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**Is it politically reasonable/feasible to prescribe heroin
The Swiss experience**

Riaz Khan

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Agenda

- Is HAT politically feasible
 - Yes, Switzerland does
 - How Switzerland did it
- Is it politically reasonable
 - Results
- Is it politically feasible everywhere
 - Arguments against
 - Depends
- What are the factors which make it politically feasible
 - Communication

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Heroin prescription is part of an integrated health delivery system in Switzerland

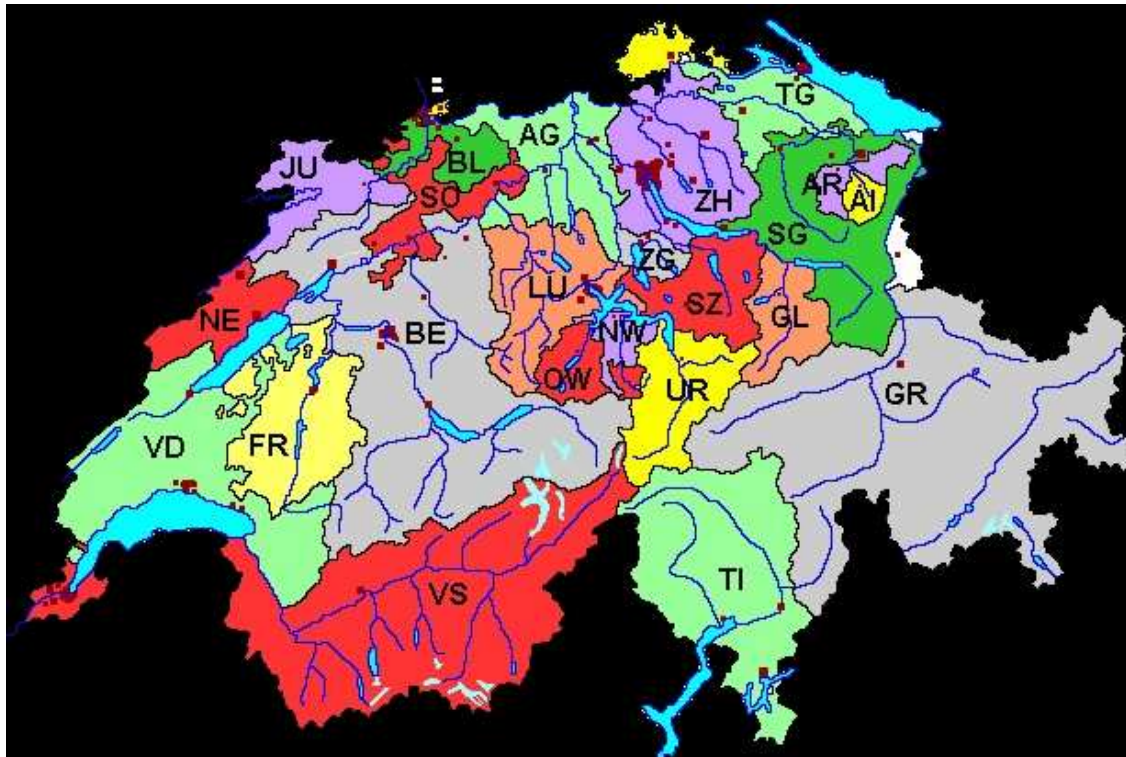
SFOPH: Heroin prescription



- The prescription of heroin ...
- ...part of a comprehensive, interdisciplinary treatment ...
- ...as an addition to treatment...
- ...for severe heroin users...
- ...whom other forms of treatment have failed

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Switzerland



26 cantons
26 constitutions
26 parliaments
26 governments
26 court systems
26 health policies
4 languages

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Swiss politics



- direct democracy
- strong citizen involvement
- important information work
- federal law can be put to a referendum
- any amendment needs support of both the majority of the voters and cantons

