

Interest Groups:

Facilitators or Obstructors of Policy Diffusion?

Katja Biedenkopf

Institute for European Studies
Vrije Universiteit Brussel
katja.biedenkopf@vub.ac.be

Work-in-progress

Please do not quote without permission of the author

1 Introduction

This is a first draft of a framework for analysing the role of interest groups in policy diffusion processes. State and non-state actors play a role in policy diffusion processes. Both can actively look at foreign policy experiences. Additionally, non-state actors can act as facilitator of diffusion through the provision of information and advocacy campaigns. Some public policy approaches emphasize the importance of relatively autonomous state actors whereas some other approaches underline the role that societal actors play by stressing that state actors respond to societal pressure. This paper follows the approach that recognises the mutual influence and importance of both, state and societal actors.¹ Non-state actors include a wide range of different groups such as interest groups, academics, think tanks, political parties and the media. This paper focuses on interest groups. They use foreign experiences in their advocacy efforts and disseminate information and analyses. Yet, interest groups can also act as obstructors of diffusion. Opponents of policy measures can also use foreign experiences in their advocacy efforts. There is some research on transnational networks of non-governmental organisations and their facilitating role in diffusion processes² but in-depth analysis of the different roles of interest groups (facilitating and obstructing) and their use of foreign experiences in the policy diffusion process is very scarce. This paper contributes to filling this gap.

Section two conceptualises policy diffusion and describes the frame within which the role of interest groups is analysed. Section three outlines the activities and roles of interest groups in the different stages of policy-making. Section four concludes with some considerations about the different roles of NGOs and business groups in policy diffusion.

2 Policy Diffusion

Policy diffusion is defined as a set of uncoordinated policy transfers without explicit political pressure from one political entity to another political entity. These individual transfer cases can be disconnected or only loosely connected but they start from one source, a pioneer policy. The scope of what is included in the concept of policy diffusion is contended. Some scholars include all means of influencing policy in

¹ Bennett and Howlett 1992.

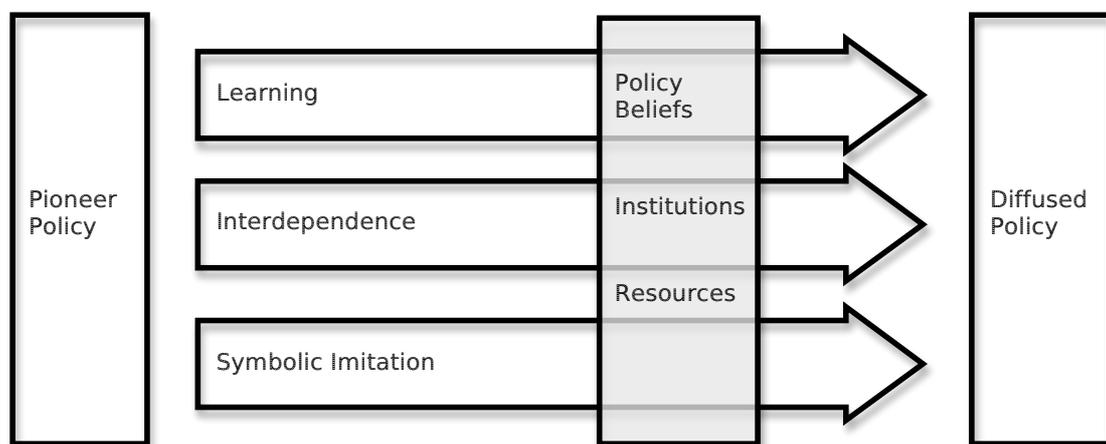
² Stone 2000; 2004; Mintrom 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998.

another jurisdiction, including international law and coercion.³ Some other scholars developed a more narrow definition of policy diffusion. They only include the mechanisms that are predominantly voluntary and uncoordinated, explicitly excluding collective decision-making or asymmetric power relations.⁴ This paper applies a narrow conceptualisation of policy diffusion. A distinction is made between explicit coercive pressure and interdependence-motivated transfers. Coercive pressure is defined as measures with the primary aim of forcing a policy change in a foreign jurisdiction. Interdependence-motivated policy transfers are policy measures that have externalities but whose primary aim is policy change within the EU. This paper also does not include international negotiations in the definition of policy diffusion.

