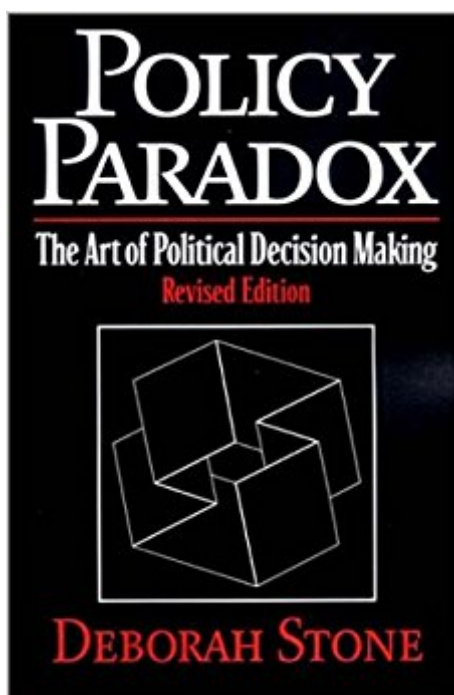


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# Policy Paradox: The Art Of Political Decision Making



## Synopsis

Since its debut, *Policy Paradox* has been widely acclaimed as the most accessible policy text available. Unlike most texts, which treat policy analysis and policy making as different enterprises, *Policy Paradox* demonstrates that "you can't take politics out of analysis." Through a uniquely rich and comprehensive model, this revised edition continues to show how real-world policy grows out of differing ideals, even definitions, of basic societal goals like security, equality, and liberty. The book also demonstrates how these ideals often conflict in policy implementation. In this revised edition, Stone has added a full-length case study as an appendix, taking up the issue of affirmative action. Clear, provocative, and engaging, *Policy Paradox* conveys the richness of public policy making and analysis.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Deborah Stone holds appointments as Research Professor of Government at Dartmouth College and Honorary Professor of Political Science at Aarhus University in Denmark. She has taught in undergraduate and graduate programs at Brandeis, MIT, Yale, Tulane, and Duke, as well as in universities worldwide where *Policy Paradox* is used.

Deborah Stone's "*Policy Paradox*" is an important work in the field of policy analysis. The subtitle is illuminating: "The Art of Political Decision Making." Her takeoff point is the following statement

(pages x-xi): "This new field of policy analysis supposedly devoted to improving governance, was based on a profound disgust for the ambiguities and paradoxes of politics. . . . In rational analysis, everything has one and only one meaning." In her own words, she (page xi) ". . . wrote this book to critique the field and to capture, I hope, a more inspiring and humane kind of policy analysis." Her basic point is that the rational models drawn from economics do not explain very well how policy analysis works. Nor, in her view, should it be the actual model for decision making. She contends that economic rationality often gives way to political reality, to accommodation to conflicting interests, to compromise, to values other than economic efficiency (such as liberty, fairness, and so on). The introduction opens the book strongly, with Stone noting policy paradoxes, where the economic rational model does not prevail and explain how things work. She argues (page 13) that "each type of policy instrument [e.g., inducements, rules, rights, for example] is a kind of sports arena, each with its peculiar ground rules, within which political conflicts are continued." The first chapter continues the theme, by speaking of the market (economics) and the polis (politics), with a nice table summarizing key points on page 33). She concludes that (page 34) "Problems in the polis are never `solved' in the way that economic needs are met in the market model." Two different realms, and what works in the market may or may not work in the polis. The book proceeds in three major sections: Part II focuses on broad goals (e.g., equity, efficiency, security, liberty); Part III examines problems (with chapters labeled as follows: symbols, numbers, causes, interests, decisions); Part IV focuses on solutions (or tools or instruments, such as inducements, rules, facts). In the end, the book examines nicely the tensions between economic rational analysis of policy ideas and the messier but inescapable political process as it addresses policy issues. The reader will be provoked to think about important issues upon encountering Stone's perspective. A very useful work on the bigger picture of policy analysis.

interesting book

Stone identifies four reasons for writing this book: 1) Rationality is a narrow conception of how humans think and feel; 2) the field of policy analysis is dominated by economics and its model of society as a market; 3) political science hasn't found a very convincing or satisfying explanation of how policy gets made; and 4) public policy and policy analysis worship objectivity and determinate rules (pp. xi, xii). With these observations, Stone sets out to unearth and describe the underlying assumptions and biases within analytic standards used to set goals, define problems, and judge solutions. An excellent introduction to policy making!

This one book explains why it's so difficult to establish policy. You don't just sit down and write policy, normally. Policy comes as a result of a political process. I recommend this book wholeheartedly.

Very stimulating reading and very applicable in many kinds of negotiations & meetings, not just "policy making" as in government. Her thesis is the "most books" assume policy should be rational and analyze when it is not. She argues that policy is INTRINSICALLY a paradoxical, conflicting process where (to greatly simplify) some people see A and others see B and others see C no matter how much data and rationality are tossed about, and that is HER starting point for discussing "policy making." I found it very stimulating and see wide ranging applications in my work and even outside work for these ideas. It's a fairly long book and not to be skimmed so it defies easy summary.

Every American should be required to read this. People complain about our government doing too much or taking too much money, etc... This gives you as an American a humorous smack in the face and makes you look at what it means to have the government that we do. Deb Stone is a genius! I love this book! I will make my kids read this. I believe we need to make this a required read for every American.

Good book. A must read for policy geeks. Gives a fresh perspective on policy writing and building support.

Completed my graduate degree...good stuff!

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