

The Status of Ideas in Controversies on Public Policy. Analyzing Beliefs as Dependent Variables: A Case study on Harm Reduction Policies in Switzerland

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Abstract

This article is about the theoretical and methodological apprehension of public policy controversies. It is based on a case study research on harm reduction policies in matters of drug addiction in two Swiss cantons. The focus lies on the role of ideas during public policy controversies, with the purpose to consider how to construct actors' beliefs as dependent variables. In fact, the ambiguity of the analytical status of ideas as causes or as variables is a recurring bone of contention in public policy analysis. This point is particularly salient in the case of highly emotional controversies, which tend to naturalize the beliefs as if they were entirely preexistent to the policy-making process. We will argue that when ideas are considered in such a way -as independent variables-, the analysis is likely to be a more descriptive than explicative one. In the contrary, by adopting a processualist point of view, our analysis concentrates on how ideas occur in the course of action. We assume that the study of the very process of idea formation allows achieving a deep understanding of the emergence and the development of the controversy. Our theoretical starting point is the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), which has proved its worth in the multilevel analysis of public policy controversies between adversary coalitions.

At first, we put forward two theoretical aspects of the ACF that require specification in order to be able to construct ideas as dependent variables: the analysis of the coalitions' long-term genesis, and the differential analysis of the specific arenas where the controversy takes place. Second, we maintain that political sociology can advantageously complete public policy analysis on these two points, because of its focus on the constant actualization of actors' beliefs within shifting condition of action. A set of concepts meant to problematize the existence itself of the coalitions, and of their members' beliefs, is then proposed. We underline the importance to include the out-of-power groups in the analysis, to temporalize each stage of the controversy, and to take into account its progressive fragmentation on di-

verse arenas. These processes are of higher importance in the structuring of beliefs. We thirdly discuss the methodological operationalization of these propositions. Lastly, the case-studies on two Swiss cantons examine how harm reduction policies became a matter of politico-professional consensus in one canton, while provoking a professional cleavage and a highly politicized controversy in the other canton. By explaining how similar actors from the two cantons have, in a similar macro-context, dramatically differing ideas on harm reduction, the analysis illustrates that beliefs cannot be considered as data that would preexist the policymaking process. These case-studies thus highlight the configurational nature of beliefs, and the importance to focus on the proper dynamics of the controversies.

Zusammenfassung

Dieser Artikel behandelt die theoretische und methodologische Perzeption von Public-Policy-Kontroversen und basiert auf Falluntersuchungen zweier Schweizer Kantone im Bereich Massnahmen zur Schadensminderung bei Drogensucht. Das Hauptaugenmerk liegt auf der Rolle von Ideen in Public-Policy-Konflikten, um herauszufinden, wie Beliefs von Akteuren als abhängige Variablen modelliert werden können. Tatsächlich stellt die Ambiguität des analytischen Status von Ideen als unabhängige und abhängige Variablen einen immer wiederkehrenden Stein des Anstosses in der Policy-Forschung dar. Dies wird vor allem bei Analysen emotionsgeladener Konflikte deutlich, die dazu neigen, die Formierung der Beliefs als dem Entscheidungsfindungsprozess vorangehend zu modellieren. Es wird argumentiert, dass die Analyse politischer Ideen in solchen Fällen – in denen politische Ideen als unabhängige Variablen interpretiert werden – eher deskriptiven als erklärenden Charakter annimmt. Die hier durchgeführte Analyse hebt sich hiervon ab, indem sie einen prozessbezogenen Blickwinkel einnimmt und sich vielmehr auf die Entstehung von Ideen im Politikprozess konzentriert. Dabei wird die Annahme getroffen, dass durch die Untersuchung des Ideenentstehungsprozesses wiederum ein vertieftes Verständnis der Entstehung und Entwicklung der Politikkontroverse erreicht werden kann. Als theoretischer Startpunkt fungiert das Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), das sich in der Multilevel-Analyse von Public-Policy-Kontroversen zwischen gegnerischen Parteien mehrfach bewährt hat.

Zunächst werden zwei theoretische Aspekte des ACF spezifiziert, die helfen, Ideen als abhängige Variablen modellieren zu können: einerseits die Analyse der langfristigen Formierung einer Koalition, und andererseits die differenzierte Analyse der spezifischen Politikarenen, in denen sich die Kontroverse abspielt. Zweitens wird argumentiert, dass die Politische Soziologie die Politikanalyse in den beiden obigen Aspekten auf vorteilhafte Weise unterstützt und ergänzt, da sie hilft, die konstante Aktualisierung der Akteur-Beliefs innerhalb sich ändernder Handlungsumstände im Blick zu halten. Konzepte, die die Existenz von Koalitionen und die Beliefs von deren Mitgliedern problematisieren, werden vorgestellt. Dabei wird berücksichtigt, dass auch Gruppen mit wenigen oder gar keinen Entscheidungsbe-

fugnissen in die Analyse miteinbezogen werden sollten, dass die einzelnen Ebenen einer Politikkontroverse zeitlich strukturiert werden sollten, und dass die damit einhergehende Tangierung einzelner Politikarenen berücksichtigt werden sollte. Dies ermöglicht eine konsequente Analyse der Strukturierung von Beliefs. Drittens wird die methodologische Operationalisierung dieser Vorschläge diskutiert. Zuletzt wird im Rahmen von Fallstudien zweier Schweizer Kantone untersucht, wie Massnahmen zur Schadensbegrenzung in einem Kanton Gegenstand eines Konsens zwischen Politikern und Spezialisten werden konnten, während in einem anderen Kanton ein Konflikt zwischen Spezialisten und eine hoch politische Kontroverse resultierten. Indem erklärt wird, wie ähnliche Akteure in ähnlichen Makro-Kontexten komplett unterschiedliche Ideen zum Thema Schadensbegrenzung entwickeln können, verdeutlicht die Analyse, dass Beliefs nicht einfach als präexistente Daten dem Politikprozess vorangestellt werden können. Die Fallstudien zeigen die konfigurative Natur von Beliefs und betonen die Wichtigkeit, die spezifische Dynamik der Politikkontroverse genauer zu betrachten.

1 Introduction

The question raised in this article is about how to theoretically and methodologically apprehend public policy controversies¹. More precisely, the role of ideas during public policy controversies between different policy coalitions is put into perspective. The starting point is the will to analytically construct ideas as dependent variables. Public policy scholars have underlined the confusion that lies at the heart of public policy analysis, where the status of ideas as causes or as variables is often blurred (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002: 60). When ideas are considered as independent variables, the analysis is likely to be more descriptive than explicative. In order to construct ideas as dependent variables, the focus has to be on the progressive formation of belief through the coalitions' adversarial activities. Hence, what will be questioned here is the process by which individuals do engage - or not- in public policy debate regarding harm reduction. We will not consider actors' engagement in a cause as unilaterally deriving from their beliefs. This line of questioning is closely linked to the ontological and epistemological choices. We assume that a processualist ontological stance is well-fitted to avoid the tautol-

¹ The author wants to thank the anonymous reviewer for his/her constructive comments on the manuscript.

ogy induced by considering ideas as *déjà-là*. By viewing militant commitment as a social and dynamic *activity*, a processualist focus highlights how ideas occur in the course of action (Fillieule 2001: 199-200). From this point of view, mobilized groups are by no means seen as preexisting entities driven by fixed ideas (Offerlé 1994). This is particularly salient in the case of highly emotional controversies, where actors' ideas are often considered as if they had always existed. Furthermore, actors engaged in the same struggle do not necessarily share homogenous beliefs. Analyzing the heterogeneity of investments enables to understand the dynamics of the collective action (Mathieu 2004: 19). Similarly, the focus on the process of idea formation during policy controversies provides an opportunity to attain a deep understanding of the dynamics of the controversy.

Analyzing ideas as dependent variables has important methodological repercussions. It shifts the location to where the explicative factors -and hence the data- are searched. The present reflection on public policy controversies is based on a case study research on harm reduction policies in matters of drug addiction in two Swiss cantons, Vaud and Geneva. The theoretical starting point of this study is the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). Daniel Kübler (2000) has convincingly illustrated that this particular subject is well captured with the help of ACF's theoretical framework. The formulation of harm reduction policies are regularly the scene of sharp confrontations between policy coalitions, and ACF's concepts are particularly well-suited to the analysis of the Swiss multilevel politico-administrative system. Meanwhile, the benefits of using concepts from the social movement theory (Kübler 2001: 623) or the political sociology (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002: 63) in the public policy analysis has been asserted.

The paper is structured as follows: In the first section, we review the contributions of the ACF to public policy analysis, and point out two theoretical points that appeared to be worth specification in the light of our case studies. These two points, already identified in the literature, concern the study of the long-term coalitions' birth and structuring process (Kübler 2001: 623; Schlager 1995), and the analysis of the specific arenas where the

controversy takes place (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002:70-71; Muller 2006 : 52). The second section is a theoretical discussion where we detail the concepts drawn from political sociology we used in our study. In the third section, we discuss the methodological operationalization of these concepts. We finally turn to the case studies on harm reduction policies.

