

1 Accepted version (19 September 2022)

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FROM HIERARCHY TO CONTINUUM:

4

CLASSIFYING THE TECHNICAL DIMENSION OF POLICY GOALS

5

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Journal: Policy Sciences (Print: 0032-2687, Electronic: 1573-0891)

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ABSTRACT

10

11 This paper investigates the technical dimension of policy goals, or their structural properties.
12 The paper challenges the idea that policy goals can be conceptualized within a unidimensional
13 hierarchy. It aims to contribute to policy theory by classifying goals based on systematic
14 empirical research. Qualitative content analysis of 11 governmental strategies was conducted
15 by focusing on the overlap of six technical features of policy goals: level of specification, mode
16 of accomplishment, presence of time frames, quantifiable indicators, beneficiaries, and
17 responsible actors. Based on the analysis, the paper distinguishes seven technical types of policy
18 goals: broad, mode-centered, direction-centered, beneficiary-centered, actor-centered, semi-
19 structured, and structured. Technical types of policy goals do not form a hierarchy with clear-
20 cut levels, but can be placed on a continuum, from broad to structured, with the mixed types in
21 between. This insight could enhance policy design theory by introducing a more sophisticated
22 tuning of policy goals, potentially leading to better advice for practical policy planning, and, in
23 turn, to more successful policy implementation.

24

25 **Keywords:** cross-sectoral comparison, policy design, policy goal types, qualitative content
26 analysis, technical features of policy goals

27 INTRODUCTION

28 Goals, a fundamental feature of public policy, are rather sparsely covered in the policy
29 literature. In contrast to policy instruments which are well studied and conceptualized,
30 especially in policy design theory which focuses closely on this segment of policy architecture,
31 policy goals are still insufficiently researched. Goals are present in the policy literature, but
32 even though policy goals have been the topic of extensive research in the last several decades,
33 their theoretical conceptualization is still rather fluid and they are not elaborated in detail or
34 meticulously examined. They are presented as a somewhat self-evident element of policy
35 design that does not need further explanation. The literature lacks solid and comprehensive
36 classifications of goal variations connected to empirical examples as goals considerations are
37 mainly deduced from purely theoretical criteria which are not grounded in rigorous empirical
38 research. The literature often suggests that there are diverse variants of policy goals on different
39 levels, varying from lower positioned to higher positioned goals, and forming a hierarchical
40 construction that has clearly separated levels (Dunn, 1994, 2018; Howlett, 2011; Howlett &
41 Cashore, 2014; Spicker, 2008). As this is a very generic approach to the categorization of policy
42 goals, it is difficult to precisely differentiate between these levels in practice and to accurately
43 apply them to diverse empirical examples from the real world of policymaking.

44 The imprecise understanding of policy goals is an obstacle for the more sophisticated design of
45 goals. In an effort to better understand policy dynamics and policy change, policy design theory
46 developed a meticulous interest in calibrations of policy instruments (Capano & Howlett, 2021;
47 Daugbjerg & Kay, 2019; Howlett, 2009; Howlett et al., 2022). It would certainly profit from
48 the conceptual fine-tuning of policy goals as well. Advanced goal design could then offer
49 practical insights to improve policy planning and to increase the success of implementation.
50 The risk of policy failure resulting from poor design could be reduced through more careful
51 policy goal choices. The “right” mix of policy goals and policy instruments is equally important
52 for a successful design, as are the relations between the two. A better insight into goal types is
53 a prerequisite for these endeavors, as well as for the development of more precise evaluation
54 frameworks.

55 We strive to fill the aforementioned gap with this paper. Our contribution is grounded in a
56 systematical empirical analysis of real-world policy goals. This is guided by our view that an
57 inductive approach could improve the theoretical precision of the conceptualization of policy
58 goals, their operationalization, and, ultimately, advice for designing and calibrating policy goals
59 in practice. We challenge the underlining premise within the policy literature that varieties of

60 policy goals comprise a single-lined hierarchy, and develop a multidimensional classification
61 instead, by focusing primarily on the diverse features of real-world policy goals.

62 Our analysis is based on an empirical case study of Croatian public policies which was designed
63 as a cross-sectoral comparison. In order to construct a comprehensive multidimensional
64 classification of policy goals, in this paper we focus on an analysis of their technical dimension
65 – on properties of goal structure. Therefore, by technical dimension we mean the shape of goals,
66 the form in which they appear, the configuration of their elements, and the technical features
67 by which they are structured, operationalized, and prepared for implementation. This means
68 that our research project in this phase is primarily guided by a deceptively simple descriptive
69 research question: How the structural properties of policy goals vary?

70 The research project is based on the coding of 11 strategic documents produced by the Croatian
71 government, according to qualitative content analysis procedures (Schreier, 2012) and
72 CAQDAS for data collection, processing, and analysis (NVivo 11). The documents were
73 sampled to ensure the representation of sectors from all policy areas: from law and order,
74 foreign affairs and defense, to sectoral, social, and economic policies (Compston, 2004). The
75 sample also includes multisectoral policies that target specific social groups, “cutting across”
76 standard ministries, as well as strategies focused on more narrow policy issues. The final sample
77 thus includes security, employment, education, justice, transport, disability, gender equality,
78 and youth policy, complemented with policy issues involving domestic violence, reading
79 enhancement, and the wood and furniture industry.

80 For the purposes of processing and analyzing data on the technical dimension of policy goals,
81 the project developed a coding scheme that focused on the level of specification, mode of
82 accomplishment, presence of time frames, quantifiable indicators, beneficiaries, and
83 responsible actors associated with specific policy goals. The analysis revealed that practical
84 policy goals tend to be relatively loosely specified and that their structure varies on a continuum.
85 This continuum can be described according to seven technical types, in contrast to a hierarchy
86 with clearly separated levels which could not be detected, as goal hierarchies found in the
87 theoretical literature on policy goals cannot be recognized empirically, at least not in our
88 empirical case.

89 The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, the theoretical background is presented to show how
90 the policy literature elaborates goals, their types, and the relationships among those types. Then,
91 in the methodological framework, we present ways in which qualitative content analysis is used

92 to detect the technical features of goals. The results are presented in the data description and
93 analysis section. We briefly present the frequencies of technical features, but most of the
94 analytical work is devoted to combining those features to detect technical goal types. In the
95 discussion, we show how technical types of policy goals could be placed on a continuum from
96 broad goals with only one technical feature present, to fully structured goals, with the various
97 mixed types in between. In the concluding remarks we suggest the relevance of our findings for
98 the betterment of policy theory and practice.

