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Marsden

Influencing the roll out of good policies: An evaluation of governance tools

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ABSTRACT

Research on sustainable transport planning has concluded that, for the most part, the policies that will lead to more sustainable outcomes are known and what is required is a more widespread and intense application of such measures. In response, upper tiers of government with responsibility for achieving policy goals and for steering the lower tiers of government are often faced with a dilemma of how to encourage these lower tiers to 'do the right thing'.

This paper examines the presumptions surrounding the spread of 'good policies', considers the motivations of actors at a lower tier when faced with pressure to adopt policies and, drawing on a series of case studies from Europe, discusses the potential for a range of different approaches to stimulate the more rapid uptake of 'good policies'.

The research concludes that greater attention needs to be given to the notions of policy diffusion and the different stages of adoption (or rejection) of policies. Much better use should be made of pilot studies to understand the likely adoption pathway for policies and the extent to which the policies will spread without active intervention. Where intervention is needed, better communication of the benefits and the use of incentives to encourage compliance are likely to be more effective than sanctions and regulations. Sanctions and regulations can be difficult to design, expensive to enforce or oversee and will, faced with an underlying reluctance to comply, lead to compliance on paper but limited action. Good policies are only good policies in particular circumstances and plans to support their roll out should recognise this.

1. INTRODUCTION

The short and long-term challenges facing decision-makers in trying to develop and deliver sustainable transport strategies are well rehearsed [1]. At a local or regional scale there exists a range of policy choices which could be selected and a key dilemma facing these areas is which package of policies is feasible and will work best for them now and in the future [2]. In Europe, the Green Paper on Urban Mobility from 2007 suggests that '*European towns and cities are all different, but they face similar challenges and are trying to find common solutions*' [3, p1]. In the US as in Europe considerable emphasis is given over to the identification and dissemination of 'good' or 'best' practices [4, 5, 6]. In the current financial environment, with considerable resource and staffing pressures, it seems yet more important to exploit the potential for effective solutions established in one area by rolling them out across other areas.

It is understood however that there are considerable barriers to the adoption of policies in areas with quite different institutional characteristics [7]. This paper therefore considers the potential for different steering or governance mechanisms to be applied by higher tier levels of government that may wish to support or mandate the broader adoption of particular policies. In so doing, the author is mindful that one of the reasons that policies may not achieve widespread adoption is that good practice in one context may not be good practice in another [8].

The paper begins by considering the motivation of government or government agencies drawing on literature from a range of disciplines including public administration, institutional economics and organizational management. A series of case studies are then presented drawing on evidence from Europe and in particular England. In Section Three four case studies are presented which demonstrate aspects of governance by authority where coercive mechanisms have been applied to encourage particular outcomes. Section Four reviews case studies which are more enabling in character although they share the characteristics of focussing on particular types of intervention. Section Five reflects on the evidence from the case studies in light of the motivations presented in Section Two. It goes on to develop a more nuanced process for understanding the process of rolling out policies based on notions of policy diffusion (the spreading of innovations over time through social systems). Practical suggestions for appropriate use of governance tools to support policy roll out are provided. Section Six provides some conclusions about the degree to which it is possible to use governance tools to steer policy adoption.

2. MOTIVATIONS OF GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

In order to adequately understand the responses of government agencies to different forms of incentives, regulations or sanctions to encourage particular behaviours, it is necessary to first consider the underlying motivations which will influence their response. The political science and public administration literature emphasises the need to consider formal governance structures, the distributions of power (including financial resources) between the actors in the formal process and issues of accountability, local identity and performance. The following contentions emerge:

- They are budget maximising entities which will seek to grow personnel, resources and power over time [9].
- They are subject to complex goal complexity and also goal ambiguity in ways which are not so marked in the private sector (where profit maximisation retains a strong although not complete focus in corporate priorities) [10]

- Acceptance of the need for new policies is subject to the acceptance of a problem and a lack of existing internal solutions. The strategic fit of policy solutions to the local context is important to their consideration and adoption [11]
- Elected bodies will be constrained by assumptions about the attitudes of voters [12]. More complex policies and those involving price adjustments will be subject to higher risk [13].
- Changes are strongly influenced by the nature of past developments and policies [14]. Boonstra (2004) notes that significant policy changes require organisational change and that the mismatch between the policy and the implementation environment is often responsible for policy failure – despite the policy often being cited as the problem [15].