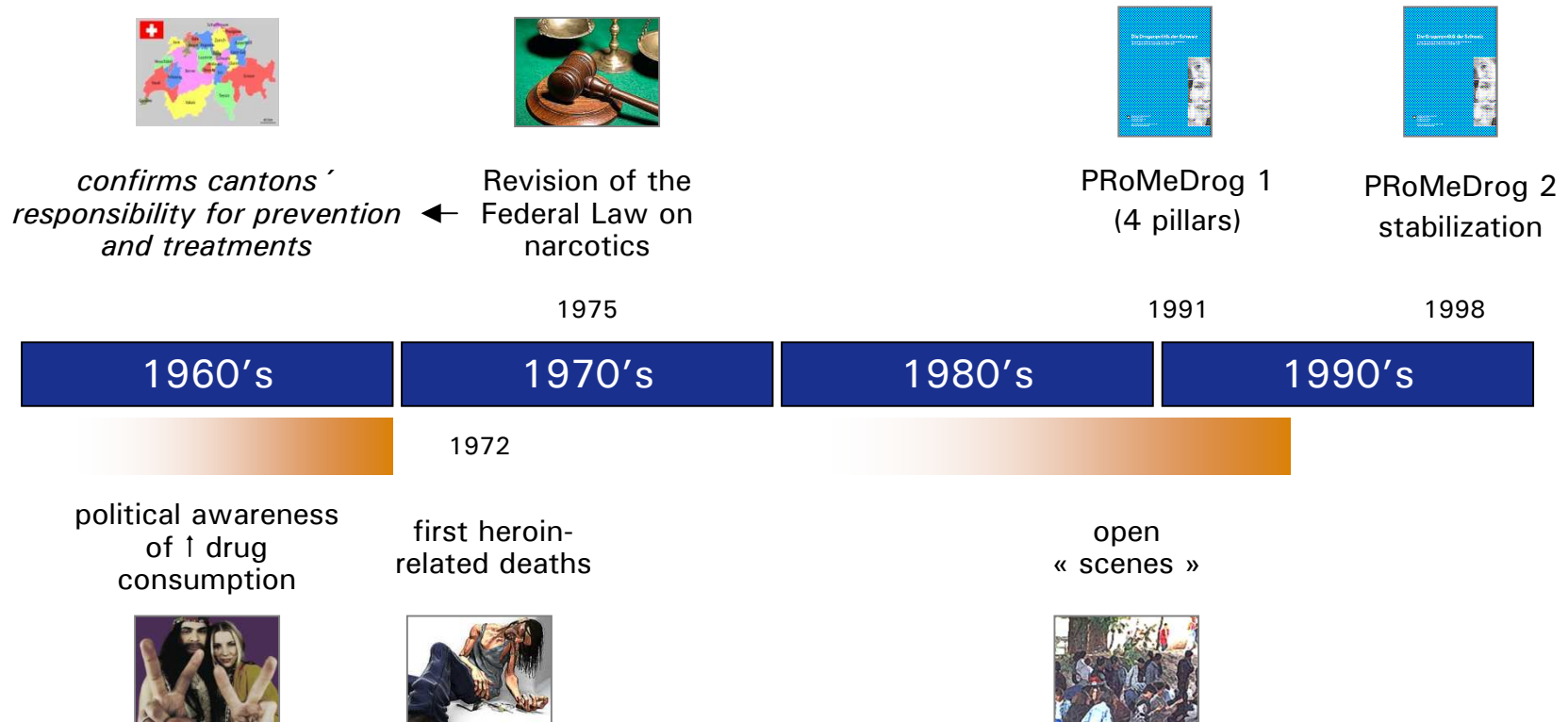
Swiss public health policies



- responsibility of the cantons
- Confederations roles (“Principle of complementarity”)
 - supports cantons
 - scientific research
 - coordination
 - information

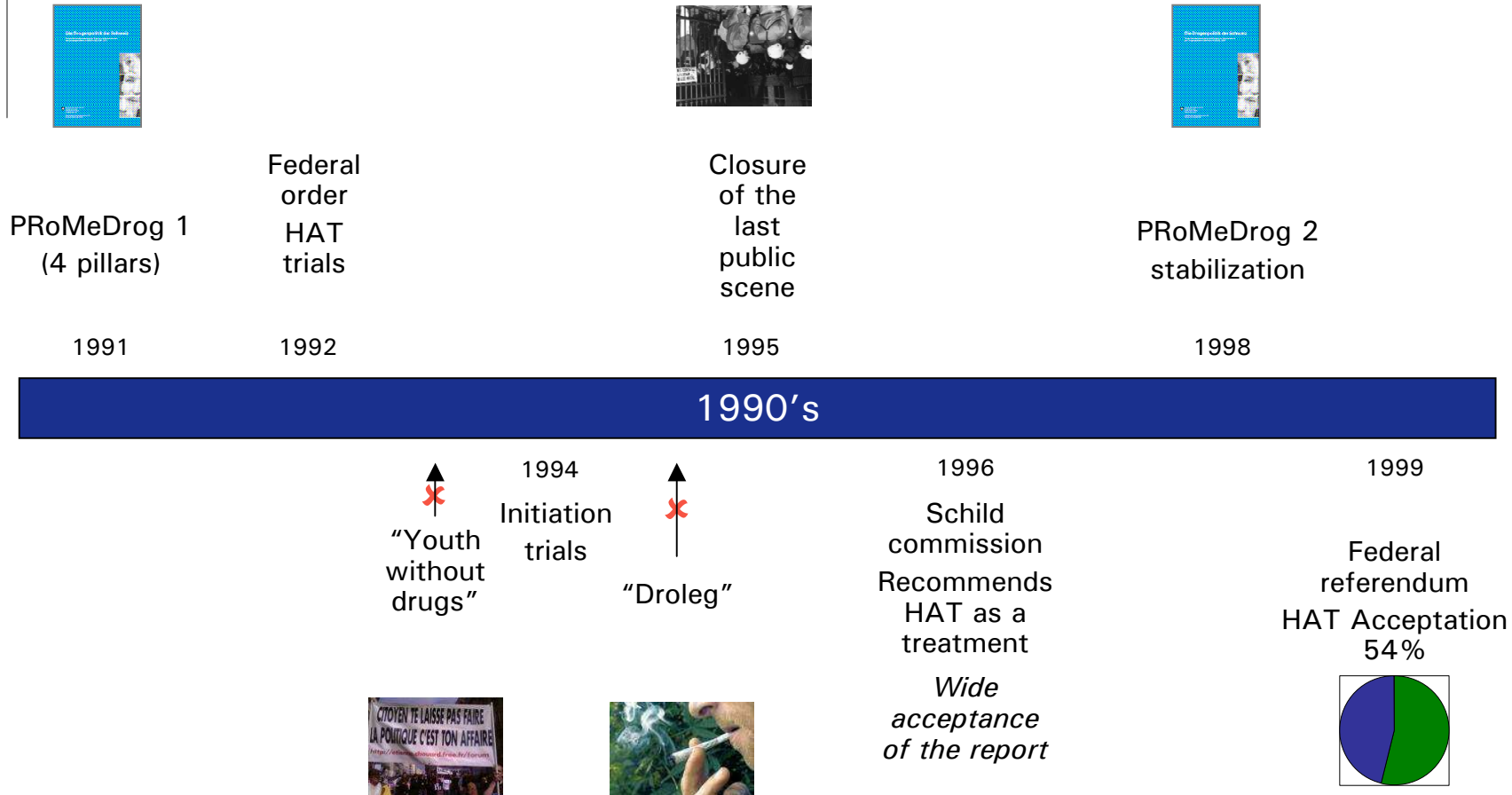
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Historical review