99

100 **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

101 Policy goals are a crucial element of any public policy for many reasons. First of all, they are a
102 central normative element within a policy architecture. Policy goals are the operationalization
103 of political ideologies and worldviews, preparing them for action within the system of political
104 institutions. They provide meaning for the existence and operations of the political institutions
105 and justify diverse forms of collective action. In short, they give legitimacy to political activity.
106 Political elites formulate policy goals. In order to lead a polity in the preferred direction,
107 politicians and political parties, with the help of the bureaucracy, determine what the long-term
108 and short-term goals of all governmental departments are. Therefore, goals constitute the basis
109 for the responsibilities of political elite and a blueprint for evaluating and controlling them.
110 Hence goals have significant democratic importance (Colebatch, 2004; Hogwood & Gunn,
111 1984; Vedung, 2013). Finally, policy goals "combine" politics and policy within their nature:
112 at the same time, they are the subject of political conflict and an essential part of rational action
113 necessary to steer a plural society.

114 For the just stated relevance, policy goals are a core element of defining public policy in the
115 seminal and more recent literature.¹ They are also inevitable when conducting policy analysis,
116 for example, in evaluation research or cost-benefit analysis.² Diverse theoretical approaches
117 within policy studies routinely include some ideas about goals in policymaking,³ however, goals

¹ For examples of how goals are a constitutive part of policy definitions see Althaus et al., 2007; Anderson, 2006; Birkland, 2015; Colebatch, 2004; Hill, 2010; Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Howlett, 2011; Howlett & Cashore, 2014; Howlett et al., 2009; Kraft & Furlong, 2007; Smith & Larimer, 2013; Stone, 1998; Wildavsky, 1992.

² For examples of how policy goals are a constitutive part of policy analysis see Bickers & Williams, 2001; Dunn, 2018; Hogwood & Gunn, 1984; Kustec Lipicer, 2012; Smith & Larimer, 2013; Spicker, 2008; Vedung, 2013.

³ Several major policy theories incorporate goals into their propositions. For rational decision-making models, see Allison & Zelikow, 1999; for policy design theory, see Birkland, 2015; Howlett, 2011; Schneider, 2013; Smith & Larimer, 2013; for a "top-down" understanding of policy implementation, see Hill, 2010; for advocacy coalition frameworks, see Weible & Jenkins-Smith, 2016; for governance networks, see Sørensen & Torfing, 2007.

118 are usually not elaborated in detail or meticulously examined. Policy goals are considered a
119 somewhat self-evident component of policy design that does not need much further explanation,
120 and is neglected in policy research. The policy literature rarely elaborates on variations in policy
121 goals. There are a few exceptions that show how various levels of policy purposes are
122 conceptualized.

123 Hogwood and Gunn (1984) stress that the literature distinguishes proximate goals that are really
124 the means for achieving higher goals, and those higher, ultimate goals themselves. In that sense,
125 the literature discusses higher- and lower-level goals. Spicker develops a four-level hierarchy
126 using “objectives” as the general category in his discussion of the levels of precision of policy
127 purposes (Spicker, 2008). He stresses that there are two main types of objectives—aims and
128 goals, which are connected to a mission, or a vision and values. The mission is a statement of
129 purpose as a most general statement of aims and values. It is general in nature, and exists at a
130 high level of abstraction. For Spicker, values are norms and moral principles. He emphasizes
131 how aims are the operationalization of general purposes, which a policy should achieve. Aims
132 usually include responding to problems, satisfying claims for services, undertaking a desired
133 activity, and improving outcomes. Goals, following Spicker, are even more specific. They are
134 the precise outcomes of certain sectors, which are sometimes identified with objectives or
135 targets. Goals present practical outcomes but also serve as an indicator of whether an aim is
136 being achieved; thus, they are measurable, time-bound, and achievable.

137 Howlett and coauthors distinguish three levels of policy design and accordingly goals: an
138 abstract level that is general or conceptual, then the concrete level of the program, and a specific,
139 on-the-ground level (Howlett, 2011; Howlett & Cashore, 2014; Howlett et al., 2022). High-
140 level abstract policy aims or goals are general ideas that govern policy development, namely
141 the macro-level statements of government ambitions in specific sectors. This could be
142 compared to Spicker’s missions and/or values. Objectives in program-level operationalization,
143 that is the meso-level, define what policy tends to address formally in order to achieve more
144 general aims. This meso-level of objectives would be equal to Spicker’s aims. Settings, on-the-
145 ground measures, specifications or specific targets, show what the specific micro requirements
146 of a policy are, and how they concretize objectives (Howlett, 2011; Howlett & Cashore, 2014;
147 Petek & Petković, 2014). Both Spicker on the one hand, and Howlett and his coauthors on the
148 other, define the lowest level of policy purposes as targets, but for Spicker they are also goals,
149 and for Howlett they are also objectives. Similarly, lower levels are often set by the higher
150 levels, as their operationalization.

151 Dunn (1994, 2018) instead offers a dual perspective with only goals and objectives. According
 152 to Dunn, five main differences between goals and objectives can be identified: the specification
 153 of purposes, types of definitions, time period, measurement procedure, and treatment of target
 154 groups. Goals express broad purposes, and objectives determine specific, concrete aims.
 155 Usually, goals are not expressed in the form of operational definitions with a list of operations,
 156 mechanisms, and/or procedures that are necessary to measure their effect. Objectives have
 157 operational definitions, and are usually, in stark contrast to goals, quantifiable and have a
 158 specified time period for achievement. Objectives define target populations specifically, and
 159 goals only in broad terms (Dunn, 1994, 2018).

160 Dunn’s objectives are a counterpart to Spicker’s goals, as both are quantifiable. Howlett’s
 161 objectives are similar to Dunn’s objectives, but Dunn’s term could also include Howlett’s
 162 targets or measures (compare the definitions in Table 1). Dunn additionally explains how
 163 relationships between the diverse levels of policy purposes could be schematically illustrated
 164 as an objectives tree. This is a visual display that shows the overall structure of goals and their
 165 relationships to objectives. This tree, or ladder, shows, if read downwards, how or by which
 166 objectives a goal should be achieved. If read upwards, it shows why some objectives should be
 167 pursued (Dunn, 1994).

168 **Table 1 How policy purposes vary according to the literature**

Authors	Levels	Definitions
Spicker (2008)	Mission or Vision	“a statement of purpose... a general statement of aims and values which comes before any specific policy has been determined” (p. 49). “Missions’ go beyond statements of values” (p. 50). “an understanding of their purpose, a set of values, and a way of putting them into practice” (p. 51).
	Values	“an important dimension in statements of objectives, but they are not always identified explicitly. Values are moral principles or norms” (p. 49).
	Aims	“what a policy is supposed to achieve. General purposes have to be ‘operationalized’. That means that they have to be translated into terms which can be realized, or put into practice” (p. 49).
	Goals or Targets	“are specific objectives, identifying the precise outcome which a policy is meant to achieve... they are both practical outcome, and a test of whether the aims are being achieved” (p.49). “Goals are often set in quantitative terms” (p. 61).
Howlett (2011) Howlett and Cashore (2014) Howlett et al. (2022)	Aims or Goals	“What general types of ideas governs policy development?” (Howlett & Cashore, 2014, p. 21; Howlett et al., 2022, p. 3). “The most general macro-level statements of government aims and ambitions in a specific policy area” (Howlett, 2011, p. 17).
	Objectives	“What does policy formally aim to address?” (Howlett & Cashore, 2014, p. 21; Howlett et al., 2022, p. 3). “policy objectives are operationalized goals” (Howlett et al, 2022, p.4). “The specific meso-level areas that policies are expected to address in order to achieve policy aims” (Howlett, 2011, p. 17).
	Targets or Measures or Specifications or Settings	“What are the specific on-the-ground requirements of policy?” (Howlett & Cashore, 2014, p. 21; Howlett et al., 2022, p. 3). “The specific, on-the-ground, micro-requirements necessary to attain policy objectives” (Howlett, 2011, p. 17). “policy specifications are the actual targets expected to be achieved” (Howlett et al., 2022, p. 4).
Dunn (1994, 2018)	Goals	“an aim or purpose which is broadly stated, formally defined, unspecified as to time and target groups, and unquantified” (1994, p. 261).
	Objectives	“an aim or purpose which is concrete, operationally defined, time- and target-group-specific, and frequently measured with quantitative procedures” (1994, p. 261).

