

## **Policy Analysis and the Rhetoric of Practice**

Nick Turnbull, *The University of Manchester*, Oxford Rd, Manchester M13 9PL.  
Tel: +44 (0)161 275 4833; Email: [nick.turnbull@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:nick.turnbull@manchester.ac.uk).

### **Abstract**

Policy studies has been distinguished from political studies in terms of practice. However, the distinction between the practical and the theoretical, the real world and the academic, has posed difficulties for the field since Lasswell debated these questions. Recently, Wagenaar and Cook demonstrated the benefits of different theories of practice for understanding policymaking. This paper builds upon these ideas by considering how to synthesise the sociological concept of practice with the rhetorical approach to policy analysis. Politics is 'of society', therefore it must be understood as a social practice: policymaking is the reality of politics as it is for political actors. If we operate from a sociological perspective, we reverse the order of politics and policy, such that the latter is primary and the former derived. Policy studies is the primary form of political inquiry because it engages with politics on the participants' terms. Using Bourdieu's sociological conceptions of practice and reflexivity we can thematise the forces driving the continuity of policymaking in an otherwise contingent political world. Practice is also rhetorical in that we respond to difficult questions by 'rhetorizing' them via rhetorical figures and passions. At the same time, some problems are more pressing and must be explicitly treated in political rhetoric, which can create consistency despite problematisation. In this synthesis we find the conditions for differentiating academic policy analysis from political science while also emphasising its relevance for practical policymaking.

## **Policy Analysis and the Rhetoric of Practice**

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Whatever its differences from the mainstream, interpretative policy analysis shares with all other approaches to policy studies—even positivist or behaviourist ones—the central concept of *practice*. It is this emphasis upon *practice* which distinguishes policy analysis generally from political science and political theory. By articulating the various meanings of practice we can complement interpretative policy analysis with an interpretivist view of social practice. By taking a sociological view—of both academia and practical policymaking—we will work from a general position more appropriate for identifying the principles of policymaking in terms of practice itself. These principles are political. Whatever the genuine attention to problems and the potential agreement of a range of stakeholders, policymaking is a social activity performed through a political logic and to political sensitivities. This paper uses ideas from Bourdieu's 'logic of practice' and Gottweis' discussion of rhetorical policy analysis to outline a framework for the rhetorical analysis of the practice of policymaking.

### **1. What is policy analysis?**

Policy analysis is a broad field of inquiry. However, it is so broad that we find it difficult to define coherent boundaries for our discipline. The study of policy and policymaking includes almost any public issue to which academics might turn their hand, such that anyone in almost any discipline might research and write about policy, whether in the social sciences or medicine or engineering. Policy analysis also refers to the activities of non-academics, from politicians and bureaucrats to think tank personnel to social workers as 'street level bureaucrats'. Our research could be for such policy analysts, especially as we educate them for these jobs in our graduate programs. Distinguishing policy analysis from political science is also difficult, so policy analysis is often thought

of under alternate titles, for example 'public administration' or 'public management'. Within political science policy analysis has been thought of as focusing on limited issues or problems, and as a result its knowledge is thought of as less generalisable and perhaps of less status than mainstream political science which strives to propose general principles and uncover structural patterns.

Some have defined policy analysis as different because it is concerned with the problems of the public, for example Harold Lasswell, who wanted to unite scholarly inquiry with practical policymaking through a new field, 'the policy sciences', which would establish new institutional forms to bring scientists and policymakers together. Lasswell's perspective is interesting in that he saw the solution not in new theory but in social form, in an institutional solution.<sup>1</sup> We find contemporary expressions of this approach in calls for 'participatory policy analysis' (deLeon 1992) such as in deliberative forums which would bring scientific and lay knowledge together (King, Feltey and Susel 1998) and to mediate such exchanges through normatively prescribed deliberation. But I think such institutions would face difficulties because academics and policymakers operate in different 'fields' defined by different social rules. I return to this later in the paper, noting for now that academia and formal politics remain far apart.

Many books and articles on policy analysis vary according to what they perceive the purpose of policy analysis to be; that is, who they think policy analysis is for. If it is thought to be for policymakers, then it doesn't matter whether academics, bureaucrats, think tank researchers or citizens practice the research. Here, the intention is *practical*, to have concrete effects upon the world. However, this leaves much interpretative policy analysis irrelevant, given that it often seeks new ways to describe policymaking activity rather than to promote particular solutions to problems. Furthermore, it uses social constructionist epistemology to understand policymaking, an approach which is not used by

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<sup>1</sup> Hence the seminal edited volume the study of the science of policymaking included a chapter by Robert Merton, the sociologist.

practitioners nor even needed by them, because they operate within particular contexts and have immediate, practical matters to attend to in their work. The meaning of problems for them is often pre-given so it is not necessary for them to ask questions of meaning. Such inquiries are academic, and take place within universities, academic conferences, books, and journals. They might be read by some practitioners and used in teaching, however they are not manuals for practical policymaking. Academics are certainly concerned with these things, however that is not all policy analysis is.

