

Gerston, L.N. (2004). **Public Policy Making: Process and Principles** Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc. \$58.95 hardcover. ISBN 0-7656-1203-8. \$23.95 paper. x + 142 pp. + notes + index

The book presents a unique dimension of public policy perspective definition that differs from those of the top policy scientist (i.e. Thomas Dye, B. Guy Peters, and David Robertson & Dennis Judd) in our contemporary society by incorporating both actions and exchanges of both people and government in a dynamic, interdependent manner---in order to understand the linkage between policy makers and policy receivers---the power of public policy.

Like a closely similar book of its genre (that won the Aaron Wildavsky Award) by John Kingdon, the author argues that public policies spring from triggering mechanism that converts a routine problem into a widely shared, negative public response. The activities that act as precursors for triggering mechanism however may be difficult to anticipate because they tend to remain hidden from view, as their monument builds behind more observable daily events, he contends. Kingdon, however presented more potent evidence that shows the triggering mechanism opens policy window which allows policy advocate to push attention to their given initiatives for only a very short time.

The author carefully draws a link between triggering mechanism and public agenda---which has its own challenges by introducing three coherent concepts perhaps unlike any other book on the subject. The author introduces the concepts of agenda builders---sources or people (public officials, public bureaucracy, the media and the interest groups) who brings the message to the policy makers in the process termed agenda building. Kingdon earlier in his work would refer to this same concept as "visible cluster of actors." The second concept deals with coping with agenda that may either be symbolic or substantive issues that evoke decisions on political values. The last concept, "hidden agenda" presents a problem of separating vital issues from nonissues. Other author however does not go in detail to explain the last concept but made a reference to it--for example Bardes, Shelley and Schmidt (2004) discussed this concept vaguely under policy formulation.

The author demonstrate skills and unparalleled familiarity with policy application by presenting a prism from which earlier work of Theodore Lowi can be viewed from the policy implementation angle. He shows that Lowi's analysis (distributive, regulatory, and redistributive policy) represented a guide to which policies are likely to be implemented with precision and which are not. The spotlight implication suggests that that some policies are implemented as intended, while others are not.

Throughout the book the author extremely minimizes the use of diagram, charts, figures and other visual indicators to diverts readers attention into universe of issues that floats in and out of policy-making arena—intending to remove the readers from world of orderly boxes and diagram. There is a mute as to whether the aforementioned style of writing is plausible or not. The book is however rich in real world illustration from both present and past government administration. No other book in public policy is more current. The only gray spot in this otherwise excellent book is the refusal of the author to address the issue of policy termination. Perhaps the only justification for this omission may be partly due to the rare occurrence of policy termination.

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Kingdon, J. (1994). Agendas, alternatives, and public policies. (2nd ed.). New York, New York: HarperCollins College Publishers

Palumbo, D., & Maynard-Moody, S. (1991). Contemporary public administration. White Plain, N.Y. Longman Publishing Group.