

IMPLEMENTING **PUBLIC** **POLICY**

THIRD EDITION

MICHAEL HILL
& PETER HUPE



IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC POLICY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY
OF OPERATIONAL GOVERNANCE



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Peter Hupe teaches Public Administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam. In 2012–2013 he was a Visiting Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford. His research focuses on the theoretical–empirical study of the policy process, particularly implementation and street-level bureaucracy. In a longstanding collaboration he and Michael Hill have published articles in *Public Administration*, *Public Management Review* and *Policy and Politics*. With Aurélien Buffat they edited *Understanding Street-Level Bureaucracy* (2015).

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION¹

This book reviews the literature on public policy implementation, relating it to contemporary developments in thinking about governance. It stresses the continuing importance of a focus upon the implementation part of policy processes. Accordingly it goes on to suggest strategies for future research on implementation and identifies modes of managing implementation.

We are very grateful to Ian Holliday for commissioning the book for Sage Politics Texts, and for the support he has given us during our work. We also wish to thank Lucy Robinson of Sage for her support of the venture, and Lauren McAllister and Justin Dyer for all their help with the preparation of the manuscript.

We are particularly grateful to Marianne Vorthoren for her assistance throughout the whole project. She always reacted with good humour to our relentless demands for articles. While we were teaching, doing consultancy and other jobs, she helped to ensure that our work on the book went on. At the last stages of preparation of the manuscript we benefited enormously from Vicky Balsem's typographical and word-processing expertise. Thanks are also due to Jantiene van Elk for her bibliographical support.

We thank all those who provided comments on a draft of the manuscript. In addition to Ian Holliday, these were (in alphabetical order): Bob Hudson, Walter Kickert, Stephen Mitchell, Larry O'Toole, Christopher Pollitt and Arthur Ringeling.

We are grateful to the board of the research group *Waardering in en van het openbaar bestuur* (The Evaluation of Government) at the Department of Public Administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam, particularly the chair and treasurer, Arthur Ringeling and Harry Daemen, for their financial support. Similar thanks go to the School of Social Sciences and the Department of Public Administration of Erasmus University Rotterdam, particularly Wim Derksen, Jan Hakvoort and Percy Lehning, the (then) Dean, for approving Peter Hupe's arrangement to spend his concentrated research time in the second semester of 2000–1 at Goldsmiths College, University of London. Similar thanks go to Nirmala Rao, at that time Head of the Department of Social Policy and Politics at Goldsmiths College, for hospitality for our work, and to the Warden of Goldsmiths, the late Ben Pimlott, for his approval of our affiliations to the College.

Our wives, Betty and Nynke, have both been wise and patient, very committed to what we are doing, while giving us the space to get on with our work.

They have been supportive and tolerant when mealtime conversation turned to the book. We therefore dedicate this book to them.

Note

- 1 This preface has been amended slightly.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of this book, published in 2002, was well received by peer reviewers in several journals of political science and public administration. It has appeared on reading lists for curricula in those disciplines across the world. It thus is obvious that we felt pleased when David Mainwaring of Sage asked us to prepare a second edition of the book.

In this second edition both much and little have changed. Concerning the latter, we have maintained our view on what the top-down/bottom-up controversy has brought to the state of implementation theory and research conceived as a sub-discipline between political science and public administration. In the first three chapters, therefore, only minor changes have been made. What also has remained the same is our clinical view of the future of implementation studies; see the final chapter. As long as people engage in collective endeavours, intentions will have to be turned into achievements – as legitimately as possible. That fact justifies the expectation that the study of the ways this happens will endure, despite the changing labels for such a study.

New elements concern the increased importance of the concept of governance and the development of *governance research* when related to that. The essence of both seems a widening of scope, away from vertical means/ends schemes as the only thinkable approach in practice as well as in theory. In fact, in this second edition we particularly elaborate on these themes in more detail, because they were already present in the first edition of the book. More specifically we can give the following overview of changes.

As indicated, the first three chapters have been only lightly adapted. In view of insights gained since 2002, in Chapter 4, we have reformulated the range of issues addressed in implementation theory. In doing so, we do not give a substantively different state of the art, but the way we present the issues has changed. In Chapter 5, we focus on the historical and societal environment within which implementation is being studied, as we did in the first edition. More explicitly, however, we position the policy-implementation paradigm in what we consider as a historical development. In Chapter 6, we present our meta-theoretical framework of analysis as an alternative to the widely used stages approach to the analysis of public policy. This is something we did in the first edition, but now it has been elaborated in a separate chapter. In the first edition we included both a research review and a set of recommendations on doing research. The former has been removed but the latter has been expanded in Chapter 7 (and aligned with the account of the issues in Chapter 4), drawing

on experience from the previous research review and our efforts to keep up with more recent articles and monographs. In Chapter 8, we look at the practice of implementation, as we did in the corresponding chapter in the first edition. The difference is that now we explore the dimensions of contextual variety more systematically. As far as the conceptual part of the chapter is concerned (modes of governance), where previously we were rather prescriptive, our stance is now that those who make prescriptions need to take into account the ways in which policy and institutional contexts will differ. In the final chapter, the general argument of the book is summarized, and some promising developments are identified.

Several colleagues were kind enough to give their comments on drafts of the first edition of this book; they are acknowledged in the parts of the earlier preface reproduced above. We remain grateful to them. Since then we have had the chance to develop our ideas further in several publications and in many classes and seminars. From these we wish to highlight the contributions of the editors, and anonymous reviewers, of *Public Management Review*, *Policy and Politics* and *Public Administration* for comments on articles published in those journals in which we have developed our thinking between the two editions.