The literature therefore suggests that the motivators of organisational change will be influenced by an interaction between structural change (changes to funding, incentives and regulations) and by agency (the actions of individuals with influence within the process). This paper seeks to explore the degree to which these issues emerge as important through case studies of policy roll out described in sections 3 and 4.

3. POLICY ROLL OUT – GOVERNING BY AUTHORITY

This section reviews the evidence from four initiatives in the UK where central government has sought to govern the action of local government and other local agencies by authority. This has been done through a variety of means including establishing regulations, mandating compliance, rewarding performance and associating terms and conditions to grant funding opportunities.

3.1 Planning Obligations for Workplace Travel Plans

Rye et al. (2009) define a travel plan as “a package of measures implemented by an organisation to encourage people who travel to/from that organisation to do so by means other than driving alone by private car” [16]. Travel Plans emerged in the 1990s, initially at Nottinghamshire County Council based on experiences brought back from California. Travel Plans were subsequently adopted and promoted by central government. This began with their inclusion in a 1998 White Paper and then within the 2001 revision of national planning policy guidance on transport which provides “a strong recommendation to local authorities that they should pursue travel plans through the planning process, for developments exceeding a nationally-prescribed threshold size” [16]. The development of supporting guidance makes this the de facto standard approach to development planning. The UK is acknowledged to have one of the most strongly institutionalised approaches to travel plans in the EU (alongside Switzerland). The mechanisms by which travel plans can be required are part of more general planning conditions and include conditions imposed before a new development can open as well as obligations which can be enforced after opening. The practice adopted with respect to including monitoring and enforcing the plans varies within organisations and across authorities – thus complicating evaluation of their success.

A national government funded study made an attempt to quantify the likely impacts of the widespread adoption of travel plans estimating the potential for an overall reduction in peak hour commute traffic to be 0.4-1.5% in England with an overall reduction in car commuting of 0.7-3.3% [9]. Rye et al. review the basis for these estimates noting that the impacts are based on literature from the US, UK and Netherlands (and that transferability may therefore be an issue) and on data from seven local authorities in England which study

[9] noted “were selected mainly because they had data available on uptake and effectiveness of travel plans in their area and were known to be active in the field.” [16]. Rye et al. note that this is likely to create a bias in expectations as “experience from the evaluation of travel plans in the USA demonstrates that those places that have monitoring data available tend to be better than average examples of good practice (/Schreffler/Organisational Coaching, 1996)” [16].

Rye et al. surveyed 139 planning and transport authorities in England, obtaining a 62% response rate [16]. This was further supplemented by the results of 18 interviews with staff involved in using the planning system to negotiate travel plans. They found that authorities had secured around 40 travel plans each, of which around 75% were through the planning process with the balance being voluntary. The introduction of national maximum parking standards had acted as an additional impetus for the adoption of travel plans. However, the study also found that 34.5% of authorities only used planning conditions to introduce travel plans (i.e. the majority had no means of monitoring or enforcing the plan after the site opens). Of those that used planning obligations 40% either did not monitor or could not demonstrate how they monitored compliance with the agreement. Even where plans were monitored there was a reluctance to enforce the conditions and 46 out of 86 respondents could think of examples which would be likely to be or were in breach of their conditions. A lack of resources and a disproportionate legal process were the main factors in an unwillingness to enforce travel plans [16].

The apparent success of Travel Plans may in part be a result of overinflated expectations emerging from a bias selection of early ‘good practice’. These are areas for which travel plans have a good policy fit and where expertise has developed over the past two decades. Despite the introduction of legislation and planning guidance to promote the widespread adoption of travel plans the implementation process seems to have been subject to wider institutional constraints. First, there is goal conflict between the imposition of strong planning conditions and fears of deterring economic opportunities that may locate to similar areas with less stringent conditions. Secondly, there are clearly resource constraints both in the establishment of more complicated planning obligations (which are the only way to ensure compliance) and in the subsequent monitoring and enforcement. Those authorities that feel most empowered to extract planning obligations (i.e. economically buoyant cities) appear to be equipped and skilled to do so whilst other areas are less inclined and less able to effectively do so. It may be, therefore, that whilst the formalisation of the process has provided an objective reason to introduce travel plans for all authorities, the effectiveness will be strongly limited by local capacity and preferences.

