Implementation Perspectives: Status and Reconsideration

Søren C. Winter

Although the field of implementation research is barely thirty years old, implementation has already been analyzed from many different perspectives representing different research strategies, evaluation standards, concepts, focal subject areas and methodologies (see the Introduction to this section on Implementation). The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. It first performs a critical review of some of the major contributions to the literature. This examination will follow the development of the field. Commentators have already identified three generations of implementation research (Goggin, 1986), which will be presented and assessed below. These are the pioneers with their explanatory case-studies, the second generation studies with their top-down and bottom-up research strategies and synthesis models, and a third generation with more systematic tests based on comparative and statistical research designs. The nice thing about these generations is, however, that as a researcher you can belong to more than one, and thus stay alive and even get younger!

The Pioneers

In several respects the book Implementation by Fressman and Wildavsky (1973) sets the stage for later implementation research. Most implementation research has focused on implementation problems, barriers and failures, and this pessimistic view of implementation was already reflected in the subtitle of the seminal work: ‘How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland, or, Why it’s amazing that federal programs work at all…’

In this case study of the local implementation of a federal economic development program to decrease unemployment among ethnic minority groups in Oakland, the two authors focused on the ‘complexity of joint action’ as the key implementation problem. In that case — as in many others — federal, regional, state and local government actors, courts, affected interest groups, private firms and media had a role and stake in policy implementation. Implementation problems were amplified not only by the many actors but also by the many decision and veto points, which must typically be passed during the implementation process. Although they probably overemphasized the lack of conflict in their case, Fressman and Wildavsky convincingly showed that merely slightly different perspectives, priorities and time horizons among multiple actors with different missions in repeated and sequential decisions could cause delay, distortion and even failures in policy implementation.

However, the two authors also demonstrated that failures are not only caused by bad implementation but also by bad policy instruments. Many of the problems in the Oakland case would have been avoided had policy makers chosen a more direct economic instrument that would have tied spending of public expenditures to the actual number of minority workers employed rather than relying on endless ex ante negotiations with affected parties and authorities.

Fressman and Wildavsky (1973) are good representatives for the first generation of implementation studies, which were typically explorative and independent case studies with a theory-generating aim. Very few central theoretical variables were in focus, in this case the number of actors and decision points and the validity of the causal theory.

Another outstanding example is Eugene Bardach’s (1977) Implementation Games, which placed more emphasis on the aspects of conflict in implementation, seeing implementation as a continuation of the political game from the policy adoption stage, though partly with other actors and other relations among actors. Bardach analyzed the types of games that various actors apply in the implementation process in order to pursue their own interests. However, these games tend to distort implementation from the legislative goals. Among other representatives from what has later been called the first generation of implementation research we find Erwin Hargrove (1975), who called implementation research ‘the missing link’ in the study of the policy process, and Walter Williams and Richard Elmore (1976).

Second Generation Model Builders: Top-Down, Bottom-Up and Syntheses

Second generation implementation studies began in the early 1980s. While the first generation studies had been explorative and theory-generating, the ambition of the second generation was to take a next step in theory development by constructing theoretical models, or rather frameworks of analysis, which could guide empirical analysis. Some of these studies had more optimistic views on successful implementation.

The construction of models and research strategies, however, immediately led to a major confrontation between the so-called top-down and bottom-up perspectives on policy implementation. The predominant top-down researchers focused on a specific political decision, normally a law. Against the background of its official purpose, they followed the implementation down through the system, often with special interest in higher-level decision makers. They would typically assume a control perspective on implementation, trying to give good advice on how to structure the implementation process from above in order to achieve the purpose of the legislation and to minimize the number of decision points that could be vetoed.

The best-known and most frequently used (Sabatier, 1986) top-down analysis framework was developed by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1981). It contains seventeen variables placed in three main groups concerning the tractability of the problems addressed by the legislation, the social and political context, and the ability of the legislation to structure the implementation process. This structuring can be made by means of, for example, hierarchy, appointing of authorities and staff with a positive attitude towards the legislation/program, and use of incentives including competition among providers. By adding a long-term perspective of ten to fifteen years to implementation, the authors allow that, over time, start-up problems are often ameliorated by better structuring of the implementation by policy advocates (see also Kirst and Jung, 1982). This gave rise to much more optimistic views of implementation in contrast to the pessimism introduced by Fressman and Wildavsky (1973) and joined by most implementation analysts.