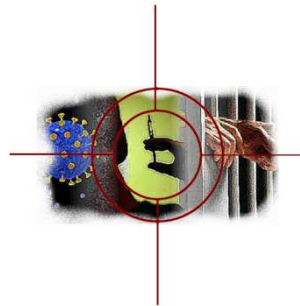
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Historical review (details 90')



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Federal Vision



↓ drug problems

↓ consumption

↓ negative
consequences
to user

↓ negative
consequences
to society



treatment



prevention



harm reduction



repression

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HAT in Switzerland

BAG, 2005

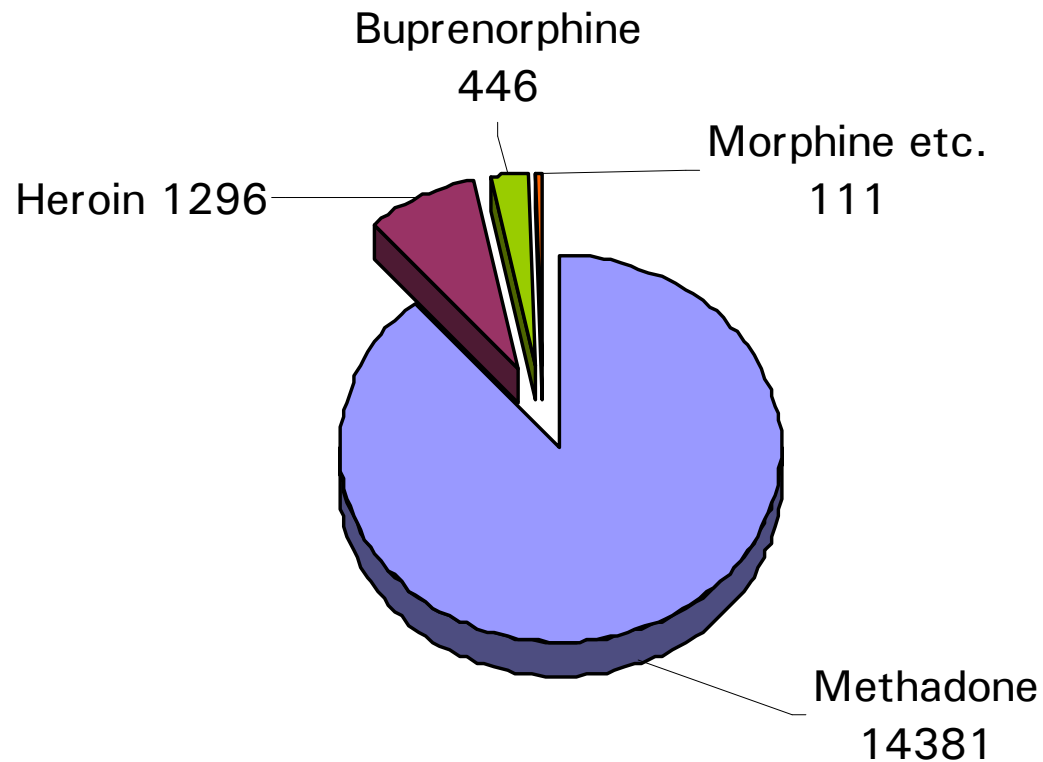
- 1295 patients in 21 centers Jan 2006
- Mean retention 2.83 years
- 20% were already in the program in 1994
- 61% leave → methadone or abstinence based programs 2005

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Costs 2004

- Mean daily costs: 57 CHF
- 20 805 CHF / patient / year
- Total costs for the centers 28.3 millions
- Covered by ...
 - Cantons and communes 20%
 - Health insurance 80%

Opiate assisted treatment in CH 16.9.2005



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Arguments against HAT



Moral arguments

- Providing treatment for self-inflicted problems
- Making currently illicit substance available

