

Problematization in Problem Identification Process

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Abstract

Public policymaking has long been considered a science of rational problem solving. However, the literature has not yet adequately addressed how policy “problems” are given specific meanings in particular contexts. This research uses a comparative empirical study in Taiwan to observe the process of problem identification in three different policy domains. This study contributes to an understanding of the practical logic of policy making as individual policy practitioners assign interpretations to “problems” in their daily practices and argues the need for policy analysts and policy-makers to be self-reflexive to enhance problem solving capability. A two-phase problematization analysis is performed: first a triadic analysis of the ethos, logos and pathos of problem solving cases; second, Bacchi’s “What’s the problem represented to be?” (WPR) approach is adapted and modified as a systematic guideline for problematizing and critically reflecting on the process of problem representation by questioning assumptions.

Keywords: public policy, problem identification, WPR approach, problematization, post-structuralism

投稿日期：103年11月12日；接受刊登日期：104年9月10日。

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I. Introduction

Public policymaking has long been considered a science of the rational problem solving process. However, the literature has not yet adequately addressed the political dynamics and contingent side of how policy “problems” are given specific meanings in particular contexts. By analyzing the problem identification process as the practical questioning of a policy entrepreneur who determines when to propose policy change, this study contributes to an understanding of the practical logic of problem solving as individual policy practitioners interpret the problems they face daily. The paper then argues and demonstrates the need for policy analysts and policy-makers to be self-reflexive (Schön, 1983) during the problem-solving process in order to discover the problematic in the way a “problem” is represented and enhance alternative problem solving capability. This study draws upon both interpretive and post-structural premises (Ascher, 1986; Funtowicz & Ravetz, 2001; Lindner & Peters, 1995) with an argument to use problematization as a critical methodology (Bacchi, 2012; Meyer, 1995).

Two analytical stages are designed in this study: first to examine the process of problem identification by applying triadic analysis and then to launch a self-reflective critique of the process of problem representation with the WPR (what’s the problem represented to be) approach (Bacchi, 1999, 2009). These two stages mirror the two paradigms in psychology identified by Unger (1989: 15): the “person constructs reality” paradigm (constructivism), and the “reality constructs the person” paradigm (constructionism). The former pays attention to how policy actors shape problematizations and the second examines how deep-seated conceptual logics underpin existing policies.

To empirically illustrate the problematic nature of the problem identification process, this author uses a comparative case study in Taiwan to observe the actual process of problem-solving cases in three different policy domains. In each policy domain, two cases of problem solving are investigated and studied. The problematization analysis¹ of

¹ The term “problematization” used by this research is more in its verb form which is to describe what people or governments do, i.e. *to problematize* than its noun form which is the *outcomes* of problematizing, i.e. problematizations. In this study, “problematizing” is used as a methodology of critical analysis. Along the same line, scholars such as Alvesson and Sandberg (2013: 71) propose what they called “problematization methodology” to systematically assessing assumptions and presuppositions in social theories.

those cases challenges the traditional view that policymaking is a rational process by disinterested actors working toward the common good (Lasswell, 1951, 1971). The paper also argues that what constitutes the “common good” for the public and what constitutes a “problem” that deserves the attention and priority of policymakers are contingent on the ethos (self, value), logos (world, institution) and pathos (other, emotion) of policymakers (Turnbull, 2013: 120). In other words, policy making often is used to constitute a “problem” – to give an issue a particular meaning – instead of rationally addressing problems as presumed fixed entities.

Before applying this problematization analysis to actual problem-solving cases in Taiwan, the first section of this study reviews the historical development of policy analysis from a rationalist approach with a focus on government, a user-oriented style of governance study and the recent shift in attention to critically examining how governing involves problematizing (Rose & Miller, 1992: 181). It also explains the purpose and implications of such a problematization approach. The second section describes the methodology and summarizes six cases of empirical problem solving followed by two phases of the problematization analysis.

II. From Governance to *Problematization* in Governance

In the past decades, policy analysis has shifted its focus from “*government*” to “*governance*” (Kooiman, 1993; Pierre, 2000; Pierre & Peters, 2000). Government-oriented research places disproportionate emphasis on the role of government or the practice of an old governing style, whereas the governance approach has attempted to introduce the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), communities and citizens into the governing enterprise. The public sector is practically and theoretically revitalized through the introduction of new ways of studying and incorporating “users” of public policy, including such non-state actors as private institutions, associations and the general public (Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1999). Increasing attention has been transferred from compartmentalized and hierarchically managed policymaking to an emerging mode of governance that emphasizes interconnectedness (Borrás, 2003). This shift mirrors the emerging consensus among social scientists that a procedural or discursive mode of policy process is normatively superior to the former rational analytic approach of identifying the best policy solution via cost-benefit analysis (Haas, 2004:575). Policymaking is understood as a process rather than as a fixed set of analytic techniques. This anti-rationalist view entails that all policy outcomes will be suboptimal compared to

the ex-post ideal outcome, where path-dependence and uncertainty occur on multiple levels. Contingency is embedded throughout the policymaking process and language (Fischer & Forester, 1993; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003), and discursive power also plays a role (Dryzek, 1997) in the creation of policy outcomes.

More recently, the importance of another theoretical argument, i.e., the *problematization* in governance, has increased (Bacchi, 2012; Colebatch, 2006; Colebatch, Hoppe, & Noordegraaf, 2010; Hoppe, 2011; Turnbull, 2013). It refers to a shift of attention to critically examine the problematizing process in governing affairs. When revisiting rationalism and the procedural approach to policy analysis, scholars have focused increasingly on what can be questioned and how “problems” are identified (See Figure 1).

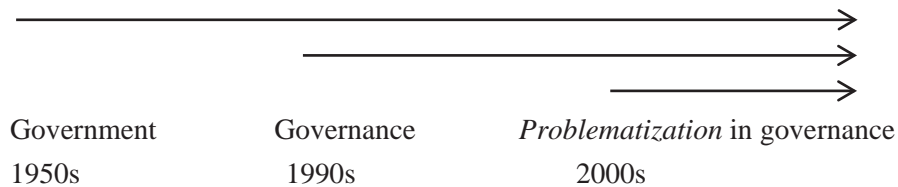


Figure 1: Historical Development of Policy Analysis

Source: Constructed by author.

