... that when things happen within a sequence affects how they happen” (Tilly 1984: 14).

**Introduction**

Cooks are well familiar with the problem. If one does not follow the instructions of a recipe in the designated chronological order, the eventually prepared meal is likely to taste less good or even turn into a complete failure. At what time something is done and in which sequence acts are carried out, however, does not only matter in terms of cooking. For political processes (though they can rarely rely on “blueprints” and “recipe knowledge”), it can also be assumed that the chronological order of individual reform measures may be of major significance. In the past, however, relatively little scientific attention was paid to this circumstance, which is why research into the sequencing of political reform measures is still in its infancy today. Since the majority of studies on the subject deal with Latin American or post-socialist transformation processes and the problem of market liberalisation, the occupation with reform sequences has long tended to have the status of a special problem.

Only over the last years, significantly increased general interest has been observed, which can be attributed to the so-called “historical turn” in the social sciences (Howlett & Rayner, 2006; McDonald, 1996; Robertson, 1993) that led to a substantial appreciation of the factor of ‘time’, on the one hand, and to various methodological innovations, on the other (Abbott, 1992; Czarniawska, 2004; Griffin, 1993; Mahoney & Terry, 2008). This increased attention is reflected, for instance, in a growing number of articles with historical-institutional argumentation (e.g. Bulmer, 2009; Falleti, 2005; Trampusch, 2010) and in the progressive extension of sequence considerations to various topics and areas of research (cf. Bagdadioglu & Cetinkaya, 2010; Bahl & Martinez-Vazquez, 2006; Bietenhader & Bergmann, 2010; Daugbjerg, 2009; Edwards, 2009; Kingdsale, 2009; Meyer-Sahling & Gotze, 2009; Pralle, 2006; Wallsten, 2002). The present article takes the increased interest in questions of sequencing as an incentive to summarise the state of research and, on this basis, develop a typology of different sequencing motivations. Until today, however, sequencing has barely been used as an opportunity for optimising political reforms. The present article aims at finding possible starting points for further research into this aspect of political reform.
STATE OF RESEARCH IN MACROECONOMICS AND DEMOCRACY THEORY

Thus far, the sequencing of reforms has been debated in various independent discussion contexts and therefore also with differences in accentuation and significative content. A consistent understanding of reform sequences has not yet emerged. Instead, it is possible to distinguish between different approaches and views. Originally, the question of reform sequences was identified as a problem of macroeconomic control and discussed primarily with regard to economic liberalisation in South America and transformation in the post-socialist countries. In the early 1980s, for instance, economists began to puzzle on why liberal economic reforms in the countries of Latin America did not succeed. In retrospect, it was considered a possible cause that the basically reasonable reform measures had only been carried out in an unfavourable succession (cf. Bresser-Perreira, 1987; Edwards, 1990; Lora, 1998; McKinnon, 1991). Later, the reflections on the sequencing of reforms thus developed were reviewed on the basis of experience with economic liberalisation and democratisation in other regions of the world (cf. Bawumia, 1996; Branch & Cheeseman, 2009; Edwards, 2009).

Due to the historically unprecedented simultaneous reorganisation of the economic and political system in the post-socialist transformation countries and the uncertainties associated with this process, the appropriate sequencing of reform measures was back on the political and scientific agenda a few years later. Here, the question of which sequence of reform steps is most favourable suggested itself because the aspire objectives were achievable only through a variety of individual reforms that could not be implemented simultaneously. At the same time, it was possible to conceptualise the complex reform programmes as a transformation process, i.e. as time-limited transition from an initial situation to a relatively specific final state.

At first, the demand for transformation timetables aiming at the reduction of uncertainty was answered primarily by economists and economically trained advisers (e.g. Sachs, 1989). However, the degree of compliance between the various reform recommendations was rather low (Funke, 1993). Owing to the high level of uncertainty in respect of the individual reform steps, the scientific debate as well as the perception of political actors (cf. Blejer & Coricelli, 1995) soon shifted towards dealing with the appropriate pace of reforms. In this context, two camps were formed: the advocates of shock therapies or big bang strategies, on the one hand, and the gradualists, on the other.

