



# Bureaucratic Politics

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## **Abstract**

The bureaucratic politics approach seeks to understand public policy as the result of decision-making processes, characterized by conflict, bargaining, and compromise, inside and between government organizations. A core assumption is that government organizations pursue distinct interests, including the preservation of their unique sphere of authority (“turf”) as well as the pursuit of distinct views on policy problems and solutions. Hence, while appearing as unitary actors with consistent preferences from the outside, the bureaucratic politics approach suggests that decisions of national governments, supranational organizations, such as the European Commission, and other bodies, such as regulatory and executive agencies, should be better understood as the result of political processes involving multiple organizations and organizational units. The bureaucratic politics perspective therefore partly overlaps with the literature on coordination inside and between government organizations, which for instance highlights the importance of “organizational silos” as impediments to successful coordination. The paper introduces classic contributions to this literature (as well as more recent theorizing), focusing on the political nature of public organizations, including reputation management and blame avoidance. The paper also elaborates on different types of decisions – reforms/institutional choice vs. regular policy-making – and the relevance of the bureaucratic politics approach for analyzing such decisions. The paper reviews selected empirical contributions to this literature, specially focusing on the European Commission as well as EU agencies and their interactions with national level agencies.

## **Keywords**

Administrative Reform – Blame Avoidance – Bureaucratic Politics – Coordination – EU Agencies – European Commission – Reputation Management

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## Introduction

The bureaucratic politics approach seeks to understand public policy as the result of decision-making processes inside and between government organizations characterized by conflict, bargaining, and compromise. A core assumption is that government organizations pursue distinct interests, including the preservation of their unique sphere of authority (“turf”) as well as the pursuit of distinct views on policy problems and solutions. Hence, while appearing as unitary actors with consistent preferences from the outside, the bureaucratic politics approach suggests that the decisions of national governments, supranational organizations (such as the European Commission) and other bodies (such as regulatory and executive agencies) are better understood as the result of political processes involving multiple organizations and organizational units. This literature partly overlaps with the literature on coordination inside and between government organizations, which, for instance, highlights the importance of organizational silos as impediments to successful coordination. This paper covers classic contributions to this literature as well as more recent theorizing on the political nature of public organizations. The next section presents the fundamentals of the bureaucratic politics approach. The section after that, the paper covers pertinent literatures addressing distinct types of bureaucratic politics, including turf politics, silo politics and coordination, administrative reform, blame avoidance, and reputation management. In view of the book’s focus on European Union Public Policy, the paper highlights selected studies addressing the European Commission as well as EU agencies and their interactions with national level agencies through a bureaucratic politics perspective. The conclusion summarizes the paper and makes suggestions for further research.

## Fundamentals of the bureaucratic politics approach

The bureaucratic politics approach emerged as a critique of analyses of governmental decision-making that considered governments as unitary and rational actors. In his seminal analysis of the Cuban missile crisis, Graham Allison (1969) developed an alternative perspective in which governmental decision-making is driven by competing views and powers struggles between politicians and top civil servants inside the US administration. Accordingly, using a bureaucratic politics approach means “opening the black box of the policymaking process” (Gilad et al., 2019, p. 371) where decision-making is characterized by conflict, bargaining, and compromise. This view is nicely summarized in the following quote by Paul ‘t Hart and Anchrith Wille (2012):

The bureaucratic politics approach suggests that non-elected bureaucrats driven by divergent views and interests play a pivotal role in the policy process, and that policy choices emanate from opaque interaction and bargaining among multiple executive actors more so than from deliberation in democratically elected bodies.

(‘t Hart & Wille, 2012, p. 370)

This definition is useful for understanding policymaking and inter-departmental coordination within government bureaucracies, such as between ministries in a national context, and inside the European Commission and its Directorates-General. Importantly, the bureaucratic politics approach explicitly questions the possibility of separating politics and administration by underlining that bureaucratic organizations are political actors in their own right with distinct preferences and resources.

Another, slightly different view on bureaucratic politics that complements the above definition underlines that bureaucratic organizations seek to maintain and defend their institutional identity in a crowded institutional space (Bach & Wegrich, 2019a). This perspective suggests that different organizations do not merely have different views and preferences on substantial policy problems, but that they are motivated by the self-interest of institutional maintenance (Wilson, 1989).

