

KAY 493

Comparative Public Policy


Week 5

Step 1: Understanding programs
and lessons

Step 2: Creating awareness of
problems

Rose, Chapters 2 & 3





Step 1: Understanding programs and lessons

Rose, Chapter 2

«A wise person's question is
half the answer.»

Old proverb



Distinguish details from the essential



Too much information creates a problem of selection.



The ability to **extract knowledge from a flood of details** saves the policy analyst from drowning in detail.



The **art of lesson-drawing** (for it is a **creative activity** as well as a science) is to understand which features of a foreign program are **essential** and which are not.

How to filter information?

Concentrate on concepts and ideas



Science depends on concepts. **Use concepts** to select information relevant for lesson-drawing from books and the Internet.



Concepts are ideas which receive names. They **determine the questions one asks, and the answers one gets.**



Concepts provide the **common vocabulary to relate features of a program that operates in different settings.**

Example: UBI Concept

Universal Basic Income	
Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple and efficient to administer.• Avoids poverty trap of means-tested benefits.• Reduces inequality, poverty and homelessness.• Encourages socially beneficial tasks such as old age care.• Encourages individuals to take risk and set up business.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Could encourage laziness.• Could discourage part-time work.• Cost higher than current benefit system leading to higher taxes.• Higher income taxes could lead to disincentives to work.• Could lead to welfare support for undesirables like criminals. <p>www.economicshelp.org</p>

Concept Example: Program

- A program is **the way public employees are authorized to spend money in pursuit of stated objectives.**
- A program is about the **'how' of public policy.**
- In the **absence of a program** detailing how good intentions will be achieved, a statement of good intentions can only produce a 'feel-good' effect.

Concept example: Lesson

- Lessons:

 - Are **outcomes of learning**.
 - **Specify a program** drawing on knowledge of programs in other countries dealing with the same problem.
 - Are very different from a proposal to alter an existing program, because **it is about introducing something new**.
 - Have **empirical base**, for it makes use of **observation and evidence** currently in effect elsewhere.
 - **Adapt what is done elsewhere** into a program that can be applied at home.

Factors of success as a policymaker

- To succeed as a policymaker, you must be good at
 - **designing a program**, and
 - winning the **political support** necessary to adopt and maintain it.

Policy analysts as doctors

- **Lesson-drawing has a lot in common with the practice of medicine.**
 - Both doctors of medicine and masters of public policy require theoretical and practical knowledge.
 - The first step is **diagnosing the root cause** of a problem, not the symptom.
 - The purpose of diagnosis is not just to explain but also to **prescribe an intervention that will improve conditions.**
- Any prescription drawn from foreign experience must be hedged with qualifications about success, the **outcome is far from certain.**

Importance of programs

- Programs organize and direct major **resources** of government – laws, money, personnel, and organizations – **towards identifiable ends**.
- .The goals of programs vary.
 - Some goals **target individuals**, such as quotas for the disabled in bureaucracy.
 - Others are **addressed to organizations**, whether in the public sector, such the police, or the private sector, such as firms emitting high levels of pollutants; or to conditions that concern both sectors, such as safety at work.


Hardware and software of programs

- Programs combine the ‘hardware’ and the ‘software’ needed to advance towards a policy goal .
 - The **hardware consists of laws, money, personnel, and other organizational resources that are necessary to launch a new program.** However, they are insufficient to put a program into effect.
 - **Software** is also required, including the **training of officials in new tasks, the development of informal procedures** for integrating a new program into existing public institutions, and delivery systems linking public agencies with intended beneficiaries.

Types of programs

- Every program is a mixture of resources, and the mix varies from program to program.
 - Paying pensions is **money-intensive**;
 - Regulating companies is **law-intensive**;
 - Providing childcare is **labour-intensive**; and
 - Health care is **both labour- and money-intensive**, since doctors, nurses, and hospital staff are required in large numbers, and all must be paid.

Program success

- Programs are the **tangible embodiment of policy commitments**.
 - From the administrative perspective, a program **works if its inputs of resources are effectively transformed into outputs delivered to those lawfully entitled to receive them**.
 - From the perspective of a politician, a program works if it produces **political satisfaction**.
 - Searchers for lessons from abroad seek programs that **work in both the administrative and the political sense**.
- 

Similarity and difference among programs

- A fundamental reason for looking to other nations for lessons is that **differences between programs within a country are often greater** than those between programs addressing the same problem in different countries.
- Since national governments **respond to a common problem in different ways**, learning about these differences creates useful knowledge.

