



REFORMS THAT STICK

**THE POLITICS OF
PRESERVATION**

JOANNAH LUETJENS

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Reforms that Stick

The Politics of Preservation

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(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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CONTENTS

| | | |
|-------------------|---|-----|
| Chapter 1. | Introducing Reform Endurance: Immovable Objects and Irresistible Forces | 9 |
| Chapter 2. | Conceptualising Reform Endurance: Where Preservation meets Adaptation | 25 |
| Chapter 3. | Studying Reform Endurance in Parliamentary Systems: A Comparative Approach | 47 |
| Chapter 4. | Sweden's Educational Saga: The Entrenchment of School Choice | 73 |
| Chapter 5. | Environmental Reform in Ireland's 'Throwaway' Society: Moving Beyond Landfill | 95 |
| Chapter 6. | Conclusions: Navigating the Twin Challenges of Reform Endurance | 123 |
| | References | 143 |
| | Appendix | 161 |
| | Samenvatting in het Nederlands | 173 |
| | Acknowledgements | 181 |
| | About the author | 187 |

TABLES AND FIGURES

List of Tables

- 2.1 Elements of a policy
- 2.2 Key concepts regarding the contents and causes of reform endurance
- 3.1 Included reform cases
- 3.2 Endurance as a 'set'
- 3.3 Political support as a 'set'
- 3.4 Administrative adaptation as a 'set'
- 3.5 Sectoral realignment as a 'set'
- 3.6 Supportive constituencies as a 'set'
- 3.7 Checking for necessary conditions for endurance
- 3.8 Truth table for the presence of endurance
- 3.9 Two pathways to endurance
- 3.10 Three pathways to non-endurance
- 4.1 Key events preceding Sweden's choice reform
- 4.2 Enduring elements of Sweden's school choice reform, 2008
- 4.3 Total number of independent schools per municipality, 1997
- 4.4 Growth of independent schools, 2003-2008
- 5.1 Enduring elements of Ireland's waste management reform, 2012
- 6.1 States of endurance
- 6.2 Endurance trajectories: Ireland and Sweden

List of Figures

- 5.1 Regional waste management clusters in Ireland



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING REFORM
ENDURANCE: IMMOVABLE OBJECTS
AND IRRESISTIBLE FORCES

There is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous than to manage the creation of a new order of things.

Nicolo Machiavelli

If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.

Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, The Leopard

A REFORM BATTLE

Australia is one of the earliest places in the world to allow women to both vote and stand for election. The establishment of this right occurred almost by political accident in the colony of South Australia in 1894, but it was the endurance and the expansion of this right over the following century that displayed the most perseverance and craftsmanship.

The question of women's enfranchisement had gained currency in the colony since the mid-1880s, due largely to the advocacy efforts of the Women's Suffrage League. Between 1886 and 1894, women's suffrage was raised in six separate unsuccessful bills to the South Australian Parliament. In the final – and ultimately successful – reform attempt, members of the League presented a 120-metre-long petition containing 11,600 signatures supporting the cause. Recognising the turning tide of public and parliamentary opinion, Ebenezer Ward, one of the bill's outspoken opponents, made his move. Ward sought to undermine the entire reform by adding an amendment which he believed would derail the whole agenda. This original bill extended all women the right to vote. Ward's amendment extended women the right to stand for Parliament. He was convinced that the very idea of women running for Parliament would be enough to drive any rational man to vote in opposition. The gambit backfired and the bill passed, 31 votes to 14.

But the reform's long-term survival was far from guaranteed. During this time, a series of constitutional conventions were conducted to discuss the future of the six Australian colonies. The issue was never really whether the colonies would federate, but how. This would require diminishing the power of the colonies or expanding some of their laws to benefit all citizens across the new Commonwealth (Wright, 2018). Women's suffrage organisations around the country lobbied federal convention delegates. Leveraging the precedent of South Australia, one petition urged delegates to "consider whether or not such franchise shall be uniform through all the colonies" (Womanhood Suffrage League, 1897). At the 1897 Convention in Adelaide, South Australia's Premier Charles Kingston proposed that full voting rights for *all* adults be written into

the Constitution. The South Australian representatives made their stance clear: if the clause was not approved, South Australia would vote against joining the Commonwealth.

The clause was indeed approved and in 1902, the first Australian Federal Parliament met to settle the question of who should be able to vote and stand in national elections. The initial wording of the proposal spoke of universal suffrage, a right extended to *all* adult Australians. This attempt to secure a broadly-based suffrage and establish perhaps “the most representative Parliament, according to the truest principles of democracy” did not survive (O’Connor, 1902). The debate resulted in the 1902 Franchise Act, giving Australian women the rights that no other women in the world had. However, in preserving the existing rights of colonists and extending them to all white adults, that same piece of legislation undermined the principle of universal suffrage by disenfranchising all First Nations peoples. This Act meant that race, not gender, defined the new Australian citizen, and continued to define citizenship for the next sixty years.

While the battle for universal suffrage was initially won at the state-level, it was quickly undermined in the first federal Parliament. While elements of the South Australian reform (women’s voting rights) were preserved, First Nations peoples’ rights were not. But this issue became even more complex. The Franchise Act had explicitly identified and disenfranchised different groups within Australia. As a consequence, the politics of the Act never really settled and the question of who could vote and stand in Parliament became a complex administrative jigsaw at the state- and federal-levels. For example, the Act used the expression ‘aboriginal native’, but this was interpreted as any person born in a country and belonging to the original ‘racial’ group of that country. This created a situation where, for example, people of Asian or African background could be naturalised and still be denied voting rights – but their Australian born children would have a different set of rights.

As observed by Aaron Wildavsky (1979), public policy often is its own cause: yesterday’s solutions to social problems can turn out to be – or construed as – drivers of today’s problems. To remedy this confusion, caveats were continually added to the Franchise Act, slowly incorporating more and more of an increasingly multicultural Australia. At the federal level, the post-WWII period cast this question into sharp relief. First Nations peoples had fought, side-by-side with non-Indigenous soldiers in the First and Second World Wars. The hypocrisy of permitting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander man to fight – and possibly die – for ‘his country’, but not to vote, became increasingly clear (Hall, 1995). In 1962 a new resolution was reached with the right to vote extended to all First Nations peoples.

The case of universal suffrage illustrates some of the challenges facing the long-term existence of major policy reforms. It demonstrates how some elements of a reform endure over time, while

others can change. The passage of a reform does not guarantee its survival over time. Contexts change, political leaders come and go, the authority to govern can change hands, and priorities shift readily as new and pressing policy problems rear their heads. Instead, a reform can develop in unintended ways, beyond what its early advocates and/or originators intended. When first introduced, the franchise bill contemplated an astonishingly broad franchise. Yet, exceptions and qualifications slowly transformed the definition of universal, promptly excluding not only First Nations peoples but also 'non-European' migrants, certain offenders, and those of 'unsound mind.' Over time, such qualifications and exceptions were cast in a new light, as contexts changed and advocates mobilised around new definitions and understandings of citizenship.

The symbolism of a reform's enactment is not enough; any reform needs (and takes) time to work its way into the fabric of society. Despite the reform's enactment, scepticism and outright opposition to women's voting and parliamentary rights remained, particularly at the state-level. The major political parties, for example, refused to accept women within their ranks.¹ Instead, women were encouraged to stand as independents, to "dissociate themselves from party turmoil" and to put pressure for further social reform on all parties (Scott, 1903). The reform prompted the emergence of new organisations and political alliances seeking to protect and extend these newfound rights. The 1920s, for example, saw the emergence of First Nations rights activists joining forces with other human rights activist organisations seeking the end of existing legal and political exclusion (Chesterman and Galligan, 1997). Slowly, but surely, these rights gained a foothold in Australian society.

WHAT HAPPENS TO REFORMS OVER TIME?

To not only legislate for but to credibly sustain reforms is a central challenge facing reforming governments around the world (Shugart and Haggard, 2001). Once passed, reforms do not proceed on autopilot. As time passes, the survival and success of any policy reform rests not on faithful reproduction, but on ongoing active adaptation to the political and economic environment (Ansell et al., 2015; Vancoppenolle et al., 2015). Just because something survives for a long period of time, does not necessarily mean that it remains effective or successful. Just like there are 'permanently failing organisations' (Meyer and Zucker, 1989) that nevertheless endure, so there are 'zombie policies' that exist in name but have become a dead letter (Peters and Nagel, 2020; Quiggin, 2012)

Within the world of politics, there is a constant pressure to change course yet again, to 'fine-tune', to address unintended consequences, to innovate, to compensate losers, to accommodate

¹ In 1921, nearly 20 years after the Franchise Act, Australia elected its first female member at the state level. No Australian woman was successful in gaining a seat in the House of Representatives or the Senate until 1943. Australia's Parliament House did not even have a designated ladies' bathroom until 1974.

powerful interests, to move with the times, to adjust to new political realities. Yet, at the same time, policy U-turns are condemned and interpreted, at least by media pundits and opposing parties, as bowing to pressure or evidence of incompetence (see e.g., Tingle, 2013; Grube, 2014; Hopkins, 2020). Preserving the integrity of a reform commitment requires maintaining and promoting agreed-upon rules, ways of working, and adhering to institutional rules (Boin and 't Hart, 2000). On the other hand, reform stewardship also requires responsive adaptation to changing circumstances and feedback information to ensure that the reform remains 'fit for purpose' (Hallsworth, 2011; Carey et al., 2021). If such adaptation does not occur, a hard-fought, path-breaking policy reform might turn out to be inconsequential, counterproductive, politically corrosive, and therefore end up being marginalised, amended, or abandoned altogether. Thus, the capacity of reforms to endure centres on the twin challenges of preservation and adaptation. With these pressures and challenges in mind, some important questions arise that are central to this study:

- How is it that some policy reforms come to endure politically, while others dwindle and disappear?
- What elements of a reform endure? What does a durable reform look like?
- Under what conditions do reforms endure? What role do political dynamics, bureaucratic, civil society and citizens play in endurance?
- How in those cases of reform endurance, do policymakers navigate the Scylla and Charybdis of preservation and responsiveness adaptation?

In addressing these questions, I follow in the footsteps of Eric Patashnik's (2008) pioneering work and examine what happens to major policy reforms after they have been adopted and over time. The motivation for doing so is simple: We know much about how policy reforms are designed, fought over, and adopted, but relatively little about their capacity to endure over time. The few studies of reform endurance that we have, agree that it is a messy terrain (Patashnik, 2008; Jenkins and Patashnik, 2012; Thompson, 2012; Lindquist and Wanna, 2011). No matter how well a reform is designed, and no matter how much public and political support it initially receives, its endurance is "contingent, conditional, and contested" (Patashnik and Zelizer, 2013, p. 1072). Making reform stick is "invariably a creative and emergent process" (Lindquist and Wanna, 2011, p. 11), where success is far from guaranteed. Through analysing and comparing the trajectories of major policy reforms over time, my intention is to problematise, define, and enrich understandings of both the content and causes of reform endurance.

Major reforms are in effect policy gambles (Dror, 1983) in which governments forge new trajectories for public problem-solving, not just at one point in time but over time. For such gambles to pay off, citizens, businesses and other stakeholders must believe – or be persuaded

– that the government will honour today’s commitments in the future. They need a modicum of stability and reliability in order to make choices about how they will conduct their lives and enterprises. This is highly relevant when it comes to policy reforms which are intended to operate over a long time period, or where there is a lengthy time lag between a reform’s costs and benefits. Think, for example, of pensions, education, environmental protection, or infrastructure. While a future-oriented, long-term approach may be what politicians endorse, there is little motivation or incentive present to aim one’s eye into the distance. The demands of democratic legitimacy and accountability require governments to respond to changed conditions in ways that may impair its credibility. Unravelling reforms can be costly (see e.g., Patashnik, 2008) but reform reversal can also lead to confusion and cynicism about the effectiveness of government, future reform efforts, and public services more generally (Caiden, 1999; Lindquist and Wanna, 2011; Scarpa and Schierup, 2018).

RECONNOITRING ENDURANCE

Let us now map the terrain of reform endurance by visiting instructive historical and contemporary examples. I previously mentioned that a policy reform might turn out to be inconsequential, counterproductive, and/or politically corrosive, but what does this actually look like? Why is it in some cases that things go downhill?

The CETA in America: Why reputation matters

Let me begin first with a reform that more or less fumbled into oblivion. It is 1973, we are in the United States, and the Nixon administration has just signed the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) into law. This Act had several precursors that had resulted in a jumbled and confusing unemployment policy landscape populated by a proliferation of federal categorical grants, each with a narrowly defined purpose. Nixon, and his push toward ‘New Federalism’, focused on returning responsibilities and funding for programs to state and local governments through revenue sharing and block grants (Conlan, 1988). The goal was to pull together diverse programs at the local level under a single prime sponsor. It was a comprehensive countermeasure to the fragmentation emerging over the post-war period.

Beginning its life as a broad training and employment reform, the job creation aspect soon became dominant particularly in light of the 1974-76 recession. In its brief history, from 1973 to 1982, the reform was amended eight times and proliferated 12 separate programmatic titles, parts, and subparts (Guttman, 1983). These constant revisions were fuelled largely by the political compromise upon which the Act was founded. The White House favoured a decentralised and ‘no-strings’ block grant approach. Congress, however, favoured centralisation and categorical grants.

Continuous Congress-driven amendments to the Act slowly nibbled away at the decentralised and decategorized design of the reform and muddled its focus. The reform became 'something of a dumping ground' for social problems that Washington was incapable of or unwilling to address (Mucciaroni, 1990, p. 187).

A puzzling insight from this reform, however, is the mismatch between perception and reality. With rising costs, media pundits and political opponents levelled accusations of pervasive financial mismanagement, corruption, and fraud. While it is unclear how widespread these allegations were, the Act's reputation certainly took a hit (Weir, 1992). It became politically corrosive. Yet, in terms of its substantive impact, the scorecard reads quite differently. The reform should not be heralded as an outright success but its reputation as an abject failure understates its programmatic achievements (Mucciaroni, 1990; Bovens and 't Hart, 1996). The key lesson for reform endurance from this episode is that *perception and reputation matter*: the perceived political failings sounded the reform's death knell. With social policies shifting sharply to the right under President Reagan, CETA was targeted for elimination, coming to an end in 1981. Despite some promising impacts on the ground, a reform needs ongoing political backing if it is to stand any chance of enduring over time.

Assisted Reproduction in Canada: Why institutional constraints matter

I take you now to Canada, where a 15-year policy process resulted in the passage of the Assisted Human Reproduction Act in 2004. Lauded at the time as one of the most comprehensive pieces of legislation in the world, the reform aimed to create national standards in assisted reproductive activities. Navigating a quagmire of social and ethical controversies surrounding reproduction and technology, the reform covered everything from human cloning to payment for sperm and eggs. Covering a spectrum of contentious topics, the reform included criminal prohibitions to prevent harmful technologies and behaviours, a framework for 'controlled activities' (to be accompanied by detailed regulations), as well as a federal regulatory agency to oversee it all and respond to emerging technologies. Through the reform, federal policymakers sought to combine two broad substantive frames: the medical-scientific and the moral (Snow, 2019). In opting for a national approach, the reform incorporated medically beneficial technologies and activities (which would be subject to regulation) and morally harmful technologies and activities (which would be subject to criminal prohibition). It was hailed as a model of a comprehensive approach that emerged from politically and ethically treacherous terrain.

The aura of success, however, was short-lived. The province of Quebec challenged aspects of the reform's constitutionality while the ink was still wet. A court case focused on whether the reform's provisions were related to health care or to criminal law, the issue being that the Canadian

Constitution grants policymaking authority over health care to the provinces. For Quebec, the federal government had overstepped its authority. Quebec furthermore claimed that the provinces had been sidelined in the lead up to the reform's passage. The Quebec Court of Appeal as well as the Supreme Court, agreed with Quebec's argument.

As a result, the newly created federal agency was gutted as virtually all of its regulatory functions had been rendered unconstitutional. In its six years of existence, it had issued only one regulation, and was frequently criticised for its unwillingness to act even on the unchallenged provisions (Baylis and Downie, 2013). Closing its doors in 2012, the agency's surviving functions were absorbed into Health Canada. At the federal level, the criminal prohibitions remain but the scope for national action in healthcare is severely limited. A key lesson from this case for our understanding of reform endurance concerns the *influence of institutional constraints* on policymakers, and the extent to which framing strategies can affect reform outputs in unexpected ways. In this case, the reform failed to endure due to the competing demands of Canada's constitutional framework and the federal level's desire for national uniformity.

These two illustrative cases demonstrate some of the pressures that a reform can come under. In the United States, the inability to endure was largely a consequence of political tinkering and the eventual chipping away at the reform's fundamental elements. In Canada, the story is a bit different. The demise of the assisted reproductive reform stemmed from the federal government's framing of the issue as one of 'national concern' and its oversight regarding provincial jurisdiction. In both of these cases, such pressures were enough for the respective reforms to come undone. But pressures and contestation are a mainstay of politics. How, then, might such pressures be dealt with effectively and/or overcome? To interrogate this, I turn first to an instructive example from the United Kingdom and then to Australia.

The UK's Minimum Wage: Why learning matters

In 1999, Tony Blair's Labour government introduced a national minimum wage across the United Kingdom. In an earlier (unsuccessful) attempt, Labour detailed a minimum wage based on a specific formula. Political opponents and sceptical trade unions criticised the formula for its fuzziness and ambiguity. Learning from this attempt, Labour instead established an independent commission to detail and guide the reform's design and implementation. The Commission comprised of three employer representatives, three labour representatives, and three independents. This broad-based composition reflected an understanding that the government had more to lose than to gain by forcing through a decision by simple majority (Rutter et al., 2011). Working collegiately rather than along 'party lines', the Commission presented a united front, establishing a consensus that the minimum wage should be a permanent feature of the labour market.

The Commission took inspiration from a shipping reference, a plimsoll line. This is the load line on the side of a ship which indicates how low it may safely sit in the water. They were careful to define the minimum wage in terms of a wage floor, rather than a wage policy. The plimsoll line analogy depicted the minimum wage as something that could and would fluctuate in line with the ebb and flow of economic and social conditions. In doing so, the Commission proceeded cautiously and, in an evidence-based manner, testing the impact of its recommendations before moving to a more ambitious programme of increases. This cautious approach also helped to sway the reform's political opponents. The dire labour market effects hypothesised by the reform's Conservative opponents never came to pass. Political opposition to the minimum wage began to fall, and by 2005 the Conservative Party manifesto pledged to retain the reform upon election (Ward, 1999; Rawnsley, 2005).

This broad political consensus, coupled with the ongoing work of the Commission, have certainly allowed the reform to endure. The reform's principles are firmly embedded within the fabric of society. Political debate remains centred on the 'how' (the appropriate wage level) rather than the 'why' (the reform's rationale and purpose). Through this episode, several insights regarding a reform's endurance stand out. To start with, *if at first you don't succeed, keep at it, only smarter so*. The earlier attempt gave Labour the opportunity to learn from their missteps. In doing so, the party actively considered how they might regroup and try again. The independence of the commission proved critical to gaining and maintaining broad endorsement of the reform. Adjustments to the minimum wage remain based on the recommendations of the commission. This has protected the reform from political interference. It has also helped to gain trust and support from the general public, as well as the broader business community.

Gun Control in Australia: Why vigilance matters

The final example I consider here concerns one of the most comprehensive and sweeping reforms of gun control in the world. In 1996, following a horrific massacre at Port Arthur, a popular tourist attraction in the state of Tasmania, the Australian federal government successfully introduced the National Firearms Agreement. The reform sharply restricted legal ownership of firearms through a series of strict licencing and registration requirements. Gun-owner registries were created and all new firearm purchases required a permit. A significant provision of the reform was a flat-out ban on certain kinds of guns, such as automatic and semi-automatic rifles and shotguns. Through amnesty and buyback programs, owners no longer qualified to possess the newly banned weapons surrendered them to authorities. More than two decades on, both public and political support for the reform has only grown (Alpers and Ghazarian, 2019). The reform continues to enjoy broad acclaim and impact, recently becoming a source of inspiration and guidance for gun reform in New Zealand.

Despite this success, the reform's long-term endurance is far from guaranteed. The reform could be vulnerable to what Wildavsky (1979, p. 285) terms the 'Paradox of Time', where past successes lead to future failures. In this case, the continuing endurance of the reform rests on both ongoing vigilance and cohesion between the different states and territories. The key lesson here is that *proponents cannot rest on their laurels*; the very success of the gun reform means that it may no longer be front of mind. Two decades of political pressures have reduced restrictions and watered down the laws state by state (see Alpers and Rossetti, 2017). For example, New South Wales has steadily reduced restrictions surrounding licensing and permits, particularly on the use of prohibited firearms. Western Australia does not require gun owner safety training, except for handgun licences. No state or territory limits the quantity of ammunition which can be purchased. Each exception to the reform arguably opens the door for further dilution in the future.

An additional factor which could sow the seeds of the reform's future destruction lies in a provision of the reform itself. The requirement from the reform to have a 'genuine reason' to own a gun triggered a surge in gun club memberships. Membership in a club was an accepted reason for ownership. As a consequence, the financial and political power of the gun lobby, aided largely by membership fees, has expanded (Alpers, 2016). Reforms create opportunities for groups to mobilise, both in support for but also in opposition to the reform itself. Scholars of reforms in welfare and health policies have recognised this, labelling it 'self-undermining feedback' (Jacobs and Weaver, 2015; Béland et al., 2019). The multimillion-dollar annual income stream suggests that pro-gun lobby's political influence and power will not be decreasing any time soon (Alpers and Ghazarian, 2019).

Both the minimum wage and gun reform cases offer indications of what endurance can look like, and some of the ways that it can be achieved. In the case of gun reform, the broad principles and general purpose are celebrated and entrenched, but some of the reform's instruments and settings have been adapted. In the minimum wage case, the general purpose is well-accepted and the reform's settings are evaluated on an annual basis. In terms of attaining endurance, public support, political backing, administrative adaptation, and vigilance recur as prominent themes. Such themes also emerge in existing studies of reform endurance (see Lewis, 2012; Thompson, 2012; Béland et al., 2020). Similar to the experience of gun reform in Australia, Patashnik (2008) discusses the likelihood that the 'losers' of an initial reform battle will regroup to fight, nibble at and destabilise the new policy direction. The opportunities for political parties, interest groups, and citizens to mobilise in support of or in opposition to a reform over time have also been carefully detailed by welfare state scholars (Skocpol, 1992; Pierson, 1992; Soss and Schram, 2007; Mettler, 2005).

STUDYING REFORM ENDURANCE

Eric Patashnik (2008) offers the most comprehensive account of reform endurance to date. *Reforms at Risk* examines the political sustainability of 'general-interest' reforms over time. Reforms of this kind either seek to destroy particularistic benefits by encouraging programs which provide broad benefit to the general public, or 'rationalise' some aspect of government undertaking. At its core, Patashnik queries if there are particular institutional and political features of reforms that make them more or less susceptible to the wear and tear inflicted upon them by special interest lobbies and political ad-hocery. By drawing attention to the ongoing struggles to sustain political commitments over time, Patashnik concludes that the question of whether a reform is capable of being sustained is empirical. Rather than focusing solely on the immediate institutional shift associated with a reform, *Reforms at Risk* suggests that the evolving dynamic after a major policy change is an important – but neglected – object of study.

My interest in reform endurance began before I started engaging with the topic in an academic setting. I attribute this to two factors. The first factor relates to the political instability blighting the federal level of Australian politics. In a short space of time, from 2011 to 2016, Australia had four different prime ministers. This internal political upheaval, as well as changes in the power to govern, led to a number of reform reversals and changes. The dominant themes, at least as relayed through the media, were of reform 'gridlock', 'corrosive' institutions, and a deterioration of the capacity to govern. While some major reforms were reversed (the carbon pricing scheme) or slowly abandoned (school funding), others were retained (national disability insurance scheme). Clearly political support was an important factor at play here but there had to be more to the story.

The second factor relates to the idea of the 'golden age' of reform. Commentators often hark back to the glory days of the late 1980s and 1990s when real and substantive change was possible, when politicians of all political persuasions worked together for the greater good. Some of the reforms implemented during that time still stand today – but, again, this led me to question how? How have they come to command a level of respect and importance? Do they continue to retain a positive impact, or do they simply exist? Are such concerns regarding reform endurance shared across democratic systems?

While doing this PhD in Western Europe, I quickly encountered similar sentiments. Here too, attention is drawn to the short-termism of modern politics, the collective inability to break the gridlock, and the difficulties of sustaining 'real' reform (Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations, 2013; OECD, 2014). To understand how some policy reforms come to endure, I bring together, and systematically compare, a collection of major reforms from different democratic

systems. I do so both to better understand the forms and shapes of endurance, but also to complement existing works which focus heavily on the United States.

Pursuing these lines of inquiry first led me to question the characteristics of political systems. Political systems come in a range of different shapes and sizes. The most comprehensive – and well-known – effort to identify variations among parliamentary systems was conducted by Arend Lijphart (1999, 2012). Lijphart identifies a number of different dimensions, such as whether countries have federal or unitary arrangements, or tend toward single-party or multi-party coalition governments. This provides an interesting lens with which to examine endurance. For example, different parliamentary systems are often viewed as either being decisive or resolute. A political system which tends toward single-party governments is often characterised as inherently ‘adversarial’ given the dominance and choice of a limited number of parties. In contrast, a political system which tends toward multi-party coalition governments is often characterised as ‘consensual’ given the negotiations and common ground that must be struck in order to govern.

Focusing on the distribution of power across different political systems, scholars have suggested that policy reform in parliamentary systems might be more prone to instability and change (Weaver and Rockman, 1993). Rather than assuming that reform endurance is less likely in parliamentary systems (we know it isn’t), I was curious as to whether (and how) these institutional variations could further or stymie the capacity of reforms to endure. To investigate this and reflecting my aim to extend understandings of endurance beyond the United States already offered by Patashnik, I decided to focus my analysis on reform endurance in parliamentary systems. To this end, the reform cases that form the empirical core of this book are drawn from Australia, Canada, Ireland, and Sweden. Australia and Canada are both examples of federal parliamentary systems, where the government tends to alternate between two major parties. At the other end of the Lijphartian spectrum, Ireland and Sweden are both examples of unitary systems, which tend to feature multi-party coalition governments.

The next challenge was to identify cases of major policy reform. In the policy literature, there is little agreement on what actually constitutes a major reform. It is one of those things: we know it when we see it but it can be difficult to define. However, some scholars have highlighted certain components that may be usefully employed to recognise a reform. For example, reform is fundamental, deliberate, and enforced (Bannink and Resodihardjo, 2006). Fundamental implies a deviation from existing structures or established ways of doing things (Dror, 1976; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Deliberate means that the reform was planned with some kind of causal theory in mind (Cerych and Sabatier, 1986). Finally, enforced simply means that the reform has survived all of the policymaking stages and is now in place. To add more policy ‘meat’ to these

components, I define reform as fundamental, deliberate and enforced changes to both the broad means and ends of public policy.

With this definition of reform, I began compiling reform cases from these four countries. To aid in this endeavour, and to narrow my search, I reached out to policy experts and scholars across Australia, Canada, Ireland, and Sweden for inspiration and recommendations. Arriving at the final set of reform cases is best described as a back-and-forth process. For example, given my intention to compare these cases, I needed to take steps to ensure that they were indeed comparable. To do this, I first narrowed my focus to two key policy domains: environment and education. This does not mean that endurance challenges are not pertinent to other policy domains, it simply means that other policy domains are beyond the scope of this analysis.

I chose these policy domains not only because they represent big ticket items for government, but they are also highly value laden. Education, for example, tends to reflect the values and preferences of parents, students, administrators, politicians, and many others. Yet such values and preferences evolve over time and education systems and policies must contend with this. Similarly, environmental policy is rife with collective action problems and social dilemmas (Ostrom, 1990). The multiplicity of interests and the visibility of environmental policies usually guarantees that reform goals and instruments are subject to intense and ongoing political debate, with particular scrutiny given to their costs and effectiveness in the short-term (Kraft, 2018). Education and environmental policy domains thus present different challenges for reform endurance.

I then considered the time period that these cases would be drawn from. For example, in an earlier iteration, I had included the case of free post-primary education in Ireland. This reform, however, occurred in the 1960s. The other cases that I had arrived at were all enacted between the late 1980s and mid-1990s. To ensure that all cases were drawn from a similar period of time (Haydu, 1998), I decided to drop this Irish case. Given that reforms take (and need) time to take 'effect', I opted for reform cases that were enacted at least 20 years ago. In doing so, I am able to trace their developments over time.

In comparative policy, there are two general and relevant lines of inquiry. The first focuses on national differences while the second focuses on policy sector differences (Levi-Faur, 2006). The national differences approach suggests that national level characteristics exert a major impact on policy, politics, economics, and society. The policy sector approach, however, emphasises the autonomous political characteristics of distinct policy sectors (Freeman, 1985; Howlett and Tosun, 2021). In short, it suggests that similar policy sectors will exhibit strong similarities regardless of their national setting. By combining these two approaches (four countries and two policy domains), I am able to clarify whether an emergent finding is simply idiosyncratic to a single

case or consistently replicated by several cases (Yin, 2018). Multiple cases can also create more robust theory because the propositions are more deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007).

This approach may be ambitious but it is certainly not naïve. Comparative studies are fraught with difficulty. To deal with some of these challenges, trade-offs had to be considered and made. Comparative politics offers various classifications and typologies to understand and identify parliamentary systems (e.g., Miller et al., 1997; Peck and Theodore, 2007). In opting to follow Lijphart, I am well aware of the stones unturned. In addition, the cases that I examine, while they are drawn from similar/different policy domains, are unique entities in their right own. In order to ensure a degree of comparability between them, I have relied heavily on primary sources (policy documents, formal debates, reports, audits) for my empirical material. Now, this, combined with the first analytic technique, may have contributed to a rather rationalistic or clean account of reform endurance. Through the intensive case studies, I take steps to remedy this by interviewing with contemporary experts. I recognise, however, that there are inherent limitations in this approach. However, my goal is not to provide a comprehensive account of all of the ins and outs of endurance. Instead, I aim to open the door on the comparative and systematic study of the shapes and causes of reform endurance.

HOW THIS STUDY WILL UNFOLD

To summarise, a lot of scientific knowledge is available on passing reforms, but not on whether and how they endure. As I discuss further in Chapter 2, the passage of a reform is only just the starting point. For a reform to endure, not only does it need to survive over a reasonable period of time, but it also needs to navigate various challenges to its existence. The battle may be won, but the war is far from over. As such, reforms face a great deal of uncertainty as reformers push through uncharted terrain, all the while contending with powerful forces that seek its reversal, as well as legacy effects of policies past. This is by no means impossible, but such challenges and constraints do influence the realm of possible development trajectories.

The principal argument of this book is that reform endurance is about managing the twin challenges of preservation and adaptation. In Chapter 2, I elucidate a solid conceptual basis for reform endurance, drawing from conceptual advances in policy studies in order to unpack its moving parts. Through this effort, I arrive at an analytical framework capable of pinpointing precisely what a reform is and what endurance means. The next challenge involves detecting how reform endurance happens. While a focus on endurance is relatively novel, an interest in policymaking and governance over the long-term is not. As existing studies have shown, long-term policymaking is often the result of a confluence of different factors and their interactive

effects. As such, I am interested in the way that reforms influence activities in the political arena and subsequent policymaking. That is, how a reform stimulates (or fails to stimulate) activities across the political, administrative, sectoral, and societal domains that aid its endurance, and whether such forces 'feedback' and affect the reform itself.

Taking existing studies and my own explorations into account, my hunch was that endurance would be about patterns and commonalities, but also about appreciating contexts. As the case studies offered in this chapter imply, endurance can occur in different ways. It is reasonable to assume that there is no single cause of endurance. Instead, I, like Patashnik and Zelizer (2013, p. 1072), treat endurance as "contingent, conditional, and contested." This implies that endurance will not occur in a linear manner. Instead, it is likely the result of a confluence of different factors and their interactive effects. To analyse endurance, then, I employ a multi-method approach capable of taking such complexity and contingency into account. As a first step, in Chapter 3, I introduce and employ a technique called Qualitative Comparative Analysis to uncover the essence and variation of endurance across the cases of reform. The goal here is to detect patterns and commonalities across the suite of reform cases.

I then conduct two intensive within-case analyses to recontextualise endurance and gain a deeper understanding of how it occurs in practice. Chapter 4 tells the story of the Swedish school choice saga, or how a reform transformed the Swedish school system from a near-entirely public, bureaucratically operated system with very little room for parental choice, to one of the world's most deregulated public education systems (Imsen et al., 2017; Dahlstedt and Fejes, 2019). Chapter 5 tells the tale of Ireland's battle with its ever-increasing levels of waste, or how a reform enabled Ireland to (slowly) move beyond its 'strategy of last resort' and shrug off its 'throwaway culture' label. This multimethod approach allows me to first paint a broad picture of endurance in Chapter 3, and then add texture and colour through the thick descriptions and analyses offered in Chapters 4 and 5 (Goertz, 2017).

In Chapter 6 I reflect first on the patterns and commonalities of reform endurance emerging across my suite of cases. In doing so, I consider how the architects and supporters of an already accepted reform meet the twin challenges of preservation and adaptiveness in their endeavour to make it stick. Considering the intersection of these two dimensions (preservation and adaptiveness) yields four possible 'states' of endurance, as well as the possibility of further mapping reforms continuously overtime. Using the insights generated across my multimethod approach, I return to the idea of endurance as contingent, conditional, and contested, providing further nuance into these descriptive labels. The final part of Chapter 6 interrogates the desirability of reform endurance by considering its connection with more nuanced understandings of performance and success. The chapter ends with a reflection on the approach I have taken in this book, as well as avenues to further advance the study of reform endurance.



CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALISING
REFORM ENDURANCE:
WHERE PRESERVATION
MEETS ADAPTATION

How is it that a policy reform can become so embedded – in governance practices, in institutions, in the routines of citizens – that its subsequent reversal becomes virtually unthinkable? Achieving this level of acceptance is undoubtedly a feat. For a reform to endure, not only does it need to survive over a reasonable period of time, but it also needs to navigate various challenges to its existence. In this chapter, I introduce some of these challenges. I begin first with the politics of implementation, of what happens when the rubber hits the road. I then turn my attention to the constraining effects of previous policy choices, as well as ‘legacy effects’ on future policy choices. To conceptualise reform endurance, I argue that it is important to understand both stability and change. To do this, I draw on recent advances in policy studies in order to unpack its moving parts. Here, I introduce an analytical framework capable of pinpointing precisely what a reform is and what endurance means. The next challenge involves detecting how reform endurance happens. While a focus on endurance is relatively novel, an interest in policymaking and governance over the long-term is not. Scholars from various political science disciplines have considered different factors which influence how reform unfolds over time. Treating endurance as a political phenomenon means paying close attention to the conflicts involving collective actors within the political domain. With this in mind, I present *four conditions* which I surmise to be relevant herein and whose (singular and combined) contribution to the achievement of endurance I later examine.

THE POLITICS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND THE FATE OF REFORMS

Some of the challenges facing a reform may include administrative infighting or political conflict in its birth stage, entrenched opposition or limited take-up in its early years, not to mention inevitable changes of government and economic shifts over time. In short: there are a number of different challenges to navigate and many opportunities for things to go south. For a policy to move from idea to reality, it first needs to be put into action: it needs to be implemented. While poor implementation can certainly undermine a reform’s capacity to endure, endurance is not guaranteed by effective implementation (Patashnik and Weaver, 2020). Instead, implementation offers a site for the politics of endurance to emerge. To explore these issues, it is important to pay close attention not just to what is being created and maintained, but what is being destroyed or altered.

Pressman and Wildavsky (1973) expressed this view on implementation, more or less explicitly, in the first edition of their classic *Implementation: How Great Expectations are Dashed in Oakland: or, why it’s amazing that federal programs work at all, this being the saga of the Economic Development Administration as told by two sympathetic observers who seek to build morals on a foundation of*

ruined hopes. The lengthy and vivid subtitle captures the disappointment of the best laid plans failing to come to fruition, as great expectations shatter into dashed hopes. From this perspective, implementation research has been labelled as ‘miserable’ research as it is “largely a study of why things go wrong” (Kettl, 1993, p. 60). Pushing this one step further – implementation fails when a policy fails to live up to the vision espoused by the designer. But viewing implementation – and the latter stages of the policy cycle (‘maintenance’ or ‘evaluation’) – in this way reinforces the idea of a disconnect between politics and administration. Political elites formulate the reform and “the rest is implementation” (Hupe and Hill, 2016).