Bureaucratic politics is a consequence of functional specialisation within government organizations. A division of labour between and within organizations results in different local rationalities where officials pay attention to distinct aspects of a policy problem or the organizational goal (Cyert & March, 1963). This means that organizational structure shapes the attention of public officials and their policy choices. However, in order to achieve the organization's overarching goals, some degree of coordination is required, especially for interdependent policy problems (Scharpf, 1994). For such problems, coordination is not a mere technical exercise of maximizing administrative efficiency, but involves the often conflictual reconciliation of different legitimate viewpoints in the absence of an overarching view on the optimal solution to address a given policy problem. This means that bureaucratic politics is not merely about selective perception, which is a necessary consequence of specialization that seeks to break down complex policy problems. Bureaucratic politics also includes the intentional pursuit of distinct organizational worldviews on policy problems and solutions, as well as the pursuit of institutional interests for organizational maintenance. The latter may also result in behaviour that could be described as "non-coordination" or deliberate avoidance of coordination with other organizations (Bach & Wegrich, 2019a).

Bureaucratic politics is not a coherent theory but an umbrella term which encompasses different theoretical approaches (see also 't Hart & Wille, 2012). This paper particularly focuses on approaches that use an organizational lens on bureaucratic politics, seeking to understand decision-making as the result of the intentionally rational behaviour of organizations operating in political contexts with competing rationalities, ambiguous objectives, and diverging criteria of organizational performance (Bach & Wegrich, 2019a). However, the paper also briefly touches upon individual-level theories of bureaucratic politics.

## **Turf politics**

The section above underlined that specialization is a fundamental and desirable feature of government organizations. The notion of "turf" underlines that

specialization does not simply lead to a distinct perspective on a problem, but that organizations pursue institutional self-interests to protect or enlarge their turf, which means that each organization or organizational unit “becomes a guardian of its own mission, standards, and skills” (Wilensky, 1967, p. 37). Turf is sometimes defined as “the domain of problems, opportunities, and actions over which an agency exercises legitimate authority” (Bardach, quoted in Heims, 2019). In another well-known definition, turf is understood as “relatively undisputed jurisdiction” (Wilson, 1989, p. 183) and a widely shared understanding of the organization’s central task among employees and external stakeholders. This definition draws on Selznick’s (1957) notion of institutionalized organizations, which underlines the importance of organizational identity for explaining their behaviour. Another aspect of turf relates to the uniqueness of an organization relative to others: “an organization is like a fish in a coral reef: to survive, it needs to find a supportive ecological niche” (Wilson, 1989, p. 188).

In many ways, having a distinct turf is essential to achieve political support and to motivate employees (Wegrich & Štimac, 2014). While specialization and uniqueness may be beneficial for increasing organizational performance and employee motivation, this incentive structure focuses on achieving organization-specific goals rather than goals cutting across several organizations. Following this line of reasoning, Wilson (1989) develops several “turf strategies”. These include building a unique task profile, fighting other organizations that seek to perform the organization’s own tasks, and avoiding taking on tasks that differ significantly from those at the heart of the organization’s mission. Moreover, Wilson (1989) advises organizations to be careful about cooperation with other organizations, as it may imply a loss of control over turf and generate uncertain benefits, but immediate costs.

That said, cooperation among organizations is not impossible. Heims (2019) argues that “a lack of cooperation due to the rational institutional interest to focus on an organization’s core mission needs to be recognized as normal, and even desirable, behaviour” (p. 116). She states that cooperation with others is a peripheral task for organizations; they “would not be doing their job at all” (Heims, 2019, p. 116) if they prioritized cooperation. However, public organizations are not necessarily opposed to cooperation; they will cooperate if it helps them to fulfil their mission and engage in “productive turf protection” (p. 121). In an analysis of multilevel relations between national and EU level agencies, Heims (2017) leverages this theoretical argument and demonstrates that national food safety agencies are positive towards EU level regulatory coordination because this supports them in their control of regional and local authorities. In another case study, she shows that national authorities are sceptical about the EU’s involvement in international maritime safety cooperation, where national authorities have traditionally had a strong role.

In a comparative analysis of multilevel coordination in the EU, Busuioc (2016) makes a similar argument according to which EU level agencies may be seen as “rivalling” organizations by national authorities. Although inter-organizational cooperation may be desirable and necessary for effective problem solving, it sometimes seems hard to achieve because mandating organizations to cooperate does not guarantee success.