We could define policy analysis as Harold Lasswell and many others have done, as research (especially social science) applied to public problems and policymaking around those problems. This would mean conducting scholarly inquiry which is relevant to the practical needs of policymakers, knowledge which is 'useable'. However, many critics have pointed out that social science knowledge has often not been used in policymaking, or used for alternate purposes than that intended and recommended by the researcher (Weiss 1977, 1991). In general, the social sciences have been closely linked with the demands of the modern state and the goal of a rational basis for political decision making was an assumption which lay beneath the surface even where it was not explicitly stated. But in recent years we have seen this goal problematised, if not abandoned, because of fundamental changes to social structures, reforms in the operation of government, and scholarly reflection upon the constructed nature of knowledge itself. Zygmunt Bauman writes how a key difference between modernity and postmodernity is that intellectuals can no longer claim the truth and recommend courses of action on behalf of the rest of society. Intellectuals have suffered a collective 'lack of confidence' in their knowledge and its applicability to a contingent world (1989). He argues that today intellectuals are more accurately characterised as *interpreters* of politics and society rather than *legislators* (1989). Their task is less to prescribe scientific solutions to problems and more to assist in facilitating communication across traditions.<sup>2</sup> Academic

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<sup>2</sup> This 'interpreters' idea has been employed effectively in policy analysis, for example by Healey, Fischer, and Dryzek, however we must be wary of 'scholasticism'—I discuss this later in the paper—in such interpretations, as it can have a depoliticising effect. For example, this happens

policy specialists still work in applied policymaking but this is not exclusive and therefore not definitive of our field. More specifically, we no longer have direct access to the state, nor even to the many non-state actors involved in the policy process. Policy analysis is no longer necessarily *for* policymakers. Therefore as a field of scholarly inquiry it cannot be defined entirely in terms of what decisions we hope the knowledge will affect. Whereas Lasswell (1971, p. 121) lamented the 'half-man, half-brain' perception of the academic caught between the worlds of science and practical politics, but today we are more modest about our ambitions for political influence.<sup>3</sup> And within the academy, policy analysis is itself a subset of political analysis, but one that is different and has its own value and reveals important questions not considered by mainstream political science.

So, if scholarship and policy practice are further apart than we had hoped for, *what is the difference* between them? Politics is 'of society', therefore it must be understood as a social practice: policymaking is the reality of politics as it is for political actors. If we operate from this sociological perspective, we reverse the order of political science and policy analysis, such that the latter is primary and the former derived. Policy studies is the primary form of political inquiry because it engages with politics on the participants' terms. Although political studies in general deals with practical matters, and political theory clearly has strong practical implications, by making practice—understood in a sociological sense—the basis of our inquiry, we have a way to differentiate policy analysis from political studies more generally.

How is academic practice different from that of practitioners? Most importantly, at base, the academic policy analyst seeks something much different from the policy analyst outside of academia: a critical analysis of the policy process which aims at universality, at generalisability. In contrast, policy

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when we impose a theoretical approach upon the practical behaviour social actors, as in 'network theory' when epistemological equivalency is between actors is assumed. Each political actor in a policy process comes from not just a different interpretative position but from a different socio-political position, involving differences in power, and operating in different sub-fields with their own organising forces (formal politics, journalism, civil society, academia, etc.). Bourdieu's reflexive sociology, along with concept of field, mitigates against this.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, given recent reforms to performance evaluation mechanisms within universities, it is our scholarly reputation which we are now forced to concentrate upon.

practitioners have political considerations in mind at all times (no matter what their location in relation to key decision makers in government) and operate according to a political logic. This has been said many times before, but the point I wish to emphasise is not simply that the practitioner and academic are differentiated by their freedom to theorise nor by the extent to which they are differentially constrained by contextual limitations. Rather, if we consider their difference in terms of practice, then the academic and the practitioner are working in fields of activity which operate according to a different *logic of practice* (Bourdieu 1998). The ideas of Pierre Bourdieu can help to elaborate upon this distinction, bringing in the key concepts of habitus, capital, and field to support a sociological definition of practice and the scholarly analysis of policymaking. We need to differentiate our own practice from that of our object of inquiry through a reflexive sociology<sup>4</sup> of policy analysis. The intent is to derive theoretical benefit by detaching the interpretative epistemological perspective in academic analysis from the interpretative world as it is practiced by policy actors in order to augment our analytical tools with an interpretative and systematic way of studying the logic of policymaking practice.

