

# T01W02 / The politics of Solution Definition: Shaping the hidden side of the Policy Agenda

**Topic :** T01 / Policy Process , Policy & Politics, Policymaking, Policy implementation

**Chair :** Philippe Zittoun (ENTPE - Ecole de l'aménagement durable des territoires)

**Second Chair :** Nicholas Buchanan (University of Freiburg)

**Third Chair :** Frank Fischer (Humboldt University in Berlin)

## CALL FOR PAPERS

In 1993, David Rochefort and Roger Cobb published a major edited book titled "The politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda." Drawing on the studies undertaken by Cobb and Elder, the "first systematic scholarly assessment of the pre-decisional component of the policy process" (Jones, 2016), they focused on the problem definition process. This involved defining the meaning of a social situation, its implication, its urgency, and also who was to blame for the situation. They proposed to study the "problem definition phenomenon from both political and policymaking perspectives, to map out the most frequently employed by problem definers, and to analyze the scenarios by which definitions are build and crumble" (p. 4).

Paradoxically, however, despite the focus on issues and problems, an enigma persists: how is a solution defined and how does it succeed to attract the government's attention and its decision to take responsibility for the issue? Under the hypothesis advanced by Kingdon, i.e., that solutions and problems are not interrelated, it seems clear that how solution is defined and manages to attract government attention continues to be the hidden side of the policymaking process.

In this workshop, we would like to explore this hidden side of the policy agenda by analyzing the definition and trajectories of a solution in the same manner that the definition and trajectories of a problem has been undertaken. Is it possible to identify how a proposal emerges as a "solution" ? What role does agency, bureaucracy, the advice system and political parties play? How and under what conditions does a proposal attract the attention of decision makers? What can be said about the "dynamic of the proposal" and the conditions of its failure or success? What is the relationship between a proposal and the actors who define it? Can we speak about the owner of a solution in the same way as the owner of a problem (Gusfield)?

Drawing on Cobb and Elders's studies mentioned above, we would like also to evaluate the politics of definition by analyzing the politicization process of a solution, the importance of definitional struggles, the complex relationship with experts and existing knowledge, and the feasibility argumentation (Majone). More generally, we would like to focus on the conflict and power struggles that the definition process of a solution generates.

The Workshop is open to all participants who can contribute to this question about the politics of solution definition and how the dynamics of proposals may be grasped. Paper proposals may be theoretical, empirical or methodological.

## ABSTRACT

In 1993, David Rochefort and Roger Cobb published a major edited book titled "The politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda." Drawing on the studies undertaken by Cobb and Elder on problem agenda setting and Schattschneider's studies on Semi-Sovereign people, they focused on the problem definition process. This involved defining the meaning of a social situation, its implication, its urgency, and also who was to blame for the situation. They proposed to study the "problem definition phenomenon from both political and policymaking perspectives, to map out the most frequently employed by problem definers, and to analyze the scenarios by which definitions are build and crumble" (p. 4).

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## Session 1 General Introduction

Tuesday, June 26th 10:15 to 12:15 (Posvar Hall - 4430)

### **Strategic solution definition across science and technology policy domains: the “hidden side” of of transport technology and nanotechnology policy**

Eric Lindquist (Boise State University)

Political and public acceptance and support for new advances in science and technology depend in large part on how solutions are strategically linked to societal problems. What problems are being linked to new or redefined technologies and why, and who is advocating the solution, are significant and relevant questions from the perspective of the IPPA Workshop session W02 on the politics of Solution Definition. The objective of this contribution is to explore the strategic linkages between science and technological solutions and the strategic definition of problems for which these solutions are targeted with an emphasis on understanding the strategic processes of science and technology policy making and the political context for its advocacy and adoption.

The strategic use of rhetoric and symbolism has been at play in the process of public policymaking in this country for years. The latest and greatest technology or scientific innovation is routinely trotted out before Congress and the general public, followed by promises of innovation, solving complex problems, creating jobs, and maintaining competitiveness or supremacy in the global context. To illustrate this phenomenon, two policy domains, the rise of transport technology as a solution to myriad environmental, health and transport problems in the late 1980s, and the rise of nanotechnology, a decade later, which was marketed as a technological and scientific solution to yet another list of environmental and societal problems, are contrasted and compared through a solution definition lens. A comparative policy approach provides insight into differences and similarities across these domains, while a longitudinal aspect will show how the technologies, as policy solutions, and their associated problems have been redefined over time in order to respond to changing social and political circumstances and opportunities. We find that this exploration of solution definition in two diverse policy domains sheds light on the “hidden side of the policy process” as well as on the dynamics of science and technology policy and politics. Understanding the strategic definition of a solution, and its strategic linkages to problems addresses the broad and still significant question posed by Schattschneider (1961) as to “who is speaking and why.”