2 Advocacy Coalition Framework

By founding the Advocacy Coalition Framework at the end of the 1980s, Paul A. Sabatier aimed at overcoming the dominant approach that viewed the public policy implementation process as an ideal-typical sequence, underpinned by a rational causal model. On the contrary, the ACF considers that the public policy formulation and implementation processes shelter a constant recreation of the whole public problem, through the struggle between opposing advocacy coalitions. The notion of policy subsystem lies at the heart of the analysis: It conceptually depicts the area in which the policy definition takes place. It offers the advantage of taking into account the different levels of action the coalitions are simultaneously distributed across, thus authorizing a multi-level dynamic analysis. Consequently, it permits to see how actors valorize in certain spheres resources that they acquired in other levels. The policy subsystem notion was also intended to overtake the top-down/bottom-up alternative, by focusing on a meso-level of analysis (Kübler 2000).

Importantly, the ACF model also wanted to revalorize the role of beliefs in the policymaking process (Kübler 2000)². The model aims at analyzing how different coalitions fight for imposing their solution to a public problem. The advocacy coalitions are composed of people sharing a common set of normative and causal beliefs (Bergeron/Surel/Valluy 1998: 206). The coalitions' members try to translate these beliefs into policy formulation. However, far from presupposing that social actors act according

² From now on, we will use the generic term "policymaking process" to designate the whole process formed by both the policy formulation and the policy implementation.

to instrumentalist strategies, the ACF argues for investigating the constitution and the evolution of actors' representations (Bergeron/Surel/Valluy 1998: 199; Sabatier 1999). In the ACF, the actors' belief systems consist of three strata, corresponding to more or less adaptable assumptions on a given theme. A coalition is considered to be stabilized when it achieves a high level of coordinated actions over a sustainable time period (Kübler 2000; Sabatier/Jenkins-Smith 1993). The aim is to analytically create collective entities (i.e., the advocacy coalitions) regrouped around the same object and ideas, fighting with each other in the policy subsystem (Bergeron/Surel/Valluy 1998: 201). Recently, the ACF models of the learning processes (Henry 2009; Weible/Sabatier 2009), as well as the analysis of the coalitions' interactions within a given subsystem (Weible 2005) have been refined.

The ACF succeeded in honing the analysis of the policymaking process. However, in order to construct ideas as dependent variables, two aspects have to be considered in deeper detail. The first concerns the process of constitution and development of coalitions. The second is linked with the need to analytically refine the location of the policymaking process, as regards the policy subsystem concept. As for the first point, we argue that a deeper analysis of the constitution and development process of coalitions is necessary for avoiding taking ideas as *déjà-là*. This necessity has already been pointed out (Kübler 2001: 623). We will assert that retracing the coalitions' long-term genesis is the only way to deeply understand the latter controversy's dynamic. From this point of view, the existence itself of different contending coalitions is not taken as given, but problematized. Problematizing the opposing coalitions instead of considering them as invariants allows a differential analysis of the policymaking configurations. Furthermore, taking the advocacy coalitions for granted would also lead to presupposing the uniformity of their members' beliefs, presumed to be shared from the beginning of the controversy (Bergeron/Surel/Valluy 1998: 218). On the contrary, analyzing the heterogeneity of investments that prevail during the groups' birth and development permits us to better understand the dynamics of the struggle (Mathieu 2004: 19). This al-

lows to see that one organization's -or coalition's- official position is the fruit of a collective negotiation (Offerlé 1994, 2004). Indeed, as some ACF scholars have themselves already shown, neither the coalitions, nor their members' beliefs are completely preexistent to the controversy (Kübler 2000; Nohrstedt 2010).

The second point we will address is the ACF's policy subsystem concept. The location of the coalitions' activities is a crucial factor in understanding the mobilizations and the controversies. For the ACF, a public policy derives from successive confrontation and cooperation activities that are spurred by coalitions' beliefs in a given policy subsystem. The participants of the subsystem are considered as forming a relatively autonomous community around a policy theme, fighting for having their expertise in this domain recognized (Bergeron/Surel/Valluy 1998: 206). The advantages of the policy subsystem notion are that it permits taking into account the links between public and private actors at different levels of government. The policy subsystem notion is also intended to analyze the cohabitation of different belief systems in the same policy sphere. In this regard, ACF adequately rose against former approaches that neglected the importance of private actors, as well as the polycentrism of the policymaking processes (Kübler 2000). Thus, the policy subsystem is the matrix that shelters the interpretative struggle between coalitions.

However, the notion of subsystem appears to be the black box of the ACF analysis (Nohrstedt 2010: 326). Some scholars underline that this subsystem cannot be considered as a fixed frame that would be constant across decades of public action on a domain. Its conceptualization has therein to be clarified, for the boundaries of such a subsystem are continuously evolving (Bergeron/Surel/Valluy 1998: 218-219). In the same manner, the policymaking process is simultaneously split into various separate arenas. Each of these arenas constitutes a distinct scene of policy formulation (Muller 2006). The analysis benefits from taking into deeper account the particularities of each of these different policymaking arenas, instead of merging them into an overall policy subsystem.

3 Theoretical Discussion

We will successively detail in this section how to consider the genesis of the coalitions, and how to conceptualize the fragmentation of the controversy on diverse arenas. Fundamentally, the focus lies on the effect of temporality on the controversies. The aim is to address the actors' changing rationalities, which are bound to the interaction's contextuality and temporality (Cefaï 1996: 51). This temporalization enhances the analysis by showing that all the participants do not contend simultaneously in the same arenas: That has fundamental consequences on the formation of their beliefs as well as on the structuring of the controversy. Political sociology is particularly helpful, because of its focus on the constant actualization of actors' convictions in relation with their socializations and position (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002). This further conceptualization of the actors, arenas and temporalities at stake during the policymaking process allows capturing the factors influencing the structuring of beliefs.

3.1 Towards an Analysis of the Coalitions' Long-Term Genesis

Avoiding analyzing the coalitions' beliefs as data preexistent to the controversy requires two precautions: retracing the institutionalization of the different sectors included in the policymaking process, and proceeding to a close reconstruction of the involved actors' trajectories (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002: 66). Tracing the long-term history of a public policy aims at denaturalizing the politico-administrative arrangements under study. In order to qualify the different professional, associative, political and administrative sectors involved in a policymaking process, by following Patrick Pinell (2002: 5-6), we will talk of a thematic space of activities related to one policy subject. The author proposes to view the thematic space as composed of multiple and fragmented fields of action, nevertheless united by the fact that they partly shelter debates and activities on a common theme. The long-term emergence of the whole thematic space has to be retraced prior to the outbreak of the controversy. The advantage

of this notion is that it takes into account the trajectories of the totality of the actors that will sooner or later intervene in the policy formulation, even if they are long excluded from the public decisional system. In this sense, this notion is more inclusive than the concept of policy subsystem because it integrates in the analysis actors who have not yet been included in the official decisional system, but whose activities nevertheless have repercussions that affect it. The importance of analyzing out-of-power groups has also been underlined by ACF scholars (Kübler 2000; Nohrstedt 2010: 323). Taking into account these groups only at the moment when they directly intervene in the official policy-making means adopting a state-centered perspective, and neglecting important factors contributing to beliefs. Their activities outside the decisional process can have dramatically important effects on the policy formulation and on the ulterior dynamic of the controversy.

The second precaution -which is to retrace the (collective) trajectories of each identified (collective) actor- aims at diachronically and synchronically capturing the birth and evolution of the different sub-currents involved in a thematic space. This leads to adopting a relational view of the alliance and confrontation processes between the sub-currents of a coalition. From this point of view, the various mobilized groups of actors are analyzed in a differential way (Filleule 2001), because the rationales for championing a cause are eminently diverse (Mathieu 2004). Furthermore, the controversy's shifting gravity center (Muller 2006: 41-46) has to be found inductively by tracing the theme's peregrination among the different administrative, political, professional and media arenas, as well as the scientific and expert forums³, involved in a fluid and polycentric thematic space. Each of these arenas gives a particular impetus to the advocacy activities, and thus a particular shape to the collective trajectories. Yet, -being less standardizing than the policy subsystem- the notion of thematic space takes into account the fact that each policymaking

³ About the difference between forums and arenas, see Hassenteufel/Surel 2000: 15. However, for simplicity's sake, we use here only the term arena, to designate the multiple scenes where the struggle is actualized, and the debate redefined.

arena functions according to its own rules. In this way, every forum where the controversy occurs is included, but each is analyzed in its particularities. Thus, the notion of thematic space allows analyzing both the groups excluded from the decisional system, and the effects induced by the fragmentation of the controversy on different arenas generating each a proper dynamic of debate.

