

Module 1. Key actors, relationships and power dynamics in women's football business

Section 1. Defining and categorising policy

Welcome to this course on understanding policy in women's football business. In this first reading, we will create the over-arching framework for making sense of the world of policy, to which we will return in subsequent readings, assignments, and videos. Fundamentally, the goal of this reading is to orient you in the world of policy by providing you with a set of concepts and frameworks that you can take into proactive engagement with and/or management of policy in women's football business.

At the outset, I would like to provide the definition of the term 'policy' that we will use across the module. In this way, I hope to get us off on the right foot by establishing a clear understanding of what we are studying. While there is considerable scholarly debate about the precise meaning of the term 'policy', Lowi and Ginsberg's (1996) definition is well-established in the literature and provides a useful mix of precision and flexibility. They define policy as "an officially expressed intention backed by a sanction, which can be a reward or a punishment." (p. 607).

As we will see, the actors who create these officially expressed intentions are not limited to states and their agencies. Furthermore, the nature of rewards or punishments that used to back a policy varies widely. In order to get to grips with this variety across this course, we will use the conceptual framework established by Lowi (1972) to differentiate different types of policy. Lowi's analysis outlines a typology that separates policy into four types: regulative, distributive, redistributive, and constitutive. We will now define and explain each of these types.

At the most formal level, we can think about policy as being the production and enforcement of laws and rules. Lowi (1972) describes these as '**regulative**' (or, elsewhere, '**regulatory**') policies which specify norms for behaviour and interaction, with a clear line of sanction (in the form of either punishment or reward), for complying or failing to comply with these norms. Regulative policies are typically codified; i.e., they are written down in an authoritative piece of text which can be referred to when they are being enforced or contested. The type of regulative policy that most immediately springs to mind is the production of laws at the state level – such laws can impose burdens on individuals or organisations; they can also confer rights or provide protections. We can



think about employment legislation, for instance, as having these two faces – imposing a burden of compliance and reporting on employers, while providing employees with protections. Of course, regulative policy is also produced by non-state actors – in the world of women’s football business international, national, and league associations, it creates rules around the use of performance enhancing substances, for instance. While self-regulation is one model of regulative policy, this type of policy typically requires an agency to ensure compliance, and to rule on disputes.

Two further types of policy identified by Lowi (1972) centre on the allocation of resources. Here, the policy does not centre on creating and enforcing rules, but, instead, it focuses on whom (or what group) gets what resources, when, and how. Lowi (1972) makes a distinction between allocative policy that is **distributive** versus allocative policy that is **redistributive**. As Kuhlmann and Blum (2021) explain:

Distributive policies allocate resources, either directly to individuals or groups, or to equip infrastructure that is broadly accessible. What is crucial is that these benefits are assumed to be infinitely divisible—the fact that A obtains resources does not imply that B gets less. By contrast, **redistributive** policies imply that costs and benefits are reallocated between individuals or groups. Redistributive policies are therefore assumed to generate much more conflict than are distributive policies. (p. 281).

What is interesting about this distinction between distributive and redistributive policies is that it is largely a matter of perception and presentation. Schneider and Ingram (1993) argue that all policy in a complex society tends to create ‘winners’ and ‘losers’. Or, to put it in a more accessible metaphor, there is no such thing as a free lunch. As such, the distinction between distributive and redistributive policy is largely based on the extent to which the groups benefitting/suffering from a revised allocation of resources is clearly identifiable as the policymaking process unfolds. The key insight here from Lowi’s approach is that re-distributive policies are likely to encounter significantly greater political resistance (which may ultimately necessitate coercion) compared to distributive policies. This makes sense, as policies in which a certain group in a society can be identified as losing out create clear incentives for that group to organise and resist the policy.

The fourth type of policy in Lowi's framework is 'constitutive' policy. This type of policy centres on the institutions and mechanisms that create policy. It can be thought of as a 'meta' element of policymaking in that it is characterised by a focus on the rules by which the policy game is played, rather than the specific policy decisions that are generated. In state-level politics, these rules are often specified in codified constitutions, which can be protected from change by provisions requiring super-majorities or referendums, unlike other forms of policy which can be determined by majority rule [for a detailed discussion, see Lorenz (2005)]. Examples of aspects of constitutive policy include the provisions for electing representatives, provisions for the operation of legislative and executive bodies, and rules for resolving deadlocks between different policy bodies. As we will see, in the world of women's football governance, the key constitutive policy debates centre on the representation of women in football governance, and the manner in which women's football clubs, representatives, and associations are integrated with men's football governance.