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## Session 2 Coupling Solution to Problem Definition

Tuesday, June 26th 13:45 to 17:00 (Posvar Hall - 4430)

### **Upcycling a Trashed Policy Solution? The Case of Argumentative Couplings in German Pension Policy**

Sonja Blum (Universität Bielefeld)

In public policy analysis today the view prevails that there are neither objective 'problem' situations, nor can there be direct and unambiguous links of defined problems to 'solutions' they require. This view is most pronounced from a garbage-can perspective, which not only highlights how problems and solutions flow largely independently through the political system, but also how the classical 'problem-solving logic' may be reversed when there are solutions in search of (fitting) problems (Kingdon, 1995; Zahariadis, 2003). And yet while both problems and solutions do not just 'exist', but undergo processes of definition and construction, there is one decisive difference between the two. Namely, while problems may be defined without connecting them to solutions, this is not the case vice versa. Policies, measures and proposals are developed all the time, but they indispensably require the connection to a problem (or several ones) to become a 'solution'.

While such problem-policy couplings are crucial within the multiple-streams framework (MSF), the coupling process itself has remained largely overlooked in the literature (Zahariadis, 2003; Zittoun, 2013). Building up on own previous work that integrated the MSF with knowledge utilisation, this paper further specifies the concept of 'argumentative coupling' (Blum, 2017), that is the linking of problem, policy, and politics issues through arguments. Already Kingdon (1995, p. 22) distinguishes two types of coupling: Prior to the 'final couplings' of streams at times of open policy windows, there are also various linkages between problem, policy, and politics aspects at times when the streams flow normally ('attempted couplings'). In particular, Kingdon (1995, p. 227) highlights how the problem and policy streams are connected if people try to 'solve problems'. Such linkages, which are established e.g. by drawing on (scientific) knowledge claims (Blum & Brans, 2017), may lead to the 'softening up' of an issue, while they let other ideas descend into the depth of the streams. Argumentative coupling can thus illuminate how the ground for 'final couplings' is prepared, and how a solution – or possibly different solutions – are defined.

Asking how a solution is defined through argumentative couplings, the paper draws on the case of German pension policy, which is interesting for several reasons. It has been well-researched how the German pay-as-you-go pension system came under pressure with demographic change and population ageing, how retrenching the public pillar and promoting private provision emerged as 'solutions', and how this narrative was utilised by a powerful reform coalition for the far-reaching early 2000s reforms. However, with zero-rate policy, and increasing old-age poverty in a lean public pension scheme, this argumentative coupling itself came under pressure and was, at least partly, decoupled. By applying the MSF with a special focus on argumentative couplings, the paper studies recent German pension policymaking (2009-2017) and its changing problem-policy coupling attempts. The analysis builds on ethnographic fieldwork, expert interviews, and document analysis. Not least, it shows how the difficulty to define a solution and 'upcycle' (cf. Zittoun, 2013) the 'old solution' of public-pension provision contributed to two failed attempts at establishing a minimum-pension scheme.

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### **The role of ideas in shaping agendas: the case of logistics and the shifting of railways from problem to solution in Brazil transportation policy**

Augusto Fonseca (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro)

Defining solutions to political problems is never an easy task. Rationality may be contested, access to full information is seldom the case and a variety of solutions are always on the table. Many models have been formulated to understand solution definition (often embedded in a larger agenda setting framework) like Lindblom's incremental approach or the Garbage Can Theory. Likewise, many variables such as actors, power relations, or institutions have been postulated to determine how to choose a solution. All these approaches offer fundamental insights to the bigger problem of agenda setting. In this article I propose exploring the role of ideas in shaping political agenda. Specifically, I explore the role of logistics as a new idea that have prompted a transformation in Brazil's transportation policy and in how government and private actors construe the role of different modalities of transport (roads, railways, airports and water transportation) in cargo transportation. The main hypothesis is that as logistics became more and more a fundamental referential in understanding the world, railways shifted from a transportation problem to a political solution. For that, I utilize Pierre Muller's analytical tools of ideas and referentials. For Muller, the first referential to be mobilized is the Global Referential, which is a set of fundamental values that produce images of the world and enables to intervene on it as whole. Global Referentials (GRs) are mobilized by the economic sectors (like transportation, health, education, etc.) which in turn make Sectorial Referentials (SRs). Those SRs set the limits of economic sectors and shape the political agendas as they turn abstract ideas into problem and solution definition. Examples of GRs are liberalism, developmentism, and in the case of this article, logistics. Logistics plays a role in a number of economic sectors, but has a major role in transportation. Two main SRs are generated by the transportation sector: multimodality and bottleneck transportation problem solving. To demonstrate how the government is applying these SRs as political policies, I use the case of Brazil's transportation policy, especially from the period 2006-2014. From 2006 onward, the Brazilian government has launched a series of major plans aimed at improving its infrastructure. The first of those plans is the Plano Nacional de Logística e Transporte (PNLT), assembled in 2006 which has a set of projects expected to be completed until 2031. It was succeeded by the Plano de Aceleração do Crescimento (PAC) 1 (2007-2011) and 2 (2011-2014) and the Programa de Infraestrutura Logística (PIL).

In conclusion, further understanding about how ideas can change political agendas offers insights on solution definition and agenda setting as a whole. I believe that is the case of transportation agenda in Brazil. Albeit all problems in Brazil's infrastructure (institutional, financial, structural), the government has launched its plans to revitalize the sector, and logistics, as an idea, plays a major role in defining its agenda.

