The Role of Public Discourse in European Social Democratic Reform Projects
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Abstract
Public discourse, understood both as ideas about public action and interactive processes that serve to 'coordinate' the construction of those ideas and to 'communicate' them to the public, has been central to the success (or failure) of the reform projects of social democratic parties. Certain background factors, including countries' policy legacies, problems, preferences, and capacity set the stage for reform while good ideas which are cognitively sound and normatively appropriate as well as relevant, coherent, and consistent contribute to reform success. But institutional context also matters with regard to how ideas are conveyed to whom, with 'simple' polities emphasizing the 'communicative' discourse to the general public and more 'compound' polities the 'coordinative' discourse among policy actors. This is demonstrated with examples from Germany, France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden.
Kurzfassung
Öffentlicher Diskurs, verstanden sowohl als Ideen über öffentliches Handeln als auch als interaktive Prozesse, die dazu dienen, die Konstruktion dieser Ideen zu "koordinieren" und diese an die Öffentlichkeit zu "kommunizieren", hat sich als zentral für den Erfolg (oder Misserfolg) von Reformprojekten sozialdemokratischer Parteien erwiesen. Gewisse Hintergrundfaktoren, einschließlich der politischen Vermächtnisse von Ländern, ihrer Probleme, Präferenzen und Kapazitäten, schaffen die Voraussetzung für Reformen, während gute Ideen, kognitiv einwandfrei und normativ sowohl adäquat als auch relevant, kohärent und konsistent, zu Reformerfolgen beitragen. Aber der institutionelle Kontext ist ebenso von Bedeutung, im Hinblick darauf, wie Ideen an wen vermittelt werden, wobei "einfachen" politische Systeme den "kommunikativen" Diskurs mit der generellen Öffentlichkeit betonen und "zusammengesetzte" politische Systeme den "koordinierenden" Diskurs unter den politischen Akteuren. Dies wird anhand von Beispielen aus Deutschland, Frankreich, Großbritannien, Italien, den Niederlanden, Dänemark und Schweden dargestellt.
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1. Introduction ⬆

What role has public discourse played in the welfare reform projects of European social democratic parties? Or any reform project? Discourse is crucial not only to gain the political support to initiate change but also the public support to maintain it. Public discourse about reform is important because change is never easy, and it necessarily means going against 'politics as usual,' against entrenched interests and in particular majorities resistant to change. For social-democratic parties, moreover, coming up with a persuasive, legitimating discourse of reform has been arguably even more difficult than for most political groupings. This is because since the 1980s reforms have tended to go against the ostensible interests of their own constituencies and reverse hard-fought policy legacies based on long-held commitments and values.

But what is discourse? And what is its role in social democratic reform projects? To answer this question I begin with a discussion of the background conditions to discourse, including countries' policy legacies, problems, preferences and capacity for reform. I then explore the nature of public discourse with regard to reform. I consider, first, the ideas that depend for persuasiveness on their 'cognitive' soundness and 'normative' appropriateness as well as their relevance, coherence, and consistency; and second, the interactive processes that serve to 'coordinate' the construction of those ideas and 'communicate' them to the public.

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On this latter issue, I focus on the importance of institutional context for how discourse works in 'simple' polities, where the concentration of governing activity through a single authority leads to an emphasis on the 'communicative' discourse to the general public, by contrast with how it works in more 'compound' polities, where the dispersion of governing activity among multiple authorities leads to an emphasis on the 'coordinative' discourse among policy actors. I use examples from a range of European countries, in particular Germany, France, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, to illustrate.

Methodologically, my approach constitutes a fourth 'new institutionalism'—discursive institutionalism (Schmidt 2002a, n/a; see also Campbell 2001)—which has the same epistemological status as the three older 'new institutionalisms'—rational choice, historical, and sociological institutionalism (see Hall and Taylor 1996)—as a framework for analysis within which one can describe and analyze phenomena as well as develop and test theories. Rather than a rival approach, however, it can be seen as complementary to the other three institutionalisms. Proof of this is, if in nothing else, in the fact that one can identify 'discursive institutionalists' who follow in the tradition of the three other institutionalisms (see Schmidt n/a), with the more positivist among them sitting between historical and rational choice institutionalist traditions (e.g., Blyth 2002, Hall 1993, McNamara 1998) and the more constructivist sitting between the historical and sociological institutionalist traditions (e.g., Finnemore 1996, Wendt 1999, Risse 2001).

What makes discursive institutionalism particularly useful in studies of institutional change is that it builds on the evidence of all three other approaches—using it as background information—at the same time that it overcomes their static structural bias through the dynamics of discourse. The dynamics comes from the fact that at the same time that discursive institutionalism takes interests, institutions, and culture as constitutive of ideas, it sees ideas as reconstitutive of interests, institutions, and culture, because able to redefine interests and reconfigure interest-based coordination; to reshape structures and follow new historical paths; and to reframe rules and create new norms (for more detailed argument, see Blyth 2003; Schmidt 2002a, n/a). Most importantly, however, it shows the dynamics not only through the changes (or continuity) of ideas but also in the discursive interactions among policy actors, political actors, and publics—that is, who speaks to whom about what when, how, and where.

This very dynamics, however, also ensures that we could never claim discourse as *the* independent variable in the explanation of change, since it is very difficult to separate it from the other variables related to interests, institutions, or culture. But instead of therefore dismissing it out of hand, as would some political scientists, because of the difficulties of sorting it out from the other variables, because it cannot be *the* cause, we ask when is discourse *a* cause of change, or even the most influential, and when is it not because it simply reflects interests, follows institutional paths, and reifies cultural norms (Schmidt 2002a, pp. 250-56; Schmidt and Radaelli 2004). My purpose here is not to demonstrate the causal influence of discourse, however, which is best done through focused studies that engage in process-tracing of ideas to show how they led to different policy choices (e.g., Berman 1998, Blyth 2002) or that take matched pairs of cases where everything is controlled for but the discourse (e.g., Schmidt 2002b, 2003). Rather, it is to explore the uses of discourse in a wide range of cases so as to show how, why, where, and when discourse has mattered to social democratic reform projects.

2. The Background Conditions to Discourse ⬆

First, before even defining the role of discourse in social democratic reform projects, it is important to note that discourse does not take place in a vacuum. It takes place in a given context and is affected by a number of background conditions or mediating factors (see Table 1). These include, first of all, a country's policy legacies that represent the starting point for any reform; second, whether a country faces policy problems that its long-standing policies no longer adequately solve; third, whether it has the political institutional capacity to impose or negotiate reform in light of the problems; fourth, whether it maintains or changes its policy preferences in response to the problems; and, fifth, whether it has a discourse that serves to enhance political institutional capacity to reform by changing perceptions of problems and legacies and thereby influencing preferences (see Schmidt 2002a, Ch. 2).

Table 1

2.1. Policy legacies ⬆

Different countries are informed by the policy legacies that emerge from different histories, cultures, interests, and institutional realities. Value structures, policy structures, and institutional structures matter, since they generally set the parameters for reform. Thus, the 'European Social Model' to which the EU Commission and national leaders often refer hides tremendous differences in welfare states, going from the liberal model of Anglo-Saxon countries such as the UK and Ireland to the social-democratic model of Scandinavian countries like Denmark and Sweden to the conservative model of Continental countries like Germany, Italy, and Austria (Esping-Andersen 1990). Moreover, social democracy has stood for different things in different countries at different times, in recent years going from Blair's approach in the UK to Jospin's in France to Schroeder's in Germany, to say nothing of the Swedish social-democrats.

