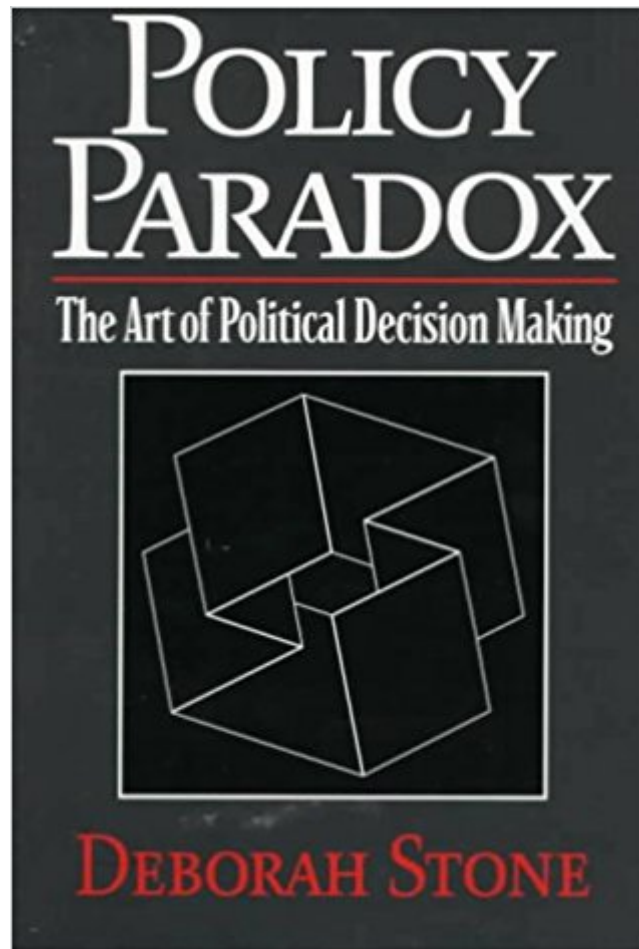




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# Policy Paradox: The Art Of Political Decision Making, Revised Edition



## 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

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policy making and analysis.

Some of my pages were missing in chapter 2. Almost an whole chapter.

Very clean copy. Fast delivery.

This is one of the required texts for my Graduate-level Introduction to Policy class, and I find it the most accessible and well written of all the required texts. Stone does a great job of outlining the political issues at stake during the policy design and implementation process. A must read for any student with no background in policy or the politics of policy making.

I'm the director of the Masters in Advocacy and Political Leadership (MAPL) Program at University of Minnesota Duluth. Ours is a weekend program, aimed at young and not so young people who wish to learn how to change policy--in whatever direction they wish to see it changed. Policy Paradox is the first book our students study and it sets the tone for our program because it is both analytical and realistic. There's nothing else in the field quite like it. If you want your students to understand the reality of policy decision making, Policy Paradox is the book you want. If, on the other hand, you want them to learn how to build rational choice policy castles in the sky, you'll have to go elsewhere.

Stone writes this book for people who are interested in implementing public policy, not merely studying it as an academic exercise. She takes us beyond the methodological self-satisfaction of too many academics and points out how applied policy arenas, from the simplest of settings like the school yard to the most complex of arenas such as national defense or social welfare policies, are characterized by the phenomenon of policy paradox. It's not easy to find a profound book in the area of policy analysis. The typical book, as a rule, is analytically sharp, but isn't usually notable for the insight it yields. Stone argues that it is wholly inadequate to ground decision-making for a wide range of policy issues and contexts, characterized by policy paradox, in conventional rationalist terms. Like Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, Stone finds what she calls the "rationality project" or "calculative rationality" at once typically characteristic of the discipline of policy analysis and inadequate as means/method for analyzing a broad range of contemporary public policy issues. Her analysis suggests that this inadequacy becomes increasingly transparent, the closer one gets to the concrete challenges of implementation. While in some ways she doesn't go as far as Ramos in

analyzing and articulating alternative political theoretical grounds for policy analysis, she is notably clear and remarkably articulate as far as she goes, revealing among other things, how the very movement from policy analysis at large toward implementation analysis in particular is likely to bring to the surface, what may otherwise remain hidden paradoxes of public policy. In the face of the phenomenon of policy paradox, Stone grounds the enlarged policy analytic framework she offers in the specifically interactive context of political theory. Politics may unfold in higher or lower forms (differentiated by Ramos and others) and which Raghavan Iyer portrays diagrammatically through interlocking ascending and descending triangles in his book *Parapolitics*. While Stone doesn't make this differentiation explicit, nevertheless, she compactly interweaves this kind of political understanding with an understanding of literary theory, drawing upon a deep understanding of the often covert role of metaphor in language. Throughout her text, she brings this kind of fundamental rhetorical insight to the surface and reveals the use of metaphor in processes of reasoning, notably including "calculative rationality." Stone's interweaving of insights from political theory and rhetorical theory in turn, suggests an analytic means for penetrating the obscurantist or covert "cognitive politics" that she, like Ramos, appears to believe, too often masquerade in semi-imperial fashion, as "rational" solutions to policy problems. At bottom, Stone contrasts the "calculative rationality" which she finds characteristic of much of the policy analysis field with a broader notion of political reason that she grounds in the reciprocal interplay between facts and values within each individual and in such deliberation across communities of persons within the "polis." For Stone, the dignity amidst the messiness of politics and its creative import lies in the extent to which people may, through meaningful deliberation, constructively engage the pursuit of common and diverse ends and means in ways that constructively and concretely address particular problems of social significance. The deliberation Stone conceives and observes accounts at once for individual notions of self-interest and some notion of a common good through which persons are bound into a larger community or political whole. For Stone, this whole is neither merely the *laissez-faire* sum of its individual parts, nor some super-whole lording over individual parts, but rather -- as it was for Mary Parker Follett -- a creative "whole-a-making;" Stone takes her notion of community seriously as the foundational notion of political association, just as the exchange of individual self-interest constitutes for her the foundation of economic association. A reductive interpretation of human association in either this fundamental economic or this fundamental political direction is for Stone, inadmissible. Real social problems are confronted and political economic life is lived between these tensions. For Stone, it is through interactive processes of deliberation within and across communities that means are employed/discovered to reconcile or otherwise engage the phenomena of "policy paradox." Policy

Paradox is one of those handful of texts that is a particularly good investment in that it is worth reading and re-reading. It is a text in which you are likely to find something more with each re-read as you progress in your studies and/or professional work. Stone's book contains insightful material throughout, written simply. Highly recommended for anyone concerned with reciprocally bridging theory and practice in the policy analytic field and/or for those reflective practitioners concerned with more effectually addressing critical issues in the practical art and challenge of policy implementation.

This scholar not only shares her understanding of complex patterns and interconnections of policy decision-making but also writes so readably! She captures what used to be in my mind as a very messy business. After I completed the book, I have much clearer concept of how and why political decision-making happens. I thought James G. March was the father of decision-making theory. Deborah Stone has become the dominant mother.

Policy Paradox is truly a gem. Stone's language is clear, entertaining and very educating. The book is very witty and can be recommended to anyone interested in the peculiarities of political decision-making. I treasure my copy.

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