CHAPTER SIX

Policy Implementation

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1. Introduction

From the late 1970s on, implementation became a focus for research in Dutch public administration. What happened after a bill had been passed was a key question asked, echoing a famous American study. In earlier decades, attention had been entered more on questions of policy making and planning where a shared interest by policy makers and students of public administration was noticeable. The 1960s and the 1970s were an era of policy making and planning. The welfare state was developed. With economists, sociologists and political scientists, students of public administration participated in this major societal and political shift. Comparable to the sequence is the United States’ amazement and disillusion when the results manifested themselves, but this was not the only reason for the appearance of the theme of implementation. Researchers in public administration and public policy also noticed the development of this theme in the international literature, in particular the literature from the United States. The heavy reliance of Dutch scholars on international literature made the development of thinking on implementation typically foreign. In large part, it corresponded to the trend in modern welfare societies.

As always, there is an exception. Studies on implementation in the Netherlands had a trend in common: the attention paid to the organisational structure of implementation. The theme of implementation had everything to do with the relationships between central and decentralised governmental organisations. However, typical for a country such as the Netherlands, attention to the relationships between governmental, semi-governmental and private institutions was also evident. Policy implementation was not only a problem for the public sector, it
was a problem that revealed itself in the welfare society as a whole. Secondly, in several studies, the influence of societal forces on policy implementation became clear.

The sociologist Van Doorn once remarked that in the Dutch situation, it is more appropriate to speak of the welfare society than of the welfare state (Van Doorn, 1978). With this expression, he pointed to the intense linkage of the modern state with a variety of societal organisations in order to realise its aims. Thus, in the fields of education, health, housing, social welfare and social security, most of the implementation of public policies is carried out by semi-governmental or private organisations, in part or totally funded by public means. The consequences are important. First, when there is a conviction of a failing welfare state, innumerable societal organisations, semi-public and private, must share in the misery (Ringeling, 1993). Secondly, those governmental organisations and quangos developed a variety of links, directed to policy making as well as to implementation. With the rise of the welfare state, relationships between governmental organisations and private institutions were intensified. Public influence on organisations stemming from private initiative increased. De Swaan (1976) characterised this development as the governmentalisation of welfare arrangements (verstatelijking van verzorgingsarrangementen).

Research into policy implementation processes had a late start in the Netherlands. This delay had one great advantage: there was no dominant traditional approach to be eliminated before a more realistic or ‘modern’ approach to policy implementation was given a chance. The classical approach has been elegantly characterised by Hood (1976) as the ‘model of perfect administration’ and by Van Gunsteren as the ‘rational central rule approach’ (Van Gunsteren, 1976). At best, the model functioned as a ‘straw man’, used to confront the approaches of implementation used by different researchers. This does not imply, however, that the top-down approach of the implementation process was not used at all. This approach corresponded perfectly with the surprised policy makers when they were confronted with the results of their policies in the 1980s. This led to a number of parliamentary inquiries in the 1980s, a means which had been applied in the political history of the Netherlands only twice before.

Research on policy implementation ensued and in the Netherlands, at least two themes can be distinguished. The first theme concerned the study of the discretion of implementing organisations and their officials. The second theme revolved around the study of policies that failed, regardless of the criteria used for that judgement. This included the study of non-implementation. We will elaborate on these trends in the next two sections. In the fourth section we analyse, on a more theoretical level, the variables that explain the implementation of public policy. We focus on a particular variable in section five, the interorganisational relationships between policy organisations. A number of conclusions
are presented in the sixth and last section.

2. Discretion: implementation on the micro-level

A landmark in the study of implementation in the international literature was Pressman's and Wildavsky's *Implementation* (1974). In the Netherlands, another study formed an important inspiration for the research of policy implementation. That study was by K.C. Davis, *Administrative Discretion* (1969). In his dissertation, Ringeling (1978) made clear that discretion was not only the result of vague and ambiguous rules as Davis had assumed. The organisational circumstances of policy implementation also led to discretion on the part of the implementing officials. The extent to which the implementation created information monopolies for the officials and the extent to which they were subject to hierarchical and democratic control were the products of these circumstances. He reasoned that it was questionable to what extent administrative discretion was a problem, as Davis had stated. The discretion officials possessed also enabled the adjustment of the policy to the circumstances of individual cases. Therefore discretion was not, in all circumstances according to Ringeling, a phenomenon that should be restricted by increased administrative rule-making. In his research on the adjudication of inhabitants of the former colony of Indonesia, Ringeling established a systematical deviation from the enacted rules. Davis' recommendation would only have limited implications for the discretion of the implementing civil servants, but moreover, a restriction on their discretion would result in the inability of the civil servants to choose the best solution according to the starting-points of the policy.

