

Power, Agenda and Policy Decision

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Course Overview

	Morning Session (10:00 ~ 13:00)	Afternoon Session (14:00 ~ 16:00)
2 Aug 2024	Concept of Public Policy	Assignment & Task Division
9 Aug 2024	Research & Doing Policy Analysis	Hands on Using AI tools
16 Aug 2024	Policy Actors & Policy Process	Policy Simulation
23 Aug 2024	Power & Policy Agenda	Poster Preparation
30 Aug 2024	Policy Implementation	Policy Workshop

Day IV: Session Overview

- How agenda gets into policy?
- Visible and invisible faces of power.
- Power and political system.
- Decision making tools

Guardians of the Coast

The coastal village of Bayview had always been proud of its fishing heritage. Generations of fishermen had made their living from the sea, bringing in fresh catches that supplied markets far and wide. But in recent years, something had changed. The fish were becoming scarcer, and the once-bountiful waters seemed to be emptying. Whispers began to spread through the village. Fishermen spoke of large, unmarked boats seen just beyond the horizon, pulling in nets heavy with fish. These boats weren't from Bayview, and they weren't following the local fishing rules. It wasn't long before the whispers turned into outcries, and the village demanded action. The local government held emergency meetings, trying to understand the scope of the problem. They spoke with the fishermen, environmental experts, and law enforcement. The picture that emerged was grim: illegal fishing operations were depleting the fish stocks, threatening not just the local economy, but the entire marine ecosystem. The government knew they had to move quickly. They passed new regulations aimed at protecting the coastal waters, increasing patrols to catch illegal fishermen, and imposing heavy fines on those caught breaking the rules. The fishermen of Bayview watched closely, hoping these measures would be enough.

The Classroom Revolution

Elara, once famous for its vast rice fields, is now an industrial powerhouse. In the heart of a rapidly industrializing nation, Elara government faced a new challenge. Factories were springing up across the country, but there weren't enough skilled workers to fill the jobs. The education system, designed for an agro-era, wasn't preparing students for the demands of the modern economy. Reports began to surface about factories unable to find qualified workers, slowing down production and threatening the country's economic growth. Business leaders warned that if something wasn't done, Elara could lose its competitive edge. Parents, too, were worried, fearing that their children wouldn't have the opportunities they had hoped for. The government knew it had to act. They gathered experts in education and industry to figure out how to overhaul the national curriculum. The answer, they decided, was to shift the focus toward technical and vocational training. The new curriculum was rolled out, along with apprenticeship programs that gave students hands-on experience in the workforce.

Funds or the Forest?

Deep in the heart of the country, vast forests stretched as far as the eye could see. These forests were home to countless species of wildlife and were a source of pride for the nation. But over the years, logging companies had moved in, cutting down trees at an alarming rate. Environmental groups raised the alarm, warning that if the deforestation continued, the damage could be irreversible. Yet, the government was oblivious. Logging was a lucrative industry, providing jobs and contributing to the economy. But as the deforestation continued, another voice entered the conversation: the tourism industry. The country was famous for its natural beauty, attracting visitors from around the world. But with the forests disappearing, tourism was at risk. The tourism board presented a report to the government, showing how deforestation could lead to a sharp decline in visitor numbers, and therefore, a significant loss of revenue. Suddenly, the issue wasn't just about the environment; it was about money. Faced with this new perspective, the government began to take the problem more seriously. They introduced new regulations to limit logging, protect certain areas of the forest, and promote sustainable practices. The logging companies pushed back, but the government was firm. The forests were too valuable to lose.

Fields of Battle

In the fertile plains of Nova, agriculture had always been a way of life. Small farms, passed down through generations, dotted the countryside, producing the food that fed the nation. But as time went on, large agribusinesses began to cast its shadow over this idyllic scene. They pushed for deregulation, arguing that it would lower food prices, and make Nova a global agricultural powerhouse. The small farmers, however, saw things differently. Deregulation, they feared, would only benefit the big players, driving them out of business and eroding the traditional farming practices that had sustained their communities for centuries. Rural advocacy groups rallied behind the small farmers, holding town hall meetings and writing letters to the government, pleading for protection. The government, caught in the crossfire of this agrarian battle, found itself in a precarious position. On one side were the powerful agribusinesses, with their deep pockets and promises of economic growth. On the other were the small farmers, representing a way of life that was integral to the country's identity. The debates were long and heated. Politicians faced intense pressure. Whatever decision they made would have far-reaching consequences.

