
The Role of Actor Networks in Public Policy Formulation

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the role played by actor networks in the process of formulating public policy. With the increasing complexity in the public policy environment, the role of actor networks becomes crucial in influencing and shaping the resulting policy direction. This research uses a qualitative approach by collecting data through in-depth interviews and documentary analysis. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that actor networks play a crucial role in the process of formulating public policy. These roles include the roles of subjects with high importance but low power, key players with high interest and power, other followers who represent group voices that may be less heard, and supporters who have power but low interest. However, the process of formulating public policy is faced with a number of challenges, including the complexity of organizational structures, conflicts of interest between actors, lack of resources, and resistance to change. To overcome these challenges, close collaboration between all parties involved, open communication, and wise management of differences and conflicts that arise is required. Through these efforts, the policy formulation process can become more inclusive, responsive and effective in meeting the needs of society as a whole.

Keywords: actor networks, public policy formulation, cross-sector collaboration

1. INTRODUCTION

Policy implementation is an important stage in the public policy cycle, which begins immediately after policy enactment, whether in the form of laws or regulations (Faturahman, 2018). Implementation is broadly understood as the implementation of policies in which various actors, organizations, procedures and techniques work together to carry out policies with the aim of achieving predetermined targets (Meutia, 2017). Gonsalves, as described in Sandi (2020), explains that implementation actors are those who impact or are affected by development policies, programs and activities. They can be individual men or women, communities, socio-economic groups, or institutions in various dimensions at every level of society.

To be able to accommodate the implementation of these policies, there needs to be involvement of actors both in the government and outside the government through networks (Hanjarwati & Aminah, 2014). In a network perspective, the government no longer acts as a single actor. The government is required to be able to build a network between actors in every public policy making (Utami, 2018). The actors in question can be individuals or institutions (organizations). The network approach in public policy is experiencing rapid development with the growth of cluster and quango organizations as a result of interactions between government, the private sector and society. Policy networks contribute to changes in goals with the emergence of actors who are full of motivational values and interests (Suwitri, 2008).

In this context, the role of actors in policy implementation has a crucial role in determining the success of policy implementation. The role of these actors is usually divided into three main categories, namely government, private sector and society (Putri, 2021). The government has the main responsibility for ensuring policies can be implemented well, including providing resources, supervision and coordination between relevant institutions. The private sector also has a significant role, especially in terms of investment and

contribution to economic growth which is an important part of policy implementation (Komarudin & Rosmajudi, 2023).

On the other hand, society also plays a very important role in policy implementation. Active community participation, either through monitoring, feedback, or direct contribution in policy implementation, can strengthen policy legitimacy and ensure sustainability and accountability of implementation (Agindawati, 2019). Therefore, a deep understanding of the role of each actor and the dynamics of interaction between them is important in ensuring the success of effective and sustainable policy implementation (Nugroho et al, 2023).

Thompson's theory presented in Wakka (2014) identifies four types of actor roles based on the power and interests possessed by each actor in implementing policies or programs. First, actors with a high level of interest but low power are known as subjects. Second, there are actors with a high level of interest and power, who are called key players. Third, actors with a high level of interest but low power, are called followers (crowd). The four actors with a low level of importance but high power are known as contest setters. Understanding the role of each actor and the dynamics of interaction between them is important in designing effective and sustainable policy implementation strategies. By considering the strengths and interests of actors holistically, policy implementation can be more responsive to community needs and the dynamics of the social environment.

Actor networks, in the context of public policy, refer to a network of connections and interactions involving various related parties in the policy formulation process (Prita et al, 2019). This network includes individuals, community groups, organizations, government institutions, and non-government entities that are actively involved in influencing, shaping, and implementing public policy (Argenti, 2018). The complex dynamics of this network of actors not only include diverse interests and forces, but also complex interactions between them, which can significantly influence the success or failure of a public policy (Hardi, 2020). Understanding these complex interactions is crucial in designing and implementing public policies that are effective and responsive to societal demands.

Research on policy actors in public policy networks, among others, was carried out by Cobb & Elder (1972) who found that policy actors are policy communities consisting of the government, a group of public who participate under the initiator or opinion leader with pressure from the mass media. A policy network is a relationship formed as a result of coalitions between government actors, society, including private actors. (van Waarden, 1992). Actor networks have the concept of a social relationship that is bound by trust which is maintained and guarded by existing norms. This relationship can be viewed as an interaction that is interconnected with each other and forms a unified whole that is bound through a social network (Oktaviari, 2017).