This book was followed by several other studies; we will mention briefly the most important ones. Van Groenendael (1986) places emphasis on the regulatory character of the process of adjudication. His study was also directed at policies on aliens. In the 1970s, given the large number of illegal aliens in the Netherlands, the government issued a policy of regularisation of illegal aliens' stays, provided that certain conditions were met. In his study, the policy instrument of regulation assumes a central place. Van Groenendael confronts the creation of rules with their execution and the inspection of the execution.

Terpstra (1985) has conducted research on organisations in the field of the social provision of work. These organisations were created in order to offer work opportunities to people who have limited access to the labour market because of a physical or mental disability. Sometimes this opportunity can lead to a return to the regular labour market. The question of how these organisations select candidates was central in his research. First, of course, there is regulation in this field. This regulation leaves the functionaries involved considerable discretion in
executing the policy. Secondly, these functionaries are confronted with an unpredictable environment of potential clients. Policy discretion is the suitable means to react to the environment.

The organisations do so by categorising their candidate employees. As a result, the uncertainty with which the organisations are confronted is reduced. Furthermore, the organisations involved develop their own rules. These organisations begin to resemble businesses and to develop values that express this business-like character. The functionaries in charge of the selection of employees also develop rules that stem from their own ideas. The discretion in the policy of admission is restricted by this set of rules. Selection becomes a matter of routine.

Ekkers (1984) concentrates on the policy of housing distribution. Local governments contain organisations who distribute a part of the available local housing accommodations among those who have applied for housing. Also in this field of policy, rules constitute the starting-point of his research. Local regulation of housing distribution possesses the same legal status as national regulation. Implementation of these rules is in the hands of housing distributors, social and medical reporters and civil servants who give permits to occupy houses and who manage these processes. However, these rules insufficiently take into account the fact that housing distribution does not concern a single case since a particular house will be assigned several times. Decisions about allocation also involve the social environment of the living accommodation. Rules will be expanded by civil servants because of their concern for these factors. In some cases, they even avoid existing regulation. In so doing, they create space for themselves in which they can act with relative discretion.

In his research, Knecht examines the implementation of the General Assistance Act (Knecht, 1986). He speculates on the patterns of behaviour exhibited by civil servants who are responsible for implementing this Act and the causes of these patterns. By means of participative observation, he attempts to gain the necessary insight for answering this question. Regulation turns out to be so complex that civil servants cannot perfectly master regulation, enacted prescriptions and jurisprudence. In many situations in which a decision has to be made, they find a case somewhere which resembles their own problem. Their decision making is chaotic. Sometimes, they show compassion with certain applicants of Social Security while they are reluctant to help others. Their own personal preferences are of great influence on the decisions they have to make. Knecht concludes that four components determine their style of work:

- working within the frame of the civil service;
- working by professional standards;
- management of one’s own work situation;
- personal satisfaction in work.
The mutual weight of these factors differs from civil servant to civil servant. Based on the varying weight of these factors, the author distinguishes three styles of implementing rules: a bureaucratic, a political and a pragmatic style. Civil servants with the bureaucratic style orient themselves on an ideal image of a well-functioning bureaucracy with a clear hierarchical distribution of competence and responsibilities. Civil servants with a political style do their best for certain clients according to their own criteria and try to maximise their autonomy with regard to the authority in the organisation. Civil servants with the pragmatic style search for the best possible compromise between the four factors mentioned above.

Research on implementation on the micro-level brings together two approaches. The first approach is the attention to problems of discretion of policy and the client's dependency on the decisions of those responsible for implementation in the welfare state. The second approach is the research on styles of implementation, especially as initiated by Kagan (1978). This theme links up with the ideas of Lipsky (1980) on the crucial role of street-level bureaucracies. With this, discretion developed from an administrative-juridical problem into an organisational problem. The research became increasingly fixed on the organisational conditions of implementation at the micro-level.

