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The Political Dynamics of Policy Analysis, Policy Evaluation and Public Participation in the Twenty-First Century Global Era

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Abstract

The assertion that there is a trend in policy analysis should not be interpreted as indicating that its creators intentionally aim for coordination or that their goals are consistent. The policy analysis movement is quite influential even though it is not politically equivalent to other social movements. Government advice-giving mechanisms have been transformed, policy debates have changed, and as a result, long-standing but informal advising practices that transfer authority and influence have been called into question. Policy evaluation is the process of making a decision about how well a specific policy process, department, or program is performing based on its attractiveness. In policy evaluation conversations, participation is nothing new. According to several academics, participation is a crucial component of the assessment procedure. This paper focuses especially on the difficulties and politics involved in incorporating other viewpoints into the policy review process. Both more inclusive and deliberative forms of citizen engagement as well as more traditional approaches, like public hearings and surveys, are taken into account when evaluating policies. The current status of public policy debate and the anticipated future directions of policy advising practice and policy analyst training are covered in the paper's conclusion. It discusses some of the particular challenges of engaging the public in retrospective policy evaluation.

Keywords: *Policy, Policy Analysis, Policy Making, Policy Evaluation, Public Participation.*

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I. Introduction

Any government activity that reflects previously decided responses to particular situations is seen as a public policy. The general goal of government policy-making is to advance the common good (Howl, 2021; Mint, 2022, p. 261). In order to critically evaluate past, existing, and planned policy settings, policy studies refers to research on policy themes and analytical work that is usually carried out by university-based scholars. Researchers can

conduct policy studies in a variety of academic and cross-disciplinary contexts. They have access to a variety of interpretative and analytical approaches. The scope of policy studies might include historical and comparative analysis. The subset of analytical methods developed in the social sciences and used to comprehend the formulation, execution, and assessment of public policies is referred to as the "policy sciences." Here, policy analysis is defined as research aimed at increasing our understanding of the root causes of public issues, potential solutions, the potential effects of those solutions, and potential trade-offs when deciding on the best course of action for the government. The activity of supplying information to government decision-makers with the goal of strengthening the body of knowledge that serves as the foundation for decision-making is known as policy advising. While policy advising need not be based upon rigorous policy analysis, over recent decades such policy analysis has come to play a more central part in the development of advice for decision-makers.

Policy evaluation is defined as a judgement on the effectiveness of a specific policy process, department, or programme based on its value, worth, or attractiveness. Ideally, there is a clear opportunity for learning, introspection, and improvement throughout the evaluation stage of the policy-making process. It signifies both the end and the beginning of the policy cycle (Althaus et al., 2017, p. 143). Policy review is a retrospective (ex post) process that explicitly evaluates previous choices and initiatives. Such assessments may be mandated by law, or they may be prompted by a planning or budgeting process. In some cases evaluations are triggered by specific policy events, such as a perceived policy fiasco or change in political leadership (Bovens et al., 2016). And the idea of participation is not new in discussions on policy evaluation. Indeed, some scholars have identified participation as a central part of the evaluation process.

Since the middle of the 1960s, a growing number of individuals with backgrounds in the social sciences and humanities have dedicated their careers to creating policy recommendations. Although the expansion of activities related to policy advice has been most noticeable in the United States up until recently, this tendency is worldwide. Universities have attempted to offer pertinent graduate-level training in response to the government's increased need for skilled policy analysts and consultants.

It is helpful to think of the emergence of policy analysis as a movement. The use of this phrase suggests that many people are making a conscious effort to reconsider the function of government in society and to renegotiate some parts of the relationships that exist between governments, collectivities, and individuals. The assertion that a movement for policy analysis exists, however, should not be interpreted as suggesting that its creators intentionally aim for coordination or that their goals are consistent. The policy analysis movement has had a significant impact, despite not being politically equivalent to other social movements. Government advice-giving mechanisms have been transformed, policy debates have changed, and as a result, long-standing but informal advising practices that transfer authority and influence have been called into question. Social and political analysts have frequently failed to recognise the extent of this change. This is because there haven't been many noticeable or immediate disruptions to the administrative systems and procedures that are normally connected to government, or more generally, public governance, as a result of the pertinent changes.

Policy analysis was often portrayed in the past as a part of policy advice. Accordingly, policy analysis was viewed as essentially an internal government agency job that was done to inform the decisions of a select group of important individuals, mainly elected decision-makers (Lindblom, 1978; Wildavsky, 1989). The potential uses of policy analysis are now

recognised to be far more expansive. Numerous other audiences are thought to be interested in policy and receptive to, if not demanding of, well-presented analytical work (Radin, 2020). Audiences for policy analysis include those in business, government officials, non-profit organisation members, and well-informed citizens. Although it was originally believed that policy analysts were primarily found in government agencies, they are now also present in the majority of businesses that interact directly with governments and in many businesses where government activities have a big impact on the working environment. Furthermore, a large number of university-based researchers, who typically view their peers and students as their main audience, carry out studies that pose issues regarding governmental policies and provide answers through the use of policy analysis techniques. In light of this, a definition of modern policy analysis that is suitably comprehensive must acknowledge the variety of subjects and problem domains that policy analysts work on, the variety of research and analytical techniques they use, and the variety of audiences they want to reach. Understanding the variety of modern policy analysis applications and styles, it is evident that good policy analysis requires not only the use of strong technical skills (Mint, 2022), but also in-depth substantive knowledge, political awareness, and strong interpersonal skills (Mint, 2023). Although many policy analysts still hold the underlying expectation of giving high-quality, trustworthy advice, advising now appears as a part of the larger category of policy analysis. A major change in focus and priorities from previous eras may be seen in the move from policy analysis as a subset of advising to advising as a subset of analysis.

Bovens et al. (2016) state that a rationalistic or classical model of policy analysis has served as the inspiration for the prevalent approach to policy evaluation. In most cases, this type of evaluation aims to leave politics and values out of the equation while determining the facts at hand using predefined evaluation criteria. Put differently, the objective is to determine whether a program or policy worked to accomplish its goals (is it successful?), whether it is the most effective means to accomplish these goals (is it efficient?), and whether it is appropriate for the times (is it relevant?) (Althaus et al., 2017). These types of formal evaluations typically start with an independent body (such as an audit office, an ombudsman, a consultant, and so forth) defining the evaluation's scope, choosing the evaluation criteria (such as cost effectiveness), gathering pertinent information (often centred on the operation and implementation of the policy or program), and then producing an unbiased assessment and recommendations. This more conventional method of evaluating policies is predicated on the underlying premise that the standards employed are suitable and quantifiable, and that the findings reached will be conclusive and uncontroversial.

This type of methodical and logical evaluation of a policy program is uncommon in practice, nevertheless (Bovens et al., 2016; O'Faircheallaigh, 2022). In fact, there are several instances in policy practice that show how policy evaluation is not at all apolitical or value neutral. Divergent policy actors will almost always have conflicting opinions about what defines a successful and unsuccessful policy, how it should be evaluated, and what lessons the outcomes suggest. Because of this, evaluation is an inherently contentious and political process that frequently sparks more dispute and contestation than any other phase of the policy-making process. When an evaluation process begins, even the most obscure and seemingly uncontroversial policy programs can turn into political battlegrounds because it raises a number of issues regarding funding allocation and expenditure, winner and loser, accountability and responsibility, and opportunities for rephrasing discussions (Bovens et al., 2016).

Since policy evaluation is inherently political in today's society, it is best understood as a process that aims to represent the range of viewpoints on a particular program or policy. Therefore, the

necessity is "less to develop 'objective' measures of outcomes—the traditional aim of evaluation research—than to facilitate a wide range of dialogue among advocates of different criteria," according to Majone (1999, p. 183). To put it another way, helping to "contribute to a shared understanding of the various critical perspectives and of their different functions in the process of public deliberation" entails acknowledging the diversity of criteria and viewpoints on a particular problem (1999, p. 170). Multiple viewpoints must be elicited by policy analysts (such as independent evaluators and public managers) in order to implement this more participative approach to policy evaluation. In actuality, this goes much beyond merely completing a client satisfaction survey or enlisting the help of numerous professionals and elites. Participatory policy evaluation ideally entails include a range of stakeholders who both influence and are impacted by a program or policy in the assessment process.