But the implementation of a reform cannot be separated from its politics (Moe, 1989). If long-term reform goals are to be realised, governments and policy actors must also be able to navigate the challenges and inconsistencies that arise through implementation and beyond. Implementation and evaluation are more than the technical execution of political decisions; they are instead themselves political processes of turning words and intent into actions and outcomes during which the ideas, assumptions and coalitions underpinning reforms are tested and their constituent programs may be stretched, tweaked, redefined, or completely overturned (O’Toole, 2000).

The political character of implementation processes has certainly not gone unnoticed. Eugene Bardach (1977, p. 56-57) described implementation as “a process of assembling numerous and diverse program elements” that are in the hands of many different actors often operating independently of each other. As a result, Bardach (1977, p. 37) concluded, “some might call the resulting process ‘politics’. And so it is. Yet, implementation politics is, I believe, a special kind of politics.” Despite this early recognition that policy implementation is shaped by political factors, and indeed, shapes political factors, the political implications of implementation were largely neglected. Consequently, long after Pressman and Wildavsky’s initial publication, Patashnik (2008, p. 5) noted that “the implementation literature focuses mainly on the internal life of bureaus and the conditions under which statutory mandates are (or are not) translated into administrative actions.” The problem with this focus is that a lot of political action and contestation occurs “after the dust” of policy enactment settles (Pierson, 2005, p. 37). Implementation poses unique challenges for reform endurance as it creates opportunities and spaces for further contestation.

CHOICES-IN-TIME AND LEGACIES-OVER-TIME

Over the past few decades, the range and sheer number of commitments, legislative enactments and policy decisions on the books has expanded. With new programs periodically added to a generally preserved base of prior obligations, the very nature of governance changes. Increasingly, policymakers in all major advanced industrialised democracies find that they are constrained not just by prevailing circumstances but also by the legacy of previous decisions. As Richard

Rose and Philip L. Davies (1994, p. 1-2), pointedly argue, “The statutory commitments of a newly installed official are not a menu specifying what an individual might choose but a description of what a policymaker is committed to do. Like it or not, each new arrival in office must recognise that to govern is to inherit.” The primacy of inheritance before choice acknowledges the dense infrastructure of pre-existing policy commitments, structures, interests, actors, and ideas already in place once a new governing coalition assumes office. It is within this context that policymakers navigate between preservation and responsiveness adaptation: between the past, the present, and the future, and between stability and change.

This idea of ‘inheritance before choice’ has significant implications for what policymakers actually *do*. Policymakers, then, must contend with the policy legacies left by their predecessors – the accretion and accumulation of pervasive regulatory and fiscal interventions, decisions and commitments of policymakers’ past (Adam et al., 2019). When a new governing coalition arrives, aiming to transform the forms and redistributive impact of government interventions, they are not starting from scratch. Very often, these experiences have a history because they build upon earlier experiences with other related policies. Hogwood and Peters (1982) noted that scholars often speak of creation, birth and innovation as though policies come new into the world. In reality, new policies are rarely written on a clean slate, but rather on a well-occupied or even crowded tablet of existing laws, organisations, clients, stakeholders, and expectations. This reality does not prevent political actors introducing change or responding to changing contexts, but it does place limits on what is politically and practically feasible.

In addition to the renewed interest in the politics of implementation, and the appreciation of legacy effects, political scientists and policy scholars have also intensively studied how major policy reforms reshape politics. Following E.E. Schattschneider’s (1935, p. 288) observation that “new policy creates new politics,” scholars of policy feedback have theorised that policies influence subsequent political behaviour and public opinion (Pierson, 1992; Skocpol, 1992). Rather than treating policies as the culminating ‘outputs’ of a political process, policies are viewed as political forces in their own right (Stone, 1997). From this perspective, policies do more than succeed or fail; they change the basic features of the political landscape (see also Fischer, 1995). For example, the specific design of a policy may affect the way in which political and administrative elites, interest groups and target populations interpret its meaning by producing particular sorts of information and knowledge (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). In turn, these interpretations affect how different actors subsequently define their interests and act in relation to the initial policy. From this perspective, the way in which political processes and public policies shape each other over time is brought into sharp focus.

The general idea that existing policies can reshape politics and policymaking over time is not new in political science or policy studies. Yet, it has received increasing attention since the late 1980s and early 1990s, when it became explicitly associated with historical institutionalism (Béland and Schlager, 2019). Historical institutionalism stresses the impact of historically constructed political and policy institutions on policy development. Importantly, it has encouraged scholars to consider how different processes unfold over time, and what effect (if any) this has on the established policy. For example, scholars have questioned the relationship between administrative capacity and public policy, and the effect that policies have on enabling or constraining administrative activity (Skocpol, 1992; Oberlander, 2003; Moynihan and Soss, 2014). Other efforts focus on the extent to which policies mobilise action among interest groups (Pierson, 1994; Goss, 2013), shape public opinion and political behaviour (Campbell, 2012; Soss and Schram, 2007; Gingrich and Ansell, 2012), and promote or constrain further policy development (Schneider et al., 2014; Jacobs and Weaver, 2015)

PRODUCTIVE PERSISTENCE?

To arrive at an understanding of reform endurance, I first introduce and explain some of the concepts underpinning it. Quite simply, reform can be understood as a noun or a verb. I employ the term as a noun. When I speak of reform, I am referring to an instance of a purposefully pursued large-scale policy change. In this section, I review existing conceptualisations of 'public policy', before arriving at an analytical breakdown of policy elements. Doing so sets the stage for understanding 'what' constitutes a policy reform. This also creates the foundation for a dynamic conceptualisation of endurance by taking into consideration stable and changing policy elements.

Mapping policy stability, change and termination

It is difficult to pinpoint what the term 'policy' actually means across different domains and contexts (see e.g., Green-Pedersen, 2004; Howlett and Cashore, 2009). Many different things have been discussed under the one broad heading. While no single definition is likely to ever exist, there is broad acceptance of some of the key characteristics of public policy (Birkland, 2019). For example, it refers to (in)actions or interventions by government (Dye, 1976). It is ostensibly made with the 'public interest' in mind – a term equally as nebulous as policy itself (see e.g., Bryson et al., 2014). Policy can be understood as both a process and an outcome. And it can be used to refer to broad and abstract statements and/or specific measures applied 'on-the-ground':

One conventional view of public policy assumes that decision-makers set policy objectives and analysts or advisers design various configurations of resources (in the form of programs and policies) for reaching those objectives. Implicit in this top-down perspective is the idea that

policy design and implementation are, and should be, separate activities (Hill and Hupe, 2014). But policy is more than just the setting of intentions and directives. Policies are actions which contain goal(s), but they also need the means to achieve them. The actions included in this definition are government decisions to act, or not to act, to change or maintain some aspect of the status quo (Birkland, 2001). The general idea that a policy's means and ends travel together has long been a core assumption of the modernist form of policy analysis that gained prominence in the post-war decades (e.g. Dror, 1971). Wildavsky (1979, p. 387) however, warns that "limiting oneself to policy as product encourages a narrow view of rationality as presentation of results, a view that squeezes a disorderly world into the familiar procrustean formulation of objectives and alternatives." Instead, it is perhaps more fruitful to consider public policy as a "yoked phenomenon... sort of a means-and-ends package deal" (Baehler, 2007, p. 159).

The study of the dimensions of policy has been much helped by Peter Hall's comparative study of economic policymaking in Great Britain and France (Hall, 1993). Rather than treating 'policy' as a single measure, he explicitly distinguished between a policy's means and ends, and between abstract and concrete policy measures. These distinctions were made by breaking policy down into three component parts: the overarching goals that guide policy in a particular field, the techniques or policy instruments used to attain those goals, and the precise settings of these instruments. This classification allowed for a comparative analysis locating change at different levels, or 'orders.' By invoking such labels and consciously disentangling the various elements of a policy it is possible to capture a range of different policy dynamics. For example, continuous monitoring and adjustment of the 'lower order' settings of policy instruments may help to maintain its broad 'higher order' goals.

This idea of breaking policy down into component parts has since been taken further by students of policy processes and policy change. In an effort to 'take stock' of present orthodoxies in policy studies, Howlett and Cashore (2009) note that it is still relatively common for scholars to conflate the various elements of what constitutes policy. As a starting point, public policy should be recognised as a complex mix of 'ends and means related goals' which operate at a range of different levels. Take, for instance, the desire to enhance environmental protection. This is suitably broad and vague; an elaboration of precisely 'what' environmental protection entails needs to be formulated. A range of different activities could fall under this banner, for example, promoting biodiversity, protecting habitats, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These goals, although further specified, are still quite vague. They help to narrow the focus of the broad goal, but these objectives still need to be transformed into operational or usable targets. For example, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by x percent over a specific period of time, or specifying the size of land to be protected in a specific location.

The means-related elements help to breakdown the ‘how’ of policy. With a destination in mind, the next step is figuring out how to get there. Of course, the types of design choices inherent in the ‘how’ can have a quite technical, evidence-based quality to it but such decisions also inescapably – and sometimes explicitly – political. Using the goal of environmental protection as an illustrative example, how is this to be achieved? Governments have a range of (preferred) tools in their arsenal to try to realise their goals. For example, at the broadest level, the preference might be to develop environmental policy which incorporates coercive ‘command and control’ instruments. Another option could be to rely on voluntary measures or harnessing the power of market forces. These preferences form the ‘instrument logic’ or the broad means of intervention that a policy can take. These preferences offer a starting point but they still need to be transformed into specific and operational policy tools. If the preference is to use more coercive instruments, then the tools might include regulation, permits or licenses, for example. To understand how these tools work in practice, they need to be calibrated: how many permits are available, who qualifies, etc.

This breakdown of policy elements, first offered by Howlett and Cashore (2009), helps to identify the connection or theory of change that exists between what a government seeks to do (its ends) and how it seeks to do it (its means). But more than that, this conceptualisation of public policy can be used to further understandings and assessments of policy stability and change. Using the elements set out in Table 2.1, it is possible to pinpoint precisely what a policy is and track how its elements change (or do not change) over time.

Table 2.1. Elements of a policy

| | | Level | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | | <i>High level (policy orientation)</i> | <i>Operationalisation (program)</i> | <i>On the ground specification (measures)</i> |
| Content | <i>Policy ends (aims)</i> | GOALS: What general types of ideas govern policy development? | OBJECTIVES: What does the policy formally aim to address? | SETTINGS: What are the specific requirements of the policy? |
| | <i>Policy means (instruments)</i> | INSTRUMENT LOGIC: What general norms guide policy instrument preferences? | TOOLS: What types of instruments are employed? | CALIBRATIONS: What are the specific ways in which the instrument is applied? |

Source: Howlett and Cashore (2009)

Policy ‘reform’ vs policy ‘change’

The policy sciences are replete with adjectives to describe the type or magnitude of policy change. Often terms like ‘major’, ‘paradigmatic’, ‘deep’, ‘sweeping’ and ‘large-scale’ are invoked to signify the boldness and import of departures from the status quo (e.g., Dempster and Wildavsky,

1979; Collingridge, 1992; Hall, 1993; Tuohy, 2012). Rather than getting embroiled in the definitional nuances and theoretical discussions of precisely what constitutes major, significant, or fundamental change, reform is used here to identify deliberate and enforced change to both the broad means and ends of a pre-existing policy (Goldfinch and 't Hart, 2003). Reform is not only about size and depth, but also and quite pivotally about *intent*. This explicit nature of reform stands in stark contrast to the sometimes unplanned, emergent, and more implicit nature of 'change.' The reform cases in this book all represent purposeful attempts to forge broad, deep, irreversible policy changes to the status quo.

Scholars of policy reform have focused their attention overwhelmingly on the design and development of reform packages, and on the political processes leading to their adoption or rejection. Instead of attempting to explain how new reform ideas develop, find their way into bills and budget proposals, and make it into laws, I am instead interested in how policy reforms that have already been adopted get implemented and consolidated, and whether they endure over time. Throughout this book, I use the enactment of reform as a starting point upon which to track, trace and understand the unfolding – and equally political – process of implementation, evaluation, reconsideration, consolidation, and adjustment.

Over its post-enactment life span, the elements of a policy reform can and often do change to varying extents. Various policy and institutional scholars assume that a change in the higher order elements will affect the lower levels as well (Howlett, 2009; Béland, 2010). This is a reasonable assumption as the addition of any new instrument or objective will need to be further calibrated and fleshed out in detail. However, changes made to the lower order elements may also influence the policy's higher order elements. For instance, Cox (1998) focuses on the relationship between ideas and policies of welfare program restructuring. He finds that any effort to change policy instruments within a social policy program also impacts upon its core principles. This suggests that it is also important to consider the relatively undramatic, but potentially transformative, processes of change that can occur at 'lower' levels of a particular reform (cf. Mahoney and Thelen, 2010).

Reform endurance

For their intent to be realised and their design to continue to 'work' over time, reforms require basic upkeep and care (Mettler, 2016). Imagine yourself as a homeowner. Now, it is not uncommon, for example, for residents of older houses to install new wiring, remove asbestos, or make a series of minor and sometimes major repairs to keep their home in a liveable state. Sometimes, these changes do not suffice and more radical renovations are required. A similar line of thinking

can apply to reforms. Reforms require maintenance and renovating if they are to continue to function well and retain sufficient levels of support in both the political and the implementation arenas. This view of maintenance differs from earlier perspectives. Hogwood and Peters (1982), for example, offer maintenance as an outcome of a formal evaluation process. Maintenance, as it relates to endurance, however, refers to ongoing vigilance to ensure that a reform continues to deliver valued social outcomes. If reforms are not actively managed, monitored and updated, they will likely underperform, deviate from their purposes, or lose traction among what Mark Moore (1995) calls the 'authorizing environment'. The latter is as important as the former: reforms come undone not necessarily because they do not 'work' anymore, but possibly precisely because they do work, but political power has changed hands or the circumstances have changed.

Regardless, the idea of maintenance and upkeep offers a useful way to start thinking about reform endurance. Citizens have every reason to assume that ongoing efforts are in place to maintain the quality of physical infrastructure such as bridges, roads, and buildings. This applies not only to policy reforms that ensure public safety and protection from natural disasters, but equally to other areas, including those that safeguard public health, economic security, educational opportunity, and environmental protection. Reform endurance is as much about preservation as it is about responsive adaptation. Some speak of 'dynamic conservatism': adapting the 'how' to preserve the 'what and why' of a reform (cf. Ansell et al., 2015). This means that a fundamental challenge in the conceptualisation of endurance is the tension that exists between the continuation of reforms as originally 'designed', and the need to adapt them for use in contexts that may differ in important ways from those in which they were originally designed.

One way that scholars have come to view the balance of preservation and responsive adaptation is through path dependence. Initially devised to account for processes of inefficient technological 'lock-in', or why every computer still comes stock standard with a QWERTY keyboard (see David, 1985), path dependence has been employed to explore resistance and change in policy pathways. The classic argument proceeds somewhat deterministically: accidental events leading to the development of inefficient technical solutions, which become reinforced by processes which prevent the development of alternatives. In the world of politics, the idea of being 'locked' into an unchangeable policy reform does not make sense (Torfing, 2009). Instead, one of the major challenges in exploring reform pathways has been accepting the dynamic character of a policy without compromising the idea of a relatively stable and coherent path. This has been navigated by recognising the composite or layered character of implemented policy reforms. The crucial point is that the presence of different layers and slight variations in the reform path by no means hinders the identification of a relatively coherent and stable path.

It will have become clear over the course of this section that it is impossible to think about endurance without considering time. For reforms to endure, they need to be 'built to last' (cf. Collins and Porras, 1994), and continually adjusted to changing circumstances without compromising their core value proposition. But time alone is an inadequate indicator of endurance. For example, a reform may technically exist and persist 'on paper' but be otherwise rendered ineffectual or suffer from neglect as attention or preferences shift (Downs, 1972). Reforms may also enjoy periods of calm and docile circumstances but fall at the first hurdle or show mettle by surviving turbulent contexts. How and when a reform endures is an empirical question. There is a general consensus that policy reform takes time: to implement, to settle, to function, etc (Pierson, 2005; Pollitt, 2008). Sabatier and colleagues (1993, 1999; 2004) suggest using timeframes of a decade or more to allow a policy to complete at least one implementation, evaluation, and adjustment cycle. But more than this, I want to find out whether a reform remains intact if and when an election brings about a change in government as this is one of the stress tests that a reform will face (cf. Rabe, 2016).

The next step in conceptualising endurance involves reconciling the tension between preservation and responsive adaptation in terms of the elements of the reform. To do this, I return to Howlett and Cashore's (2009) policy elements model presented in Table 2.1. So long as the basic logic and mix of higher-order policy ends and means are actively upheld, the essence of a reform can be said to endure. This conceptualisation allows for adaptations and adjustments to be made to the lower-order elements, such as the specific on-the-ground measures and instrument calibrations. There is one important caveat here: in the ensuing empirical case study chapters, I remain cognisant that cumulative lower-order changes all working in a particular direction may compromise the endurance of a reform over time in that they add up to dynamic destruction – Patashnik (2008) talks about 'death by a thousand cuts', see further chapter 3 – rather than dynamic conservatism. Whether this is the case will need to be examined on a case-by-case basis. In general terms, however, I view reform endurance as a product of preservation and reinforcement of the initial high-level reform intent amid the inevitable vagaries of implementation, politics, and time. Endurance presupposes that those who have embraced the reform's higher-level intent find ways to uphold its goals and instrument logic, if needed by adapting the lower-order elements in light of post-enactment experiences and changing circumstances.

As an illustrative example, consider the development of the organisational pension system in Australia. Until 1992, Australia relied mostly on an age pension as its principal retirement income system. Unlike most other developed countries, there were no policy to compel participation in any publicly provided employment or earnings-related retirement scheme. While superannuation as a form of retirement savings first emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, it had largely been

the preserve of a minority of workers – predominantly full-time, white-collar men and public-sector employees (Edey and Simon, 1998). During this time, and against the backdrop of high interest rates, inflationary pressures, and a rising foreign debt, it became increasingly apparent that the government would not be able to continue to publicly fund the costs of retirement alone. As a solution to this problem, a system of mandatory superannuation emerged in the early 1990s. Through this reform, a small percentage of one's wage is automatically placed in a personal pension 'account' as a contribution to their future pension.

The reform's implementation had some teething problems, and certainly copped its fair share of criticism in its early years. Over the course of its journey, various 'elements' within the reform have changed but the rationale underpinning the reform has never really been seriously challenged. The high-level goal of the reform is to boost retirement incomes. The way that this is achieved is by both encouraging and compelling people to accumulate funds which are to be used as an income stream when they reach the age of retirement. (cf. 'Instrument logic') To do this, the government relied on compulsory contributions made by employed individuals (cf. 'Tools'). The way in which contributions are made depends on employment situation: for example, employers are expected to make contributions on behalf of their employees, but freelancers are subjected to slightly different rules (cf. 'Settings'). Since the reform's inception, the compulsory contribution rate has been steadily increased. That is, changes have been made to the calibration of the policy instrument. Other associated elements, such as the retirement age, and the age at which benefits can be accessed, have also been adjusted over time as circumstances have changed. The compulsory superannuation reform has been subjected to a range of governmental and external reviews, but its goals, instrument logic, and tools, remain firmly in place.

This simple account of what is actually an intricate and complicated system illustrates a broader point: in keeping with the notion of dynamic conservatism (Ansell et al., 2015), some elements of a reform need to change in order for it to endure effectively. Reforms often take and need time to consolidate and take effect. At the most fundamental level, reforms are unlikely to endure if they lack political and administrative support, resources, and ongoing vigilance.

It would be much simpler and far more parsimonious to treat policy reform as a stable, one-shot practice with clearly defined beginnings and ends but this would not do the topic or the practice justice. Instead, a focus on endurance prompts questions about how different conditions and factors coalesce – or fail to coalesce – at different times throughout a reform's development. On the whole, reform endurance is defined as the preservation and reinforcement of the initial high-level reform intent amid the inevitable vagaries of implementation, politics, and time.

HOW REFORM ENDURANCE HAPPENS: WHAT WE KNOW NOW

While a focus on endurance is relatively novel, an interest in policymaking and governance over the long-term is not. Scholars from various political science disciplines have considered different factors which influence how reform unfolds over time. In *Governing for the Long Term*, Alan M. Jacobs investigates the conditions under which elected governments invest in long-term social benefits at short-term social costs. Through a comparative analysis of pension systems across four countries, Jacobs (2011) questions how political actors address the temporal dimensions of policy choice. Rather than viewing policy as a single distributive event, it is instead viewed as a stream of government actions whose effects are felt over long spans of time. In *Deciding for tomorrow, Today*, Wieke Pot examines the extent to which long-term, forward-looking considerations are brought to bear on water infrastructure investments in the Netherlands. Pot (2020) concludes that long-term governmental decision-making is influenced by a Kingdonian concoction of politics, problems, solutions, and choice opportunities (see e.g., Kingdon, 1984). A similar theme is explored in Jonathan Boston's (2017) *Governing for the Future*. Through a careful elucidation of political myopia and a resulting 'presentist' bias, Boston raises important questions about the long-term problem-solving capacity of liberal democracies. Instead of focusing on a specific substantive reform, *Governing for the Future* instead identifies various institutional conditions that can constrain and undermine the capacity to think long-term.

Since the mid-1990s, increasing attention has been given to the idea of policy feedback. The policy feedback literature draws attention to the continuous interactions between policy, the outcomes in society, and how these outcomes affect policy actors in ways that influences politics and subsequent policymaking (Weible, 2014, p. 13). At its core, a policy feedback approach assumes that existing policies may reshape politics and policymaking through resource and interpretive effects. Resource effects channel resources to actors and/influence choices open to them. Interpretive effects influence flows of information, shaping how actors interpret the world around them. The novelty of the feedback approach, however, is in its explicit attention to time. As Pierson (1992, p. 597), states, "Now that we know policy choices have political consequences, ... what needs to be determined is precisely how, when and where particular effects are likely to occur."

Early studies of policy feedback tended to focus on the 'positive' or 'self-reinforcing' effects of specific policies and programs. This was particularly prominent in studies of national pension systems and other welfare state reforms. According to this argument, once established, policies create their own political support, making their abolition unlikely (Pierson, 1992, 1994, 2000).

This emphasis on (automatic) self-reinforcing effects and policy stability has since been critiqued (see e.g., Hacker, 2004) and expanded to account for forces which may have the opposite effect. Adopting these theoretical insights, a policy feedback approach now suggests that stability and durability through self-reinforcing feedback is not, as suggested by much of the earlier literature, a given and paying attention to stilted positive feedback and 'self-undermining' feedback is equally important (Jacobs and Weaver, 2015; Kumlin and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2014).

Taken together, reform endurance is understood as a delicate balance of the struggle between processes of stabilisation that seek to reproduce and reinvigorate it, and processes of contestation that seek to destabilise it (Béland and Schlager, 2019). From this perspective, the ongoing politics of reform is central. Treating endurance as a political phenomenon means paying close attention to groups of collective actors within a political domain. Here I present *four conditions* who I surmise to be relevant herein and whose (singular and combined) contribution to the achievement of endurance I later examine. These four conditions seek to capture stabilisation and contestation dynamics of collective actors in different 'arenas': 1) political parties, 2) administrative actors, 3) sectoral interests, and 4) mass publics. I will now introduce and discuss each factor in turn.

Political support

An important source of endurance for any reform comes from political leaders and political parties. Elected officials are clearly important in setting forth reform goals (which can be vague) and reinforcing the importance of those goals. While policymakers and social actors need to give the reform time to (have the chance to) work, they may feel pressured by shorter time horizons. Reforms need both steadiness and vigilance. One key factor threatening the endurance of any reform are undoubtedly elections. The balance of power in political systems can change quite regularly. New leaders and new governing coalitions inevitably have their own values, agendas, and preferences when it comes to the direction that a reform should take. There is no guarantee that a new reform will survive a change in government, even when the reform enjoys broad support from other sources.

The adoption of a reform by slim margins may both signal and cause endurance concerns. Maltzman and Shipan (2008) have shown that the greater the roll call opposition when a bill is passed, the more likely the law is to be amended in future years by a subsequent Congress. I am not suggesting that all amendments are bad; some are, of course, friendly, and necessary. The broader point is that a divisive beginning may undermine the credibility of the government's promise to stick with the new reform. At the bare minimum, a contentious start may raise eyebrows. Citizens who do not generally pay close attention to public affairs could easily conclude that

there might be something wrong with a new reform if a near-majority opposes it. However, in some circumstances, it is difficult to tell whether this is (oppositional) politics as usual, or genuine cause for concern.

Political support can of course vary over time. Following mounting dissatisfaction with the existing voluntary health insurance scheme, major changes to Australia's health care system were introduced by the newly elected Whitlam Labor government in 1975. By the end of 1975, Whitlam had been dismissed and a new Coalition-led government had been installed. Despite promises to continue with the direction established by the previous government, the new government began modifying the universal healthcare system. By 1981, the government decided to abolish it completely. However, a change in government in the early 1980s brought with it the re-introduction of 'a virtual carbon-copy' of the previous scheme. The Opposition stated unequivocally that they would – again – dismantle Medicare at their first opportunity. That opportunity appeared in 1996, with the instalment of a Coalition-led government. In the lead up to the election, however, the Opposition had changed its tune, promising to retain the healthcare system. The new prime minister had in fact stated earlier that year, "There's no law in politics that says that you can't over a period of time change your view about an issue" (Howard, 1996). Since then, both sides of politics have been competing to demonstrate their commitment to and support of the system (Boxall and Gillespie, 2013).

David Mayhew (2012) reasons that cross-party opposition to a policy might fade over time as the initiative becomes embedded with the broader institutional environment, or as a new governing coalition 'inherits' the previous arrangements (see, e.g., Rose and Davies, 1994). The tables turn when successive administrations realise that it would be a political liability *not* to endorse an initiative that has amassed public support and legitimacy, as with the case of Medicare. The way in which political support – and opposition – play out are likely to differ across different political systems. For example, in two-party systems, the relationship between the two parties is likely to be much more adversarial. In multi-party systems, the relationship between the parties is likely to be more predisposed toward negotiated agreement. This is obviously a broad generalisation and degrees of antagonism can of course be found in typical consensus-based democracies (Bovens et al., 2001). Similarly, with majoritarian, or two-party, systems: bipartisanship occurs more often than the media would have you believe.

If there is *broad agreement* among *different* political actors regarding the core ideas of the reform and also the logic underpinning it, then it is more likely that a reform will survive a change in government. In short, if a policy reform enjoys support from a relatively broad and deep political coalition, then it has a better chance of enduring over time. With a sense of common purpose

often comes a commitment to continue with the agreed upon course of action and resist efforts to undermine it. If, however, there is lukewarm or limited support across the major political players toward the reform, then it is more likely to come under threat should there be a change in government. Ultimately, the breadth and depth of political support that a reform enjoys will be case-specific, context and time dependent.

Administrative adaptation

Public organisations – be they departments, ministries, or agencies -- shape reform outcomes, but reforms also have the power to disrupt and reconfigure administrative entities (Moynihan and Soss, 2014). They can restructure authorities, alter routines, redistribute resources, and reframe culture, identity, and motivation. Administrative organisations within the public sector are laden with legacies of rules, expectations, investments, and norms from prior moments. For this reason, major reforms can encounter a hostile terrain, entering into contradiction with established institutionalised rules, norms, and practices. Embedding a new reform into the broader institutional environment involves challenging and negotiating existing rules, practices, and beliefs – a feat easier said than done. Put simply, societies are rule driven and reforms will gain most traction when they align with existing technical and normative institutions (see, e.g., March and Olsen, 2006). For a reform to endure, new sets of routines and practices need to be developed and embedded not just within the lead administrative body, but across all administrative layers affected by the reform's reach.

In some cases, policy reform drives major shifts in administration by creating (or exposing) mismatches between goals and capacities. In 2013, Australia embarked on a new disability approach providing no-fault insurance cover for Australians born with or acquiring a severe and permanent disability. The Scheme is administered by an independent statutory organisation, the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA). At first, implementation of the reform followed a phased approach, developing a series of trial sites before launching the full scheme. The trial sites were intended to create time and space to experiment, to learn what works and what does not, particularly when it came to financial arrangements. Prior to the introduction of the scheme, disability services were provided by the States directly, or indirectly, using block funding. The NDIA, however, continued to use existing State-based service delivery models during the experimentation phase (Miller, 2017; Carey et al., 2019). This reliance on a pre-existing model has created a rift between the reform's goals and its means.

When overwhelmed by the complexity of the problems they front, decision-makers tend to lean heavily on pre-existing policy frameworks, adjusting only at the margins to accommodate

distinctive features of new situations (Pierson, 1994). Bureaucrats “may respond sluggishly to new directions not because they are wilfully disobedient or obstructive, but because they cannot ignore the accumulation of prior directives” (Kaufman, 1981, p. 7). Recognising such path dependent tendencies inherent in administrative systems, Patashnik (2008, p. 5) argues that policy reform is not only a matter of assembling new elements, but crucially, “some extant policy system must be cleared away or at least contained before a reform can be safely established.” While various scholarly works shine a light on the importance of overcoming such path dependent tendencies, there is limited insight on precisely how this is achieved when new reform directions are forged.

As a starting point, it is reasonable to anticipate that durable reforms need effective and strong administrative supports. Given the many different tasks public agencies perform, there is scope for countless variations on this theme. While reform implementation always takes place in an institutional context, not all institutional contexts are equally conducive to adapting their activities or organisational missions. The demands of a reform can shake up administrative routines and expose an organisation’s unstated mode of sensemaking (Weick, 1995). Over time, agencies build up a history or tradition, a memory of dealing with the kinds of programmes with which they are entrusted. Reflecting on his pivotal 1949 study, Philip Selznick (2000) warned of the long-term consequences facing agencies who were unwilling to reconsider or reprioritise the relationships with particular constituencies that had formed in the past. As Hacker (2004) argues in his study of hidden forms of policy retrenchment, some institutional configurations militate against formal policy change but invite opponents to seek conversion or erosion of existing policies. The existence of administrative tensions does not mean that reforms are doomed to fail, but rather it highlights the challenges of turning abstract reform goals into the often-messy process of implementation (Ingrams et al., 2020). This factor explores the efforts made by administrative actors to move “from something that is diffuse, unstable, and unfixed into something more settled, stable and integrated” (Selznick, 2000, p. 280).

Sectoral realignment

This factor explores the activity that a policy can spur amongst different sectoral groups, or the lack thereof. Pierson in his 1994 book *Dismantling the Welfare State?* shows that “if interest groups shape policies, policies also shape interest groups. The organisation structure and political goals of groups may change in response to the nature of the programs that they confront and hope that they sustain or modify it” (p. 40). Interest groups are truly a universal phenomenon and need to be made central to any theoretical understandings of the politics of reform endurance. Over time, existing policies can develop their own supportive and reinforcing structures in the form

of organised interests. In contrast to Pierson (and others) I avoid the term 'vested interests' as it usually implies, assumes or imputes ill-intent. Instead, I use the more general sectoral groups or interest groups to examine different activities.

When powerful private and/or non-state actors develop a real stake in a given system, policy or program, the tendency will be to protect that claim at all costs. This particular dynamic can act as a double-edged sword, depending on how fragmented or cohesive the sectoral environment is. The implementation of any new reform is likely to upset some (potentially powerful) actors; specifically, those who derived their status and power from the pre-existing arrangements. This can mean that a new reform will likely face a hostile environment. Consider, for example, the failed efforts of many countries to put a price on carbon. Fossil fuel companies are typically large, wealthy, and powerful – and will be hardest hit by carbon pricing. As a consequence, such companies have strong grounds to protect their interests.

For a reform to endure, it needs to build political constituencies that benefit from the reform's existence and press for its extension. In 2008, the United Kingdom passed its Climate Change Act. Essentially, this Act is a comprehensive framework law, used to coordinate and advance climate action with respect to both reducing greenhouse gas emissions and climate resilience. Prior to the introduction of the Act, four-fifths of the UK's electricity came from fossil fuels. Since then, the UK has cleaned up its electricity mix faster than any other major world economy. One of the ways that this Act has been sustained is through the creation of new interests who literally act as a counterweight to opposition coming from groups in the electricity sector. Since the introduction of the Act, the largest six companies in the sector have made major new investments in renewables. In addition, a range of new interests have emerged to take advantage of the incentives offered by the Act (Lockwood, 2013).

For a reform to endure, it needs to be accompanied by a real shake-up of the broader sectoral environment. If, however, the reform largely works as designed, existing groups may have the means to adapt and develop a stake in its survival. This may help it endure. Similarly, if a reform creates conditions which facilitate the emergence of new groups or new alliances which would not have been possible in the pre-reform situation, then the reform is likely to stand the test of time. However, it is likely that groups with strong interests in the old status quo will still exist; and if they remain powerful, they are likely to continue the fight – in the implementation process, in elections, wherever they can – in an effort to disable the reform and wear it down. Whether major reforms ultimately succeed, then depends on how these reforms shape their own politics, and how they shape the constellation of organised interests: the old as well as the new. If groups with strong interests in the old system *remain* powerful and antagonistic, then the new reform

may be vulnerable. Patashnik (2008), through an illustration of airline deregulation in the United States, contends that the best way to achieve endurance is to completely remove or discredit those who benefitted from the pre-reform arrangements.

Supportive constituencies

The general claim is that programs and policies that generate broad levels of support in their authorising environment – not merely the general public but rather specific constituencies and institutional ‘veto players’ – are more likely to endure, and even be expanded over time. Those who do not are more likely to be nibbled at, hollowed out, or dismantled and reversed altogether (Patashnik, 2008). The specific design of the policy and its characteristics may heighten the visibility of some social and political connections while obscuring others. For a reform to generate any kind of response from the ‘mass public’, voters would likely need to experience some kind of discernible outcome that leads them to ask about the cause, or at the very least, be aware that the reform actually exists.

The idea that policies can have political effects is now well-established. An early claim of the ‘policy feedback’ approach was that certain programs and policies can shape political participation and attitudes (Campbell, 2012). Since Paul Pierson’s (1992) influential review, ‘When Effect Becomes Cause’, policy scholars have explored the relationships between policies and ‘mass publics.’ While the initial focus of much feedback research was on the activities of organised interests, a specific line of inquiry began to question the relationship between existing policy legacies and political participation. The main concern was not interest group formation but rather the electoral and political participation of individuals directly affected by concrete public policies.

Murray Edelman (1985) argued that policies are simultaneously instrumental acts, with intended, tangible effects on the allocation of values, and expressive acts, that convey meaningful cues to diverse political audiences. For example, the introduction of social security in the United States created the conditions for the invention of a new social category (‘retired people’), and the formation of the politically powerful American Association of Retired Persons. This association effectively increased the electoral and political participation of the older people in the United States. In return, this increased participation impacts the politics of social security. By motivating older people to pay attention to, and get involved in, the political process, Campbell (2003) argues that social security has transformed into the so-called third rail of politics. That is, touch it and die (politically).

Smoking bans offer a good illustration of how policies can generate constituencies of support. While efforts to ban smoking in bars was initially met with some resistance, the implementation

of these policies across different countries has contributed, more broadly, to the denormalization of smoking. It is almost easier to count the number of cities that actually let people smoke in their bars than the ones where it is banned. A focus on smoking bans shows that, for the most part, popular support for the ban becomes more apparent after the policy change (see, e.g., Cairney, 2019; Freeman, 2019). Not only can people directly experience the effects of the ban: that is, enjoying a smoke-free environment; but the efforts have also been highly visible. It is possible to see and feel the change. Smoking bans have enjoyed remarkable success, evidenced by the fact that they have facilitated more restrictive measures in certain contexts, such as a ban on smoking in cars and with children present.

Some reforms are met with a great deal of opposition and protest from the general public. Others are able to, perhaps surprisingly, generate a broad constituency of support. Supportive constituencies may emerge in many different ways, perhaps on the basis of favourable benefits they personally receive from a reform, or constituency support emerges as a result of goal or value alignment with a specified policy direction. For example, reforms which do not yield observable or benefits for a specific individual but align with an individual or constituencies shared interests. This factor seeks to understand if and how public reaction is associated with reform endurance. Is there a general level of support? Is there a significant degree of opposition and protest? For election-minded politicians and policymakers, it is reasonable to anticipate that the level of public support that a reform enjoys would have a direct impact on its endurance.