3. Explaining failure (and some successes)

Policy implementation is often seen as the bottleneck in the policy process. The Netherlands is no exception. In a survey, 57 members of the Dutch political elite (ministers, prominent MPs and top civil servants) were asked, 'Does policy implementation lead to problems in or outside your field of activity?' Sixty-eight percent of the respondents answered with a clear-cut 'yes' (Hoogerwerf, 1986: 253). The main obstacles mentioned were bureaucracy (42 percent), time pressures (33 percent), uncooperative civil servants (25 percent), coordination problems (23 percent) and information problems (17 percent).

From the outset, Dutch researchers have modelled policy implementation as an interactive process involving not only the public authorities, but also representatives of the target group and other interested parties. All actors participating in this process were acknowledged to have their own motives and resources which, apart from direct policy measures, are also influenced by many other circumstances. One limitation, however, was that most of the initial implementation studies aimed to find explanations for the success or - more often - failure of the policy. The principal research focus therefore was 'top-down'.

One of the first studies conducted along these lines concerned the anti-suburba-
nisation policy in the Netherlands in the period 1966-76 (Glasbergen and Simonis, 1979). This policy was designed to prevent expanding rural communities from making excessive inroads into the open space between the cities in the densely populated west of the Netherlands. This policy had virtually no effect whatsoever: local resistance to national guidelines, financial-economic conditions, a favourable market situation for suburbanisation and lack of coordination between the urban planning and housing policies were among the main factors leading to the failure of this policy (Simonis, 1983: 118).

In 1983, two empirical studies appeared in which policy implementation was conceptualised as a dynamic political process centring on the various actors who each have their own aims, information and means of power (Maarse, 1983: 40-60; Bressers, 1983: 188-197).

In the second half of the 1970s, the spectre of unemployment re-emerged after a period of full employment in the Netherlands. In an effort to counter the threat, the government launched a programme of public works. Municipal authorities, in particular, were invited to submit projects which were to be assessed by special committees. The assessment was based on criteria such as the expected creation of jobs, possible spin-offs and social utility. The policy was gradually terminated because of its high costs and a suspicion that the public works simply replaced investments that local authorities would otherwise have paid for themselves.

Viewed from a perspective of implementation as communication, Maarse arrived at the conclusion that the parties submitting the plans lacked adequate information on decision making process and consequently saw the allocation procedure as a kind of lottery. At the same time, the decision makers often received too little information to be able to judge the projects on their merits.

Viewed from a perspective of implementation as a process in which all actors strive for the attainment of their own aims, Maarse also concluded that the objectives of the committee members played a central role in the course of the process. Interestingly, the practical lessons learned during the implementation process prompted the parties involved to disregard the official guidelines which had been specifically designed to promote the realisation of the policy objectives (Maarse, 1983: 236). These deviations were nevertheless attempts to be able to further the values behind the policy even more effectively, not to disregard them, a phenomenon that was already observed in the research on 'discretion' (section 2).

Another example of implementation research into success and failure concerned the policy programme aimed at reducing water pollution through the construction of waste water treatment plants (Bressers, 1983). In this case, the lengthy process of finding and acquiring building sites in such a densely populated country as the Netherlands caused many delays in the building programme. The water boards seeking to build the installations were confronted with the conflicting interests of
the other actors involved. The municipalities preferred to use their land, for example for residential purposes, while many civilians feared that the installations would undermine their quality of life. In this procedure, the rules often worked against the water boards, which was the only party interested in arriving at a speedy solution.

A comparative analysis of the implementation processes of the various water boards revealed a link between the success of implementation and the water board's willingness to strike a compromise, its ability to enter into coalitions with the provincial authorities and the degree of communication with the municipalities. It turned out that if the municipality was more or less given the freedom to designate a location itself or if the water board tried to confront the municipality with a detailed plan, the risk of delay was greater than when the parties tried to agree on a suitable location in mutual consultation.

Communication also proved to be the vital ingredient in the policy aimed at reducing industrial waste-water pollution. The effluent charges imposed on organic waste pollution were so high that many environmental measures were actually paying for the company. Consultation, however, was also extremely important in order to increase awareness among the companies involved. Differently expressed: consultation remained; only the circumstances in which it was conducted changed radically once the companies realised that pollution abatement led to significant savings in charges.

