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Mismatch of Policy Theory and Policy Practice in Eastern Europe: Cross-Sectoral Comparison of Croatian Policymaking

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to improve empirical policy theory by examining Eastern European policymaking, using Croatia as a case for analysis. Data sources are published studies that describe 11 sectors from diverse policy areas. The whole material was coded by the rules of qualitative content analysis. The results show 15 basic features of Croatian policymaking combined into six policymaking types: administrative, analytical, economic, external, incremental, and political. All detected policymaking types were successfully connected to several policy concepts, theories, frameworks, and approaches. The analysis revealed three points of theory-practice mismatch that are fruitful for theoretical improvements: the need for mainstreaming Europeanization and policy transfer into policy theory; the need to modify rationalistic approaches for more empirical studies on obstacles and barriers to rationality in policymaking; and the need for adapting actor-centered approaches for a more broad application and empirical research of policymaking in Eastern Europe.

Key words:
cross-sectoral comparison, Croatian policymaking, Eastern Europe, empirical policy theory, qualitative content analysis

1. Introduction

Policy theory is becoming more and more sophisticated, rich, and ramified. Public policy conferences and panels are massively attended, and policy journals are numerous and have ever greater impact. The policy research community is growing rapidly and becoming truly international, gathering scholars from all around the world, working together on the refinement of policy concepts and theories. Still,

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theories in policy research in general are somehow tricky, due to the complexity in combining normative, positive or formal, and empirical types of theoretical work (Beyme 1996, 520–523; James 2019). "Compared to the past, the theories … are better at describing and explaining the policy process and are supported by an unparalleled number of empirical applications" (Weible 2018, 364). Nevertheless, the challenge of creating firm empirical policy theory is far from obsolete. A puzzling relationship can always be traced between policy theory and policy practice or policy work (Hoppe and Colebatch 2016). Even though empirical policy theory makes a huge contribution to the precision and profundity of policy research, most policy concepts are not yet tightly grounded in the data on policy practice, and the empirically rooted parts of policy theories are not yet sufficiently developed.[2]

This gap is even more evident outside the circle of Western post-industrialized countries whose practice dominantly inspires policy theory. It is also true for the neighboring Eastern European countries[3], as they greatly differ in historical development and current policymaking context from the United States and other Western countries. The discipline of comparative public policy, which is strongly focused on how policy concepts and theories can be validly transferred across borders, has progressed a lot in the last decade or two. However, it is still marked by over-representation of countries in Western Europe and North America, "the usual comparative suspects" (Engeli et al. 2018, 116). "However, Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania, Serbia, Ukraine, and even Croatia or Romania, have barely attracted any comparative attention over the last 20 years" (Engeli et al. 2018, 120), at least by published research papers in top policy journals that dominantly define the field.

So, it seems that concentrating policy research on Eastern Europe, which is quite close and similar but still with significant differences from the "usual suspects", could be very fruitful in improving the empirical part of policy theory. The question is what the most productive focus of research efforts would be and where Eastern European practice can contribute the most to the enhancement of empirical

2 In this paper I use policy research as the broadest term that combines all aspects of theoretical thinking about public policies but also data-sets and empirical, data-collecting work in the research on public policy. Policy theory is understood and used for all theoretical work on public policy, whether it is normative (prescriptive), formal (descriptive, deductive) or empirical theory (descriptive, inductive), as the specificity of policy research is in combining all those types of theories. Policy process research is an important set of policy theories that focus on decision-making processes and that are also normative, formal and empirical in nature, accompanied by data-collecting on policy processes in practice. This paper stresses how the empirical aspect of policy theory and policy process theory is underdeveloped, as creating concepts, classifications and theoretical prepositions from systemic data-collecting and inductive inference is the weakest part of policy research.

3 I will not participate in the debate present in comparative politics on defining new regions in Eastern Europe that were created after the break-up of communism (such as Central Europe or Southeast Europe), nor will I comment on diverse arguments regarding which region(s) Croatia belongs to (for details, see Kasapović 2013). Instead, I will use the term Eastern Europe simplified as a general label for non-Western parts of Europe.

policy theory. It seems that the biggest mismatch between the two is the best place to start. Therefore, to contribute to the development of empirical policy theory with bearing stated notions in mind, the aim of this paper is exploratory – to produce an initial map of the gaps between established policy theories and Eastern European practice. I apply a cross-sectoral comparative research design to the sample of Croatian public policies, with the following research question: What are crucial points of the mismatch between policy theory and the practice of policymaking in Croatia?

Croatia is a good case example for studying specificities of Eastern European policymaking, as it combines many diverse features that represent the instability and changeability of the area. It is "the most eastern and most southern country of Central Europe and most western and most northern country of Southeast Europe" (Kasapović 2013, 179). Croatia was part of a multinational, federal socialist state, and then it experienced war, a transition to democracy and market economy, and democratic consolidation. It also changed from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary political system and had several changes of electoral system. Additionally, it is part of the so-called Western Balkans and became the newest member of the European Union. Even if not the perfect representative of all specificities within the Eastern European region, which a single country can hardly ever be, Croatia does combine many important Eastern European features, which makes it a worthwhile case example.[4]

The analysis of Croatian policymaking in this paper falls within the approach of cross-sectoral comparative public policy. Comparing across sectors within the same country provides a fruitful basis for refining theoretical propositions and for developing empirical policy theory as it produces rich insights into the diversities of the functioning of the political system and its subsystems' coordination. Nevertheless, cross-national comparisons of public policies that focus on a single sector in several countries are much more developed than cross-sectoral comparisons that compare several policies in one country (Heidenheimer 1986; Hofferbert and Cingranelli 1996; Lodge 2007; Petak 2002; Pierce et al. 2017; Schmitt 2013; Tosun and Workman 2018; Wilder 2017). In this paper, cross-sectoral research design will contribute to the scope of grasped policy practice to be compared with the policy theories from the literature. The general background for this paper is research done on policy classifications, primarily inductively derived policy taxonomies, grounded and inspired by the work of Theodore Lowi (Compston 2004; Lowi 2009; Petek 2014; Smith 2002).