The argumentative approach to policy evaluation takes seriously the role of values in shaping and determining the worth of a policy program (Stewart, 2019a). In other words, policy evaluation involves a process of judgement that is inherently subjective; it is influenced by numerous factors such as who is doing the evaluation, the scope of evaluation, the evaluative criteria used, and the way material is interpreted. This paper follows the participatory or argumentative tradition of policy evaluation, which views the assessment of any policy performance or program as something shaped by the underlying assumptions and values of the evaluation process, as well as those interpreting the evidence (Fischer & Forester, 2013; Majone, 1999).

In the literature on policy evaluation, the concept of participation is not well understood or expressed. This is true even when more deliberative and participatory forms of governance are becoming increasingly popular and used. The fact that participation is usually presented as an activity that takes place at the beginning of the policy-making process, such as when agenda-setting, policy-design, and sometimes decision-making, may be one explanation for this. However, the role of involvement in policy evaluation is growing, especially in light of the drive to generate "public value" and the general move towards more participatory forms of governance.

With its robust critical and expository methodological garb, this paper examines the factors contributing to the growing need for policy analysis. The expansion and modification of the policy analysis supply in response to this demand is then reviewed. In light of several themes that have emerged from participatory governance theory and practice, this paper examines ex post policy evaluation. The difficulties and politics of incorporating different viewpoints into the policy evaluation process are its main areas of interest. Both traditional approaches to public participation in policy evaluation, like surveys and public hearings, as well as more inclusive and deliberative forms of citizen engagement, are taken into account. The current status of public policy debate and the anticipated future directions of policy advising practice and policy analyst training are covered in the paper's conclusion. The United States is used as a primary point of reference throughout. Nonetheless, an attempt has been made to illustrate the argument's comparative relevance. This has been accomplished by talking about how the New Public Management dogma was adopted globally between the late 1970s and the mid-1990s, as well as how governments responded to the global financial crisis between 2007 and 2012. Some of the unique difficulties of involving the public in retroactive policy evaluation are also covered in this paper.

The Evolving Demand for Policy Analysis

The creation of issues and the political climate that has elevated those issues have been the primary drivers of demand for policy analysis. Government officials were typically the ones who recognised the

issues that needed to be addressed in the early stages of the development of policy analysis tools. They sought assistance from academics. Often, the scholars who were thought to be most helpful in light of the issues at hand were highly skilled economists who could estimate the scope of issues, perform statistical studies, and calculate the costs of different government initiatives. Throughout the twentieth century, issues related to decentralised decision-making emerged as new avenues for market trade were made possible by transportation, electrification, and telecommunications (McCraw, 1994). In the meantime, requests for governments to set up systems that could efficiently control a variety of natural and social processes surfaced as knowledge of the causes of numerous natural and social phenomena increased. Many issues that were formerly viewed as social conditions or unavoidable aspects of existence have been changed to become policy issues (Cobb & Elder, 1993). The marketplace's growing size, social interactions' growing complexity, and our growing understanding of social conditions all combined to put pressure on governments to take the lead in organising and regulating both individual and group behaviour. To direct this growing scope of government, policy analysis tools were created, such as the analysis of market failures and the formulation of workable government responses. However, as policy analysis's scope expanded, concerns were voiced regarding the biases present in some of the analytical instruments being used. As a result, fresh attempts were undertaken to take into consideration the consequences of policy modifications, and fresh perspectives started to make substantial contributions to the formulation of policies. Working with a model of the policy-making process is helpful in order to investigate the elements that are driving the need for policy analysis. In recent decades, several ideas about how policies are made have been established. Problem definition, agenda setting, policy adoption, implementation, and assessment are the five phases that are commonly proposed in the "stages model," which we employ here (Eyestone, 1988).

Growing awareness of issues that governments might be able to solve led to the first calls for policy analysis. Naturally, concerns about the suitability of different policy options surfaced. Therefore, the demand for high-quality policy analysis emerged in the United States in the 1930s when the federal government assumed significant new responsibilities in the areas of regulation, redistribution, and the funding of infrastructure development. Regarding regulatory policy, the Interstate Commerce Commission was expanded due to worries about the growing trucking industry's threat to railroads (Eisner, 2013). This organisation hired economists and solicitors who contributed to the development of a growing collection of rules that ultimately applied to numerous businesses. The emergence of the American welfare state required coordinated policy research and development work by a group of bureaucrats, despite the fact that it has always been smaller than welfare states in other countries, particularly those in Europe (Derthick, 1989). At first, areas like Wisconsin, where Robert LaFollette had pioneered welfare systems, provided a large portion of the expertise required to fill these roles. Career bureaucrats at the Treasury, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Health and Human Services were bolstered by policy analysts as the U.S. government's role in redistribution grew. In the 1930s, benefit-cost analysis—a fundamental element of public economics and a pillar of contemporary policy analysis—was created to aid in the planning of dam development in the Tennessee Valley. At the time, politicians were concerned that certain dams were being constructed only to keep money flowing to construction firms rather than to satisfy the rising need for flood control and energy (Eckstein, 1968). The technique's wide range of applications quickly became evident, and its use has continued to grow. Simultaneously, there have been ongoing efforts to advance the technique's sophistication and create variants that are most appropriate for various sets of situations (Boardman et al., 2016; Carlson, 2021).

Over time, a number of aspects of agenda-setting politics, policy formulation, and the policy-making process have contributed to the rise in need for policy analysts. The forces at play are comparable to how an arms race creates a continuous and frequently growing need for military acquisitions. The increasing number of policy analysts working in the federal government bureaucracy in Washington, DC, prompted demand for policy analysts in other parts of the city who could confirm or refute the analysis and recommendations coming from government organisations. The establishment of the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) is a prime illustration. As a check on the accuracy of the assessments created and distributed by the executive-controlled Office of Management and Budget, this office was created as an independent resource for Congress that would produce analysis and recommendations (Wildavsky, 2012). Additionally, the General Accounting Office—which was renamed the Government Accountability Office in 2004—was established to offer Congress impartial counsel. This Office's jurisdiction has always been more expansive than the Congressional Budget Office's.

Groups of persons outside the government who had a big stake in the direction of government policy started investing resources in producing independent, high-quality advice as the analytical tools available to elected officials increased. Archetypes of many independent policy shops now based in Washington, DC, include think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution, which were founded in the 1940s and 1920s, respectively, and are still operating today (Smith, 2011).

These days, think tank employees and affiliates are frequently seen as part of a small group that controls policy because of their expertise and entrepreneurial potential. Appointments into government departments, sometimes referred to as a "revolving door" because policy experts regularly move into and out of important positions in the government over the course of successive presidential elections, strengthen networks between non-governmental policy experts and politicians in the United States. Because of their extensive networks, the celebrity status of some of their members, and their sophisticated influence campaigns, American think tanks are therefore frequently seen as reliable sources of advice to the administration.

It is important to remember that national institutional and political circumstances influence the functions, personalities, and efficacy of think tanks. The majority of think tanks in the US often perform as both "watch dogs" and "idea brokers," with the degree to which they display either function primarily based on how closely they match with the political philosophies of the current administration. As opposed to this, the majority of think tanks that work in Asian nations typically see their function as "regime-enhancing" (Stone, 2020; Stone & Denham, 2024; Abelson, 2024).

Compared to systems like the US, where the division of powers is a key component of governance, parliamentary systems—which are most noticeable in Commonwealth nations—tend to show a stronger centralisation of legislative power and accountability. Those in leadership roles have more influence over policy when power is centralised. The ability of persons in government to influence the creation of policies can be strengthened or weakened by the election process. This is best seen in the case of New Zealand, where the political landscape was altered in 1996 when the country's parliament switched from first-past-the-post to mixed member proportional representation. In the current policy-making process, policy deliberation tends to be longer and more consultative, needing more input from a larger range of political actors and interest groups due to the growing diversity and quantity of actors (Boston et al., 2023). Policy analysis is now more in demand as a result of the electoral system transition. The ability of political parties, parliamentarians, and non-governmental interest

groups to exert influence has prompted them to develop analytical capabilities that were previously virtually unique to government agencies.

