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It is about time! Exploring the clashing timeframes of politics and public policy experiments

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Abstract

Although existing studies on experimental policymaking have acknowledged the importance of the political setting in which policy experiments take place, we lack systematic knowledge on how various political dimensions affect experimental policymaking. In this article, we address a specific gap in the existing understanding of the politics of experimentation: how political timeframes influence experimental policymaking. Drawing on theoretical discussions on experimental policymaking, public policy, electoral politics, and mediatization of politics, we outline expectations about how electoral and problem cycles may influence the timing, design, and learning from policy experiments. We argue electoral timeframes are likely to discourage politicians from undertaking large-scale policy experiments and if politicians decide to launch experiments, they prefer shorter designs. The electoral cycle may lead politicians to draw too hasty conclusions or ignore the experiment's results altogether. We expect problem cycles to shorten politicians' time horizons further as there is pressure to solve problems quickly. We probe the plausibility of our theoretical expectations using interview data from two different country contexts: Estonia and Finland.

Key words: policy experiments; experimental policymaking; politics of experiments; timeframes.

INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity of economic, environmental, and societal problems has pressured governments to seek novel ways to adapt existing public policies, as well as design new policy solutions. Experimentation has been proposed as a key strategy for dealing with complexity and producing policies that better address acute challenges (e.g., Ansell and Bartenberger 2016; Bravo-Biosca 2020; McGann, Blomkamp, and Lewis 2018; Pearce and Raman 2014; Rangoni and Zeitlin 2021). Experimental approaches promise to provide a better understanding of policy problems that are characterized by high levels of uncertainty (Bravo-Biosca 2020). Numerous studies point to the increasing use of experimentation in contemporary policymaking (e.g., Ansell and Bartenberger 2016; Lee and Ma 2020; Pearce and Raman 2014).

Various definitions are used for delineating policy experiments. We adopt a definition of experiments as *time-limited tests of new policy solutions that provide information for further policy decisions* (Bravo-Biosca 2020, p. 195; McFadgen and Huitema 2018; Nair and Howlett 2016, p. 69). This definition is intentionally broad to accommodate different experimental approaches and satisfies the two core criteria put forward by McFadgen and Huitema (2018): to call something an experiment, there should be an intervention theory with explicit assumptions, which are tested, and the tested solution should be novel. Importantly, experiments have a clear timeframe and an explicit *ex ante* strategy for assessing the effects of the intervention (Ibid.; Bravo-Biosca 2020, p. 195). Our focus is on *field experiments* initiated and interpreted by governmental policy actors and not on laboratory experiments conducted by researchers. We concentrate on strategic large-scale policy experiments, which span several years and involve political decision making.

Despite high expectations, existing studies have often found that large-scale policy experiments face various impediments. Nair and Howlett (2016, p. 72) argue the obstacles have a lot to do with "the politics of policy experiments"—various political considerations featuring throughout the experimental process and posing "continual challenges to effective experimentation." From the "political learning" perspective, postulated by Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch, and Maarek (2021, p. 4), electoral competition should encourage politicians to undertake more experiments since the knowledge gained from such experiments may offer politicians electoral advantages by signaling voters their "intentions to implement policies based on rigorous evidence, address criticism, and establish objectivity in politically contentious issues." The reported experience with policy experiments, however, indicates a much more complex picture: choices of policy action and interpretation of evidence have been strongly influenced by what is "politically preferred, conducive or acceptable" (Nair and Howlett 2016, p. 72). Despite extensive scholarly discussions on policy experimentation, however, there is surprisingly little systematic analysis and theoretical conceptualization of the *political dimensions* of public policy experiments.

A core characteristic of all experiments is that they have "timeframes set from the start to assess results and make decisions" (Bravo-Biosca 2020, p. 197). However, some studies have recognized that there is a potential "temporal disjoint between establishing evidence and demands for political action" (Pearce and Raman 2014, p. 393). As noted by Stoker (2010, p. 53), "experiments are a tool with a linear rhythm in a non-linear policy process and may as a result lose the battle for relevance by failing to produce results in a timely way." The timeframes inherent to large-scale experiments (spanning several years) can be expected to interact with other temporalities in the politico-administrative system. The interaction of these temporalities may shape the experimental design, process, and results in unanticipated ways.

Hence, in this article, we zoom in on a specific challenge that the political setting poses for experimental policymaking: the potential clashes between political and experimental *timeframes*. Although the challenges related to timeframes have been tangentially mentioned by several studies discussing public policy experimentation, so far, they have not been investigated in a *systematic* way—either theoretically or empirically. In our article, we seek to address this important gap in existing research. The key research question of the article is: How do the timeframes inherent to politics influence experimental policymaking? In particular, we are interested in the *challenges* the political timeframes pose for large-scale policy experiments.

Our analytical strategy for tackling these questions is as follows. In the theoretical part of the article, we outline the key clashes between experimental and political temporalities that can be encountered in experimental policymaking. We do so by synthesizing ideas from the theoretical discussions on experimental policymaking, public policy, electoral politics, and mediatization of politics.[1] In the empirical part, we probe the plausibility of the theoretical expectations and examine how these clashes are expressed in the perceptions of public officials about experimental policymaking in two different country contexts: Estonia and Finland. As sources of data, we use 66 interviews conducted with public officials in Estonia and Finland in 2022–2023.

The novel theoretical contribution of our article is to put forth a framework that discusses the impacts of the various timeframes inherent to politics (electoral cycles and problem cycles) on experimental policymaking in a systematic and holistic way. Our empirical contribution is to test the plausibility of the theoretical expectations and to provide an empirical understanding of how the political timeframes influence experimental policymaking in different empirical contexts.

THEORETICAL DISCUSSION
The Promise and Nature of Public Policy Experiments

The growing pressures on governments to be "smarter," more "innovative," and "agile" have spurred a call for an increasingly experimental stance or even an "experimental turn" in public policy making (e.g., Ansell and Bartenberger 2016; Ettelt, Mays and Allen 2015; Lee and Ma 2020; McGann, Blomkamp and Lewis 2018; Rangoni and Zeitlin 2021; Raudla et al. 2023). The benefits of using experimentalist approaches are argued to be manifold. Testing the usefulness of novel ideas and solutions in a real-world setting before applying them on a larger scale is expected to increase the quality of policies by providing knowledge that is otherwise not available (Checkland et al. 2023; Ettelt, Mays, and Allen 2015; Farrelly 2008; Millo and Lezaun 2006). Furthermore, experimentation is viewed as a way to adjust to change in an increasingly uncertain, complex, and fast-changing social, economic, and environmental context, and to improve the future-readiness of the planned policies (Ansell and Bartenberger 2016; Bravo-Biosca 2020; Lee and Ma 2020; Millo and Lezaun 2006; Nair and Howlett 2016). Large-scale policy experiments have been undertaken in various policy fields, including education, employment, welfare, health, environmental sustainability, and fiscal policies. For example, policymakers have experimented with universal basic income, housing allowances, income maintenance, welfare-to-work, negative income tax, and water management (Ettelt, Mays, and Allen 2015; Kangas et al. 2021; Nair and Howlett 2016; Oakley 1998).