SEQUENCING AS A METAPHOR OF GRADUAL REFORM IN CONTRAST TO SHOCK THERAPY

According to the advocates of quick, comprehensive measures, all reforms in transition or transformation contexts are equally important and mutually interdependent. Beside a basic reservation to any simultaneous existence of old and new institutions, they hold that political economy calculations also speak in favour of a “shock therapy” approach. To make the reforms irreversible as quickly as possible (Aslund, Boone & Johnson, 1996) and signal the willingness to implement reform policies as clearly as possible is considered more important than the uncertain optimisation of the reform sequence.

By contrast, the adherents of gradualist reform advocate a step-by-step process and thus raise the question of the reform sequence. Since the gradualists share a basically pessimistic attitude to the possibilities of control, however, they do not prepare any complete timetables for the reforms. Instead, the question of sequencing is answered in a rather abstract way. For example, Mathias Dewatripont and Gérard Roland (1995) hold that the sequence of reforms should be organised in a way that ensures progression of the reform process, on the one hand, and minimises the destabilising effects, on the other. As a result, measures which are likely to materialise quickly in economic success should be initiated at the beginning of a reform process. By contrast, reforms with an investment character should ideally not be implemented until corresponding start-up costs can be compensated by means of the initial measures’ success. Empirical evidence supporting this assessment was found for instance by Byung-Yean Kim and Jukka Pirttilä (2006). In later works, Gérard Roland further differentiated his ideas (Roland, 2004): a sequence of reforms should begin with reform steps that help reduce the level of uncertainty (early reduction of uncertainty), are of critical importance to the overall reform (early reduction of risks) and provide benefit to many citizens (early safeguarding of corresponding start-up costs can be compensated by means of the initial measures’ success). Empirical evidence supporting this assessment was found for instance by Byung-Yean Kim and Jukka Pirttilä (2006). In later works, Gérard Roland further differentiated his ideas (Roland, 2004): a sequence of reforms should begin with reform steps that help reduce the level of uncertainty (early reduction of uncertainty), are of critical importance to the overall reform (early reduction of risks) and provide benefit to many citizens (early safeguarding of support for the reforms). By contrast, Peter Murrell (1993), another exponent of the gradualist position, bases his argument on the importance of the measures. At the beginning of a reform process, the reform forces ought to focus on the most urgent problem. Further process of reform will have to be implemented systematically over an extended period of time, relying to a high extent on an evolutionary development. Considering the high level of control uncertainty, it would subsequently be appropriate to implement reform measures that take their bearings from experimental learning (trial and error).

The gradualists’ strong reserve to any material specification of the reform sequence, which becomes apparent in these recommendations, is based on the fact that gradualist perspectives are usually linked to the idea of multiple de-
in which price liberalisation was implemented prior to stabilisation consistently encountered problems in economic recovery. By contrast, David Barlow and Roxana Radulescu (2005) showed by means of various panel logit models that especially the privatisation of small and medium-sized companies (small scale privatisation) had a positive impact on the subsequent reform steps. According to their analysis, there is a similar situation regarding the start of negotiations about EU accession, which favoured later bank reforms as well as the reform of competition policies.

Owing to the consideration of specific reform steps, the empirical findings of the aforementioned studies can only partially be transferred to other contexts, as the reform measures being implemented, for instance, in Western democracies differ entirely from the ones realised in transformation countries. However, the studies show that sequence aspects can be taken into account in analytical modelling contexts, and that one sometimes finds surprisingly strong correlations. In the transformation context, for example, the sequence of reforms unfolds more explanatory power than the pace of reforms although the latter is discussed far more intensively in the scientific arena (Beyer, 2001; Popov, 2000).

