PUBLIC POLICY THEORIES

TEORIAS DE POLÍTICA PÚBLICA

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ABSTRACT: The article presents a review of the concept of public policy, covering different definitions present in the literature, highlighting the central elements of the concept. Based on this review, the article proposes a synthesis concept that incorporates these elements. Then, the article outlines an overview of public policy theories, structuring this scenario according to different stages of the public policy cycle. Although, as we try to argue, the public policy process does not occur as a sequence of steps that follow each other in a linear fashion, the organization of the exhibition by stages was adopted as a heuristic resource. The article was based on the analysis of theoretical literature in the field of public policy, and, in the discussion of theories, it aimed to highlight the central issues involved in the study of agenda-setting, formulation and implementation of public policies.

KEYWORDS: Concept of public policy. Public policy theory. Agenda theory. Public policy formulation and implementation.

RESUMO: O artigo apresenta uma revisão do conceito de política pública, abrangendo diferentes definições presentes na literatura, com destaque aos elementos centrais do conceito. A partir dessa revisão o artigo propõe um conceito-síntese que incorpora esses elementos. Em seguida, o artigo traça um panorama das teorias de política pública, estruturando tal panorama segundo diferentes etapas do ciclo de política pública. Embora, como se procura argumentar, o processo de política pública não ocorra como uma sequência de etapas que se sucedem de forma linear, a organização da exposição por etapas foi adotada como um recurso heurístico. O artigo se baseou na análise da literatura teórica do campo de política pública, e, na discussão das teorias, teve por objetivo destacar as questões centrais envolvidas no estudo da agenda e da formulação e da implementação de políticas públicas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Conceito de política pública. Teoria de política pública. Teoria de agenda. Formulação e implementação de política.

RESUMEN: El artículo presenta una revisión del concepto de política pública, cubriendo diferentes definiciones presentes en la literatura y destacando los elementos centrales del concepto. A partir de esta revisión, el artículo propone un concepto de síntesis que incorpora estos elementos. En seguida, el artículo esboza un panorama de las teorías de política pública, estructurando este escenario de acuerdo a las diferentes etapas del ciclo de política pública.

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Si bien, como intentamos argumentar, el proceso de política pública no ocurra como una secuencia de pasos que se suceden de manera lineal, se adoptó como recurso heurístico la organización de la exposición por etapas. El artículo se basó en el análisis de la literatura teórica en el campo de política pública y, en la discusión de teorías, tuvo como objetivo resaltar los temas centrales involucrados en el estudio de agenda, y de la formulación e implementación de políticas públicas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Concepto de política pública. Teoría de política pública. Teoría de agenda. Formulación e implementación de política pública.*

Introduction

Public policy theories seek to explain how and why public policies are made (and should be made), and try to describe and explain the formulation and implementation process, and the reasons for its success or failure. These explanatory efforts followed the development and inflections of the field of public policy studies, a relatively recent field that was formed in the USA in the late 1960s. Until then, public policies had been neglected as an object of study by both the Political Science and Public Administration disciplines that today are at the very core of this multidisciplinary field.

Political Science focuses on analyzing the State and its institutions and on studying disputes to influence state action - polity and politics (FREY, 2000) – but not considering the result of government action (and the specific process by which it is produced) (SOUZA, 2006). Analyses of the State were also of a sociocentric nature, that is, the State and its action were explained by factors that were external to the State and government (MARQUES, 1997; SKOCPOL, 1997).

Public policy was also not an object of attention from Public Administration, because of the formation characteristics of the discipline. Its scientific aspect had been established in the USA at the end of the 19th century, and was based on the separation of administration from politics with a focus on administration (VILLANUEVA, 2006; FARAH, 2011; FARAH, 2013).

The incorporation of public policy as an object of study by both disciplines and the constitution of a field of formation and studies that had its own identity - public policy – occurred in the 1960s in the USA, and was influenced by what it had been agreed should be called the public policy analysis movement (MORAN; REIN; GOODIN, 2008; DOBUZINSKIS; HOWLETT; LAYCOCK, 2007)[2]. The constitution of this new field of studies

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[2] Studies of state intervention and sector policies were developed, above all, from the 1960s in various disciplines, even though these study 'objects' were not called public policies. So, for example, urban and housing policy studies were carried out in the fields of urban sociology and town planning as from the 1960s, and influenced by different

was based on the recognition that bureaucrats not only carry out, but also "make" policies (decide on and formulate them). As McCamy stated in 1960 when referring to the incorporation of public policies as an object of Public Administration in the USA: "All those who work in the public sector, or who study those who work in public administration know that the public administrator **makes** public policy" (MCCAMY, 1960, p. 2, author's emphasis).

The objective of the public policy analysis movement, which later influenced the constitution and development of the field of public policy in other countries, was to train civil servants – bureaucrats - who were then able to contribute towards preparing policies and solving relevant public problems.

The explanatory effort of the first public policy theories was associated with this objective of contributing towards solving public problems. There was an attempt to improve the rationality of the policy process (LASWELL, 1951; SUBIRATS *et al.,* 2012) and to help make solving public problems effective (PARSONS, 1995 apud SUBIRATS *et al.,* 2012; FARAH, 2011).

According to one of the founders of the field of public policy studies, Laswell (1951, p. 3):

> We have become more aware of the policy process as a suitable object of study in its own right, primarily in the hope of improving the rationality of the flow of decision.

The explanatory effort of the theories was linked at that time, therefore, to the search for "understanding the operativeness and logic of public action" (SUBIRATS *et al.,* 2012, p. 22) as support for a better decision-making process. The modernist, positivist approach, which was dominant for several decades, saw public problems as exclusively technical matters, which could be resolved by the application of scientifically-based knowledge (GOODIN, REIN; MORAN, 2008; DOBUZINSKIS; HOWLETT; LAYCOCK, 2007).

With the development and consolidation of the field of studies, explaining the public policy process became more complex and diversified and distanced itself from the view that considered public problem-solving to be a process based exclusively on rationality and the search for effectiveness and efficiency. Public policies started to be seen as the result of a set of political, institutional and evaluative factors, and not just as a product of appropriate technical decisions. Actors and their interests, conflicts, values and ideas started being considered as

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theoretical paradigms. The same thing happened in the education area, with studies in educational policy being published, particularly as from the end of the 1960s.

relevant variables, and mechanical causal explanations were put to one side (GOODIN; REIN; MORAN, 2008). The public problem was no longer considered to be an automatic derivation of a "real" problem as a given, and was seen as a construction, in which language and argumentation play a central role in a dispute process between views and conceptions of the problem (FISCHER; FORESTER, 1996; SUBIRATS *et al.,* 2012; MULLER, 2000). The emphasis on ideas, discourse and argumentation characterizes what has been called the "*argumentative turn*" (GOODIN; REIN; MORAN, 2008), driven by a *critical movement* towards theoretical and methodological approaches that have a positivist perspective: the critical public policy studies' movement[3].

In the 1960s in Brazil, there was an embryonic process of incorporating public policy as an object of study and education within the scope of the setting up of Public Administration courses under the direct influence of the public policy analysis movement in the United States (FARAH, 2016). Unlike what happened in the USA, however, there was no need to "bring the State back" as an object of study in Brazil (EVANS; RUESCHEMEYER; SKOCPOL, 1997; MELO, 1999). Brazilian political and social thinking in the 20th century focused on reflecting on the State and its relationship with society. But the State was conceived of in a monolithic way, and the State-society relationship was emphasized in macro-explanations of an essayistic character. There were no explanations of the "State in action", although the Brazilian State since 1930 had been a State that was full of "actions". The National-Developmental State was marked by the establishment of coordinated actions in different areas, especially in the infrastructure sector and the social area, configuring what would later be called public policy[4].

