OXFORD

DISMANTLING
PUBLIC POLICY

Preferences, Strategies, and Effects

EDITED BY Michael W. Bauer, Andrew Jordan,
Christoffer Green-Pedersen, & Adrienne Héritier

Dismantling Public Policy

Policy dismantling is a distinctive form of policy change, which involves the cutting, reduction, diminution or complete removal of existing policies. The perceived need to dismantle existing policies normally acquires particular poignancy during periods of acute economic austerity. Dismantling is thought to be especially productive of political conflict, pitting those who benefit from the status quo against those who, for whatever reason, seek change. However, scholars of public policy have been rather slow to offer a comprehensive account of the precise conditions under which particular aspects of policy are dismantled, grounded in systematic empirical analysis. Although our overall understanding of what causes policy to change has accelerated a lot in recent decades, there remains a bias towards the study of either policy expansion or policy stability. Dismantling does not even merit a mention in most public policy textbooks. Yet without an account of both expansion and dismantling, our understanding of policy change in general, and the politics surrounding the cutting of existing policies, will remain frustratingly incomplete.

This book seeks to develop a more comparative approach to understanding policy dismantling, by looking in greater detail at the dynamics of cutting in two different policy fields: one (social policy) which has been subjected to study before and the other (environmental policy) which has not. On the basis of a systematic analysis of the existing literatures in these two fields, it develops a new analytical framework for measuring and explaining policy dismantling. Through an analysis of six, fresh empirical cases of dismantling written by leading experts, it reveals a more nuanced picture of change, focusing on what actually motivates actors to dismantle, the strategies they use to secure their objectives and the politically significant effects they ultimately generate.

Dismantling Public Policy is essential reading for anyone wanting to better understand a hugely important facet of contemporary policy and politics. It will inform a range of student courses in comparative public policy, politics, social and environmental policy.

Preface

This book is about the dismantling of public policy. By policy dismantling we mean a particular type of policy change, i.e. the cutting, reduction, diminution, or even complete removal of existing policies. Policy dismantling is something often associated with periods of economic hardship, when politicians are more likely to come under economic pressure to generate financial savings. Finding themselves wedged between the 'rock' of putting up taxes and the 'hard place' of cutting policies, many reluctantly choose to cut policies that were probably originally adopted in better times. Never entirely motivated to cut in the first place and then facing a phalanx of disgruntled policy supporters, many politicians not surprisingly seek to hide what they are doing or seek to pin the blame for the cuts on others.

Or at least, that is how we are used to thinking about dismantling. Scholars of public policy have, however, been rather slow to offer a comprehensive account of the precise conditions in which particular aspects of policy are dismantled and why, grounded in comparable empirical analysis of different countries and/or policy sectors. Although our overall understanding of what causes policy to change has matured a lot in recent decades, there remains a bias towards studying either policy expansion or policy stability. Policy dismantling tends to be neglected; in fact, it does not even merit an entry in the index of most textbooks on public policy. Yet without an account of both expansion *and* dismantling, our understanding of policy change will always remain incomplete.

Of course, there are some areas of policy analysis where the academic debate about dismantling has been more dynamic and intensive; for example, in relation to the welfare state or the removal of regulation ('de-regulation'). The broad challenge we set ourselves in writing this book was to draw together the state of the art on social policy dismantling and take it in a new, that is, more *comparative* direction, by looking at how the politics of dismantling play out in what is often assumed to be a very different policy field, namely the environment. Paul Pierson first popularized the term 'dismantling' in the 1990s; his 1994 book *Dismantling the Welfare State?* pretty much defined the field and has been extensively cited. But most of his work (both then and since) is about welfare state retrenchment, not policy dismantling. His work

established many of the standard assumptions in that field of analysis, and motivated a generation of scholars to analyse cuts in welfare state provision. He was sensitive to the importance of policy type in affecting the directions and consequences of dismantling in this area, but he mostly concentrated on different types of social policy as opposed to different types of policy. Those who followed in his wake have opted to concentrate on other foci and measures of dismantling, but his preoccupation with social policy has remained. As a general factor shaping the politics of dismantling across a suite of policy areas, 'policy type' has rather fallen out of the equation.