2.2. Policy problems ⬆

But whatever the policy legacies, change is not likely except during times of crisis. In the expression of the US south, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it'. Politicians don't even begin to talk about a social-democratic reform project unless the country faces problems that can no longer be solved by the existing policies. As Harold Macmillan once responded when asked by a journalist what were the main problems for instituting policy in his first year in office, he responded: 'Events, dear boy, events'. Such events, for the welfare state, may be the products of outside economic pressures related to globalization and European integration or of internal dynamics, in particular changing demographics (Pierson 1994; Scharpf 2000).

But problems differ among countries. Whereas the main problem for conservative continental welfare states has been combating unemployment, in liberal Anglo-Saxon welfare states it has been combating poverty, while in social-democratic Scandinavian welfare states it has been sustaining high levels of benefits and services. Moreover, the policy legacies of the postwar welfare system may themselves represent greater challenges for reform in some countries than in others. Thus, whereas neither Scandinavian nor Anglo-Saxon welfare states faced a challenge to the basic premises of their systems, as Scandinavian welfare states largely sought to maintain their social-democratic system and the Anglo-Saxon welfare states to go farther in a liberal direction, Continental welfare states were confronted with the need to reform radically their family-focused,

male-breadwinner model which increasingly acted as a drag on the political economic system (see Scharpf and Schmidt 2000).

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2.3. Political Institutional Capacity ⬆

Whenever a country does experience problems that generate a crisis for the welfare state, when it *is* 'broke,' the next question is: can you fix it? For this, states have to have the political institutional capacity to reform, which depends on the political interactions of relevant policy actors within given institutional arrangements as to whether reform can be successfully imposed and/or negotiated.

Institutional arrangements are key to understanding the process of reform. Countries can be seen as on a continuum from 'simple' (single-actor) to 'compound' (multi-actor) polities (Schmidt 2002a). Simple polities such as France, the UK, Greece, and Portugal tend to channel governing activity through a single authority, generally the executive, by way of unitary institutional structures, majoritarian political representation systems, and statist policymaking processes. As a result, simple polities tend to have great capacity to impose change, subject, however, to the sanctions coming from elections or protest. The UK, for example, had great capacity to reform radically through the 1980s and much of 1990s not only because of its 'Westminster' system of government but also because of a divided opposition and a Labour party that was largely unelectable (Crewe 1988). Today, 'New Labor' for similar reasons can impose, given an unelectable conservative party. France, which also has a large concentration of power in the executive, has had significantly less capacity to impose reform because sanctions from protest are a stronger check on government power—witness the experience of Prime Minister Alain Juppé with regard to his welfare initiatives in 1995, when the country was paralyzed by protest; but the socialists between 1997 and 2002 were also cautious with regard to welfare reform for fear of protest (Levy 2000; Schmidt 2002a).

Compound polities such as Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland tend instead to disperse governing activity through multiple authorities by way of regionalized or federal institutional structures, proportional representation systems, and corporatist policymaking processes. As a result, compound polities have little capacity to impose reform and tend instead to negotiate policy change among a wide range of policy actors. Whether they succeed or not, here, depends first and foremost on whether they can reach agreement, with elections or protest secondary as sanctions. Countries such as Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands, with unitary institutional structures but corporatist policymaking processes and proportional representation systems are also on the compound side of the continuum, albeit closer to the middle, since where the social partners choose not to participate, the state has the capacity to act—something more difficult for regionalized and federal states. Germany, for example, in the 1970s had great capacity to respond to the oil crisis, with the social partners negotiating wage restraint in response to Bundesbank pressure, but through the 1990s to the early 2000s—conservative and social-democratic governments alike lacked a similar such capacity to institute labor market flexibility and pension reforms due to lack of agreement among the social partners and unwillingness to compromise on the part of the opposition (Scharpf 2000). By contrast, the Dutch government had much greater success in negotiating wage restraint and labor market flexibility with the social partners in the 1980s and in imposing pension reforms in the 1990s (when the social partners chose not to participate), producing the 'Dutch miracle,' but had little success in the 1970s on labor reform (Visser and Hemerijck 1997). Italy in the 1990s was arguably the greatest success story with regard to gains in political institutional capacity, having been able to negotiate significant labor market and pension reform in the 1990s after decades of failed attempts (Ferrera and Gualmini 2000, 2004).

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2.4. Policy Preferences ⬆

Countries that experience problems which they have the political institutional capacity to remedy do not always do so. This is because even if the welfare state is 'broke' and the country has the capacity to 'fix' it, the kinds of reforms necessary to solve the problems may go against long-standing policy preferences. Much, in fact, depends upon whether policy actors stick to old preferences or switch to new ones.

For social democrats, the need to change policy preferences in the face of serious problems has been particularly difficult. This is because the legacies of the postwar welfare state represent the victories of past social democratic battles as well as promises for the future that social democrats did not want to reverse. So support for reform was often weak or non-existent. Social democrats were often slow to accept that the problems required solutions that went against the postwar legacies. This was most notable in the case of France, where Mitterrand's government subsequent to election in 1981 engaged in further expansion of the welfare state and neo-Keynesian policies—although when these proved economically disastrous, they were reversed overnight in 1983. Social democrats also often found themselves engaged in rear-guard action in response to radical reforms by neo-liberals in control of formerly 'conservative' parties—the case of the UK when the Labour Party found itself unable to get elected until it had become 'New Labour' under Blair and largely embraced neo-liberal reform, albeit with a human face. A similar transformation can also be seen in the United States with the democrats under Clinton.

By the same token, however, social democrats have sometimes found themselves responsible for initiating reform in response to the lack of reform by parties previously in power—the case of Germany when the social democrats under Schroeder found themselves forced to push for the same kinds of policies that the conservative Kohl government had not been able to institute. Other times, social democrats have found themselves in coalitions with other parties that pulled them farther in the direction of neo-liberal reforms than they might have gone on their own, as was the case of the social-democrats in the Netherlands when in coalition with conservatives and liberals and then only the liberals in the 1990s.

For social democratic parties, the main problems with regard to reform have been political, involving how to go against the interests and values of their own traditional constituencies (see Huber and Stephens 2001). For many social democratic parties, this often required redefining their constituencies in line with the changes in society, for example, moving from identifying their electorate as made up of blue-collar workers to one of 'employees' (in France, *les salariés)* and from working class to the 'middle-classes' (in the UK among other countries). For most social democratic parties, the question was how to reconquer the electoral center as social democrats appeared increasingly to the left as society moved farther right. For some, this also required abandoning socialism for social democracy, something that the German social democrats had done in the late 1950s with the Bad Godesberg agreement, but which the British labor party did not give up until the mid 1990s, when they jettisoned the nationalization clause in the party constitution.

