

Table of Contents

List of Figures	VII
Table Directory	VIII
List of Abbreviations	XII
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Motivation and problem-solving	1
1.2 Objective and research questions	3
1.3 Structure of the work	6
2 Definitions	9
2.1 Health policy and health policy reforms	9
2.2 Health telematics / e-health	11
2.3 Electronic card systems and electronic network systems	12
3 Specials of German and Austrian health care systems	16
3.1 Commonalities and differences of the organization of the statutory health insurance in Germany and Austria	16
3.2 A network analysis of the decision-making structures and governance forms in German and Austrian healthcare	19
3.3 The European health insurance card and electronic card systems in Germany and Austria	34
4 State of research on (health) political change and classification of this work in the field of research	45
4.1 Methodological approach of the research work	45
4.2 Results of the literature evaluation: (health) political change in theory and empiricism	47
4.3 Classification of own work in the field of research	56
5 Used theories and hypotheses	61
5.1 Theoretical framework for empirical analysis	61

5.2	Hypothesis formation	72
6	Research strategy	78
6.1	Policy field Health	78
6.2	Policy Area: Regulatory Policy	79
6.3	Case study type and country selection	81
6.4	Period of investigation	84
6.5	Examination methods	85
7	Empirical Analysis: Explanatory Factors for the Reform "Introduction of electronic card system" in German and Austrian health care system	96
7.1	Social and economic developments	96
7.2	Interest groups and power resources	112
7.3	Ideological imprint of the government	145
7.4	Political-institutionalist conditions and veto players	152
7.5	International influences	164
7.6	Political legacy - self-reinforcing mechanisms	175
7.7	Political entrepreneurs and the political window of opportunity	183
7.8	"New" actors, the power of the media and bound rationalities the political decision maker	195
8	Discussion of results	210
8.1	Theoretical implications	210
8.2	Practical implications	218
8.3	Limitations of the study	219
9	Conclusion	222
9.1	Main results	222
9.2	Implications for science and practice	225
9.3	Further research questions and outlook	227
	Bibliography	228
	Appendix	258

Summary:

Political science studies of the last few years show that the German and Austrian health care systems are rather reform-resistant. On the basis of the launch of electronic card systems in the German and Austrian health care system, this dissertation demonstrates that health policy reform steps are possible. Furthermore it uses a comparative research design to examine theories from the comparative policy research as well as from the public policy research. The theories are tested comparing Germany and Austria – two relatively similar structured states with relevant differences in the health policy. Through a qualitative content analysis according to Mayring and the evaluation of expert interviews, the determinants of health policy change are analyzed.

The results of this dissertation differ from previous empirical findings regarding reform possibilities and reform resistance. Hence, the study contributes to political science research due to its explanation of policy change.

The dissertation shows that a combination of theory modules from comparative policy research and public policy research can reasonably explain the introduction of electronic card systems in the German and Austrian health care system. The study shows that a rapid political change was possible in both countries, especially up until the implementation phase of the policy cycle. Changes in power relations, the distribution of power resources between interest groups in the policy field, former political decisions and self-reinforcing mechanisms, the commitment of "new" actors in the subsystem, as well as the bounded rationalities of political decision makers are the main reasons for initiating the launch of the electronic card system in the German and in the Austrian health care system.