Comparing policy dismantling in two different fields sets our book apart from others in the field of public policy analysis. We aim to say something new about policy dismantling, but we have not written it exclusively for policy area specialists (although we sincerely hope it advances their specialist knowledge). Rather, we hope it appeals to a more general audience of comparative policy analysts, whom we think will benefit from incorporating policy dismantling into their analytical frameworks and empirical studies. We will feel that the effort we have invested in putting this book together will have been worthwhile if some of them join us in pursuing a more comparative approach to understanding policy dismantling.

This book has its origins in a seminar on policy termination that Michael Bauer gave to his Master's students in Konstanz in 2005. His discussions with those students encouraged Bauer and his colleague Christoph Knill to dig deeper into the topic, believing that there was a gap in the literature. Funding was secured from the Landesstiftung Baden-Württemberg, which paid for Jale Tosun to do more exploratory work and, after two years of studying the policy termination and related literatures, a more concrete research agenda emerged. At this point, three more of us—namely Adrienne Héritier, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, and Andy Jordan—joined the group, and together we successfully applied for EU Framework 7 funding for a project known as CONSENSUS, or 'Confronting Social and Environmental Sustainability with Economic Pressure: Balancing Trade-Offs by Policy Dismantling or Expansion?' (2008–2011; No. 217239), under the leadership of Christoph. In 2008, we (together with a greatly enlarged team comprising senior and more junior researchers), embarked upon the next stage of our intellectual journey which eventually culminated in the writing of this book, as well as another volume, *Social and Environmental Policy Under Economic Pressure* (Cambridge University Press), authored by Christoph Knill, Sophie Schmitt, Kai Schulze, and Jale Tosun. The irony was that much of the thinking and writing that informs both books was completed before the onset of the global financial recession in the late 2000s. In many ways, that has unexpectedly (and rather ironically) given our work far greater political salience than we had originally expected.

Collectively and individually we have incurred many debts in the course of the last few years. First of all, we would like to thank Christoph Knill for leading the CONSENSUS project and Jale Tosun for shouldering much of the administrative burden. We would also like to thank the European Commission for funding the CONSENSUS project. At Oxford University Press, Dominic Byatt and Sarah Parker helped to bring this book to fruition. They also collected six anonymous referee reports on drafts of some of the chapters, which really helped us to improve our approach. We would like to thank all six referees for their insightful and penetrating assessments. We remain entirely responsible for any remaining errors of fact or interpretation. Stefan Becker and John Turnpenny helped to format the chapters and produced the index, and David Benson commented on Chapters 1 and 9. Last, but certainly not least, we owe a huge debt of gratitude to the authors of the six case studies, who were amazingly patient and good natured to work with, even after several rounds of extensive revision. Without them, this book would simply not have been written.

Michael W. Bauer, Andrew Jordan,
Christoffer Green-Pedersen, and Adrienne Héritier
February 2012

Notes on Contributors

Michael W. Bauer was a professor at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the University of Konstanz, both in Germany, and recently joined the German University of Administrative Sciences Speyer. He is an expert on comparative public administration and policy analysis and works on issues of European and multilevel governance.

Dominik Bernauer is a junior research fellow at the Chair of Comparative Public Policy and Administration, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz, Germany. He is interested in environmental governance and management processes within ministries.

Andrea Bianculli is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI), Spain. She holds a PhD in Political and Social Sciences from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. Her research interests lie in the fields of comparative and international political economy, governance, regional integration, trade and regulation.

Flemming Juul Christiansen is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Denmark. His primary interest is in how political parties manage to agree to govern together by agreeing to public policies. He has also written articles on interest groups.

Eva-Maria Euchner is a Junior Research Fellow at the Chair of Comparative Public Policy and Public Administration, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz, Germany. Her research interest lies at the intersection of comparative politics and comparative public policy, with a particular focus on social problems and moral political issues.

Christoffer Green-Pedersen is Professor of Public Policy at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Denmark. He has a long-time interest in the comparative politics of welfare state reforms. His recent research focuses on comparative political agenda-setting.

Adrienne Héritier is a Professor of Political Science in the Department of Political and Social Science and the Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence. Her research extends to theories of institutional change in the European Union, comparative public policy, European policy making, Europeanization, regulation, and new modes of governance.

