

INTERESTS

IRRATIONALITY

INSTITUTIONS

IDEOLOGY

The Framing of Climate Action  
in Ireland:  
Strategic Considerations

Dr. Cathal FitzGerald

PSAI Annual Conference, Maynooth, October 2019

# Layout of Presentation

## A. The Analytical Framework

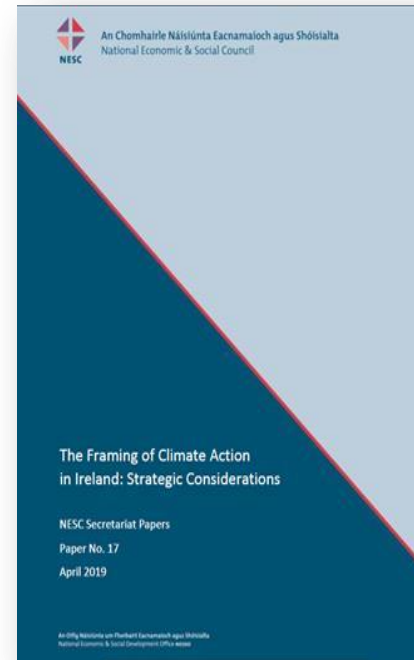
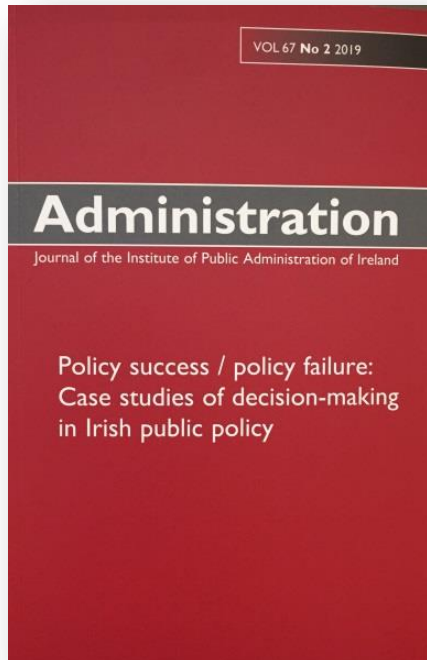
- The Four I's
- Examples of framing effects

## B. Climate Politics

- Climate action challenge
- Climate action frames and their impact
- Can framing help?
- Climate action frames in Ireland
- *A resilience frame*

## Conclusions

# Background

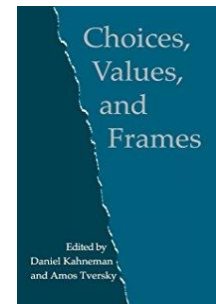
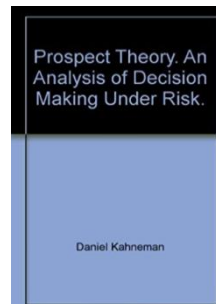
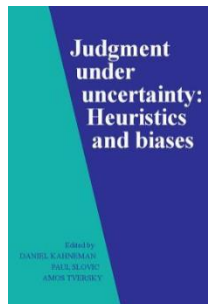
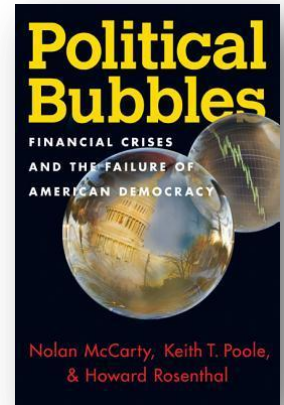


- *Administration*, Volume 67: Issue 2, May 2019
- *The Framing of Climate Action in Ireland: Strategic Considerations*, NESC Secretariat, April 2019
- [www.nesc.ie/publications](http://www.nesc.ie/publications)

# **A: The Framework**

# The Four I's

- Axiomatic that political decisions impacted by:
  1. Interests
  2. Institutions
  3. Ideology
- Decisions also impacted by:
  4. Irrationality
    - Bounded rationality
    - Decision-making biases



# Framing Effect I

“Could you comfortably live on 80% of your income?” – Yes is 80%

“Could you comfortably save 20% of your income?” – Yes is 50%

“Beef: 90% fat-free”

“Beef: 10% fat”

“Operation: 90% success rate”

“Operation: Fatality is 1 in 10”

“Should US build an anti-missile shield?” – 6% unsure


“Should US build an anti-missile shield, or are you unsure?” – 33% unsure



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# Framing Effect II

 **Britain Elects** @britainelects 1h  
On "reducing the voting age from 18 to 16":  
Support: 37%  
Oppose: 56%  
(via Ipsos-Mori / 12 - 14 Dec)