### **(Virtual) The Discursive Dimension of the Policy-Making of Proactive Transparency in Brazil**

Temístocles Murilo de Oliveira Júnior (Office of the Brazilian Comptroller General)

This study analyzes how the policy-making process of proactive transparency in Brazil has been driven by discursive practices that coupled this "preventive solution" to the "problem of corruption." Such policy aims to make government information available with no requests. The trajectory of this process occurred between 2003 and 2010, during the presidential mandates of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, in a context characterized by new anticorruption conventions and "good governance" reforms.

Two changes promoted by Presidency's Office of the Controller-General (CGU), which was the federal government's anti-corruption body, marked this trajectory. The first one refers to the *Portal da Transparência* (Transparency Website), which is a web page developed by CGU that makes available information on federal government's revenue and spending. Its initial releases provided only data on federal funds transferred to municipal governments and beneficiaries of the Bolsa Família (Family Allowance Program). The second refers to the *Lei Capiberibe* (Capiberibe Act), which made it mandatory for subnational governments to make available information on their revenues and expenditures.

This study assumes these solutions were not built from the problem that legitimized them. The hypothesis is that the politicians and bureaucrats linked to CGU and other executive bodies have driven discursive practices to couple the *Portal da Transparência* and the *Lei Capiberibe* to the corruption what has allowed them to meet their power intentions. The theoretical and methodological background adopts policy and discourse analysis and process-tracing references, combined with documentary and interview techniques. The proposed causal theory indicates that such practices represent the causal mechanism that explains how the policy-making of proactive transparency produced the couplings mentioned above. This mechanism is composed of the following parts: a) definition of power intentions; b) labeling of solutions; c) construction of the solution-problem coupling; d) advocacy of the solution benefits; e) association with legitimized agendas; f) affirmation of the importance of leadership; g) legitimization of power.

Evidence confirms that discursive practices were the mechanism that forged the outstanding policy-making. CGU promoted the *Portal da Transparência* as an anti-corruption preventive solution, but in its first releases, this website was mostly used to legitimize an audit program of this office that oversaw government expenditures of small municipalities supported by federal funds. At that time, most of the local governments were led by neutral or opposition parties to the federal government and the president's coalition did not represent the majority of Congress. The approval of *Lei Capiberibe* occurred after strategies of CGU members and allies to promote such law to the public opinion taking advantage of a corruption scandal involving members of Congress. This new legislation imposed on all subnational governments to follow CGU's guidelines based on the experience of *Portal da Transparência* as a best practice.

These results point out that politics and discursive dynamics matter for explaining the highlighted policy-making and its power implications. The transparency-corruption coupling was essential to expand the prerogatives of the federal government's anti-corruption body, ensuring the control of such government level over subnational ones, and strengthening the presidents' coalitions.

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## Session 3 SolutionMakers: Bureaucracy, experts, interests groups

Wednesday, June 27th 09:00 to 12:15 (Posvar Hall - 4430)

### **Framing policy solutions: “Problems entrepreneurs” and policy-makers addressing the issue of water pollution from agriculture in Brittany (France)**

Magalie Bourblanc (GovInn, University of Pretoria (South Africa)/ Cirad, Univ. Montpellier (France))

Since the 1970s, Brittany (France) has been renowned for its ongoing problem of non-point source pollution coming from agriculture. A striking phenomenon in the case of water pollution coming from agriculture is the high instability of the definition(s) of the problem, the diversity of problem definitions ranging originally from an illegal increase in the size of pig herds to drinking water issues related to nitrates and more recently to the green seaweed phenomenon covering the beaches. Although in a longitudinal study of public policies, Rochefort and Cobb (1994) already stated that problem redefinition is more often the rule than the exception, the renewal rate of problem definition is an intriguing issue, especially when it concerns the same social movement organization. A previous work focused on how

“problem entrepreneurs” construct a public problem and on why they construct the problem the way they do (Bourblanc 2014). One finding emphasizes that there is a method to it, which is very much linked to the way social movements are trying to influence policy solutions downstream the policy-making process. Policy outsiders trying to get their issue on the public agenda will bear in mind two inter-connected dimensions that constrain their problem definition activities, i.e. the way they perceive what the problem really is about and potential problem definitions that can strategically be used in a bid to ensure that their cause can make it to the public agenda. Not everything is determined by strategic framing opportunities. Indeed the perceived problem can sometimes limit the range of problem definitions that will be explored, based on the compatibility of such strategic framing with the perceived problem and preconceived understanding of who is to blame and which policy solutions can adequately tackle the issue at stake. Such constraints on the way to construct public problems can also explain why competing problem framings promoted by different social movements are sometimes fended off. Some authors call this phenomenon “problem ownership” (Gusfield, 1980; Stone, 1989), underlining the interest that an organization has in controlling a problem in order to maintain its position as a legitimate partner in the decision-making process. I argue that actually it is not only a question of securing the involvement of the organization for its own sake (irrespective of the definition of the problem) but more specifically securing a particular problem definition for it better ensures a specific policy-making path and policy settings that are seen as more appropriate. The objective of the present paper is to prolong this work with a reflection on the use of expert knowledge and reporting by policy-makers in the latest development of the agricultural pollution saga in Brittany. Indeed, studying the long-lasting scientific controversy surrounding the proliferation of green algal bloom on Brittany beaches, the paper shows how resorting to expert reports helped reframe the political debate and re-orient public action towards more politically acceptable public interventions.