In my researched I firstly focused on detecting the main features of Croatian policymaking. I compared the sample of 11 Croatian public policies divided across

4 Selecting Croatia is partially a result of a natural selective bias (Kasapović 2013), as "there is a significant relationship between the location of the author's academic institution and the countries that are included in the articles … only a minority of authors have published studies that do not include their 'home country'" (Engeli et al. 2018, 120).

six different policy areas (Compston 2004): defense and foreign affairs (foreign policy), law and order (migration policy), economic policies (employment, fiscal, and regional policy), sectoral policies (agriculture, environment, and transport policy), social policies (education and health policy), and other policies (culture policy). Published studies that describe the policymaking features and process in the last three decades since Croatian independence within the selected sectors were used as data sources.

The whole material was coded according to the rules of qualitative content analysis (Schreier 2012) and processed by NVivo. The coding scheme of the features of policymaking was developed inductively, with the least possible influence from the policy theory, and then systematically applied to the whole material. This is how I developed a detailed list of the main features of policymaking in Croatia. Each feature is presented by its overall frequency in the whole material but more importantly by the meanings of coding units that it gathers. Then in the analysis, I clustered similar, connected, and overlapping features into groups or types of policymaking. This analytical step is based on the logic of an inductive qualitative methodology. It is done by developing more complex, reflective and inferential codes (Miles and Huberman 1994) and by following a taxonomical approach to classifications (Smith 2002).

In the interpretation of the findings at the end of the paper, I try to determine what theoretical discourses on public policy can be connected to Croatian policymaking types. The policy literature was scanned to determine the policy frameworks that best help in explaining Croatian practice presented in studies to find the gaps and the mismatch. Although the basic logic of the research design was inductive, first dealing with the data and then digging into the theory, the structure of the paper is standard. The theoretical framework precedes the methodological explanations, data description and analysis, and general discussion of the findings.

2. Theoretical framework: Overview of potential policy theories

In this paper, I do not have the ambition to produce a comprehensive and systematic overview of policy theories, as this is a diverse and non-coherent field. With a pragmatic approach, I instead consulted 10 important policy handbooks (Araral et al. 2013; Birkland 2010; Cairney 2012; Dye 2012; Fischer et al. 2007; Hill 2010; Howlett et al. 2009; Parsons 1995; Peters and Zittoun 2016; Weible and Sabatier 2018) and

used their overviews of policy theories.[5] Sometimes theoretical approaches were spread through all the chapters in selected books (e.g. in the review of the policy process phases). Since I wanted to capture as much as possible, I included them, too. This was based on the assumption that a broader and more diverse list of policy theories will maximally diminish the mismatch with Eastern European policy practice and allow me to keep a more benevolent approach to detect only the crucial and biggest theory-practice gaps. I included policy theories, concepts, approaches, frameworks, and models, in general all diverse levels of theoretical discourse (Ostrom and Ostrom 1997), neglecting the differences and demarcation line between those terms to achieve simplicity.

Comparing all the lists of policy theories from all selected books, I extracted the theories mentioned at least three times, in one-third of the selected literature (see Table 1).[6] Some theories and models that were stressed once or twice I managed to combine with some other similar and overlapping approaches. As the list is quite exhaustive, I also combined some theories into the same category and had their broader approach present in the final list (e.g. top-down and bottom-up models under implementation theory; or corporatism, pluralism, and elitism under power approaches). I ended-up with 22 policy theories which I use in the interpretation part of this paper. Altogether, this is a very rough scanning of the policy literature and policy theories. This paper does not allow me to go into detail on concepts and propositions of each selected theory, so I will introduce them only briefly.

Firstly, I will introduce some ubiquitous, mainstream policy theories. One unavoidable policy theory is (1) the advocacy coalition framework (ACF), which is focused on the actors' impact on policymaking. Second is Baumgartner and Jones's (2) punctuated equilibrium, an analysis of a long-term agenda-setting that resulted in a huge international research network called the *Comparative Agendas Project*. A similarly "famous" status can be assigned to John Kingdon's theory of (3) policy streams and windows of opportunity within agenda-setting and other steps to de-

5 The aim was to have a diverse and heterogenous set of sources. I selected 10 sources as this is a number big enough to have variety but still small enough to have a manageable amount of material to grasp all nuances and details. There were five criteria for selecting handbooks. First a general criterion was that the handbook is devoted to theories (e.g. Carney 2021; Weible and Sabatier 2018). Then, secondly, I wanted to include not solely contemporary handbooks, but also classical handbooks, especially those with many editions (e.g. Dye 2012; Parsons 1995). Third, I wanted to incorporate different epistemological and methodological perspectives, not just a positivistic rationalistic view, so I incorporated representatives of an interpretative approach (e.g. Fischer et al. 2007). Fourth, I wanted to include handbooks with high citation records (e.g. Birkland 2010 has 2492 citation according to Google Scholar). Fifth, I included authors that dominate the field and are well-known authors worldwide (e.g. Michael Howlett or Guy Peters and the handbooks that they co-authored or co-edited). One handbook was selected primarily as a product of natural bias – I included a handbook translated into Croatian (Hill 2010).

6 In this procedure, the following six theories and approaches were cut out: applied cultural theory, behavioral approaches, information processing, mixed-scanning, political philosophy, and statism.