## **2. For a reflexive sociology of policy analysis**

Bourdieu argues that much academic work imputes rational structures to the life of non-academic actors. He terms this error the *scholastic fallacy* (1988). Bourdieu criticises the scholastic academic vision as a vision which fallaciously attributes the same mode of thinking practised by an academic observer to the practice of social actors which he observes (1998). It arises when one presumes that the 'disinterested' perspective of the academic is the ideal one and that for which social action should aim. To overcome this, he conducted a sociological analysis of academic life, just like Merton before him, but this time from an interpretative perspective which reveals the contingent basis and form of

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<sup>4</sup> I note here the difference between Bourdieu's reflexive sociology and that of Merton, of whom Bourdieu was critical (Bourdieu 2004). Merton's presence in Lerner and Lasswell's (1951) seminal work on the policy sciences from 1951 should alert us to the need for an interpretative sociology to complement interpretative policy analysis.

academic life, whatever its achievement of non-contingent, generalisable knowledge. He notes that academics are supported by the state to work at a distance from the immediate demands of everyday life. This provides them with an unusual level of autonomy and considerable social power. Hence there is an underlying *interestedness in the disinterested perspective* of academics, revealed in the fact that it is the state which guarantees this distance from the necessities of everyday life in work that structure the actions of workers outside the university. He shows that the *practice* of academia is in fact a social oddity. This reflexivity is intended to distinguish between scholastic theories, which aim at universality, and the non-scholastic *practice* of theorising which is particular and underpinned by politico-social power related to these conditions of knowledge construction. In elaborating the differences between *homo academicus* (1988) and other social practices, Bourdieu uses the concepts of 'capital' and 'field', seeing an actors' position within a field of activity, i.e., his position within a social space in relation to many other players occupying various positions, each holding differential amounts of capital to be used in positioning himself in relation to others. The *scientific* (academic) field is quite different from the *political* field, each operating according to different sociological rules for acquiring capital and as a result influencing different forms of social *practice*.

To elaborate, he argues that all social action occurs in relation to others in similar fields. The social construction of knowledge is affected by the rules of organisation of the field. To understand knowledge construction in academia, we need to understand the processes by which academic actors pursue (symbolic) 'capital', namely through publication, research grants, and so on. In the university, academic work is conducted for employment, promotion, and power within the field. The main device for this is the social mechanism of peer review which reinforces the 'disinterested' and specialized nature of scientific knowledge. This form of capital acquisition (along with that obtained through administrative power) structures the practice of research and creates the unique outlook of *homo academicus*.

For *homo politicus*, finding universal solutions to public problems does not guarantee the acquisition of capital (either symbolic or formal, through

institutional office). The governing logic is of legitimation (of one's arguments, of one's power), the key source of acquiring capital and the determinant of one's position in the field in respect of the other players. Solving problems is important *because* it lends legitimacy to decision makers. We can appreciate this contingent relationship between questions by considering the contrary case, when governments solve problems but nonetheless are seen as incompetent and voted out of office. In the actors' struggle for legitimate power, it is political necessity which presses itself most upon them. That is, each actor operates from her own dispositions when engaging with policy problems, and must respond in relation to the positions of the other actors. The bureaucrat has no choice but to legitimate the state, the politician the government or opposition, the social worker the organisation which employs her. All actors in the policy field are engaged with others in a political contest which involves power and legitimation of their positions. Individual actors earn capital through their role in political argumentation and legitimation struggles: the politician who makes public 'hits' on an opponent, the minister who runs her department competently; or the non-government advocate who wins esteem by bringing a problem to the political agenda; or the bureaucrat who manages programmes well and keeps to a budget. Importantly, these decisions are made through political means, resting ultimately in the popular vote and/or the 'interested' decisions of elected and appointed officials. In other words, the logic of practice is *political* in that capital is acquired through the serving of particular interests in relation to others, rather than through peer evaluations of knowledge. Certainly, academics are engaged in politics with each other. However, what counts as 'capital' is not determined by political means, even if the pursuit of personal and organisational goals has some political ends. And whatever the politics of knowledge construction, this is quite different from the rules of political legitimation that organise the political field in which policymakers operate.

