Conceptualizing Key Drivers of Policy Change
An Introduction to the Kaleidoscope Model

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Objectives

Favorable policy environments stimulate economic growth, while unfavorable policy regimes stymie development outcomes. Since policy decisions shape the incentives and actions of key farmer, consumer and industry groups, policies become central determinants of overall economic performance as well as progress towards key agricultural, nutrition and food security goals.

Achievement of key development goals, therefore, depends heavily on a good understanding of a given country's policy processes. This brief introduces the Kaleidoscope Model, developed in response to growing interest in understanding policy systems and identifying the key factors that shape policy reforms.

The Kaleidoscope Model

The Kaleidoscope Model (KM) provides a simple, applied framework for analyzing key drivers of policy change in food security, agriculture and nutrition. Developed by the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy (FSP), the framework aims to be flexible enough to encompass a broad range of policy systems across a diverse set of countries.

Two large bodies of experience have informed the structure and content of the Kaleidoscope Model. First, the model derives insights from international development policy experience through an extensive review of available evidence on episodes of policy change in developing countries across a broad range of policy domains related to food security, including agriculture, education, healthcare, nutrition, and social

Key Findings

- The Kaleidoscope Model (KM) assesses key factors that drive policy change.
- This brief summarizes the 16 key hypotheses emerging from the KM.
- The KM offers several practical tools for stakeholders interested in improving policy system performance or those aiming to intervene more effectively in a specific policy setting.

protection. Second, it draws on the large academic literature on policy systems, published primarily in public administration and political science. Drawing on these two bodies of evidence, the KM identifies a set of core variables that have proven consistently important in motivating policy reform and influencing policy design, implementation, evaluation and reform.

The framework encompasses all five stages of the policy cycle: • agenda setting, • design, • adoption, • implementation, and • evaluation and reform. Its architects have named the resulting framework the Kaleidoscope Model because, just as shifting a kaleidoscope refracts light on a new pattern, so does focusing on a particular element of the policy process reveal a different constellation of key variables (Resnick et al. 2015). Like the pieces of a colored glass inside a kaleidoscope, many of the underlying variables remain relevant as policy dynamics unfurl, yet some factors play a disproportionately larger role in driving policy change at a particular point in time.

What drives policy change?

Testable propositions about key drivers of policy change center on the 16 hypotheses listed in the center of Figure 1. The light grey inner circle in Figure 1 enumerates these 16 hypotheses, while Table 1 describes them more formally.

In addition to these primary causal variables, an array of contextual conditions envelops the policy environment and shapes its contours. Macro-economic conditions, for example, often shape prices, private sector motivations and government's budgetary resources. Similarly, material conditions, such as asset distribution, poverty rates, available technologies, soil structure and climate, also shape the intensity of specific policy problems as well as feasible design options. To illustrate these situation-specific contextual conditions, the outer circle of the KM wheel includes an illustrative list of contextual conditions.