169
 170 As presented, the policy literature uses many terms to denote the purposes in the policymaking
 171 process: not just goals, but also aims, targets, objectives, values, measures, specifications, and
 172 missions, with no clear distinctions between them. The aforementioned terms are used

173 haphazardly: sometimes they overlap, sometimes different authors use the same term for
174 different things, or different terms for the same aspects of policy purposes. Some scholars see
175 goals as the lowest, most practical level of policy purposes, and some as the highest, most
176 general level. The question is also how to demarcate the phenomenon at stake. Are values, the
177 “ultimate ends of public policy” (Rein, 2006, p. 390), also goals? Or are goals only the
178 operationalization of values? Some lower-level objectives seem to be policy purposes and also
179 the means of their achievement (Dunn, 1994), so, are they policy purposes, policy instruments,
180 or both?

181 There are more important problems than the authors disagreeing on labels and terms. The
182 theorizing presented above puts different types of policy purposes within a hierarchical
183 construction of higher and lower levels. The authors stress how higher and lower goals vary by
184 abstraction, concreteness, specification, precision, applicability, operationalization, and so on.
185 The problem is that these features are not identical and do not belong to the same dimension.
186 Even though they do not form a singular dimension, levels of policy purposes are presented as
187 a unidimensional hierarchy (see Fig. 1). Then the problem, in addition to the terminological
188 inconsistencies and questionable hierarchical construction of policy purposes, is also that the
189 reasonably precise guidance on how to apply these categories to concrete empirical examples
190 and how to distinguish between the levels of policy purposes in practice is completely absent.
191 It seems that the types of policy purposes presented in the literature are not derived from
192 systematic empirical analysis. They are abstract, theoretically-derived typologies (Smith,
193 2002), unfit for an empirical investigation attuned to real-world policymaking practices. The
194 operationalization of the concept of policy goals for empirical research is a particularly weak
195 point.

196 **Fig. 1 Hierarchy of policy purposes from the literature**

General, high, conceptual, broad, unspecified, unquantified

MISSION

VALUES

AIMS

GOALS

OBJECTIVES

TARGETS

Specific, precise, measurable, concrete, time-bound, target group-specific, with
microrequirements, operational definitions, and quantifiable indicators

197

198 Source: Authors according to Dunn, 1994, 2018; Howlett, 2011; Howlett & Cashore, 2014; Howlett et al., 2022;
199 Spicker, 2008.

200

201 When it comes to terminological confusion, which we came to see as a less important problem,
202 we simply opted to use the term “policy goal” as a generic term for all variants of policy
203 purposes. It is probably the term that is most commonly used in the jargon of policy practice as
204 well as theory; all the presented authors use it, unlike other similar labels (see Table 1), and it
205 seems to be closest to the middle point of the presented hierarchies.⁴ We strive to enhance the
206 operationalization of the concept of policy goals by building an empirical theory of policy goals,
207 using rigorous empirical investigation and inductive reasoning. Our in-depth coding of
208 empirical examples of policy goals shows that a distinction between thematic and technical
209 dimensions is necessary to classify policy goals.⁵ Even though it may seem obvious, this
210 multidimensional approach to goal classification is absent from the literature. To paint a fuller
211 picture of what policy goals stand for, in this paper we focus on their technical dimension—the

⁴ Although clear boundaries cannot be drawn between these somewhat synonymous terms, if one looks at their different semantic accents and connotations, *goal*, etymologically probably of Germanic origin, simply indicates an end point, or figuratively a desirable future state; *aim* somewhat more strongly suggests a process of calculation (cf. Latin *aestimare*); while *purpose* appears to be somewhat vague and abstract, referring to a general thematic focus or proposal (old French *porposer*, equivalent to the Latin *propositium*). See www.etymonline.com.

⁵ The dimensions were derived primarily through the inductive coding of governmental strategies and systematic empirical analysis. First, we inductively extracted the diverse characteristics of policy goals, then we merged them into broader categories, *sector-*, *process-*, *evaluation-*, *value-*, and *instrument-oriented goals*, and finally merged those categories into an even broader thematic dimension (for details see Petek et al., 2021a). The thematic dimension of policy goals already demonstrates that there is no singular coherent hierarchy for all terms related to policy goals. Apparently, values are a specific thematic type of policy goals. Our inductive classification also shows a place where the concepts of policy goals and policy instruments overlap. Namely, the introduction of a new policy instrument or reforming an existing instrument represents a specific thematic type of policy goals which we term *instrument-oriented goals*.

212 shape of the goals or the form in which they appear through investigating their structural
213 properties. We analyze the configuration of their building elements; all the technical features
214 by which they are structured, operationalized, and prepared for implementation. Most of the
215 technical features used here are inspired by Dunn (1994, 2018); however, they are adjusted and
216 simplified for the purposes of a systematic and rigorous empirical application.

217

218 **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH**

219 Our methodological approach is guided by the rules of qualitative content analysis (QCA;
220 Schreier, 2012), as QCA is in line with the descriptive purpose and descriptive research question
221 of our project and of this paper. QCA is a research strategy suited to the detection of the main
222 features of some phenomenon, and then for creating classifications accordingly. It is also a
223 convenient strategy for the simplification of a wide set of textual material. All highlighted
224 features of QCA are complementary and beneficial for the tasks of this research. The data-
225 collecting method chosen for the investigation of policy goals was document analysis (Bowen,
226 2009; Esmark & Triantafillou, 2007).⁶ The policy strategies of the Croatian government were
227 the selected data source.⁷ We used 11 governmental strategies for the extraction of policy goals
228 (see the list of coded documents in Appendix 1). The document sample had to be as diverse as
229 possible, comprising miscellaneous policy types, and the selection was made by combining
230 several policy classifications.