But once having accepted the need to reform, social democrats confronted the problem of what new ideas and values to promote. This has not been easy, since fifty if not a hundred years' worth of ideas about social justice have seemingly been under attack. The commitment to full employment has been challenged by greater tolerance for unemployment, plus the obligation to work in exchange for the right to compensation. The commitment to equality has been undermined by cutbacks in welfare, greater differentials in wages, and greater differentials in taxes, with the rich paying less, the poor paying more.

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The right to an education has been challenged by partly fee-based education and the right to adequate health care has been under attack through fees, rationing of access, and cost cutting. The entitlement to support when unemployed, disabled, or just old has been subject to givebacks, with a decrease in unemployment and disability compensation, an increase in the contribution time for pensions, with lower amounts of compensation, and responsibility for pension shifted increasingly to the individual. Even the assumption that wages and work conditions were to be determined by general rules set either by the state or by collective negotiation between management and organized labor have been jeopardized by the rise in individual bargaining, management discretion, and market forces.

Also, societal values have changed. This has followed not just from the rise of neo-liberal values but also of post-industrial values related to changing lifestyles, attitudes toward work, and the role of women. Thus, the right to equality of opportunity in employment and gender income parity have brought with it demands for greater flexibility in the workplace, better provision of child care and other family services. Plus, the workplace has changed, as employment relations have been increasingly decentralized and individualized to reflect new forms of work organization and production processes based on new human resource management philosophies.

The result is that the definition of social justice itself has shifted for social democrats from a focus on equality of results and redistribution whatever the cost to a concern with equality of opportunities and equity balanced by efficiency. Moreover, social democracy itself has expanded from a focus primarily on the social part of the social democracy formula to the democracy part, with an opening to new social values of inclusion and democratic participation.

2.5. Discourse ✦

Most social scientists' discussions of the mediating factors in policy reform would stop here—with policy legacies, problems, political institutional capacity, and preferences. But there is yet another factor: discourse.

Discourse consists of both ideas and interactions. In discussing preferences, we have already addressed the challenges to social democratic ideals of the past and the newly-emerging values for the present and future. But discourse is more dynamic a concept, since it concerns not only the content of ideas but also the process of generating new ideas as well as persuading the public that such ideas can work and are appropriate. The importance of discourse is that even if the welfare state is 'broke' and you have the political institutional capacity and desire to 'fix' its problems, you still need to be able to persuade policy actors and the public of the value of the reforms. The question remains as to whether you can change perceptions of the policy legacies and problems such as to influence public preferences to ensure not only that you can pass reforms but that those reforms last. For this, you need discourse.

Table 2

3. Discourse as Ideas ✦

Discourse is first of all about 'what you say,' or the substance of ideas, which speaks to their cognitive and normative content, and about 'how you say it,' which relates to the 'truthfulness,' relevance, and applicability of its cognitive arguments, the resonance of its normative arguments, and the coherence and consistency of both cognitive and normative arguments.

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All of these influence the success (or causal influence) of a discourse, that is, of how 'good' it is and whether it has transformative power capable of persuading the public of the necessity and appropriateness of a given public action (see Table 2). I leave aside factors which, although also important, are of a different order, affecting the reception of the discourse: These are the psychological imponderables such as speakers' rhetorical eloquence or their psychological 'interactivity' based on their ability to project warmth or inspire trust; and the medium of delivery, an increasingly significant factor at a time when televised political communications in the US demands 10 second sound bites and televised political debates allow only 90 second arguments, such that public discourse is hard put to play its pedagogical role, and certainly can't develop an argument able to deal with complexity.

The ideas in any discourse, to begin with, contain both *cognitive* and *normative* content. Public discourse offers cognitive arguments about the soundness of public action, defined in terms of its purposes and objectives, its proposed solutions to problems, and its policy instruments and methods. Its success depends largely on the strength of its argument, based on its ability to define the problems to be solved, to propose adequate policy solutions to those problems, and/or to develop a public philosophy that provides the key to both problems and solutions (Mehta 2004; Campbell 2004.)

A 'good' cognitive argument is one that may certainly be 'true' in terms of its ideas, but truthfulness is not so much at issue here as is the strength of the argument, especially since truth in the public sphere is itself often contested, with discourse part of a dynamic process of creating an intersubjective reality in which one hopes to convince others of one's own 'truth' or vision of the world. This does not mean that truth is relative but, rather, that it is a matter of cognitive interpretation of the 'facts,' only some of which may be in question at any given time (see Radaelli and Schmidt 2004, pp. 366-68). Although what one takes as 'facts' and the theories behind them may be falsifiable, how one weaves the facts into an overall argument is clearly not. The operative criterion for success is therefore not to demonstrate truth but, rather, to show that the proposed reforms are necessary, as the only workable solutions to the problem. Truth in this context is therefore best understood as a question of relevance to the problems at hand, that is, of applicability of the reform ideas in terms of their ability to actually solve those problems. The cognitive side of discourse, in short, justifies its ideas in terms of a logic of necessity.

A good normative argument is not so much concerned with demonstrating the truth or applicability of the ideas in question as with their appropriateness. Thus it tends to make appeal to the norms and principles of public life, with its success dependent upon to what extent it resonates with the values of public life, whether the newly-emerging values of a society or long-standing ones in the societal repertoire. This normative side of discourse, in short, legitimates its ideas in terms of a logic of appropriateness.

Both cognitive and normative aspects of discourse also benefit from coherence, even if a certain amount of vagueness or ambiguity can prove useful, and from consistency over time. Consistency plays not only a prospective role, by adding credibility to speakers' arguments as demonstrated by their continued adherence and commitment to a set of ideas. It can also play a retrospective role, by providing the public with a new way of thinking and talking about their lives as a result of the new policies they now have to live by.

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Interestingly enough, political science subfields tend to divide along cognitive and normative lines in terms of their focus of inquiry (see Schmidt n/a). Comparativists tend to concentrate on the cognitive side of ideas, concerned with how ideas serve to redefine economic interests, how they get accepted, and, following Kuhn, what kinds and degrees or 'orders' of change they promote (e.g., Blyth 2002, Hall 1993, Schmidt 2002a, Ch. 5). International relations scholars, by contrast, tend to emphasize the normative side, concerned with how ideas constitute the norms that serve to (re)frame actors' understandings of interests, how they get constructed, and how and why they resonate with national values (Finnemore 1996; Risse 2001; Wendt 1999). Among comparativist scholars concerned with the welfare state in particular, however, there are some who have become increasingly concerned with the normative side of discourse, whether in terms of collective memories, social values, or social risks (e.g., Rothstein 2000; Schmidt 2000; Taylor-Gooby 2005). All such studies are useful, however, both on the cognitive and normative side of the divide, in lending insight into how discourse works to promote reform.

Social-democratic parties' reform projects tend to do best when they meet all the criteria noted above. But this is true also for conservative parties' projects. And often, where the conservative parties have gotten there first, with a transformative discourse, social democratic parties cannot gain a hearing for their own projects until they have taken on many of the cognitive and/or normative aspects of their political rivals' discourse.