Amongst diffusion scholars, there is no harmonised terminology and clear consensus on what constitutes the channels of policy diffusion. Simmons and Elkins⁵ differentiate two broad sets of forces: increasing adoptions changing the benefits of a policy and provision of information about the benefits of adopting a policy. Busch and Joergens⁶ distinguish (limited) rational learning, norm-based activities, competition and symbolic emulation. Braun, Gilardi, Fueglistler and Luyet⁷ discuss learning, competition, common norms, taken-for-grantedness and symbolic imitation. Bringing together these different conceptualisations, three broad categories can be identified, channels derived from the interdependence of jurisdictions, channels based on learning and channels grouping norm- and legitimacy-related motivations.

2.1 Domestic Variables

In most cases, the result of policy diffusion processes is not an exact copy. Domestic variables act as a filter for pioneer policy. They determine whether diffusion takes place and shape the form and degree of the diffused policy measure. Policy diffusing through the learning, the interdependence or the symbolic imitation channel is filtered by actors' belief systems, institutions and resource-related variables.



State and non-state actors involved in policy-making and policy diffusion are assumed to have a set of policy beliefs that shape their perception and interpretation of pioneer policy. Hall⁸ defines the policy-making process as a composition of three

³ See for example Dolowitz 2000. Yet, for example Shipan and Volden 2008 and Simmons, Dobbin and Garrett 2006 include coercion but exclude international harmonisation.

⁴ Joergens 2004, 252; Busch and Joergens 2007, 58-60.

⁵ Simmons and Elkins 2004.

⁶ Busch and Joergens 2007, 72-4.

⁷ Braun, Gilardi, Fueglistler and Luyet 2007, 42-4.

⁸ Hall 1993, 278-91.

central variables: “the overarching goals that guide policy in a particular field, the techniques or policy instruments used to attain those goals, and the precise settings of these instruments.” Sabatier⁹ conceptualises policy change as a result of competition between advocacy coalitions each of which has a common belief system. Belief systems have a deep core of fundamental normative and ontological axioms, a near (policy) core of basic strategies and policy positions and a set of secondary aspects comprising a multitude of instrumental decisions. Fundamental beliefs are more resistant to change than instrumental secondary beliefs, which change at frequent intervals. Actors seek more information and understanding of a policy in order to find ways to achieve their fundamental goal. For this, they are willing to change instrumental beliefs.¹⁰ Actors that are involved in the policy diffusion process are assumed to have a set of policy beliefs composed of a core of fundamental beliefs, beliefs related to specific policies and beliefs about policy settings. Fundamental beliefs, such as the desirability of a liberalised versus a socialist market model, are deeply rooted and do not change. A fundamental change of policy direction in a jurisdiction only takes place through majority changes in the government and the legislative body. Policy-specific beliefs change but not as frequently as beliefs about policy settings. The two latter categories are instrumental to implementing the fundamental beliefs. For policy diffusion, this means that if a pioneer policy is incompatible with the dominant fundamental belief in a jurisdiction, its diffusion is unlikely. Only minor elements that are compatible with the dominant beliefs are likely to diffuse and the difference between pioneer and diffused policy is great. In cases of absolute compatibility with the dominant beliefs, a pioneer policy is much more likely to diffuse and the likelihood of significant similarity between pioneer and diffused policy is high.

It depends on actors’ beliefs whether a situation is considered a problem and being placed on the political agenda. There are many situations but only a few issues are recognised as problems. A situation is defined as a problem when actors believe that something should be done about them. When there is enough support for the point of view that a situation is a problem, it is placed on the political agenda.¹¹ Policy diffusion can take place when a problem has already been put on the political agenda and then the pioneer policy serves as additional input and source of information. Pioneer policy can also change a certain situation in another jurisdiction so that more actors perceive the changed situation as a problem. The support for introducing a similar measure increases.

Institutionalised rules and procedures determine certain ways of policy-making that result in certain outcomes. Existing policies lead to a certain degree of path dependency. Institutionalised procedures can lead to favourable access to the decision-making process for certain actors and exclude others. It can make changes more difficult than preserving the status quo. Once institutions are established, actors rely on them and it becomes difficult to change them. Governments and decision-makers act within and adapt to existing institutional settings that impose constraints and provide opportunities for them to act upon their preferences and beliefs.¹² In cases of incremental change, as opposed to radical change, decision-makers base their action on existing policy and do not substantially depart from it.

Resources enable actors to get involved in policy diffusion. Financial means, human resources and expertise can broaden or constrain actors’ scope for action.¹³ The public budget can put constraints on policy proposals because they would be too

⁹ Sabatier 1988.

¹⁰ Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1993, 5-6.

