

The Study of  
Public Policy

EVSS/PUBA  
602 Public  
Policy

What is Public  
Policy?

Purpose of  
Public Policy

Studying  
Public Policy

# The Study of Public Policy

EVSS/PUBA 602 Public Policy

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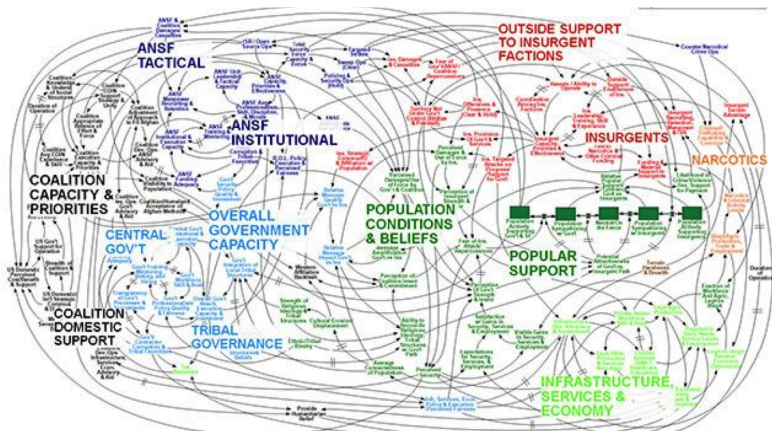
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## What is Public Policy?

## Purpose of Public Policy

## Studying Public Policy

## Policymaking is Complex



# Defining Public Policy

- Public policy is . . .
  - “Whatever governments choose to do or not do” (Dye)
  - “The relationship of a governmental unit to its environment” (Eyestone)
  - “A purposive course of action or inaction undertaken by an actor or set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern” (Anderson)
  - “The actions, objectives, and pronouncements of governments on particular matters, the steps they take (or fail to take) to implement them, and the explanations they give for what happens (or does not happen)” (Wilson)
  - “The authoritative allocation of values” (Easton)

# Characteristics of Public Policy

- Combining definitions
- Policy policy is . . .
  - Not random but purposive and goal oriented
  - Made by public authorities
  - Patterns of actions taken over time
  - A product of demand—a government directed course of action in response to pressure about some perceived problem
  - Positive—deliberate action
  - Negative—deliberate decision not to take action
  - Based on values and value conflicts

# Purpose of Public Policy

- Resolve conflict over scarce resources
- Regulating behavior
- Motivating collective action
- Protecting rights
- Directing benefits toward the public interest
- Responses to *market failures*

# Markets and Policy: Types of Goods

- Goods vary along two dimensions
  - Rivalrous
    - Rival: My consumption prevents your consumption
    - Non-rival: My consumption *does not* prevent your consumption
  - Excludability
    - Excludable: Individuals *can* be prevented from consuming
    - Non-excludable: Individuals *can not* be prevented from consuming

# Types of Goods

- Private goods
  - Rival and excludable
  - Market most efficient allocation
- Public goods
  - Non-rival and non-excludable
  - Markets tend to *under produce*

## Types of Goods

- Common-pool goods
  - Rival and non-excludable
  - Markets lead to *over consumption*
- Club goods
  - Non-rival and excludable
  - High barriers to entry
  - Markets tend toward *natural monopolies*
  - Natural monopolies exist when a monopoly is most efficient



# Market Failures

- Externalities
  - *The actions of one individual (or firm) have a direct, unintentional, and uncompensated effect on the well-being of other individuals or the profits of other firms*
    - Direct
    - Unintentional
    - Uncompensated
  - Imposes additional costs to society

# Market Failures

- Public goods
  - Why are public goods under-produced by a market?
- What is the Tragedy of the Commons?
- Collective action problems
  - *Prisoner's Dilemma*: Self-interest vs. group interest
  - Free-riding

# Academic Public Policy

- Who
- Political scientists, public administration scholars, economists, sociologists, psychologists, historians . . .
- How (*Epistemology*)
  - Scientific method
  - Post-positivist

## Two Types of Knowledge

- Knowledge *in* the policy process
- Knowledge *of* the policy process

# Knowledge *in*

- Policy Analysis
  - What should we do?
  - *Ex ante*
  - Statistical methods
  - Economic methods
  - Criteria for “best” answer

# Knowledge *in*

- Policy Evaluation
  - What have we done?
  - *Ex post*
  - Seeks evidence of an empirical casual relationship between the policy and the outcome

## Knowledge of

- The how and why of policymaking
- Why governments pay attention to some problems and not others
- Why policy changes (or remains stable)
- How individuals and groups affect policy
- Where policy comes from