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**Comparative Policy Research -
Eclecticism or Systematic Integration?**

Jürgen Feick, Werner Jann

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MPIFG Discussion Paper

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Abstract

International comparative policy research has produced an abundance of empirical studies. The insufficient homogeneity of the utilized concepts has, so far, prevented the integration of research findings. This paper represents a secondary analysis of studies focusing on three countries - Great Britain, Sweden, USA - and a limited set of policy sectors - mainly environmental, social and economic policies. It tries to integrate the results of different empirical studies in a way which allows country-specific characterizations across policy fields. The authors concentrate on qualitative factors such as national characteristics of culture, policy-networks and policy style. Finally, they try to relate the country-specific configurations of these factors to the contents of policies, policy-profiles. This attempt is a first step whose simplifications ask for discussion and critique.

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Die international vergleichende Policy-Forschung hat eine Fülle von empirischen Analysen hervorgebracht. Die ungenügende Abstimmung der verwendeten Konzepte hat jedoch bisher eine Integration der Forschungsergebnisse verhindert. Die folgende Sekundäranalyse versucht, anhand dreier Länder - Großbritannien, Schweden, USA - und ausgesuchter Policybereiche - insbesondere Umwelt-, Sozial- und Wirtschaftspolitik - Forschungsergebnisse verschiedener Untersuchungen zu integrieren und länderspezifische Aussagen über Policy-Bereiche hinweg zu machen. Dabei konzentrieren sich die Autoren auf eher qualitative Variablen oder Faktoren - Charakteristika der nationalen Kultur, der Policy-Netzwerke und des Policy-Stils. Schließlich wird versucht, deren länderspezifische Konfiguration zu national spezifischen Politikgehalten, Policy-Profilen, in Beziehung zu setzen. Dies ist ein erster Schritt, der in seiner vereinfachenden Zuspitzung der Diskussion und Kritik bedarf.

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1 Introduction

Comparative politics or comparative government have long traditions in political science research. The notion that nations differ with respect to institutional structures, political and administrative processes or cultural predispositions of their populations is a familiar one. By contrast, the history of systematic policy research - be it with respect to policy-making or policy-implementation - is quite short, lasting roughly two decades by now (Heclo 1974: IX). Comparative policy studies meriting the name "comparative" are even younger as a research field. Nevertheless, there exists already a considerable amount of comparative studies in different policy fields - partly of the macro-quantitative-statistical but mostly of the case-study type - comprising different sets of countries. What is lacking, are attempts to integrate at least the descriptive results, not to speak of theoretical explanatory efforts. The necessity and challenge has been often recognized but scarcely ever taken on (see e.g. Heidenheimer 1986).

In this paper we would like to present a first step towards integrating research results. The task is twofold. On the one hand the discussion will deal with the methodological problems of integrating existing concepts and generally qualitative material into - what might be called - a process of cumulative knowledge extension. On the other hand we would like to approach the substantive question of our headline, asking whether the research results of the studies

under investigation lend support to the notion that "nations matter" with respect to public policies. All this will be done on the basis of some studies in only a few fields - such as social, economic, environmental, and occupational health and safety policies - having a very limited set of countries - Great Britain (GB), Sweden (S) and the United States of America (USA) - and also a limited selection of variables - policy contents, formulation and implementation processes, institutional structures and politico-administrative cultures - in mind.

It is not our goal to create new concepts, typologies and analytical schemes which one would like to propose as operational research guides. One reason for this is that "The price of using abstract ... typologies may be that we have to start from scratch in building up a body of comparative case studies" (Freeman 1985: 484). Since every scientific discussion should try to improve concepts for future research, the aim of this paper is to find conceptual levels where results based on conceptually different studies can be integrated.

This paper will not and cannot be the solution to the problem of "centrifugal tendencies in policy studies so as to make them capable of being treated in a more theoretical manner" (Heidenheimer 1986: 167). Its modest goal is, however, not only to point to the problem, but to demonstrate it using empirical material and, going one step further, to try to find a hopefully satisficing level of integration. It is meant to be a proposal and an invitation to discussion and joint efforts. If policy researchers do not succeed in

developing and integrating cross-culturally valid concepts and research results, we are bound to fail with respect to the creation and accumulation of less "impressionistic" knowledge than we have collected so far (Scharpf 1978: 124).

Our primary goal is to arrive at typological descriptions which differentiate countries across policy fields with respect to the contents of policies, the political process in which they are shaped and the institutional-structural as well as cultural context within which these processes take place. Mentioning these variables seems to imply causality, meaning that national institutional and cultural contexts influence policy-making processes in nationally typical ways which translate into the outcomes of these processes - policies. Caution is advised. Talking about explanations at this macro-level might be too ambitious. First, it is not at all clear that there is a unidirectional chain of causality which allows for the neat differentiation of independent and dependent variables. Furthermore, one must be aware that there are very many factors of influence which cannot all be grasped or controlled by selecting a few variables whose concepts are additionally somewhat fuzzy and hard to operationalize.¹ Methodologically, it might be

¹ Boudon (1988) discusses the problem that "commonsensical epistemology" (p. 2) tends to see causes, often even one cause, where it really does not make sense in scientific discourse to talk about causes. He mentions examples where "X ... derives from such a complicated network of causes - including eventually circular causal relationships - that the question 'what is the cause of X' has actually no meaning at all" (p. 4), or where one encounters coincidental results, i.e. Cournot effects of coincidental causal

more honest to talk of country-specific configurations or covariations of different variables (mostly qualitatively operationalized) which should lead to an understanding of complex phenomena, but should not be mistaken as general theoretical explanations (von Wright 1971). In this kind of mostly qualitative research the goal is not to find generalizable relationships between two isolated variables, but to further the understanding of social systems and systems' processes. Therefore, we are much more trying to detect typologies and typological patterns as indicators of complex mechanisms or "coping relationships" (Mayntz 1985: 73ff.). And certainly, where individual and corporate actors with their values, orientations and strategies are involved in "translating" demands and resources within complex problem-formulation and decision-making processes and given institutional structures into policy-decisions, we are dealing with complex structures and processes.

Choosing countries as the critical differentiating entity has multiple reasons. One is that, despite supranational and transnational policies as well as international diffusion, most policies are still developed mainly within and confined to national boundaries. But it is primarily our curiosity whether the hypothesis holds that "nations matter". Such an approach does not exclude the possibility that the characteristics of policy sectors could be more important as policy-influencing variables than country differences, meaning that one could find more variation

sequences.

among sectors than among countries. This is an empirical question which can best be approached by a research design which varies countries as well as policy fields (Freeman 1985: 491, Feick 1983). But there are only very few empirical studies available which actually use such a demanding design (e.g. Jann 1983, Mayntz/Feick et al. 1982).² Most studies research one policy in different countries, which biases the analysis towards looking for country variation. In reconstructing the research results into a several countries/several policies scheme, secondary analysis can correct this bias. The minimal precondition: compatibility of research concepts.

The reader should be reminded again of the limited task of this paper, namely, to try to integrate concepts and research findings of internationally comparative research on the basis of the specific "nations matter" hypothesis. Certainly, if it can be shown that there are systematic and plausible differences between the cultures, institutional structures, policy processes and policies of different countries across policy fields, this would be a starting point to look for country-specific covariations of the variables. Given such a result, the question would still remain whether we have just detected the influence of specific independent variables on policy contents or really the influence of "countries" as a "super"-variable. "When one finds cross-national differences, it may not

² The study by Mayntz/Feick et al. (1982) has shown that there is within-country variation across policy sectors as well as within-sector variation across countries.

be clear, whether the crucial "context" that accounts for the differences is nation or culture or political or economic system..." (Kohn 1987: 725). This problem would be difficult if not impossible to solve.

Theoretically, the list of factors which can influence policy contents is unmanageable. The abundance of potential variables in relation to the scarcity of cases (= countries) leads to the problem of overdetermination (Przeworski/Teune 1970). One way to circumvent this is the strategy of comparing similar cases (= countries) by which as many variables as possible are more or less reliably controlled so that research can focus on those variables which are most likely to show country-specific differences (Lijphart 1975: 159).³

This strategy was used in selecting the countries and policy fields to be analyzed in this study. Although one might debate this, we think that, for the purpose of our task, the three countries are similar enough concerning their level of socioeconomic development to assume that existing differences in this respect should not be of disturbing influence on the policy problems and the policy-contents. If one accepts this assumption, then the hypothesis can be put forward that differences in policy contents should be influenced at least to a certain degree by differences in institutional structures, politico-cultural orienta-

³ There are different strategies for solving this problem, all of which have their own shortcomings. Lijphart (1975) provides a short but useful overview of some of the available strategies and the difficulties connected with them.

tions and characteristics of procedural interactions (Scharpf 1987: 26f.).⁴

The research methodology in the studies selected for our analysis relies almost exclusively on the analysis of qualitative data of the case-study type. These are generally rich studies, full of details and trying to describe and sometimes plausibly "explain" complex interrelationships between policy contents, contextual factors and characteristics of the politico-administrative systems and their actors. The problem with these studies is well known: empirical data and their coding can hardly be controlled by the reader, and attempts at generalization seem to be highly eclectic and difficult to accumulate across studies.

On the other hand, quantitatively oriented studies find it easier to include more countries and to handle more variables - if data are available. Their advantage is that they allow for intersubjectively controllable hypothesis-testing, and by that they contribute tentatively to knowledge accumulation. But this meth-

⁴ Kaelble (1987: 159) argues in his book on European social and economic development that political structures and cultures can be regarded as rather stable variables, which supports the argument that these factors should be influential over time, even if situational factors change.