3.2 Mandatory School Travel Plans

Issues about school travel were raised in the mid 1980s, generated by concerns about accident risk to children and curtailment of children’s independent mobility. An apparently successful project to address these issues in the Danish city of Odense led on to UK work on ‘safe routes to schools’ projects in the mid 1990s. This has subsequently evolved into the development of integrated plans to reduce the amount of car travel to school and to increase the use of healthier modes of walking and cycling under the banner of ‘school travel plans’ [18]

As with the workplace travel plan, school travel plans became part of mainstream policy in the UK in 1998. Many authorities started working on the issue. In September 2003, a major new initiative on school travel was launched jointly by the Departments for Transport and Education. This has included new funding for school travel work. It was accompanied by new legislation, and aims for all schools to introduce a travel plan before the end of the 2010. As with workplace travel plans, a review was conducted for the Department for Transport of

the outcomes of 30 pioneering school travel plans (in this instance). It concluded that the average reduction in car use was 23%, walking had increased at two-thirds of the schools by as much as 50%, cycling had increased on average by 25% and bus use had also increased [18]. Cairns and Newson note that not all schools are willing to engage in discussions about travel reduction although of those that do, over 60% will actually reduce car use.

One of the main reported motivations for schools to engage is clear problem acceptance – usually manifested by visible congestion and safety problems at the school gates and fractious relationships with local residents. Cairns and Newson also note that national certification schemes such as “Healthy Schools or Eco-schools had acted as the stimulus for work” [18, p9]. “Some local authorities highlighted that making funding available for school travel work had acted as a catalyst for generating interest from schools.” (p10). A study based on national travel statistics in 2005 concluded that there was “little evidence to suggest that there has been a widespread modal shift, above that which may have happened anyway, in schools with STPs.” [19]. A further review has been commissioned and is currently underway.

Whilst on the surface it is difficult to imagine a lack of policy fit between school travel plans and broader school objectives it appears that school travel plans are a heavy administrative burden and whilst adoption rates are increasing significantly, engagement rates vary. Interviews with nine local authority School Travel Advisors (STAs) in the North of England suggested that there are no resources to go back and assess whether schools are achieving their plans and the quality of school-led monitoring is generally weak. The STAs suggested that schools could be classified by four behaviours:

- “schools that won’t engage;
- schools who put a plan in place but don’t do anything with it;
- schools who put a plan in place but could do more; and
- schools who put a plan in place and work well to achieve the targets.” [20]

As with the travel plans, it appears that there will be instances where the policy, the place and the people are aligned in some way where most progress will be made. Equally, there will be a proportion of schools to which this agenda is less appealing (e.g. in rural areas there are few alternatives and sometimes large catchment areas) and there are risks of minimum compliance where the resources invested achieve no net gain.

3.3 Target Setting and Performance Rewards and Sanctions

Managing the public sector through the use of targets has become increasingly widespread. There remains however, considerable debate about the extent to which target setting does indeed lead to improvements in performance and the extent to which it does so without creating perverse incentives or detrimental side effects such as short-term decision making and measure fixation [21].

In England, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) process offer insight into the ability of central government to use target setting with performance rewards/penalties to influence the behaviour of local transport authorities [22]. For the Local Transport Plans 2006-2011, local authorities were required to set targets for up to 15 mandatory indicators (depending on authority type) and a further set of locally derived indicators (up to a total maximum of 40 indicators). The guidance suggested that nationally consistent thresholds denoting ‘satisfactory’ and ‘stretching’ targets would be established for the mandatory indicators and that authorities would be rewarded or penalised by $\pm 25\%$ of their capital funding for

integrated transport measures according initially to the quality of their planning approach and the ambition of their targets and subsequently against their ability to achieve these targets.¹

Marsden et al. explored the impact of the system on authority behaviour in the target setting process through interviews and questionnaires (a representative sample of 31 out of 82 LTP submitting authorities). This found that, despite the relatively small sums of money involved (typically less than \$200k per year) authorities were motivated to participate and saw the loss of resources as being potentially detrimental to their ability to achieve their goals [23]. This is consistent with the notion of budget maximising entities. The authorities reported being more certain of achieving those of their targets which had been deemed most “stretching” – reflecting a strategy where they try to perform well in areas of core competence. One of the key difficulties of the system was in setting and agreeing the assessments for stretching and satisfactory targets – reflecting considerable concerns over the ability of a centrally imposed system to reflect local circumstances.