Political actors engaged in policy making also apprehend their world in terms of what they do and how they relate to each other, in terms of socially constructed meanings expressed in forms of practice. However, they do not have *distance* from the immediacy of the everyday demands upon them. This is in

contrast with scholastic thinking which enjoys a distance from the necessities of existence and permits us to be concerned with abstract problems.<sup>5</sup> Political actions are sometimes informed by strategic reflection, but even then it is grounded in practices learnt in the field and that become part of their basic dispositions. For example, the party politician who thinks of policy in terms of what is desired by and desirable for the party; the social worker who automatically seeks greater 'caring'; the bureaucrat who responds to problems by establishing rules, procedures, and forms to fill. Such actors will not abandon their perspectives in order to deliberate at length upon how best to find a solution to a problem. They want a solution to the problem, but which they think is best and which also fulfils their political goals. This does not necessarily mean an extreme Machiavellianism nor something approximating perfect rational choice. It lies in between, around the dual question of the problem and the legitimation of their place in the political field, all conducted through the context of social structures and norms. Here, we see the interaction of intentional, practical action and unreflective social practice which takes place through the ingrained *habitus* of the actors who are oriented towards the political game and have internalised its logic.<sup>6</sup>

Within the political field, we might distinguish a number of sub-fields. The politician is an openly political animal, forced to obey the logic of the political field in order to survive and prosper. The bureaucrat is in a different position, fulfilling political imperatives but also required to investigate all options, to serve the executive but also not to side with one party or another. *Homo bureaucraticus* thus occupies a complex space which we know best through the

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<sup>5</sup> Thinking of the foundations of Lasswell's policy analysis in the pragmatism of Dewey, this is why Dewey was right about the irrelevance of much philosophy for the real and important problems of the public, but also why his approach was wrong: he did not separate the philosophical from social action. Even though he grounded his philosophy in experience, this was a scholastically constructed conception of experience which supposed a seamless transition between thought and action (following Aristotle's 'practical reason').

<sup>6</sup> An actor can participate in two different fields at once, of course. So, a politician can speak about a theory of politics in a scholarly environment and a scholar can participate in practical policymaking. But the rules for acquiring capital and the dispositions of each field remain distinct, such that the person working across fields continues to be subject to the principles of each field and is evaluated and judged in separate terms.

complexities of public administration in practice, where the political interests of the government collide with what is considered the 'rational' administration of the state. Indeed, the apparent impartiality of the bureaucracy contributes to legitimating the political partiality of state decisions. In understanding the relationship between the various subfields, and uncovering their logics of practice, we can develop a complete picture of policymaking.

A policy analysis which takes a sociological definition of practice is well placed to provide a unique perspective. Firstly, it would be interpretative, and retain the 'problem orientation' because this is an important part of the practical orientation and the particularity of the subjects around which political legitimisation contests are played out. Furthermore, the problem concept is consistent with a view of policy analysis as questioning about problems, and provides consistent epistemological grounds through which to relate scholarly inquiry to political inquiry (Turnbull 2006). Secondly, because policy problems have uncertain meanings and there is argumentation around those meanings, we need rhetoric to articulate the political dimensions of policy discourse (Gottweis 2006, 2007; Turnbull 2006), through the key concepts of ethos, logos, and pathos (Gottweis 2007). A rhetorical theory would also theorise political norms as *rhetorical*, since norms are general answers to questions of how we should treat public problems which are always questionable and which have been brought into question in practice by social change and a strengthening democratic orientation.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, this would be sociological, encompassing a sociological study of the political field, of policy as politics in practice. I would note here that it is possible to link the sociological and the political through rhetoric, if we use Michel Meyer's general definition of rhetoric as the negotiation of the distance between subjects (1996). Using his logic of questioning we can consistently theorise from political speeches which outline policy programmes and establish the speakers' distance from political opponents to policy discourse which constructs the subject identities of government and

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<sup>7</sup> In practice, political actors always deal with and through norms: all politics is normative because taking a position on an issue and how we should deal with it implies underlying views about values, the role of the state, political obligation and responsibility, and so on.

citizens to social structures which do the same but implicitly through the structuring forces of social relations. Fourthly, this would place the question of legitimacy a central organising construct of policy analysis. All political actors deal with this question, even when it is only implicit. The problem orientation incorporates the policy problem itself and the legitimation problem. It also extends to the 'social' legitimacy of actors insofar as they operate through practices which must comply with cultural norms.