Public policy studies from the end of the 1960s and the 1970s indicate a shift in relation to this essayistic tradition, developing, on the one hand, a production oriented towards solving relevant public problems (FARAH, 2013) and, on the other, an interpretive effort in relation to public policies that was promoted by the developmental State (MELO, 1999).

The constitution of a field of studies in Brazil with its own identity would still take time however. The authoritarian regime had negative repercussions on the constitution process of the new field, which only partially resumed as from the mid-1980s with the process of re-democratization[5] and, more systematically from the second half of the 2000s (FARAH, 2011, FARIAS, 2012). In the 2000s, the public policy theme assumed a central position in the agendas

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[3] Capella analyzes this process in public administration and discusses the "post-modern and argumentative turn" in this discipline (CAPELLA, 2011).
[4] See Vaitsman, Ribeiro e Lobato (2013).
[5] The constitution of *NEPP*, the Public Policy Center at UNICAMP, University of Campinas, signaled a return to research in the area, and a connection between the university and relevant public problems.
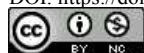
of both society and government (SOUZA, 2006, FARIA, 2012), and this was reflected in the creation of a large number of undergraduate courses and, to a lesser extent postgraduate courses and a boom in research in the area (FARAH, 2011). This boom was not enough, however, to generate more significant contributions at the theoretical level, especially with regard to classic themes in public policy studies. Some of the themes of great relevance in the national context, however, have given rise to original contributions that dialogue with the field's production, such as the discussion about the relationship between public policies and federalism, decentralization, innovation in public policies and dissemination, street-level bureaucracy and inequality, the relationship between public policy and social movements, participation mechanisms, transversality and inter-sectorality, and public policy dynamics, to mention just a few examples.

The presentation of public policy theories, which is the object of this article, must also be preceded by the discrimination of two aspects in the development of this field of studies. Some authors split public policy production into two subfields: studies *of* public policies, and analysis *for* public policies, which is a distinction that had not been considered until recently in Brazilian literature.[6] In this regard Dobuzinskis, Howlett & Laycock (2007, p. 3-4, author's emphasis) state:

> [...] academic literature frequently establishes a distinction between **policy study** and **policy analysis**. The former term is sometimes used when referring to the study **of** public policy and the former when referring to studies **for** public policy. Public policy studies…. [are] carried out mainly by academics and relate to "meta-policy" or the general nature of the state's activities. It is generally directed at understanding the development, logic and implications of public policy processes as a whole, and the models used by researchers for analyzing these processes. Public policy analysis, in comparison, refers to applied social and scientific research, but also involves the more implicit forms of practical knowledge that are sought by the civil servants and workers in non-governmental organizations who are directly involved in the design, implementation and assessment of existing policies, programs and other courses of action adopted or considered by states."

Public policy **studies,** therefore, are mainly conducted by academics who seek to describe and explain the public policy process. Public policy **analysis**, on the other hand, consists of scientifically-based research **for** formulating, implementing and evaluating public policies.

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[6] One of the first books in Brazil to consider the analysis sub-field *for* public policies was launched July 2013 (VAITSMAN; RIBEIRO; LOBATO, 2013). This is a collection of texts that takes stock of analysis *for* public policies in Brazil, in an historical perspective that considers different levels of government and some of those engaged in *policy analysis*. See also Farah (2016) and Secchi (2020).

Subirats makes this same differentiation, but uses different terminology. This author believes it is possible to differentiate the two separate strands: **analysis *of* public policies** and **analysis *for* public policies**. The former is dedicated to knowledge of the formulation and execution processes of public policies, while the latter looks "to developing a cognitive system that can be used for and in the processes of formulating and carrying out public policies (analysis for public policies)" (SUBIRATS *et al.,* 2012, p. 22, author's emphasis).

While our article presents a synthetic overview of the theories that go to make up the subfield of public policy studies (the analysis **of** public policies), it nevertheless recognizes the strong interpenetration that exists between the two subfields. The knowledge that derives from public policy theories tends to be useful for analyses for public policies and for actions aimed at influencing public policies.

The article initially includes a discussion of the public policy concept, highlighting elements that are common to different definitions, especially reference to State action, to the material dimension of state action, and to the impact that public policy has on the lives of citizens. It then presents several theories about the public policy process.

The public policy concept

Some 40 years ago there was practically no reference in academic production in Brazil to the expression "public policy"[7]. Neither was the term used in public administration, government action or in social movement *practice,* although there was reference to specific policies, such as housing, health, education, science and technology. Today the scenario is very diverse, and the term "public policy" is a reference for the different actors who are involved with public issues, with analyzing government action, and with the challenges faced by the country in different areas, such as for example: health, education, science and technology, women, children and adolescents, environmental issues, and racial inequality.

But what is public policy? There are several definitions in the specialist literature. This variation is a result of the different ways adopted in the process of constructing the concept itself. As Villanueva says:

> A concept is not something that is offered directly in the experience, but a construction of the facts of the experience based on theoretical and evaluative perspectives. **The public policy concept results from a construction that**

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[7] Which does not mean that previously there were no articles on state intervention or on policies promoted by the state. But the field and the term itself had not been consolidated (FARAH, 2011). See Melo (1999), Vaitsman, Ribeiro and Lobato (2013) and Farah (2018).

selects, highlights, articulates and integrates certain elements of its observable process (VILLANUEVA, 2006, p. 49, our translation, author's emphasis)

Heclo, one of the pioneers of public policy studies, said about this in the 1970s:

> [Public] policy is not a phenomenon that defines itself, but is an analytical category. It is the analysis that identifies its content.... There is no such thing as an obvious and unequivocal fact that constitutes public policy and finds itself in the world just waiting to be discovered [...] (HECLO, 1972, p. 85, our translation).

The existence of multiple definitions was pointed out by a respected researcher in the field as an element that can make it difficult for beginners to understand what public policy is:

> In recent years there has been a substantial transformation in the way in which public policy is studied. The "policy making" student comes across not only a diversity of theoretical approaches, but sometimes also specialized vocabulary and terminology that are conflicting. **In no field is this situation so clear as it is in public policy definitions.** These discussions frequently use specialized language, in fact, veritable jargon that **often confuses the student and makes it difficult to understand what public policy is** (THEODOLULOU, 1995, p. 1, our translation, author's emphasis).

But this does not mean that it is not possible to move towards identifying a core that is common to different definitions.

One of the elements that is explicitly or implicitly found in various definitions is the concept of public policy as an **action** (or an **omission**) of the State. In this sense Dye states: "[public policy] is what the State **chooses to do** or **not do**" (DYE, 1984, apud SOUZA, 2006, p. 24, our translation, author's emphasis).

In this perspective of state action, some authors emphasize the link that exists between different actions in public policy.

So, for Pal, 1997, p. 2, our translation, author's emphasis):

> [...] public policy will be defined as **course of action or inaction** that is <u>chosen</u> by the authorities for dealing with a certain problem or set of problems [...].

This means that a public policy is different from isolated actions, and supposes a sequence of actions that are linked around an objective.

Friedrich's definition (1963, p. 79 apud SALISBURY, 1995, p. 35, our translation, author's emphasis) also has this sense of a **goal**-oriented **course of action**:

> A **course of action** proposed by a person, a group or a government within a certain environment, having identified the obstacles to be overcome by the policy and the opportunities that the policy intends using in an effort to reach a goal or attain an objective or purpose. **It is essential for the policy concept that there is an end, an objective, or a purpose"**.