Parallel and interdependent programs

- The programs of a national government can be **unique to one country, operate in parallel with many countries, or be functionally interdependent** on what happens outside national boundaries.
- **Lesson-drawing is possible** only if policymakers in different governments face a **common problem**.
- **Unique programs are exceptional and often not desired.**

Parallel programs

- When many governments deal with a similar problem, their efforts are **parallel** if the activities of each remain as separate as the jurisdictions of different national governments.
- Parallel programs are **comparable**.

Interdependent programs

- A program is **interdependent** when what is done by one government is influenced by what is done by other government, such as international trade policies.
 - When there are interdependencies between the programs of different governments, national policymakers must pay attention to what is done elsewhere, or risk failure.
 - Interdependence requires an **awareness of cross-national differences**.
 - The European Union is a prime example the importance of the creation of institutions in response to an awareness of interdependence.

The distinctiveness of lessons

- A lesson is a distinctive type of program, because it **draws on foreign experience** to propose a program that can deal with a problem confronting national policymakers in their home environment.
- Because a lesson is created by **extracting knowledge from the experience of other countries**, it differs from the normal practice of learning from your own experience.

Characteristics of lessons

- A lesson is a practical, nuts-and-bolts outline of the means as well as the ends of policy.
- It identifies the laws, appropriations, and personnel and organizational requirements needed for a program to be put into effect.
- A lesson omits information that is interesting but non-essential and **includes what is essential to make a program work.**

Difference between a case study and a lesson

- **A lesson contains far fewer details** than a case study of how a foreign program operates.
- **The information in a case study is only the starting point of learning; the end point is drawing a lesson** that uses such knowledge to propose a program to achieve similar effects (or avoid a similar disaster) in another country.

Lesson-drawing process

- Like diffusion studies of the sequential adoption of measures in response to a common stimulus (for example, the spread of anti-smoking legislation or of Internet use), **lesson-drawing is about the introduction of parallel programs in more than one country.**
- Lesson-drawing accepts the **contingency** of public policy. It thus avoids the **one-size-fits-all prescriptions of international management consultants and foreign aid advisors** who recommend the same program without regard to national context.

Learning from bad lessons

- A lesson can be a **warning about what not to do**, and the value of **avoiding mistakes** is as great as the potential gains from positive lessons.
- A lesson can explain **why a program has failed** by analyzing what went wrong in detail in order to see the reasons of the failure.

