

Addressing Multilevel Program Complexity by Evaluation Design

Fritz Sager

Center of Competence for Public Management, University of Bern

Céline Mavrot

Center of Competence for Public Management, University of Bern

Susanne Hadorn

Center of Competence for Public Management, University of Bern

The full article is available for free on the website of the Policy Studies Organization

<http://www.ipsonet.org/publications/open-access/epa/volume-1-number-2-fall-2015>

Abstract

In this paper, we present the evaluation design for a complex multilevel program recently introduced in Switzerland. The evaluation embraces the federal level, the cantonal program level, and the project level where target groups are directly addressed. We employ Pawson and Tilley's realist evaluation approach, in order to do justice to the varying context factors that impact the cantonal programs leading to varying the effectiveness of the implemented activities. The application of the model to the canton of Uri shows that the numerous vertical and horizontal relations play a crucial role for the program's effectiveness. As a general learning for the evaluation of complex programs, we state that there is a need to consider all affected levels of a program and that no monocausal effects can be singled out in programs where multiple interventions address the same problem. Moreover, considering all affected levels of a program can mean

doi: 10.18278/epa.1.2.5

going beyond the borders of the actual program organization and including factors that do not directly interfere with the policy delivery as such. In particular, we found that the relationship between the cantonal and the federal level was a crucial organizational factor influencing the effectiveness of the cantonal program.

Keywords: *evaluation design, multi-level governance, complexity, realist evaluation, implementation analysis, tobacco prevention program*

References

- Bala, Malgorzata M., Lukasz Strzeszynski, Roman Topor-Madry, and Kate Cahill. 2013. "Mass Media Interventions for Smoking Cessation in Adults." *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 6: CD004704.
- Balthasar, Andreas, and Franziska Müller. 2014. "Die Verbreitung evidenzbasierter und gleichstellungssensitiver Informationen in den Entscheidungsprozessen kantonaler Steuer- und Sozialtransferpolitik: eine quantitative Analyse." *Swiss Political Science Review* 20 (1): 70–95.
- Befani, Barbara, Simone Ledermann, and Fritz Sager. 2007. "Realistic Evaluation and QCA: Conceptual Parallels and an Empirical Application." *Evaluation: The International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice* 13 (2): 171–192.
- Blatter, Joachim, Clara Bombach, and Roman Wiprächtiger. 2015. "Enhancing Gender Equity through Evidence-based Policymaking? Theorizing and Tracing the use of Systematic Knowledge in Family and Tax Policy Reforms." *European Policy Analysis* 1 (1): 3–34.
- Egeberg, Morten. 2003. "How Bureaucratic Structures Matter: An Organizational Perspective." In *Handbook of Public Administration*, eds. B. Guy Peters, and Jon Pierre. London: Sage, 116–126.
- Howlett, Michael. 2009. "Policy Analytical Capacity and Evidence-based Policymaking: Lessons from Canada." *Canadian Public Administration* 52 (2): 153–175.
- Howlett, Michael, and Jeremy Rayner. 2007. "Design Principles for Policy

mixes: Cohesion and Coherence in ‘New Governance Arrangements’.” *Policy and Society* 26 (4): 1–18.

Ismayr, Wolfgang. 2009. “Die politischen Systeme Westeuropas im Vergleich.” In *Die politischen Systeme Westeuropas*, ed. Wolfgang Ismayr. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 9–64.

Kissling-Näf, Ingrid, and Sonja Wälti. 2007. “The Implementation of Public Policies.” In *Handbook of Swiss Politics*, eds. Ulrich Klöti, Peter Knoepfel, Hanspeter Kriesi, Wolf Linder, Yannis Papadopoulos, and Pascal Sciarini. Zürich: NZZ, 501–524.

Knoepfel, Peter, Frédéric Varone, Werner Bussmann, and Luzius Mader. 1997. “Evaluationsgegenstände und Evaluationskriterien.” In *Einführung in die Politikevaluation*, eds. Werner Bussmann, Ulrich Klöti, and Peter Knoepfel. Basel, Frankfurt a.M.: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 78–118.

Kübler, Daniel. 2000. *Politique de la drogue dans les villes suisses entre ordre et santé. Analyse des con its de mise en œuvre*. Paris: L’Harmattan.

Kübler, Daniel, and Sonja Wälti. 2001. “Gouvernance métropolitaine et démocratie: l’exemple des politiques de lutte contre la drogue.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 7 (2): 1–25.

Ledermann, Simone, and Fritz Sager. 2009. “Problem erkannt, aber nicht gebannt. Der Nutzen einer Verknüpfung von Konzept- und Umsetzungsevaluation am Beispiel der schweizerischen Strategie ‘Migration und Gesundheit.’” *Zeitschrift für Evaluation* 8 (1): 7–25.

Linder, Wolf. 1987. *Politische Entscheidung und Gesetzesvollzug*. Bern: Haupt.

Linder, Wolf. 2010. *Swiss Democracy. Possible Solutions to Conflict in Multicultural Societies*. New York: Palgrave.