Mazmanian and Sabatier’s framework was met by two different kinds of criticism. According to one strand, the model was naive and unrealistic because it over-emphasized the ability of policy proponents to structure implementation, thus ignoring the ability of policy opponents to interfere in this structuring process (Moe, 1989). Often policy opponents are able to make policy goals less clear and to increase their own long-term influence in the implementation process in order to avoid some of the effects intended by policy proponents. Conceptually, the model ignored the politics of policy formulation and policy design (Winter, 1986b; see also May, Chapter 17).

Another strand of criticism came from the bottom-up researchers who took special interest in the ‘bottom’ of the implementation system, the place where the public sector meets the citizens or firms. They all emphasized the influence that front-line staff or field workers have on the delivery of policies such as social services,
income transfers and law enforcement in relation to citizens and firms. Field workers are crucial decision makers in these studies, and the disability of politicians and administrative managers to control field workers is emphasized.

Like top-down researchers and also most evaluation researchers, some bottom-up researchers use the official objectives of a given legislation as the standard of evaluation (Lipsky, 1980; Winter, 1986a). Michael Lipsky (1980) developed a theory on "street-level bureaucracy." It focuses on the discretionary decisions that each field worker – or "street-level bureaucrat" as Lipsky prefers to call them – makes in relation to individual citizens when they are delivering policies to them. This discretionary role in delivering a consistent and fair interpretation of regulations makes street-level bureaucrats essential actors in implementing public policies. Indeed, Lipsky (1980) turns the policy process upside-down by claiming that street-level bureaucrats are the real policy makers. However, one ironic aspect of the theory is that although Lipsky emphasizes the individual role of street-level bureaucrats in implementing public policies, their similar working conditions make them all apply similar behavior. This means that street-level bureaucrats even across policy types tend to apply similar types of practices (such as teachers, policemen, nurses, doctors or social workers).

Although trying to do their best, street-level bureaucrats experience a gap between the demands placed on them by legislative mandates, managers and citizens on the one side and their high workload on the other. In this situation they apply a number of coping mechanisms that systematically distort their work in relation to the intentions of the legislation. They ration services, such as making it less attractive or more difficult for clients to turn up at their office. They make priorities between their tasks, for instance by upgrading easy tasks and cases where clients turn up themselves and exert pressure to obtain a benefit or decision, at the expense of complicated, non-programmed tasks and clients that do not provide easy solutions within the short deadlines. For example, within the social services, acute casework and payment of benefits get higher priority than do rehabilitation and preventive work.

Bottom-up bureaucracies tend to apply few, rough standard classifications for grouping clients. By using rules-of-thumbs for the processing of these categories, the action to be taken can easily be decided even if implying that part of the process. The official objects determination is neglected. To prove successful, street-level bureaucrats tend to apply cramming in favoring relatively resourceful clients that might be in a good position to take care of themselves and downgrading the weaker clients. Street-level bureaucrats try to gain control over clients in order to make cases simpler to process, while difficult cases are passed on to other authorities. As time goes by, street-level bureaucrats develop more cynical perceptions of the clients and their intentions and modify the policy objectives that are the basis of their work.

Other bottom-up researchers go the whole length, rejecting the objective of policy mandates as an evaluation standard. For example, Elmore (1982) departs from a specific problem such as youth unemployment (Elmore, 1982) or small firms' conditions of growth (Hull and Hjerm, 1987). In practice it is the researcher himself, who in most cases defines the problem and the policy evaluation standard. In my opinion this is acceptable if done explicitly, and it can be fruitful if the researcher is able to convince others about the appropriateness of his problem definition.

The next task in Hull and Hjern's bottom-up approach is to identify the many actors that are affecting the problem in question and to map the relations between them. In these network analyses, both public and private actors become essential, and the analyses often include several policies that affect the same problem whether or not it is intended to do so. For example, in defining youth unemployment as the focal problem, youth unemployment is affected by a great number of actors such as schools, high schools, educational and vocational training institutions, the social welfare system, employment service, unemployment foundations, employer providers as well as the social partners (for example, through fixing of wage rates). Hull and Hjern (1987) focused on the role of local networks in affecting a given problem in the implementation process, and they also developed a way of identifying these networks. It is a combination of a snowball method and a sociometric method. Starting with the actors with most direct contact with people exposed to the problem, one gradually identifies more and more actors who are interested in the target group and street-level bureaucrats' ability to tip the balance of these incentives in order to affect the problematic situation of the target group (backward mapping). Other scholars have tried to solve the controversy by specifying the conditions where one approach might be more relevant than the other. Sabatier (1986) claims that the top-down perspective is best suited for studying implementation in policy areas that are dominated by one specific piece of legislation, limited research funds, or where the situation is structured at least moderately well. Bottom-up perspectives, on the other hand, would be more relevant in situations where several different policies are directed towards a particular problem, and where one is primarily interested in the dynamics of different local situations.