This was most notably the case in Britain, where the strong cognitive and normative elements in Thatcher's discourse succeeded so well in transforming the very terms of discourse that the Labour Party carried those terms over into its own discourse in order to be elected. Thatcher justified her neo-liberal policy reforms cognitively by claiming 'TINA—there is no alternative' while she legitimized them normatively through appeal to Victorian values and liberalism, telling people to 'get on your bikes' and, in a direct challenge to social democratic values, that they had a 'right to be unequal' (Marquand 1988). Importantly, although one may question the transformative power of Prime Minister Thatcher's neo-liberal discourse during her first term, when the economic policies did not appear to be working, it is clear that as her policies began to take hold, altering people's experiences of work and welfare, the reasonably coherent and consistent discourse performed a retrospective legitimizing function, by providing the public with a positive way of thinking and talking about their new experiences—so much so that Labour could only be elected once it had itself embraced essential aspects of Thatcher's neo-liberal discourse and policy program (see Schmidt 2000, 2002a, Ch. 6).

One should not forget, however, that although Thatcher's discourse eventually worked for the radical reform of the economy, it did not with regard to the welfare arena, where her discourse of the 'worthy poor' versus the 'feckless and idle' failed to resonate with the public, which resisted radical welfare reform (Taylor-Gooby 1991; Pierson 1994; Rhodes 2000). Blair's 'third way' discourse, by contrast, succeeded in promoting neo-liberal social policies that Thatcher had not even dreamed of pushing, such as workfare, mainly because it added a normative appeal to social democratic ideas still held by the public. Thus, New Labour's discourse about its policy program claimed to 'promote opportunity instead of dependence' through positive actions like workfare as opposed to the conservatives' negative actions like limiting benefits and services; but also unlike 'old' Labor's program, its reforms constituted 'not a hammock but a trampoline,' not 'a hand out but a hand up' (Schmidt 2000).

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French social democrats suffered from another problem: While they had strong cognitive arguments on the necessity of social policy reform, they lacked good normative arguments to convince of its appropriateness. From 1983 to the early 1990s, neither the conservatives nor the socialists even tried to reform the welfare state, although they did make cognitive arguments about its necessity even as they all promised to protect 'social solidarity.' As a result, the public was unprepared for the 1990s, when reform seemed imperative as a result not only of the crisis of the welfare state and the demographic problems but also the need to meet the Maastricht criteria. The first real reforms, those of conservative Prime Minister Balladur in 1993 that made pensions for private sector workers less generous and longer to kick in, were accompanied by very little discourse at all, and succeeded because Balladur had the capacity to impose reforms on workers who had little capacity to strike, given low levels of union organization in the private sector. This was not the case for the public sector pension reforms proposed by conservative Prime Minister Alain Juppé toward the end of 1995, for which he provided almost no discourse at all—a fact which in no small way added fuel to the massive strikes at the end of 1995 which paralyzed the country for over three weeks and contributed to his electoral defeat in 1997. Only with Socialist Prime Minister Jospin did a social democratic discourse appear that served to legitimate reform by balancing cognitive arguments about efficiency with normative arguments about equity. Here a 'neither…nor' rhetoric worked to great effect, as the Socialists promised, for example, 'neither to soak the rich nor let them shirk their obligations' with regard to tax reforms (Levy 1999, 2000; Schmidt 2000, 2002, Ch. 6). But the socialists' reforms did not tackle the major pension problems for fear of protests, although there was a significant amount of discourse about its necessity and appropriateness. This consistency of the discourse over time, in particular since Jospin, helped set the stage for public acceptance of the significant reform of public sector pensions by Prime Minister Raffarin, despite Raffarin's minimal discourse (Natali and Rhodes 2004).

In the Netherlands, similarly, only when the normative discourse was added to the cognitive was reform accepted. Thus, the massive defeat of the conservative-liberal-left government in 1994, which had initiated welfare reform in the early 1990s because theirs was a 'sick country,' given the level of number of workers out on disability (one in seven), was in part due to the fact that the cognitive discourse was not accompanied by a sufficiently legitimizing one. This the new left-liberal government subsequently remedied, with its landslide electoral victory in 1998 due not only to a better economy, with 'jobs, jobs, and more jobs,' but also with a social democratic discourse that spoke to the normative issues, by claiming to safe-guard social equity even as they produced liberalizing efficiency, for example, by attacking the inefficient inequities of paying disability to able-bodied individuals (Levy 1999; Schmidt 2000, 2003; Cox 2001).

In Denmark, too, the normative and cognitive were combined in a discourse in the 1990s focused on how to make the welfare state work most efficiently and equitably, by introducing seemingly neo-liberal reforms so long as they did not undermine welfare equality or universalism (Cox 2001). The Swedish government's discourse during this same time period, instead of using an equity/efficiency argument as had the Danes, the Dutch, and the French, maintained that they were defending basic welfare state values of equality even as they cut benefits in order to 'save the welfare state' (Rothstein 2001; Schmidt 2000, 2003). But this meant that they were unable to go quite as far as Denmark in reform efforts—leaving greater questions about welfare state sustainability (Benner and Vad 2000).

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Italy had one of the most elaborate of the discourses that promoted successful reform in the 1990s—and remarkably so since it had largely failed in all of its welfare reform efforts in the 1970s and 1980s. Social democratic governments throughout the 1990s spoke to the cognitive necessity of reform in order to return to financial health as well as to join the European monetary union at the same time that they made normative appeals to national pride with regard to joining the euro and to social equity-- to end unfairness and corruption as well as to give 'piu ai figli, meno ai padri,' more to the sons, less to the fathers, so as to ensure intergenerational solidarity (Sbragia 2001; Ferrera and Gualmini 2000, 2004; Schmidt 2000, 2002b).

Germany has arguably been one of the least successful countries with regard to speaking either to the necessity or appropriateness of welfare reform. The Kohl government barely tried. Schroeder did, but not very convincingly as he sought to borrow from the British discourse of the 'third-way' in summer l999 and then the French socialist discourse in the fall before settling back into the traditional discourse by the end of the year, when he came out swinging against the Mannesmann takeover by Vodafone and tried to save Holzman from bankruptcy—none of which did much for the government's reform effort (Schmidt 2002a, Ch. 6). Schroeder's inconsistency with regard to his policy discourse has been a real problem, as he appeared to be without convictions. Only with the most recent set of reforms, the Hartz IV reforms on pensions and unemployment compensation, has Schroeder gained in credibility, the reforms in legitimacy, and his rather thin discourse in persuasiveness. But this is mainly because he has held to the reform despite battering in Laender elections, weekly protests, and a massive slide in public opinion, as evidenced by his subsequent rise in the polls. There is still a major problem with the Hartz IV reforms, however, because in merging earnings-related unemployment compensation and means-tested social assistance into a single system, the reforms violate the public's basic beliefs about the appropriateness of an insurance-based system. So the government would need to explain why it is legitimate to depart from the insurance principle, which it has not done.

4. Discourse as Interactions

Discourse is not just about what you say and how you say it but to whom you say it in the process of policy construction and political communication in the public sphere (see Schmidt 2002a, Ch. 5). The public sphere itself is made up of two overlapping spheres, the policy sphere and the political sphere, with two different forms of discursive interaction: a *coordinative* discourse and a *communicative* discourse (see Table 3).