### **3. The rhetoric of policymaking practice**

The sociological conception of practice provides a way to analyse the full spectrum of activity and motivations in policymaking processes. This would examine how policy actors take on ingrained dispositions towards their work and the problems they deal with. That is, it would uncover the practices through which policy actors operate without conscious reflection, as well as the degree to which they do reflect upon their own position within the field and their own presuppositions and modes of operation. In other words, it includes both implicit, unconscious practices as well as 'rational action'. However, it does not use the rational actor model as a substitute theory of human behaviour. Rather, it considers rational calculation as one element of the *habitus*, and thematises this calculation in terms of the principles of operation of the *field*. So, rational calculation by an academic is quite different from that of an advocate for drug law reform, since what is considered interesting and important for each is quite different, along with whom else in the field they relate their social position to. We could thus bring together analyses of activity around a range of problems to provide a more generalised conceptualisation of the *political field* and its structures, along with the potential agency which the field accords to the various players in the political game. At the level of particular policy problems which develop their own 'epistemic communities' and specialised discourses, the concept of 'policy habitus' encapsulates the specific dimensions of discourse and practice around a defined problem (Campbell 2007).

We already have much research to build upon in order to thematise the unreflected assumptions and practices of policymaking. The literature on organisational behaviour is very large and repeatedly points to the 'character' of organisations, how they embody a particular culture which strongly influences their behaviour. Similarly, the notion of 'policy work' (Colebatch 2006) expresses the complex, diverse and ambiguous experiences of those making policy. Other authors describe policy as 'dramaturgy' (Dillon 1976) or as 'performance' (Hajer 2006) through which reality is constructed through actions equally as the ideas which inform them. Other studies consider comparative differences in culture and the resulting variations in how policymaking is conceived by the actors. All such approaches replace the overarching 'rational model' of policymaking with a theoretically interpretative and empirically informed conception of practice. Coordinating these approaches to 'practice' through the concepts of habitus, field, and capital would enable us to see the 'political' strategizing which takes place as well as the sociological forces structuring activity and lending more or less autonomy to the players.

When considering social practice, we need to distinguish between which choices are the result of conscious, reflected thought and those that are more unconscious and intuitive. Both follow a logic, however this is not always thought out as a 'rational' choice, as an explicit choice between known alternatives. In many cases it is routine practice, ingrained responses through which we find solutions to our questions, resolving them in advance by excluding them from being called into question. Meyer (2000) theorizes that even though we face questions all the time, the consciousness annuls those questions by making them rhetorical. It does this through the passions, which cover up how we make questions rhetorical in order to give the world constancy for us: the passions are involved in the very constitution of the subject and in the phenomenalization of the world and others for the subject. The repetition of actions (prior solutions) then becomes so routine and embodied that we do not literally 'think' about what we are doing, instead we gain a sense of security through the comfort of repetition (see Turnbull 2005, 2007; based on Meyer 2000).

Social practice can thus be theorized as the rhetorical repression of questions. Stability accrues through practice from the repression of questions and the passions (*pathos*) involved in this process, i.e., the *pleasure* of repetition and the *comforting* security of the familiar. This, in turn, constructs our identity (*ethos*). These two aspects intertwine with our reasoned approach to the world, our problem-solving capacities (*logos*), to comprise a rhetorical anthropology as a three-part orientation towards oneself, towards others, and towards the world (Danblon 2007). Social practice provides its own problem-solving logic in our ability to respond instinctively to situations, to enact partial responses to them and so to frame them as intelligible questions. At the same time, we also consciously reflect upon what we do and we seek out rational responses to the problems which confront us. Our treatment of questions is partly constrained by the context of our inner, unreflected *habitus* as well as factors external to us, while at the same time we can imagine solutions beyond the limitations of these situations. So, rather than considering only the level at which problems are already explicit and the alternatives known to us in some way (for example, in Simon's 'bounded rationality' and 'satisficing' behaviour), we can include an underlying and implicit level of social action. At this level the key distinction is between the repression and explication of questions.