One could still argue that it is an oversimplification to assume that the structural problems concerning e.g. environmental pollution or the national economic situation are basically alike in the countries chosen. But our analyses of policy contents do not, for example, contain dimensions - such as technical policy instruments - which might be strongly connected to specific technically defined problem situations.

odological strategy is faced with other, though not less serious problems. The choice of variables is very often not the result of conceptual research designs, but rather research designs are altered to fit readily available data (Lijphart 1975: 173). Variable operationalization may lack theoretical stringency for the same reason. Furthermore, existing studies in this research tradition have been much more successful in refuting hypotheses than in establishing positive relationships. And what is conceptually even more disturbing from a political science point of view, structures and processes of policy formation and implementation are mostly treated in the typical black-box manner, serving only occasionally as additional ad hoc arguments. Consequently, the answer to the question of how context characteristics influence policy-contents through interaction processes remains in the dark.⁵

On the following pages we will try to integrate the findings of several empirical studies in the fields mentioned above. This obliges us to apply a conceptual strategy which looks for a common conceptual denominator. This approach is bound to neglect empirical information that does not fit into the analytical scheme more or less applicable to all the studies. These dif-

⁵ Typical examples of this type of study in the tradition of quantitative policy-output research can be found in the overview of comparative welfare policy studies provided by Harold Wilensky et al. (1987) in Dierkes et al. (eds.) (1987). Alber (1982) is one of the rare researchers who try to combine the quantitative macro-approach with institutional and political-process explanations, though the latter are presented more in an additive than integrative manner.

ficulties are increased by the fact that most studies do not cover all three but often only two of the selected countries. A great variety of comparative literature has been drawn upon or explicitly used especially concerning the conceptual discussion. Authors like Ashford, Boudon, Freeman, Heclo, Heidenheimer, Katzenstein, Mayntz, Richardson, Scharpf, Schmidt, and others should be mentioned. But this list is by far not exhaustive. Here and there we have integrated empirical findings more eclectically, for example when discussing political cultures. The systemic basis for our attempt to integrate empirical work have been the following studies:

1. Comparative economic policies: Benz 1987, Dierkes et al. 1987, Jann 1983, Lehner et al. 1983, Scharpf 1987, Weir/Skocpol 1985, Wilks/ Wright 1987;
2. Comparative social and educational policies: Alber 1982, Benz 1987, Dierkes et al. 1987, Premfors 1980, Wilensky 1987;
3. Environmental, occupational safety and health policies: Badaracco 1985, Dierkes et al. 1987, Jann 1983, Kelman 1981, Lundquist 1980, Mayntz/ Feick et al. 1982, Vogel 1986, 1987.

2 Concepts and variables: structures, cultures, styles and profiles

It has already been mentioned above that, though we do not intend nomothetic explanations of policy contents, the selected variables seem to imply causal relationships. The causal understanding stems to some degree from the chronology of policy processes where the content of policy decisions is the "result" of complex interaction processes among participating actors.

The following table (1) might help to systematically locate the variables we are interested in by providing a rough overview over factors or variables which are often employed in international policy comparisons.⁶

⁶ Our categorization is influenced by one which has been proposed by Sabatier (1987) for a different type of analysis. Certainly, the two dimensions employed to differentiate the main categories are very rough measures for a highly complex research object. The simplification is required by our limits to validly measure and analyze in more detail.

Table 1: Important Variables in the Policy Process

	relatively stable	relatively unstable	
country-specific	developmental stage	economic situation	socioeconomic
	cultural orientations (culture)	present attitudes opinions	cultural
	institutional arrangements (structure)	e.g. political coalition (government)	institutional-organizational
	policy style (politics)	present relationship between political actors	process characterist.
	typical policy content (profile)	e.g. financial endowment of policies	policy content
sector-specific	traditional solutions	specific actions	policy content
	interaction/bargaining/decision-making charac.	present conflictive/consensual processes	process
	issue/policy networks	policy coalitions	institutional-organizational
	governing norms in sectors	present preferences	cultural
	problem situation/problem-solving technology	present problem situation (urgency)	socioeconomic

In the table we differentiate essentially between four concepts which are presented as "independent" contextual variables. These are socioeconomic, cultural, institutional, process-characteristic concepts. In the middle of the table the policy (-content) concept maintains a special position. On the one hand, this is the "dependent" variable in our analysis. On the other hand, preceding policies, as single policies or as typical policy-content configurations, are influencing succeeding policies "independently".

These five concepts are translated into specific categories which are differentiated by two dichotomized dimensions. These two dimensions are stability over

time and country- or sector-specificity. In all four main boxes we always talk about the same categorical concepts. But the specific factors can be differentiated according to the two dimensions (stability/instability; country/sector specificity). Having the comparison of policies in mind, one can theoretically deduct at least three hypothetical possibilities from the figure:

- Policies in one country show considerable similarity across all or most policy fields; i.e. factors within the first quadrant would be most influential.
- Policies in one or more similar policy fields show considerable similarities across countries; i.e. factors of the second quadrant would be most relevant.
- The comparison of policies does not reveal similarities, neither across fields nor countries; i.e. more or less situational factors of the third or fourth quadrant would be of importance.

We should expect that neither of these radically formulated hypothetical possibilities will solely represent reality. The table allows to locate very different sets of hypotheses, e.g. the one which maintains that the socioeconomic context is highly important in determining policy contents - a factor of the first quadrant -, or that the party composition of governments is of dominant importance - a factor of the second quadrant. In general, in the complex world of policy-making and policy-implementation we should suppose that very different factors are at work inter-

dependently. And, furthermore, there are indications that different characteristics of policies are related to specific factors which belong to different categorical dimensions (Mayntz 1987). Institutional structures might be important for the procedural implementation prescriptions in policies, while political majorities should be more relevant for the definition of a problem situation, the financial endowments or the distributional aspects of a policy. The objective problem situation might be especially influential with respect to instrumental policy choices etc.. And beyond that, one should not forget the time dimension. Policies are influenced by historical phases. The relevance of specific factors or factor combinations for policy formulation can depend on historical circumstances and developments (Alber 1982).

In our paper we are essentially interested in the factors of the first quadrant which are country-specific and remain rather stable, although we do not deny the potential influence of the others. In selecting countries which are rather close with respect to socioeconomic status, typical problems of highly industrialized societies and available problem-solving technologies, we hope to have sufficiently controlled these factors - at least as far as the task of this paper is concerned. This leaves us with the institutional, cultural, process and policy factors or variables respectively. The factors themselves are complex clusters of sub-categories which will be described below.

Looking for the empirical configuration of relatively stable influencing factors provides the opportunity to relate them to characteristics of policies which in themselves are relatively stable across policy sectors and possibly over time as well. Thus, comparing the research results across several policy fields and countries may lead to the detection of country-specific institutional, cultural and procedural-interactionist patterns which leave their traces or manifest themselves in the content of policies.

At this point the rather vague concepts of policy profile and policy style shall be introduced.

Reviewing policy comparisons, the first and disappointing impression is the lack of conceptual-analytical homogeneity. There is no agreement on the definition and operationalization of policy as a variable, which has been or could be used across countries and policies. Many attempts to clarify the concept have been influenced by Lowi's typology, which has been criticized as too culture-bound, i.e. oriented towards the United States' political system, and, furthermore, as not very helpful in guiding complex empirical analyses.⁷

⁷ One of the rare exemptions is the analytical framework proposed by Daintith (1988: 50-54). But it is too sector-oriented and too detailed to serve for secondary analysis though it could be a guideline for future research. This is the dilemma of all analytical frameworks which want to be comprehensive, consistent and at the same time applicable to past research results.

Our attempt at comparing policy contents is bound to look for the smallest common denominator of the studies selected. For simply terminological clarity we speak of the profiles of policies. There are two possible levels of profile analysis. Every single policy has a profile and can as such be the object of "explanation". On the other hand, in talking about country-specific characteristics we aim at detecting policy profiles of countries across policy fields. The question here would be: What are the common content characteristics of policies in a country?

The concept of style is taken from everyday language where it can mean two different things. First, if we refer to the architectural style of a building or the style of a series of paintings, we are talking about common characteristics of products. On the other hand, if we say that somebody has style, we mean his behavior and his actions. In the policy discussion, concepts of style have been used in a very loose, impressionistic and sometimes catch-all fashion which is a reaction to the imprecision and non-integration in policy research, but does not really solve the conceptual problem.⁸

⁸ Comparable with the imprecise utilization of the concept of culture or political culture, policy style has been en vogue for several years by now without clarifying much. It has been used as if it could incorporate institutional and procedural structures and/or normative, cognitive and evaluative orientations and/or decision-making results etc.. Attempts to use the style concept as a device for integration in policy research include the works of Richardson (ed. 1982), Freeman (1985), Vogel (1986) or Sturm (1986 and 1987).

In our definition of the concept, style is used to characterize interaction and decision behavior in policy-making and/or implementation and is thus conceptualized as a process variable related to the classical politics dimension of political systems research. Certainly, even with this more precise definition of policy style we encounter difficulties when trying to categorize and "code" observed phenomena. But this more narrowly defined concept adds at least some degree of precision. We will elaborate on our definition for the purpose of this integration of research further below.

Talking about policy style on the national level, we have to think of an ideal-typical construct of behavioral characteristics which, of course, is not identical with actual behavior in actual policy-making processes. Nevertheless, it should be recognizable as a kind of "invisible frame" to which concrete singular processes adapt themselves more or less closely. Our concept should be seen in close relationship to the context variables of national institutional structures and cultures/political cultures. Both can be regarded as constituting factors of this ideal-typical variable policy style as a process characteristic.

Why then the style variable? Precisely because many policy studies try to deduce policy content - or even impact - from contextual variables, such as socio-economic situation, institutional structures or culture, leaving the acting individuals or collective actors in a black box. But, as Lundquist once put it, "... background factors do not make policy. Policy

makers do ..." (Lundquist 1980: XIII). In this sense, policy style is the missing link in the model bridging the gap between context variables and process outputs. Comparable to the problem of measuring policy profiles, the policy-style variable has to be measured as the common characteristic of processes across fields, if we talk about style as a macro-concept at the national level. This is our intention here, though one can certainly speak of the policy style within the boundaries of a singular policy-making or implementation process.

On the following pages we will proceed in this way: We will operationalize the different variables or concepts using the approaches of the selected studies as conceptual boundaries. The existing research results will then be taken as data which characterize the different countries. This should lead us to more or less complex characterizations/typological classifications with respect to the central variables or factors. A last step will then be to look for at least exemplary links between country-specific institutional structures, cultures and styles on the one hand and policy profiles on the other. Or to term it less "causally": Do we find national configurational fits between the different variables?