Figure 1. Kaleidoscope Model of Policy Change
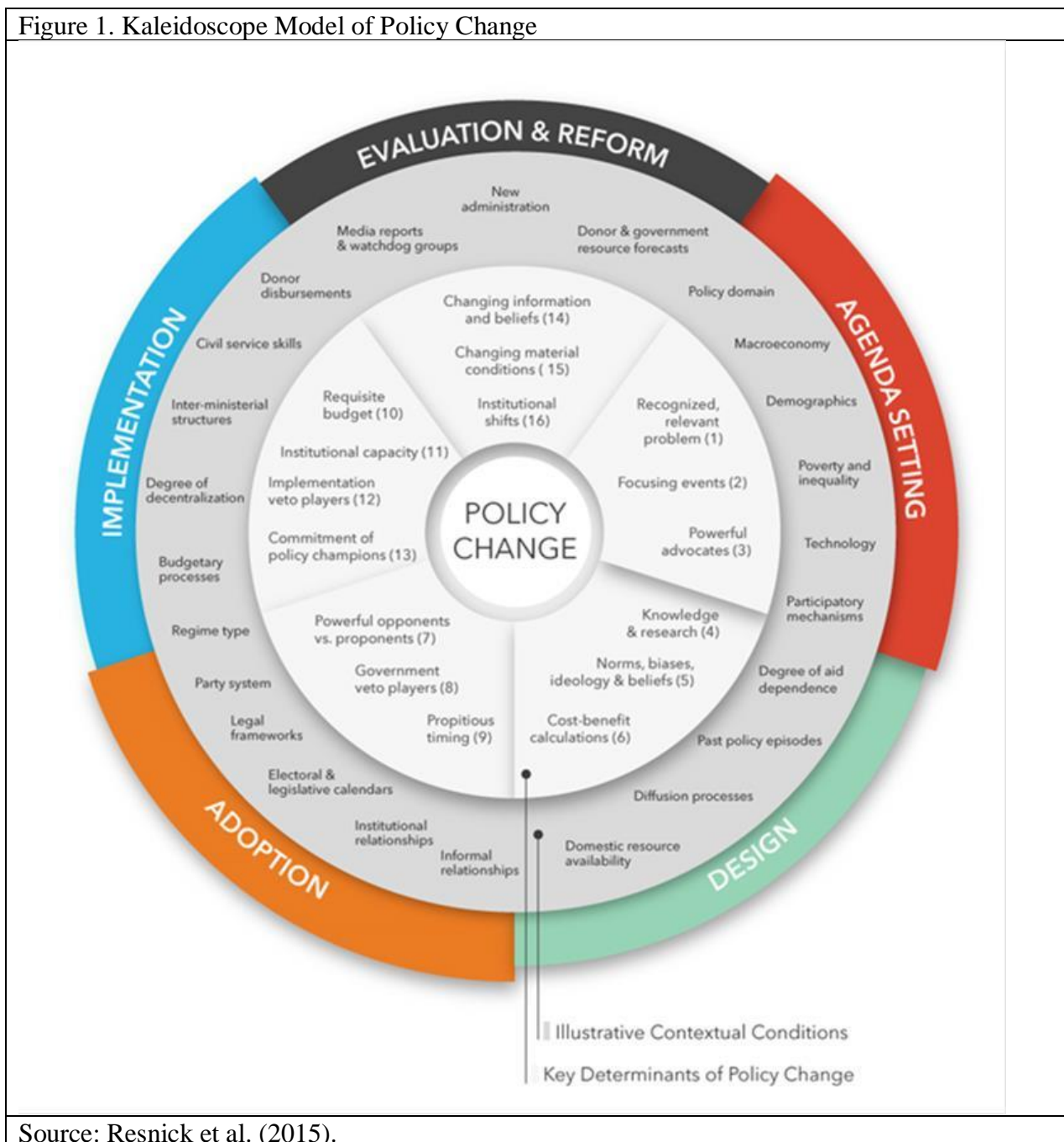
Source: Resnick et al. (2015).

Table 1. Kaleidoscope Model Hypotheses about Key Drivers of Policy Change

Policy Stages	Key Variables Driving Policy Change	Hypothesis
Agenda setting	1. Recognized, relevant problem	• A concerned constituency identifies a relevant problem based on credible evidence or popular perception.
	2. Focusing event	• A well-defined event focuses public attention on a problem or creates a window of opportunity for policy change.
	3. Powerful advocates	• Strong individuals, organizations, or companies support a new or changed policy to key decision makers.
Design	4. Knowledge & research	• Evidence-based knowledge shapes feasible design options.
	5. Norms, biases, ideology & beliefs	• Beliefs and biases shape the range of acceptable designs.
	6. Cost-benefit calculations	• Expected benefits and costs (political, economic, social) influence the preferred design.
Adoption	7. Powerful opponents vs. proponents	• For a policy to be adopted, supporters must be relatively more powerful than opponents.
	8. Government veto players	• For a policy to be adopted, government agents with ultimate decision-making power must be supportive or neutral. • For a policy to be vetoed, government agents with ultimate decision-making power must be an opponent.
	9. Propitious timing	• Supporters wait for opportune moments (political, economic, social) to push policy change.
Implementation	10. Requisite budget	• Government or donors provide fund sufficient to carry out the new policy or program as intended.
	11. Institutional capacity	• Government or other intended implementing organizations managed the new policy or program as it was intended.
	12. Implementing stage veto players	• Designated implementers -- from the private sector, NGO or local agencies -- have both incentives and willingness to implement the policy program.
	13. Commitment of policy champions	• Strong individuals, organizations, or companies continued to publicly support the program.
Evaluation & Reform	14. Changing information & beliefs	• New learning emerges that influences how decision makers believe the policy/program should be structured.
	15. Changing material conditions	• Available resources, technology, or policy needs have changed since the policy was originally implemented.
	16. Institutional shifts	• New actors enter the policy arena as the result of elections, cabinet reshuffle, or new staffing.

Applications

Developing country stakeholders, donors and researchers have applied the Kaleidoscope Model across a broad range of geographic and policy settings. See, for example, recent summaries of policy dynamics in nutrition and agricultural input policies by Hendriks et al (2016), Resnick et al. (2016) and Haggblade et al. (2016).

Some stakeholders express interest in improving the overall performance of a given policy system. Others seek to influence outcomes by engaging more effectively in specific policy debates. For each purpose, a variety of tools exist. The *User's Guide to the Kaleidoscope Model* provides a good starting point (Haggblade and Babu 2017). The guide and other web-based learning materials are available to interested stakeholders at the following hotlink: http://foodsecuritypolicy.msu.edu/resources/policy_tools

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