The checks and balances system established by the American constitution includes a highly fragmented and decentralised federal and presidential administration. Since three-quarters of the policy experts on the Congressional Policy Advisory Board come from think tanks, the board's creation in 1998 has given experts another avenue to advise members of Congress. The US government allows a wide range of government and non-government experts to participate in policy-making due of weak parties and high personnel turnover (McGann & Johnson, 2016).

The need for policy analysis has been fuelled by curiosity in the efficacy of government initiatives, even though it is commonly thought of as the work done prior to the adoption of a new policy or program. One could argue that the issue of what happens after a policy notion is approved and enacted into law is too operational to need policy analysts' attention. However, during the last few decades, policy analysts have come to recognise the importance of studying implementation issues (Bardach, 1987; Lipsky, 1994; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1983). This has been influenced in part by program evaluation results, which frequently show that programs are either failing to produce the desired goals or, worse, having a whole host of unforeseen and detrimental repercussions. What is currently referred regarded as the "government failure" literature has been influenced by a significant portion of the work done to evaluate implementation (Niskanen, 1981; Weimer & Vining, 2015; Wolf, 1989). Policy analysts developed a greater respect for market processes and a degree of suspicion towards the government's restorative capabilities as a result of the likelihood that public initiatives intended to alleviate market failures can actually cause issues (Rhoads, 1995). As a result, policy analysts had to get a more sophisticated understanding of how specific markets functioned. Government attempts to mimic market processes or to reform government and contract out parts of government supply that may be taken up by private enterprises operating in the competitive marketplace have gained more attention as a result of the literature on government failure (Osborne & Gaebler, 2013). In areas where government reform initiatives have been extensive, an intriguing dynamic has emerged. In both relative and absolute terms, the number of policy analysts working in the core public sector has grown while its size has decreased. This dynamic demonstrates how governments are strengthening their ability to manage contracts as opposed to services (Savas, 1997). People with expertise in mechanism design and benefit-cost analysis have been in high demand in these new settings. As a result, even as the reach of government has been reduced, job possibilities for policy analysts have tended to increase. In many jurisdictions that adopted the New Public Management methods, administrations were characterised by fiscal conservatism, which contributed to this tendency (Yergin & Stanislaw, 2018; Willia, 2013). Realising all potential efficiency benefits becomes crucial when budgets are tight. Government policy analysts are in a better position than any other qualified professional to perform the type of analytical work required to find cost-saving strategies and convince elected decision-makers to embrace them.

The range of factors that affect policy outcomes makes it difficult to quantify the precise influence that policy advisors have had over political decision-makers. In addition, the definition of a policy analyst has changed over time due to the shifting political and institutional environments; in some cases, "windows of opportunity" for policy influence occur more frequently than in others (Kingdon, 2015). For instance, the shift to address large national debts resulted in widespread reform of government policy settings in many jurisdictions during the 1980s and 1990s. The globe had become extremely global by the 1980s, in terms of politics, society, and the

economy. Similar policy decisions were frequently the consequence of global issues. Political authorities in New Zealand realised at that time that the nation's economic situation was getting worse. The New Zealand government opened itself up to the influence of organisations and agencies that were thought to be experts in the prevailing issues of the time due to economic stagnation, social unrest, and ideological shifts away from reliance on the government for the distribution of many resources in society (Oliver, 1999).

Individual networks connecting ministers with important bureaucrats and non-elected political actors strengthened the power of central agencies with economic knowledge, like the New Zealand Treasury and groups like the New Zealand Business Round Table (NZBRT). Similar to other nations like Norway, Sweden, Britain, and France, New Zealand had only one economics minister in the 1980s, which limited the chances for countervailing power. Accordingly, one analyst at the time referred to the system in New Zealand as an "elective dictatorship" (Boston, 1999).

The Treasury was the most significant advisory body of the government in New Zealand. Business leaders acknowledged the power of the Treasury department and the importance of networks when they hired Roger Kerr, a senior management from the Treasury, to head the NZBRT in 1986 (Mint, 2016). In policy debates, the NZBRT made sure that business leaders' opinions were thoroughly expressed. The Round Table and the Minister of Finance were reportedly "so close you couldn't slide a Treasury paper between them" at the time (Murray & Pacheco, 2021).

The extent of the economic restructuring carried out in New Zealand throughout the 1980s and 1990s can be partially explained by the circumstances that gave a small number of consultants significant influence over political decision-makers. "Rogernomics" in New Zealand followed a pattern of international policy transfer that includes commercialisation, liberalisation, and deregulation, much like "Reaganism" in the United States and, at the very least, the early years of "Thatcherism" in Britain. These concepts were not novel. They "represented a global spread of neo-liberal politics" and had their start ten years earlier in North America and Europe (Dolowitz & Marsh, 2020; Heffernan, 2019).

Policy transfer has increased over the past few decades due to technical advancements that have enhanced communication and made it simpler for decision-makers and policy advisers to evaluate various policy options. Broad patterns in policy development are easy to identify, yet specific, even peculiar, aspects of policy design are always present in individual nations. In order to establish competition through a free market, liberalisation in the 1980s and 1990s in the US, UK, and New Zealand involved repealing the previous regulatory framework and reducing protectionist laws. It has mainly been unmatched and was conducted in New Zealand at a never-before-seen pace (Goldfinch, 2008). The emphasis on monetary policy as a key tool for influencing the economy in the US signified a significant shift from previously unfeasible political policies. British liberalisation and deregulation, on the other hand, were perceived as more path-dependent and incremental because they were slower and did not represent a drastic shift from preexisting beliefs (Niskanen, 1998; Heffernan, 2019).

In the middle of 2007, the global financial crisis quickly became apparent. As a result, governments from all over the world began to meddle in financial market operations in ways that were frowned upon in the 1980s and 1990s. The extent to which public policy frameworks support the efficient operation of markets has gained attention once more. Consequently, the modern era has solidified the government's ubiquitous role in capitalist society. In its best form, this new era of policy-making has seen attempts to properly weigh the dangers of

government failure against remedies to market failures. At its worst, the new age has seen examples of people who helped cause the crisis getting away with it while those who were most affected got little help from the government. In summary, there is now more room for in-depth discussion of public policy and the function of government in society. Some analysts have viewed the developmental role of governments in fostering economic advancement—which has been most evident in the Asian tiger economies in recent decades—as a sensible prescription, even for the world's most developed economies. Large-scale government interference in economic affairs has raised far greater concerns among sceptics. The fear of government failure, which is most evident in the special interest capture of government subsidies, has been voiced frequently.

In the 1960s and 1970s, debates over the function of policy analysts in society frequently depicted them as "whiz kids" or "econocrats" who were trying to bring a high level of rigour and logic to public decision-making (Self, 1987; Stevens, 2013). Benefit cost analysis proponents undoubtedly believed they had a method for evaluating the relative merits of competing policy proposals that, in theory, outperformed all others. Similarly, proponents of using quasi-experimental research designs for program assessment believed their method was better than alternative methods that might be used to assess the efficacy of the programme (Cook & Campbell, 1989). The fact that benefit-cost analysis and quantitative evaluation techniques have been used continuously for decades indicates that people believe they are useful for producing knowledge that can be put to use. Critics are aware of the limitations of these methods, though. The benefits-cost analysis technique has also come under fire for certain aspects that make it so attractive, such calculating net social benefits and reducing all consequences to a single metric. Alternative techniques for evaluating the effects of new policies, like health, social, and environmental impact assessments, have become more popular in response (Barrow, 2020; Lock, 2020; Wood, 2015). The incorporation of gender and race analysis into policy creation has also been the subject of extensive efforts (Mint, 2022; Myers, 2022; Tru & Mint, 2021). The validity of different research methods as well as the proper scope and goal of evaluation efforts have been the subject of extensive and fundamental disputes in the case of evaluation studies. Importantly for the subject at hand, these arguments have actually increased the demand for policy analysis. In fact, many jurisdictions now have government offices specifically created to audit how policies affect women, racial minorities, families, and children. Additionally, assessors now give organisational process evaluations, which frequently examine the character of relationships between organisations and their clients, the same weight as more conventional attempts to gauge program outcomes (Patton, 2017; Weiss, 2018). Yet these process evaluations are motivated by very different questions and draw upon very different methodologies than traditional evaluation studies that assessed programme impacts narrowly.