Attempts were also made to synthesize the two models. Richard E. Martland (1995) suggests that their relative value depends on the degree of ambiguity in goals and means of a policy and the degree of conflict. Traditionally, top-down models, based on the public administration tradition, present an accurate description of the implementation process when a policy is clear and the conflict is low. However, newer top-down models such as the Magaziner–Sabatier framework are also relevant when conflict is high and ambiguity is low, which makes the structuring of the implementation particularly important. In contrast, bottom-up models provide an accurate description of the implementation process when the policy is ambiguous and the conflict is low. When conflict as well as ambiguity is present, both models have some relevance according to Martland.

Other attempts at synthesizing the two approaches were made by the former main opponents. The previous bottom-up analyses, which were performed by the circle around Hull and Hjern (1987), focused on actors and activities at the bottom, while in practice their analyses had not risen very high above it. However, in their synthesis proposal – called "an inductive approach to match outcomes of policies and their intentions" – Hull and Hjern recommend systematic interview analysis of relevant actors from the bottom up to the very top, including mapping of implementation activities and structures, the actors' evaluation of the politically determined purposes of the relevant laws and their achievements, and the actors' opinions on where it goes wrong and analyses of how various policies contribute to solve the policy problem in question. Obviously, it would require immense resources to carry out this research strategy, and I am not aware of any such study performed in practice. In addition – as was the case for their bottom-up analyses above – the proposed synthesis suffers from being methodological recommendations rather than theory-based expectations, which can be tested systematically.

Sabatier (1986) has also suggested a synthesis – the so-called Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). He adopts "the basic unit of analysis – a whole variety of public and private actors involved with a policy problem – as well as their concerns with understanding the perspectives and strategies of all major categories of actors" (not simply program proponents). It then combines this starting point with top-downers' concern with the manner in which socio-economic conditions and legal instruments constrai
behavior (Sabatier, 1996: 39). The synthesis applies the framework to explaining policy change over a period of a decade or more in order to deal with the role of policy-oriented learning. It also adopts the top-down style of developing and testing hypotheses as a contribution to theory development. In conceptualizing policy change, Sabatier focuses on government action programs that in turn produce policy outputs at the operational level, which again result in a variety of impacts. The focus on legislative mandates and as well as outputs and impacts could potentially relevant for implementation research. In practice, however, the ACF framework was further developed to focus on policy change in mandates rather than implementation. Although making an important contribution to the public policy literature, Sabatier and his later associate, Jenkins-Smith (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993), actually moved the focus of analysis away from implementation and towards policy change and formation.

Another kind of synthesis was suggested by Winter (1996, 1994) in his 'Integrated Implementation Model'. Unlike previous attempts, the purpose here is not to make a true synthesis between top-down and bottom-up perspectives, but rather to synthesize a number of the most fruitful theoretical elements from various pieces of implementation research — regardless of their origin — into a joint model. Its main factors in explaining implementation outputs and outcomes are policy formation and policy design, inter-organizational relations, street-level bureaucratic behavior in addition to target group behavior, socio-economic conditions and feedback mechanisms (cf. the Introduction to this section of the Handbook). The three first sets of key factors are elaborated in the following chapters by May, O'Toole, and Meyers and Vorsanger.

**THIRD GENERATION: QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGNS**

While the first and second generations of implementation studies have been helpful in directing attention to implementation problems and identifying implementation barriers and factors that might ease implementation, the research had not succeeded in sorting out the relative importance of the explanatory variables. A substantial part of the studies could be criticized as merely presenting — often long — checklists of variables that might affect implementation. Malcolm Goggin (1986) pointed out that because implementation research had been dominated by single case studies, it was plagued by the problem of 'too few cases and too many variables' or by 'overdetermination', where two or more variables explain variation in the dependent variable equally well. The single case study approach did not allow for any control of third variables. According to Goggin, this problem had hampered the development of implementation theory. He therefore called for a third generation of implementation studies that would test theories on the basis of more comparative case studies and statistical research designs which could increase the number of observations.