To summarise, the key concepts and their definitions that have been introduced and discussed in this chapter are presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. Key concepts regarding the contents and causes of reform endurance

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|---------------------------|--|
| Policy reform | Fundamental, deliberate and enforced changes to both the broad means and ends of public policy. |
| Reform endurance | The preservation and reinforcement of the initial high-level reform intent amid the inevitable vagaries of implementation, politics, and time. |
| Political support | Broad agreement among different political actors regarding the core ideas of the reform and also the logic underpinning it. |
| Administrative adaptation | The extent to which new sets of routines and practices are developed and embedded not just within the lead administrative body, but across all administrative layers affected by the reform's reach. |
| Sectoral realignment | The extent to which a reform builds political constituencies that benefit from its existence and press for its extension. |
| Supportive constituencies | The balance of support and opposition from target groups or affected constituents towards the reform. |

TOWARDS EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I have offered a dynamic conceptualisation of reform endurance, and an elucidation of the factors anticipated to affect it. Drawing inspiration from the idea of policy feedback, I contend that reform endurance will not occur in a linear manner. As existing studies have shown, long-term policymaking is often the result of a confluence of different factors and their interactive effects. In order to analyse reform endurance, I take the formal beginning of a reform as a starting point. From this point, I am interested in the way that the reform influences politics and subsequent policymaking. That is, how a reform stimulates (or fails to stimulate) forces across the political, administrative, sectoral, and societal domains that aid its endurance, and whether such forces 'feedback' into the reform itself.

Having conceptualised these factors, it is now time to examine their singular and combined contributions to reform endurance. For example, in some cases, it may well be that bipartisan political support is enough for a reform to endure. This may not hold true for other cases. Similarly, it is reasonable to expect that the factors may interact in different ways across different reform cases. For example, a reform with broad political support may also trigger a flurry of sectoral interest activity. Having identified a range of different theoretical threads expected to affect reform endurance, it is now time to weave these together and identify plausible 'pathways' to endurance. In some cases, it may be that specific factors are necessary for a reform to endure, while in other cases reform endurance may be the result of a specific configuration of conditions that emerge over time. It may also be that specific combinations of conditions disrupt a reform and stifle its capacity to endure. In the next chapter, I discuss this in more detail with the introduction of how to examine reform endurance and as well as an extended analysis.



CHAPTER 3

STUDYING REFORM ENDURANCE
IN PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS: A
COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Even in the best of circumstances, major reforms face a great deal of uncertainty. Well-thought out, well-intentioned, and otherwise well-designed reforms can fail or fall short as contexts change, new actors emerge, or political priorities transform. Prior studies of policy reform, in general, have driven home the point that in the world of politics, there are few guarantees and nothing is a sure thing (Patashnik, 2008; Tuohy, 2012). It is highly unlikely, then, that reform endurance could ever be contributed to one sole cause. It is also highly unlikely that the forces affecting endurance would behave in a linear or predictable manner. And we have already noted that reforms shape their contexts and that contexts shape the reform. To examine reform endurance, this complexity needs to be taken seriously. However, perhaps patterns can be detected across similar cases, contexts, or over time. This prospect gives rise to a series of questions: do different political systems share similar patterns of reform endurance? What about specific policy domains? Can we detect patterns of reform endurance over time across similar/different contexts? In this chapter, I use a specific technique to explore and tackle these questions. Before I introduce this technique, I begin first with an empirical example which serves to showcase the nuances endemic to reform endurance. Following this, I introduce and apply a method in a step-by-step manner which will allow me to identify different pathways to reform endurance.

AUSTRALIA'S UNIFIED NATIONAL SYSTEM: "THE SCRAMBLED EGG"

To understand the complexity of endurance, let's begin with an example from one of the reform episodes I examine. In the late 1980s, John Dawkins, Australia's newly appointed Minister for Education, set out a reform agenda which would affect the entire landscape of higher education. At that time, higher education was divided into a small number of universities and a broader array of more vocational Colleges of Advanced Education. The Colleges were designed to complement universities, forming a 'binary' system. With participation rates steadily increasing across all institutions in the binary system, Dawkins began to question the efficiency and effectiveness of the prevailing approach to higher education management and government funding arrangements. As a way forward, Dawkins' reform agenda sought to capitalise on efficiency and capacity advantages associated with economies of scale. For higher education, this meant abolishing the binary system and installing a Unified National System in its place.

The Unified National System aimed to create "... greater diversity in higher education. The ultimate goal is balanced system of high-quality institutions" each with its particular areas of strength and specialisation but coordinated in such a way as to provide comprehensive offerings (Department of Employment, Education, and Training, 1988, p. 28). To encourage the establishment of such institutions, the government provided strong financial incentives for existing universities and

colleges to join forces and amalgamate. Membership and, perhaps more importantly, eligibility for the full range of Commonwealth grants was guaranteed if an institution met certain size criteria, for example, enrolling at least 8000 students. This led to a significant reduction in the number of institutions, from 75 Commonwealth funded separate institutions in 1989 to 36 members of the UNS by 1991.

By the early 1990s, the system began to operate almost as a quasi-market, with a common funding formula designed to create a 'level playing field' on which all institutions vied for funding and academic prestige (Marginson and Considine, 2000). The main policy initiatives of successive governments since then have focused mainly on further developments along the reform direction set in the period 1987 to 1990. To the Dawkins reform of competition, mixed funding and 'modern' management, the next government added a sharper reduction in public funding per head, and a further extension of marketisation. These changes certainly modified the paradigm set by Dawkins but did not abolish it (Watts, 2017). In fact, the higher education reform approach had scarcely changed for more than a decade. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, a return to any sort of binary system was explicitly ruled out: "we're not going to unscramble that egg" (Lane, 2003).

Despite numerous reviews and reform attempts, the system of higher education has experienced little structural change for some decades. The architect Dawkins has since stated that this is actually a bad thing: "The 1987 reforms are completely out of date for current circumstances. They have lasted for 30 years... Public policy for a sector like this cannot be expected to accommodate changes that could not have been anticipated nearly 30 years ago" (Dodd, 2016). In short, the reform has persisted but in a manner which, according to its architect, has perhaps outlived its usefulness. Although Australian higher education policymaking is marked by some watershed moments, it also exhibits a great deal of paralysis.

Examining this reform in depth, and highlighting the salient points through this short vignette, different levels or types of endurance seem to occur at different points in time. During the 1990s, the goal of fostering greater diversity through university-driven missions and the associated financial instruments were upheld not just by the government that introduced the reform but also by successive governments. Moving into the twenty-first century, however, the reform becomes more rigid, almost frozen in place. If this is the case, then how can we make sense of the driving forces underpinning such nuanced differences in reform endurance? And further, are such forces unique to this particular case of higher education reform or do similar forces exist across other major education reforms? What about environmental reform? To answer these questions, I apply Qualitative Comparative Analysis, a method capable of systematically capturing and exploring the building blocks of endurance across a range of different policy reforms.

A QUALITATIVE COMPARATIVE APPROACH

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) – and its fuzzy-set variant – has a few unique features that allow me to further unpack and systematically compare the driving forces underpinning reform endurance. Broadly, the goal of QCA is to “integrate the best features of the case-oriented approach with the best features of the variable-oriented approach” (Ragin, 1987, p. 84). It brings the logic and empirical intensity of qualitative approaches to studies that embrace more than a handful of cases. In short, QCA facilitates systematic cross-case comparisons, while simultaneously doing justice to within-case complexity (Rihoux and Ragin, 2008). The cases included in this book are quite diverse. They come from four different countries, two different macro-institutional settings, spanning two different policy domains, and covering different periods of time. My goal is to reveal the complex interplay of factors conducive to endurance, and to detect whether patterns exist across different reforms. Given the complexity and ‘messiness’ of policy reform endurance, the configurational logic underpinning QCA is well-suited to unearth patterns across comparable reform experiences (Fischer and Maggetti, 2017).

The main difference between QCA and other research methods lies in the idea of causality underpinning the approach. Methods such as statistical analysis tend to imply mono-causality and focus on the estimates of each independent variable’s separate effects on the variation of the dependent variable. In contrast, QCA aims to produce multi-causal explanations. It focuses on combinations of conditions rather than single variables and does not assume that a unique ‘solution’ can account for the occurrence and non-occurrence of an outcome (Vis, 2012). In short, ‘many roads lead to Rome’ and there are a variety of different ways in which the same outcome can be achieved. Finally, and based on the notion of asymmetric causality, the conditions leading to reforms which do not endure, are not necessarily the inverse of the conditions leading to enduring reforms.

Similar to other research methods, QCA has expanded and evolved since it was first introduced (see, e.g., Marx et al., 2014). Its increased popularity and usage across diverse fields of research have also been accompanied by an array of critiques. Some critics focus on the method’s hybrid nature – of its position as an alternative, or middle ground between quantitative and qualitative techniques (Lieberson, 2004). Most criticisms are levelled against specific practices of QCA, of particular relevance here is its inability to adequately incorporate a temporal element. Traditional approaches to QCA offer a static snapshot of the observed states of a set of cases. Given the dynamic nature of endurance (in terms of its causes and contents), I address this limitation by segmenting the reform cases into two time points. Doing so introduces a temporal element and creates the opportunity to identify changes over time – in both a reform’s endurance as well as the conditions associated with it.

At the most basic level, QCA is a case-based, set-theoretic method. It can refer to both a broad research approach as well as a specific analytical technique. Contemporary approaches to QCA can be differentiated along three lines: the mode of reasoning, the approach to cases, and the approach to evaluation (see e.g., Thomann and Maggetti, 2020). Along these lines, the approach I take is best categorised as an explorative, case-oriented approach based on substantive and theoretical knowledge. Following this approach, QCA refers to processes before and after data analysis including “(re-)collection of data, (re-)definition of the case selection criteria, or (re-)specification of concepts, often based on preliminary insights” (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012, p. 11). Such ‘back and forth’ between ideas and evidence is a critical component of QCA (Ragin, 1987), especially when it comes to considering the cases and conditions. In addition, the case-oriented approach creates the opportunity to further interrogate individual reform cases *after* the QCA analysis, a point I return to towards the end of this chapter. To arrive at the ‘analytic’ moment of QCA, there are a few key steps to follow which I now turn to.

Step 1 – Constructing the cases

Cases in QCA are best understood as combinations of conditions. In general, a case is defined as a unit of analysis, or “a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time” (Gerring, 2007, p. 19). As discussed in the introductory chapter, there is little to no agreement on how to define a ‘major’ reform in the policy literature. As a reminder, I define reforms as fundamental, deliberate and enforced changes to both the broad means and ends of public policy. Each of the cases of reform examined in this book meet these criteria.

In most QCA designs, it is important to include cases that display some common background features. But what is more important is their diversity. If all of the cases under examination look more or less the same, there is no analytic leverage (Ragin, 2008). However, there is a great deal of leverage if the cases differ substantially from each other (with respect to their memberships in the relevant causal conditions). As discussed in the first chapter, the reforms that I examine come from two different policy domains (education and environment) within four different political systems: Australia, Canada, Ireland, and Sweden.

For each country, I began identifying well-documented substantive environmental and education policy reform that had been enacted over the past thirty years. The decision to focus on reforms from this period of time was largely pragmatic and based on data availability. For example, one initially promising case was the introduction of free post-primary education in Ireland in 1967. This reform constituted a fundamental and deliberate break with the past, dramatically changing the purpose and organisation of education in the Irish republic. Having endured for more than 50 years, it is undoubtedly a feat but a paucity of sources and data meant that tracing the nuances and

conditions over time proved difficult. To arrive at the final case selection, I also consulted policy scholars and domain experts in each country, asking their perspective on what a major reform from this period of time would be. The initial candidates, combined with the recommendations of subject experts, resulted in the selection of the following reform cases presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Included reform cases

| Country | Reform | Time Periods | | Objective |
|-----------|---|--------------|-----------|--|
| | | T1 | T2 | |
| Sweden | <i>Friskolreformen</i> (Independent School Reform) | 1992-1997 | 2003-2008 | To achieve the greatest possible freedom for children and parents to choose a school |
| | <i>En ny skogspolitik</i> (A New Forest Policy) | 1994-1999 | 2003-2008 | To set environmental and production values on equal footing |
| Australia | Unified National System | 1988-1993 | 2003-2008 | To enhance the quality, diversity and equity of access to higher education. |
| | National Drought Policy | 1992-1997 | 2004-2009 | To encourage the agricultural sector to adopt a self-reliant approach to managing for drought |
| Ireland | Waste Management Act | 1996-2001 | 2006-2011 | To prevent or minimise the production or harmful nature of waste and to encourage and support the recovery of waste |
| | Free Fees Initiative | 1995-2000 | 2005-2010 | To assist third level undergraduate students in accessing publicly funded higher education |
| Canada | Model Forests Program | 1992-1997 | 2006-2011 | To establish a series of working-scale projects aimed at effecting a transition from conventional forest management to sustainable development |
| | Network of Centres of Excellence | 1988-1993 | 2003-2008 | To mobilise Canada's research talent in the academic, private and public sectors. |

QCA as a research approach requires deep familiarity with the case material. To facilitate this process, I first constructed comprehensive reform narratives (Rihoux and Lobe, 2009). This involved a timeline of events, mapping of involved actors, the context and content of reform, changes of government, subsequent policy changes and formal reviews, as well as potential destabilising

events such as relevant crises. Through this process, detailed knowledge of the cases was gained, as well as chronicles which facilitated the coding of the conditions and the outcome. To aid comparison and arrive at standardised chronicles, I drew extensively from similar or compatible data over distinct reform episodes. This data came from government acts and bills, parliamentary debates and political speeches, budget estimates, parliamentary libraries, departmental annual reports, independent reviews or reports from respected international organisations, as well as secondary sources.

Each of these reforms has a long and convoluted history, and it is infeasible to attempt to capture every twist and turn in their respective sagas. Appreciating that reforms often take time to consolidate or take effect, I have segmented each reform into two time periods in a bid to capture the combinations of conditions and their connection with endurance over time. The first 'snapshot' examines each reform approximately five years after it was enacted. The second 'snapshot' probes further along each reform's trajectory, examining dynamics occurring 10 to 15 years after enactment. In doing so, I am able to offer a more dynamic understanding of endurance, examining developments at different points in time (Verweij and Vis, 2021; Mello, 2021).

Step 2 – Constructing the 'set' of enduring reforms

The next step involves considering the outcome of reform endurance as a 'set'. Essentially, a set can be thought of as a container which has boundaries that define what is considered 'in' and 'out'. At the beginning of this chapter, I introduced the case of the Unified National System reform in Australia. Let's consider this reform in relation to Howlett and Cashore's (2009) policy elements table in Chapter 2. In that case, the reform's goals and instrument logic remained quite stable during the reform's early years. Sure, some adjustments were made over the course of implementation and when political power changed hands but these were in line with the direction set by the initial reform. In the early 2000s, however, the goals and instrument logic seemingly ossified – and despite the context changing quite dramatically – the reform's goals and instruments remained firmly in place.

In contrast, let's consider another case that is included in this analysis: Canada's Model Forest Program. In 1991, Canada's federal government launched an approach which sought to embed principles of sustainable management within the forestry domain. The idea was to bring traditional adversaries together in multi-stakeholder partnerships to define and implement their own vision for sustainable forest management. The federal government approved an initial ten Model Forests across the country to act as demonstration sites for sustainable forest management whilst providing core funding and leadership to the program. Within each Model Forest specifically, the

mandated structure called for an industrial partner as well as a commitment to accommodate additional stakeholders and the environmental community. The federal government gave no specific guidance on what it would mean for forests to be regarded as more sustainable. Consequently, each Model Forest had the freedom to experiment with programs and activities, acting as living laboratories under the broad umbrella of sustainability (Sinclair and Smith, 1999).

The overarching goals (to embed sustainable practices in forestry) and instruments (funding for multi-stakeholder partnerships) of the reform were stable until 2007. To allow the program to anticipate and adapt to changing circumstances, the Model Forests developed over four distinct five-year funding cycles. Funding for the first phase was quite generous, incentivising a myriad of different stakeholders to take part (Gibson, 2009). Over the subsequent phases, however, the funding was reduced. By 2007-2008, and the time of the fourth funding phase, Canada's forest sector was experiencing an unprecedented economic bust. From 2000 to 2008, the forest industry lost 100,000 direct jobs, representing a 37 percent decline that affected some 200 forest-based communities (Mockler and Robichaud, 2011, p. xi).

In response to these changing conditions, the Model Forest Program transformed into a new Forest Communities Program. The broad federal reform goal of overcoming long-standing forest sector conflicts in the pursuit of sustainable forest management remained in place, but there was a shift in emphasis on forest sustainability towards a more meaningful incorporation of community sustainability (Parkins et al., 2016; Bullock and Reed, 2020). However, the new period came with a further diminution of federal funds. While nearly all of the pre-existing Model Forests continued their work under the new program, funding reductions limited the willingness of key stakeholders to entertain and solidify further collaboration with non-conventional allies. Despite these efforts to adapt the reform goals and instruments to changing circumstances, federal funding was eliminated in 2014, spelling the programs formal end.

In this case, then, the reform goals and means were maintained in the early years, but the program itself was formally terminated in the reform's later years. Returning to the notion of reform endurance as a 'set', it is possible to identify different kinds and degrees of enduring reforms. For example, a reform whose goals and instruments have been formally terminated would be considered 'fully out' of the set of enduring reform. A reform whose goals and instruments are unstable or incapable of adjusting to changed circumstances would also be considered 'out' of the set of enduring reform but to a lesser degree. For a reform to be 'fully in' the set of enduring reforms its goals and/or instruments must be upheld and it must also have demonstrated a capacity to anticipate and reflect changing circumstances. Similarly, a reform whose goals and/or instruments are relatively stable is also considered 'in' the set of enduring reforms but to a lesser

degree than one which displays a greater alignment with changing contexts. Table 3.2 offers a summary of the degrees and kinds of reform endurance, where I chose to use a four-point scale given the qualitative nature of the data rather than an even more fine-grained scale (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012).

Table 3.2. Endurance as a ‘set’

| <i>Fuzzy set value</i> | <i>Enduring reform</i> |
|-------------------------|--|
| Fully out (0.00) | Goals and instrument logic not upheld (terminated) and instruments not adapted to reflect changing circumstances |
| More out than in (0.33) | Goals and instrument logic unstable or instruments not adapted to reflect changing circumstances |
| More in than out (0.67) | Goals and instrument logic relatively stable or instruments adapted to reflect changing circumstances |
| Fully in (1.00) | Goals and instrument logic upheld and instruments adapted to reflect changing circumstances |

Step 3 – The ‘building blocks’ of endurance

With the reforms introduced, endurance defined and operationalised, it is time to consider the four factors introduced in Chapter 2 as ‘sets.’ One of the advantages of this research approach is its consideration and inclusion of theoretical material as well as insights from the case material when it comes to identifying and conceptualising plausible conditions. For some who are new to this method, this can be a confusing process as it can be difficult to know how or where to start. Unlike independent variables, conditions are not external to the cases but part of the cases that are being examined (Byrne, 2005). This means that conditions need to be on a rather abstract level as they are used for cross-case comparison and therefore cannot be too specific to the context of a singular case. Instead, they represent generic elements that can be compared across cases that are themselves consisting of a unique mix of generic and specific elements (Byrne, 2011). This is a challenging balance to strike but can be approached through constant iteration.

To transform the four conditions (political support, administrative adaptation, sectoral realignment, supportive constituencies) into sets, each condition needs to be calibrated. Calibrated measures simply refer to external standards, meaning that assigned scores can be directly interpreted once standards are known (Mello, 2021). There are three different ways that calibration can be approached. The first approach is the direct method. This approach is often used when investigating a large number of cases. In essence, it uses a software-based routine to transform numerical raw data into fuzzy sets. The second approach is called the indirect method. This approach is less common than the direct method but also uses a statistical estimation

technique to transform preliminary scores and raw data into fuzzy values. The third approach is the qualitative approach, or the manual approach. This involves assigning scores based on prior definitions of the specific sets. The direct and indirect approaches are typically used when calibrating quantitative data. Given the broad scope of reforms – in terms of content and time-span – I follow a qualitative approach which assigns scores by hand to individual cases based on a coding scheme. An important decision in fuzzy set QCA, regardless of calibration method, involves the identification of anchor points. In terms of numerical values, if zero corresponds to ‘fully out’ of a set, and one corresponds to ‘fully in’ a set, then 0.5 refers to a point of maximum ambiguity where it is difficult to say whether a case is inside or outside of a given set.

While extensive guidance and instruction is offered for quantitative, index-based ways of calibration (see e.g., Ragin, 2008; Schneider and Wagemann, 2012), qualitative calibration has not received the same level of attention. When using qualitative data, the calibration may not always involve a cross-over point that corresponds to one very precise quantitative empirical value (Gerrits and Verweij, 2018). Instead, it is useful to think of the cross-over point as a distinguishing criterion, or as the qualitative difference between cases that are in and out of a given set (De Block and Vis, 2019; Jopke and Gerrits, 2019). To illustrate what this means, imagine a pile of sand. If you gradually start removing individual grains of sand, at what point does it no longer constitute a pile? At some point, it will resemble a small pile but eventually all the grains will be removed and it will cease to be a pile. I will now discuss each of the conditions as sets. For each condition, I offer an illustrative example taken from the case material before arriving at the final calibration table.

Political support as a set – A good proxy measure to assess this is to look at levels of cross-party support. The distinguishing criterion between whether a case is in or out of the set of broad political support refers largely to the behaviour of the parties in opposition (see Table 3.3). I will use the case of Australia’s National Drought Policy to illustrate what this looks like in practice. In 1992, the Australian Commonwealth government, together with the support of opposition parties, as well as the state and territory governments, affirmed a new approach to drought conditions. In recognition of the frequency and ‘normalcy’ of drought conditions in Australia, the National Drought Policy aimed to encourage primary producers and other sections of rural Australia to be self-reliant in managing for climate variability. It also sought to maintain and protect Australia’s agricultural and environmental resource base during periods of extreme climate stress.

Unknown at the time, but the enactment of the NDP coincided with what was to be one of the worst droughts of the century. The strong cross-party support that had been evident at the establishment of the reform came under threat as the opposition parties raised the temperature

of the debate in Parliament in mid-1994 (Botterill and Wilhite, 2006). Despite this, the reform continued to enjoy broad political support and no serious attempts were ever made to remove it or propose an alternative. The NDP would then be firmly ‘in’ the set of broad political support, regardless of the time period examined.

Table 3.3. Political support as a ‘set’

| <i>Fuzzy set value</i> | <i>Political Support</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Fully out (0.00) | All non-government parties attack the reform, pushing for its reversal |
| More out than in (0.33) | Some non-government parties attack the reform, pushing for its reversal |
| More in than out (0.67) | Some cross-party support for the reform |
| Fully in (1.00) | Strong cross-party support for the reform |

Administrative adaptation as a set – Administrative organisations, and the extent to which they are able to comprehensively adapt to the new realities that reforms bring, are an important source of endurance. If such efforts are not made, then there is little reason to expect a reform to endure over time. After all, the success of even the best-designed reforms depends considerably on the motivations and efforts of those assigned to deliver the envisioned programs (Lindquist and Wanna, 2011). The difference-making criterion separating cases which fall in or out of the set of strong administrative adaptation is whether efforts to adapt are present across all or just some of the responsible entities.

To flesh this out in more detail, consider the case of Canada’s Network of Centres of Excellence Program. Regarded as the most significant post-secondary education policy initiative of the 1980s Mulroney era, the Centres of Excellence Program sought to develop a web of national research networks, forging collaborations among universities, industry, government, and not-for-profit organisations. When it came to implementing this program, the three research councils responsible for university research quickly concluded that the objectives would be impossible to put into practice: there were too many criteria often with conflicting goals (Fisher et al., 2001). Initially, the plan was for public servants to review the applications, with the final decisions made by the Ministry. The research councils, committed to impartiality and peer review, criticised this proposal. Instead, a compromise was struck: the research councils would run the competitive bid process and distribute the funds, while the federal Department of Industry, Science and Technology would provide the secretariat. In doing so, the administrative actors responsible for the reform proved highly adaptive, striking a balance in the reform’s early years between ‘value added’ commercially relevant research and scientific excellence, as promoted by the research councils.

However, this balance came unstuck by the end of the decade (Atkinson-Grosjean, 2006). Much to the chagrin of the research councils, a newly reconfigured and expanded department, Industry Canada, began to modify the selection criteria for the proposals, demoting the weight of the 'excellence' criteria (Fisher et al., 2001). In doing so, this department broke with the previously struck compromise and reoriented the program to something that they were more comfortable with. The new criteria reflected what they had wanted from the start: a program that fostered industrially relevant research. From the beginning, there was a tension between the world of policy represented by government and the world of science represented by researchers and research council officers. While the administrative actors responsible for the reform were able to adapt their priorities and practices in the reform's early years, such adaptations proved untenable for Industry Canada who instead decided to re-prioritise 'relevance' and 'utility' as dominant goals.

Table 3.4. Administrative adaptation as a 'set'

| <i>Fuzzy set value</i> | <i>Administrative Adaptation</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Fully out (0.00) | Strong administrative resistance in changing practices in line with reform goals, dominance of pre-reform practices |
| More out than in (0.33) | Partial administrative resistance in changing practices in line with reform goals, some pre-reform practices continue |
| More in than out (0.67) | Partial administrative proactiveness in changing practices in line with reform goals, some new practices |
| Fully in (1.00) | Strong administrative proactiveness in changing practices in line with reform goals, dominance of new practices |

Sectoral realignment as a set – Interest groups can either be powerful defenders of the status quo, or staunch advocates for change. If a reform creates conditions which facilitate the emergence of new groups with a stake in the new status quo, then it stands a better chance of enduring over time. The difference-making criterion separating cases which fall in or out of this set is the dominance of new versus old interests and alliances. To illustrate what this looks like in practice, I draw on the *Friskolreformen* ('Independent school reform') in Sweden. In 1992, Sweden enacted a reform emphasising the importance of freedom of choice in education by creating favourable conditions for the development and emergence of independent schools. Through a voucher system, independent schools would receive funding based on the number of students enrolled. It was anticipated that this incentive would lead to the creation of schools with different ownership structures and pedagogical philosophies, thereby creating 'choice' for parents and pupils.

In the early years of the reform the interest group environment stayed relatively constant. Teachers' unions were cautious in their stance toward the development of independent schools but they used their position to negotiate a pay rise instead of actively resisting the reform. Most

applications to start independent schools during this time came from small groups of teachers, former principals, or small community organisations (Svensson, 2019). While the number of independent schools grew during the reform's early years, the interest group environment did not experience any drastic changes.

The landscape changed quite considerably during the early 2000s with the entry of several larger multi-school corporations becoming active in the independent school sector (Erixon Arreman and Holm, 2011). Following the growth of the school market, business actors in the education sector formed powerful alliances and lobby groups to preserve and protect their interests and the new status quo (Gingrich, 2011). This development, coupled with the decline of 'traditional' school interests such as teachers' unions, has resulted in an altered power dynamic which sees the dominance of new organised interests who benefit from the new status quo in the Swedish education system (Klitgaard, 2008).

To take these (and other interest group activities from the other reform cases) into account, I present the different degrees and kinds of interest group activities that are included in the set of sectoral realignment. For a reform to qualify as 'fully in', the sector needs to be overwhelmingly dominated by new organised interests. At the other end of the spectrum, a reform could be regarded as 'fully out' if the sector remained dominated by interests who had benefitted from the pre-reform arrangements.

Table 3.5. Sectoral realignment as a 'set'

| <i>Fuzzy set value</i> | <i>Sectoral Realignment</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Fully out (0.00) | Sector overwhelmingly dominated by those who benefitted with previous arrangements, marginally new ones |
| More out than in (0.33) | Sector mostly dominated by those who benefitted with previous arrangements, some new ones |
| More in than out (0.67) | Sector mostly dominated by those who benefitted with new arrangements, some old ones |
| Fully in (1.00) | Sector overwhelmingly dominated by those who benefitted with new arrangements, marginally old ones |

Supportive constituencies as a set – Reforms can generate constituencies of supporters – or as Moore and Fung (2012, p. 180) put it, 'call publics into existence' – which in turn affect subsequent courses of policy development. If a reform creates conditions which generate strong support from target groups or affected constituents, then it could stand a better chance of enduring over time. The difference-making criterion separating cases which fall in or out of this set is the presence or absence of strong (and visible) support. To illustrate what this looks like, consider the

case of waste management in Ireland. In 1996, Ireland passed an Act in an attempt to radically reform the country's approach to waste management, minimisation, and prevention. Until this point, waste management and environmental issues more broadly were regarded as limited and parochial issues, undeserving of national attention. The Act marked the first attempt to develop a comprehensive national framework for waste management strategies. The production of waste plans by local authorities was a key mechanism by which the strategic management of waste would be developed.

In the late 1990s, the new approach to waste management was met with vociferous opposition and public protest, especially when it came to discussions surrounding incineration infrastructure and the heightened fees for depositing waste in landfills (Rudden, 2007). The public unrest was not helped by the lack of consultation opportunities in the drafting of local and regional management plans. The first phase of the Irish case of waste management would then score 'fully out' of the set of supportive constituencies.

Seeking to remedy the negative public reaction to the new approach to waste management, the Irish government launched a comprehensive public awareness campaign in the early 2000s. The increased focus on waste awareness and recycling created a new public confidence in the waste management system. To further illustrate the significance of this, in 2002, Ireland was one of the first countries to ban plastic bags in shops and supermarkets. While there was initially some degree of public scepticism, within a few weeks the plastic bag ban had gained 90 percent public approval (Convery et al., 2007). While some of aspects of the broader waste management approach, such as incineration, still generate some opposition, the approach generally enjoys a positive reaction from the general public.

Table 3.6. Supportive constituencies as a 'set'

| <i>Fuzzy set value</i> | <i>Supportive constituencies</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Fully out (0.00) | Little to no support from target group/affected constituents, |
| More out than in (0.33) | Some support from target group/affected constituents, mostly opposition |
| More in than out (0.67) | Moderate support from target group/affected constituents, some opposition |
| Fully in (1.00) | Strong support from target group/affected constituents, marginal opposition |

Step 4 – The 'analytic moment': Pathways to endurance

With the outcome and conditions conceptualised and the cases coded, it is now possible to move through the analysis.² As a first step, I look for conditions which are necessary for endurance. A

² This analysis was run in R using the SetMethods (Oana and Schneider, 2018) and QCA (Duşa, 2018) Packages. See Appendix for R code.

necessary condition is one which is always present whenever endurance occurs: it almost acts as a prerequisite. Necessary conditions need to meet specific criteria (a consistency score above 0.90), as displayed in Table 3.7, the condition political support comes close to this (0.85) but none actually cross the threshold to be deemed necessary. The tilde symbol (~) simply takes into consideration the absence of that condition as a necessary condition for endurance. From this first step of the analysis, it appears as though no individual conditions are necessary for reform endurance.³

Table 3.7. Checking for necessary conditions

| Condition | Consistency |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Political support | 0.85 |
| Administrative adaptation | 0.81 |
| Sectoral realignment | 0.69 |
| Supportive constituencies | 0.81 |
| ~ Political support | 0.50 |
| ~ Administrative adaptation | 0.58 |
| ~ Sectoral realignment | 0.69 |
| ~ Supportive constituencies | 0.54 |

The second step involves an analysis of sufficiency through the construction of a truth table. In a truth table, fuzzy set values below 0.5 are displayed as 0s and values above 0.5 are represented by 1s. A sufficient condition means that whenever a factor is present, the outcome is also present. The truth table effectively synthesises how many cases adhere to a certain pattern, and if they consistently show the same outcome. If a particular pattern is consistent, then these rows are used in a minimisation procedure which produces a particular solution term. With four conditions, which could be either present or absent, there are 16 different configurations that are theoretically possible appearing in the truth table.⁴ In QCA, cases can cluster in particular rows which display a specific sequence of conditions. However, it is important that cases do not cluster *too much* as the empirical distribution of cases across truth table rows reveals the broad empirical scope of the cases under examination. As Table 3.8 shows, there are 6 empty rows which do not correspond to any of the empirical cases that I examine. In general, it is quite rare for every row in the truth table to be filled with an empirical case. The empty rows are termed *logical remainders* and occur when

³ During this step, I also looked for necessary conditions for the absence of endurance. No such conditions emerged. I also examined necessary conditions for T1 and T2. No conditions were necessary for the presence of endurance at T1. Although, the absence of sectoral realignment was necessary for non-endurance at T1. For T2, the presence of political support, administrative adaptiveness and sectoral realignment all crossed the 0.90 threshold for endurance. Results of these necessity analyses are presented and discussed in the Appendix.

⁴ The number of theoretically possible configurations present in a truth table is simply 2^k , where k = number of conditions

the number of logically possible configurations exceeds the number of empirical cases. In this analysis, there are 16 cases and 16 logically possible configurations. If every row corresponded to a case, this would indicate that the research design is overly differentiated. In addition, if the cases clustered in just a few rows (leaving majority of rows empty) this would indicate problems with the conceptualisation of the conditions (Mello, 2021). From Table 3.8, we can see that the cases are not overly clustered, nor does every case correspond to a single row.

Table 3.8. Truth table for the presence of endurance

| Political Support | Administrative Adaptation | Sectoral Realignment | Supportive Constituencies | Cases | Consistency | PRI |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---|-------------|------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | Unified System T1 Friskolreform T2 Waste T2 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Friskolreform T1 Free Fees T1 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | Skogsreform T2 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | Model Forests T1 | 0.92 | 0.67 |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | Model Forests T2 | 0.89 | 0.49 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | Unified System T2 | 0.89 | 0.00 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | Centres of Excellence T2 | 0.89 | 0.00 |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | Drought T1 Centres of Excellence T1 | 0.87 | 0.60 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Skogsreform T1 Free Fees T2 | 0.77 | 0.33 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | Drought T2 Waste T1 | 0.75 | 0.25 |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | - | - |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - |

For the sufficiency analysis examining what (combinations of) conditions need to be present in order for a reform to endure, the minimally recommended consistency level is 0.80 (Rihoux and Ragin, 2008). However, a higher threshold can also be selected based on knowledge of the case material or if there is an observable 'gap' or drop in consistency scores. In addition, a higher sufficiency threshold is preferable when dealing with a small or medium number of cases (Mello, 2021, p. 105). Revisiting the truth table, at first glance, most of the consistency scores are decent but the real issue emerges when I look at the PRI column. PRI means 'Proportional Reduction in Inconsistency' and it is used to identify situations where a condition is sufficient for both the

presence and the absence of the outcome. In the truth table, even though most of the consistency scores are above 0.80, there is a noticeable drop in PRI from 0.67 to 0.49. This means that if I set the consistency threshold at 0.80, I am including cases which do not display the outcome in the sufficiency analysis. The case that corresponds to that 0.49 PRI value is the Model Forest Program at T2. Given that this program formally came to an end, I exclude it from the sufficiency analysis by setting the consistency threshold at 0.90. In doing so, I follow a conservative strategy for coding the truth table by setting the raw consistency threshold above the first truth table row that contains a case which has a membership greater than 0.5 in the condition but not in the outcome set.⁵

In doing so, *two main pathways to reform endurance emerge*.⁶ The first route combines political support, administrative adaptation, and sectoral realignment. What is interesting, though, are the cases that display this combination of conditions. Except for the Unified National System reform in Australia which corresponds to the earlier phases of the reform (T1), the other three cases of Sweden's forestry reform, Sweden's school choice reform, and Ireland's approach to waste management all correspond to the latter phases of each reform (T2). The second route, surprisingly, combines no administrative adaptation, no sectoral realignment, and supportive constituencies. In essence, this indicates that the presence of supportive constituencies – even in the absence of other conditions – may be enough to sustain a reform. The cases that exhibit this particular pathway are Sweden's school choice, Ireland's Free Fees, and Canada's Model Forest Program. However, each of these cases correspond to the earlier phases of each reform (T1). The surprising combination of present and absent conditions in this pathway could also indicate that additional conditions are needed to capture a reform's early endurance. This is a point I return to and explore in Chapter 4.