In the case of heavy metal pollution, the charges were much lower than the clean-up costs and at best, the regulations gave the water boards equal rather than superior power vis-à-vis the companies. Here too, consultation and negotiation were crucial, as a means of carefully trying to get the most out of the resources available to the implementers. It was evident that in a situation where neither party enjoyed superior power, a rigid and formal stance could only lead to conflict and delay (Bressers, 1983, 1988, 1992).

Later, various other studies appeared (cf. Honigh, 1985; Korsten and Derksen, 1986), including many in the field of environmental policy (see the special chapter in this volume). In 1989 the two authors of this chapter noticed an increasing convergence between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approaches in practical research. The remaining differences did not concern the fundamental perception of reality but rather the question of what aspects of that reality deserved most emphasis. It was obvious that the differences between authors had become too subtle and multi-faceted to be categorised into general 'schools of thought' and that such rough distinctions were no longer fruitful for the further development of this field of study (Bressers and Ringeling, 1989: 23).

Building on this convergence between the top-down and bottom-up approaches, an attempt was made to link organisational aspects of policy implementation (task-setting, division of tasks and coordination) with the characteristics of actors in the implementation process (Arentsen, 1991).
The empirical information provided by these and other studies has served to enhance our understanding of the policy implementation process in the Netherlands. As with all policy studies, translating empirical observations into practical recommendations is still problematic for various reasons. From the start, therefore, attention has been devoted to the development of tools which would make it possible to use the new insights in order to design processes for implementing policy in fields other than those studied. In this context, two developments can be distinguished: (1) the formulation of checklists of points of attention for setting-up policy implementation and (2) the development of theories for explaining the implementation process. The first subject will be treated in this section, the second in section 4.

Scholars of public administration learned from these studies, and the practice of policy also benefitted. After all, enough doubt was created about the omnipotence of national regulation. Improving the implementation of intentions of public policy and preventing the law turning into a dead letter became questions in administrative practice. This led to attempts to estimate the implementation of the programme at the formation of policies. Among others, the 'administrative impact assessment' was developed (Van Geest et al., 1985). With this instrument, policy makers have to consider the consequences of certain intentions of policy of national government on the functioning of decentralised governments. Is it feasible to implement the measure? What are the administrative efforts demanded from other governments? Answering such questions will strengthen the sensitivity of the decision makers at the level of central government for the position and problems of lower governments. Besides, insight could be improved in the question of whether administrative efforts can lead to intended goals. The design of this instrument can vary. The most simple form is a checklist with a number of questions concerning the practicability of a certain measure by other governments. These answers should be involved in decision making on a measure. In this design, the administrative impact assessment is comparable with Rule 29.5 of the Standing Rules of the American Senate, which asks for a 'regulatory impact statement' of intended measures of policy. A more profound design concerns research on the practicability by provincial and local governments before a decision about a measure is made.

In the 1980s, policy makers also paid attention to implementation of policy in another way. Implementation not only turned out to be difficult (more difficult than many policy makers assumed), but it was also expensive. In a society where not only governmental organisations but many semi-public and private organisations are responsible for implementation, government is not the only actor who must bear the consequences of this. Costs of implementation surfaced within social organisations and among them business organisations (see Arentsen et al., 1993). For this reason, central government paid attention to the administrative burden for private organisations as a result of policy development.
More generally, Van den Graaf and Hoppe (1985) have developed rules of thumb for estimating \textit{ex ante} the practicability of governmental measures. In their opinion, such a practice implies a simulation of the implementation of policy. Using forward and backward mapping of the process of policy, a number of penetrating questions can be asked about the possibilities of implementation and the potential disturbance of this. These questions are asked from the perspective of policy makers and the target group as well as from those who are responsible for implementation.

4. Explanatory theory

Many implementation studies set out not only to identify policy outputs, but also to explain them. These explanations vary from case to case, putting forward a vast array of factors, both in the Netherlands and in other countries. The policy may have run aground because ‘the municipalities responsible for implementation were not sufficiently motivated’, ‘there were staff shortages’, ‘the guidelines arrived late’, ‘the applicants did not understand the subsidy arrangements’, ‘there was insufficient support in society’, ‘the statements of the under-secretary Mr Jansen spread confusion in the media’, to mention but a few. There are two disadvantages to such \textit{ad hoc} explanations. First of all, although they may contain some degree of truth, they rarely tell the whole story. Mainly, the identified factor or factors could exert influence only in combination with other factors which, in themselves, need not adversely affect implementation. For instance, a lack of motivation on the part of the municipalities to implement the policy is only a decisive factor if these municipalities enjoy a large degree of discretion (or can afford to act like that: actual discretion). However, a large degree of discretion in itself will not necessarily prevent effective implementation.