This alternative analytic trend has observed that the ability of policy workers to define problems is constrained within Scott’s (2008) three pillars of the institutional legitimacy structure: norms (ethos), regulation (logos) and culture-cognition (pathos) or the translation of a problematique extending from Aristotle’s value (ethos), reasons (logos) and emotions (pathos) (Barnes, 1984). Consequently, every aspect of policymaking is problematic. The existence of a clearly defined social problem is questioned because of the complexity of policymaking itself as a logic of questioning across various domains of activities. According to Turnbull (2013: 115), “problems are constructed, not only through power and interpretive framing schemes, but as much by the practice of policymaking activity.” Along the same lines, a policy change proposal to solve a “problem” is also problematic. The problematization in governance approach leads us to explore the intrinsic system of limit and exclusion in policy making (Simon, 1971: 73) because any question is constitutive of a duality of explication and repression (Meyer, 2000). When a policy change is introduced, it inevitably explicates or addresses itself to one specific aspect of the question while repressing others. Without asking questions and reflecting on the identified “problem”, the solution is always partial and

biased to a certain degree. Inevitably, some options for social intervention are closed off by the way in which a “problem” is represented. And the result can have devastating effects for certain people (Bacchi, 2009: 16). In other words, the term “problem” is taken to mean a question, or even a specific form of question (Maniglier, 2012: 21), rather than a pre-existing troubling status. There is no perfect “solution” to a “problem” but only “questions” and “answers” (Rose, 1999).

This approach can also be regarded as a theory of consciousness to explain policy stability and policy change or innovation. Although comforting emotions are produced to repress differences and then establish a solution and stable policy practice, policy change or innovation is only possible when a policymaker is confronted with disturbing emotions that prompt an internal questioning of the status quo. By repeating the practice of a policy, policymakers unconsciously prefer it, and the outcome is seen as unproblematic. Emotion provides a problem-solving logic for a policymaker to use to determine what is a problem (Turnbull, 2013: 120).

What is the purpose of problematization (Foucault, 1977) in policy analysis? The goal of problematizing in governance is to provide a space for reflectivity and to stand back from the assumed policy solution and status quo (Bacchi, 2012: 5). Through the exercise of problematization, the genealogy of objects can be traced back to consider their effects, including an examination of their subjectification. Patterns in problematization can also be identified to reveal the style of governance based on Foucault’s suggestion. This added emphasis on self-reflection, particularly on the role of researchers, which is based on the assumption and observation that concepts and arguments developed by researchers play a key role in establishing what is “in the true” and hence “real”. In other words, problematization analysis encourages researchers to ask what realities do my methods create and with what effects for which creatures and places (Bacchi, 2012: 6-7). Furthermore, the problematization approach can also help analysts observe how “things” come to be, and it creates multiple realities that raise questions about the “singular reality” (Mol, 2002). Recognizing theories as practices to reinforce particular realities can allow analysts to self-scrutinize our strongest biases and thereby open a space for change (Flynn, 2005: 33).

To operationalize the practice of problematization in policy analysis, Bacchi (1999, 2009) introduced the “What’s the problem represented to be?” (WPR) approach. The WPR methodology entails six questions:

1. What is the problem represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?

3. How has this representation of the problem come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences?
Can the problem be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?
6. How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

By asking these six questions in policy analysis, scholars can discover that the meanings of “problems” are not given but rather are social constructions. Public agencies are not involved in solving pre-existing problems but are participants in “problem” creation. Identifying particular conditions as problems limits a government’s options for corresponding policy responses. Therefore, Bacchi urges scholars to analyze policy not from a problem-solving perspective but from a problem *questioning* perspective. A focus on problematization can free policy analysts and policy-makers from preconceptions about understandings of “problems”. Such emancipation from commonly accepted views of what is problematic can encourage an inventive approach to developing alternative policy proposals.

III. Method

This research, which draws upon both interpretive and post-structural forms of analysis, aims at explaining the practical side of the problem-solving process in public policymaking. A comparative empirical study was conducted in Taiwan to observe the process of problem solving in three different policy domains: nuclear energy policy, social welfare policy and education policy. In each policy domains, several middle managers such as Division/Section Chief or project principle coordinating officers were invited for simultaneous interviews to provide insights into policymakers’ assumptions and details in the problem-solving process. In each case, two public sector representatives were asked to describe one previous problem-solving project on which they had worked together to ensure the validity of data. From September to December of 2013, data for a total of six problem-solving cases were successfully collected from ten interviewees (See Table 1 for interviewee list), among whom most have over decade(s) of experience working in public agencies. The interview questions (see Appendix A) were designed to explore multiple aspects of the problem-solving process, including problem identification, new policy initiation procedures, implementation, challenges and impact.

Table 1: Interviewee List

Policy Sector	Case #	Interviewee Job Position	Problem-Solving Case in Charge
Nuclear Energy Policy	N1	1 Division Chief and 1 Officer at Atomic Energy Council, Fuel Cycle and Materials Administration	Parallel radiation monitoring program
	N2	1 Division Chief and 1 Officer at Atomic Energy Council, Dept. of Radiation Protection	Patient radiation management program
Social Welfare Policy	S1	2 Social Work Supervision Officers at Taipei city gov., dept. of Social Welfare, Division of Social Assistance	Extra Mentoring Service
	S2	1 Section Head and 1 Officer at Taipei city gov., dept of Social Welfare, Division of Welfare Services for Senior Citizens	Differentiated senior health insurance assistance
Education Policy	E1	1 Secretary General and 1 Section Chief at Kaohsiung Municipal Social Education Center	Open space initiative
	E2	Same as above two interviewees in E1 case	Fundraising initiative

Source: Compiled by author.

Once the data collection was complete, two phases of problematization analysis of the cases were initiated. The first phase examined the ethos, logos and pathos aspects of each case. Based on descriptions of how the problem was identified at the initial stage provided by interviewees, I launched a triadic analysis to categorize the conditions under which the actors became aware of substantive interruptions in established organizational arrangements that required intervention, prompting them to propose a different policy design. The second phase applies a modified version of Bacchi’s “What’s the problem represented to be?” (WPR) approach and her six questions as a set of guidelines to systematically reveal the logic (what, how, why and who) at work during the problem-solving process in public agencies. The answers to these six questions for the six problem solving cases in Taiwan are mainly from the descriptions provided by interviewees (see Table 4-9), except questions 4 and 6 which are in need of researcher’s additional interpretation, educative guesses and further analysis based on the empirical data. For instance, question 4 explores what is left unproblematic in this problem representation,

where are the silences and how can the problem be thought about differently. This is a question that the interviewees were not asked to answer directly in this project yet could and should be encouraged to be asked among policymakers in the future as part of the self-reflexive exercise. As for the first part of question 6 regarding how the problem is produced, disseminated or defended, data need to be regrouped, analyzed and interpreted before answering this question. Moreover, hypothetical scenarios are required to be simulated on the part of the researcher in order to answer the second part of the question dealing with how the problem could be questioned, disrupted and replaced – again another self-reflexive exercise future policymakers or policy analysts can use.