 **Britain Elects** @britainelects 1h  
On "giving 16-17 year olds the right to vote":  
Support: 52%  
Oppose: 41%  
(via Ipsos-Mori / 12 - 14 Dec)

	€25 + €5 shipping
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	Background Music	
	French accordion music	German Bierkeller music
Bottles of French wine sold	40 (77%)	12 (23%)
Bottles of German wine sold	8 (27%)	22 (73%)

Figure 6.1. Number (and percentage in brackets) of bottles of French versus German wine sold as a function of the background music in one of the most oft-cited marketing studies on the impact of ambient music on people's behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

# Framing Effect III

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# Framing Effect III

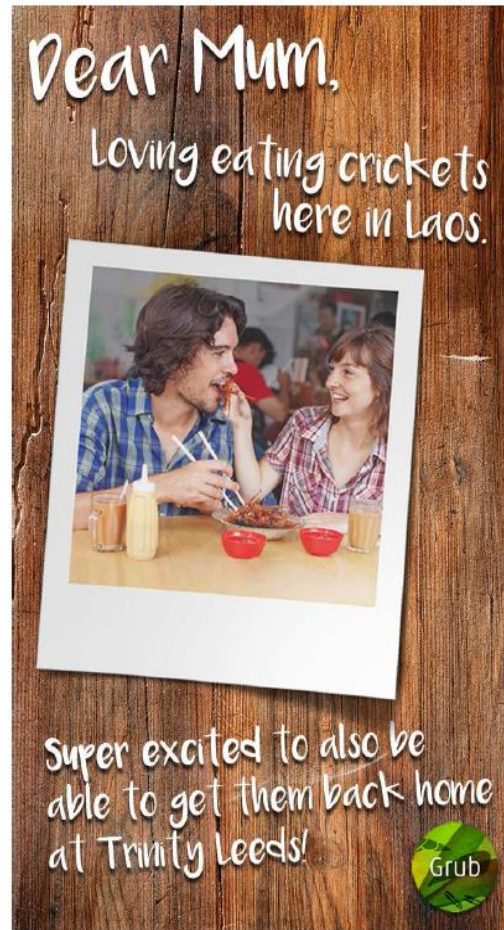
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# Framing Effect IV



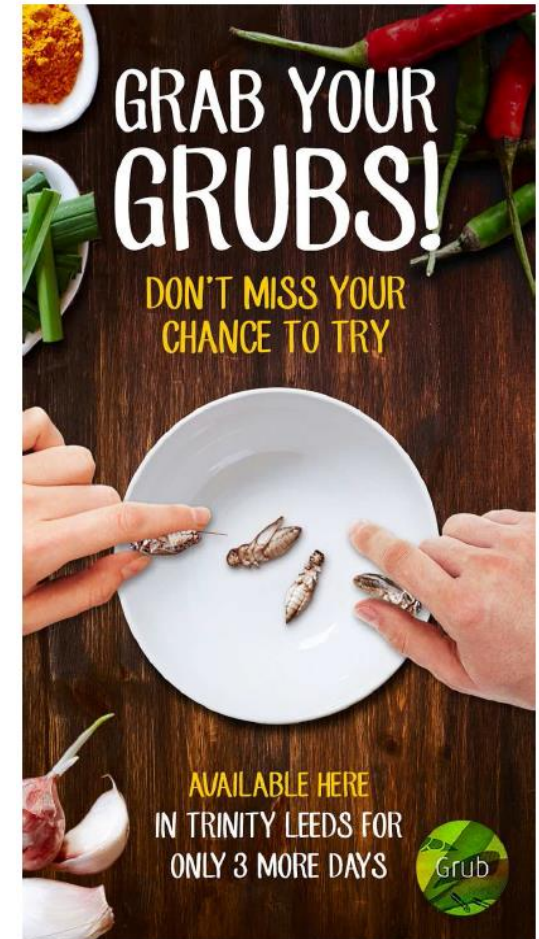
Rational message

67 purchases



Normalising message

126 purchases



FOMO message

154 purchases

# **B: Climate Politics**

# 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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**INTERESTS**

**INSTITUTIONS**

**IDEOLOGY**

**BOUNDED RATIONALITY**

**DECISION-MAKING BIASES**

**NEED SHARED UNDERSTANDING**

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

Source: Based on Dewulf, 2013.

