

Chapter 6 Theoretical perspectives on policy dynamics

6.1 Boundedly rational assumptions

Over the past few decades, a concern for scholars interested in policy analysis has stayed with policy stability and change. Observations of items flying on and off policy agendas for seemingly unclear reasons, of long periods of policy stability interspersed with short bursts of policy change, and of massive pressure for change that results in only incremental adjustments has increasingly stimulated research on the evolution of policymaking.

The core of this study examines the relationship between crisis and patterns of policy change. The empirical puzzles presented in part one indicate patterns of both stability and change in the Swedish criminal justice sector that deserve to be better understood. It is therefore crucial that the theoretical insight be drawn from prior attempts to account for both policy stability and change.

For this purpose we will turn to three significant contemporary approaches to describing and explaining policy dynamics, namely multiple streams (MS) theory (Kingdon 1984; [1995] 2003), punctuated equilibrium (PE) theory (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2005), and policy advocacy coalition framework (ACF) (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; 1999). These approaches do not primarily focus on policy processes after crises; crises do however play a role in their accounts of policy change and stability, as we

shall see below. These three approaches or frameworks are prominent upholders of the policy stability and change discourse, perhaps most of all because they can potentially elucidate policy change and policy evolution over time. John (1998) pointed out that this is because they all consolidate mixes of approaches: MS embraces ideas-based and institutional approaches, without ignoring the importance of individuals and external processes; PE also encompasses institutional factors where networks, individuals and interests are vital; ACF is more parsimonious and departs from policy subsystems, but acknowledges the influence of external processes and events. For the sake of convenience, these frameworks are here labeled the 'policy change' strand of the policy analysis literature.

Why these three frameworks? The agenda setting and policy analysis literatures certainly offer more potential candidates. Path dependency and policy inheritance (Rose and Davies 1994; Pierson 2000) are other important strands that deserve comment. In principle, path dependency and policy inheritance elaborate similar concepts when explaining at least policy stability, as does the policy change strand. Both for instance rely on assumptions of 'increasing returns to scale' (especially PE, and to some extent MS) when accounting for collective behavior (Kuipers 2004). The Rose and Davis (1994) categorization of policy change was used in part one of this study to classify the type and level of change that were observable in the Swedish counter-terrorism arena. However, as Jones and Baumgartner maintain, "[p]olicy inheritances must be understood as organizational phenomena" (2005: 50). Path dependency and policy inheritance are well adapted for explaining why policy structures, often translated into bureaucratic organizations, remain in place for very long periods once they have been established. But the policymaking processes on display in the previous part shows that the history of Swedish counter-terrorism to a large extent has been about establishing policy structures in the first place. Theories that focus on agenda attainment and the restraints and opportunities to move an issue from there to policy decision making hold more promise for actually shedding light on the processes at work.

The scholars that have developed MS, ACF and PE do not engage in much cross-referencing. Other scholars however see commonalities between the approaches and often treat them together – all three or only two – and sometimes together with a fourth framework, such as epistemic communities (Parsons 1995; Dudley and Richardson 1996; Mintrom and Vergari 1996; John 1998; Schlager 1999; Meijerink 2005). One reason for grouping these frameworks together is that they all depart from assumptions of the individual as being boundedly rational (Schlager 1999). They may explain historical accounts of policy change or non-change that seem counterintuitive. In light of the policy change patterns related to the crises presented above, MS, ACF

and PE are not simply a random selection of interesting theoretical frameworks – they are actually quite promising.

The three theoretical lenses will be presented in three steps. First, a general overview of the main arguments will be given. The second step will be a closer examination of their respective assessments and conceptions of crises, focusing events and perturbations, and how they supposedly affect the policy process. The final step is a critical discussion of each lens, mainly concerning the nexus between critical challenges and patterns of policy change. After these expositions, a discussion about similarities and differences of the three theoretical lenses will follow. An argument will be developed that the three lenses harbor mainly complementary, if not overlapping, propositions. From the three theories, two perspectives will be derived on their complementary aspects. The last section of this chapter will discuss the applicability of the process tracing method to the three theories and two perspectives.

6.2 Multiple streams theory

6.2.1 General overview

The multiple streams theory explores how agenda-setting and alternative specification come about under conditions of ambiguity (Kingdon 1984; [1995] 2003; Zahariadis 1999). Largely inspired by Cohen, March and Olsen's (1972) garbage can model of organizational choice, it challenges stimuli-response notions of the policy process and explores how solutions find problems and vice versa. Attempts to trace the roots of policy ideas often lead to infinite regression. It is therefore not fruitful to ascribe ideas to single actors, but to see how the sharing of agendas creates them.

Multiple streams theory in fact refers to three streams: problems, policies and politics. In the problems stream, some problems have to be closest to the surface in the eyes of the (policymaking) beholder. The theory examines what factors make certain issues visible and others invisible. Indicators acquired by routine procedures or special studies may reveal the scope and nature of a problem, to which dramatic events or feedback from existing policies may draw attention.

The policies stream pertains to ideas, which can basically be seen as solutions to problems, prevalent or not. These ideas are raised by specialists in policy communities, e.g. bureaucrats, politicians and scholars interested in a specific policy domain. Whether they have a chance to survive hinges upon their practicability: They have to be technically feasible and concordant with the values that cement the networks. The policies stream develops independ-

ently from the problem stream, which means that solutions may be at hand before the problem.

The politics stream could possibly be understood as a *zeitgeist*, which centers on the national mood, pressure group campaigns and administrative or legislative turnovers. Each of these processes can have a promoting or inhibiting function on policymaking. Issues can be pushed onto or kept off of the policy agenda. The national mood appears somewhat undefined and hence not easily accounted for. Opinion polls might be one indicator, although Kingdon (1984: 155) contends, “the mood does not necessarily reside in the mass public”. Changes related to administrative or legislative turnovers, on the other hand, are easier to trace. Pressure group campaigns in a way epitomize the national mood. If the majority of interested parties in an issue unanimously voice a preferred direction for a policy, then incumbents are likely to catch on. When views are conflicting, political leaders are likely to “arrive at an image that strikes some balance between those for and those against a given proposal” (Kingdon 1984: 157). If they perceive that the balance of support is tilting against a proposal, it can still be pushed on the agenda; the perception helps calculating the costs of doing so.

At certain junctions in time, items from these streams that somehow inter-relate link together, opening a ‘window of opportunity’. For a limited period, an idea’s time has come, and provided that some policy entrepreneur shows the readiness and resolution to invest the required resources, an alteration in the policy agenda is likely to occur. These windows are opened by compelling problems or events in the political stream, but in order for something to happen someone has to produce a current in the policies stream.