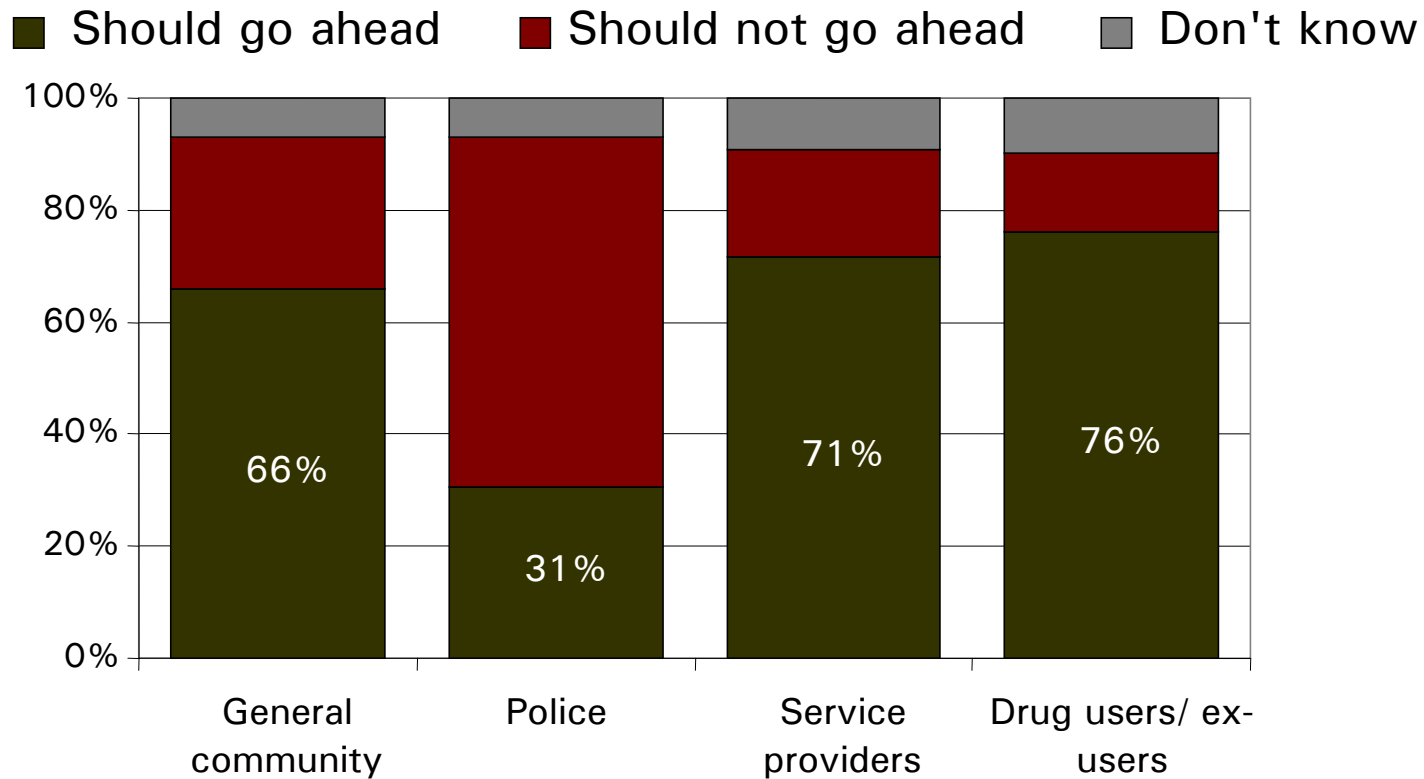


Risks

- “Immigration” of drug users
- More permissive attitudes to illicit drugs
- Road accidents
- Diversion onto black market
- Congregation at the treatment site
- Further institutionalization or marginalization

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Support of Australian HAT program



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Importance of using the right language