When thinking about all of these types of policy, it is important to be cognisant of the power of the *status quo*. There is a natural human tendency to think about policy as an activity or form of positive action that implies change. The converse of this reasoning is that no new law or decision means that there is no policy. However, this is not the case. Policy inaction, in the form of keeping an issue off the agenda, or delaying a decision, is also a form of policymaking. Absent a new constituent, regulative, distributive, or redistributive policy, the *status quo* is maintained. Indeed, there is a considerable body of literature in the study of politics that focuses on the exercise of power, by controlling the political agenda in such a way that decisions or policies that may be damaging to an established set of power actors never arise in the first place (Lukes, 2021). As such, policy can come in the form of either action or inaction.

In summary, this introductory section has established a working definition of the term 'policy' that will apply across this course. It has also provided a framework that we will use throughout to classify different types of policy. Be sure to return to this section, if you struggle to recall these distinctions across the course, as they will inform how you will be analysing and thinking about managing policy in women's football business. In the next section, we seek to put some flesh on these conceptual bones, by looking at how Lowi's (1972) framework maps onto real-world examples drawn from the development over time of women's football business.

Section 2. Applying Lowi's typology to women's football business: regulative and constitutive policies

In this section, we will apply Lowi's (1972) typology to a set of illustrative examples in women's football business. The goal of this section is to bring the typology to life through



examples, and to make the point that policy fundamentally **matters** in women's football business. This is designed to provide the motivation behind this module.

Let us begin by looking at regulative policies. It is not difficult to think of examples of highly consequential regulative policies in the domain of women's football business. Williams (2006) argues the following: "While women's participation has taken place in several countries for over a hundred years, there has been a hostility to female participation on behalf of the sporting bureaucracies that has been the most defining feature for the women's game." (p. 153).

The most egregious illustration of this hostility came in the early-mid 20th century, when a range of national football associations banned or prohibited organised women's football, which was an emerging spectator sport by the end of the First World War. The English Football Association's 1921 imposition of a blanket ban on women's teams having matches at Football Association or Football League affiliated stadiums or grounds, not only devastated women's football in the UK, but also provided a model that was taken up in other countries such as the Netherlands and Germany (Williams, 2006).

More recently, an example of regulative policies affecting women's football business can be found in the establishment, by FIFA, in late 2020, of a new set of minimum labour conditions for female football players, including a minimum period of 14 weeks of paid absence for maternity leave, with a guarantee of return to work opportunities (including facilities for breastfeeding and/or expressing milk), access to medical advice during pregnancy, and protection from dismissal or other professional disadvantage due to pregnancy (Women's Football, 2020). What is interesting to consider here is the flexible nature of this regulative policy – the emphasis is on minimum standards, which does not preclude the agreement of standards that are more generous.

Debates about constitutive policy are also vital to women's football business. The key issue at stake here is the lack of female representation in the governance of football. In a report on the governance of football in the UK, Fair Game (2022) noted that female representation of the boards of football clubs lagged considerably behind standards in other sectors of the economy. Their analysis showed that women made up between 4.2 % and 11.3 % of Boards in the top four leagues in English football, compared to an average of 39.1 % in FTSE 100 companies. Analysts of gender and governance have found that improved diversity on Boards can improve corporate governance, risk management, and workplace culture, with Fair Game (2022) concluding that "In short, more gender diversity leads to better decision-making and financial performance" (p. 13). In the next reading, we will spend time analysing FIFA's current women's football strategy. However, this constitutive element is to the forefront, and the following tangible goals are listed in their strategy document (Women's Football Strategy, 2018):



100% of FIFA member associations to have at least one woman present on their executive committee by 2026.

By 2022, at least one third of FIFA committee members will be women.

Every member association will dedicate at least one seat on its executive committee to representing the interests of women in football and women's football. (p. 16).

One other strand in this debate is the extent to which women's football governance is subsumed into the structures created with the interests of the men's game in mind. For the most part, the extent of resources accrued in the men's game have made it difficult to avoid women's football governance being folded in to organisations like FIFA and UEFA, as well as national men's football associations and clubs. Williams (2006) states that "those women's associations which preceded the recognition of women's football by FIFA have gradually given way over the last thirty or so years to become committees within male administrative structures or are recognised as affiliated to these bureaucracies." (p. 160). As we will see in the next reading, both FIFA and UEFA have targeted increased female representation in football governance in their policy strategies.

Section 3. Applying Lowi's typology to women's football business: resource-based policies

Looking at examples of resource-based (i.e., distributive and re-distributive) policies, the growing scale of participation in and support of women's football has not escaped the attention of academics [see, for example: Williams (2003)] and business analysts (Football: the business case for the women's game, 2022). Perhaps, the most vivid demonstration of the scale of growth of the sport was the spectacle of the 2022 UEFA Women's EURO final between England and Germany, which drew a crowd of 87,192 spectators – the highest attendance ever for any (male or female) European national team tournament match. It reached a peak television audience of over 23 million (combined broadcast and streaming) in the UK alone (McCaskill, 2022). This was not a once off. In the Spring of 2022, FC Barcelona's women's team twice drew more than 90,000 spectators. Parry (2022) notes that "[Women's] football has also seen considerable growth in participation. In 2020, 3.4 million women and girls played football in England, and the world governing body FIFA aims to have 60 million playing by 2026." (para. 8).