6.2.2 The relationship between crisis and policy agenda attainment

Focusing events, such as crises, pertain to the problems stream and are under some conditions conducive to putting issues on the agenda. Kingdon (1984: 100) proposes that the nature of the policy domain matters in terms of how crises affect policy agendas. The more publicly visible the policy domain, the less important are crises and disasters, he concludes, comparing focusing events’ effects in the transportation sector – where they tend to be high – to the health sector, where their effects are usually low. Health problems are ubiquitous and naturally on our agendas, with an occupational branch dedicated to taking care of them. These problems do not easily become urgent for governments. To this should be added (Ibid.: 101) an effect of aggregation built in to the structures of the sectors. The more people affected, physically or otherwise, the greater the likelihood of the problem reaching the policy agenda. A problem in the

transportation sector, like an airplane crash (to be drastic), is hence more likely to attain crisis proportions than a problem in the health sector, where “[t]he basic unit—is a patient-provider exchange. When something goes wrong, it doesn’t show up as a major crisis” (Ibid.). For health sector problems to have a crisis-like impact, they must gradually build towards major proportions, or the individual cases must be aggregated into startling statistics. “But in transportation, something that goes wrong is often already pre-aggregated. An airplane goes down, killing hundreds of people at once rather than killing one patient at a time” (Ibid.).

Given these preconditions, Kingdon (Ibid.: 103-105) argues that focusing events need ‘accompaniment’ to create meaning for policy makers, which determines the likelihood of agenda attainment as a consequence of crisis. Crises need to “reinforce some preexisting perception of the problem, focus attention on a problem that was already ‘in the back of people’s minds’” (Ibid.: 103). Crises can also serve as early warning signals to unprecedented disasters and crises, “if subsequent consideration really establishes that there was a widespread condition that needs attention” (Ibid.). It is also possible that crises and focusing events affect problem definition in combination with other events. “Awareness of a problem sometimes comes only with the second crisis, not the first, because the second cannot be dismissed as an isolated fluke, as the first could” (Ibid.: 104). Also, if one incident of a particular kind does not create an impression of a salient problem, the occurrence of similar events may add prominence to the issue.

The notion of ambiguity should be differentiated from uncertainty. More information can reduce uncertainty, but not ambiguity. The more we know about for instance SARS, the more we combat ignorance and inaccuracy about how the disease spreads, its contagiousness etc. But it is still an ambiguous task to establish whether SARS is primarily a transport, animal, healthcare, political, or why not a policing, issue (cf. Zahariadis 1999: 74-75). The job of the policy entrepreneur is to reduce that ambiguity for policy makers by presenting solutions that fit into a particular issue domain. Crises are therefore ripe moments for affecting policy makers’ understanding of problem areas.

Crises are clearly potential window openers in MS reasoning. In contrast to policy developments in normal situations where elements from the three streams somewhat mysteriously converge – not seldom by chance, crises provide more focused and discernible opportunities for policy innovation. Crises make policy problems visible. To achieve agenda prominence, someone in the policy stream has to present a potential or possible solution to the arisen problem. Of course, in the stream of politics, the crisis needs to be interpreted as a symptom or part of a familiar problem to promote policy change. On the other

hand, if no one could meaningfully grasp an event, it would hardly reach crisis proportions.

6.2.3 Critical assessment

MS notions on how policies are made have had a seminal impact on the academic field of policy analysis.²⁵ Not least the 'window of opportunity' metaphor is widely referred to. However, scholarly attempts to build further on the theory or lens have been scarce, let alone efforts to empirically test its claims. In MS reasoning it is not clear how the streams relate to each other (whether they are independent or interdependent), how the streams affect coupling, how entrepreneurial strategies affect coupling and how coupling relates to the windows. Chance and serendipity are apparent attributes of (political) life and Kingdon is keen on capturing such dimensions. In fact, they are duly ascribed their explanatory leverage. The scientific virtue of parsimony is however infringed, which renders efforts to operationalize follow-up studies difficult.

When Kingdon observed how problems in different sectors translated differently to the policy agenda, he related this to diverse and inherent degrees of preaggregation. Comparing the 2002 outbreak of SARS or the 2005 outbreak of avian influenza in Southeast Asia and in Europe with fatal car accidents in any of these countries of course undermines the implied sector logic. In an interesting study of plane crashes in the U.S., Cobb and Primo (2003) find that the link between crashes and public policies is rather ambiguous. The cause of the crash and the location of the impact are examples of factors that affect media reporting and further policy implications. It is however clear that plane crashes receive a lot more attention than the far larger number of fatal car accidents. The preaggregation seems rather to be associated with institutionalized subsidies for control and safety. Where the car driver has control and is accountable, the air passenger relies on public and industry agencies for safety. These agencies in turn more easily become targets for policymaking. If this logic holds, it is likely that infectious disease epidemics, as well as acts of terrorism, are prone to sail up on the policymaking agenda. The key is not the policy sector, but governmental responsibility for coping with (rare and unpredictable) hazards that common citizens cannot control.

The 'accompaniment' needed for a crisis to gain prominence on the policy agenda suggests that the three streams are interdependent to some degree. Mucciaroni (1992) holds that changes in one stream can trigger or reinforce changes in another. In relation to the role of crises in the policy process, this observation points to an inconsistency in the original framework. The 'accom-

²⁵ According to Sabatier (1999: 9), Kingdon is cited about eighty times annually in the Social Science Citation Index.

paniment' needed for a crisis to bring meaning to a certain problem seems to require some sort of pre-coupling: The streams of policies and politics, i.e. the national mood and potential solutions, have already made contact. Most likely, some have already framed the problem as well. The crisis attracts wider attention to both the problem and solutions and hence reinforces, or ties closer together, the already interdependent streams.

Zahariadis (1999) considers Kingdon's nebulous conceptualization of the precise role of windows in coupling. Windows open up in both the problem and politics stream and "the different properties of opportunities indicate that each window has a differential impact on coupling" (Ibid.: 82). From a case study on the attempt to sell British Rail, he derives two hypotheses:

When windows open in the problem stream, coupling is likely to be consequential (finding a solution to a given problem), and when windows open in the politics stream, coupling is likely to be doctrinal (finding a problem for a given solution).

One case study may not be enough to convince the skeptic, although the assumption may have some leverage. It would however imply that crises (pertaining to the problem stream) would produce consequential coupling. The launching of a Swedish antiterrorist team after the Palme murder seems to provide falsifying evidence.

Keeler (1993) elaborates on the concept of policy windows in connection to crises. He argues that there is a function between the severity of the crisis and the size of the mandate that policy makers get. There is also a relationship between the cumulative effect of these factors and the size of the window for reform, i.e. the more severe the crisis is perceived to be, the bigger the reform window.

Zahariadis (1999) and Keeler's (1993) points combined seem to suggest that problems that evolve over time provoke consequential solutions, whereas abrupt crises call for solutions of any kind, consequential and/or doctrinal.

6.3 Policy advocacy coalition framework

6.3.1 General overview

The policy advocacy coalition framework (ACF) considers policy dynamics over extended periods of time (Sabatier 1988; 1998; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; 1999). It focuses on the interaction of advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem. An advocacy coalition consists of actors from a broad range of organizations and institutions who share policy beliefs and hence strive towards a common goal in a given issue.