The research entitled "The Role of Actor Networks in Public Policy Formulation" aims to analyze the role and dynamics of actor networks in the process of formulating public policy, as well as understanding how cross-sector collaboration between government actors, the private sector and civil society can influence the implementation of public policy. It is hoped that this research will provide an in-depth understanding of the complexity of the public policy formulation process, provide strategic recommendations to strengthen cooperation between actors, and encourage broader dialogue about the importance of involving cross-sector actors in formulating public policies that are responsive to community needs.

2. LITERATUR REVIEW

Research on policy actors in public policy networks, among others, was carried out by Cobb & Elder (1972) who found that policy actors are policy communities consisting of the government, a group of public who participate under the initiator or opinion leader with pressure from the mass media. A policy network is a relationship formed as a result of coalitions between government actors, society, including private actors. (Waarden, 1992). Actor networks have the concept of a social relationship that is bound by trust which is maintained and guarded by existing norms. This relationship can be seen as an interaction that is interconnected with each other and forms a unified whole that is bound through a social network.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods with descriptive studies in the form of written or spoken words and people's behavior that can be observed (Sugiyono, 2011). This research aims to provide a detailed description of a phenomenon regarding the role of actor networks in the formulation of public policy. This is done through a study or examination of the situation and conditions of the perpetrators, recipients of aid and those involved in it. This research seeks to provide an explanation of social aspects related to the role of actor networks in the formulation of public policy. The qualitative approach taken seeks to reveal and provide a comprehensive picture of the results obtained from interviews and data collection to understand the implementation of corporate social responsibility by positioning the company as the research subject and main implementer in the entire process. Data collection techniques use observation, interviews, documentation studies, and visual images.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

1. The role of actor networks in the formulation of public policy

As Thompson (2016) stated, the role of actor networks in formulating a policy or program is categorized into four types, namely as follows:

a) Actors with a high level of importance but low power are known as subjects.

Actors with a high level of interest but low power, known as subjects, play a significant role in the policy or program formulation process. Although they have a strong interest in the resulting policy outcomes, their capacity to directly influence the policy process is limited by resource limitations, access to political power, or institutional constraints. In many cases, subjects need the support and assistance of other actors, such as community groups, civil society organizations, or even government actors, to realize their interests in the policy formulation process.

Subjects' involvement in policy processes often depends on their ability to form strategic alliances with other actors who have the necessary power or resources. In some cases, subjects can leverage their access to unique resources or knowledge to form coalitions or advocacy groups that can amplify their voices in the policy process. Therefore, it is important for policy makers and practitioners to understand the important role played by subjects and to consider ways in which their needs can be met through effective cooperation and partnerships.

Fostering strong relationships between subjects and other actors, including governments or non-governmental organizations, can strengthen their ability to influence the policy agenda and ensure that their interests are taken seriously in the policy process. In addition, encouraging the active participation of subjects in public dialogue forums or consultation processes can be an important step to ensure that their voices are heard and taken into account by decision makers. By paying adequate attention to subjects and their needs, the policy formulation process can become more inclusive, ensuring that the diverse interests and perspectives of society are properly accommodated in the resulting policies.

b) Actors with a high level of interest and power are classified as key players .

Actors with a high level of interest and power, who are classified as key players, play an important central role in the policy or program formulation process. They are often the main driving force behind strategic decisions and policy directions taken by governments or related organizations. The involvement of such actors is not only driven by powerful interests, but also by their ability to use existing resources and influence to influence decisions that affect various aspects of society.

As a key player, this actor is usually involved in the policy formulation stage from the start, involved in the strategic decision making process, and plays an important role in determining the policy agenda that will be taken. Their presence in discussion forums and policy working groups often determines the direction of the resulting policies. Therefore, close collaboration with key players is crucial in ensuring that policies are produced that take into account diverse viewpoints and interests.

