ЗАРУБЕЖНЫЙ ОПЫТ УПРАВЛЕНИЯ

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC POLICY PROBLEMS[1]

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Problems as social constructions and claims

Let us start from a simple and common sense definition of the concept of a 'problem': One has a problem when one experiences a gap or disparity between a moral standard and an image of a present or future state of the world. Someone who claims to be plagued by a problem, implicitly or explicitly passes a moral judgment. One uses a standard involving value or worthlessness, desirability or undesirability, to pass judgment on present or expected acts or situations (e.g. Rokeach, 1973; Frankena, 1973). Some call moral standards strictly phenomenological, subjective facts of our inner, personal lives (Hodgkinson, 1983:31–32). Life presents itself to us as a series of moments-facts-events. To these phenomena we attribute value; it is what we appreciate. Values are, to put it inelegantly but unambiguously, 'in ourselves', not 'in things out there'. People attribute or ascribe value to things. In principle, this is a voluntary act.

However, in political or administrative practice value attribution is part of social conventions, social status, bringing up and educational background, political ideology, group interest, and, ultimately, expressions of political influence and power (Safranski, 1999)[2]. Values are confronted not just as inner feelings with a

[1] This article is taken from R. Hoppe, 2011, pp. 66–76.

[2] Safranski (1999) writes, "Behind every value attribution hides the will to power." This is equally true for the 'highest values': God, the ideas, the metaphysical. … However, even the will to power

strictly private character. They are confronted as externally imposed constraints, limits, or claims. For example, a public health officer involved in preventing HIV-AIDS is drawn into difficult political and ethical dilemmas:

Attempts to curtail epidemics raise – in the guise of public health – the most enduring political dilemma: how to reconcile the individual's claim to autonomy and liberty with the community's concern with safety? How does the polity treat the patient who is both citizen and disease carrier? How are individual rights and the public good pursued simultaneously? (Baldwin, 2005: 3)

In this political dilemma, where moral claims for both sides can be traced to constitutional clauses and public law, policy actors confront the ethical as objectified social constructions, as group claims, and as political power.

Presented as numbers and tables in statistical reports and government documents written by scientists or officials, problems and problem descriptions sometimes take on the garb of objective, merely factual statements about a situation. However, especially public problems are always claims of groups of persons about the way they experience a situation:

…having a problem is a claim on others, on how they ought to think about our situation and how they ought to act. …I, as an outside advisor, may claim that a society or an organization has a problem. …But the problem is posed by me, and unless others feel it or can be made to feel it, it will not be a problem for them. They may concur in my definition or choose another one. But my saying that a society has a problem…is an act that limits the set of possibilities that can be designated by the members of the society. I have attempted to take over the problem-defining process, and the society's politics (Krieger, 1981:39–43).

This makes any attempt to frame public problems essentially contested, and thus part of the political process and political conflict – as Schattschneider taught us so convincingly. What he (and many other political scientists interested in agenda setting) overlooked in his account of problem finding and framing, is that understanding the situation and coming to agreement about it necessarily changes our understandings – sometimes the understanding of ourselves. Not as political manipulation in the strategy and tactics of politics, but as an unavoidable part of the process of coming to agreement on the nature of a public issue or problem. In forging agreement on public problems, politicians create stories of a group's problem that help them and others, who originally do not belong to that group, to structure their experiences. He concocts from the stories of problematic situations experienced by some, a more overarching, more collective story, capable of mobilizing more people behind a problem formulation. In doing so, the story about the problem changes from the purely local, in some way contingent story of some

has misunderstood itself for a long time. People believed to discover independent essences, while, in fact, they invented them out of the force of the will to power… They have denied their own value-creating energy…Obviously, they would rather be victim and receiver than author and giver, perhaps out of fear for their own freedom." [translation by RH].

group of people, to a more 'cosmopolitan' or at least more decontextualized, and in that sense more 'rational' account for a majority.

Transformation of original problem experiences of a particular group of claimants into a more overarching, collective problem formulation for a political majority, then, is more then clever political manipulation. It is inherent in coming to some agreed version of the problematic situation in a democratic way. Some alienation or distance between individual citizens' or a particular group's problem experience and a politically viable and acceptable problem framing is an unavoidable socio-cognitive fact of democratic life. It is not necessarily, as many political scientists have claimed, self- or group interest-driven 'bias'. In principle, this cognitive dimension is independent from processes of political representation and aggregation. The transformation of a problem formulation, and the subsequent distance or potential alienation felt by some of the original problem-owners, would also occur under the most participatory and deliberative forms of politics and collective decision-making.