Based on prior research on policy implementation, ACF rests on the assumption that theories of policy processes need to embrace a time span of a decade or more to cover a full policy cycle (formulation-implementation-reformulation). They must further weigh technical data about the nature and scope of the problem, its causes and the estimated cost of alternative solutions, which are normally considered important to policy makers. Short-term analyses do not easily capture changes in belief systems that result from policy research and analysis. Focus should be on policy subsystems rather than on formal governments and institutions. A subsystem consists of actors from various public and private organizations who are actively engaged in and try to influence a certain policy issue, i.e. the total of all advocacy coalitions (usually one to four) in a given matter. However, the focus on subsystems should be broadened from traditional understandings of iron triangles working at a single level of government to include all levels of government. Professional groups such as journalists, policy analysts and researchers should be included in the concept of a subsystem. Lastly, attention should be paid to implicit theories of policy implementation often permeating public policies. Such theories reveal policy makers' notions of causality, value priorities and ideas of efficacy in various policy instruments.

ACF aims at explaining policy change, even though its inheritance from policy implementation research also highlights circumstances and factors that have a stabilizing effect on policy development. To understand the process of policy change, ACF directs attention to external shocks (an exogenous factor) and learning (an endogenous factor).

The latter relies on actors' belief systems, of which ACF differentiates among three degrees. The first is labeled *deep core*, and refers to fundamental normative and ontological axioms, "akin to a religious belief." The deep core beliefs operate across most policy domains and are suggestive in overarching assessments on societal problems (e.g. the relative rank of citizens' integrity and personal freedom versus societal equality). The second degree is *policy core* aspects, which ACF assumes is the glue of advocacy coalitions. They represent the coalition's basic normative commitments and causal perceptions across a policy domain (e.g. crime can best be mitigated by preventive and caring means since it is related to a societal failure, versus repressive and punishing measures because criminals should be held personally accountable). The policy core beliefs also include fundamental policy positions concerning the basic strategies for achieving core values within the subsystem, such as the appropriate allocation of resources between correctional treatment and law enforcement. Policy core beliefs are difficult to change, although they do from time to time if experience reveals serious anomalies. The third degree is *secondary aspects*, which refers to below subsystem level beliefs concerning for instance the relative weight of various causal factors (e.g. correctional treatment is more versus less effective

than community-oriented policing in preventing crime). These beliefs are more easily adjusted than the first two categories. Reliable statistical data and experience, for example, may alter them.

A change of a belief system is about policy-oriented learning, i.e. actors trying to better understand the world in order to advance objective policy positions. In accordance with the tripartite notion of belief systems, it follows that learning is most likely to occur in the secondary aspects. In fact, actors are inclined to disregard information or revelations that run counter to their policy core beliefs, let alone their deep core beliefs. To this should be added the ACF model of the individual, which implies that actors are prone to weight losses more than gains and to view opponents as more powerful than they probably are. This can easily lead actors to regard information and interpretations coming from rival coalitions as attempts to manipulate the policy agenda rather than as insights to learn from. Hence, policy-oriented learning has leverage in explaining change in secondary aspects, but changes in policy core aspects require a perturbation in non-cognitive factors external to the subsystem.

There are basically two types of exogenous factors that may alter the constraints and opportunities of subsystem actors. The first type is rather stable and inert and consists of parameters such as fundamental socio-cultural values and social structure, basic constitutional structures, and basic distribution of natural resources. The second type is more likely to undergo change during a policy cycle. Changes in socio-economic conditions, in public opinion, and in systemic governing coalitions are known to occur with some regularity.

Based on case studies, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993; 1999) formulated and developed three series of hypotheses concerning advocacy coalitions (1), policy change (2) and learning across coalitions (3). These hypotheses suggest that advocacy coalitions show relatively stable lineups over time and that the policy core beliefs of these advocacy coalitions do not alter easily (1). Policy changes are unlikely to occur as long as the policy-initiating coalition remains in power over the policy jurisdiction in concern. For policy core attributes to change, significant perturbation external to the subsystem is of greatest importance (2). Policy-oriented learning across coalitions is about reorientation of secondary aspects of one party's belief system towards a competing coalition's core values. The prevalence of quantifiable data and theory involving natural systems (as opposed to political systems) and/or a prestigious arbitrary forum may facilitate this (3).

6.3.2 External perturbation and policy change

In short, ACF (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993; 1999) provides a framework that points towards stabilizing factors in policy processes that inhibit or

limit the scope of change. What then is the role of focusing events and crisis in their thinking? Actually, crisis (or at least an external perturbation such as the oil shock in 1973) is a key variable in explaining the policy shifts that do occur. Beliefs and policy ideas are challenged when they fail to bring meaning to events. According to the notion of policy core beliefs (as being very difficult to change), it

follows that the only way to change the policy core attributes of governmental policy in that jurisdiction is through some *shock* [italics added] originating *outside* [italics in original] the subsystem that substantially alters the distribution of political resources or the views of coalitions within the subsystem (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999: 125).

Political resources can therefore be redistributed through shocks. Arguably, an advocacy coalition's core values determine the content of the policy agenda, for which reason shocks should have the potential for causing agenda reappraisals.

The ACF is in agreement with the idea that shocks provide necessary but not sufficient conditions for policy change. External shocks to the policy subsystem are not equal to the crisis concept applied in part one. These shocks can include a new government taking power, a crisis in another sector, etc. More specifically, ACF holds that agenda shifts require some shift in coalition actors and/or mandates, alternatively that the existing coalition reappraises policy core beliefs. Much like in MS, ACF contends that the cumulative effect of events that disturb perceptions of the order of things may lead to the alteration of policy core beliefs.

6.3.3 Critical assessment

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) reassessed ACF in light of follow-up studies. The prominence ACF has achieved is due to its applicability; by 1998, no less than 34 cases critically applying ACF had been published (Ibid.: 126). The attractiveness pertains to clearly defined concepts, two distinct causal drivers (core values of coalitions and external perturbations), many falsifiable hypotheses, and a fairly broad ability to be generalized (at least for OECD countries).

As mentioned, in the 1999 (pp. 125–150) assessment of ACF, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith answered the criticism that up to that point had been put forward in academic discourse and adjusted the framework (at least the secondary aspects of it) accordingly. I will here address problems related to the notion of external perturbations and learning, and policy change.

In their search for the causal nexus between the two phenomena, Mintrom and Vergari (1996) pointed out that not all external perturbations, and not all instances of policy learning, lead to policy change. For this reason, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999: 147) adjusted their contention: "Significant perturba-

tions external to the subsystem [...] are a necessary but not sufficient, cause of change in the policy core attributes of a governmental program". It is however still not clear whether external perturbations are measured by their effects, or if real world events of a certain kind would qualify as such, regardless of their effects. Would for instance the 1973 oil shock have qualified as an external perturbation, had it not resulted in policy change?

