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**S w i s s f o r e i g n p o l i t i c s a n d
t r a n s p o r t p o l i c y**

A policy network analysis case study

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Summary

The 28-tonne limit has had a decisive influence on recent developments in Swiss transport policy. Initially intended as a measure to protect roads it became a tool for defending and protecting the railways at the time the weight limit in the EU countries was raised to 40 tonnes in 1984. For the time being Switzerland had been able to safeguard the weight limit with the Transit Agreement with the EU (signed in 1992) but in return for constructing two new crossings of the Alps. It was not until the bilateral negotiations between Switzerland and the European Commission became stuck in the sand and the surprising "Yes" vote for the Alps initiative that the debate on a solution was initiated and a new - market-oriented - transport policy finally made possible with the km and weight dependent Heavy Goods Vehicle Tax [LSVA] as the key.

The passing of the law for a km and weight dependent Heavy Goods Vehicle Tax (September 1998) was possible because this instrument could unite several objectives. On the one hand there is a tradition in Switzerland of arguing for a consistent tax on the external aspects of heavy road transport. The basic principles had already been prepared in the debate on a co-ordinated transport policy (KVP). With the question of protecting the Alps the LSVA now had a further argument which could be easily put across. But it was the integration debate that helped the LSVA to get the required majority in business circles. From its conception the LSVA has been in a position to replace the weight limits with a modern range of instruments which are Europe-compatible by removing the effects on road transport productivity and generating funds for investment in transport. In this way Switzerland has been able to replace a solution aimed at directing economic policy and bound by dogma with a Europe-compatible solution and thus has become an outrider in Europe for a market economy oriented policy.

Behind this process stands a major development in the network of relations both domestically and abroad which moves in the electrically charged field between transport, environment and integration policy. The scientific base of the Policy Network Analysis explains this process by analysing the different actors in relation to each other. To this end the various phases in the sample case of the 28-tonne limit are used which in the analysis are treated as an expression for bringing together the different policy fields. The analysis has shown that this is an "Open Policy Network" (trans-sectoral, stable, with a large number of actors) where the domestic and foreign subnetworks (state and non-state actors) merge continuously with each other in the various phases. The outriders here were the economy and the state actors. Only later did the political parties reinforce their activities of the international network. The so-called "Two Level Game" where the (national) networks assemble behind the actors in direct negotiation (in this case the Transport Department and the European Commission), was breached in particular in the bilateral negotiations phase. This gave those actors who were able to use their skills to link the various features of the networks together with solutions that

were capable of consensus an important power in decision-making: the Policy Network was not created to entrench positions of power but to resolve a problem that was growing in importance (integration into Europe without sacrificing transport policy objectives).

In the sample case it became clear that the scientific approach of the Policy Network Analysis would have to be widened in order to raise the interpretation content for complex decision-making processes. In particular the various levels of decision-making have to be differentiated which can be encompassed by a multi-level base. To this end additional models for determining the power of the individual actors were included. One of the most important findings to come from this expanded analysis is that obviously the formal power of negotiation provided by the institutional position still plays an important role in specific (here internationally directed) decision-making situations. In contrast factors like the capacity of the actors to become involved in conflicts, their resources and network activities are more likely to be of secondary importance. Furthermore it has been shown that package ties (linking different policies, in this instance transport policy, protection of the Alps and integration) can be successful if the risks involved are balanced out by using a time-sequential decision-making process. The failure of package solutions however raises the acceptance of so-called "muddling through" strategies. The process involved in withdrawing the weight limits was first and foremost a process directed by state actors. In particular the final decisive phase showed that state actors (inter alia a head of department in charge who knows how to utilise diplomatic channels) can have a decisive part to play.

With the passing of the bilateral agreements Switzerland was also able to collect practical knowledge which is no less important for the analysis. The negotiations with the EU have shown that one can no longer plough one's own furrow in Europe in terms of transport policy. Domestic policy (like the KVP debate) has become foreign policy. However there is still scope for movement. Above all the states bordering the Alps have an opportunity to make their problems visible and work towards solutions which along with ideas aimed purely at efficiency do take account of other matters, first and foremost environmental aspects.