Let us now shift from the normative to the factual or empirical aspect in problematization. The fact-value distinction is still frequently justified by invoking the idea that the world of 'values' is created by our own fiat, whereas the world of 'facts' is an indubitable, external given (e.g. Hodgkinson, 1978:104). But epistemologists meanwhile agree that the idea of immediately 'given' sense data as rock-bottom baseline for human knowledge is a misconception. Every form of human observation and every 'fact' discovered through observation, is inevitably coloured or pre-structured by frequently implicit, hidden theoretical notions (Diesing, 1991; Ziman, 2000). Thus, in an indelible way events and situations that we 'see' and 'experience' are influenced by concepts and mind frames acquired in the course of our life. In the political, administrative and policy sciences such insights have generated a flood of research into the ontological, causal and finalistic (means-goals) assumptions in policy paradigms, heuristics, mind frames, cognitive maps, cultural scripts, and the like (Hoppe, 1999; Fischer, 2003).

Although we should relativize the fact-value distinction from an epistemological point of view, we cannot do away with it in practice. When we justify our values, we do appeal to the consent of others in terms of arguments of 'goodness' or 'justice' or 'utility'. When we make claims about facts, we appeal to the consent of others in terms of 'truth', 'verisimilitude', and 'honesty'. On top of that, in spite of many differences, there exists a fair amount of agreement on the rationality of procedures and methods for convincing an academic or professional community of experts on the truth-value of individual propositions and theories. Similar methods or procedures for arguing the superiority of ethical claims or theories, like in ethics, theology, and law, are more contested (Fischer, 1980; Dunn, 1983).

More importantly, however suspect the fact-value distinction has become from an epistemological point of view, it is historically entrenched in many insti-

tutions of modernity. Particularly, the boundaries between the institutions of science and politics, and between politics and administration, have exactly the fact-value distinction as one of their pillars. In the practical boundary work between representatives of these institutional spheres, the fact-value distinction in continuously appealed to as a basis for demarcation and coordination of activities (Jasanoff, 1990; Halffman, 2003). E.g., people working for independent think tanks and policy analysts working in state bureaucracies both refer to science as being experimental, empirical, independent, certified, measured, reliable, consistent, careful, meticulous, peer-reviewed, published, factual, *etcetera*; whereas politics and policy are labelled as a matter of values, decisions, implementation of political decisions, choice, wisdom, practical knowledge, managerial, et cetera.

Ezrahi (1990) has convincingly argued that methods of 'objective' science were complementary to – and actually strengthened – the depersonalized authority of democratically elected political leaders and bureaucratically organized civil servants. In other words, the fact-value distinction may be epistemologically suspect and contested, in political, administrative and scientific practice the boundary line is continuously constructed on the basis of the fact-value organization of activities, tasks, projects, policy programs, and the like. This does not mean that the boundary is clear, pre-given, and conflict free. On the contrary, boundary work entails almost day-to-day negotiations between representatives of the different institutional spheres to draw the line situationally and contingently (Halffman, 2003). The point is that, in doing so, policy relevant actors appeal to fact-value laden institutional narratives. 'Bureaucracy' is shorthand for the front-office narrative that bureaucrats serve and obey democratically accountable politicians, and everything entailed in the division of labor between instrumental and substantive rationality in day-to-day policy work. 'Decisionism' conveys a similar narrative that truth-telling science bows to the primacy of value-proclaiming politics. Put more precisely, in the back-office negotiations and consultative mutual cooperation of their day-to-day boundary work, civil servants and experts act 'in the shadow' of institutional rules of bureaucracy and decisionism (Hoppe & Huijs, 2003).

This is exactly the reason why, as a first step in following Steinberger's suggestions (1980), the fact-value distinction provides the analyst with two socially and politically grounded dimensions for a typology of policy problems. Every effort to pin down a problem is a double social construct. And this is not all. In problem framing and definition, fact-constructions are linked to norm-constructions through comparison; and this comparison also is a social construction in itself. Here too, the comparison, in political or administrative practice, is not just an individual act of free will. Politicians, administrators, policy and science advisers cannot just arbitrarily compare values and facts and on that basis attribute the label 'problem' to the judgment that the facts of a situation do not meet some standard. In order to successfully do this, they have to take into account the distribution of agreement and disagreement and power relations in different forums (cf. Watzlawick et al, 1974):

a. degree of consent on (prognosticated) facts in all kinds of political, administrative and scientific or professional forums, the media and public opinion;

b. degree of consent on values at stake;

c. degree of consent on the problem formulation itself, i.e. the comparison of fact- and value-sets.