Mintrom and Vergari (1996) suggest that ACF has much to gain from lending insights from what they referred to as the policy entrepreneurship model. This is because "policy entrepreneurs serve to bring new policy ideas into good currency" (Ibid.: 422). Policy entrepreneurs help in forming and uniting coalitions; they articulate policy innovations and bring them forward while networking in government circles. They are willing to take the risks involved with pursuing actions that have uncertain consequences. The success or failure of policy entrepreneurs would then provide the causal link between policy-oriented learning/external perturbation and policy change. The policy entrepreneurship model instead adds emphasis, since the early ACF also included the "policy broker,' whose principal concern is to find some reasonable compromise that will reduce intense conflict [and hence facilitate cross coalition learning]" (Sabatier 1993: 18-19). Policy brokerage is however more associated with the 'binding-in' of opposition, which facilitates incremental change. In the reassessed version of ACF (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999), the role of the individual is still downplayed in favor of coalitions. Moreover, it is only minority coalitions that are supposed to have an incentive to change policies after perturbations (Ibid.: 148). The entrepreneurship is taken over by minority collectives, which only makes policy shifts more impracticable, given the collective action problem.²⁶ In order to understand how swift policy change actually happens, the policy entrepreneur cannot easily be discarded from the analysis.

One may also question the notion that major change only happens as a consequence of external perturbation, i.e. that learning is unlikely to lead to alterations of policy core beliefs. This notion is consistent with the ACF contention of major and minor policy change. "Major change is change in the policy core aspects of a governmental program, whereas minor change is change in the secondary aspects" (Ibid.: 147). This implies that major change requires a shift in mandate – a change in power between the majority coalition and one competing minority coalition. Learning takes place with the majority coalition intact. As Schlager (1999: 252-253) points out, this assumption is problem-

26 The collective action problem includes "(1) the transaction costs involved in coming to a common understanding the policy problem and the proper means of addressing it, (2) the difficulty of finding policies that fairly address the distributional conflicts among coalition members, and (3) the temptation for each individual and organization to free-ride" (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999: 138).

atic for a number of reasons. In particular the idea that “[t]he same change may be ‘minor’ for one subsystem and ‘major’ for a subsystem nested within it” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999: 147), calls into question what exactly a subsystem is. There are apparently subsystems (containing policy core beliefs on an issue) that have sub-subsystems (containing secondary aspects of the same issue) nested within them. Since ACF does not account for how the subsystems are empirically distinguishable from the sub-subsystems, it may as well be that policy-oriented learning actually produces major change.

Some ACF scholars have focused on the difference between beliefs and interests. “The ACF does *not* assume that actors are driven primarily by simple goals of economic/political self-interest, nor does it assume that self-interested preferences are easy to ascertain” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999: 131). Moreover, beliefs are supposed to encompass (economic and organizational) interests (Sabatier 1993: 28). This view has been contested for primarily two reasons: beliefs are not necessarily easier to ascertain empirically than interests (Hann 1995), and interests are not by definition subordinated or encompassed by beliefs (Nohrstedt 2005). Nohrstedt (2005) argues for instance that the Swedish Social Democratic party’s policy change on the issue of nuclear energy in the 1970s had much to do with that party’s interest to regain governmental power, and very little to do with their beliefs in the policy issue. In that case, beliefs and interests were successfully disentangled.

Crises should then have the potential (however with difficulty) of altering policy core beliefs as well, and be conducive to policy-oriented learning. Interests should arguably be less susceptible to crisis episodes.

6.4 Punctuated equilibrium

6.4.1 General overview

The punctuated equilibrium (PE) theory ambitiously aims at explaining observations of both swift policy changes within limited time periods, and of policy stability over extended periods (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; 2002; True, Jones and Baumgartner 1999; Jones and Baumgartner 2005). The main ambition is to describe conditions that lead to the emergence of policy monopolies and the dynamics of decay in such systems. PE argues, like ACF, that policy incrementalism depends on the degree to which policy makers succeed in defending their preferential right of interpretation. Both seem to agree that institutions normally maintain power over issues for a considerable time. PE explains both this phenomenon and the eventual decay of a policy monopoly with two central concepts: images and venues.

A policy *image* is equal to the public understanding of a policy problem. Every policy problem, according to PE, is understood in simplified and symbolic terms, even by the politically sophisticated. Policy images are further a mix of empirical information and emotive appeals. In fact, this latter evaluative component (which can be measured in terms of its *tone*, e.g. good/bad, desirable/undesirable, etc.) is critical when it comes to the alteration of image predominance on the public agenda. Hence, by pitching a policy issue in a certain manner, stakeholders aim at getting enough support to maintain or alter a problem definition, as defined by the public (often also including appropriate solutions).

According to PE (Ibid.) a policy *venue* is the institutions or groups in a society that have the authority to make decisions concerning an issue. To the extent that different images compete for predominance in a political setting, each institutional venue is home to a different image to the same issue. How an issue gets assigned to a particular arena of policymaking is as much an empirical question as how certain issues come to be associated with one policy image rather than another. A distinction can be made between venues that are firmly established and those where change is more likely. Whether or not a venue is more or less permanent may stem from logic or tradition, and may be codified in a country's constitution or emerge from common practice. Hence, venues that are firmly cemented in constitutional arrangements are less likely to be a driving force for change.

If images and venues are the tangible manifestations of change, the causal drivers are processes of positive and negative feedback. The notion of positive feedback is inspired by the economic conceptualization of increasing returns to scale.²⁷ This *mimicking* logic applies also to political decision makers.

If the probability of any action on the issue is zero, then there is little reason to focus attention on the issue, since there is no expected benefit. What would cause the probability of success to rise? One important element is the expected behaviors of other relevant actors. This is why focusing events can be so important..." (Baumgartner and Jones 2002: 21-22).

Societal problems, for which political decision makers are to varying degrees accountable, are normally complex and multidimensional. However, often only one dimension at a time draws the attention of the public, media actors and elite decision makers alike: the profitable dimension. Faced with new evidence that cannot easily be refuted and not matching the policy image of a policy monopoly, a flock movement to the expected future winners is likely to be

²⁷ Regardless of objective quality criteria, VHS rather than the Beta system seemed to be the incipient universal video standard. The VCR manufacturer, the retailer and the consumer therefore chose the VHS system, which then only reinforced the initial assumption.

seen, a so-called *attention shifting*. Take for instance the U.S. homeland security concept, which was far from familiar before 11 September 2001. When it became excruciatingly clear that U.S. soil could be the theater of terrorist attacks, homeland security became the winning concept around which governmental programs were initiated. Expected benefits may take time or be absent, but expected behaviors come more rapidly. Jones (1994: 13) noted, “that preferences change only grudgingly but that attentiveness to those preferences can shift rapidly”, thereby indicating that different dimensions to a certain issue are not necessarily mutually exclusive to the policy maker. However, when a policy image loses meaning for the general public and especially the media, the policy monopoly breaks down. An alternative image gains momentum and a rival policy venue gains prominence.