A wide range of experimental approaches are available for governments to fulfill these aims. By and large, they can be divided into three ideal types—randomized controlled trials (RCTs), non-randomized policy pilots, and design experiments (Raudla et al. 2023). RCTs offer experimenters the opportunity to draw valid causal conclusions about the effects of a project, program, or policy by randomly dividing the target population into two or more groups and treating them differently (Bravo-Biosca 2020; Pearce and Raman 2014). RCTs are often presented as the "gold standard" of experiments (e.g., Pearce and Raman 2014). Non-randomized policy pilots test a new policy approach on a small subset of population or jurisdictions and allow the introduction of a policy in a phase-wise manner (Farrelly 2008; Nair and Howlett 2016). In design experiments, a policy solution is iteratively refined on the basis of feedback gathered from the affected individuals, until acceptable results emerge (Ansell and Bartenberger 2016; Stoker and John 2009). In this article, we focus on large-scale experiments, which span several years and necessitate the involvement of politicians (e.g., for legislative mandate, funding, and public legitimization).

The Political Setting of Experiments
Huitema et al. (2018, p. 148) argue that in the policy sciences, experiments have been predominantly conceptualized as *a research method*. According to the "research logic" of public policy experiments, the experimentation would proceed in the following steps: identifying the policy problem, exploring potential ideas and solutions, selecting idea(s) for testing, choosing the appropriate experimental design, testing whether and how the solutions work, evaluating the evidence, deciding on the further policy steps (discontinue, scale-up, or new experiment), and disseminating the knowledge gained (e.g., Bravo-Biosca 2020; Cobb et al. 2003). As such, public policy experiments hold a promise of a rational approach to policy making (Checkland et al. 2023), "removed from the messy world of politics" (Rogers-Dillon 2004, p. 24).

[1]The mediatization of politics has been defined as "a long-term process through which the importance of the media and their spill-over effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors have increased" (Strömbäck and Esser 2014, p. 6).

However, since policymaking is an inherently political process, the reality of policy experimentation is much more complex than the "rational" ideal implies (e.g., Checkland et al. 2023; Rogers-Dillon 2004). Experiments can be exposed to political impacts throughout the entire process, and politics may undercut the aforementioned linear sequence of steps (e.g., Bédécarrats, Guérin, and Roubaud 2019; McGann, Blomkamp, and Lewis 2018). Indeed, the existing literature acknowledges that public policy experiments are not neutral evidence-creating research activities, and their interpretation is "an inescapably political process" (Huitema et al. 2018, p. 148). The political setting can influence "who gets to formulate the ideas, who is involved in producing the evidence on their efficacy, which kinds of information should be collected, and which rules of evidence are used" (Ibid., p. 145). Thus, political motivations are likely to affect the choice and set-up of experiments and the interpretation of results. In the following, we zoom in on a key challenge that the political setting poses for large-scale public policy experiments: the clashes between political and experimental timeframes.

How Political and Experimental Timeframes Clash

According to Schedler and Santiso (1998, p. 5), "[t]ime in its manifold manifestations represents a pervasive factor of political life." Studies on political time have distinguished between various temporal features (such as electoral terms, time budgets, and time horizons) and argued that all these aspects can profoundly affect policymaking (e.g., Goetz 2014; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009; Howlett and Goetz 2014; Linz 1998; Schedler and Santiso 1998). Although in the existing literature on experimental policymaking, the potential clashes between political and experimental timeframes are mentioned, it has been done in a cursory fashion. In none of the existing studies have the tensions between experimental and political timeframes been examined in a systematic way—theoretically or empirically. Thus, to take the first step towards a more systematic understanding of these tensions, we developed the theoretical discussion in the following way. We juxtaposed the theoretical insights from various literatures on public policy, electoral politics, and mediatization of politics that discuss the nature of political timeframes with existing theoretical discussions on policy experimentation and derived the implications for experimental policymaking. We argue the temporalities of politics and experimentation can clash with each other in various ways. More specifically, the key sources of these clashes are disparities between the electoral and experimental timeframes and differences between the timeframes of political problem cycles and experiments.

Electoral Cycles Versus Policy Experiments

The modus operandi of electoral politics is that in a democratic setting, politicians strive to win competitive elections, and their decisions are influenced by their perceptions of which policies appeal to the electorate and maximize votes from their constituents (e.g., Bernecker, Boyer, and Gathmann 2021; Sørensen et al. 2020). In a democratic setting, "the most fundamental temporal unit is the electoral term" (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009, p. 185). The electoral term provides politicians with the time budgets they have for getting things done and marks the time horizons they adopt—which in turn can influence the timing, starting, and ending of policies (Goetz 2014; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009; Howlett and Goetz 2014; Linz 1998; Schedler and Santiso 1998). The

impact of these temporal features on policy experiments can be viewed through various lenses. On the one hand, there are mechanisms through which the timeframes of electoral cycles can *facilitate* the use of policy experiments.

First, politicians may use experiments to extend their policy influence *beyond one electoral cycle*: to cast a longer shadow than their current term in office would otherwise allow and to tie the hands of subsequent governments in their policy choices (Callander and Hummer 2014; Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch, and Maarek 2021). When politicians know that they may not be in office after the next elections, they may initiate policy experiments during their time in office in the hope that the evidence of positive results provided by trial would compel the future government to go ahead with their preferred policy direction. Thus, experiments initiated in one electoral cycle can serve as a mechanism for transmitting information to the next electoral cycle (to the electorate and to the next incumbents), for securing buy-in and ensuring the survival of the preferred policy (Callander and Hummel 2014; Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch, and Maarek 2021). Used in that way, experiments can in fact lengthen the political time horizons, which may otherwise be confined to just one electoral cycle.

Second, politicians may launch policy experiments in the run-up to elections to avoid "larger pain" and to minimize electoral losses. As Nair and Howlett (2016) suggest, if addressing a particular problem entails painful and unpopular decisions, politicians may use an experiment as a "substitute" for large-scale policy action. Pilots can serve "as an excuse for policymakers to delay large-scale policy reforms beyond their term in office" (Nair and Howlett 2016, p. 71). In that way, the elected officials can demonstrate that they are "dealing" with a problem but at the same time avoid retribution from the electorate for politically unpalatable actions.