For example, in Amsterdam city government during the latter half of the 1980s, the norm of equal treatment irrespective of gender, and facts about preferential treatment for women, were linked as a goal to a means. In the political climate of those days, there was strong agreement on the factual need and normative desirability of this instrumental link. Whoever would politically criticize this construction between a value and a fact as in reality ineffective, or as an unjustified gap between the practice of a policy program and an ethical standard of non-discrimination, would not only fight a lost political cause; even the courts would rule against him.

In summary, the elegant simplicity of the concept of 'problem' as a gap between a moral or ethical standard and some existing or expected situation cannot conceal its deeply problematic structure. Anyone formulating a problem constructs an easily contestable connection between ontologically disparate elements: moral standards or ethical guidelines (norms, values, principles, ideals), on the one hand, and facts, 'data' or empirical elements, on the other. Straddling the fact-value distinction, the concept of a 'problem' expresses the inextricable entwining of fact-values or value-facts in politics and administrative practice (Forester, 1989:240–241). Exacerbating the epistemological hybridity of the concept, one should add the second property of public policy problems: they are social constructs in every respect. Thus, when a politician or policymaker, on behalf of some authoritative political institution or public agency, formulates a problem, and this formulation gets accepted by a majority, a very complex and delicate social 'composition' has been created. It is both complex and delicate because as a political and social fabric it may be torn apart in three ways:

a. the social construction of the facts may be denied, or judged to be incomplete, biased, misleading, or even a set of outright lies, and so forth;

b. the social construction of values may be judged as incomplete, one-sided, wrong or unjust in principle, and so on;

c. the comparative link between facts and values may be rejected as illogical, irrelevant, not plausible, nonsensical, *etcetera*.

At the same time, having contributed to the bringing about of such a delicate fabric as a politically accepted problem definition, why should one be modest about one's achievement? And why not resist any effort at deconstruction and reframing as wrong-headed, even malicious? After all, the universal and rational notion of processing problem claims that problem-solving efforts require stable problem definitions lest they become 'moving targets'.

Four types of policy problems

The simple definition of a 'problem' hides a complex social construction. In this section, the heuristically productive and theoretically plausible reduction of that complexity for purposes of political judgment, policy analysis and policy design is at stake. It means that one should be able to distinguish between types of problems in the public sector. What is needed is a typology of policy problems, as a kind of model of the task environments that politicians and other policymakers face in the analysis, design, and evaluation of public policies. But first we need some minimal assumptions about the problem processing behaviour of politicians and proximate policymakers (cf. Forester, 1989).

Like all human beings, politicians and proximate policymakers are cognitive misers – perhaps even more so than other people, due to the information overload of the hyper-complex social-institutional contexts in which they usually operate. In their task environments they have good reasons to want maximum intellectual results from minimal cognitive efforts. For them processing problem claims in a more or less rational way involves three distinct, but connected demands (cf. Gigerenzer et al, 1999):

1. *Bounded rationality* (Simon, 1947; Simon, 1957): dealing with problems – from experiencing a problematic situation, to problem framing and defining, all the way to applying search and stop rules for alternative creation and selection, or problem solving – is intendedly, but boundedly rational. As information processing system, the human brain runs into cognitive limits determined by our neurophysiologic make-up, like the processing capacity of short- and long-term memory. The human capacity for information processing is less than fully adapted to the complexity of our environment. Dealing rationally with problems should make realistic demands on time, speed and computational skills of ordinary men. The implication is that human beings, politicians and policymakers among them, unavoidably use strategies and heuristics of complexity reduction. Practically, it means that that there will always be a tension between analysis and intuition; analysis as a "step-by-step, conscious, logically defensible (cognitive) process", and more intuitive ways of problem coping that somehow produce a solution, but through unarticulated, tacit ways, without the transparency and consistency of more analytic methods (Hammond, 1996:60ff.)