Table 3.9 presents the two pathways to endurance which their respective parameters of fit. The black dot (●) denotes the presence of a condition whereas the white dot (○) denotes the absence of a condition. The blank spaces mean that the condition is irrelevant. Solution consistency means that the membership score on the outcome is consistently higher than the membership score of the causal combination. The measure of coverage indicates a percentage of the empirical cases that these pathways explain. For example, the entire solution with its two pathways can explain 81 percent of the empirical cases displaying the outcome.

⁵ Adjusting the consistency threshold can have implications for the robustness of the solution as rows are either included or excluded from the analysis. Lowering and raising the consistency thresholds, respectively, yielded different solutions: but not drastically so. The test solutions are presented in the Appendix.

⁶ I present the conservative solution. The parsimonious and intermediate solutions are presented in the Appendix. Following the enhanced standard analysis, no simultaneous subset relations were found but two contradictory simplifying assumptions (rows 7 and 8) were detected and excluded from the analysis.

Table 3.9. Two pathways to endurance

| Conditions | Path 1 | Path 2 |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Political Support | ● | |
| Administrative Adaptation | ● | ○ |
| Sectoral Realignment | ● | ○ |
| Supportive Constituencies | | ● |
| Consistency | 1.00 | 0.93 |
| PRI | 1.00 | 0.80 |
| Coverage | 0.61 | 0.50 |
| Cases | Skogsreform T2 Unified System T1 Friskolreform T2 Waste T2 | Friskolreform T1 Free Fees T1 Model Forests T1 |
| Overall solution consistency | | 0.96 |
| Overall PRI | | 0.91 |
| Overall solution coverage | | 0.81 |

Given the assumption of causal asymmetry inherent in QCA, I also want to know if there are combinations of conditions that are considered sufficient for the absence of endurance (the non-outcome). This would refer to reforms that do not endure (reforms whose goals and instruments are unstable, rigid, or formally terminated). This analysis reveals three pathways that are considered sufficient for non-enduring reforms.⁷

In the first pathway, the presence of political support combined with the absence of administrative adaptation and the presence of sectoral realignment is considered sufficient for non-enduring reforms. The cases that display this combination include Canada's Network of Centres of Excellence Program (T2), as well as Australia's Unified National System (T2). The second pathway combines the absence of administrative adaptation with the absence of sectoral realignment and the absence of supportive constituencies. The cases that display this combination are Sweden's forest policy (T1), Ireland's Free Fee initiative (T2), Australia's National Drought Policy (T2) and Ireland's waste management approach (T1). Finally, the third pathway displays the absence of both political support and sectoral realignment, combined with the presence of both administrative adaptation and supportive constituencies. This combination is evident in Canada's Model Forest Program (T2). Table 3.10 provides a summary of these pathways with their respective parameters of fit.

⁷ The truth table for the sufficiency analysis of the non-outcome is presented in the Appendix. The consistency threshold was set at 0.88. The solution presented here is the conservative solution. The parsimonious and intermediate solutions for the absence of endurance are presented and discussed in the Appendix.

Table 3.10. Three pathways to non-endurance

| Conditions | Path 1 | Path 2 | Path 3 |
|------------------------------|---|--|------------------|
| Political Support | ● | | ○ |
| Administrative Adaptation | ○ | ○ | ● |
| Sectoral Realignment | ● | ○ | ○ |
| Supportive Constituencies | | ○ | ● |
| Consistency | 1.00 | 0.93 | 0.90 |
| PRI | 1.00 | 0.84 | 0.51 |
| Coverage | 0.54 | 0.59 | 0.41 |
| Cases | Centres of Excellence T2 Unified System T2 | Skogsreform T1 Free Fees T2 Drought T2 Waste T1 | Model Forests T2 |
| Overall solution consistency | | 0.95 | |
| Overall PRI | | 0.89 | |
| Overall solution coverage | | 0.86 | |

To examine the robustness of the resulting solutions for enduring and non-enduring reforms, I performed sensitivity tests lowering and raising the threshold for inclusion in the minimisation procedure. This simply means that either additional or fewer rows in the truth table were treated as positive instances of the outcome and included in the analysis. While there were sound reasons, as described above, for setting the inclusion threshold at 0.90 for the sufficiency analysis of reform endurance, I was curious how sensitive the resulting solution was to threshold changes. Setting a more demanding threshold (0.95) means that only three configurations are assigned a positive outcome value. Setting a less demanding breakpoint (0.80) implies that eight configurations fulfill the standard. The resulting solutions were not drastically different: in the more demanding test, only the second pathway altered slightly. In the less demanding test, both pathways were slightly altered. However, these altered pathways were subsets (derivations) of the solution presented in Table 3.9.⁸ These tests also demonstrate an inherent trade-off to consider when it comes to the consistency threshold. The more demanding threshold leads to a reduction in the percentage of the empirical cases that the pathways explain. That is, the coverage of the solution decreases. The less demanding threshold, whilst increasing the percentage of the empirical cases that the pathways explain, comes at the cost of a lower consistency measure. This means that cases that share a specific combination of conditions may not show the outcome. To summarise, the reported solutions are relatively robust to changing thresholds, and strike a decent balance between consistency and coverage.

⁸ See Appendix for test solutions.

Step 5 – Detecting patterns within and across the reforms

This analysis has sought to understand which conditions are necessary, and which combinations of conditions are sufficient, for reforms to endure. From this, it appears as though there is no single factor which is critical for reform endurance. Instead, there are different ways that reforms can endure and different ways they can fail to endure. As previously intimated, what is striking is that both pathways for endurance seem to be associated with different time points in a reform's development. In the Swedish school choice reform, for example, the two pathways are present but at different points in time. This needs to be investigated further but it is reminiscent of Patashnik's (2008 p. 177) conclusion that the factors that sustain a reform in its early years are often different from what sustains it over time.

Looking first at the pathways for endurance, both pathways are associated with both environmental and education reforms, perhaps suggesting that such combinations of conditions are not specific to any one particular policy domain. In addition, these pathways are associated with a mix of cases from different political systems, suggesting that these patterns are not specific to any one particular political system or country.

For reforms that do not display the outcome of endurance, however, the pathways seem to correspond to either education reforms or environmental reforms. In the first pathway, this combination of conditions is associated with education reforms from federal/majoritarian countries: Australia and Canada. In the second pathway, three of the cases correspond to reforms in unitary/consensus political systems (Sweden and Ireland). The third pathway – and arguably the most convoluted – corresponds to Canada's Model Forest Program.

Another interesting dynamic emerging from these patterns relate to the differences in pathways for endurance and non-endurance *within* the respective reforms. By segmenting the reforms into two time points, the analysis suggests first that a reform which is struggling in its early years can in fact be turned around. In fact, there are two environmental reform cases that follow similar paths first to non-endurance in their early years, but then are able to endure in their later years: Ireland's waste management approach and Sweden's forestry policy. For both cases, administrative actors make little effort to adapt to the new realities that the reform brings, the interest group environment remains stable, and no supportive constituencies are found. The situation changes when the reforms are re-examined at a later time point: here, both reforms enjoy broad political support, administrative actors who were capable of adapting to changing circumstances, and the emergence of new interests supportive of the reform effort.

In Canada's Model Forest Program, it is able to endure in its early years largely due to the emergence of a supportive constituency, even in the absence of administrative adaptive efforts and a stable interest group environment. Looking at the second point in time, however, it continues to enjoy a supportive constituency, and administrative actors have made efforts to adapt their practices in line with the reform's goals but the dominance of traditional interests coupled with the lack of political support spells the end for this particular reform.

Finally, for the education reforms, Ireland's Free Fee initiative endures in the same way as Canada's Model Forest Program in its early years, largely due to a strong supportive constituency. However, looking at the reform over time, it loses this constituency of support – largely due to the ever-increasing 'student registration charge' that was created in lieu of tuition fees. The last case that is worth mentioning, at least on the basis of these patterns and results, is Australia's Unified National System. It is the only T1 case that corresponds to the first pathway for endurance. The pathway for non-endurance at the second point in time is similar to the pathway for endurance at the first point in time but with one crucial difference: the adaptation efforts of the responsible administrative actors. Even though the reform continued to enjoy broad political support, and a strong shake-up of the interest group environment, the strong adaptive efforts made by administrative actors in the early years came unstuck. When the reform was implemented, massive changes were also made to the machinery of government. A new 'mega' department of education formed and specialist taskforces were assembled to aid the process of consolidating the higher education institutions. But these were not to last, when the next government came in, the priorities shifted. The mega department was broken up into different components and some of the administrative entities, such as the National Board of Employment, Education and Training, as well as its councils were abolished.

TOWARDS INTENSIVE PROCESS ANALYSIS

Using this comparative technique, I have been able to detect some emergent patterns both across and between cases. However, the use of QCA only describes the consequences attributable to some treatment: it does not achieve a full explanation (Thomann and Maggetti, 2020). QCA offers a useful first step in organising data and identifying plausible patterns that exist across and between cases, but it is limited in its ability to explain how these combinations of conditions lead to endurance. In the following two chapters, I present a deeper dive into two of these cases: Sweden's school choice reform and Ireland's approach to waste management. In the Swedish case, for example, the initial endurance of the school choice reform is seemingly related to the presence of a strong constituency of public support. By contrast, Ireland's waste reform failed

to achieve this in its early years: Does this imply that supportive constituencies are integral to reform endurance, or is there more to the story? In addition, the same combination of conditions emerge as sufficient for both reforms over time. To unravel these puzzles, I rely on intensive case study analysis to substantiate these cross-case claims, and further understand and contextualise how these combinations of conditions work in practice and what mechanisms they trigger (or fail to trigger) to further explain the endurance of these reforms.



CHAPTER 4

SWEDEN'S EDUCATIONAL SAGA:
THE ENTRENCHMENT OF SCHOOL
CHOICE

In the early 1990s, something remarkable happened in Sweden. Traditionally heralded as a prime example of the social democratic welfare regime, which among others boasted a much-celebrated public monopoly on education, it nevertheless shifted towards what could be regarded as its antithesis: the government began to actively promote school choice through the introduction of a voucher system. This reform was part of a broader suite of deep policy changes Sweden had made throughout the previous decade. It was anticipated that a more diverse and competitive system would drive improvement in national and international comparisons and cost-effectiveness. In effect, it transformed the Swedish school system from a near-entirely public, bureaucratically operated system with very little room for parental choice, to one of the world's most deregulated public education systems (Imsen et al., 2017; Dahlstedt and Fejes, 2019).

The reform resulted in a rapid expansion of private schools and actors in the education sector. Before the choice reform was introduced, independent (*friskolor/fristående*) schools barely represented a drop in the ocean. There were 89 independent (compulsory-level) schools in the 1991-92 school year, taking in less than 1 per cent of the total student population. By the end of the decade, the total number of these schools had more than tripled. At present, more than 800 of these schools exist at the compulsory level, taking in approximately 15 per cent of the student population (Skolverket, 2020). Not only has the sector experienced a rapid growth and expansion, but the nature of both schooling and education has undergone a drastic transformation. There are a number of moving parts that need to be introduced and discussed in order to understand why and how this came to be. Throughout its 25+ year existence, key political advocates (and opponents) have come and gone, administrative authorities have been created and divided, education has cemented itself as a key policy concern for citizens, and the sector as a whole bears little resemblance to that which came before.

Equally remarkably, when the social democrats regained power in the mid-1990s, they did not follow through on their promise to abolish it. Instead, they chose to retain it. Indeed, the school voucher system has endured, largely untouched, since it was introduced. Despite a range of challenges and opportunities to do so, the principle of 'choice' and the creation of 'a level playing field' for both public and private schools within the education system have never really been seriously questioned. Since the formalisation of the 'choice' system, governments of all political persuasions and compositions have come and gone. There have been several internal investigations and inquiries, as well as external reviews, into different elements and components of the broader system. These have shown that the system has created some quite deleterious effects. Not only has Sweden experienced a marked decline in students' educational performance, but the choice reforms have been criticised for their part in enhancing segregation in Swedish

society (Schleicher, 2015; Åstrand, 2020a). Despite these negative consequences, freedom of choice and the voucher-like system has firmly cemented itself as an accepted part of the educational landscape. This chapter tells the story of how and why this has been the case.

The story begins with an overview of the substance and dynamics of the educational policymaking domain prior to the introduction of the school choice reform. The purpose here is to understand and explain why the policy reform got on the agenda in the first place. It provides the context for the reform. The next key piece is to examine the content of the reform itself. In this section, I focus on the supporters and the opponents of the reform, and substantive contents of the policy, as well as the expectations of the key actors at the time of the reform's adoption. With these pieces in place, I then progress to the final, and most important part of the story: the evolution and endurance of the school choice reform over time. Here I draw on the insights emerging from the previous chapter's comparative analysis and examine the changes in coalitional patterns and interest group activity, the breadth and depth of political support, the adaptive efforts of administrative authorities, as well as the role of constituency support in institutionalising the reform. The chapter ends with a discussion on additional factors that can help to explain the endurance of Sweden's freedom of choice reform.

FROM MONOPOLY TO MARKET

For most of the post-WWII period, education policy in Sweden was a key component in constructing the modern Swedish welfare state. During the 1950s, the Parliament experimented with the creation of a new school system. This step-by-step process resulted in the formalisation of the comprehensive school system in 1962 (Husén, 1965). The rationale was simple: every student should be given the chance to participate in a general education in order to create "a common foundation in cultural and political knowledge and values" (Elgqvist-Salzman, 1981, p. 13).

This reform work rendered Sweden a long-lasting international reputation of being a progressive and successful school nation. One key factor facilitating this image was the electoral success of the Social Democratic political party. Coming to power in 1932, the Social Democrats remained in office – either alone or in a coalition – until 1976. For 44 years, the Social Democrats embarked on a radical new political agenda to tackle soaring unemployment, modernise economic policy and address the need for social reform. However, this narrative of the 'strong state' (see, e.g., Lindvall and Rothstein, 2006) hit a road bump in the mid-1970s. Among other things, the visibility of the extent and reach of government bureaucracy became readily apparent in what is known as 'the affairs.' These included highly publicised tax troubles of beloved Swedish cultural icons Ingmar Bergman and Astrid Lindgren, the bugging of telephones by secret police, and the arrest

of the Social Democrat treasurer by custom officials for smuggling dollars into Finland (Pettersson, 1976). The underlying theme of 'the affairs' was that the Social Democrat government was losing its way.

The so-called 'bourgeois' (*borgerlige*) opposition parties effectively capitalised on the growing resentment against the social democratic party's dominance. After successfully criticising the social democratic state's welfare apparatus for being over-governed, inefficient and expensive, a coalition of non-socialist parties won the 1976 election (Pierre, 1993) and were able to form and hold government for the next six years. This set the stage for the ideological shift in education policy that emerged throughout the 1980s. When the Social Democrats regained power in 1982, they were largely compelled to respond to the critique that had disrupted their 44-year reign. The time spent in opposition forced the party to recalibrate some of their priorities and previous positions (Daun, 2003).

Education policy and governance until this point had fit the social-democratic mould: state-led, highly centralised and regulated. Educational content as well as the time spent on different school subjects were prescribed by 'Stockholm'. Teacher wages were determined through central negotiations and implemented nationwide, and a system of central government grants determined how resources were to be spent. The National School Board (*Skolöverstyrelsen*), together with county-level authorities, were responsible for the planning and evaluation of regional and local activities.

Through the 1980s, consecutive governments – including social democratic ones – began eating away at the post-war paradigm of "strong public expansion" and "centrally planned solutions" (Pettersson et al., 1990, p. 407). In an attempt to offset the perception (and perhaps reality) of bureaucratisation, parts of the educational administration began shifting from the central to the regional and local levels (Lane and Murray, 1985). In 1985, the government launched an inquiry into the distribution of power and democracy in Sweden. The government decided on the directives, appointed four members, and financed the undertaking. The goal was not to present any policy proposals; instead, its directives specified an assignment of pure research, headed by scholars who possess independence with respect to academic as well as administrative decisions. Over the course of the inquiry, existing universal systems – such as the comprehensive school system – came under heavy scrutiny. The commission pointed out that one of the most difficult things to do in the future would be to balance the need for individual initiatives and solutions, together with maintaining communal, shared solutions. In its final report, a 'new' image for the Swedish political elite was outlined which advocated a shift away from the 'Swedish model' and towards a more dynamic, flexible and participatory 'open society' (Pettersson et al., 1990).

A radical transformation of the highly centralised education system was realised in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For Swedes, this is called *kommunaliseringen*. Loosely, it means municipalisation or decentralisation. The newly installed education minister, Göran Persson, stressed, “The power of school development must now be sought in the classrooms and in the individual school. It is the experiences and professionalism of teachers and school leaders that must be utilised” (Proposition 1990/91: 18). First, employment responsibility for teachers was transferred to the municipalities. Second, the introduction of a new block grant financing system gave unprecedented fiscal and administrative autonomy to the municipalities. The Social Democrats believed that municipalities were in a better position to decide how and where money ought to be spent in order to achieve educational objectives (Lundahl, 2002). By design, municipalities were given considerable leeway as to how they were to handle their responsibilities. In practice, significant ambiguity arose among municipal leaders as to what the new responsibilities actually entailed and who was actually in charge (OECD, 1992).

Following these developments Persson declared, resolutely and with little prior notification, that the existing state bureaucracy in charge of national school policy (*Skolöverstyrelsen*) would be dismantled. *Skolöverstyrelsen*, having been in place for nearly 70 years, represented an obstacle to the realisation of the new, deregulated, and decentralised education system. In its place, a much smaller agency, *Skolverket*, was established. This new agency defined itself in opposition to its predecessor, pledging to “dismantle traditional supervision and control” (Haldén, 1997, p. 17). *Skolverket*'s first Director-General expressed a direct disregard for the institutional memory of the previous organisation and publicly voiced fears that its “bureaucracy was stuck to the walls” of the newly created agency (Kornhall, 2013, p. 51). The abolition of *Skolöverstyrelsen* was accompanied by a significant loss of educational expertise as approximately half of the educational administrators lost their jobs.

The Social Democrat's *kommunalisering* agenda ruffled a lot of feathers. Politically, it was unclear whether the proposal would even go through as the different parties vacillated between pledging their support, to publicly lambasting it. The teaching unions were particularly displeased, largely because the changes came out of left field, but also because teachers derived a particular status from being employed at the national level. There was a perception that teachers were being demoted in status and importance (Lachance, 2020). Coupled with a precarious unfolding national economic situation, the education system was already in the midst of some drastic changes by the early 1990s. The main events immediately preceding the next big change are depicted in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Key events preceding Sweden's choice reform

| Year | Event | Description |
|------|---|---|
| 1985 | State-commissioned inquiry: Power and Democracy | The aim of this investigation was to 'broaden and deepen our knowledge of the conditions of Swedish democracy.' The comprehensive school system came under heavy scrutiny. |
| 1989 | Decentralisation (<i>kommunaliseringen</i>) | A narrow majority voted to decentralise responsibility for the Swedish school system from the state to the municipalities. |
| 1991 | Abolition of Skolöverstyrelsen (SÖ) | SÖ, the National Board of Education, was viewed as redundant in light of the decentralisation decision. SÖ had focused on producing guidelines and recommendations for schools. |
| 1991 | Creation of Skolverket | A smaller agency created to help ensure the development of Swedish schools kept in line with the objectives of national educational policy. Skolverket was constructed around the idea of informative governance. |
| 1991 | Election | Social Democratic government loses; Carl Bildt becomes prime minister of a centre/right coalition government |

THE REFORM: CREATING 'CHOICE'

An election in September 1991 put an end to another nine-year period of Social Democratic government. The new government consisted of a coalition of the Liberal Party, the Christian Democrats, and Centre Party, and the Moderate Party, whose leader Carl Bildt became the new prime minister. The Moderate party assumed control of both ministerial portfolios in education: Beatrice Ask became Minister for Schools and Per Unckel became Minister of Education. Shortly after becoming prime minister, Bildt offered an indication of where he would like to see Sweden heading: "The time for the Nordic model has passed... It created societies that were too monopolised, too expensive, and didn't give people the freedom of choice that they wanted; societies lacked flexibility and dynamism" (cited in Mouritzen, 1995, p. 14).

The new centre-right coalition government swiftly introduced a proposition to Parliament detailing the importance of freedom of choice in education and the role and importance of independent schools (Government Bill, 1991/92:95). The idea was to give independent (private) schools the same basis to operate as municipal (public) compulsory schools. This was to be achieved through a voucher-like system. According to the proposition, the municipality was to distribute the money directly to the schools on the basis of the number of students enrolled, rather than giving a physical or redeemable piece of paper to parents to 'spend' at some particular school. In the debate surrounding the issue, all political parties used the term *skolpeng*, quite literally translated as 'school money' and broadly taken to mean something akin to a school voucher. In the simplest terms, the reform meant that each student was entitled to a certain amount of money, the money would follow the student, and the option to choose a public or an independent school was extended to parents.

Now, until this point, independent schools were practically of little import. Under the post-WWII comprehensive system, they were allowed to function so long as they adhered to the national objectives and reflected the national curricula. The reform, however, meant that independent schools would receive state funding based on the number of students enrolled. Technically, independent schools did not have to follow the curriculum. At the same time, public schools were to stop operating on the basis of strict catchment areas. Previously, enrolment was based on proximity to residence. From these two measures, the goal was “to achieve the greatest possible freedom for children and parents to choose their school” (Government Bill, 1991/92:95). The Bildt government anticipated that the stimulus of competition, and the creation of schools with different ownership structures and pedagogical philosophies, would enhance the quality of schools across the whole education system.

The minister for schools, Beatrice Ask, framed the choice reform as both creating a more efficient and high-quality education whilst simultaneously putting the final nail in the coffin of the public sector's education monopoly. The Moderates, adhering to Milton Friedman's vision of education, viewed the creation of choice as a desirable outcome in and of itself. The remaining coalition partners were generally supportive of enabling and expanding options for parents but did not pursue the issue with the same ideological fervour as the Moderates. The proposal put before the *Riksdag* was the result of a compromise reached between the government partners. The Moderates traded 'depth' for 'breadth', accepting a small, but ideologically preferred step towards privatisation over the massive expansion of choice; a position they had advocated for since the early 1980s (Gingrich, 2011).

The formalisation of the financing system was at the core of this reform. Independent elementary schools that were approved for compulsory school education could receive contributions from the municipalities at a minimum of 85 percent of the municipality's average cost per pupil. These schools were allowed to charge fees, so long as they were 'reasonable'. Conveniently, what was considered reasonable was never clearly defined. In addition, the figure of 85 percent was never fully justified. A governmental investigation (SOU, 1992: 38) had concluded that 75 percent was a more appropriate level. Despite the fact that the investigator and most referral agencies considered 85 percent too high, the education minister maintained that level. When probed for an explanation, she stated: “There is no science behind one or another specific level. It is a question of judgement based on what is reasonable and acceptable” (Ask, 1993, p. 103).

The proposal was met with vehement opposition from both the Social Democrats and the Left Party. The main points of contention centred on the purpose and role of education and schools. For the Social Democrats, the compulsory school was “one of the most important democratising and equalising forces” in society. It was not just about passing a series of tests, school was

instrumental in learning how to learn, providing a common frame of reference, and a shared experience which could instil the basic values of Swedish democracy. While not opposed to the idea of independent schools per se and admitting that they can play an important role in society, the Social Democrats claimed that “the conservative government’s dogmatic desire,” rather than a clear pedagogical vision motivated the proposal (Hjelm-Wallén, 1991/92: Ub62). The voucher-like system was interpreted as a ‘death blow’ to the Social Democrats vision of compulsory schools and education more broadly.

Despite initial hesitations and uncertainty, the proposal was accepted and swiftly came into effect in September 1992. However, given the recent reconfiguration of administrative responsibilities within the education system as a result of *kommunaliseringen* (decentralisation), some challenges immediately arose. For example, there was some confusion as to the role of the newly established *Skolverket*. The first director-general of the agency, for example, could not recall any discussions about what the new market orientation would entail (Svensson, 2020, p. 23). Previously, the power to issue permits for independent schools was afforded to a municipal body. In a bid to standardise decision-making practices, this responsibility then shifted to the county school boards. *Skolverket* assumed responsibility for authorising independent schools from 1992 onwards. But the agency’s interpretation of decentralisation meant that the state would “stop at the municipal border” (Skolverket, 1997, p. 11). It was not willing to give advice to individual schools. In addition, *Skolverket* lacked the educational expertise of its predecessor – largely due to a combination of budget cuts and a significant reduction in staffing capacity (Johansson and Lundberg, 2002, p. 185). In theory, *Skolverket* could reject an independent school’s application. In practice, rejection was rare.

To summarise, by 1992, the freedom to choose between state-subsidised independent schools and public schools was a reality. However, many questions and issues remained. Certain elements of the independent school reform remained heavily contested, specifically the level of funding that independent schools were entitled to, how this decision was made, their ability to charge fees, as well as their anticipated role vis-à-vis public schools. There was also a great deal of uncertainty in terms of the roles and responsibilities of municipal authorities and state authorities as the dust of decentralisation was still in the process of settling. In addition, the public monopoly on education had been the norm since the end of WWII. As such, it remained unclear how parents and students would react to their newfound freedom to choose. After all, there were no visible parent or student demands for increased school choice or more favourable conditions for independent schools. Finally, until this point, independent schools had been merely a blip on the radar of the broader education system. Given these unfavourable starting conditions, it would be reasonable to expect that this reform would not last long.

ENTRENCHING A HYBRID SYSTEM

Let me begin first with the ideological divisions and political contestation of the reform. The Social Democratic party, at least publicly, continued to voice opposition to the choice reform in its early years. During the 1994 election campaign, the party promised to abolish the voucher arrangements and revert back to the plans that they had announced prior to their 1991 election loss. The Social Democrats were not ideologically opposed to school choice *per se*. Their preferences in the 1980s and early 1990s were to make public schools more responsive to individual preferences, allow for direct citizen participation, and facilitate choice between public schools. The main point of contention centred on the reform's instrument: the 'voucher'. The Social Democrats were opposed to marketizing aspects of the education system. They endorsed the idea of choice, but only between public schools. They also did not want taxpayer-funded independent schools to be able to charge fees.

The Social Democrats remained opposed to the fledgling independent school movement when they returned to power in 1994. The Declaration of Government, incoming Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson's speech before Parliament at the opening of the national assembly, states: "A good school for everyone assumed that resources are distributed according to the students' different needs. Therefore, the school money system will be phased out" (1994, p. 5). This line was again used by newly appointed Minister for Education, Ylva Johansson. Johansson wanted to reintroduce the targeted state grant to the school that the Social Democrats had introduced in the late 1980s. She also wanted municipalities to distribute money as needed. This message was further reiterated in an interview with *Svenska Dagbladet*: "It absolutely must not be so, which happens today, that the independent school receives better financial conditions than the municipal [school]" (Johansson, 1994).

A week later, the government seemed to have changed its mind. Johansson announced that the Carlsson government was considering allowing independent schools to retain their 'reasonable' fees if the level of state funding was reduced to 75 percent. This had been a major point of contention. With independent schools receiving 85 per cent of their funding from the state, they were allowed to charge fees to cover any extra costs involved. This ability was at odds with the Social Democrats vision of 'equal' education: the fear was that it would lead to segregation within the education system. Johansson, extending a hand across party lines, was prepared to discuss a lowered level of school funding, "if that means the perversions with the current system disappear" (Lärarnas tidning 24/1994). Eager to overcome the points of contention, Johansson was willing to make an agreement that could hold for a long period of time.

The government, together with the Left Party, had a small majority to abolish the voucher system. Instead of pursuing this, they were suddenly interested in reaching out to other parties and seeking broader political agreement. A commission was appointed to examine the voucher system, as well as the regulations surrounding independent schools. Based on the findings, a new proposal was presented which removed school vouchers, and instead allowed independent schools to receive funding from the municipalities based on their needs. It was anticipated that the work of the independent commission could help to bridge the different political preferences regarding the future of independent schools. This was not the case. The negotiations at the ministerial and party level went nowhere, as the parties dug their heels firmly into their pre-established positions.

Unable to reach an agreement with the other major parties, the government struck a deal with the Green Party, who, perhaps surprisingly, were keen to retain the voucher system. The rationale for the continued support of the Green Party, in contrast to the more liberal and conservative parties, was that the system gave small communities and individuals with innovative pedagogical ideas room to experiment. The voucher system, after all, was established in a bid to offer alternatives to the mainstream. For the Green Party, this meant individual, community run schools.

An agreement was reached in 1997. Independent schools would operate on the same conditions as the public schools. When it came to funding this meant that students were entitled to the same resources regardless of which school they chose. The independent schools were included in the same resource allocation system as the municipal ones in order to create as equal conditions as possible. Rather than a minimum level of 85 or 75 percent of the municipality's average per-pupil costs, grants were given according to the same principles that apply to the municipality's own schools. Independent schools were also banned from charging student fees, and more stringent requirements were established for the approval of independent schools. By accepting the fundamentals of marketisation, but introducing further regulations, the Social Democrats intended to minimise any outstanding risks of economic or social segregation. By reasserting an element of centralised control, the Social Democrats accepted school vouchers and independent schools as elements of the education system.

This recalibration of the reform's instruments and alteration of its settings represented an attempt to reign in the unfettered market model first introduced by the Moderates. By the end of the 1990s, freedom to choose between public and independent schools came to enjoy broad political support from nearly all of the major political parties. The Left Party was the only political party continuing to voice reservations about the direction that the education system was taking. Of course, some parties such as those in the right-alliance, are somewhat more vocal and ardent

in their support but there was no one at this time advocating for any further large-scale changes. The Social Democrats considered their deal with the Greens as a win. After all, they removed the ability for independent schools to charge fees (however 'reasonable' they were deemed to be).

Reaching this broad political acceptance is a critical ingredient in the reform's endurance. The fact that the Social Democrats had initially promised to abolish it – and had the opportunity to do so – meant that there was a great deal of uncertainty and hesitation on the part of different actors who might otherwise be inclined to start an independent school. Before the Social Democrats recalibrated the reform's main instrument, most applications to start independent schools came from small groups of teachers, former principals, or small community organisations (Svensson, 2019).

One of the key arguments used to promote and defend the reform was that independent schools could enhance the quality of public schools by allowing individuals or small groups to experiment with different pedagogical approaches. The right to set up independent schools combined with the favourable conditions established in 1997 by the Social Democrats resulted in some surprising developments which caught many off guard. Both the enthusiastic and more reluctant political supporters of the choice reform anticipated that schools with different pedagogical approaches would emerge and expand: "It would be Montessori and Steiner and such schools" (Hjelm-Wallén in Svensson, 2020, p. 39). After all, "the discussion was about *alternatives* to the municipal school" (Ask, 2003). It appears that there were certainly different understandings of what the choice reform meant, and what changes it would facilitate within the education system.

Unlike the 1990s, when foundations, cooperatives and non-profit organisations constituted the majority of independent school owners, larger private companies began to emerge and capitalise on the favourable conditions offered to independent schools. From the mid-2000s, there was a perceptible shift in terms of ownership. Within a few years, both the growth of the number of independent schools and the number of students attending independent schools was particularly strong for limited companies and large private education providers (Skolverket, 2014). At present, over three-quarters of all independent schools are owned by limited companies. One of the (many) distinctive features of the Swedish education system is that limited companies are allowed to distribute surpluses to their owners and shareholders. However, there is no legal obligation to reinvest profits into the school. This particular feature has been drawn into a broader political debate surrounding the ability of companies working in the welfare sector to make a profit.

The profit-making potential of independent schools had, however, been on the political radar at the end of the 1990s. In fact, in 2001, the Social Democratic Minister of Education had directed an existing school commission to investigate whether it is "advisable that private profit interests steer the establishment of schools" (SOU, 2001: 12, p. 188). Despite raising this issue, the

commission's report did not suggest curtailing profit-making in any way. The issue re-emerged just prior to the 2006 election, where the Social Democrats lost power to a centre-right coalition government. Before the election, the Minister of Education had once again directed a commission to investigate whether public funding to schools should be restricted to public providers and non-profit companies (Dir. 2006: 3). This particular commission was immediately abolished when the new centre-right government came to power. Despite intense political debates, as well as increased media and public attention, the profit-making potential of independent schools remains unresolved.

WHY EDUCATIONAL REFORM ENDURED

So far, in this chapter, I have introduced the background to and context for Sweden's freedom of choice reform, as well as discussing the reform itself. It is now time to focus specifically on its endurance. I do this in two steps. First, I return to the reform elements breakdown introduced in Chapter 2 to take a closer look at what happens to the different ends and means of the choice reform over time (cf. Howlett and Cashore, 2009). Here, various elements of the reform are disaggregated into contents and levels for analytical purposes. As a reminder, a distinction is made between what the reform intends to do (its aims) and how it intends to do it (its means). These are further delineated into three levels ranging from high-level, program-level, and on-the-ground measures. In doing so, I offer a detailed account of precisely what of the reform is enduring. Second, using insights from the broader comparative analysis in Chapter 3, I examine the combinations of conditions sufficient for reform endurance at two separate points in time. I then discuss plausible additional conditions that could be used to further understand the endurance of this reform.

Step 1. Assessing stability and change of the school choice reform

In terms of *the high-level orientation* of the reform, the broad goal was twofold: to create a more efficient and high-quality education system and to achieve the greatest possible freedom for children and parents to choose a school. These broad goals were not particularly contentious. The contention instead lay in the general norms guiding the instrument preferences in the initial legislation. For Bildt's coalition government, freedom of choice was perceived as an ideological goal in its own right but also as a means for achieving other aims. It was anticipated that market forces could be employed to open up the school system to a wider range of providers with various orientations and pedagogical profiles. In doing so, schools would compete with one another and the overall quality (and efficiency) of the school system would be improved. It was the unrestricted faith in market forces and competition as well as the assumption that all individuals have equal

access to information, time, and money to make informed school choices that sat uneasily with the political parties in opposition.

The *program level objectives* of the reform have stayed remarkably stable over time. The ambition to make schools and municipalities more sensitive and accountable to parents' wishes remains. So too does the ambition to enhance pedagogical diversity and create real alternatives for students and parents. These objectives were retained, even when the Social Democrats regained power in 1994. However, from this point, an additional objective of 'equivalence' was also emphasised: "Within each school form, the education shall be equivalent, wherever it is organised in the country" (Prop. 1995/96:200, p. 36). The renewed emphasis on equivalence can be understood as an attempt to reconcile diversity with the long-standing Swedish egalitarian ideals.

In terms of the *means to achieve these objectives*, there are essentially two main types. A distinction can be made here between the more substantive and procedural tools (Howlett, 2004). The substantive tool refers specifically to the voucher. This voucher is still issued by the government and can be redeemed at any school approved by *Skolverket*. The procedural tool refers to the responsibilities of *Skolverket*. In addition to processing independent school applications, the primary task of *Skolverket* was not to directly regulate schools but to collect information and perform analyses (Jacobsson and Sahlin-Andersson, 1995). Disseminating information into 'good examples' of successful schools was expected to inspire other schools to improve themselves, effectively functioning as an indirect form of regulation (Haldén, 1997). Acknowledging that this amounted to a policy of self-regulation of schools, the Social Democrats increased the supervisory and interventionist role of *Skolverket* from 1997 onwards in an effort to achieve the reform's objectives (Wennström, 2020).

Moving to the *on-the-ground measures*, this is where the reform experiences the most change. In terms of the specific requirements of the reform, independent schools were initially afforded considerable leeway in terms of their establishment and what they could teach. But over this period, the requirements began to tighten. In terms of establishment, municipalities were afforded more of a voice in the application process. If a municipality could demonstrate that the establishment of a new independent school would have negative long-term consequences then an application could be rejected. In addition, the minimum number of students that an independent school needed to operate increased from 12 to 20. In terms of content, independent schools were also required, from 1996, to adhere to the national curriculum guidelines. The guidelines do not give exact details regarding what students must learn, but instead stipulate what content should broadly be covered and the level of knowledge that is required for each grade.

The specific way that the voucher was applied also took a few years to stabilise. As previously discussed, the level of the voucher first decreases and then increases to a value corresponding to 100 percent. In principle, this meant that independent schools were entitled to the same public funding per student as municipal schools, or equal funding on equal terms. Rather than defaulting to a standard formula, municipalities were to take the needs of each school into consideration. To further emphasise the objective of equivalence, independent schools were also banned from charging additional fees. This meant that independent schools were open to all, irrespective of parents' income (Volckmar and Wiborg, 2014).

