystem of public policy. It is undoubtedly at this level that the

differences between the models are the greatest. While the work of Peter Hall implicitly rests on a hierarchy of degrees of abstraction (even if the normative and cognitive elements are both covered by the general notion of policy paradigm) Sabatier argues that the principles which allow us to make distinctions are very closely connected to differences in diffusion and social embeddedness. For Sabatier, there is a difference between the *deep core* and the *policy core* which is not only linked to their position in the hierarchy (the deepest and most general beliefs appearing in the deep core) but also concerns their scope: the deep core affects the whole of society (or at least a sizeable community) whereas the policy core refers only to a subsystem of public policy.

To put it more generally, taking the original conceptualization of Kuhn, we have, above all, a cognitive component which defines legitimate strategies with respect to objectives more or less explicitly prescribed by general principles. Peter Hall thus shows that the differences between Keynesian and monetarist paradigms hinge on distinct macro-economic policy objectives (the fight against unemployment in the first case, against inflation in the second). And these specific principles are closely related to the normative stratum, in so far as they aim to define clear prescriptions for public policy-making. For example, European monetary union was inspired by a monetarist 'world view' that helped to define suitable precepts for the formulation of macro-economic policies (McNamara 1998).

Forms of action

The above-mentioned grouping of cognitive and normative elements is linked to practical considerations of the most appropriate methods and means to achieve the defined values and objectives. Again, by analogy with Kuhn's work, for scientific methods to be inextricably linked to metaphysical principles and hypothetical-deductive models specific to a particular paradigm, it is necessary to identify forms of action appropriate for the trajectories sought, with respect to the values which characterize a frame. In other words, cognitive and normative frames not only construct 'mental maps' but also determine practices and behaviours. In the case of the state, they delimit the choice of instruments to implement a particular strategy.

Peter Hall, using the same example as before of macro-economic policy, shows that the techniques employed vary considerably according to the paradigm adopted. The mechanisms used to boost consumption through an expansive budgetary policy characteristic of Keynesian approaches contrast, for example, with the monetarist's emphasis on control of the money supply and the more systematic use of monetary policy instruments. The mobilization of instruments is therefore by no means a neutral decision; rather it matches certain normative and practical imperatives laid out by the previous elements.

Instruments

Finally, the last level is concerned with the specification of instruments which is shaped by the whole of the frame, to ensure their congruence with the other elements.

In Paul Sabatier's analysis of the role of secondary aspects within belief systems characteristic of an 'advocacy coalition', he includes, for example, minor decisions which may, within a particular programme, be concerned with budgetary allocations, administrative regulations, and so on. The cognitive and normative frame therefore delimits the scope of the necessary and potential instruments and the relative importance of each of them (legislative or regulatory mechanisms, interest rate level, etc.).

Overall, it is the combination of these elements which gives rise to particular mental maps. The definition of a 'societal paradigm' offered by Jane Jenson sums up well what underpins the specificity of these cognitive and normative frames, that is to say,

> a shared set of interconnected premises which make sense of many social relations. Every paradigm contains a view of human nature, a definition of basic and proper forms of social relations among equals and among those in relationships of hierarchy, and a specification of relations among institutions as well as a stipulation of the role of such institutions. Thus, a societal paradigm is a meaning system as well as a set of practices.

(Jenson 1989: 239)

Beyond their differences, these distinct conceptualizations all in fact posit the existence of an ensemble of general principles and values defining the relations and identities of actors, in particular through forms of thought which delimit, hierarchically rank and legitimate social distinctions, all the while setting priorities for action in a given community. In addition, the consequences of these different cognitive and normative societal frames are to legitimate some groups rather than others, mark out the terrain for public action, as well as define the possibilities for change in a particular subsystem. They thereby determine as much the world views themselves as the practices that follow from them.

However, such models raise problems linked to the different allocation of the elements making up a cognitive and normative frame. Thus, the articulation between the different layers is at times ambiguous, at others deterministic. Far from always clarifying the relations between metaphysical principles, forms of action and practical elements, in fact these models most often posit an internal coherence and a hierarchical ordering which enhance the normative elements. Furthermore, the links between these cognitive and normative variables and the institutional context are rarely made explicit, the problem made all the worse by the semantic imprecision in the terms at times introduced by the various tendencies of neo-institutionalism (ideas forming an explanatory variable of institutions in one case are themselves institutions in others, cf. Hall and Taylor 1996; for sociological institutionalism, cf. Powell and DiMaggio 1991).