This growth in the scale of women's football has been accompanied by an increase in the allocation of financial and other resources by states, football federations, and clubs to the women's game. In some senses, this line of progression can be seen as following a conventional business logic – the increasing levels of public interest in and engagement with women's football will create financial resources which will accrue to women's football businesses. However, it should be noted that the recent increase in the resourcing of women's football occurred in a wider context of very low baseline spending, relative to the men's game. Kuper (2022) makes the following indictment of FIFA's resource allocation to women's football:

[FIFA's] 2019 report claimed that 'women's football development is one of FIFA's top priorities', yet the \$14mn it planned to spend directly on women's football in 2020 represented just 2 per cent of the total allocated to 'development and education'. From 2015 through 2018, FIFA spent more than twice as much on its museum in Zurich as on developing the female game. (para. 24).

As discussed in the first section, the distinction between distributive and redistributive policies in the sphere of women's football business can be difficult to draw. The policies with the most fundamentally distributive characteristics revolve around participation and access to football. This type of spending can be justified in terms of knock-on effects on the health and well-being of a population. Furthermore, the provision of broad-based resources has consistently been found to be a key component of success in international competition. Houlihan and Green (2007) provide a meta-analysis of studies of the policy components of elite sporting success and all contain a significant distributive resource element – including financial investment, investment in facilities and coaches, and investment in research and expertise. Their analysis is produced in table 1 below. Across the four studies that they consider, resource allocation is a constant. What is interesting here is the extent to which this resource allocation can be described as distributive versus redistributive. In one sense, state support is drawn from the same budget that is used to provide vital services in health, law and order, transport, etc. When sports funding, and especially funding targeted at producing and supporting elite athletes, is 'competing' for money from this pot, it can be painted as re-distributive. However, and as we will see, the case is usually made that participation in sport is a means through which people can be healthier (reducing the burden on health services), and has also been characterised as a route away from high-risk or even criminal behaviour in young people. These

characterisations (which paint the performance of elite athletes as a key ‘pull’ factor into engaging with sports) allow for sports funding to take on a more distributive character.

Table 1. Factors contributing to elite sporting success

Factors	Oakley and Green	Digel	UK Sport (SPLISS Consortium)	Green and Houlihan
Contextual	An excellence culture	Support, especially financial, of the state	Financial support	Support for ‘full-time’ athletes
	Appropriate funding	Economic success and business sponsorship A media supported positive sports culture	Participation in sport Scientific research	
Processual	Clear understanding of the role of different agencies	Talent development through the education system	Talent identification and development system	Athletic and post-career support Integrated approach to policy development Coaching provision and coach development
	Simplicity of administration	Talent development through the armed forces		
	Effective system for monitoring athlete progress			
	Talent identification and targeting of resources			
Specific	Comprehensive planning system for each sport			A hierarchy of competition opportunities centred on preparation for international events Elite facility development The provision of coaching, sports science and sports medicine support services
	Lifestyle support	Sports science support services	International competition	
	Well-structured competitive programmes		Training facilities	
	Well-developed specific facilities			

Source: Houlihan and Green, 2007, p. 4.

Re-distributive policies are generally subject to the highest levels of political contestation and conflict because of their tendency to highlight the ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ of resource allocation policy. In women’s football business, this dynamic can emerge when resources are sought that could redress the historical imbalance between men’s football and women’s football. One of the more extreme versions of this type of policy was Kuper’s (2022) argument for reparations from men’s football to be paid; he argued:

If football associations tried to ban women’s football today, the response would be rather different to 1921. Courts and competition regulators could consider this an unjustified violation of competition laws, probably on the grounds of limiting markets. After all, some teams (but not others) were excluded from profitmaking



activities. The bans could also be an abuse of dominance, given that the football federations had market power and could in effect dictate the rules of competition.

The members of any association illegally imposing such a ban could find themselves on the hook for billions. The maximum fine for breaking European competition law is 10 per cent of the offending company's overall turnover, "multiplied by the number of years and months the infringement lasted", says the European Commission. (para. 18).

While there is little evidence of such a course of action being seriously pursued in women's football, the success of members of the US Women's national soccer team in securing a settlement with the US Soccer Federation (USFF) on player pay. Following a six-year legal battle, US Soccer committed to providing an equal rate of pay for the women's and men's national teams including World Cup bonuses, subject to collective bargaining agreements with the unions that separately represent the women and men. During the conduct of the legal dispute, court documents filed by the USFF were revealed as arguing that men's football requires 'materially different skill and more responsibility' than women's football, resulting in a scandal that saw USFF President Carlos Cordeiro step down (Dure, 2022).