Long periods of equilibrium come about through negative feedback. Regardless of the direction of an outside or inside influence, the mechanisms of negative feedback work to correct and counterbalance. In any policy domain, equilibrium or incremental change is the predominant feature. Most policies remain stable for long periods because institutions do not often change. According to Baumgartner and Jones (2002: 24), institutions maintain rigidity because

[they] are typically designed to encourage participation by certain groups and discourage participation by others. Institutions are also designed to facilitate the use of some aspects of information rather than others. Institutions often promote certain issue definitions by requiring that decision makers consider some types of information but not others.

In times of heightened attention, institutions are likely to undergo some adjustment. When attention fades, institutions remain. In addition to the reflex to nip competing problem definitions in the bud, institutional rigidity is therefore related to the fact that the type of heightened attention required to cause institutional change is for the individual institution an infrequent phenomenon.

6.4.2 Focusing events and policy monopoly breakdown

Crises are conducive to spark positive feedback processes because of the attention they direct to a dimension of a policy problem: An issue can then not easily be confined to a policy subsystem, as parties are drawn in for ideological or populist reasons. To the extent that macro-level political institutions intervene, subsystems tend to be disrupted. The familiar crisis phenomena of mediatization and politicization therefore facilitate policy shifts.

Even if crises seem to provide fertile soil for policy change, PE discusses the notion of ‘triggering events’ with some caution. It has been observed that both media and policy attention sometimes follow recurrent ‘real-world’ events such

as riots, while this is not the case at other times. Timing is therefore crucial in PE reasoning on policy processes after crisis. PE argues that when heightened media and political attention actually follow a focusing event, the event as such can best be described as an “attributed trigger” (Baumgartner and Jones 1993: 129-130). The event becomes a symbol of a particular understanding of a problem. In this respect crises fulfill a more consolidating role, since the underlying problem is already publicly widespread. True (2002: 155-183) noted that the changing focus of U.S. national security policy after the second world war was not easily attributed to radical changes in the external environment, such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Crises may therefore be followed by drastic policy change, or policy stability. PE explains this through the concept of disproportionate information processing, which stipulates that a threshold needs to be crossed for a policy to change.

The natural tendency is to underemphasize new threats, new ways of thinking of things, new ways to organize public bureaucracies, until and unless some significant threshold of urgency is crossed. At that point, major changes can occur. While the 9/11 terrorism example is an extreme case of such a thing, similar patterns of overresistance, then overreaction, are general characteristics of government. *Crises seem necessary to drive change.* (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 51, italics added).

However, PE assumes human and organizational decision-making processes to be marked by strong status quo biases (Ibid.: 53), suggesting that crises may be necessary but not sufficient drivers for policy change. Strong beliefs and ideological convictions are examples of such status quo biases. But unlike ACF, these same mechanisms in some circumstances lead to overreaction according to PE, not least when loaded with emotive attributes. The attention paid to an issue does not necessarily indicate what solution will follow. That depends on a variety of circumstances, such as leadership personality, what ready-made solutions exist, etc. In short, PE like MS in that regard refers to the garbage can model of organizational choice (Ibid.: 52).

6.4.3 Critical assessment

PE theory has proved to be simple yet informative for describing past periods of policy stability that have been interspersed with short bursts of radical change. It is based on the assumption that individual and collective behaviors are guided by bounded rationality. Preferences do not change easily, but behaviors are more transient and subject to change when attention shifts from one dimension of a problem area to another. The model seems to be universal and adaptable to at least most open democracies, although Baumgartner and Jones have not shown

much interest in or encouraged studies of policymaking outside America. A few efforts have been carried out however, such as Dudley and Richardson (1996), John and Margetts (2003) and Mortensen (2005). In the United States, however, they have conducted or solicited about 20 case studies (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2005) and promoted follow-ups by making their data bank available on the Internet. It has been demonstrated in the case studies that PE has advantages compared to theories that rely on incrementalism, such as the ease with which PE can include deviant cases (extreme values) in the longitudinal analysis. It encourages us to think about where current policy equilibrium comes from and therefore provides an evolutionary explanation for policy developments.

In assessing PE, True, Jones and Baumgartner (1999: 111-112) only pay attention to the drawbacks that their reportedly historically accurate stories imply: an inability to predict. In any given policy sector at any given time, there are a number of potential punctuations brewing, but PE cannot say which ones will come to fruition and when. This is however not necessarily a scientific problem.

In PE, there is nothing between equilibrium and punctuation. A focusing event leads to either a major change or stasis. PE does not account for minor changes, i.e. the theoretical framework is the exact opposite of (or perfectly complementary to) incrementalism. This has to do with the PE notion of policy monopolies and how they emerge and eventually decay. However, by focusing on changes of images and venues, PE does not examine how interests organize themselves, but instead focuses on the consequences of such organization (Schlager 1999: 245). PE therefore directs us to observe only when such consequences are manifest, i.e. major change or no change.

Closer attention on how interests organize themselves would seem to require a shift in focus from the public agenda to the meso and micro levels of policymaking, which is the direction that PE appears to embark. In the latest PE volume (Jones and Baumgartner 2005), the emphasis has clearly changed in favor of decision-making on an organizational (including government) level. The bottom-up approach has therefore lost leverage within PE. As a consequence, the policy image does not necessarily reflect the public understanding of a certain problem, but rather elite understanding of that problem.

6.5 Concealed similarities and apparent differences

In Beckett's *Play*, three diseased individuals engage in dialogue with only their heads protruding from their urns. The *crime passionnel* retold by them only at a closer hearing crystallizes as three independent monologues, all however relating to the same affaire. With MS, ACF and PE the opposite is discernible; only on closer examination do the seemingly independent monologues turn out to be something of a dialogue. Their illusion is indeed facilitated by sparse cross-referencing. In this section we will compare the frameworks' bearing concepts in order to see in which ways and to what extent they are overlapping, complementary or opposing. The effort is meant to at least conceptually simplify the reality that the three theoretical frameworks individually aim at simplifying.

The criteria for this comparison are 1) a model of the individual, and 2) collective action formation and institutional settings. These points of comparison capture the basic elements of the policy process. The criteria represent the key mechanisms promoting or inhibiting policy change. It should however be clear that none of the three theories presume a clear-cut causal chain reaction from crisis to policy change. This scheme of comparison largely follows the suggestion and example of Schlager (1999).²⁸

6.5.1 Individuals: Ideas, beliefs and preferences

The three theories rely on bounded rationality for understanding how individuals experience and act upon new information and situations. Individuals are assumed to be goal-oriented and to act in ways that they believe are good for them. However, reality is complex and ambiguous. The three theories' notions of the boundedly rational individual take that complex and ambiguous policymaking context into account when trying to understand individual choice. "Choice becomes less an exercise in solving problems and more an attempt to make sense of a partially comprehensible world" (Zahariadis 1999: 75). A susceptibility to contextual matters makes them acknowledge the boundaries of rationality.

Edella Schlager (1999: 241-244) points out that upon closer inspection the theories work with somewhat different perspectives on the individual: in MS the individual is a "satisficer", in ACF a "belief-er" and in PE a "selective attender". In MS theory, bounded rationality means that the logic of rationality has grown into a logic of time. The streams metaphor reflects a time-dependent

28 Besides these points of comparison, Schlager (1999) also includes "boundaries and scope of inquiry" and "policy change". These will here be treated separately in section 6.7.1.

flow of problems, solutions and contextual prerequisites to which policy makers need to abide.