3 Policy profiles

Accepted categories for the characterization of policy contents and the construction of typologies are a prerequisite for the identification, comparison and eventual explanation of policy profiles (Verba 1967: 118, Bendix 1987: 497). Policies are analytical constructs. In this paper they are understood as governmental, collective intervention programs which can be more or less formalized (laws, statutes, administrative guidelines, government statements, etc.) and more or less detailed. Sometimes it is difficult to determine the point in time when a policy can be said to be finally formulated. This is an analytical decision, since one could argue - as some do - that policy-making is a never-ending process. We use the policy makers' perspective, which explicitly or implicitly determines when a policy is decided upon and ready for implementation. The possible characteristics of policy content seem boundless. Here again, the definition of our research task obliges us to take the categorizations provided by the studies re-analyzed as the starting point from which to deduct a common analytical frame.⁹ On this basis we propose the following dimensions as policy characteristics:

⁹ This is a rather reduced list of categories to describe policy contents. For example, one might like to include time as a characteristic, meaning the point in time when a policy is introduced or a problem situation perceived as such. Furthermore, one might like to compare the instruments of governmental intervention more thoroughly. These categories are missing because they are not contained in all the studies under review.

- Formalization: degree of legal codification of policies;
- Integration: degree of integration of single policies in a policy sector or problem field;
- Continuity: degree to which policies follow or deviate from preceding policies;
- Programming: degree of detail and precision with which legal provisions prescribe implementation decisions and behavior - or, at the other end, the degree of discretion on the part of implementors;
- Intensity: degree of intervention intensity vis-à-vis the target group compared with normal behavior which could be expected.

Certainly these categories in themselves are not easy to measure in any objective way. This problem is aggravated by the fact that the data are being interpreted in two phases - first by the original researchers, then by us.

3.1 Formalization

In Great Britain the degree of formalization is generally quite low. The drug-control policy, for example, is made up of an almost bewildering array of semi-official commission reports, scarcely-binding circulars of governmental agencies and more formal administrative guidelines (Jann 1983: 454). The same seems to apply at least to parts of labor market policy and,

during a considerable period, to environmental policy as well (Vogel 1986).

Sweden, being a country where policies are highly formalized, can be contrasted to Great Britain. Single policies or their various components are not only based on laws approved by parliament, but they are usually embedded into so-called "propositions" as well. These integrate formally all planned governmental interventions in a particular policy field, and are subject to ratification by parliament.

Formalization is relatively high in the USA as well. Normally, each single program has its own legal basis. Where such a law is missing or formulated too generally, the budgetary authorizations and appropriations through Congress provide binding formality.

3.2 Integration

Here, differences among the three countries are extreme. Very often Great Britain is mentioned as the country characterized by a high degree of fragmentation and an almost complete lack of coordination of its policies. This is true for drug control, environmental, labor market and industrial policy (Jann 1983, Benz 1987, Vogel 1986, Heidenheimer/ Heclo/ Adams 1983). Even in the field of social policy, which was completely reorganized after World War II, we can observe a set of four rather unrelated policy sub-areas (Benz 1987).

Sweden, again, is the opposite case. Integration of governmental policies, on the one hand, and coordination of single actions, on the other, are the central characteristics of Swedish policies. Integration - even beyond single policy fields - starts with the above-mentioned "propositions" and continues as cooperation and tight networking among implementing agencies and organizations. The authors write about the "issue web" of environmental and educational policies (Premfors 1980), the "integration of an extensive set of localized contacts" (Hanf/ Hjern/ Porter 1979; Blankenburg/ Krautkrämer 1979) or the "tight knit system of economic management" as well as the "fabric of interconnected policies" (Heclo/ Madsen 1987: 54, 62).

American policies are described as specialized and fragmented, as bundles of intervention decisions and actions which often derive from contradictory concepts and inconsistent goals. There seems to be no systematic attempt to develop long-term strategies with integrated policy steps. On the contrary, policy approaches are often competitive, "erratic and ad hoc" (Heidenheimer/ Heclo/ Adams 1983: 160). For several years, the environmental policy field has been one where attempts at integration have been relatively forceful. This was partially due to the implementing behavior of certain regulatory agencies. But this has changed back to normal with changing administrations and economic situations.

3.3 Continuity

It is difficult to classify British policies in this category. On the one hand, "stop and go" seems to be a trademark of British economic policy. Abrupt changes and sudden reversals can be observed in fields such as social or telecommunication policy. "Often programs and actions have been discontinued shortly after their introduction, frequently implementation has been insufficient as well" (Benz 1987: 61, translation by authors). The latter observation indicates a mechanism in Great Britain which counteracts abrupt policy reversals. They are smoothed through insufficient or flexible implementation, possible because of the high degree of discretion left to the implementors. This tradition reduces the possible discontinuity of policy decisions. The characterization of British policies as incremental point into the same direction (Weir/ Skocpol 1985, Benz 1987, Ashford 1981). Environmental policy, for example, seems to be oriented quite heavily towards preceding "solutions" (Vogel 1986), i.e. preceding policies influence following ones. All this indicates that British policies do not follow the same pattern in this category.

Despite the systematic attempts in Sweden to develop and implement innovative policies - see, for example, the remodelled policies after World War II in fields such as labor market, educational, science and environmental policies -, these are generally not abrupt changes. Policy changes are preceded by long policy-making phases which allow for long-term, incremental and continuous policy planning and modification. Im-

plementation itself seems to serve as a learning process which feeds back into policy changes. The provision that the main target groups are generally to be involved in policy-making and implementation is a kind of institutional guarantee for continuity despite innovation.

In the USA, policies develop in cyclical waves with sometimes high amplitudes. They follow rather frequently changing cycles of public discussion which determine the urgency of a "problem". The reaction to the oil crisis in the seventies has been described as a "cross-cutting mix of monetary contraction and budgetary expansion in early 1974 and the exact reversal of each after the middle of the year" (Heidenheimer/Heclo/ Adams 1983: 133). And the perception of this crisis has led to a radical change in environmental policy as well (Lunquist 1980, Vogel 1986).

Like Sweden, the US are capable of creating innovative policies, such as the introduction of Keynesian economic policy in the 1930s or, more recently, in the environmental protection field. But in contrast to the Swedish tradition, these innovations in the US often follow abrupt issue-cycles which can be rather short-lived and do not give the impression of continuous policy development (Weir/Skocpol 1985). Programmatic innovativeness, often influenced by up-to-date scientific inputs, barely survives the implementation phase after an actionistic-euphoric beginning has given way to disinterest by the general public and most politicians. The fate of the social policy program during the "War on Poverty" may serve as an example, as well

as the radical environmental policy of the late sixties and early seventies.

3.4 Programming

British policies, leaving much discretion to the implementing bodies, display a rather low degree of regulatory density and precision. Single interventions cannot be deduced from clear and binding stipulations, and they appear to be made on an ad hoc basis, meaning that they can vary considerably with respect to regions, organizations or time. As a result, decisions are not very strongly programmed which provides room for adaptations during the implementation process whose approach can be characterized as "flexible bargaining" and "steering with information".

The situation in the USA is quite different. Many studies show convincingly that American regulating agencies are very often tightly guided by precise and detailed rules stipulated by a legal regulatory framework in which Congress has the power to supervise and to conduct hearings. But, if political interest in a certain policy fades, the discretionary power of regulatory agencies is quite high and controlled more by legal fights between an agency and affected organizations or groups than by political guidance.

Sweden holds a medium position. Policy contents are normally more precise and detailed than in Britain. But the tightly knit network of participants in implementation, including most of the affected groups,

provides the possibility of decentralized adaptation of rules to "local needs".

3.5 Intensity

Here again, it is difficult to locate Great Britain. On the one hand, we encounter radical policies with intensive interventions which use such intervention instruments as, for example, nationalization or rather strict social controls such as in health-related fields. But more generally policies seem to observe incremental feasibility considerations, even if radical announcements precede them. Examples of this are the cases of "administrative reform" and "economic planning" (Ashford 1981). This implementation tradition closely observes the needs and interests of target groups and is, in the end, partly responsible for policies of rather low intervention intensity.

Sweden, too, provides the image of a state capable of strong governmental interventions if deemed necessary. The Swedish reactions to the oil crisis are characterized as "decisive programs that showed little hesitation in bringing government pressure to bear on ostensibly economic areas" (Heidenheimer/Heclo/Adams 1983: 133). No doubt, Swedish policies in such areas as taxes or health are more interventionist than those in other countries. And even in problem fields where policies have been homogenized by professional-technical input, such as in occupational health and safety, Swedish regulations are usually tougher (Kelman 1981). But there is a counterbalance to this picture. Policy-

making and policy implementation leave much room for the continuous influence of interested, affected groups (Lundquist 1980, Kelman 1981) with the consequence that policies are subjectively perceived as being less interventionist by Swedes than by outsiders.

The position of the USA is quite ambivalent, in that it reflects an anti-government and an anti-"Big Business" bias at the same time. On the one hand, policies are formulated in an atmosphere "deeply ambivalent not simply about the right policy, but even about government's rightful role in the economy" (Heidenheimer/Heclo/ Adams 1983: 133). On the other hand, it is surprising how strictly and harshly governmental agencies can regulate business conduct or that of other groups. Many authors stress the "punitive approach" and the uncooperative control behavior of American governmental agencies vis-à-vis target groups in the implementation process - at least in the heyday of the so-called "new social regulation" of the 1960s and early 1970s. But even looking back to the old days of the New Deal, one is struck by the fact that governmental interventions were perceived as being very conflictive, and by just how strong the "anti-business bias" of the interventions actually was (Weir/Skocpol 1985: 134). All this leads to the classification of American policies as highly intense.

The following table (2) is a rudimentary and certainly simplifying attempt to classify policy contents on the basis of existing empirical information and along

categories which can be taken as the common denominator of those studies.