Table 3

In the policy sphere, the domain of the 'coordinative discourse,' the main interlocutors are policy actors—civil servants, elected officials, experts, and/or organized interests--who seek to *coordinate* agreement on policies often using the ideas conveyed by policy 'entrepreneurs' (Fligstein and Mara-Drita 1996) and developed in discursive policy communities—whether 'policy networks' based on the exchange of ideas (Kohler Kocch 2002); 'epistemic communities' united on the basis of shared ideas (Haas 1992); 'advocacy coalitions' which share both ideas and access to policymaking (Sabatier 1996); or 'strong publics' that critically deliberate about policies (Eriksen and Fossum 2002).

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In the political sphere, the domain of the 'communicative discourse,' the main interlocutors are political actors—political leaders, spokespeople, party activists—who *communicate* the policy program developed in the context of the coordinative discourse to the public—including both the general or 'weak' public of citizens (Eriksen and Fossum 2002) and the 'informed publics' of 'organized private persons (Habermas 1989) or 'policy forums' (Rein and Schön 1994) made up of community leaders, activists, experts, organized interests, the media—for discussion, deliberation and, ideally, modification.

The flow of ideas generally moves in a clockwise fashion from discursive community to coordinative discourse to communicative discourse to general and informed publics, but with feedback going the opposite way as well (see Figure 1). The coordinative and communicative discourses naturally overlap in terms of actors. Elected officials often act both as policy makers and political leaders; leaders of organized interests not only help generate policies as part of discursive policy communities but also respond as part of 'informed publics' to political leaders' pronouncements about such policies. And the discourses also mostly overlap in terms of ideas, as political actors convey the ideas generated by policy actors to the general public. However, they don't always overlap. This occurs when policies remain part of the 'closed debates' of policy communities rather than spilling over into more 'open debates' with the general public, whether because they are kept from public view—the case of some of the more progressive immigration policy reforms (Guiraudon 1997) or because the issues don't capture the sustained interest of the public—as in banking reforms across Europe that often represented welfare for bankers (Busch 2004). Generally speaking, however, most policies tend to be debated, either because politicians introduce the debates—to gain or retain electoral support, in particular in election periods—or because the 'closed debates' are opened up by vigilant members of the public, especially by the media and/or dissatisfied members of policy communities.

Figure 1

It is important to note that both coordinative and communicative discourses address both cognitive and normative issues, but with different emphases (see Figure 2). The coordinative discourse tends to be more focused on the cognitive arguments, as policy actors debate policies' relative technical and scientific merits, such as the best way to privatize, or how to rationalize social services. The normative arguments about such policies' appropriateness, although also important, are not necessarily articulated in this sphere unless they appeal to newly-emerging values or clash with long-standing ones, since if they resonate with existing values their normative legitimacy is often simply assumed. (This arguably sheds light on why comparativists in political science, who tend to be focused on policy making and, thereby, the coordinative sphere, are more concerned with the cognitive side of discourse.) Thus, the normative mainly comes up explicitly where policy actors disagree on the fundamentals, for example, on whether to privatize at all or who is to bear the brunt of cuts in social services. But this is naturally also when the debates spill over into the political sphere, and the issues are taken up in the communicative discourse.

In the communicative discourse, the cognitive arguments may get shorter shrift, since political actors often assume the cognitive adequacy of the policy—especially if it fits with long-established scientific 'truths'—as they seek to show the policy's normative resonance with the underlying values of the polity. This is where government and opposition generally air their reasons for seeking to pass or to block particular policies, legitimating their arguments on the basis of differing political positions which often also differ in the values of the polity to which they appeal.

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Right/left divides are the most obvious bases for such divisions, but they can also be based on religious beliefs, life-style issues, and ethnic diversity among others. Often, of course, the normative divisions also bring with them alternative cognitive arguments about the policy's adequacy.

Figure 2

This communicative process is complicated by the fact that political actors must speak not just to the merits of any given policy—as do policy actors—but also to how it fits into a larger policy program that spans a number of policy sectors—say, economic policy and how it meshes with labor and social policy. Here, the communicative discourse clearly requires political actors to make cognitive arguments at a more general level about the technical adequacy of the policy program(s)—arguments which are also taken from the coordinative sphere and translated into more publicly accessible language. But it is the normative that takes center stage in this sphere, as political actors must show how the policy programs are part of a larger, coherent political program in which policies are not only sound—because they promise to solve current and future problems—but also appropriate—because they solve those problems in ways that fit with the long-standing and/or newly-emerging values of the polity.

Political actors, after all, need to win elections. And they have to win such elections against politicians from rival parties with communicative discourses about alternative political programs that may muster different cognitive and normative arguments. Election outcomes depend at least in part upon the ability of the 'master' politicians—presidential and prime ministerial candidates—to communicate a 'master' discourse to the public by weaving together the coordinative ideas about a wide range of policy programs into a (at least seemingly) coherent political program that provides a 'vision' of where the polity is, where it is going, and where it ought to go (see Schmidt 2002, Ch. 5). Some political leaders have been true masters at this, in the UK both Thatcher and Blair, in France both de Gaulle and Mitterrand. But this is often not just because of the psychological imponderables and their ability to control the medium of delivery, it is also because they often worked at ensuring that members of their government also projected the same message. Jospin, for example, sought to ensure this by keeping close tabs on his ministers' discourses through one-on-one weekly meetings, through which he was able to craft his master discourse to mesh with the sectoral ones (which worked well his first three years in office). Blair vets all statements from his ministers for similar reasons. Both cases contrast with Schroeder who, when first elected, was not the only 'master' of the discourse, given that party chairman Oscar Lafontaine provided a rival, more left-leaning discourse (Schmidt 2002a, Ch. 6).

It is important to note, though, that however good the discourse in any one arena, it can be pushed out of the center stage by competing discourses that capture public attention. War clearly tops the list: For example, the Falklands war distracted the public enough from the economic problems to help Thatcher win re-election in 1983, while the Iraq war helped Schroeder escape punishment for his inability to solve unemployment and economic problems in the 2002 elections. But law and order issues can also crowd out the socio-economic discourse, as in the French 2002 election, when Jospin was defeated in the first round of the presidential elections; or in the Dutch 2002 elections, when the discourse of maverick rightist Pym Fortyn proposing intolerance for the intolerant in order to protect a tolerant society (and stop immigration) crowded out the left-liberal government's discourse of socio-economic reform success.

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5. Discourse in Institutional Context ⬆

Discourse is not just what you say, to whom you say it, and how you say it but also 'where you say it'. And this speaks to the question of institutional context. Although all polities have both coordinative and communicative discourses, compound polities tend to emphasize the former, simple polities, the latter (see Figure 3). These differences in emphasis tend to ensure differences in who talks to whom, that is, the main interlocutors; how they express themselves, that is, their discursive styles related to tone and tenor; and what legitimacy problems they may confront as well as how they might solve them (see Table 4).

Figure 3

Table 4

5.1. Simple Polities and the Emphasis on the Communicative Discourse ⬆

In simple polities such as Britain, France, and Greece the coordinative discourse tends to be quite thin, the communicative discourse highly elaborate. The concentration of power in the executive, the restricted nature of interest representation, and the polarization of politics means that political actors are naturally focused on communicating to the public decisions taken behind closed doors by a restricted policy elite, rather than on coordinating policy construction with other policy actors, organized interests, or political agents (Schmidt 2002a, Ch. 5). With such a 'thick' communicative discourse, it follows that the discourse would be authoritative in tenor to promote acceptance—as when judges legitimize decisions in terms of the shared cognitive and normative criteria of the polity—and adversarial in tone to anticipate negative reactions—as when political actors seek to persuade the public of the validity of their position while denying that of any opposition. Here, the transformative power of discourse is therefore most likely to be evidenced in public responses to the communicative discourse—through quiescence or protest, positive or negative election results, and opinion polls and surveys.