This examination of the changing need for policy analysis has revealed a number of factors that have increased the need for policy analysts both inside and outside of government, as well as placed them at the centre of government operations. The increasing complexity of social and economic relationships as well as the creation of information is largely responsible for these changes. However, policy analysis itself also creates a demand for additional policy analysis. Although a lot of policy development takes place in national capitals, where these trends have been most noticeable, they have also manifested themselves in analogous ways in other locations. For instance, in federal systems, expanding cadres of well-trained policy analysts have become engaged in sophisticated, evidence-based policy debates in state and provincial capitals.

Policy analysts are also being used more and more in the strategy and planning divisions of cities. The

abilities of policy analysts have been widely utilised by major coordinating organisations at the international level, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, to keep an eye on a variety of transnational developments and nationally significant and interesting activities.

Policy analysis is in high demand today, coming from both inside and outside of governments. This demand will probably continue to rise as more people call on governments to address new and unidentified issues. On the one hand, we should anticipate continued attempts to improve the calibre of policy analysis by utilising technological methods from the scientific and social sciences. However, more people are likely to use similar strategies, reimagine them, or create entirely new methods to combat them in an effort to have a bigger say in how policies are made at all governmental levels, from the local to the international.

The Evolving Supply of Policy Analysis

Since the middle of the 1960s, supply has significantly increased to keep up with the rising demand for policy analysis. However, this growth has coincided with a change in the character of the products offered, at least on the outskirts of the business. As a result, policy analysts who are politically motivated, who challenge historical questions, or who want to satiate intellectual curiosity rather than provide answers to pressing issues are now frequently seen. The question of what exactly qualifies as policy analysis is therefore not one that can be answered simply. Responses will rely heavily on the context. An answer from the mid-1970s, for instance, would have been more limited in scope than one from today. Supply has grown dramatically since the mid-1960s to meet the growing demand for policy analysis. Nevertheless, this expansion has been accompanied, at least on the periphery of the company, by a shift in the nature of the items being sold. This has led to the prevalence of politically driven policy analysts, those who doubt historical facts, or those who choose to satisfy academic curiosity over solving urgent problems. Therefore, there is no easy way to answer the question of what precisely constitutes policy analysis. The context will be crucial in determining the responses. For example, compared to today, an answer from the mid-1970s would have been more constrained.

The mainstream approach to policy analysis has always existed. Today, that style is more common than it has ever been. Both critics and practitioners describe the style as the utilisation of a fundamental but ever-expanding set of technical techniques (Stokey & Zeckhauser, 1988). Microeconomic analysis is the source of the majority of those activities. These comprise the application of benefit-cost analysis, the study of markets and market failure, and the examination of personal choice and trade-offs. This idea of policy analysis as a technological endeavour is frequently expanded upon in modern policy analysis textbooks (Bardach, 2020; Mint, 2022; Munger, 2020; Weimer & Vining, 2015). For instance, Eugene Bardach (2020) argues in his Practical Guide to Policy Analysis that the majority of policy problems can be analysed using a simple, "eightfold" method. The process calls for us to identify the issue, gather some supporting data, develop the alternatives, choose the standards, forecast the results, weigh the trade-offs, make a decision, and share our narrative. Like the methods of Stokey and Zeckhauser, Bardach's method is obviously based on microeconomic analysis, namely benefit-cost analysis. We shouldn't be surprised by any of this because, to the extent that there is such a field as policy analysis, it developed directly from microeconomic analysis. There is still a strong disciplinary connection. Economists comprise the majority of members of the United States-based Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM), the largest such association in the world. Likewise, contributions to the

Association's Journal of Policy Analysis and Management are authored predominantly, although certainly not exclusively, by economists.

Positively, we might observe that the fundamental method of policy analysis that comes from microeconomics is quite useful. A vast collection of technical practices has emerged as researchers have carried on using and developing this kind of analysis. A lot of work has gone into making sure that college students who want to pursue careers in policy analysis are properly exposed to these methods and have the chance to use them. Students enrolled in the majority of master's programs in public administration or public policy analysis must complete a core set of courses that introduce them to evaluation techniques, public economics, benefit-cost analysis, microeconomic analysis, and descriptive and inferential statistics. Courses on subjects like organisational behaviour, the essence of the policy-making process, and strategic decision-making are occasionally added to the core. Students typically have the option to add a variety of elective courses from many areas to their core course options. Graduates of these programs are undoubtedly prepared to start making valuable contributions to the creation of public policy right away. Many American colleges have launched master's programs in recent decades to teach policy analysts in the manner described here. Similar initiatives have recently been launched in numerous other nations worldwide. The people who are starting them are aware of the high demand for the training they aim to offer. These professional courses create opportunities for people who have already been trained in other disciplines to acquire valuable skills for supporting the development of policy analyses. Graduates end up being placed in many organizations in the public, private and non-profit sectors.

When seen in a more negative light, the conventional method of teaching and practicing policy analysis can be criticised for being too limited and favouring methods based on economic theory over analytical approaches that incorporate political and social theory. Let's say that the policy-making process is once more broken down into the following steps: problem definition, agenda-setting, policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Our grasp of agenda-setting and the politics of policy adoption, implementation, and evaluation is not greatly enhanced by the mainstream approach to policy analysis. Mainstream policy analysis, steeped in the utilitarian or rational choice perspective, is ill-equipped to explain why certain issues may arise at specific times, why some policy options may seem politically acceptable while others may not, and why adopted policies frequently undergo substantial changes during the implementation phase. Furthermore, whereas technical approaches to programme evaluation are clearly required to guide the measurement of program effectiveness, they often prescribe limited data gathering procedures that may fail to investigate very significant information. Research that focuses on evaluating programme results is unlikely to highlight the various—and sometimes contradictory—ways that participants and programme staff frequently interpret programs. As a result, analysts may misunderstand the reasons why participants and programme staff reinterpret the program's objectives from what policymakers had originally intended. Program design or theory issues may ultimately be disregarded in favour of interpretations that attribute the problem to poor execution (Chen, 2010). More generally, practitioners may be encouraged to adhere to presumptions about both individual and collective conduct that are not supported by the data by standard techniques to policy analysis. In the worst situations, this may result in suggestions for policy changes that are not properly specified.

Given the aforementioned findings, we may be concerned that junior analysts are not adequately prepared by mainstream policy analysis training to develop into reflective practitioners or practitioners who pay close attention to the opinions of those who

are most likely to be impacted by policy change (Forrester, 2010; Schön, 1993). The questions that policy analysts should ask when working on policy challenges have undoubtedly been rethought in part as a result of harsh criticisms of conventional analytical techniques (Stone, 2022). In professional settings, however, there is a strong reliance on mechanisms of tacit knowledge transfer, whereby narrowly trained junior analysts gain skills and insight that serve them well as policy managers. It is a fact that many individuals who have gone on to become excellent policy managers and leaders of government agencies started their careers as junior policy analysts straight out of mainstream policy programs. It is believed that the essential elements of this professional socialisation can be codified and are teachable (Mint, 2023), but the curricula of the many university programs that are currently in place to train future practitioners do not adequately incorporate the skills necessary to be an effective policy analyst.

People with substantial training in law, engineering, the natural sciences, and the liberal arts may start their careers in closely related fields before moving into policy work. This is in contrast to mainstream efforts to increase the supply of policy analysts, which all place a strong emphasis on the development of technical skills informed primarily by microeconomic theory. Other disciplines also play a significant role in preparing those who eventually become involved in policy analysis. For instance, people who were originally trained as sociologists may become certified social workers and then, after years of practice, take on managerial positions that require them to focus primarily on policy-making. Individuals who choose to work as policy analysts through these alternative career paths can contribute a variety of perspectives and rich experiences to policy debates. Intractable policy conflicts have been known to arise from the ensuing multidisciplinary contributions to policy discussions (Schön & Rein, 2014). These multidisciplinary forums can, however, result in successful policy formulation provided disputes arising from disparities in training and analytical viewpoints are effectively handled. Indeed, through "joined-up government" programs, more and more attempts are now being made to address important issues (Perri, 2024). By doing this, people from different professional backgrounds who are known to have been working on related issues are brought together to develop coherent policy solutions. To effectively detect and prevent child abuse, for instance, paediatricians, police officers, social workers, and educators may be urged to collaborate in the development of policies.