**SEQUENCING AS THE RIGHT TIMING OF REFORMS**

The question of whether partial, sequential or simultaneous reforms are to be preferred is also raised under new premises for OECD countries. For instance, Oliver Blanchard and Francesco Giavazzi (2003) argue that the deregulation of product markets causes a decline in returns due to increased competition; as a result, deregulation measures are subsequently also aspired for on the labour markets. These findings indicate an interaction effect between product market and labour market regulation. Even more comprehensive complementarity relations were already discussed before, e.g. by Peter A. Hall and David Soskice (2001). Helge Berger and Stephan Danninger (2005) take up the idea of complementarity and conclude on the basis of an OECD country panel that, in the period between 1990 and 2004, simultaneous product and labour market deregulation had a positive impact on employment growth (a strong interaction 2

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1 I.e. either a shock therapy or gradualism, depending on the individual situation: “Each country has to choose the proper speed of adjustment and sequencing of reforms by examining country-specific factors” (Nsouli, Rached & Funke, 2005: 740).
effect). According to Berger and Danninger, optimal timing of the reforms (in this case: simultaneity) is usually not achieved due to the separation of policy fields, which is why a sequence from one partial area to another as indicated by Blanchard and Giavazzi (2003) is more likely. Accordingly, the optimal timing of reform measures would require (1) knowledge of the complementarity relations and (2) overcoming of the decision makers’ partial, policy field-specific reform perspectives.

Gilles Saint-Paul (2004) also occupies himself with the timing of labour market deregulation (cutting back protection against dismissal). His considerations start with the often-voiced assumption that structural reforms are best implemented during phases of economic upswing. Differentiating between various individual factors, Saint-Paul makes clear that no clear direction of effects can be forecasted. Factually, however, the majority of all deregulating labour market reforms have been implemented in phases of rising unemployment, i.e. contrary to the initial considerations. Saint-Paul attributes this to the fact that employees’ resistance to reducing protection against dismissal is lower in times of rising unemployment when they themselves have to fear unemployment and may therefore favour reforms that promise to facilitate their re-entry into gainful employment. Apart from that, the question of pro-cyclical or anti-cyclical macroeconomic control policies, which is raised by Saint-Paul, has occupied economists at least since the days of Keynes. In a more recent study, Phillipe Aghion and Ioana Marinescu (2007) show that countries with a less developed financial sector could benefit in particular from anti-cyclical government investment policies. It is a joint characteristic of the various macroeconomic control approaches which understand sequencing as the problem of timing reforms in the right way that they require not only political actors’ sensitivity to long-term strategies, but also their ability to identify the right point in time. Based on expectations of the practical implementation of Keynesian control policies, this requirement has to be considered very strict.

SEQUENCING AS POSTPONING DEMOCRATISATION IN FAVOUR OF ECONOMIC REFORMS

Analogously to macroeconomic control debates, the development policy-related question about the right succession of reforms has also been raised in the context of democracy theory. Here, the debate focuses on the potential advantages that may be associated with the postponement of democratisation. Based on a mixed track record of the ‘third wave’ of democratisation which got underway in the late 1980s, various scientists emphasised the risks associated with precipitate democratisation. For instance, Fareed Zakaria (1997) points out that newly elected political leaders in countries like Peru, Argentina, Kazakhstan and the Philippines soon restricted or completely abolished civil liberties and, at the end of the day, only ‘illiberal democracies’ emerged in many of these countries. Amy L. Chua (1998) also attributes the outbreak of ethnic conflicts in Asia to premature democratisation and hence criticises the simultaneity of economic liberalisation and democratisation promoted by international organisations as inappropriate and ultimately disadvantageous for the social development of many countries. In addition, young democracies are often particularly susceptible to civil and other wars. For Edward D. Mansfield and Jack L. Syner (2007), this circumstance indicates that, in many countries participating in the third wave of democratisation, the institutional requirements of democratisation were not yet in place. Therefore, they consider the establishment of a functioning bureaucracy and a reliable legal system as reform steps which should be taken prior to the process of democratisation wherever this proves to be possible. In their opinion, unnecessary bloodshed and the ultimate failure of democratisation movements can be avoided on condition that elections are not held already at the beginning of a democratisation process. Theoretically, the possible problem of introducing democracy simultaneously with liberal market economy was also discussed under the headword of the ‘simultaneity dilemma’ (Armijo, Biersteker & Lowenthal, 1995; Elster, 1990). The simultaneity dilemma is based on the idea of asymmetric antagonism. On the one hand, free market institutions are seen as promoting the development of democracy or possibly even a precondition for the efficiency of democratic systems. On the other hand, the unequal distribution of assets and income which results from the introduction of liberal free market institutions is considered as barely manageable in democratic conditions. From a historical perspective, extended sequences from the nation state to a free market economy and subsequently to democracy are therefore regarded as the prevalent development path.