Thus, in our case studies, we used several concepts of political sociology to analyze the coalitions' long-term genesis: the socialization, the collective action repertoire, and frame analysis' concepts. The aim was to understand how actors' preferences are multidimensional ongoing dimensions (Muller 2006: 35), and how beliefs are concretely embodied in social actors during the course of action (Berlivet/Sawicki 1994: 113, Gaxie 2002). This focus requires a close study of the micro-mobilization processes (Kübler 2000). First, the notion of socialization was used to understand the structuring experiments in which actors' convictions are anchored and continually actualized (Gaxie 2002). More particularly in our case, the study focused on the actors' professional and political socializations that shaped their beliefs about harm reduction. This notably required detailing the particular gateway they have had with the theme. We then studied the collective trajectories of the groups engaged in the controversy, their relationship to the state's decisional system (Offerlé 1994), and the aggregation effect of collective action (Gaxie/Lehingue 1984). This allows understanding of the long-term logic of competences' and beliefs' structuring. In fact, the convergence of actors' multiple investments -that are sometimes even contradictory- into one cause is crucial to take into account, because it constitutes the very motor of the collective action. The particular beliefs and competences that result from the collective socialization at a given time determine the manner in which the mobilized groups handle the theme (Mathieu 2002: 92-95), and hence structure the controversy. Thus, retracing the socializations aims at analyzing the multiform meanings invested by engaged actors (Gaxie 2002). This focus helps at understanding how coalitions actually become coalitions, instead of taking their existence as the analytical point of departure.

Second, in order to follow the fruitful proposition to complete public policy analysis through the study of the excluded groups' strategies with the help of social movement theory (Kübler 2001), we used the concept of repertoire of collective action (RCA) (Tilly 1978)⁴. The aim is to analyze how the actors excluded from the policymaking process precisely influence the public action because of their external critical position (Meyer/Staggenborg 1996: 1629-1630). The focus lies here in the exclusion phase. In fact, the groups' identities and resources are determined by their particular mode of emergence in the thematic space. In turn, these parameters shape the groups' strategies (i.e., the manner in which these excluded groups try to modify the frontiers of the decisional system) (Favre 1992; Lagroye 2003; Offerlé 1994: 144). As the activities of these excluded groups have fundamental repercussions on the latter treatment of the issue, they have to be included in the analysis from their birth - even if they are not co-opted in the initial policymaking process - in order to understand their attempts to question the state's choices. This analytical focus is precisely operationalized through the RCA concept, which concentrates on the instruments and strategies chosen by the mobilized groups to express their claims. Moreover, the groups' repertoires of collective action are eminently evolving, and thus indicative of the groups' position and composition (Fillieule 1997: 208-211) and of the overall thematic space's structuring.

The RCA permits the analysis of ideas as dependent variables, because of its focus on the constraints that weight on the structuring of beliefs in the course of action. Fundamentally, through the RCA, collective action is viewed as a succession of symbolic, but also practical engagements. The perspective entails here a pragmatic understanding of action (Dodier 2003; Mathieu 2002: 92-95). The RCA selected by the groups reveals how actors' calculations are constrained by the objectivation of their past experiments. In turn, that channels their definition of new situations and their anticipations (Mathieu 2004: 135). The RCA concept

⁴ The RCA is the tool chosen by mobilized groups for expressing their claims. As it produces specific effects, this choice has crucial repercussions on the ulterior developments of the struggle.

operates as an indicator of these constraints upon the groups. The focus on actors' practices allows overcoming the bias of an excessively cognitivist perspective that incurs the risk of adopting an evolutionist vision of change (Laborier 2003: 429). Instead of invoking a global social propensity, the analysis focuses on dimensions that are possible to grasp analytically (Hassenteufel/Smith, 2002: 61). Being a precise indicator of the group's configurational constraints and resources at a given time, the RCA permits a precise and contextualized analysis of the structuring of beliefs. The central focus lies in the group's collective trajectory in the thematic space. Depending on this trajectory, the group has certain cognitive resources and pragmatic competences available (Mathieu 2002), as well as a specific position in a configuration that constrains the range of its opportunity of actions. All of these factors, mediated by the collective socializations, give shape to the claim-formulation as well as to the claim-making activities (Offerlé 1994: 108). The analysis also aims at understanding how the incentives to mobilizations are maintained (Gaxie 2005; Kübler 2000; Siméant 1998: 139-155; Siméant 2001). The evolution of these dimensions is observable in the micro-socialization spaces where these incentives are collectively -and continuously- constructed and activated (Kübler 2000). In sum, the context is analytically captured in the way the involved actors understand and mediate it (Berlivet/Sawicki 1994: 126). Thus, far from postulating that action (i.e., the claim-making activities) unilaterally derives from ideas, the coalitions' beliefs are also seen as emerging from their practical activities, which can be analyzed through the RCA.

In order to analyze how actors' purposes occur during the action (Mathieu 2002), the RCA must be analyzed from a double point of view. From the one hand, a study of the successive RCA used by the same coalition through time gives precious information on the shifting status of the coalition in the broader thematic space. From the other hand, analyzing the various RCA used by different sub-streams of a coalition at the same moment shows how one coalition's beliefs are polymorphous. It allows, for example, understanding the process by which actors decide to publicize or to politicize a theme, thus transforming it. The kind

of RCA chosen by actors leads the theme to be brought into specific arenas – which include and exclude specific actors- and consequently shapes the controversy. Hence, the RCA offers a mean to examine policy change without considering it as purely incremental, or conversely, as imposed by exterior global macro-factors that are too vague to be analytically captured. From this point of view, policy change is not conceived as a linear phenomenon induced by “ideas”, but rather as anchored in action and interaction frames (Laborier 2003: 427-428).

Third, if we assume that beliefs do not necessary preexist to either the policymaking process or the controversy, it is crucial to analyze the constant symbolic work of idea shaping and formatting that is done by the coalitions’ members. This analysis requires avoiding analytically homogenizing the coalitions. By acknowledging the heterogeneity of their composition, we can focus on the internal collective negotiations at the heart of the belief-shaping activities (Mathieu 2002: 89; Offerlé 2004). The frame analysis perspective is a useful framework for examining the structuring of actors’ cognition within collective action (Kübler 2001: 627). We saw that the ACF supposes that one coalition’s members share a set of common beliefs, which leads them to coordinate their actions in order to translate these beliefs into policy programs. In the same way, cognitive approaches regard the actors as being impregnated by the values induced by a sectorial referential. However, the sociology of mobilization has stressed the importance of taking into account the heterogeneity of the actors’ investment in one cause (Broqua/Fillieule 2001; Mathieu 2004; Offerlé 2004; Siméant 2001). The analysis focuses not only on the way the actors shape the groups, but also on the way the groups shape the individuals (Sawicki 2003: 126). From this point of view, collective action is not seen as an instrumental mean for people to transpose preexisting agendas into actions (Cefaï 1996: 51). The linear sequence that views acts as deriving from ideas is thus nuanced in favor of a more tangled vision that takes into account the situations’ contingency (Muller 2006: 37-38). In fact, on the one hand, shared beliefs do not necessary lead to collective action (Kübler 2001: 625-626). On the other hand, engagement in action can precede the formation of

shared convictions on a theme (Benford/Snow 2000; Duriez/Sawicki 2003: 19; Offerlé 1994: 49).

While the meanings attached to a cause -leading various types of actors to engage themselves- are diverse, the unification of the argumentation is the fruit of a constant interpretive work (Benford/Snow: 2000: 615). Frame analysis points at the cognitive alignment processes occurring within the mobilized groups. These framing activities both shape the beliefs, but also direct the collective action in a particular direction. Thus frame analysis opens a fruitful path to examining the coalitions' activities of self-motivation and self-presentation⁵. As one coalition's composition is diachronically evolving, as well as synchronically crumbled, it is judicious to analyze the interactions between the coalitions' configurations, the perspectives of their members, and the way they present their diagnoses and their claims (Cefai/Trom 2001: 56). Their framing activities are used to position themselves in relation to their rivals, to maintain the motivation of their participants, and to win external supports (Benford/Snow 2000; Wagner 1997). Consequently, the coalitions' framing activities – be they internal or external, publicized or not, official or officious – have to be analyzed related to the moment when -and to the arenas where- they occur.

3.2 The Controversy's Fragmented Localization

This leads to the second point that requires conceptual specification: the places where the interactions of the policymaking processes take place. We postulated that the policy formulation sphere is not an undivided enunciation scene, and that its frontiers are not one-dimensional. Furthermore, different particular dynamics are induced by the diverse arena where the debates take place. It is hence necessary to conceptualize the spatial and temporal superposition of these diverse policymaking arenas

⁵ However, the utilization of those concepts requires being aware of the numerous criticisms that have been addressed to frame analysis. One of them is that it overemphasizes the role of representations to the detriment of the contextual factors. A second warns about an excessively strategist use of the notion of framing processes (Benford 1997; Mathieu 2002: 87-88).