On the other hand, there are several ways how the electoral cycle can be expected to pose challenges for experimental policymaking because of the mismatches between experimental and electoral temporalities, especially when it comes to larger-scale policy experiments. The clashes between electoral and experimental timeframes can influence *whether* the experiments are initiated in the first place, how they are *designed*, and the extent to which policymakers *learn* from them.

First, given that electoral terms limit their time budgets and shorten their time horizons (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009), politicians may be disinclined to launch large-scale experiments (spanning several years) in the first place (Bernecker, Boyer, and Gathmann 2021; Majumdar and Mukand 2004). If an experiment is initiated before elections but the results only materialize after, the political calculus may question the electoral benefit of such an undertaking (Bueno 2023; Majumdar and Mukand 2004; Mink and De Haan 2006). Prior to elections, politicians would be motivated to pinpoint concrete policy achievements and decisions that have already been adopted, highlight their visible benefits to the voters, and claim the credit (Bueno 2023; Harrington 1993; Rogoff 1990). If, instead, politicians have to point to an *ongoing* policy experiment with vague and uncertain future benefits (Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch, and Maarek 2021), they may consider it to be an overly weak signal of their achievements in office, potentially undermining their chances in the electoral competition. Thus, the perceived short-term political benefits derived from faster policy decisions (by fitting them into the time budget remaining in the electoral

term) may outweigh the longer-term benefits of the information an experiment can offer. Such opportunistic uses of the time budgets shaped by the electoral cycle have been observed in other domains of political action and discussed extensively in the literature on electoral budget cycles (e.g., Bueno 2023; Katsimi and Sarantides 2012; Mink and De Haan 2006).

Second, even if politicians do decide to launch policy experiments, the considerations of the electoral term, which limits their time budgets (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009), may motivate politicians to push the experiments to be done faster than warranted by scientific design (Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch and Maarek 2021; Stoker and Evans 2016; Strydom et al. 2010). Thus, the elected officials may demand shorter experiments to ensure that the results can be shown within their time budget: before the next elections (Nair and Howlett 2016; Stoker 2010). Although large-scale strategic RCTs lasting several years hold the promise of delivering the most rigorous causal conclusions about the effects of a tested policy (e.g., Cotterill and Richardson 2010), politicians may object to longer timeframes needed for the intervention to take effect and demand shorter timeframes for the experiment. Due to the limited duration, however, the experiments may not be able to capture the longer-term impacts of the tested policy solution (Millo and Lezaun 2006).

Third, even if politicians agree to launch experiments that cross the electoral cycle (i.e., are designed to end after the subsequent elections), the proximity of upcoming elections may motivate politicians to draw conclusions from the ongoing experiment too hastily (Checkland et al. 2023; Martin and Sanderson 1999; Rogers-Dillon 2004). Stoker (2010, p. 53) argues even "if the right moment is seized to do experimental work, there can be issues about the impatience of policymakers in waiting for results." If politicians support the policy solution the experiment is testing but fear that they would not be in office after the next elections, they may wish to cement certain policy decisions during their time in office. As a result, they may be inclined to scale up the tested policy immaturely, before the experiment has an opportunity to provide solid evidence. This, in turn, would undermine learning from the experiment and important policy decisions may be made before the results of the experiment come in (Nair and Howlett 2016; Stoker 2010).

Fourth, electoral cycles may induce politicians to ignore the results of the experiments (Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch, and Maarek 2021; Majumdar and Mukand 2004). By the time the results of an experiment are available, a new government may be in office and, consequently, political priorities may have changed (Bravo-Biosca 2020; p. 205; Nair and Howlett 2016; p. 70; Oakley 1998; Pearce and Raman 2014, p. 394). Thus, experiments may become regarded "as time capsules from a previous era" (Huitema et al. 2018, p. 148) and the new government in office after elections may be inclined to ignore the experimental evidence.

Political Problem Cycles Versus Policy Experiments

Alongside the considerations of the electoral cycle, politicians' decision making is strongly influenced by emergent problems in the public sphere and the collective attention to these problems (e.g., Jones 2017). The essence of what we label as a "problem cycle" is the following: when there is a societally perceived problem and politicians are expected to "fix" it—sooner, rather than later. The timeframes of the "problem

cycles" are likely to affect politicians' inclination to launch and learn from experiments.

If delays in solving societal issues are perceived as problematic, the time horizons of policymaking can become even shorter than the timeframes posed by electoral cycles. If politicians perceive a strong time pressure in addressing a societal problem, gathering evidence via experimenting may seem as a "luxury," as pointed out by the literature on evidence-based policymaking (e.g., Cairney 2016; Stoker and Evans 2016; Strydom et al. 2010). Some problems may be perceived to be so acute that they do not allow time for conducting experiments (Clarke and Craft 2019; Pearce and Raman 2014). Instead, driven by ideology, politicians may prefer to trust their gut feeling about the potential impacts of different policies—and hence would not feel the need to demand more rigorous evidence via experiments (Beesley, Hawkins, and Moffitt 2022; Bravo-Biosca 2020; Cairney 2016). Experimenting strikes the kind of "chord of skepticism and indecision" that politicians seek to avoid (Peters 1998, p. 126), especially in a situation of collective attention to a problem that has been defined as urgent (Jones 2017). Even if an experiment is launched to test different solutions to an imminent and salient problem, then similarly to the dynamics in electoral cycles, politicians may want to hasten the evaluation of the data provided by the experiment to get answers more quickly (Nair and Howlett 2016; Trein and Vagionakis 2022).

The clashes between the experimental and political problem-solving timeframes are likely to be amplified by two factors: (1) media attention to societal problems and (2) crises. Media attention is likely to increase policymakers' perception of urgency in solving salient societal problems (Stoker and Evans 2016; Torfing and Ansell 2017). The increasing role of media in shaping political decisions has been captured by the term "mediatization of politics." Since the media plays a strong role in influencing public opinion, politicians are strongly motivated to take it into consideration in their decisions (Strömbäck and Esser 2014). The growing mediatization of politics means that the media attention amplifies the societal gaze under which political actors move and it forces political actors to take decisions more quickly (Blumler 2014; Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999; Strömbäck 2008; Strömbäck and Esser 2014; Torfing and Ansell 2017). Due to the perceived power and influence of the (news) media, political actors may subject the pace of their decisions to the media-cycle. As Blumler (2014, p. 35) puts it, the rhythm of news production embraces "the new" and "all involved in its making are drenched in the fluid immediacy of events and their coverage." Consequently, "politicians and their advisors often seem impelled to keep up with and respond to the news on its terms and in its time" (p. 35). As a result of the scandal-focused media, while at the same time suffering from information-overload and shortage of knowledge (e.g. ,Jones 2017), politicians may be tempted to dive into solutions too quickly (Torfing and Ansell 2017, p. 38), which leaves no time for discussing alternative options and testing them before scaling up.