2. *Ecological rationality* (Hammond, 1996:111ff.; Goldstein & Hogarth, 1997): rational problem processing always is a performance in a real-world environment or task environment. From an evolutionary point of view the human capacity to survive and adapt to changing environments implies that rationality works successfully only through some kind of correspondence between the inner and outer life world. Like many other animals, humans use multiple fallible indicators to judge this correspondence between problem processing efforts and task environment. Monitoring policy fields by elaborate sets of economic, social, cultural and

ecological indicators, of course, is a well-known device for policymakers (e.g., MacRae, 1985; MacRae and Whittington, 1997). Practically, ecological rationality introduces a tension between generality and specificity, the cosmopolitan and the local, situational, or contextual elements in problem processing.

3. *Social rationality* (Janis & Mann, 1977; Tetlock, 1997): this is a special form of ecological rationality, as persons making claims on other persons (see above) socially construct most of a human problem-processing context. Psychologist Philip E. Tetlock (1997:660–661) gives an excellent description of the socially constructed task environment of political and public life in his two core assumptions on humans as 'would-be' politicians: (a) "accountability of conduct as a universal feature of the natural decision environment"; as the most important link between individual policymakers and the social-political environments in which they typically act; and (b) people act as approval-and-status seekers, keen on protecting and enhancing their self-esteem, social image and identity, while acquiring power and wealth. Practically, these assumptions give rise to two interdependent tensions. First, a tension between a correspondence theory of truth, based on criteria of accuracy in representing a 'real life' world; and coherence theories of truth based on criteria of logical and attitudinal consistency with prior beliefs and positions (Hammond, 1996). Second, a tension between judgments arrived at through one's personal feelings, intuitions, observations and analyses; and judgments generated by social pressures or instigation by others-as-group-members (Hoppe, 1983). The de-ideologization and individualization processes in coming to political judgment clearly exacerbate both. Individualization of political judgment erodes trust of socially instigated judgments; de-ideologization attributes a less prominent place to a coherence theory of political truth, and boosts a correspondence theory of political truth. The rising number of performance indicators and league tables in policymaking evidences the trend.

Acting boundedly, ecologically, and socially rational, policy actors will be prone to use an acceptability heuristic (Tetlock, 1997; confirming Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1963): in accounting for their decisions they will first and foremost look at acceptability in the eyes of those who have to support, represent, or otherwise publicly cover them. Projecting this on the dimensions of accountability for the framing and definition of public problems, policymakers and politicians confront different potential situations.

Regarding moral or ethical standards, they will distinguish between policy problems whose standards, norms, values and objectives are more or less agreed to. Similarly, concerning perceptions of present and future situations or conditions, and the deliberate transformation of problematic present into improved future, they will distinguish between policy problems in which there is more or less certainty on available and usable knowledge. Using these two dimensions – degree of agreement on normative claims at stake, degree of certainty on relevant

and available knowledge – one may construct the following typology of the socio-cognitive status of problems for policymakers in political task environments[3]:

The heart of the typology is the opposed pair of structured versus unstructured problems. One can speak of *structured problems*, when policy designers perceive unanimity or near consensus on the normative issues at stake, and are very certain about the validity and applicability of claims to relevant knowledge. They simply know how to turn a problematic present situation into the improved, or desirable, unproblematic future situation. A structured problem is like a puzzle. However complex, the pieces of the puzzle are given, and for each puzzle there is just one configuration of pieces representing an adequate solution (Mason & Mitroff, 1981; Dery, 1984). There exists a solution for the problem that, for all practical purposes, is complete and fully guaranteed; usually by means of standardized methods of applied science or professional practice. Rittel & Webber (1973) give as examples 'domesticated' problems of low complexity from the early days of statehood, like building and paving roads, designing and building housing (but see Simon, 1973), eradicating dread diseases (but see Baldwin, 2005), and providing clean water and sanitary sewers. Many, not all[4] problems of a medical nature fall into this category. Scientific, technical, evidence-based treatment and therapy makes for high levels of certainty on relevant knowledge. Also, there appears to be near unanimous consent on the goals of medicine: prevention of disease and injury, promotion and maintenance of good health, relief of pain and suffering caused by maladies, care and cure of the sick, care for those who cannot be cured, and avoidance of premature death and pursuit of peaceful death (Callahan, 2003:88–92). It is because of these two properties that the problem definition of structured problems can be kept out of the sphere of subjectivity, politics and overt interest struggle (De Jouvenel, 1963:206–207). Structured problems, thus, usually are matters of administrative implementation and professional routine.