IV. Case Briefing

Table 2 summarizes the six problem-solving cases. In the domain of nuclear energy policy, two cases were studied: case N1, a radiation self-monitoring program, and case N2, a patient radiation management program. Case N1 began as a 3-year parallel radiation monitoring education program spanning the period 2010-2012 at the Lanyu Island nuclear waste storage site, which is located on a volcanic island 45 km off the southeast coast of Taiwan. Without any precedent, the Fuel Cycle and Materials Administration of the Atomic Energy Council decided to release part of their central monitoring power to the local residents living near the site and to teach the locals to self-monitor the levels of radiation. This policy innovation was extended to 2013 due to the impact of the Fukushima nuclear plant explosion. Case N2 was proposed after the passage of the 2003 New Healthcare Service Quality Assurance bill, and this policy innovation called for a new patient radiation management program that had never been implemented on such a comprehensive scale in Taiwan or elsewhere in the world. As a result of this policy change, in 2010, Taiwan became the first country in the world to provide a comprehensive medical radiation exposure quality assurance plan, which involves the monitoring of 442 computer tomography machines in 224 hospitals in Taiwan.

Table 2: Summary of Problem Solving Cases

Policy Domain	Nuclear Energy Policy		Social Welfare Policy		Education Policy	
Public Agency	Atomic Energy Council, Fuel Cycle and Materials Administration	Atomic Energy Council, Department of Radiation Protection	Taipei City Government, Dept. of Social Welfare, Division of Social Assistance	Taipei City Government, Dept. of Social Welfare, Division of Welfare Services for Senior Citizens	Kaohsiung Municipal Social Education Center	Kaohsiung Municipal Social Education Center
Case Code	Case N1	Case N2	Case S1	Case S2	Case E1	Case E2
Case Name	Parallel radiation monitoring program	Patient radiation management program	Extra mentoring service	Differentiated senior health insurance assistance	Open space initiative	Fundraising initiative
Time/Event	2010-2012 A 3-year Parallel Radiation Monitoring Education Program at Lanyu Island nuclear waste storage site: teaching local residents to self-monitor Budget: 70,000-100,000 US\$/year Extended to 2013 due to 2011 Fukushima crisis; changed to allow the monitoring team to be run entirely by local residents	2003 New Healthcare Service Quality Assurance bill Started to digitize radiation data and management in hospitals island-wide In 2010, Taiwan became the first country in the world to provide a comprehensive medical radiation exposure quality assurance plan, particularly to monitor 442 computer tomography machines in 224 hospitals in Taiwan	2006 Special Outsourcing Mentoring Service for High Risk Family in Low Income Housing Community to NGOs Each outsourcing project is a 2-year initial program – extending 1 year upon evaluation After that, a public bid is made for an alternative NGO service provider Example: I-link Community Services Association	1996 Provide senior health insurance full subsidies to all senior residents over age 65 in Taipei 2001 Policy changed to Differentiated Senior Health Insurance Substitution, excluding higher income seniors 2009 Added stricter evaluation, such as asset evaluation Until 2013, the program was still in place, with a trend of increasingly strict regulation	2003 Open Space Initiative launched 2004 Completed first phase of open space construction: Removed all 180-cm walls around the center 2006 Completed second phase of open space construction: Interior remodeling and garden beautification project	2010 First large-scale launch of external fundraising campaign 2013 30% total government budget cut, but still maintained same amount of activities with US\$20,000 government funding/60,000 external funding 2014 might expect 40-50% budget cut

Source: Compiled by author.

In the social welfare policy domain, case S1 involved a proposal by the Taipei Municipal Government Department of Social Welfare, Division of Social Assistance. It was proposed that extra mentoring services for high-risk families in low-income communities be outsourced to NGOs. Although public-private partnerships are common in the social welfare domain in Taiwan, the extra mentoring that was provided specifically to high-risk families that live in state-owned low-income housing and that are already assigned to public social workers was innovative. This problem-solving project was initiated in 2006 and has continued to the present (2014). The NGO that has worked closely with the Taipei Municipal Department of Social Welfare is the I-link Community Services Association². Case S2 introduced a policy change in 2001 to differentiate the healthcare insurance financial assistance provided by the Taipei municipal government to seniors over age 65. These seniors had been fully covered regardless of income or assets since 1996. In 2009, a stricter evaluation method was introduced to include asset evaluation, further categorizing those who are and are not qualified to receive assistance.

Lastly, in the domain of education policy, case E1 has been an architectural initiative of the Kaohsiung Municipal Social Education Center (KMSEC) since 2003. The removal of a 180-cm-tall wall that had surrounded the center for a decade was proposed, and the rest of the center underwent a beautification transformation. With this open space initiative, the center is aiming to create a stronger bond with the community and to provide a more welcoming atmosphere, which did not appear to be a concern in the 1990s. Case E2 is a fundraising initiative that started in 2010 after the creation of the new Kaohsiung special municipality status³. Historically, KMSEC has depended entirely on local government funding. With this initiative, KMSEC sought external funding for the first time and launched a large-scale fundraising campaign.

² <http://www.i-link.org.tw/>; I-link's pronunciation resembles that of "love neighbor" in Chinese. I-link's website describes their service related to this government outsourcing project as the community's "7-11", empowering high-risk families.

http://www.bosa.taipei.gov.tw/ep/Ep_Cnt.asp?sno=0010205 (accessed March 3, 2014)

³ In 2010, five special municipalities were created in Taiwan. From north to south, they are Taipei, New Taipei, Taichung, Tainan and Kaohsiung. Before 2010, Kaohsiung city and county coexisted. After 2010, the two merged into one administrative entity. This change was the first major government restructuring since the Second World War.