It was not possible to assess the outcomes of the system as, during 2008 a reduction in central-local government indicator burdens (driven by broader concerns across local government) meant that the incentive scheme was withdrawn and the requirements on reporting loosened. Marsden et al. employed game theory and an experimental laboratory experiment with transport strategy software to explore the expected impacts of the targets and performance rewards regime. They concluded that “linking performance rewards to target setting will lead to competition between authorities and, designed correctly, this will lead to greater levels of achievement against the key metrics in the system than if no performance rewards are available” [23, p66]. The study also showed that, if there is a level playing field between participants, then few rewards or prizes stimulates maximum effort whilst if the players are heterogeneous then multiple prizes are necessary to motivate those with least chance of competing. The authors note that the positive interpretation of the findings is subject to two caveats. First, the findings are limited to the specific indicators adopted (i.e. other issues may then be excluded or marginalised in the policy process) and that the significant management costs may yet offset the benefits.

The study is typical in being unable to fully evaluate the public policy initiative due to the changing nature of the policy itself. It does however provide a theoretical support to the notion that targets tend to stimulate greater effort. It is also important in suggesting that authorities know their own core competencies and will try to compete most strongly in areas which they know they can perform well. The theoretical work on incentives suggests that authorities will only bid for funding when they feel that they have a reasonable chance of winning (and that the benefits of winning exceed the bidding and compliance costs) and so self-selection will be a feature of any funding contest.

3.4 The Transport Innovation Fund and Road Pricing

The Transport Innovation Fund was an attempt by the national Department for Transport to make the prospect of introducing significant demand management measures, and in particular road pricing more attractive. The Government funded a series of pump priming grants for cities to develop the case for an enhanced capital funding programme combined with pricing (see Section 4). The size of the funding on offer for such proposals was a substantial inducement. Manchester for example brought forward a proposal for charging where it stood to receive a total of £1.4 bn (~\$2 bn) in central government capital grants compared with

¹ For example, a satisfactory target for bus punctuality was to aim for 90% of services to be no more than 5 minutes late over a 10 year period. This was set to 8 years for a stretching target. Year on year progress to be assessed against the trajectory to 90% from the current position.

current levels of around £50m per annum (~\$75m) plus some one-off funding for new tram routes and other major investments.

The initiative can be seen to be a partial success from the perspective of a central steering mechanism. Faced with sufficient financial inducement, the case for a package of charging and public transport investment was sufficiently attractive for Manchester to develop a serious proposal. An inability to retain sufficient support across the 10 local authorities involved in developing the proposals led to a decision to put the proposals to a referendum. The proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by 78.8% of voters on a 53% turnout. The proposals have been abandoned and the Transport Innovation Fund has also been abolished with the new national government of 2010. Whilst large cash incentives were sufficient to motivate cities to consider and ultimately propose charging schemes such funding clearly does not overcome the local politics of implementation. This is an example of governing by authority as the conditions for the funding were very highly constrained (by contrast to the pump priming described in section 4.2).

4. POLICY ROLL OUT – GOVERNING BY ENABLING

This section considers two main types of enabling strategies which can promote the uptake of policies. The first considers supporting knowledge exchange and the second the role of pump priming to promote adoption.

4.1 Local Agenda 21 Uptake in Germany – Formal Transfer Partnerships

Kern et al. [24] looked at the extent to which cities belonging to different regions of Germany had adopted Local Agenda 21 policies. Local Agenda 21 reflected local government's commitments to adopt the principles of sustainable development set out in the United Nations Rio Earth Summit of 1992. The case study is interesting as there is a significant range of uptake of Local Agenda 21 policies (from 66% in Hesse to under 2% in Saxony-Anholt). In this instance, the Federal government did not intervene so the differential impact of the approaches in the different regional Länder can be studied. As of June 2006, 2610 local authorities (around 20%) had initiated Local Agenda 21 policies and the numbers seem to have reached a plateau (Figure 1), perhaps related to a post Kyoto switch in emphasis to climate change.