Her analysis shows that the supranational police authority, EUROPOL, encounters serious problems regarding cooperation with national police authorities, who are reluctant to share information about criminals, as this means they give away the opportunity to claim credit for solving a case, this being essential for demonstrating their unique capabilities and societal contribution. In contrast, she finds that national authorities are more cooperative towards the EU border control agency, FRONTEX, which assists national authorities with their tasks and whose operational forces consist of national border guards.

A constant tug-of-war between different organizations is certainly problematic. However, equally problematic is a lack of coordination (or “non-coordination”). In cases with a lack of coordination, responsibility lies with one organization whose approach is not contested and which may have “blind spots” and overlook important aspects of a policy problem (Bach & Wegrich, 2019a). This is a variant of the “underlap” problem of coordination (Wegrich & Štimac, 2014) where distinct problems or client groups fall between the cracks of organizational boundaries and even are deliberately pushed between different organizations (Lodge & Wegrich, 2014). In contrast, turf politics, which emerge in cases of overlap between responsibilities, are not invariably negative. Indeed, competition within the executive can “lead to well-vetted and flexibly implemented policies, produced by ongoing yet respectful deliberation that allows for clarification of values and testing of assumptions” (’t Hart & Wille, 2012, p. 376) or what Wilensky (1967) calls “constructive rivalry” (p. 39).

## **Organizational silos and bureaucratic coordination**

Patterns of decision-making following organizational silos are another aspect of bureaucratic politics. Indeed, ’t Hart and Wille (2012) distinguish silo politics from turf politics, arguing that silo politics are about sectoral conflicts, where the coordination of several organizations is required to address a policy problem spanning several organizations. Here, a main concern is that organizations (or organizational units) seek to push their distinct worldview based on a local rationalities and problem perceptions.

In many instances, it will be difficult to draw a clear line between turf and silo politics. In analytical terms, this may be possible. Silo politics is about the coordination between interdependent organizations to address substantial policy problems (Hartlapp et al., 2013; Scharpf, 1994), whereas turf politics relates to the distribution of responsibilities between different units, the allocation of budgets and personnel, or ultimately the survival of an organization. That said, questions of policy design cannot always be clearly separated from questions of institutional responsibility. This is because policy decisions distribute responsibilities as well as budgets and staff for policy implementation by a department or by a regulatory or executive agency under the department’s responsibility. In the following, the paper briefly reviews recent studies of substantive policymaking, primarily inside the EU Commission, which

exemplify silo politics. The next section addresses administrative policymaking or reform policies, which exemplifies turf politics.

There has recently been a surge in studies of policymaking in the European Commission, which exemplify silo politics. Hartlapp et al. (2013) show how the internal structure of the Commission – the division of labour between Directorates-General, the role of lead departments in policy development, and the gatekeeper function of the Secretariat-General – systematically shape the Commission’s policy agenda. Another study on horizontal coordination of climate policy inside the Commission (Hustedt & Seyfried, 2016) demonstrates different problem perceptions among relevant Directorates-General and the presence of turf battles in horizontal coordination. Finke (2020) shows how coordination inside the Commission is driven by concerns of organizational turf, in particular for highly salient policy decisions. Taking a different stance, Vantaggiato et al. (2020) argue that Commission officials hardly ever operate in organizational silos, which they define as employees who do not interact with other parts of the organization. They show that policymaking officials interact with others, leading them to question the above narrative of policymaking in a fragmented Commission. However, one may doubt whether their measure of interaction across departmental boundaries is incompatible with turf protective behaviour.

Another analysis explicitly addresses different types of bureaucratic politics inside (national) government bureaucracies. Gilad et al. (2019) analyse how politicians and bureaucrats “translate” the agenda of social movements into policies. They show that bureaucratic politics range between consensual and confrontational modes of responding to external pressure, where consensual responses are characterized by politicians’ desire to mitigate electoral losses and where a few powerful bureaucratic actors draw on existing policy solutions to produce swift but conservative policies. In contrast, confrontational decision-making is characterized by politicians’ desire to harvest electoral gains and by conflictual negotiations among bureaucratic actors with diverging views. In particular, Gilad et al. (2019) show how social movement demands empowered a previously marginalized ministry “with an opportunity to successfully progress its problem frame and plans that it formulated in previous years” (p. 381). Importantly, this analysis shows how external pressure for policy change is interpreted by bureaucracies’ distinct worldviews and existing policy solutions.