### **Parsing the Political: Bureaucratic Influence in Non-Regulatory Policy Settings**

Juniper Katz (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

This paper examines bureaucratic influence in the context of non-regulatory natural resource management policy contexts. Non-regulatory settings are frequently characterized by cooperative and complex negotiation processes between agencies, policy beneficiaries, and third-party implementation partners. As Greg Huber argues, these qualities of the non-regulatory environment should be viewed positively as “features not bugs” when it comes to studying the black box of bureaucratic decision making (2107, personal communication).

Existing research on bureaucratic influence tends to focus on regulatory enforcement and congressional agenda setting due in large part to the difficulties of operationalizing influence in non-regulatory decision environments (e.g Rothenberg, 1994; Huber, 2007; and Workman, 2015). The literature does not address settings such as cooperative spaces, where agencies negotiate with private actors such as nonprofits and private citizens to accomplish natural resource goals.

This paper examines bureaucratic influence in the non-regulatory policy space of voluntary conservation programs in the USDA's department of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The paper focuses on identifying processes inherent in the institutional rules of the agency versus discretionary practices bureaucrats bring to the process themselves. In so doing, the paper builds on Greg Huber's theory of strategic neutrality (2007) to shed light on the key tenets of the theory: that bureaucrats operate in both strategic and politically neutral ways, and these practices allow agencies to be more effective in solving natural resources coordination problems.

The research employs an original survey, coded agency documents, interviews with bureaucrats and policy stakeholders, as well as secondary datasets to measure the nature and extent of bureaucratic influence on the policy priorities of implementation partners engaged in natural resource conservation programs.

### **The Politics of Solution Definition: Analysis of the development of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (the NDIS) – The Australian Federal Government's solution for delivering improved disability services.**

Anita Phillips (University of Canberra)

My Paper will analyse the background to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (the NDIS), the Australian Government's *solution* to address the problem of inadequate programs and services for people with disabilities. The NDIS came into effect nationally in July 2017, to provide personalised "reasonable and necessary" services for people with "significant, long-term disability", (no matter how acquired), funded via an "insurance" levy model and delivered in a competitive market environment. The Paper will attempt to reveal what **policy governance factors and decisions** led to the selection of this *solution*.

The research questions for my Thesis aim to discover whether changes have occurred to the policy intent of the NDIS during selected stages of the implementation process. In essence, I will be examining whether the NDIS is delivering programs and services in line with the solution envisaged by Government and articulated in the Objects of the National Disability Insurance Scheme Act. This will involve a "big book" thesis, exploring a much wider scope than the Paper proposed here, however, research of how this particular solution was decided on constitutes a significant chapter of my Thesis and will form the basis for this Paper.

The methodology I used in developing that Background Chapter, is informed by Implementation Theory, in analysing the process of operational governance that preceded the development of the NDIS legislation. I have researched parliamentary documents, Senate Inquiries, Productivity Commission, disability groups' and other Reports, campaigns by activists, proposals from "champions" and elites", social media and other lobbying to government. My analysis of the data so far, has confirmed that the development of a policy solution is extremely complex and multilayered, none-the-less, I anticipate that it will be able to shed some light on the chosen solution, often the "hidden side of the policy agenda".

In the development of the NDIS, it was definitely the vocal expression of the "problem" (the paucity of services for people with disabilities) that attracted Government's attention and contributed significantly to it **getting onto the agenda**. Initially there was no obvious *solution*, and no commitment by the Federal Government to intervene in any "hands-on" manner to what had been State/Territory business. The Labor Opposition, possibly motivated by an opportunity to seize **political advantage** as much as a social conscience, had called for a Senate Inquiry into Disability Services. The timing was also politically fortuitous as the Committee handed down their Report to Parliament in the lead up to a Federal election and the Opposition was able to make a commitment that, if elected, it would initiate all recommendations. When Labor did in fact win government, they established a consultation process to explore the extent of "problem" and find a *solution*. This was now **firmly on the Federal government's agenda**, although there was no commitment for it to actually implement the *solution*.

Some **large and powerful disability advocacy groups** combined to manage the consultation process, and their report – "*Shut Out*" – graphically highlighted how seriously "broken" the current system of services was for people with disabilities. The report grabbed media (including social media) attention. The overwhelming call for action insisted that government find a *solution*, but it was not until a "**champion**" in the form of Bruce Bonyhady entered the debate that there was focus on what that *solution* might be. Bonyhady brought unique qualities as an economist to the debate. He proposed a "no-fault insurance" model, whereby everyone contributed to a levy which would fund support services needed if people became disabled. Bonyhady and



some **other “elites”** were commissioned by government to develop the proposal further, and their Report, *The Way Forward*, recommended a National Disability Insurance Scheme as a *solution*.

