

INTERESTS

IRRATIONALITY

INSTITUTIONS

IDEOLOGY

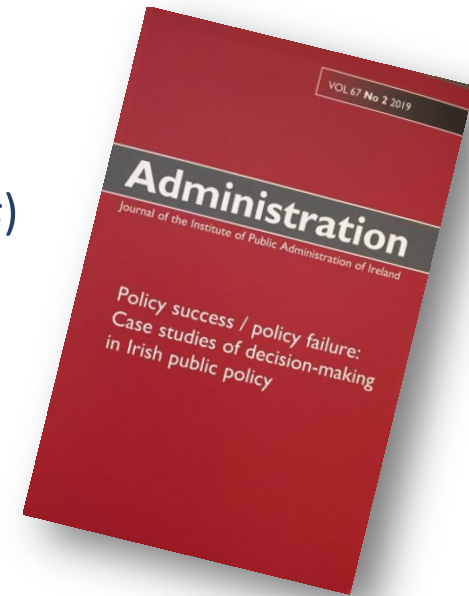
The Framing of Climate Action
in Ireland:
Strategic Considerations

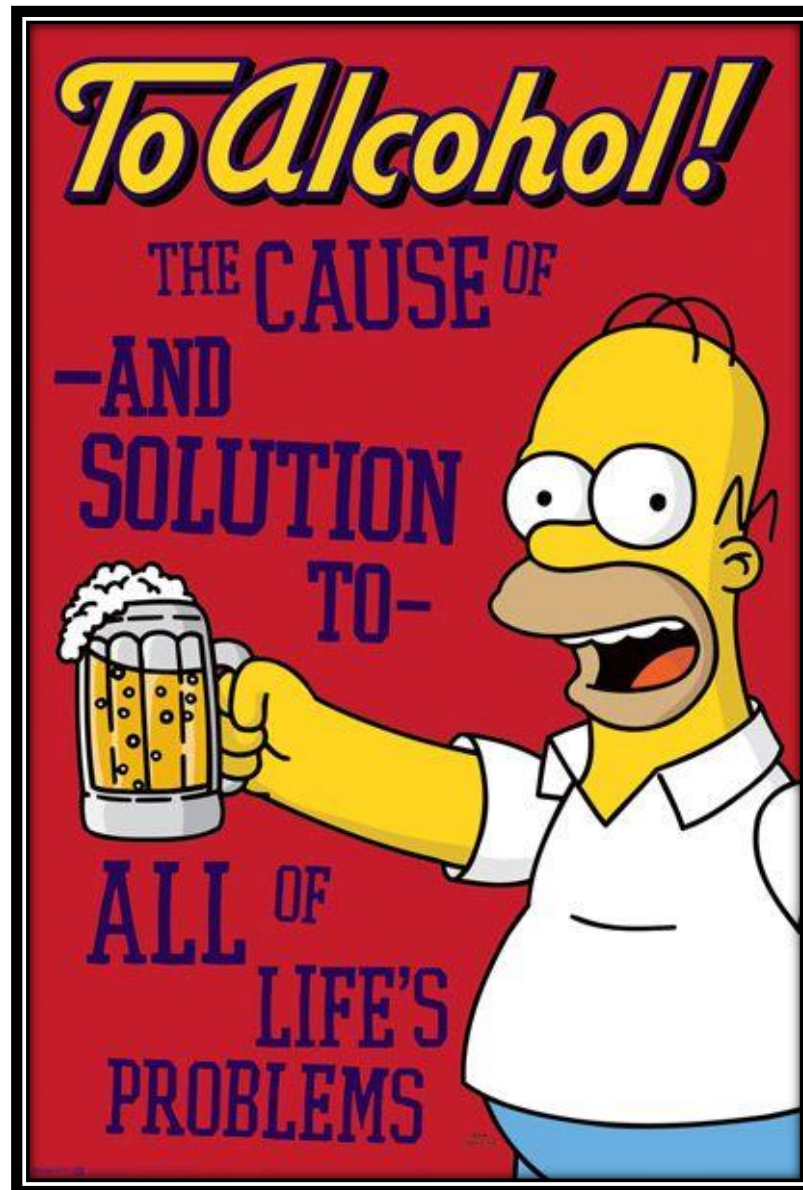
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Background