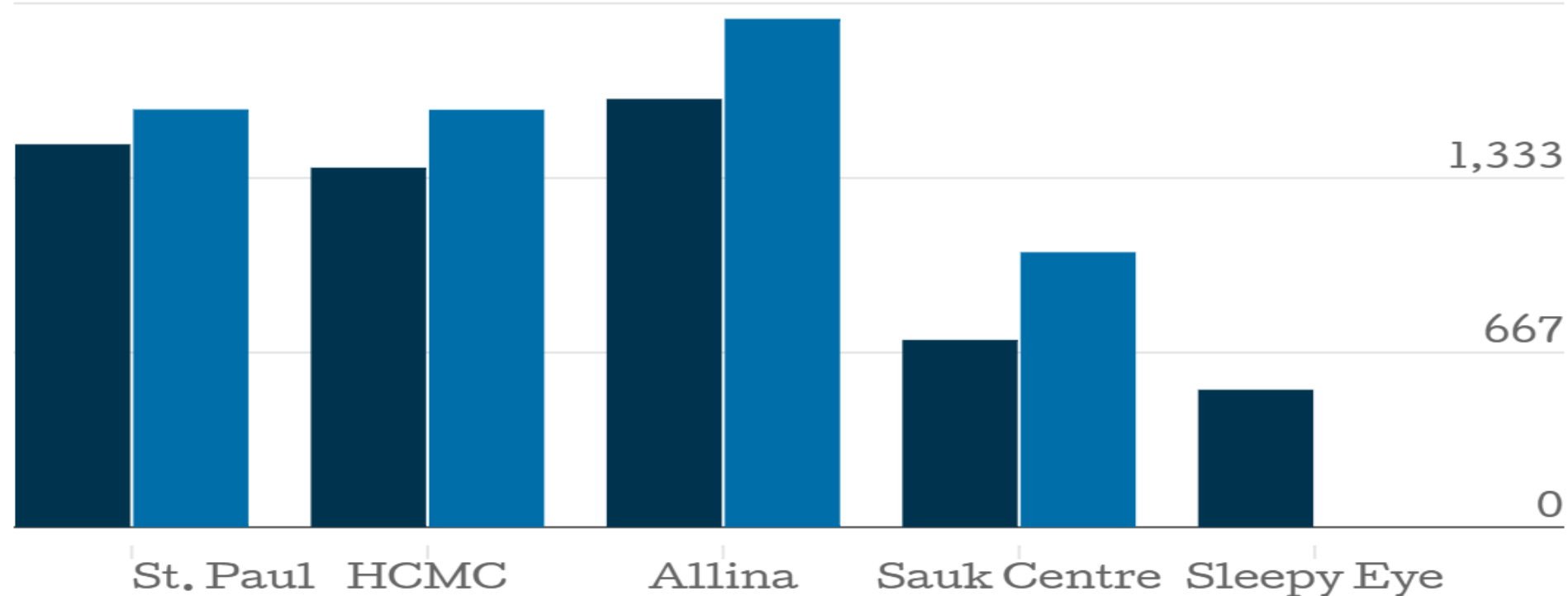
Importance of lessons

- A lesson is a **bridge across time as well as space**.
- It combines knowledge about what is happening in another country today with a **specific proposal about actions** that a government here might take to improve public policy in future.
- Because a lesson is **future-oriented**, it cannot be evaluated empirically.

Cost of calling an ambulance

Ambulance service fees

■ Basic Life Support Fee ■ Advanced Life Support Fee \$2,000



Source: Ambulance services

Limitations of lesson-drawing

- The potential number of ‘lessons’ that can be drawn from history is almost **infinite** if the past of every country from China to Canada can be searched for examples.
- **Lack of sources**
- **Lack of time**
- **Lack of language skills**
- **Manipulation**
 - Example: Officials of some international organizations can draw on their prestige and financial resources to offer prescriptions masquerading as lessons from experience.

Are these really lessons?

- **«Lessons» for Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union:**
 1. Encourage the creation of new firms.
 2. Impose financial discipline on loss-making firms.
 3. Strengthen legal and regulatory controls of private sector and state-owned enterprises.
 4. Avoid early beneficiaries of privatization capturing the state and blocking further reforms
 - **These are not lessons**, due to the lack the programmatic details.
- 