The problem with the thinness of the coordinative discourse within simple polities is that, it tends to leave to the public little option other than protest—whether through polemics in the press, strikes, demonstrations, or elections—where it disagrees with government initiatives. Depending upon the intensity of the public reaction, the government may decide to persist with the discourse and the policy unchanged in the face of confrontation—in which case the policy's soundness and appropriateness is left in doubt. Blair's public service reforms are a case in point. By contrast, the government may withdraw the policy without any further public discussion in order to put an end to confrontation and/or to avoid potential electoral defeat—in which case the problems the policy was to address remain unsolved even as the policy's legitimacy remains in question. This, as we have already seen, was true of much of the Juppé reform initiative, where not only was there almost no communicative discourse but even the coordinative discourse was so highly restricted that Juppé could boast that he had devised the reform with only a few of his closest advisers—as if that added to legitimacy!

Legitimacy can be enhanced in simple polities by increasing participation in deliberations. Indeed, most conceptions of deliberative democracy are predicated on this, that is, on the assumption that the more participants in the discourse the better—as Habermas (1989) would argue. But it is important to note that in practice occasionally less is better, where the public airing of certain issues agreed

among policy actors may lead to less than 'ideal' results—as in cases of immigration policy where public debates have become highly politicized and subject to populist exploitation (Guiraudon 1997).

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In simple polities, the main question is how to increase participation at the coordinative stage of discourse, before the state acts and society has nothing left to do but to react. Increasingly, simple polities have sought to devise ways to increase public access to the coordinative discourse. One such way is when government officials replace the traditionally limited information-imparting process in the coordinative sphere with more open deliberative processes, such that objections are heard and, if possible, incorporated. This has been the case in Sweden on those issues where the state has sole responsibility, as in the welfare reforms of the early 1990s when, in the absence of coordination with the social partners, the social democratic government organized an elaborate consultation process with the public (Rothstein 2001; Schmidt 2003). In France, similarly, the socialist government's privatizations as of 1997 involved the unions in the negotiations, gaining their cooperation by pledging to secure investment and guarantee jobs, while it created private pension funds administered by the social partners (rather than private companies, as proposed by the right) (Levy 2000). Significantly, the capacity of the Raffarin government to institute public sector pension reform—something the Jospin government didn't even try—benefited not only from the consistency of the arguments in previous governments' communicative discourses, as discussed above, but also from a coordinative discourse that proved successful enough to split the union opposition by buying off some of the unions through separate settlements while holding out against others (Natali and Rhodes 2004).

Another approach to increasing legitimacy in simple polities has been to delegate policy construction to committees of sages charged to produce a policy recommendation on the basis of widespread interest consultation and public deliberation which the government can then promulgate with the greatest of authority. This creates a semi-coordinative discourse within the communicative sphere, especially since the committee usually gets tremendous media attention and public exposure. This has been the frequent solution of French governments for controversial issues (e.g., on citizenship and on 'laicité'—on head scarves in schools), of British governments, as well as of Dutch governments in those areas where the state has sole responsibility (e.g., the draft).

Governments can also devolve their powers to societal interests in certain spheres, for example, by creating a coordinative discourse between social partners in the shadow of the state. This was the case in France with regard to the 35 hour work week, where the implementation was to be worked out between business and labor. Deregulation is probably the most far-reaching of such remedies once a plan of action is decided, however, since it shifts the locus of the discursive interaction from government to independent regulatory agencies which, although equally authoritative in tone, gain in legitimacy as they are required by law to hear all sides and make decisions in a transparent manner— without the arbitrariness that comes when civil servants use their administrative discretion to make exceptions to the rules, as in France or in Italy.

There are certain intractable problems in simple polities, however, which have to do with the fact that once a policy is decided, the very authoritativeness of the government discourse, together with the contentious nature of the response, makes modifying any policy program difficult. This is because backing down is admitting political defeat—and requires a strong communicative discourse to overcome. This is why incorporating societal concerns at the coordinative stage of the discourse, as is generally the pattern in compound polities, is often a better remedy. But here, other problems result, since compound polities also encounter problems of legitimacy, albeit in different areas.

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5.2. Compound Polities and the Emphasis on the Coordinative Discourse ⬆

In 'compound' national polities such as Germany, Italy, Belgium, Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands the coordinative discourse tends to be more elaborate and the communicative discourse thinner. The dispersion of power in multiple authorities, the wide interest consultation, and the consensus-oriented politics ensures that policy actors will be more focused on coordinating agreement among themselves and legitimizing any such agreements through 'sub-discourses' to their constituencies in terms of their own particular cognitive and normative criteria. The communicative discourse is therefore left to the government, which has the task of communicating agreements to the general public in more vague terms. This is because any detailed communication could risk unravelling compromises reached in private by violating ideas and/or values contained in the different groups' sub-discourses (Schmidt 2002a, Chapter 5). With such a 'thick' coordinative discourse, it follows that the discourse is contractual in tenor, in order to promote negotiation, and cooperative in tone, to smooth agreement. It also follows that the transformative power of discourse is more likely to be located in the outcomes of the coordinative discourse, that is, whether or not there is any agreed policy, with empirical investigation focused on interviews and reports of policy actor.

The problem with the thinness of the communicative discourse within compound national polities is that it tends to leave the public with little significant orienting or legitimizing information beyond what it may have obtained as members of constituent groups (and thus as an informed public). The very structure of the discursive process, thus, may seem to violate Habermas' (1989) democratic ideals based on public deliberation and 'communicative action,' given that public deliberation will necessarily be uninformed and have little effect upon decisions already made on the basis of private deliberations behind closed doors. (That Habermas developed his political philosophy in compound Germany should come as no surprise). Here again, then expanding participation in the discourse is a key to increasing legitimacy, but in compound polities this would be more likely to be focused on the communicative sphere, to ensure greater discourse toward and deliberation with the general public.

The thinness of the communicative discourse may nevertheless not be a serious problem for democratic legitimacy in compound polities where the coordinative discourse is inclusive—by covering most relevant groups in society; transparent—because made public through open meetings reported in the news; and responsive—because open to modification in the light of criticism. Problems occur mainly where the coordinative discourse marginalises certain groups—such as immigrants, the unemployed, and women; where policy elites do not communicate enough with constituent members—the case of the Italian unions in the 1980s (Ferrera and Gualmini 2004); and where it occurs behind closed doors that don't leak, leaving the public in the dark about agreements—as in Austria in the 1990s. In Austria, in fact, the communicative discourse of the leader of the extreme right, Haider, resonated not so much because of his thinly-disguised Nazi references but because, in the absence of any real communicative discourse from the government, his talk represented a 'breath of fresh air' as well as because his normative arguments in defense of 'family values'—pledging to increase support for women who stayed at home—resonated at a time when welfare state reforms threatened to undermine the male-breadwinner model (Schmidt 2003).