By contrast, Thomas Carothers (2007) criticises the idea of postponing democratisation as a ‘sequencing fallacy’. In his opinion, autocrats cannot be expected to develop institutions that can be understood as a precondition of democratisation. The hope for a sequence in which an authoritarian state would initiate legal and bureaucratic steps on which a later democratic government could build on was no more than an illusion. A criticism by Joel S. Hellman (1998) and Bransilav L. Slantchev (2005) points in the same direction, namely to the fact that in many societies undergoing transformation, more far-reaching reform steps are blocked by the governing circles themselves as they do not wish to lose their newly obtained access to extraordinary yield opportunities by means of ‘rent-seeking’ (Hellman, 1998: 219). So far, democratic deci-
sion-making processes have prevented the phenomenon of deadlocked partial reform, described by Hellmann as the ‘winners-take-all’ problem. Sheri Berman (2007) also vigorously opposes the idea of suspended democratisation. In her opinion, each of today’s successful democracies has taken an independent, unique path, often also marked by major turbulences. Therefore, she finds sequence considerations to be of only little significance in the field of democratisation research.

STATE OF RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF INSTITUTIONALISM

Over the past years, another line of discussion about the issue of “sequencing” has emerged independently of the debates on macroeconomic control and processes of democratisation. Associated with the rise of institutionalist approaches in political science, sociology and economics, historical points of view and argumentation patterns have increasingly moved into the focus of attention (Greif, 2006; Howlett & Rayner, 2006; Mahoney & Rueschemeyer, 2003; Nee & Brinton, 1998). Terrence J. McDonald (1994) even considers this shift of focal interest as a “historical turn” in the social sciences. Beside path dependencies (e.g. North, 1990; Mahoney, 2000), critical decision-making points (e.g. Collier & Collier, 1991), governance mechanisms (e.g. Mayntz, 2004), event sequences are also attached particular importance by scientists with an institutionalist orientation. One of the much-quoted referential texts in this respect is Paul Pierson’s essay with the title “Not Just What, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes” (Pierson, 2000). Among other authors sharing Pierson’s interest in sequences are Edwin Amenta (2003), Dietrich Rueschemeyer and John D. Stephens (1997) and Kathleen Thelen (2000). Without using the term “sequence” or “sequencing”, however, different chronological orders and successions of events have already been used by the classic authors of historically oriented institutionalism as an explanation for national differences and different routes of modernisation (e.g. Moore, 1966; Gerschenkron, 1962, Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). As one example of the newly aroused interest in sequences, a historical-institutionalist analysis by Tulia Falleti (2005) attributes the differing success of decentralisation in Latin America to the sequence in which the individual steps (political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation) were implemented. Falleti’s analysis shows that sub-national political elites (governors and mayors) have not necessarily gained more autonomy. In case of an unfavourable sequence of decentralisation steps (especially late fiscal decentralisation), the measures even led to higher dependence of the sub-national levels on central government.

SEQUENCES AS AN ANALYTICAL CONCEPT

The “historical turn” has contributed to calling established methodological approaches into question. Owing to methodological innovations such as “narrative positivism” (Abbott, 1992, 1993; Czarniawska, 2004; Ospina & Dodge, 2005; Brzinski-Fay & Kohler, 2010), alternatives to the “general linear model” have emerged which can take the procedural character of historical developments more strongly into consideration. The “general linear model” relies on the assumption of correlations between one dependent factor and various independent variables. For instance, political decisions are considered in regression models as the result of stochastic processes in which a number of variables with certain features “determine” the eventual result. Implicitly, this kind of causal modelling negates the significance of history. Time is conceived as a discreet, endlessly divisible unit. In conceptual terms, history is then only a sequence of moments. Which point in time or period of time is selected is of no significance for the general linear model since it assumes that any outcome can be calculated from the current configuration of variables. Instead, the “narrative positivism” approach turns the entirety of a historical event sequence retrospectively into a subject of research. It aims at identifying the plot or narrative which provides a plausible explanation of the development from start to finish. By contrast to the general linear model, it is not an exceptional case but a basic expectation of narrative positivism that a variable exerts influence on the development at a certain point in time, whereas it does not have this effect anymore at another point of the sequence. Accordingly, explanations have to meet other criteria than in the general linear model. For instance, Andrew Abbott (1992) refers to the following criteria:

1. Enchainment, which is considered as a “narrative analogue of causality” (Howlett & Rayner, 2006:3). In this context, explanations should complement each other in such a way that there are plausible links between the individual parts of the narrative.
2. A strict succession or order, which needs to be in place if a sequence of events is to explain a certain result.
3. Convergence, which ensures that the sequence ultimately reaches a “steady state” or the final point of the narrative.

Historical sequences can also be compared with one another. For this purpose, new comparative analysis procedures have likewise been developed. For example, Andrew Abbott and Stanley DeViney (1992) studied the continuous extension of social security benefits. Based on a so-called “optimal matching” procedure to analyse the different sequences of social security benefit exten-
tion, they found significant indications of a trans-national imitation process which, though, was partially influenced by various country-specific factors. They argued that variation of the sequence does not affect all social security benefits in equal measure. Time and sequential variation is relatively large in the area of health insurance and pension insurance, whereas industrial accident insurance, unemployment insurance and social welfare fit into a general historical development pattern to a far greater extent.

SEQUENCES OF PATH DEPENDENCE

Some historically oriented institutionalists assume that social processes are not structured sequentially in a completely arbitrary way, but in line with a dominant basic pattern of any historical development. The most prominent representative of this perspective, Paul Pierson, acts on the assumption that many, if not most political processes are self-reinforcing, path-dependent event sequences: “There are strong grounds for believing that self-reinforcing processes will be widespread in political life... If the emergence and development of institutions are subject to positive feedback, this alone assures the centrality of path dependent processes, since institutions are a ubiquitous feature of the political world” (Pierson, 2000: 79).

The impact of historical events on present and future processes is path-dependent. In earlier phases of path-dependent development, relatively minor events can be crucial for this development to take a certain course, whereas even large-scale events barely exert any influence on the chosen path at later points in time. This also means that a relatively large number of paths can still be chosen at the beginning of a process (high level of contingency), whereas self-reinforcement later leads to consolidation and institutionalisation. Consequently, a lot depends on what phase a path-dependent process is in. However, path-dependent processes do not always have a typical development sequence. Completely accidental event sequences can also importantly determine the “direction” of a path. This effect is illustrated in the famous Polya urns example by path dependence pioneer W. Brian Arthur: A vessel contains two or several balls of different colours which are drawn out of the vessel blindly (i.e. accidently). At the start, there is one ball of each colour in the vessel. Of the colours drawn, one (or several) additional balls are placed in the vessel together with the original ball (as a self-reinforcing or “increasing returns” effect), so that the composition of colours in the vessel changes with every draw. The process is repeated until the composition of colours becomes almost stable. The latter cannot be determined in advance as it depends on the accidental outcome of the draws. In any case, however; early withdrawals from the vessel have a greater impact on the final composition and therefore a path-forming effect (cf. Arthur, Ermoliev & Kanovski, 1987). Analogously, it is conceivable that political processes are directed into a subsequent path-dependent development by the chronological order of small or larger events.