Goggin followed up on these recommendations in a study with his associates (Goggin et al., 1990). The study was mainly based on a communications theory perspective on intergovernmental implementation but also included many variables from previous top-down and bottom-up research. The study focused especially on variation among states in the way they implement federal policies in three different social and regulatory policies and the extent to which they do so. The authors tried to encourage further research involving multiple measures and multiple methods, including quantitative methods. Later, Lester and Goggin (1998), in making a status for implementation research, called for the development of a 'paradigm shift' in the development of 'a panacea', yet complete, theory of policy implementation'. They suggested that such meta-theory might be developed by combining the insights of communications theory, regime theory, rational choice theory (especially game theory) and contingency theories. As dependent variable for implementation studies they proposed to focus on implementation processes rather than outputs and outcomes.

**THE NEED FOR A NEW RESEARCH AGENDA**

While agreeing with Goggin's (1986) call for using more comparative and statistical research designs based on quantitative methods, I disagree with several of the later methodological and theoretical recommendations made by him and his colleagues. Recognized by one of the co-authors (O'Toole, 2000), to follow the methodological suggestions given by Goggin, Bowman, Lester and O'Toole (1990) would involve at least outlining a research career's worth of work. This work would require applying research designs that involve numerous variables, across different policy types, across fifty states, over at least ten years, as well as measuring the relevant variables by a combination of content analyses, expert panels, elite surveys and expert reassessment of the data from questionnaires and interviews. As such a research strategy is too demanding, less demanding research strategies, which can still secure a sufficient number of observations, are more realistic.

Given the many exploratory variables which have already been identified by various implementation scholars, the development of a panel of 'complete implementation theory' by combining theoretical elements from at least four different theories appears to be a contradiction in terms and is more likely to lead to theoretical mismatch. Rather than looking for the overall and one-for-all implementation theory, we should welcome diversity in both the theoretical perspectives and methodologies applied. Such diversity will give us new insights. Some of these may then later be integrated into broader analytical frameworks or models (Maizan and Sabatier, 1981; Goggin et al., 1990; Winter, 1990). It strikes me, however, as unrealistic to think that many scholars can agree on applying one common theoretical framework.

Although the general implementation framework presented by model builders so far has been influenced by some of these crucial implementation variables, the generality of such models may in fact be an obstacle for further development of our understanding of implementation. This is due to the fact that theory and practice inhibit precise specification of variables and causal mechanisms (May, 1999). Consequently, it seems more fruitful to utilize research resources on developing partial theories and hypotheses about different and more limited implementation problems and on putting these to serious empirical tests.

My suggestions for further development of implementation research can be summarized in six points: (1) provide theoretical diversity; (2) focus on partial rather than general implementation theories; (3) seek conceptual clarification; (4) focus on output (performance of implementers) as a key dependent variable but also (5) include studies of outcomes; and (6) make use of more comparative and statistical research designs. While the two first and the last points have been developed above, I will elaborate on the other points in the following and illustrate them by some of my recent research with Peter May on enforcement of and compliance with agro-environmental regulations in Denmark.

**Conceptual clarification**

As pointed out by Peter May (1999), most conceptual frameworks in the implementation literature are weakly developed, lacking adequate definitions of concepts and specification of causal mechanisms. The most important issue for the implementation process and the output — and sometimes also the outcome — of the implementation process. Lester and Goggin (1998) view implementation as a 'process', a series of subnational decisions and actions directed toward putting a prior authoritative federal decision into effect. Thereby, they reject focusing on the output of the implementation process as a dichotomous conceptualization of implementation as simply success or failure.

Although agreeing that the success/failure dichotomy is problematic, I suggest that the two key dependent variables of implementation research should be the output of the implementation process in terms of outcome behavior and the outcome in terms of target group behavior. As mentioned in the Introduction to this section of the Handbook, implementation research can be conceived as public policy analysis at the delivery level of policy making. The classic focus of public policy research are the content of policy, its causes and consequences (Dye, 1976). Implementation output is policy content at a much more operational level than a law. It is policy as it is being delivered to the citizens. By the same token, outcomes are the consequences of the policy, which has been delivered. Accordingly, the key tasks for implementation analysis are to analyze the causes and consequences of delivery behavior.

