From Policy Design to Policy Practice

B. Guy Peters
Maurice Falk Professor
University of Pittsburgh
Begin by Questioning the Frame of the Main Theme

• Not to be Rude

• But Good Policy Design Must Include Plan of Action

• Perhaps Too Often Designs Appear Abstract andDisconnected from the Real World of Governing

• But a Design Needs to Consider how to Translate Intentions into Action

• And Effective Action
Begin by Thinking About Policy Design

• All Policy is Designed

  Implicit
  Explicit

• Formulation Literature

• But Literature, and Practice, of More Conscious Design
Thinking About Policy Design

• First mentioned by the fathers of the field

• Basically (again) thinking about formulation is a systematic manner (Simon).

• Tinbergen

• Then Dormant for a Period
Then the Late 1970s and Early 1980s

• Dryzek

• Linder and Peters

• Bobrow and Dryzek

• The Instruments Literature
Technocratic Orientation

• The Requirements for Design

  Model of Causation
  Model of Instrumentation
  Model of Intervention (Implementation)
  Model of Evaluation

Goal of Creating Algorithms

In vain, Ignored Too Much About Politics
But Both Instrumentation and Intervention Were about Action

• Basically, about Implementation

• Instruments about the Tools to be Used

• Intervention about the Organizational Structures

• And About Politics
But Even Then Some Major Problems with Designing That Hinder Putting into Practice

• First, Focusing on a Narrow Field

• The Coordination Problem, but More

• To Design a Health Policy Involves Other Aspects of Social Policy, Housing? Transportation?

• But What is the Stopping Rule?
2) But Building In too Much Complexity

• Most Policy Problems are Complex, not only Wicked Problems

• So Tended to build Elaborate Structures

• Perrow, *Normal Accidents*

• Obamacare as a Good Example
3) Assumption of *Tabula Rasa*

- Very few Virgin Policy Domains
- But Much of the Literature, and Practice, Does not take it on Board
- And Especially True for Practice. e. g. Repeal and Replace of Obamacare
- Two Reasons
  
  Analytically, Easier
  Politically Looks new
4) Focus on Instruments

• Wait, Just Said Instruments were Part of the Answer?

• Instruments are Important

• But Design is More than Selecting an Instrument, as is Implementation

• Technically Instruments are Replaceable, Politically They are Not

• This Includes Organizational Politics
5) Lack of Attention to Context

- Assumption That One Size Fits All
- Especially for Policy Transfer
- But Also for Ideological and Political Projects
- But Need to Understand the Context within which the Policy Will Function

- Political
- Institutional
- Socio-economic
- Cultural
For All These Problems Organizations are at the Heart

• Specialization

• Commitment

• Standard Operating Procedures

• Paradoxically, the Best Run Organizations May be the Worst for Designing
But Now the “New Design”

• Based more on Product Design

• Opening Up Rather than Closing Down

• More Collaborative

• Understanding the Non-linearity of Most Problems
Conclusion

• Designing Policy Implies Designing Organizations

• Public Administration Should be Closely Connected with Public Policy

• But Like All Aspects of Academe Today Growing Apart

• And Perhaps Also in Practice