(François/Neveu 1999: 49). The cognitive approach elaborated by Pierre Muller and Bruno Jobert fruitfully refined this aspect of public policy analysis. The two called for further sociologizing the analysis of public action by putting the emphasis on the constant interactions between actors' cognitive matrix and their activities in the decisional process. Especially important are the arenas where these activities take place. Hence, the acceptance of one public diagnosis goes through the differential functioning of various policy forums (Muller 2006). Conceptualizing the policymaking process as split into several forums constitutes a major contribution of cognitive approaches to public policy.

The differential analysis of the multiple places where public policy recipes are elaborated implies taking into account the fact that each arena functions according to its own rules, its own temporality, and its proper historicity (Muller 2006: 52). Besides, the decisional system's configuration is changeable (Jobert/Muller 1987: 37). The continuous shifts in the struggle make the respective weight of each forum vary through time. The examination of the stakes and constraints of each forum facilitates a better understanding of the groups' behavior. Significantly, not only the confrontations between the coalitions are influenced by the circulation of the theme through different policymaking arenas, but also the coalitions' beliefs themselves. Different sub-currents of a same coalition can simultaneously interact in different forums, thus pulling the coalition in antagonistic directions. Consequently, it is helpful to retrace the theme's course through the diverse arenas, and examine its repercussions on the theme's modality of enunciation (Favre 1992; Lehingue 1990: 111).

This includes examining which stakes are progressively attached to the theme, and what framing of the theme results from these processes. In fact, each arena requires particular types of resources to enter into it, selects certain kinds of participants, and defines the legitimacy on behalf of which these participants can seize the theme (Favre 1992; Gaxie/Offerlé 1985: 107). Thus, the analysis takes into account the fact that each enunciation scene comports a set of particular opportunities and constraints: it induces specific anticipations and therefore proper self-presentation and theme-presentation strategies. Furthermore,

each arena involves a certain horizon of possibilities, as well as specific taken-for-granted cognitive shortcuts (Cefai 1996; Cefai/Trom 2001; Favre 1992; François/Neveu 1999; Muller 2006; Offerlé 2004: 60). Finally, the controversy has changing degrees of heteronomy to each arena, according to the developments of the debate. The heteronomization of the controversy to one arena means that the dynamic of the debate is indexed to the particular rules, stakes and dividing lines that characterize this arena (Favre 1992; Gaxie 1990: 7; Gaxie/Lehingue 1984; Lagroye 2003). Consequently, the heteronomization processes to one or another arena are factors that profoundly affect the evolution of beliefs. For example, when the controversy is heteronomized to the political sphere, its resolution is no longer a confidential matter of experts, but rather a political matter bounded by the functioning of the political arenas (Offerlé 2004: 76). In this regard, the examination of the controversy's publicization and politicization processes (Lagroye 2003) is crucial in contextualizing the actors' activities.

Finally, the mediators, who are able to play at the intersection between two distinct universes of meaning and action, make the link between the different public policy's arenas. By providing the translations from one forum to another, these individuals combine together heterogeneous logics (Muller 2006: 68-69, 32). Through the mediators, the informational flow is transferred along the various arenas that function according to different codes. Focusing on the mediators particularly helps understanding the alliances between multiple interest groups that progressively enlarge the coalitions. In this regard, the analysis of the policy mediators' multi-positionality is crucial. Indeed, the mediators translate the issue into a new arena according to their own preoccupations, as well as according to this arena's rules. We see here that the more actors and arenas involved, the more public policy meanings and cognitions are drawn from disparate information (Muller 2005: 166). Importantly, the mediation processes generates specific *liaisons obligantes* that links different groups of actors during the alliance process (Offerlé 1994: 130). These partnerships are made of the crossbred favors accorded, and the mutual obligations contracted, among groups engaged together in

collective action (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002: 71). By building these partnerships, a coalition is gaining new advocates for its cause, but must in turn accept the metamorphosis of the issue. Their analysis allows to understand the successive metamorphosis of the theme according to which actors appropriates it.

Analyzing the reasons why groups decide to bring one theme into a new arena implies taking into account their position in the thematic space's configuration. The transfiguration effects of the mediations have then to be detailed (Gaxie 1990: 8; Gaxie/Lehingue 1984: 62). In the case of a public policy controversy, it is particularly important to examine the modalities of the theme's emergence in the political arenas (Favre 1992: 10). In fact, the politicization attempts aim to modify the balance of power (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002: 71), by subverting the frontiers of the decisional system (Lagroye 2003: 360-363). The analysis has then to differentiate the functioning of each political arena⁶, to investigate their mutual links, to examine the stakes of the political competition and the connections between the elected and the non-elected actors involved in the mediation process (Favre 1992; François/Neveu 1999; Offerlé 1994, 2004). These processes are of higher importance in understanding the progressive shaping of the theme (Lehingue 1990: 126). All of these factors determine how a theme that is translated in a new arena is made compatible with the importing actor's -or organization's- perception (Spanou 1991: 55). Thus the imported theme is filtered, and new stakes are grafted onto it (Collovald/Gaïti 1990: 10; Lagroye 2003: 365).

4 Methodology

We will now detail the methodological consequences of this analytical focus. We have argued in favor of retracing the coalitions' long-term births, and analyzing the controversy's dynamic according to its fragmentation on different arenas, in order to understand how ideas change in the course of action, and thus to construct beliefs as dependent variables. Accordingly, our in-

⁶ Whether they are executive or legislative, national or local.

depth studies were based on a definitely processualist approach, paying a particular attention to the temporal chain of actions. The evidences were based on the covering of each significant step and contextual factor of the process; this permits the elaboration of a case-based consistent web of explanations (Blatter/Blume 2008: 320-322). Hence, the inferences within each case study were drawn from the demonstration of strong multidimensional links between the variables. Then, in a second step, the results of the case-studies were compared, in order to bring to light the factors leading to the differential outcomes (in our case: the (non)politicization of harm reduction policies, and their (non)rallying to a right/left cleavage).

The comparison is therefore a very useful way to control the weight of each factor, and opens the door to moderate generalization. This permits disentangling the structural and the temporary elements that influence policymaking (Jouve 1995: 135). It allows to study ideas as dependent variables instead of considering them as pre-constituted data. More precisely, in our case, the professionals' and the politicians' beliefs about harm reduction policies dramatically differ in the two studied cantons, which gives us the opportunity to constitute these beliefs as dependent variables. The comparison of different harm reduction policymaking processes that took place in these cantons at the same time allows us to examine the differing beliefs about drug policies. In fact, the two compared cantons are exposed to very similar macro factors (such as the national context, the cantonal politico-administrative institutions, and the HIV prevalence among drug users). Hence the comparison can focus on the more micro factors that led to the (non)emergence of two contending coalitions (and therefore of differing beliefs) on the theme. As these factors arise during the course of the coalitions' constitution and of the debate's journey through various arenas, a thin reconstruction of these two processes illustrates in what regards the professionals' and the politicians' beliefs on harm reduction do not exist per se outside these specific chains of events. Therefore, through a process-analysis of the long-term policymaking process, we could identify the independent variables leading to the formation of different beliefs for similar actors in the two cantons.

This analytical focus had four methodological consequences on our investigation procedure. First, in order to take into consideration the actors and processes that intervene outside the decisional system, and before the controversy's eruption, we broadened the field of data gathering. We saw that neglecting this analytical phase can lead to a tautological explanation, where at the end the winning coalition is somehow the stronger. While the focus on the sole statist policymaking process tends to crush the actors' belief and positioning in a univocal data (Kübler 2000), the precise restitution of the actors' long-term trajectories allows the disaggregation of variables that influence the beliefs. Thus, we paid particular attention to all the relationships between public and/or private groups of actors involved in the thematic space, even outside the decisional system. As a methodological consequence, we extended the temporal scope where the data were gathered. We extensively retraced the complete trajectories of all the groups involved, from the very emergence of the drug addiction thematic space. The aim was to avoid focusing on the sole more visible and accessible arenas and groups.

Second, as we insisted on the necessity to analyze ideas in action, we paid particular attention to the private archives of the mobilized groups, the political parties' publications, and the internal State's documents, and conducted interviews as well. Through the concept of RCA, we constructed indicators pertaining to each coalition's sub-streams, such as: the degree of their inclusion/exclusion from the decisional system(s), their shifting compositions and collective identities as they result from their trajectories, and the progressive emergence of their goals and activities according to their resources and positioning (Offerlé 1994: 104/127). The focus lies on the constant renegotiation of the collective activity into the changing environment as it is perceived by the actors. The documentary analysis of the grey literature and the archives allows contextualizing the actors' statements. They are particularly fitted to observe the evolution of the stakes, as well as to objectivize the identity formation processes (Hassenteufel/Smith 2002: 61). These data permits comparing the arguments used as legitimate internally to each group with those used externally in front of each kind of interlocutor (Has-

senteufel/Smith 2002: 65). This proceeding allows identifying the configurational factors that constrain the discourse.