Table 2: Policy Profile

	USA	GB	S
Formalization	3	1	3
Integration	1	1	3
Continuity	1	1-2*	3
Intensity	3	1-2*	2
Programming	3	1	2

1 = low; 2 = medium; 3 = high (The numbers do not indicate metric measurements)

* The asterix indicates variance within the country across fields

4 Institutional structures: Characteristics of policy networks

Traditional institutional approaches are not very much interested in the impact of institutional arrangements on governmental activities. Even in the discussion on corporatism it is normally not the policy which is being related to corporatist structures but contextual outcome measures such as employment, inflation and growth rates or even the stability of complete political systems (see examples in Wilks/Wright 1987: 308f.). But despite this lack of interest in the above-mentioned relationship, much can be said in favor of the hypothesis that long-term stable institutional structures of the political and administrative system should have an impact on the content of poli-

cies, although its strength might vary considerably depending on the policy field as well as the specific phase within the policy-making process (Mayntz 1986: 16). Institutional structures - intermediating interest flows into policy formation processes, the horizontal and vertical fragmentation and interconnectedness of decision-making participants through rules of participation, the position of courts vis-à-vis policy-making and implementation etc. - all this certainly determines to some degree entrance, exit and voice conditions, the opportunity space of actors and the process relationships among them (for a discussion of the institutional approach see Scharpf 1985, 1986, 1988).

Again, there are two strategies possible in trying to systematize the literature. The first starts by asking what kind of categories and dimensions are used to describe differences and similarities of institutional network structures in the traditional comparative government, politics and administration literature, the other strategy takes its starting point from those institutional characteristics which are mentioned in studies of comparative public policy. The first strategy could look at intra-organizational characteristics at the "micro" level and start from recent work in comparative bureaucracy (Page 1985, 1987) or could try to use newer conceptual and methodological developments like bureaumerics (Hood and Dunsire 1985, Dunsire 1987). But both these promising research approaches, at least for the time being, do not permit to say anything about the policy consequences of different intra-institutional structures. One could also

concentrate on salient inter-organizational characteristics at the "macro" or "meso" level and start from the classical comparative government and politics literature. But institutional typologies, often used by students of comparative government - e.g. the dichotomization into presidential vs. parliamentary systems, one-party vs. multi-party systems etc. -, are too crude. Not surprisingly, relationships between those structures and policies are rarely found in the few studies which try to link them with policies (Premfors 1980). Another strategy would be to start from descriptive categories used in the corporatism and pluralism literature (Lehmbruch 1987), or perhaps try newer more formalized concepts of network analysis as a starting point (Schneider 1985, 1987). All these strategies are certainly worth while and ought to be pursued, because it is necessary to utilize the enormous descriptive and typological knowledge which is stored in traditional comparative government literature. But our aim has to be more modest. We will use the second strategy and ask "inductively" what kind of institutional characteristics have played a role in comparative public policy studies.

Almost all the studies reviewed for this paper mention more or less explicitly the impact of institutional structures. In one case (Badaracco 1985) the author is even blind for any other factor. But the conceptualization of institutional structures is rather erratic which hinders integration enormously. On the one hand, institutional arrangements seem to be pretty much the same everywhere: In all "our" countries decision-making structures are sectoralized and segmented into

policy networks. Specialized actors from the public and the private sector interact closely to formulate and implement public policy. On the other hand, parameters to describe these networks vary frequently among studies, and sometimes within single ones. Our main question therefore is: How do policy networks look like in different countries, in which dimensions do they differ?

From our bird's-eye view we look for the following characteristics of policy-networks in the studies analyzed:

- fragmentation: Are there many or few effective policy-formation units in a policy field?¹⁰
- stability: Are networks more or less stable over time, do participants and issues change frequently or not?
- openness I: Are networks open or closed for new participants, are boundaries "strong" or "weak"?
- openness II: Is it easy or difficult for "observers" to judge what is going on in the network?

¹⁰ Here one can distinguish between the actors of the political input structure (external arena) and those within the political conversion structure (internal arena) composed of actors who are integrated in the parliamentary and governmental policy formulation process.

The well-known configurational description of American political-administrative institutions is a recurrent theme in the comparative literature. In the USA, political and administrative institutions are located within a fragmented system, are rather autonomous and often pursue conflicting policies. They have been termed "adversarial institutions" (Kelman 1981, see also Badaracco 1985), which indicates behavioral consequences of the given structure. Alongside the formal procedures within and connecting them, these institutions are set up in a way that allows for the discussion and competition of conflicting positions and their quasi-judicial resolution, especially concerning regulatory policies, but not for the reduction of conflicts per se. The American institutional system is generally open and allows for many participatory inputs, the condition being that the interests are able to overcome organizational and transaction costs. At the same time networks and particularly participants change frequently. American actors do not act in a stable environment. Additionally, it is quite easy for outside observers to follow the political game, especially when the media are interested in an issue.

Because of the multitude of institutions which have some formal say in the decision-making and implementation process there are formally many opportunities to establish veto positions. Parties are ideologically heterogeneous, and Congressmen, because of the electoral system, are inclined to develop stronger ties with their constituencies and specific interest groups than their parliamentary party. Both add to the multitude of influencing actors. The specific weight of Congress

and even single Congressmen vis-à-vis the president and his administration is of enormous importance as a policy-influencing force (see Lundquist 1980 for environmental policy). All these factors contribute to a generally "centrifugal" political system (Page 1987) which can nevertheless join forces in case of acute problem pressure.

In many respects Sweden represents the opposite case. Despite some degree of local decentralization, Sweden has a unitary political system. The different institutions in the political system are integrated into the policy process in a way which fosters cooperation and mutual adaptation of positions. Furthermore, almost all kinds of interests are members of stable policy networks to participate in the formation and implementation of public policies. As opposed to the USA, organized and officially recognized interests participate in policy-making processes. This means, they are not open to newcoming and/or loosely or non-organized actors. Additionally, the policy decision-making process lacks transparency to outside observers. The actors in the policy arena are tightly connected by formal and informal networks of contacts which are often personal in nature and affect the mutual behavior of actors.

In further contrast to the USA, close ties exist between Swedish Members of Parliament and their parties which steer the politicians' careers as well as the handling of political issues. Policy networks are therefore rather stable and integrated at the same time.

With respect to policy-making, Great Britain can be regarded as a unitary system as well. The process of policy-formulation is very much coordinated, integrated and dominated by the government, backed by its parliamentary majority. In parliament and in public, discussions between the opposition and government are controversial and often highly polemical. This contributes to the visibility and transparency for outside observers. But this is true only concerning discussions open to the public's eye. Policy-formulation in the narrower sense is not only dominated by the ruling government, thus strictly controlling access on functional as well as on party-affiliation and ideological grounds, it is also very much hidden from the public's eye. This is especially true of the stable world of governmental and administrative institutions and the large number of commissions. Additionally, their rather homogeneous composition allows for mainly non-conflictive discussions of policy issues. From a socialization perspective the ministerial bureaucracy is highly integrated through an elaborate non-specialist career system.

The specific position of the Members of Parliament is rather ambiguous with respect to possible political and output consequences. The majority voting system does establish close ties to the local constituency, thus providing MPs with some independence and allowing for some variety of interest inputs. But MPs and their political efficacy depend, first of all, on the strength of their parliamentary party and their own power position within it. Therefore, parliament as a

whole and single members of it are generally not important actors in policy networks.

What has been said with respect to policy-making is not necessarily true for policy-implementation. Formally a unitary system as well, the real structure seems to be much more fragmented, allowing for diverse local inputs and more influence for local implementors - even though their formal authority might still reside in London. Although policy-making and policy-implementation reveal somehow different structures in practically every national setting, in Great Britain the differences seem to be extremely great.

This attempt to lay out some main characteristics of the British institutional structure points to a certain heterogeneity and mirrors some of the difficulties we encountered in trying to provide a neat description of the British policy profile. One could thus hypothesize that the British structural heterogeneities might account for more contingency space in policy responses than the structural characteristics in the USA or Sweden.

In table 3 we try to summarize our secondary findings in a simplifying way. Each of the three countries seems to correspond to specific "ideal types" of policy networks (Jordan 1981).

Table 3:

Dimensions and Characteristics of Policy-Making Networks and Specific Actors

	USA	GB	SWEDEN
Internal Arena	fragmented	segmented, integrated by bureaucracy and party	segmented, integrated by parties and groups
External Arena	fragmented	less fragmented	more integrated
Stability	not stable	stable	stable
No. of Participants	unlimited	limited	limited
Access	open broad	closed more narrow	closed more narrow
Central Authority	weak, fragmented	strong, integrated by bureaucracy and party	strong, integrated by party and groups
Parliament	fragmented active	integrated by party reactive	integrated by party reactive
Parties	weak, heterogenous	strong, homogenous	strong, homogenous
Bureaucracy	fragmented	integrated - by executive - by career	integrated - by executive - by career
Ministries	weak	strong	strong

"ideal type"	Policy Whirlpools (issue dominated networks)	Party Government (party and bureaucracy dominated networks)	Corporatism (interest group/ party dominated networks)
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The USA resemble the classical picture of "policy whirlpools", i.e. policy networks which are highly fragmented, unstable and open without any strong or hierarchical decision making structure beyond these issue networks. But, of course, this picture is too simple. There are also policy arenas and phases where

the characteristics tend more towards the categories "stable" and "closed". This leads us to the well-known "iron triangles", also an important image of policy-making structures in the US.

Great Britain resembles the type of "party government". Segmented networks are integrated, held together and cut off along lines which are largely defined by party preferences and program characteristics. But this picture, too, needs modification. It underestimates the importance of the stable and politically rather neutral bureaucracy. Therefore, a more adequate label might be "bureaucracy and party dominated networks".

Sweden, finally, shows many characteristics of party government, but here organized and integrated external actors play a more important and continuous role in policy-making. This institutional structure could be described as "interest group and party dominated networks".

Obviously parties, groups, bureaucracies etc. play a role in each of the countries, and their relative importance can change from one policy area to another. But, all in all, we still hold that there are discernible differences between these countries across policy areas which justify the rough typological characterization employed above.

Needless to say that it is difficult to work with such a crude analytical scheme if one really wants to establish plausible relations between institutional and policy variation. Studies of Badaracco (1985), Lundquist (1980) and Vogel (1986) point in the right di-

rection, but lack adequate conceptual complexity and explicit explanatory hypotheses. These few attempts at categorization show that it is possible to describe country-specific arrangements which can be expected as being influential on policy-formulation and policy-implementation processes and, indirectly, on their outputs.