The shortening of political time horizons resulting from mediatization would be further amplified if the policy problem is defined as a "crisis": where the core values, institutions, or functions of the society are perceived to be under threat (Boin and t'Hart 2022). A situation of a (perceived) crisis is likely to give rise to a sense of "policy urgency" among
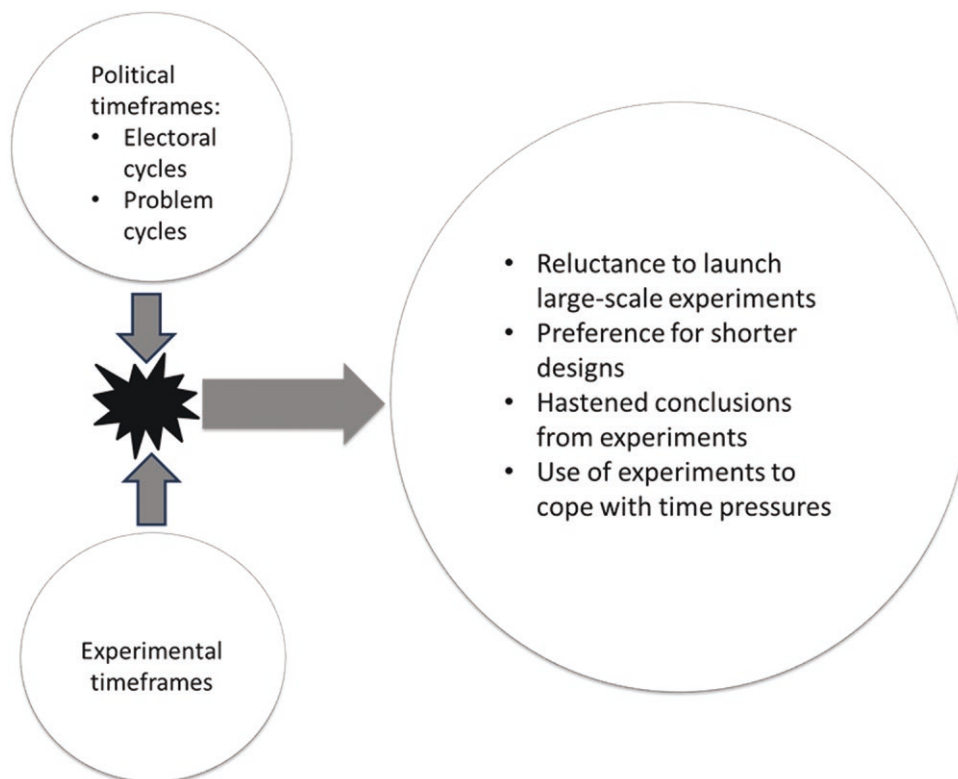
Figure 1. Impacts of clashes between political and experimental timeframes

politicians (Hulme and Hulme 2012; Lesch and Millar 2022). In such a situation, politicians are likely to forgo experimental policymaking, since such evidence-collection is likely to take more time than politicians have in their time budget (Hulme and Hulme 2012).

In sum, we expect the clashes between political and experimental timeframes to lead to the following impacts (see also fig. 1). First, both electoral and problem cycles are likely to hinder the launch of large-scale policy experiments. Second, even if large-scale policy experiments do get launched, electoral cycles can lead politicians to prefer shorter designs and draw conclusions before the completion of the experiments. Finally, politicians may use policy experiments to cope with pressures from electoral and problem cycles. Next, we test these conjectures empirically.

METHODS

To probe the plausibility of the theoretical expectations outlined the previous section, we draw on interviews carried out in Estonia and Finland from Fall 2022 to Summer 2023. The semi-structured interviews (32 in Estonia and 34 in Finland) were conducted according to the same interview protocol and engaged central government public officials from the Government Office/Prime Minister's Office, fiscal and financial policy institutions, and other public institutions. When selecting interviewees, we were guided by the following considerations. First, we contacted officials who are or have been in charge of coordinating experimental policymaking in the Prime Minister's Office in Finland and the Government Office in Estonia. Second, we wanted to interview officials from different hierarchical positions. Our set of interviewees included: 6 top-level

officials from Estonia and 4 from Finland; 13 middle-level officials in Estonia and 12 in Finland; 13 expert-level officials in Estonia and 18 in Finland. Third, we wanted to ensure that our interviews cover the perspectives of officials working in ministries and agencies. Our set of interviewees thus included 32 ministry-level officials (16 in each) and 16 agency-level officials (7 in Finland and 9 in Estonia).[2] Finally, we used snowballing to identify further interviewees who had had experiences with policy experiments (see Appendix I for more details).

Despite being geographically close, the two countries represent different cases in terms of their historical-social background and experience with policy experimentation. Finland is regarded as a leading country of policy experimentation, embedding them in "anticipatory governance," while Estonia is an aspiring novice, having only taken its first steps towards a more systematic public policy experimentation. The interviews explored the perceptions of the Estonian and Finnish public officials regarding the benefits and pitfalls of policy experiments as well as their own experience with experimenting (see Supplementary Appendix II for the interview protocol). The average length of an interview was one hour.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. In coding the interviews with MAXQDA, we used a combination of deductive and inductive approaches. The coding exercise started with the initial coding scheme based on the preliminary analytical framework drawing on the international academic

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[2]Given the overall focus of the broader research project within which the interviews were conducted and to ensure in-depth comparability between the cases, the interviewees included 11 Ministry of Finance officials in Finland and 15 in Estonia; 7 officials from the Tax and Customs Board in Estonia and 4 officials from the Finnish Tax Administration.

debate on policy experimentation. In the process, the initial coding scheme was complemented with the additional codes emerging from the analysis of the interview transcripts. All the statements of the interviewees concerning the role and perceptions of politicians and political institutions towards policy experimentation as well as all the statements regarding temporal aspects of experimenting were coded with respective codes (see Supplementary Appendix II for more details).

The research design allowed us to gain rich information about the perceptions and experiences of public officials regarding the different temporalities involved in policymaking and experimentation. To maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, they are identified by a short code in the analysis (e.g., Est1, Fin1).

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

A Short Overview of the Case Contexts

Estonia and Finland—neighboring countries located at the opposing shores of the Baltic Sea—are both small parliamentary democracies with parliaments *Eduskunta* (FIN) and *Riigikogu* (EST) elected by proportional representation. The countries have strong multi-party systems that, in combination with the proportional representation, lead to coalition governments where common interests and aims must be sought by political parties.