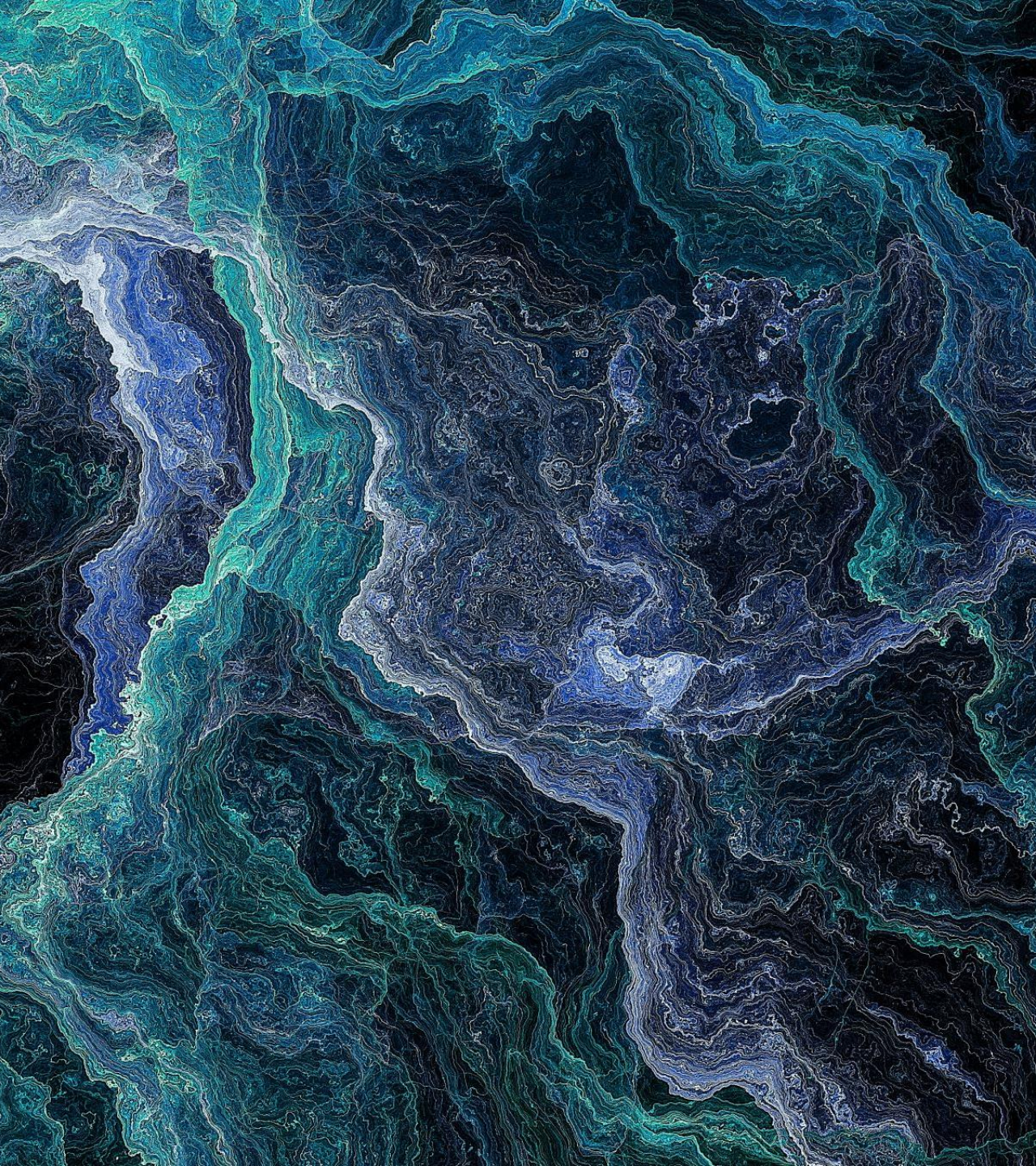
Concept example: Lesson

- Lessons:

 - Are **outcomes of learning**.
 - **Specify a program** drawing on knowledge of programs in other countries dealing with the same problem.
 - Are very different from a proposal to alter an existing program, because **it is about introducing something new**.
 - Have **empirical base**, for it makes use of **observation and evidence** currently in effect elsewhere.
 - **Adapt what is done elsewhere** into a program that can be applied at home.

How to focus?

- Focus attention to a restricted area of public policy, such as education
- Focus attention to a limited number of countries, such as EU members, OECD countries
- Try to translate theoretical models/lessons from the world of pure theory to the messy context of a real country.