V. Triadic and WPR Problematization Analysis

The problematization analysis of this paper is divided into two phases. In the first phase, a triadic analysis of the ethos, logos and pathos aspects is performed for each case. Reasons or institutional background under which a problem-solving case identified this particular problem are analyzed. Second, Bacchi's WPR approach and her six questions are applied as a set of guidelines to systematically reveal the logic (what, how, why and who) involved during the problem-solving process in public agencies.

The first phase of problematization analysis is designed to guide readers to illustrate the analytical process in which policymakers participate when defining problems. The analysis is based on the theoretical assumption that policymakers' ability to identify and respond to problems is constrained within what Scott (2008) labeled the three pillars of the institutional legitimacy structure: norms (ethos), regulation (logos) and culture-cognition (pathos) or Aristotle's values (ethos), reasons (logos) and emotions (pathos) (Barnes, 1984). To operationalize, interviewees in each case were asked to provide detailed descriptions on how the problem was first identified, including the identification of both primary (denoted with ☉) and secondary reasons or background (denoted with ○) under which the problem-solving case was established. Table 3 categorizes the background of problem identification for all six cases provided by interviewees in the Fall of 2013 into ethos, logos and pathos aspects.

Table 3: Background of Problem Identification

	Case N1	Case N2	Case S1	Case S2	Case E1	Case E2
Ethos (values; idea, self) Internal		○Radiation in hospital > nuclear plan ○Professional knowledge		◎Social justice		◎willingness to serve; do as much as we can to serve
Logos (institution; reason, world) Institutional	○Future electoral consideration/public support	◎Increasing international scientific attention on patient radiation dose ◎Develop medical tourism for Taiwan in the long run	◎A response to UN poverty alleviation effort ◎high-risk family assistance as central gov's priority ◎A new application of Taiwan Public Welfare Lottery profit	○Affordability of Funding consideration ○Aging society ○Electoral consideration	○Institutional survival and competition ○Trend of open space movement at organizational level	○Institutional survival
Pathos (emotion; interest, the others) External	◎Public fear, distrust				◎Sense of pride and willingness to be a pioneer	

Note: According to descriptions provided by interviewees, ◎ denotes primary reasons for identifying the problem; ○ denotes secondary reasons for identifying the problem.

Source: Compiled by author.

Then by using the categorized data for the background of problem identification listed in Table 3, the researcher draws a simplified triadic analysis circle map for each problem-solving case (see Figure 2). Since this figure is drawn to facilitate the comparative effort among the six cases, within each circle, only primary reasons were written and highlighted to illustrate with emphasis under which type of institutional logic a case's problem identification is most constrained.

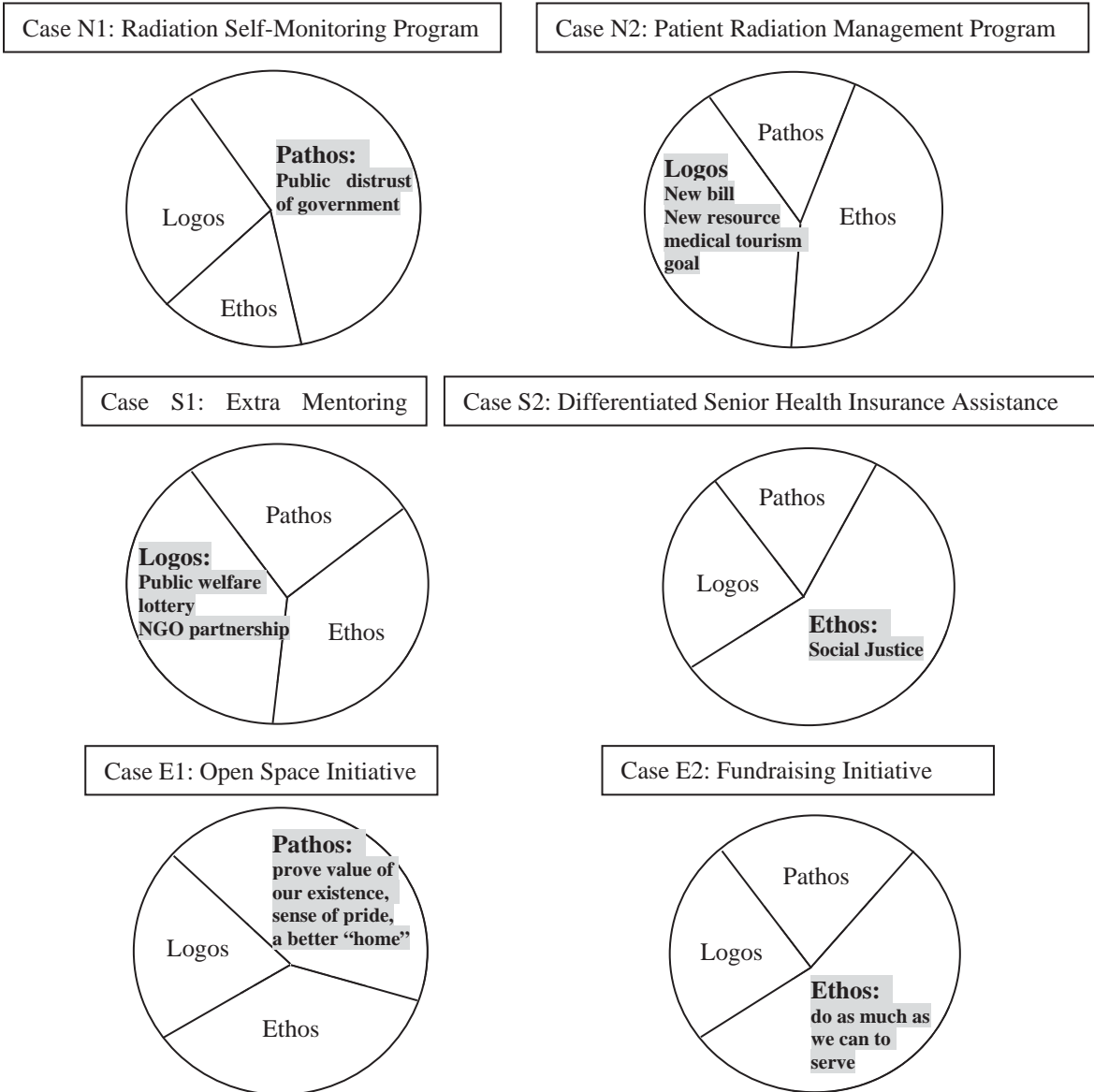


Figure 2: Triadic Analysis for Problem Identification

Source: Compiled by author.

