

Tobacco control policymaking in Europe

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VALORIZATION ADDENDUM

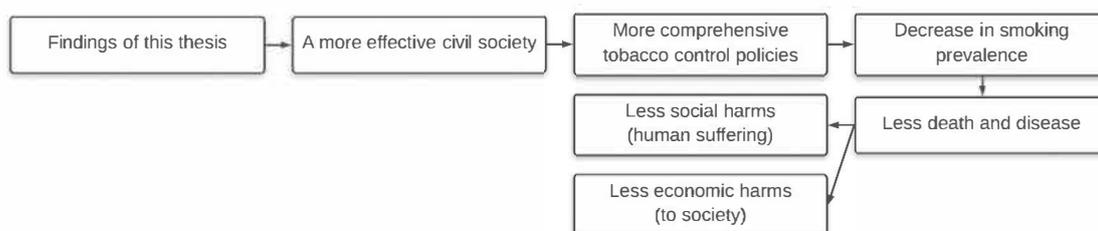
According to the Rathenau institute and the Dutch government, valorization refers to a “process of creating value from knowledge by making knowledge suitable and/or available for economic and/or societal use and translating that knowledge into products, services, processes and entrepreneurial activity” (Rathenau Institute, 2016).

The aim of this valorization addendum is to describe the societal relevance and impact of findings presented in this thesis. Five questions are answered: 1) What is the social and economic relevance of the research results 2) For which people, outside of academic circles, are your results of interest? 3) Are there actual research products in which your results are applied? 4) To what extent are these products innovative compared to existing products? And 5) How will these be implemented?

Relevance

As tobacco consumption causes diseases and premature deaths, the associated social harms resulting from human suffering are considerable (1). Comprehensive tobacco control policies have the potential to reduce smoking prevalence (2–4). More ambitious policies should be adopted in Europe to reduce smoking prevalence, to ultimately reduce death and disease and associated social harm (suffering). In order to achieve this, civil society plays a crucial role. It needs to work effectively to foster tobacco control policies at the national level. This thesis had a dual focus: 1) examining the policy environment more precisely using cross national policy adoption designs (i.e.: determinants of policymaking) and 2) examining how civil society can improve itself. Both these aims may help civil society to work more effectively. When they become more effective, comprehensive evidence based policies may be more readily enacted as a result, smoking prevalence will then likely decrease, which causes less people to die and get sick, which will in turn reduce human suffering and associated costs for society (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Flowchart of hypothesized relationship between findings of this thesis and social and economic benefit



Secondly, in terms of economic relevance, tobacco consumption brings about enormous financial costs for societies because of high healthcare costs and absenteeism etc., even when taking

into account the considerable treasury income from tobacco excise duty (5). When smoking prevalence decreases, it will ultimately save society a great amount of money, which can be spent on alternative issues which may benefit the population (e.g. improving healthcare or education).

Target groups

More insight into tobacco control policymaking is relevant for various stakeholders outside academia. Most obviously, this refers to actors in civil society (tobacco control advocates) who benefit from a more detailed assessment of the policy environment and a list of characteristics that may help them to assess and improve the strength of their advocacy. As targeted end-users of the knowledge generated in this thesis, these advocates were actively consulted and involved during the project and most of the data was collected from them.

Next to civil society advocates, policymakers may benefit from findings presented in this thesis. As an example: in Chapter 3, we find that public support may be galvanized by presenting it in terms of child-protection. Policymakers that use this frame, may effectively bridge differences between opponents and proponents of big government and a governmental role in the domain of tobacco control. Furthermore, as the policy process is often called complex, policymakers that are relatively unexperienced with health issues that get tobacco control in their portfolio may read this thesis to get some more insight into the various aspects relevant to this domain.

Furthermore, the tobacco industry increasingly focuses on low- and middle-income countries in Asia and Africa as a market for their products, as European countries adopt stricter legislation over time (6). It is important for comprehensive tobacco control in such countries, that their governments understand the importance of avoiding interaction with the tobacco industry (7). This thesis will provide them with the general insight that tobacco control is a continuous tug-of-war between the tobacco industry and civil society. As civil society in these countries is typically weaker or completely absent, economic interests are likely to prevail over public health. Furthermore, tobacco control advocates in those countries may use the tool developed by us (Chapter 7) as a guide to establish or improve their partnerships to become more effective.