THE FUNDAMENTAL DYNAMICS OF COGNITIVE FRAMES

Certain authors (cf. notably Mériaux 1995) have underlined the more or less explicit functionalist perspective present in these different approaches. Beyond the

particular inspirations and origins of each model, it is possible to see that cognitive frames all sustain several fundamental processes which act as the social functions of integration in a given community. In setting up a view of the world and determining legitimate practices, they seem in particular to be shaped by the production of identity mechanisms and the distribution of power, as well as by their capacity to manage social tensions.

The production of identity and the allocation of power

As in the cultural conception of ideology put forward by Geertz (Geertz 1964), one of the principal 'functions' of a cognitive and normative frame shared by a certain number of actors is effectively to develop a 'collective consciousness' in them; in other words, a subjective sense of belonging, producing a specific identity. Cognitive and normative frames allow actors to make sense of their worlds, and to locate themselves and develop in a given community, by defining the field for exchange, by allowing meaning to be conferred on social dynamics, and by determining the possibilities for action. They thereby contribute to the construction of individuals or groups as social actors in a particular field.

The management of the connection between values, representations, global norms, etc. and their 'counterparts' at the level of the subsystem always underlies a paradigm or a *référentiel* (the global/sectoral relationship, in Jobert and Muller's terms), this articulation resulting in identity production. The existence of a cognitive and normative frame is therefore both a source of boundaries, which constitute a group and/or an organization and/or a subsystem in itself, and a source of forms of articulation and the overlapping of these boundaries, allowing the adherents of a particular matrix to view themselves in relation to a wider whole. The configuration of the medical profession is a good example of this, in the way it has established the norms and principles of its constitution which in turn define the legitimate boundaries of the profession itself, as well as the nature of its relations with other actors: patients, the state, social security agencies (Hassenteufel 1997).

Similarly, cognitive and normative frames are fundamentally constituted and modified by the interplay of actors. Far from being simple 'revelations', paradigms are, on the contrary, the product as well as the determinant of exchanges between individuals, groups and the state in a given society. From this point of view, Sabatier, as well as Jobert and Muller, underline the privileged role of certain actors in public policy-making, both in producing and diffusing cognitive and normative frames. As such, the notion of the *policy-broker* in Sabatier's work refers to a category of actors characterized by their capacity to make the link between one subsystem and another, and to facilitate the integration of subsystems of public policy in the global public sphere. For Jobert and Muller, these mediators, genuine organic intellectuals in the Gramscian sense, 'hold a strategic decision-making position insofar as they construct the intellectual context in which negotiations and conflicts take place, and alliances are created, which lead to the taking of decisions' (Muller 1994: 50).

What the modification of such a paradigm or global *référentiel* leads to is thus a decentring of sites of power, more than the substitution of one élite for another

(Hall 1993). As a paradigm shift occurs, it is the nature and stability of social exchanges which are transformed through the reallocation of power. In the case of the macro-economic policies analysed by Hall, the shift to a monetarist paradigm, while being based on a change in the political élite with the return of the Conservatives to power under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, above all brought about a transformation of the relationships between the Treasury and other government departments (in a particularly long-lasting and significant way for the conduct of policy-making).

Still, such approaches leave to one side or marginalize other basic variables which focus primarily on the interests of actors, partially because of the conditions under which such forms of understanding public policy came into being. As Radaelli (1995) reminds us, the placing to the fore of cognitive and normative variables dates primarily from the work of Lindblom who, since the 1960s, has tended to question traditional approaches focused on the nature of interests and power relations in the shaping of decision-making and public policy. Consequently, even if the logics of power relations are present in most of these works, they are subordinate to the focus on the identification of actors sharing the same cognitive and normative frame.

The relationship between interests and cognitive and normative variables has recently been made clearer in a response by Paul Sabatier to certain critiques of his *advocacy coalition framework*. More or less 'summoned' to locate himself in relation to supporters of rational choice models, Sabatier clarified that, from his point of view, actors are only rational at the instrumental level, maximizing exclusively at this 'lower' level the resources available to them, according to defined objectives. Yet the determination of these objectives is fundamentally linked to cognitive and normative frames specific to a given subsystem. Sabatier therefore considers that 'actors always perceive the world through a lens consisting of their preexisting beliefs' (Sabatier 1998: 109).