The multiple-streams perspective translates into a process in which individuals are viewed as less capable of choosing the issues they would like to solve and more concerned about addressing the multitude of problems that are thrust upon them, largely by factors beyond their control (Zahariadis 1999: 75).

In an environment marked by constant time constraints in combination with a multitude of solutions, the best solution (allowed by the politics stream) is likely to remain in the primeval soup of ideas. The decision maker, or policy maker is thereby left to be a *satisficer* (Schlager 1999: 244).

ACF explores the cognitive world and takes a foothold in the individual's belief systems. Belief systems determine individual choices and action and form the basis for coalition creation. When confronted with new information or a new situation, individuals interpret that stimulus with their belief system as a benchmark. Depending on the type of belief system affected (deep core, policy core or secondary aspects), the individual's tendency to either refute or be persuaded is more or less likely. Information is essentially used to persuade others of the correctness of their own belief.

In PE, attributes of the situation rather than the belief system characterize the boundaries of individual choice. Since the individual is limited when processing large amounts of information, she can only pay attention to selective parts of the complex reality. Preferences change grudgingly, but the individual can change course drastically over time. Not because preferences have shifted, but because another side of the problem has been presented to her. For the selective attender, the decision-making setting is therefore crucial, since its characteristics affect what angle of a given problem will have salience.

MS, ACF and PE give different perspectives on individual choice. The question is to what extent the perspectives are mutually complementary or competing with each other. The MS satisficer has traits in common with the PE selective attender in that the situation, rather than the conviction of the individual, determines choice. However, all three agree that ideas, preferences and beliefs are robust and hard to change. The ACF belief-er is just a little less easily influenced by situational information overload or situational impression management. On the other hand, the choices that the satisficer and the selective attender actually make are arguably not essentially different from their ideas and preferences. The PE selective attender can make different choices at different times, depending on the decisional situation, but most likely not choices that run counter to the individual's policy core beliefs. PE does not elaborate different degrees of beliefs and preferences. If it did, it could not be excluded that the selective attender is flexible about different secondary aspects within

the parameters of a given policy core realm. Such an interpretation at least does not shake PE to its foundations. Hence, the different concepts of the boundedly rational individual are largely overlapping and complementary.

6.5.2 Collective action formation and institutional settings

Based on models of the individual, the three theories provide different accounts on how individuals come together and produce policy change or stability. The context that sets the boundaries of individual rationality to some extent consists of institutional settings, which are to various degrees venues for collective action formation.

MS pays scant attention to collective action as a means for individuals to achieve policy stability or change. Focus is rather directed towards influential entrepreneurs. Movements in the politics stream form the preconditions and the contextual basis for collective action. “Policy entrepreneurs do not control events or structures, but they can anticipate them and bend them to their purposes to some degree” (Kingdon [1995] 2003: 225). Entrepreneurs therefore must be sensitive to national moods or other broadly supported currents that work in favor of their ends. With this perspective, institutional settings play only an indirect role. In MS reasoning, the institutional position of policy entrepreneurs affects their ability to influence the policymaking process. Different venues contain different accession points and thereby different prerequisites for entrepreneurs to combine streams.

Collective action is of paramount importance to ACF. The question of how coalitions actually take shape and are kept together has become a key concern for ACF scholars. The existence of advocacy coalitions has never been taken for granted, but has always been a matter for empirical scrutiny. Coalition participation is empirically verified by tangible manifestations of shared belief systems. It is however not always clear how tightly or loosely the coalitions are tied together. Implicitly, institutional arrangements provide relatively fixed platforms for beliefs and are for that reason important coalition pillars. Institutional settings therefore also appear in ACF as more or less susceptible venues for a certain coalition’s intentions.

Like in MS, policy entrepreneurs play a crucial role in PE. Unlike MS, PE counts on the entrepreneur as not only a spearhead of policy change, but also a gatekeeper against change. However, PE pays attention to collective action, where entrepreneurs act in groups, but where interest groups and more broad-based public mobilizations also fight for their cause. Institutional rigidity creates hindrances that entrepreneurs and interest groups need to break through to achieve change. But once underway, unclear jurisdictional boundaries between institutional arrangements may allow players from various settings to participate in

the policymaking process. In fact, drawing previously disinterested actors into an issue is a strategy that policy entrepreneurs use to break institutional dead-lock and achieve collective action.

The three theories focus on different dynamics in accounting for collective action and how institutional settings affect such processes. MS and PE share the notion of clever entrepreneurship as the driver of collective action. They also have a common view on macro societal movements, as well as events and structures as contextual preconditions for entrepreneurial maneuvering. ACF largely ignores the impact of entrepreneurs as motors for collective action, just as MS for the most part ignores institutional arrangements and collective action when accounting for policy change. ACF and PE, on the other hand, share an analysis of institutional settings as being to various degrees susceptible to influences from policy challengers. Through venue shopping, coalitions or interest groups can attain collective action. MS, ACF and PE then have to some extent overlapping analyses of how individuals come together to produce (or to prevent) policy change. The MS lack of accounting for collective action and the ACF lack of accounting for entrepreneurial strategies are not at odds with each other. They rather shed complementary light on the process (Mintrom and Vergari 1996; Schlager 1999).

Table 1: MS, ACF and PE: Mechanisms in comparison

	Model of the individual	Collective action and institutional settings
Multiple Streams	Satisficer	Entrepreneur driven, where institutions provide more or less favorable accession points.
Advocacy Coalition Framework	Belief-er	Driven by coalitions' belief systems. Institutions are more or less susceptible to one coalition's beliefs.
Punctuated Equilibrium	Selective attender	Driven by entrepreneurs, interest groups and public opinion. Institutions form barriers for collective action in negative feedback and facilitators in positive feedback.
Comparative Status	MS and PE overlap. ACF complements MS and PE.	MS complements ACF on collective action, where PE overlaps at both ends. MS, ACF and PE largely overlap on assumptions about institutional settings.

6.6 Two perspectives on crisis and policy change

In the previous section, the case was made that the different theories are not fundamentally at odds with each other in any significant aspect with regard to mechanisms purporting to policy stability or change. MS, ACF and PE are

either overlapping or complementary. The exercise was carried out in order to narrow the scope of concepts used for the analysis. Of particular interest are the mechanisms that complement each other. They generate somewhat different propositions on the role of crisis as policy change agent. This is because they involve different assumptions of the boundedly rational individual and of how collective action comes about. However, the tendency of individuals to interpret novel information and situations with the help of cognitive biases lies at the heart of bounded rationality and is thus a common denominator for all three theoretical frameworks. The main difference lies rather in the way these translate into collective action formation: the processes by which individual ambitions, policy goals, solutions, etc. reach wider constituencies or fail to do so. By and large, the different propositions diverge into an ACF perspective (centered around belief systems and coalition structures) and a MS/PE perspective (centered around attention spans and entrepreneurial strategies).