Vignette Experiment, Example

- Anya is a single mother of two children, living in a small urban apartment, has recently lost her job due to company downsizing. She has been actively looking for work but has not yet found a new job. She is currently receiving unemployment benefits, which cover about 60% of her previous income. She applies for additional welfare assistance to help cover her rent and utilities.
 - On a scale from 1 to 10, how deserving is Anya of receiving additional welfare assistance?
- Nadibaza, a mid-sized city, has recently been experiencing more frequent and severe floods due to climate change. The city council is considering implementing a policy that requires all new buildings in flood-prone areas to be elevated above the 100-year flood level. However, this policy would increase construction costs by 20% and could slow down development in these areas.
 - How important is the potential increase in construction costs on whether to support this policy? (Not Important, somewhat important, important, very important)

Agenda to Policy

- Traditional views: governments would recognize and address the most important issues (e.g. see [Guardians of the Cost](#) from previous slides)
- Socioeconomic influence: long-term **socioeconomic changes** naturally bring certain issues onto the policy agenda. (e.g. see [The Classroom Revolution](#) from previous slides)
- Social process and framing: agenda gets into policy depending on the way it is framed and perceived by policy makers (e.g. see [Fund or from previous slides](#))
- Competing frames: policy agenda is result of competition and continuous negotiation among policy actors. Winner's agenda get into policy (e.g. see [Fields of Battle](#) from previous slides)

Agenda to Policy: The Hall Model

- Legitimacy: The issue should be perceived as a proper concern for government
 - Is the issue appropriate for public policy? Does it align with societal norms and values?
- Feasibility: There is the practical ability of the government to address the issue.
 - Are there sufficient resources, technology, and administrative capacity to tackle the problem? Is there a visible solution?
- Support: Are there sufficient political and/or public support in favor of the issue?
 - Do the key stakeholder support the issue? Is there consensus on pushing the issue forward?

Kingdon's Model of Agenda Setting

Problem Stream

- Identified through indicators, focusing events, or feedback.
- These issues must be recognized as significant enough to require government action.

Policy Seram

- Refers to the pool of ideas and solutions proposed by policy actors.
- Policies need to be technically feasible and politically acceptable.

Political Stream

- It is the political climate and the willingness of political actors to act.
- Influenced by changes in government, public opinion, and interest group pressure.

Kingdon's Model of Agenda Setting

- Policy Windows
- Brief opportunities when the three streams align, allowing an issue to reach the decision agenda.
- Policy windows are unpredictable and often short-lived.
- opened by changes in the problem stream (e.g., crises), policy stream (e.g. new evidence/innovation/knowledge), the political stream (e.g., elections), or a combination of both.
- Policy actors must be ready with solutions and able to effectively push their agenda when a window opens.

Policy Windows: Examples

- A sudden collapse of a major private cryptocurrency due to fraud or market volatility may open a policy window, leading central banks to fast-track the development and implementation of their own digital currencies.
- A significant increase in unemployment due to rapid automation in key industries and a progressive government elected on a platform of economic reform may facilitate UBI adoption
- A global economic downturn that significantly reduces remittance flows to developing countries and international agreement on strict immigration measures, global agreement on sustainable policies, may initiate reducing dependency on remittances through sustainable development policies.

Policy Windows: Examples

- A major political scandal or election interference linked to misinformation spread through social media, and unanimous support in the government for protecting election integrity. Enactment of regulations requiring social media platforms to monitor and control political advertising.
- A viral media report publicized humanitarian crisis in a country under heavy sanctions, leading to widespread suffering. Growing international pressure to adopt more humane and effective strategies for enforcing human rights. Revoke sanction and adopt targeted measures.
- A high-profile legal case involving a terminally ill celebrity seeking the right to assisted suicide. Public demonstration and strike in favor of the celebrity. Legalization of euthanasia and assisted suicide under regulated conditions.

The Visible Faces of Power

- Power as decision making: The ability of actors to make decisions that directly influence policy outcomes.
 - Observable and clear, involves conflict and negotiation
 - E.g.: A government decides to implement tax cuts for high-income earners.
- Power as non-decision making: The ability to prevent certain issues from being considered or debated.
 - Less visible and subtle, Maintains the status quo
 - Fossil fuel companies lobby to keep stricter environmental regulations off the policy agenda
- Power as thought control: The ability to shape people's beliefs, values, and perceptions
 - Subtle and insidious
 - Promoting specific political stances or candidate through media outlet and ignore others

The Invisible Faces of Power

- Power as Social Structure: Power embedded in the social, economic, and institutional structures that shape policy outcomes.
 - E.g. The wealth gap influences access to resources and opportunities, leading to policies that favor the wealthy.
- Power as Ideology: Power that shapes beliefs, values, and norms, influencing what is perceived as natural or right.
 - E.g. Neoliberalism widely accept market-driven policies, despite potential drawbacks, shapes policy in favor of privatization and deregulation.
- Power as Knowledge: The ability to define, produce, and disseminate knowledge, shaping how we understand the world.
 - Pharmaceutical companies influencing medical research and guidelines.