Of the six cases reviewed, according to the interviewees, only one case addressed an existing social problem (case S1), and the other five problems were socially constructed. However, even in case S1, the problem of the lack of extra mentoring services for high-risk families was identified as a problem to be tackled by the interviewee only when the agency was capable of solving or placing it on the policy agenda after the public welfare

lottery can offer additional funding (logos) and after the process of applying to Taipei's Division of Social Assistance became relatively competitive (starting in 2006). If people's applications were denied, the agency was unable to solve this problem without extra funding and might have remained silent about the problem, as it did prior to 2006. Therefore, this institutional setting (logos) as informed by the interviewee stands out compared to the pathos and ethos aspects of the problem.

Furthermore, emotion (pathos) played a larger role in the problem identification process and the introduction of the problem-solving solution in cases N1 and E1. Case N1 addressed the emotion of public distrust of government, and case E1 was a result of the emotional reaction of civil servants in the Kaohsiung Municipal Social Education Center, who wished "not to lose pride in their home", to "prove the value of our existence" and to have the "willingness to build a better service center" (according to an interview with two senior officers on November 21, 2013). Similar to case S1, case N2 was largely a result of institutional persuasion (logos), as new medical quality assurance bills and the goal of developing medical tourism were the strong institutional determinants behind the questioning of the "problem". However, in cases S2 and E2, ethos (values) was pivotal in proposing a differentiated subsidy for senior citizens' health insurance policies and in proposing a fundraising initiative. The front line officer in Taipei's Division of Welfare Services for Senior Citizens sensed the social injustice problem in the old subsidy policy and proposed a policy change (S2).

The Taipei city government proposed the senior health insurance subsidy in July 1996 when no such policy had been implemented in other cities in Taiwan, except maybe in Kaohsiung. The way that the health insurance subsidy worked is dependent on income. The lower the income, the lower the subsidy. For instance, for low-income seniors, we provided a subsidy of NT\$300-400; for higher income seniors, the subsidy could be as high as NT\$1000-2000 per month. I felt that this was unjust [ethos] in terms of fair public resource allocation. However, at that time (1996), I had only been a civil servant for 1-2 years. I felt strange and reported this to my immediate supervisor, who had entered the agency only a little earlier than I. Together, we were not able to successfully tackle this problem until 1999. (December 6, 2013, telephone interview)

Case E2 also demonstrates the importance of values (ethos) for the realization of the fundraising policy change: the two officers at the Kaohsiung Municipal Social Education Center repeatedly expressed their belief in "doing as much as they could as civil servants to serve the public" despite the difficulty of budget cuts. They worked hard to continue to

organize the same number of activities despite annual budget cuts exceeding 30%. In other words, they could have easily reduced the number of activities they offered to Kaohsiung residents using budget cuts as an excuse.

The second phase of problematization analysis involved a comparison of all six of the problem-solving cases by applying Bacchi’s six questions, one by one. The first question is as follows: What is the problem in a specific policy represented to be? Among the six cases, based on case description provided by the interviewees, only in case S1 were there attempts to tackle a traditionally defined social problem: high-risk families in low-income community housing. The other five cases addressed the management of offices in their daily practice. For example, N2 involved a lack of digitized radiation information in hospitals, and E1 addressed an increasing budgetary shortfall (See Table 4).

Table 4: Problems represented in policy innovation

1. What is the problem in a specific policy represented to be?	
N1	Lack of local trust in public agency’s monitoring program
N2	Lack of digitized, comprehensive medical radiation exposure quality assurance
S1	Inability of high-risk families to care for children under 18; Lack of manpower in public sector
S2	Lack of social justice in existing senior healthcare subsidy; Increasing financial burden on budget
E1	Lack of interaction with the community and low visit count; Loss of agency competitiveness
E2	Decreasing public budget

Source: Compiled by author.

Bacchi’s second question pushes researchers to probe the assumptions behind each problem. Understanding assumptions helps in tracing the logic behind why problems are identified as such and opens up space for alternatives. Problem-solving case N1 (see Table 5) was proposed because the radiation monitoring authority assumed that regardless of how they adjusted scientifically, the local residents living near a nuclear waste site installed in 1981 in Lanyu, most of whom belong to the population of approximately 4,000 aborigines of the Tao or Yami tribes, would not trust the government’s radiation monitoring data. One radiation monitoring official who is also an aborigine commented:

The Tao is a unique tribe that does not trust any “outsider”. Their decision making

style is more egalitarian than hierarchical with respect to individualism. They do not even trust third parties, such as universities or environmental non-governmental organizations, who tried to assume the radiation monitoring task. For them, these non-Tao people are all “outsiders” and cannot be completely trusted. (Interview on September 12, 2013)

Table 5: Assumptions underlying the problem

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?	
N1	No matter what public agencies do, residents will not trust their reading of the data Not sufficiently useful to adjust current nuclear waste management style or technical improvement
N2	Radiation in private hospitals must be centrally monitored by government officials to ensure quality Previously conducted using paper forms, inhibiting the ability to monitor comprehensively
S1	Extra help is needed for high-risk families, and it should work Increasing the number of public social workers is too expensive; outsourcing is more affordable
S2	Government has limited resources and should provide them to the most needy Excluded seniors can afford to do without assistance Without exclusions, a larger budget will be required later
E1	High walls inconvenience visitors Other public centers are opening up their space, and so should we
E2	The problem will worsen because the city government is running a budget deficit Public evaluation requires the public to cooperate with the private sector Even without a budget, quality should be maintained

Source: Compiled by author.

In case N2, the case of patient radiation control, the authorities assumed that if they could create a digitized database of all radiation-related equipment in all of Taiwan's hospitals, they would be better able to monitor and regulate patients' exposure to radiation and ensure higher quality medical care. However, no other country has previously launched a monitoring program this comprehensive in scale, and the program is an entirely new experiment for Taiwan. The effectiveness of the program is still being reviewed.