In summary, the allocation of resources is a key aspect of women's football policy. No serious analysis of how to drive growth in participation and/or elite performance ignores this, although debates continue about the optimal distribution of public spending in this area. The highest degree of contestation in this area centres on what are perceived to be re-distributive policies; especially those where men's football can be identified as the 'losing' side in a re-distribution of resources towards women's football. Understanding this policy context is very important for those seeking to analyse or manage women's football business policy – as we will demonstrate, it provides insights about what resistance some policies will receive and how they can be framed in order to circumvent this.

Section 4. The women's football business governance network

In this section, we will build a scheme of the network that creates and enforces regulative, distributive, redistributive, distributive, and constitutive policy in women's football

business. In terms of the actors who create and deliver policy, the main focus of academic study of policy has been nation-states and governments. However, as society becomes increasingly complex and inter-dependent, there is a growing acknowledgement that “No single actor, public or private, has the all-encompassing knowledge, overview, information, or resources to solve complex and diversified problems” (Sehested, 2003, p. 89). This insight led to a paradigm shift in how policy is understood and studied – described as a shift from the study of government to the study of governance.

Key differences in how this wider conception of policymaking informs our understanding of the role of government, the nature of decision-making, the structure and focus of the policy process, the democratic and accountability mechanisms, and the very nature of policy itself are provided in table 2 below. What we can see throughout is an emphasis on the wider network of governance actors, relative to the traditional focus on governments as the sole producers of policy. This approach moves us away from a hierarchical understanding of policy as something imposed towards a more horizontal sensibility wherein policy is co-created (and co-implemented) by a variety of state and private actors.

Table 2. From government to governance

Dimension	Government	Governance
The Role of Government Authority & Decision Making	Major Actor Centralized Command & Control	One of Many Actors Decentralized Negotiation & Persuasion
System Structure	Closed & Vertical	Open & Horizontal
Focus	Program	Tool
Democratic Process	Representative	Participatory
Accountability	Process Outputs Quality Outcomes	Community Level Outcomes
Policies	Centralized/ Uniform	Decentralized/Place Sensitive

Source: Frahm and Martin, 2009, p. 410.

This adds a considerable degree of complexity to the policymaking process, but the benefit is that it allows for a wider range of inputs from individuals and groups affected by policy. It also allows us to understand that there is considerable scope for flexibility in the nature of policymaking. As we outlined in discussing the example of FIFA’s new regulative policies on labour conditions in professional women’s football, it is possible to adopt an approach based on setting minimum standards which nonetheless allows for variation arising in different places and contexts. The governance approach is well-suited to the study of policy in the sphere of women’s football business where, as we will see, policy is influenced, developed, and delivered by a wide range of actors.



Let us now consider the key actors in the women's football governance network. At the highest level of authority, formally empowered political authorities set the wider contextual regulative policy environment. In women's football business, particularly important aspects of regulative policy relate to business and taxation, sports infrastructure and funding, workers' rights and employment regulations, and equality regulation. Like any other business, women's football business is affected by these contextual regulative policies and must operate in accordance with them. As such, the state, through its creation of legislation and (via the government, civil service, police, and courts) execution of that legislation, is a key reference point in determining contextual regulative policy. Within states, some aspects of contextual regulative policy may be made at the sub-national level, including local, municipal, and regional bodies.

In some instances, for example, in the European Union, aspects of contextual regulative policy can be set and enforced at the regional level via supranational governance mechanisms, in which states pool their sovereignty to make collectively binding regulations that apply across a region (Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997). For instance, the 1995 Bosman ruling by the European Court of Justice had a dramatic effect on the organisation of football across all member states of the European Union (Binder and Findlay, 2012). The ruling held that restrictions on foreign EU players within clubs in national leagues, and restrictions that meant payers were not free to move to another club at the end of their contract without a transfer fee were in contravention of workers' rights provisions of the EU Treaties. As such, football associations and leagues had to rescind restrictions on the number of EU foreign players, and football players gained significantly enhanced bargaining power in the light of their free agency once contracts expired. This ruling was a supreme example of the ways in which contextual regulative policy can (re)shape the contours of the football world.

At the same time, football is a largely voluntary activity involving self-governing clubs, associations, and businesses. As Geeraert et al. (2013) point out:

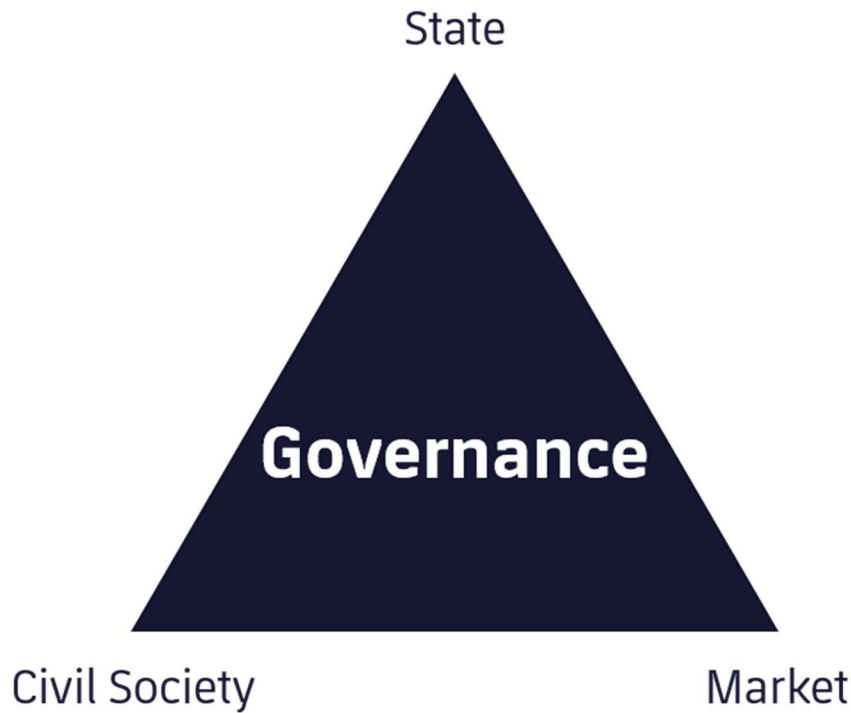
Sport originally was a self-regulating activity. The highest governing bodies of sport, global sport organisations (GSOs) like FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and the IOC (International Olympic Committee), regulated their sports or events autonomously through self-governing networks with their own rules and regulations. (p. 113).



A notable feature of the evolution of the football governance network is increasing complexity and interdependence over time. This has been driven by a variety of dynamics, with growth in the commercialisation of football being a central component. The increased revenues attracted by football business globally have drawn greater attention from commercial/market forces and from state governments. At the same time, an array of stakeholders is consolidating and seeking their 'place at the table' in football governance. Such stakeholders range from representatives of player's interests (globally organised under the FIFPro banner), to groups representing clubs (such as the ECA), communities [see, for example, UEFA's Football for Unity Projects (2021)], and fans [see, for instance, the Fan-Led Review of Football Governance (2021)]. As such, understanding the actors involved in contemporary women's football policy involves dealing with a combination of diversity and complexity.

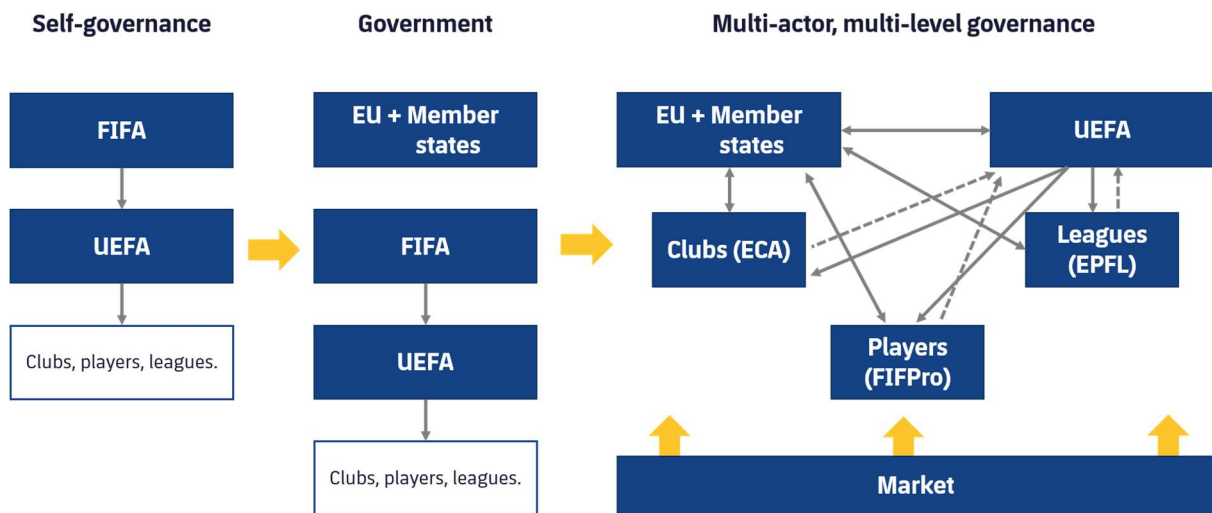
Figure 1 and 2 below present a scheme used to understand the football policy network in the EU, developed by Geeraert *et al.* (2013). Their approach locates the football policy network as being located at the intersection of three types of policy actor: states, civil society, and the market. This approach allows for an understanding of the fact that football has a substantial element of self-governance in terms of policy – with clubs, national federations, and international federations (most notably, UEFA and FIFA) producing and enforcing a large volume of policies. At the same time, states set the wider contextual policy frameworks within which football organisations operate and state decisions on matters of labour rights, consumer rights, commercial regulation, and equalities legislation can significantly impact on the scope for action of football organisations.