Heroin user → *"can decide to use or not to use"*

Heroin misuser → *"does it wrong"*

Heroin abuser → *"does something wrong"*

Heroin addict → *"isn't able to decide for himself"*

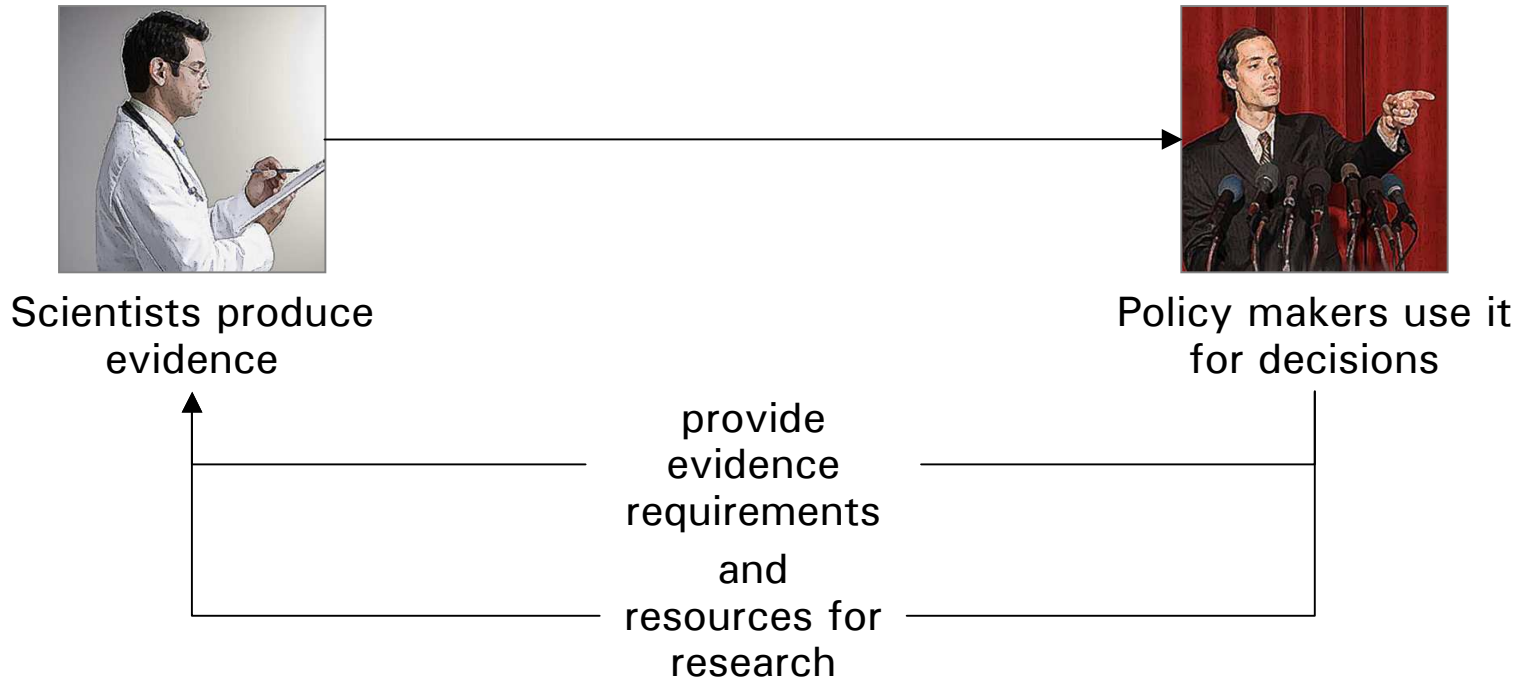
Patient → *"has to be cared for"*

Client → *"is assumed to be able to contract"*

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Evidence based policy making

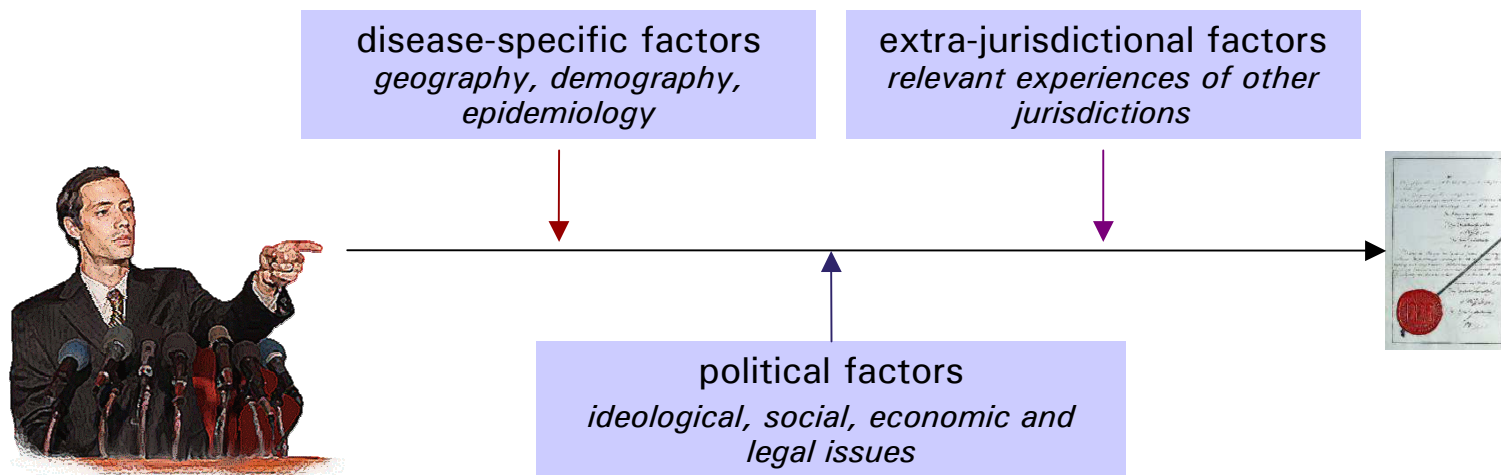
How it doesn't work



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External decision-making context