If we accept this position on the relationship between values and interests (which many do not, at least a priori), this last variable can nevertheless serve to clarify certain important processes. How can the structure of interests, for example, influence the production of cognitive and normative frames? Is there not an asymmetry in resources and positions which explains why a particular category of actors succeeds in playing the role of mediator or *policy-broker*? Furthermore, what is the degree of internal homogeneity of a subsystem identified by the sharing of the same cognitive and normative frame?

The management of tension and conflict

To answer these questions we need to explore the second basic dynamic isolated above to describe the 'functioning' of cognitive and normative frames: how a frame is able to manage social tensions and contain conflict. The coherence of cognitive and normative factors in the same frame is in fact successively characterized by the setting-up of a causal explanation of the ongoing processes (Stone 1988), then by defining principles and particular practices for action. It is usually necessary to manage the tensions inherent in 'anomalies' in the social organism in seeking not so

much the means to resolve them (political activity is not interested in solutions to enigmas, cf. Schön and Rein 1994), as a way to deal with their effects and consequences. Each subsystem thus succeeds, through the cognitive and normative frame which characterizes it, in managing the conflicts and tensions arising from its location in global society.

The management of social tensions does not, however, mean the disappearance of all forms of conflict, given the multiplicity of paradigms in each subsystem. Most of the models evoked here recognize the existence of competing paradigms in any context, each sustained by distinct configurations of actors. Such dynamics appear in Sabatier's model, which shows clearly that

> [w]ithin the subsystem, . . . actors can be aggregated into a number (usually one to four) of 'advocacy coalitions', each composed of actors from various governmental and private organizations who both (a) share a set of normative and causal beliefs and (b) engage in a non-trivial degree of co-ordinated activity over time.
>
> (Sabatier 1998: 103)

Instead of unifying and homogenizing the social sphere where it 'functions', the paradigm consequently acts more as a bounded space for conflict, between the subsystem and the global community, as inside the subsystem itself (Jobert makes a distinction here between 'debates which take place, within the same *référentiel* and controversy about the *référentiel* itself' (Jobert 1992: 221)). A cognitive and normative frame thus marks out the terrain for social exchanges and disagreements, rather than simply supporting an unlikely consensus. A dominant paradigm is thus by no means an exclusive one.

The appropriateness of these cognitive and normative frames, notably for understanding transitional phases where social tensions are revealed which require new adjustments based on new principles, is best represented visually in a simplified form (see Figure 1). General changes such as in the social division of labour generate
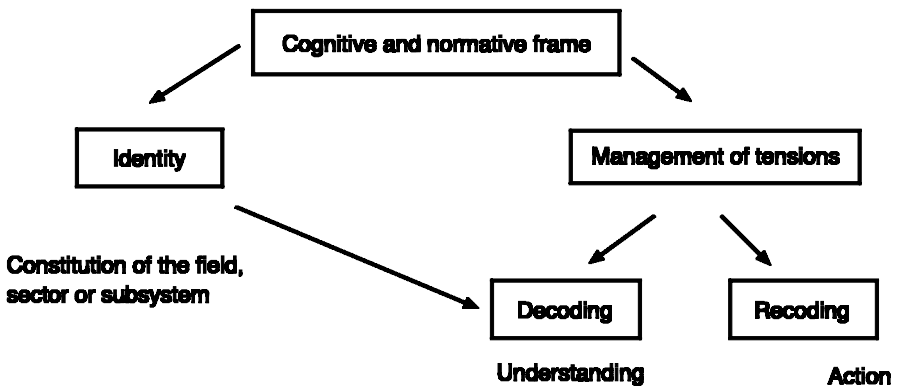

Figure 1 The dynamics of cognitive and normative frames

tensions in structures and entrenched social values, which in turn lead to new definitions of basic assumptions and to certain behavioural changes. These also imply a new conception of the individual defined as a producer, and the adaptation of different social spaces. Such approaches are located in a developmental, indeed an evolutionary, perspective, which explains why the notion of change is one of their fundamental attributes.