However, we should conceptualize output and outcome in other ways than common success/failure dichotomy or interval. The most common dependent variable in implementation research so far has been the degree of goal achievement, whether defined in terms of output or outcome. The first problem, however, is that goal achievement is a fraction. Output in terms of performance of the implementers or outcome in terms of effects on target population is the numerator, and the policy goal is the denominator. Yet, using a fraction as the dependent variable renders theory-building problematic.
when different factors explain variation in the numerator and the denominator. While the policy formation process is likely to account for variation in goals, the implementation process is likely to account for variation in the performance of implementers.

Therefore, a theory explaining variation in goal achievement requires a combination of three theoretical streams: a theory on goal-setting, a theory on performance, and a theory on the relation between goal-setting and performance. Even if some implementation researchers have taken steps in that direction by incorporating the character of the policy adoption process in explaining variation in implementation (Winter, 1986a, 1990, 1994), such a combination of three different theoretical perspectives renders the construction and accumulation of implementation theory very complex.

Pushing to extremes, the problem is that any attempt to make generalizations about goal achievement based on analysis of the behavior of implementers or target groups is dependent on the goal variable having a certain value. The generalization may become invalid if the goal changes. Therefore, generalizations about implementation output are extremely relativistic because statements are conditioned by the goals that are formulated. This is problematic when it is recognized that policy makers are often more interested in making decisions on means or instruments than goals, goals are often invented after decisions on the means have been made in order to legitimize the means adopted, and goals are not always expected or even intended to be achieved.

The second problem of using goal achievement as the dependent variable of implementation research is that such goals can be difficult to operationalize. Much has already been written in the literature on implementation and evaluation about this vagueness and ambiguity of policy goals and about the difference between official and latent goals. In addition, while most policy analysts have concluded that some kind of goal for the outcome of the policy, many fail to specify any goals or standards for the behavior of the implementers. This is often the case in regulatory policies. For example, Danish agro-environmental regulations have a general objective of reducing nitrate pollution of the aquatic environment to a certain level and it specifies a large number of very specific rules for farmers’ behavior in this respect. However, the only objective or requirement for the implementers - that is, the municipalities that are in charge of enforcing this policy is to inspect farms for compliance with the rules. In this case it is hard to gauge implementation success unless we use the goals for changes in the farmers’ behavior or in the physical environment as the standard. However, from the evaluation and implementation literature we also know that factors other than the implementation output may affect policy outcomes (Rossi and Freeman, 1989).

It is important that we make an analytical distinction between explaining implementation outputs and outputs. Different bodies of theory are likely to be relevant for explaining the behaviors of implementers and target groups.

The performance of implementers

Because of the above problems of using goal achievement as a dependent variable, I suggest that we instead look for behavioral outputs of variables to characterize the performance of implementers in delivering services or transferring payments to the citizens or enforcing regulations. One primary aim of implementation research then should be to explain variation in such performance. This will require substantial effort in conceptualizing and categorizing the performance of implementers at the level of agency, as well as of the individual level.

One very intriguing question is whether we can find behavioral dimensions and classifications that are universally applicable in all policy areas, or if we should generate concepts and classifications that are different from one policy area to another. Lipsky’s (1980) street-level bureaucracy theory represents an ambitious attempt to offer a universally applicable set of concepts for describing the coping behavior of street-level bureaucrats in all policy areas (see also Winter, 2002b). However, while coping is also relevant in regulatory policies, some of these mechanisms may be more relevant in social policies with weaker target groups. It is also a problem that the street-level bureaucracy theory only focuses on dysfunctional types of delivery behaviors. In addition, a universally applicable classification scheme may suffer from a lack of the precision that a more policy-specific set of concepts could offer. On the other hand, generalizations based on very policy-specific concepts and studies would have a rather narrow sphere of application.

A middle ground is to use sets of concepts that apply to very broad classes of policies. For example, concepts have been developed that are appropriate to classify the behavior of implementers in almost any kind of regulatory policy (Kagan, 1994). May and Winter (1999, 2000, Winter and May, 2001) have developed concepts for regulatory enforcement at both agency and individual street-level bureaucratic levels. Agency enforcement choices are conceptualized as tools (use of different enforcement measures: sanctions, information and assistance, and incentives), public perception and what to inspect for, and effort (use and leveraging of enforcement resources).

The enforcement style of individual inspectors is defined as the character of the day-to-day interactions of inspectors with the target group. May and Winter expect and verify in a study of agro-environmental regulation in Denmark that enforcement style has two dimensions, comprising the degree of upholding and the degree of coercion. They also identify distinct types of enforcement styles among inspectors along these two dimensions (May and Winter, 2000; see also May and Burdy, 1998; May and Wood, 2003).