6.6.1 Assumptions of the belief-based perspective

Crises of the type studied previously in this thesis do not, from the point of view of the individual belief-er, typically challenge ingrained conceptions. Policy core beliefs remain stable, even when confronted with new and strange situations. The belief structures typically remain stable over long periods of time and crises are likely to be interpreted as to fit with a given belief structure. Policy core beliefs provide an explanatory dimension to the reason behind the scope of potential solutions. For the individual policy maker, policy core beliefs reduce uncertainty over which policy domain a problem belongs to.

An advocacy coalition shares the same belief structure in a given policy issue and is composed of policy makers such as politicians, bureaucrats, public opinion makers, pressure groups, etc. An advocacy coalition cannot be meaningfully separated from its policy core beliefs. The coalition holding legislative power over a policy issue by inference is a majority coalition. The explanation for the possible lack of major policy change after crises resides in the fact that policy core beliefs remain stable for long periods, and that the crisis occurred when the policy core belief of the majority coalition was well established, but not yet outdated.

Policy change, according to the collective action formation processes suggested by the belief-based perspective, comes in the form of policy-oriented learning, or alternatively through coalition turnover. A majority coalition can learn from a minority coalition, if the level of conflict between them is not too high, but still exists. A sufficiently important forum for arbitration that mediates between the conflicting coalitions increases the likelihood of policy-oriented learning taking place. Learning supposedly comes about easier if the

subject matter is a secondary aspect for the learning coalition and a policy core belief for the opposing coalition. Repeated occurrence of a new phenomenon can challenge the belief system of a majority coalition and hence produce policy-oriented learning without conflict.

But it is still a matter for a coalition as a whole to learn, which requires a collective transformation of belief systems within the learning coalition. The fact that policy entrepreneurs are absent in ACF and that coalitions are viewed as rather flat is due to the primacy of beliefs. The weight of a given coalition depends on the number of belief-ers, not on its activities.

6.6.2 Assumptions of the attention-based perspective

Both the multiple streams and the punctuated equilibrium theories are attention-based. They certainly admit that beliefs, or preferences, remain stable over long periods of time, or change only grudgingly. They however acknowledge that novel and unfamiliar situations hold the potential for radical policy change, depending on how these are framed and understood. Within a given policy core belief there is enough space to change policies quite drastically. There is therefore reason for policy entrepreneurs to capitalize on events. Entrepreneurs are hence of primary importance to PE and MS. A skilful policy entrepreneur can bend the understanding of a situation to fit a preferred solution. Especially the punctuated equilibrium theory focuses on to the hitherto disinterested, which implies that the potential constituency is not entirely exhausted for a given issue at any given time. In accordance with the attention-based perspective, the policy entrepreneur can initiate positive or negative feedback processes by including or excluding the previously disinterested.

The critical challenges discussed in part one are indeed occasions for policy entrepreneurs to capitalize on. The presumed explanation for policy change and stability according to the attention-based perspective is found in the ways attention spans created by crises are managed.

6.7 Process tracing: A method applicable to analyzing patterns of policy change

Having derived two perspectives on policy change, it is now time to discuss how these will help explain the empirical puzzles of part one. In so doing, we will return to the three theoretical frameworks to argue that process tracing is a promising method for that purpose. 6.7.1 argues that MS, ACF and PE have difficulties in meeting proper theory criteria (as put forward in chapter one). In 6.7.2, we relate the process tracing method to the methods normally used by

MS, ACF and PE scholars. In 6.7.3 we will take up the two perspectives again and clarify what theory-driven questions the analysis of the subsequent chapters will probe.

6.7.1 Crisis, policy change and the boundary and scope of inquiry

In the beginning of this chapter it was said that MS, ACF and PE hold the potential for explaining policy stability and change because they consolidate mixes of approaches. That may however be seen as a euphemism for not ascribing the independent or dependent variables their appropriate values. And there is something to that notion. Below, the theories will be deconstructed with the purpose of demonstrating the difficulties they have in designating what is supposed to be explained (policy change) and what the explaining factors aim for (boundary and scope of inquiry). It will be argued that the way part one was structured, i.e. putting the crisis upfront and following the subsequent policy process, actually facilitates focusing the analysis. It certainly facilitates the use of the process tracing method.

The abundance of independent variables, which mirror the complex world that MS, ACF and PE purport to explain, are not necessarily allowed to vary in relation to competing explanatory variables. This makes it hard to assess their individual explanatory leverage. It is also not clear just which of the dependent variables the independent variables aim at explaining. Only at a meta-level is policy change actually the explanandum of their work.

MS seeks to explain alternative specification and agenda setting, which are both assumed to be conducive to policy change (and in that respect independent variables). The many independent variables (e.g. political decision makers inside and outside of governments, interest groups, media, crises, entrepreneurs etc.) are for the most part consolidated into the three streams of policy, politics and problems. The streams bear the weight of explaining why a certain issue is of interest to the government. However, the process of pushing and pulling that characterizes the actual specification of policy alternatives seems to be equal to the policy stream, which turns that explanatory variable into a dependent variable (Schlager 1999: 254).

A closer look at ACF reveals that the dependent variables of most concern are the emergence of policy advocacy coalitions and the development of belief systems (learning) that in turn are conducive to policy change. The variables explaining these phenomena have been different measures of coordination, institutional properties of policy actors, etc. (Ibid.). The two “hypotheses concerning policy change” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999: 124) largely depict those two dependent variables, without designating their causal relationship in terms of policy stability and change. To state that the policy core attributes

of a governmental program in a specific jurisdiction is unlikely to change in the absence of significant perturbations external to the subsystem, does not, as Mintrom and Vergari (1996) point out, say which external perturbations do and which do not lead to change. The hypotheses do not assume *why*. These dependent variables could therefore as well be regarded as independent variables, competing for explanatory power (of policy change) with for instance entrepreneurial strategies.

PE, like MS, tries to explain agenda setting.²⁹ The explanatory variables are by and large grouped into policy images (mass mobilization, media images, etc.) and policy venues (institutional arrangements, interest group activities, etc.). However, there are more variables involved that in turn explain and are explained. The process typically looks like this: An image projection explains processes of positive and negative feedback. These feedback processes bear the burden of explaining the emergence of policy monopolies and their breakdown. The emergence and decay of policy monopolies explicate the agenda setting. However, agenda setting at time $t-1$ likely determines the policy venue, and not least the policy image, at time t . Among these circular links, the one between image projection and feedback processes is the only link that has been attached to a causal mechanism, namely the assumption of the individual as a boundedly rational selective attender.

Dividing history on crisis events may not be an accurate way of determining the start and end points of policy processes, but the procedure certainly has one advantage: the risk of mixing independent and dependent variables due to undefined time frames is reduced. There may be other ways of organizing time, such as by changes in governments, but given the purpose of this study and not least the importance that the three theories accord crises, this approach holds more promise in tracing processes from impetuses to policymaking effects. The basis of this effort was formed in part one, where the policymaking processes were described.