The rise of the extreme right in compound polities such as the Netherlands, which has long had a highly inclusive, transparent, and responsive coordinative discourse, and not just in Austria, where the coordinative discourse has long been highly confidential and opaque, suggests that the structure of discourse in compound polities alone—by minimizing the communicative sphere—is a problem.

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But it may be a question not just of structure but of strategy, that is, of the discourse of policy elites who prefer not to address politically sensitive issues, such as the question of immigration, foreigners, and law and order, thereby leaving the field open to exploitation by the extreme right (Schmidt 2003). And this, of course, has equally been a problem for simple polities such as France, as evidenced by the defeat of Jospin in the first round of the 2002 presidential election.

Only in two cases does the communicative discourse naturally come to the fore in such compound polities: in election periods—when its adversarial tone may undermine the cooperative demands of the coordinative discourse—and when the coordinative discourse breaks down. In this latter instance, the communicative discourse may offer a solution, by providing a new frame within which key policy actors can reconstruct the coordinative discourse as it exhorts all parties to the debate to come to the table. But for this, one needs to have good 'communicators' with good ideas and policy actors willing to come back to the table. This is not such an easy task, however, given the large numbers of actors able to speak with authority, but who are likely to have very different messages for the public. The potential result is that many good ideas communicated to the public may get drowned in a sea of conflicting messages, and that it will in any case take time for any clear voices to be heard through the din, let alone come to agreement on what is to be done (Schmidt 2002a Ch. 5).

Germany is perhaps the best example of the problems resulting from the breakdown of the coordinative discourse in the absence of a communicative discourse capable of serving to reframe the debate. Tellingly, in the first three months following German Chancellor Schröder's election, he engaged in no communicative discourse related to reform of the work or welfare arena, explaining later that he deliberately remained silent while waiting for the (coordinative) discussions in the Alliance for Jobs talks between employers and unions to resolve the problems. Only after those talks broke down did he begin to engage a communicative discourse, albeit without much success until very recently, as we have already seen.

Italy provides a counter-example to Germany, as a country which up until the 1990s was plagued by a cacophony of voices in the coordinative sphere and empty rhetoric in the communicative sphere, but which subsequently instituted major social welfare reforms. The successful efforts were by social democratic parties led by Italian Prime Ministers Amato, Dini, and D'Alema which instituted pension reforms and enabled Italy to qualify for EMU. Notably, the discourse promoted reform success not only as a result of good cognitive and normative arguments, as we have already seen, which were primarily located in the communicative sphere. It also came from highly elaborate coordinative discourses between government and unions, and unions with their rank and file in an extensive deliberative process culminating in a referendum by union rank and file that served to seal the agreement (Baccaro 2000). The significant contrast is with Berlusconi's lack of success in 1994, when he sought to impose reforms without any coordinative discourse with the unions, and similarly today, where his initiatives have been met by escalating labor protests in response, again, to the lack of consultation (Natali n/a).

The Netherlands also provides an object lesson in the importance of both coordinative and communicative discourse. In the early 1980s, it was the coordinative discourse of the new Prime Minister, credibly threatening government intervention because "it is there to govern," which spurred the social partners to 'learn the lessons' of the previous decade and to begin a more cooperative set of deliberations, with union acceptance of a new trade-off between wages and profits (Visser and Hemerijck 1997; Schmidt 2003). By contrast, in the 1990s, it was the left-liberal coalition's communicative discourse which, in the end, as we have already seen, ensured public acceptance of reform.

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6. Conclusion ⬆

Discourse, in short, plays a major role in social democratic reform projects. Ideas matter. Coming up with good ideas, both cognitive and normative, to make one's arguments is key—but such arguments are also best if reasonably coherent and consistent and if the policies they espouse prove relevant and applicable. Discursive interactions in given institutional contexts also matter: In simple polities, strong communicative discourses supported, increasingly, by wider coordinative discourses promote reform success; in compound polities, more open and inclusive coordinative discourses clearly make a difference, aided increasingly, however, by stronger communicative discourses. But where the discourse is weak, whether in ideas or interactions, even strong political institutional capacity is no guarantor of reform success—especially since most such reforms go against social-democratic policy legacies and preferences. In conclusion, I provide a chart summarizing the reform success of the cases discussed herein, by relating the reform initiatives of social democratic and, where relevant, those of conservative parties, to their institutional context, political institutional capacity, and discourse—coordinative and/or communicative. (I don't add policy legacies or preferences as separate categories to the chart, because these are in almost all cases negative, or the policy problems, since these are largely contemporaneous with timing of the reform initiatives, which is listed.) From the chart, it becomes clear that lasting reforms generally require both significant political institutional capacity and a transformative discourse, although sometimes a transformative discourse can facilitate reform even where there is little political institutional capacity, while political institutional capacity without a transformative discourse rarely produces lasting reform.

Table 5

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Endnotes

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Table I

Mediating Factors in Social-Democratic Reform Project

Policy legacies	Depends on history, culture, interests, institutional arrangement. Social democracy means very different things in different countries at different times
Problems	'Events'…Presence or absence of crisis; economic vulnerability Some countries have greater problems than others because of legacies
Political institutional capacity	Ability to impose or negotiate change depending upon political interactions and institutional arrangements 'Simple Polities' (UK, NZ, Fr, Gr, Port) where governing activity has traditionally been channeled through a single authority have the capacity to impose change subject to sanctions of elections (UK, NZ pre 1990s, Fr) or protest (Fr) 'Compound polities' (B, US, Ger, It, Dk, NL, Sw) where governing activity is dispersed among multiple authorities negotiate change subject to sanctions from lack of agreement (Ger, US, Dk) or protest (It)
Preferences	Do policy actors, political actors, and the public shift their preferences in response to the problem and, if so, how? Special problems for social-democrats because of legacies of post-war era
Discourse	Ability to change preferences by altering perceptions of problems and legacies and thereby to enhance political institutional capacity to impose or negotiate change

Table II

The Ideas in the Discourse

Ideas:

Ideas:

- what you say (substance of ideas)
    - **cognitive**—soundness of ideas that define policy purposes and objectives, propose solutions to problems, define policy instruments and methods
      —justifies in terms of logic of necessity
    - **normative**—resonance of ideas with values of public life, whether long-standing or newly-emerging
      —legitimizes through logic of appropriateness

- how you say it (criteria for success)
    - psychological imponderables and medium of delivery
    - 'truthfulness'
    - relevance, applicability
    - coherence, consistency

Table III

Discourse as an Interactive Process

It's not just what you say and how you say it.

It is also:

- to whom you say it (interlocutors) in public sphere (two overlapping spheres)
    - In **policy sphere**, a coordinative discourse among policy actors
      seeking to come to agreement on policy program,
      getting ideas from discursive communities (epistemic communities, advocacy
      coalitions, strong publics, discursive policy networks);
      --stronger emphasis on the cognitive aspects of ideas
    - In **political sphere**, a communicative discourse b/w political leaders and public
      (informed publics, general publics)
      engaged in deliberation and legitimization;
      --stronger emphasis on the normative aspects of ideas

Table IV

Discourse in Institutional Context

It's not just what you say, how, and to whom.