Lasswell and Kaplan's definition is another example of the perspective that emphasizes goal-oriented action: "**a planned program of goals in terms of values and practices**." (LASSWELL; KAPLAN, 1950, p. 71 apud SALISBURY, 1995, p. 34, our translation, author's emphasis).

The idea of purpose, of **objective**, of action oriented towards the solution of **problems** is, therefore, another element present in many of the definitions of public policy. In some approaches it is accompanied by a "depoliticized" conception of public policy, in which any dispute over ideas and interests is disregarded (SOUZA, 2006).

Another central element to the concept of public policy is that of **decision**, of **choosing** between alternative courses of action, as can be seen in the aforementioned definitions. This dimension is highlighted in one of the meanings of public policy that was identified by Salisbury (1995, p. 34, author's emphasis):

> Public policy comprises legitimate **decisions,** or those that are sanctioned by government actors. It refers to the "**substance"** of what government does, differentiating it from the processes by which decisions are made. Public policy is the **result** of government processes.

Some definitions make this relationship between public policy, the political system and politics clear. According to Schubert (1991, p. 26), cited by Frey (2000, p. 217, our translation): "concrete political order forms the framework in which material policy become effective by way of political strategies of conflict and consensus".

This perspective is also found in the definition suggested by Elisa Reis (1989, p. 15, our translation, author's emphasis): "When I refer to public policies (or simply policies), I have in mind the **technical-rational translations of specific solutions of the aforementioned game of political interests**".

The **material** and **concrete dimension** of the decision, its materialization, is another aspect found in several definitions of public policy. Frey, an author who emphasizes the relationship between the political system, politics and public policy, conceptualizes public policy as follows (FREY, 2000, p. 217, our translation): "The material dimension, 'policy',

refs to the concrete content, that is, to the configuration of political programs, to technical problems and to the material content of political decisions".

The definition proposed by Secchi (2010, p. 1, our translation) also stresses this concrete dimension of the decision: "Public policies deal with the concrete and symbolic content of political decisions and with the construction and operation processes of these decisions".

The definition that Saravia (2006, p. 28-29, our translation) suggests includes various elements that were previously indicated:

> It is a stream of public decisions, aimed at maintaining social balance or introducing imbalances for changing reality. Decisions are conditioned by the stream itself, by the reactions and changes they provoke in the social fabric, and by the values, ideas and visions of those who adopt or have an influence over the decision.
> They can be thought of as strategies that point to different ends, all of them, in some way, desired by the different groups that participate in the decision-making process. The ultimate purpose of these dynamics – the consolidation of democracy, social justice […] – constitutes a general guiding element.

The definition proposed by Saravia contains some aspects that are worth highlighting. First, the idea that public policy seeks to change reality[8] and is guided by a purpose that constitutes a guiding element of State actions. The second aspect is the recognition that decisions are not only affected by values and ideas, but also by the impact that policies themselves have on reality.

The impact of policies is a central element in understanding what public policy is, according to Theodolou (1995, p. 1, our translation), who states: "The point that all authors agree on, however, is that public policy has a profound effect on the daily lives of all individuals in society".

Subirats *et al.* (2012, p. 38), in turn, proposes a concept of public policy in which non-governmental actors participate, alongside state actors in the decision-making process and in implementing policies, in an approach that incorporates important changes in the process of formulating and implementing public policies that has occurred since the last decades of the 20th century:

> A series of intentionally coherent decisions or actions taken by different actors, publics, and sometimes in public – whose resources, institutional nexuses and interests vary – in order to solve a problem that is politically defined as collective. These decisions and actions give rise to formal acts that

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[8] There is a difference, albeit a subtle one, in relation to the notion of "problem", but discussion of this difference is beyond the scope of this article.

have a variable degree of obligation, and tend to modify the behavior of social groups (SUBIRATS *et al.,* 2012, p. 38, our translation).

Finally, Muller (2000, p. 195, our translation, author's emphasis) introduces an additional dimension to the concept of public policy: that relating to how the world and the public problem are interpreted:

> Public policies do not serve (in any case, not only) for solving problems (p. 194) .... As a result, we become aware of **the cognitive and normative character of public action [public policy],** because the two dimensions, explanation of the world and the creation of norms, are irreducibly linked in a process of attributing meaning to the real: **public policies serve at the same time to construct interpretations of the real** (Why does unemployment persist? How are we to analyze the transformations in the system of international relations? Is food security deteriorating?) **and to define normative models of action** (we need to make work more flexible, support the democratization of Eastern European countries, and strengthen health controls).

Based on this reconstitution of the views of several authors, I propose the following concept of public policy, which seeks to integrate the aspects stressed by different actors:

> A course of action, chosen by the State, with the aim of solving a public problem. This course of action is integrated by actions of the State – and non-governmental actors – that derive from the legitimate authority of the State, with the power to impose itself on society. The chosen course of action is influenced by ideas and values, by an interpretation of the problem and by the dispute between different actors and groups, and is based on technical and other forms of knowledge.

In the concept I am proposing, I refer - as did Subirats - to actions carried out by non-state actors. The inclusion of non-governmental actions does not mean that they are considered equivalent to state action. In the definitions we have seen, public policy corresponds to the action of the State, and in some cases refers to the action of non-governmental actors. The redefinition of State action from the last decades of the 20th century was accompanied by an expansion of the range of actors involved in the public policy process. As several authors point out, public policy is not just about government bureaucracy and state actors, but it increasingly depends on a **network** of state and non-state actors who participate in both defining the problem and formulating the policy, as well as in its implementation (FRIEDERICKSON, 1999; RABELL, 2000; FARAH, 2013).

This does not mean, however, that action promoted by a non-governmental actor can be considered public policy, even when it is aimed at solving a public problem, unless this action

is part of a more comprehensive set of actions that are directed or coordinated by the state[9]. Although oriented towards changing and resolving a public problem, the action of private agents (non-state, non-governmental) alone lacks one of the basic requirements for public policy, which only the State has: authority. In democracies this also includes a second requirement: legitimacy. Only the State can establish a public policy that all citizens must "obey"[10].

The fact that the centrality of state action is highlighted in the concept does not mean that sometimes the action of non-governmental actors is not crucial for facing up to public problems in relation to which the state is ineffective, or fails to act. As some definitions highlight, the choice of not doing (omission) can be public policy and, in light of this, non-governmental actors can promote public actions to denounce the omission, to put pressure on, or to try to directly minimize a given public problem.

Public policy theories

The overview of public policy theories presented below is intended to serve as an initial reference for those interested in studying and researching public policy and participating in the field as an actor engaged in "policy making", in the implementation and evaluation of policies public services.

The presentation of theories and analysis models will be based on the division of the public policy process into stages, the "public policy cycle". Notwithstanding the pertinence of criticisms leveled at interpreting the public policy process as a succession of sequential stages, organization by stages is useful for a comprehensive introductory article, allowing authors and

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[9] According to the classification proposed by Leonardo Secchi (2010) between statist and multicentric approaches, in the way it was established. It seems that the challenge in studying (and in practice) public policies lies in recognizing changes in the nature of the presence of the State and state action, and the new presence of non-state actors. This new reality of public policies, which are today based on the manifestation and action of various actors, is currently much more complex than when the field was constituted and requires theoretical and methodological changes in the analytical plan, but in my opinion, this should not lead to the state element that is inherent in public policies being diluted. Perhaps the approach today needs to be both statist *and* multicentric. Being directed does not mean *top down,* but under the responsibility of an actor to whom decision-making power has been delegated. Non-governmental actors must control this process and hold people accountable.