One advantage of creating such conceptualization of the behavior of implementers is that it is well suited for testing hypotheses for explaining variation in implementation behavior across time and space. Variables from implementation theory characterizing aspects of the implementation process would be an important basis for the development of such hypotheses. However, another advantage of focusing on delivery performance as a dependent variable in implementation research is that we can integrate the study of implementation much more with theory on bureaucratic politics and organization theory. Implementation research can thereby gain inspiration from these research fields, which have a long tradition of studying the behavior of agencies and bureaucracies. In return, these sub-disciplines can benefit from implementation concepts that are more policy-relevant than those behavioral variables applied in most bureaucratic and organization theory.

As an example, Winter (2000) analyzes the discretion of street-level bureaucrats in enforcing agro-environmental regulation in Denmark by applying a principal-agent perspective and its notion of information asymmetry in examining the extent to which local politicians control street-level bureaucrats (Moe, 1984; Brehm and Getes, 1999). Of all departments of 216 local inspectors show that local politicians’ policy preferences have no direct impact on the behavior of street-level bureaucrats. However, the politicians do control relatively mild forms of performance, such as the number of inspections, through funding capacity for inspection. On the other hand, when it comes to less transparent street-level bureaucratic behaviors such as inspection and the strictness of inspectors apply in reacting to violations of the rules - politicians’ policy preferences and their funding of staff resources have little or no influence on these practices. On the contrary, the latter are dominated by the street-level bureaucrats’ own values. The study also examines the impact of various types of attitudes on street-level bureaucrats’ behavior. Their ideology does not have much effect, whereas their preferences for certain instruments and for less workload have strong impacts.

Need for outcome studies

My suggestion of using implementation output/performance as a dependent variable in implementation research does not imply that outcome impacts are unimportant in public policy analyses. On the contrary, implementation scholars as well as other political scientists have paid too little attention to explaining policy outcomes and to examining the relation between implementation output and outcome. As mentioned above, few implementation scholars include outcome in their implementation models or framework (McManus and Sabatier, 1981; Elm, 1982; Hahn and Hjenn, 1987; Ogginn et al., 1990; Winter, 1990). It might, however, be fruitful to make a distinction between implementation output studies and outcome studies. We do not have a complete understanding of the policy process unless we know how target groups respond to public policies. Despite the fact that ‘the authoritative allocation of values for a society’ (Essex, 1983) and ‘what, when, and how’ (Laswell, 1936) are among the most famous definitions of politics, very few political science studies focus on how citizens respond to public policies. Some would say that
CONCLUSION

Implementation is a relatively young research field in public administration and policy. The field has made an important contribution in terms of adding a public policy perspective to public administration with a strong focus on how policies are transformed during the execution process. It has been fundamental for understanding the complexity of policy implementation. The studies have revealed many important barriers for implementation and factors that may make success more likely.

The research has moved from explorative theory-generating cases studies to a second generation of more theoretically ambitious models or frameworks of analysis with top-down and bottom-up angles. However, while these frameworks presented lists of many relevant variables, the development of theories, specification of causal relations and tests were conducted in a different manner because the common reliance on single case studies did not allow any control for third variables.

This suggested an analytical distinction between implementation output and outcome does not only have the advantage of making it easier to explain variation in delivery performance. The conceptualization of performance is also likely to make it easier to study the relationship between implementation outputs and outcomes. The research suggests that inspectors are often reluctant to comply and that inspectors often try to do so, they are unlikely to succeed because farmers do not trust them enough. In contrast, advice from credible sources such as farmers can influence the outcome and it is more effective in fostering a sense of duty to comply. This demonstrates an important role for third parties including interest groups and consultants. They are more effective in achieving desired outcomes through information provision and legitimation (Winter and May, 2002). The findings from the Danish implementation studies are also very relevant for other regulatory settings. They illustrate that delivery performance can be constructed as a variable that is dependent on both delivery variables in explaining implementation outputs and as independent variables in explaining outcomes.

Although explaining variation in implementation outputs and outcomes are two distinct analytical processes, the combination of these insights can bring implementation research a major step forward. If we know (a) the motivations of the target group, (b) what kinds of implementation performance trigger these motivations, as well as (c) the factors that account for variation in such implementation performance, our combined insights can be used to identify more effective ways of designing and implementing public policies.