The development of the experimental culture in Finland dates back several decades as a central theme in innovation policy and the activities of the Finnish innovation fund SITRA but was strongly re-emphasized during the government period of Prime Minister (PM) Juha Sipilä in 2015–2019. During that period, policy experimentation was institutionalized as a high political priority through the program "Experimental Finland" (2016–2019) (Leino and Akerman 2022). A framework of public sector experimentation was developed and funding for experiments was allocated. The program designed by the Experimental Finland Team in the PM Office foresaw several types of experiments including strategic experiments (policy trials) and pilot pools/partnerships (regionally relevant or sector-specific experiments) (Leino and Akerman 2022, p. 45). Alongside hundreds of experiments and policy pilots conducted across the country both at the central government and municipal level, six strategic experiments were initiated, including the world-famous universal basic income (UBI) experiment (Kangas et al. 2021). The subsequent government of PM Sanna Marin launched various large-scale policy experiments as well, including an RCT testing the extension of preschool education to 5 year olds, an RCT testing the effects of a recruitment subsidy for sole entrepreneurs, and piloting the delegation of employment services to municipalities, among others.

In Estonia, the emergence of policy experimentation as an element of public sector innovation policy has been much more recent and characterized by a bottom-up approach. Experimentation has been promoted by public sector innovation programs financed from the European Union structural funds and so-called "design sprints" led by the Public Sector Innovation Team at the Government Office. In June 2023, a methodological guide for experimenting in the public sector was published. However, the policy experiments carried out have been mostly small-scale design experiments (e.g., on improving the explanatory note of the state budget), policy pilots (e.g., on performance budgeting), or RCTs (e.g.,

concerning recycling of packaging) not demanding political attention or intervention.

Electoral Cycle Versus Experimental Cycles

Our interviews indicate that in both Finland and Estonia, the electoral cycles have influenced experimental policymaking in important ways. The clashes between electoral and experimental timeframes have influenced decisions on *whether* and *when* to initiate experiments, the temporal features of their *design*, and *learning* from experiments.

Whether, When, and How Long to Experiment?

Even though the governments in Finland have managed to launch large-scale experiments spanning several years, many interviewees did consider the electoral cycle to be a major obstacle to policy experiments. It was noted that since governments are in office only for the term of four years it may *discourage* politicians from launching longer-lasting experiments since they feel they do not have enough time in their time budget to wait for the results. As an interviewee explained, "politicians know that they have only four years in office and if they want to get votes in the next elections, they have to signal to the voters that they have done something beneficial. That creates a problem with these experiments because it would be ideal to have them running for longer time-periods. But the politicians don't want to, because the effects would be coming after the elections, and they may not be in the next government" (Interview Fin20).

Estonian public organizations have undertaken several smaller-scale experiments that have remained under the political radar—for those, the political timeframes have not presented significant challenges. The interviewees acknowledged that for large-scale policy experiments (the Finnish UBI experiment was often referred to as an example), politicians would need to be involved to initiate the trial, provide the legislative mandate, and secure funding (Interviews Est7, Est11, Est12, Est15, and Est18). Politicians' focus on the electoral cycle, however, was viewed as a major hurdle in undertaking large-scale policy experiments. Furthermore, some of the interviewees pointed out that due to the frequent turnover of governments in Estonia (with each coalition lasting 1–2 years), the time horizons of politicians are even shorter than the electoral cycle of four years, with one respondent stating "the political cycle in Estonia is about a year—so you cannot actually assume that you have 4 years to carry out any project" (Interview Est9). That, in turn, has hindered the initiation of any longer-term experiments: "politicians are afraid that by the time the experiment is completed, they might not be in the office anymore, so they want to implement the proposed solution right away" (Interview Est18).

The electoral timeframes have implications also for the *timing* of new policy experiments. The Finnish experience with large-scale RCTs demonstrates that if politicians do want to launch them, they strongly prefer to do it at the *beginning* of the governmental term, to ensure that the experiments get completed within their time budget. An interviewee summarized the tendency as follows: "it's very difficult for politicians to accept that they have launched a certain experiment but not get the outcome during the same electoral period. This is one reason why experiments are often launched at the beginning of the governmental term." (Interview Fin12)

The Finnish interviews indicate that the Government Program is a key instrument for outlining which experiments the government plans to undertake but the composition of the Program is influenced by political timeframes. A Government Program is a 4-year action plan that a new coalition government agrees on at the beginning of the governmental term. If the experiments are decided during the negotiations over the Government Program and written into it, then they cannot be neglected later (Interviews Fin3, Fin12, Fin15, Fin16, Fin 17, Fin22, Fin23, Fin24, and Fin25). The time budget for compiling the Government Program, however, is usually quite short (from a couple of weeks to a couple of months) and that means that only limited time is available for considering what kinds of strategic experiments could be mentioned in the Program.

When politicians in Finland have decided to launch larger-scale experiments spanning several years, the clashes between the political and experimental timeframes have influenced the *design* of the experiments. While researchers and civil servants would have preferred longer timeframes for preparing the experiments and their actual duration, the political timeframes were much shorter due to the electoral cycle (Interviews Fin7, Fin8, Fin10, Fin11, Fin14, Fin15, Fin16, Fin20, Fin28, and Fin32). As observed by one of the interviewees, in the case of the UBI experiment, there was strong pressure from politicians to launch the experiment quickly: "the politicians wanted to have the experiment up and running in one month. But there were a lot of things that needed to be done before, so that was very unrealistic." (Interview Fin6) In the words of another interviewee: "the toughest part was the timeframe. The universal basic income experiment had to be conducted quite quickly because the politicians wanted to complete it before the next elections. It is difficult for them to understand how long it takes to prepare and implement a good experiment." (Interview Fin8) This provides evidence for the theoretical expectation that politicians' considerations of the electoral cycle can lead them to prefer shorter timeframes for policy experiments.

However, our interviews also indicate that there can be *political* reasons for why the launch of an RCT can take a long time. In the Finnish context, RCTs that treat people differently need a legislative basis. Passing the necessary legislation can take time and considerably delay the start of the experiment (Interviews Fin7, Fin14, and Fin21). Furthermore, in some instances, electoral considerations can lengthen (rather than shorten) the duration of the experiment. In the case of the pre-primary education trial, the politicians demanded the addition of one more cohort of pupils to the experiment, which extended its length by one year.[3] Although that meant that the trial could not be concluded anymore within the Government period, the interviewees suggested that the request to include an additional cohort was related to the political calculation: "they just thought that it would look nice for the people who are voting for them, the electorates." (Interview Fin13). Thus, contrary to our expectation that electoral cycles would shorten the timeframes of policy experiments, the Finnish case provides examples of situations where political considerations actually lengthen the experimental timeframes. In sum, our cases indicate that electoral

cycles play a significant role in whether and when politicians prefer to launch policy experiments and which experimental timeframes they prefer. Next, we analyze how electoral cycles affect the learning from experiments.