Government referred the Report to the Productivity Commission to investigate its feasibility. **Senior bureaucrats** then became involved in the process of finding a *solution*, as the Terms of Reference, while approved by government, none-the-less reflected a heavy emphasis on governance and administrative details including costs and financing with minimal details as to the nature of the support services.

By now there were **many actors involved in the definition of a solution**. The community-based Every-Australian-Counts campaign, utilised psychological and emotional principles very successfully in pursuing government’s agenda, by sensitising the wider community into accepting that the NDIS was the *solution*, even if they knew no details except that they would have to pay a levy to fund it.

The **Productivity Commission recommended the NDIS as a solution**, which was referred to the **Select Ministerial Council**, who massaged it, including managing the **internal jurisdictional conflicts and power struggles**. Deals were struck and this **politicised solution was approved by Cabinet** with the National Disability Insurance Act passed in 2013.

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## Session 4Tools Agenda

Wednesday, June 27th 13:45 to 17:00 (Posvar Hall - 4430)

### **Empowered by risk analysis? Instrumentality, legitimacy and power in policy-analytical tool change**

Regine Paul (Center for European Studies Harvard)

Regulation scholars and policy analysts have noted the recent rise of risk analysis in policy-making across countries and sectors. Risk analysis is associated with hopes of efficiency and effectiveness gains in decision-making because the actuarial analysis of the likelihood and impact of a given adverse event (such as a work accident, a flood or a food-born illness) allegedly enables policy-makers to differentiate their decision-making more systematically alongside variable risk levels (OECD 2010). From this perspective, risk analysis appears as a typical technocratic analytical solution – a ‘policy-analytical tool’ similar to cost-benefit analysis or regulatory impact assessment (Jordan and Turnpenny 2015) – which appeals due to its capacity to solve problems of resource scarcity, overregulation, and enforcement inconsistencies. This paper challenges this portrayal conceptually and empirically by examining the hidden politics of enthroning risk analysis as chief decision-making heuristic within the German public administration.

I start by conceptualizing the adoption of new analytical solutions in policy-making across different sets of motivations. I adopt an interpretive policy analysis framework (e.g., Fischer 1993; Wagenaar 2011; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006) to argue that the adoption of a new policy-analytical tool is a process of selective meaning-making during which policy-makers, shaped by their specific institutional contexts, vest variable combinations of instrumental, legitimacy and power-related hopes in a new analytical solution. Instrumental consideration relate to the perceived ability of a policy-analytical tool to rationalize decision-making vis-à-vis perceived policy problems and its assumed causes, just as orthodox policy analyses describe it. The latter two considerations, however, are more explicitly political – but also more hidden – as they are shaped by policy makers’ variable perceptions about how certain types of analytical thinking can stabilize the legitimacy of their mandate (especially when under pressure) and help increase their influence in a policy domain. The ILP triad thus brings together so far disconnected ways of explaining the adoption of new policy solutions in the public administration and policy studies literature within one analytical framework.

The paper specifies these general conceptual claims by operationalizing the ILP triad for the case of risk analysis, drawing on long-standing insights in the sociology and political economy of quantification. From this, risk analysis emerges as an attractive policy-analytical solution precisely because it is versatile and can tap into different motivations at the same time: efficient and effective problem-solving which circumvents problems of uncertainty in risk regulation (Majone 2010), legitimation by ‘trust in numbers’ (Porter 1995), and the expansion of administrative capacities and powers based on a new ‘metrics’ (Scott 1998). I offer illustrative empirical evidence from a cross-sectoral comparison within the German public administration: the introduction of risk analysis in the enforcement of food safety, work safety and flood protection.

Data was gathered as part of an international research project on the comparative rise of risk-based regulation in Europe (HowSAFE, ORA-funded 2013-2016). The paper represents the condensed theoretical part of my book project “Empowered by risk: the comparative politics of policy analytics in Germany”, for which feedback in the workshop will be greatly appreciated.

## **Why do universal policies fail to produce universal access? A critical look at solution definition in Ghana's basic education policy**

Rodney Buadi Nkrumah (Center for Research on Children and Families (CRCF) McGill University)

In the past two decades, Ghana's policy direction towards basic education has been driven by a rights-based approach, under the influence of principles of universality and inclusion (Nudzor, 2012). By introducing the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy, and subsequently the Educational Capitation Programme (GAP), successive governments have consistently defined the provision of fee-free universal education as the solution to remedying high illiteracy rates among children (Government of Ghana, 1992). However, with over 20 years implementation of the FCUBE, free and compulsory universal education still remains an illusion to many Ghanaian children (UNESCO, 2011). This paradoxical relationship between the FCUBE's policy intent and outcomes underscore Kingdon's proposition (1984, 1995) that the definition of solutions within specific policy contexts are not always consistent with existing problems. It also questions how language and rhetoric are employed by the political elite in defining what acceptable policy solutions are, and by extension, challenges the assumption that universality is synonymous with access. (Anttonen et al., 2012). The recurrent tensions between universality and access in Ghana's basic education policies speak to the larger issue of how the process of solution definition has become a hidden venture in the policy making process. It also reflect how governments, and the political elite hide behind the policy process in implementing their agendas. Accordingly, this paper fits well with the theme for workshop 2: "The politics of Solution Definition: Shaping the hidden side of the Policy Agenda".