[10] Examples that illustrate the limits of non-governmental action well are the law that established the compulsory wearing of a seat belt, or a fine for those who drive after drinking alcohol. No non-governmental actor has the power to impose these decisions on society as a whole. Social movement and non-governmental bodies can mobilize to influence the decision that, in the final instance, is taken by state actors (with the participation of non-governmental actors in collegiate instances).
Subirats *et al.* (2012, p. 39) draws attention to the fact that a law is only effective when political, administrative and social actors take corresponding decisions (when we say in Brazil that a law "catches on" or "doesn't catch on' we ae referring precisely to this). This does not invalidate the fact, however, that the law (which here synthesizes the policy idea) cannot be established just by the state.

approaches to be grouped according to the 'dimensions' (stages) of the process emphasized by the different analysis models. The article will be developed, therefore, discussing some of the theories from the "dimensions" agenda: the formulation, decision-making process and implementation[11].

Laswell, one of the pioneers in the study of public policy, introduced the concept of the public policy process as a sequence of stages. From its original proposition, this model served as the basis for the development of several typologies based on the idea of stages or a cycle (JANN; WEGRICH, 2007). Laswell's view of the public policy process was more prescriptive and normative than descriptive and analytical. The very idea of a sequence of stages was conceived from the perspective of problem solving, thus approaching other rational models of decision-making and planning that were developed within the scope of organizational theory and public administration. According to the rational model, the decision-making process consists of a succession of clearly delimited stages that are oriented towards choosing the best alternative, as shown by Jann and Wegrich (2007, p. 44).

> According to such a rational model, any decision-making should be based on a comprehensive analysis of problems and goals, followed by an inclusive collection and analysis of information and a search for the best alternative to achieve these goals. This includes the analysis of costs and benefits of the different options and the final selection of the course of action.

The success of the stages model was that it identified with a prescriptive and normative model that allowed the public policy process to be conceived of as a rational process (Jann; Wegrich, 2007). The cycle model served the dichotomy between administration and politics, even though Laswell himself was critical of this dichotomy and included the complexity of the public policy process in his theory.[12] The idea of cycle that prevailed was based on a logical and chronological sequence. Initially, an issue is defined and added to the agenda; the public policy is then formulated and implemented, and in the final stage its results and effects are evaluated in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, serving as a basis for the reformulation of the policy, or for its extinction. As Jann and Wegrich (2007, p. 45) state: "[...] combined with Easton's input-output model, this stages perspective was then transformed into a cyclical model, the so-called policy cycle".

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[11] Discussion of the asssessment is outside the scope of this article. See Faria (2005), Rico (1999), Barreira, Carvalho (2001), Ceneviva and Farah (2007), Trevisan and Van Bellen (2008).

[12] He recognised, on the one hand, the participation of various actors and institutions (unlike the traditional public administratin model that focused on a single institution) and on the other, policy making a a *continuous* process, unlike the emphasis of political science on inputs, which are seen as a specifically pre-decision moment (interest groups, political behavior, attitudes) (JANN; WEGRICH, 2007).

Although this linear and chronological concept is criticized by most contemporary theories of public policy, both in the subfield of public policy studies and in public policy analysis (or analysis for public policy), the idea of cycle is useful for organizing discussion of the public policy process, and even for problematizing each of its dimensions (or stages) and their relationships. Although they do not recognize the linear succession of stages – implicit in the rational model – many public policy academics favor examining just one of the stages of the cycle (or dimensions of the process).

The division of stages itself, as already mentioned, varies from author to author, with different forms of aggregation of the processes involved in the whole public policy process. In this article, we will consider the agenda, formulation, decision-making, and implementation stages.

Agenda

For a public policy to be established, a subject, question or issue needs to be considered a problem that becomes an object of government attention.

When an issue becomes the object of government attention, it is said to have been included on the government's agenda. Getting onto the agenda is a necessary stage in the public policy process, even though this process is not seen as a linear succession of sequential stages.

Study of the agenda or of agenda-setting essentially discusses how and why certain issues get onto the agenda and others do not. It also discusses the process of change as such: how some issues come off the government's agenda, and others go onto it. It seeks to identify both the actors who participate in the process of including a topic on the agenda and the factors that explain this inclusion.

The first works on agenda-setting emerged in the USA in the 1960s and 1970s, in Political Science, their focus being on political debate and their axis the theory of democracy (COBB; ELDER, 1971; JANN; WEGRICH, 2007). The participation of different groups and the effectiveness of participation constituted, at first, the central themes of these studies.

Cobb and Elder defined the agenda in their pioneering 1971 work as: "a general set of political controversies that integrate the legitimate concerns that deserve the attention of the political system." (COBB; ELDER, 1971, p. 905).

In later work, the authors differentiated two types of agenda: systemic and governmental. The systemic agenda "consists of all the issues that are perceived by members of the political community as deserving public attention and involving matters pertaining to the

legitimate jurisdiction of a given level of government authority" (COBB; ELDER, 1995, p. 98). The governmental, formal or institutional agenda is defined by these authors "as a set of items explicitly directed towards serious and active consideration by decision-making authorities" (COBB; ELDER, 1995, p. 99).

Kingdon also distinguishes these two types of agenda, but proposes an internal differentiation for the formal agenda, by distinguishing the government agenda - the list of issues that are the target of serious attention by government officials - from the decision agenda - the list of issues that are the target of deliberation – such as the enactment of a law or the presidential choice (KINGDON, 1995; KINGDON, 2006a; 2006b).

Subirats *et al.* (2012) identify five types of agenda-setting process in the literature. These were also pointed out by Jann and Wegrich (2007) in a classification whose main axis is the type of actor responsible for the inclusion of the issue on the agenda. The first type is "mediatization", which is characterized by the decisive role the media plays in converting a topic into an object of public and governmental attention. The second corresponds to "mobilization" or "external initiative", and describes the situation in which social movements defending interests (of a general and long-term character), using institutional means, such as popular initiative, or extra-institutional means, such as collective demonstrations in public places, seek to draw the attention of the authorities (political-administrative actors) to the social problem that they intend to be the object of state intervention. A third type is the "political offer" or "electoral competition", which is inspired by public choice theories, in which political parties or other organizations have the role of defining public problems and formulating policies, leading to the expansion of their electoral base. In this case, the political agenda is based on themes chosen by the main political parties and included in their programs and within the framework of political campaigns.

A fourth type of agenda-setting model is that of "internal anticipation", according to which members of the bureaucracy and political authorities directly interfere in the (re)definition of public problems that are the object of state attention, and in the formulation and reformulation of public policies. Actors in charge of implementing policies, in direct contact with the "mismatches" between state actions and social problems, interfere in redefining the government agenda from within[13].

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[13] Resources mobilized in a different way by the various actors in each of the models: infrastructure, time, organization, political support and legal solutions.

Subirats, Knowepfel and Larrue also identify a final agenda-setting model, which they call "silent corporate action", which highlights the discreet role of interest groups in setting the government's agenda. Generally defending their own private interests, these very well-organized actors have direct access to the decision-making arena and seek to prevent their influence and interests from becoming publicly visible. Clientelist-type mechanisms correspond to this model, as does the phenomenon that was described by Fernando Henrique Cardoso as "bureaucratic rings" in the authoritarian period (CARDOSO, 1975).

Each of these types or models has as its axis a type of actor who is mainly responsible for the inclusion of the issue on the agenda. The resources mobilized by each of these actors vary, as do the main institutional rules that make the models viable[14].