231 At a very basic level, policies can be distinguished according to the area of activity they pertain
232 to, as a series of activities which constitute a meaningful whole of interrelated actions, like
233 various actions concerning health or culture (“health policy” or “cultural policy”). Second,
234 policies also concern specific target groups whose behavior or social position they intervene
235 into and/or whose benefits they are set to produce, as for example in war veterans’ policy (Fink-

⁶ Document analysis was selected as a data gathering method because documents are easily accessible and very cost-effective; they are relatively comprehensive sources that allow systematic comparison across diverse policies; and they are suited for the descriptive purposes of our research. Even though documents are a practical and convenient data source, the limitations of document analysis must be kept in mind. Documents present just one of many aspects of policymaking and provide only a fractional insight into rich and complex policy cycle.

⁷ Document selection was executed according to four criteria: we took governmental documents containing proclaimed positions of policy goals determined by state actors (not the critical positions of the non-state actor about the goals some policy should have) to examine the official and active goals that frame policymaking; we then took strategic documents (strategies, action plans, programs) because they comprise much information on the goals of a policy sector, especially when compared to laws or other types of regulation; we took the most recent and still valid strategic documents, to observe a single point in time; finally, we tried to create a diverse sample that incorporates all types of public policies. For more details on the document selection criteria, see also Petek et al., 2021a.

236 Hafner, 2007). We have included both types in our sample. First, we used the additional
237 taxonomy of policy areas to capture the first type. It classifies the core policy sectors that are
238 founded on a set of related activities, which are usually translated into the jurisdiction of
239 standard governmental ministries. We selected strategies from all policy areas, from law and
240 order, economic policies, social policies, sectoral policies, and foreign affairs and defense
241 (Compston, 2004). To include the second type, we then sampled strategies which pertain to
242 specific target groups. Those strategies usually “cut across” governmental ministries, and their
243 creation and implementation is distributed over several governmental jurisdictions.

244 As we discovered strategies that did not fit into the previous categories, we added an additional
245 mixed type of strategies into the sample. We therefore included strategies written for narrower
246 policy issues dealing with only one smaller set of activities, but that are intertwined among the
247 jurisdictions of several ministries. For example, development of electronic public procurement
248 fits into this type of policy issues translated into strategic documents.

249 The sample therefore includes security, justice, employment, transport, and education, as
250 representative examples of policy areas embedded in single ministerial jurisdictions and
251 corresponding to whole policy sectors. Additionally, the sample includes youth, gender
252 equality, and disability policy – policies for target groups with the responsibility shared among
253 several governmental ministries. The sample furthermore includes issues of domestic violence,
254 reading enhancement, and the wood and furniture industry, which are narrower policy issues
255 that do not consume the totality of some policy sectors, and which cut across several
256 jurisdictions. Sampling diverse policies helped to partially overcome the limitations of a one-
257 country focus; research based on the Croatian situation could also be representative of the post-
258 communist Eastern European region, and new EU member-states in general.⁸

259 Documents were processed and coded using NVivo 11 software. Segmentation was set using a
260 thematic criterion to extract coding units containing only one policy goal.⁹ The coding scheme
261 contained six main categories on the technical dimension of policy goals (see Table 2). We

⁸ Croatia is used as an example of a European country whose government produces numerous strategic documents, often as a result of a Europeanization process and policy transfer, which have not been previously subjected to systematic empirical analysis. It was also chosen because we have no language barrier and are familiar with the functioning of the Croatian political system. This allowed us to understand the details of the documents in their context and constitutes a natural selection bias. Documents are included from 2011 to 2017. This period was predominantly run by a coalition government led by social-democrats (from December 2011 till January 2016). The short experimental government led by a non-party prime-minister was then in power (from January till October 2016), and then the main center-right party formed a new coalition government (from October 2016 till June 2020).

⁹ For explanations of the segmentation process, see Petek et al., 2021a, and especially the methodological supplemental in Petek et al., 2021b.

262 gathered data on the level of goal specification, mode of goal accomplishment, time frame for
 263 the goal accomplishment, the quantifiable indicator used to measure goal accomplishment, the
 264 beneficiary that profits from goal accomplishment, and the actors responsible for the
 265 implementation and goal accomplishment for each goal and each coding unit. All main
 266 categories have two subcategories indicating whether some features are present or not.

267 **Table 2 Coding scheme—selection of main categories and subcategories on technical**
 268 **dimension of policy goals**

SPECIFICATION	MODE	TIME FRAME
<i>Broad purposes</i>	<i>Mode determined</i>	<i>Specified time frame</i>
<i>Concrete purposes</i>	<i>Mode undetermined</i>	<i>Unspecified time frame</i>
QUANTIFIABLE INDICATOR	BENEFICIARY	RESPONSIBLE ACTOR
<i>Quantifiable indicator present</i>	<i>Existent beneficiary</i>	<i>Responsible actor specified</i>
<i>Quantifiable indicator not present</i>	<i>Nonexistent beneficiary</i>	<i>Responsible actor not specified</i>

269

270 The category of the level of *specification* considers whether a goal is set to achieve some broad
 271 purposes or specific ones. The criteria for the differentiation of broad and specific purposes is
 272 the potential to fully attain a goal. Goals representing general ideas that govern policy
 273 development on a wide scale, which are unattainable and elusive, could never be fully realized,
 274 and are continuous and permanent, are coded as *broad purposes* (e.g., freedom, or information
 275 society). On the other hand, goals referring to the precise and narrow requirements, which are
 276 connected to outputs, specific services, goods, and products, and which can be fully achieved
 277 and marked as realized, are goals with *concrete purposes* (e.g., to develop prevention measures
 278 or to increase the number of scholarships by 10%).

279 The main category *mode* refers to the technical feature of goals connected to the
 280 presence/absence of specified ways, procedures, processes, or mechanisms for achieving that
 281 goal. There are several forms of goals coded here. First, some goals could have a double form:
 282 A can be accomplished by B, and B is a precise governance mechanism or policy instrument.
 283 Second, some goals could have a double form: A can be accomplished by B, but B is a vague
 284 notion of how A will be accomplished. Third, goals could have a single form in which the goal
 285 is also an instrument answering both questions—what should be achieved, and how it should
 286 be achieved.¹⁰ All three forms are coded as *mode determined*. Therefore, when all three are

¹⁰ Our previous research which focused on thematic dimension of goals demonstrated how concepts of policy goals and policy instruments overlap in practice in *instrument-oriented goals*, that seek the reform and adjustment of an existing instrument or the invention and the introduction of some new policy instrument (see Petek et al., 2021a). This corresponds with Dunn who stresses how some lower-level objectives seem to be policy purposes and the means of their achievement at the same time (Dunn, 1994). This is evident in the structure of goals, through their mode.

287 combined, the main category *mode* captures whether a goal, within its structure, is
288 interconnected to its environment, to some other goal and/or instrument that assures its
289 accomplishment.