Learning from Experiments

We conjectured that, in addition to decisions on how long the experiment should last, the electoral cycle may influence *how quickly* the politicians draw lessons from an on-going experiment or whether they are willing to wait for them at all. As the Finnish interviews indicate, this has indeed happened in the case of a large-scale policy pilot that was intended to test whether delegating employment services from the central government to the municipalities would improve employment outcomes. The pilot was launched in early 2021 and was meant to last for 4 years (until the end of 2024). However, before the 2023 spring elections—2 years before the experimental evidence was supposed to come in—the Finnish government decided to scale up the policy solution being tested and delegate employment services to all municipalities, starting from 2025 (Interviews Fin9, Fin12, Fin13, and Fin15). As one of the interviewees explained, "the pilot wasn't given enough time to show any results before the politicians took the decision for this large-scale structural change. The first results only came in after the government had already decided to scale this policy up. The preliminary results showed that there was no significant difference between the pilot municipalities and the synthetic control groups, but by then the policy decision was already done." (Interview Fin9) This shows how pressures of the electoral cycle led politicians to become impatient waiting for the results of the policy experiment and decide to expand the reform before evidence about its impacts was available.

As the interviewees explained, the government wanted to use the opportunity when in office to get something done in the policy domain it considered ideologically and politically important. Since the coalition politicians could not be sure they would be in the next government, they wanted to leave a mark on the employment policy area (Interviews Fin9, Fin12, and Fin15). Similarly, in the case of the pre-primary education trial, the approaching general elections put the issue of pre-primary education on the political agenda and led to a political suggestion of scaling the solution to all the children before any results from the trial had come in (Interview Fin16).

We suggested that the electoral cycles may lead to the disregarding of experimental evidence when a new government comes to office and has different policy priorities from the previous one. We witnessed some of these dynamics in the case of the UBI experiment in Finland, where the results of the experiment only came in after the term of the government (that had initiated it) had ended. Although the experiment did show some promising results regarding improving the well-being indicators of participants, the new government that came into office after elections had other policy priorities and did not pursue any further steps with universal basic income (Interviews Fin6, Fin20, Fin23, and Fin27). One of the interviewees explained that there is a higher chance for the results of the experiment to "endure" beyond the term of the government who initiated it and to influence the new government in office when the new coalition includes at least one party from the previous coalition (Interview Fin20). It was also suggested that if the issue being experimented with is considered important by all parties, the subsequent coalition

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[3]The RCT sought to assess the effects of offering pre-primary education to 5 year olds on children's development and learning (Ministry of Education and Culture 2021).

governments are more likely to consider its results (Interviews Fin9 and Fin14).

Another factor influencing whether the legacy of an experiment endures from one government to the other is whether the parliamentary opposition parties have been included in the discussions on the experiment and support it (Interviews Fin14 and Fin21). That way, the opposition parties are less likely to discard the experiment when they take office. Thus, involving opposition parties in decisions regarding an experiment can lengthen politicians' time horizons beyond the electoral cycle. Broad-based discussions and the building of consensus concerning an experiment can hence provide opportunities for longer experimental timeframes, which in turn improves the validity of the evidence experiments offer. In sum, our cases show that electoral cycles play a significant role in whether experiments are launched, how long they last, and how politicians draw conclusions from them. Next, we turn to the impacts of the problem cycles on policy experimentation.

Problem Cycle Versus Experimental Cycle

We conjectured that the short problem-cycles politicians follow can hamper the use of large-scale experiments in experimental policymaking, and the sense of policy urgency is likely to be amplified by mediatization and crises. The interviews from both Finland and Estonia corroborate these expectations.

Although the Finnish government has—to some extent—been able to overcome the short-termism pressures imposed by the problem-cycle and launched large-scale policy experiments, the interviewees did mention that time pressures have also undermined experimentation. As one of the interviewees summarized it: "we are currently living in social media-driven political reality where politicians are so stuck to minute-based communication that it seriously harms visionary politics of which experimental policymaking could be part of" (Interview Fin29). It was also observed that the perception of a crisis creates pressures to offer immediate solutions, which, in turn, undermines experimentation. As one of the interviews put it, "during the covid crisis, nobody in their right mind could suggest experimenting with the solutions before scaling them up. We had to act immediately" (Interview Fin34). Thus, we can see that even in a country where politicians favor policy experimentation, the time pressures of mediatization and crises can hamper their willingness to experiment.

Our interviews suggest that policy experiments in a specific policy area may also be influenced by problem pressures in *neighboring* policy fields. In the case of the policy pilot that delegated employment services to the municipalities, the context was changed by a major reform of social and health services whereby the responsibility and budget for these services were moved from the municipal to the regional level, with one interviewee stating "at that stage, the politicians thought that we had to compensate for this change somehow to the municipalities and decided to give employment services from the state to the municipalities" (Interview Fin12). This consideration contributed to the decision to scale up the employment services reform before the policy pilot could deliver any results (Interviews Fin12 and Fin13).

On the other hand, the Finnish interviews also demonstrate how politicians use pilots and experiments to "buy time" in solving problems and to mitigate time pressures created by mediatized problem cycles. Several interviewees argued that since launching pilots requires less time (and also less money and effort) than a full-scale policy change, politicians often prefer it as a first step in addressing the problem (Interviews Fin2, Fin4, Fin8, Fin16, and Fin20), with one interviewee stating "launching pilots allows the politicians to go on TV and make an announcement about that" (Interview Fin2). It also emerged from the Finnish interviews that, at times, politicians use experiments to reach a compromise in a situation where reaching a "permanent" policy solution may be too difficult (e.g., Interviews Fin4, Fin8, Fin16, and Fin20), with one interviewee stating "if the coalition partners in the government cannot agree on a measure, then one solution is to make it temporary" (Interview Fin20). For example, reaching the agreement on offering tax deductions for household services (that constitute green investments) was facilitated by the fact that these were decided to be temporary and regarded as experiments (Interviews Fin4 and Fin12). Thus, our interviews suggest that initiating pilots is one way for politicians to postpone decision making. As one of the Finnish officials put it, "if politicians are not able to decide upon some policy, it's easy to say: 'Let's experiment with it'" (Interview Fin8).