It is also:

- where you say it (institutional context)
  - in a **simple polity**, the communicative discourse is highly elaborate, the coordinative thin
    a restricted elite makes policy (given concentration of power in executive) and then 'communicates' ideas for elaborate debate and deliberation in the wider public/political sphere
    authoritative tenor to promote acceptance; adversarial tone to anticipate negative reactions
    thinness of coordinative discourse makes protest only recourse, through elections, demonstrations, strikes

    --legitimacy enhanced when participation in deliberation increased through:

    > more open deliberative processes in coordinative sphere
    > delegate policy construction to committees of sages
    > create coordinative discourse b/w societal interests in the shadow of the state
    > give decision-making responsibility to independent regulatory agency

  - in a **compound polity**, the coordinative discourse is highly elaborate, the communicative thin
    a wide range of policy actors coordinates agreement (given dispersion of power in multiple authorities) and communicates it to constituencies in terms of own cognitive/ normative criteria
    contractual in tenor, to promote negotiation; cooperative in tone, to smooth agreement
    thinness of communicative discourse to the general public leaves it with little orienting/legitimising info

    --legitimacy enhanced where the coordinative discourse is inclusive, transparent, responsive
    --but legitimacy is undermined where

    > the coordinative discourse marginalises certain groups
    > it occurs behind closed doors that don't leak, leaving the public in dark about agreements
    > the thinness of the coordinative discourse leaves the way open to communicative discourses by the political extremes
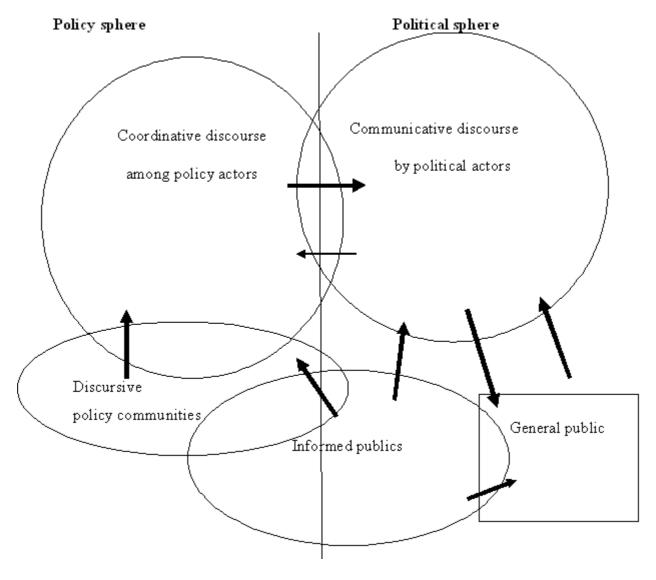
Table V

Role of Political Institutional Capacity and Discourse for Work and Welfare Reform Success

Countries' reform initiatives in Work and Welfare		Institutions		Political Institutional Capacity	Discourse		Reform Success
		Simple	Compound		Coordinative	Communicative	
UK	Thatcher Work '80-'87 Welfare '85-'90 Blair Work/Welf 97-'02	+ + + + + + + + +		+ + + + + + + + +	− − − − − − − − −	+ + + + + + +	+ + + + + + +
NL	Work '80s Welfare '94 Welfare '98	 + +	+ +	− − − + + + +	+ + + + +	+ − − + + +	+ + + + + + +
D	Kohl Work/Welf mid '90s Schröder Work/Welf late'90s Welfare '03–		+ + + + + + + + +	+ + +	+ − − −	− − − +	− − − +?
DK	Work/Welfare'80s–'90s		+ +	+ + +	+ + +	− −	+ + +
Sw	Work/Welf '90s	+		+ +	− −	+ +	+ +
Italy	Work/Welf '80s Berlusconi Work/Welf'94 Dini Work/Welf '95 Berlusconi Welfare '04	 +	+ + + + + + + + + +	 − − − + + −	 − − − − − − + + + − −	 − − − − + + + +	 − − − − − − + + −
France	Mitterrand Work'80s Juppé Welfare '95–'97 Jospin Work/Welf '97–'02 Raffarin Welfare '03	+ + + + + + + + + + + +		+ + + + + + + +	− − − − − − + −	+ + + − − − + + + + +	+ + + − − − + + +

Figure 1

The flow of ideas and discourse among actors in the policy process

Policy sphere   Political sphere

Coordinative discourse

among policy actors

Communicative discourse

by political actors

Discursive

policy communities

General public

Informed publics

Legend: Solid arrows show direction of ideas and discourse, dotted arrows show feedback, overlap shows where some actors may operate in both spheres.

Figure 2

Policy programs and political program in coordinative and communicativediscourse in the public sphere
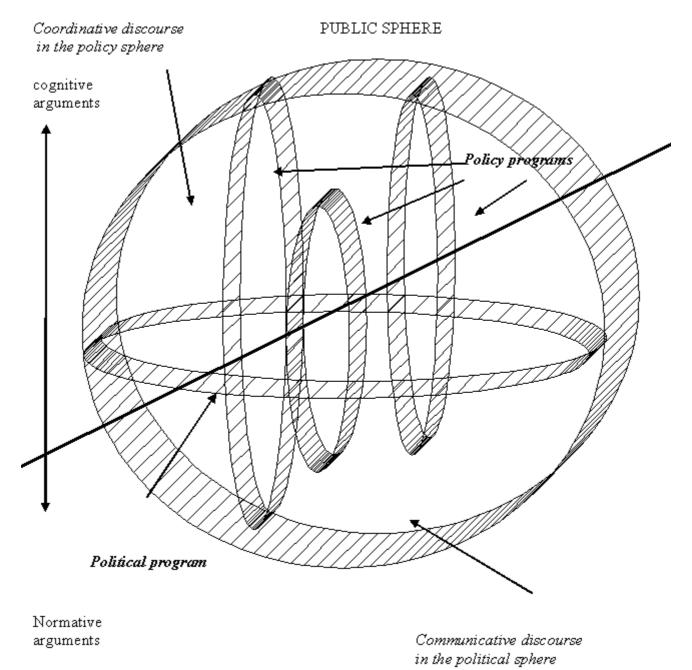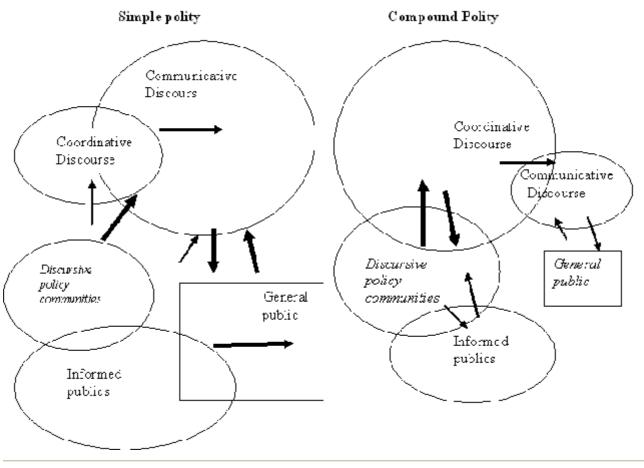
Figure 3

Discourse interactions in simple and compound national polities

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