Kern et al. found that “the local authorities’ capacities (size, wealth, political institutions, social capital) and location appear to be crucial for LA21 diffusion. LA21 pioneers tend to be middle-sized or large cities.” (p610). State capitals and university towns were often pioneers. Study of the diffusion of local agenda 21 within each Länder suggests that in the early stages, bi-lateral (authority to authority) diffusion of policies is most likely and that this is most likely to occur most rapidly in agglomerations and metropolitan regions, largely as the network of actors is more dense (a phenomenon they describe as the “risk of contagion”) [24]. Some of the Länder introduced transfer agencies to spread the policies and practices and this lead to multi-lateral rather than bilateral exchanges which they identify as a key factor in the accelerated diffusion of the uptake of LA21 commitments in German authorities.

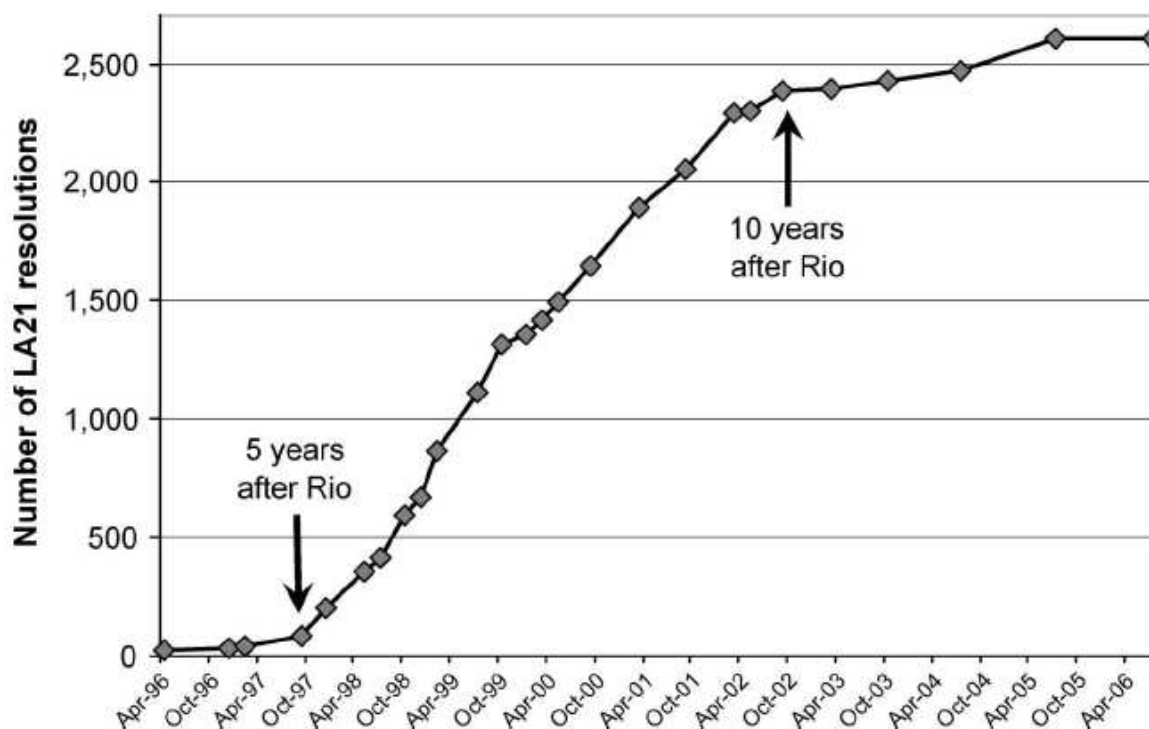


Figure 1: Development of LA21 resolutions in Germany from 1996 to 2006 (July)

Source: [16] p608²

Two interesting concepts emerge from this analysis. The first is the S-shaped adoption curve which has both an upper bound of “interested authorities” (or those that were interested before the policy agenda moved on) and a slow start up typical of many product innovations [25]. The second is the notion of building diffusion around pioneers but formalising the acceleration of the transfer process through transfer agencies. This may work best at a regional level³ as, elsewhere in the policy learning literature, it is clear that authorities prefer to learn from other similar authorities – where the transfer of context and institutional arrangements are clearer [11].