This approach has the benefit of preserving the 'problem orientation' in political analysis and also makes a number of advances. Firstly, it draws upon a deeper, sociological conception of practice than the 'practical reason' proposed by Lasswell, which he drew from Dewey. Secondly, this approach also separates somewhat the policy problem from the problems faced by political actors in the context around the policy problem, something we must do given the large variety of stakeholders taking different perspectives on—and interests in—the policy process. Thirdly, we can also abstract the explicitly political dimension of the policy process found in the legitimation question present in all policymaking activity. Thus we have a *three-dimensional problem orientation*—the public problem, the problem for the actor in context, and the legitimation problem—all

grounded in and integrated through a general theory of questioning.<sup>8</sup> In the remainder of this paper I will focus on the latter two dimensions, since these refer directly to theories of the policy process itself rather than allowing the nature of a particular public problem to drive the theory. Finally, since it is based on a conception of questioning, it constructs questions themselves as partial answers, such that the partial answer is on an equal footing with the solution which dissolves the question (see Turnbull 2006). This places rhetoric inside the relationship between question and answer—between implicit worries and the explicit formulation of problems, then between these latter problems and the answers which might solve them. Rhetoric becomes central to the analysis, rather than allowing it to be artificially separated from the logic of the overall process. This produces a rhetoricized problem orientation for policy analysis.

In this conception, rhetoric is a dynamic construct which stands across both stability and change. In the stable elements of social practice, problems are made rhetorical through the passion for repetition and consistency which denies questioning, seeking answers in the *implicit* reconfirmation of the old. At the same time, politics is the activity of reflecting critically upon what we do and seeking ways to modify our future. In general there is a distinction between the repression and explication of questions.<sup>9</sup> This is distinct from the rationalist view, which would see constancy differently, as repeated instances of the same decision calculated as an optimal choice in the circumstances, or as the result of fixed structures, or perhaps as simple inertia. In the alternative view, the choice is no choice, because it is rhetorical—it is impassioned and thus answered implicitly. Inertia is preferable when we *desire* it and because we identify with the status quo such that attempts to change it *arouse* passions against the reformers. At the same time, passions are equally important for others who desire change and are *moved* to pursue it. At all times we find differences between the desire to reconfirm the old and the desire to problematize.

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<sup>8</sup> This builds upon and extends Lasswell's idea of the two-part 'problem orientation for the policy sciences' (1951).

<sup>9</sup> This does not preclude the fact that policymaking is a highly complex activity and change or continuity may result from either unconscious patterns or intentional reform.

Importantly, we can locate this distinction at many different domains of policy activity, from everyday micro-level practice right up to electoral contests. In this latter domain, the dynamic takes on its most explicit manifestation in the distinction between conservative and progressive ideologies and political parties, in which tradition or reform are considered values in and of themselves.

Rhetoric—considered in terms of questioning—encompasses both practice and critical reflection, stability and change in a dynamic view. Some passions explain why we prefer the comfort of the old while other passions speak to the excitement of change. In each case, we can theorize the rhetorical repression of questions or the rhetorical explication of questions which only then become the subject of explicit deliberation between conservative and progressive advocates. Referring again to the three-fold problem orientation proposed above, we need to link the problems which arise as defined by the domains of policy practices (the various dimensions of 'policy work') with the political question of legitimation. And, to flesh out this synthesis in a rhetorical sense requires that we consider these dimensions in terms of ethos, pathos, and logos, along with a note towards the rhetorical genres which deal with different forms of problematization.

Table One identifies the rhetorical dimensions of the various realms of policy practice and links these with legitimation questions. I stress that these domains of practice are not separate spheres of activity but enmeshed within each other. At the most elemental domain are the everyday activities of individuals and organizations involved in policy work. This includes all the day-to-day activity of individuals, such as responding to emails, writing policy briefs, and attending meetings. In this domain, the legitimation question faced by these individuals and organizations is primarily answered through the social recognition of normative practices and structuring principles of the organizations. Here, even with bureaucratically specified rules, the legitimacy of individual behaviour is also found implicitly within the activities themselves. As we move up through the domains of policy practice we find a greater deal of formalization (in the type of activity) and a concurrent explication of the broader question, the legitimation of the government and state. This is most apparent in elections at which the legitimation of the government is explicitly put and

resolved. At each domain the form of rhetoric is related both to the type of activity and degree to which legitimation is explicitly put in question. The legitimation question in general stands across all aspects of policy problems and allows us to speak about policymaking without separating the institutional structure from cultural practice. Through it, we can synthesize the rhetorical and institutional perspectives. Power and legitimacy are in question for all the players, but with regard to different questions and varying according to the degree to which these are implicit in the activities or formally debated and consecrated.