Figure 1. The governance triangle and its application to football governance in Europe



Source: own source based on Geeraert *et al.* (2013).

Figure 2. The governance triangle and its application to football governance in Europe



Source: own source based on Geeraert *et al.* (2013).

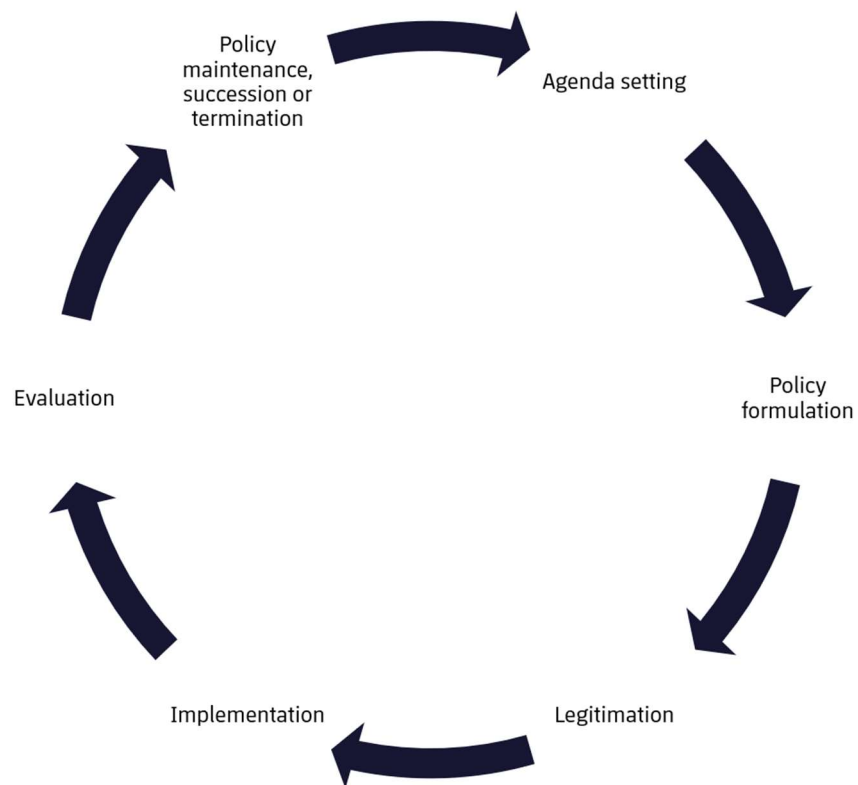
Section 5. The policy cycle

In this section, we will provide a description of the policy cycle. The idea of a policy cycle is designed as a way of making sense of how policies come to be made, enforced, and developed over time. Its main function is therefore heuristic – that is, a device that allows us to reduce a highly complex process into a more straightforward representation. Figure



3 below captures the typical representation of a policy cycle as occurring in a series of six stages.

Figure 3. Stages in the policy cycle



Source: [online image of stages in the policy cycle], (n. d.), <https://bit.ly/3RZD42F>.

During the **agenda setting** phase, actors in a policy network engage in an effort to make sense of the substantive issues or problems that characterise a policy area. This involves both identifying relevant issues, but also creating a narrative that connects them to potential solutions. The second phase is **policy formulation**. It involves setting goals, assessing the impact of solutions (typically in terms of setting potential benefits against the costs of a given policy), choosing an overarching policy solution and developing a set of specific policy instruments required to deliver that solution. The third phase, **legitimation**, is often also described as 'decision-making'. This is the phase in which policies are formally adopted and involves the assertion of support or approval for a policy by empowered members of a governance network. This phase can include legislative or executive approval for state actors, adoption by a board or vote by members of civil society organisations, and consultation or (in rare cases) referendum votes with members of the public.

Once a policy is formally adopted, three further phases can be identified. **Implementation** refers to the execution of a policy. Depending on the nature of the policy option adopted, this can involve existing agencies ensuring that policy decisions are carried out as planned, or it can entail establishing a new organisation (or contracting to one) to create the requisite staffing, financial, and legal resources to implement a policy. As the policy unfolds, it should be subject to continuous **evaluation** to assess the extent to which it is delivering the desired effect without creating unforeseen costs. Typically, policy evaluation requires the creation of metrics that policymakers can use to assess policy efficacy and costs and the population of these metrics with new data on a regular basis. Finally, policymakers are continuously faced with whether to maintain, modify, or discontinue policies, and this is represented in the final **policy maintenance, succession, or termination** phase – wherein the decision to either modify or terminate a policy initiates a new cycle.

Reflecting on the use of policy cycles to analyse and intervene in policymaking, Cairney (2022) notes:

A cycle divides the policy process into a series of stages, from a notional starting point at which policymakers begin to think about a policy problem to a notional end point at which a policy has been implemented and policymakers think about how successful it has been before deciding what to do next. The image is of a

continuous process rather than a single event. The evaluation stage of policy 1 represents the first stage of policy 2, as lessons learned in the past set the agenda for choices to be made in the future. (<https://bit.ly/3UmFSIG>).