As discussed in chapter one, the process tracing strategy seeks to find reasons for different lines of action by way of “[identifying] the actors, the decision points they faced, the choices they made, the paths taken and shunned, and the manner in which their choices generated events and outcomes” (Bates et al. 1998: 13-14). How process tracing can be methodologically useful for the theoretical bodies of knowledge will be discussed below.

29 Jones and Baumgartner’s (2005) most recent work does focus on policy decision-making.

6.7.2 MS, ACF, PE: Case studies and process tracing

The body of theoretical knowledge that MS, ACF and PE represent is essentially case study driven. Kingdon ([1995] 2003: 231) pursued “case studies of policy initiation and noninitiation” when developing MS. In Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith’s studies of elite beliefs over time, they examined two cases: “The debate over development of the Lake Tahoe region and the debate over the breath and speed of oil and gas leasing on the U.S. outer continental shelf” (1993: 237). The ACF has since been further developed by additional case studies – 34 up until 1998 and still counting (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999: 126; see also Nohrstedt 2005 and Nohrstedt forthcoming). The Policy Agendas Project that has further developed PE (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; 2002; Jones and Baumgartner 2005) aims at producing “high-quality datasets that are capable of tracking policy change in the United States since the Second World War within precise policy content categories” (Jones and Baumgartner 2005: 291). These policy content categories have over the years been investigated through a vast number of studies that try to synthesize the merits of “cross-sectional studies of several issues at one point in time, and longitudinal case studies of single issues” (Baumgartner and Jones 1993: 40).

The reference to ‘case studies’ may however have different connotations. It can refer to the study of a case, where the case is defined as “an instance of a class of events” (George and Bennett 2004: 17). The ‘class of events’ are for MS, ACF and PE policy change and policy stability, and it is in that sense of the term that they study cases. But ‘case studies’ can also refer to a set of methods (of which process tracing is one) that “include both within-case analysis of single cases and comparisons of a small number of cases” (Ibid.: 18). Methodologically, case studies are different from statistical methods and formal modelling, even though an historical case can very well be analyzed in numerical terms. PE studies, for instance, are typically constructed as statistical analyses, whereas ACF normally are within-case analyses, and MS based its original conclusions on the comparison of four cases (and more observations). But the preferred methodological approach need not have wider implications in terms of epistemological foundation.

Epistemologically, all three approaches [case studies, statistical methods and formal modelling] attempt to develop logically consistent models or theories, they derive observable implications from these theories, they test these implications against empirical observations or measurements, and they use the results of these tests to make inferences on how best to modify the theories tested (George and Bennett 2004: 6).

The ongoing and at this point long-lasting projects that in particular ACF and PE have become indicate that empirical observations still trigger refinement

of theoretical concepts and arguments. They share the same epistemology, for which reason the methodological approach is a subordinate issue.

The process tracing method is by no means at odds with the epistemological commitment of MS, ACF and PE. It is within-case oriented and as such designed to unveil mechanisms that “trace the links between possible causes and observed outcomes” (Ibid.). None of the three theories refer to the process tracing method, but they are not shoehorned in it by force. After all, they work with models of the individual and they designate collective action accordingly, as discussed above. The two perspectives developed in this chapter can hence be expected to offer the micro foundations for the relationship between the crises and the patterns of policy change portrayed in part one.

6.7.3 Processes to trace

So far, this chapter has in some detail examined three theoretical frameworks in a search for guidance into the ‘black box’ of policymaking, and more precisely into the role of crisis experience for policy developments. Since the three frameworks seemed to share many assumptions, they were collapsed into two perspectives, a belief-based and an attention-based. These perspectives are furthermore assumed to be complementary, that is, they are not here understood to provide competing explanations. Together they are expected to explain the outcomes of Swedish counter-terrorism policymaking at a finer level of detail than what was presented in part one. Hopefully, they reveal causal mechanisms between crises and policy change. In order to probe this, the process tracing method is arguably more productive compared to the methods previously deployed by ACF, MS and PE scholars.

Each of the three analytical chapters that follow below will treat a crisis-related policy process: the period of policy change that followed the Bulltofta skyjacking, the period of policy stability after the West German embassy drama, and the period of policy change after the Palme murder. Each chapter will be divided into a belief-based and an attention-based part.

The parts of the analytical survey that adopt the belief-based perspective will as far as possible uncover belief-based coalition structures and how these endured the crisis in question. The spotlight will be directed at dominating policy core beliefs, but also at challenging core beliefs. It is of importance to detect the main actors of advocacy coalitions.

Within and between coalitions, interaction patterns are likely to unveil preconditions for coalition cohesion and requirements for policy-oriented learning. Evidence of such kind will be looked for. In that respect it is also important to see to what extent policy core beliefs and secondary aspects are related to crisis experience, that is, if crises affect belief systems. In order to discover precondi-

tions for policy-oriented learning, the level and nature of conflict between rival coalitions needs to be defined. What kind of evidence is used in the conflict, and is it convincing? Is there a prestigious enough arbitrary forum in place for coalitions to participate and reach agreement?

How is the existence of an advocacy coalition established? The original ACF was developed to explain policymaking in America, even if Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith argue that the framework is applicable to “all policy areas in at least modern industrial polyarchies” (1993: 225). Others have raised the objection that ACF is less applicable to policy styles that do not correspond with American pluralism (John 1998; Parsons 1995). In fact, the Swedish policy style of ‘corporatism’ and ‘consensualism’ is not likely to produce the type of advocacy coalitions suggested by ACF (Nohrstedt forthcoming). Moreover, the advocacy coalition framework is “particularly applicable to cases involving substantial political conflict and high technological complexity” (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1999: 125). Counter-terrorism policymaking is fundamentally non-technological in nature, even if it at times has produced substantial political conflict. In other words, Swedish counter-terrorism policymaking is not benign territory for establishing policy advocacy coalitions. With these caveats in mind, the following chapters will be a difficult test to the applicability of ACF assumptions.

In line with the attention-based perspective, it is the suggestive nature of events that is interesting to capture empirically. This entails two analytical challenges. First, policy entrepreneurs need to be captured in action. Attention must be given to entrepreneurial efforts to capitalize on the event, but not only the case in point. Exactly which events are used for meaning making is to be empirically ascertained. Second, processes of positive and negative feedback need to be traced. It is then a question of identifying how and to what extent previously disinterested actors became engaged in policymaking.

The presence or absence of policy entrepreneurs needs to be established in the first place. A policy entrepreneur however need not be a single individual, but can also be a collective in the form of for instance a pressure group. The identity of the policy entrepreneur is likely to affect the prospect of success. What position or clout does the policy entrepreneur have? And what skills does he, she or it bring to the table? Are outcomes, the patterns of policy change, traceable to positive or negative feedback processes set in motion by the policy entrepreneur?

The questions above reflect assumptions of the two perspectives, which were in turn built from complementary assumptions. But of course issues that were found to be overlapping, such as the role of institutions, should also be covered.