Secondly, \textit{ad hoc} explanations do not generate a cumulation of knowledge of factors that influence policy implementation. The studies show little uniformity, based as they are on different terms and levels of abstraction. As a result, information from new research cannot be tested against predictions based on earlier research. It is possible, up to a point, to induce certain general factors from the concrete factors mentioned in the various studies. Indeed, this was done at an early stage (e.g. in the Netherlands: Hoogerwerf, 1977, 1983; cf. Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1980, Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1989, 1983). However, the interaction between these general factors and the way in which they reinforce or weaken each other’s influence are rarely taken into consideration. Another drawback is that these general factors tend to remain fairly abstract. As a result, they are not often used in practice as a basis for hypotheses, but rather as a basis for fruitful diagrams for the clear classification of \textit{ad hoc} explanations. In order
to achieve cumulative knowledge of the factors that influence policy implementation and effectiveness, it is vital to develop theories with explanatory power.

A feature of the Dutch implementation studies field is that there have been some works that not only state the importance of the formulation of explanatory and predictive theory, but also actually develop and apply such theory. Such a theory, developed in the Netherlands, is 'instruments theory' which is the subject of the present section. The theory derives its name from the fact that it was developed to facilitate the comparison of policy instruments. One of its basic assumptions is that the working of policy instruments cannot be seen in isolation from the circumstances in which they are applied. The theory, therefore, not only looks at the characteristics of policy instruments and their impact on target groups, but also at the policy implementation processes. Its first version was developed in 1986 (Bressers and Kloek, 1987, 1988). After a series of empirical studies (cf. Kloek, 1987; Grimbergen et al., 1988; Kraan-Jetten, 1991), which generally provided evidence supporting the theory, a further clarification of concepts and theorems led to the second version (Kloek, 1991). Thereafter, new empirical studies followed (e.g. Pullen, 1992). The treatment in this section will be based on Pieter Jan Kloek's second version of the theory.

The theory assumes that the policy implementation process is not only about implementation, but also about attempts to prevent implementation or to change the character of what is implemented. The process involves activities and interactions between the implementing government officials and the members of the target group. Often the same actors already maintain contact with each other in connection with other matters. Moreover, government and target groups often exert influence on each other before the policy that is to be implemented is introduced. The new policy does not replace this interactive process, but adds a new element to it. Therefore, to assess the possibility of the new instruments being applied correctly, it is first of all necessary to gain insight into the factors determining the nature of the interactive process between the government and the target group. We can then try to find out how these factors change due to the introduction of the new policy instruments (Bressers and Ringeling, 1989).

Another basic assumption of the theory is that the factors which influence the implementation process do not operate in isolation from each other (cf. Mayntz, 1983). The influence of the various factors cannot be simply summed up. A factor that exercises a positive influence under certain circumstances may exercise no influence, or indeed a negative influence, under other circumstances. The way in which these processes develop must therefore be explained on the basis of combinations of the values of the various distinctive factors. This means that hypotheses on the relationship between the dependent variable and only one independent variable at the time, with a ceteris paribus assumption regarding other independent variables, are regarded as unproductive.

Although this basic assumption is undoubtedly more realistic, it creates severe
complexity problems for theory formulation. In fact, if one assumes 15 independent variables to be important to the development and results of the implementation process, then even if one treats these variables as dichotomies, no less than 32,768 combinations of circumstances or 'settings' can occur. Because many of the relevant variables cannot validly be operationalised as quantitative measures, computerised modelling provides no escape.

Instead, this complexity is made manageable by discerning two sets of independent variables. These factors are divided into 'core circumstances' (i.e. factors that have a direct influence on the development of the processes) and external circumstances (i.e. factors that have an indirect influence via their influence on the core circumstances). The applied policy instruments can also be counted among these 'external circumstances'. The theory indicates how the core circumstances jointly determine the development and results of a process. External circumstances, including characteristics of the policy instruments that are to be implemented, are taken into consideration when estimating the value of the core circumstances. In this way, many circumstances can be taken into account without exponentially increasing the complexity of the theory. The number of settings remains limited as they are determined by a limited number of central circumstances. These central circumstances are the goals, information and sources of power of the actors involved.

