Players in the Policy Process

Providers of goods, services, or activities related to a problem
Consumers of goods or services (whether or not they are organized)
Experts with specialized knowledge
Advocates and lobbyists representing interests
Officials with authority
  Roles in the process
    Inside government
    Outside government

Forms of communication in the process: Inside Government

One pagers
Memos
White papers
Legislative concept proposals
Legislative histories (see http://loc.thomas.gov)
Committee reports (all different kinds of committees)
Speeches
Testimonies

Forms of communication: Active citizens

Email
Comments about experience
Testify about problems in their lives
Letter writing, email campaigns, phone trees
Form coalition of “competing groups” (Smith’s term is a bit misleading)
Lawsuits or boycotts
Lobby as representatives of organizations
I divide the process into three phases:

1. Pre-analysis
2. Analysis
3. Writing and explaining

These are iterative processes, not linear

Pre analysis

Prepare
Plan

*Produce comes later—in Bardach’s tell your story phase*
1. Define the problem

- Think of deficits and excesses
- The definition should be evaluative
  - Bardach thinks it’s a good thing to consider problems in terms of market failure or other problems
- Quantify if possible
  - This doesn’t mean you have to use lots of fancy statistics!
- Conditions that cause problems are also problems (but this is a terminological problem)
- Missing an opportunity is a problem
- Common pitfalls in problem definition
  - Defining the solution into the “problem”
  - Uncritically assuming causal claims

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition: Frame the Problem</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do we know a problem exists?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focusing events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changes in indicators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sometimes you get to choose the problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why problem definition is important: it frames the debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>How to define a policy problem</td>
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<tr>
<td>In this instance, we are assuming purpose B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task 1: problem and stakeholders</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. Assemble some evidence

- Think before you collect
  - That is, carefully consider why you are reading and thinking about the material you need
  - Hint: you will be able to write a lot sooner than you think. You might be able to write a first draft right off the top of your head!
  - Self control
    - Educated guessing!
    - Ask:
      - “How much is it worth to me to confirm the actual difference between what I can guess and what I can learn about the world by really getting the data?”
  - Do a literature review...
    - But avoid too much material from advocacy groups (I would avoid it almost entirely)
    - Survey “best practice”
      - This is known as lesson drawing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use Analogies</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is the application of one idea from a seemingly unrelated policy domain to another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start Early (!!!)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Construct the alternatives</td>
<td>This corresponds to Task 2, page 27: Specify alternative solutions and relevant criteria</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Start comprehensive, end up focused</em></td>
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<td>Avoid assessing more than 3 or 4 alternatives at the end</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where to turn for ideas?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ideas from already existing actors</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Try to <em>invent</em> superior alternatives</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• “Let present trends continue undisturbed”—this is <em>not</em> the “do nothing” option</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will anything change that will affect the problem?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elections</td>
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<td>Changes in economic data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Budget “tightness”</td>
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<td>Demographic changes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Model the system</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I take this to simply mean “understand the causal relationships”</td>
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<tr>
<td>I find that mind-mapping and flow charting are very helpful here.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reduce and simplify the alternatives</strong></td>
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<td>Design problems: consider them, but you won’t really get a lot of feedback of the sort Bardach describes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Select the criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td>That is, select how you will weight the various features of the alternatives</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluate outcomes, not alternatives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Criteria selection build on problem definition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>That is, the process is <em>iterative</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Common criteria</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Equality, equity, fairness, justice</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Be very careful about your definitional assumptions here!</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Political feasibility versus technical excellence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political versus technical domination of alternative selection</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Legality</em></td>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Political acceptability</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Robustness and improvability</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Focusing on primary criteria</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5. **Project the outcomes**  
   \[ \text{Projection} = \text{model} + \text{evidence} \]  
   - Attach magnitude estimates  
   - Avoid the optimism problem  
   - *Other guy’s shoes*  
   - Undesirable side effects, such as moral hazard, over regulation, rent seeking  
   - Outcomes matrix

6. **Confront the tradeoffs**

7. **Decide!**  
   Task 3, page 27: Recommend an alternative and explain your reasoning (also in the 8th step)

8. **Tell the story**  
   *There’s no one way to format the output of your work*  
   - *The taxi-driver test (we also call it the elevator or business card pitch)*  
     1. What medium to use?  
     2. Logical narrative flow  
   - *Pitfalls*  
     1. Showing the 8-fold path (showing your work)  
     2. Compulsive qualifying  
     3. Showing your work (sort of like 1)  
     4. Listing without explaining  
     5. Style (!!!)  
   - *Report format*  
     - Executive summary  
     - Improve your display of tables and graphics (read Tufte’s work if you need to)  
     - References and Sources

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**Data Gathering Ideas and Hints in the Analysis Phase**  
*Data sources*
The academic literature

Google Scholar

Ebsco

Other databases

The popular media

Elite media

*The New Yorker, Atlantic, Harpers, National Review, Economist, etc.*

Popular media (avoid)

*Most newsmagazines*

*Most local newspapers*

The ultimate value of the popular media: to help you find other, better sources

For legislation and legislative history at the federal level

Full text Committee hearings: Lexis-Nexis

Full text legislation: [http://thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)

Full text *Congressional Record*: [http://thomas.loc.gov](http://thomas.loc.gov)

Full text federal laws:

Use [www.findlaw.com](http://www.findlaw.com). Click the “for legal professionals” tab. Click cases and codes for laws, regs, caselaw

For legislation and legislative history at the state level

[http://www.ncleg.net/](http://www.ncleg.net/)

Data on bills back to 1989!!

General Statutes are also available

Also use findlaw.com

Understanding Legislative History is really important

Telling the story

*Addresses a specific audience*
Has a purpose
Represents authority accurately
And you are an authority!
Uses appropriate form

“Use the document type, style, and tone of presentation that are expected for the purpose and that accommodate working conditions in the setting of its reception.”

What are your goals in writing this paper?
Obviously, to demonstrate learning and get a good grade!
But what more?

To demonstrate your expertise through publishing

To practice the use of a technique

To become more expert in a field to benefit your current or potential future career

Measures of Excellence

Clear
Correct
Concise
Credible