The limitations imposed by problem cycles on large-scale policy experiments were perceived to be significant in the Estonian context. As the Estonian interviews indicate, delays in solving societal issues are often perceived as problematic, which, in turn, constrains the use of large-scale policy experiments (e.g., Interviews Est1, Est15, Est17, and Est27). In the words of the interviewees: "politicians feel that they have to put out the fire immediately. They live one day at a time. This makes it challenging to introduce policy experiments. …. They want to put the seed into the ground today and take out the carrot tomorrow" (Interview Est17). Another argued "we have to decide on the solution and then start running. Even then we may not be fast enough. … If we started to experiment before choosing direction, we would lose even more time" (Interview Est1). The Estonian interviews also confirm that problem cycles faced by politicians can be further shortened by media cycles and perceived crises, which amplify the time pressure in solving problems. As one of the interviewees explained, "when something happens, for example, the electricity price goes through the roof, the minister has to be on TV in 15 minutes and promise solutions. And then they go there, blurt out some solution that may not be reasonable actually and then we somehow have to make it work." (Interview Est4) This illustrates well how problem cycles—especially when amplified by mediatization and crises—impose pressures on politicians to come up with quick policy solutions, leaving no time to test them experimentally before scaling up.

In sum, both cases demonstrate how clashes between problem cycles and experimental timeframes can pose challenges for launching large-scale policy experiments. While in Finland, politicians have found ways to overcome the time pressures created by problem cycles and launch a number of large-scale experiments, in Estonia, the constrained time budgets created by problem cycles have been a major hurdle for experimental policymaking.

CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

Part of the appeal of policy experiments is that they hold the promise of "rational and depoliticized policy making" but, in

reality, experiments take place in a "messy world of politics" (Checkland et al. 2023, p. 464). Although existing studies on experimental policymaking have acknowledged the importance of the political setting in which policy experiments take place (e.g., Huitema et al. 2018; McGann et al 2018; Rogers-Dillon 2004), we lack systematic knowledge on how various political dimensions affect experimental policymaking and interact with the preconditions of creating reliable experimental evidence.

In this article, we sought to address a specific gap in the existing understanding of the politics of experimentation: how political timeframes influence experimental policymaking. As the growing literature on political timeframes has suggested, temporal features like electoral terms, time horizons, and time budgets are likely to influence policymaking (Goetz 2014; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009; Howlett and Goetz 2014; Linz 1998; Schedler and Santiso 1998). In our study, we sought to shed light on the challenges that various political temporalities—the electoral cycles and problem cycles—pose for large-scale policy experiments. Drawing on theoretical discussions on experimental policymaking, public policy, electoral politics, and mediatization of politics, we synthesized expectations about how electoral and problem cycles may influence the timing, design, and learning from policy experiments. We then probed the plausibility of the theoretical conjectures using interview data from Estonia and Finland. Table 1 summarizes our findings.

First, we conjectured in the theoretical discussion that since electoral timeframes limit the time budgets and shorten the time horizons of politicians (Goetz 2014; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009; Howlett and Goetz 2014; Linz 1998; Schedler and Santiso 1998), electoral cycles are likely to discourage politicians from undertaking large-scale policy experiments in the first place. Our interviews show that the electoral cycle has indeed constituted a major hurdle to conducting large-scale policy experiments in Estonia. In Finland, however, politicians have launched several large-scale policy experiments during the past decade despite the potential obstacles from the electoral cycle. This indicates that the electoral cycle does not always hinder large-scale policy experiments, and it would be fruitful to investigate further under which conditions this happens.

Second, drawing on studies on political time (Goetz 2014; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009) and experimental policymaking (Nair and Howlett 2016; Stoker 2010), we suggested that even if politicians do decide to launch large-scale experiments, they may prefer shorter designs than warranted by scientific considerations. The Finnish experience with large-scale policy experiments—whereby politicians have pressured the implementers of the experiments to design shorter experiments—offers some evidence of such a tendency. At the same time, our interviews pointed to an example where politicians actually preferred to extend the duration of the experiment since it was electorally expedient.

Third, we expected that the electoral cycle may lead politicians to draw hasty conclusions or ignore the experiment's results altogether (e.g., Checkland et al. 2023; Rogers-Dillon 2004; Stoker 2010). The experience with several large-scale policy experiments in Finland provides evidence of such a propensity. Fourth, we conjectured that problem cycles are likely to shorten politicians' time horizons further as there is pressure to solve problems quickly (e.g., Clarke and Craft, Pearce and Raman 2014), making them reluctant to undertake policy experiments and to prefer immediate policy action instead. We expected the impact of such problem cycles to be amplified by media cycles (e.g., Blumler 2014; Strömbäck 2008; Strömbäck and Esser 2014) and the perceptions of crisis (Hulme and Hulme 2012; Lesch and Millar 2022). Our interviews indicate that the compressed timeframes imposed by the problem cycles and amplified by media attention and crises have indeed acted as a major constraint on launching large-scale experiments in Estonia. In Finland, however, even though these pressures are perceived to be present, politicians have launched numerous large-scale experiments.

Fifth, our theoretical discussion pointed to how politicians may be inclined to use large-scale experiments to cope with the political timeframes: either to tie the hands of the next government (Callander and Hummer 2014; Corduneanu-Huci, Dorsch and Maarek 2021) or to avoid taking painful decisions (Nair and Howlett 2016). While we did not find evidence of the former, the Finnish interviews did indeed demonstrate the use of experiments as a way of postponing or avoiding larger decisions in the face of time pressures imposed by both electoral *and* problem cycles. Furthermore, as the Finnish experience indicates, the temporary nature

Table 1. Summary of empirical findings.

	Finland	Estonia
Conjecture 1: Electoral cycles prevent the launch of large-scale experiments.	Although the electoral cycle is seen as a potential obstacle, several large-scale experiments have been launched	Confirmed
Conjecture 2: Electoral cycles shorten the duration of large-scale experiments.	Evidence of pressures towards shorter design, but also instances of lengthening the duration	No large-scale experiments undertaken
Conjecture 3: Electoral cycles hasten learning from experiments and can lead to ignoring experimental evidence	Confirmed	No large-scale experiments undertaken
Conjecture 4: Problem cycles prevent the launch of large-scale experiments.	Not confirmed	Confirmed
Conjecture 5: Politicians use large-scale experiments to cope with time pressures from electoral and problem cycles.	Confirmed	Not confirmed
Conjecture 6: Politicians use large-scale experiments to tie the hands of next governments.	Not confirmed	Not confirmed

of experiments may make it possible for the coalition partners to reach a joint decision at all, during their government term. Also, in situations where due to a mediatized environment, politicians are expected to offer "quick" solutions, the politicians can seek to "win time" by saying that they are launching a pilot as a response to the problem. We did not, however, witness such uses of experiments in Estonia.