SEQUENCES OF PUNCTUATED INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Another pattern of social processes is assumed by the representatives of punctuated institutional change or the so-called “process sequencing” approach. Based on studies from the area of evolutionary biology by Niles Eldridge and Stephen J. Gould (1972), proponents of process sequencing hold that institutional change is characterised by the fact that long phases of institutional stability are interrupted by essentially shorter phases of fundamental change (Haydu, 1998; Jones, Sulkin & Larsen, 2003; Jones & Baumgartner, 2005; True 2000; John & Margetts, 2003). In the process of policy formation, one can identify long “normal” phases in which, for instance, calmness predominates, budget continuations are common and political views barely change. These long periods of stability are punctuated by large – though less frequent – changes due to large shifts in society or government. Endogenous processes then lead to a situation where many things change within a short time: “Atypical, paradigmatic or non-incremental change then involves new policies which represent a sharp break from how policies were developed, conceived, and implemented in the past but are still rooted in the same general concerns and problems” (Howlett & Rayner, 2006: 12). A much-quoted example is the shift to Keynesian demand-oriented policies in the 1930s/1940s and the similarly fundamental change towards neoliberal control strategies in the 1970s/1980s (Hall, 1992).

From the punctuated development point of view, institutional change occurs in a sequence of steps which require one another but cannot be considered as regular cycles. In the context of every step or leap, the previously valid general concepts, belief systems or paradigms are called into question and finally abandoned. This draws attention to destruction and construction mechanisms such as agenda setting (Kingdon, 1997; Pralle 2006) or the formation of “advocacy coalitions” (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). In this approach as well, sequences matter in two different respects. First, historical development

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3 This implies that path-dependent processes are often shaped by unintended social dynamics and not sequences of deliberately taken steps. Compare Garud and Karnoe (2001) who speak of ‘path creation’ when actors set a sequence of self-reinforcing events in motion.
has a sequential structure due to the succession of stability phases and times of punctuated change; and second, fundamental change – at least in the area of policy formation – requires prior construction phases and hence a characteristic sequence of development.

MOTIVATION OF SEQUENCING

Our explanation of the various perspectives on the issue of reform sequences has shown that various aspects can turn sequences into an interesting subject of research. Until today, however, sequencing has only seldom been used as an opportunity for optimising political reforms. Existing research is limited to specific optimisation recommendations which would affect the sequence of reforms. This fact is not only attributable to a basically sceptic assessment of control possibilities by many scientists participating in the discussion, but also to the still low number of reform cases the sequence of which has been analysed systematically. Another difficulty is that sequencing can be based on different motives which are associated with different potential ways of optimisation. Further empirical research might therefore differentiate between reform sequences by type of motivation. In the following, a typology of motivations is presented in this respect.

The sequential order in which reforms are implemented will only become of any relevance if these reforms are mutually related to their framework conditions or to other reforms. However, it makes an analytical difference whether the interdependencies relate to framework conditions or directly to other reform steps, since the right “timing” of reforms is likewise important in the former case, whereas the succession of reform steps is the sole relevant factor in the latter case. In addition, the motivation is assumed to vary depending on whether the interdependency is based on characteristic attributes of the reforms or on a critical concurrence of factors. If one takes both differentiation possibilities into consideration, one arrives at four types of motivation. Three of these are interested in exerting active influence on or controlling the succession of reforms (speculation on the interplay of reform effects and framework conditions, consideration of interaction effects, seizure of windows of opportunity). By contrast, the fourth type focuses on avoiding the unpredictable and hence undesired interaction effects.4

4 Theoretically, radical reformers can also pin their hopes deliberately on the most uncertain strategy and hence on realising the “unexpectable”. However, this is likely to be an extremely exceptional case.