290 The main category *time frame* refers to an element of goals related to the time limit set for their
291 accomplishment: either a goal contains any kind of time frame mentioned, even not a
292 completely precise one, but that can be interpreted as some kind of a deadline; or it does not
293 have a time limit for the accomplishment determined in any way. The main category
294 *quantifiable indicator* refers to the (non-)presence of a benchmark for the goal achievement that
295 is set through concrete numbers, that is, as a specific numeric value. *Beneficiary* as a main
296 category pertains to the existence of specific individuals or groups that benefit from goal
297 achievement.¹¹ A crucial criterion for determining if there is a beneficiary of the goal
298 achievement is the direct and explicit naming of one or more types of individuals, specific social
299 or professional groups, or all citizens/every citizen, which are directly and positively affected
300 by the goal and for whom a goal concerns their wellbeing and prosperity. The main category
301 *responsible actor* shows whether a specific goal is accompanied by a specified actor that is in
302 charge of the goal implementation, that has competence and key responsibility over
303 implementation coordination and/or is directly designated as the actor who should carry out
304 implementation activities.¹² The main categories of *quantifiable indicators*, *responsible actors*,
305 *beneficiaries*, and *time frame* capture whether those features are specified, present, or exist in
306 any way or not at all.

307 The coding scheme was developed using a mixed strategy combining deductive, theory-driven,
308 and inductive, data-driven, categories and subcategories. We started with the specification of
309 technical features primarily established by Dunn (1994, 2018). As those features are not
310 elaborated extensively enough and not operationalized for precise empirical application, we
311 encountered problems in applying them systematically and uniformly across documents and
312 between coders. For example, there was not enough guidance on how to systematically
313 differentiate between a specific and a broadly defined target group, and therefore, we had to
314 simplify most of the features into binary options as the existence/nonexistence of a feature. We
315 also found Dunn's explanation of the difference between theoretical and operational definitions

¹¹ Various social groups and their organizations and collectivities (e.g. youth associations, wood industry) were coded as beneficiaries. Professional groups were also coded here, within the state hierarchy or outside of it (e.g. police officers, teachers, lawyers). Governmental bodies or public institutions (e.g. schools, judicial bodies) were not coded here, as they are coded under actors.

¹² This code gathers data on actors within a state and/or within supranational organizations. Therefore, Croatia and European Union are not coded as actors if Croatia/state/EU are mentioned only generally.

316 within the goal impossible to apply to diverse empirical examples in a systematic manner. So,
317 we replaced it with a simplified mode of goal accomplishment that had been previously
318 elaborated. The only purely data-driven category derived from the available technical features
319 within the documents, and not inspired by theory is that of *responsible actor*. Paragraphs
320 surrounding specific coding units were used to determine whether some goal has a specific
321 technical feature or not. We thus used a context unit, which is broader than the coding unit, and
322 set on the level of each document (Schreier, 2012).¹³

323 A 10% subsample was used for the test coding. Those 222 coding units for test coding were
324 selected from all the documents and all parts of the documents according to the overall share
325 that each document occupies within the total sample of 2,223 coding units.¹⁴ Test coding was
326 set to check coding consistency through comparisons across time (Schreier, 2012). Because the
327 textual context for the coding of each goal had to be considered, only specialists for each
328 strategy, coders who control the entire content of a strategy, could conduct the coding. Each
329 coder, in a group of eight, coded the same subsample from their strategy twice within the time
330 interval of two weeks.

331 The overall coding consistency for all the documents and all coders was almost 93%.¹⁵ Each
332 strategy had a coding consistency above 85%, which shows that the work of each coder was at
333 a satisfactory level.¹⁶ All main categories had a coding consistency across documents and
334 coders above 90%, except for the category *beneficiary*,¹⁷ which shows that all main categories
335 had satisfactory levels of clarity within their definitions and application rules.¹⁸ Coding validity
336 was secured across documents and coders via repeated intensive meetings of all coders before
337 and after test coding. Each meeting included not just commenting on and sharing

¹³ The whole codebook, with general coding rules and with definitions of categories and subcategories, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and examples for each code (in the original language), is available on request. See Appendix 2 for an excerpt from the codebook (with translated examples).

¹⁴ The subsample for test coding contained 56 coding units for disability, 22 for education, 7 for employment, 7 for family violence, 12 for gender equality, 19 for justice, 9 for reading enhancement, 5 for security, 47 for transport, 24 for the wood industry, and 14 for youth policy.

¹⁵ For 222 coding units, eight coders assigned codes 3,108 times, and 2,878 were assigned identically in two waves of test coding.

¹⁶ The coding consistency for each strategy was as follows: 94% for disability, 86% for education, 86% for employment, 88% for domestic violence, 90% for gender equality, 94% for justice, 94% for reading enhancement, 100% for security, 91% for transport, 99% for the wood industry, and 92% for youth policy.

¹⁷ The category *beneficiary* was additionally discussed in detail after the test coding, which resulted in further specification of the coding rules that were applied (see Appendix 2: Selection from the codebook).

¹⁸ The coding consistency for each main category was as follows: *specification* 90%, *mode* 90%, *time frame* 98%, *quantifiable indicator* 94%, *beneficiary* 87%, and *responsible actor* 98%. Complete test coding material is available on request.

338 understandings of categories and coding rules but also extensive practice in coding examples
339 from all documents, jointly by all coders.

340 Data description was done in a quantitative manner, which is also standard in QCA, to give an
341 overview of the vast data set which is focused on categories and not on cases (Schreier, 2012).
342 The co-occurrence of the technical features of various goals was then analyzed. We explored
343 how technical features appeared in combination within goal structures systematically across the
344 material. This step resulted in technical types of policy goals that represented patterns or sets
345 of subcategories that appeared together in one coding unit or one goal (Schreier, 2012).
346 Technical types were extracted inductively; they were identified during coding and derived
347 from the coding memos, which listed observed relationships or co-occurrence among
348 subcategories. For validation purposes, the coded material was exported to Excel and filtered
349 by all features to ensure that no combination of subcategories that appeared in a relevant share
350 had been unfairly omitted.

351

352 **DATA DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

353 The coding findings suggest that Croatian policy goals are considerably imprecise and
354 formulated at a fairly abstract level (see Table 3).¹⁹ We must stress that coding was done in a
355 “charitable manner”, identifying the presence of a feature even when it was not completely
356 precise and strictly defined. Still, the results showed that most technical features were quite
357 often missing in the goals’ form. Broad purposes were more present than concrete ones. Even
358 if more than two thirds of selected examples proposed some mode in which goals should be
359 accomplished, they still predominantly lacked meticulousness in other elements. So, only 47%
360 of all coded examples of goals were accompanied by a stated beneficiary; 31% had a responsible
361 actor specified; 25% had a determined time frame; and only 14% had a quantifiable indicator
362 present within the goal structure.