Table 1
Overview of policy theories*

Araral et al. 2013	Birkland 2010	Cairney 2012	Dye 2012	Fischer et al. 2007	Hill 2010	Howlett et al. 2009	Parsons 1995	Peters and Zittoun 2016	Weible and Sabatier 2018	Final
ACF	ACF	ACF		ACF	Advocacy coalitions		ACF	ACF	ACF	**ACF**
				Applied cultural theory						
				Argumentative policy analysis						**Discursive approaches**
								Behavioural approaches		
	Bottom-up approaches to implementation		Bottom-up theories		Bottom-up approach		Bottom-up models			**Implementation theory**
Bounded rationality		Rationality	Rationalism	Rationality	Rationality	Rationalism	Rationality	Bounded rationality		**(Bounded) Rationality**
						Class analysis				**Structuralism**
Comparative approaches				Comparative Public Policy	Comparative studies		Comparative public policy			**Comparative public policy**

					Core executive					**Policy networks**
					Corporatism	Corporatism	Corporatism			**Power approaches**
				Deliberative Policy Analysis			Policy discourse approaches	Discursive Approaches		**Discursive approaches**
					Economic theory of bureaucracy					**Economic approaches**
			Elite theory		Elitism		Elitist and neo-elitist models			**Power approaches**
Epistemic communities framework										**Policy networks**
			Game theory		Game theory					**Rational choice**
Garbage can model					Garbage can model	Garbage can model		Garbage can model		**Garbage can model**
Governance		Multilevel governance								**Governance**
			Group theory							**Power approaches**

Araral et al. 2013	Birkland 2010	Cairney 2012	Dye 2012	Fischer et al. 2007	Hill 2010	Howlett et al. 2009	Parsons 1995	Peters and Zittoun 2016	Weible and Sabatier 2018	Final
				Hybrid theories of implementation		Implementation theory				**Implementation theory**
Incrementalism		Incrementalism	Incrementalism		Incrementalism	Incrementalism	Incrementalism			**Incrementalism**
							Information processing			
IAD	IAD	New institutionalism	Institutionalism		Institutionalism	Neo-institutionalism	Institutionalism	Institutionalism and IAD	IAD framework	**Institutionalism (including IAD)**
							Managerial framework			**Governance**
						Mixed--scanning model	*Mixed scanning*			
				Narrative policy analysis					Narative policy framework	**Discursive approaches**
					Pluralism	Pluralism	Pluralist and neo-pluralist approaches			**Power approaches**

Policy design	Policy design and tools			Policy design and tools		Policy design		Tools approaches		**Policy design and tools**
Policy evaluation			Policy evaluation		Policy evaluation	Policy evaluation				**Policy evaluation**
Policy feedback and learning	Policy failure and learning			Policy learning		Policy learning			Policy feedback theory	**Policy learning and feedback**
Policy-making process	Policy process		Process model	Policy cycle	Policy phases	Policy cycle framework	Stagist approach			**Policy cycle**
Policy networks				Policy networks	Policy networks and communities		Subsystem approaches/networks and communities			**Policy networks**
Policy streams	Streams metaphor	Multiple streams analysis		Streams metaphor of agenda change	Kingdon's model	Policy streams and policy windows	Policy streams		Multiple streams framework	**Policy streams**
Policy transfer		Policy transfer			Policy transfer				Innovation and diffusion model	**Policy transfer**
	Policy types			Classification of policy types	Policy types	Policy subsystems and policy regimes	Typologies of policy issues			**Policy classifications**
Political economy						Welfare economics	Welfare economics			**Economic approaches**

Araral et al. 2013	**Birkland 2010**	**Cairney 2012**	**Dye 2012**	**Fischer et al. 2007**	**Hill 2010**	**Howlett et al. 2009**	**Parsons 1995**	**Peters and Zittoun 2016**	**Weible and Sabatier 2018**	**Final**
							Political philosophy			
Postpositivism and policy process						Postpositivist approaches				**Discursive approaches**
		Power theories		Power theories of agenda-setting	Power theories		Power approaches			**Power approaches**
Public choice		Rational choice theory	Public choice theory	Rational choice	Rational choice	Public choice theory	Public choice approach			**Rational choice**
Punctuated equilibrium	Punctuated equilibrium model	Punctuated equilibrium				Policy monopoly	Punctuated equilibrium model	Punctuated Equilibrium Theory	Punctuated Equilibrium Theory	**Punctuated equilibrium**
State theory and regulatory state						*Statism*				
		Structural explanations (Marxism, globalisation)			Structuralism (Marxism, globalism)		Social structure			**Structuralism**
							Neo-marxist approaches			**Structuralism**

	Top-down approach-es to im-plementa-tion		Top-down theories		Top-down approach		Top-down approach			**Imple-menta-tion the-ory**

* Note: Theories and approaches that were mentioned only once or twice and were not merged with other theories into the final categories were marked with italic letters.

cision-making. Most popular for introductory purposes and a cornerstone of most policy handbooks is the (4) cycle model of policy process, which is a grounding for many other theories. One is (5) implementation theory, combining top-down and bottom-up approaches, and newer hybrid versions of the implementation explanations. Also, theories of (6) policy design and tools, mostly devoted to the analysis of how policies are formulated, and the (7) policy evaluation approach are emerging from the idea of the cycle model.

Policy learning is sometimes connected to policy evaluation research with issues of policy failure and feedback, but today (8) policy learning and feedback form a distinctive set of literature. (9) Policy transfer theory could be considered a part of the comparative public policy approach, but today there is a rich literature specialized on this theory and explaining how policies "travel" across borders and how policy innovations are used across different jurisdictions. Additionally, most handbooks stress three classical decision-making theories that are important for understanding foundations of policy research even though they are not broadly applied in contemporary empirical studies. Those include (10) classical rationalistic understandings of decision-making, especially Herbert Simon's version of bounded rationality that was stressed in almost all selected books, and theories that developed as its critique, such as (11) incrementalism by Charles Lindblom and (12) the garbage can model by March, Cohen, and Olsen.