Third, the will to avoid homogenizing the coalitions went with a methodological endeavor to decompose them by punctuating the analysis with transversal cuttings of them. These cuttings aim at determining the different strata of actors that compose the coalitions at various moments; the trajectory of each of these strata has to be retraced (Broqua/Fillieule 2001: 68). This leads the analysis to focus on the changing determinants of collective actions. The examination of the shifts in the characteristics of actors involved facilitates observing how the progressive actors' selection is related to the changing stakes attached to a cause (Broqua/Fillieule 2001: 76-77). Thus, this methodological technique allows refining the analysis of the coalitions' multidimensional beliefs. In this way, we avoid attributing to a coalition a timeless composition and a collective identity that would be inferred from what we can observe at a given stage of the controversy (Siméant 2001: 65). Neglecting this fact would constitute a methodological error, anchored in a teleological epistemological stance.

Fourth, our analysis focused on the coalitions' strategies of self-presentation. Indeed, the public self-presentations processes –in case of publicization of the controversy - aim at generalizing the argumentation in order to convince a broader public. In this regard, they play a crucial role in shaping the controversy. The methodological translation of this analytical focus lied in the examination of the media reports and of the accounts of parliamentary debates, because of the importance of these arenas in the publicization and the politicization processes. The analytical crossing of more or less public positions permits understanding of the coalitions' respective strategies of dramatization or alleviation of the controversy (Gaxie/Lehingue 1984: 62). On the one hand, the focus is diachronic in order to retrace the shifts in the debate's center of gravity. On the other hand, the focus is also synchronic in order to see to what regard the dramatization of the debate in one arena affects the developments of the debates in the other implied arenas (Collovald/Gaïti 1990: 13). That shows how certain arenas can impose their categorizations to other arenas

(Favre 1992; Offerlé 2004: 76). Such a task implies retracing the disseminations of interpretative frameworks and semantic categories among the data gathered in each arena (Cefai/Trom 2001: 64). This methodological proceeding discloses how the coalitions' stances are progressively contorted by their fragmentation on several arenas.

5 Exemplification

In this section we present our case studies on harm reduction controversies in two Swiss cantons⁷. The study retraces how the progressive emergence of the harm reduction theme about drug addiction from the end of the 1980s led to a highly politicized policymaking controversy in the canton of Vaud, where a decisional system including very few actors was progressively replaced by a confrontation between two large advocacy coalitions contending with each other in various policy formulation arenas. An initial conflict between the drug addiction workers was redoubled by a long-term communal and cantonal parliamentary controversy during the 1990s. Thus in Vaud, the whole harm reduction policymaking process was highly contentious. We compare this process with that of the canton of Geneva, where harm reduction policymaking was a matter for professional specialists, which never came up to a controversy. We also question why the struggle in Vaud gradually led the two coalitions to reconfigure themselves along a right/left political axis, whereas the subject is politically consensual in Geneva.

Concerning the research design, we chose two cantons which both have a large city, are exposed to the same regional context, have alike formal politico-administrative structures, and have dramatically differing outcomes as regard harm reduction policies. These facts allow us to concentrate on the political, admin-

⁷ Harm reduction policies aim at the reduction of drug-related harm. They include low-threshold measures -such as sterile syringe distribution, injection rooms, or health and social care centers-, as well as medium-threshold measures, such as methadone dispensation. The philosophy that lay behind these politics is that drug users must be protected from AIDS during their consumption phase, and that these lower threshold measures facilitate the passage towards the high-threshold ones, i.e., detoxification treatments and residential therapies.

istrative, and professional interactions that configure each cantonal drug addiction space. Actors' beliefs about harm reduction are constructed as the dependent variables. The comparison between the two cantons demonstrates that the highly controversial nature of the debate in Vaud cannot be attributed to some inherent specificity of the harm reduction theme. On the contrary, the different outcome (i.e., the coalitions' beliefs) in the two cantons in a similar macro context allow us to search for the factors that progressively led to shaping the ideas about harm reduction in two opposite ways in Geneva and Vaud.

5.1 The Genevan Case Study

5.1.1 An Integrative Professional Decisional System

The absence of controversy in Geneva is particularly due to the constitution of an integrative professional decisional system, and to the impossibility for elected representatives to appropriate the theme. First, a drug addiction unit had already been established at the psychiatric public hospital before the AIDS epidemic. The unit acquired the confidence of the local authorities and enjoyed a considerable therapeutic freedom. With the explosion of the epidemic, the unit's director quickly used its symbolic and material resources to initiate medium-threshold therapies (i.e., methadone dispensation). The politicians did not intervene in this medical decision to lower the therapeutic entry threshold, and the discussion remained internal within the hospital. Second, since 1986 a private foundation had been offering medium-threshold treatments. Since they were subject to a private law regime, the foundation's therapeutic decisions were difficult to attack. These two first factors shaped the institutional configuration of the drug addiction professional space in Geneva. This institutional configuration gave considerable power to these two organizations -the public hospital and the private clinic-, allowing them to control the cantonal harm reduction set-up.

Third, the Genevan high-threshold residential treatment center ran therapies according to the "free demand paradigm," in which only self-motivated residents were accepted. Accordingly, its therapeutic team did not view as problematic the possibility for drug users not yet ready for a detoxification to benefit from lower-threshold measures. Consequently, this third institution did not

perceive itself concurrent to the two other ones. Hence, this third factor is a matter of specific professional socialization. Fourth, in Geneva the low-threshold measures were promoted by actors who never labeled themselves as drug addiction professionals, but definitely as AIDS prevention professionals. A sterile syringe distribution program was launched in 1991 under the aegis of an AIDS association, thus framing drug users as a target group like any another group. That led each subtask in the drug addiction professional space to be well delimited, thus avoiding conflict between the drug addiction therapists and the AIDS prevention professionals. This fourth factor regards the specific theme-framing induced by the existence of a well-organized AIDS professional group in the canton.

Fifth, since 1980, an extra-parliamentary cantonal commission—one that brings all the drug addiction professionals together—exists in Geneva. The commission functioned as a confidential decision-making and contention-solving mechanism, and ensured the monopoly of the professional experts on the theme. After debating in the commission outside the political sphere, the professionals of the low, intermediate and high threshold presented a united front to the authorities. The commission's decisions were only then ratified by the cantonal executive. Later, when the harm reduction theme came up in the Genevan cantonal Parliament, potential opponents could not capitalize on it because they did not have the legitimacy to argue with these coordinated specialists. Thus, the parliamentary parties consensually accepted the issuing of trial of heroin prescriptions in 1995 and the opening of an injection room in 2001. The existence of this integrative extra-parliamentary expert commission is a further factor explaining the long-term structuring of actors' beliefs about harm reduction policies in Geneva. First, the location of the harm-reduction debate in this forum ensures a dispassionate debate. Second, the existence of this forum prevents the heteronomization of the theme to the political arenas.

In sum, the expert mode of treatment of the theme in Geneva is due to the long-term institutionalizations of the AIDS prevention and the drug addiction professional and associative sectors. Both form a thematic space characterized by an integrative and consensual decisional system, monopolized by the experts. The professionals have been socialized in a universe of sense where the three thresholds-level measures—high, intermediate and low—are

understood as complementary. Due to this professional consensus, the theme of harm reduction cannot be seized by the politicians. It can reasonably be hypothesized that not every Genevan politician has strong convictions in favor of harm reduction policies. However, the thematic space is locked by the experts and their decisions cannot be called into question in the political arenas. Retracing the long-term institutionalization of the drug addiction thematic space allows the understanding of what factors prevented politicians from appropriating the subject. Hence, ideas have to meet a facilitating context even to be expressed, let alone to flourish. We will see now that none of the aforementioned Genevan features exist in Vaud. That permits us to constitute them as variables explaining the Genevan professionals' and politicians' beliefs on the very complementary nature of the high, intermediate and low threshold measures.

5.2 The Case Study of Vaud

5.2.1 The Institutionalization of High-Threshold Therapy in Vaud: The Monopoly's Birth

In the canton of Vaud, the institutionalization of the drug addiction therapy created a monopoly controlled by a single residential institution, the Levant. The cantonal executive created this therapeutic institution for disaffiliated drug users in 1971. The institution is not a medical one but a social one. At the beginning, the social educators who worked for the institution had to cope with the drugs of the 1970s, mainly LSD and cannabis. The institution was a low-threshold one. By the end of the 1970s, however, problems emerged within the educational team because of the growing number of residents who were using injected heroin. The director decided to abandon the "free demand paradigm" that prevailed, and to provide treatment for drug users placed there by force by the judicial authorities. An intense conflict erupted with the educational team, ending in demonstrations and in the occupation of the institution. Supported by the cantonal executive, the director fired every educator who refused to accept the new guidelines. Hence the advocates of the free demand paradigm were excluded from the drug addiction professional sector. From then on, the cantonal executive took the Levant's director as his

only advisor, along with the cantonal police chief. This event marked the repressive turn of drug addiction policies in Vaud.