PARADIGM CHANGE

The processes discussed above beg a level of questioning, beyond that concerning their components and their dynamics, as to the elements which provoke a break and thereby characterize a shift from one frame to another. If we consider this more closely, what these different models primarily aim to explain are the ways in which change comes about in public policy, and alongside this, the evolution of power relations in a given subsystem of public policy-making. By so doing, they have helped to 'relativize' classical approaches to understanding policy-making based on individual rationality, both theoretically and in terms of their explanatory power. Indeed, recognition of the importance of cognitive and normative logics has led to a reconsideration of the traditional conclusions of incrementalist theories (Lindblom 1959). Centred on the idea of a paradigm shift as the bearer of 'extraordinary' changes in public policy, these approaches are therefore interested in a complex host of social processes, which oblige most social actors to make radical normative and cognitive adaptations, going beyond the simple and marginal adjustments required by incrementalism. Two tendencies dominate here: that which looks for causes or bearers of change, and the analysis of the various forms of these changes.

Bearers of change

In the identification of 'elements of rupture' which can instigate a paradigm change, different approaches highlight particular dynamics capable of modifying felt cognitive and normative stability. Two general elements seem able, separately or together, to prompt the development of new global norms, namely, transformations of economic conditions, and/or a serious crisis affecting the subsystem under consideration.

A more or less substantial modification of economic dynamics and structures seems to be one of the principal triggers of crisis, adjustment or production of cognitive or normative frames. Sabatier's model, in part presented in terms of 'systems', thus considers socio-economic variation as one of the possible elements of these 'exogenous shocks' which comprise 'changes in socio-economic conditions, public opinion, system-wide governing coalition, or policy outputs from other subsystems' and which are 'a *necessary, but not sufficient*, cause of change in the *policy core* attributes of a governmental program' (Sabatier 1998: 118; emphasis in original).

To take an example, neo-liberalism may be conceived as a form of response to the economic oil crises of the 1970s, and to more recent economic transformations. At the end of the nineteenth century, Emile Durkheim identified the phenomenon of

anomie, resulting from transformations caused by ruptures to traditional socio-economic structures, in his analysis of the consequences of the social division of labour (Durkheim 1964). Similarly, we can hypothesize that the industrial revolution was gradually able to modify the underlying assumptions and contexts of social exchanges and public policy. However, beyond its detrimental effects, the consequences of the industrial revolution also obliged social actors to rethink the contexts and assumptions of their actions in order to confer meaning and legitimacy on a set of processes which would otherwise have been perceived as problematic.

Another event or series of events which may spark a particularly serious political crisis is war; either with a foreign power or a civil war. This kind of shock can provoke a trauma leading most political actors more or less consciously to try to make a clean slate of the past, in order to solve the problems perceived as provoking the crisis, and to argue for different institutional frameworks and principles for action. Accordingly, this kind of trauma tends to destroy the prevalent paradigm and can help individuals and organizations to define an alternative way of thinking. Thus the wars experienced by France in the nineteenth century can be understood as catalysts, if not the direct triggers, of important re-evaluations of the fundamental principles upon which socio-political stability was built at the time. In particular, the shock of the defeat of 1940 was a genuine trauma for the French, signalling a change in the way France was viewed in the world, in the guiding principles of state action and in the perception of social hierarchies and legitimate social exchanges.

Elements of the above theories may be used in conjunction with those developed in the work of John Kingdon and John Keeler on 'political windows' (Kingdon 1984; Keeler 1993). Analysing the different processes which traditionally characterize public policy, John Kingdon was able to show that the culmination of favourable dynamics may allow the opening of a political window, that is 'an opportunity for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions, or to push attention to their special problems' (Kingdon 1984: 173). While suspending the ordinary conditions of politics, such situations not only permit greater input into agenda-setting but also offer the actors concerned a wider scope for action, which effectively allows them to modify public policy in a non-incremental way. As a result, changes in public policy paradigms are achieved.

Different ways of achieving change

While the analysis of different ways of achieving policy change is at the heart of Peter Hall's and Paul Sabatier's work, it is a more marginal consideration for Jobert and Muller. Peter Hall (1993) clearly articulates the main orientations of this shift in the analysis in policy-making which seeks to challenge the conclusions traditionally drawn by public policy analysis. Following Lindblom's work on the contexts of decision-making, which are revealed to be complex to the point of allowing only marginal (incremental) changes in public policy, most research in this area has concluded that the state is relatively unchanging. In practice, political and administrative actors can only advance public policy through what they learn from the

environments they are located in, or from their own capacity for action (for a review of the literature on learning, see Bennett and Howlett 1992).