Environment in which a decision is to be taken

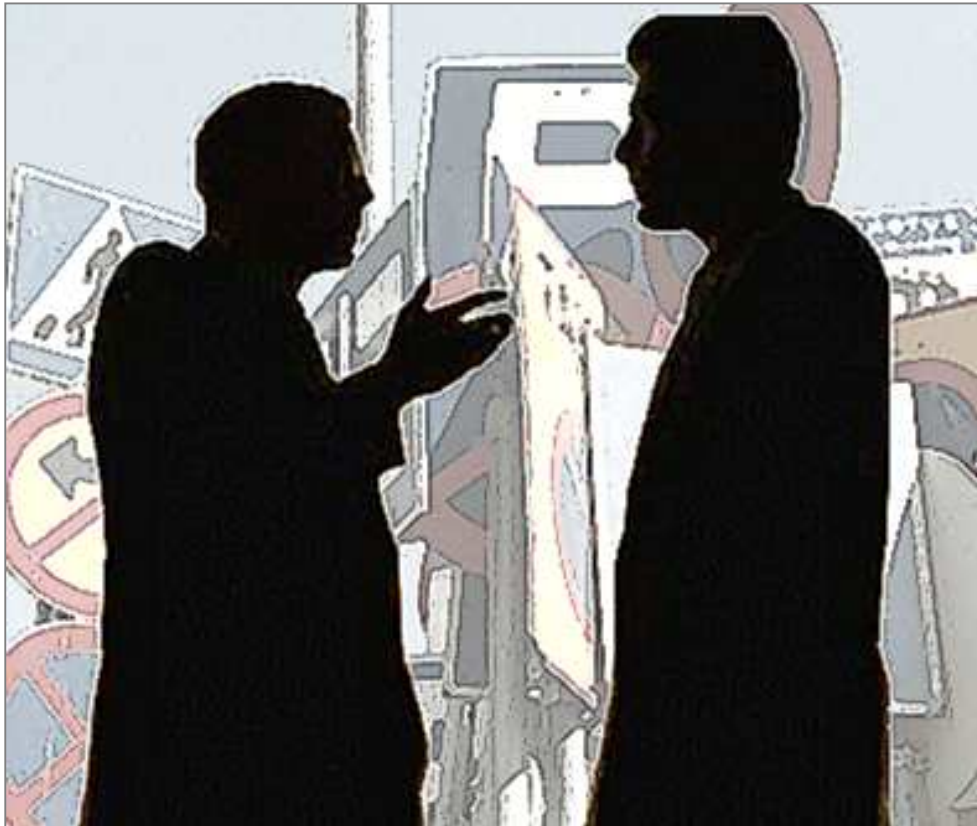


External contextual factors are

- fixed
- uncontrollable
- cannot be manipulated by decision-makers (at least in the short-term)

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Researchers and policy makers...



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...live in different worlds



publications, professorship
publish or perish

competition of
hypotheses

search until you find
MEDLINE, EndNotes

search for "truth"
rational model

what counts

policy, practice, and people
be everywhere

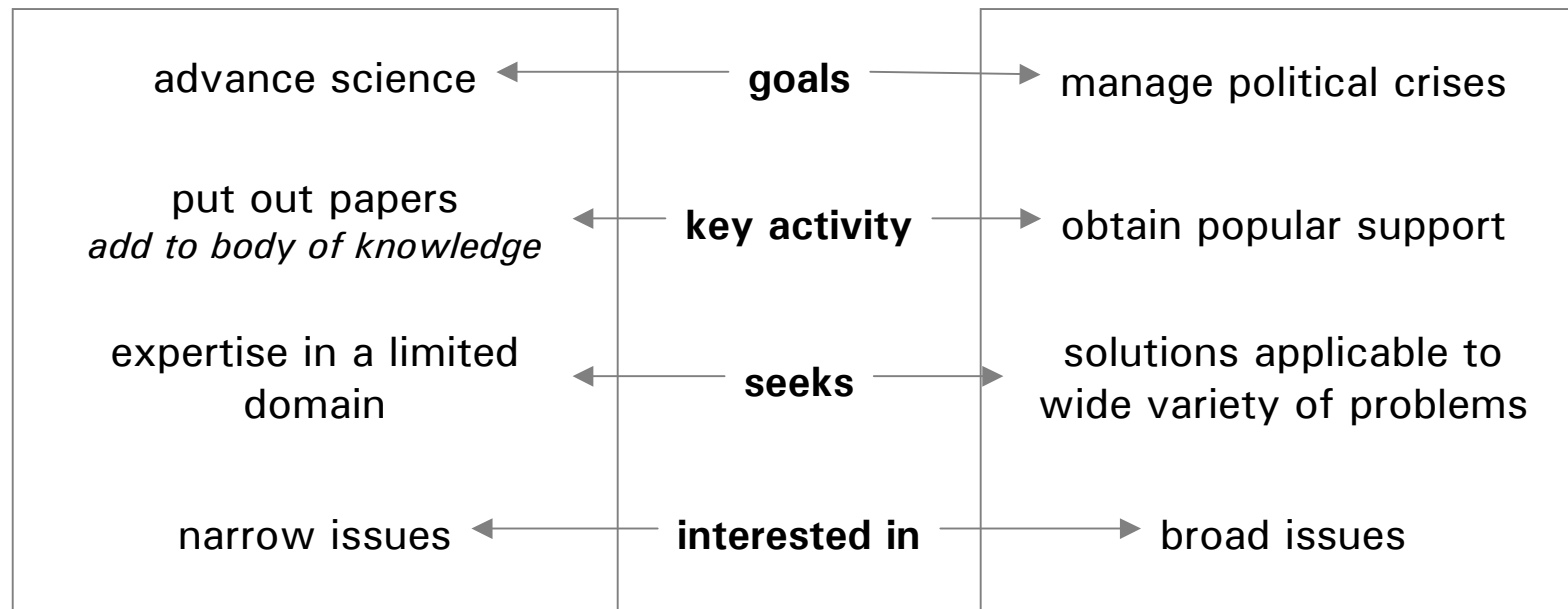
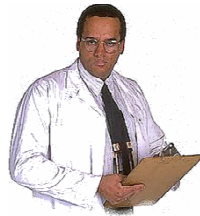
competition of
viewpoints