Step 2: Creating awareness of problems

Rose, Chapter 3

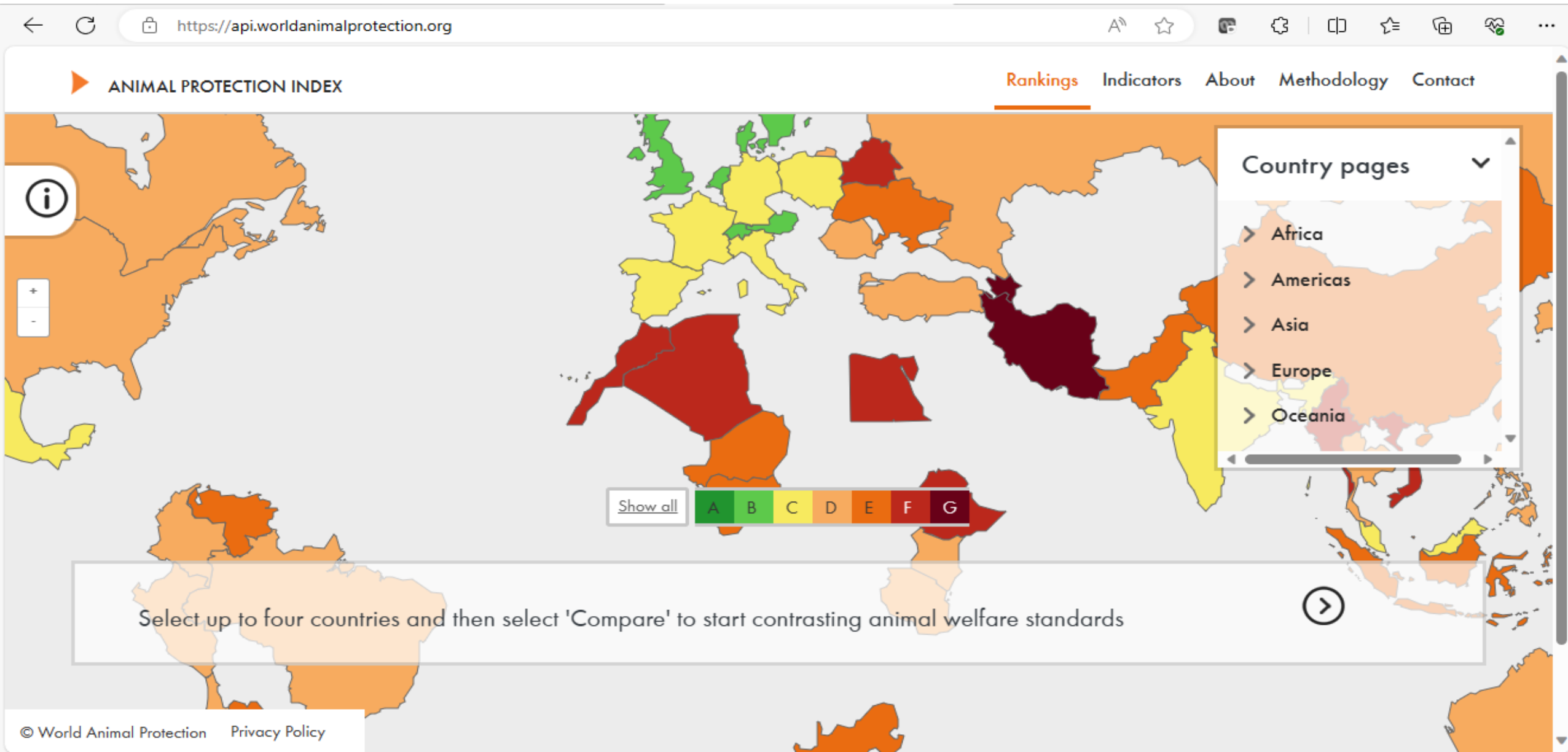
Best Case Scenario for Policy Makers

- Politicians like to be associated with success. As long as almost everyone concerned with a program is satisfied, the diagnosis is simple: no problem.
- A program does not have to be internationally outstanding to produce contentment; it is sufficient for the program to be considered '**good enough**'. (**satisficing**)
- Public is satisfied and policymakers do not have any need to do anything, except take credit for what is running by routine.
- There is no need to think about changing the program and even less to seek lessons from abroad.

Bad Scenario: Rise of Dissatisfaction

- Sooner or later, either neglect by policymakers or unexpected national or international events can stimulate a rise in dissatisfaction, forcing policymakers into action.
- In an increasingly global policy environment, the publication of international comparisons can also stimulate dissatisfaction, if a country's program does not appear to be up to international standards.
- This encourages policy entrepreneurs to offer a best-practice solution, but such programs often have limited applicability outside their country of origin.