## **Administrative reform and institutional choice**

The reform of government has been analysed as administrative policymaking, which is understood as decisions about structure, processes, personnel, and the location of public organizations (Egeberg & Trondal, 2018). This is an indirect type of policymaking, focused at changing the government apparatus tasked with deciding and implementing substantial policies. The (looming) reform of public organizations appears particularly well-suited for analyses using a bureaucratic politics perspective. The restructuring of organisations involves a high degree of uncertainty from the perspective of employees. In contrast to substantial policies, employees have direct



stakes in the outcome of reform decisions, which implies a much closer coupling of bureaucrats' private interests and policy choices compared to substantive policymaking (Egeberg, 1995). Therefore, one can expect a greater degree of mobilization among bureaucrats in the case of reform processes. The paper now briefly turns to prominent theories about individual bureaucrats' institutional preferences, and then covers theories emphasizing the organizational context for explaining bureaucrats' behaviour.

A prominent example for a micro-level explanation of turf politics is Niskanen's (1971) theory of the budget-maximizing bureaucrat, which assumes rational bureaucrats who push for bigger budgets, more staff, and more operational autonomy, as this increases bureaucrats' opportunities for higher salaries and promotion, amongst other things. This behaviour takes place in a context where agencies compete for budget shares, personnel allocations, and policy programs. Hence, rational bureaucrats will (perversely) contribute to state growth and increased public expenditure (for a critique, see Egeberg, 1995). The bureau-shaping model (Dunleavy 1991) provides a more nuanced picture of bureaucrats' institutional preferences. This model postulates that bureaucrats, in particular senior civil servants, have strong incentives to delegate operational tasks to agencies because they favour pleasant working environments in small teams, policy-related, analytical tasks, and being close to politics. In short, bureaucrats seek to maximize interesting tasks, but are less interested in salaries or other personal benefits. This is because not all budget increases are relevant for individual utility, as budgets are passed on to other organizations, and because large organizations with multiple and incompatible tasks are difficult to manage (Wilson, 1989). The budget-maximization and bureau-shaping theories fall squarely within the realm of turf politics, as they are about neither sectoral nor silo politics.

A number of empirical studies have analysed turf politics in the context of administrative reforms. Carpenter (2010a) analyses the reaction of the Federal Reserve Board (FED) in the US to a policy proposal to establish an independent consumer protection agency in the wake of the financial crisis. This policy proposal constituted an obvious threat to the FED's turf, as it suggested the transfer of authority, staff, and budgets to a new agency. This happened in a context when the FED had a poor record of protecting consumer interests during financial crisis. As a response to the proposal, the FED significantly increased its attention to consumer protection issues in multiple ways. After the policy proposal was on the agenda, consumer protection figured more prominently in speeches of senior managers, the FED increased its rulemaking activities in consumer protection, and it announced more enforcement actions in consumer protection (Carpenter, 2010a). Eventually, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was established as part of the FED, rather than as independent authority.

The termination of public organizations has attracted sustained academic attention. A substantial branch of this literature applies population ecology approaches, analysing the determinants of organizational termination or other types of "transitions" for larger populations. However, there is another branch in this literature labelled the "institutional legacy approach" (Kuipers et al., 2018, pp. 267-268) that studies single

organizations' gradual adaptation and reaction to changing circumstances, including termination threats. This literature criticises population ecology approaches that "treat agencies as passive actors" and thereby lack "a sense of political contestation" associated with major reform proposals (Dommett & Skelcher, 2014, p. 543). In a study of agencies in the United Kingdom facing major reform or termination, Dommett and Skelcher (2014) provide an account of agency senior officials' responses to those threats. They show that senior officials prioritize the continuous performance of the organization's main task in some form or another, rather than pursuing organizational survival in the present form. Moreover, they identify three archetypical agency strategies: the technical expert strategy where the agency provides arguments in favour of maintaining some agency functions; the network node strategy where stakeholders rather than agency officials challenge reform proposals; and the marginal adaptor strategy where agencies propose incremental adaptations when facing strong political commitment to reform.