¹¹ Kingdon 1995, 109-10.

¹² Scharpf 1997, 40-1.

¹³ Scharpf 1997, 43.

costly.¹⁴ In cases of scarce resources, only the perceived most important and urgent policy problems can be dealt with. Resources determine whether, how and to what degree actors engage in analysing pioneer policy and developing diffusion strategies.

2.2 Learning

Learning takes place when actors become aware of a foreign policy example and draw lessons from it for their own jurisdiction. Actors can genuinely learn or they can engage in tactical / instrumental learning. Actors can learn from foreign experiences and revise their beliefs or they can take parts of foreign experience that fit their existing beliefs. Decision-makers can actively search for information or information can be brought to their attention by other stakeholders. State and non-state actors' motivation for engaging in policy learning is that, on the basis of their beliefs, they perceive a certain situation, a regulation or the lack thereof as a problem.¹⁵ New information from abroad provides information that can be utilised to achieve some of their fundamental beliefs. Learning from others' experiences reduces costs and uncertainties about the success of a policy. It is easier and more efficient to assess and take over experiences that others have already made than to invent and design a completely new solution, which has never been tested in practice before.¹⁶

When learning, actors analyse and use information to attain their fundamental beliefs. They revise their beliefs about policy settings and policy instruments but the fundamental core belief persists and filters the pioneer policy.¹⁷ From this follows that actors are selective in the information that they take into account. They engage in bounded learning, which acknowledges the limits of actors' analytical capabilities and their selectiveness. Actors take "analytical short cuts and cognitive heuristics to process information".¹⁸ Policy beliefs act as a filter that preclude and distort the manner in which external policy experience is analysed and policy decisions are taken.

Diffusion through learning leads to changes in policy instruments and settings. Changes of the dominant fundamental beliefs occur through changes in a country's majorities and leadership. It cannot be triggered by learning. Learning rather is instrumental to achieving and furthering the fundamental beliefs. Therefore, learning is an important element of changes in policy-specific and policy setting beliefs.¹⁹ For changes of fundamental beliefs, learning would require additional supporting factors such as changes in the political power constellation, which could be brought about by changes in the general economic or environmental situation. This could (partially) be a result of diffusion through the interdependence channel.

2.3 Interdependence

Through the interdependence of two jurisdictions, pioneer policy can have externalities affecting the respectively other jurisdiction leading to changes in the position of actors and potentially increasing the support for certain policy measures. Pioneer policy can alter for example the economic or environmental situation in another jurisdiction.²⁰ As a response to these changes, decision-makers can revise their beliefs related to certain policies and policy settings. Significant changes in the economic, environmental or social situation can also lead to shifts in the governmental support resulting in a stronger support of the existing government or in

¹⁴ Kingdon 1995, 105-9.

¹⁵ Simmons and Elkins 2004, 174-5.

¹⁶ Tews and Busch 2002, 180; Dolowitz 2000, 13.

¹⁷ Sabatier 1988, 149; Hall 1993.

¹⁸ Meseguer 2006, 36.

¹⁹ Sabatier 1993: 17-20, 30-3.

²⁰ Elkins and Simmons 2005, 39-42.

stronger support for the opposition. This channel plays an important role for multinational corporations to engage in policy diffusion processes.

The enactment of a pioneer policy can trigger regulatory competition. The assumption is that in liberalised markets goods, capital and people move freely and choose the jurisdiction with the most beneficial regulation. Therefore, interdependent jurisdictions compete with each other to attract and retain capital and international business. If one jurisdiction introduces a policy that makes it more attractive than another, decision-makers of the other jurisdiction might react strategically and consider responding with similar policy.²¹ This is often associated with a 'race to the bottom', which means that regulatory requirements converge on a lowest common denominator level, leaving only a minimum of environmental and social protection. Yet, for example in environmental policy, empirical tests generally find no support for the hypotheses that regulatory competition leads to a race to the bottom. A number of other factors could be responsible for both, a 'race to the top' and a 'race to the bottom'.²² In most environmental cases, pioneer policy sets higher and more stringent requirements making the race to the bottom argument not applicable. Yet, the regulatory competition argument could also mean that environmental and public health pioneer policy creates favourable conditions for people and attracts them triggering a race to the top.