In the changing supply of policy analysis, two somewhat contradictory trends have been identified. An important degree of analytical isomorphism has been facilitated, on the one hand, by the expansion of professional programs at universities that are intended to train policy analysts. Regardless of the university or nation where these programs are offered, students must read from an expanding body of books and articles that cover various facets of policy analysis and study a similar set of subjects. These programs encourage public policy thinking that has strong roots in the field of economics. The creation of policy analysis, however, has seen a growing participation from scholars and practitioners from other fields. These non-mainstream contributions have a tendency to encourage diversity in analysis. When combined, these opposing tendencies characterise the modern discipline of policy analysis. The distinctions are frequently minimised. The overall impression is that of a journal dedicated to the advancement of mainstream methods of policy analysis, even though the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management publishes research articles and shorter pieces on teaching practice, all of which can be informed by a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Controversies in the multidisciplinary field of evaluation studies, on the other hand, have made a very different impact. As a result, when taught in professional public policy programmes, policy evaluation courses may offer

viewpoints that conflict with those covered in other foundational courses. Similarly, the eclecticism of contributions to organizational studies can transform otherwise staid courses on public management and administration into eye-opening explorations of organizational behaviour that present perspectives and analyses differing starkly from mainstream economic interpretations.

A combination of mainstream and alternative analytical viewpoints is expected to continue to define the changing supply of policy analysis. It is unrealistic to anticipate that new policy issues brought about by shifting political agendas, technological advancements, and social circumstances can easily adapt themselves to mainstream policy analysis. In fact, many modern issues defy such classification, even as policy analysis textbooks offer particular types of government or market failure as convincing justifications for policy action. For instance, a variety of recent policy disputes have been sparked by shifting views on what constitutes morally acceptable behaviour (Mooney, 2020) and the extent to which parents and the government should be trusted to act in the best interests of children (Nelson, 1994; Shapiro, 2019). Evaluating the relative merits of opposing viewpoints and arguments in these fields is not a good fit for mainstream techniques to policy analysis. This implies that policy analysis must be guided by the comparative strengths of competing disciplinary perspectives in order to make any progress in resolving disputes of this kind. A greater understanding of the extent to which national policies affect international relations, transnational norms, global trade, or environmental issues is also pushing the boundaries of policy analysis (Sandler, 2024; Tabb, 2024). More creativity in the creation and use of policy analysis methods will be necessary to keep up with these advancements. In many instances, the mainstream perspective will need to be augmented by alternative perspectives that offer sound analytical traction on otherwise difficult conceptual and practical problems. Thus, definitions of policy analysis are likely to keep expanding and the set of actors having relevant and important contributions to make will remain dynamic.

The Role of Participation in Policy Evaluation

Participation is not a novel concept in policy evaluation talks. In fact, several academics have determined that a key component of the evaluation process is involvement. Guba and Lincoln (1999), for instance, see evaluation as a process that promotes agreement among different stakeholders. As part of their approach (known as "fourth generation evaluation"), stakeholders work together and are given the authority to create and discuss proposals. Post-positivist academics who wish to broaden the argumentative foundation for policy analysis often use participation as a theme in their work (Fischer, 2015; Forester, 2019; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2023b; Majone, 1999). Here, the focus is on policy analysts developing interactive environments where policy arguments and facts can be made available for public discussion, rather than so much "solving" a specific issue or discovering its "truth." Scholars have lately suggested that interactive or deliberative forms of policy analysis are crucial for making practical decisions in situations where radical uncertainty, deep-value diversity, and complex networks of actors are becoming more and more prevalent in governance (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2023a). As a result, participation becomes essential to the process of assessing how policies function and how they could be enhanced. "Any knowledge we possess must be evaluated for its relevance and usefulness in interaction with the concrete situation at hand, and that this continuous process of assessment occurs in situations of intense social interaction," as stated by Hajer and Wagenaar (2023a, p. 24).

The discipline of public management has also produced some themes regarding participatory evaluation. Through consumer involvement, there

has been a movement to increase "client focus" in the monitoring and evaluation of service performance. Improved understanding of client needs, more openness, and enhanced accountability for services are the goals of participation in this context (Goetz & Gaventa, 2021). New Public Management (NPM), which stresses the significance of service providers meeting the needs and aspirations of their clients and consumers (much like customers in the private sector), is one managerial discourse that has advocated some of these imperatives. NPM has promoted passive and one-way forms of participation, such as satisfaction surveys, that encourage respondents to think as consumers rather than as citizens (Howard, 2020; Parkinson, 2024).

Recent scholarly and professional debates over the significance of "public value" in public sector management have also brought up the concept of "participation." In general, public value relates to what the public values (Benington, 2019; Horner et al., 2016), while the concept is still evolving (Alford & O'Flynn, 2019; Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2017). In order to help public managers understand their policy responsibilities and to motivate them to be more receptive to their constituents, the concept of public value was developed in the United States (Moore, 2015). In other Western democracies, including the UK, the concept of "public value" has drawn attention as a sort of remedial reaction to the managerial discourse of NPM (Horner et al., 2016). In contrast to NPM, the concept of public value does not conflate the views and preferences of consumers and citizens, and in doing so it encourages public managers to listen to the voices of different publics. While some of the literature on public value celebrates public participation, little detail is given on who should participate in the policy process and how.

Recent conversations about performance management in the public sector have also brought up participation. Although evaluation research and performance management have separate origins, assessing a program's, department's, or government's performance is a crucial part of policy assessment (see Blalock, 2019). The general goal of performance management is to make sure that public organisations are carrying out their duties effectively and efficiently. Ensuring that governments are efficient service providers is just as important as encouraging public accountability. Performance metrics are often quantitative, such as those derived from output measurements like units and service standards or budget data (Holzer & Kloby, 2015b).

A push to directly involve citizens in the evaluation and measurement of government performance has surfaced more lately. In addition to helping with data collecting and service design, advocates contend that citizens can contribute to the development of socially relevant measurements (Callahan, 2020; Ho, 2015). Furthermore, others contend that by building social capital and trust, citizen-led performance management can enhance democracy and encourage accountability (Halachimi & Holzer, 2020). The politics and realities of involving citizens in the policy-making process, however, have not received as much attention as debates on public value. As the use of citizen participation in performance management grows, this could alter. Already in the United States hundreds of performance projects have been conducted where citizens have been asked for their feedback on services, or involved in developing performance measures. In most cases participation appears to involve relatively non-interactive methods such as customer surveys (e.g. Heikkila & Isett, 2017; Holzer & Kloby, 2015a, 2015b).

The aforementioned discussion makes clear that the majority of the arguments in favour of more public involvement in policy review are expressed in terms of epistemology. Access to new data, alternative knowledge, and values can be obtained by involving various publics in the evaluation process. This may be the case, but the way that public involvement is being framed here ignores a number of democratic

and management factors that contribute to the growing importance of participation in modern governance.

Broader Drivers for Public Participation in Policy

The aim to democratise public services and the policymaking process is one of the main forces behind public policy involvement. On one level, this is a result of growing public demands to be involved in decisions, policies, or services that they support, pay, or utilise. However, on a different level, some academics and international organisations like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have pushed to give communities the chance to participate in decisions that impact them in order to address some of the democratic deficits in the policy process (Dry, 2020; Fu, 2016b; OECD, 2021). Communities become irate and disappointed when they are not allowed to participate in decision-making processes, and they begin to doubt the legitimacy and justice of the "imposed decision" (Renn et al., 2015). To put it another way, they might not agree to the required funding or behavioural changes or acknowledge the validity of the choice (Parkinson, 2016). Others cite numerous more ethical justifications for giving the public more influence over policymaking. For instance, some contend that proactive citizen participation in public policy, particularly in the long run, can reduce systemic disparities in communities and encourage more equitable outcomes (Schneider & Ingram, 2017). Participation is also said to promote more transparent decision-making, and thereby improve trust in public institutions and citizenship more broadly (Putnam, 2013). These normative arguments are all relevant to policy evaluation.

