

Integrative Political Strategies - Conceptualizing and Analyzing a New Type of Policy Field

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Abstract

Traditionally, policymaking has been described as taking place within the boundaries of differentiated and institutionalized policy fields. Regarding some newer issue areas, such as sustainability or climate change, this “sectoralized” pattern of policy development does not seem to be an adequate description anymore. Here, a different type of policymaking that practitioners regularly qualify as “integrative” and “strategic” can be observed: policymaking transgresses the boundaries of established policy fields and integrates differentiated policy areas by means of overall political strategies. How can scholars make sense of these supposedly new forms of policymaking in contemporary policy systems? On what conceptual grounds and with what kinds of tools can they analyze the respective policy practices? In this paper, I critically review the current literature on “integrative political strategies” (IPS) and argue that existing conceptualizations and studies of IPS are awed since they rest on problematic functional presumptions and do not consider the analytical implications of “integration” and “strategy” as practical cornerstones of IPS. Aiming at more conceptual and analytical clarity, I propose interpreting IPS in terms of a new, “reflexive” type of policy field that emerges from countermovements to two dominant trends that have shaped contemporary policy systems—integration as a countermovement to the continuing differentiation of policies, on one hand, and strategy as a flexible form of boundary work that contrasts with the pattern of institutionalization, on the other hand. I outline an analytical repertoire for systematically on the basis of this, taking account of policy integration and political strategy in

contemporary policymaking. I conclude with some implications of my propositions for future policy research.

Keywords: *integrative political strategies, policy eld, policy integration, political strategy*

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