A more important interdependence-related argument is that pioneer policy can alter the costs and benefits of introducing similar measures in other jurisdictions. If the pioneer policy covers a significant amount of businesses or other actors, the compliance costs of similar measures in the follower jurisdiction can be lowered considerably. Additionally, the introduction of a pioneer policy can improve the environmental and health situation and by following the example with similar policy the follower can achieve a much higher environmental and public health result than in the situation in which it would have acted on its own. Hence, pioneer policy can change the policy-making conditions in other jurisdictions so that they might be more compatible with the policy beliefs of relevant actors in the follower jurisdiction. The costs of introducing a certain policy can be lowered and its benefits can be increased. This can generate the acceptance of actors whose policy beliefs and priorities would otherwise not have been compatible with the diffused policy.

Pioneer policy can have externalities in terms of a direct impact on business in another jurisdiction if they are exporting products or services that are covered by the policy to the pioneer jurisdiction. This assumption holds true in cases in which the pioneer market is attractive enough to incite producers to comply with the regulatory requirements rather than withdrawing from the market. As part of their fundamental beliefs, actors in the potential follower jurisdiction could place a high emphasis on the competitiveness of domestic actors. In the attempt of ensuring domestic industry's competitiveness and preparedness for compliance with the pioneer policy, actors can change their attitudes towards introducing similar policy initiatives. The issue can rise in actors' list of priorities and opposition to certain policy measures can decline significantly. The interest of business actors can change. They can revise their beliefs related to policy instruments and settings and put pressure on their governments to adopt the ambitious standards set by the pioneer jurisdiction in an attempt to try to gain competitive advantages. By introducing the higher standards, a level playing field with other domestic producers would be created. Companies that comply at an early stage with the high standards would then have a competitive advantage because they would be well prepared for compliance and could sell their knowledge and technologies to others.²³ Hence, pioneer policy can change

²¹ Simmons and Elkins 2004, 172-3.

²² Holzinger and Knill 2004, 27-8, Drezner 2001

²³ Vogel 1997, 561-3; Porter and van der Linde 1995

conditions in other jurisdictions that lead to the revision of state and non-state actors' beliefs with regard to the desirability of certain policy measures.

Pioneer policy can diffuse internationally without public policy responses. Pioneer policy can be implemented in the entire supply chain of companies even outside the territory of the pioneer jurisdiction. Changes in the production process for the pioneer market can trigger the application of these requirements in the entire global supply chain of a company. Considerations about economies of scale could incite multinational companies to apply pioneer policy requirements to their global operations. The reason for this is that for multinational companies, it could be economically viable to take on the requirements of the market with the highest standards and apply them to their global production in order to avoid transaction costs caused by maintaining different parallel production lines.²⁴ Decision-makers' policy beliefs can be that these direct externalities do not require any public policy intervention.

2.4 Symbolic Imitation

Symbolic imitation is based on the following of a respected and trusted example and on considerations about a political entity's own legitimacy in the international arena. As opposed to learning processes, emulation does not entail enhanced comprehension and analysis of policy experiences in another jurisdiction. It rather involves following international trends. Comparisons across nations can change the problem perception of actors. If other countries are considered more advanced on certain issues than one's own jurisdiction, actors can perceive a certain situation as a problem whereas they did not consider it very problematic beforehand. International benchmarking can influence actors' perception of how problematic or important an issue is.²⁵ Legitimacy considerations can be a motivation for introducing a policy originating in another jurisdiction. Particularly, once a policy has already spread to a significant number of jurisdictions, other decision-makers may consider following this trend for symbolic reasons. They introduce the respective policy in order to boost their own image, reputation and credibility in the international community and to avoid being considered a laggard.²⁶

3 Interest Groups in Policy Diffusion

Interest groups can act as facilitators and obstructors of policy diffusion processes. They are groups that have a common goal and that engage in advocacy to achieve this goal. Interest groups are mainly NGOs, business and professional groupings. They transfer information and generate policy analysis of pioneer policies, transmit them to decision-makers and engage in advocacy efforts to generate support for their favoured policy solution. Yet, interest groups are not a necessary condition for policy diffusion. Theoretically, state actors could obtain the information and analysis and take policy decisions without external interference. Nevertheless, in most cases, interest groups play an important role because they do not act as neutral information provider but they use foreign examples in their advocacy efforts to push for the implementation of their policy goals in public policy. Their role of information transfer agent, policy analyst and support generator can be facilitating or obstructing for policy diffusion. Opponents of a certain policy measure can use foreign examples as evidence that the respective measure should not be implemented in their jurisdiction. They try to advocate different solutions or the status quo.

²⁴ Vogel and Kagan 2002, 6

²⁵ Kingdon 1995, 111.