In the context of Ghana's basic education policy, this structural tension between universality and access, in public programmes like the FCUBE, is mostly interpreted from the rational interaction perspective (O'Connor and Netting, 2012) criticized by Rochefort and Cobb (1993). This perspective assumes that a well-crafted policy, subjected to effective financing and implementation strategies would deliver performance as conceived during formulation (Nudzor, 2013; O'Connor and Netting, 2012). From this perspective, attaining fee-free universal access to basic education for all children is dependent on government's financial power. Though recent studies have highlighted the challenges surrounding access to basic education in a regime of universal policy, much of the elite (politicians and policy makers) understanding of this policy paradox overlooks the myriad political dynamics that impact definition of solutions (Rochefort and Cobb, 1993), ignoring the essential political and administrative reforms central to the realisation of universal access.

In this paper, I present the results of a scoping review (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005) used to map-out relevant literature with a thematic focus on: universal policies, Ghana's basic education policies and the implementation and impact of the FCUBE policy. I argue that relying on such rationalist interpretation of the policy process, overemphasizes fiscal capacity as an explanation for the failures in attaining universal access, while neglecting important socio-political factors that play key roles in determining universal access. For instance, the following critical questions are hardly attended to: (1) what philosophy underlines the usage of universality by the political elite in Ghana's educational policy context? (2) What incentive structures shape the process of defining solutions? (3) How is universality as a rights-based system implemented in the FCUBE policy? To provide a critical understanding of why our education policies fail to achieve the intended universal access, this paper employs an interpretive non-rational approach (O'Connor and Netting 2011) in analysing the FCUBE policy. More specifically, it adopts Debora Stone's policy paradox (2002) perspective to highlight the socio-political dimensions that surround the formulation and implementation process of universal policies.

By exploring these questions from a non-rational conceptual perspective, this paper identifies two key features of Ghana's universal basic education policies that address the tension between universality and access. First, the increasing usage of universality as a toll for pursuing political interest. Second, the need to make universality a guiding administrative principle in the implementation of basic education policies (Anttonen et al., 2014; Nudzor, 2012). These factors, to a large extent, explain why the philosophy of universality behind educational policy implementation has failed in producing corresponding universal access to all Ghanaian children.

## **Consequential narrative frames: a discursive tool to justify solutions**

Damien Pennetreau (Université catholique de Louvain)

Defining the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power. Since no objective public issue exists *per se*, definition or framing of a particular situation as a public issue is a means of discovering what it is realistic to

ask and how to obtain it. However, problems and solutions may not be interrelated. Solutions may even influence the definition of the issue. This makes it difficult to disentangle how policy options come about and why a particular one is adopted.

Solutions' acceptability does not firstly depend on its efficiency. Solutions mostly depend on the consequential narrative frames policy entrepreneurs (be they civil servants, executives, companies, associations, or citizens) are able to present as legitimate. Several policy analysis theoretical frameworks, adopting different perspectives, underline the importance of narratives. Following, what matters is the conveyed consequential story that justifies the relevance of a particular option. Because solutions have to appear as legitimate, an interesting perspective to analyse their definition and trajectories is to observe ***whether and how media present policy solutions and what use citizens make of this information.***

To answer this question, I analyse how citizens, when talking politics, discuss policies. Focus group and individual interviews transcripts are coded to qualitatively identify trends in the way citizens talk about policies. More precisely, how they characterise policies' target groups, objectives and results. Indeed, to understand how (un)democratic and/or (in)efficient solutions may be promoted and implemented it is crucial to look at how beneficiaries and goals of the policy are framed.

The relevance of this perspective to shed light on the hidden side of the policy agenda may be strikingly outlined with the example of social policies. Social policies reforms are running at full speed. They focus on the funding schemes sustainability of unemployment protection and health systems. Intriguingly, while economic growth has resumed –the world produce more wealth than ever–, policy solutions are based on consequential narratives arguing that social models have become unaffordable. How can we explain this hiatus?

Analysing, how media discourses about social policies influence citizens' perceptions and discourses is the way I use to answer the question. When analysing media content, it makes sense to look at both TV bulletin and newspapers because they remain citizens' focus point and because it enables to gather the two broader types of media users: TV viewers and radio listeners versus press readers and web surfers. As regards citizens discourses, a secondary analysis of qualitative data understood as a method using pre-existing qualitative data to investigate new questions or verifying previous studies' findings is suited to observe whether citizens do rely on media narrative frames to express their opinion. Focus group or individual interviews are used. This enables to disentangle the potential effect of interpersonal discussion.

This perspective could shed light on the fact that: (1) citizens are more interested in policies outcomes than in legitimacy or transparency debates and; (2) despite this, they assess policies on the basis of ex-ante debates rather than on policies' outcomes. Policy solutions would then be the by-product of actor's capacity to impose the narrative frames promoting "their" solutions.