5 Cultural orientations

It is hardly necessary to repeat that neither context factors nor institutional structures act. "The simple truth that only the combination of the - facilitating and restricting - structure of the action system with the specific orientations of given actors produces whatever effect politics have on policy is neglected by pure 'institutionalists' and pure 'behavioralists' alike" (Mayntz 1988: 67). Approaches which depart from individual and "collective" actors cannot take only institutional structures or functional prerequisites of specific problem situations into account, but they must also focus their research on interests and orientations which guide the behavior of actors at least to some degree. In the context of this paper we are assuming, that country-specific cultural characteristics as rather stable cognitive, normative and evaluative orientations within a society and/or its subsystems have discernible impacts on policy outputs. We are leaving aside mere situational opinions and prefer-

ences, which also might be of great impact in specific situations, but should not be regarded as typically differentiating one country from the other.

Concepts of culture differ widely. At one extreme we find comprehensive ones which comprise practically all phenomena and artifacts of social life, and at the other end a conceptual reduction to values, norms and orientations which are dominant in a society or subgroup. In this paper we opt for the minimal concept although research in this perspective most often relies on behavioristic methods with specific shortcomings (Badie 1986; Geertz 1973) - for example, concerning the comparative social meaning of the survey questions and answers. The critics argue that "culture traffics in symbols, and symbols must be interpreted in full ethnographic context" (Laitin 1988: 589) meaning Geertz' "thick descriptions". The strength of the reduced concept lies in the relative clarity of the concept and the measurement outputs. This is the reason, which makes us define cultures as configurations of orientations vis-à-vis specific social objects. These orientations can be cognitive, affective and evaluative (Almond/Verba 1965: 14f.).¹¹ They are supposed to influence individual and collective behavior

¹¹ This does not mean that we regard the other methodological approach as illegitimate. Our only concern is that whatever method is used to measure the "variable" culture, it has to be clearly defined and there must be a controllable technical way of measurement. *If possible by way of research organization, one should prefer a research mix of surveying, unstructured interviewing, participant observation and content analysis. But such a multiple approach would be very costly in terms of research resources.*

and decisions, including the design of institutional systems, and the interaction processes within and among organizations. To a certain extent they shape the "dominant rule systems" (Burns/Flam 1987: IX) establishing norms in society and its sub-systems of how reality "ought" to be perceived, actions chosen and outcomes or situations evaluated. Obviously, these orientations should leave their traces in policy decisions.

In comparative policy research, the concept of culture is introduced quite often, be it as dominant orientations within a society or as sub-cultures of specific societal sub-groups or sub-systems (professional cultures, sectorial cultures such as industry cultures, or institution-related ones such as administrative culture, political culture, parliamentary culture etc). What makes its utilization problematic is the generally poor conceptualization, the fact that it is rarely independently measured, and the ad hoc manner in which it is introduced into explanatory models. Very often it is used as a residual category, expected to catch all that is left of the unexplained variance like a magic spell.

Comparative policy studies which explicitly introduce culture as a factor often reinterpret data taken from readily available surveys and adapt them as well as possible to their research question (e.g. Jann 1983). Others try to reconstruct underlying cultural orientations from the analysis of institutional structures, policy processes and policy profiles (Lundquist 1980, Kelman 1981, Mayntz/Feick et al. 1982, Wildavsky

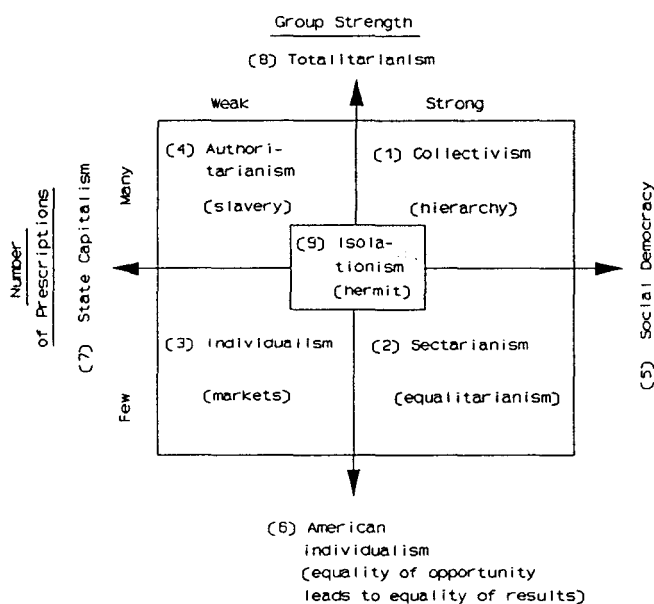
1987). The first approach is handicapped by the deficiency that the data have been collected within a different research context and do not really fit the new purpose. The second strategy can produce interesting hypotheses which, unfortunately, remain highly speculative and encourage tautological explanations. Therefore, the existing cultural explanations of policies leave much to be desired. Every attempt at integration of research results has to add conceptional structure and other cultural data. This should help to (re)construct a component of policy-making which allows for comparative analysis.

One of the boldest attempts at cultural explanations is Wildavsky's and Douglas's "grid/group" approach (Wildavsky 1987)¹² which is rooted in anthropology and tries to treat culture as a global concept able to explain almost everything in social and political life. Grand theory is the aim. It starts from the premise that it is the mutual relationship to other people that matters to people and - following from this - that the major choice they are making - or are forced to make - "is the form of social order - shared values legitimating social practices - they adopt. These types of social life can be called cultures" (Wildavsky 1985: 1f.). One of the problems with this concept is its definitional comprehensiveness and, because of that, lack of clarity. It is defined as "legitimizing values", as "ways of life", "mode of social organization", as "regimes" or a "form of ra-

¹² For a critique of this approach see Laitin (1988) and the reply by Wildavsky (1988) in the same issue of the journal.

tionality" - all definitions contained in the same paper (ibid.). Although Wildavsky tries to do so, it is rather difficult to categorize countries on the basis of the proposed set of relevant cultures. He develops nine models maintaining that normally no single nation can live with only one culture.¹³ These nine models are derived from two basic dichotomized dimensions - the strength of the boundaries of the group an individual belongs to (group) and the quantity of prescriptions that regulate the behavior of the group members (grid). The following figure gives an

Nine Models of Cultures



¹³ To characterize a society culturally, it might be important to note the degree of cultural homogeneity or heterogeneity. We encounter such differentiations in social cleavage literature but practically never systematically in comparative policy research. Wildavsky includes in his approach the diversity of group cultures in a society without really using this observation for an overall description of cultures.

overview over the nine models which Wildavsky thinks to be relevant for explaining social and political life (Wildavsky 1985: 7a).

The simplicity - though not always clarity - of the basic concept and explanatory model is attractive at first sight. But for the purpose of typologizing whole societies or nations the concept seems to be too crude, especially, if one attempts to describe country differences and to analyze their effects. Furthermore, the dimensions used - group boundaries, internal regulation - might be more adequate to characterize institutional structures than cultures in our terminology. But Wildavsky's and Douglas's dimensions can be related to orientations, too, such as openness or closedness vis-à-vis others and orientations towards authority or collectively binding norms.

Another interesting attempt has been undertaken in the field of organizational sociology. Hofstede has proposed four value dimensions - derived by means of factor analysis - in order to classify country-specific corporate cultures: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity (Hofstede 1980). The data have been gathered within the organizational setting of a multinational information-technology company, i.e. a specific sub-culture which cannot be easily translated into the world of policy-making.¹⁴ The approach lies in the tradition of behav-

¹⁴ Hofstede who wants to measure cultures as national mental programs regards this research setting as an advantage for his purpose, "Multinational corporations have subcultures of their own; to the extent that these subcultures reduce the variability in the

ioral analysis of cultures. Despite the shortcomings for our research task, it might be interesting to mention some of the results.

Power distance measures roughly the extent to which respondents accept or even prefer authoritative inequality, hierarchical decision-making and fear disagreements with superiors. On the index Sweden scores lowest (31), followed by GB (35) and the USA (40). It is hard to interpret this as substantial differences, given the statistical fact that the index can theoretically range from -90 (smallest power distance) to +210 (largest power distance) (Hofstede 1980:76f.). Using a different language we would say that in all three countries the degree of deference is rather low.

The same is true for the **uncertainty avoidance index** which measures the need for security in one's work, the dependence on experts in decision-making, rule orientation, and anxiety. This index can theoretically range from -150 (lowest uncertainty avoidance) to +230 (highest uncertainty avoidance). Sweden, again, displays the lowest score (29), followed by GB (35) and the USA (46). Given the large theoretical range, the country differences should not be over-interpreted (ibid. 121f.).

The **individualism index** shows greater differences. Its theoretical range goes from 0 (low individualism) to 100 (high individualism) and measures mainly the pref-

data from one country to another, the remaining variability will be a conservative estimate of the true variability among countries" (1980: 30f.).

erence of employees for their personal life outside work vs. additional training by the company. The scores for the USA and GB are very close (91, 89) while Sweden has a substantially lower figure (71). One could interpret this prudently as a higher degree of egoistic individualism with Americans and Britains and greater loyalty vis-à-vis the organization or group one belongs to on the side of the Swedes (ibid. 157f.).

The masculinity index displays even greater differences between GB (66) and the USA (62) on the one hand, and Sweden (5) on the other, considering that this index can range from 0 (low masculinity) to 100 (high masculinity). Behind high masculinity measures are preferences for work goals such as advancement, competition, earnings, training, up-to-dateness. Low index measure indicate work goal preferences such as friendly atmosphere, physical conditions, cooperation, character of superiors, and position security (ibid. 186ff.).

Turning to the comparative studies systematically included here, we do not find convincing conceptualizations and measurements of culture, but rather the listing of country-specific orientations which could be sociological common sense just as well as outputs of controlled research. Astonishingly little use is made of the results of classical studies of culture or political culture as those mentioned above. This is another indicator that the case-studies reviewed here mainly reconstruct cultural orientations from the limited cases they describe, generally without examin-

ing the validity of their findings or judgements in comparing them with results from systematic cultural research.

The cultural orientations found in the reviewed and complementary literature can be subdivided into four analytical categories resembling somewhat the "standard analytic issues" proposed by Inkeles and Levinson (1969):

1. concept of self,
2. orientation vis-à-vis others,
3. orientation vis-à-vis authority,
4. orientation vis-à-vis problem handling.