For many governments worldwide, participation has emerged as a crucial managerial and administrative subject (OECD, 2019). Participation might, at the at least, be required administratively, for instance, in order to complete an Environmental Impact Statement or other legal requirements. As an alternative, a participatory method could be used to help avoid or settle a dispute. For instance, governments have employed consultative processes to thwart protest politics and rebuild "trust" in democratic institutions since the 1970s. Using engagement to better distribute accountability for policy outcomes—both triumphs and failures—is a related motivation in this context (Head, 2017).

As was previously mentioned, public participation is being promoted more and more as a way to enhance government agencies' administrative effectiveness, service delivery, and accountability. Additionally, there has been a greater understanding that governments cannot do the role of governance alone; rather, they must collaborate with a number of interdependent entities (Wanna, 2019). Governments and other organisations' ability to solve problems is expected to improve with participation. The efficiency of public programs and services can be increased when various players collaborate on issues because they can exchange resources and expertise (Kickert et al., 2017; Kooiman, 2013). Additionally, collaborative and participatory methods offer decision-makers a different way to handle the intricacies and unpredictabilities of contemporary policy concerns (Koppenjan & Klijn, 2024).

More aspirational administrators and managers may use public participation to change the discourse or spark change. For instance, in order to broaden the conversation on a contentious policy topic beyond symbols and specific interests, they may resort to more deliberative approaches (e.g. Cars et al., 2022; Einsiedel et al., 2021; Niemeyer, 2024). By experimenting with novel participatory procedures, public administrators may also aim to get around some of the drawbacks of traditional forms of community involvement (such opinion surveys and pressure group politics) (Hend, 2022; Reddel & Woolcock, 2023).

Who Participates in Policy Evaluation, and How?

It would be incorrect to think of participatory policy evaluation as a procedure when pertinent specialists collaborate to determine the "effectiveness" of a program or policy. This method circumvents the crucial democratic justification for participatory policy evaluation, which holds that the evaluation process (and its conclusion) is valid to the degree that it involves potential policy stakeholders in an informed public discussion process (Dry, 2020).

Targeting "stakeholder" groups is a popular strategy for involving potentially impacted communities in policy review (e.g. Guba & Lincoln, 1999). Usually, this phrase is used to refer to recognisable groups or organisations that have shown interest in a plan, initiative, or policy problem. Stakeholders may also be organisations with valuable insights or information, as well as the authority and means to thwart or encourage changes to policies. This type of stakeholder engagement bears many of the democratic risks of interest group pluralism, chief among them the tendency to give preference to institutionalised, well-funded, and well-organised interests (Lowi, 1979; Olson, 1975). In reality, discourse is often limited to a small number of elites and policy entrepreneurs due to stakeholder involvement methods (Curtain, 2016; Hunold & Young, 2018).

Some academics emphasise the significance of policy analysts hearing a range of perspectives, particularly those of the marginalised and under-represented, in order to combat this mobilisation bias (Dry, 2020; Fischer, 2020; Forester, 2019). Those advocating from the standpoint of public value, who specifically emphasise the need for public involvement that extends beyond experts and special interest groups, advance a similar viewpoint. In order to ensure that public resources best serve the needs of the general public, not the self-interest of public managers, professionals, or one specific group of citizens, Horner et al. (2016, p. 19) contend that the objective should be "about placing individuals as citizens centre stage of decision-making." Other scholars have been motivated to make emerging forms of network governance (which typically involve public, private, and non-government representatives) more inclusive of everyday citizens (Bingham et al., 2015; Hend, 2018).

It is evident that there are numerous pertinent communities and groups for each particular policy issue or initiative. As with any participatory projects, these publics will be defined by the specific focus of the evaluation process (Barnes et al., 2023). Considering how various "publics" might be asked to contribute to various phases of the assessment process can be helpful. Interest groups (including influential and marginalised groups), specific communities (specific socioeconomic, user or disaffected groups), elite stakeholders (businesses, experts, think tanks, consultants), the general public (lay public, "users," and taxpayers), and government officials and departments are a few examples of such categories (adapted from Salter, 2017).

It is less clear how these different publics might really participate in policy evaluation. Participatory strategies for involving various publics in policy concerns are abundant (Fu, 2016a; Gastil & Levine, 2015; Roberts, 2024; Smith, 2019). According to Head (2017) and IAP (2017), participatory methods are frequently categorised in terms of a ladder or spectrum of public participation, where mechanisms vary in purpose from informing (e.g., open days, websites, and education campaigns) to providing feedback and consultation (e.g., surveys, focus groups, and public hearings) to more interactive and collaborative processes (e.g., advisory committees, citizens' juries, and partnerships). In actuality, soliciting public input or comments—for instance, through surveys, focus groups, submissions, and public hearings—is the most popular method of including the public in policy evaluation. Participation in the majority of these processes is not very interactive, and there is little opportunity for wider public engagement. Participatory processes are

sometimes linked to more formal expert review procedures, such enquiries and advisory panels.

The two conventional methods of gathering public feedback that are most common in policy evaluation—satisfaction surveys and public meetings—are explicitly and thoroughly discussed in the sections that follow. A quick overview of some of the more cutting-edge strategies for public participation that prioritise inclusivity and public discussion follows. To be clear, the goal here is not to present a thorough analysis of all the many participatory mechanisms, but rather to give an overview of their diversity and talk about some of the more general political and policy concerns that arise when using them to evaluate policies.

Citizen Surveys

Surveys aimed at citizens or clients are a popular way to get input on how well a policy program, department, or project is performing. Although there are other variations, the most popular format is a satisfaction survey that follows normal survey research methods. Participants are chosen at random and contacted by phone or mail. In certain situations, more participatory techniques like focus groups may be used to investigate citizen satisfaction.

Although public administration has always used satisfaction surveys, their use has grown since the 1990s as a result of a stronger emphasis on providing customer-centred services (Osborne & Gaebler, 2012). Surveys are therefore viewed as a means for public managers to learn how to enhance their offerings in order to better satisfy the demands of their customers and clients (Kelly, 2015). Because satisfaction surveys generate "evidence" from a procedure that is generally considered to be methodologically robust, they also mesh nicely with the conversation about more "evidence-based" policy-making (Howard, 2020).

The use of citizen surveys as a benchmarking instrument to monitor changes in citizens' satisfaction with public services over time has also become more popular. In this regard, the Citizens First survey conducted in Canada has emerged as a particularly significant model that has been imitated globally, offering public managers information about the demands of citizens and the efficacy of programs. Since 1998, Canadian governments have conducted biennial surveys to get feedback from thousands of residents on public services (see Howard, 2020 for a critical viewpoint).

A common and appealing method for involving the public in policy review is the satisfaction survey. They serve as a rapid gauge of public service customers' expectations. Such surveys, however, are a far cry from the kind of participatory or deliberative review that some promote (e.g. Majone, 1999) and reflect superficial forms of citizen involvement. One of the main issues is that citizens are assigned a limited and passive role as customers; additionally, it is not always evident who these consumers are or where to look for them (Howard, 2020). Evaluation surveys of this kind also focus respondents on questions about whether they are satisfied with a particular service, but not about broader issues such as their expectations for what the public service should do, how services should be delivered/provided and who should use them (Horner et al., 2016).

Rather than serving as a practical external performance indicator, the information gathered from citizen surveys has frequently been utilised to guide educational initiatives. For instance, public managers frequently respond by improving public awareness of service quality when citizens' satisfaction with a service is significantly lower than the "objective" administrative performance data (Kelly & Swindell, 2022). The premise that "personal experience and indeed self-interest is the sole determinant of a user's evaluation of a service" is more problematic in satisfaction surveys (Horner

et al., 2016, p. 20). Consequently, they may inadvertently promote certain public sector reforms that are centred on the provision of customer service, such enhancing consumer choice and the use of private sector suppliers (Howard, 2020).

A public inquiry or other formal policy evaluation procedure may include some public meetings. In these situations, legally mandated public gatherings are known as public hearings. Public hearings are a standard component of formal public enquiries in several nations, like Canada. However, as noted by Salter (2017), hearings differ significantly based on the composition of the public. While some public hearings invite members of the general public to provide community expertise or personal testimonials, others call on representatives of stakeholders to participate in an interest bargaining process.