limited time frames
"bullet points" reading

search for "solution"
intuitive model

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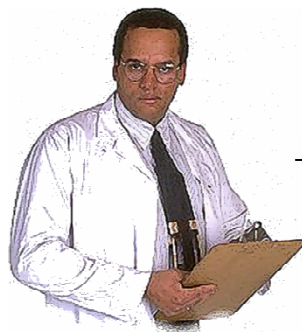
Natural selection ?



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Point of view of scientists/clinicians

relationship is a one to one



I tell him the
evidence



He acts

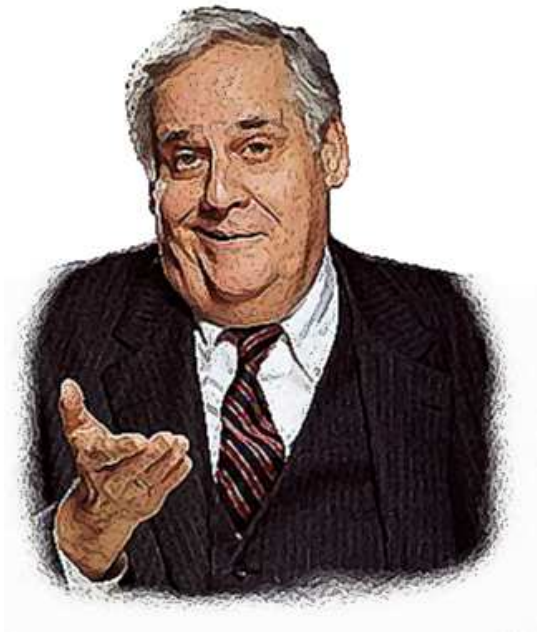
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Point of view of policy makers

many-to-one relationship



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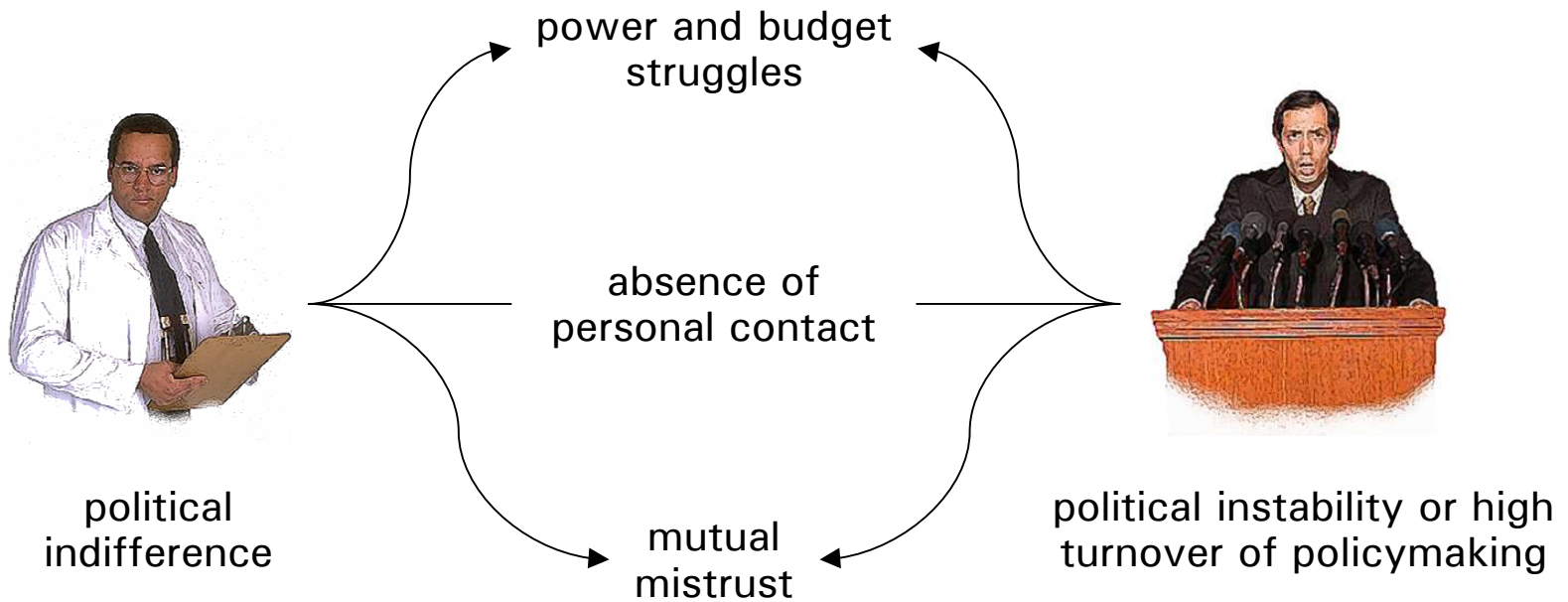


