

Říchová, Blanka and Jüpner, Petr
and Riegl, Martin and Švec, Kamil:

**ANALÝZA POLITIKY
A POLITIČTÍ AKTÉŘI –
MOŽNOSTI A LIMITY APLIKACE
TEORIÍ NA PŘÍKLADECH.**

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The publication *Analýza politiky a političtí aktéři – Možnosti a limity aplikace teorií na příkladech (Policy analysis and political actors – possibilities and limits of theory application in case studies)* aims to find problem solutions for how to apply theories in practical research or in academic publications. It is a monograph collectively written by Blanka Říchová, Petr Jüpner, Martin Riegl and Kamil Švec, all of whom are Czech academics specializing in regional political systems and comparative politics. The authors of the book note in the introduction that it is rather problematic to apply theories in political science research. The difficulties involved with choosing a theory that is appropriate for the case study or research question may cause students and academics to avoid applying a theory altogether. The aim of the authors is to help readers of this book to find a way to use theories in the research of specific cases.

The book points out that the topic of policy analysis is frequently discussed in both the Czech and the global academic environments and it presents examples from various sources including the Czech publications *Moderní analýza politiky – uvedení do teorií a metod policy analysis (Modern Policy Analysis: Introduction to the Theories and Methods of Policy Analysis)* by authors Petr Fiala

and Klaus Schubert (2000) and *Analýza policy (Policy Analysis)* by Milan Hrubeš (2011). Another example the book uses is the internationally recognized publication *Public Policy Analysis* by William N. Dunn (2012). The first of these books is focused mainly on the theoretical background of this topic (Fiala, Schubert 2000: 5). The others are focused on the practical uses of policy analysis in the real world and in real policies (Hrubeš 2011: 12; Dunn 2012: 18). The chapter by Říchová et al. aims to be somewhere in middle of these two ways. Their aim is to explain how to use theory (they explain it and draw attention to its problems) and show how to apply theory in real case studies.

The publication consists of five chapters. The first chapter presents current conditions in policy analysis. It focuses mainly on the concept of political actors and their role in the political process. This is the core concept of the book, as it focuses on the differences between political and non-political actors. Political actors are classified as institutions and their representatives. They act in a political space and have executive or regulatory competence. Non-political actors are institutions or individuals who have no executive or regulatory competence, although they may seek to influence political processes. Both types of actor are active at all levels of governance – local (municipality), regional, national and trans-national. This concept is also presented by Fiala and Schubert in their chapter *Moderní analýza politiky. Uvedení do teorií a metod policy analysis* (2000). However, authors P. Wagner, W. Janna and K. Wegrich expand the definition of who a political actor is, and include the government, as well as social and non-state actors. Authors Raab and Kenis present another classification: political actors are defined as both political actors and non-profit actors. Říchová et al. emphasise that, in policy analyses, political actors need to be seen in the

context of phases of the political process. They define all institutions (not only governmental) that influence the political process as political actors. Mainly, they focus on government administration and on non-governmental institutions. In this chapter, they also define the concepts of political cycle, policy net and policy arena and how they connect to political actors. All of these concepts are applied in qualitative case studies in the subsequent chapters. The selection of case studies aims to reflect all levels of governance.

The second chapter analyses political actors in political nets during the process of establishing the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency (GSA). This chapter represents the European level of governance and the main concept of this chapter is based on Fiala and Schuberts' theory of acting (Říchová et al. 2015: 66). The authors complain that policy analyses do not reflect on non-political actors or the individual level of political actors. In addition, the analyses do not include the strategies, connections, etc. of political actors as much as they present the role of political actors (also including non-political actors and the individual level) through the theory of acting and through the concept of political nets. According to the authors, political networks are defined as issues networks and are influenced by individual actors. In this case study, the authors confirmed that the most important aspect of political networks is the informal connection between individual actors in issues networks. They also confirmed that the role of formal status, political party discipline and dependence on others is irrelevant in issues networks.

The third case of the study consists of non-political actors' influence in political nets during the legislative process. This case study represents the national level of governance. V. Prorok claims that non-political actors have a huge impact on the legislative process and

mainly on its outcome. The outcome is often contrary to public opinion or to the original idea of the law. This is also why the authors of this book find it so important to study non-political actors and their strategies. Říchová et al. state that non-political actors influence the political process in the political and administrative spheres. They do it directly through pressure on primary actors, or indirectly by influencing the economic or legal environment and through the media. Most political analyses do not reflect this. The aim of this chapter is to show that the external environment (and not only the political and non-political actors) also has an impact on the outcome of the legislative process. The case study focuses on the legislative process of an amendment to Act No. 13/1997.* The case study shows that it is necessary to analyse the legislative process as one that includes the informal and external environment. This example also shows that if non-political actors are interested in different solutions or outcomes than political actors, then the political actors (in this case the Ministry of Transport) are not able to control the whole process. Consequently, it needs to be taken into account that non-political actors play a key role in the process. Moreover, the case study shows that political decisions, especially the adoption of laws, are not as ideal we might expect from a *polity*. We should consider that policies and their rules are read and implemented differently by different actors according to the roles they perform.