- Observing multi-faceted policy-making system
- Understanding policy success and failure
- ‘Hundreds’ vs. ‘Millions’ of decision-makers
- Analytical framework (FitzGerald, 2016)
 - Behavioural political science
 - Interests, institutions, ideology + irrationality (*The Four I’s*)
- Application
 - Financial crisis (FitzGerald)
 - Health insurance model (Burke, Brugha, and Thomas)
 - Labour market activation schemes (Arlow)
 - Public sector pay (Kiernan)
 - Taxi market regulation (Weir)
 - Public service integration and change (Köppe and MacCarthaigh)
- From ‘looking back’ to ‘looking ahead’
- From ‘micro’ to ‘macro’ policy challenge
 - Climate change policy success and failure





To Irrationality!

THE CAUSE OF
-AND
SOLUTION
TO-



ALL OF
LIFE'S
PROBLEMS



Climate Action Challenge

- Decision-makers have electoral concerns
 - Few votes in more effort and higher taxes (rational inaction)
- Policy has indivisible benefits; system for stability
- Action creates costs and distributional issues
 - Winners and losers; role of the State and/or markets
- Policy is complex, technical, and contested
 - Information overload, (cognitive) cost
- Losses 'greater', more salient, nearer than gains
- Policy depends on interpretation of challenge
 - Technological (narrow) or socio-political (broad)
 - Who or what needs to change, and how?

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BOUNDED RATIONALITY

DECISION-MAKING BIASES

NEED SHARED UNDERSTANDING

In other words...

- To irrationality (clearly defined)!
 - The partial cause of our climate action problems.
 - Can it be the partial solution?
- Policy-frames as sense-making devices
- Framing matters (Kahneman and Tversky, 1984)
 - Decision-makers usually passive
 - Processes do not assess alternative framing or its outcome
 - Powerful nudges that must be selected with caution (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008)
 - e.g. Holding a political rally? (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004)
 - Help explain policy developments (Baumgartner and Jones, 1993)
- Most powerful under uncertainty; science does not speak for itself
- Persistent problem for policy-makers in climate action realm
- Many climate action frames exist and the frame matters...



Climate Action Frames

- “What is climate action an exercise in?”

Examples of climate action frames include: adaptation, mitigation, transition, resilience, compliance, transformation, global equality, just transition, green growth, hazards/disaster risk management, pollution, vulnerability, technical problem (tame), governance problem (wicked), state security, human security, ideological clash, etc.

- Does the answer matter?

Impact of Competing Climate Action Frames

Example	Frame A	Frame B
1	Adaptation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human-induced climate-change • Climate-neutrality • Reduce emissions • Energy issue 	Mitigation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on vulnerable groups • Climate-proofing • Deal with impacts (e.g. floods) • Hydrological issue
	Tame Technical problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techno-scientific issue • Impact assessments • Technological solutions • Give voice to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific expertise • Citizen's knowledge claims 	Wicked Governance Problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-political issue • Communication strategies • Power relations key • Increase stakeholder participation
2	State Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System focus • Emphasis on risk of conflict as natural resources degrade: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between groups in society • Between states 	Human Security <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actor focus • Emphasis on the vulnerable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social inequities • Discriminatory policies • Economic injustices • Unequal power relations
3		

Source: Based on Dewulf, 2013.

PACE

VOICE

TENSION

How can framing help? I

Climate Action Challenge

- Decision-makers have electoral concerns
 - Few votes in more effort and higher taxes (rational inaction)
- Policy has indirect effects on stability
- Action creates costs and distributional issues
 - Winners and losers
- Policy is complex, technical, and contested
 - Information overload, (cognitive) cost
- Loss of trust in government, in each other
- Policy depends on interpretation of challenge
 - Technological (narrow) or socio-political (narrow)
- Who or what needs to change, and how?