In studies on the EU, institutional choice processes like the creation of EU level agencies and administrative networks have been analysed through a bureaucratic politics perspective, emphasizing the notion of institutional rivalry (Bach et al., 2016). The creation of those kinds of institutions is commonly explained using functional explanations, suggesting that agencies and networks lead to more efficient problem solving and contribute towards closing regulatory gaps. However, those institutions are created in a crowded institutional space. Hence, a different view is that the dynamics of institutional choice are influenced by existing national agencies, who resist the creation of powerful EU level bodies to avoid a loss of powers. A bureaucratic politics perspective on institutional choice also helps explaining the creation of ever more formalized administrative networks. In the area of data protection, a network of national agencies pushed for the formalization of this network and for EU legislation mandating formal independence of national data protection agencies (Yesilkagit, 2011).

## **Blame avoidance**

Another analytical perspective, which directs attention to the pursuit of institutional interests, is blame avoidance. A paper by Kent Weaver (1986) is widely cited as classical contribution to this approach. Another important contribution is Hood (2011), which provides a comprehensive treatment of the topic. The original claim of the perspective focuses on politicians, rather than bureaucrats. The core assumption is that politicians' main priority is to avoid blame, rather than maximizing credit for policy decisions. Hence, the motto of this perspective is to "make sure things don't go wrong, if they go wrong, make sure blame does not stick with you". The underlying reason for this type of behaviour is the public's negativity bias; the public is more likely to pay attention to negative information than to positive information. Put bluntly, news media are more likely to report on policy failures than on success stories. A fundamental part of the media's role, but also of (opposition) politicians and other watchdogs, such as auditor bodies, is to hold office holders accountable for failures of commission and omission. The different components of blame include some

(perceived) damage done to important values and the action or inaction of a political or administrative actor, who is made responsible for the problem at hand (Hood, 2011).

There are several analyses of politicians and their blame avoidance behaviours, which amongst others include the use of “presentational strategies”. In short, office holders’ attempts to play down the severity of a problem, to admit a problem but deny responsibility, or to admit responsibility (Bach & Wegrich, 2019b; Bovens et al., 1999; Hood, 2011). Another blame avoidance strategy of politicians is to try to distance themselves from unpopular activities. A prominent example of such blame avoidance behaviour through institutional design is the delegation of tasks to executive agencies in order to use them as ‘lightning rods’ to avoid responsibility for problems (Hood, 2011). In contrast to the theory of bureau shaping, which suggests that delegation serves to maximize interesting tasks, the blame avoidance perspective sees delegation as an attempt to escape accountability.

Hence, here we see two distinct analytical views on blame avoidance, namely the anticipatory design of institutions to avoid or minimize blame attributions in the future and the reactive behaviour of office holders to attributions of blame (Hinterleitner & Sager, 2017). The aforementioned can be seen in connection, where the ex-ante design of institutions affects the ex-post dynamics of blame attribution and the possibilities of office holders to escape blame. For instance, Bach and Wegrich (2019b) show how complex institutional structures work as a temporal buffer for executive politicians in the case of an episode of protracted failure of public service delivery.

The literature on blame avoidance often focuses on the behaviour of individual office holders, especially executive politicians. That said, those are typically analysed in the context of administrative or policy failures, and hence the blame avoidance behaviour of politicians is relevant for understanding the defence of institutional interests. However, a number of studies address blame avoidance behaviour by public organizations. Hinterleitner and Sager (2019) study organizational strategies in a political climate characterized by increasing polarization, where politicians shift blame to public organizations. They highlight different bureaucratic strategies of anticipatory blame avoidance through changes to public service delivery. A first strategy is the redesign of policy measures. Hinterleitner (2018) shows how youth welfare authorities in Switzerland reacted to a high-publicity case of a repeat juvenile offender who received an expensive treatment that media framed as a waste of taxpayer’s money. In order to avoid blame, the authorities used their discretion and prioritized punitive instead of educational measures for juvenile offenders. Another example relates to the provision of information about policy implementation. Hinterleitner and Sager (2019) use the example of the Millennium Dome in London, a prestigious project, which stopped publishing visitor numbers after protracted public criticisms of visitor numbers clearly below the expected targets.

These examples of blame avoidance behaviour by bureaucracies show how bureaucratic politics distracts organizations from other (mandated) tasks and may

result in suboptimal service delivery as consequence of deliberate neglect of tasks and duties. The implication is that the bureaucracy's institutional interests, not politicians' policy preferences, define priorities in policy implementation and shape the policies as they reach citizens.