Lastly we must also be aware that the findings in this thesis may have unintended negative consequences, as tobacco industry representatives may also benefit from a more thorough assessment of the policy environment, and more insight in what contributes to the strength of their political opponents in this political domain.

Products

A tangible product which has resulted from the findings in this thesis, is the tool we developed to measure characteristics related to tobacco control partnership strength. This tool measures

such characteristics on three dimensions: resources (including connections to policymakers), partner characteristics, and partnership characteristics. It has a great potential to benefit population health and science, as the tool 1) can offer tobacco control advocates insights into the organization of their partnerships, 2) can offer starting points for establishing or improving tobacco control partnerships, 3) can be used as a benchmark to compare partnerships within and across European countries, 4) can be used to monitor changes in partnership organization over time, 5) can contribute to theory-building in the broader field of determinants of health partnership strength... Possible applications are numerous. Future scholars are invited to further develop this tool, preferably by testing its validity, or appointing relative weights to individual items or subscales to calculate 'scores' on which countries can be more easily compared.

Another relevant process worth considering is the data collection itself as possible intervention (8). Tobacco control advocates typically do not reflect much on their day-to-day activities and their approach is often largely intuitive (9). By asking them which factors they believe are associated with success in influencing national policy, they are forced to reflect on (the effectiveness of) their practices. This may lead them to work differently (hopefully more effectively), and the expert panel then functions as an informal intervention. This logic also extends to our interviews conducted for Chapter 4 and 5: it may be possible that discussing tobacco control in particular had an agenda-setting function for Members of Parliament and/or civil servants. If this is true, then this research as such can be considered a form of advocacy. For tobacco control advocates interviewed in this project, it may have had an effect as well: the focus on the case of a tobacco display ban may have primed interviewees to advocate for this specific policy measure. Filling out the tool eventually, as it was sent out through ENSP to all European partners, may also have changed their perceptions about what constitutes an effective partnership. Furthermore, we sent the partnerships individual country feedback, allowing them to compare themselves with partnerships across Europe and possibly, within their country.

This thesis itself also constitutes a product, which will be sent through the format of an e-book to all advocacy contacts that participated in this research, such as the Alliance for a Smoke-free Netherlands, the DKFZ in Germany, and other ENSP colleagues. We will provide a German summary of this thesis as well, to overcome potential language issues.

Three additional 'products' have resulted from the SILNE-R project and the Trimbos institute. A SILNE-R group was created on researchgate.com (a website), in which references to published articles are shared. This group has 41 followers across various countries and disciplines. Furthermore, The Trimbos institute shared two online news items on its official website to disseminate the findings of Chapter 3 and 4 upon publication. They have also tweeted a link to these publications. These activities have likely boosted the number of downloads of the article

in Chapter 3 for example, which was 476 in the first year, of which 115 (24%) were emanating from IP addresses in The Netherlands.

Innovation

The tool developed and administered in Chapter 6 and 7 is the first ever attempt to operationalize and assess tobacco control partnership strength. Previous endeavors have focused on health partnerships in general, which sometimes included tobacco control partnerships, in addition to such partnerships in other domains (10,11). By assessing the characteristics related to tobacco control partnership strength specifically, characteristics that are specifically relevant for tobacco control can be determined. In other words: an approach that focuses on health partnerships in general, may not do justice to the idiosyncrasies of this particular policy domain. Although there are obvious parallels between tobacco and alcohol (a powerful industry, both are bad for health), there are also aspects that make them unique (12). For example: the social norm towards smoking is different from the social norm regarding alcohol, and the industry is irrefutably regarded an unreliable partner in formulating policy, something that remains debated in the field of alcohol policy in which voluntary agreements with the industry are still often accepted.

Planning and implementation

We have actually already ‘implemented’ our tool (e.g. administered it to tobacco control partnerships across and within EU countries). We hope that future scholars will further develop it in terms of reliability and possibly by assigning relative weights to the individual items.

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