Animal Rights Benchmarking: Animal protection Index



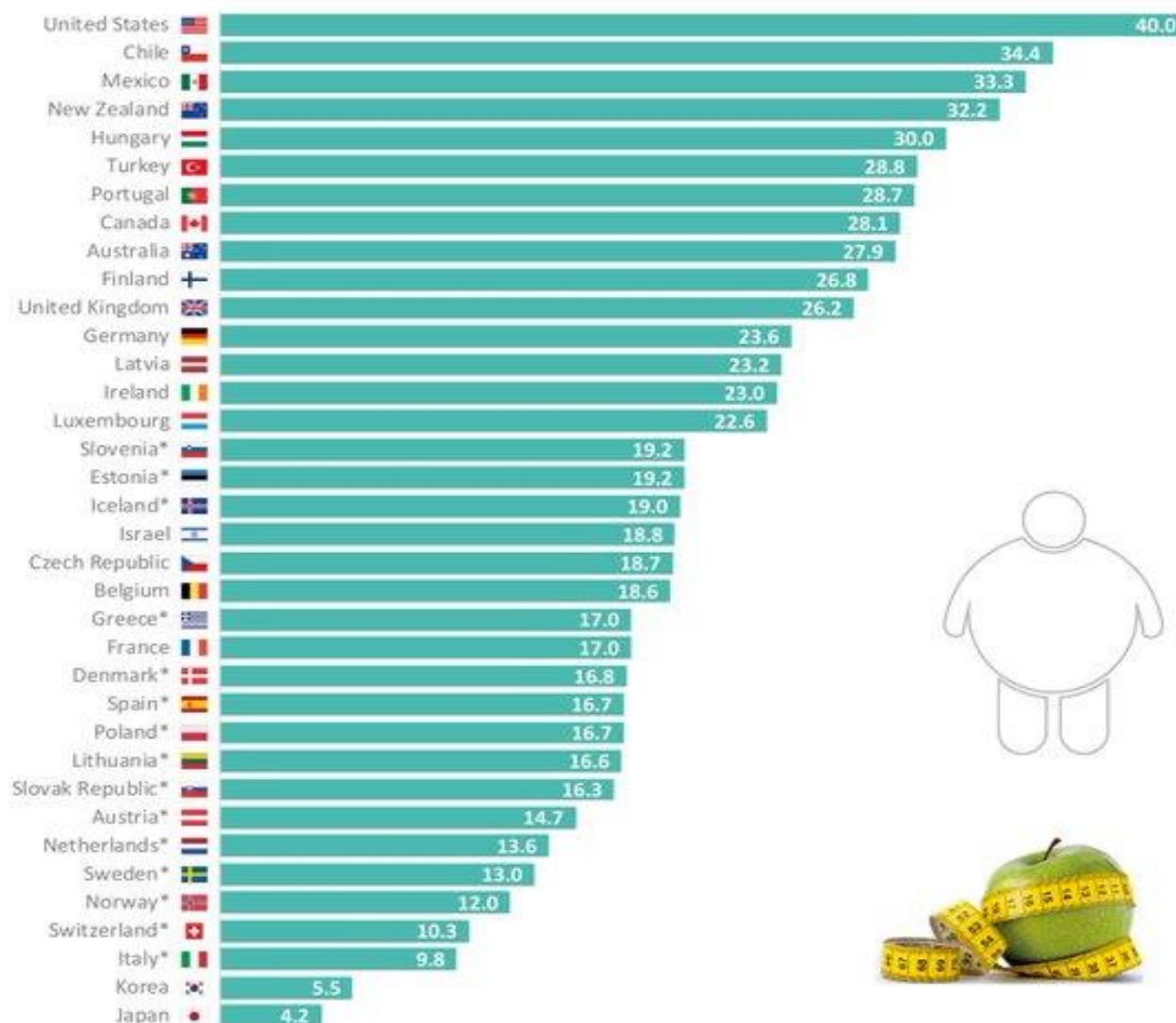
Obesity rates benchmarking

- Whereas **benchmarking** compares how different governments are doing, the intent of **best-practice** analysis is to show what governments ought to do.



Obesity rates

As % of total adult population (aged 15 years and over), 2016 or latest year



Note: * means that self-reported height and weight data are used in these countries, while measured data in other countries.

Source: OECD (2018), OECD Health Statistics 2018

www.oecd.org/health/obesity-update.htm

One problem with many solutions

- Best-practice analysis spotlights a league leader, it throws in the **shadows alternative ways** of improving performance.
- Benchmarking gives equal attention to the programs of all governments in the top category; it thus offers a **plurality of examples** of how a higher standard of performance can be achieved.
- Whereas **best-practice** analysis points to a ‘**one-size-fits-all**’ diagnosis and prescription, **benchmarking** offers national policymakers **a menu of programs** to choose from.

What if? Assumption-based planning

- Assumption-based planning confronts policymakers with the question: **what could go wrong?**
- **Contingency plans** cannot prevent unwanted events from happening, but they can go some way towards neutralizing their negative consequences.