²⁶ Meseguer 2006b, 172; Brooks 2007, 704; Tews, Busch and Joergens 2003, 572-5; Drezner 2001, 57.

Most interest groups are organised in or are part of multi-level structures. They have international, national and sub-national branches or connections. This enables them to be present at different decision-making levels and to transmit information vertically and horizontally. If organisations do not have a multi-level structure themselves, they often engage in networks with other organisations that share similar policy beliefs and goals.²⁷ Multinational companies have branches globally. They monitor legislative developments in all jurisdictions in which they market their products and services. This high degree of awareness and the detailed knowledge about policies around the globe puts them in the position that they have access to a large knowledge base that they can use for their advocacy efforts. Smaller companies do not possess these elaborate resources but they are organised in trade associations that often are well connected with foreign trade associations, like for example the World Electronics Forum that organises annual meetings of national electronics industry associations to exchange information about policy developments. Similar to multinational companies, international NGOs have branches in different countries where they monitor policy developments. National NGOs have contact with their peers abroad.²⁸ For example in spring 2009, a number of US NGOs concerned with chemicals policy met with their peers in Europe to exchange information about their respective policies. In this case, the EU introduced a pioneer policy and the US is in the process of revising its domestic chemicals law. Trade unions and other professional associations also communicate internationally.

The main roles of interest groups in policy diffusion are the provision of information and analysis, and advocacy for their preferred policy option.²⁹ In the learning channel, interest groups learn themselves and trigger learning of others, mainly decision-makers and the public but also other interest groups. They can genuinely learn from pioneer policy and revise their beliefs about policies and their settings. They can also use foreign examples to corroborate and push for their existing beliefs in an effort to trigger learning by others. In the interdependence channel, business actors play a major role because they can be affected directly by externalities of a pioneer policy and on these grounds revise their beliefs with regard to their policy preferences. NGOs are not directly affected by these externalities but they can use them as an argument and support in their advocacy efforts. In the symbolic imitation channel, interest groups use international comparisons and benchmarks in their advocacy. They refer to internationally accepted norms and make the case that their jurisdiction should introduce similar measures because this is the internationally expected behaviour.

Interest groups use information in a selective manner, filtering pioneer policy through their policy beliefs. They provide information and analysis of foreign pioneer policy to decision-makers and the public. By searching for information to corroborate and legitimise their goals, they pool knowledge and expertise.³⁰ Interest groups analyse foreign experiences in the light of their policy beliefs and their own jurisdiction's circumstances and needs. They often draft reports and studies on certain issues that further their organisation's goals. Foreign policy experiences can serve as justification for certain measures and give them legitimacy. Pioneer policy provides information about the design, implementation and effectiveness of policy measures. Successful examples can provide information about how to achieve a certain goal. Interest groups search for and use information that corroborates their policy goals and makes their arguments stronger while neglecting information that is contradictory to their goal. In their analysis of pioneer policy they filter the pioneer policy through

²⁷ True and Mintron 2001.

²⁸ Keck and Sikkink 1998, 1-3.

²⁹ Stone 2000, Mintrom 1997, 739-40.

³⁰ Robertson 1991.

their fundamental beliefs and draw lessons that contribute to their goals. They are selective in the pioneer policy that they provide information about. Pioneer policy can also be used as a negative example to obstruct diffusion. In this case, interest groups provide information and analysis of foreign experiences to argue that such a measure would not be suitable for their own jurisdiction.

Advocacy is the second main role of interest groups in policy diffusion. They help to establish legitimacy and gather support for policy measures. More proactive than gathering and analysing information about pioneer policy, interest groups engage in convincing decision-makers, the public and other stakeholders of the benefits and effectiveness of their policy proposal. They design and implement advocacy campaigns to draw attention to their preferred policy solution.

Interest groups do not always stress the fact that they refer to and promote a pioneer policy. Sometimes they learn from foreign experiences but package the message differently to gain more traction in the domestic debate. This depends on the country and on the issue. In the case of a big country such as the US, it might not be helpful to refer too frequently to the example of a EU policy. This could trigger a rejecting reaction of decision-makers and others arguing that they are a powerful nation themselves and do not need to follow one of their major competitors. In the case of small countries, it might be beneficial to mention that the policy example comes from a big country such as the EU because this gives legitimacy and credibility to the policy. Interest groups act strategically in the way they package their policy-related information by not always making it too obvious that they learnt from abroad. Domestic and economic factors can be stressed more prominently for the purpose of gaining support.