The decisional system on drug policies is thus a closed one, composed by the member of the cantonal executive at the head of the health department, the Levant, the judiciary system, and the cantonal police chief. These actors believed that repression was the best way to prevent people from taking drugs; all their professional experience was structured around this belief. That made them later reject harm reduction measures, which require a low level of repression in order to reach drug users with the preventive message. In this cantonal configuration, the first factor shaping the beliefs about drug treatment is the monopoly of one single therapeutic institution. The Levant's institutionalization process led to a second important factor: the progressive constitution of a professional socialization that gives value to high-threshold intervention measures as the only valid therapeutic option. The third factors influencing beliefs' formation in Vaud is the role of the Levant's director as a policy mediator: he translated his particular professional experiment to the political actors as being the universal answer to the drug problem. Fourth, the creation of this wholly closed politico-professional decisional system is a factor that will have severe repercussions on the excluded actors' strategies. These four factors took place before the great public controversy in Vaud, but are of high importance in understanding the latter coalitions' formation.

5.2.2 The Rise of Low- and Medium-Threshold Claims: The Professional Rivalry

In the late '80s, new actors challenged the Levant's monopoly on drug addiction treatment: the "Working Group on Drug Addiction in Vaud" (WGDAV). They were the first to raise the harm reduction issue in Vaud. We will see that in order to question the closed and exclusive decisional system, this group had to politicize the theme. The main characteristic of the WGDAV is that its members were not recognized professionals, either in the field of drug addiction, or in AIDS prevention. In fact, there were no fully-fledged drug addiction professionals aside from those of the Levant in Vaud at that time. As to the medical sector, unlike in Geneva, there was no hospital unit fully specialized in drug addiction in Vaud. As to the associative sector, there was a cantonal

AIDS prevention association, but it was focused on other target groups than drug users and thus, never dealt with the harm reduction question. For its part, the WGDAV was composed of people who were working daily with highly marginalized people, including drug users. Most of the WGDAV's members were general practitioners, social workers, or religious street-workers, working for different organizations.

The WGDAV's members entered in mutual contacts for two reasons: they helped together drug users to find methadone treatment places in the private doctors' offices, and some of the WGDAV's members also started to distribute sterile syringes illegally. They gathered in meetings, and progressively framed the situation as unfair and modifiable; this double qualification of the situation is identified as an important incentive to collective action (Piven/Cloward 1977). On the basis of their professional experience and immediate expectations, they formulated a double plan of action: lift the ban on syringe distribution, and improve the access to methadone treatments. They attempted to discuss their ideas directly with the cantonal authorities, but were rejected. These failures, coupled with the fact that one of the WGDAV's members was an elected member of the cantonal Parliament, made them decide to bypass the closed executive decisional system, by questioning the Parliament. This member of Parliament (MoP) -a left-wing member- submitted a motion in 1991 in the name of WGDAV asking the Parliament to force the executive to lift the syringe ban, to facilitate access to methadone treatments in the canton, and to create a cantonal drug addiction commission that would include professionals other than the sole Levant's director. This motion was the first step in the politicization of the issue. The choice of this RCA is a clear indicator of the WGDAV's exclusion from the closed decisional system. Therefore, submitting a motion that would shift the decision center to the Parliament was the only way to go around this decisional system. The WGDAV tried to subvert the way addiction was addressed in the canton by questioning its frontiers.

As regards the links between the militants' social properties and the cantonal configuration of the drug addiction space, two factors are important to underline. First, the configuration did not leave room for drug addiction professionals besides the director of the Levant. This spurred the WGDAV to function as an out-of-power informal group that recruited its members by word of

mouth. As a consequence, the group was composed of participants with strong politico-professional affinities. In fact, all of the original members of the WGDAV had some left-wing activist background, and the group's cooptation mode functioned according to this implicit criterion. This was a first step in the process leading to the labeling of harm reduction policies as a left-wing cause in Vaud. Although this process was initiated upstream of the official political arenas, this left-wing orientation will be of particular importance to the issue of politicization. This shows the importance of retracing the long-term collective trajectories. Second, in order to counteract the Levant's monopoly and to gain recognition of their competencies, the WGDAV's members labeled themselves drug addiction professionals. That laid the foundations for the emergence of two adversarial professional coalitions. Indeed, whereas the needle question could be presented as a measure of broader AIDS prevention, the methadone question locates the entire debate in the field of drug addiction treatment. We saw that on the contrary in Geneva, the high- and low-threshold do not perceive themselves as rival, because the former are drug addiction professionals and the latter are AIDS prevention professionals.

Thus, the emergence of harm reduction claims in Vaud was framed from the beginning in terms of drug addiction treatment, and not only in terms of AIDS prevention. This is due to the fact that the syringe and the methadone claims emerged simultaneously, and from the same actors, contrary to Geneva. This framing of the issue paved the way for the professional struggle between the Levant and the WGDAV, whose therapeutic convictions were grounded in differential practical experiences. In fact, the therapeutic experience of the Levant's director with forced treatment led him to conclude that any harm reduction measures would provide comfort to drug users and lower their motivation to undergo detoxification. In contrast, the goal of the members of the WGDAV was to check the devastation caused by AIDS among drug users, and to create a contact with them that will increase their future chances to undergo a detoxification process. Having been the cantonal sole counselor about drug therapy for fifteen years, the Levant's director was faced for the first time with competition in his own field. This initial conflict between the two professional groups would then be redoubled in the political arenas. In sum, the theme's politicization in Vaud can so far

be explained by the following factors: the Levant's monopoly, the closed nature of the executive decisional system in the matter of drug addiction, the exclusion from this system of professionals working with street people, their gathering and their informal operating mode as a militant group, their self-labeling as drug addiction professionals, their left-wing orientation, their contacts with left-wing MoP, and their ability in bringing the struggle into the institutionalized political arenas by being able to submit a parliamentary motion.

5.2.3 Cantonal Parliament: The Political Emergence of the Theme

The modalities of emergence of the harm reduction theme on the cantonal parliamentary arena altered its properties by the adjunction of stakes that were specific to the political sphere⁸. Moving the discussion to this political arena gave an increased number of people—200 elected officials—the opportunity to express their opinions on the question. The process of the theme's heteronomization to the parliamentary arena was thus initiated. As the issue had never been hitherto discussed in the Parliament, the way the first politicians came to grips with it was crucial for the latter framing of the theme. In fact, one or two members of each parliamentary party immediately appropriated and modeled the theme according to his/her experience and preoccupations. All of these initial policy mediators had more or less direct links either to AIDS prevention, drug addiction, or street-work. They translated the question according to their own convictions, which were anchored in a broad range of experiences. Thus, a pitched battle broke out between policemen, parents of drug addicts, youth educators, members of AIDS prevention associations, pharmacologists, and the instigator of the parliamentary motion who was herself a physician prescribing methadone. Interestingly, these actors were already divided along the left/right cleavage; they spearheaded the debate during all of the 1990s.

As the interpretative antagonisms derive from the confrontation of differential universe of meaning and validation principles (Berger/Luckmann 2006; François 1990: 92), the condition are

⁸ More particularly, about the confusion between the clinical and the political argumentative lines during public debates on drug addiction, see Ehrenberg 1996.

fulfilled in the present debate. The main validation principle of the police representative was to fight drug traffic in order to reduce drug sales, on the basis of the belief that it would reduce the overall drug consumption. The parents of drug users wanted to protect youth from the dealers; part of the medical community wanted to reduce AIDS infections rates by providing medical assistance to drug users; street educators wanted to reduce marginalization by lightening the legal rules that they believed reinforced social stigmatization. When the actors' comprehension of the phenomenon takes root in very differential cognitive and normative matrix (Muller 2006), the emergence of interpretative confusions is facilitated. In our case, an initial and long-term structuring confusion flourished: the need to fight the drug epidemic was opposed to the need to fight the AIDS epidemic.

Thus, the theme was inevitably transfigured through the mechanisms of political representation. The temporality required by the political treatment of the motion (several debates laid in a one year interval) sequenced its appropriation by the elected representatives. This temporality's indexation on the constraints of the political field had important consequences. Between each parliamentary debate, the policy mediators had the occasion to brief their co-elected members on the question, according to the internal dynamics of each political party. While in the first debate, every elected official was speaking on behalf of him/herself, by the second one, two political parties already were arguing with one voice. The theme shaping started to be structured around political concerns and dynamics. Besides, the contestation of the cantonal executive's decisions by emerging actors in the Parliament was seen an attack against one particular party. In fact, the two cantonal departments involved in the drug addiction executive decisional system -Justice and Police, and Public Health- were at the time both held by Liberal members of the cantonal executive. Furthermore, these departments had long been in the hands of the Liberals in Vaud. Accused of neglecting the AIDS epidemic, these two Liberal elected representatives responded to Parliament that the drug epidemic was more dangerous, thus putting the two themes in competition. In the end, the final parliamentary vote would either support or disown the activities the Liberal executive chiefs had been pursuing for the past years. The personification processes tend to graft partisan logics onto the issues, thus reformulating them (Gaxie/Offerlé 1985: 133),

which was the case here. Consequently, we see the importance of taking into account the link of the drug addiction professionals with the MoP, as well as the long-term positioning of the political parties in the parliamentary and executive arenas. This analytical focus shows us how the right/left cleavage is induced by the specific configurational logic.