T.C. SAĞLIK BAKANLIĞI
HALK SAĞLIĞI
GENEL MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ

PANDEMİK İNFLUENZA ULUSAL HAZIRLIK PLANI

Ankara-2019

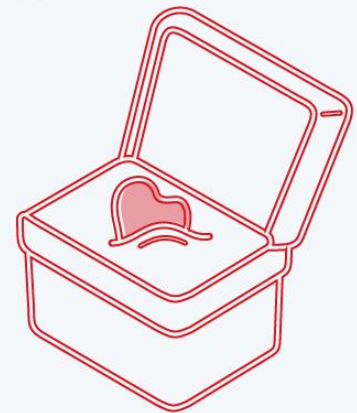
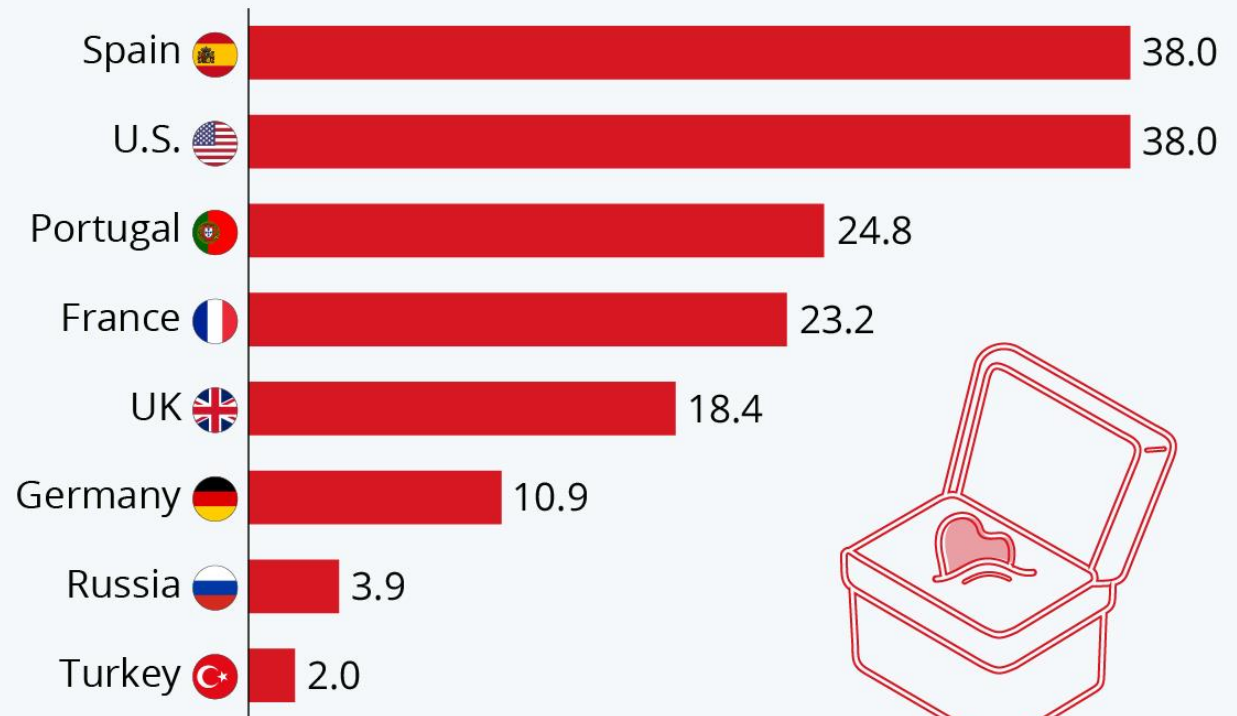
Evidence

- The activities of an established program routinely **generate evidence** about its administration.
- The simplest form of evidence-based evaluation of a program is to **compare the latest results with those of the previous year.**
- When quantitative evidence indicates a program is performing satisfactorily, there is **no need** for busy policymakers to indulge in foreign comparisons.

Evidence about organ donations

The Global Gulf in Organ Donation Rates

Deceased organ donors per million population
in selected countries in 2020



Source: EDQM



Evidence about organ donations



Automatic program termination: Sunset laws

- In past decades American legislatures have tried to force the review of programs through **'sunset' laws** that **terminate a program automatically after a fixed period** of years **if a positive vote is not taken to extend its life.**
- However, such laws have lost favor, as the political pain of terminating an existing program is very great.

Positive consequences of unexpected events

- When medical research showed the link between smoking and cancer, this was bad news for people who were regular smokers but good news for policymakers.
- This pointed to actions that government could take to promote health by reducing the amount that people smoked:
 - Boosting the price of cigarettes by raising tobacco taxes,
 - Restricting smoking in public places.
- National policymakers drew lessons from the tobacco control legislation of other countries when preparing their own measures.