The typology proposed by Cobb and Elder (1995) can be recognized in the synthesis of Subirats, Knowepfel and Larrue. These authors were pioneers[15] in identifying types of categories for including the issue on the systemic or societal agenda - issue creation – one of which differs from the types included in the Subirats typology: inclusion resulting from unanticipated events.

The reference made in this pioneering text to issue creation refers to one of the central points in the discussion on agenda setting: the distinction between a problematic condition or situation and public recognition of this condition as a "problem". Kingdon, one of the authors who developed a comprehensive theory on agenda setting states that a problematic condition or situation is more likely to enter the agenda when it is believed that something needs to be done to change it, that is, when it is recognized as a problem (KINGDON, 1995, p. 106)[16]:

> There is a difference between a condition and a problem. We put up with all kinds of conditions every day, and conditions do not rise to prominent places on policy agendas. Conditions come to be defined as problems, and have a better chance of rising on the agendas, when we come to believe that we should do something to change them.

In discussing the formation of the agenda, Fuks (2000) shows how the tradition in the social research area started from the assumption that objective conditions were the primary explanatory factor for the emergence of public problems. According to this author, the reformulation of the "sociology of social problems" requires a shift from the analysis of objective conditions to the subjective recognition of these conditions as problems. The

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[14] See the table with analysis of variables for studying and including problems on the political agenda (SUBIRATS; KNOWEPFEL; LARRUE, 2006, 147)

[15] His original work is from 1983 and was reproduced in 1995 in the publication cited here.

[16] Original work from 1984.

perception of the objective condition as a problem is just as important as - or more so than - the objective basis.

Baumgarten and Jones (1993) showed how the perception of an issue as being public and not private is necessary for it to become part of the corporate agenda. They mention, as an example, school dropout in the USA: when this was perceived as personal choice, it tended to be seen as something to be resolved by the family. When it was viewed from the perspective of its impact on the quality of the country's labor force, it came to be regarded as a public problem (FUKS, 2000). These authors developed an explanatory model – the Interrupted Equilibrium – according to which changes in the agenda do not always occur incrementally. Radical changes (in agenda and policies) occur whenever a policy "monopoly" (the monopoly of the way the problem is defined, and the understanding of how it should be tackled) and the corresponding policy image are broken by the emergence of alternative views of the problem and appropriate policies (alternative policy images), which involves the mobilization of new actors and the constitution of new institutional arrangements (CAPELLA, 2007).

One of the central issues of agenda theories is, therefore, how a problem is recognized and (re)definition of the public problem. The most recent works on the subject highlight the importance of ideas and values and, above all, of argumentation in transforming an objective condition into a problem. As Jann and Werich (2007, p. 47) state:

> While earlier models of agenda-setting have concentrated on the economic and social aspects as explanatory variables, more recent approaches stress the role of ideas, expressed in public and professional discourses (e.g., epistemic communities; Hass, 1992), in shaping the process of perception of a particular problem.

One of the models that exerted the greatest influence on the study of agenda is that of Kingdon (1995), the Multiple Streams Framework. According to this author, recognition of a condition as a problem worthy of attention by government authorities depends on two factors: a) the means by which the authorities become aware of situations, and b) the way in which situations are defined as a problem.

In terms of the media involved, Kingdon mentions indicators, events and feedback. Indicators allow authorities to assess the magnitude of a problem. An example is the number of people – and the proportion in relation to the total population – who contracted Covid-19 in a certain period of time in Brazil. Events, crises or disasters draw attention to one particular problem more than to others. To illustrate this, we can mention the dam failures in Mariana in 2015 that had a huge environmental impact, and the failure of an iron ore dam in Brumadinho
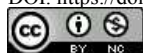
in 2019, which caused hundreds of deaths. Recently we have had fires and sand clouds and the intensification of deforestation in several regions in Brazil. Finally, there have been the Dantesque scenes of thousands of exposed bodies waiting to be buried in Manaus during the pandemic. Feedback, in its turn, provides an assessment of ongoing policies, and helps redefine the place of different issues on the agenda (KINGDON, 1995).

With regard to defining problems, Kingdon points out situations that tend to result in an issue being considered a problem: a) situations that call into question dominant values; b) comparison with other countries or localities; and c) the way in which the problem is defined or classified. The example cited by the author in relation to the classification of the problem is the lack of public transport for the disabled, which can be defined as either a transport problem or a matter of rights, which affects the treatment to be given to the problem, and the way in which it gets onto (or not) the public agenda.

Kingdon's model deals in an integrated way with the issue of the agenda and the selection of alternatives - pre-decision stages. His Multiple Streams Framework simultaneously considers the inclusion of an issue on the decision agenda and the choice of policy alternatives. According to this model, for an issue to enter the decision agenda, three independent streams need to be linked, each with their own dynamics: problems, policies (alternatives, solutions to problems) and politics. In relation to the problems stream, he highlights those elements that lead to a problematic situation being recognized as a problem. In the policies stream, in turn, a set of alternatives is constituted that have no direct relationship with specific problems, but that can be mobilized and selected when an issue enters the decision agenda (the existence of available alternatives is, in fact, an element that makes it possible for the topic to be included in the decision agenda). Kingdon uses here the Garbage Can model that was developed by Cohen, March and Olsen (1972), according to which solutions are sought by decision makers in a "garbage bin". For Kingdon, ideas and solutions are generated by policy communities, comprising specialists in the field. These ideas and solutions undergo a competitive selection process, in which some are discarded, others are redefined and some survive to become available for the decision-making moment. The third stream is that of politics, in which political events follow their own dynamics, and are not necessarily linked with any problems or proposals.

Kingdon highlights moments that are favorable to agenda change. These are what this author calls "policy windows", occasions when the three streams converge. An urgent problem attracts the authorities' attention and there is a solution available that converges with the political dynamics at that time. A window can also open from the policy stream, when, for

example, a change in government favors the selection of an alternative to a problem that has not yet been addressed in the decision agenda.

This model also includes the identification of actors who participate in setting the agenda and formulating policy, differentiating visible actors (the media, the president, "important" members of the congress, parties, among others) and invisible actors (specialists: academics, career bureaucrats and congressional staff)[17]. It also highlights the role of the policy entrepreneur: "people willing to invest resources for promoting policies that can benefit them". These entrepreneurs:

> are skilled negotiators and maintain political connections; they are persistent in defending their ideas, and taking their conceptions of problems and proposals to different forums. They also manage to "tie up" the different streams, and are always attentive to the opening of windows" (CAPELA, 2007, p. 97, our translation).

Kingdon's model has been criticized by various authors, particularly in relation to its structure, in which randomness prevails (CAPELA, 2007)[18]. With regard to the limits of his theory, we might also question the weight attributed to the figure of the policy entrepreneur, who was originally conceived of as a self-interested individual. The approach to social networks constitutes an alternative to this perspective, and considers the political entrepreneur from the perspective of the insertion of actors in social networks. The analysis of social relations is, therefore, favored. Entrepreneurs constitute social networks that are comprised of different actors, and individual action is referred to in terms of those relationships that the individual establishes (MARQUES, 1997; MARQUES, 2006; SOUZA, 2006).

The Advocacy Coalition theory that was developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1995) also incorporates the presence of collective actors as the promoters of ideas and policies. For these authors, beliefs, values and ideas (and not just ideas) are crucial when defining problems, selecting alternatives and formulating policies. On the one hand, this concept is opposed to the garbage can model that was incorporated by Kingdon, and originally based on the construction of the "neutral" solutions that are available in the garbage can (SOUZA, 2006). On the other, it highlights the importance of coordinated action by different actors[19] in the

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[17] Kingdon's model focused on studying federal government and does not discuss state and municipal policies, which is very necessary.