Applying these analytical categories, the three countries can be characterized as follows:

Table 5: Cultural Orientations

	USA	GB	SWEDEN
Concept of self	egoistic, individualistic	egoistic, individualistic	altruistic, community-oriented
orientations vis-à-vis others	distrustful, competitor	distrustful, competitor/fellow	trustful, fellow
orientations vis-à-vis authority	self-assertive	self-assertive	deferent
orientations vis-à-vis problem-handling	impatient, goal-oriented, efficiency-oriented	patient, means-oriented, efficiency/ equity-oriented	patient, means-oriented, equity-oriented

The characterizations are crude, maybe too crude for a more sophisticated analysis. But, given these research results of the comparative policy studies, we

should now at least try to compare them with cultural data which have been collected independently.

Hofstede's analysis seems to contradict the characterizations provided in the reviewed policy literature in two instances. The **power distance index** is lower in Sweden than in the other two countries though Swedes are normally characterized as deferent vis-à-vis authorities. The seemingly contradictory findings could be explained in the following way: Swedes might be more deferent concerning public authorities in the sense that they regard decision-making outputs of rather participatory and cooperative decision-making processes as relatively trustworthy and legitimate. At the same time, they regard authorities - public position holders as well as company executives - not as far removed entities, but more as "equals" than it might be the case in the other two countries. Therefore, the **power distance index** is rather low at the same time. An equivalent line of interpretation might apply to the fact that Swedes seem to be less eager than the others to avoid uncertainty, i.e. they feel less dependant on official rules or on expert advice when discussing problems and making decisions. Where relationships in the public sphere or in the work place are collegial, the necessity to safeguard oneself through strict rule adherence and/or expert opinion seems to be less pertinent.

Comparing the characterizations in table 5 with results of the Almond/Verba study of 1963 (the edition of 1965 is cited here), the categorization of Americans as well as Britains as distrustful seems to be

contradictory or at least overstated. General social trust ranges around 50% for both countries. (Almond/Verba 1965: 213; Sweden was not included in the civic culture study). Data of the World Values Survey of 1981 include Sweden and by that the characterization in our table receives a certain relative plausibility. According to these data 57% of the Swedish population agree with the statement, "Most people can be trusted". In GB these are 43% and in the USA 42%. This means, interpersonal trust is considerably higher in Sweden than in the other two countries (Inglehart 1988: 380).

With respect to Great Britain table 5 shows some inconsistencies within single boxes. They are due to the fact that there seem to be substantial orientational differences concerning specific arenas in which policy-making takes place. Competitive and distrustful orientations dominate where the arena of policy-making on the parliamentary level is concerned. There, party and class politics prevail. Internal policy-making within the executive as well as local level implementation seem to be guided more by cooperative orientations. The image provided of Great Britain is that of a cultural mix with some orientations similar to those in the US, and others leaning more towards the Swedish side, very much depending on the specific policy phase and arena.

These remarks shall suffice to indicate the tremendous difficulties - already on the descriptive level - when trying to integrate different research findings. The

difficulties remain when explicitly turning to politico-cultural orientations.

Taking the described general social orientations for granted, we should not expect a 1:1 translation into political and administrative ones.¹⁵ Lundquist (1980) and Kelman (1981) implicitly introduce the differentiation between cultural orientations which are of a general societal nature and those which can be termed political and/or administrative subcultures (for the original attempt to differentiate them see Almond/Verba 1963). Both levels of description and analysis can be important. Subcultures should be influenced by the overall culture of a society (see Hofstede 1980). But the policy interactions take place in specific arenas with their own subcultures, and in these arenas specific sets of groups or actors participate which

¹⁵ To return once more to the example discussed earlier: In the behavioristic political culture literature the US population is described as rather trustful vis-à-vis other members of the population or government and administration in general (see Almond/Verba 1965). But when it comes to specific issues in the political arena, where competition for power and influence and the distribution of costs and benefits prevail, the policy studies literature tends to describe the orientations of Americans as more distrustful - especially when thinking of big private or public organizations. And turning from the general public to involved actors in specific policy arenas who do have some stake in the issues discussed and decided upon, the orientations become even more competitive and distrustful. Other actors are perceived as "allies" or "competitors", sometimes even "enemies", in the political game. At this point it becomes highly important how the process of conflict resolution and consensus finding is regulated institutionally, i.e. which kind of incentives are resulting from institutional structures shaping actual behavior on the basis of given interests and orientations.

are characterized, again, by their specific sub-cultural attributes. Our analysis cannot be so sophisticated as to adequately treat this mix or interference of different (sub)cultures. But we should have in mind that reality is more complex than the data we are dealing with seem to propose. We should also consider that, in characterizing the different societies, we are dealing with characteristics which are assumed to be the dominant but not necessarily the only ones, and which are assumed to be meaningful differentiators between societies.

Returning to the descriptive material provided by the comparative policy literature we can distill the following political and administrative cultures, pertinent at least in the policy sectors included here.

America is described as a society where individualistic-democratic values in the classical liberal tradition prevail. There is general distrust of big organizations, be they private or public, which fosters the ideology of the weak state. Politicians and bureaucrats do not rank high in the esteem of their fellow citizens.

Policy actors, be they private or public, are prepared to maximize their utility and to exploit political, administrative, and judicial procedures for their own goals. Politics is a game with winners and losers and not a gathering of community- and consensus-oriented fellows. Perceiving politics as a competitive game played in public, political drama ranks high and is instrumentalized by policy actors as a strategic re-

source. Policy actors, thinking in terms of self-interested goal-optimization are impatient players or competitors, trying to mark their points as quickly as possible, knowing quite well that favorable political situations have to be exploited immediately, because issue changes can alter the political landscape dramatically.

American civil servants as well as politicians are not highly regarded by the general public or non-governmental policy participants. Administrators' time-perspective is rather short-term - at least of those who can be regarded as top policy-makers. But those who join the administration or government as upper-level policy makers/implementors are quite often mission-oriented activists who marshal an extensive amount of scientific input into problem-solving. With regard to policy-planning in the sense of policy preparation, American policy makers and implementors are highly professional but - due to their generally short stay in the administration - they are "strangers" (Heclo 1977) who often do not possess the political knowledge, standing and patience to lend stability to pursued policies.

The Swedish political and administrative culture is characterized almost by opposite attributes. The democratic credo is community-oriented. The state, its administrations and actors enjoy a high degree of trust and esteem. We encounter a "strong-state ideology" and a certain deference towards political and administrative authorities which is thought to have its religious roots in authoritarian Protestantism.

But also the accepted democratic legitimation of the political institutions has to be regarded as a source. Political institutions and processes do not derive their legitimacy from providing a playground for egoistic individualists to further their individual goals - and, perhaps, increasing the common good as a invisible-hand spin-off. Policy making is regarded by participants as a process where the discussion between cooperative policy makers shall lead to mutual consensus in favor of the right problem solution which has to take all interests into account.¹⁶ This does not mean that all interests are factually included or even satisfied in policy decisions but it is the paternalistic view of policy makers that they are properly representing and considering them. Public polemics and mere political rhetoric are generally frowned upon. This means that those who are "in" the policy making arena are not very much public-oriented.

Policy-makers are inclined to find viable and comprehensive long-term solutions which can be regarded as adequate concerning the problem situation as well as the interests concerned. They are patient policy-mak-

¹⁶ Very often the Swedish political culture is described as consensus-oriented (see e.g. Anton 1969 or Thomasson 1978) giving the impression as if conflict would not exist in Swedish policy making. This would be a false impression. There are conflicting views but they are not regarded as fundamental, at least by policy makers (see Ruin 1982: 147). Ruin also points to the possibility that it might very much depend on the policy fields or even specific issues in a field whether one encounters more or less conflict. But even in this case the orientation of conflicting views policy participants - those included in the process - seems to be cooperative and not exclusively competitive in the first place.

ers. The administrative and political actors are generally not distrusted by other participants allowing them to monitor the policy process with self-confidence. As in the US, policy-making is characterized by professionalism, but problem-solving tends to be less goal-maximizing and concentrates more on available resources and means, i.e. is more feasibility-oriented. There is a more prudent allocation of resources, not least because implications are discussed more comprehensively, extensively and lengthy.

The British case is a mixed one. There is a rather individualistic democratic attitude with strong class ties on the one hand and a high degree of tolerance and esteem for fairness towards competing actors on the other. The political system and its institutions are regarded as legitimate and trustworthy, and the civil service generally enjoys a high degree of esteem. Furthering one's own goals does not preclude respecting others' goals as being legitimate and taking them into account. If positions cannot be led to consensus, they should at least be led to a compromise (Freeman 1985: 111).

We have already mentioned a policy-process and institutionally related distinction of attitudes. Again, the dividing line is between internal policy-making and implementation on the one hand and parliamentary party politics and public discussion on the other.

Parties and parliament are regarded as institutional loci where conflict and competition belong. This is mirrored in the orientations of politicians (Putnam

1974: 191) who are more conflict-oriented, care more about specific interests, tend to moralize issues and like the polemical public debate. As a result, policy-making outputs in Great Britain can be rather radical, if a given government has the strength to get its way - even if it has to oppose or circumvent its own administration (Singer 1988).

Looking at ministerial or administrative policy-making elites (see e.g. Putnam 1974: 190f.), we detect the following policy orientations: policies should meet a high degree of acceptance in general, they should be developed in a non-ideological but pragmatic manner which takes administrative practicability into account. Civil servants do not tend to be very specialized professionally and, furthermore, are likely to have worked in more than one ministry or agency during their administrative career.

Implementing administrators are described as even more tending in this direction. In the implementation process cooperative attitudes are prominent. Thus, the orientation and socialization of British administrators support piecemeal, pragmatic and compromise-oriented policy-making with as little conflict as possible. The fact that the British administration is institutionally very much hidden from the public eye supports such a tendency.

6 Policy styles: Characteristics of policy processes

As described above, policy style should be regarded as a hybrid containing elements of both, the institutional structure and the cultural orientations. It is introduced as a concept which should capture the characteristics of policy-making and/or implementation processes in which actors are involved and interacting on the basis of institutional prerequisites as well as their cognitive and normative orientations, procedural preferences and substantive interests. At the same time, the concept serves analytically as the missing link between connecting institutional and cultural prerequisites with the outcomes (policies) of interactions.