# T01W02 / The politics of Solution Definition: Shaping the hidden side of the Policy Agenda

**Chair :** Philippe Zittoun (ENTPE - Ecole de l'aménagement durable des territoires)

**Second Chair :** Nicholas Buchanan (University of Freiburg)

**Third Chair :** Frank Fischer (Humboldt University in Berlin)

## Session 5 Solution Agenda Setting - Trajectories and barriers

Thursday, June 28th 09:00 to 12:15 (Posvar Hall - 4430)

### **Revisiting Kingdon's model: Does solution definition really matter in the politics of agenda setting?**

Maitreyee Mukherjee (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

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This paper aims to explore the significance of development of the solution stream in Kingdon's model. As hypothesized in the original model, opening of policy window is facilitated by simultaneous development of problem, policy and politics streams (Kingdon, 1984). Further research from Birkland, Zahariadis, Howlett, Guldbrandsson & Fossum and others inspected different mechanisms through which sensitization of an issue occurred, such as focusing events, mass mobilization, creation of national mood, interest group campaigns, political advantage appeal or electoral patterns. Interestingly, most of these literature concentrate either on problem definition patterns or on political discourse of the issue. The presence or evolution of solution definition has been thus mostly under-theorized. Or does it really play any crucial role in creation of public images or formation of government agendas?

To find this answer, I shall study the dynamics of agenda formation in India, focusing mainly on three issues- 'Clean India Mission', 'Delhi air pollution' and 'Ganges clean-up program'[1]. This will be done by picking up issue mentions regarding these three topics from parliamentary discussions as well as media coverage over past 5 years[2]. The issue mention points would be plotted to identify occurrence of peaks and gauge the presence of any particular high salience period for respective issues. Then the subject matter of each issue mention would be scrutinized through content analysis to find out their general trend- that is, if they were dealing with problem definition, solution discussion or political leverage. It would be interesting to see how the content of the issue mentions differed before and after any specific focusing event or high salience peaks.

A previous study by the author, on the 'Ganges clean-up program' had revealed that issue mentions peaked around election years, showing punctuated equilibrium pattern. In addition, government agenda was found to have salience over media coverage. Further examination into the matter indicated that the agenda had gained momentum specifically during election time owing to political motivation of the opposition party leaders (who eventually came to power post elections). Thus my proposed paper above, would complement these findings by trying to find out if similar patterns could be seen in other important issues as well; what kind of public or political discourse over those issues was going on; and finally how did the content of the issue mentions differ before and after the high salience peaks. The underlying question would be - does solution definition find prominence before the peaks are observed or does it come into play once the agenda has been accepted by the government and then they start looking for viable options.

[1] These have been important public agenda in recent times.

[2] The current ruling party in India has been in power for three and a half years. By collating five years of issue mention, I can cover both pre- and post-election dynamics for one election cycle.

## **Carbon capture and storage: resilience of a technical solution against climate change**

Sebastien Chailleux (Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Bordeaux)

The paper explores the definition of carbon capture and storage (CCS) as a political solution against climate change between 1997 and 2017. This technology aims at burying underground the carbon produced by coal-plant or other great GHG emitters. While the problem faced by decision-makers is quite stabilized – global warming and climate change – the solutions to tackle the problem are plethoric and involve different worldviews. CCS is one of those solutions encompassed in the category of geoengineering. Despite an important endeavor started by decision-makers and industrials in the 2000s, CCS did not meet the expectation and lost political interest, but the industry adapted to sustain the definition of CCS as a relevant solution against climate change.

We suggest a specific scenario for a type of policy solutions which is the technical one defined as solutions based on technological and scientific progress. In underlining the weaknesses and the strenghts linked with a technical solution for public problems, we explain that in order to become a policy solution, a proposal need to meet three obligations: to be defined in political terms and not only in technical ones; to develop resistance to critics in reaction to other political solutions; to adapt to the changes in the public problem it aims to solve.

We call the first argument is the burden of the technical discourse. Based on Zittoun (2013) notion of “énoncé”, we underline the obligation for promoters of a policy proposal to define at the same time the narratives, the actors, the publics and the tools participating to their solution. Technical discourse precludes promoters to enroll non specialists once the solution is questioned. Building an “énoncé”, policy promoters should widen their support in expanding the focus of their solution instead of confining it to technical debates.

The second argument is called learning by fighting. A policy solution is defined through the struggles it goes through that shape and reinforce its legitimacy and its ability to resist to critics. We demonstrate that the absence of critics does not systematically lead to the implementation of a solution but rather that it could generate political disinvestment. The point is to demonstrate that narrative struggles allow a proposal to reinforce and to forge alliance and that the absence or the confinement of those struggles preclude policy actors to enroll wider political support.

The final argument is called the ability to last. It asserts that, to endure time, policy solution has to develop an ability to mutate with the public problem it aims to solve. We want to underline that the failure to be chosen as the legitimate policy solution does not mean the political death of the solution. Policy solutions are adapting to the public problems they target. This ability is forged both on the resources engaged by promoters to sustain the relevancy of their proposal and on their narratives adaptation to the new context.