To sum up, a complex conjunction of factors led to the formation of beliefs about drug policies among politicians. First, the closed decisional system (i.e., the cantonal executive, the Levant's director and the police chief) was opened by the emergence of the theme in a second political arena: the cantonal Parliament. Second, the appearance of several new policy mediators -MoP who became the new drug specialists for their respective political party- caused the theme's interpretation to be torn in many opposite directions. This is due to the highly diversified universe of meaning and validation principles of these mediators, according to their personal characteristics. This diversity constitutes the basis of the fundamental interpretative confusion between the "war against drugs" and the "war against AIDS". The third set of factors weighing on the politicians' belief formation regards the transfiguring effects induced by the political representation mechanisms. In particular, these factors are the sequenced temporality of the parliamentary debates, the personification induced by the political game, and the tendency of each of the political parties to adopt unified positions. This results in the grafting of partisan logic onto the theme in the course of its political treatment. Hence during this phase, the theme was reformulated, and became widely heteronomized to the cantonal parliament.

5.2.4 Communal Parliament: The Fragmentation of the Theme

This first cantonal vote on drug addiction -which followed the WGDV's motion- ratified the *status quo*. The right-wing majority of the Parliament affirmed its support to the two Liberal executive chiefs' action by rejecting the WGDV's propositions. We won't detail here the following episode, but it is important to note that three years later, by changing its collective action repertoire, the WGDV made a successful alliance with the cantonal administration and managed to obtain the opening of a public

psychiatric unit for methadone treatments⁹. Despite having been forced by an administrative process to implement these medium-threshold measures, the cantonal executive continued to publicly affirm its strict adherence to the repressive model in the matter of drug addiction. Realizing that the situation was blocked at the cantonal political level, but still resolute to achieve syringe distribution, the WGDAV turned then to the communal political field. Thus, the group brought the debate to the political arenas of the canton's capital, Lausanne, a left-wing city. The emergence of the drug addiction and harm reduction themes in a second executive and parliamentary sphere widened the scope of the thematic space, as well as the diversification of its political appropriations. These further mediations and translations in new arenas altered the dynamic of the controversy by increasing its fragmentation.

In 1994, two socialist members of the communal Parliament submitted several motions, notably urging the communal executive to take over the distribution of sterile material. It is important to note that at this stage, there were multiple politico-professional interlinkages between the WGDAV's members and some left-wing legislative and executive communal elected representatives. Some of them were activists in the same organizations or worked in the same professional sectors. These kinds of socio-professional closeness make the translation of common social dispositions into the political language possible (Gaxie 2002: 175). In addition, at the time the socialists' motions were submitted, the question of the open drug scene in Lausanne was to the forefront of political concern. As the open drug scene was especially a burden the city had to bear, Lausanne's executive government started to blame the canton for its inaction as regards drug addiction. Shopkeepers' associations had been created upon this concern and appealed to the communal authorities about the nuisance gatherings of drug users caused. Besides, the strong media coverage of the Letten's drug scene's closing in Zürich¹⁰ provoked the rumors that the Swiss-German authorities would proceed to the repatriation of drug users to their home cantons. The fear of a massive arrival of drug users in Lausanne emerged.

⁹ This institutionalized the first professional group that became concurrent with the Levant: the medium-threshold therapists.

¹⁰ The Letten was the biggest open drug scene in Switzerland, and attracted a lot of media coverage.

Thus, the convergence of the beginning of drug addiction being viewed as a communal political preoccupation, the existence of a solution proposed by the WGDAV, and the politico-professional closeness of the communal authorities and the WGDAV led to a sustainable alliance between them. They agreed on the formulation of a whole set of low-threshold harm reduction policies.

Hence, the communal executive chose to address what had become a communal political problem with harm reduction tools instead of repression. Supported by the left-wing majority of the parliament, the communal executive commissioned the WGDAV to organize for the first time an official distribution of sterile needles, to establish problem-solving groups with the discontented shopkeepers, and to open day centers for drug users. With this process, we can observe the emergence of the factors that contribute to further shape the beliefs about drug policies: the theme's emergence in new political arenas (i.e., the communal executive and legislative arenas), the politico-professional imbrications between the WGDAV and the communal politicians leading them to seal an alliance under the auspice of left-wing political action, and the media-related context that increased the theme's visibility. The appropriation of the theme and its reformulation into a definitely left-wing political register was progressively made, along the functioning rules of the communal political arenas. Not all the left-wing communal politicians had pre-existent convictions in favor of harm reduction policies, but at the end, along an appropriation process, all of them supported these measures. The encounter of the two collective trajectories – that of the WGDAV and that of the left-wing communal political parties – led to the convergence of beliefs on this particular theme.

5.2.5 The Institutionalization of Low-Threshold Therapies: A Professional Group's Nascence

By the end of 1999, a complete low-threshold professional network had been set up in Lausanne. The communal authorities then became a full-fledged actor of the drug addiction thematic space. Whereas in Switzerland, the formal distribution of the tasks attributes the sanitary actions to the cantons and the social ones to the communes, by a progressive semantic shift, the municipality had managed to symbolically frame the syringe distribution programs as a social mission instead of a sanitary one.

The municipality accomplished this by including all the emerging low-threshold activities in the communal program for marginalized persons. This shift had important symbolic repercussions: it moved the issue even further away from AIDS prevention strictly spoken. This framing of the controversy accentuated the right/left cleavage. What had previously been a public health theme was now framed as an opposition between the left-wing's argument for helping dominated persons and the right-wing's argument to stop them from being assisted their whole life. The communal executive made a significant investment in financial terms. Its administration co-opted drug experts, and created a close partnership with the WGDV to implement the new harm reduction public policies. The low-threshold activities of the WGDV were completely metamorphosed by this recognition. In return, along with a process of *liaisons obligantes*, Lausanne's authorities took possession of the theme. These shifts profoundly altered the newly-enlarged coalition's intervention logic.

Lausanne increasingly endorsed the role of an active city struggling on its own to compensate for cantonal stasis. From then on, harm reduction regularly figured as an electoral theme in Lausanne's left-wing political parties, which historically have commanded the clear majority in the city. The crystallization of Lausanne's role as a left-wing pro-harm reduction city as opposed to a right-wing anti-harm reduction canton added a new competitive parameter to the professionals' dispute. The dynamics of demarcation between the cantonal and the communal authorities further fed the on-going political cleavage. Part of the communal right-wing elected representatives started to reject harm reduction politics. The theme's treatment became more and more fragmented. The political rivalry between the left-wing city and the right-wing canton alimented the alignment of the coalitions' beliefs along a partisan cleavage. Thus, the further appropriation of the theme by the local sections of the political parties, as well as the insertion of harm reduction activities in the local welfare system are two more factors of the two coalitions' belief constitution in opposite ways. Hence, retracing the coalitions' development and the theme's crossing along several arenas permits seeing that the political cleavage, far from being natural, is induced by a specific sequence of events. Two opposed professional groups emerged; they rallied political actors according to

the homology of their politico-professional preoccupations and to their preexisting interlinkages; and finally the partisan polarization induced by the rules of the political game and by the inverted cantonal and communal majorities dramatized the oppositions.

5.2.6 National Events, Local Opposition

Lausanne's emergence as a low-threshold actor in the nineties also coincided with two national events that sharpened its opponents' hostility. While Lausanne's harm reduction policies accentuated the proximity of the WGDAV to the local left-wing politicians, this period was also characterized by an intense recomposing of the local anti-harm reduction coalition. At the beginning of the nineties, right-wing anti-harm reduction policy mediators from Vaud took part in two important national debates on harm reduction policies¹¹. This participation gave them further resources and legitimacy to fuel the local debate. The Levant's director, the two Liberal members of the cantonal executive, and several cantonal and communal parliamentary opponents to harm reduction participated together in these two national debates and events.

As it was the case for the left, the links between the right-wing local elected representatives and the Levant during these national mobilizations crystallized strong *liaisons obligantes* among them. The professionals gave the elected officials the legitimacy to talk about drug users, while in turn the politicians defended the high-threshold therapies on the national political scene. During these national debates, the anti-harm reduction coalition faced a national pro-harm reduction coalition including the federal government, the federal public health administration, many cantons and communes, part of the church, and several medical actors. Thus, the participation in these national events was a very structuring experience for the local harm reduction opponents, who had the deep feeling to be circumvented by a strong national lobby that would impose harm reduction on the cantons. However, during these mobilizations, the opponents also accumulated a great deal of new counter-expertise to oppose harm reduction policies. Their participation in the national drug addiction poli-

¹¹ These debates of 1993 were related to the national therapeutic trials of heroin prescriptions and to the national "Youth Without Drugs" initiative.

cymaking process, coupled to the possibility to seize the theme in Vaud, made the opponents reuse in Lausanne the whole rhetorical repertoire elaborated during these national debates. Their sense that they were in the minority, as well as the fact that the issue was touchy in Vaud, led them to use scandalization as a mode of action. They systematically sought media attention during the whole nineties, in order to publicize in Vaud what was happening at the national level. This RCA contributed to a sharp dramatization of the issue in the cantonal public space. Hence, the national debates constitute further factors influencing the politicization and the publicization of the theme in Vaud. These processes increased the polarization between the local pro- and anti-harm reduction coalitions' beliefs.