The last 10 items on the list are more broad approaches that are quite diverse within themselves. One deals with (13) policy networks, actors, their features and relations, and how they influence policymaking. Then the next approach focuses on (14) policy classifications, a general approach for cross-sectoral comparison of policies. It is devoted to determining policy types, with the most popular classification developed by Theodore Lowi. (15) Comparative public policy is also in this group as the most general approach, joining diverse research and many policy theories. Especially policy transfer theory and policy classifications, even though they were stressed separately in selected books, could be subsumed under this approach. (16) Discursive approaches are also a broad set of connected but different post-positivistic interpretative ways of analyzing public policy as argumentative, deliberative, narrative policy analysis, etc. My scanning of the policy literature also revealed (17) economic approaches as relevant to the interpretation of policy changes, especially the economic theory of bureaucracy, welfare economics, and more general political economy. (18) Rational choice is also an approach rooted in economics and the rationalistic theory of decision-making that has important applications in policy research.

(19) Institutionalism, along with its several variants, is one of the most applied political science research approaches in policy research, especially Ostroms's rational choice institutionalism in the institutional analysis and development framework (IAD). Diverse (20) power approaches including theories such as pluralism, elit-

ism, and corporatism, which guided classical policy research and founded the field, are also on my list. The next one is (21) structuralism, a set of diverse theoretical ideas focused on social-structure influence, some with a Marxist background, some based in globalization, which is not very present in mainstream policy research. The last one is the approach concerned with (22) governance (including multi-level governance), a fuzzy and extremely broadly widespread concept that connects political science with public administration and public management research. In selected books, it is not so emphasized.

Altogether, the prepared list of policy theories is really long and gathers quite different forms of theoretical thought – some precise models, some tested theories, and some broad approaches. There are also some novel theories with rich application in current policy research and some classical theoretical approaches in which policy research is grounded, but that are not widely applied in contemporary empirical research of policymaking. High diversity of the developed list would pose a huge problem for producing a systematic and comprehensive policy theory overview, but for the exploratory purposes of this paper, a broad and long list of theoretical ideas on policy is an advantage.

3. Methodological approach: Sampling, coding scheme, and QCA

Answering the proposed research question with original data is a gigantic task in the sense of finance, scholars, and time. Therefore, I based this paper on the analysis of published case studies of Croatian public policies as an easily accessible, cheap, but comprehensive data source.[7] Different studies that describe policymaking in Croatia were gathered to collect secondary data on diverse sectors. A selection of policies and studies that describe them was grounded in the policy taxonomy presented in the *Handbook of Public Policy in Europe: Britain, France, and Germany* (Compston 2004). Although this handbook compares policies only among countries, it poses a rare comprehensive policy taxonomy; it tries to list all basic national public policies which are embodied in governmental ministries. It stresses five main policy areas that all fundamental national policies belong to and one residual category: defense and foreign affairs, law and order, economic policies, sectoral policies, social policies, and other policies.

To sample Croatian sectors and accompanying studies, I have used three criteria. First, I chose one to three policies from each policy area to produce the most diverse sample. Cases were therefore selected to represent all policy areas, and the

7 Sampling governmental documents would also be a challenging data-gathering method for this research. As governmental documents are not so comprehensive and concisely descriptive, each selected policy would require the inclusion of several documents and a large number of pages. This would make the total sample unreasonably huge and quite unmanageable in the coding process for the exploratory purposes of one paper.

number of cases per policy area depended on the scope of the area – on the number of sectors listed within each (see Compston 2004, 2). Then, second, they were also selected according to the availability of detailed studies of the specific sector that provide a detailed description of the whole sector. For many Croatian policy sectors there are no studies like that available, and those sectors could not be included into this research. This was a crucial criterion – the descriptive nature of the study. The study had to present precise data on diverse aspects of selected policy and had to have parts that enumerate and describe goals set, instruments used, how it was done, etc. Third, studies were also selected to cover policymaking changes in the last three decades since Croatian independence for each sampled policy. Studies published recently were preferred to get the time span, but for most sectors, two studies were selected to achieve comprehensiveness. In the end, the sample contained 20 studies and 432 pages in total, with 11 policies altogether (see Table 2).[8]

Table 2
Sample of Croatian policy sectors

Defense and foreign affairs	Law and order	Economic policies	Sectoral policies	Social policies	Other policies
Foreign policy	Migration policy	Employment Fiscal policy Regional policy	Agriculture Environment Transport	Education Health	Culture

Some limitations of the data source and sample should be stressed right away. Only a small number of studies comprehensively analyze Croatian sectors, as most of the published papers approach Croatian policies partially, focusing on some segments of the sectors, some effects, some instruments, measures, or indicators. This posed a big challenge in the sampling process and will limit the scope of insights of this paper. For example, several studies stressed Europeanization within their research question, so this somewhat introduced a bias into the material. In the absence of other descriptive studies with a comprehensive and long-term focus, they were still included in the sample. Then, as Croatian policy scholars' community is quite small, most of the selected studies were not prepared with a policy-theory focus or interpretation. Almost all selected studies do not use any policy theory or policy concepts and are mostly done outside the policy sciences in a narrow sense. They were written by economists, social workers,

8 The sample contains the following studies: 1) foreign policy (Jović 2011; Turek 2001); 2) migration (Gregurović and Mlinarić 2012; Tatalović and Jakešević 2016); 3) employment (Bejaković 2015; Matković 2008); 4) fiscal policy (Benazić 2006; Šimović et al. 2014); 5) regional policy (Liha Matejiček 2015; Maleković et al. 2011); 6) agriculture (Franić and Ljubaj 2015; Jurišić 2014); 7) transport (Božičević et al. 2008; Vedriš 2015); 8) environment (Tišma and Funduk 2015; Nekić and Krajnović 2015); 9) education (Žiljak and Molnar 2015); 10) health (Zrinščak 2007); and 11) culture (Katunarić 2010; Primorac et al. 2015).

agronomist, sociologists, etc. with theoretical perspectives coherent with their disciplines. Therefore, by using studies as a data source, an additional reflective level is added to the inference process of this paper. Hence, the main limitation and warning about the conclusions is connected to the awareness that data selection is under the influence of scholars who wrote selected studies, their profiles, disciplinary background, and research perspectives.[9]

The data processing, coding procedure, and analysis of the results is based on the rules of qualitative content analysis (QCA; Schreier 2012). Some selected studies were not coded completely, as they contain parts that do not directly describe sampled policies and do not deal with the empirical data. For example, parts of the methodological approach were not included as they do not refer to the empirical phenomenon that I explore. Only parts with the description of policy practice in selected policy cases were included in the coding process. As I was dealing with well-structured texts, the coding unit was set to the level of a paragraph by a formal criterion, and therefore a separate segmentation phase was unnecessary. Exceptions were made for longer paragraphs. Those that contained more than 5 codes were cut down into two coding units.