The third question reveals the process of problematization. It was revealed when the problem became problematic in the eyes of policymakers. Interestingly, among the six cases studied, only one problem was identified by the interviewees as "always a problem (case S1)," whereas the other five identified problems were "not a problem before" and only became identified as problems later. This observation made by interviewees is consistent with Turnbull's argument (2013) that problems are often constructed by the practice of policymaking activity, not only by power. The interviewees informed me that the first meeting of the parallel radiation monitoring program on June 4, 2010 outlined several reasons for the proposal of this program, including Taiwan's recent democratization success, the success of the parallel monitoring program at Taichung Fire Power Plant and the upcoming government reorganization plan,⁴ which offered a window of opportunity to push for this innovative proposal. This problematization in case N1 reveals that problems are a social construction rather than a rational process. The problematization process is contingent on the logic of political development, such as the democratization of a regime, the success of other programs with the same purpose that confirms that this "problem" can be tackled, or an organizational change that provides a rationale for proposing a new program and changing the existing resource allocation. The other four policy cases (see Table 6) illustrate similar social constructions and a procedural mode of policymaking instead of a cost-benefit analysis.

⁴ On February 3, 2010 the Executive Yuan Reorganizational Bill was passed. The existing Atomic Energy Council, Fuel Cycle and Materials Administration was merged with the New Ministry of Science and Technology and was assigned the new task of safeguarding all radiation security.

Table 6: How has this representation of the problem come about?

3. How has this representation of the problem come about?	
N1	<p>Not a problem before, despite long-term protests ----- Conflict between the state and civil society</p> <p>February 3, 2010 New government reorganizational bill</p> <p>Past success of Taichung Fire Power Plant parallel monitor program</p> <p>2011 Fukushima crisis and 4th nuclear plant construction issue</p>
N2	<p>Not a problem before ----- A new bill was introduced in 2003, the Healthcare Service Quality Assurance bill 2008 UN radiation report</p> <p>Advent of technology Future medical tourism</p>
S1	<p>Always a problem ----- Proposed by bottom up/central government/UN poverty reduction initiative</p> <p>Extra funding opportunity from Taiwan Public Welfare Lottery (1999 founded; second version in 2007)</p>
S2	<p>Not a problem initially in 1996 ----- Identified as a problem of social justice in 1999 upon accounting</p> <p>Increasingly problematic due to aging society</p>
E1	<p>Not a problem when other public spaces were also enclosed in 1994 ----- 2003 New mayor for city revitalization project</p> <p>2005, Public school open space initiative</p>
E2	<p>Not a problem before Kaohsiung municipality was reorganized in 2010</p> <p>Became problem with actual budget cut ----- Too many grand construction projects that put city in deficit</p>

Source: Compiled by author.

The fourth question encourages critical reflection on the problematization by asking analysts to determine factors that have been “taken for granted” or that have no role in the policymaking process. Reviewing these factors can empower researchers or policymakers themselves to revisit their proposed solutions to the problem and think differently to further enhance future problem solving capability. This critical reflection exercise resembles a learning process. In case S1, although the extra mentoring of high-risk families in low-income housing outsourced by Taipei’s municipal government initially appeared to be an effective project, policymakers have encountered difficulties in determining how to effectively evaluate the program’s outcome and whether it has mitigated the problem. The temporary nature of the low-income housing management style has exacerbated the problem because the stability of high-risk families is constantly disturbed. Low-income housing can only offer “temporary” housing, and applicants tend to move in and out, which means the mentoring service is also temporary in nature (see Table 7).

Table 7: Silence about representation of the problem

4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the omissions? Can the problem be thought about differently?	
N1	The agency’s current functions are unproblematic, i.e., lack of protective clothing for workers Problem of minority protection (4,000 people) Lack of a long-term independent monitoring entity, no international team Selective, not open to the public Cannot learn sufficient amount in such a short workshop
N2	Silence on patient’s privacy issues in digitized record Effectiveness of this problem Why are other countries not implementing this solution? Is there a lack of trust in private hospitals? Lack of medical radiation training among professionals
S1	This problem is difficult to evaluate or mitigate Outcome is not visible Problems create more problems (spillover effect) Temporary housing worsens family’s stability

Table 7: Silence about representation of the problem (continued)

S2	Silence on why only a few cities provide this subsidy for seniors, fairness for all taxpayers Exclusion of other priorities Initially an electoral concern Do seniors really need this subsidy from the government? (US\$ 20/senior)
E1	Silence on multiple artistic activity service providers in Kaohsiung city. Does this cause an overlapping injection of public resources? Silence about other reasons for losing visit count Loss of competitiveness due to loss of focus and uniqueness
E1	Silence about how past outsourcing of public services cost more but was not more efficient. Silence about the purpose of this center. Was the previous solution inefficient? Did we previously waste too much public funding?

Source: Compiled by author.

Reflecting on Case E1, the open space initiative of the Kaohsiung Municipal Social Education Center (KMSEC), one might point out that it involves silence regarding questions that policy practitioners were unaware of or took for granted, such as other causes of the center’s decrease in visitors, including activities that the center offers that overlap with similar programs offered by other museums, libraries or universities in Kaohsiung. Figure 3 shows the locations and dates of the construction of public social and artistic facilities provided by the municipality of Kaohsiung, which has a population of 2.7 million (1.5 million before the 2010 merger of Kaohsiung city and county). In addition to the fact that other public activity providers have newer facilities than KMSEC, the organizational purpose of KMSEC has not been well defined through its activities or became outdated between the initial establishment of its mission in 1950 and the construction of the current center in 1994. What is “social education”? A critical evaluation is required regarding what the center can offer Kaohsiung residents that fits its mission statement and what differentiates the center from other public institutions.

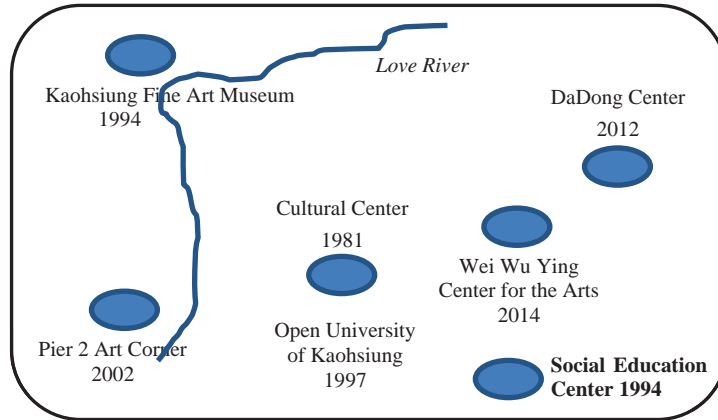


Figure 3: Social and Artistic Activity Facilities in Kaohsiung (as of March 2014)

Source: Compiled by author.