In attempting to describe policy styles and to distill them from the studies reviewed, we encounter even more conceptual difficulties than we had with the other variables. A special difficulty lies in the fact, mentioned earlier, that policy style can be used to describe policy-making as well as implementation processes and that it might be useful to separate the two phases analytically. Different styles might be observable in the two phases because, in general, structurally different sets of actors are involved, different tasks have to be performed etc. In many studies these boundaries are blurred. No doubt, it is difficult to take all these potentials for variation into account. But one should at least be aware of them.

Again, there are two strategies of inquiry which might be pursued. One would look at existing conceptualizations of "style" and try to integrate those into one concept. The inherent problems of this approach stem from the fact that different authors do not only use different concepts but sometimes even conflicting ones within the same work. The conceptual status of "style" in these studies is still very uncertain, and there are only very few attempts to clear the thicket of conceptual uncertainty (Richardson 1982, Olsen 1983, Freeman 1985, Vogel 1986, Peters 1977 or Sturm 1986, 1987).

Our strategy, taking the descriptions in the studies as given and trying to "distill" relevant dimensions of style, should not obscure the difficulties in operationalizing the variable "policy style" as a kind of country-specific ideal type. As indicated above, the style of every single interaction and problem-solving process can be analyzed. But we are interested in characteristics of these processes which can be regarded as country-specific and constant across fields. It is quite obvious, therefore, that our attempt cannot be more than a first step within a difficult process of approximation. The necessary level of detail is determined by our goal of differentiating significantly among countries in a way which helps to make policy variation plausible.

In researching different phases, elements and phenomena of policy-making which are actually linked together and only analytically divided into different entities, the reader may often have the impression of

"déjà-vu", circular argumentation etc.. It should not be surprising to find closely related characteristics in concepts describing realities which are tightly linked. And it is not necessarily tautological to find the "same" or closely related categories in characteristics of culture, style or policy content. But even if tautology can be avoided on the conceptual, it might creep in on the operational level - because of the lack of independent measurement. There is no easy way out of this problem - at least not at this point - but one should always be aware of it when interpreting data.

We will start with a framework for the description of policy styles and, using it as a basis, try to characterize the three countries. Those characteristics which are described most often can be summarized under these main headings:

- characteristics of conflict resolution concerning categories such as degrees of
 - * conflict
 - * competition
 - * cooperation
 - * consensus
 - * formality
 - * dramatization
- characteristics of problem solving approaches such as
 - * activist vs. reactive
 - * comprehensive vs. piecemeal

- * quick vs. slow problem perception and policy response
- * long vs. short policy time-frame
- characteristics of participation and interaction, concerning
 - * comprehensiveness of participation
 - * openness vis-à-vis the public
 - * atmospheric stress.

Within this framework Sweden is characterized by procedures and interactions which allow for a high degree of informality within the process despite formal procedural rules. In general, policy-making takes place without rigid time constraints and is not meant to provide quick responses. Participation, although limited to organized interests, is quite comprehensive. The general public is not very much involved due to a certain lack of procedural transparency. Making policy behind closed doors gives policy-makers the opportunity to discuss possible solutions thoroughly without immediate public pressure and without political dramatization. The danger that the interests of those not represented in the policy-making group will not be considered does exist; but it should be noted that Swedish administrators and politicians are convinced that the legitimate interests even of those who are not officially participating are taken into account.

Problem-solving is at the same time problem- and means-oriented. Goals are not pursued without thoroughly taking the available means into account - including administrative feasibility. Policy-makers tend

to approach problems in an active, though rather slow way, leaving enough time to develop comprehensive, integrated planning schemes. Policy planning can therefore be said to integrate different goals and, thus, different interests in society. Policies are rarely meant to be quick fixes with immediate effects, but long-term answers which need continuous monitoring and modification.

Conflict resolution is generally cooperative and directed towards consensus-finding. Because decisions are not taken within a conflictive atmosphere, they are likely to be accepted outcomes of political discussions. This consensus-oriented approach can be found in policy-making as well as in implementation processes. In recent history, whenever sharp cleavages between different social groups or organized interests became visible - in the late 1960s and early 1970s, for example - these situations were ultimately resolved by the prevailing "don't-rock-the-boat" philosophy. Participants in policy-making know one another relatively well and meet often, also under informal circumstances. In an atmosphere where information is generously shared, everybody is well aware of the possibilities and constraints of the other actors. An open, trustful and cooperation/consensus-oriented atmosphere may lead to highly accepted policies and implementation processes which rarely result in the punishment of those being regulated.

In many respects, and not surprisingly, the USA are the counter-example in our small group of three countries. Procedures are often highly formalized in a

due-process tradition without a highly developed network of informal relationships. Policy problems, once on the agenda, are treated at high speed because this is expected by the public, and because interested policy makers do know that they can run out of time (and policy success) if the public eventually loses interest. Policy processes are open to a wide array of interests or their respective representatives, in case those interests can overcome the necessary organization costs. They take place under the public's - especially the media's - eyes.

Problem-solving is often goal-oriented in an activist way, meaning that feasibility considerations - especially those of administrative practicability - can remain in the background despite a normally high input of expert advice and policy analysis. There is a certain politics orientation in the sense that the political game becomes more important than the problem at hand. The time perspective of policy makers is short, because it has to be adapted to the waves of political issue changes. Radical and activist policy changes thus depend on the existence of strong public interest and support. Thus activism really means reactive response to public discussions.

Despite the "professionalization of reform" and the high input of professional manpower, policies do not tend to be comprehensive but piecemeal - even when innovative and radical. There is no policy integration across problems and fields, nor a long-term perspective due to the fragmentation of policy responsibilities and the rather short issue-cycles in American

politics. President Carter's attempt to get political approval for a more consistent and integrated energy program dramatically failed vis-à-vis a political process which is not tuned to such a comprehensive, long-term and integrative approach.

Decision-making and interactions are clearly marked by competition and conflict. Relationships are therefore generally formal, with meetings only taking place when they are formally required. Information is not shared in order to promote mutual understanding and consensual decisions, but is distributed strategically so as to strengthen one's own position. Rule-making procedures in regulatory policy resemble court procedures in which generally one party wins and the other loses. The atmosphere between participants is generally hectic and characterized by great stress. Certainly, it is often necessary to make compromises. But this is done not because the actors like to find a balanced compromise which can be regarded as a communal solution, but because they are forced to do so by the situation and in their own interest. As there are fewer long-standing and durable relationships among actors, everybody tries to maximize his short-term utility. Often, regulatory rule-making or implementation are not accepted by those affected and disputed in court. This is an outcome of distrust in the justice and reasonableness of policy decisions.

The distrust between policy makers and implementors and target groups respectively leads to a policy approach which favors rigid rules, rather strict standards and an aggressive, punitive approach.

Great Britain has to be placed between Sweden and the USA. The characteristics of policy-making procedures depend very much on the political arena in which they are being carried out. Policy-making in the parliamentary arena, dominated by party politics, is different from that dominated by the administration. In the first case, Great Britain leans more towards the US policy style and in the second case, towards the Swedish one. But for the overall outcome of policies the second arena is much more important than the first.

Despite harsh conflicts in the parliamentary arena, policy-makers are generally willing to deal with one another on an informal, flexible basis. There is rarely high pressure to come up with quick solutions. Policy-making processes are not open to wide participation. Formal requirements and/or careful selection by the executive branch in the arena where it can dominate the process determine who may participate. In this participatory respect Great Britain deviates significantly from Sweden where policy-making remains hidden from public view, but where at least practically all organized interests are somehow involved. In Great Britain policy-making participants are more homogeneously selected on an expertise and party-political basis if the governing majority dominates the process. There is not much public transparency in policy-making except when an issue is treated by parliament in a prominent manner.

Problem-solving is very much means-oriented, considering administrative feasibility as well. There is a striking mix between problem- and politics-orienta-

tion. The goal to resolve conflict and - at least in the implementation process - to take care of different interests is as important as the solution of the substantive problem. Policy-making is more often reactive than active, and policy-planning more often incremental and piecemeal than comprehensive. But, depending on the saliency of an issue and the determination of a strong executive, reality may deviate from this general style. In this case, the top-level executives have to select the participants in policy-making quite extensively within their domain of control (see Singer 1988).

Conflict resolution and interaction can be quite competitive and conflictive in the parliamentary arena, but it is highly cooperative and consensual in those policy-making circles which are hidden from public/media scrutiny. Informal relationships between actors are important, although informality can be restricted to specific in-groups whose boundaries are determined by class and/or political affiliation. In general, there is a high degree of information sharing within those closed policy-making groups. As in Sweden, too, policy-makers or policy advisors within a specific policy field know one another quite well and meet relatively often, compared to the situation in the USA (see Heclo 1987). As in Sweden, the policy networks are rather stable, integrated, and transparent for those involved.

Summarizing decision styles Scharpf (1988) has characterized the American style as "confrontation", the British as "bargaining", and the Swedish as "problem

solving". These characterizations come close to our descriptive results though we would maintain that this additional simplification reduces too much information for our purpose.

The following table (6) shall provide a rough summary of our findings.

Table 6: Characteristics of Policy-Style

	USA	GB	SWEDEN
conflict resolution:			
- competition	strong	strong	weak
- cooperation	weak	strong	strong
- conflict	strong	strong	weak
- consensus	weak	strong	strong
- formality	strong	weak	weak
- drama	strong	middle	weak
problem solving:			
- scope	piecemeal	piecemeal	comprehensive
- direction	activist	more reactive	activist
- speed	quick	less quick	slow
- time frame	short time	short time	long time
interaction:			
- openness	public	less public	private
- participation	wide	narrow	relatively wide
- atmosphere	hectic	more relaxed	relaxed

Obviously, our description of policy styles contains an almost indefensible degree of simplification. But nevertheless, even this simple trial shows quite convincingly that it is possible to differentiate countries with respect to their policy style. And, furthermore, it should be possible to show characteristic links and interrelationships between culture, structure, style and policy profiles.

In our model, style is certainly the most vague and diffuse concept, but it is indispensable if the characteristics of the policy-making process are to be used as a variable, if cultural and institutional-structural characteristics shall be connected to policy decisions. If institutional structures formally "determine" the institutional field and the actors of the game and cultures provide the less official "rules of the game", then style describes how the game is actually played by a specific team. Or to give an example in sports: The British play football quite differently from the South-Americans, although the institutional structure of the game is the same. Should this be different for the more complex political game in policy arenas?