Codes on policymaking features were a part of a broader coding scheme on policy design and policy change features.[10] The main category, *Policymaking* with its subcategories, makes the largest code within the coding scheme, and consequently it was applied most frequently (665 out of 2,782 times codes were assigned, or 24 % of all coding; see the codebook in Appendix 1). Both the main category and all its subcategories were developed by an inductive, data-driven strategy, as much as my previous theoretical knowledge and insights allowed me to be "theory blind." Inductive coding was selected for two reasons. First, this way the coding process was kept as "clear" as possible from my theoretical assumptions. Second, inductive coding was suitable to handle descriptive texts written without the policy-theory focus and interpretation. Overall, the idea behind the coding strategy was to keep policy practice and policy theories as separated as possible to let the mismatch points "self-develop".

In a preparatory detailed reading of the whole material of 20 studies, features of policymaking that they stress in descriptions of diverse policies were derived, and I created a list of 15 subcategories or features of Croatian policymaking. Then the

9 I believe that there is no purely value-neutral science and that all research and every analysis is always biased by the discipline/theoretical background of the researcher. This is, in my opinion, true not just in using this kind of studies as a data source, but also in, for example, the utilization of polls or in interviewing, or even in natural sciences. On the one hand, I tried to minimize the impact of other researchers' lenses by using only descriptive studies and data description sections of the studies. On the other hand, I tried to be transparent and stress limitations of my work here in this methodological part, and also in the conclusions.

10 For the presentation of the results on goals, instruments, actors, problems, discourses, and target groups, see Petek (2019).

coding procedure was guided by QCA propositions (Schreier 2012), which allow for multiple coding but not within one main category. This means that one coding unit was assigned only once into the *Policymaking* subcategories. As coding was done on the subcategory level, the 665 instances where policymaking was noticed within the material were assigned to only one of 15 policymaking variants in the coding scheme. If more than one policymaking feature was present in a coding unit, the one that was central in the meaning of the paragraph was selected to be assigned.[11] This is how I ended up with clear, non-overlapping material for each policymaking feature to create their detailed description.[12]

4. Data description: Features of Croatian policymaking

Qualitative content analysis allows one to explore frequencies of occurrence of each code within the material (see Table 3). The most present feature of policymaking in Croatian public policies from the selected studies is *Europeanization and Policy Transfer* (18.95 % and present in all sampled policies). A high level of appearance is also applicable for the codes *(Lack of) Resources and Capacities* (16.99 %) and *(Lack of) Expertise and Strategic Planning* (10.53 %). The least present feature of policymaking is the resistance of target groups, with only three occurrences (0.45 %). Still, the meaning of the codes, and not the level of their appearance, is a focal point of QCA, so I will get into the specific content each code gathers.

(De)centralization and Concentration is a code concerned with the effects of the territorial organization of the country and its administrative structure. It stresses a centralist approach in Croatian policymaking, strong central control over local government, and some not-so-successful decentralization efforts for extending jurisdictions at the local level. The code *(Dis)Continuation and Socialist Heritage* is connected to the long-term aspect of policymaking and the sequencing of decisions. Material in this code is primarily concerned with the influence of the socialist heritage and former Yugoslav policies on policymaking in independent Croatia, sometimes stressing the forced break-up with this heritage, as in education, but more often a strong duration of old forms and patterns of policymaking, as in the agriculture and health sectors. This code also includes issues of state-ownership and the privatization of diverse organizations throughout the sampled policies, (dis) continuations of programs, budgets, etc.

11 The quality of coding was checked by blind coding of a subsample of 10 % in a time frame of two weeks, as a method of evaluating the coding consistency of only one coder (Schreier 2012).

12 The NVivo project, containing the codebook and whole material coded, is available on request.

Table 3
Frequency of occurrence of policymaking features

Policymaking feature	Frequency	Percentage
(De)Centralisation and Concentration	17	2.56
(Dis)Continuation and Socialist Heritage	41	6.17
Europeanization and Policy Transfers	126	18.95
Fragmentation and Inertia	22	3.31
Governance Modes and Policy Mixes	53	7.97
Influence of Politics	18	2.71
Innovation and Investments	32	4.81
(Lack of) Communication with the Public	18	2.71
(Lack of) Coordination and Systematic Approach	26	3.91
(Lack of) Efficacy and Implementation Deficit	54	8.12
(Lack of) Expertise and Strategic Planning	70	10.53
(Lack of) Resources and Capacities	113	16.99
Participation and Bottom-up Approach	39	5.86
Reforming	33	4.96
Target Groups' Resistance	3	0.45
TOTAL	**665**	

The most present code in the material *Europeanization and Policy Transfers* is devoted to the influence of the EU on national policymaking by setting European standards, by incorporating European regulation or by the role of the EU institutions as a strong, active actors in the accession process. Also, all international standards or foreign policy elements that have affected policymaking in Croatia were coded here, but they are an extra small part of the code. The code *Fragmentation and Inertia* gathers all paragraphs that talk about non-doing, non-responding of government, its inertia, sporadic and implicit policymaking that leads to fragmented subsystems and marginalized policies. The code *Governance Modes and Policy Mixes* combines all paragraphs from studies that explain diverse policy regimes, models, concepts, approaches, or paradigms within the same sector and their combinations. *Influence of Politics* is a code about the impact of general features of the political system, ideologies, elections, political parties, coalitions, and the effects of interest groups' lobbying on policymaking.