4.2 Pump Priming of Innovative Policies

This section reviews the evidence of the success of pump priming initiatives to support the introduction or mainstreaming of new policies. The expectation from the anticipated motivations of the authorities is that pump priming will appeal because it fits well with notions of budget maximising authorities and it overcomes some of the issues of problem acceptance (as the solution is only partially internally funded). The provision of central funding may also serve to reduce some of the perceived local political risks although the delivery risks are then both locally and nationally significant. It is anticipated, both from the theory [23] and from the evidence above regarding the selection of solutions which match local goals, that authorities are most likely to bid when:

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³ It is also the case that authorities see obvious benchmark groups for themselves in different contexts (e.g. the core cities group (congestion), former mining towns (regeneration))

- a) they think they have a chance of winning (and the costs of bidding are low enough to make the winning pay off substantial); and
- b) the funding supports activities that meet objectives they would wish to pursue.

Some recent examples of competitive pump priming initiatives are shown in Table 4 below, along with an indication of the number of bids per initiative.

Table 1: Pump Priming Initiatives

Initiative	Available Funding	Number of Bids	Number Funded
Sustainable Travel Demonstration Towns	£10m	~50	3
Transport Innovation Fund (congestion) Rounds 1 and 2	£18m	32	10
Cycle Demonstration Towns and City	~£100m	~40	11

Judging the success of such initiatives is a challenge. The objectives of each individual city or town bid may or may not be achieved but this only defines success in one dimension. A major purpose of pump priming initiatives is to lead to the mainstream adoption of policies and the diffusion of their adoption from the funded areas to other areas over time. No research has, as yet, adequately addressed this part of the question.

Pump priming initiatives can also have downsides. A Rural Bus pump priming competition evaluation found that some authorities had entered the competition with bids containing innovations which they did not feel were appropriate but which were necessary to meet the funding criteria [26]. Substantial growth in the services in some areas also led to tender price rises (as supply and demand matched poorly) and the time and skills available to bid for funding were highly constrained leaving some authorities to opt out of bidding.

5. APPLYING LESSONS TO THE POLICY ADOPTION PROCESS

5.1 Summary of Evidence

The evidence from Section 3 suggests that regulation can drive adoption of policies and can clearly sometimes be a crucial enabler in providing powers to enforce more widespread adoption. Implementation and the quality of implementation remains very highly linked to the degree of policy fit that particular initiatives have and the ability of authorities to adequately skill up and resource emerging agendas relative to existing commitments. In this regard the results of evaluations of early adopters seem likely to present an over optimistic impression of the potential for the impacts of a roll out of such policies as they represent committed authorities to which the solution is particularly appropriate.

Establishing rules or conditions which are attached to funding appears to stimulate very active participation of local authorities, particularly where they feel there is a good chance of winning or where the risks of not winning or even losing may also be significant. Here again though, there is evidence that authorities are most likely to compete in areas where they already have competence which presents a challenge if there is a desire to level up poor performers (which may have greater overall net benefits).

Section 4 provides a useful reminder of the importance of diffusion theory and different stages of policy adoption. Pump priming funding appears to be effective at stimulating keen early adopters to develop new policy initiatives. This is consistent with budget maximising authorities. Knowledge transfer agencies may have a role in accelerating the natural processes of policy diffusion between authorities, building up organisational capacity. However, in the case of the German Agenda 21 example, only 20% of authorities overall adopted and even in the highest adopting regions 34% did not adopt. There are some

authorities which resist particular policy solutions because they do not fit, do not compete strongly enough with other priorities or are beyond the currently available technical capacities. Neither enabling nor authority based governance tools appear particularly capable of tackling this end of the distribution. This is true of initiatives which are mandated across a whole country such as speed limits or mandatory seat belts. The local policing attitude to enforcement in these examples will dictate the extent to which these policies are effective in different areas.

5.2 Developing an effective roll-out process

To help guide the application of different governance tools in a roll-out process we suggest the use of an S-shaped diffusion curve (Figure 2). Within this curve local delivery agencies can, for any particular policy, be considered as belonging to one of four categories described below.