Likelihood of implementation

The policy implementation process is typically characterised by the interactions between the government and the target group of the policy. The application of a certain policy instrument often occupies a less prominent place in this process than one would be led to expect on the basis of official procedures. The actual granting of permits to those members of the target group who are required to hold permits, the actual imposition of levies, the application of sanctions when regulations are violated: none of these can be taken for granted in the practical process. The first result of the implementation process can therefore be stated as the possibility that the instrument will be applied at all. Sometimes this result may have the side-effect of undermining the credibility of the policy, particularly if implementation fails to get off the ground.

It is quite conceivable that not only the members of the target group but also the government body responsible for implementation attach little importance to the application of the instrument. Implementors have values and interests of their own, which may not coincide with the activities involved or even the policy as such. The Dutch Nuisance Act, for instance, has been typified as a symbolic act, because for years no one has lifted a finger to put it into practice. In fact, it is even open to question whether the policy makers ever intended it to be
implemented (Aalders, 1984). Thus, the first group of factors which determines
the possibility of applying the policy instruments consists of the objectives of the
implementors and the target group. To put it more specifically, the central
question is whether the actual application of the instrument will contribute to the
achievement of their own objectives.

The successful application of policy instruments also depends on whether those
involved have sufficient information. The first question to ask in this connection
is whether the policy implementors know who makes up the target group. Do
they know, for instance, which companies are obliged to have a permit or which
ones qualify for a subsidy? If the target group itself stands to gain from the appli-
cation of the instrument, e.g. in the case of subsidies, then information available
to the members of the target group may also greatly help to increase the
possibility of application. This concerns information about the way in which they
can benefit from the instrument.

The third group of factors that determines the development of the implemen-
tation process is the distribution of power between the implementors and the
members of the target group. First of all, who is empowered to apply the
instrument and how far does this power go? The power may rest exclusively with
the implementors. In some cases, e.g. subsidies, the instrument can only be
applied at the request of the members of the target group. The target group then
enjoys an extremely strong position if it is not in favour of the application of the
instrument. Other forms of power may derive from formal sources (e.g.
opportunities to appeal) and informal sources (e.g. dependence on the other party
for the achievement of other objectives).

The combination of circumstances (values of the various factors) determines the
kind of interaction that will occur between the government and the target group
in the policy implementation process. The theory makes a distinction between
three types of interaction: partnership, cooperation and resistance. Partnership
occurs when both parties share a common goal. We speak of cooperation when
one of the parties adopts a relatively passive attitude which neither hinders nor
stimulates the application of the policy instrument. Resistance, of course, speaks
for itself. There are also situations in which there will be no interaction at all
between the government and the target group. In this case the possibility that the
instrument will be applied is very remote indeed.

Figure 1 gives an overview of the circumstances in the implementation process
and the types of interaction and results to be expected from the application of
instruments in these circumstances. The flow chart rests on nine theorems that
in the space of this section cannot be elaborated upon.
Degree of correct implementation

The mere application of a policy instrument does not automatically lead to the envisaged change in the consequences of the behavioural alternatives of the target group. The application may not be up to standard; for instance, levies may be lower than originally intended, or permits may not specify restrictive regulations, or grants may not be accompanied by the intended conditions. The question in such cases is not whether the policy implementors themselves are breaking the law or other regulations, nor whether they have deviated from the instrument-as-intended as such. Empirical implementation research has shown that deviations can actually be motivated by concern for goal-attainment on the part of the implementors. The dependent variable here is whether the impact of the instrument on the consequences of the behavioural alternatives of the target group is less far-reaching than originally envisaged by the policy makers.