Innovation and Investments is a code mostly present in the transport policy. Within this code, studies investigate investments as an aspect of policy change. They discuss the level of investments; investment programs; state and private investments into infrastructure, maintenance, energy sources, and environmental protection; planned and insufficient or unsatisfactory investments; and priorities in invest-

ment. Sometimes, investments are connected to innovations, institutional innovation, investments in new technologies, especially ICT technologies and innovation of practical instruments for policy implementation.

The code *(Lack of) Communication with the Public* is mostly about public and expert debates within a specific sector and especially a lack of them (e.g. in education and health). Additionally, it is about informing the public about governmental bodies and, again, the lack of it. Only sporadically does it focus on public opinion and its pressure and influence on policymaking. The content behind the code *(Lack of) Coordination and Systematic Approach* is mostly on different forms of coordination among governmental bodies, especially ministries, among different levels of government, and with other states and the EU level. Also, a systematic approach to policymaking that results in coherent, comprehensive, long-lasting, integrated policy is stressed. Most selected studies highlight the lack of coordination and a systematic approach.

The code *(Lack of) Efficacy and Implementation Deficit* is primarily about non-efficient policymaking that produces results opposite of the desired goals as well as not achieving goals because of inefficient measures. Diverse indicators of inefficiency are stressed. Then this code mentions barriers to achieving higher levels of efficiency, efficacy of spending, budgetary efficacy, effects on economic activities, non-efficient usage of EU funds, and roles in international organizations. The implementation deficit is sometimes explained as complete non-compliance to the laws and other regulations and sometimes as delays in implementation.

(Lack of) Expertise and Strategic Planning gathers citations concerned with issues of expertise, knowledge, skills, standards, monitoring, and policy evaluation. Most studies refer to the lack of expertise in Croatian policymaking. Only a small part of the material in this code is directly connected to strategic planning, also in a negative tone, stressing the need for it. The code *(Lack of) Resources and Capacities* is devoted to the material that emphasizes diverse resources that influence policymaking, such as human, financial, technical, natural, and infrastructural resources. Some paragraphs discuss the management of those resources, but most of them just go into detailed data and numbers with no direct connection to policymaking. Sometimes the issue of resources is connected to the question of capacities, institutional capacities, local government capacities, fiscal capacities, capacities of stakeholders and users, innovative, operational and analytical capacities, and policy learning that improves them. Most authors of selected studies stress the lack of adequate capacities.

Cooperation, partnership principle, inclusive approach, networking, openness, tripartite negotiations, involvement of diverse actors, official and unofficial, non-hierarchical relations among actors, and theirs attempts to influence policymaking are gathered in the code *Participation and Bottom-up Approach*. The meaning of the code *Reforming* is in general policy change or policy transformation, dominant-

ly by legislation adjustments. Studies are stressing the need for tax-system, pension, health, and social-protection insurance reforms. Others are for changing the structure of revenues and expenditures and of local administration. In total, most talk about the need for so-called structural reforms. *Target Groups' Resistance* code mentions policymaking situations in which the target group stopped policy change.

Altogether, Croatian policymaking can be characterized as heavily under foreign influence, especially of the EU, based on significant resources but low capacities with the lack of expertise and strategical planning that leads to inefficient policymaking and an implementation deficit. Croatian policymaking is burdened with the socialist heritage, especially in the 1990s, with some inclination toward the participation of diverse actors, cooperation, and partnership but with slow policy changes and the lack of systemic reforms, low investments, lack of coordination and a systematic approach, which results in fragmented and incoherent subsystems. According to selected studies, policymaking in Croatia is characterized by low levels of communication with the public and public debates for the purposes of policymaking, by a strong centralist approach and by extremely low levels of influence of target groups. For the analytical part of the paper, I developed types of Croatian policymaking by grouping its features detected through codes.

5. Data analysis: Types of Croatian policymaking

For producing types of Croatian policymaking, I grouped similar and connected codes of policymaking features. Types were not derived from a higher structural logic nor grounded in some prior theoretical template. The presented classification and types are more taxonomical in nature (see Smith 2002), based on the material at hand, and data-driven, as their development was guided by the propositions of inductive qualitative methodology. Types correspond to second-level coding – producing pattern codes that are more inferential, reflexive and explanatory (see Miles and Huberman 1994, 57–58). Therefore, by my understanding of coded material, Croatian policymaking can be classified into six types or policymaking styles combined from different codes.

The first type is the administrative perspective, combining *Governance Modes and Policy Mixes* and *(De)Centralisation and Concentration*. The second type is the analytical approach, which contains the codes *(Lack of) Efficacy and Implementation Deficit*, *(Lack of) Coordination and Systematic Approach*, and *(Lack of) Expertise and Strategic Planning*. The economic approach is the third, and it combines *(Lack of) Resources and Capacities* and *Innovation and Investments*. The fourth policymaking type, named "external", contains only *Europeanization and Policy Transfers*. Next is the incremental type of policymaking, which combines the codes *(Dis) Continuation and Socialist Heritage, Fragmentation and Inertia* and *Reforming*, as they all share their focus on small and slow policy change. The last one is the po-

litical type, which combines the following codes: *(Lack of) Communication with the Public*, *Influence of Politics, Participation and Bottom-up Approach*, and *Target Groups' Resistance.* All types consume a significant share of coded paragraphs with more than 10 % (see Table 4).