In an effort to ensure effective engagement of key players, it is important to facilitate open and transparent dialogue, as well as create mechanisms that allow for the constructive exchange of ideas and feedback. Strengthening openness and accountability in decision-making processes will help ensure that the interests of

society as a whole are reflected in the resulting policies. In addition, it is also important to recognize and appreciate the significant contributions of key players, both through formal recognition and through active involvement in policy implementation after decisions are taken. By recognizing the central role of key players and by ensuring their inclusive participation, the policy formulation process can be more open, responsive, and produce policies that are more effective in meeting the needs and aspirations of society as a whole.

c) Actors with a low level of interest and power are classified as other followers (crowd),

Actors with low levels of importance and power, classified as crowd followers, play an important role even though they may not have direct access to resources or significant political power. However, their role in the policy formulation process should not be overlooked, as they often represent the voices and interests of groups that may not be heard enough in the decision-making process. The existence of other followers often reflects diversity in society that may be overlooked by actors with more dominant power and interests.

To effectively involve other followers in the policy formulation process, it is important to create an inclusive, participatory space that allows them to contribute and share their perspectives openly. This can be done through public consultation forums, community meetings, or other participatory platforms that allow followers to voice their concerns and aspirations. By providing space for their voices, the policy formulation process can be more representative and responsive to various interests in society.

In addition, supporting the capacity and participation of other followers through training, education, or community empowerment can also increase their role in the policy process. By increasing their understanding of policy mechanisms and empowering them to take an active role in the process, other followers can become powerful agents of change in championing their group's interests and aspirations.

It is also important to build solid working networks with organizations or community groups that represent other followers, and involve them in the planning and implementation stages of policies. By ensuring the ongoing involvement of other followers, the policy formulation process can reflect the needs and aspirations of broader groups in society, which in turn can strengthen the legitimacy and acceptability of the resulting policies. By listening to their voices and needs, other followers can become a force that drives positive change in the formulation of public policy.

d) Actors with a low level of interest but high power are classified as contest setters.

Actors with a low level of interest but high power, who are classified as supporters (contest setters), are parties who have the potential to significantly influence the policy formulation process even though they may not be directly involved in the initial stages. Although they may not have a direct interest in policy outcomes, the power they possess, whether in the form of resources, authority, or access to institutions of power, gives them the ability to shape and influence the course of the policy process.

In understanding the role of supporters, it is important to recognize their potential to bring about significant change, either supporting or hindering specific policies. They may use their power to advance interests that may not be directly related to the policies under consideration, or even to block changes that could threaten the positions or advantages they enjoy. In this context, it is important for policymakers and practitioners to understand the power dynamics and interests that influence supporters, and to manage relationships with them effectively. Communicating openly and continuously with advocates, by recognizing their interests and seeking common ground among existing interests, can help mitigate the potential risks associated with their presence in the policy process.

Additionally, building strong partnerships with advocates and engaging them in constructive dialogue can open up opportunities to find mutually beneficial solutions and support effective policy implementation. By recognizing the important role played by supporters and managing relationships with them wisely, the policy formulation process can become more inclusive, adaptive, and responsive to the various interests that exist in society. Thus, it is important for decision makers to actively monitor changes in supporting dynamics and to adopt strategies that can ensure that their presence does not hinder the ultimate goals of the policies formulated.

2. Challenges of actor networks in formulating public policy

The following are some of the challenges faced by actor networks in formulating public policy:

a) Structural Complexity.

The complexity of organizational structures in actor networks creates significant challenges in the process of formulating public policy. The various entities involved, including government organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, often have different visions, missions, and interests. These differences can result in tensions and conflicts that hinder the process of coordination and consistent agreement

formation. Additionally, these complex structures can also lead to increased bureaucracy and the length of time required to reach agreements, as each actor tends to maintain autonomy and control over their own agenda.

In facing these challenges, strong collaborative efforts and effective communication between the actors involved are essential. Building a deep understanding of differences in goals and interests between actors, while remaining focused on points of commonality and shared goals, can help reduce tensions and increase cooperation between various parties. Additionally, adopting inclusive and participatory decision-making mechanisms can facilitate open dialogue and speed up the policy formulation process by enabling various parties to contribute constructively. Thus, a deep understanding of the complex dynamics in the organizational structure of actor networks and the implementation of effective strategies can facilitate a policy formulation process that is more adaptive, coherent, and responsive to the needs of society as a whole.

b) Conflict of Interest.