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DECISION-MAKING BIASES

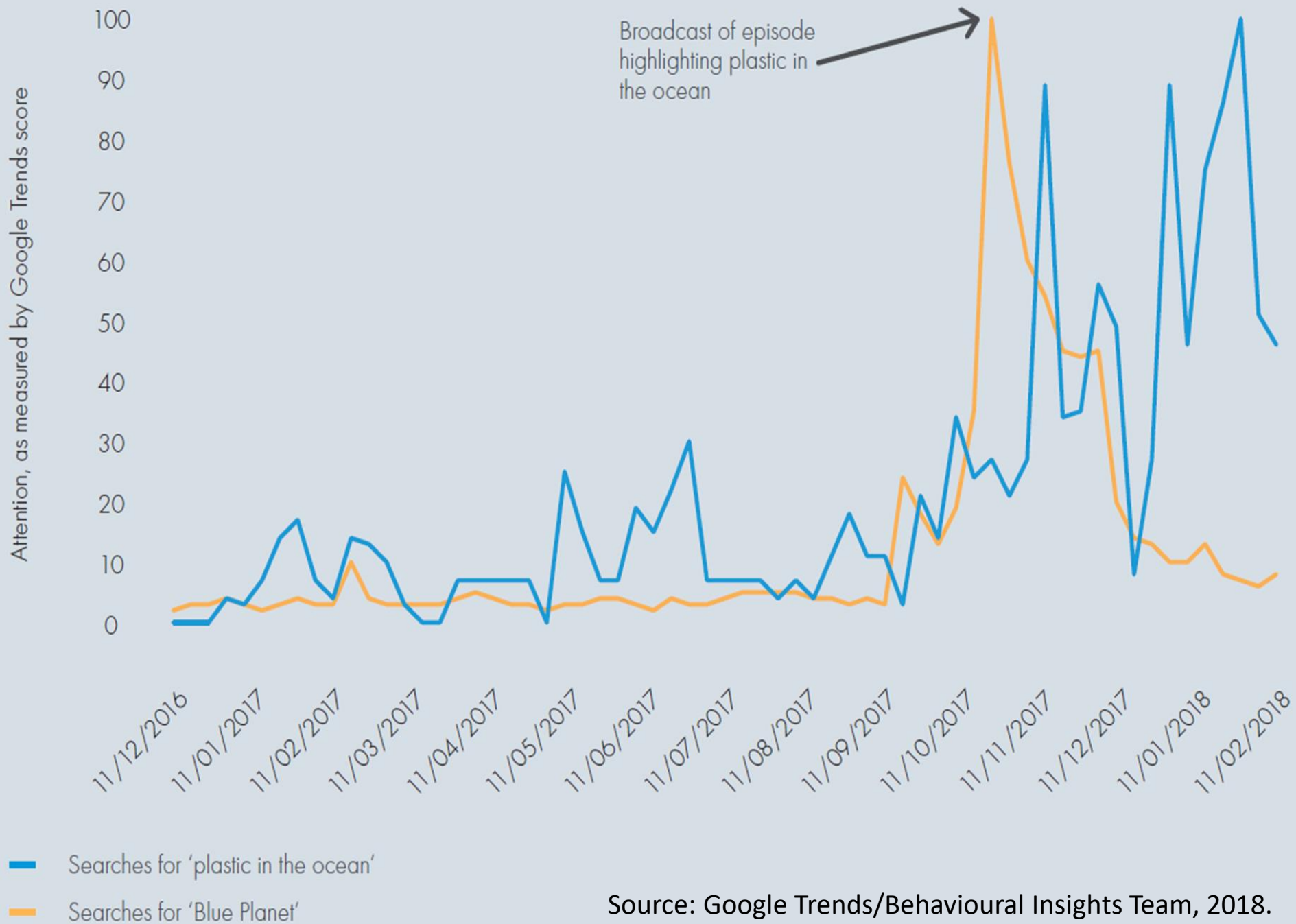
NEED SHARED UNDERSTANDING

How can framing help? II

- Link action to values or to a challenge faced collectively
 - Climate action as an exercise in **social justice** vs. technical **modelling and forecasting**
- Deflate the concept of ‘winners and losers’/intervention
 - Climate action as an exercise in **resilience** vs. ensuring a **just transition**
- Move to ‘positive-sum intertemporal trade-off’ from ‘zero-sum present-day redistribution’
 - Climate action as an exercise in **economic growth** vs. **costly adaptation**
- Move away from narrow mandates and towards higher goals
 - Climate action as an exercise **national security** vs. **sectoral decarbonisation**