4 Different Stages of the Policy Process

The role of interest groups in the policy diffusion process differs in the different stages of the policy-making process. In the agenda-setting phase, the existence of a pioneer policy and its possible externalities are used to define a situation as a problem and to place an issue on the political agenda that is framed in a way that fits the preferred policy solution of the interest group that advocated the issue. In the policy formulation phase, detailed analysis of pioneer policy and its possible consequences for the follower jurisdiction are provided by different interest groups. Their analysis and the information they provide reflects their respective policy beliefs and can facilitate or obstruct policy diffusion. In the policy adoption phase, interest groups use generalised examples of implications of similar policy measures abroad to mobilise broad support for or opposition to the formulated policy.

4.1 Agenda-setting

In the agenda-setting phase, all issues that could possibly be discussed in the political arena are narrowed down to a short list that is seriously considered and focused on.³¹ A policy idea in another country is only one of many factors influencing agenda-setting. Increasing public support, crises and prominent events can also trigger the placing of an issue on the political agenda. The emergence and accumulation of knowledge about an issue can place it on the agenda.³² Externalities of a pioneer policy can change a situation in a follower jurisdiction that is consequently perceived as a problem and triggers a change in the agenda.

A pioneer policy or its externalities can be used by interest groups to place an issue on the political agenda. Policy diffusion is initiated by placing an issue that is inspired

³¹ Kingdon 1995, 3.

³² Kingdon 1995, 16-8.

by a foreign pioneer policy on the political agenda. Interest groups use pioneer policies to further their organisation's goals by advocating policy measures that are similar. Their success will depend on whether they are able to influence political agendas and public opinion. Therefore, in an effort to pursue their fundamental goals, interest groups search for vehicles to place their issues on the agenda. Pioneer policy is one instrument for this. By transmitting information about foreign policy experiences, they can attract some attention to the issue. Analysis of the pioneer policy's success makes a similar solution attractive for decision-makers and the public. In the interdependence channel, pioneer policy can also change certain situations in a foreign jurisdiction. These externalities can be used by interest groups to define the changed situation as a problem that requires a public policy response. Interest groups can use changed situations defined as problems in order to attach their already pre-existing solution to. Policy solutions may predate problems. Actors can try to define problems in a way that benefits their goals. Interest groups often have a set of solutions that they advocate and that they would like to put on the political agenda. Hence, they may have existing solutions and search for problems that fit these solutions. They strategically search for salient problems that they can link their preferred solution to in order to place it high on the political agenda.³³ Externalities of a pioneer policy can provide such an opportunity but also many other events can open up opportunities to push for issues to be placed on the agenda, which are inspired by pioneer policy.

In the agenda-setting phase, interest groups use pioneer policy in order to introduce new measures to the political agenda. Interest groups act as facilitators and initiators of policy diffusion. Yet, groups that perceive the status quo as a desirable solution compatible with their fundamental goals engage in obstructing the placing on the agenda of an issue. They bring forward arguments why a certain situation is not a problem requiring new public policy responses.³⁴ In the efforts, pioneer policies can be used as negative examples.

4.1.1 Policy formulation

Once a policy issue has reached the political agenda, different alternatives and the precise settings of a policy are formulated. In this stage, foreign experiences provide examples and justification for different alternatives. Interest groups provide information and analysis of foreign experiences to corroborate their preferred policy solution. They attempt to influence learning processes of decision-makers by providing them with information. The information reflects the different interest groups' fundamental beliefs. Therefore, examples chosen, the emphasises and the lessons drawn differ between interest groups. In this phase, interest groups act as facilitators as well as obstructors of policy diffusion. They use foreign examples to argue that the formulation of domestic policy should be similar to pioneer policy or to argue that the policy measures should be different. Obstructors argue that the pioneer policy is not transferrable and does not fit domestic problems.³⁵

The formulation of the policy can result in a proposed policy that is only remotely similar to the pioneer policy due to the different analyses of facilitators and obstructors of policy diffusion between which most likely a compromise will be found. Domestic conditions and other actors' influence can shape the final wording of the policy and make it very differ from what the interest groups that pushed for the placing on the agenda of the issue had in mind.

³³ Kingdon 1995, 86, 93.

³⁴ Kingdon 1995, 109-10.

³⁵ Robertson 1991, 60-2.