Bacchi's fifth question focuses on determining the effects of the representation of the problem. For example, in case E2, the external fundraising campaign, the identified problem of increasing budget cuts produced a spillover effect on the organizational behavior of KMSEC. To attract private donors, KMSEC diversified its activities and started to organize more creative and larger scale events, such as the National Paintball Competition and Eleven-Legged Race, the latter of which had been previously only conducted in Japan, according to the interviewee. KMSEC staff also launched a more aggressive media exposure campaign and used their limited resources more efficiently by increasing the multitasking capability of each civil servant. The result of this identified problem and the resulting solutions to the problem created new opportunities for the center to grow (see Table 8).

Table 8: What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?

5. What effects are produced by this representation of the problem?	
N1	<p>A 3-year innovative public education program is proposed to teach local residents to self-monitor radioactivity</p> <p>Increase civic participation and welcome third-party independent monitoring</p> <p>Open and transparent data movement</p>
N2	<p>Launch the digitization program for radiation monitoring in all hospitals in Taiwan</p> <p>In 2010, Taiwan became the first country in the world to provide a comprehensive medical radiation exposure quality assurance plan</p>
S1	<p>An outsourcing program to NGOs</p> <p>A preventive measure and emergency aid</p> <p>Closer collaboration between the government, NGOs and civil society</p> <p>Empower NGOs to innovate through this flexible funding</p> <p>Facilitate cross-organizational cooperation</p>
S2	<p>Create a differentiated senior healthcare subsidy program</p> <p>Exclude seniors who do not meet the new subsidy threshold.</p> <p>Increasingly strict regulations for exclusion; More seniors are disqualified</p>
E1	<p>Proposed open space construction project</p> <p>Upon completion of the first phase of open space construction: 600,000 visitors/yearly to 920,000 visitors/yearly in 2004</p> <p>Upon completion of the second phase of open space construction in 2009, the number of visitors/yearly nearly doubled, from the original number to 1,200,000 visitors/yearly.</p> <p>Fund Application Skill Learning and Cross-Organizational Cooperation</p>
E2	<p>Seeking non-state actors for fund raising</p> <p>More creative events to attract donors</p> <p>Greater media exposure campaign</p> <p>Closer relationship with the community</p> <p>More efficient use of resources and staff</p>

Source: Compiled by author.

The final question urges researchers to interpret the problem-solving process as the practical questioning of a policy entrepreneur who determines when to intervene and initiate an alternative policy. When the problem that arises is defended and disseminated recursively without critical questioning, disruption or displacement by either internal or external forces, the problem is likely to be addressed and prioritized in the policy agenda. Based on this process, the case analyses (see Table 9) illustrate the practical logic of problem solving in the way that individual policy practitioners interpret and make sense of the problems they face daily. According to an official at the Atomic Energy Council, the lack of a comprehensive digitized patient radiation monitoring system in case N2 became an identified “problem” in 2003 when the central government introduced a new medical quality assurance bill (Interview on September 13, 2013). The Atomic Energy Council issued two minor bills in response and legitimized the need for “digitizing patient radiation data” as a problem that required a new resource allocation strategy. Furthermore, the goal of promoting Taiwan as a destination of medical tourism helped *disseminate* the legitimation of the problem. A presentation released by the Atomic Energy Council’s Department of Radiation Protection in August 2011⁵ characterized the patient radiation management system as a method for increasing Taiwan’s future international competitiveness in the medical tourism industry. This problem, however, was initially *questioned* and caused a *disturbance* within the agency and hospitals. One interviewee shared his experience of promoting this policy innovation at the initial stage:

This problem of patient radiation is widely ignored by citizens and even hospitals. When people think of radiation problems, they mostly refer to nuclear radiation near nuclear power plants or nuclear waste disposal sites. They are unaware of the danger of increasing medical radiation doses in the human body through the increasingly frequent use of computer tomography (CT) scans that expose patients and hospital employees. My agency thought this was a problem that we needed to tackle. However, at the initial stage, hospitals *questioned* our new policy because it would add extra costs to their budget and would require extra professional training. Our agency’s staff all received extra training for this problem, including traveling abroad to learn the newest technology and increase our knowledge in radiological protection in medicine. (Interview on September 13, 2013)

⁵ http://www.aec.gov.tw/webpage/control/rad/files/index_10_1-2.pdf (accessed on March 6, 2014)

Table 9: Reproduction or disruption of problem representation

6. How/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?	
N1	<p>State/civil society opposition through the media (produced/reproduced) A Japanese team came to Lanyu in 2012 (disseminated) ----- We hired Japanese scholars to present evidence in Parliament and in front of the media (questioned and disrupted) If the program is ineffective, this problem could be replaced. No other country has a similar program (questioned/disrupted)</p>
N2	<p>Defended due to the new 2003 medical quality assurance bill Medical tourism is further promoted (disseminated) ----- Questioned due to higher costs and lack of professionals This problem can be disrupted due to a lack of government funding and a lack of manpower Questioned because this concept is new</p>
S1	<p>The problem is defended due to its alignment with UN poverty and the central government's policy agenda Help to train NGOs (disseminated) ----- Disrupted if budget deficit exists Questioned by lack of standard evaluation and results</p>
S2	<p>This problem is defended within social justice and budget balancing considerations. This policy might be used (disseminated) in an electoral campaign. ----- Questioned by local residents who are not aware of this existing subsidy Disrupted or replaced if the Taipei municipal government runs a budget deficit</p>
E1	<p>Supported and produced by certain colleagues who treat the center as a home Other open space projects (disseminated) ----- Our project would be questioned or disrupted if it lacked funding Replaced if other ways to increase competitiveness were successful</p>
E2	<p>Budget cuts in all Kaohsiung municipal offices. (produced) Research and Development Evaluation Commission required the public agency to work with a non-state actor (disseminated) ----- Questioned because less could have been done Donations were all too small to help (questioned)</p>

Source: Compiled by author

VI. Concluding Remarks

This study challenges the traditional rational approach of understanding public policymaking in which political dynamics and the contingent side of the problem-solving process are not the focus. In this study, interviewees identified six cases (N1, N2, S1, S2, E1 and E2) in three policy domains (nuclear energy, social welfare and education) to illustrate their routine problem-solving processes. By performing triadic and Bacchi's WRP analyses of the six empirical cases, the paper illustrates the practice of both a constructivist and constructionist question-and-answer logic while revealing the questioning process of individual policymakers who determine what is problematic.