[18] Here it is important to draw attention to the contrast between Kingdon's theory and the initial theories that were based on absolute rationality.

[19] "A broad set of subsystem actors that not only include more than the traditional iron triangles' members, but also officials from all levels of government, consultants, scientists, and members of the media" (WEIBLE; SABATIER; MCQUEEN, 2009: 122).

defense of values in the field of policy formulation. Advocacy coalitions are formed around values and involve different actors, who defend certain ways of defining the problem and specific alternatives for shaping the policy. The notion of coalition is taken up again by Hajer, who proposes the concept of "discourse coalition", according to which a group of actors shares ideas, concepts and categories about a phenomenon and collectively, through discourse, they establish the political framework of the phenomenon and this gives them social meaning (Hajer, 1996).

Another relevant dimension in agenda analysis is the arenas where competition takes place for defining public affairs and including (or removing) an issue on (from) the public and governmental agenda (FUKS, 2000). According to Fuks (2000, p. 82, our translation), "certain arenas will be more likely to host certain subjects and certain actors". There are arenas that restrict access to experts, for example, and also restrict the subjects that can be discussed. Other arenas are more permeable. Baumgarten and Jones, in their 1993 study that was cited by Fuks, show how the identification of a favorable arena was crucial for defenders of including the environmental issue on the public and governmental agenda (FUKS, 2000, p. 82).

The example offered by Baumgartner and Jones (1993) is the action of environmental groups in the United States in the 1960s. After encountering resistance from the federal Executive, these groups turned to an institution that was more open to their demands: Congress. The result of this change was the approval of new legislation, ensuring environmentalists greater access to arenas where their presence was fragile – the courts and environmental regulation processes - while reinforcing the "image" they promoted in this regard of the question of that was of interest to them.

When discussing favorable spaces within the government for the inclusion of certain themes on the agenda, Cobb and Elder's analysis is similar to this perspective of multiple arenas. The authors claim that a group can find different answers at different levels and in different branches of government. They give the example of the inclusion of issues for combating racial discrimination in the US: the executive and legislature were "arenas" that were impervious to the demands of the black movement, and it was the judicial "arena" that allowed the subject o be included on the government's agenda. (COBB AND ELDER, 1995).

Discussion of favorable arenas and spaces makes way for discussion of the inclusion on the agenda of issues that are defended by minority or non-hegemonic groups, and for analysis of national, state and local agendas. It draws attention to the action of groups that have unequal resources and to the uneven permeability of different arenas.

Formulation and the decision process

If an issue is on the decision agenda, this means that a decision must be taken and a public policy defined that aims to solve what was defined and recognized as a public problem. Analysis of the formulation and decision-making process seeks to describe and explain the process of formulating alternatives and the decision-making process (choosing the alternative that will become public policy). Studies on the formulation and decision-making process seek to answer questions such as: How are alternatives formulated? What is the relationship between the problem and the solution? Which actors take part in formulating alternatives and in decision-making? Which factors explain the choice of alternatives and the decision? What is the pace and nature of the change?

Studies on formulation and decision-making were strongly influenced by the orientation towards action that marked the constitution of the field of public policy studies and by the paradigm of rationality, according to which it was possible, after defining a problem, to carry out a comprehensive and exhaustive analysis of its determinants, design alternatives, evaluate them and select the best option, and, from there, make recommendations to the decision maker (speaking truth to power, WILDAVSKY, 1979). In the rational model, the idea prevails that the problem is a fact that logically and chronologically precedes the study of alternatives and decision-making[20]. A first version of the rationality model, that of absolute rationality, was developed by Jan Tinbergen (Secchi, 2010). According to this model, decision is a purely rational activity, in which cost and benefit alternatives are considered by decision makers (politicians) in order to select the best possible option (the best way). Herbert Simon, one of the founders of the public policy field, drew attention to the limits of the absolute rationality model and proposed the bounded rationality model, according to which decision makers face information and cognitive limitations, making it impossible to exhaustively explore the whole range of alternatives and choose "the" best alternative. Decision making consists of choosing a satisfactory alternative (SIMON, 1972).

An alternative model for analyzing the decision-making process, which is opposed to the rational model, was developed by Lindblon. According to the disjointed incrementalism (or muddling through) model, the decision process has the following characteristics: a) it considers alternative policies that differ only incrementally from what had previously been established;

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[20] Training for the public poliy analyst is still based on this sequence of stages, even though critical reflections on the limit of the rational model have been included in this training. See BARDACH, 2012.

b) it includes the analysis of political goals and values alongside empirical data relating to the problem; c) it is a sequence of trial and error; d) in the decision-making process it fragments analytical work between many participants who have different views and positions, which requires negotiation between multiple actors; e) it is based on successive limited comparisons, as opposed to the exhaustive examination of alternatives as proposed by the rational model (Lindblon, 1959; Saasa, 2006). As a result, the selected alternative is not the best option, but the one that is both technically and politically possible (Lindblon, 1959, 2006, Secchi, 2010; SECCHI, 2020).

Another author, Dror, dialogues with Lindblon's theory and proposes a hybrid model of policy formulation that links elements of the rational model that is limited to incrementalism, but adds original ingredients. This author includes a non-rational element in his decision-making model, that of the "Great Normative". He considers that it is possible to have greater "rational" content in the decision-making process than that considered by Lindblon, which implies expanding the study of alternatives. On the other hand, his model incorporates non-rational elements, such as intuitive judgment, impressions derived from immersion in the situation and experience; he also recognizes tacit knowledge [21] (DROR, 1964, p. 155-156):

> Extrarational processes play a significant role in optimal policy making on complex issues. This is not only unavoidable because of lack of resources and capacity for complete rationality, but in fact, makes a positive contribution to better policy making. **Intuitive judgment, holistic impressions derived from immersion in a situation, and creative invention of new alternatives are illustrations of extrarational phases of optimal policy making**. The importance of such processes is not only acknowledged by all experienced policy makers but also by some modern research in psychology, for instance the works of Carl Rogers and Michael Polanyi discussing "**experience" and "tacit knowledge" as sources of insight and understanding.**

Kingdon links the agenda and selection of alternatives in a single model which, by incorporating Cohen, March and Olsen's garbage can theory, adopts a perspective that is radically different from that underlying the rational model: solutions or alternatives develop in a dynamic that is independent of the dynamic. of the problems. According to the garbage can model, policies "look for solutions" in the garbage can where they are available following a selection process that is equivalent to that of natural selection. The solutions are not analyzed in detail and the alternative chosen depends on the range of solutions currently available. Understanding of the problem and the solutions is limited.

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[21] Saasa questions the appropriateness of rational and incremental policies for developing societies, stating that rationality is unattainable in these societies given their prevailing conditions. On the other hand, incrementalism is not for societies in which radical changes are needed (SAASA, 2006).

Inspired by biology and computing, Baumgarten and Jones propose a model that dialogues with incrementalism, but suggest distinguishing between periods of stability, when changes are incremental (equilibrium), and periods of instability, when radical changes occur (interrupted equilibrium). In the Interrupted Equilibrium model, the concept of policy image assumes a central role, that is, the socially diffused image of the object of a public policy and of the policy itself. The policy image in periods of stability tends to crystallize into policy monopolies, which Baumgartner and Jones (1993, p. 6) define as: "a monopoly on political understandings concerning the policy of interest, and an institutional arrangement that reinforces that understanding".