In many Western democracies, public gatherings are still a common and frequently required way for the public to participate (Baker et al., 2015; McComas, 2021; Snider, 2023). In more totalitarian settings, like China, their use is also growing (Zhong & Mol, 2018). The usage of community cabinets, in which ministers travel to various locations within their territories to field community enquiries, is a more recent variation in the UK and Australia (Marsh et al., 2020; Reddel & Woolcock, 2023).

Public meetings have a poor reputation despite their widespread use (Heberlein, 1986; Kathelene & Martin, 2011). The main complaint against public hearings is that they rarely allow citizens to have a say in policy decisions. They are frequently carried out as a basic form of engagement in which the emphasis is on informing residents rather than taking into account their opinions. Meetings are frequently scheduled too late in the decision-making process, leaving little opportunity to consider the opinions or concerns of the public. Because of this, public gatherings are frequently viewed as venues for communal outbursts or as chances for advocates to declare and defend policy (King et al., 2018, p. 322). Public gatherings, according to others, are merely democratic rites used to fabricate legitimacy (Topal, 2019).

Additionally, public meeting attendees are criticised for not being reflective of the larger community (Roberts, 2024). Meetings are usually attended by members of organised interest groups, and the most articulate and emotionally charged individuals dominate the conversation (Willia & Fu, 2024).

Additionally, public hearings and meetings are not very deliberative. They spend a lot of time giving speeches or giving technical presentations. Generally, public participation is confined to brief comment periods with little to no opportunity for debate. The commissioning body usually controls the scope of discussions and sets agendas in advance. Additionally, the format of public gatherings frequently encourages hostile environments. For instance, public participants usually face officials while standing at microphones at the front of the room, their backs to the other attendees (Willia & Fu, 2024).

Some academics contend that public gatherings give citizens the chance to carry out a variety of different political tasks, even though they might not be a practical means for them to discuss or directly affect policy decisions. Public gatherings allow citizens to: (1) communicate with decision-makers and the media; (2) publicly support or humiliate public officials; (3) establish the policy agenda; (4) postpone decisions; and (5) establish networks, according to empirical study (Adams, 2024). Since public meetings are available to everybody, unlike more formal consultative or deliberative forums (described below), citizens have the opportunity to use political manoeuvring and lobbying strategies (Adams, 2024). In this sense, public meetings fulfill an important democratic role in the policy system by encouraging public accountability and government responsiveness (Adams, 2024; Snider, 2023). Others

speculate that public meetings might promote positive rituals that reaffirm civic values and encourage social cohesion (McComas et al., 2020).

Public Meetings and Hearings

Public meetings are another common way that the public is involved in policy evaluation. Typically, a public meeting is an open forum for residents and impacted groups to offer input on a particular project, initiative, or policy problem. Although size usually restricts attendance, participation is normally accessible to everyone and the entire proceedings are supposedly "public" (Snider, 2023). The formality of meetings varies, but generally speaking, a panel of authorities and experts front a public audience and may provide a formal or technical presentation. Most public gatherings then give attendees a chance to come up and briefly express their opinions. Generally speaking, communication between citizens and between citizens and officials is discouraged (Adams, 2024).

Public meetings have been improved over the past ten years (e.g., see Baker et al., 2015). Some of these improvements include using new forms of information technology to make them more accessible, transparent, and accountable to the public (Snider, 2023), integrating more deliberative elements (McComas et al., 2020), and connecting them more closely to other forms of citizen engagement (Adams, 2024).

Innovative Forms of Public Engagement

Numerous creative methods for more thoroughly and significantly involving various publics in policy issues have emerged as a result of the shortcomings of traditional approaches to public engagement mentioned above. Diversifying the types of participants and their level of engagement has been a special focus of this innovation. Here, the emphasis is on processes that involve regular people in a lengthy public discussion process. Usually, professionals and other policy actors provide input to the citizens' discussions, which are independently facilitated. The discussions and proposals that result from the deliberative process are fundamentally grounded in a careful evaluation of all the arguments in light of the public interest (Hend, 2021).

The citizens' jury is the most often used deliberative process, especially for local governments. It usually consists of a panel of about 20 randomly chosen residents who convene for several days to discuss a specific policy topic (Crosby & Nethercut, 2015). By integrating talks in small and big groups, larger events like deliberative polls can involve hundreds of individuals in policy deliberations (Fishkin, 2019). Even bigger is the 21st Century Town Meeting concept, which uses polling key pads and networked computers to allow thousands of people to participate (typically in various venues) (Lukensmeyer et al., 2015). In addition to working in small groups of 10 or so, participants are all connected to a central database for extensive discussions. Some innovative deliberative procedures, such as citizens' assemblies have been specifically designed to connect to formal institutions of representative democracy, such as parliaments and referenda (Warren & Pearse, 2018).

Urban planning, energy, gene technology, health care, housing, nuclear waste, consumer protection, and indigenous affairs are just a few of the topics on which deliberative forms of public participation have been used in the majority of Western democracies (Gastil & Levine, 2015; Goo & Dry, 2016; Hajer, 2015; Hend, 2015; Johnson, 2019; Parkinson, 2024).

Even though deliberative governance has grown, there are still some major obstacles to overcome in its application. The absence of institutionalisation is one of the main drawbacks of deliberative processes to date. Surprisingly few deliberative initiatives are actually linked to or influence current governance structures (e.g. Goo & Dry, 2016). The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly's consideration of

electoral reform is the most well-documented example (Warren & Pearse, 2018). Because limited institutionalisation depends on players outside the state to initiate and support projects, it has consequences for the sustainability of public discussion (Willia & Fu, 2024). Indeed, a variety of non-state actors, including foundations, academics, entrepreneurs, think tanks, and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), have initiated and sponsored the most inventive participatory programs (both in terms of outreach and size) in the United States and Australia. However, it is possible to see non-state actors' encouragement of public discussion as a crucial component of democratising the policy-making process. In fact, non-state actors use these participatory projects as "insisted spaces" to assess projects or their own internal decision-making processes, or to increase community capacity (Cars, 2018).

The fact that deliberative governance is not commonly used in the field of policy evaluation is another significant drawback. According to Hartz-Karp (2015), the majority of deliberative modes of public involvement have been employed thus far in the early phases of policy formulation, such as helping citizens define policy problems, create future policy scenarios, or rank policy options. Citizens typically have little opportunity to discuss the efficacy of a given policy program and how it is being implemented. In fact, there are very few recorded instances in which the deliberative process has allowed individuals to monitor and assess the advancement of suggested plans or objectives in addition to determining the policy agenda. For instance, Fu (2023) details a community policing initiative in Chicago where participants had the chance to study regulations and suggest modifications during lengthy, continuous discussions. Citizens have also had the chance to assess policy programs in relation to the distribution and tracking of funding for public services and local infrastructure through a variety of participatory budgeting initiatives (Baiocchi, 2015; Johnson, 2019).

E-governance, a novel approach to public participation, has also emerged online. More and more governments are putting their services online and requesting feedback from the public. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have made it possible for agencies to engage with their constituents, albeit primarily in a one-way fashion. Web-based surveys are currently used by several departments, however they often reproduce many of the issues with traditional surveys that were previously mentioned (Robbins et al., 2018). This has led to some experimenting with more interactive online engagement methods that stimulate conversation (Boner et al., 2015).

In order to encourage more transparent, responsible, and responsive government, an increasing number of government organisations have also been supporting the use of collaborative online technologies (web 2.0), such as wikis and social networking sites (e.g. Government 2.0 Taskforce, 2019). There is a risk that these "crowd sourcing" methods simply provide a restricted type of "e-engagement" among communities of like-minded individuals, even as they provide new platforms for citizens to learn more about and potentially participate in government operations (Lubensky, 2019).

There are several ways to increase who participates in participatory processes and how through the Internet. Additionally, web technology has been successfully employed to enhance in-person deliberative procedures (Hartz-Karp, 2015). Despite the Internet's promise to increase public participation, governmental organisations have primarily used it to improve customer service rather than engagement and consultation (Dutil et al., 2017). In fact, the long-term risk, especially for policy evaluation, is that public participation options are crowded with superficial e-governance models

that prioritise client and customer feedback above thoughtful citizen input.