The factors that determine the character of the interaction process between government and target group on this point are virtually identical to those mentioned earlier: objectives, information and power. Nevertheless, we still need a separate analysis diagram as the factors may take on very different values and the types of interaction are more complex than those that occur in respect to the possibility of application.
Figure 1. Probability of application of the policy instruments

| Contribution of application of measures to achievement of the objectives of: | Maturity of request target group for application of: | Information for application of: | Power position of: | Situation | Type of instruments | Likelihood of application of policy instrument | Loss of policy credibility |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Implementers: target group | Implementers: target group | Implementers: target group | | | | | |
| positive | positive | sufficient | 1 | active cooperation | very great | yes |
| positive | insufficient | 2 | active cooperation | very great | no |
| positive | insufficient | 3 | none | very small | yes |
| none | sufficient | 4 | passive cooperation | very great | yes |
| none | insufficient | 5 | none | very small | yes |
| positive | insufficient | 6 | passive cooperation | great | yes |
| none | insufficient | 7 | none | very small | yes |
| negative | insufficient | strong | strong | 8 | opposition | average | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | strong | 9 | passive cooperation | very great | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 10 | none | very small | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 11 | opposition | average | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 12 | none | very small | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 13 | none | very small | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 14 | passive cooperation | great | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 15 | none | very small | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 16 | opposition | average | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 17 | none | very small | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 18 | passive cooperation | great | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 19 | opposition | average | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 20 | none | very small | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 21 | passive cooperation | great | yes |
| negative | insufficient | weak | weak | 22 | none | very small | yes |
For instance, the members of the target group may well favour the application of a subsidy in itself, but oppose correct application as this would bind them to all sorts of regulations. Or, in another situation, implementers may have sufficient information to identify those members of the target group who require permits, but have insufficient information to know what regulations should and can be applied to the companies in question.

The types of interaction that may occur with respect to correct application are to some extent different from those with respect to the possibility of application. This is because the degree of correct application involves a much larger number of factors. The degree of correct application, for instance, not only concerns the question of whether a company required to hold a permit will indeed obtain one, but also whether that permit will be adequate, i.e. contain all regulations necessary to achieve the policy objective. It is precisely the formulation of these regulations that is the most difficult part of the negotiations between government and industry. Furthermore, the concept of 'degree of correct application' assumes that a certain degree of application takes place. If the instruments are not applied, the degree of correct application lacks all significance. The application of policy instruments almost necessarily leads to interaction, so it will be impossible for the result to be 'no' interaction, as in Figure 1. A distinction is made between constructive, but also obstructive partnership, constructive and obstructive cooperation, negotiation and conflict. Obstructive partnership occurs in situations where both companies stand to gain from incorrect application. The same phenomenon may occur with cooperation when one or both parties have an interest in the application of the instrument - e.g. because non-application would be too obvious to higher authorities - but not in the correct application of the instrument. In view of the many aspects involved in the correct application of the instrument, it is useful to sub-divide the interaction type 'resistance' into negotiation and conflict. In the case of negotiations, the parties do their utmost to realise as many of their own objectives as possible by reaching a compromise. In the case of conflict, the target group usually breaks the lines of communication and confronts the other party with a negative use of power. In the latter case, the target group will generally question the legality of the instrument. Finally, with some combinations of circumstances the interaction type and result are highly uncertain.

Figure 2 gives an overview of the situations and predicted interaction types and results with regard to the degree of correct application of the instrument. This flow chart rests on 11 theorems, that cannot be elaborated upon in the context of this section. The implementation of a policy may involve the deployment of more than one instrument. In fact, different instruments are frequently applied at different stages of implementation.
Figure 2. Degree of correct application of the policy instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution of context</th>
<th>Information for accurate application of</th>
<th>Power position of</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Type of innovation</th>
<th>Degree of accurate application of the instrument</th>
<th>Lack of policy credibility</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>implementers</td>
<td>target group</td>
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<td>sufficient</td>
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For instance, the first step in applying a permit system will be to issue permits specifying certain regulations; the second step will be to enforce these regulations. Therefore, to generate a comprehensive explanation of the results of the policy implementation processes, the parts of the theory described here will often have to be applied several times.

5. Policy networks

A few additional and somewhat more specific points can be made about the advantages (and also limitations) of focusing on networks in policy (Bressers et al., 1994). Following Hufn and Ringeling (1990: 6), the term 'policy network' is defined here as a social system in which actors develop comparatively durable patterns of interaction and communication aimed at policy problems or policy programmes. A network perspective in policy research is further justified by reviewing several observations about settings for policy research. Most modern approaches conceptualise policy formulation and implementation as multi-actor interaction processes, the course and results of which can only be understood from characteristics such as the goals, information and power of the set of actors involved. A network perspective is also consistent with this conceptualisation, but these features alone do not mark this perspective as distinctive. Rather, a set of additional observations comes into focus once one adopts a network approach, points that might otherwise be easily overlooked.