This theory draws attention to the imbalance processes that lead to changes in the agenda, alternatives and policies, and that are produced by the problematization of policy images about an issue or a problem. Public action and popular mobilization, social movements, play an important role in this destabilization that characterizes the broken balance and radical change. The media also plays an important role in giving visibility to the alternative image of politics (policy image) (FUKS, 2000). In recent years, social networks have played an equally or more important role than the conventional media in this problematization of policy agendas, alternatives and images. Any change in the policy image in a context of instability is accompanied by the selection of alternatives that tend to break radically away from previous policies.

The Advocacy Coalition approach, which was developed by Sabatier and Jenkins and colleagues, makes a core contribution to the analysis of public policy formulation, by highlighting the relevant role played by technical and scientific knowledge in the public policy process (Weible; Sabatier; McQueen, 2009). Specialists, academics, bureaucrats acting as policy analysts, and analysts linked to interest groups participate in defense coalitions as relevant actors, mobilizing technical information for the defense of alternatives in different arenas. It is important to note how this perspective differs from the rational model, which attributed the monopoly of the knowledge that is relevant to decision-making (speaking truth to power) to scientific knowledge.

This model also discusses change in public policy when it identifies four paths of change (Weible, Sabatier and McQueen, 2009): a) the first is derived from external events such as socioeconomic change, changes in public opinion, government coalitions, or others subsystems, which have repercussions in the coalitions that support the policy; b) the second path of change is associated with policy-oriented learning, understood as changes in the way of thinking, beliefs and behavioral intentions, resulting from experience or new information, leading to a

revision of policy objectives; c) the third way of change stems from internal events that are associated with identifying flaws in the practices that make up the policy itself, and d) the fourth way stems from agreements that involve two or more coalitions.

The role of idea diffusion and policy transfer in the process of selecting alternatives and formulating policies has also been highlighted by authors such as Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) (FARAH, 2008). Multilateral organizations are recognized as external actors that exert an influence on the inclusion of the topic on the public agenda, on the selection of alternatives, and on the decision-making process (Jann; Wegrich, 2000).

Analysis of the decision-making process also relies on contributions from neo-institutionalism that draw attention to the importance of institutions and rules to the decision-making process. The different strands of neo-institutionalism highlight the role of institutions in shaping the actors' preferences, thus affecting decision-making and the choice of alternatives. As Souza states (2006, p. 38-40):

> The contribution of neo-institutionalism is important because the struggle for power and resources between social groups is at the heart of the formulation of public policies. This struggle is mediated by political and economic institutions that push public policies in a certain direction and favor some groups over others, although institutions alone do not play all the roles - there are also interests, as rational choice theory tells us, ideas, as historical and structural institutionalism emphasize, and history, as historical institutionalism asserts.

Implementation

Studies on the implementation of public policies seek to describe and explain this stage of the public policy cycle. The central issues considered concern the relationship between formulation and implementation; the nature of the implementation activity; the actors that participate in this process; the relationship between these actors; and the degree of discretion of the implementers.

Pressman and Wildavsky's book Implementation, published in 1973, is often considered as the starting point for implementation studies (Faria, 2012), which until then had been the missing link in public policy studies (Hargrove, 1975 apud Hill, 2006). Until the early 1970s, with the prevalence of the paradigm that separated politics from administration, political science studies focused on decision-making and policy formulation; implementation – understood then as the set of processes by which policies are translated into action – was seen as something unproblematic, merely operational, and best left to the administrators. However,

as Hill points out, implementation studies were already being developed in the context of organizational studies, in the area of Public Administration (Hill, 2006; Faria, 2012).

The subtitle of the book Implementation reveals some of the central questions posed by early implementation studies: How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland. As this subtitle suggests, one of the central motivations of these early studies derived from the frustration of decision makers (of formulators) and consisted in the attempt to explain why the public problem that a particular policy was intended to solve had not been solved.

This work is considered to have introduced one of the views of the implementation process: the top-down approach, according to which implementation consists of carrying out what was decided in the formulation stage, which logically and chronologically precedes that of implementation, and which has a hierarchical and control relationship with it. The top-down approach has its roots in the stages model and is supported by a clear separation between formulation and implementation (Hill, 2006). In the classic view of the public policy cycle, everything is defined in advance, in the formulation stage: a plan defines "not only the goals, but the resources and the time horizon of the planning activity" (Silva; Melo, 2000, p. 4). The linear view recognizes that implementation can provide feedback for the formulation stage. But this continues to be seen as the stage that determines implementation "from above" (and previously) based on complete (and correct) mastery of the problem and its diagnosis, on information for designing action proposals and on a causal model that relates the problem to its causes and allows measures to be identified for solving it. According to Silva and Melo, implementation problems tend to be seen as route deviations (SILVA E MELO, 2000).

The top-down approach characterizes what Wildavsky and Majone call implementation as control, in an article following Wildasky and Pressmann's 1973 pioneering work. In this perspective, formulation prescribes a policy implementation plan in detail:

> In the "planning and controlling" model of implementation...the initial plan, P0, and its realization, P1, are on the same logical level. The problem of implementation is to transform one into the other.... The model prescribes clearly defined goals, detailed plans, strict controls and – to contemplate the human side of the equation – incentives and indoctrination (WILDAVSKY; MAJONE, 1995, p. 141).

According to these authors, this perspective is based on the rational action model and any implementation problems are due to the plan itself, the formulation, or derived from the inadequacy of the implementation of the plan.

Elmore refers to this perspective as a forward mapping approach. According to this author, in this approach, formulators influence implementation and set it at the top of the

administration pyramid, indicating what they expect from the implementers. All the political, organizational and/or technical factors that may interfere with policy implementation are addressed in advance. It works with the notion that policy makers control the organizational, political and technical processes involved in the implementation of public policies (ELMORE, 1979/80 *apud* VIANA, p. 25).

Pressman and Wildavsky and Elmore are representative authors of what Winter (2006) considers the first generation of implementation studies. This first generation was characterized by the development of exploratory case studies by way of which it was intended to contribute to the elaboration of theories. Taking the case analyzed by Pressman and Wildavsky, Winter shows how the main critical elements identified by those authors were the multiplicity of actors and the existence of multiple decision and veto points throughout the local implementation process of a federal policy (WINTER, 2006, p. 212-213):

> In this case study of the local implementation of a federal economic development program to decrease unemployment among ethnic minority groups in Oakland, the two authors focused on "the complexity of joint action" as the key implementation problem. In that case – as in many others – federal, regional, state and local government actors, courts, affected interest groups, private firms and media had a role and stake in policy implementation. Implementation problems were amplified not only by the many actors but also by the many decisions and veto points… Although they probably overemphasized the lack of conflict in their case, Pressman and Wildavsky showed that merely slightly difference of perspectives, priorities and time horizons among multiple actors with different missions in repeated and sequential decisions could cause delay, distortions and even failure in policy implementation".

The study by Bardach (1977), Implementation Games, also from this first generation of studies, highlights the presence of conflicts in the implementation process, which mean that political conflicts continue during the policy formulation and adoption stages. According to Bardach, the games played by different actors to guarantee that their interests affect implementation tend to distance it from what was established by the formulation (Winter, 2006).

A second generation of implementation studies dates back to the early 1980s, and were marked by the ambition to construct theoretical models. This theoretical elaboration effort was accompanied by debates between advocates of top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation (Winter, 2006; Pülzl; Treib, 2007).