All the approaches to public policy discussed here acknowledge the relevance of these ways of achieving change. This is particularly so for the *advocacy coalition framework* model which, while accepting a priori the possibility of change in the deep core of belief systems, none the less considers this to be extremely rare, Sabatier going as far as to coin it a 'religious conversion'. The notion of learning appears in the recent works of Bruno Jobert (1994) as a means of modifying the coherence and the degree of generality which formerly characterized the notion of the *référentiel*. More systematically, the theme of learning is also found in two of the ways of achieving a change in public policy isolated by Peter Hall. Here, learning remains a pertinent notion to describe occasional adjustments which affect the 'lower' levels of cognitive and normative frames. Speaking of first and second order changes, Hall shows that it is learning which explains instrumental changes in the first order, second order changes mainly concerning 'the development of new policy instruments' (Hall 1993: 280).

However, Peter Hall adds the possibility of third order changes to these traditional mechanisms, which he describes as processes through which 'not only were the settings of policy changed but the hierarchy of goals and set of instruments employed to guide policy shifted radically as well' (Hall 1993: 283–4). This is analogous to Kuhn's conceptualization of a paradigm crisis, such processes thus primarily referring to the growing incapacity felt by actors to view changing social relations according to previous frames.

Concerning public policy programmes, a political crisis can consequently come about, characterized by

> a phase of public policy-making during which dominant representations no longer succeed in interpreting the development of a social field in a way that satisfies the actors concerned, and can therefore no longer successfully structure and legitimate the action of the State. It is in this sense that a 'political crisis' produces problems.
>
> (Muller and Surel 1996: 93)

This last notion is close to that of 'anomaly' used by Hall with reference to Kuhn's work, which describes the growing incapacity of a given paradigm to manage social tensions or to offer satisfying and/or legitimate public policy solutions, thus reaching a 'critical juncture' (Collier and Collier 1991) which itself creates favourable conditions for the more or less substantial re-evaluation of the general or specific principles of the subsystem under consideration. Taking the example of macro-economic policies pursued by the British government in the 1970s in response to the oil crises, Hall shows that the Keynesian strategies employed for counter-cyclical economic revival (primarily boosting demand) produced unintended consequences, owing to the combination of inflation and unemployment. The resulting loss of confidence in the Keynesian paradigm as the dominant reference point of macro-economic policy opened the way for the neo-liberal paradigm to take hold (Hall 1992, 1993).

THE MULTIPLICITY OF COGNITIVE AND NORMATIVE FRAMES

These different elements, relating to the components, the 'functions' as well as the forms of a change of cognitive and normative frames, constitute the principal features of these different conceptualizations. An increasing number of empirical studies informed by these models testify to their success, which can undoubtedly be explained by their capacity to integrate certain long-standing questions in political science into the field of public policy analysis. In particular they seek an articulation within the antagonistic pairing of conflict and co-operation, which, according to Jean Leca (1997), is the Janus' face of political science. Similarly, such modelling has attempted, more or less explicitly, to construct certain dynamics associated with the dialectical oppositions between thought and action, past and present, continuity and change, order and disorder, unity and division, and so on. Lastly, from the viewpoint of public policy analysis, it has been possible to develop models, separate from those informed by a rationalist position, which are capable of explaining the processes of 'extraordinary' change in public policy.

A number of critiques have none the less emerged recently, pointing to the problematic implications of these approaches for both empirical and theoretical research. The excessive emphasis on cognitive and normative variables as well as the methodological problems they pose (How are cognitive and normative frames to be identified? To what extent are they appropriate to describe the practices of actors and the development of public policy?) have sometimes led to the purely rhetorical use of these notions, underestimating the forms of mobilization, of diffusion, indeed of instrumentalization, to which these frames have at times been subject. Isolating the role of cognitive and normative macro-frames effectively poses a problem of identification and explanation of the multiplicity of these principles, values and global representations within different units of analysis, as well as of the hierarchical co-existence of societal paradigms, both old and new. Rather than going no further than the falsely naïve statement that the same frame produces varied social usages, it may be more useful to question these differences through the construction of spatial, temporal and even intersectoral comparisons, while also seeking to integrate certain variables which have hitherto been neglected or marginalized: the interests of actors, and the role of institutions (Hall 1997).