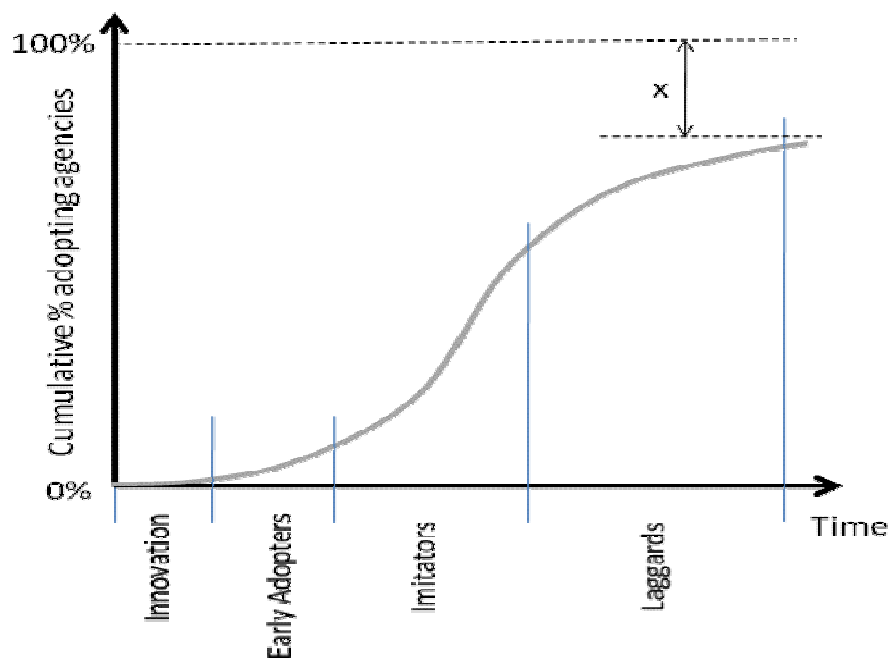


Figure 2: Framework for policy adoption amongst local delivery agencies

- Innovators – forward thinking agencies where new policy ideas are developed at a local level.
- Early Adopters – agencies which are looking for solutions within a particular area and see the policy fit of the proposal, are not overly risk averse in the context considered and are prepared to engage in shaping the policy to their locality.
- Imitators – agencies which wait for policies to become more standardised and accepted as current practice before they are prepared to commit to adopting. There is likely to be a mixed degree of commitment to the application of the policies.
- Laggards – agencies which do not see sufficient reason to adopt a policy. Such reasons may include lack of policy fit, limited potential effectiveness in their area or a lack of resources to implement.

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The design principles for supporting the role out of policies amongst local delivery agencies might then be organised around an exercise which matches the different tools to the different stages of the adoption curve.

5.2.1 Stage 1: Innovation

Support for local agencies to try new initiatives will help to generate some of the policy ideas which are then promulgated. Enabling measures which can help support this phase include:

- Facilitating knowledge exchange (sponsoring conferences, networks, collaborative projects) e.g. CIVITAS CATALIST <http://www.civitas-initiative.org/>;
- Scanning for and synthesising evidence on initiatives (noting that the local evaluation base will not always be robust enough to rely on) as with NCHRP syntheses;
- Open calls for small pump priming grants which allow agencies to try new ideas (e.g. the grants given by the USDOT, EPA and HUD liveable communities partnership);
- Reducing the pressure on local authorities to devote all their resources (financial and human) to centrally-specified activities;
- Increasing the opportunities for local authorities to raise their own funds and devote them to their own priorities (e.g. Tax Increment Financing where local government can borrow against future increases in tax revenues);
- Encouraging local initiative through announcement of awards to recognise innovation by individuals and authorities (e.g. the European Green Capital award http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/index_en.htm);

These activities will only be engaged in by those motivated to develop new solutions. The results are likely to be preliminary in nature and there will be question marks over transferability. Only some of the innovations are likely to have impacts which suggest their roll out.