By the early 2000s, the idea that freedom of choice and competition could be harnessed to enhance the quality of the education system had been accepted. The acceptance that the reform's high-level orientation came to enjoy meant that much of the political debate fixated on the lower-level elements of the reform, specifically, its tools, how they work in practice, and the requirements placed on independent schools. Since 1997, the level of the voucher has remained the same: municipalities are required to treat public and independent schools equally. However, this vague wording translated into a great deal of discretion and lack of transparency when it came to resource allocation, especially as there are various administrative costs and deductions that are included in the process. Since 2003, the sum of the student voucher is recommended by the government on an annually updated national 'price list'. To increase transparency, a state investigation sought to further clarify the reform's setting by specifying how the grants to independent schools are calculated and what costs are covered (SOU, 2008: 8). This meant that the reform's substantive tool underwent further calibration and its settings were further explicated.

Over both time periods that I examine, the reform's high-level orientation (its goals and instrument logic) became firmly embedded. The initial objectives have been retained, and a new objective has been layered in. The tools have remained relatively stable but have been subjected to various adjustments and recalibrations. In addition, the settings have been increasingly tightened and elaborated (see Table 4.2). Overall, despite the uncertain starting conditions, the Swedish choice reform proved remarkably durable over both periods of time. To make sense of the endurance of the choice reform, I return now to the insights emerging from the previous chapter's comparative analysis.

Table 4.2. Enduring elements of Sweden's school choice reform

| | Level | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| | <i>High level (policy orientation)</i> | <i>Operationalisation (program)</i> | <i>On the ground specification (measures)</i> |
| <i>Policy ends (aims)</i> | GOALS: Accepted and entrenched | OBJECTIVES: Initial objectives retained; additional objective added | SETTINGS: Constant adjustment |
| Content <i>Policy means (instruments)</i> | INSTRUMENT LOGIC: Accepted and entrenched | TOOLS: Substantive tool adjusted and expanded; procedural tool adjusted and expanded | CALIBRATIONS: Constant adjustment |

Step 2. Explaining endurance

Endurance in the early years

The comparative analysis conducted in the previous chapter suggested that the combination of conditions conducive to endurance in the early years of Sweden's school choice reform are the absence of administrative adaptation, the absence of sectoral realignment and the presence of a strong constituency of support. This combination is quite surprising. At first glance, it is difficult to understand how a politically contentious reform that ran counter to the norm would survive, especially when it lacks strong administrative grounding and broader sectoral support. This begs the question: What was going on?

I will move through these three conditions individually, beginning with the low level of administrative adaptation. When the choice reform was implemented, the dust of decentralisation was still in the process of settling. This led to considerable uncertainty regarding the roles and responsibilities of municipal authorities and state authorities (Skolverket, 2011; Schleicher, 2015). Municipalities were responsible for determining how resources should be allocated between different parts of the school system. There was no general model for resource allocation which worked in all municipalities or for all activities within the school system. In some municipalities, political actors had the final say on resource allocation but in others, such decisions fell to civil servants (SOU, 1998: 12, p. 16). In effect, this meant that each municipality was making its own estimations and calculations, largely on a per capita basis. The municipalities were under no obligation to calculate grants in this way. Instead, this method was viewed as a practical solution, a 'workaround' or a quick fix to fit with the requirements of the choice reform (Åstrand, 2020b).

In practice, there was little incentive or even need to develop comprehensive systems or new routines at the municipal level because independent schools simply did not occupy a large presence and nor were they expected to (OECD, 1992). For example, at this stage, independent

schools were present in less than half of the 289 municipalities (Skolverket, 2003). Some municipalities only had one independent school that they needed to fund. And further, a quarter of all independent schools concentrated in the three largest municipalities: Stockholm, Göteborg and Malmö (Table 4.3). Despite the increasing number of applications being processed by *Skolverket*, independent schools were not yet a widespread phenomenon. This helps to explain why there was limited administrative adaptation to the new requirements of the reform. Some of the resource allocation models were so complicated that the independent schools had very little opportunity to understand the structure of the system. According to *Skolverket* (1999, p. 58), “it seems rather to be the case that the school system is functional despite or independent of the intentions formulated at the political level.”

Table 4.3. Total number of independent schools per municipality, 1997

| | | | |
|-------------|----|-----------|---|
| Stockholm | 41 | Örebro | 7 |
| Göteborg | 30 | Nacka | 6 |
| Sollentuna | 10 | Linköping | 6 |
| Helsingborg | 10 | Västerås | 6 |
| Södertälje | 9 | Haninge | 5 |
| Uppsala | 9 | Lund | 5 |
| Malmö | 9 | Uddevalla | 5 |

Source: Skolverket [Swedish National Agency for Education] (1999a, p. 3).

Initially, few ‘new’ actors took advantage of the favourable conditions afforded to independent schools. As stated previously, most applications to start independent schools came from small groups of teachers, former principals, or small community organisations. There appears to be a sound reason for this: the future of the choice reform was profoundly uncertain. According to one former liberal party member, many private entrepreneurs waited one more election to see if the system would actually stick before deciding to enter into it (Enfeldt, 2020).

Despite the slow emergence of independent schools, one aspect was immediately apparent: citizens valued their right to choose, regardless of whether they exercised it (Miron, 1996). Despite the limited presence of independent schools in these early years, the Social Democratic leadership were cognisant of their changing voter base. During the 1990s, greater focus was placed on the interests of the middle-class and less and less on the traditional concerns of its heartland, the working class. Among middle class voters, individualism was on the rise, as was a growing interest in liberal principles such as ‘choice’ in public services. The Social Democrats decision to retain – and expand – the voucher model upon their return to government can be interpreted as an attempt to shore up middle class support and broaden its electoral base (Lidström, 1999; Klitgaard, 2008).

To summarise, despite its contentious beginning, the high-level orientation of the choice reform as well as its initial objectives and tools proved durable – but for a surprising reason. Creating a strong constituency of support, in the absence of other conditions, may have been sufficient for endurance in the reform's early years but is this enough to sustain it over time? Let's look at the combination of conditions sufficient for endurance in the next time period under examination.

Endurance over time

By 2003, the choice reform had been in place for approximately 10 years. It had also survived a change in government. The broad political support that emerged in the late 1990s for the reform's high-level orientation was maintained throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. No party, even the Left, made any serious attempts to alter the reform's broad goals or question its instrument logic. The Social Democrats, by this stage, had accepted independent schools as “a valuable part” of the common school system that hold an “obvious place” (Prop., 2001/02: 35, p. 29). The Social Democrats were not united in this view. Within the education committee, several Social Democratic members remained opposed to the reform's goals and instrument logic. Despite this internal disagreement, the official party line expressed support for the reform's high-level orientation. The 2006 election saw the return of a centre/right alliance government led by Fredrik Reinfeldt from the Moderate Party. The alliance government maintained that market forces and independent schools must have the maximum freedom to operate. This broad political support, in combination with strong administrative adaptation and broad sectoral realignment emerges as sufficient for the endurance of the choice reform over this period of time.

With most parties expressing support for independent schools and the freedom to choose, the focus shifted to developing a clearer set of rules for how the system works in practice. That is, the debate shifted to the specific tools and their calibrations over this period of time. This had consequences for the administrative authorities, particularly at the municipal level. By 2008, there were independent primary or secondary schools in 74 per cent of the country's municipalities (Skolverket, 2009). The spread of independent schools meant that more attention was called to the different ways in which municipalities allocate resources. As a result, the disparities within the 'system' were cast into sharp relief. Despite additional efforts at the national level to increase transparency and formalise decision-making at the municipal level, the municipal authorities continued to fall short of expectations. It was in this context that the importance of decentralisation was toned down, and administrative authorities at the national level began to reinstate themselves.

In terms of the administrative adaptation at the national level, the path dependencies or principles guiding *Skolverket* in its earlier years were brought to the fore. When the Social Democrats regained power in 1994, they repeatedly urged *Skolverket* to exercise more active and direct control, especially when it came to supervising and inspecting independent schools for compliance with national regulations (Riksrevisionsverket, 1994). But this did not really happen: the agency had been founded on other principles, and these requests were at odds with the advisory and dialogue-oriented path the agency had initially been commissioned to take (Riksrevisionsverket, 2001). In 2003, *Skolverket* was reconfigured and given a more explicit mandate to inspect schools and local authorities. Through this decision, the state reclaimed ownership of an instrument of control that it had previously divested itself of. The renewed focus on inspection initially led to the development of a new division within the agency and later to a formal split and creation of a new School Inspectorate in 2008. The new Inspectorate was formally tasked with upholding the 'equivalence' objective, ensuring every student's right to quality education and equal opportunities regardless of which school the student attends (Rönnerberg, 2014). This involved closely monitoring the activities of the independent schools and ensuring that they were complying with the tightened requirements.

This administrative reconfiguration had important consequences for the endurance of the choice reform. Until 2003, the state 'stopped at the municipal border' when it came to inspecting public schools. This, after all, was the municipalities responsibility. This was never the case for independent schools. *Skolverket* aspired to inspect each independent school over a three-year cycle but found the pace impossible to sustain. From 2008, under the new Inspectorate, the same inspection conditions applied to both public *and* independent schools. This harmonisation indicates that the choice reform has come to affect the whole system, not only independent schools. The Inspectorate also has the power to revoke funding and even the licence of an independent school if it fails to adhere to admissions regulations, teaching standards, or shows signs of financial instability. In effect, this has the capacity to enhance the market-logic underpinning the reform as it aims to identify and admonish poor performance. Finally, the publication of the inspection reports forms an important source of information for students and parents to gain insight and knowledge about the offered alternatives, theoretically correcting any information asymmetries present (Lindgren et al., 2012).

The decision to create 'equal' conditions for both public and independent schools led to the emergence of a range of new actors entering the school system. At the start of the new millennium, there were 371 independent primary schools and 73 independent secondary schools. The number of independent schools continued to steadily increase, as did the percentage of students attending such schools (see Table 4.4). But this quantitative expansion says little about

the transformation that was underway. Applications to start independent schools continued to increase through the early 2000s. The key difference here, however, is the emergence and growth of different forms of ownership.

Table 4.4. Growth of independent schools, 2003-2008

| | 2002-03 | 2004-05 | 2006-07 | 2008-09 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Independent primary schools | 528 | 565 | 599 | 635 |
| Independent high schools | 194 | 241 | 300 | 359 |
| % students at compulsory independent school | 5.7 | 6.9 | 8.0 | 9.0 |
| % students at independent high school | 8.2 | 11.9 | 15 | 17.0 |

Source: Data from *Friskolornas Riksförbund* archives www.friskola.se

One of the ways that a reform is expected to endure is if it motivates new actors and coalitions to emerge who have a stake in the reform's long-term survival. The increase from 85 to 100 percent funding for independent schools resulted in a substantial addition of resources to the fledgling independent school sector. The profit-making potential facilitated the entry of bigger firms, groups of school companies, and venture capitalists to the scene. The smaller education providers are still important, but since the early 2000s, there has been a clear increase in the market shares of the bigger independent education providers (Skolverket, 2012). By the end of the decade, approximately one third of all pupils in independent compulsory schools attended a school run by the ten biggest providers (Skolverket, 2014).

This period is characterised by an unparalleled growth of the private education sector and constant evolution of the identity of sector actors. The entry of venture capitalists as well as an increasing concentration in ownership created powerful business actors who worked in close collaboration with non-socialist (and sometimes socialist) politicians to vigorously defend their interests. The connections between the independent school lobby group (*Friskolornas Riksförbund*), and the major political parties are no secret. Former politicians of all persuasions (Greens, Moderates, Social Democrats, Liberals) have acted as chairmen for the organisation. The organisation's strength lies in its steadily increasing membership: 'The more we become, the heavier our voice weighs and the greater the chance we get to influence' (*Friskolornas Riksförbund*, 2011). Partnering with other industry associations, *Friskolornas Riksförbund* has become a well-oiled and vocal machine, actively defending the interests of for-profit independent schools.

To summarise, the continued endurance of the choice reform beyond its first decade is the result of gaining and maintaining broad acceptance across the major political parties, reinstating a degree of centralised control by adapting the administrative authorities, and attracting new actors and groups who undoubtedly stand to gain from it.

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

Through this analysis, I have shown how different combinations of conditions can help to explain how Sweden's freedom of choice reform endured over time. If I return briefly to the role of constituency support in the reform's early years, it appears as though broader demographic changes across the Swedish population had a significant impact on the endurance of the reform's high-level orientation. Until the 1990s, the Social Democrats had relied on support from the working class but this 'traditional' voter base was declining. There are several posited reasons for this. One explanation focuses on the impact of education: as Swedish voters have become more highly educated and better informed through the news media, their voting preferences change. Another explanation points to the decline of the working class which could lead to a decline in class voting and hence to Social Democratic decomposition (Lidström, 1999; Immergut, 2002). Regardless of the cause, the desire to appeal to a broader swathe of voters had implications for the endurance of the choice reform.

Without this constituency of support, there appears to be little preventing the Social Democrats from abolishing the system once they regained political power in 1994. Accepting the high-level objective of the reform, the Social Democrats contented themselves with recalibrating the voucher model by increasing the level of funding that independent schools were entitled to. This political support – and the certainty that it provided – sent a strong signal to would-be entrepreneurs wanting to take advantage of the favourable conditions afforded to independent schools. As the independent school sector grew, the administrative authorities at the national level have also been reorganised and had their missions altered to further align with the goals and objectives of the choice reform.

Throughout the 2000s, politicians, advisors, and administrators who were active in designing the independent school reform increasingly became involved in the burgeoning sector. One former Liberal party member likened this to a revolving door: if you are a younger policy professional, then there are a lot of job opportunities within the growing independent school environment (Enfeldt, 2020; Svallfors, 2016). For example, political party members, elected politicians, and members of Parliament have filled roles such as independent school owners and CEOs, members of for-profit independent school boards, and head of the industry organisation representing independent schools, *Friskolornas Riksförbund* (Rönnberg, 2017). The realignment of sectoral actors also had implications for the administrative adaptation experienced in this period. By the turn of the millennium, authorities at the national level began to retake a measure of control – leading to the creation of an entirely new inspection agency and an expanded workforce.

Examining this enduring reform in-depth revealed further insights which were not considered in the broader comparative analysis. One thing that I continued to find puzzling in this case was the initial Social Democratic U-turn upon returning to power in 1994. Appealing to a broader voter base may explain why the Social Democrats came to accept the principles underpinning the choice reform but it does not explain why the official party line changed in a short space of time. Over the course of a week, the party line shifted from abolishing the voucher system to negotiating to retain it.

In the early 1990s, Sweden faced a severe financial crisis. With banks collapsing, public debt soaring, unemployment rising, and GDP dropping, the Social Democrats returned to power in 1994 with over 45 per cent of the vote. Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson saw it as his 'mission' to rectify the dire economic situation facing Sweden (Carlsson, 2014, p. 76). To achieve a broad and stable parliamentary basis for economic policy, Carlsson sought to include the Center Party. During these negotiations, Carlsson came to realise that the Center Party was not willing to make any significant changes to the system of independent schools. At this point, Carlsson made the assessment that any significant changes to the voucher system were off the table: rescuing the economy was more important (Svensson, 2020; Carlsson, 2014).

The economic situation, coupled with the constituency of support, thus helps to explain why the Social Democrats came to accept the high-level orientation of the freedom of choice reform. The economic situation may also have implications for how additional conditions operate. For example, to cope with financial situation in the mid-1990s, the state reduced its contributions to the municipalities. Since education was one of the largest municipal activities, a large part of the savings efforts came from there. These reductions had visible implications, such as reducing teacher density and cuts to specific educational offerings such as special education and languages (Skolverket, 2009). The quality deficiencies that parents and the general public saw and experienced paved the way for the increased interest in independent schools as a feasible alternative.

Finally, by the early 2000s (when the economic situation had improved) contributions to the municipalities were restored. This meant improved resources for schools. This is where we see increased applications to start independent schools as well as the emergence of larger private companies and school groups. It is reasonable then, that the municipalities improved financial positions, in combination with the broad political support expressed for the choice reform, had implications for the growth of the independent school sector and the entry of new actors who become strong advocates for the continuation of the reform.

CONCLUSION: A TRANSFORMATIONAL REFORM

Sweden's school choice has been remarkably durable since 1992. Upon enactment, there was a general impression that independent schools would complement public schools through the development of innovative and alternative pedagogical approaches. In the early 1990s, the time appeared ripe for such a reform: the political acceptance of the public monopoly on education had slowly broken down. However, the system as it stands now, is far beyond what its initiators envisioned. Since the early 1990s, the reform has developed in unintended ways. Its endurance is certainly a product of political support, the emergence of new interests and broad public acceptance, but it is also a product of inopportune timing and the political need to respond to the worsening economic situation of the 1990s.

In general, education policy has experienced a vast shift from its heyday in the post-WWII period: its slow-moving and unwieldy nature makes it difficult to control and claim credit for. As a consequence, education policy often fails to compete with other national priorities. It is clear from this analysis that the linchpin of the reform's endurance is the degree and extent of sectoral activity. However, such players would likely not have emerged had they not received a clear signal from the Social Democratic Party in the late 1990s. It is also clear that this signal may not have been sent had the general public not appreciated and valued their right to choose. Whether this appreciation was a reaction to the formerly state-led, highly centralised and regulated public school system remains to be seen. What is clear, though, is the school choice reform has drastically transformed the landscape of Sweden's education system and will likely continue to do so in the years to come.



CHAPTER 5

ENVIRONMENTAL REFORM IN
IRELAND'S 'THROWAWAY' SOCIETY:
MOVING BEYOND LANDFILL

There was cause for optimism in Ireland in the early 1990s. Having languished through a prolonged recession the previous decade, great strides were taken to rectify the political and economic instability that had so blighted the 1980s. Ireland, at this stage, was on the cusp of entering its boom years, of earning the world-wide reputation of the 'Celtic Tiger.' With its economic trajectory successfully redirected, Ireland soon found itself staring down the barrel of another messy problem. The rapid economic growth that the country began to enjoy, coupled with increasing levels of production and consumption, came with a nasty and visible side effect: ever-increasing levels of waste. This problem was certainly not unique to Ireland; waste volumes were quickly rising the world over. The Irish problem was instead how to reconcile the national prioritisation of job creation and economic development with the emerging eco-consciousness permeating the system as well as respecting the obligations that came with being a member of the European community.

The extent of environmental degradation experienced as a consequence of industrialisation and urbanisation was only marginally experienced in Ireland by this stage. Until this point, waste management and environmental issues more broadly had been regarded as limited and predominantly local concerns, undeserving of national policy attention. The dearth of waste management infrastructure and guidance at the national level meant that more than 90 per cent of the country's waste went directly to landfill. With existing landfills reaching capacity, the unsustainability of this "strategy of last resort" was cast into sharp relief (Boyle, 2002, p. 182). Waste became a problem which could no longer be buried and forgotten.

Although Ireland remained relatively aloof from the emerging international concern for environmental protection, its membership in the European Union meant that it had a duty to adhere to decisions made in this area. Continued policy inaction was no longer an option. Responding to growing pressure from increasingly stringent EU environmental directives, the government launched a radical overhaul of waste management planning with the enactment of the Waste Management Act in 1996. This reform sought to fundamentally change how the country dealt with waste by transitioning away from landfill and towards the ultimate goals of prevention and minimisation. Given the limited advancement of environmental policy in Ireland, the waste reform offered an opportunity to capitalise on its late-mover status and leapfrog from last cab off the rank.

Instead, Irish politicians and policymakers found themselves in a difficult catch-up situation. Despite the political support and initial enthusiasm for the reform, it initially failed to gain a strong foothold. The historical underinvestment of environmental infrastructure and lack of administrative capacity threatened to derail the reform's objectives. With reliance on landfill

increasing, Ireland proved incapable of climbing the ladder of desirable waste options. Rather than embedding capacities and activities to stem the flow or minimise the production of waste, the national conversation became increasingly fixated on the 'best' means of disposal: to burn or to bury. With tensions between local politicians and the environment minister heightening, and the EUs patience wearing thin, Ireland was more or less forced to act.

This story begins with an overview of the substance and dynamics of the environmental policy domain prior to the introduction of the waste reform. The purpose here is to understand and explain why the waste reform got on the agenda in the first place. It provides the context for the reform. The next key piece is to examine the content of the reform itself. In this section, I focus on the supporters and opponents of the reform, and substantive contents of the policy, as well as the expectations of key actors at the time of the reform's adoption. With these pieces in place, I then progress to the centrepiece of the story: the evolution and endurance of the waste reform over time. Here I draw on insights emerging from the previous chapter's comparative analysis and examine the changes in coalitional patterns and interest group activity, the breadth and depth of political support, the adaptive efforts of administrative authorities, as well the role of constituency support in institutionalising the reform. The chapter ends with a discussion of additional factors emerging from the case analysis that can further help to explain the endurance of Ireland's waste reform.

THE NOT-SO-GREEN EMERALD ISLE

Poetically dubbed the 'Emerald Isle', Ireland often evokes visions of expansive vales and verdant rolling green hills, of at least forty shades – or so the famous Johnny Cash song goes. Despite such popular imaginations, attention to environmental issues rarely took centre stage throughout much of the post-WWII period. Traditionally, broader environmental matters have largely been understood to be the concern of privileged elites, largely divorced from the everyday challenges and lives of 'ordinary' citizens (Feehan, 1997; Cabot, 1999). It has even been suggested that the devastating implications of the Great Famine have had lingering effects in terms of agnostic attitudes to the environment. Despite its social and political roots, the famine created a sense of betrayal by nature and the land, generating scepticism toward state-based interventions in environmental management (Foster, 1997).

Until the 1960s, Ireland had experienced little by way of industrial or agricultural development (O'Malley, 1985). It also had a relatively low rate of urbanisation, and a decreasing national population. In contrast to other Western countries, little was happening to produce environmental degradation or any concern and action among the public about it (Mawhinney, 1989, p. 90). During

the 1970s and particularly the 1980s, this was set to change rapidly. Not only did the country go through belated but rapid modernisation, it also became increasingly open to, and influenced by, ideas and developments from outside, particularly following its entrance to the European Economic Community in 1973.

Concern and mobilisation around the environment in Ireland initially occurred as a reaction to the threats posed by economic and particularly industrial development. Throughout the 1970s, for example, Irish environmental movements began to emerge in opposition to proposed nuclear facilities, oil refineries, and pharmaceutical plants (see, e.g., Leonard, 2008). At this time, Ireland did not have a dedicated environmental department within its machinery of government. Issues of air and water pollution, waste disposal and sanitation were, through a series of Local Government Acts, the responsibility of local authorities. Environmental matters were thus being seen as local political issues. Even when in 1977 the Department of Local Government was renamed the Department of Environment, this localism continued. Though 'the environment' now had a PO box in the Dublin bureaucracy, the rebranding was undertaken primarily as a symbolic act. Meanwhile, the direction of the department and the policy vacuum at the national level remained largely unchanged (Rees et al, 2013, p. 134). Taylor (2002, p. 195) relays the sentiments of a civil servant working within the renamed Department: "There wasn't even a separate environment division. There was a miscellaneous environment section, but in fact all that did was look after cats, dogs, parks and playgrounds."

The lack of national attention given to environmental issues was not uncommon. Globally, there were fewer than ten ministerial-level departments of environment in 1970 (Ausubel et al., 1995). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, governments, political parties and citizens around the world were waking up to challenges that now fall under the demarcated banner of environmental protection. The Irish situation was different. Environmental concerns were often put on the back burner in favour of attracting inward foreign investment and multinational jobs as a result of pressures to increase employment (Allen, 2004; Leonard, 2007). Multinationals were grant-aided by the Irish Development Authority and purposefully attracted by a less than stringent regime of environmental legislation. With job creation as a priority, the approach to environmental issues remained reactive and ad hoc. Achieving compliance with European directives took a back seat (Flynn, 2004). This approach, coupled with a lax regulatory stance, was particularly stark in the waste management field (Taylor, 2001).

Responsibility for domestic waste disposal fell to Ireland's local authorities. Yet in practice, all kinds of waste from both private and public waste collectors arrived at local authority dump sites. There was no need to obtain permits for waste management procedures and there was nothing in Irish law preventing public or private actors from discharging dangerous substances

to groundwater. Despite being the responsible regulatory authority, local authorities had no enforcement capacity (Coyle, 1994). Offences such as illegal dumping and backyard burning of waste went unpunished. Waste management, if it can be identified as 'management', comprised of a patchwork of rudimentary, unseparated collection services, unregulated landfills for municipal waste, and virtually no recycling infrastructure.

THE LONG ROAD TO REFORM

By the mid-1980s, Ireland lagged well behind the standards set by the European Union in terms of recycling rates, facilities for biological treatment, and capacity for energy recovery. From a policy perspective, waste was managed through a series of public health statutes and ministerial regulations that were at best only loosely guided by European legislation (Meehan, 1996). Progressing any environmental policy agenda vis-à-vis other problems and policy fields was quite challenging given the limited availability of economic, societal, and political resources.

The improving economic situation toward the end of the 1980s provided an opportunity to direct much-needed funds into developing and improving environmental infrastructure. This was aided by three developments. First, having formed in 1982, *Comhaontas Glas* (the Green Alliance) won its first parliamentary seat in 1989. The 1989 election, in fact, marks the first occasion in which the party manifestos of Ireland's two largest political parties explicitly mention environmental protection and waste management (Irish Electoral Manifesto Archive, 2021). Second, an influx of chemical and pharmaceutical multinationals to Ireland led to regular pollution incidents, which began to arouse public disquiet. Third, Ireland assumed the presidency of the Council of the European Union in 1990. In his speech to the Dáil Éireann (House of Representatives) upon taking up the role, the Taoiseach (prime minister) Charles Haughey took this as an opportunity to designate the 'Irish Presidency a Green Presidency', pledging to take steps to protect and defend the environment. The Irish government had committed itself publicly. Now it had to deliver.

This intent manifested itself in various ways. An important milestone was the creation of Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency in 1994, in an apparent effort to upgrade the ineffective institutional capacity needed to oversee the local implementation of environmental policy emanating from Brussels (cf. Connaughton, 2013). The new agency also needed to play a role in reconciling the dual and conflicting role of local authorities as 'gamekeeper' and 'poacher' in terms of environmental functions (Coyle, 1994, p. 73). Local authorities were responsible for various activities such as water quality and waste disposal. The irony was that local authorities were themselves major polluters and were technically responsible for the environmental impact of their own operations.

Among others, the EPA was tasked with creating a national waste database. This is when the full extent of the waste management problem began to materialise. The first report, published in 1995, showed that only 15 percent of the 118 active landfill sites contained proper lining protection against seepage and groundwater pollution. One third of all sites would reach capacity within five years. The rapid economic development that Ireland was enjoying was contributing to sharp increases in the volume of waste produced. According to EPA estimates, households and companies generated 38 percent more waste compared to the mid-1980s. These figures show that Ireland was not immune to the 'throwaway' culture oft associated with increased levels of production and consumerism (Redclift, 1996; Strasser, 1999). The impending exhaustion of existing landfills coupled with the challenge of finding new facilities in light of public opposition created the conditions for the political parties to consider a new approach to waste management.

The 1992 parliamentary election resulted in one of the worst ever outcomes for Fianna Fáil, with the traditionally dominant party receiving less than 40 percent of the vote. The Labour Party emerged as a clear winner, more than doubling its number of seats and elevating it to a position of kingmaker within the ensuing coalition negotiations. In early 1993, an agreement was struck leading to the formation of the first Fianna Fáil-Labour coalition government. Its Programme for Government contained a commitment to developing comprehensive legislation on waste management. Preparations for the waste bill began immediately. However, that bill was never formally introduced in the House of Representatives. At nearly every Dáil sitting, between 1992 and 1994, questions were raised about the progress of the bill and when it would be ready.

The promised waste legislation was further stymied in November 1994 with the breakdown of the coalition government. At the time, Fianna Fáil were awaiting the final report of an inquiry into malpractice in the beef industry during the late 1980s. Fianna Fáil's leader and Taoiseach (prime minister) Albert Reynolds had previously been minister for industry and commerce, and was potentially implicated in the wrongdoings. When the report was delivered, Reynolds along with his advisors locked themselves in a government building with the only copy of the report. When Fianna Fáil's coalition partner and Labour leader Dick Spring came looking for a copy, he was refused admittance (O'Toole, 2014). Reynolds and his advisers extracted two short quotations out of context and issued a statement to the media claiming he had been 'totally vindicated.' It took Spring approximately 15 minutes to phone the Irish Times and distance himself from Reynolds' bold claim. This episode marked the beginning of the end, as the collapse of trust was out in the open.

The nail in the coalition government's coffin came two years later, through Fianna Fáil's nomination of a former attorney general to the high court despite Labour's concerns over his mishandling of

the extradition of a notorious paedophile priest. The rift between Spring and Reynolds became irreconcilable and Labour withdrew from government. Reynolds resigned as leader of Fianna Fáil by the end of 1994. With the breakdown of this governing coalition, the Labour Party turned to other Dáil parties in the hope of assembling a new coalition. What is striking, perhaps, is that this breakdown did not trigger a general election. Instead, Labour successfully joined forces with Fine Gael and a much smaller party, the Democratic Left. The resulting 'Rainbow Coalition' officially formed in December 1994. For the waste bill, these political perturbations meant further delays as the new government conducted its own review of its progress. After a series of false starts, the long-awaited waste bill was formally presented to the Dáil in May 1995.

THE REFORM: FROM WASTE DUMPING TO WASTE MANAGEMENT

Brendan Howlin, the newly installed Minister for the Environment and Labour Party member, presented the Waste Management Bill to the Dáil. Either as a consequence of its protracted arrival or its actual contents, the bill met a lukewarm response. The Irish Times featured a prominent editorial announcing the reform dead on arrival (Dáil Éireann (debate), 1995), and political opponents expressed their disappointment in what was perceived as a flawed, minimalist overture (Dempsey, 1995). Despite this reception, Howlin changed their minds. Howlin and his departmental officials took it upon themselves to respond to every query, discuss and debate every amendment, and provide careful research and documentation as to why certain decisions and directions were taken. The minister created an inclusive and open space, inviting a broad array of perspectives to be aired. Not only did he successfully shepherd the bill through the Dáil and the Seanad (the Senate), but he also won the praise of his political opponents. The leaders of both Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats commended Howlin and his department officials for the inclusive and courteous manner in which they handled amendments, ideas and suggestions (Dáil Éireann, 1996). In just under one year after its initial submission, the Waste Management Act was enacted.

This reform marked the first attempt to develop a comprehensive national framework for waste management strategies. It did so by paying careful attention to the many elements or options surrounding waste. Earlier policy documents typically displayed a black and white view on the subject, relying on end of pipe solutions involving either incineration or landfill. The inherent assumption of this view is that waste is an inevitability, an unavoidable by-product of economic growth and success. The 1996 reform expanded the range of options for dealing with waste beyond the default of 'put it in the ground'. It introduced the language of prevention, reduction, re-use, and recycling. In line with European directives, the reform put Ireland in a position where

it could move up the hierarchy of desirable waste management strategies, towards recycling, minimisation, and ultimately prevention.

As framework legislation, the reform established key principles and provided a more effective organisation of public authority in relation to waste management. The Minister for the Environment, the EPA, as well as local authorities took on new or refined roles. The Minister in particular obtained greater authority to set further necessary regulations and to ensure the progression of waste management planning. Licencing criteria for landfills were also delineated, as was the handling of waste, which now fell under the EPA's remit. Any activity undertaken in the waste space had to adhere to three key environmental principles: (1) the precautionary principle, where serious risks warrant preventative action, (2) the proximity principle, where waste treatment is as close to its source as possible, and (3) the polluter pays, where the cost of waste management is borne by its producer.

It was up to local authorities to put these principles and guidelines into action. Reflecting the hierarchy of desirable waste strategies, local authorities set about developing waste management plans. This was the key mechanism for actually managing waste. The ultimate aim of the plans was to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, which was sitting at around 98 percent (EPA, 1995). Through the reform's passage, Dáil members stressed the lack of appropriate waste infrastructure time and time again. However, it did not make sense for each individual locality to develop its own comprehensive infrastructure either, especially given the country's small size. Instead, through the reform, Howlin gave local authorities the opportunity to join forces to develop their waste plans. Thus, a 'regional' approach to waste management ensued. Following this regional approach, Howlin expected substantial progress on the plans by 1998, setting a maximal timescale for formal adoption by the middle of 1999.

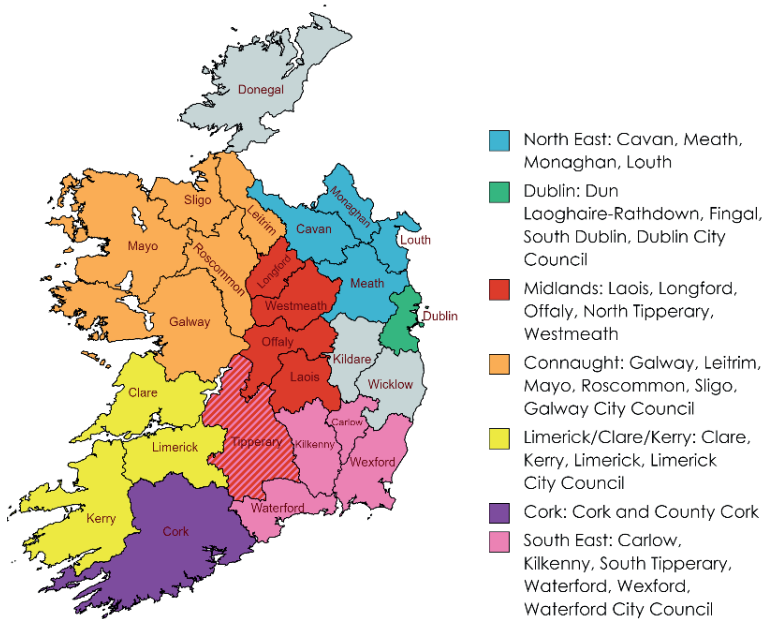
No specific targets were set at this stage; these were details either the minister or local authorities would flesh out at a later stage. Unfortunately for Howlin, a general election occurred before he had the chance to do so. The 1997 election saw the removal of the Rainbow Coalition and the return of Fianna Fáil. Environmental issues did not feature prominently in the lead up to the election. Instead, the campaign amounted to a 'prosperity auction', with the major parties offering different ways to spread the fruits of Ireland's economic growth (Taylor, 1997). Fianna Fáil formed a minority government by joining forces with the Progressive Democrats and gaining the support of four independent ministers. The change in governing coalition did not pose a threat to the newly enacted reform. Its Programme for Government affirmed the new governing coalition's full support for the Waste Management Act, as well as the broader goal of moving Ireland further along the hierarchy of desirable waste approaches.

NATIONAL TARGETS, REGIONAL CLUSTERS, LOCAL DECISION MAKING.

The new government had a keen interest in 'modernising' the local government system, an interest reflected in its decision to attach 'Local Government' to the end of the Department of the Environment's name. The new minister and Fianna Fáil party member Noel Dempsey further embedded an irrefutable connection between local government and environmental issues with his waste policy statement *Changing our Ways* (1998). In a statement addressed chiefly to local authorities, Dempsey identified landfill as the most fundamental issue to be addressed, an issue which should be "the core objective of the current local planning process" (Dempsey, 1998, p. 3). Through this statement, Dempsey also advocated the inclusion of more private operators in waste management and floated the idea of incineration as a plausible waste solution.

For the first time, Dempsey established national targets for waste management over a fifteen-year period. These targets intended to give a clear direction to local authorities to further develop their plans. Ambitious targets were set for landfill diversion, for recycling, and for an integrated network of waste management infrastructure. However, this was new terrain for the local authorities. The idea of a regional network approach was also quite foreign to the authorities (Quinlivan, 2002). During the 1990s, many different regional administrative groupings were superimposed throughout the country. The issue was each regional grouping served a different and unique purpose. The waste 'regions' were no different. The emerging clusters were arbitrary and often at odds with the physical planning powers of other regional authorities (Connaughton, 2014; Boyle, 2002). In addition, some local authorities preferred to develop their own plans, rather than join the regional structures (see Figure 5.1).