SPECULATION ON THE INTERPLAY OF REFORM ATTRIBUTES AND FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

As far as the first type of motivation for the sequencing of reforms is concerned, it is important that reform effects can differ significantly, e.g. with regard to transitional costs or the group of beneficiaries. As a rule, reforms tend to produce transitional costs first – be it only the cost of developing and passing the corresponding policies. Depending on the reform, the extent of these transitional costs can be quite different. The possible reform gains only emerge at a later point in time and their actual realisation is always uncertain since, as is generally known, reforms can also miss their aspired objectives. In the ideal case – where the reform gains actually materialise – the cost-benefit development follows a J-curve (Przeworski, 1991). At first, a more-or-less deep gap needs to be closed before the benefit eventually materialises. Reforms are hence encumbered with the problem of time inconsistency (Kydland & Prescott, 1977). In liberal-democratic conditions, voters sometimes have to be ready to accept losses on the grounds of their hope for future gains. If the incumbent government does not succeed in convincing voters that the implemented reforms will eventually produce success, it may be voted out of office or forced to abandon the reform process. Governments therefore are most motivated to initiate such reforms which are highly likely to bring returns already in the current election period, and rather avoid reforms where this is not to be expected. In addition, differences in the amount of transitional costs and length of the transitional period open the opportunity to make strategic use of this aspect. Such a calculation may motivate such reform sequences, for instance: a) the benefit of which becomes apparent at an early stage, b) the returns of which concentrate before the next election or c) which minimise phases in which the transitional costs cannot be compensated by the success of other reforms (“valley of tears”).

The sequencing of reforms with this motive in mind requires that the effects of the individual reform steps can be assessed. Moreover, selection of a suitable strategy requires that the political forces are also able to assess voters’ reform acceptance – after all, their readiness to tolerate painful phases of transition can be fairly high. The greatest problem for this speculation on reform effects is likely to lie in unexpected factors affecting the framework conditions of planned sequences. For instance, failure of a reform step which was supposed to ensure early returns will require complete re-calculation of the intended sequence.

As regards the reform effects, the specific group of beneficiaries also is a starting point for exerting influence on sequential successes. As mentioned above, Gérard Roland (2004) recommended securing support for reforms by...
CONSIDERATION OF INTERACTION EFFECTS

As far as the speculation on reform effects is concerned, possibilities for sequencing arise from the interdependency of reform attributes and framework conditions such as limited length of the legislative term. Another constellation of decision making appears if the effects of interaction between one or several reforms indicate a certain sequencing structure. This is the case whenever the implementation of reform steps in a certain succession promises greater success because of the direct interdependency, i.e. whenever taking step A before step B is more favourable than taking step B before step A. Where this asymmetric relationship applies to several steps of an overall reform, the effort to maximize interaction effects may face complex problems of orientation (e.g. A prior to B is more favourable than B prior to A, yet CBA may still be more favourable than CAB). Moreover, reformers would often have to wait with the reform steps, which does not only require knowledge of the sequential interaction effects, but also – considering the fluctuating popularity of public issues and the problem-solving pressure – a high extent of discipline. Despite these difficulties, consideration of interaction effects can ultimately pay off as a strategy since the effects of a different succession may be highly dissimilar, as is shown for instance by the results of transformation research.

For the motivation of considering interaction effects, it is also relevant whether there are complementary relationships between two or several reform steps. Timely implementation of these reform steps would then be advantageous if positive interaction effects could arise at an early stage. Most recently, the idea of complementarity was used, particularly in the so-called “varieties of capitalism” research, as an argument for the stability of different institutional systems (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Amable, 2003). In this discussion, it was assumed that the various institutions of an economic system complement one another insofar as the efficiency of one institutional attribute is positively influenced by the existence of other institutional attributes. From the perspective of institutional change, complementarities contribute to the mutual stabilisation of institutions. The concentration of a dissimilar complementary reform package could help break such entrenchments. However, this requires the reform forces to have knowledge of the existing complementarities and a reform perspective that ranges across the individual policy fields. Secure knowledge of institutional interdependencies is not yet very extensive, as complementary effects are relatively hard to isolate and may also change over time (Boyer, 2007). Further progress in this field of research would therefore significantly enhance opportunities for the sequencing of reforms as far as consideration of interaction effects is concerned.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY

For the third motivation of sequencing, it is important that framework conditions might change on a time-critical basis, erratically or in relatively irregular cycles. The sequencing of reforms can aim at seizing the windows of opportunity resulting from this circumstance. The case is relatively simple when it...
comes to cyclical developments such as the cyclical economic trend: reform activities can be geared to the respective phases of the cycle. Depending on the type of correlation, pro-cyclical or anti-cyclical measures and reforms come into question. The sequencing can be optimised through development of forecasting instruments indicating the changeover from one phase to another. It can also require the establishment of a preliminary timetable of activities. Apart from that, knowledge of the correlations and interdependencies is essential to determining what kind of activity is suitable for which phase. The greatest risk associated with this kind of sequential action is wrong timing of the reform activities – this may even leave policymakers with renunciation of sequential action as the more favourable alternative. Knowledge of the cyclical character is relatively extensive in the important areas of monetary and economic stabilisation policy. In the majority of other policy fields, however, sequential adjustment of reform activities to possible cycles has not been in focus thus far, which means missed opportunities for optimisation. However, general pro-cyclical and anti-cyclical dynamisation of reform activities could also increase the overall difficulty of identifying the right timing.