The opposition to Lausanne's harm reduction was enhanced by the chronological overlapping of the national and the local events. This overlapping allowed the opponents to assimilate Lausanne's harm reduction policymaking to the concomitant national events. Thus, Lausanne's harm reduction opponents tried to establish symbolic connections between the federal program of heroin prescriptions, attempts to liberalize drug use¹², and the implementation of harm reduction policies in Lausanne. By doing so, they reinforced the framing of the debate in Lausanne in terms of drug policies rather than AIDS prevention policies. Finally, by the end of the nineties, the fight between the pro- and anti-harm reduction coalitions in Vaud had stabilized around this fundamental interpretative struggle. If the controversy had been analyzed from this point of departure, we would have only had an instantaneous snapshot of the political dispute, and would have viewed the beliefs about harm reduction policies as naturally divided along a right/left cleavage. On the contrary, the examination of the disputes over a long period of time shows that any public arena not only shelter the debates, but is fundamentally structured through these confrontations (Cefai 1996: 58).

The long-term analysis also highlights the factors that led to political polarization. The polarization caused by the media over-

¹² In the late nineties, a revision of the National Drug Law was under consultation. The discussion was about whether to depenalize the personal drug consumption, but it was often framed by its opponents as liberalizing drug consumption. The close links between national and local coalitions and debates in the matter of harm reduction policies in Switzerland has been highlighted by Kübler (2000).

exposure of harm reduction in Vaud removed the more nuanced positions. In fact, during public controversies, only the arguments that are more likely to allow generalization are maintained (Wagner 1997). For instance, the left-wing arguments for supporting harm reduction policies as an act of solidarity with the dominated people progressively faded in favor of the public health argumentation. The right-wing arguments of the high cost of harm reduction policies, as well as the shopkeepers' arguments were dismissed because they appeared to be too selfish¹³. The opponents' argumentation concentrated more and more on the presumed incentive effect of harm reduction policies in pushing the youth into drug consumption. From then on, both sides constructed a scientific-like repertoire of justifications. The fact that some positions were censored because of the properties of the new elocution arenas (i.e., the parliaments and the media) shows that the investments in the collective action within each coalition were heterogeneous. Such self-censorings are important indicators of the controversy's dynamic, for they reflect the underground appropriations of this polymorphous theme.

Hence, the struggle between the two coalitions progressively structured itself along changing dimensions, until its final crystallization around a key interpretative confusion. This confusion lied in the fact that the anti-harm reduction coalition increasingly presented harm reduction policies as fundamentally concurrent to the high-threshold therapies. From then on in Vaud, for a majority, making public choices in the matter of drug addiction was equivalent to making a choice between the fight against the drug epidemic and the fight against the AIDS epidemic, between a high overdose rate and a high seroconversion rate. This confusion cognitively structures the debates. At the end, the controversy culminated in 2003 in a double parliamentary vote –cantonal and communal- on the opening of an injection room in Lausanne, which was rejected by all the right-wing parties, and accepted by the left-wing ones. The arguments that had been developed during the national drug debates were locally reactivated during this vote, which was fully mediatized and dramaticized.

At that juncture, the cognitive possibility of rationalizing the refusal of the injection room by appropriating the whole argu-

¹³ Kübler identified this internal dissension, typical of the anti-harm reduction coalitions, as a concurrence between the quality-of-life sub-coalition and the drug-abstinence sub-coalition (2001: 635).

mentative line elaborated in the 1990s by the anti-harm reduction coalition existed, and was used by all the right-wing parties to refuse the injection room. The existence of this repertoire of justification thus favored the rallying of the theme to a complete right/left parliamentary cleavage, according to the structuring of the local policy configuration. Since these parliamentary votes, the debates on this issue have continued along a totally partisan divide in Vaud. Thus interestingly, our case-study shows that a high –and belated– degree of inclusion in the policymaking process can also lead to the use of veto points. The contrast with the Genevan case is striking: The cantonal Parliament of Geneva had consensually voted in favor of the opening of an injection room in 2001. For its part, the political cleavage in Vaud was due to the initial antagonism between the professionals, and to the great diversity of actors who had been authorized to simultaneously propose diagnoses on an overall “drug problem,” during political debates widely polarized because of their publicity. When each camp bases its convictions on such distinct politico-professional rationalities, the recourse to scientific arbitration is blurred (François/Neveu 1999: 36). This ended in the confusion between different stages of a public policy program that are seen as complementary in Geneva.

6 Conclusion

The Advocacy Coalition Framework has developed a useful theoretical framework for examining the debates taking place during the policymaking process, especially concerning public policies that are characterized by a polycentric decisional process. More particularly, by its focus on the interactions between adversary coalitions confronting each other for the imposition of a diagnosis on a problem, ACF provides useful guidance to understand public policy controversies. However, two analytical points deserve further specification: the analysis of the coalitions’ long-term genesis, as well as the conceptualization of the arenas where the debate emerges and the controversy progressively takes shape. At the light of our case studies, these two aspects were of particular importance in understanding why harm reduction policies are a matter of politico-professional consensus in Geneva,

while being dramatically politicized along a partisan cleavage in Vaud. As the drug addiction and harm reduction policymaking processes are characterized by a strong interdependence between professional and political actors, we proceeded to a close reconstruction of both the institutionalization process of the low-, intermediate- and high-threshold therapies, as well as of the precise emergence of the theme in the political arenas. The reconstitution of this long-term history illustrated the processes by which this particular subject of public health could provoke so differential political outcomes in two neighbouring cantons. As this was an emerging object –which was not yet constituted as a traditional right/left theme of cleavage- it was possible to decompose the whole process leading to the partisan politicization in one of the cantons. Thus, actors' beliefs about harm reduction were problematized, instead of being taken as the analytical point of departure.

The differential policymaking processes of the two cantons led to dramatically different beliefs in the matter of harm reduction for comparable actors in Geneva and Vaud. Interestingly, the two cantons were exposed to the same national context and had similar politico-administrative structures. This provided us the opportunity to genuinely address ideas as dependent variables, through a processualist theoretical and methodological stance, focused on ideas in action. Such a stance aimed at avoiding the analytical risk of a timeless analysis that would condense the policymaking process in one fixed place, time and composition. On the contrary, a temporalization of each stage of the controversy –the diversification of its appropriations, the enlargement of coalitions, the shifts in the decisional centers, and the fragmentation of the enunciation scenes- accounted for the dynamics of the debate. Particularly important were the analysis of the out-of-power groups before their integration into the policymaking process, the changes in the coalitions' composition, and the debate's progressive crossing along different arenas. These dimensions provided a changing array of constraints and opportunity, on which the issue was progressively indexed. Political sociology was particularly appropriate for analyzing these processes, because of its focus on the constant actualization of actors' beliefs within shifting

condition of action. Such a temporalized analysis focused on the heterogeneity of investments that lies at the heart of collective action.

From this point of view, actors' beliefs on a theme were neither explained by external macro-factors, nor considered as naturally preexisting to the policymaking process. In fact, our case-study illustrated that individual beliefs do not exist outside their configurational anchorage. The processualist stance allowed analyzing the mediations by which actors' beliefs were progressively structured and reformulated. These micro-processes took place along the debate's heteronomization to diverse arenas, its indexation to particular local and national events, and the corresponding shifts in the actors' horizons of possibilities. Accordingly, the analysis focused on the progressive enlargement of the coalitions, and on the increasing fragmentation of the debate on diverse action and locution scenes. These processes invigorated the controversy, by pulling it in diverse directions. In this sense, the struggle between coalitions during the policymaking process was not viewed as a zero-sum game. The strengthening of one coalition did not necessary lead to the weakening of the opposing coalition. Quite the reverse, in our-case study, the strengthening of one or other coalition went along with the extension of the policymaking process to new arenas, which symmetrically gave the rival group the opportunity to recruit new advocates in the cause, along a process of mutual reinforcement. The analysis of these processes illustrated the relative plasticity of beliefs in a controversial situation. Thus, the processualist analysis aimed at deconstructing precisely what had been eclipsed by the dramatized polemic: the crystallized positions on a public issue -fruit of a constant work of naturalization. This aim was pursued by focusing on the configurational nature of beliefs, and of their opportunities of expression, which constitute the driving force behind the controversies.

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