The paper is based on two sets of data. A recollection of 579 press articles between 1997 and 2017 allows the analysis of the media agenda-setting of CCS as a solution through different variables such as the event generating the article, the actors and the arguments mobilized concerning CCS. A dozen of interviews with main political actors are conduced to shed light on their role in the publicization of CCS as a political solution.

## **Similar Problems, Different Solutions: the Fate of Direct Payments in EU and US Agricultural Policy**

Gerry Alons (Radboud University of Nijmegen)

This paper seeks to make an empirical contribution to panel T01W02 on The Politics of Solution Definition, by investigating the process through which the EU and the US arrived at different policy solutions for apparently similar problems.

During recent decision making on farm policy in the EU and the US, both governments were confronted with increasing criticism on existing policies. The legitimacy of the agricultural support policies were questioned due to their environmental side effects and unequal distribution of support, benefiting large farms over smaller ones. In addition, the direct payments schemes in both the EU and the US were under fire for paying farmers for ‘doing nothing’, while in a period of high food prices farmers should not need such payments. It is interesting to see that whereas the EU in its most recent Common Agricultural Policy reform in 2013 decided to retain the direct payments but increase their environmental conditionality, the US in 2014 decided to discontinue direct payments all together and turn crop insurance into a central pillar of its farm safety net instead. How can it be explained that, confronted with similar pressure, the EU and US opted for such different policy solutions?

In this paper the argument will be developed that legitimacy perceptions and concerns combined with the

politics surrounding 'solution definition' are key to explaining why and how both countries resorted to different policy solutions. The dominant agricultural policy ideas in both countries combined with their institutional set-ups resulted in different legitimization dynamics, with different dominant actors and discourses and resulting in different policy solutions. The findings of this comparative case study will also allow for conclusions on the interplay between ideas, agents and institutions in the politics of solution definition in different institutional contexts.

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## Session 6 Conclusion: The politics of Solution Agenda

Thursday, June 28th 13:45 to 16:00 (Posvar Hall - 4430)

### **Degenerative policy designs and immigrant integration policy making – the politics of doing nothing**

Ilona van Breugel (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

This paper focuses on dilemmas in policy targeting as an insight in 'solution definition' and moreover the justification of the proposed policy solutions in immigrant integration policy making. With a comparative study of immigrant integration policies in Europe the paper draws attention to non-targeting as a form of policy steering, contributing to the literature on policy targeting as a link between problem and solution definition.

The paper connects Schneider and Ingram's (1997) framework of degenerative effects of target group populations and the literature on targeting from migration studies (De Zwart 2005, Simon and Piché, 2012), bringing in an additional normative dimension and adding 'non-targeting' as a policy choice to Schneider and Ingram's framework. Schneider and Ingram's 'target group proposition' describes how target group constructions and the subsequent goods distributions resemble group constructions that are common in society in anticipation of public approval or approbation for the policy interventions (Ingram et al. 2007: 105), illustrating the degenerative effects of public opinion on policy distribution. The migration studies literature on targeting adds an extra, overarching, normative dimension to the definition of target groups, linking the very question whether there is room to (explicitly) distinguish target groups at all, to models of integration, distinguishing between multiculturalist, assimilationist and universalist models of integration (De Zwart 2005).

At the core of national identity and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion migrant integration governance forms a highly politicized policy field. Particularly since the 'multicultural backlash' (Vertovec and Wessendorf, 2010) and subsequent 'assimilationist turn' (Joppke and Morawska 2003) in the early 2000's immigrant integration policies have become increasingly symbolic (Entzinger 2006). At the same time however a trend of mainstreaming is observed in European immigrant integration policies, entailing a development from specifically targeted policies to generic measures and a move towards inclusive policies (van Breugel and Scholten 2017). The crux of the polarization of immigrant integration centers around the same issue of recognizing and targeting integration. While under political and populist pressure problems of integration are explicitly and specifically recognized, specifically targeted policies are considered unevenly beneficial to the negatively constructed target group of immigrants (Schneider and Ingram, 1997) and thus rejected as a policy solution: the so-called dilemma of recognition (De Zwart, 2005).

Immigrant integration policies thus form an interesting case to study the process of solution definition in a politicized context, that seems to call for both explicit recognition and non-recognition. For this paper I have conducted a qualitative policy analysis of French, British and Dutch immigrant integration policies between 2000-2014, to track the process of solution formulation and explain the change to non-targeting as observed in our empirical data. To explain the differences in the (non-)targeting trends between the different cases the paper finally differentiates between policy targeting and policy justification (see Wilson 1987 and Sniderman et al. 1996) as two separate processes, in which depoliticization by generic policies (avoiding the normative dilemma of target grouping) enables sub-rosa targeting: targeting specifically, selling it generically. Thus, rather than attracting the government's and the public's attention for a policy solution, the generically framed mainstreaming measures and framing seem to create room for targeting 'behind the scenes', calling for a more layered understanding of solution definition.

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