The next case study focuses on the problems of political actors at the regional level. It presents the process of establishing regions in the Czech Republic and the process of fiscal decentralization in the Czech regions. This study focuses mainly on political actors who have significant influence in this process. The main

* This law defines the traffic rules. The amendment simplifies some conditions of advertising near roads.

theories applied to the regional level are the theory of second-order elections, the theory of election cycles and the theory of political coalitions. Říchová et al. use the concept of veto players as defined by G. Tsebelis. Říchová et al. claim that this concept is derived from the decentralization theory, so this concept is better for analysing political players at the non-national level. Based on this concept, Říchová et al. define the main political actors in this case study as the government, the Parliament of Czech Republic, the Ministry of Finance, political parties and individual politicians. Říchová et al. claim that these actors are able to influence the regional level, and that the regional level is not able to stop this influence. It shows the reality and can describe the problem of regional dependence at the national level.

Finally, the last chapter consists of two case studies. The first describes political systems at the local level, as it examines municipal elections in Nákří during the 1994–2014 period. It describes how the type of political system is able to influence the electoral system. The second case study of this chapter is set in the municipal district of Praha 10 and deals with problems with a local coalition. It is focused on political actors at the local level and how to use theory in these sorts of cases. Říchová et al. work with a specific situation of Czech municipalities. There are enormous differences between municipalities, so applying some theories is complicated. For the municipality of Nákří, the authors use V. Bubeníček's typology of local democracy models. For Praha 10, the authors use P. Jüptner's concept of kernels as unitary actors in municipal politics. They conclude that in both local political systems, the main actors are individual politicians. Both municipalities are presented as long-term, stable and functioning political systems. On the other hand, there is a huge absence of competition in elections. This shows that the character of individual actors has an impact

on the political systems of both municipalities. The political systems are affected by the electoral system and through the establishment of coalitions.

To sum up, this book tries to explain the difficulties in applying policy analysis theories in different contexts than they were originally intended. The difficulties arise from the fact that the majority of theories are established on the national level and do not take into account the differences between trans-national, national, regional and local levels. The Czech political system differs greatly at the regional and local levels in comparison with European regions and municipalities, as well as in comparison with each other at the Czech level. In each chapter, the authors use some theories and concepts of political and non-political actors and apply them to the specific Czech political system. The authors successfully describe the specifics of each level of the political system. On the other hand, in the first half of the book they underscore that non-political actors must be taken into account when defining the roles of political actors. However, in chapters four and five, they do not use the concept of non-political actors and do not take them into account. The case studies and the results presented in this publication are interesting, however, each of them presents a totally different topic, without any interconnections. The monograph also presents problems with applying theories and concepts, nevertheless, the authors do not explore these problems in depth, nor do they explain specifically how to solve them. From this point of view, the first part of the book is very similar to the publication *Moderní analýza politiky – uvedení do teorií a metod policy analysis* by Fiala and Schubert (2000). On the other hand, Říchová et al. focus more deeply and primarily on political actors, which makes this book unique. The second part of the book – the case studies – more closely resembles Hrubeš' *Analýza policy*

(2011). It is very important to mention that the selection and description of cases in *Analyza politiky a političtí aktéři – Možnosti a limity aplikace teorií na příkladech* is more detailed and systematic than in Hrubeš' publication.

To conclude, the publication presents the problems in applying policy analysis very clearly and provides examples. Unfortunately, the lack of possible solutions and missing interconnections between chapters may not fulfil all readers' expectations. Despite these weaknesses, the clear explanation of the theory of policy analysis and the presented case studies may be very helpful for researchers in this field.

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Jones, Erik and van Genugten, Saskia et al.:

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This book is an important guide to understanding the relations between Europe and its Muslim population. It is useful not only for academic purposes in the fields of political science, international relations, and Europe-

an studies, but also for the practice of politics and diplomacy within Europe and in its neighborhood. The developments and trends pointed out in the book provide observations on past and present events, which in turn can provide a lesson for the future. The authors aim to analyze the relationship between Europe and Islam. This is done by observing several challenges that emerge as a consequence of disagreements which can, and do, occur in fields such as secularism, security, identity and solidarity. *Europe and Islam* serves as a benchmark for understanding the political processes in contemporary Europe through a comprehensive observation of specific countries (France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Italy), and by pointing out differences between the countries that take the shape of the varying challenges of stable multiculturalism. Furthermore, it provides an innovative point of view on topics that have been dealt with in academic research by selecting a range of articles, opinions and observations in relation to the subject.

The gathering of the articles, together with the introduction of the varying challenges and approaches, provides a new point of view on topics that have been heavily researched, as it is done within the context of contemporary changes in Europe. Though many articles have been written about the challenges of multiculturalism in different places, this book offers an analysis that becomes even more relevant in light of the changes that have come to pass in the relations between Islam and the countries of Europe since September, 2015, and the influx of Muslim refugees and migrants that have been swarming into Europe. It does so by breaking down the differences between EU Member States' approaches towards Muslim communities and Muslim immigrants, and by defining what attitude trends are EU-wide.

Olivier Roy deals with the theological gap between an awakening of the Muslim faith