The key insight from this quote is that one should not see the various phases of a policy cycle as occurring in isolation. Each phase is influenced by the nature of the previous phases, and each cycle is affected by the *status quo* policy – which affects not just the decision to maintain, modify, or change a policy, but also how it is defined and how potential policy solutions are understood and evaluated.

In the next sections of this reading, we will weave together the concepts of the components of policy categories, policy networks, and policy cycles in order to provide a comprehensive analytical framework that will allow you to both make sense of and engage with policy in women's football business.

Section 6. Policy in motion – How policies are made, contested, and changed

In this section, we focus on the dynamics of policymaking, in particular outlining how new policies come to be made, as well as how existing policies come to be contested or changed. In order to do so, we draw on the work of Howlett *et al.* (2017) – which draws together several theories of policy change into a single, overarching framework for analysis.

In order to understand this approach, it is necessary to ground ourselves in some of the debates that are common among policy analysts, and the ideas that those debates have generated. In the first place, the policy cycle framework that we outlined in the previous section was hugely influential from the early 1950s until the mid-1980s among academic policy analysts, but it had some notable limitations (see: Jann and Wegrich, 2007). In the first place, it was not very well-equipped to explain policy dynamics, that is, why are some policies stable and others subject to frequent change? Secondly, it provides a rather 'clean' overview of policymaking, which is, in reality, often a 'messy' process with elements of randomness and blurred boundaries between phases and actors. Thirdly, it had little to say about the matter of **agency** – that is, the capacity of individuals or groups to shape (or compete to shape) policies.

Two highly influential responses to these limitations emerged in the form of 'multiple streams theory' and 'advocacy coalition frameworks'. Multiple streams theory was developed by Kingdon (1984), largely in reaction to the critique that policy cycles were too linear and logical in nature to capture the reality of policymaking. As explained by Houlihan (2005):



Kingdon emphasizes the ambiguity, complexity, and degree of residual randomness in policymaking in marked contrast to the dominant assumptions of actor rationality. He identifies three distinct streams. The *problem stream* comprises those issues which government policymakers have identified as requiring action (as opposed to those they have chosen to ignore) prompted by focusing events (crises, for example), indicators of the changing scale of a problem (e.g. routine collection of statistics on juvenile crime, obesity, or cardio-vascular disease), and feedback on the performance of current policies. The *policy stream* is conceptualized as a 'primeval soup' within which ideas, sponsored by particular policy communities, float around and occasionally combine and rise to the top of the agenda, or are adopted by policy entrepreneurs who promote particular ideas and mobilize opinion. Ideas might include the belief that physical education is a crucial part of the school curriculum, or that privatization improves the quality of sports services. These ideas reach the top of the government's agenda if they fulfil a number of criteria, including that they should be technically feasible and compatible with the dominant values of the community. Finally, the *political stream*, which is independent of the other two streams, comprises a number of elements including the national mood, organized political forces (political parties and interest groups, for example), and government. (p. 172).

Kingdon's analysis argued that policy change occurs when there is an alignment of these streams that creates a 'launch window' where "a problem is recognised, a solution is developed and available in the policy community, a political change makes the time right for policy change, and potential constraints are not severe" (Kingdon, 1984, p. 174). A second response was the 'advocacy coalition framework', which placed a greater emphasis on power and institutional structure. This approach conceptualised policy as



being driven by policy communities embedded in specific policy 'sub-systems', with combinations of stable and unstable system-level parameters. According to this approach, policy change is driven by 'advocacy coalitions' which comprise groups and individuals in the policy subsystem united by a set of policy beliefs and resources. System-level changes (for instance, socio-economic shocks, changing mass beliefs, changes in government parties) affect the terrain on which these coalitions compete, and the varying power and capacities of these coalitions ultimately explain policy change.

There is significant value in both frameworks, and ongoing value in the policy cycle approach which they react to. Each has its strengths and weaknesses and each emphasises different aspects of policymaking – as such, there is a clear advantage in adopting an approach that blends these insights in a coherent way. This is why we will employ Howlett *et al.* (2017) 'five streams framework of the policy process' in this course. This approach incorporates the policy cycle, is amenable to analysis across the policy types that we have outlined, and adds insights about the messy nature of policymaking and importance of contesting coalitions from the multiple streams and advocacy coalition approaches, respectively.