5.2.2 Stage 2: Promoting Early Adoption

Once initiatives are identified as promising (either through central government supported action or through agency to agency learning) there will be a growth in their application from other forward looking agencies that see a good policy fit with the initiative. It is here that lessons about the design of the policies in different contexts are best learnt and more general understanding of their likely effectiveness is developed. However, it should still be noted that performance may be at the high end of expectations as all participating agencies are likely to be committed to the policy (or they would wait before adopting).

Early adoption is also best promoted through “Enabling” measures and it can be promoted through knowledge exchange and scanning as in Stage 1. To ensure a sufficiently broad and rapid expansion in the knowledgebase this period of expansion could also be supported through trials and larger pump-priming initiatives (such as the cycling demonstration towns).

Learning from this stage in the process is important in order to gauge the actions which are required to ensure further uptake and to gain an understanding of how rapid, how complete and how effective the roll out of such policies might be. Indicators include the proportion of bidding authorities competing at the bid stage, the types of authorities bidding (are any particular areas or types not actively engaging?), the proposed intensity of application amongst bidding authorities as well as the actual evaluation outcomes. This stage will benefit from the promulgation of advice notes, good practice guides, publicity and official recognition of successful local action.

5.2.3 Stage 3: Mainstreaming Adoption of Policies

The best strategies for mainstreaming the adoption of policies will depend on the particular policy measures. For measures which seem to find popular acclaim amongst authorities then the adoption pathway may require minimal further intervention as it becomes an operational norm. Maintenance activities using enabling tools as set out in Stage 1 will support the roll out of these policies. The rate of adoption can be increased by funding exchange agents and/or agencies (e.g. school travel plan coordinators and specific exchange agencies such as the Energy Savings Trust (www.est.org.uk)) but the limits on skills and capacity in the sector should be recognised as brakes on the adoption rate. It is also not always true that rapid adoption equates to effective adoption (there is much greater variability on the performance on and maintenance of school travel plans than on their initial development). Where enabling measures are used there will be a proportion of agencies (Shown as x in Figure 2) which will not adopt the policy.

There may also be a case to introduce measures which stimulate adoption by “Authority”, particularly where the national roll out of a policy looks like being effective but not likely to be achieved through enabling measures alone. This could include performance rewards for target achievement, regulations and minimum standards. This can serve both to accelerate the adoption of policies (particularly reducing the time it takes ‘Laggards’ to adopt) but also to minimise the proportion of agencies not adopting (i.e. reducing x in Figure 2)

As noted above, there will be a variable commitment to making the paper policies happen on the ground (and the implementation and enforcement of workplace travel plans is a good example of this). The rate of adoption and its likely effectiveness will, in all cases, be limited by the extent to which agencies feel that the benefits of adoption outweigh the costs (including the extent to which this diverts effort from other priorities).

In deciding what route to adopt in mainstreaming the uptake of the policy initiative it is important also to understand the extent to which a policy measure is “unique” and the extent to which its goals are or could be fulfilled by existing or other emerging policies. It is anticipated that diffusion of policies will be more difficult where competing approaches exist.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has reviewed the governance tools available to steer the roll out of apparently promising policies. It suggests that greater attention needs to be given to the motivations of the potential adopting authorities or agencies. In particular, the degree of policy fit and the ability of the organisation to absorb the new policy define the likelihood of adoption. Governance tools can be used to accelerate the rate of adoption of new policies and those which align financial incentives with effective adoption appear to best match authority and agency motivations. Regulatory responses can reduce the problem of laggards but have a significant risk in generating paper based rather than actual compliance which is a net cost to the system.

It is suggested that in considering the roll out of ‘good policies’ that greater attention is given to the adoption process from innovation through early adoption to normalisation of adoption. Different governance tools should be applied at different stages in the process with enabling tools applied to stimulate early adoption amongst committed participants. It is important to learn more about the nature of the early adopters and the extent to which they are typical of the broader population of authorities and agencies. Some policies will have widespread appeal and will need little support. Others will require further support through

means such as knowledge transfer agencies, incentives or regulation. The evidence presented in this paper strongly suggests that the roll out of a policy is unlikely to be effective in anything approaching 100% of authorities. It seems most effective to focus efforts on a coalition of the willing rather than trying to achieve passive compliance across the whole population. Good policies are only good policies in particular circumstances and plans to support their roll out should recognise this.

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