Differences in interests between actors often cause conflicts that hinder the process of formulating public policies. When the actors involved have different or even conflicting agendas, the coordination process becomes complicated and cooperation between them becomes hampered. The competition that arises due to differences in interests can result in reduced efficiency in decision making and sacrifices towards common goals, which in turn can slow down the overall policy formulation process. Additionally, conflicts arising from these differences in interests can be detrimental to relationships between actors, creating tension and distrust that can hinder future cooperation.

In overcoming these challenges, it is important to encourage open and transparent dialogue between the various parties involved. Through discussion forums and meetings that facilitate the exchange of views and understanding, different actors can understand each other and find common ground between their differences. Additionally, adopting a compromise approach and seeking mutually beneficial solutions can help resolve conflicts that arise due to differences in interests. By building relationships based on mutual trust and cooperation, actors can work together towards achieving common goals, while still respecting the diversity of interests that exist within the actor network. Thus, managing conflicts that arise from differences in interests can help ensure that the policy formulation process runs smoothly and results in more holistic and inclusive decisions.

c) Lack of Resources.

Lack of resources is often the main obstacle for actor networks in implementing public policy. Limited funding allocations can limit their ability to implement well-planned programs, causing a reduction in the quality of services or final products provided to the community. In addition, a shortage of qualified and trained labor can slow down the policy implementation process, hinder innovation, and reduce overall operational efficiency. In addition, inadequate infrastructure or lack of access to necessary facilities can also limit the ability of actor networks to achieve targeted policy outcomes, especially in remote or less developed areas or communities.

In facing this challenge, coordinated efforts are needed to optimize the use of existing resources through innovative and efficient strategies. Diversifying funding sources, such as seeking funding from the private sector or donor agencies, can help overcome existing funding shortfalls. In addition, developing training and development programs to improve workforce skills and strengthening existing infrastructure through long-term investments can increase the capacity of actor networks to implement policies more effectively and sustainably. Through sustainable financing strategies and improvements in human resource and infrastructure management, actor networks can overcome the challenges of resource shortages and increase the positive impact of policy implementation.

d) Resistance to Change.

Resistance to change is a challenge often faced by actor networks in the policy formulation process. Some actors may be reluctant to accept proposed changes because they feel that such changes could threaten positions or advantages they have previously enjoyed. In addition, concerns about possible negative impacts on their interests can trigger disapproval or even attempts to hinder the success of policy formulation. This kind of resistance can hamper the decision-making process, cause delays or reduce the quality of the policies produced, and damage cooperation between the actors involved.

To overcome these challenges, it is important for stakeholders to understand the roots of resistance to change and to adopt effective communication strategies. Building awareness of the urgency of change and clarifying the long-term benefits that can be derived from new policies can help reduce resistance and strengthen support for proposed changes. Additionally, involving actors who have the potential to show resistance in the policy formulation process, by listening to and respecting their concerns, can help build trust

and reduce any tensions that may arise. By ensuring inclusive engagement and adopting an approach that is responsive to the concerns and expectations of all stakeholders, actor networks can overcome resistance to change and design policies that can be widely accepted and implemented successfully.

Overcoming these challenges requires close cooperation, open communication, and coordinated strategies among all parties involved. Careful planning, active involvement of various actors, and effective conflict management are also important to achieve sustainable agreement in formulating public policy.

5. CONCLUSION

The conclusions from the analysis of the role of actor networks in the formulation of public policy and the challenges faced in this process are as follows:

1. **Role of Actor Networks:** In the formulation of public policy, actor networks play diverse roles, including subjects with high interest but low power, key players with high interest and power, other followers who represent the voices of groups that may be less heard, and supporters who have power but low importance. Effective engagement of all these types of actors is critical in ensuring inclusiveness, representation, and overall representation of societal interests in the public policy process.
2. **Challenges Faced by Actor Networks:** Challenges faced by actor networks in formulating public policy include the complexity of organizational structures, conflicts of interest between various actors, lack of resources that limit policy implementation, and resistance to change that can hinder the decision-making process. Overcoming these challenges requires close collaboration, open communication, and coordinated strategies among all parties involved.

Thus, it is important for stakeholders in public policy making to pay attention to the roles played by various types of actors and to overcome challenges that may arise through open dialogue, effective cooperation, and wise management of existing differences and conflicts. In this way, the resulting policies can be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of society as a whole, thereby creating a significant positive impact on the communities served by the policies.

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