



# Public Policy as a Discipline: Bridge over Troubled Water?

*Symposium*

*How to Teach Social Sciences? Challenge for  
the 21st Century*

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# Content:

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- Problems of humankind
- Can Public Policy be of any help?
- Public Policy as a discipline in Central and Eastern Europe
- Challenges of instruction



# Humankind has not yet learned to manage its own affairs

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- The world is still too dangerous place for too many
- Consumption of resources exceeds the self-renewal capacity of the planet and is distributed very unequally
- Nation states are too weak to resist the rent-seeking strategy of globally operating multinationals
- There are threats of unforeseeable consequences of the utilization of new technologies
- Obfuscated responsibility for the political and administrative decisions



# The Roots of Bad Governance

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- Absence of global level of Public Administration *vis-à-vis* the global operation of the market
- Insufficient coordination between the various levels of governance
- Destruction of organic forms of social cohesion due to modernization
- Short-term interests prevail over the long-term considerations
- Negative feedback loop between the lack of responsibility of the politicians and the public



# Can Public Policy be of any help?

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It is the chief presupposition of *enlightenment* that the power of reasoning has been bestowed upon us to use it in solving the tasks that we are facing, no matter how challenging and extensive they are. Therefore *a rational human being* has to ask where the roots of insufficient capacities of governance lie so as to be able to seek and find a remedy.

One of available answers is: the main cause of these distortions is the underdeveloped Public Policy (as a scientific discipline and, as a consequence, a societal practice).



# Public Policy as a discipline

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Public policy is a discipline which uses the terms of reference of sociology, political science, economics, law, organizational science, public administration and other disciplines for analyzing and forecasting ways of formulating and implementing differentiated public interests bound to identification and resolution of various societal problems. At the same time, it is devoted to the institutionalized management of these processes via the public, civic and to a certain degree the commercial sector in a form that can be used in political practice. Public Policy is therefore a scientific discipline *sui generis* that cuts across many other scientific disciplines.



# Example 1: Dimensions of governance

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- Holism and multidimensional approach (rule of law, legitimacy, welfare, and control of resources)
- Multi-level governance (supra-national, national, regional...)
- Coordination of the market, state, media, and civic sector (see Example 2)
- Networks and networking



## Example 2: Public Policy Coordination: Government, Market, Media, and the Civic Sector

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The market, government, media, and the civic sector are rudimentary politico-economic mechanisms, functioning in democratic societies with market economies. In Public Policy, the key is to understand the advantages as well as the failures of all of them, and thus to be able to identify the fields of their potential interference and conflict, as well as synergy and mutually supportive application. The art of public policy making is to find an appropriate balance in their roles as regulators of public affairs.





# Models of maintaining social order

Regulative model	Regulative principle	Specialized scientific discipline
society	spontaneous solidarity	sociology
market	competition	economics
government	hierarchical control	law, public administration, political science
media	generalized informed consideration	Communication studies, political science
associations	harmonization through organization	organizational theory, sociology of social movements



# Public Policy as a scientific discipline in CEE: *state-of-the-art*

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- Considerable time delay in its development compared with the USA and, to lesser extent, with Western Europe
- Problem of „emancipation“ of the discipline among other social sciences
- Modest educational capacities at universities (Budapest, Bratislava, Prague...) and within in-service programs
- Ideological, methodological and/or disciplinary bias and short-termism of many research and advisory units and think-tanks



# Challenges of instruction:

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- Clutter of concepts and theories
- Methodological disorder
- Approaches to develop research skills
- Exposure to *praxis* (internships)



# Resources:

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Don't mind that we still have only a little boat!  
Let's build the bridge together!