363 **Table 3 Presence of technical features within the goals of Croatian public policies***

¹⁹ The type of data source is a limitation of these findings as strategies belong to one specific category among many other relevant policy documents, and, if we subscribe to the stages heuristics model, pertain to the earlier phases of the broader policymaking cycle. As one of the reviewers put it, looking at government strategies is like looking through “a window on a specific segment of the policy cycle”. Additionally, strategies are supposed to be the most general, broadest documents, and accompanying action plans are supposed to offer more specific, detailed operationalization. Still, there is the reasonable question of the functionality of poorly operationalized strategies, especially when they are set for a period of five years, as most in our sample were. Furthermore, most strategies from our sample are not accompanied by action plans.

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE*
SPECIFICATION		
Broad purposes	1,266	57%
Concrete purposes	958	43%
MODE		
Mode determined	1,729	78%
Mode undetermined	494	22%
TIME FRAME		
Specified time frame	564	25%
Unspecified time frame	1,660	75%
QUANTIFIABLE INDICATOR		
Quantifiable indicator present	322	14%
Quantifiable indicator not present	1,902	86%
BENEFICIARY		
Existent beneficiary	1,049	47%
Nonexistent beneficiary	1,174	53%
RESPONSIBLE ACTOR		
Responsible actor specified	692	31%
Responsible actor not specified	1,531	69%

365

* All percentages show a share of 2,223 coding units in total from all 11 documents.

366

367 Our analysis was set to extract technical types of policy goals in order to develop an empirically
 368 grounded classification of goals, and then to review how those empirical insights could improve
 369 policy theory. To establish these technical types and classify the goals according to their
 370 structural properties, we looked for the dominant patterns of subcategories within the material.
 371 Our analysis focused on the co-occurrence of variants of technical features within the goals.
 372 This means that we searched for a pattern or a set of relationships between technical
 373 characteristics that were present across the data set. Therefore, a pattern is a specific
 374 combination of technical features, for example of specific mode, specific time frame, specific
 375 beneficiary, etc., that reappears repeatedly in the goals of diverse strategies. We observed how
 376 continuously, across the material and in diverse strategies, some combinations of technical
 377 features appear together in policy goals quite often. All those goals with similar structure
 378 potentially constitute specific technical type.

379

380

In the final step of interpretation when we return to the realm of policy theory with our results,
 we will discuss whether and how exactly the discovered patterns (do not) constitute technical

381 types of policy goals. However, we must first elaborate on nine configurations of the derived
382 technical features that systematically reappeared across all the material. All of them were
383 individually present in at least 5% of all coding units (see Table 4). All constructed sets jointly
384 covered around 75% of all segmented goals. Percentages represent shares of pure sets. The
385 excluded coding units were mixes of technical features with no stable overall structure that
386 systematically spreads across the coded material.

387

388 **Table 4 Configuration and presence of sets of technical features of policy goals**

		SETS OF TECHNICAL FEATURES OF POLICY GOALS								
		SET 1	SET 2	SET 3	SET 4	SET 5	SET 6	SET 7	SET 8	SET 9
		Broad	Beneficiary-centered A	Mode-centered	Actor-centered	Beneficiary-centered B	Direction-centered	Beneficiary-centered C	Semi-structured	Structured
OCCURRENCE*		9%*	6%	15%	6%	11%	8%	6%	5%	7%
TECHNICAL FEATURES	Specification	Broad	Broad	Broad	Broad	Broad	Concrete	Concrete	Concrete	Concrete
	Mode	---	---	Determined	Determined	Determined	Determined	Determined	Determined	Determined
	Beneficiary	---	Existent	---	---	Existent	---	Existent	Existent	Existent
	Responsible actor	---	---	---	Specified	---	---	---	---	Specified
	Time frame	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	Specified	Specified
	Quantifiable indicator	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	Present

389 * All percentages show the share of coding units that contained all subcategories that constituted a specific set in the total of 2,223 coding units.

390 The findings indicated that goals, regardless of the strategy or policy type, varied along several
391 specific sets of technical features. One set constituted the most general goals (Set 1, Table 4),
392 based on broad purposes, and marked by the absence of specified ways, procedures, processes,
393 or mechanisms for achieving that goal or any other technical element. Those broad goals were,
394 on account of their structure, somehow hovering within strategies and were not directly
395 connected to other goals or instruments or specified in any manner. The disability strategy's
396 "creating an inclusive society" (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2017b, p. 53) or the
397 justice strategy's "comprehensive cooperation of all stakeholders" (Ministry for Demography,
398 Family, Youth and Social Policy, 2017, p. 15) are examples of those floating goals.

399 There was a distinct set of goals (Set 3, Table 4) which was still devoted to broad purposes and
400 had no specification regarding time, indicator, actor, or beneficiary, but had the mode of goal
401 accomplishment determined. We called these mode-centered goals, as they contained at least
402 vaguely specified means of their accomplishment, quite often by direct connection to some
403 other goal that would help in their realization. The goal to "increase the attractiveness of public
404 transportation by improving management concepts and modernization of rolling stock"
405 (Ministry of Sea, Transport, and Infrastructure, 2017, p. 196) shows the structure of this set
406 well—there was a vague mode of accomplishment and no other technical feature that would
407 further specify the goal.

408 A similar goal structure was present within Set 4 (see Table 4). These goals were still
409 determined by the broad specification and mode, and did not specify other characteristics,
410 except the designation of an actor responsible for the goal implementation. This type we called
411 actor-centered goals, and it is illustrated by the example from the employment strategy: "in
412 order to continuously and systematically monitor the implementation of active employment
413 policy measures" (Ministry of Labor and Pension System, 2017, p. 22). Monitoring is a broad
414 specification of the goal, that is, according to its textual surroundings, determined to be
415 accomplished by the establishment of a new working group, and specific ministry and
416 subordinated bodies have responsibility for it (Ministry of Labor and Pension System, 2017, p.
417 22). It is not known who the beneficiary is, when this goal should be achieved, or how its
418 achievement should be measured.

419 Direction-centered goals (Set 6, Table 4) also did not possess many specified technical features.
420 This set of goals diverged from those previously described by having specific purposes at their
421 core, which were accompanied by a determination of the mode of accomplishment. No other

422 technical features were present in the structure of those goals. The goal of “development of
423 prevention programs to combat domestic violence” (Ministry for Demography, Family, Youth
424 and Social Policy, 2017, p. 13) is a clear example. It has a purpose which could be fully realized,
425 some programs can be developed, and it is a mode itself (innovation of organizational
426 instrument), yet the structure of the goal contains no other technical features.

427 Three connected sets of policy goals had the beneficiary in focus (Sets 2, 5, and 7, Table 4).
428 Beneficiary-centered goals in total were the most common overall.²⁰ They contained broad
429 (Versions A and B) or specific purposes (Version C), where mode could be undetermined
430 (Version A) or determined (Versions B and C),²¹ but all other technical features were absent,
431 except the specification of the individuals, social groups, professional groups, and their
432 organizations or collectivities, which benefit from goal achievement. Those specifics are
433 evident in the following examples.