Most local authorities lacked the expertise and/or the capacity to actually develop their plans. Recognising this, Dempsey advised local authorities to seek assistance from waste management experts. This task largely fell to Irish engineering consultants, M.C. O'Sullivan and Co. Ltd, who produced all but one of the regional plans (Boyle, 2003). Given that nearly all of the plans were produced by one firm, they were remarkably similar in terms of content. Each regionalised plan recommended the development of incineration facilities, recycling, biological treatment, as well as reduced landfill. The plans acceptance and progression depended on the unanimous support of all of the local authorities within a region. Ireland's waste management future was placed squarely in the hands of local elected representatives. Before the local authorities voted, the general public were consulted and invited to present their views. The mere insinuation of potential incineration facilities and 'super dumps' was enough to provoke considerable public interest and opposition.

Figure 5.1 Regional waste management clusters in Ireland⁹

Campaigns and protests erupted across the country. To the west in Galway, campaigners amassed 22,000 signatures against the waste plan in a city of only 70,000 (Davies, 2005). To the south in Cork, campaigners quickly banded together forming an alliance to stop the proposed construction of a large commercial incinerator (Leonard et al., 2009). To the east in Dublin, city councillors were prepared to face dissolution rather than implement changes that were bound to be opposed by urban residents (RTÉ, 2000). Achieving the necessary agreement on the plans simply proved impossible in a number of local authority areas. By 2000, only 11 of the 34 local authorities had formally adopted their waste management plans.

Following the limited progress of the waste plans by 2001, the relationship between the Department and local authorities became one of “disarray and dismay” (Fagan *et al.*, 2001, p. 12). Despite having the power to specify the form and content of the local authority plans, the Minister and Department officials initially adopted a hands-off approach (Davies, 2005). This led to considerable confusion regarding the role of the administrative actors within the Department as well as the Minister as it was unclear what they were doing to police the operation of the legislation (Dáil Éireann, 2001a). The initial reform, and the embellishment of policy details in

⁹ Donegal, Wicklow and Kildare did not join a regional structure, but made individual county waste management plans. This figure is the authors own.

Changing our Ways (1998) strongly emphasised the value of local authorities, in terms of their participation and autonomy, as well as the value of community consultation. This hands-off approach was not to last with the tone from 2001 onwards decidedly more dirigiste.

“THE MOST DRACONIAN LEGISLATION EVER”: THE POLITICS OF IMPLEMENTATION

Dempsey found himself between a rock and hard place. Europe was steadily losing its patience as Ireland was on the verge of falling foul of its legal obligations, particularly the landfill directive. The delayed adoption of waste management plans meant that Ireland was at risk of being taken to the European Court of Justice for non-compliance. The threat of European intervention and financial sanctions created tensions between Dempsey and the local authorities yet to adopt their plans. With pressure from local communities mounting against the proposed incineration and super dump infrastructure, Dempsey refused to allow the re-negotiation of plans, creating a challenging environment for local councillors to navigate.

The pressure was on Dempsey to “act in the national interest” and “facilitate the satisfactory completion of the planning process” (Wallace, 2001). This was to be achieved through the introduction of an amendment to the Waste Management Act. The amendment proposed to transfer the power to adopt a waste management plan away from locally elected representatives of local authorities. Dempsey sought to “remove any perceived obstacles to the effective implementation of regional plans” by placing decision-making power in the hands of non-elected city and county managers (Wallace, 2001). Unsurprisingly, the proposal generated a furious response from both local politicians and national opposition parties, particularly Fine Gael and Labour. The proposal was castigated as “the most draconian legislation ever to come before this House,” exposing the “naked contempt that the Minister and the Government have for local democracy” (Dáil Éireann, 2001). Despite this, the minority Fianna-Fáil-Progressive Democrats government, aided by four independents, signed the amendment into law just four months later.

Through this action, Dempsey effectively circumvented both community opposition and the reluctance of local representatives. From 2001 onwards, waste management planning was no longer the preserve of local elected officials. Instead, non-elected city and county managers would sign off on the plans. With this transfer of decision-making power, all waste management plans were adopted in their original state by the end of 2001. There would be no public consultation, just imposition. County managers did not face the same political pressures and could accept the current plans. Dempsey intended for this transfer of power to be time limited: it was introduced to break the impasse. Decision-making power would return to elected councillors when it came to revising and renewing the plans in the future. However, a ministerial shake-up followed the re-

election of a Fianna Fáil-Progressive Democrats coalition in 2002. With Dempsey's talents sought in another problematic portfolio, Martin Cullen became the new environment minister. In an effort to avoid any future politicisation of waste management planning, Cullen made the transfer of decision-making power permanent in 2003.

Until the early 2000s, political and public attention had concentrated on one small segment of what were otherwise comprehensive regional waste plans. The transpiring incineration controversy took centre stage. The uncertainty that this controversy created meant that little else was achieved in the waste space during this time. However, Dempsey's 2001 amendment also enabled the diversification of policy instruments employed to address the waste problem. Waste collection had typically been a government funded service. From the early 2000s, however, local authorities had the power to charge households for waste collection. This led to the introduction of flat fees for household waste collection. In addition, the amendment enabled the creation of a national plastic bag levy as well as a landfill levy. The ability to charge for waste collection, as well as the two levies, are illustrative of Dempsey's ambition to operationalise the polluter-pays principle outlined in the initial waste reform.

TOWARDS MOMENTUM

Through the early 2000s, the national government's expressed commitment and rhetoric surrounding integrated waste reform rarely translated into concrete action. By instituting the regional waste management policy approach, Dempsey decreased the role and influence of local authorities. Following suit, Cullen noted the "over-democratization" of the waste management planning process; he did not think that "having so many layers involved" added anything to the process (McDonald, 2002). Cullen also wanted to distance the central government from decisions regarding the highly contentious siting of large-scale waste infrastructure. To remedy these two issues, the Minister enabled the 'fast-tracking' of planning decisions regarding incinerators, landfill sites and other waste management facilities directly to the national planning and appeals authority, *An Bord Pleanála*. In doing so, Cullen intended to simplify what he viewed as a messy and fragmented system, lacking coordinative capacity and ownership. His political opponents however interpreted this as a further blow to local democracy (Dáil Éireann, 2002).

In 2005, Ireland's waste management shortcomings, particularly the lack of ownership and enforcement, were thrown into sharp relief. The European Court of Justice criticised Irish authorities for the structural and administrative deficiencies underpinning their waste approach. The judgement condemned Ireland for its "general and persistent" flouting of EU rules on waste management and disposal (European Court of Justice, 2005). The court also condemned Ireland's

tolerant approach which appeared to obfuscate a large-scale administrative problem. This ruling triggered a significant prioritisation of resources and administrative adaptations to address the deficits that had accumulated over several decades. It also prompted policymakers to finally move 'up the waste hierarchy' and start focusing on prevention, recycling, and re-use, rather than getting embroiled in the futile incinerator versus landfill debate.

These developments coincided with the Green Party's rise to prominence and electoral success in 2007. For the first time in Irish history, the Green Party became part of the governing coalition together with Fianna Fáil. Following a decade of successive Fianna Fáil environmental ministers, Green Party Chairman John Gormley took over the environmental portfolio from 2007 to 2011. Gormley, a staunch incineration opponent, sought to further embed and institutionalise more desirable waste management approaches. He did so by attempting to reframe waste as a multifaceted resource rather than a "problem that has to be buried or burned" (Taylor, 2010).

Gormley's tenure coincided with the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis and its aftermath. With Ireland plunging into severe recession and a prolonged period of austerity, investment to provide environmental protection and waste management infrastructure more than halved between 2008-2012 (OECD, 2021). As economic growth faltered, however, so too did levels of household and municipal waste. In fact, the recession and marked falls in personal consumption helped Ireland meet all but one of its EU waste recovery targets.

Meanwhile, public confidence in the Green-Fianna Fáil partnership plummeted as a consequence of rising hardship and severe austerity policies. While the coalition succeeded in bailing out the Irish banking sector and negotiating an EU-IMF bailout, the Green Party resigned from government in early 2011, citing a loss of patience with Fianna Fáil's ongoing leadership saga (Irish Times, 2011). Unfortunately for Gormley, this occurred just one week before he was set to introduce a new 'waste as a resource' policy to the Dáil.

The decline in waste generation following the financial crisis gave Irish policymakers a brief reprieve to consider the long-term sustainability of their waste management approach. There is a discernible shift in rhetoric before and after the crisis. In the aftermath, the EPA stressed the importance of decoupling waste generation from economic growth. Gormley lay the foundations for waste to be treated as a resource but this shift was solidified with the election of a new Fine Gael and Labour governing coalition in 2011. With the release of *A Resource Opportunity*, the new governing coalition stressed the environmental and economic benefits of waste prevention. For the first time, waste prevention and environmental protection was treated as a top priority. Through this statement the new Environment minister sought to protect the Emerald Isle and begin the restoration of Ireland's 'green' image.

HOW WASTE MANAGEMENT REFORM ENDURED

To explain the endurance of Ireland's Waste Management Act, I first apply the analytical framework introduced in Chapter 2 to take a closer look at what happens to the different ends and means of the reform over time. As a reminder, this framework distinguishes between what the reform intends to do (its aims) and how it intends to do it (its means) at the high-level strategic, program, and operational levels. The purpose is to pinpoint the stability and change of the different elements that make up the broader waste reform. In doing so, I am able to identify precisely the 'what' of endurance. As a second step, focused on the 'how and why', I return to the insights emerging from the broader comparative analysis conducted in Chapter 3, to further examine the extent of the reform's endurance at different points in time. For this step, I focus on the early years of the reform, from 1996 to 2001, and then its latter years, from 2006 to 2011.

Step 1. Assessing the stability and change of the Waste Management Act

The *high-level strategic goal* was to forge an integrated approach to waste management. This broad goal has never been challenged and has remained firmly in place since 1996. The contentious element of the reform has been not its why but its 'how' – the suite of instruments applied to achieve this goal – which has slowly evolved over time. The initial legislation adopted a regional 'partnership' approach, where local authorities were encouraged to work together to develop integrated solutions which reflected their specific requirements and needs. Given Ireland's sparse population, it was anticipated that these new regional clusters could benefit from economies of scale, and the consolidation and streamlining of waste infrastructure. The heat of the conflict that these regional waste plans generated threatened to de-rail the implementation of the reform. It was not until the end of 2001, when local councillors were stripped of their decision-making power, that the scaled-up implementation (at the regional level) model found a firm foothold. The transfer of power had been intended to be temporary (for four years) but was made permanent in 2003.

The *program-level objective* of the reform, to enable the minimisation, prevention, and re-use of waste by moving Ireland up the European ladder of desirable waste strategies and outcomes, is reflected across each policy statement since 1996. However, different governments over time afforded different weights to each of the 'rungs' in the ladder of waste strategies. For example, with Minister Dempsey's *Changing our Ways* statement emphasising the importance of reduced reliance on landfill by finding alternate methods, the policy focused on municipal waste disposal. This can be understood in the context of reduced landfill capacity and the need to source other means of disposal. Dempsey's next statement in 2002, emphasised the prevention of waste arising in the first place and aimed to improve recycling levels at the individual, municipal and national

level. This is likely to have occurred in conjunction with the implementation of the regional approach. The emphasis shifted again in 2004 with Minister Cullen's focus on managing waste that had already been generated, rather than preventing it in the first place. This latter shift can be understood in the context of pressures from the EU, an issue I will return to.

By the mid to late 2000s, first with Minister Roche's 2006 *Biodegradable Waste Strategy* and then with Minister Hogan's 2012 *A Resource Opportunity*, waste began to be treated as a multifaceted resource. Roche's statement recognised that different forms of waste required different treatment. More broadly, however, this implied that several waste strategies could be pursued simultaneously and did not need to be prioritised. The emphasis afforded to different objectives in the reform's early years had created a siloed and fragmented waste space, whereas the approach adopted in the reform's latter years meant that Ireland could pursue an integrated approach to the objectives of waste management.

Over time, policymakers acquired and deployed a wider array of policy instruments to achieve the reform's programmatic objectives of minimisation, prevention, and re-use. Numerous alterations and additions are evident since the passage of the 1996 reform. Substantively, the regional waste management plans were the centrepiece of Ireland's waste management approach in the reform's early years. Rather than achieving economies of scale, the initial regional approach resulted in patchwork arrangements of waste activities and a great deal of confusion regarding planning responsibilities and authority. Institutional capacity needed to be built. To this end, in 2002 Dempsey first raised the possibility of creating a national authority to keep track of the various activities occurring within the waste regions. Despite being floated on several occasions, this option never eventuated. Instead, to further coordinate the regional plans with EU commitments at the national level, Minister Hogan chose to upscale: in 2012 the number of waste regions was reduced from ten to three (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012). The larger entities had more regulatory capacity and were less prone to capture by local interests.

In 2002, Dempsey added economic instruments such as the plastic bag levy, landfill levy, and municipal waste charges, to the waste reform policy mix. The national government also created an Environment Fund from the revenue collected from these charges. Importantly, this money was ring-fenced and used in the implementation of waste plans, in waste recovery activities, as well as for schemes promoting and supporting the development of community waste infrastructure such as civic amenity sites and 'bring' banks. The Environment Fund meant that there was always some funding available for waste activities, regardless of the broader economic national context.

In addition to these market-based carrot-and-stick instruments, Dempsey and then Cullen also employed sermons, i.e., communicative instruments (cf. Bemelmans-Videc et al., 1998).

They launched a multimillion-dollar awareness campaign to increase the awareness of waste management across the Irish population. The *Race Against Waste* campaign included the development of fact sheets in Irish and English, a website, television and cinema advertising, and an information hotline for the general public, small businesses, and the public sector.

The reform also relied on the effective deployment of *procedural tools*. Initially, local authorities had an enforcement role in many aspects of waste management, while also being involved in operations themselves. More broadly, the Environmental Protection Authority is responsible for ensuring and managing the ongoing compliance with EU directives. In the initial reform, the Agency was responsible for granting licenses, inspecting landfills, and bringing landfills up to code. In the early 2000s, the Agency's enforcement powers were strengthened, allowing the Agency to override local authorities that were identified as lagging behind (Cahill, 2010, p. 18). From this point on, local authorities were subjected to detailed monitoring and reporting obligations of their waste management progress.

At the level of the *operational measures*, Dempsey's 1998 *Changing our Ways* statement detailed specific targets to be achieved over a 15-year period. While these were national-level targets, the various regions could create their own targets which considered their starting conditions and individual situations and needs. The national targets included a diversion of 50 percent of overall household waste away from landfill, a minimum 65 percent reduction in biodegradable wastes consigned to landfill, recycling of 35 percent of municipal waste, and a reduction and rationalisation of municipal waste landfill sites. Some adjustments accompanied the launch of the Biodegradable Waste Strategy, but the national targets remained unchanged from 1998 to 2013.

In terms of the *calibrations* of the policy means, the levels steadily increased or transformed over time. For example, the municipal waste charges. When these were first imposed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, they were initially set at a flat rate. But there were substantial differences between the charges across the various localities. This led to considerable confusion and – in places such as Dublin – citizens' outright refusal to pay. To create a more equitable system, the flat rate waste charges were phased out and replaced by a pay-by-weight system. This recalibration was quite slow, however, with some municipalities continuing with their flat rate schemes. The pay-by-weight system became mandatory from 2005 onwards. The level of the plastic bag levy was also steadily increased over time, beginning a 0.15 EUR at the beginning of the 2000s and rising to 0.22 EUR by the end of the decade. The landfill levy was also recalibrated, rising from 30 EUR per tonne to 50 EUR per tonne by 2011, with a further increase to 75 EUR in 2013.

In sum, at the beginning of 2001, five years after it had been enacted, the waste reform was fragile; its implementation was bereft of momentum and its political endurance was far from

guaranteed. Despite the broad level of support for the reform's aims and objectives, the tension between the Minister for the Environment and the local elected officials regarding the potential placement of incinerators within specific localities had resulted in an impasse. At this stage, the waste situation in Ireland was decidedly worse than before the reform was passed. Circumventing local authorities' backtracking, the Minister both entrenched and expanded the regional strategy of the reform through the 2001 Amendment. From this point on, the 'regional' approach was there to stay. While the prioritisation of objectives as shifted over time, subsequent waste policies have remained firmly committed to the waste management hierarchy. Various instruments have been added to the mix over time, often reflecting the need to address waste problems at different levels (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Enduring elements of Ireland's waste management reform, 2012

| | Level | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | <i>High level (policy orientation)</i> | <i>Operationalisation (program)</i> | <i>On the ground specification (measures)</i> |
| <i>Policy ends (aims)</i> | GOALS: Accepted and entrenched | OBJECTIVES: Accepted but afforded different weights over time | SETTINGS: Relatively stable |
| Content | | | |
| <i>Policy means (instruments)</i> | INSTRUMENT LOGIC: Challenged then entrenched | TOOLS: Adjusted and expanded: economic and information tools added | CALIBRATIONS: Subject to change; becoming more flexible over time |

Step 2. Explaining endurance

The early years: a slow start

What accounts for the initial lethargy of the waste reform? Why did it fail to gain a strong foothold? To answer these questions, I return now to the insights generated from the comparative analysis conducted in Chapter 3. The analysis highlighted three conditions which warrant closer inspection: the adaptation efforts of administrative actors, the extent of sectoral realignment, and the generation of a supportive constituency emerge as a 'sufficient' for the reform's endurance, but only in its latter years. In the reform's early years, the absence of each of these three conditions worked against the reform's endurance. I will now move through these conditions individually to gain a deeper understanding of the reform's unsettled journey in its early years

Let me begin first with the *adaptation efforts of administrative actors*. The reform outlined new or redefined roles for a range of different actors operating at different levels. Local authorities were tasked with devising, implementing, evaluating, and adjusting comprehensive waste plans that would allow Ireland to meet and beat its EU obligations. In addition, they were to coordinate

their waste activities within 'regions' imposed on them by Dublin, in a move which the Minister for the Environment thought would create a competitive dynamic to achieve reform targets. Centralisation of authority was the order of the day. The Minister for the Environment was granted greater authority to set the tone and direction of waste management, as well as developing additional regulations whenever deemed fit (by the Minister). Moreover, the reform also bolstered the remit of the EPA by transferring authority for waste licencing and landfill inspection from local authorities to the EPA.

The regional partnership approach represented an entirely new direction for local authorities. Environment department officials, as well as the Minister, soon realised that local authorities lacked both the technical expertise and the coordinative capacity to develop the plans and manage the implementation process. Department officials, emphasising the importance of local autonomy, were unwilling to impart the professional or technical assistance needed. As a result, the Department recommended that each region employ specialist consultants to help draft their plans. This soon became a point of contention as it did little to remedy the implementation deficit already pervasive at the local level. It also resulted in strikingly similar waste plans, regardless of the specific situation, needs, or starting point of each region. The development of policy content is not matched to the same extent by administrative redesign or marked changes to repertoires or routines at either the local or the national level. Instead, the central government expected local authorities to deliver regional economies in spite of political unwillingness to support this through devolving resources or authority (Connaughton, 2019).

The passage of the reform prompted little *interest group activity* within the broader sectoral environment. This is perhaps unsurprising as the initial Act provided little by way of clear signalling or incentives for private sector actors. The Act implied that private sector activity was desirable but it was unclear what form this would take. Minister Dempsey in the 1998 policy statement attempted to clarify this by inviting private sector actors to participate "in all areas of waste management in Ireland" (Dempsey, 1998, p. 8). However, during this period there was barely any new activity or actors reacting to such an invitation. By 2001, the Environmental Protection Agency estimated that €825 million was necessary to develop waste management infrastructure, of which nearly 70 percent was anticipated to come from private investment (Forfás, 2001). Less than a third of this estimate eventuated (Forfás, 2007).

During the reform's early years, waste collection services were offered by a fairly even split of both local authorities and private collectors operating in a peculiar 'side-by-side' competitive arrangement. I say peculiar because, in Ireland, the ownership of household waste is legally prescribed to the householder – and not to the municipal authority. This idiosyncrasy allows

private collectors to compete and collect household waste in the collection market alongside municipal authorities (Phelan, 2013). Although the share of public and private collection differed in some locations across Ireland, there were no major changes in the provision of this service in the reform's early years. In general, the reform did little to elicit a response from established waste companies.

In addition to the lack of salient incentives, the Act's regional approach as well as its commitment to the proximity principle actually created barriers to entry for new actors. The proximity principle specified that waste should be treated as close to its source as possible. This made it far more difficult for private providers to operate beyond the arbitrary regional boundaries. In addition, each of the regions had their planning and permit processes. This administrative burden not only created a confusing environment for businesses, but it also acted as a barrier when it came to attracting investments for infrastructure development. Ultimately, the complex and fragmented nature of rules and regulations in the reform's early years prevented the entry of new interests and alliances in the broader sectoral environment.

Despite an increasing awareness of the waste problem in Ireland, the reform *failed to build a strong constituency of support*. There is no doubt that waste presented a clear and visible problem within Irish society. With a countryside dotted with plastic bags, garbage strewn around city streets, the stench of burnt waste in backyard fires, and even rodent infestations swarming uncovered landfills, the gravity of the situation and the need for reform was not lost on Irish citizens. While the reform's integrated approach was well-received, the regional planning approach and the role (or lack thereof) of citizens therein was met with scepticism. Across some of the regions, this scepticism transformed into outright anger and public protest once the plans were released for public consultation.

Part of the anger, especially from community activists, stemmed from a general wariness of public consultation exercises. Consultation, particularly as it was conducted in the context of 1980s industrial development, was seen to be superficial or simply a means to rubber-stamp proposals that had already been agreed to (Fagan et al., 2001, p. 41). With a set of six large incinerators proposed in Dublin, the South East, Galway, Limerick, the midlands, and the North East, community opposition galvanised. This opposition arose against the incinerators on health and other grounds but was further roused by the idea that householders would bear the full cost of their waste disposal. An additional problem was that Minister Dempsey did little to foster public support or allay the fears of concerned groups. Instead, he appeared to downplay genuine citizen concern, chalking all criticism and opposition of the regional plans to Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) syndrome. Dempsey claimed that the alliance of "doctrinaire greens", "globetrotting

self-appointed experts” and “political opportunists” were clearly motivated by a NIMBY agenda (Dempsey, 2001).

To summarise, the post-enactment implementation of waste reform experienced an inauspicious beginning. While the broad goals and purpose of the reform were quickly accepted, and even celebrated, the contentious regional partnership approach meant that the focus quickly descended into an unhelpful debate about incineration versus landfill. The reform also failed to find a solid institutional ‘home’, as administrative actors at both the national and local level sidestepped their new responsibilities. During these early years, the reform not only failed to cultivate new interests or stimulate new private sector activity, but it also failed to generate a broad constituency of support among Irish citizens. In fact, it did the opposite. It bred hostility and contempt across the areas of Ireland slated to obtain an incinerator or super dump. In such a hostile, fragmented, and uncertain environment, the endurance and sheer survival of the waste reform was on the line.

Endurance over time

Yet over time and perhaps surprisingly so in light of the above, the conditions leading to the instability of the reform in its early years began to turn around. By 2006, just ten years after its initial enactment, the elements of the waste reform began to stabilise. By this stage, the regional partnership approach was firmly entrenched (largely as a consequence of the politically contentious 2001 Amendment to the Act). The contentiousness of the reform had abated, and a flurry of activity had developed both within the administrative as well as the broader sectoral arena. By 2011 the reform appeared remarkably durable. To explain this turnaround, I now detail the conditions affecting the reform’s endurance in its later years. These conditions include the breadth and depth of political support, the adaptation efforts of administrative actors, and the extent of sectoral realignment.

The *broad-based political commitment to the reform’s high-level goal* and the need to move away from landfill never wavered. With the entrenchment of the regional approach, the political debate began to shift to other waste activities such as minimisation, prevention, recycling, and other means of disposal. The incineration issue, however, did prompt different political parties to adopt pro- or anti- stances. All of the parties agreed that Ireland did not need six incinerators, as initially suggested by the regional waste plans. All of the political parties except the Greens accepted that Ireland needed some incineration capacity. The Green Party were steadfastly against the development of even one facility.

The breadth and depth of political support for the waste reform was put to the test in 2007 with the emergence of a Fianna Fáil-Green Party coalition government. The Green Party

warned its coalition partner that it will insist on an anti-incineration policy as a key element of any government programme. The 2007 Programme for Government, whose environmental elements were largely driven by the Greens, affirmed a commitment to a waste strategy that actively discouraged incineration. Unfortunately, at this time, the realm of possibility within the waste space and environmental policy more broadly severely narrowed with the onset of the Global Financial Crisis and Ireland's subsequent economic collapse. Environment minister and Greens Party leader, John Gormley lamented his party's inability to pursue a more active pro-environmental agenda: "It would of course have been preferable if our time in Government had not coincided with the worst economic downturn in our nation's history" (Gormley, 2011).

Despite the worsening economic climate, the *adaptation efforts of administrative actors* during the reform's latter years were strong. By the mid-2000s, the administrative environment became increasingly complex and fragmented. For example, thirteen different bodies are involved in setting the regulatory framework for municipal and household waste management: The Environmental Protection Authority, the Irish Planning Authority, the Competition Authority, and 10 regional waste authorities. To obtain a waste permit, for example, involved navigating back and forth between various bodies, each with their own specifications and rules. This complicated patchwork of administrative rules, combined with a lack of coordination and oversight at the national level, meant that technical expertise and know-how was scattered across the various bodies. It did not work as a 'system' – instead, each administrative body could pull in a different direction. It was impossible to know what both the left and right hands were doing.

This began to change, starting first with administrative actors within the Environmental Protection Agency. At first, the EPA was criticised for its 'pro-industry' outlook and hesitancy toward enforcement, a path-dependency perhaps inherited from the lax regulatory stance characterising the previous decades (see e.g., Taylor, 2001; Shipan, 2006). In 2003, an additional Office for Environmental Enforcement was added to the EPA in order for it to exercise a supervisory role in respect of the environmental protection activities of local authorities. Its explicit mission was to 'put the environment first'. Since 2004, the EPA and local authorities have operated the Network for Ireland's Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (NIECE), in an attempt to improve cooperation and coordination between various agencies involved in enforcement of waste and environmental legislation.

In lieu of a national waste agency, an idea floated several times but unable to gain traction, various initiatives began emerging all with an eye for administrative coordination and simplification. The EPA, for example, launched the National Waste Prevention Programme, a broad attempt to coordinate and disseminate a 'prevention' message throughout Ireland. A national waste collection

permit office, a centralised hub replacing 10 previous nominated permitting offices was also created. The final major administrative adaptation which helped to coordinate the fragmented system was the consolidation of waste regions. Instead of 10 regions running on parallel tracks, three larger regions were created: Connaught Ulster, Eastern and Midlands, and Southern. This rationalisation intended to not only free up resources for other priority areas but to also reduce any administrative burdens on waste management firms (Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012).

This brings me to the *interest group activity and broader sectoral realignment* within the waste space. One of the ways that a reform is expected to endure is if it motivates new actors and coalitions to emerge who have a stake in the reform's continuation. In contrast to the lack of new sectoral activity in the reform's early years, its latter years bear witness to some drastic transformations. One of the reasons, perhaps, for the lack of early activity was the emphasis, politicisation and conflict surrounding incineration. Combined, these features created an uncertain environment for would-be interests to invest in waste management infrastructure: "these investors need the reassurance that the market is not going to be turned on its head in 2 years' time" (Walsh, 2014, p. 6).

With public and political attention centred on incineration, private actors began deploying a range of different initiatives and activities connected to 'other' options in the waste management hierarchy. For example, in the early 2000s, domestic waste collection was largely a municipal service. When domestic waste collection became a chargeable service, however, many households simply refused to pay. With unpaid bills mounting, one by one the local authorities began contracting out refuse collection to private companies. Many municipal authorities were still active in the waste collection market and competed side-by-side with private operators. However, from 2009, the market share of municipal authorities fell to 40 percent, then to 16 percent by the end of 2011 (Phelan, 2013). The ability of private sector operators to deliver services at a lower cost, coupled with their ability to exit the market, reduced the number of active municipal authorities collecting waste to just 3 in 2012. In a relatively short space of time, Ireland's domestic waste collection moved from being a predominantly free municipal service to a fully privatised and chargeable service, thus prompting changes in the broader sectoral environment.

Private actors and companies also became active in the 'prevention' and 'recycling' spaces as well. This activity was partly motivated by the Department of Environment's establishment of a Market Development Group in the mid-2000s. The Group brought together a diverse range of stakeholders from across the packaging, construction, agriculture, and retail industries, and sought to promote the development of markets for three recyclable products: organic matter, paper, and plastics. The Department offered seed funding for new enterprises willing to redesign or invest

in new or modified practices to eliminate waste. The infiltration of private companies within the waste collection market, in addition to the private actors involved in the recycling market, has further bolstered the strength and influence of Ireland's Waste Management Association, the trade association representing the interests of the waste industry.

The sector's interest-group environment and governing arrangement were adjusted further with the inclusion of an environmental pillar in the national social partnership approach in 2009. Social partnership describes an approach where interest groups outside elected representatives have an opportunity to contribute to decision-making. Until this point, the social partners in Ireland had been categorised into four pillars: trade unions; employers and business; farming; and the community and voluntary sector. The environmental pillar, comprising national networks with extensive associational memberships throughout the country, brought a large cross-section of civic associations into the partnership process. This is a significant change as it marks the first time that environmental interests, especially waste interests, are given a seat at the proverbial national policy table. Once niche environmental organisations had moved into the mainstream.

To summarise, despite an inauspicious beginning, the waste reform came to endure in the reform's latter years. The initially contentious regional partnership approach became firmly embedded, and later simplified in order to align better with national level commitments and targets. A flurry of adaptive administrative activity blossomed across the national level. Both the Department and the EPA were heavily involved in steering and coordinating enforcement and prevention activities. Administrative actors at the local level were also able to promote and support the development of community waste infrastructure by tapping into the ring-fenced Environment Fund. In short, the national and local level no longer sidestepped their responsibilities. During these latter years, with the broad and deep political support that the reform came to enjoy, a host of new interests and private sector activity also emerged with the development of collection and recycling markets. Incineration is still an issue but by paying attention to the other options in the waste hierarchy, Ireland has been able to firmly entrench its integrated waste management approach.

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

Clearly, the pace and long-term fate of waste management reform in Ireland depended on overcoming administrative, organisational, social, and political barriers in the governance of the sector. These were eventually slain partly by design and leadership, partly by happenstance and pressure from the European level. However, the endurance of Ireland's waste reform also owes much to wider changes in environmental and local government policy since the 1970s. In this final section, I will reflect on two broader factors which have also impacted the endurance of

Ireland's waste reform. These factors emerged following close analysis of the case material. The first factor speaks to broader economic conditions and societal trends, namely economic growth, population growth, and consumption patterns. The second factor focuses on Ireland's approach to environmental policy as well as its relationship with the EU.

Let me begin with the broader economic conditions and societal trends. The diminishing landfill capacity certainly underlined the importance of embedding the new waste reform, but this was further amplified by the prosperity achieved during the Celtic Tiger period. From the late 1980s to the onset of the 2007-08 Global Financial Crisis, the Irish economy grew at an annual rate of six percent. During the same period, the average disposable income increased by 132 per cent (Claudy et al., 2017). As a consequence, consumption in general, and household consumption in particular, has dramatically risen (EPA, 2006). This new economy magnified environmental pressures related to consumption – more cars, more waste, and increased demands for environmental infrastructure. These trends, combined with the population growth that Ireland has experienced, have made waste a visible and salient problem requiring constant attention. The practice of bury and forget has long expired; Ireland is more or less forced to develop alternative solutions in its handling of ever-increasing volumes of waste. Not only have these broader trends underscored and reinforced the need to transition away from landfill, but they have also contributed to a more holistic and systemic understanding of the dimensions of an integrated waste strategy.

The period of austerity following the Global Financial Crisis also had implications for the endurance of the waste reform. Until this point, each of the 10 waste regions were responsible for developing their own waste planning activities. Before the financial crisis, this regional approach to waste management had been criticised due to its fragmented nature, poor coordination, and duplication of activities. In the ensuing austerity period, waste policy, and the environmental policy regime more broadly, was forced into subtle forms of innovation regarding policy integration. This was largely a consequence of extremely sparse funding. In one fell swoop, the lower tier of Irish local government, a network of 80 small municipal and borough councils, ceased to be relevant. Importantly, the waste regions were rationalised from ten to three and a national coordinating body was established to ensure alignment with national targets. Breaking the regional waste 'monopolies' also made it easier to operationalise the principle of proximity underpinning the waste reform as it erased the boundaries that had emerged between the 10 regions.

By the mid-1990s, Ireland had the opportunity to capitalise on the political momentum that the reform provided. As a greenfield site, Ireland was well-placed to look abroad, learn from the actions (and mistakes) of other countries, and chart a new direction in waste management. Unfortunately, the legacies of the past, in the form of absent or underdeveloped infrastructure,

as well as insufficient administrative and financial autonomy at the local level, prevented Ireland from taking advantage of its late-mover status. Relative to other EU member states, the environment both as a policy domain and as a broader political movement were both in their infancy when the reform was passed.

As last cab off the rank, Irish policymakers initially treated waste management largely as a technical problem in need of a technical solution. In doing so, the political and multilevel aspects of waste were neglected, or underestimated at the very least (see e.g., Davies, 2008, p. 103-09). Part of this has to do with how Ireland tended to implement EU environmental rules. Ireland's track record with EU environmental directives is epitomised by strong adoption but meagre application, earning it the questionable reputation of being merely a "policy downloader" (Connaughton, 2019, p. 72). While Ireland is generally quick to transpose various EU rules and requirements, the capacity of domestic institutions to absorb and contextualise these measures is often found wanting, as is the ability to translate them into action.

The increasingly stringent directives at the EU level certainly prompted Irish political leaders to pay attention to environmental issues. But the EU also proved to be a pivotal actor in the ongoing development and trajectory of the waste reform. There are two particularly exemplary moments. The first was in 2001 when Minister Dempsey transferred the power to sign off on regional waste plans from local elected officials to non-elected county managers. This action, which created a more stable and consistent foundation for a key element of the waste reform, was prompted by the threat of European intervention. The second was in 2005 when Ireland was formally reprimanded by the European Court of Justice for institutionalised lawbreaking. This judgement forced Ireland to act. It forced Ireland to not only remedy latent issues surrounding waste licencing and landfills, but it also highlighted the structural and administrative deficiencies underpinning Ireland's approach to waste in general. Ireland's international reputation took a hit as this was the first time a member state was condemned for the systemic lack of implementation of core waste management rules (Connaughton, 2019, p. 115).

CONCLUSION: LEARNING THE HARD WAY

The endurance of Ireland's waste reform is replete with twists and turns. It is no exaggeration to say that Ireland essentially started from scratch. This reform quite literally had to be built from the ground up. It is clear that the requisite administrative capacity to do so was found wanting. It is also clear that the instability generated at the political and administrative levels failed to reassure or incentivise would-be interests to get involved. Treating waste as a technical problem and outsourcing the development of early waste plans to consultants, also frustrated the

potential for supportive constituencies to emerge. Ireland had to learn the hard way. Had it not been for condemnation from the EU, Ireland's throwaway culture may have been more difficult to turn around.

The story of Ireland's waste reform demonstrates that policy is not immune to the broader economic conditions and pressures facing a country. In this case, I am speaking directly to the pressures emanating from the EU. Had it not been for this heavy hand, then the endurance of the waste reform appears far from guaranteed. As a consequence of this intervention, Ireland sought to remedy the long-standing administrative and structural barriers that had so blighted the progression of the waste reform. It was this attention that sent a signal of commitment and stability to broader sectoral actors, stimulating an array of activity. The waste reform's endurance has certainly been tested: by political leaders, by the EU, and through the period of austerity following the Global Financial Crisis. Despite these tests, the waste reform has not only survived, it has thrived. The waste reform will require ongoing attention as new environmental, economic and social challenges arise but Ireland is moving in the right direction to reclaim its Emerald Isle moniker.



CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: NAVIGATING THE
TWIN CHALLENGES OF REFORM
ENDURANCE

Aesop's famous fable tells the story of a tortoise who, sick of being ridiculed by a hare for being slow, challenges him to a race. The hare speeds off, leaving the tortoise well and truly behind. With a comfortable lead and the tortoise nowhere in sight, the hare decides to take a nap midway. The hare's nap turns into a deep sleep. Eventually coming to, the hare finds his unlikely rival, moving slowly but steadily, nearing the finishing line. The hare's last-ditch attempt to catch up is futile. The unhurried tortoise bests the hubristic hare, leading to the general lesson that 'slow and steady wins the race.'