Power: Anchoring vignettes

- A proposed law to increase the minimum wage is quietly dropped from the legislative calendar after intense behind-the-scenes lobbying by business associations. The issue is not publicly debated, and the minimum wage remains unchanged. => Power as Non-decision Making
- In a corporate environment, the idea that long working hours are a sign of dedication and success is deep-rooted. Despite evidence showing the negative effects of overwork on health and productivity, the company continues to promote a culture of long hours and minimal work-life balance. Employees who try to push back against these norms are seen as less committed, reinforcing the ideology that personal sacrifice is necessary for career advancement. => Power as ideology
- A state legislature passes a bill that introduces standardized testing as the primary method for evaluating student performance in public schools. Teachers and parents express concerns, but the decision is made to implement the tests as a way to improve accountability in education. => Power as decision making

Power: Anchoring vignettes

- A prestigious university implements a new admissions policy that heavily favors students from elite private schools. While the policy is officially merit-based, it inadvertently privileges those who have had access to better educational resources and tutoring services. As a result, students from underfunded public schools, often from lower-income backgrounds, find themselves at a significant disadvantage, perpetuating social and economic inequalities. => **Power as Social Structure**
- During an election campaign, a major news outlet consistently portrays one political candidate in a positive light while downplaying or ignoring the achievements of their opponent. Over time, public opinion begins to favor the candidate promoted by the media. => **Power as Thought Control**
- In the debate over climate change, certain industries fund research that downplays the impact of human activities on global warming. This research is widely disseminated, creating doubt in the public mind and influencing policymakers to delay or weaken environmental regulations. Despite the overwhelming consensus among independent scientists, the knowledge produced by these industry-backed studies shapes the public and political discourse. => **Knowledge as Power**

Power and Political System

Power as thought Control

Ideological Power

Discursive Power (thought control)

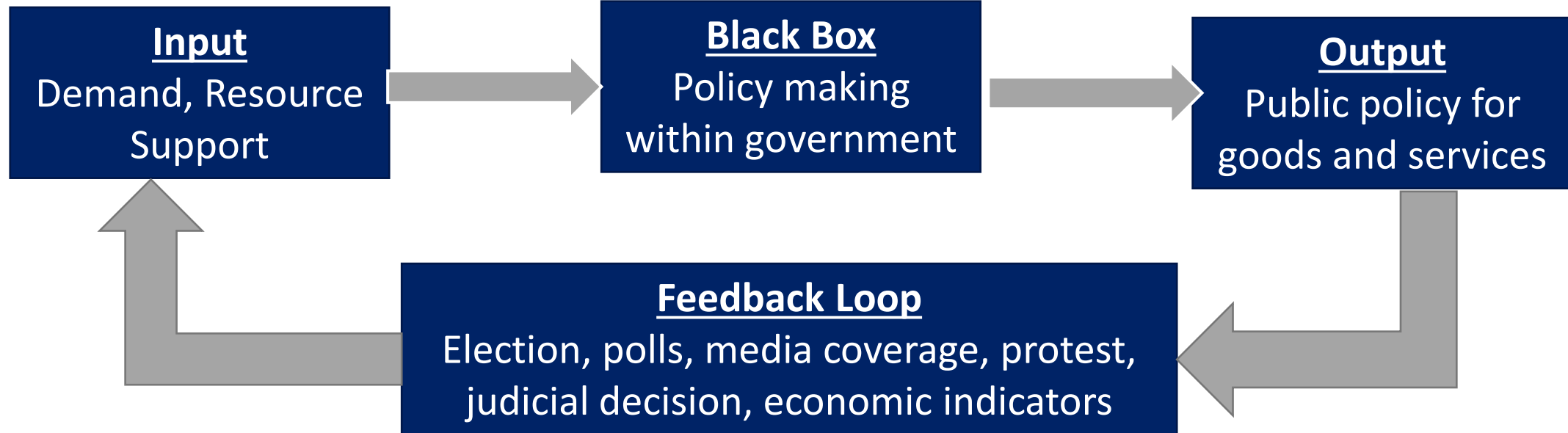
Knowledge as Power

Power as (non) decision making
Structural Power

Power as decision making

Discursive Power (thought control)