Constructing a comparative analytical grid

If, for example, we suppose that a nation is a subsystem, each country being subjected to a similar meta-norm (neo-liberalism in the recent past), it may effectively be possible to isolate discrepancies in the diffusion of these societal paradigms. The particular reception of the same societal paradigm in each country allows us to identify and compare the dynamics of the operationalization of these norms, in part linked to the specific structure of interests and institutional configuration in each national context.

In the course of the 1980s, the same meaning has not been accorded to neo-liberal ideology in France, Britain, the United States and Germany, for instance. The particular instrumentalization of very similar normative inputs has not produced the

same cognitive and normative frame in each country. To put this simply, we could say that the neo-liberal norm was taken on board with relative ease and in full in the United States and Britain, while it was more strongly contested in France and Germany (Jobert 1994). Likewise, representations of Europe vary from one country to another, beyond the presumed unity of the ideas promoted by European Union agencies. The usage of the concept of 'Europe', notably in government speeches which seek to legitimate current reforms in monetary policy, varies strongly from one member state to another, in some in an attempt to justify the status quo (Britain), in others building on it to push forward significant public policy changes (Italy).

The same kinds of hypothesis can equally be applied to research based on temporal comparisons (Bartolini 1993). Taking the nation state as the basic unit of analysis, we can seek to construct relatively simple indicators (number of privatizations, financial market reforms, etc.) where variations reveal the mechanisms of time-lag between the different countries. Alongside the different modes of adaptation in each country, we find different rhythms, first in the uptake of a new frame, with some countries ahead and others behind, as well as in their diffusion and development. Equipped with such an array of hypotheses, we can, for example, draw attention to the relatively early embracing of neo-liberal ideas in the United States, and attempt to isolate the pertinent variables which explain these different forms and sequences of adoption. The turning points, during which a shift seems to occur more quickly, could equally be correlated with certain trigger factors such as a change of government, an 'objective' and/or 'subjective' worsening of a crisis, or external pressures.

This analytical grid can finally be used to explore intersectoral comparisons, showing how the same global dynamics produce a variety of outcomes according to the sector. Within the same country, certain socio-economic fields are found to be more or less in sync with new cognitive and normative frames. The different processes which result from this may be associated as much with a strategy of closure and/or resistance as with a partial adaptation to global logics, or even a total conversion of the sector to the new precepts, modes of action and instruments implied by the new global *référentiel*.

Such examples show that the spread of new ideas, principles of action and forms of action does not come about in a 'revolutionary' way from scientific development, but rather from a more or less radical re-evaluation of ways of legitimizing groups and social exchanges, as well as through more or less substantial modifications to legitimate frameworks and forms of public policy. In practice, the penetration of neo-liberal ideas has provoked strong resistance from mechanisms intrinsic to national policy styles, in particular owing to the mobilization of interest groups. Furthermore, such an analysis also reveals the existence of institutional and normative grids specific to each country, which play a part in modifying the substantial content of dominant cognitive and normative frames to ensure their compatibility with the previous structures of exchange and action characteristic of that country.

In seeking to understand the factors which explain these specificities and the various forms of resistance to the same general principles in different countries,

Pierson (1997) shows the importance of the influence of the past in the structuring of institutional and normative configurations in each country. He makes use of the notion of 'historical causality' developed by Stinchcombe (1968) to shed light on the existence of a logic of 'path dependency'. This logic includes the processes of the progressive sedimentation of normative and institutional frames of social exchange and public policy-making, a sedimentation which is then able to determine mechanisms of resistance and/or 'translation'. The implanting of customs within bureaucracies and the enmeshing of interests and values between the groups concerned and administrative departments therefore appear among the constitutive factors of institutional, relational and cognitive grids which have a bearing on the penetration of new global cognitive and normative frames.

Factors underpinning the variation in frames

We can attempt to isolate certain elements which account for spatial and/or temporal and/or sectoral differences, arising from the mechanisms of variation of a similar global cognitive and normative frame. Several factors are relevant here, namely (1) the extent and the nature of the previous paradigm, and (2) the institutional configurations specific to each country which act as filters to the dominant paradigm.