A first observation from a network perspective is that the actors involved in the policy subject interact not only during the research period, but also before and after. The interactions under observation in any policy research, therefore, are influenced by the history and predicted future of these intersections.

A second related observation is that the actors often interact not only in the processes under study but in other fields as well. Acknowledging that the process under investigation is not the only venue for interaction among those under examination, even during the period under investigation, means that the analyst is better able to understand some of the activities and interactions in the process under examination that are, almost inevitably, induced by experiences in our expectations of other processes of interdependence. (For an elaboration of these two observations in an implementation setting, see Arendse and Bressers, 1991.)

A third observation from a network perspective is that the actors involved in the process under examination not only act on their own or in reaction to each other, they are also influenced by background actors who play no direct role in the observable interaction but are connected through a network. One can expect to find that some organisations in a policy network nearly always remain in a background position, but these can be important when they are a source of
indirect influence upon others. One obvious role could be as trusted or authoritative advisers.

Finally, and again related, this point about indirect influence can be broadened. An advantage of a network perspective is that it can be used to direct attention to the larger structure of interdependence. Instead of assuming that influence takes place only through direct and observable interactions, whether as personal relationships or among representatives of institutional interests, a network approach - applied at portions of a policy process as varied as formulation and implementation - can investigate how the larger structure can have systematic effects on the behaviour of individual actors as well as on the content of decisions, policy responses and implementation efforts. A network approach thus offers the chance to combine both interpersonal and structural explanations for policy-relevant events.

All in all, these observations explain why the course and product of a policy process can appear to have a rationale different from what might be expected from the immediately-observable interactions of a set of separate actors. For these reasons as well, one could expect a network perspective to provide insights helpful in the analysis of policy.

Of course, one must be cautious. To confirm the existence of networks of some kind may say nothing more than that there are, in fact, networks. The network perspective can lead to an overemphasis on the 'who' compared with the 'what'. The activities and interactions within the network then tend to be viewed as one giant 'garbage can', largely immune to careful analysis. In the extreme form, all processes under scrutiny merge into one, which seems to process and produce nothing, but only replicates itself. The analyst might then conclude, incorrectly, that this perspective constitutes the state of the world, while in fact it may be an artefact of unclear distinctions among the various processes being examined. Furthermore, the degree of involvement and the goals, information and power of the network actors often vary considerably from one process to another. Whenever this circumstance arises it is useful to analyse these processes separately, albeit not in isolation from the others in which the network actors are also engaged. We are conscious, therefore, that network analysis has both advantages and limitations.

6. Conclusion

Research on the implementation of policies in the Netherlands can be correlated with the development of the welfare state in the 1960s and 1970s. As in other countries, an implementation gap was established. There was talk of high expectations and relatively mediocre results. In research, scholars questioned how
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this could have happened. An important theme with regard to this was formed by
the problem of the freedom of policy of executive organisations and civil
servants.

These two themes are not separate. A welfare state which continues to develop
makes increasing use of behaviour-modifying regulation. This regulation has to
be implemented. The question of how this happened contains at least two aspects.
First, it contains the question of what remains policy makers’ intent at the level
of implementation. Secondly, it concerns the position of the group of purpose or
the clients of the policy. Do generated solutions in regulation link up with their
problems? In what way do they depend on the way the rules are handled by those
who are responsible for the implementation?

In a theoretical respect, Dutch research has a particularly strong connection
with the literature from the United States, but differences in political-administra-
tive ideas on the amount of governmental intervention and in administrative
structure are too large to be neglected. Roughly speaking, the public sector in the
Netherlands is twice as big as in the United States. Street-level bureaucracies in
the Netherlands, for the greater part, have semi-public and private characters as
we saw in the introduction. Administrative relations are also different as a conse-
quence of the federal construction of the United States and the much more
centralistic management in the Netherlands. This does not only give the problem
of implementation another intensity, but also another character. As a conse-
quence, the problem of the relative autonomy of implementing organisations
acquires a different meaning.

A second difference with the implementation theory literature in the United
States was produced by the attempts to develop an explanatory theory that has
more of the characteristics of a hypothetical-deductive theory than of the more
common ‘frameworks of analysis’. In recent years Dutch implementation theorists
are trying to incorporate new variables from the well-known notion of implemen-
tation networks.
References


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