**Table 1: Rhetoric and legitimation in policymaking**

<b>Domain of policy practice</b>	<b>Type of activity</b>	<b>Form of rhetoric</b>	<b>Legitimation</b>	<b>Meta-level legitimation of the government</b>
<i>Everyday activity</i>	Individual and organizational practice	Rhetoricization of questions, unconscious and culturally shared	Normative practices; organizational culture and rules	implicit
<i>Policy network</i>	Policy communities, stakeholder interaction	Semi-structured, informal; exploratory and deliberative	Professional; epistemic construction of values; organizational influence	↓
<i>Institutions</i>	Bureaucratic	Rule-structured	Formal; ethos	
<i>Public sphere</i>	Civil society/media debate	Deliberative; epideictic	Persuasion; values	
<i>Elections</i>	Campaigning, voting	Forensic; epideictic; deliberative	Formal: plebiscite	

The primary form of rhetoric varies with the type and domain of activity. At the most elemental domain rhetoric involves the unconscious suppression of questions in the deployment of social practices. Moving up through the domains we

find more exploratory and deliberative rhetoric in actual discourse, all the way to the forensic judgment upon the record of a government made at an election. At this last domain, the deliberative dimension is weaker than might be expected, because what is in question is the contest between alternative governments—the general legitimacy of the government—even though policy details are debated at the election. Here, there is a much stronger role for epideictic rhetoric (praise and blame), especially when the character (ethos) of leaders and their parties is important in voters' choices.

In his philosophy of questioning, Michel Meyer (1996) provides a general definition of rhetoric as the negotiation of distance between people with regard to a question. His idea is to synthesize the many and fragmented historical definitions of rhetoric to reveal its nature and explanatory power. We can apply this idea to a revised definition of the problem orientation in policy analysis to bring rhetorical concepts to bear upon the political dimensions of policymaking. Table Two adds this layer of analysis to the levels of policy practice.

**Table 2: Rhetorical distance and the modes of persuasion**

Domain of policy practice	Rhetorical negotiation of distance from others	Modes of persuasion		
		<i>ethos</i>	<i>pathos</i>	<i>logos</i>
<i>Everyday activity</i>	one's unconscious; co-workers	policy worker, professional	suppression of questions; collective identification	reasoning according to habitus
<i>Policy network</i>	policy communities	identification with stakeholder organization	relations between actors; exclusion/inclusion	strategic negotiations between stakeholders
<i>Institutions</i>	other institutions	identification with institution	institutional loyalty	interpretation & application of rules
<i>Public sphere</i>	other citizens	class, gender, race, age, place	motivations to change/preservation; praise and blame; difference	debate over policy alternatives
<i>Elections</i>	alternative leaders	leaders	public mood	voting decision

At the domain of everyday activity, what is important is one's identity as a 'policy worker' and one's identification with and difference from immediate colleagues. Here, the *habitus* or embodied dispositions are most important, providing identity to individuals and organizations and supporting the efficient conduct of complex tasks. At the second domain we move beyond the individual actor to relations with other actors. Here we find relationships within policy communities and the tactics employed by the various stakeholders in relation to the other key players. At the institutional domain, distance is governed by the political relationships between institutions. These are highly circumscribed by law but there is also considerable room for political manoeuvre, for example in battles between rival departments with a stake in a problem. The members of the institutions, and the public, identify with institutions and add to path dependency effects. The scope for interpreting the meaning of rules and when to apply them allows for a considerable degree of strategic argumentation. In the

public sphere more broadly we find the key political distinctions across social cleavages, such as class, gender, race, age, and place. All these categories have been problematized in recent decades, so that an 'identity politics' has developed whereby the creation of identities, and attributions of character to social groups (praise and blame), forms a key element of contemporary politics. Those seeking reform or using populism to preserve the status quo utilize passionate political rhetoric to mobilize supporters. There is also broad public debate, primarily conducted through the media, where state and civil society meet. Here we find the main role for deliberative rhetoric. New institutional mechanisms to support deliberative democracy seek to bracket out or at least limit the manipulative elements of *ad hominem* attacks and appeals to negative emotions (such as *fear*) by providing an environment conducive to the deliberative genre. Finally, in elections one locates oneself according to one's distance from the respective leaders (and parties) seeking office. Character and passion enter strongly into this decision, which need not be made by a rational calculation of interests.

Finally, Table Three articulates the repression and explication of questions with the domains of policy practice. It describes how at each domain of activity there is an underlying contrast between the rhetorical drive for the repression of questions and the rhetorical drive for problematization. The first dimension reflects the forces working for stability while the second articulates the forces which form the precondition of deliberation and change. It is important to note that these are the underlying dimensions of policymaking, and that another layer sits over the top of both, the layer at which policy problems and solutions are explicitly debated, which is also rhetorical. The second level of explication is the domain of *partial answers* (problematological answers), responses which make a problem 'real' so that we can deliberate upon it. At the explicit level we find political rhetoric in its traditional sense as persuasive discourse upon a question.