Knowledge as Power



Discursive Power (thought control)
Knowledge as Power

Rationalism

- Perfectly informed , rationale actor
- Aims for optimal decision making
- Complete analysis of all alternatives
- Systematic and comprehensive
- Over simplified, unrealistic to context

Bounded Rationalism

- Limited information and cognitive capacity
- Aims for good enough solutions
- Limited search for alternatives
- More realistic in complex environment

Black Box (Decision making)

Incrementalism

- Aims for gradual process of small changes
- Less comprehensive analysis
- Reduced risk and uncertainty
- May lead to policy inertia

Mixed Scanning

- Combined element of rationalism and incrementalism
- Comprehensive analysis of alternatives
- Incremental adjustment for specific alternatives

Education Reform

- The Ministry of Education has been receiving criticisms about the outdated curriculum in public schools, but extensive reforms seem too risky and politically antagonistic. The ministry decides to pilot a new math curriculum in a few schools across the country. They start implementing the changes in only a handful of classrooms, and closely monitor the results. Teachers provide feedback, and adjustments are made based on what works and what doesn't. After two years of testing and refinement, the new curriculum is expanded to more schools. => Incrementalism

Climate Change

- The national government is facing growing pressure to address climate change. In response, they launch a comprehensive and highly detailed process to design a new climate policy. The government begins by defining clear, long-term goals: reducing carbon emissions by 50% in the next decade and transitioning to 100% renewable energy by 2040. To achieve these goals, a task force is created, gathering experts from various fields. The task force conducts extensive research, analysing every aspect of the problem and all possible policy options. After months of careful analysis, the task force presents a detailed, step-by-step plan to the government. The plan outlines specific policies, timelines, and expected outcomes. Confident in the thoroughness of their work, the government enacts the policy, believing it will achieve the desired results. => Rationalism

Public Health Crisis

- A sudden outbreak of a new viral disease catches the public health department off guard. With limited information about the virus and only a short window to respond, the department's leaders need to make quick decisions. They know they cannot possibly gather all the necessary data or explore every potential solution in the time available. The decision-makers quickly set an initial goal: to slow the spread of the virus and prevent the healthcare system from being overwhelmed. They gather as much information as they can within the time constraints, consulting with a few key experts and looking at what other countries have done. With these inputs, they decide to implement a partial lockdown, close schools temporarily, and ramp up testing. They know these measures might not be perfect, but they are the best they can do under the circumstances. The public health department plans to adjust the strategy as more information becomes available. => **Bounded Rationalism**

Traffic Congestion

- Kathmandu is struggling with severe traffic congestion, leading to high levels of pollution and wasted time for commuters. Mayor Balen recognizes that this is a complex issue requiring both immediate actions and long-term planning. Mayor Balen consulted with urban planners, environmental experts, and community leaders, and decide to implement a comprehensive public transit expansion over the next decade, including new subway lines and bus rapid transit routes. At the same time, he introduce traffic-calming measures in the most congested neighbourhoods, implement a pilot program for bike-sharing, and adjust traffic signal timings to improve flow. These initiatives are monitored and tweaked as needed, while the broader public transit plan is slowly rolled out. => **Mixed-scanning**

Policy Decision Tools

- Const Benefit Analysis: Basis for economic reasoning, difficult to measure and interpret
- EIA: Always dependent on judgment calls and value assessments from experts. Useful for public policy involving environmental aspects.
- Multicriteria Analysis: useful for evaluating complex issues with various stakeholders and impacts, such as urban planning or environmental protection.
- Scenario Analysis: Helps policymakers prepare for uncertainties and plan for various possible futures, such as climate change adaptation.
- Decision trees: making complex decisions with multiple stages and uncertainties, such as investment decisions.

Policy Decision Tools

- SWAT Analysis: Helps policymakers understand internal and external factors that could affect the success of a policy
- Technology Assessment: Informs the potential benefits and risks associated with technology adoption and integration.
- Health intervention Technology Assessment: Provide policymakers with policy choices that deliver greater value for public health.
- Participatory planning: Applied in areas such as urban planning and community development to create policies that are more responsive to local needs and conditions.
- Agent based modeling: Analyze the potential effects of policies on different sectors or populations, such as economic forecasting or traffic management.

Thank You !