This framework makes sense of the policy process in a way that accommodates its sequential nature, provides an understanding of change dynamics, and deals with the 'messiness' of policymaking. It works by conceptualising a series of five streams, which capture fundamentally discrete aspects of the policy process. Central to the entire process is the **problem stream** – this captures how the various actors involved (be the governments, administrators, athletes, fans, or citizens) understand the issues at stake, and the nature of a problem to be addressed in a policy area. This approach sees the agenda-setting phase as the alignment of a high-priority policy problem with a **policy solution** stream, which captures an array of policies that might address this problem, with a *political* stream, which captures the role of authoritative actors in the governance network, their interests and strategies. When these streams coalesce at the agenda-setting stage, this sets in train a fourth **process** stream – which captures the formal apparatus of policy design, adoption, implementation, and evaluation. Once a particular policy is adopted in the decision-making phase, a **programme** stream is created, and the implementation and evaluation of this programme enters the process.

This framework is captured visually in figure 4 below. What is important for our purposes is that it allows us to draw together the various ideas and concepts that we will use to understand policy in women's football across the rest of the course. Before explaining how we will do so, however, it is important to insert a note of caution about the limitations of this abstract model – so that you can use it as a helpful tool in your work, without becoming a 'slave to the model'.

Figure 4. The five-stream framework of the policy process



Source: Howlett *et al.*, 2017, p. 73.

Section 7. A note of caution: the benefits and limitations of heuristic concepts

Having established the definitions, ideas, and overarching framework that we will use in this module, it is important to pause for a moment to consider their benefits and limitations. As you will have noticed across this reading, the academic study of public policy generally is an area of ongoing debate and contestation – there is no ‘perfect’ approach to making sense of policy. This is simply a feature of the reality within which we find ourselves – human beings are complex and can be both irrational and unpredictable. Concepts and frameworks in the social sciences serve two key purposes:

1. **an applied purpose.** Fundamentally, the value of these frameworks for our purposes is in application. That is, they can be imposed on ongoing policy debates germane to women’s football business as a means of understanding and affecting policy.
2. **A heuristic purpose:** the term ‘heuristic’ captures the idea of a mental shortcut or ‘rule of thumb’. Heuristics can be very useful in dealing with complex situations which require a decision. For example, a traffic light can be thought of as a heuristic, in the sense that it allows drivers to reduce all of the complexities of vehicles and pedestrians at an intersection into a simple rule: green means go, red means stop. Similarly, policy framework provide heuristics that can be used to identify opportunities and obstacles, and develop and implement strategies for engaging with and managing policy.

However, there are dangers that come with these benefits. In the first place, it is important to bear in mind that our structuring ideas influence not just how we understand what we observe, but what we choose to observe in the first place. That is to say, it is possible that our frameworks lead us away from important evidence. One thing to consider regarding the five-streams framework is that it emphasises the role of beliefs and ideas. However, an alternative Neo-Marxist framework would tell us to look at the wider economic system and actors’ economic interests as being of more value. Secondly, human beings are often reluctant to process new evidence that challenges their existing ways of seeing the world. This is why established ‘paradigms’ in various fields can be difficult to overturn, even when there is evidence against them. If you come across evidence that contradicts or challenges the frameworks that we use in this course, do not simply disregard it; instead think about how best to change your approach in the light of it.

In summary, while the structure of this course requires you to get to grips with and, to an extent, internalise the concepts and frameworks presented in this reading; it is important to remember that they are merely tools for engaging with the world of policy. I believe



that they are the best tools that social science has developed and fit well to women's football business as a policy area. However, it is vital that you use them critically and intelligently to get the most from them.

Section 8. Conclusion: how the concepts and framework introduced in this reading connect to the next three readings

The purpose of this reading has been to establish the concepts that we will use to understand policy as it applies to women's football business. The next three readings will draw on these ideas to both structure our learning and generate insights and strategies that can be used in specific circumstances. The next reading looks at engaging with policymaking – it shows how individuals and groups have advocated for regulative, distributive, redistributive, and constitutive policies that can level the playing field for women's football, driving participation and expanding revenues at the elite level. We will explore a series of cases that demonstrate wider principles of influencing policy at each stage in the policy process, emphasising the importance of aligning with the goals and interests of actors in the governance network.

The third reading drills into metrics. Metrics are influential at all stages of the policy process – they are very useful in shaping public and political understandings of the policy problem in agenda setting, can be linked to the design of policy as inputs and outputs, and serve as a vital tool in the implementation and evaluation phases. It will provide insight into how metrics are created and how they can be used to explain the value created by women's football business to policymakers. Metrics matter across all types of policy germane to women's football business, shaping regulative, distributive, redistributive, and constitutive policy outputs. By empowering you to make sense of and engage with metrics, this reading will provide a particularly useful technical knowledge base to engage in women's football policy.

The fourth and final reading considers the management of policy in women's football business. Here, the emphasis is on putting your understanding of relevant policies and how they are created to use as a person involved in women's football business. Again, the concepts and frameworks introduced in this chapter allow us to break this task down into manageable and understandable tasks and strategies. Do please return to this reading as the course unfolds, as this will allow you to internalise and put into action the concepts that we covered and the framework that we outlined.

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