Michael Hill would like to express his thanks to Wayne Parsons and Ken Young who invited him to participate in research and teaching at Queen Mary College, University of London, and to Raymond Kuhn who extended his visiting professorship there for three more years from 2008. Students from a lively MA course, with participants from UK central and local government and from many other countries, have taught him a great deal. He is also grateful to Nicola Vick and Perri 6 for involving him in a research study of the implementation of the English direct payments scheme. Susan Balloch and Philip Haynes at the Health and Social Policy Research Centre at the University of Brighton have continued to be invaluable sources of support and have kept him in touch with applied research.

From February till October 2007, Peter Hupe was visiting professor at the Public Management Institute in Leuven. He would like to thank his colleagues there, as well as at the Department of Public Administration, Erasmus University Rotterdam, his institutional base, for enabling this affiliation. These thanks regard in particular Geert Bouckaert, Marleen Brans and Manu Gerard in Leuven, and Kees van Paridon, Victor Bekkers and Henk Schmidt in Rotterdam. Weekly teaching to both Flemish and Dutch students made it possible to try out a notion like the *trias gubernandi* and other ideas about studying the policy process. At these two universities the students are thanked for their response. In a late stage of the preparation of this book Donald Kettl gave comments on a draft of Chapter 5, which were greatly appreciated.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

Since 2009 much in the world has altered. The financial crisis became world-wide, while its impact is still pervasive. In several countries there have been shifts in government coalitions or even regime changes. Internet and other new media of mass communication have turned the world definitely into a village. At the same time many things have remained as they were. Wars have ended, but new ones have broken out. Nuclear plants, claimed to be safe and solid, occasionally appear to be sources of devastation and horror. New medicines are being invented, but in the meanwhile, becoming more prosperous enhances risks of getting all kinds of diseases.

Against this state of the human condition, it seems somewhat futile to get involved in writing about implementation, a topic that presumes some stable relationships between human aspirations and their realization. Yet we were pleased when Natalie Aguilera of Sage suggested that we should start thinking about a third edition of this monograph. Such a message from a publisher means that she is satisfied about the sales of one's book – and when a publisher is happy, authors are as well. In substantive terms the message implied that the first and second editions of this book have been used in courses and curricula throughout the world, and still are. It is obvious we are highly pleased with this fact.

We are indebted to the colleagues and students using the previous editions, some of whom gave us comments. Apart from that, others have influenced our thinking on the study of public policy and public administration more in general. Confining ourselves to joint writing projects in the present or recent past we would like to mention (in alphabetical order) Aurélien Buffat, Arthur Edwards, Menno Fenger, Christopher Hood, Eva van Kooten, Theo van der Krogt, Monika Nangia, Christopher Pollitt, Harald Sætren and Arie-Jan van 't Zelfde. In terms of providing favourable institutional conditions we owe a lot to Philip Haynes (University of Brighton), to Victor Bekkers and Kees van Paridon (Erasmus University Rotterdam) and to the Warden and Fellows of All Souls College, Oxford. The latter generously offered hospitality to Peter Hupe as a Visiting Fellow, enabling him to write during a sustained period.

Regarding this third edition in relation to the previous one, published in 2009, a similar observation can be made about the world at large: there have been changes, although much has remained the same. We processed every chapter, leaving the overall structure of the book intact. Updating the insights from and references to the literature was essential. We can highlight three particularly salient considerations. First, the development of analysis of the policy process in

terms of 'governance', recognizing multiple sources of influence and complex questions about the legitimacy of decision makers. Second, an explosion of interest in developing the ideas about street-level bureaucracy to analyse the way policy is delivered and discretion is exercised. Third, new approaches to empirical analysis of implementation processes combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

On the whole we maintain our pragmatic view on the subject matter. As there was implementation before the term was invented, there will be when different labels are being used. This makes us confident about the future: of implementation studies, but actually overall. Next generations will be confronted with large and smaller tasks, as has happened since the pyramids were built. They will keep aspiring to the fulfilment of such tasks; succeeding one way, struggling in another. Therefore we dedicate this book to our grandchildren: Kathy, Rosa, Nuala and Mari, and Sophie and Laurens, respectively. Wishing them wisdom we are convinced that they, like our children, are able to find ways to face the challenges ahead.

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1

INTRODUCTION

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Introduction

Once upon a time there was a period of intense academic debate about the understanding of the phenomenon of public policy implementation. It lasted from about the moment of the publication of Pressman and Wildavsky's influential book *Implementation* in 1973 until sometime around the end of the 1980s. In 1997 one of us in an article asked whether implementation was 'yesterday's issue' (Hill, 1997). The answer given to that rhetorical question was: 'No'.

In this book we take a similar stance. In doing so, alongside a discussion of literature explicitly concerned with implementation will be a recognition of four facts. The first is that the phenomenon 'implementation' was a matter of concern and, to some extent, academic study *before* the word was used. The second fact is that, as we have discovered whenever we have attempted computerized literature reviews writers focus on 'implementation' in many contexts. The backgrounds of those writers may differ from the ones of public administration and public management specialists. Third, it is a fact that such writers, without using the word implementation, may equally explore it in ways which public administration specialists regard as relevant. Fourth, implementation inevitably takes different shapes and forms in different cultures and institutional settings. This last point is particularly important in an era in which processes of 'government' have been seen as transformed into 'governance'. The latter means that a wider