434 An example of Version A from the education strategy, “human rights and rights of children will
435 be respected” (Croatian Parliament, 2014, p. 20), shows a structure with a broad specification
436 without the determination of mode. A good example of Version B can be found in the gender
437 equality strategy goal “to improve the social position of women belonging to national
438 minorities” (Croatian Parliament, 2011, p. 18). It is followed by the explanation that round
439 tables and conferences will be organized, scholarships for Roma women will be increased, and
440 so on. The broad specification is accompanied by mode and beneficiary specifications, but no
441 other features. Finally, the structure of a Version C beneficiary-centered goal is evident in an
442 example from the reading enhancement strategy to “design and implement programs to
443 encourage reading of children in early and preschool age” (Government of the Republic of
444 Croatia, 2017c, p. 21), which has a specific purpose, mode determined,²² and the age group of
445 beneficiaries specified.

446 The final two sets were goals with the most specified structure. Semi-structured goals (Set 8,
447 Table 4) were concrete goals with the mode, beneficiary and time frame determined. They have
448 half of all technical features specified. The most specific and precise goals were found within

²⁰ This is neither a bias from the sampling process, nor the result of including target-group-specific strategies (disability, youth, gender equality). We have compared all strategies in NVivo, and the findings showed how those three strategies did not contain bigger shares of beneficiary-focused goals than other groups dealing with core policy sectors or narrower policy issues.

²¹ It seems that the initial lower result for the *beneficiary* category in test coding, which was accommodated by adding more detailed coding rules, was partly due to the high spread and variation of beneficiary-centered goals.

²² The goal is followed by some directly connected policy instruments, such as the education of educators or announcing tenders for program design (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2017c, p. 21).

449 the last set (Set 9, Table 4), characterized by the specification of all technical elements. They
450 represent fully operationalized goals, completely structured: the most solid and most tangible
451 goals.

452 An example from the disability strategy, which stresses the “increased number of specialized
453 foster families for children with disabilities” (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2017b,
454 p. 11) as a goal, has a specific purpose, the mode is determined by additional measures, the time
455 frame is present in the surrounding text (“in the period from 2017 till 2020”, Government of
456 the Republic of Croatia, 2017b, p. 11), and the specific social group is stressed as a beneficiary.
457 Fully structured goals, with all technical features present, can be illustrated by an example from
458 the wood industry strategy, stating that “by the end of 2020, between 1,000 and 1,500 new
459 workers could be directly employed” (Government of the Republic of Croatia, 2017a, p. 12).
460 Not only is this example qualified by the specific, fully realizable purpose, a set beneficiary
461 (workers), a set indicator (from 1,000 to 1,500), and the set deadline (end 2020), but it is also
462 accompanied by surrounding text that states how green public procurement is a mode of growth
463 for wood processing and furniture production. Lastly, albeit in a quite general manner, public
464 administration or governmental bodies are given responsibility for that mechanism and goal
465 achievement.

466

467 **DISCUSSION**

468 Problem of terminological inconsistencies on policy goals and confusions in labeling them,
469 present in the literature, is additionally aggravated by weak operationalization and poor
470 applicability of theoretically derived policy goals classifications. Our findings show that real-
471 world goals do not operate on the several clear-cut levels that are constructed into single-lined
472 hierarchy, as expected in policy theory (cf. Dunn, 1994, 2018; Howlett, 2011; Howlett &
473 Cashore, 2014; Howlett et al, 2022; Spicker, 2008). Therefore, it seems more fruitful to examine
474 the empirical variations of goals focusing primarily on their features. Our data-driven, inductive
475 investigation revealed how goals are much more precisely determined and classified if explored
476 in two macro-dimensions, as their features group around the themes and issues they contain,
477 but also around technical properties that regulate the form in which they appear. Thematic²³

²³ For the details on thematic dimension, see Petek et al., 2021a.

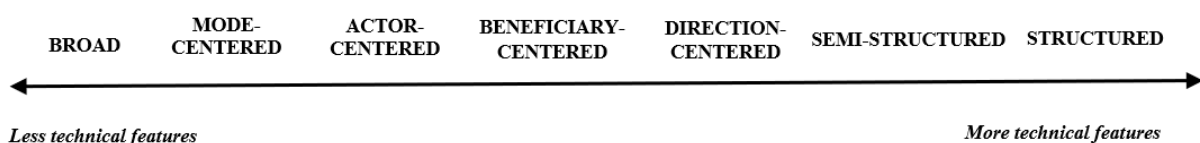
478 and technical dimensions, as broad clusters of multiple goal characteristics, help in clarifying
479 overlapping terms regarding policy goals, and also the operationalization of the concept.

480 The technical dimension helps in differentiating how policy goals appear in multiple forms in
481 practice. Numerous sets of technical features that reappeared in the data show how policy goals
482 vary from more to less connected with other goals, and from more to less operationalized by
483 technical features, with no strict demarcation lines between goal types. Even if we combine all
484 variants of beneficiary-based goals into a single type, we are still left with many types, that are
485 all significantly present in the analyzed strategies but often differ from each other by only one
486 feature. Therefore, we propose the theoretical understanding of technical types of policy goals
487 as a continuum, as this could be more empirically valid and analytically useful than thinking
488 through rigid aim-goal-objective levels of hierarchy. The continuum allows for many mixed
489 examples and covers both goals that have many technical features, and those with just a few or
490 even one (see Fig. 2). It represents the entire macro-dimension of goals' structural properties in
491 which the technical types of policy goals are composed of different constellations of technical
492 properties, thus ranging from less complex (with less technical features) to more complex types
493 of policy goals (with more technical features). In contrast to the policy literature, the crucial
494 insight of the continuum is that more complex goals structured with more technical features are
495 not necessarily lower goals.

496

497 **Fig. 2 Continuum of technical types of policy goals**

498



499

500

501 The ends of the continuum are marked by most broad goals that are not interlinked in the
502 network of other goals on the one side, and fully structured, specific goals operationalized with
503 all technical features on the other. More alike, and closer to the center of the continuum, are
504 mode-, direction-, actor-, beneficiary-centered, and semi-structured goals. These are seven
505 basic technical types of policy goals, and the building blocks of the continuum as it varies from
506 broad to specific purposes, and from an undetermined mode of accomplishment to its

507 determination. Out of all the other features, the presence of beneficiaries within the goal
508 structure seems the most complicated but is still quite important. The indicator feature is in the
509 most unfavorable position for penetrating the structure of goals, followed by the time-period
510 specification. Including the responsible actor, a purely inductively-derived technical feature,
511 was justified because goals do vary according to the responsible actor specification, and this
512 feature sets a distinctive technical type of policy goals.

513 In summary, broad and concrete goals both vary in having one or two, then several, to many
514 technical features and do not constitute clear separated levels. For instance, direction-centered
515 goals with concrete purposes have less technical features than actor-centered goals with broad
516 purposes. On the one hand, most broad, most general, unspecified, and unquantified goals, do
517 not seem to be higher goals as they are not connected to other goals at all. They are standalone
518 goals, somehow outside of the goals network. On the other hand, more complex goals,
519 structured with more technical features, are not necessarily lower goals. Structured goals, as the
520 most specified goals, could present the lowest level in the hierarchy of goals, but could also be
521 superior to some other goal, for example a beneficiary-centered goal. In practice levels are not
522 clear-cut and types of goals cannot be placed in a single-line hierarchy but “spill over” into each
523 other along the continuum.