How can framing help? III

- Increase salience
 - Climate action an exercise in **mitigating flooding** vs. **delivering a green future**
- Simplify the chain of reasoning from ‘decision’ to ‘consequence’
 - “How do we address the global inequality arising from climate change?”
 - “How do we mitigate the impact of climate change in Ireland?”
- Place in a frame that makes the decision-maker care
 - Tell a story that plays to convenience, prestige
- Appeal to decision-makers sense of what is at stake (losses)
 - #savethesurprise
 - Fracking as an environmental **disaster** vs. economic **boom**
- Employ heuristics to reduce the cost of information
 - BBC’s *Blue Planet* and UK’s 25-year Environment Plan



How can framing help? IV

- Move from zero-sum near-term issue (allocate costs today) to positive-sum inter-temporal one (share more benefits tomorrow)
- Shift issue to higher-order concern
- Draw highest attention to common elements
- Link action to deeply held beliefs, shared values
- Emphasise crises or events faced collectively
- Align with rational self-interest, electoral mandate and electoral success
- Bring competing interests together
- Blur the distribution of power between groups

Policy Frame Construction

Strategic policy framing is an active process, whereby policy-actors work with the specific objective of establishing an important frame (or sense-making device) which will be used by decision-makers in that policy area to comprehend, conceptualise, understand, explain, and respond to issues and events. A particular narrative will flow from the strategic policy frame.

- Passive and discursive vs. active and strategic process
- Clarity of purpose (resolve conflict, aid diagnosis, articulate a solution, **motivate collective action** etc.)
- ‘Window of Opportunity’
- MINDSPACE/EAST Policy Communication Framework (BIT)
- Benford and Snow, 2000
 - Breadth of frame
 - Flexibility of frame
 - Credibility and salience of frame (including the frame articulator)

International examples

- Netherlands: 'Transition' frame
 - Shift from 'incremental reform' from 2000
 - Important and impactful
 - Frames can be expendable
 - Danger that the intended frame is not the one which manifests
 - Must deeply embed a frame so as to challenge incumbent actors
 - Balance between a flexible and specific frame can be difficult
- Australia: 'Resilience' frame
 - Shift from 'repeated coping' from 2011
 - Positive impact
 - Policy frames can suffer from multiple interpretations
 - Ensure the frame is effective at regional as well as national level
 - Accompanied by a monitoring/evaluation mechanism; innovation

Current Climate Action Frames in Ireland



- Review of national policy
- Use of multiple frames
 - Compliance; adaptation; mitigation; resilience; transition
 - Energy Trilemma
- Value of ambiguous/weak frames
- What if strategic reframing was deemed worthwhile?...

A Resilience Frame for Ireland? I

- Emergence of resilience frame in enterprise policy
- Resilience as:
 - The capacity of an economy to reduce vulnerabilities, to resist shocks and to recover quickly
 - The ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances... retaining the same basic ways of functioning...

Climate action in Ireland is an exercise in resilience, to make Ireland a more resilient country — that is, to ensure the ability of the system and its component parts to anticipate, absorb, accommodate or recover from the effects of climate change in a timely and efficient manner, including through ensuring the preservation, restoration or improvement of its essential basic structures and functions.

- Linked to ‘marketable’ metrics, in turn linked to jobs

A Resilience Frame for Ireland? II

- Assists with interests, ideology, institutions...
- Irrationality?
 - Simplifies the chain of reasoning
 - Reduce the cost of decision-makers' being informed
 - Salience of what may be lost/gained
 - Bring forward the pain/gain of poor/good climate action
 - Make the impact of (in)action detectable and the 'victims' more identifiable
 - Influence the timeline across which action is needed and will have an impact.
- (Loss aversion, metrics, and poor performance)

Conclusions

- Irrationality as part of problem and solution
- Framing is not inconsequential
- Many climate action frames possible and in play
- Case for careful, strategic framing of climate action
- Help address the Four I's and need for shared understanding
- Framers not free to construct or impose
- Attraction of employing a frame from successful policy area
- Behavioural political science approach
- What behavioural economics has to offer looking ahead to a 'macro' policy challenge