One may speak of *unstructured problems* when policymakers observe widespread discomfort with the status quo, yet perceive persistent high uncertainty about relevant knowledge claims, and high preference volatility in mass and elite opinion, or strong, divisive, even community-threatening conflict over the values at stake. Rittel & Webber call such unstructured problems 'wicked'[5], because any

[3] I do not claim any originality here. To my knowledge, the typology was first constructed and used by Thompson & Tuden (1959) in order to link decision styles to organizational structures. It has been used later by numerous authors in many different fields: business management (Nutt, 1989), policy studies (Douglas & Wildavsky, 1983; Dryzek and Ripley, 1988), science, technology and society studies (Ezrahi, 1980), organization studies and organizational learning (Crossan, Lane, Hildebrand, 1993; Stacey, 1996; Choo, 1998), and this list is far from exhaustive. Of course, the multiple uses by numerous authors strengthen my judgment that the typology is valid across many fields of application.

[4] Consult Callahan, 2003 and Hoppe, 2008 for the presence of not-so-structured problems in medicine and health care.

[5] The 'wickedness' of unstructured problems, of course, is the opposite of 'domestication' in structured problems. Note how the use of the concept of 'wicked problems' in the governmental reform literature completely misses the political and cognitive aspects of unstructured problems by defi-

solution effort immediately spawns new dissent and more intense conflict. Unstructured problems are difficult to disentangle 'webs' of interrelated problems; they resist decomposition in (quasi)independent clusters of problems. There is dissent and conflict over which pieces belong to the 'puzzle', and over which arrangement of the pieces means 'solving' the puzzle. In the risk societies of late modernity where the distribution of risks has succeeded the welfare state's distribution of goods as focus of public debate (Beck, 1992) the volume and intensity of unstructured problems appears to be on the rise. Sometimes the negative side effects of entrenched technologies cause a U-turn from structured to unstructured problem. Issues like the car mobility problem (Hendriks, 1999; Hoppe & Grin, 2000), the building of nuclear power plants in the Netherlands in the 1980's (Hisschemöller,1993: 71–78), contemporary planning for a nuclear phase-out in Belgium (Laes et al, 2004), and anthropogenic global warming (Peterse, 2006) belong in this category. Sometimes it is the unbridled research and innovation drive, which leads to new, unstructured problems. This may manifest itself in new medical technologies like (therapeutic) cloning and xenotransplantation or breakthroughs in preventive screening by genomics (Callahan, 2003; Hoppe, 2008). Contrary to structured problems, unstructured problems occasionally are in the political spotlight, and may even generate sustained, intractable political controversies (Schön and Rein, 1994).

Moderately structured problems (ends) occur when policymakers observe a great deal of agreement on the norms, principles, ends and goals of defining a desirable future state; but simultaneously considerable levels of uncertainty about the relevance and/or reliability of knowledge claims about how to bring it about. This kind of problem typically leads to disputes of what kind of research might deliver more certain knowledge for solving the problem. Given uncertain knowledge, and thus uncertain effectiveness and efficiency of interventions, moderately structured problems (ends) also frequently raise issues of bargaining about who will be responsible for expenditures in financing or otherwise enabling certain interventions; and for risks in case of ineffectiveness or negative side effects. Issues like traffic safety (Hoppe and Grin, 2000), ambient particulate matter (Peterse, 2006), fighting obesitas (VWS/ Department of Public Health, 2009) and many issues of policies for routinely agreed-upon socio-economic goals like maximizing gross domestic product and minimizing inflation (Halffman & Hoppe, 2005) belong to this problem type.

ning them as problems "that cross departmental boundaries and resist the solutions that are readily available through the action of one agency" (representative example in Perri 6 et al., 2003:34). Focussing on the technical, administrative and organizational aspects of service delivery for particular problems turns almost any problem into a 'wicked' one. Putting a man on the moon, for instance would be an extremely 'wicked' problem; so would be offshore oil drilling for energy safety. Yet, we know these are structured, quite 'doable' problems, albeit managerially and technically very complex ones. In the original meaning of the word, it is the inextricable mix of (cognitive) puzzlement and political conflict that makes tackling certain problems unstructured or 'wicked'.