524 The policy design of any specific policy sector in a specific time, sometimes represented by a
525 specific strategic document, would most probably contain all technical types of policy goals
526 from our continuum. At least, this is the case for each policy / strategy analyzed in our sample
527 as all of them consist of various types of technical goals - from broad to those fully structured.
528 Still, it is important to note that the proportion of specific types diverge significantly across
529 policy sectors – policies are marked by diverse combinations of goals with few/many technical
530 features. If we place a kind of a bar chart on a continuum, each bar representing a share of a
531 technical goal type in a policy design of a sector in a concrete point in time, and connect the
532 top of all bars, this curvy line would represent a continuum for that specific policy. And then
533 curves of a continuum could illustrate policy design of goals in a policy as a whole and enable
534 comparison of governance levels, countries, or periods within or across policies. However, the
535 precise application of this idea requires further empirical and theoretical investigation.

536

537 **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

538 Classifications that cross two distinct criteria and present four or six strict types of some policy
539 phenomenon, for example through “2x2”, “2x3” or “3x3” matrices, and which are so customary
540 in policy literature, do not appear to effectively capture the richness of real-world policy goals.
541 It also seems that the idea of a clear hierarchy of policy goal variants is primarily a normative
542 assumption of the policy literature, and not an empirical fact. Of course, policy goals do vary
543 according to their generality, but our findings suggest that there is no comprehensive and
544 unified hierarchy among policy goal types. The coding of the real-world examples which we
545 have undertaken revealed that the classification of policy goals should be based on multiple
546 dimensions.

547 Our empirical, data-driven investigation revealed two broad dimensions for each policy goal:
548 one connected to the thematic content of goals, and the other focused on the technical elements
549 of goals. This paper considered closely the structural properties of goals, and it demonstrated
550 how goals vary on a continuum of technical goal types, with many mixed cases. Groups of goals
551 with more and less technical features can be extracted, but these are only very rough sets with
552 blurred borders. This insight nevertheless invites new understandings of, and questions about,
553 policy goals. As we see it, future efforts to explore policy goals could take several directions.

554 First, it would be useful to include temporal perspectives, and to compare goals, their topics,
555 and their structure through time, to determine how they change. Secondly, samples of included
556 policies could be much broader, which would result in more solid conclusions regarding the
557 prevalence of a goal’s features and types. Furthermore, data sources could be diversified, which
558 would give a broader insight into the change of policy goals throughout the different phases of
559 the policy cycle. Findings would especially profit from the inclusion of more concrete
560 implementation documents. Additional insights could be gained by employing a comparative
561 design that includes several countries or governance levels (subnational or supranational). This
562 analysis of different jurisdictions could open intriguing questions on the policy capacity for
563 designing policy goals and actors’ political and administrative roles in those processes.

564 It would be most interesting, but also quite challenging, to incorporate our goal classification
565 into broader policy design theory by combining it with instrument classifications. Could there
566 be a classification of the goal–instrument relationships derived from the data, or is that a subject
567 too complex for meaningful systematization? Finally, technical types of goals could be linked
568 to policy implementation effects. Further research could be focused on the correlation between
569 technical types of goals and policy success or failure. This kind of insight could then be the

570 foundation for an evaluation framework that designates normative criteria for the good technical
571 design of goals, and for the effective combinations of technical types in a design. We hope our
572 research and goal classification is the first small step in answering some of these relevant
573 questions. Our descriptive research is still far from the predictive or evaluative/normative model
574 of policy goal types within the broader policy design architecture. But it does contribute to the
575 development of more empirically grounded theory of policy goals, at least through a detailed
576 uncovering of all the limitations of their current conceptualizations in the discipline.

577 Our results are limited by having examined a single country, and additionally by Croatian
578 idiosyncrasies, as it is a post-communist Eastern European country, a new EU Member State
579 and a new democracy. Some technical types may be present or present to a lower/greater extent
580 due to the “immaturity” of Croatian policymaking. Still, our data has revealed the gradual nature
581 of policy goal types, which seems convincing and generalizable to policy practice in other
582 countries. A continuum of goal types could help in refining policy design theory, by revealing
583 the nuances of goals in practice and by enabling the fine-tuning of policy goal design. This
584 more taxonomical approach to goal examination, based on data and inductive reasoning, as
585 opposed to typological classifications based on theoretically derived categories, could help to
586 avoid the problem of inconsistency in assigning empirical examples to types (Smith, 2002). If
587 the idea of a goal continuum is further developed and tested more widely, it could also serve as
588 a basis for more practical advice for policy planning, to ensure that social reality is truly
589 transformed.

590

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712

713 **Appendix 2: Selection from the codebook**

714

715 11. Beneficiary

716 The code *beneficiary* refers to the dimension of goals identifying specific individuals or groups
717 that benefit from the achievement of goals.

718

719 We primarily code social groups as beneficiaries but also their respective organizations or
720 collective forms (e.g., youth associations, the wood industry). Professional groups are also
721 coded here, within the state hierarchy or outside of it (e.g., police officers, teachers, lawyers).
722 Governmental bodies or public institutions (e.g., schools, judicial bodies) are not considered
723 here.

724

725 A crucial criterion for determining whether there is a beneficiary of the goal achievement is the
726 direct and explicit naming of the type of individuals or the specific social or professional groups
727 that are directly positively affected by the goal and for whom the goal represents wellbeing and
728 prosperity.

729

730 The code *beneficiary* is coded based on data at the single level of the goal in question, and the
731 surrounding textual context (paragraph before or after the coding unit) is scanned as well but
732 only if the context is explicitly and directly related to the goal in question. If several elements
733 which could be coded differently are present in the coding unit, the more concrete or more
734 precise is the element being coded.

735

736

737 11.1. *Existent beneficiary*

738 *The code existent beneficiary gathers all mentions of goals in which one or more groups*
739 *that benefit from the goal achievement in any form are discussed. All citizens/every citizen*
740 *stated as a beneficiary is coded here.*

741

742 Examples: veterans, citizens, young people, men and women, persons with disabilities,
743 employers, students, employees, women belonging to national minorities, women with
744 disabilities, women in rural areas, girls, teachers, vulnerable groups, seasonal workers, the
745 elderly, victims of violence and sexual assault

746 Examples: Raise awareness about the importance of ensuring access to culture for youth;
747 the social position of women with disabilities will be improved.

748

749 11.2. *Nonexistent beneficiary*

750 *The code nonexistent beneficiary relates to all goals that do not speak about any group of*
751 *beneficiaries in any form.*

752
753
754
755
756

Examples: Strengthening the capacity to implement health education; all buildings used by the Croatian government will be recorded, and the level of accessibility will be marked for each building.