"I have made up my mind,
don't confuse me with the facts"

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Barriers for interactions

Innvaer et al., 2002



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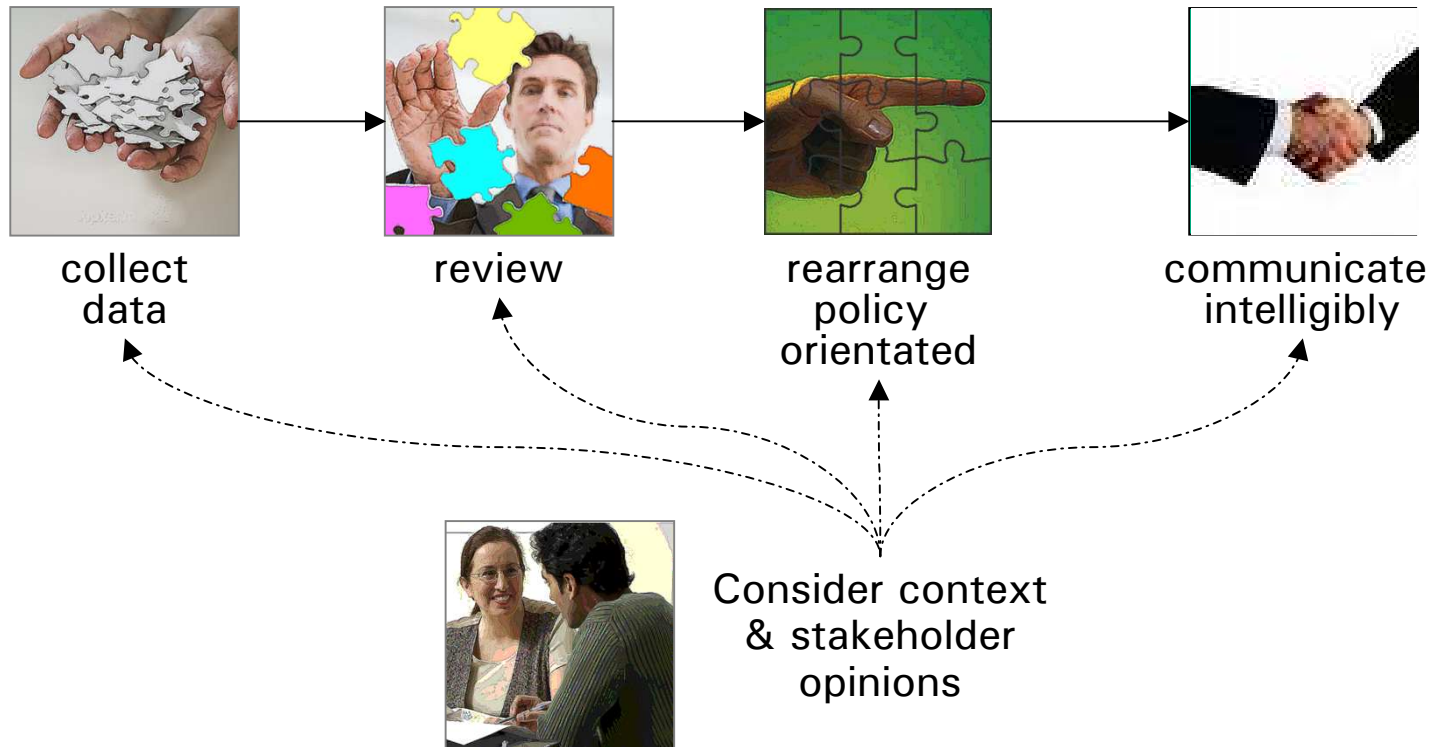
How to do



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Give policy makers what they need

*Edwards, 1993
Davis & Howden-Chapman, 1996*



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- The current Swiss drug policy has been successfully put to test on strategies having succeeded and efficient programmes.
- The partial revision of the law on narcotics inscribes in the law, the policy approach of 4 pillars ineffect for nearly 20 years.
- It was unanimously adopted by the council of states in spring 2007

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- The right wing referendum is seen as targeting this acquired practice
- The failure to legally anchor the four pillar approach is seen as endangering the existing programmes :
 - a) Heroin, adopted by the Swiss in 1995
 - b) Harm reduction measures having decreased HIV infection and mortality amongst users.

Conclusion

- HAT in different contexts feasible, effective and safe
- Switzerland and Netherlands: scientific data translated into a politico-legal framework

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“Evidence does not make decisions
people do”



Service d'addictologie