The empirical and "explanatory" integration of these different concepts is a complex and challenging task which has not yet found an adequate solution. At this point we would like to use the term country-specific "interlocks" among variables which do not provide rigid cages but elastic nets within which actors move and act, more or less constrained by the specific net.

7 From structures, cultures and styles to profiles?

In the following we will make tentative attempts to give examples of this "interlock" among the concepts we have been describing and, more importantly, try to provide some plausible "explanations" for the country-

specific differences of policy profiles. These exemplary efforts are not intended to do more than show that the task formulated at the outset is, to some extent, manageable and that the challenge we see in it is worthwhile. We will conclude with some remarks on the feasibility of such a research effort.

Great Britain

The low degree of formalization of British policies mirrors a legal tradition which can be termed non-legalistic compared to countries on the European continent. An unwritten constitution is the most "visible" result of this tradition. But there might be other, less obvious reasons for a low degree of policy formalization. Highly formalized policies are generally formulated as laws and statutes, which necessarily leads to debates in parliament lifting issues to a highly politicized level. This would uncover and increase cleavages and conflictive competition even concerning policy details. In Great Britain there is a certain division of labor in policy making, leaving a highly conflictive debate over general policy directions to the Parliament while the detailed policy work is in the hands of more consensus-oriented, cooperative and less publicly working policy networks centering around the executive branch. Furthermore, we have pointed out that the policy style concerning the problem-solving perspective is rather reactive. This means that ad-hoc policies vis-à-vis up-coming problems are easier to pursue if the institutional procedures for formalized policies can be prevented.

There are some reasons which apply to two profile characteristics, low formalization and low programming, at the same time. Institutionally a high degree of centralization and concentration of formal policy-making and implementation power allows for a lower degree of legal formalization and programming than is necessary in the case of relatively independent regulatory and implementing agencies as in the US. The latter situation asks for more control through detailed legal implementation provisions. Furthermore, a political culture which trusts policy implementors and target groups alike, which values fairness and compromise highly, and a policy style which stresses cooperation, bargaining and consensus at least in policy implementation, and which allows for means-oriented practicality arguments tends to avoid a high degree of authoritative formalization as well as of internal statutory programming. Both would hinder the possibility of flexible adaptation to situational circumstances which can be best understood by those directly concerned in the implementation process.

The fact that policies are rarely integrated sets of planned actions seems to be an outcome of this reactive, ad-hoc, piecemeal way of making policy.

With respect to the intensity and continuity of policies, we have found no clear picture in the British case, at least not with respect to policy-making outputs. Here it depends very much on the political arena - parliamentary or executive/ administrative - in which the policy issues are discussed and developed whether the outputs are more or less intensive policy

policies, but not at least also because different ministries and administrations have to be committed. At the same time, formalization does not bear the risk that political developments are getting out of hand when being dealt with on the highest level of the political system. The underlying consensus-orientation as well as the institutional controllability of the process prevent such a conflictive dynamic in normal circumstances. On the other hand, a policy perspective which calls for long-term comprehensive planning, and even takes impacts across sectors into account, requires authoritative coordination and - to explain another profile attribute at the same time - a high degree of integration as well. The lower degree of programming is no contradiction. A means-oriented, cooperative and consensual policy style requires little strict programming and leaves implementing institutions as much discretion as possible - at least in those areas where it is meaningful to adapt to situational circumstances. This corresponds also to the pragmatism typical of the Swedish culture.

The high degree of continuity can be explained by a policy style which can be termed participatory and pragmatically means-oriented, which allows for comprehensive participation of affected interests and tries to reach policy decisions in a cooperative and trustful manner. In the Swedish case, the rating of intervention intensity as medium might be surprising. Even where policies include intensive changes, these are planned thoroughly and seemingly without restrictive time-constraints until a viable solution, to which all organized interests consent, has been found.

All this is certainly promoted by an institutional framework which usually allows for discussions which do not have to take short-term public reactions into account, but can take place in a calm, almost hidden atmosphere. All these ingredients guarantee not only a certain degree of continuity despite changes, but they also convey the impression of a rather low degree of intensity. Even though outsiders might regard Swedish governmental interventions into society as very intense, this need not be the case when taking the expectations of the Swedish polity as a yardstick. And, indeed, where policy decisions are based on intensive, cooperative and consensual discussions among essentially all affected interests and are continuously adopted to changing needs and situational requirements, even interventionist policies are not felt as intensely as they are in a country like the USA. There governmental interventions are generally designed and implemented in an atmosphere of conflictive competition and distrust, and much more against the behavioral preferences of the affected groups than seems to be the case in Sweden.

United States

The USA provides the opposite case. Formalization is high because, in a conflictive political culture where distrust among the actors dominates, every governmental intervention which infringes on the liberties of an egoistically individualistic population has to have a legal stamp so that the interventions of governmental institutions can stand up against legal scrutiny.

The rather high degree of implementation programming in the legal frameworks is also a consequence of this general distrust. Policy-makers expect target groups to try to evade the law, whenever useful and possible. Programming can take care of that to some degree. Detailed programming is a means as well to control the implementation behavior of administrative agencies whose personnel changes quite frequently and may not be regarded as trustworthy by those who formulate laws or regulatory statutes.

At the same time, policy integration is quite low. The institutional arrangements as well as the actors' orientations do not allow for a time-consuming and thorough investigation across different programs or even sectors. Because of media involvement and public attention, there is virtually no time for that and, in addition, issues which become too complex do not serve well to enhance the public standing of politicians. Therefore, American policy-making is mostly concentrated on single issues. Continuity is low, which can be attributed to the fact that policies often follow the waves of public discussion and that, institutionally, the fluctuation of administrative and political policy-makers is quite high.

We have found a high degree of intervention intensity which parallels detailed programming. If issues are in the center of public discussion, as was the case with the environmental problems in the 1960s, then swift and strong actions can be pushed by those positively interested. The well-known multiple veto positions, built into the institutional structure, are no great

obstacle once public opinion is strongly moving in a certain direction. On the contrary, it is the institutional setup of the election system and the institutional position of Congressmen as political individualists, more influenced by their constituencies than the party machine, which transport the waves of public attention into actionist policy-making. The very moment this public pressure decreases, or if it is not there from the very beginning, the issue is not or no longer interesting for the average policy-maker. In this case, the multiple veto positions lead to deadlocks or to minor incremental policy measures. Once a policy has already been established, the pressure on the implementors to implement strictly diminishes; policy intent can even be practically reversed by deficient implementation. Environmental policy is a good example. After the oil crisis in 1973, public opinion with respect to environmental issues changed, or was at least no longer as unanimous as before, which now allowed interest groups - as disparate as industrial lobbyists and unionists - to raise their voices successfully in favor of less stringent environmental regulatory decision-making and control through the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and similar state agencies.

8 Conclusions

This attempt to apply the concepts for describing and "explaining" country differences of policy profiles certainly has its deficiencies. They result in part from deficiencies of the data which were available. The reader should be reminded that it was one of the conditions as well as one of the aims of this paper to use existing empirical research and see how far we can travel with it towards integration. But these deficiencies also reflect the genuine difficulties of our scientific task: developing cross-nationally and cross-sectorially valid descriptive schemes and arriving at plausible "explanations" even though the number of cases is low and that of potentially explaining variables high.

Those who think that this first step, which is meant to start discussion, is plausible enough to be followed by others, are invited to join but should be warned at the same time. Our discussion has stressed the question of between-country variance. Sector variation has been left out and only pointed at in the case of GB. But, what might be true for one sector or even only one issue in a sector might not be true for other sectors or even issues (see Ruin in Richardson (1982): 142, 154). It should be clear that such a more complex comparative approach would establish further and increased problems with respect to the integration of existing empirical research. And, looking ahead, one might doubt that future research will really adhere strictly to "one" analytical scheme - given the

fact that in the social sciences it seems to be regarded as inferior to do "normal" science and not to develop with every doctoral thesis a new paradigm or at least a vastly "superior" concept. But the alternative to a more concentrated and integrative research strategy is to go on with a never-ending stream of case studies which cannot be integrated and can only be used - if at all - like abandoned mines where everybody searches eclectically for fossils for his personal collection.

We did not include longitudinal reflections in our analysis. Orientations, structures and styles as well as policies may change over time. This makes it more difficult to speak about country-specific differences, when taking only a static view. Introducing the (highly desirable) time-dimension would render the research task even more difficult, because the researchers would have to look at country-specific processes of change. Certainly, our approach must become more historical in order to see whether, how and why structures, cultures, styles and profiles change and under which contextual and sector-specific circumstances the variables in which we are interested have more or less impact. There is an enormous workload ahead which can only be tackled by joint efforts.

There is criticism that those who look for the explanatory power of national differences are 'Don Quixotes' who have not noticed that the time, when nations or states as entities were analytically fruitful, has passed. Everything had to be analyzed with the image of a world system and increasing convergence in mind.

Those who support the convergence hypothesis (Dogan/ Pelassy 1987) tend to overlook the differences which - at least up to now - still exist. Even if we take into account that international communication processes provide international diffusion of ideas and that problems can be quite similar or disregard state boundaries (Freeman 1985), it is an empirical question whether countries deal with the same problem in different ways. Where policies are beginning to be harmonized, as is the case in the EC (European Community), national differences with respect to substantive interests as well as intervention traditions can account for many difficulties in collectively developing them (Siedentopf/ Ziller 1988). And still, in case that such policies are established, differences in the implementation process become obvious. We do not argue, for example, that the impact of multinational corporations or supranational institutions, whose strategies and actions are not confined to one country, should be neglected. We also acknowledge the signaling power of, for example, international capital streams influencing the actions of supranational, international and national institutions. But none of this refutes the hypothesis that "nations matter". Nobody would contend that they matter exclusively. But where states are again brought in (see Evans/ Rueschmeyer/ Skocpol 1985) as entities of "explanatory centrality" (Skocpol 1982: 3), the country-specific formulation, content and implementation of state interventions should be a worthwhile object of political and sociological research.

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