In sum, even though our interviews did not fully corroborate all the conjectures, our theoretical framework offered useful lenses for uncovering important dynamics in experimental policymaking and could be used as a starting point in future theorizing and empirical studies. Furthermore, theorizing could focus on the conditions in which our expectations are likely to hold. In addition to providing evidence of the relevance of the electoral and problem cycles, our interviews also revealed *additional* political timeframes that can play a significant role in experimental policymaking. First, the Estonian case pointed to the potential importance of timeframes imposed by *government turnovers* in the middle of the electoral cycles. As the average duration of cabinets in Estonia is rather short (1–2 years), this appears to amplify the effects that the electoral cycle has on experimental policymaking. The shortened time horizons, due to frequent turnover of governments, are likely to act as a further deterrent to launching longer-lasting strategic policy experiments. Thus, when we are looking for reasons why the Finnish government has been able to launch large-scale strategic policy experiments spanning several years while Estonia has not, then alongside the awareness and knowledge about policy experiments (which may be lagging behind in Estonia), the swift turnover of governments may be acting as an additional obstacle to undertaking such long-lasting experiments. The more stable time horizons available to Finnish politicians (the expectation to stay in the office for the whole 4-year period) can be viewed as more conducive to large-scale experiments than the shorter time horizons Estonian politicians face in the context of frequent change of governments. In Finland, governments are better able to commit to strategic experiments owing to their longer time horizons.

Second, our cases point to the importance of the Government Program as an instrument for managing the constrained time resource in the context of coalition governments. In both countries, the Government Program is the key document for subsequent policy actions and serves as an important document for politicians in committing to certain experiments. As such, it structures both the choices of politicians as well as other stakeholders—through the period of time dedicated to the negotiations of the Government Program, the need to have the key policy goals formulated *before* the negotiations, and the *timing* of preparations for launching the experiments right after the adoption of the Program.

Third, as the Finnish case revealed, another additional timeframe that can be relevant for experimental policymaking is that of passing necessary legislation for the experiment. Large-scale RCTs which foresee differential treatment of individuals need a legislative basis. The passing of the necessary law(s), however, can considerably lengthen the preparation phase of the policy experiment. At the same time, parliamentary proceedings also build wider consensus around the experiments and through such legitimation increase their chance of survival beyond the ongoing electoral cycle.

In sum, our study shows that to understand experimental policymaking in democratic settings, it is crucial to pay attention to the potential clashes between political and experimental timeframes. In addition to the limitations posed by the electoral and problem cycles, experimental policymaking can be influenced by timeframes imposed by the frequency of government turnover, the limited time available for compiling coalition agreements, and the procedural requirements for passing legislation underpinning the experiments. Thus, our study shows that there appears to be a deep-rooted tension between the timeframes followed by politicians and the timeframes required by policy experiments. Given that in a democratic setting, politicians' temporalities cannot be subjected to the demands of policy experiments, this tension may, in fact, be *unresolvable*. This, in turn, has implications for the expectations we can have about experimental policymaking.

In addition to rendering the expectations more realistic, more scholarship is needed to uncover the factors that alleviate the tensions between political and experimental timeframes. For example, our cases suggest that conducting experiments in policy areas that are considered important by all parties, involving opposition parties in the discussion and design of experiments, and stipulating experiments in laws may lengthen the political time horizons. However, more research is needed on how different types of experimental designs, processes for preparing and conducting experiments, and the range of stakeholders involved in experimental policymaking influence the compatibility of political and experimental timeframes. Furthermore, it would be insightful to investigate whether the tensions between timeframes vary across policy areas and are influenced by the salience and complexity of different policy solutions being tested. If a policy issue is highly salient to a powerful interest group, the interactions between the political and experimental timeframes are likely to be different from when the tested policy has low salience and is not on the radar of strong interest groups.[4] For example, a strong interest group of beneficiaries may pressure politicians to undertake a shorter experiment in order to benefit from the scaled-up policy sooner. Conversely, experiments with low salience and diffused impacts may allow policymakers to consider longer experimental designs.

In our study, we have focused on how the timeframes of elected officials influence large-scale experiments. As existing research on various temporalities in policymaking has shown, however, different actors in the political system may have different time limits, time horizons, and time budgets (Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009), and these are likely to have implications for experimental policymaking as well. For example, unelected civil servants may have longer time horizons (Goetz 2014; Goetz and Meyer-Sahling 2009) and could hence have incentives to launch longer-lasting experiments, avoid premature interpretation of experimental evidence, or minimize the involvement of politicians. Future studies could analyze how the different timeframes of elected and unelected officials (and their interactions) influence experimental policymaking.

An important limitation of our study is that we probed the plausibility of our theoretical expectations in two parliamentary countries that have proportional electoral systems resulting in multi-party coalition governments. In future research, it

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[4] We would like to thank the anonymous reviewer for drawing our attention to this issue.

would be fruitful to investigate how accurately our theoretical propositions hold in countries that are presidential, have majoritarian electoral systems, and/or have one-party governments.

In sum, our article confirms that politics can profoundly affect policy experiments. In order to better understand the politics of experimental policymaking, it is crucial to study how political and experimental timeframes clash and how these clashes influence whether, when, and how politicians experiment. We demonstrate that electoral cycles and problem cycles play an important role in politicians' motivations regarding policy experiments. There are, of course, additional aspects of the political setting that can influence politicians' preferences and decisions regarding policy experiments (e.g., ideological preferences, budgetary constraints, and blame avoidance). In order to advance our understanding of experimental policymaking it is important to address them in future research.

Supplementary material

Supplementary material is available at the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* online (www.jpart. oxfordjournals.org).

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Conflict of interest

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Appendix I

Reference(s)	Institution	Interview time(s)
Estonian interviewees		
Est1–Est15	Ministry of Finance	16.06.2022–06.01.2023
Est16	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications	29.11.2022
Est17–Est20	Government Office	10.10.2022–01.12.2022
Est21–Est22	Bank of Estonia	15.12.2022–05.03.2023
Est23–Est29	Estonian Tax and Customs Board	05.07.2022–02.02.2023
Est30–Est31	Financial Supervision and Resolution Authority	28.10.2022–09.11.2022
Est32	Enterprise and Innovation Foundation	07.12.2022
Finnish interviewees		
Fin1–Fin11	Ministry of Finance	15.02.2023–24.04.2023
Fin12–Fin15	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	21.03.2023–05.07.2023
Fin16	Ministry of Education and Culture	15.03.2023
Fin17–Fin18	Prime Minister's Office	14.03.2023–08.05.2023
Fin19	Bank of Finland	09.03.2023
Fin20–Fin21	National Audit Office	20.02.2023–07.03.2023
Fin22–Fin25	Finnish Tax Administration	20.03.2023–05.04.2023
Fin26	Finnish Financial Supervisory Authority	20.02.2023
Fin27–Fin28	KELA	28.03.2023–08.03.2023
Fin29–Fin32	SITRA	24.02.2023–12.06.2023
Fin33	Motiva	17.03.2023
Fin34	Demos Helsinki	31.03.2023