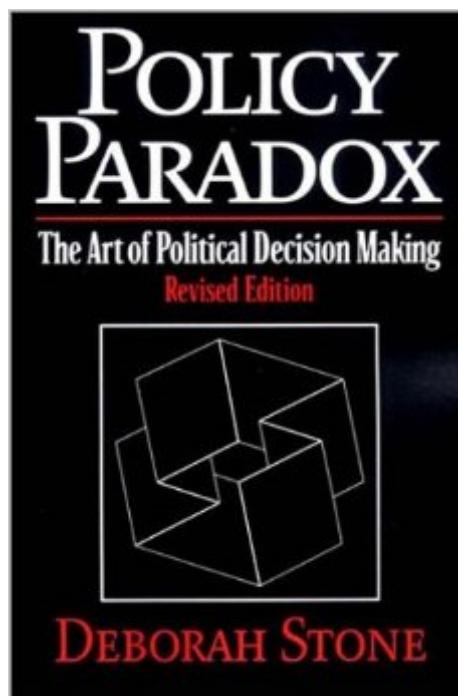


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Policy Paradox: The Art Of Political Decision Making (Revised Edition)



Synopsis

Since its debut, *Policy Paradox* has been widely acclaimed as the most accessible policy text available. Unlike most texts, which treat policy analysis and policy making as different enterprises, *Policy Paradox* demonstrates that "you can't take politics out of analysis." Through a uniquely rich and comprehensive model, this revised edition continues to show how real-world policy grows out of differing ideals, even definitions, of basic societal goals like security, equality, and liberty. The book also demonstrates how these ideals often conflict in policy implementation. In this revised edition, Stone has added a full-length case study as an appendix, taking up the issue of affirmative action. Clear, provocative, and engaging, *Policy Paradox* conveys the richness of public policy making and analysis.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Deborah Stone's "Policy Paradox" is an important work in the field of policy analysis. The subtitle is illuminating: "The Art of Political Decision Making." Her takeoff point is the following statement (pages x-xi): "This new field of policy analysis supposedly devoted to improving governance, was based on a profound disgust for the ambiguities and paradoxes of politics. . . . In rational analysis, everything has one and only one meaning." In her own words, she (page xi) ". . .wrote this book to critique the field and to capture, I hope, a more inspiring and humane kind of policy analysis." Her basic point is that the rational models drawn from economics do not explain very well how policy analysis works. Nor, in her view, should it be the actual model for decision making. She contends

that economic rationality often gives way to political reality, to accommodation to conflicting interests, to compromise, to values other than economic efficiency (such as liberty, fairness, and so on). The introduction opens the book strongly, with Stone noting policy paradoxes, where the economic rational model does not prevail and explain how things work. She argues (page 13) that "each type of policy instrument [e.g., inducements, rules, rights, for example] is a kind of sports arena, each with its peculiar ground rules, within which political conflicts are continued." The first chapter continues the theme, by speaking of the market (economics) and the polis (politics), with a nice table summarizing key points on page 33). She concludes that (page 34) "Problems in the polis are never 'solved' in the way that economic needs are met in the market model." Two different realms, and what works in the market may or may not work in the polis.

Deborah Stone's Policy Paradox is an exercise in analyzing and describing how and why public policy is made in the United States. Her book is an invaluable contribution to political science and public administration. Stone presents us with the paradox of two apparently contradictory models of policy-making: a rational-analytic model and a polis model. The two models seem to exclude each other, yet we can observe the processes of both in policy making. Stone examines and attempts to resolve the paradox by analyzing public policy through the perspectives of both models. The rational-analytic model is the perspective and methodology of the professional policy analyst. The policy analyst examines a problem and then generates and evaluates possible solutions. He weighs the costs, benefits, and feasibility of each option. He selects and recommends a solution which he expects (or hopes) lawmakers and officials will implement. Stone describes the rational-analytic model as a "market model" because it mirrors the decision-making process made by individual consumers and business people. In the idealized marketplace, buyers and sellers carefully compare costs and benefits before agreeing to a trade. Stone offers the polis model as the other perspective on how policy is made. In the polis model, different interest groups compete and cooperate to define problems and decide on solutions. As a society, we acknowledge common values, needs, and wants. Collectively, we recognize problems and crises when they arise. Unfortunately, individuals often hold different definitions of those supposedly "common" values, needs, and wants. The polis model recognizes that values, wants, and needs are abstract. A crisis or problem may be ill-defined. Groups (e.g.

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