**Table 3: Forms of problematization – stability and change**

<b>Domain of policy practice</b>	<b>Repression of questions: stability</b>	<b>Explication of questions: change</b>
<i>Everyday activity</i>	habitus	self-reflection, career
<i>Policy network</i>	policy community values	strategy; inclusion/exclusion of actors
<i>Institutions</i>	path dependence	legislative reformers
<i>Public sphere</i>	social structures; culture; identity	ideology; new social movements
<i>Elections</i>	electoral/party system	new parties; supra-national institutions

At each domain of policy practice we find different mechanisms of problem repression and explication. At the everyday domain, the habitus structures behaviour but also gives actors the capacity to reflect upon their place within the field, for example in developing a career. Policy networks, or epistemic communities, develop their own social conventions which organize the policy world for their members, who also have the capacity to strategize in relation to the other members and to include or exclude other parties from the network. At the institutional domain, path dependency effects lead to existing institutional structures going unquestioned, and gaining the strongest immunity from reform if they are explicitly problematized. In the public sphere generally, we find all the properties of culture and identity which reinforce the status quo and produce continuity in social relations. Here, also, new social movements and new ideologies seek to problematize existing social structures and norms. At the domain of party competition, repression is not just a formal limitation of the mobilization of interests seeking to uphold or challenge legitimate power and institutions, it is the extent to which these pre-structure the perception of alternatives within the political culture generally. For example, electoral systems operate not only to formally structure the potential choices for voters at an election, but such institutional structures reward the general legitimacy of the established parties by giving new, aspiring parties an air of amateurishness

and exclusion from obtaining an authoritative ethos which would cast them as acceptable potential governments.

At each domain the relationship between the repression and explication of questions is itself *rhetorical*. In particular, this relationship is articulate through the *passions*: legislative reformers are up against the authority of established institutions and the feelings of elites and the public towards them; new social movements seek to stir the passions against the complacency or apathy of the popular, common sense view; new parties must *move* voters away from their traditional party identifications; and individuals face difficult self-reflection through and against their own subconsciously constructed habitus. Again, it is important to note that all these domains of activity take place at the same time and through each other. Policy analysis prompts an examination of all domains of the policy process, so we see that there is a continual struggle between the repression and explication of problems which should not be separated according to outcomes. In policymaking, very often nothing much changes. But to look only at the results is to miss ninety-nine percent of the action. This is where policy studies makes an important contribution to political studies. A theory of policy change should account for the sources of its dynamic stability at all these domains. This suggests a broad framework for empirical analysis which combines the rhetorical dimension, policy practice, and institutional perspectives.

#### **4. Conclusion: the rhetorical analysis of policymaking practice**

Political practice is the defining characteristic of policy analysis. In extending the interpretative view with a sociological conception of practice we can differentiate it more clearly from conventional political science. Policy analysis may well have practical relevance but need not be defined by it. Instead, Bourdieu's framework for social inquiry outlines a scientific way to study policy as practice, to theorise across and synthesise a range of approaches to policy analysis through one conceptual framework. This should also allow us to generalise more easily across policy problems and across the many different

organisations which now routinely take part in policy processes. And in supplementing this with a rhetorical perspective we can uncover and express the fully political dimensions of the policy process, from the passionate involvements of policy practitioners engaged in constructing their identity through their policy work through to emotional argumentation around public problems and elections.

As always when speaking of rhetoric, we call to mind the possibility of manipulation. If we refuse the historical, general denigration of rhetoric and side with the new, interpretative perspectives, then we can employ this distinction to orient empirical studies on how rhetoric is *used* (Meyer 1996, p. 355). Meyer thematizes the difference between manipulative and sincere rhetoric in terms of questioning: positive rhetoric seeks to explicate the question whereas negative rhetoric only pretends to leave open a question which has already been decided. Uncovering this is a matter of interpretation, because speakers can always disguise their intentions. If we employ this distinction at all the various domains of practice, then the rhetorical repression of questions by *any* means can then be studied together with manipulative discourse, and so contribute to a more powerful critique of the mechanisms of political repression, of which coercion is only the strongest end of a continuum which runs from unconscious repression through all the means of persuasion. Theorizing the repression of questions accounts for both the corrupt ethos of one who aims to deceive and the pathos inherent in the acceptance of that deception, which in turn highlights the complex reality of the dual qualities of power to problematize and to repress, and the political utility to be found in avoiding conflict as much as in explicating it.

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