## **Bureaucratic reputation-seeking**

The blame-avoidance perspective revolves around a perceived loss or harm for which an organization is made responsible. The closely related theory of bureaucratic reputation was introduced by Daniel Carpenter in the early 2000s and has its roots in institutional perspectives on bureaucracies (Selznick, 1957) and turf politics (Wilson, 1989). Carpenter defines reputation as "a set of symbolic beliefs about the unique or separable capacities, roles, and obligations of an organization, where these beliefs are embedded in audience networks" (Carpenter, 2010b, p. 45). The basic motto of this perspective is to "look at the audience, and look at the threats" (Carpenter, 2010a, p. 832). A fundamental assumption is that a favourable reputation means autonomy and political support. Importantly, agencies typically have multiple audiences with potentially conflicting expectations - pleasing one audience may alienate another. This means that organizations need to "select strategies as to how they seek to be understood and stress particular aspects of their competence to enhance audience perceptions of niche roles, uniqueness, and appropriateness" (Busuioc & Lodge, 2017, p. 93).

Bureaucratic reputation theory directs attention towards agencies' purposeful attempts towards nurturing and protecting reputational uniqueness, their ability to provide services and solutions that are not provided by any other organization. The bureaucratic reputation perspective is a critique of rational choice approaches in political science, which focus on the formal powers delegated to bureaucracies by elected politicians. In such a view, public organizations have discretion to take alternative courses of actions, but only within the formal boundaries of delegated powers. In contrast, the bureaucratic reputation theory perspective underlines that public organisations are rational and politically conscious actors that actively engage in nurturing and defending a favourable reputation among relevant audiences (Maor, 2015).

A growing body of literature has documented how agencies nurture their reputation and react to reputational threats. A key concern has been to plausibly demonstrate that agencies' behaviour corresponds to theoretical assumptions of bureaucratic reputation theory. The main empirical focus of this literature is on regulatory agencies outside Europe. For instance scholars have demonstrated that agencies adjust their organizational output as a reaction to media attention (Maor & Sulitzeanu-Kenan, 2015) or that they strategically use communicative strategies – such as keeping silent or reacting publicly – when facing reputational threats (Bach et al., 2021; Maor et al., 2013). For instance, Bækkeskov (2017) demonstrates how an international organization within health policy continued providing statistics about the H1N1 pandemic even after pandemic status was declared, when case counts become

meaningless from a professional point of view. The organization continued to provide information to satisfy demands by stakeholders, even if the data became increasingly inaccurate and staff “burned out”.

The reputational approach has also been increasingly applied in the study of EU administration and policy. For instance, Busuioc and Rimkutė (2020) provide a comprehensive analysis of how EU agencies deal with conflicting external expectations and priorities, different reputational dimensions in their reporting, and how their communications became increasingly complex. Their study looks into how EU regulatory agencies legitimize their existence through public communication. They show how their communicative strategies follow a life cycle, where agencies gradually move from emphasizing their technical reputation (i.e. their ability and competence) to include other dimensions, in particular their performance.

Rimkute (2020b) studied the communicative behaviour of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) when facing public allegations. EFSA engaged in comprehensive communication with the public to demonstrate its credibility and the soundness of its decision procedures related to the toxicity of glyphosate. In contrast, facing similar allegations, the Environmental Protection Agency in the US could afford to remain relatively silent and did not directly engage with public criticism but rather concentrated on conducting further analyses. The explanation is different reputational vulnerabilities. EFSA has an emerging reputation and a less clear position in the EU institutional landscape; it is part of a networked structure which is less consolidated (Rimkutė, 2020).

## **Conclusion**

This paper provided a broad-brushed account of bureaucratic politics, which is an umbrella term for different middle-range theories rather than one overarching theory. What those theories have in common is that they underline bureaucratic organizations’ pursuit of institutional interest and how the politics taking place inside the black box of government shape policy decisions. To be sure, there are other approaches that may be subsumed under the bureaucratic politics umbrella, such as budgetary politics or court politics (’t Hart & Wille, 2012). This paper concentrates on institutional (organizational) interests, excluding a court politics approach that focuses on the personal power play and influence of individual advisers and top civil servants surrounding executive politicians. While this is an important field of research (see Bach & Wegrich, 2020 for an overview), it is one where organizational perspectives are of lesser importance.

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