This simple tale is often used to point out the diverging patterns of policy and institutional reforms across democratic political systems (Lundqvist, 1990; Hood and Lodge, 2005). Reform processes in consensus democracies, for example, are often likened to the incremental and purposeful actions of the tortoise, in contrast to the sweeping and swift actions of majoritarian hares. At the beginning of this book, I posed a simple question: How is it that some policy reforms prove durable, while others dwindle and disappear? To answer this question, I have examined a selection of environmental and education policy reforms from different parliamentary systems. Through a close interrogation of major policy reforms over time, I have learnt that reform endurance is not necessarily about being slow and steady. In some cases, this strategy pays off. In others, swift action is needed to keep a reform on track.

Bringing together insights from policy studies, political science, and public administration, I have examined what happens after the enactment of major reforms. To date, many studies of policy change and reform focus on the development and political adoption of reform proposals. Instead, I use the enactment of a reform as a starting point upon which to track, trace and understand the unfolding processes of implementation, evaluation, and adjustment. By doing so, this study both complements and extends recent efforts emanating from the 'new' policy design literature (see e.g., Howlett, 2014), bringing the temporal dimension of reform into sharp focus.

Focusing on what happens after reforms make it into laws and budgets is a worthy endeavour, and through this book, I offer several contributions to this line of research. By focusing on two policy domains across similar and different political systems, I hope to have created a deeper understanding of the institutional and contextual factors which have complicated or strengthened a reform's capacity to endure. Second, through the use of multiple methods, the cases have been interrogated from different angles. In a two-step approach I first used QCA to identify general patterns which were then examined further through intensive case analyses to gain a more granular understanding of the (f)actors at play. Third, by focusing on reforms which were implemented at least 20 years ago, the importance of time has been brought into sharp focus. Fourth, in the process of addressing these challenges, I hope to have provided clear guidelines, definitions, and methods for future scholars to explore other cases of endurance and

non-endurance. Overall, this book contributes towards both a more nuanced understanding of how reforms fare over time, moving beyond a simple distinction between termination versus continuation, and a more comprehensive understanding of the processes and conditions contributing to their endurance.

The approach that I have taken in this book builds on and extends important political science literature regarding the post-enactment politics of major reforms. Patashnik's *Reforms at Risk* (2008) has shown how reform sustainability in the United States is driven by changing interest constellations, the force of creative destruction unleashed, as well as the generation of feedback effects. Prompted by *Reforms at Risk*, most subsequent studies have been on reform dynamics in the U.S. (Jenkins and Patashnik, 2012; Lewis, 2012; Thompson, 2012). Through this book, I have re-examined the dynamics of reform endurance by casting a wider theoretical, empirical, and methodological net than existing scholarship has done. My ambition was to examine the contents and causes of reform endurance in different political systems. The insights gleaned from this effort certainly reaffirm one of Patashnik's central claims: no matter how much public and political support a reform receives, its endurance is *contingent, conditional, and contested*. But also, they offer increased conceptual precision, empirical diversity, and analytical rigour to specify what exactly endurance means and how it emerges.

In this final chapter, I reflect first on the patterns and commonalities of reform endurance emerging across my suite of cases. In doing so, I consider how the architects and supporters of an already accepted reform meet the twin challenges of preservation and responsiveness in their endeavour to make it stick. I then consider the role of contingency in reform endurance by comparing patterns across and within political systems and policy domains. Following on from this, I revisit the conditions and pathways conducive to endurance and discuss how the insights gained from the two deeper dive case studies shed light on how these conditions work in practice. This section ends with a reflection on contestation and its role in promoting or thwarting reform endurance. In light of these findings and with an eye to the future, I then turn my attention to the theoretical and normative stones that as yet remain unturned by students of reform politics. The final part of this chapter offers a reflection on the caveats of the approach that I have taken before arriving at avenues for future research.

PRESERVATION AND ADAPTATION

Unlike the crossing of a finishing line that the hare and the tortoise were challenged to achieve, the task of ensuring that a reform endures is not accomplished at a fixed end point. Reform implementation is a dynamic political phenomenon. Of the reforms that I examined, the extent to which they proved viable varied at different points in time. Some reforms initially appeared

to gain traction in implementation, only to dwindle and lose their focus or strength over time. Other reforms evolved more incrementally and became more strongly institutionalised with the passage of time. In conceptualising reform endurance, I remained cognisant that reforms do not survive by their design principles and instruments being frozen in time. Key elements comprising the reform are bound to be adapted in response to shifting contextual parameters, trial, error and feedback processes during implementation experiences, or changes in the political landscape. The key challenge, then, involved reconciling the tension between *preserving* the integrity of reforms as originally 'designed', and *adapting* their architecture so their core value proposition continues to be served in light of implementation experience and changing circumstances (cf. Selznick, 1957; Boin, Fahy and 't Hart, 2021). Donald Schön (1971) referred to this challenge as that of 'dynamic conservatism': accepting the inevitability of 'moving with the times' yet without compromising the normative core of the policy architecture that was accepted when the reform was enacted (see also Ansell, Boin, and Farjoun, 2015).

Take, for example, *Ireland's 'Free Fees' initiative*. The reform intended to remove financial and psychological barriers to tertiary-level participation. To do this, the government financed student tuition by providing funds directly to tertiary institutions. The abolition was introduced on a phased basis, with tuition fees gradually decreasing until their complete removal in 1997. While tuition fees were removed, students were required to pay a nominal registration charge, covering the cost of student services as well as exams. The charge was initially set at approximately 190 EUR and would be reviewed periodically over time.

This charge, however, made the reform's central goal difficult to uphold. From 1998 to 2010, the charge increased by more than 900 percent, to approximately 1500 EUR. The steady rise of the registration charge, coupled with increasingly stringent eligibility requirements, equated to the gradual erosion of the reform's goal. Rather than removing financial and psychological barriers to tertiary-level participation, changes to the lower-order settings and calibrations erected new ones. What is more, tertiary institutions expected that government funding would be maintained in real terms over time. Instead, the funding stagnated and failed to keep up with expanding student numbers (OECD, 2006; FGS, 2003). By 2010, various university leaders admitted publicly that student registration charges were more or less fees by another name. While the reform's broad goal exists on paper, the inclusion and increase of the registration charge frustrated the reform's capacity to endure.

The fate of Ireland's 'Free Fees' reform is not dissimilar to *Australia's National Drought Policy*. In this case, the goal was to encourage primary producers and other sections of rural Australia to adopt self-reliant approaches to manage and prepare for climatic variability. To do this, a series of interest rate subsidies and grants were made available only under 'exceptional circumstances.'

Since 1989, drought no longer classified as a natural disaster. Instead, drought was defined as a recurrent feature of Australia's landscape. Financial assistance depended on the degree of hardship experienced by the farmer but provided only to those with sound long-term prospects in farming. However, shortly after the reform's introduction, the government added a series of welfare measures marking a departure from the strong structural adjustment focus of the drought reform. The broad goal of self-reliance is preserved, but it is undermined by a political imperative to respond during intense drought events. This reactivity ultimately created a rift between the reform's means and ends (Productivity Commission, 2009).

In other cases, however, changes in the lower-order elements reinforced and strengthened the reform's higher-order orientation. For example, *Sweden's forestry reform*, implemented in the early 1990s, aimed to establish environmental and production values on equal footing. Instead of setting detailed criteria to achieve these two goals, the reform introduced minimum performance standards and granted forest owners substantial discretion to choose the proper measures. Despite the rhetorical elevation of environmental values, production values continued to guide decision-making in the forestry domain. At the end of the 1990s, however, the government incorporated a series of environmental objectives, each with concrete targets and timelines. A series of new instruments, varying in coerciveness, were also introduced to support the new objectives. In this case, additions and further specifications of the reform's lower-order elements strengthened and sought to uphold the reform's goal.

Capturing and appreciating the 'dynamic conservatism' at work in reform endurance requires examining the movement of the reform's constituent means and ends in a granular manner. Durable reforms preserve and reinforce their high-level ambitions and narratives amid the inevitable vagaries of politics. In practice, this could mean the removal, addition, or adjustment of policy instruments, their recalibration, or the further concretisation of programme-level objectives. To understand endurance, it is important to consider the seemingly innocuous but potentially transformative adjustments of a reform's architecture that occur over time.

My comparative examination suggests that there are two dominant patterns. One: reforms which appear durable early on in their implementation trajectories that still begin to unravel as time passes. Two: reforms which appear initially fragile or lacklustre post-enactment still get salvaged by amendments and reconfigurations. However, there are additional dynamics emerging from the reform cases that warrant closer attention.

Recasting these two patterns in terms of preservation (of core values and objectives) and adaptation (of the reform elements), affords an opportunity to identify additional endurance 'states' over time. For enduring reforms, the high-level ambitions and narratives are preserved and

promoted, whilst the lower-order instruments and objectives are adapted in line with the reform's broader purpose. That is, *enduring reforms* feature high preservation and high adaptiveness. By contrast, *drifting reforms* suffer from low levels of both preservation and adaptiveness. The high-level ambitions are lost or overlooked, while the lower-order elements are left to wither. Taking this one step further, brings two additional possibilities. One: instances where preservation of the high-level ambition is outpaced by activity at the lower level. This can be conceived as an *eroding reform*. Two: instances of *entrenched reform*, where preservation of the high-level ambition occurs but is not accompanied by adaptive work at the instrumental level. This can be viewed as an entrenched reform. The four possible 'states' of endurance are displayed in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. States of endurance

| | | | |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Preservation | <i>High</i> | Entrenched reform | Enduring reform |
| | <i>Low</i> | Drifting reform | Eroding reform |
| | | <i>Low</i> | <i>High</i> |
| | | Adaptation | |

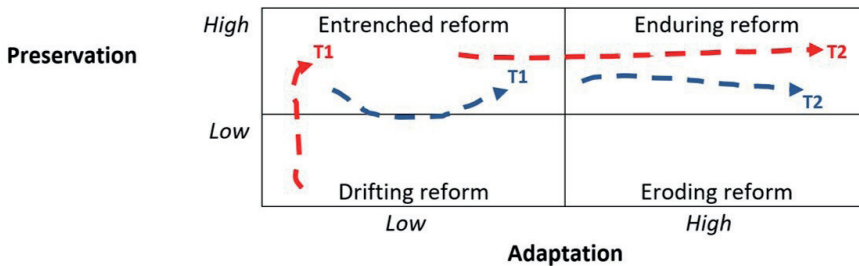
The emergence of these additional states promotes a more fine-grained view of reform endurance. For example, it affords an opportunity to analytically map reforms continuously over time. Given the dynamic qualities of endurance, it is plausible that a reform could move through, or jump between, the states displayed in Table 6.1. In the comparative analysis presented in Chapter 3, I segmented each of the reforms into two points in time. By comparing the two 'snapshots' of each reform, I was able to get a sense of general endurance dynamics. But what might emerge if a reform's trajectory is analysed continuously?

Take *Ireland's waste management reform*. The insights generated in Chapter 5 show that while the broad goal of the reform was preserved initially, it began to disintegrate as its instrument logic was progressively challenged. Policymakers and political actors instead opted to focus on incineration rather than the waste reduction, re-use, or recycling. At this stage, the reform was drifting. It was not until 2001 that the reform's implementation started to gain momentum. Through successive strategies and policy statements, initial objectives and targets are specified, and the dominant instrument (the regional waste plans) is implemented. From 2001, then, through the preservation of its goals and instrument logic, the reform begins to move from 'drifting' to 'entrenched'. Over the next four years, additional instruments are added and calibrated, and additional objectives are specified. That is, adaptation of the lower-order elements starts to increase. By 2006, the

reform appears to shift again from ‘entrenched’ to ‘enduring’. By this stage, the reform’s rationale has been well-preserved and its lower-order elements are recalibrated and adjusted based on emerging evidence and ongoing evaluations.

The endurance trajectory of *Sweden’s school choice reform* can also be mapped (Table 6.2). The insights emerging in Chapter 4 show that the broad goal, as well as the instrument logic, were preserved from the outset. Despite some initial uncertainty generated in 1994 by a change in governing coalition, the higher-order elements of the reform remained in place. Until 1997, however, there was not much change in the lower-order elements: the objectives remained stable and the level of the voucher remained the same. At this stage, the reform is entrenched. From 1997, though, additional objectives and procedural and substantive instruments are added and calibrated. At this point, the reform begins to move from ‘entrenched’ to ‘enduring’. Much like in the Irish case, adaptation starts to increase. This adaptation increases further during the 2000s, as procedural tools are adjusted and expanded and responsibilities are further delineated. By the late 2000s, the reforms rationale enjoys a high degree of preservation and its lower-order elements undergo constant refinement and adjustment to suit changing circumstances.

Table 6.2. Endurance trajectories: Ireland and Sweden



In Table 6.2, the Irish case trajectory is depicted in red, where T1 covers the period from 1996 to 2001 and T2 covers the period from 2006 to 2011. The Swedish case trajectory is depicted in blue, where T1 covers the period from 1992 to 1997 and T2 covers the period from 2003 to 2008. In plotting these trajectories, I avoid the temptation of conveying that the path to endurance is a smooth journey. Instead, these depictions offer future scholars an illustrative starting point to further unpack the twin challenges (and gaps) of reform endurance.

Examining and analysing the dynamic (im)balance(s) between preservation and adaptation over time could help to pinpoint critical junctures when a reform’s endurance is at risk, offering researchers signposts of where to focus their in-depth analysis in order to discover what

combinations of factors are at play in reform decay/survival. Alternatively, diagnosing a reform along these lines could also help to understand what is needed to strengthen a reform's endurance. Having explored the dynamics and patterns emerging across my suite of cases and shedding light on the twin challenges of preservation and adaptation, it is now time to interrogate Patashnik and Zelizer's (2013) description of endurance as *contingent*, *conditional*, and *contested*. We do so in the next three sections.

CONTINGENCIES OF ENDURANCE

Inevitably controversial up to and during their enactment, reforms need a continuous base of support once they become implemented. Equally inevitably, when the rubber of reform architectures hits the road of practical application, some things will work better than others. 'Teething problems' and unintended consequences will occur, and implementers and stakeholders will share their experiences and air their views – feedback which reform designers and sponsors need to attend (if only because if they don't, those opposed to or disadvantaged by the reform will).

Throughout these waves or cycles of implementation, feedback and discussion, viable coalitions of support for the reform's ambitions, ethos and narrative need to be maintained or even expanded. At the outset of the study, I anticipated that cross-party political support would be particularly important for reforms in majoritarian political systems, where elections can produce clear cut changes in the complexion of governments. And, sure enough, the momentum of environmental and education reforms in both Australia and Canada proved challenging to sustain over time as political turnovers shook up the authorizing environment for reform supporters and implementers. By contrast, the reforms in Sweden's consensual and Ireland's hybrid (e.g., Bulsara and Kissane, 2009) democracies tended to have a slow and shaky start but proved their mettle over time.

In line with my preliminary expectations, this may make it tempting to conclude that reform endurance is more difficult to achieve in majoritarian systems due to the political volatility inherent in their institutional structures (cf. Lijphart, 1999; Bovens et al., 2001). But that would be somewhat misleading. In fact, all but one (Canada's Model Forests Program) of the Australian and Canadian reforms continued to enjoy firm political support after changes in government occurred and initial reform 'champions' vacated the stage (cf. Rabe, 2016), while only one of the Irish and Swedish reforms (Ireland's Waste Management Act) managed to generate broad political support from the outset. The other Irish and Swedish reforms faced – but overcame – contentious political environments in their early years. So, we need to dig a little deeper to unearth what might be at play here.

New governments often come with new reform agendas and may even dismantle the reform achievements of their political opponents. While this may be their aspiration, their ability to actually do so can be hampered. In the case of Sweden's school choice reform, the newly elected Social Democratic government came to power intending to abolish it. But once in office it sensed more clearly that the idea of choice has struck a chord among the general public, and the new government quickly decided that it was in its best interest to perform a U-turn and retain the reform. In fact, of all the reforms included in this book, *Canada's Model Forest Program* was the only one which was formally terminated. But even that did not mean that the aspirations that drove it were completely eradicated: the goals and values of the Model Forest Program informed the program that came in its wake. So, Patashnik's (2008) 'empire strikes back' ideal type of abrupt reform termination was not in evidence in any of the cases studied here.

As Patashnik also pointed out, over time reforms can develop their own supporting and reinforcing structures in the form of organised interests. For a reform to endure, it needs to incentivise and co-opt sectoral constituencies that benefit from its existence and press for its preservation and extension. But the reality is that a shake-up of the sectoral configuration of organised interests – and the emergence of such powerful defenders – takes time. In only one case did the enactment and initial implementation of reform bring about an 'overnight' reconfiguration in the sector. *Australia's Unified National System*, seeking to capitalise on efficiency and capacity advantages associated with economies of scale, provided strong financial incentives for existing universities and colleges to join forces and amalgamate. This new direction saw government agencies abolished and the administrative machinery recast. As a consequence, broader sectoral groups were forced to quickly reorient to their new environment. New alliances and groups emerged swiftly in response to the environment created by the newly minted 'National System.' None of the other reforms included such strong financial incentives for sectoral mobilisation at the outset. However, over time, all of the durable reforms succeeded in creating their own coalitions of cheerleaders.

The dynamics of support are the central piece in the puzzle of reform endurance. It is difficult to imagine that any reform could endure when its support base shrinks and shrinks over time, and conversely, the circle of its opponents widens. Regardless of policy domain or political system, reforms simply cannot survive over time without varied and broad-based support for their continuation (colourfully called 'anti-termination coalitions' by DeLeon, 1978). It is not enough to just have powerful sectoral defenders, strong political advocates, astute and vigilant administrative authorities, or vocal public support. Support from one or two of these arenas may be enough to sustain a reform initially but the reforms which managed to endure over time typically had strong backing from at least three of the 'arenas' of collective actors. Appreciating

the contingent nature of reform endurance contributes to a dynamic understanding of what it takes to sustain a reform over time. While contingency often refers to fortuitous or unforeseeable circumstances, in the context of reform endurance, contingency refers instead to the potential ebb and flow of reform support.

CONDITIONALITY OF ENDURANCE

Prior studies of policy reform, in general, have driven home the point that in the world of politics, there are few guarantees and nothing is a sure thing (Tuohy, 2012; Patashnik, 2008). From the outset, I eschewed the idea that endurance would be attributed to one sole cause. Instead, my goal was to reveal the complex interplay of conditions conducive to endurance, and to detect whether patterns exist across different reforms. Having discussed the patterns of endurance and erosion emerging across the cases, it is now time to take stock of the conditions associated with reform endurance.

The comparative analysis conducted in Chapter 3 searched for necessary and sufficient conditions for reform endurance. Sufficiency simply means that when certain conditions are present, the outcome should also be present. QCA can also unearth necessary conditions: conditions which are needed for the outcome to occur. While none of the conditions I examined – political support, administrative adaptation, sectoral realignment, and supportive constituencies – passed the threshold to be considered formally ‘necessary’, political support came rather close. This indicates that political support, as discussed in the previous section, is an important building block when it comes to understanding reform endurance.

The comparative analysis yielded two main pathways considered sufficient for endurance. The first route combines political support, administrative adaptation, and sectoral realignment. This pathway was displayed in four of the cases of reform endurance. The second route combines limited administrative adaptation, minimal sectoral realignment, but a strong constituency of public support. This pathway was displayed in three of the cases of reform endurance.

QCA can be used to explore and untangle complex relationships and outcomes but to allow for causal attribution, it needs to be embedded in a theoretical rationale connecting cause and effect. The presence of certain conditions in no way ‘causes’ the outcome. Instead, the conditions could be considered as productive or permissive factors, making certain outcomes more or less likely. For example, the early years of Sweden’s school choice reform displayed the second route: there was a broad constituency of public support for the reform, minimal sectoral activity, and an administrative authority which had failed to create structures and processes to deal with the new realities that the choice reform brought. Given these conditions, it is surprising that the reform

survived. However, the in-depth analysis presented in Chapter 4 revealed that public support for the reform was an integral factor in the Social Democratic Party's acceptance and retention of the choice model. But this condition cannot be divorced from the broader context. That is, it has no causal power in and of itself. Instead, it sent a signal to leaders within the Social Democratic Party, who then decided that it was in their best (electoral) interest to retain the reform.

This same combination of conditions (broad constituency support, minimal sectoral realignment and minimal administrative adaptation) was associated with endurance in two other reforms: Ireland's Free Fees and Canada's Model Forest Program. But this pathway was only associated with initial reform endurance: that is, in the first five years. In Ireland, the presence of a broad constituency of public support, especially in lieu of other conditions, was not enough to sustain the reform over time. Despite its popularity, by the end of 2002, the government was having second thoughts about free third-level education. This according to the then Finance Minister had as much to do with the need to reduce public expenditure as with a growing concern that lower socio-economic groups had not reaped the benefits promised by the reform. An increase in the student registration charge was a direct consequence of the Finance Minister's request to cut back on expenditure. Consequently, this increase (and subsequent increases over time) triggered a public backlash, reducing the degree of constituency support.

The other pathway (political support, administrative adaptation, and sectoral realignment) was largely present in reform endurance over time. However, the way that these conditions affected endurance differs across the cases. The in-depth case studies presented in Chapters 4 and 5 indicate that while the presence of these conditions may be associated with reform endurance, they alone do not cause it. For Sweden's school choice reform, the display of broad political support certainly sent a signal to would-be actors in the sectoral arena. Providing assurance that the choice reform was not going anywhere gave sectoral actors the green light to actually launch independent schools. As the number of independent schools increased, the responsible administrative authority took the lead in adapting its structures and processes to reflect the changing education system. This led to the emergence of specialised units and teams within the administrative authority which, in turn, had a reinforcing effect on the direction set by the choice reform.

Returning to the case of Ireland's waste management, the endurance pathway can be unpacked further by paying attention to the activities of specific actors. As revealed in Chapter 5, the actions of the Environment Minister Noel Dempsey proved pivotal in entrenching a stable and consistent foundation for the waste reform by transferring the power to sign off on regional waste plans

away from local elected officials. The launch of these plans certainly prompted different activities across the responsible administrative authorities. For example, with the creation of an Office for Environmental Enforcement within the Environmental Protection Agency, and the creation of networks to improve cooperation and coordination between various agencies. In addition, the case brought against Ireland before the European Court of Justice highlighted the structural and administrative deficiencies underpinning Ireland's approach to waste in general. As a consequence, administrative authorities responsible for the waste reform were more or less forced to remedy these deficiencies and create a supportive administrative infrastructure for the waste reform.

These conditions and pathways offer a preliminary view of how reforms endure. The in-depth case studies in Chapters 4 and 5 indicate that these conditions can and do interact with each other, and in some instances, one condition might even lead to the creation or emergence of an additional condition. Paying attention to the interactive nature of the factors associated with a reform, as well as the reform itself, is critical in understanding reform endurance.

CONTESTABILITY OF ENDURANCE

This study of reform endurance reinforces the idea that reforms ought to be viewed, not as battles for enactment but as ongoing political processes whose stakes, actors, arenas, and effects shift over time. Reform implementation and evaluation pose unique challenges for reform endurance as it creates opportunities and spaces for further contestation. Often in contemporary policy studies, the focus is on the moments leading up to change and the battle to forge a reform. As a consequence, stability is either taken for granted, equated with inertia, or viewed as something to be overcome. But the overall balance and contestation between forces for stability and forces for change are central to understanding how reforms endure.

Over time, any reform faces a dilemma, which, if remains unresolved, can sow the seeds of its own destruction. This dilemma springs from the inherent tension between preservation and responsiveness. When the pull of either preservation or responsiveness becomes unusually strong, two things can happen. An overriding concern with perseverance leads to rigidity in the reform, an excessive preoccupation with conserving the 'way things have always been done'. This may cause leaders to ignore or downplay the significance of environmental changes, thus breeding a degree of complacency which undermines public and political trust. For example, a government might opt to ignore growing concerns and conflicts surrounding a reform or its specific elements. In doing so, a reform might be maintained even as risks to that reform build (Hindmoor and McConnell, 2013). A lack of contestation surrounding a reform may also dull the incentives for

policymakers to actively anticipate problems or future threats. In this context, ongoing political contestation surrounding the merits or value of a reform may contribute to its endurance.

Contestation is best understood by taking a long-term perspective. Specialist policy research, particularly concerning climate change or pensions, often incorporates longer time horizons. However, an extended temporal perspective on policy reform that encompasses both pre- and post-enactment dynamics is relatively rare in mainstream policy studies (although students deploying the advocacy coalition framework tend to at least scope their studies to cover 'ten years or more', e.g., Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999, p. 118). In order to gain a more complete view of reform endurance, however, such an extended time horizon is necessary. The longer the time frame used for the assessment of a reform, the bigger the scope for controversy about their meaning and evaluation is likely to be. Examining reform trajectories over time sheds further light on the dynamic qualities of both the contents and causes of endurance, and the manner in which reforms (like any other piece of public policy) can become their own causes.

The analytical disaggregation of reform elements is a valuable activity as it facilitates a deeper understanding of contestation within a reform. For example, political actors may transform parts of a reform, while keeping other components stable. Recognising the composite and layered character of policy reforms sheds further light on the transformative potential of seemingly small tweaks and adjustments. Viewed in another way, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how reforms can become sites of contestation. For example, in some cases, small tweaks and adjustments can enhance the reforms endurance, promoting further developments in the future. In other cases, they can undermine it.

My study stands in a tradition of policy feedback scholarship, which claims a more complex causal dynamic is at play: reforms must also be considered as causes, indeed as political forces in their own right (Wildavsky, 1979; Pierson, 2000). To date, considerable effort has been dedicated to understanding the positive or self-reinforcing effects of specific policies and programs. Stability and durability through self-reinforcing feedback is not, as earlier intimated by Pierson (1993), a given and paying attention to stilted positive feedback and 'self-undermining' feedback is equally important. Recognising and paying attention to the elements of a reform has the potential to further understandings of how and when such forces emerge. For example, in the Swedish school reform case, changing the settings and calibrations of the main instrument (the voucher), triggered a flurry of new sectoral actors seeking to capitalise on the (financial) opportunities on offer. Importantly, these sectoral actors became an importance source of support for the reform over time. In Ireland's Free Fees initiative, an adjustment of the reform's instrument had the opposite effect: this recalibration triggered public, political, and sectoral opposition, leading

eventually to the reform's demise. These preliminary insights align with recent efforts to unpack the feedback processes operating at different ideational (ends) and instrumental (means) levels of a reform (see e.g., Daugbjerg and Kay, 2020).

So, where does that leave us? Reform endurance may be contingent, conditional, and contested, but it is important to unpack what each of these descriptive terms actually refer to. Treating endurance as *contingent* shines a light on the importance of diverse sources of support, and how quickly these can form or disperse. Treating endurance as *conditional* has shown that there are, indeed, many roads that lead to Rome. There is no one best way for a reform to endure. Reform endurance will always depend on a confluence of factors, and close attention needs to be paid to how such factors interact with the broader context. Treating endurance as *contested* has demonstrated the potential benefits emanating from ongoing vigilance and 'negative' feedback. Viewed in this way, each of these aspects offer an important piece in understanding the puzzle of reform endurance.

IS REFORM ENDURANCE A GOOD THING?

If a reform proves durable over time, does that somehow mean it has achieved a kind of Pareto optimum in the polity at hand? That is, if a reform proves durable, does this mean it is the most efficient, most positively regarded, or even the best use of resources? Not quite. Reforms may endure simply because the powers supporting them are overwhelming, not necessarily because they effectively tackle the original problems they set out to remedy or because they perform to everyone's satisfaction. But this begs the normative question of how to *evaluate* the patterns of reform endurance that can be observed in and across cases. Existing research on reform implementation and policy termination/succession has left this normative stone unturned (Geva-May, 2004; Duit, 2016). My study's intention, too, has been to advance the empirical and explanatory analysis of endurance, rather than to evaluate its desirability and valuation.

One of the challenges in making normative judgements about reforms and their endurance is that there is no self-evident Archimedean point from which to do so. For example, whose values and perspectives count and what is deemed appropriate and legitimate at one point in time are both likely to shift over time (Bovens and 't Hart, 1996; McConnell et al., 2020). By way of illustration, let's revisit the example I introduced at the beginning of this book, the case of Australia's Franchise Act. This Act defined who could vote and stand in Parliament. The rationale for selective voting rights became increasingly challenged and untenable over time. As contexts changed and advocates mobilised around new definitions and understandings of citizenship, a new political settlement reflecting this value shift was reached.

It is reasonable to expect that individuals or groups who are (or merely feel) disadvantaged by a reform or to the means adopted to implement it, conceive of that reform as being at odds with their beliefs and values. Whether or not reforms *should* endure ultimately involves a careful judgement weighing between the reform outputs and its values, and, at a minimum, a careful examination of its evolving distributional effects and stakeholder sentiments (McConnell et al., 2020). But this is just the starting point. Reforms do not endure automatically, as such, it is also worth interrogating who gains and who loses by keeping a reform in place. In addition, it is also important to understand who has the power to transform an issue. This moves us beyond thinking of evaluative efforts in relation only to reform goals and toward a focus on the distribution and effects of power (McConnell et al., 2020). That is, does a reform endure because it 'does good'? Or does it endure because it perpetuates a certain power structure? Reforms that endure when their means and ends are (repeatedly and broadly) called into question shine some light on the unintended consequences of endurance.

In Chapter 4, Sweden's Educational Saga, I analyse the endurance of the school choice reform at two points in time. Essentially, the analysis ends at the conclusion of the first decade of the 21st century. But consider the reform as it stands now. In 2022, the reform will be 30 years old. The supporters of the reform continue to emphasise how independent schools, as small-scale local activities, replace bureaucracy with care for the students and their individual needs. Proponents highlight the independent schools as a guarantee that every student can find a school that best fits their needs. There are legitimate and valuable reasons for independent schools to exist as part of Sweden's education system. However, over time, consideration of the balance between preservation and responsiveness has fallen by the wayside. At present, most independent schools have become for-profit limited companies, clustered into groups that primarily run their business rather than seek to complement the public school system with a unique pedagogy. In addition, the freedom to choose remains largely rhetorical. The right exists, but the ability to exercise that right depends on waiting lists and selection procedures.

At the same time, no political party or constituency group advocates for the comprehensive abolition of independent schools. Various independent and governmental investigations do not view them as the problem. Instead, it is the settings and calibrations of the choice reform that govern the schools that have become increasingly problematic. Under the current settings, municipalities are responsible for financing the reshaping of the broader school system. This responsibility often comes at the expense of municipal schools. Every new independent school created within that municipality diverts funding away from municipal schools. The calibration of the reform's resource allocation system incentivises the growth and profit-making potential of independent school groups. Independent schools do not have the same responsibilities as

municipal schools, yet they are entitled to the same level of funding. They can also be more selective about the students they admit, and their running costs are generally less.

Amongst the Swedish population, there is broad support for banning or regulating the profit-making ability of independent school companies. Some conservative leadership sites are becoming increasingly critical, viewing the expansion of school companies negatively. But so far, it has been impossible to get a political majority for even very cautious changes to the school choice reform. There is an ideological gridlock. Proponents equate the independent school system with freedom of choice, and freedom of choice as inherently good. The dominant companies in the school market have the financial muscle to conduct intensive opinion formation: if you are against one small part of the system, then you are against the very principle of choice. At present, the reform's elements are heavily protected and preserved and have become unresponsive to shifting societal and political values.

Different stakeholders hold diverse points, values and interests regarding this reform and may experience and assess it differently. While evaluation is inherently political, recent studies on policy success and its associated dimensions can be considered to arrive at a more nuanced assessment of a reform's value (Compton and 't Hart, 2019; Luetjens et al., 2019; McConnell et al., 2020). At the most basic level, distinctions can be made between the reform's political legitimacy and its programmatic performance (Bovens et al., 2001). Assessing its legitimacy requires ascertaining the way it is perceived, experienced, and appreciated by stakeholders in public, political and legal arenas. Assessing its performance refers to evaluating its substantive impact on the issues it was supposed to tackle, as well as the extent to which it produces valuable societal outcomes.

In terms of its political legitimacy, the reform's goals and values have been increasingly called into question by a broad cross-section of political actors, sectoral groups, as well as the general public. Some former political supporters have publicly distanced themselves from the reform, and pockets exist within former sites of political support that question the expansion of school companies. From this perspective, it appears as though the reform's legitimacy has been called into question. In terms of its programmatic dimension, while the reform has created 'choice' in the form of alternative educational offerings, it has become associated with the marked decline in students' educational performance. It has also been criticised for its part in enhancing segregation in Swedish society (OECD, 2015; SOU, 2020). From this perspective, its societal costs appear to outweigh its intended benefits. As such, its continued endurance is not necessarily a good thing.

This suggests that a 'bad' reform may well continue to persist in the face of overwhelming evidence that it is failing to achieve its stated objectives (at best) or producing negative consequences

for the population it was meant to serve (at worst). Of the enduring reforms included in this book, the Swedish school choice case is an outlier in terms of its programmatic and political shortcomings. However, programmatic and political assessments of a reform are not always clear cut. Asymmetries between these dimensions can and do emerge. For example, Canada's Model Forest Program was able to create widely valued social and environmental outcomes. In fact, it even became a model which has since been replicated in 35 other countries. Despite this, a decrease in federal political support led to the Program's formal end. In this context, the question of whether a reform should endure is cast in a different light. While its programmatic performance was recognised and celebrated, its failure to excel politically stifled its capacity to endure.

In sum, evaluating whether the endurance of reform is a good thing thus requires assessing whether the reform continues to retain a positive impact, for whom (and for whom less or not so), where the main sources of support are coming from, as well as the extent to which policymakers have tried (and failed) to adjust the reform to compensate for emerging adverse distributional effects or other negative unintended consequences. This has not been the focus of my study, but it deserves a place on the agenda of future research on reform endurance. It is to the future of this budding research field that I now turn.

6

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Through this book, I offer an important first step in understanding how and why some reforms endure (while others fall apart) across different political systems. In order to compare the reform cases, I opted to focus more on structural and institutional features. In this final section, I reflect first on the implications of the approach I have taken before turning my attention to avenues for future endurance research.

Shifting the focus from the politics of adoption to the politics of implementation and beyond is a crucial and fundamental advance, one that has only recently been taken in the design of comparative policy research. To understand the ongoing politics of reform endurance, I considered and identified categories of actors/stakeholders involved in the political arena. This explicit focus on 'politics', led to the emergence of four conditions corresponding to sites of support and tensions. By adopting this approach, I focus more on meso-level collective actors rather than individual decision-makers. This was a conscious choice as my goal was to discern patterns and regularities over extended periods of time. In doing so, I looked at my empirics through the lens of formal documents, reports, debates, and some expert interviews. However, this approach may have contributed to a rather rationalistic or clean account of reform endurance.

This 'clean' methodology may lend itself to a more instrumental, design-oriented view of reform

endurance. However, much could be gained from diving deeper into the political world of secret power plays and smoke-filled backrooms. Some of these elements emerged in the intensive case studies in Chapters 4 and 5. In fact, there were instances in which individuals (and their behind-the-scenes dealings) became crucial in the survival and continuation of a reform. This creates the opportunity to consider how an individual element could be incorporated into the analysis in a systematic manner.

One avenue into this world could be through the *examination of attributes and strategies of individual policy actors*. For example, scholars studying public leadership and policy entrepreneurs have identified several strategies that increase their chances of influencing change (Goldfinch and 't Hart, 2003; Mintrom, 2020). Some of these strategies include framing problems and redefining policy solutions, using and expanding networks, creating coalitions, leading by example, and building momentum by scaling up change efforts (Mintrom and Luetjens, 2017). At present, policy entrepreneur scholarship focuses largely on agenda setting and reform crafting, in other words on the role of agency in the shaping and adoption of reforms. However, recently, scholars have started to turn their attention to the role of policy entrepreneurs across other 'stages' of the policy process (Petridou and Mintrom, 2021). In terms of reform endurance, explicit attention to individual political actors and/or policy entrepreneurs could be used to explain how, when, and why a reform becomes unstuck: if a policy entrepreneur is able to build a coalition in favour of dismantling a reform, for example. On the other hand, policy entrepreneurs and their coalition building efforts could also be used to further explain why a reform endures. Such a focus has the potential to unveil linkages between micro-level actions, and meso- and macro-level activities in policy processes.