Lund, Johan, and Leif Edvard Aarø. 2004. “Accident Prevention. Presentation of a Model Placing Emphasis on Human Structural and Cultural Factors.” *Safety Science* 42: 271–342.

Mavrot, Céline. 2012. “The Status of Ideas in Controversies on Public Policy. Analyzing Beliefs as Dependent Variables: A Case study on Harm

Reduction Policies in Switzerland.” *German Policy Studies* 8 (1): 113–156.

Mavrot, Céline, and Fritz Sager. 2014. “Smoking Prevention Policies in Switzerland: Administrative Coalition and Policy Shifts.” Presented at the 23rd World Congress of Political Science, Montreal, Canada, July 19–24.

May, Peter J., Joshua Sapotichne, and Samuel Workman. 2006. “Policy Coherence and Policy Domains.” *Policy Studies Journal* 34 (3): 381–403.

Moser, Ladina, and Fritz Sager. 2015. “Pfadabhängigkeit in der Mehrebenensteuerung: Das Beispiel Palliative Care.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 21 (3): 437–459.

Nicholson-Crotty, Sean, and Laurence J. O'Toole Jr. 2004. “Public Management and Organizational Performance: The Case of Law Enforcement Agencies.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 14 (1): 1–18.

Patton, Michael Q. 1997. *Utilization-Focused Evaluation: The New Century Text*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Pawson, Ray. 2002a. “Evidence-based Policy: In Search of a Method.” *Evaluation* 8 (2): 157–181.

Pawson, Ray. 2002b. “Evidence-based Policy: The Promise of ‘Realist Synthesis’.” *Evaluation* 8 (3): 340–358.

Pawson, Ray, and Nick Tilley. 1997. *Realistic Evaluation*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Rossi, Peter H., Howard E. Freeman, and Mark W. Lipsey. 1999. *Evaluation. A Systematic Approach*, Sixth Edition. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Rothmayr, Christine, Frédéric Varone, and Éric Montpetit. 2003. “Does Federalism Matter for Biopolicies? Switzerland in Comparative Perspective.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 9 (1): 109–136.

RS 641.316. *Ordonnance du 5 mars 2004 sur le fonds de prévention du tabagisme (OFPT)*. Berne: Chancellerie fédérale.

Sager, Fritz. 2003. “Kompensationsmöglichkeiten föderaler Vollzugsdefizite.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 9 (1): 309–333.

Sager, Fritz. 2004. “Verwaltung, Politik und Wissenschaft in der kantonalen Alkoholprävention.” *Sozial-und Präventivmedizin. International Journal of Public Health* 49 (3): 208–215.

Sager, Fritz. 2007. “Making Transport Policy Work: Polity, Policy, Politics, and Systematic Review.” *Policy & Politics* 35 (2): 269–288.

Sager, Fritz. 2008. “Securing the Long-Term Bases of the Dual System: A Realistic Evaluation of Apprenticeship Marketing Projects in Switzerland.” *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 60 (3): 327–341.

Sager, Fritz, and Céline Anderegg. 2012. “Dealing with Complex Causality in Realist Synthesis: The Promise of Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA).” *American Journal of Evaluation* 33 (1): 60–78.

Sager, Fritz, and Céline Mavrot. 2015. “Les spécificités méthodologiques de l'évaluation en Suisse.” In *Regards croisés sur l'évaluation en Suisse*, ed. Katia Horber-Papazian. Lausanne: PPUR, 175–195.

Sager, Fritz, Céline Mavrot, Susanne Hadorn, and Lyn Pleger. 2015. *Evaluation des kantonalen Tabakpräventionsprogramms Uri 2012–2015*. Bern: Kompetenzzentrum für Public Management der Universität Bern, 131p.

Sager, Fritz, and Christian Rüefli. 2005. “Die Evaluation öffentlicher Politiken mit föderalistischen Vollzugsarrangements.” *Swiss Political Science Review* 11 (2): 101–129.

Sager, Fritz, and Christine Zollinger. 2011. “The Swiss Political System in a Comparative Perspective.” In *Switzerland in Europe*, eds. Christine Trampusch, and André Mach. London, New York: Routledge, 27–42.

Sager, Fritz, and Markus Hinterleitner. 2014. “Evaluation.” In *Lehrbuch der Politikfeldanalyse*, eds. Klaus Schubert, and Nils C. Bandelow. München, Wien: De Gruyter/Oldenbourg, 437–462.

Sager, Fritz, and Yvan Rielle. 2013. “Sorting Through the Garbage Can.

Under What Conditions Do Governments Adopt Policy Programs?” *Policy Sciences* 46 (1): 1–21.

Vatter, Adrian. 2007. “Federalism.” In *Handbook of Swiss Politics*, eds. Ulrich Klöti, Peter Knoepfel, Hanspeter Kriesi, Wolf Linder, Yannis Papadopoulos, and Pascal Sciarini. Zürich: NZZ, 77–99.