1. The importance of the previous societal paradigm

The emergence of a new frame is not a case of the substitution of one paradigm for another, as Kuhn posits for the natural sciences, but rather occurs through associations and new hierarchical rankings of elements that may already exist. Far from making a clean slate of the past, a new societal paradigm must in effect be composed of previous cognitive and normative structures, which explains possible re-translations of the elements of the frame, possible 'delays' from one subsystem to another in the adoption of these new elements, and, above all, the mechanisms of resistance to which a new frame gives rise. Nor does a dominant paradigm 'destroy' previously legitimate frames; rather it comes to constitute the reference point in relation to which these older structures must adapt.

Consequently, the diffusion of a new paradigm gives rise to complex and at times contradictory mechanisms of adaptation. For example, European monetary union was not just an application of a 'pure' neo-liberal policy paradigm. On the contrary, Kathleen McNamara was able to show that 'the governments of Europe followed a pragmatic, not ideologically purist, type of monetarism' (McNamara 1998: 67), which was the outcome of the previous policy paradigms and the product of European political leaders' bargaining.

2. Specific institutional configurations

In this general expression, which seeks to integrate interests and institutions in the analysis of cognitive and normative frames, we can bring together the particular

political and administrative structures of a country or a sector, the forms of organ-ization of social exchanges in a particular field, or the judicial framework determin-ing the rules of the game and the hierarchies between actors, the instruments, etc. The modes of structuring social exchanges, sometimes institutionalized even within political or administrative departments, comprise a host of factors able to explain both variations in the translation of a particular cognitive and normative frame, and its diverse rhythms of diffusion. Indeed, several authors have underlined the importance of coalitions, arenas and forums, constituted around precise public policies, and formed around a particular paradigm, which are thus able to act as centres of resistance and/or grids modifying the content as well as the progress of a new set of cognitive and normative models (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Sabatier 1993; Jobert 1994; Radaelli 1998).

Defining the arena as a group of actors sharing particular 'orders of compre-hension' (taking up this idea from Dunsire 1978), Dudley and Richardson (1996) were able to show how this was so in policies on the development of trunk roads in Britain. The structuring of policies around a number of mechanisms mastered and legitimated by the transport department, engineers and lorry-drivers' union repre-sentatives, allowed the establishment of a kind of protective shield against any outside influence for many years. The enmeshing of the dominant normative and cognitive structures, the institutionalization of social exchanges in a specific con-text, and a number of public programmes operated as screens to new paradigms, if the 'institutions' themselves were not challenged. In the precise case of British trunk roads, it seemed that a transformation of dominant values (increased value placed on the protection of the environment) in conjunction with economic crisis (increase in the cost of fuel, decrease in public investment) contributed to the undoing of the existing coalition and at the same time the displacement of the logics of exchange (integration of new actors, notably environmental groups) and the legitimate cognitive and normative models. Such an example shows the possible succession of forms of change: an incremental logic, when the entrenched institutional and normative grids continue to function; a change of paradigm, associated with internal and/or external destabilization of these same legitimate grids.

Generally speaking, these notions arise out of the hope of isolating the sites of mobilization of cognitive and normative frames and of seeing how the interests of actors and the variable institutionalization of their relationships tend to modify the content and the scope of a societal paradigm. However, it is not only a question of occasional adjustments to original theorizations, essentially centred on the dynamics of diffusion, as these still leave to one side the question of the modes of production of cognitive and normative frames. How do they emerge in a given field? According to what power relations and what balance of power? Do cognitive and normative frames not sometimes constitute the *post-hoc* rationalizations for insti-tutional transformations or changes in power relations (cf. on this point Majone 1992)?

These sets of problems are undoubtedly less a basis for the rejection of the ana-lytical models discussed here than a starting point for complementary research, as well as a warning against the sometimes excessive use of cognitive approaches. In

certain cases, such notions have tended to fuel an invasion of erudite discourse (similar to that concerning the 'social construction of reality', cf. de Lara 1997). This undoubtedly relates once again to their aptitude for questioning the processes which underpin the dialectics of structure/agency, micro/macro, continuity/change, and so on. However, it is perhaps time to make use of the plethora of case studies already conducted to achieve a certain conceptual precision and greater method-ological rigour, while seeking to integrate previously neglected variables – a step which some authors have already undertaken, modifying and clarifying the content and the scope of their own conceptualizations (cf. Sabatier 1998, 1999; and especially Hall 1997, 1998).

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