Windows of opportunity also open where framework conditions change erratically. It is more difficult to prepare reform activities for such erratic change than for cyclical change. Nevertheless, erratic change can still have a sequential meaning since deviation from the routine sequences may become appropriate. Where a repertoire of activities has been developed for special conditions, a quick switch to another sequence of activities can take place. As can be seen from the successful application of emergency plans, this is often a crucial advantage. Medium- to long-term if-then planning can contribute to seizing windows of opportunity before they close again. The main problem of sequential preparation for erratic windows of opportunity is perhaps that the exceptional situation may cause punctuated change of the overall situation and that the preparatory action may consequently become inappropriate.

AVOIDANCE OF UNCONTROLLABLE INTERACTION

At the end of the day, time-critical situations can also arise under hazardous constellations. Therefore, sequential action can also be motivated precisely by avoiding risks. Risks do not only arise, as in case of windows of opportunity, from the interplay of reforms and framework conditions, but also from the critical coincidence of reforms that influence one another. If it is true that “small events” (Arthur, 1994) and accidental constellations are able to exert extensive influence, the guiding principle of action – provided there is a positive assess-
Our description of the four types of motivation makes clear that the sequencing of reforms can be shaped in highly different ways. Insofar, it cannot be ruled out that the search for suitable reform sequences is complicated additionally by the need to decide in favour of certain optimisation directions. This illustrates all the more that the evidence on which the sequencing of reforms could be based is still insufficient in many policy fields.

CONCLUSION

The objective of the present article was to identify starting points for further research into the sequencing of reforms. The description of the state of research has made clear that various aspects of reform sequences make them an interesting subject of research. Analyses in macroeconomics and democracy theory have focused on shock-therapeutic or gradual reform action, the succession of specific reform steps or the right timing of reforms. An analytical approach to sequences has been elaborated, and theoretical concepts of social change which focus on path dependence or the punctuated development of historical sequences have evolved within the context of institutionalist research.

Only some of the approaches take the perspective of control and aspire to optimise political reform processes. Therefore, the state of research – especially as far as the reform activities of Western democracies are concerned – provides only a very limited basis for deriving “recipe knowledge” in the sense of specific patterns of success that could guide the sequencing of reform processes. The number of reforms the sequence of which has been analysed systematically is still too low for this purpose. Thus far, plausibility considerations with respect to optimised sequences, which have largely been developed in special contexts, have barely been tested in other contexts. Another problem for research on the sequencing of reforms consists in the fact that sequencing can be guided by different, partially also overlapping motivations. In this context, it would be promising for further research into reform sequences to differentiate between them by type of motivation. Such differentiated analysis of sequences could rely on the typology of motivational constellations presented in this article. Interest in the subject of sequencing is currently on a noticeable increase, yet still relatively low, which does not seem to be justified against the current state of research. Among other things, there are:

1. well-developed methodological instruments by which sequences can be analysed (cf. Beyer, 1993),
2. evidence that reform sequences can have an extremely high explanatory potential for socio-economic developments (cf. Beyer, 2001),

Preconditions for further progress of research are therefore very favourable.

REFERENCES


3. evidence that sequence-oriented perspectives can help us close research gaps (cf. Falleti, 2005), 4. initial indications that reform sequences which led to fundamental change were arranged in a specific way (cf. Kim & Pirttilä, 2006), and 5. elaborated concepts (such as path dependence or punctuated development) through which the relevance of event sequences can be substantiated theoretically (cf. Pierson, 2000; Howlett & Rayner, 2006).