The top-down perspective sought to reduce decision and veto points throughout the implementation and, therefore, to reduce the chances of distortions or of policy failure. The
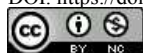
analytical framework developed by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1981) constitutes one of the best-known top-down models of this second generation of studies. In the model developed by the authors, 17 variables are grouped into three groups: the "dealability" of the problems referred to in the legislation; the political and social context; and the ability of legislation to structure the implementation stage. From a perspective of 10 to 15 years of implementation, the authors claim that some of the implementation problems that arise early in the process tend to resolve themselves over time. As a result, the theory allows for a more optimistic view than that of the first implementation studies, such as that developed by Pressman and Wildavsky (Winter, 2003).

The bottom-up perspective in implementation analysis developed from dissatisfaction with the fact that the top-down approach does not allow for actions and contributions not foreseen in the formulation (in the plan) to be incorporated (HJERN; HULL, 1983 *apud* SUBIRATS, KNOWEPFEL; LARRUE, 2008, p. 189). According to these authors:

> The 'top-down' perspective does not allow for the incorporation of contributions arising from social and political processes, contributions that were not foreseen in the PPA[22] . This is not a minor issue, since these processes should not be left out of the analysis, or be considered as simple obstacles to an effective implementation. Those in favor of a "bottom-up" perspective consider that the aforementioned, unforeseen socio-political processes are the expression that an identical PPA can provoke hopes, reactions and different strategies according to the interests of the public and private actors involved in the game.

From a bottom-up perspective, therefore, the interference of two implementers is recognized as something that cannot be forecast or controlled; it is a moment of decision that is characteristic of implementation, but does not constitute a deviation. It is rather the necessary participation of the implementing agents in defining the policy in each location, which participation may be decisive for the very success of the policy.

Authors who are advocates of the bottom-up approach, like Lipsky (2010), Ingram (1977), Elmore (1980), and Hjern and Hull (1982) (Winter, 2006) consider implementation to be a series of strategies for day-to-day solving problems prepared by street-level bureaucrats, according to the expression coined by one of the most important representatives of this current, Lipsky.

Theorists of this current suggested that instead of looking at the plan, what should be studied is what actually happens at the point at which the beneficiary of the policy is attended

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[22] Political-administrative action program.

to. The factors that have an influence on the implementers should also be analyzed. Research into implementation from this perspective takes as its starting point the actors that operate "at street level", the point at which the service is provided. The idea that everything is previously defined, at the moment of formulation, is rejected. On the contrary, what is advocated is that there is an inherent margin of discretion in implementation, according to which the street-level bureaucrats make decisions based on their closeness to the real problems (LIPSKY, 2010; PULZ; TREIB, 2007; SUBIRATS, KNOWEPFEL; LARRUE, 2008; HULL; HEJRN, 1987 *apud* WINTER, 2003). As Winter says, Lipsky "turned upside-down" the traditional approach to implementation when he stated that the street-level bureaucrats are the actual policy makers (WINTER, 2003, p. 214). Lipsky showed in his work that street-level bureaucrats develop actions (that are unforeseen) for dealing with the problems encountered in their day-to-day work. One of his major contributions was to show that the top-down approach was unable to understand that a hierarchical chain of command and well-defined objectives are not sufficient for guaranteeing the success of a policy (PULZ; TREIB, 2007).

Elmorne suggests that implementation should be studied from a backward mapping process, according to which one starts with a public problem, and then studies the actions of the local agents aimed at solving the problem (Viana, 1996). Hjern, Hull and Porter (Hjern; Porter, 1981; Hjern; Hull, 1982 apud Pulzl; Treib, 2007) suggest that implementation studies should identify the network of actors who participate in the process (acknowledging that the provision of public services is multi-organizational and involves various actors) and, starting with this identification, they examine the way in which these actors try to solve public problems.

As an offshoot of this second generation of implementation studies, some authors have proposed a hybrid approach, which integrates elements of the top-down and bottom-up approaches. Majone and Wildawsky[23] (1995) criticize the strands that interpret implementation as a translation or application of the plan (top-down) or, at the opposite extreme, as an interaction between actors, as a 'political' process that ignores the plan (bottom-up), and propose a third approach.

According to this approach, both the plan and the interactions are effective and thus relevant to the analysis. Public policies (and the plan) are provisions – and not strict prescriptions – for taking action to solve a problem. The specific way of solving the problems is defined during implementation. This is because the context is dynamic and it is not possible

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[23] Various academics working with implementation have adopted a new position. They have gone from the top-down type approach to a bottom-up perspective, or more frequently a hybrid approach, as was the case with Wildawsky.

to predict, to anticipate all the constraints that interfere with the action and that condition the goals themselves (redefining the goals).

In this sense, if the policy (and the plan) defines the parameters of implementation, **the implementation**, in turn, **shapes the policy**: "What happens most frequently is not the design of a policy, but its redesign" (MAJONE; WILDAWSY, 1995, p. 146). Other authors, such as Hill and Hupe (2002), Elmore (1985), Googin *et al.* (1990) and Winter (1990 *apud* WINTER, 2003) recommend adopting a perspective that incorporates contributions from these two strands. Some of these authors, such as Googin *et al.* (1990) (PÜLZL; TREIB, 2007) proclaimed themselves as being of the third generation of implementation studies.

Some authors also recommend that the analytical perspective should be chosen according to the characteristics of the analyzed policy (Sabatier, 1986 *apud* Winter, 2003; Hill, 2006), which results from an understanding that implementation may have more top-down characteristics in certain policies and more bottom-up characteristics in others.

In implementation studies, the relationship between federal and local governments has occupied a significant place since the first-generation case studies. An important contribution to the study of this relationship came from Scharpf (1978, *apud* PÜLZL; TREIB, 2007) who tried to integrate recognition of the relevance of the federal government's political orientation with the argument of the bottom-up approach: transforming policy into action depends on the interaction of multiple actors with different interests and strategies. This author proposed incorporating the concept of public policy networks for studying implementation, attributing importance to coordination and cooperation between actors (PÜLZL; TREIB, 2007)[24]. The importance of considering a network of actors was incorporated by Brazilian researchers who drew attention to the importance of the democratic and decentralized context for implementation and for implementation studies. Silva and Melo highlighted the inadequacy of approaches that were centered on control and hierarchy when analyzing implementation, which in post-democratization Brazil has been based on negotiation, bargaining, and the interaction of state and non-governmental actors (SILVA; MELO, 2000). A study by Nepp, coordinated by Silva (1999) highlights the relative autonomy of implementers, showing that the bureaucrats in charge of implementation also take decisions, thereby referring back to the argument of the bottom-up approach with regard to the discretion of the implementing agent. Recent studies that were compiled by Faria (2012) take up the theme of networks, highlight the importance of coordination and cooperation, and analyze the discretion of the implementing agent. With the

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[24] In the same year, Heclo (1978) published a study in which he proposed the policy network concept.

growing participation of non-governmental actors in the formulation and implementation of public policies, one of the challenges of implementation studies is to discuss the degree of discretion of the "non-governmental", street-level implementing agents, which is an aspect that has still been little studied.

Final considerations

This article presents an overview of public policy theories, and also considers the paradigm shifts and changes in the issues that have been emphasized at different moments in the constitution and evolution of this field of studies. The main objective of the text was to provide the reader – the student of an expanding field in contemporary Brazil, or the academic and public policy analyst – with a starting point for further studies and research, whether on theory itself or on specific policies.

It is hoped that discussion of the concept of public policy and the retrieval of theories about the different stages of the public policy cycle will contribute towards an understanding of the complexity of the process of formulating and implementing public policies. This does not mean reinforcing the idea of hermeticism in this field, or that academia has a monopoly of knowledge. On the contrary. The complexity mentioned here includes recognition of the many actors who intervene in the process, from the moment of the problem is defined and the agenda set to the decision-making process and implementation.

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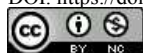
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