Conclusion: Prospects for Policy Analysis and Pursuing Participatory Policy Evaluation

In the middle of the 1960s, the policy analysis movement started to take shape. It is vast, varied, and international now. For a number of reasons, the practice of numerous individuals producing policy analysis for a variety of audiences might be regarded as a movement. First, regardless of their position in society, policy analysts all devote some portion of their time to recognising, comprehending, and addressing public issues. New issues and innovative solutions have emerged as a result of the increased use of policy analysis methodologies in the study of public issues. Although there may be a limited number of recognised policy issues at any given moment, this list is always changing as certain issues are fixed and others gain attention. Second, it is widely acknowledged that knowledge of public problems and how they can best be addressed requires thorough, theory-driven, and evidence-based investigation, even though those who engage in policy analysis work from a variety of perspectives and frequently make contradictory and conflicting arguments. This is significant because it has become more difficult for long-standing groups to use their informal, quiet power to influence government actions as a result of shifting perceptions of what kinds of claims should guide public deliberations. Third, the growing reliance on this style of policy analysis has required a core group of people to regularly apply a well-established set of analytical and research methods. As a result, a mainstream definition of policy analysis has been formed, and numerous university programs have been created to professionalise aspiring analysts. Fourth, the advancement of policy analysis has not been limited to those who use conventional methods. In fact, there has been some receptivity to individuals from different fields presenting different theoretical and empirical viewpoints on specific policy issues. There have frequently been major attempts to enhance the analytical techniques used as a response of criticism of popular methodologies. Lastly, policy analysts have a common awareness that they are doing significant, socially valuable work, regardless of their immediate goals or substantive interests. They both agree that systematic attempts to alter social institutions are at the heart of public policy. Given the gravity of this endeavour, it helps to explain why policy discussions are frequently contentious and drawn out. When combined, these diverse aspects of modern policy work effectively serve as indicators of a trend in policy analysis. In their own unique ways, those involved are participating in the continuous process of determining the proper function of government in society and the most effective means for governments to mediate social and economic connections.

What hopes does this movement have for the future? How might it develop further? Both internal and external factors will probably guarantee the movement's continued growth. One obvious takeaway from the discussion above is that sound policy analysis generates demand on its own in terms of internal dynamics. This occurs because competing parties have a tremendous motivation to outsmart one another in competitive situations, such as discussions over policy options. Other parties will quickly recognise the value in raising their game if one party's arguments are regularly backed up by solid policy research and this seems to provide them an advantage in debate. This may entail copying, editing, or criticising rivals' strategies. In any case, the outcome is more policy analysis being produced. Aside from this, thorough policy studies—particularly assessments of already-existing programmes—frequently highlight areas of policy execution or design that need further focus. Additional policy analysis takes place when we are compelled to start over. The idea that sound policy analysis generates demand on its own implies that

the movement's current vigour and momentum will persist.

The policy analysis movement's growth is fuelled by external factors that stem from shifting political, social, and economic landscapes. Globalisation, the term used to describe the growing interconnection of economies and cultures, is likely to lead to new policy issues in the future. The dynamics that were seen in federal systems from the late nineteenth century well into the twentieth century are echoed in this way by the changes brought about by globalisation. Intense interjurisdictional competition and growing cross-border business during that time period led to fresh perspectives on the function of government in society. Determining which governmental levels were most appropriate for carrying out various tasks also required a great deal of work. Modern times bring with them new issues and queries. By learning from the past, it is evident that in the upcoming decades, a number of new policy issues will be on government agendas and the subject of heated discussions. Many of these issues will be brought about by globalising forces, but the problems themselves will show themselves at all governmental levels, starting at the local level. People inside and outside of government will likely be very interested in these policy issues, as they have in the past, and they will need more creative and excellent policy analysis to expand their knowledge and bolster their arguments.

The literature on policy evaluation has mostly overlooked the growth of participatory government over the last ten years. Instead, via the performance management lens, where public engagement is restricted to one-way forms of involvement like citizen satisfaction surveys, the function of participation in evaluation has been interpreted narrowly.

However, this paper has demonstrated that ex post policy evaluation can be significantly enhanced by the use of more creative forms of public participation. In addition to exposing pertinent arguments, perspectives, and values to public scrutiny, processes that prioritise inclusion and deliberation can help elicit important perspectives on policy programs and agencies. By involving those affected by policies in the evaluation process, participation can also assist public managers in navigating the growing complexity of policy issues. Most importantly, however, the inclusion of affected publics helps to secure the democratic legitimacy of an evaluative process and its results.

However, there are certain obstacles to policy evaluation that come with participation. First, the politics of an evaluation program may become more intense if more voices are included in the process. Opening the process to more inclusive and deliberative forms of participation runs the danger of escalating contestation, even if all forms of policy evaluation entail opposing actors "framing, blaming, and credit claiming" (Bovens et al., 2016, p. 323). This is particularly true when regular residents are invited to participate, even though their viewpoints might not be seen as real or valid. Powerful players that stand to gain from the status quo or who are eager to keep issues out of the public eye are likely to oppose greater deliberation in policy review (Hend, 2022, 2021). It also needs to be recognized that not all services and issues are amenable to direct citizen engagement and participation. Fair and open dialogue will be difficult in those contexts where there is a sense of policy failure, crisis or declining trust (Bovens et al., 2016).

The second issue is the widespread claim that public participation is too frequently tokenistic and unsustainable. According to Willia and Fu (2024), a large number of participatory attempts are one-off initiatives that are not well incorporated into the institutions and governance structures that are currently in place. Because evaluation procedures are frequently contracted out to outside organisations, they are particularly susceptible in this regard. Furthermore, it is not unusual for a single agency or

policy to undergo several evaluations, leading to recommendations that are disjointed and fragmented (Bovens et al., 2016). Making sure that any participatory evaluation is linked to other evaluation methods and the larger institutions of governance is a difficulty. It is also important that any participatory evaluation is situated in an overall strategy for public engagement that targets a range of policy actors using different processes.

Third, participation can cause tensions and complexity for public managers. One major problem is having to reconcile the public's demand for greater involvement while at the same time attempting to be an authoritative voice or decision-maker (Yang & Callahan, 2017). In their organisations, public managers also have limitations. For instance, they frequently have no say in how they interact with the community since "the mandate and powers of their agency shape purpose and practice" (Stewart, 2019b, p. 49). This leads to the outsourcing of many participation activities to private consultants, which has consequences for the sustainability of public engagement in general (see Hend & Cars, 2018; Willia & Fu, 2024) as well as public sector accountability (see Speers, 2017). The broader challenge here is that participatory policy evaluation requires a shift in the way bureaucracies authorize, manage and demonstrate accountability (Goetz & Gaventa, 2021).

Additionally, participation necessitates that public managers make room for alternate information sources that generally conflict with more conventional evaluation techniques that yield quantitative data with ostensibly "definitive" outcomes. The results of any evaluation procedure that involves involvement must ultimately be able to compete with those of other, more conventional types of policy evaluation. The legitimacy of people's preferences is frequently questioned during the evaluation of various arguments and characterised as being overly impressionistic, illogical, or peculiar (Hend, 2021; Yang & Callahan, 2017). Making sure that the opinions of elites and lobby organisations are given equal weight with the opinions of the general public throughout an evaluation process is a difficulty for public managers.

Public administration practitioners must be better prepared to engage in participatory forms of governance in order to address these and other issues (Bingham et al., 2015; OECD, 2021). In order to support practitioners in expanding their participatory efforts in assessment beyond citizen surveys and towards more inclusive and deliberative approaches, new competencies and incentive structures are needed. In addition to managing and conducting participation, skills are required to properly express its limitations. Understanding people's perspectives and ensuring they are aware of which of their problems may (or may not) be impacted by their participation are key components of engagement, according to Stewart (2019b, p. 49).

Deepening the role of participation in policy evaluation gives an important opportunity to democratize the policy process. After all evaluation is the stage where the effectiveness of policy programs are examined, and the place where new ideas and agendas are generated. Therefore, increasing and strengthening public participation in the policy evaluation process will improve the findings and, eventually, their validity.

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