The theoretical contribution of this paper is fourfold. First, the study shows that policy problems are not intrinsic but are socially constructed. Policy practice, as Turnbull (2013) argues, involves both the repression of questions through practice and the explication of questions through reflection. Secondly, the triadic analysis shows that each problem identification is subject to diverse persuasive logic; it is not fixed in nature but flexible and variable. In other words, a problem-solving activity often occurs to solve a problem that is constitutive of policymaking activity instead of a rationally identified social problem. Thirdly, this problem "questioning" approach to public policy analysis emphasizes its procedural nature as opposed to the best policy rational approach, which is based on static cost-benefit analysis. This approach leads an individual on a Foucauldian journey of emancipation (McCabe & Holmes, 2009) from existing structures and empowers analysts to discover the *problematique* and "silencing effect" (Bacchi, 2009: 16) embedded in current problem identification. Lastly, the emergence of "problematization in governance" is shown in this paper as an alternative theoretical approach to "government" or "governance" that has developed since the beginning of the twenty-first century. It also reflects the political trends of democratization, decentralization and globalization because most types of *problematization* pose challenges to existing governing systems and raises questions related to justice, efficiency and bias in the policy agenda.

As for its practical contribution, the paper demonstrates that without critical questioning of the formation of problems, policy analysts may suffer from an inability to identify what is problematic in a given public policy analysis. Especially for those policymakers who strive to be policy entrepreneurs or societal entrepreneurs (Berglund, Johannisson, & Schwartz, 2012), the theory of questioning illustrated in this paper is

particularly useful for the generation, translation and implementation of new ideas in the public sector. Once questions regarding the logic, such as the what, how, why and who of a problem, is examined carefully, the silence and the omitted will be revealed in order to create room for incubating alternative problem-solving capability.

Furthermore, although the study recognizes policymakers as “participants” in the problem-construction process, it also sees and encourages the potential for self-reflexive policymakers as “changers” who can see what the “problem” is, rewrite the rules of the game, propose alternative policy proposals, allocate resources differently and change social values to produce a better society in the long run.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

受訪者基本資料：性別：_____ 年齡：____ 擔任公職年資_____；部門（歷年所有）_____是否曾任主管職_____您認為自己是否有解決問題的潛能？_____ 過去工作中有發揮出來嗎？_____為什麼有／沒有？_____

受訪者訪談問題大綱

問題解決過程（Problem Solving Process）

在您的公務人員生涯中，請敘述一件您自己成功解決問題的個案。

- I. **Problem Identification** 為何當初您想解決此問題，而不是其它問題？
政治／選舉因素；新主管下令；危機：自然或人工？內部長期問題，如資源分配不均，同事間資訊傳遞有代溝，工作效率不佳；新科技；國際趨勢；政府政策改變；業務關係人態度／活動改變；其他如民眾抱怨連連。
- II. **Initiation** 為解決上述問題，你自己提出了何種解決方案？
- III. **Support** 這個提案是否有受到支持？
誰支持你？誰反對你？你是否有合作夥伴？部門內？部門外？政治人物？企業？民間團體？
- IV. **Implementation**
執行的過程有哪些挑戰？挑戰從何而來？內部／外部／政治因素等；你如何面對這些挑戰？獨自？找同伴？其他辦法？
- V. **Result**
結果為何？此問題解決方案持續了多久？現在還在用嗎？還是被改變了？變好／不好？
- VI. **Value creation**
你認為你的新提案帶給這個組織或是大環境何種新社會價值？

VII. Role of Civil Servant

你認為公務人員該給予解決問題的空間嗎？為什麼？公務人員的工作目的應該為何？

VIII. Typology 最後，您認為您解決問題／創新作法的類型為以下那種？（可複選）

1. 提出全新的計畫或行動方案（以前你的業務範圍不包括或從沒做過的）
2. 跨內部公部門合作
3. 跨外部公部門合作
4. 和民間非政府組織合作
5. 和民間企業合作
6. 和社區／居民合作
7. 使用新的科技／軟體或硬體
8. 培力或教育客戶／居民／社區
9. 行銷公共政策
10. 鼓勵民眾參與公共事務
11. 組織全面改造
12. 組織部份改造
13. 分散權力／決策權（含成立分辦公室／成立分組）
14. 集中決策權
15. 客戶導向改變
16. 職員訓練
17. 職場平等
18. 行政流程加速
19. 私有化
20. 公部門業務委外
21. 鼓勵內部競爭
22. 增加志工的使用
23. 溢出效應（影響了其它單位）
24. 前期計畫
25. 防止未來問題的發生
26. 用鼓勵，非強制規定
27. 簡化流程
28. 簡化科技
29. 提供更多元服務
30. 加強協調各部門
31. 系統性的解決問題
32. 改變組織目標
33. 為公部門省錢（減少支出）
34. 為公部門賺錢（提供付費服務）
35. 開放職員參與式決策過程
36. 開放非公部門人員參加決策過程
37. 鼓勵市場競爭（舉辦綠採購競賽，頒中小企業創新獎等）

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問題界定過程中之問題化

簡赫琳 *

《摘要》

公共政策制定一直被視為是門理性解決問題的科學。然而，文獻中還未充分的檢視政策中想解決的「問題」是如何在特殊的情境下被賦予特定的意義。此研究運用在台灣進行的一比較案例研究來觀察政策創新是如何被當作是個工具來解決三個公共領域的各種問題。此研究提供一個實作主義的切入點，去發掘政策制定者如何在每日公務的處理中詮釋他們遇到的問題，並認為透過自我省思的練習，政策制定者及研究者可加強其創新能力。在此研究中，將有兩階段的問題化分析被執行。第一階段進行一個三位體分析，剖析每個政策創新中的威信度（ethos）、理法（logos）及情感（pathos）面向；第二階段則採用一個修改過的 Bacchi「這問題代表為何」（WPR）研究取向來系統化的分析問題化及批判政策創新過程中的提問與假設。

[關鍵詞]：公共政策、問題界定、WPR 研究取向、問題化、後結構主義

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