Table 4
Frequency of occurrence of policymaking types

Policymaking type	Policymaking feature	Freq.	Pct.
Administrative	(De)Centralisation and Concentration Governance Modes and Policy Mixes	70	**10.53**
Analytical	(Lack of) Coordination and Systematic Approach (Lack of) Efficacy and Implementation Deficit (Lack of) Expertise and Strategic Planning	150	**22.56**
Economic	Innovation and Investments (Lack of) Resources and Capacities	145	**21.80**
External	Europeanization and Policy Transfers	126	**18.95**
Incremental	(Dis)Continuation and Socialist Heritage Fragmentation and Inertia Reforming	96	**14.44**
Political	(Lack of) Communication with the Public Influence of Politics Participation and Bottom-up Approach Target Groups' Resistance	78	**11.73**
	TOTAL	**665**	

The most common policymaking type in Croatia is analytical. As the meaning and content of codes is crucial, it is important to note that policymaking styles are the main ways that Croatian studies perceive domestic policymaking. Therefore, I will emphasize that most material in analytical style codes stressed the lack of expertise, systemic approach, strategic planning, and coordination. We could say that this is a crucial critique on Croatian policymaking. By level of occurrence, the second is the economic policymaking type, which is expectedly connected to economic policies, which design the economy as a whole, and sectoral policies, which present specialized economic sectors. The next is what I call the external policymaking type, which, with only one code, has a quite high result, showing how influence outside of the political system has important impacts on Croatian policymaking. At the lower end of their occurrence are the incremental, political, and administrative policymaking types. Therefore, it seems that the slow long-term dynamic of policy change, the structure of the political system and policy subsystems, and democratic policymaking have a somewhat smaller presence within Croatian sectors.

6. Discussion: What are useful policy theories

In the last interpretation section of the paper, I compare the developed list of policy theories with the derived types of Croatian policymaking and their features to answer the research question on where the biggest gaps between theory and practice of policymaking in Croatia are. I went through each policymaking type and looked for suitable theories. I imagined that I as a researcher have a research task on each policymaking type and tried to determine by its focus, concepts, and assumptions which theory would be useful in describing the elements and explaining the functioning of a specific type. All types were filled with several potentially helpful and thematically connected policy theories (see Table 5). In the end, I will comment on the rest of the theories that seem to be less useful for the analysis of Croatian policymaking.

Table 5
Compatibility of Croatian policymaking types and policy theories

Policymaking type	Policymaking feature	Suitable policy theory
Administrative	(De)Centralisation and Concentration Governance Modes and Policy Mixes	Governance Institutionalism Policy classifications
Analytical	(Lack of) Coordination and Systematic Approach (Lack of) Efficacy and Implementation Deficit (Lack of) Expertise and Strategic Planning	(Bounded) rationality Policy design and tools Policy learning and feedback Policy evaluation
Economic	Innovation and Investments (Lack of) Resources and Capacities	Economic approaches IAD Policy learning and feedback
External	Europeanization and Policy Transfers	Governance Policy transfer
Incremental	(Dis)Continuation and Socialist Heritage Fragmentation and Inertia Reforming	(Bounded) rationality Incrementalism Institutionalism Punctuated equilibrium
Political	(Lack of) Communication with the Public Influence of Politics Participation and Bottom-up Approach Target Groups' Resistance	ACF Discursive approaches Implementation theory Policy streams Policy networks Power approaches Rational choice

Administrative policymaking could be investigated primarily within two broad approaches, the institutionalism and governance approaches. Also, policy classifications could be helpful in dismantling the issues of policy regimes and their

mixes. The analytical type is mostly about evidence-based policymaking, which several policy theories could help in understanding and explaining. Policy evaluation and policy learning, both talking about policy fiascos and failure, are appropriate for revealing this policymaking style. Also, notions and insights on policy design and tools are suitable. As this is a rationalistic perspective on policymaking, bounded rationality could also reveal some aspects of it.

For the economic policymaking type, economic approaches are most suitable. Additionally, IAD could be nicely applied to this aspect of Croatian policymaking dealing with resources and capacities. Policy learning was directly coded into this policymaking type, so this theory could be "shared" with the previous analytical policymaking type, as both types have strong rationalistic aspects. External policymaking is undoubtedly best suited for policy-transfer theory, but also multi-level governance is a theoretical perspective designed for the analysis of the effects of the EU. Punctuated equilibrium seems to be perfect by its core definition for the incremental type and its long-term focus on the continuation and breaks in policymaking. Institutionalism, especially historic institutionalism with concepts of critical junctures and path dependency, is fit to explain this aspect of Croatian policymaking. Especially the code on the (dis)continuation of policy-making is suited for the application of critical junctures and path-dependency concepts. Then reformistic changes could be grasped by a bounded rationality perspective and the lack of them within inertia through incrementalism.

For detecting the influence of politics and the political policymaking style, streams theory is best adapted, as it stresses political factors in one of the streams. Also, power approaches and discursive approaches, when focused on relations among language and power, could help in resolving this policymaking type. Incrementalism is not operationalized enough for the easy empirical application, but Lindblom's concept of partisan mutual adjustment also fits with this set of policymaking features. As actors are the focus of the research of policy networks, this broad actor-centered approach would be useful here. The rational-choice perspective could also help explain actors' conduct. The bottom-up aspect of policymaking should be investigated by the implementation theories, and ACF seems suitable for capturing the main policymaking factors in this venue, too.

Four out of 22 theories were left "unused". The garbage can model is somehow obsolete as streams theory uses its basic arguments but modifies it to the analysis of policy subsystems and the political system as a whole. The comparative public policy and policy cycle frameworks were not used, as they both are just too broad to be connected specifically to only one or two policymaking types. Comparative public policies could be applied to all features through comparing actors, coordination, influence of politics, etc. The policy cycle framework is much more suited for policy teaching then for empirical analysis, at least without some strong additions. Structuralism, at least to me, seems too much out of the policy main-

stream to be easily applied to a single policymaking style. Excluding listed theories is not a result of some Croatian specificity but is quite consistent with general trends in policy literature.

7. Concluding remarks

For the concluding remarks of this paper, first limitations of insights should be stressed. As gathering original data for 11 policies was impossible because of the costs it would require, the main data source on Croatian policymaking are studies that describe diverse sectors. This adds one reflective level to the inference process that cannot be fully isolated or removed. All analyzed features of Croatian policymaking were detected by Croatian scholars, and their understandings, perspectives, and disciplinary backgrounds shaped policymaking types developed in this paper. The methodological section stressed how focusing on the EU influence is an example of a bias in the material. Still, I believe that with this constraint in mind and in the absence of other sources, the selected studies served the purpose of this paper and showed fundamental trends in Croatian policymaking. The process of the EU accession was undoubtedly a crucial factor in the policymaking context in Croatia in the 21st century, which made scholars focus on it.