Moderately structured problems (means) exist when relevant and required knowledge tends to high levels of certainty, but there is ongoing dissent on the normative claims at stake. The key characteristic of this type of policy problem is not knowledge certainty, but the valuative ambiguity, and frequently the contested and divisive nature of the ethics of the problem. The Dutch debate on abortion provides an excellent example. When the issue arrived at the political agenda, a new, fully safe abortion technique had been introduced. The early debate focussed on the in- principle moral permissibility of abortion; later phases concentrated on the conditions under which abortion might be permissible; and on alternative procedures of consultation for establishing such conditions (Oudshoorn, 1986). In American political and policy studies the concept of 'morality policy' (Mooney, 1999; Smith, 2002) or even 'sin policy' (Meier, 1999) has been coined to cover a cluster of moderately structured (means) problems that are generally high on the conservative political agenda, and characterized by an emphasis on fundamental notions of right and wrong, high political salience, and low information costs. Abortion, euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide, racism and anti-discrimination policies in general, same-sex marriage, capital punishment, gun control, smoking, family and (criminal) youth policy all would belong to this class of problem constructions.

In spite of the illustrations given for clarity's sake, the four problem types are ideal types in the Weberian sense: simplifying and focusing, and therefore to some extent screening out some problem properties in order to bring other aspects (in this case, cognitive and design facets in a political task environment) into sharper relief. For one thing, the typology's dimensions are not inherently dichotomous; consequently, not every policy problem will be unambiguously classifiable as one of the four types. In real-life cases one encounters hybrid pairings (see Hoppe, 2011). For another, it will frequently be the case that different policy actors will classify the 'same' problematic situation differently; and even for the same policy actor problem types are stable only for certain periods of time. However, it is quite possible to deal with these familiar analytic problems of multiple policy actors and the temporality and transformation of problem frames. Here only the heuristic value of the typology is claimed for the analysis of politically authoritative policy design – be it from a formally political, bureaucratic or scientific position. Given the assumptions about the bounded, ecological and social rationality of politicians and policymakers, we cannot expect them to define problems 'objectively'. Policy problems are by definition socio-political constructs and presuppose political (inter)subjectivity. However, this subjectivity does not operate randomly. People may display certain judgmental and behavioral patterns in defining problems. (see Hoppe 2007; and Hoppe, 2011, 121–144).

From the basic assumptions the expectation is derived that governmental policymakers and decision-makers prefer to define 'their' problems as structured. Rendering issues technical, or depoliticization is a standard strategy; sometimes extremely successful. Kaiser and Schot (2014) have convincingly shown how by

doing so the European Union, since its beginnings in the 1950s, and in spite of its apparent democratic deficit, became a most successful technocratic project. Extending Scott's *Seeing Like A State* (1999), Li (2006) shows how the World Bank, in spite of a complete lack of democratic legitimacy, can implement far-reaching social development programs in Indonesia and many other countries in South-East Asia through claims of epistemic authority in 'rendering things technical'. Rendering policy problems technical minimizes politicians' uncertainty, limits the need for search activities, and constrains the range of alternative solutions to existing repertoires. Essentially, it allows them to delegate or 'outsource' dealing with policy problems to epistemic communities of experts and technicians. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that when there is too much complexity or social conflict, they will continue trying to minimize 'trouble'. Therefore, they will prefer to identify these politically more sensitive situations as one of the two classes of moderately structured problems. They would rather not admit to themselves and others that they have fully unstructured problems on their hands. This implies that governmental policymakers will show a marked tendency to ignore, sometimes actively screen out, information that may complicate the policy problem under scrutiny. This tendency need not be deliberate, or even acknowledged. Policymakers may be completely unaware of their screening relevant information away from the policy arena since they may not consciously grasp the biases that are inherent in their own belief systems and policy frames.

Another reason for problem framing bias or sheer neglect is that policymakers when finding and choosing a problem frame immediately find themselves bound by a 'legitimate' problem space and a political discourse to discuss it. That is, they determine what can, cannot, may, and may not be said about the problem without being labelled as transgressing politically 'correct' boundaries or rules of the political language game. In respecting rules of political correctness, they implicitly decide on which values are at stake and pre-structure which (type of) knowledge is relevant and required for problem solving. In the case of gaps between problem understanding by official policymakers and other influential proximate policymakers and stakeholders or the public at large they run the risk of tackling what is called the 'wrong problem'. They may treat as 'structured' a problem that other stakeholders – be they peak associations, pressure groups, target populations, or even their own executive managers and street-level bureaucrats – experience and define as much more complex and controversial than they are willing to admit. It is exactly at this point where, if they go unacknowledged, unattended to, or denied for too long, intractable policy struggles occur.

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