Focusing on individual actors also creates an opportunity to *explore the linkages between reform endurance and crisis events, so-called 'critical junctures'* (Capoccia, 2016). This line of inquiry could focus, for example, on what distinguishes a juncture which destabilises a reform trajectory from other events or shocks in which continuity is favoured and promoted. Further explorations based on individual factors could also consider the role of public administrators as well as political officials. This is often quite challenging, given the sensitive nature of various policy issues, as well as the apolitical nature of public administration. Different methodological approaches could be used to gain a deeper understanding into the motivations and behaviours of actors engaging in endurance 'work' (cf. Lawrence et al., 2011). Political sensitivities notwithstanding, significant policymaking insights have been gained through the use of ethnography (see e.g., Vohnsen, 2017; Feitsma, 2020).

While my comparative analysis yielded two broad patterns of reform endurance, there is definitely scope to *further elucidate and discern the dynamics of endurance over time*. This could, for example, be achieved by mapping reform cases continuously over time. While I sought to reduce the ‘static’ nature of the comparative methodology adopted in this study by segmenting each case into two time periods, additional time points could certainly be added. In addition, studies of reform endurance could also be strengthened through the use of network analysis. Following this approach, explicit attention could be given to the links and interdependencies between administrative, political, sectoral, and other societal actors. A network perspective could shed further light on strategic alliances and power relations, as well as coalition building activities and their relationships with different endurance states.

In order to ensure comparability and a certain level of depth of analysis, my study has been limited to four Western democratic countries. An obvious avenue for future research concerns the comparative study reform endurance across different political systems and in countries and sectors with different dominant policy styles (Howlett and Tosun, 2021). For example, in post-communist countries, institutional legacies of state-socialism may serve as a barrier to reform endurance due to the weakness of civil society, democratic institutions and low levels of public trust. Expanding research on reform endurance to more policy sectors and political systems would be useful in gaining a more comprehensive picture of the contingencies, conditions, and contestations surrounding endurance.



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| APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Qualitative Comparative Analysis – Supplementary material

Calibrated data for QCA analysis

| Case | Political Support | Administrative Adaptation | Sectoral Realignment | Supportive Constituencies | Reform Endurance |
|--------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| DROUGHT_T1 | 1 | 0.67 | 0 | 0.67 | 0.33 |
| DROUGHT_T2 | 1 | 0.33 | 0 | 0.33 | 0 |
| UNS_T1 | 0.67 | 1 | 1 | 0.67 | 1 |
| UNS_T2 | 0.67 | 0.33 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.33 |
| SKOLPENG_T1 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.67 | 0.67 |
| SKOLPENG_T2 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 1 | 0.67 | 0.67 |
| SKOGS_T1 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 |
| SKOGS_T2 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 0.33 | 0.67 |
| FREE_FEES_T1 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 1 | 0.67 |
| FREE_FEES_T2 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 | 0.33 |
| WASTE_T1 | 1 | 0 | 0.33 | 0 | 0.33 |
| WASTE_T2 | 1 | 1 | 0.67 | 0.67 | 1 |
| NCE_T1 | 1 | 1 | 0.33 | 0.67 | 0.67 |
| NCE_T2 | 0.67 | 0.33 | 0.67 | 0.33 | 0.33 |
| MFP_T1 | 0.67 | 0.33 | 0 | 0.67 | 1 |
| MFP_T2 | 0.33 | 0.67 | 0.33 | 1 | 0.33 |

Analysis of Necessity (non-outcome, T1, and T2)

No conditions were found to be necessary for the presence (or absence) of the outcome. The necessity analysis for the presence of the outcome is presented in Chapter 3. Here, I present the necessity analysis for the non-outcome. Conditions are considered necessary if they pass the 0.90 consistency threshold.

Table A.1. Necessity for non-outcome

| Condition | Consistency |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Political support | 0.86 |
| Administrative adaptation | 0.63 |
| Sectoral realignment | 0.59 |
| Supportive constituencies | 0.68 |
| ~ Political support | 0.54 |
| ~ Administrative adaptation | 0.82 |
| ~ Sectoral realignment | 0.86 |
| ~ Supportive constituencies | 0.73 |

However, I also ran separate necessity analyses on T1 cases and T2 cases. The results of those analyses are presented here:

Table A.2. Necessary conditions (T1) for endurance

| Condition | Consistency |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Political support | 0.73 |
| Administrative adaptation | 0.66 |
| Sectoral realignment | 0.53 |
| Supportive constituencies | 0.80 |
| ~ Political support | 0.46 |
| ~ Administrative adaptation | 0.60 |
| ~ Sectoral realignment | 0.80 |
| ~ Supportive constituencies | 0.46 |

No conditions crossed the necessity threshold of 0.90.

Table A.3. Necessary conditions (T1) for non-endurance

| Condition | Consistency |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Political support | 0.88 |
| Administrative adaptation | 0.66 |
| Sectoral realignment | 0.55 |
| Supportive constituencies | 0.66 |
| ~ Political support | 0.44 |
| ~ Administrative adaptation | 0.77 |
| ~ Sectoral realignment | 1.00 |
| ~ Supportive constituencies | 0.78 |

For this analysis, the absence of sectoral realignment appears as necessary for non-endurance at T1. In other words, a reform's inability to endure in its early years is a consequence of the dominance of pre-existing interests.

Table A.4. Necessary conditions (T2) for endurance

| Condition | Consistency |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Political support | 1.00 |
| Administrative adaptation | 1.00 |
| Sectoral realignment | 0.91 |
| Supportive constituencies | 0.82 |
| ~ Political support | 0.54 |
| ~ Administrative adaptation | 0.54 |
| ~ Sectoral realignment | 0.54 |
| ~ Supportive constituencies | 0.63 |

For reform cases at T2, three conditions are considered necessary: political support, administrative adaptation, and sectoral realignment. This implies that reforms cannot endure without these conditions over time.

Table A.5. Necessary conditions (T2) for non-endurance

| Condition | Consistency |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Political support | 0.84 |
| Administrative adaptation | 0.61 |
| Sectoral realignment | 0.61 |
| Supportive constituencies | 0.69 |
| ~ Political support | 0.61 |
| ~ Administrative adaptation | 0.85 |
| ~ Sectoral realignment | 0.77 |
| ~ Supportive constituencies | 0.69 |

From this analysis, no conditions emerge as necessary for non-endurance at T2.

In summary, although several conditions emerge as necessary, particularly for endurance at T2, further research is needed here given the low number of cases (8) included in this analysis.

Analysis of Sufficiency: Solution types

Table A.6. Parsimonious solution

| <i>Solution</i> | AA*SR | + ~AA*~SR*CS |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Consistency</i> | 1.00 | 0.93 |
| <i>PRI</i> | 1.00 | 0.80 |
| <i>Coverage</i> | 0.65 | 0.50 |
| <i>Cases</i> | SKOGS_T2; UNS_T1, SKOLPENG_T2; WASTE_ T2 | SKOLPENG_T1; FREEFEES_T1; MFP_T1 |
| <i>Solution consistency: 0.96</i> | <i>PRI: 0.92</i> | <i>Solution coverage: 0.85</i> |

The intermediate solution was the same as the conservative solution, regardless of directional expectations.

Analysis of Sufficiency: Sensitivity tests

Sensitivity ranges allow researchers to assess how 'sensitive' a particular QCA solution is to the various analytic choices taken. The wider those ranges, the less sensitive and more robust the solution. To investigate the robustness of the solution presented in Chapter 3, I created additional test solutions with varying inclusion thresholds (0.80, 0.85, 0.95, and 1.00). The results for 0.80 and 0.85 were identical. The results for 0.95 and 1.00 were identical.

Table A.7a. Sensitivity test (consistency threshold set at 0.80)

| <i>Solution</i> | PS*SR | + ~SR*CS |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Consistency</i> | 0.89 | 0.84 |
| <i>PRI</i> | 0.75 | 0.67 |
| <i>Coverage</i> | 0.65 | 0.61 |
| <i>Cases</i> | NCE_T2; UNS_T2; SKOGS_T2; UNS_T1; SKOLPENG_T2; WASTE_T2 | SKOLPENG_T1; FREEFREES_T1; MFP_T2; MFP_T1; DROUGHT_T1; NCE_T1 |
| <i>Solution consistency: 0.82 PRI: 0.69 Solution coverage: 0.88</i> | | |

Table A.7b. Sensitivity test (consistency threshold set at 0.95)

| <i>Solution</i> | PS*AA*SR | + ~PS*~AA*~SR*CS |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Consistency</i> | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| <i>PRI</i> | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| <i>Coverage</i> | 0.61 | 0.42 |
| <i>Cases</i> | SKOGS_T2; UNS_T1, SKOLPENG_T2; WASTE_T2 | SKOLPENG_T1; FREEFEES_T1 |
| <i>Solution consistency: 1.00 PRI: 1.00 Solution coverage: 0.73</i> | | |

I then compared these test solutions with the initial solution (where the inclusion threshold was set at 0.90). This analysis yields parameters which can be used to detect the robustness of the solution against a series of plausible analytic changes. The parameters include robustness fit consistency, robustness fit coverage, and set coincidence. A value of 1 across each would indicate perfect overlap between the initial sufficient solution and the test solutions (Oana, Schneider and Thomann, 2021). The three parameters are all lower than 1, but relatively close to it. Robustness fit consistency was 0.96, robustness fit coverage was 0.91, and set coincidence was 0.86. This means that the overlaps between the reported sufficient solution and the test solutions, although not

perfect, are rather high. All in all, this means that from a parameters of fit perspective, the initial solution displayed in Chapter 3 displays quite high robustness to the changes tested against it.

Analysis of Sufficiency: Non-endurance

For this analysis, the cut-off point for sufficiency was set at 0.88 to exclude a row which contained a case of reform endurance (Canada's Model Forest Program at T1).

Table A.8. Truth table for non-endurance

| Political Support | Administrative Adaptiveness | Sectoral Realignment | Supportive Constituencies | # of cases | Consistency | PRI |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------|
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.92 | 0.75 |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.90 | 0.51 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.89 | 0.67 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.83 | 0.33 |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0.79 | 0.41 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.73 | 0.00 |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0.72 | 0.00 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0.66 | 0.00 |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | - | - |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - |

Analysis of Sufficiency: Solutions (non-endurance)

Table A.9. Parsimonious solution (Model 1)

| <i>Solution</i> | -PS*AA | + -AA*SR | + (~AA*~CS) |
|--|---------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>Consistency</i> | 0.83 | 1.00 | 0.88 |
| <i>PRI</i> | 0.34 | 1.00 | 0.76 |
| <i>Coverage</i> | 0.45 | 0.54 | 0.68 |
| <i>Cases</i> | MFP_T2 | NCE_T2; UNS_T2 | SKOGS_T2; FREE_FEES_T2; DROUGHT_T2; WASTE_T1; NCE_T2 |
| <i>Solution consistency: 0.87 PRI: 0.73 Solution coverage: 0.86</i> | | | |

Table A.10. Parsimonious solution (Model 2)

| <i>Solution</i> | -PS*AA | + -AA*SR | + (~SR*~CS) |
|--|---------------|-----------------|---|
| <i>Consistency</i> | 0.83 | 1.00 | 0.88 |
| <i>PRI</i> | 0.34 | 1.00 | 0.72 |
| <i>Coverage</i> | 0.45 | 0.54 | 0.64 |
| <i>Cases</i> | MFP_T2 | NCE_T2; UNS_T2 | SKOGS_T2; FREE_FEES_T2; DROUGHT_T2; WASTE_T1; |
| <i>Solution consistency: 0.87 PRI: 0.73 Solution coverage: 0.91</i> | | | |

Table A.11. Intermediate solution

| <i>Solution</i> | ~AA*SR | + ~AA*~CS | ~PS*AA*~SR |
|--|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| <i>Consistency</i> | 1.00 | 0.88 | 0.90 |
| <i>PRI</i> | 1.00 | 0.76 | 0.51 |
| <i>Coverage</i> | 0.54 | 0.68 | 0.41 |
| <i>Cases</i> | NCE_T2; UNS_T2 | SKOGS_T1; FREE_FEES_T2; DROUGHT_T2; WASTE_T1; NCE_T2 | MFP_T2 |
| <i>Solution consistency: 0.91 PRI: 0.80 Solution coverage: 0.86</i> | | | |

R Code for QCA Analysis

```
rm(list = ls())
library(QCA)
library(SetMethods)

## Analysis of enduring reforms
REFEND <- read.csv("Luetjens2021.csv", row.names = 1)
head(REFEND)

## Analysis of Necessity
QCAfit(REFEND[,1:4], REFEND$END, names(REFEND[,1:4]), necessity = TRUE)

## Necessity for non-outcome
QCAfit(REFEND[,1:4], REFEND$END, necessity = TRUE, neg.out = TRUE)
## No condition is necessary for the non-outcome
## Checking Necessary conditions for T1 and T2
T1 <- read.csv("ENDT1.csv", row.names = 1)
head(T1)
T2 <- read.csv("ENDT2.csv", row.names = 1)
head(T2)
QCAfit(T1[,1:4], T1$END, names(T1[,1:4]), necessity = TRUE)
## No necessary conditions for END at T1
QCAfit(T1[,1:4], T1$END, necessity = TRUE, neg.out = TRUE)
## ~SR as necessary for non-endurance at T1
QCAfit(T2[,1:4], T2$END, names(T2[,1:4]), necessity = TRUE)
## PS, AA, SR as necessary for END at T2
QCAfit(T2[,1:4], T2$END, necessity = TRUE, neg.out = TRUE)
## No conditions necessary for non-endurance at T2
## Analysis of sufficiency for the outcome
TT <- truthTable(REFEND, "END", complete = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE, incl.cut = 0.8, sort.by =
"incl,n")
TT

## Examining the consistency scores and the PRI, a new TT with consistency set at 0.90
TT <- truthTable(REFEND, "END", complete = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE, incl.cut = 0.90, sort.by =
"incl,n")
TT
```

```

## Deriving the solutions from the truth table
sol.cons <- minimize(TT_REFEND, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE)
sol.cons <- minimize(TT, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE)
sol.cons
sol.pars <- minimize(TT, details = TRUE, include = "?", show.cases = TRUE)
sol.pars

## Re-examining the logical remainders for the intermediate solution
TT
sol.int <- minimize(TT, include = "?", details = TRUE, use.tilde = TRUE, dir.exp = c("-",1,1,"-"))
sol.int
pimplot(data = REFEND, results = sol.int, outcome = "END", markers = TRUE, all_labels = TRUE, jitter
= TRUE)

## Analysing sufficiency for non-outcome
TT_NY <- truthTable(REFEND, "END", complete = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE, incl.cut = 0.8, PRI =
TRUE, neg.out = TRUE, sort.by = "incl,n")
TT_NY

## Solutions for non-outcome
sol.cons.n <- minimize(TT_NY, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE)
sol.cons.n
sol.pars.n <- minimize(TT_NY, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE, include = "?")
sol.pars.n
sol.int.n <- minimize(TT_NY, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE, use.tilde = TRUE, dir.exp =
c(0,0,0,0), include = "?")
sol.int.n

## Running the enhanced standard analysis
## Checking for simultaneous subset relations
SSR <- findRows(obj = TT, type = 3, incl.cut = 0.88)
SSR
## Checking for contradictory simplifying assumptions
CSA <- findRows(obj = TT, type = 2)
CSA
## Creating a new TT to exclude these rows
NEWTT <- esa(oldtt = TT, contrad_rows = c(7,8))
NEWTT

```

```
cesa <- minimize(NEWTT, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE)
cesa
pesa <- minimize(NEWTT, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE, include = "?")
pesa
iesa <- minimize(NEWTT, details = TRUE, show.cases = TRUE, include = "?", use.tilde = TRUE, dir.
exp = c(1,1,1,1))
iesa
pimplot(data = REFEND, results = cesa, outcome = "END", markers = TRUE, all_labels = TRUE, jitter
= TRUE, enhance = TRUE)

sol.cons.n
sol.pars.n
pimplot(data = REFEND, results = cesa, outcome = "END", markers = TRUE, all_labels = TRUE, jitter
= TRUE)
```


SAMENVATTING

SAMENVATTING IN HET NEDERLANDS

Zelfs in de beste omstandigheden gaan grote beleidshervormingen gepaard met veel onzekerheid. Goed doordachte, goedbedoelde of anderszins goed ontworpen hervormingen kunnen mislukken of tekortschieten wanneer de context verandert, er nieuwe actoren opduiken, of wanneer politieke prioriteiten verschuiven. Eerdere studies over beleidshervormingen laten zien dat er in de wereld van de politiek weinig garanties zijn en dat niets zeker is. Maar hoe komt het dan dat een beleidshervorming zo ingebed kan raken - in bestuurspraktijken, in instellingen, in de routines van burgers - dat de daaropvolgende omkering ervan vrijwel ondenkbaar wordt?

Niet alleen wetten maken voor hervormingen, maar ze ook op een geloofwaardige manier ondersteunen, is een centrale uitdaging waarmee hervormende regeringen over de hele wereld worden geconfronteerd. Er staat veel op het spel wanneer een nieuwe koers wordt ingezet of wanneer gevestigde paden gewijzigd worden. Hervormingen gaan ook niet op de automatische piloot door als ze eenmaal zijn doorgevoerd. In plaats daarvan blijft het zaak om te overleven. Het succes van elke beleidshervorming is niet gebaseerd op het vasthouden aan initiële doelen en visies van de hervorming, maar is gebaat bij voortdurende actieve aanpassing van de hervorming binnen een veranderende politieke en economische omgeving. Als een dergelijke aanpassing niet plaatsvindt, kan een zwaarbevochten, baanbrekende hervorming inconsequent, contraproductief, en politiek destructief blijken. Hervormingen lopen daarmee het risico gemarginaliseerd, gewijzigd of opgegeven te worden. Weten welke hervormingen het meeste zullen opleveren is natuurlijk belangrijk, maar dat geldt ook voor kennis over hoe ze succesvol te implementeren en hoe ze te zouden bekijken.

In deze studie breng ik inzichten uit beleidswetenschappen, politicologie en bestuurskunde samen om een eenvoudige en toch onderbelichte vraag te onderzoeken:

Hoe komt het dat sommige beleidshervormingen bekijken terwijl anderen ontaarden en verdwijnen?

Om deze vraag te onderzoeken, bouwt mijn onderzoek voort op belangrijke politicologische literatuur met betrekking tot de politieke strijd om de uitvoering en bestendiging van grote hervormingen in de Verenigde Staten (VS). Wetenschappers in de VS hebben gewezen op de voortdurende strijd om politieke steun voor beleidshervormingen te behouden, vooral in het licht van veranderende belangenconstellaties, de kracht van marktpartijen, en mogelijke feedbackeffecten. In deze studie onderzoek ik de dynamiek van het bekijken van hervormingen, en dat doe ik vanuit een breder theoretisch, empirisch en methodologisch perspectief dan bestaande studies tot nu toe hebben gedaan. Daarbij is het mijn ambitie om de inhoud en de oorzaken van

het bekijken van hervormingen in verschillende politieke systemen te onderzoeken.

Wat het theoretische perspectief betreft, introduceer ik een solide conceptuele basis voor de inhoud en oorzaken van het bekijken van hervormingen in hoofdstuk 2. Ik doe dit door bekijken als een politiek fenomeen te beschouwen. Ik bekijk eerst de uitdagingen die de implementatie van hervormingen met zich meebrengen en vervolgens kijk ik naar de beperkingen die voortvloeien uit de ervaringen van beleid uit het verleden. Vervolgens kom ik aan de hand van recente bevindingen in de beleidswetenschappen tot een analytisch kader waarmee de dynamiek van de bekijken van hervormingen kan worden beschreven.

Hoewel de focus op het vermogen van hervormingen om te bekijken relatief nieuw is, geldt dat niet voor de interesse in hoe beleid en bestuur zich ontwikkelen op de lange termijn. Bestaande studies tonen aan dat beleidsvorming op de lange termijn vaak het resultaat is van een samenloop van verschillende factoren en de interactie daartussen. Tegen deze achtergrond heb ik onderzoek gedaan naar vier voorwaarden en hun (enkelvoudige en gecombineerde) bijdrage aan het succesvol bekijken van hervormingen. Deze vier voorwaarden helpen om de dynamiek van stabilisatie en destabilisatie in verschillende politieke arena's rondom hervormingen te vangen. Deze specifieke voorwaarden zijn: 1) de mate van politieke steun voor een hervorming, 2) het vermogen van bestuurlijke actoren om zich aan te passen aan de nieuwe eisen en praktijken die de hervorming vereist, 3) de mate waarin een hervorming steun krijgt vanuit de beleidssector, 4) het vermogen om steun van burgers voor de hervorming te genereren.

Milieu- en onderwijshervorming in vier parlementaire systemen (Australië, Canada, Ierland en Zweden) vormen het empirisch hart van dit proefschrift. Door de mix van twee beleidsdomeinen in relatie tot verschillende parlementaire systemen, verken ik – en versterk ik – de wetenschap over institutionele en contextuele factoren die het bekijken van hervormingen bemoeilijken of versterken. De casussen, hoewel individueel verschillend, vertegenwoordigen allemaal voorbeelden van grote hervormingen: het zijn allemaal fundamentele, doelbewuste en politiek gewilde veranderingen in relatie tot de instrumenten en doelen van overheidsbeleid.

Om het complexe samenspel tussen verschillende factoren voor beleidshervormingen die bekijken te begrijpen gebruik ik een innovatieve, Multi-methodische benadering. Met deze benadering, die ik hieronder toelicht, bekijk ik de wijze waarop hervormingen gebeurtenissen in de politieke arena en de daaropvolgende beleidsvorming beïnvloeden. Kortom: hoe verandert een hervorming de constellatie van partijen, belangen en gedragsprikkel, en hoe kunnen dergelijke veranderingen in de constellatie zelf weer van invloed zijn op de richting en politieke overlevingskansen van die hervorming? Om het vermogen te bekijken te analyseren, maak ik gebruik van een *multi-method approach* die rekening houdt met complexiteit en contingentie. Als eerste stap introduceer en

gebruik ik in hoofdstuk 3 de benadering van de Kwalitatieve Vergelijkende Analyse (KVA) om de manifestatie en variatie van het beklijven van hervormingen in de verschillende casussen bloot te leggen. Het doel hier is om verschillen en overeenkomsten te identificeren tussen de casussen onderling, maar ook patronen in de loop van de tijd te kunnen ontdekken.

Deze analyse in hoofdstuk 3 laat zien dat er verschillende manieren zijn waarop hervormingen wel of niet kunnen standhouden. Van de hervormingen die ik onderzocht, varieerde de mate waarin ze levensvatbaar bleken op verschillende momenten in de tijd. Sommige hervormingen leken aanvankelijk tractie te krijgen bij de uitvoering, maar namen af en verloren hun focus of kracht juist in de loop van de tijd. Andere hervormingen evolueerden meer stapsgewijs en werden met het verstrijken van de tijd sterker geïnstitutionaliseerd. Duurzame hervormingen zijn die hervormingen waarvan de beleidsambities en het beleidsnarratief behouden en berkachtigd worden te midden van de onvermijdelijke grillen van de politiek. In de praktijk kan dit betekenen dat specifieke beleidsinstrumenten worden geschrapt, aangevuld of aangepast, dat beleidsinstrumenten worden herijkt of dat doelstellingen op programmaniveau verder worden geconcretiseerd. Om variaties in de levensduur van hervormingen te begrijpen, is het belangrijk om rekening te houden met de schijnbaar onschadelijke maar potentieel transformerende aanpassingen aan de architectuur van een hervorming die zich in de loop van de tijd voordoen.

Om de bevindingen uit de KVA verder te onderbouwen, te begrijpen als ook te contextualiseren heb ik vervolgens twee intensieve case studies uitgewerkt. In deze studies staat centraal hoe 'beklijvingspraktijken' in de praktijk werken. Hoofdstuk 4 vertelt het verhaal van de Zweedse onderwijssaga. Het verhaal van een beleidshervorming die in de vroege jaren 1990 het Zweedse schoolsysteem transformeerde van een bijna volledig openbaar, bureaucratisch beheerd systeem met zeer weinig ruimte voor ouderlijke keuze, naar een van 's werelds meest gedereguleerde openbare onderwijssystemen. Tijdens de meer dan 25-jarige loopbaan van deze hervorming zijn belangrijke politieke voorvechters (en tegenstanders) gekomen en gegaan, administratieve autoriteiten gecreëerd en weer opgesplitst, heeft het onderwijs zichzelf verankerd als een belangrijke beleidskwestie voor burgers, en vertoont de sector als geheel weinig gelijkenis het verleden. Ondanks zijn schijnbaar onschuldige oorsprong, heeft deze hervorming het landschap van het Zweedse onderwijssysteem drastisch veranderd en zal dit waarschijnlijk de komende jaren blijven doen.

Hoofdstuk 5 vertelt het verhaal van de strijd van Ierland tegen de toename van afval in het land. In dit verhaal staat de hervorming centraal die Ierland in staat stelde om (langzaam) verder te gaan dan haar beleid van 'strategie van laatste redmiddel' en haar 'wegwerpcultuur'-label af te schudden. Het uithoudingsvermogen van de Ierse hervorming van afvalbeheer zit vol wendingen.

Vijf jaar na invoering van de hervorming was de staat van de hervorming uiterst fragiel; het momentum voor de uitvoering ervan was als sneeuw voor de zon verdwenen en het politieke uithoudingsvermogen ervan bleek verre van gegarandeerd. Tijdens deze eerste jaren faalde het hervormingsbeleid niet alleen in termen van belangenbehartiging of het stimuleren van activiteiten in de private sector rondom afvalverwerking, maar was het ook onsuccesvol in het verkrijgen van publieke goedkeuring voor het beleid. Sterker nog, het tegenovergesteld gebeurde. Ieren stelden zich vijandig op en keken vol minachting naar de plannen van de Ierse regering ten aanzien van geplande gebieden voor afvalverwerking of 'superdumps'. In zo'n vijandige, gefragmenteerde en onzekere omgeving stond het uithoudingsvermogen en het voortbestaan van de afvalhervorming op het spel. Maar na verloop van tijd, en misschien verrassend genoeg, begonnen de omstandigheden die leidden tot de instabiliteit van de hervorming om te keren, waardoor de aanpak van afvalbeheer stevig verankerd raakte.

Het belangrijkste argument van deze studie is dat hervormingsuithoudingsvermogen gaat over het beheersen van de dubbele uitdagingen van behoud en aanpassing. Dit verwijst naar de voortzetting van hervormingen zoals origineel bedacht of ontworpen, en de noodzaak om ze aan te passen voor gebruik in verschillende contexten die wellicht anders zijn dan de context waarvoor de hervorming in eerste plaats ontworpen is. In hoofdstuk 6 reflecteer ik op de patronen en overeenkomsten van hervormingsuithoudingsvermogen die in mijn studies naar voren komen. Daarbij bekijk ik hoe de architecten en voorstanders van een reeds aanvaarde hervorming de dubbele uitdaging van behoud en aanpassingsvermogen aangaan in hun streven om hervormingen te laten beklijven. Het beschouwen van de kruising van deze twee dimensies (behoud en aanpassing) levert vier mogelijke situaties van uithoudingsvermogen op, evenals de mogelijkheid om hervormingen voortdurend verder in kaart te brengen. Met behulp van de inzichten uit de KVA, keer ik terug naar het idee van uithoudingsvermogen als een contingent, voorwaardelijk en betwist, waardoor deze beschrijvende labels verder worden genuanceerd. In het laatste deel van hoofdstuk 6 bevestig ik de wenselijkheid van het uithoudingsvermogen van beleidshervorming door het verband te bekijken met meer genuanceerde opvattingen over prestaties en succes. Het hoofdstuk eindigt met een reflectie op de aanpak die ik in dit proefschrift heb gekozen, evenals wegen om de studie van hervormingsuithoudingsvermogen verder te bevorderen.

Focussen op wat er gebeurt nadat hervormingen in wetten en budgetten zijn opgenomen, is de moeite waard, en door middel van dit proefschrift draag ik vier belangrijke inzichten bij aan onderzoek naar duurzaamheid van beleid. Ten eerste, door het gebruik van verschillende methodes ben ik in staat geweest om hervormingscases vanuit verschillende hoeken te belichten. De KVA hielp mij om generieke patronen in beleidshervormingscases te ontdekken en door die analyse aan te vullen met specifieke case studies heb ik een goed beeld gekregen van de (f)

actoren die een rol spelen bij 'hervormingen die beklijven'. Ten tweede heb ik laten zien dat het hanteren van een lange termijnperspectief (tenminste twintig jaar vanaf de politieke invoering) duidelijk meerwaarde geeft ten opzichte van de hoofdstroom van studies naar hervormingen, die juist vaak ophouden bij het moment van invoering. Ten derde, in het proces van het aanpakken van deze uitdagingen, bied ik duidelijke richtlijnen, definities en methoden voor toekomstige wetenschappers om andere gevallen van uithoudingsvermogen en niet-uithoudingsvermogen te onderzoeken. Tot slot draagt dit proefschrift bij aan een genuanceerder begrip van hoe hervormingen het in de loop van de tijd doen, een begrip dat verder gaat dan het eenvoudige onderscheid tussen beleidsbeëindiging versus -voortzetting, als ook een uitgebreider begrip van de processen en omstandigheden die bijdragen aan uithoudingsvermogen van hervormingen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The irony of studying endurance while engaging in a long-term intellectual and creative endeavour is certainly not lost on me, or really anyone who has undertaken a PhD. Reading between the lines of this book, you may just hear the manic laughter, panicked shrieks, and awestruck agony that can underpin the doctoral life span. But on closer inspection, you will also see unwavering guidance and mentoring, life-long friendships, and the pride and wonder accompanying this process. Getting to this point took grit, resilience, and patience, and it would not have been possible – or as fulfilling – without the generosity, encouragement, and kindness that I have been fortunate enough to experience along the way.

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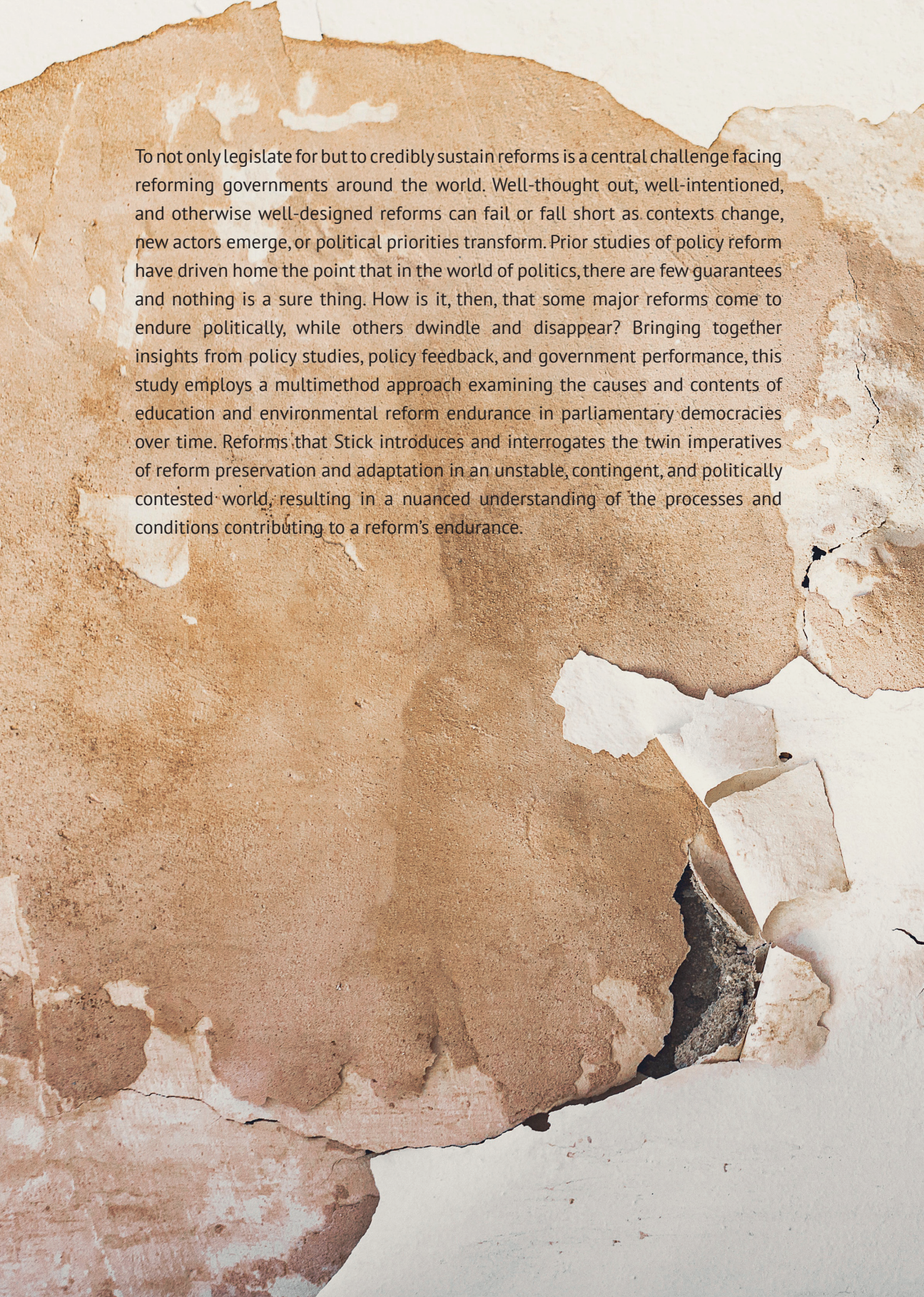


| ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Joannah Luetjens (1988) is originally from Australia. She studied a double bachelor's degree of Arts (History) and Science (Psychology) at the University of Melbourne from 2007 to 2011. This double degree was complemented with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) program in 2012 where Joannah examined the evolution of cultural stereotypes in Israeli cinema over time. Upon completion, Joannah became a research assistant with the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) in Melbourne. In this position, Joannah co-authored journal articles and book chapters on a range of different topics including climate policy, design thinking, justice reinvestment, foreign policy, policy entrepreneurship and public sector effectiveness. She was also involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of executive courses for public sector leaders. In addition to her position at ANZSOG, Joannah completed a Master of Public Policy and Management at the Melbourne School of Government from 2015 to 2016.

In April 2017, Joannah joined the Utrecht School of Governance as a PhD Fellow with the ERC-funded project *Successful Public Governance*. In addition to her own doctoral dissertation, Joannah has embarked on a range of different policy and research activities together with colleagues in Utrecht and abroad. In 2019, she co-authored a report for an Independent Review of the Australian Public Service, examining how governments both process and learn from their pasts. In 2019, she co-edited the published volume *Successful Public Policy: Lessons from Australia and New Zealand*. She has also collaborated with colleagues to produce two additional journal articles, as well as communication pieces for *The Conversation* and *The Mandarin*. She has also taken up teaching responsibilities, designing and co-convening an elective bachelor's subject, as well as supervision responsibilities. In addition, Joannah has volunteered as an Executive Coordinator of the newly formed Women in Public Policy (WIPP) International Network as well as Chairing the PhD platform within the Utrecht School of Governance from 2018 to 2020.

The image features a large, irregular piece of aged, brown paper with a prominent hole on the right side. The paper has a textured, fibrous appearance with some darker spots and a slightly mottled color. The hole reveals a white surface underneath. The overall composition is simple and focuses on the texture and shape of the paper.

To not only legislate for but to credibly sustain reforms is a central challenge facing reforming governments around the world. Well-thought out, well-intentioned, and otherwise well-designed reforms can fail or fall short as contexts change, new actors emerge, or political priorities transform. Prior studies of policy reform have driven home the point that in the world of politics, there are few guarantees and nothing is a sure thing. How is it, then, that some major reforms come to endure politically, while others dwindle and disappear? Bringing together insights from policy studies, policy feedback, and government performance, this study employs a multimethod approach examining the causes and contents of education and environmental reform endurance in parliamentary democracies over time. Reforms that Stick introduces and interrogates the twin imperatives of reform preservation and adaptation in an unstable, contingent, and politically contested world, resulting in a nuanced understanding of the processes and conditions contributing to a reform's endurance.