Nicole Jenne is a PhD candidate at the Department of Social and Political Sciences at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. At the time the research for the contribution to this volume was done, she was working as a research assistant at the Institut Barcelona d' Estudis Internationals (IBEI), Spain.

Carsten Jensen is an Assistant Professor of Public Policy, Aarhus University, Denmark. He is interested in comparative social policy and party behavior.

Andrew Jordan is Professor of Environmental Politics in the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom. He is interested in the governance of environmental problems in many different contexts, but specially the European Union.

Jacint Jordana is a Professor in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona and at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI), Spain. His research interests are in the field of public policy analysis, with a special emphasis on regulatory governance and institutional development.

Helge Jörgens is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Political and Social Sciences and Managing Director of the Environmental Policy Research Centre (FFU) at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. His research focuses on comparative environmental governance, the cross-national diffusion and convergence of policies, and the role and influence of international organizations in environmental policy making.

Christoph Knill is Professor of Comparative Public Policy and Public Administration, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz, Germany. His main research focus is on the comparative analysis of policy and institutional change, including, in particular, environmental, social, and morality policies.

Stefanie Korte is research fellow at the Environmental Policy Research Centre (FFU), Department of Political and Social Sciences, Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Her primary research interests lie in the governance of environmental problems, as well as climate change politics and policies in industrialized countries.

Sophie Schmitt is a Postdoctoral Resercher at the Institute for Research Information and Quality Assurance, Berlin, Germany. Her research focus is on comparative public policy as well as policy, change and international policy diffusion in environmental and social politics.

John Turnpenny is a Senior Research Associate in the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom. His research focuses on the relationship between science, evidence, and public policy making.

List of Abbreviations

AGVU	Arbeitsgemeinschaft Verpackung und Umwelt
ALG	Arbeitslosengeld
AP	Alianza Popular
CCOO	Comisiones Obreras
CDU	Christian Democratic Union
CHF	Swiss franc
COPA	Control of Pollution Act
CSU	Christian Social Union
PG Environment	Directorate-General for the Environment
DSD	Duales System Deutschland
EC	European Community
EMU	Economic and Monetary Union
ENDS	Environmental Data Services
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FDP	Free Democratic Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INPDAP	Istituto Nazionale di Previdenza per i Dipendenti dell'Amministrazione Pubblica
INPS	Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSR	New Source Review
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAYGO	Pay-as-you-go
PP	Partido Popular
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
RCEP	Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution
RWE	Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk

SPD	Social Democratic Party
UCD	Unión de Centro Democrático
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America
WEPCO	Wisconsin Electric Power Company
WSA	Water Services Association

Contents

Contents

Dismantling by Symbolic Action

Part III. Comparative Conclusions

List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

Part I

Dismantling Debates and Analytical Approaches

1

Policy Dismantling: An Introduction

Andrew Jordan, Christoffer Green-Pedersen, and John Turnpenny

1.1 Policy change in hard times

In the late 2000s many parts of the world entered an era of intense economic austerity. Governments of many different colours were forced to make budgetary cuts, which, in some of the most indebted nations, led to intense political conflicts and even civil unrest. 'Politics in hard times' (Gourevitch 1986) was not simply back, but back with a vengeance, a trend which became even more pronounced following the post-2010 debt crisis. Writing over a quarter of a century earlier, Gourevitch persuasively argued that public policy in hard political times adopts a different dynamic to that which prevails in easier times. It does so because it involves 'imposing pain' (Pal and Weaver 2003) on particular groups in society.

One of the ways that politicians have sought to respond to the onset of the global recession since 2008 has been to raise general taxes—thereby sharing out the pain among taxpayers. A more common approach, attempted in many previous recessions, has been to try and save money by cutting, scaling back and even completely removing public policies that were originally introduced when economic times were easier. At a very general level, some of these activities have undoubtedly been rather popular. After all, who can possibly object to 'efficiency savings', the removal of under-performing policies or the cutting of red tape? However, once attention moves from general aspirations to specific policies that directly affect society, things do not always run quite so smoothly. This is because those who benefit from the status quo tend to stoutly defend their hard-won policy gains, claiming that the pain is unwarranted or perhaps should be inflicted on someone else. In these circumstances, the widespread conception of politics ('who gets what, when and how') (Lasswell 1936) appears to be reversed; the politics of policy cutting—or