In general, I can conclude that classical and contemporary policy theory fit nicely into Croatian policy practice, as I managed to cover all detected policymaking types with several policy concepts, models, and approaches. Still, even this rough screening of policy literature and Croatian studies showed some important gaps and opportunities for improvements. I think three things should be emphasized about the fit of Western policy theories on countries outside their origin that revealed themselves by my analysis.

First, Croatian experience shows that for small countries, especially those included in some supranational associations, external factors are crucial in policymaking. Policy-transfer and policy-diffusion theory and related approaches should then be more within the core of policy research, and additional theories that deal with non-domestic forces driving domestic policy change should be developed. Especially the EU should be more in the focus of policy research, and mainstream policy theory should be more connected to the fuzzy concept of Europeanization.[13] Second, it seems that an additional main feature of policymaking in new democracies in Eastern Europe, by Croatian example, is the lack of a rationalistic, analytical approach. The absence of evidence-based policymaking should be addressed with modified rationalistic approaches that are less normative and more empirically ori-

13 I came to a similar conclusion in researching factors that influenced the layering of Croatian disability policy. Europeanization was the only factor extremely important in the empirical case and almost completely neglected in the theory (Petek 2018).

ented, primarily focused on failures and obstacles to achieve rationality in political life and policymaking.

Third, most surprising is that my research did not show a greater importance of politics, of the impact of diverse actors and their relations on policymaking. This would be coherent with the lack of analytical, rationalistic policymaking. So, I suggest that more actor-centered approaches should be applied to Eastern European policymaking. The additional reflective level of Croatian scholars that are dominantly not political scientists and not political decision-making researchers can explain this void. Therefore, even though interdisciplinary policy research is advocated today as more fruitful, it seems that more political-science empirical work in Eastern Europe is still needed.

I believe that my exploratory analysis, with all limitations in its design and scope, has shown crucial points for theoretical and empirical research on policy in Eastern Europe. Croatian policy scholars and policy scholars from other new democracies from the wider region tend to use many theoretical approaches and to apply as many concepts as possible on domestic policy practice. This has a rationale for the development of national policy sciences. But to produce a contribution to the global knowledge on public policies and to be relevant in the international policy community, at least by my analysis, most research efforts should be focused on the EU influence on policymaking and on barriers to rational and analytical policymaking. Political scientists should play a more central role in that endeavor.

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Appendix 1: Codebook

This appendix presents the whole coding scheme; and then a section of code definition and examples for one selected code.

1. GOALS	2. INSTRUMENTS	3. ACTORS
1.1 Development and Competitiveness 1.2 Diversity 1.3 Equality 1.4 National Identity and Cohesion 1.5 Quality of Life 1.6 Security 1.7 Social Inclusion 1.8 Stability 1.9 Sustainability	2.1 Authority 2.2 Nodality 2.3 Organization 2.4 Treasure	3.1 International 3.2 Non-State 3.3 State
4. DISCOURCES	**5. PROBLEMS**	**6. TARGET GROUPS**
4.1 European 4.2 Globalization 4.3 Ideological and Partisan 4.4 Public Goods 4.5 Self-Perception	5.1 Economic 5.2 External Pressures 5.3 Overlapping 5.4 Social 5.5 Structural 5.6 Technical and Physical	6.1 Business Sector 6.2 Farmers and Rural Inhabitants 6.3 General Population/Citizens 6.4 Poor 6.5 Regions and Local Communities 6.6 Vulnerable Groups 6.7 War Veterans 6.8 Women 6.9 Workers 6.10 Youth
7. POLICY-MAKING		
7.1 (De)Centralisation and Concentration 7.2 (Dis)Continuation and Socialist Heritage 7.3 Europeanization and Policy Transfers 7.4 Fragmentation and Inertia 7.5 Governance Modes and Policy Mixes 7.6 Influence of Politics 7.7 Innovation and Investments 7.8 (Lack of) Communication with the Public	7.9 (Lack of) Coordination and Systematic Approach 7.10 (Lack of) Efficacy and Implementation Deficit 7.11 (Lack of) Expertise and Strategic Planning 7.12 (Lack of) Resources and Capacities 7.13 Participation and Bottom-up Approach 7.14 Reforming 7.15 Target Groups' Resistance	

7.3 Europeanization and Policy Transfers

The code *Europeanization and Policy Transfers* gathers all coding units that stress the EU influence on domestic policy-making. The code gathers diverse types of EU influence, respectively European level being a factor of national decision-making process in any form, whether in the shape of EU regulation, EU funding, etc., or as an action of diverse European bodies. This code also includes all mention of transferring policies, programs and measures from some other international orga-

nization or from another country. This code includes international standards and influence of international actors, too.

Examples of sentences within coding units that seek coding into code 7.3:

1. "By its direct borderline with the EU members and due to the fact it tends to become an EU member in relatively short time, Croatia is growing into a desirable destination to asylum seekers" (Gregurović and Mlinarić 2012, 106).
2. "However, upon accession, additional financing will be made possible through the structural funds, especially through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The available resources for financing development projects at local level will therefore substantially increase, as the structural funds will become the main means for financing regional development" (Maleković et al. 2011, 24).
3. "The process started with WTO membership in 2000 and free-trade agreements with almost all European countries, forcing Croatian agricultural policy to adapt its system of protection based on protective guaranteed prices and incentives based on produced quantities" (Franić and Ljubaj 2015, 144).
4. "Croatia signed and ratified the European Agreement on the Major Inland Waterways of International Level (AGN), which include the waterways of the rivers of Sava, Drava, Danube and the future Danube-Sava Canal into the network of European waterways, and the ports in Osijek, Vukovar, Slavonski Brod and Sisak into the network of ports open to international traffic" (Božičević et al. 2008, 4).