4.1.2 Policy adoption

In the policy adoption phase, interest groups play a role in mobilising support for or against the policy measure that was formulated. Their use of foreign examples is more general than in the detailed formulation phase. Different situations in pioneer countries, such as economic prosperity or rising unemployment, are associated with the policy measure to generate broad support or opposition, mainly by decision-makers and the general public.

5 Conclusions

This paper proposes a first outline for the analysis of the role of interest groups as both facilitators and obstructors. In policy diffusion literature, the facilitating role of interest groups is recognised and often referred to. The obstructing role that interest groups can equally play is less often analysed. Yet, both play a crucial role in determining whether or not diffusion takes place and the result of diffusion processes.

In the different stages of the policy process, pioneer policy is used for different purposes and in differing degrees of detail. In the agenda-setting phase, it is used to demonstrate that a certain situation is a problem that requires a public policy response. In the interdependence channel, pioneer policy changes a situation in a follower country and interest groups use this to define it as a problem requiring a policy response. In the policy formulation phase, details and parts of the pioneer policy can play an influential role. Experts analyse whether and how pioneer policy could be implemented in the follower jurisdiction. In this phase, only parts of the pioneer policy can be considered worth implementing. In the adoption phase, interest groups use foreign examples and assign generalised results to them in order to mobilise broad support amongst decision-makers and the public.

Different interest groups could play different roles in the policy-making stages. In the agenda-setting phase, both NGOs and business groups could be policy entrepreneurs. Yet, business is more likely to act as policy entrepreneur in the interdependence channel because this can directly affect their activities. NGOs are more likely to act as policy entrepreneur in the learning and the symbolic imitation channels because they generally advocate increased environmental and social protection standards, which could be subject to pioneer policy. They are driven by more ideational beliefs. In the policy formulation phase, business and NGOs can have access to different kinds of resources and information. Business can give a better insight into the impact of the respective pioneer policy on their operations. NGOs are more specialised in providing information about the impact on the environment or certain societal groups. Yet, both business and NGOs try to gather information about the respectively other area of expertise to complete their arguments and to take the wind out of the respectively other group's sails in cases of opposing views. In the adoption phase, NGOs can be very effective in mobilising grassroots support for their point of view if the issue is linked to ideational and emotional issues. Business can be influential by pointing to the economic implications and potential losses of economic activities. Both strategies and lines of argumentation can be influential and it can be observed that both types of groups try to counter the respectively other types of arguments by also making statements about them. For example, NGO proponents of the increased use of renewable energy stress the job creation that they anticipate to come with it.

Given, that business appears to more influenced by interdependence-related motivations to engage as policy entrepreneur, it could be argued that it focuses more on the diffusion of concrete settings and instruments to ensure international

compatibility. NGOs however, are more driven by the idea of higher environmental and societal protection standards and therefore, it could be assumed that they focus more on the transfer of ideas.

6 References

- Bennett, Colin J. and Michael Howlett. 1992. The lessons of learning: Reconciling theories of policy learning and policy change. *Policy Sciences* 25(3): 275-94.
- Boscarino, Jessica E. 2009. Surfing for Problems: Advocacy Group Strategy in U.S. Forestry Policy. *The Policy Studies Journal* 37 (3): 415-34.
- Braun, Dietmar, Fabrizio Gilardi, Katharina Fueglistner and Stephane Luyet. 2007. Ex Pluribus Unum: Integrating the Different Strands of Policy Diffusion Theory. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift Sonderheft* 38: 39-55.
- Busch, Per-Olof and Helge Joergens. 2007. Dezentrale Politikkoordination im internationalen System – Ursachen, Mechanismen and Wirkungen der internationalen Diffusion politischer Innovationen. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift Sonderheft* 38: 56-84.
- Cobb, Roger, Jennie-Keith Ross and Marc Howard Ross. 1976. Agenda-building as a comparative political process. *American Political Science Review* 70 (1): 126-38.
- Dolowitz, David P. 2000. Policy transfer: a new framework of policy analysis. In Dolowitz, David P., Rob Hulme, Mike Nellis and Fiona O'Neill (eds.). *Policy Transfer and British Social Policy Learning from the USA?:* 9-37.
- Drezner, Daniel W. 2001. Globalization and Policy Convergence. *International Studies Review* 3(1): 53-78
- Elkins, Zachary and Beth Simmons. 2005. On Waves, Clusters, and Diffusion: A conceptual Framework. *Annals of the American Academy* 598: 33-51.
- Haas, Peter M. 1992. Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination. *International Organization* 46 (1): 1-35.
- Hall, Peter A. 1993. Policy Paradigms, Social Learning, and the State: The Case of Economic Policymaking in Britain. *Comparative Politics* 25 (3): 275-96.
- Jenkins-Smith, Hank C. and Paul A. Sabatier. 1993. The Study of Public Policy Processes. In Sabatier Paul A. and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith (eds.). *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford. Westview Press: 1-11.
- Joergens, Helge. 2004. Governance by diffusion: implementing global norms through cross-national imitation and learning. In Lafferty, William M. (ed.). *Governance for Sustainable Development. The Challenge of Adapting Form to Function:* 246-83.
- Keck, Margaret E. and Kathryn Sikkink. 1998. *Activists beyond Borders. Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca and London. Cornell University Press.
- Kern, Kristine and Ingrid Kissling-Naef. 2005. Politikkonvergenz und Politikdiffusion durch Regierungs- und Nichtregierungsorganisationen: Ein internationaler Vergleich von Umweltzeichen. In Tews, Kerstin and Martin Jaenicke (eds.). *Die Diffusion umweltpolitischer Innovationen im internationalen System*. Wiesbaden. Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaften.
- Kern, Kristine, Helge Joergens and Martin Jaenicke. 2001. The Diffusion of Environmental Policy Innovations: A Contribution to the Globalisation of Environmental Policy. *Discussion Paper FS II 01-302, Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin fuer Sozialforschung*.

- Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy*. Second Edition. New York. Longman.
- Meseguer, Covadonga. 2006. Learning and Economic Policy Choices. *European Journal of Political Economy* 22 (1): 156-78.
- Mintrom, Michael. 1997. Policy Entrepreneurs and the Diffusion of Innovations. *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (3): 738-770.
- Porter, Michael E. and Claas van der Linde. 1995. Green and Competitive: Ending the Stalemate. *Harvard Business Review* 73 (5): 120-134.
- Robertson, David Brian. 1991. Political Conflict and Lesson-Drawing. *Journal of Public Policy* 11 (1): 55-78.
- Sabatier Paul A. 1993. Policy Change over a Decade or More. In Sabatier Paul A. and Hank C. Jenkins-Smith (eds.). *Policy Change and Learning: An Advocacy Coalition Approach*. Boulder, San Francisco and Oxford. Westview Press: 13-39.
- Sabatier, Paul A. 1988. An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-oriented Learning Therein. *Policy Science* 21: 129-68.
- Scharpf, Fritz W. 1997. *Games Real Actors Play. Actor-Centred Institutionalism in Policy Research*. Boulder and Oxford. Westview Press.
- Shipan, Charles R. and Craig Volden. 2008. The Mechanisms of Policy Difusion. *American Journal of Political Science* 52 (4): 840-57.
- Simmons, Beth A. and Zachary Elkins. 2004. The Globalization of Liberalization: Policy Diffusion in the International Political Economy. *American Political Science Review* 98 (1): 171-89.
- Stone, Diane. 2004. Transfer Agents and Global Networks in the 'Transnationalisation' of Policy. *Journal of European Public Policy* 11 (3): 545-66.
- Stone, Diane. 2000. Non-Governmental Policy Transfer: The Strategies of Independent Policy Institutes. *Governance* 13 (1): 45-62.
- Tews, Kerstin. 2005. Die Diffusion umweltpolitischer Innovationen: Eckpunkte eines Analysemodells. In Tews, Kerstin and Martin Jaenicke (eds.). *Die Diffusion umweltpolitischer Innovationenen im internationalen System*. Wiesbaden. Verlag fuer Sozialwissenschaften.
- Tews, Kerstin and Per-Olof Busch. 2002. Governance by Diffusion? Potentials and Restrictions of Environmental Policy Diffusion. In Biermann, Frank, Rainer Brohm and Klaus Dingwerth (eds.). *Proceedings of the 2001 Berlin Conference on the Human Dimension of Global Environmental Change "Global Environmental Change and the Nation State"*: 168-82.
- True, Jacqui and Michael Mintrom. Transnational Networks and Policy Diffusion: The Case of Gender Mainstreaming. *International Studies Quarterly* 45 (1): 27-57.
- Vogel, David and Robert A. Kagan. 2002. Dynamics of Regulatory Change: How Globalization Affects National Regulatory Policies. Berkeley. *UCIAS Edited Volume 1*.
- Vogel, David. 1997. Trading up and governing across: transnational governance and environmental protection. *Journal of European Public Policy* 4 (4): 556-71.