***PACE***

***VOICE***

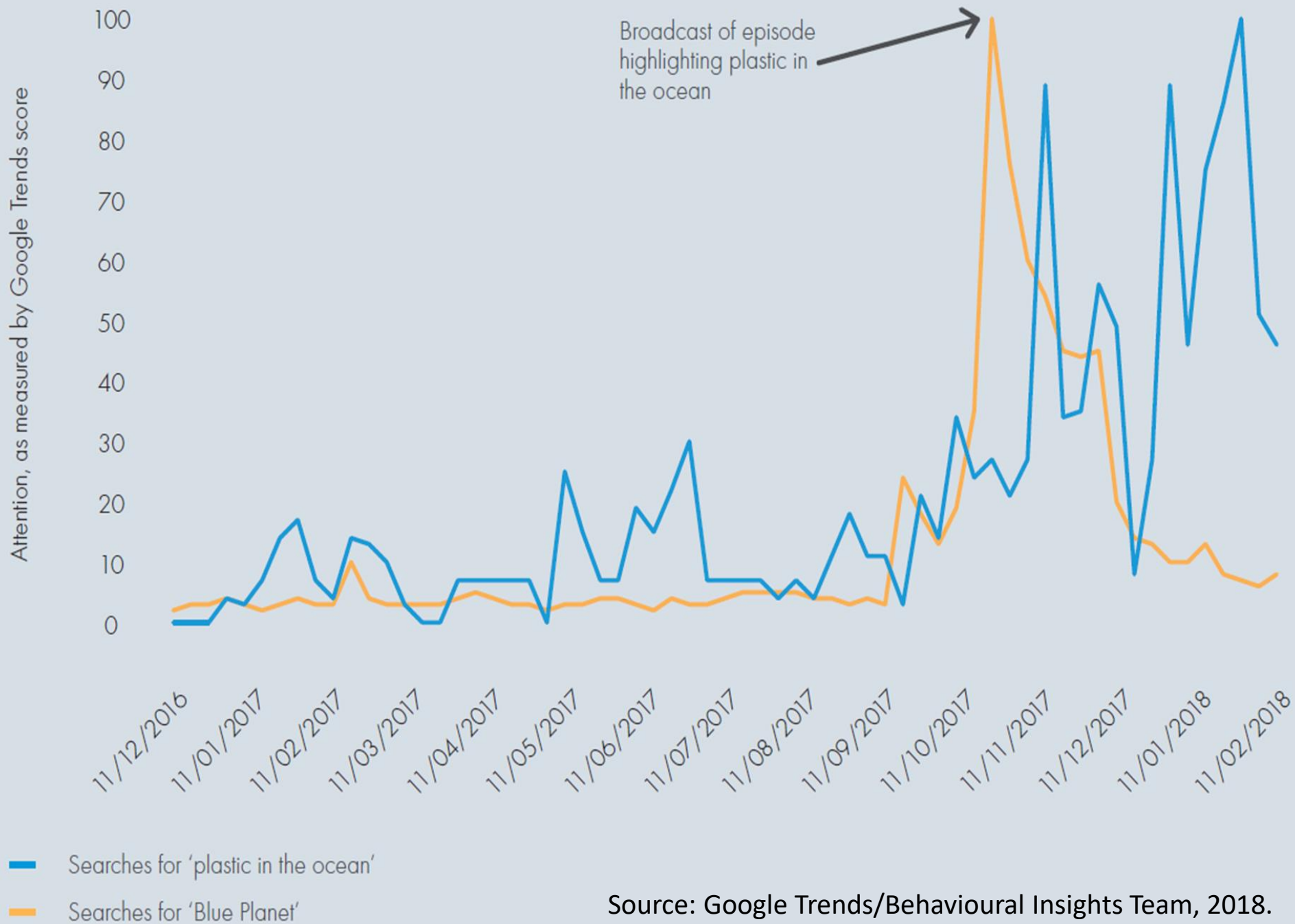
***TENSION***

# How can framing help? I

- 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? II

- 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 mitigate the impact of climate change in Ireland?” vs.
  - “How do we address the global inequality arising from climate change?”
- 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**
- Heuristics to reduce the cost of information
  - E.g. BBC’s *Blue Planet* and UK’s 25-year Environment Plan



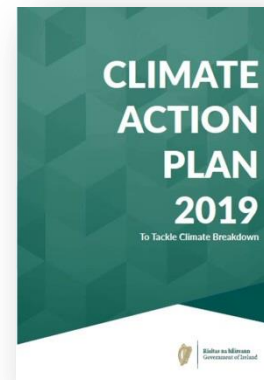
# Climate Action Frames in Ireland I



- Review of national policy
- Use of multiple frames
  - Compliance; adaptation; mitigation; resilience; transition
  - Energy Trilemma
- Value of ambiguous/weak frames
- ‘New kid’ on the block...

# Climate Action Frames in Ireland II

- “Citizen Engagement, Community Leadership and Just Transition”
- Establish a Just Transition Review Group
- “[A] dedicated new Just Transition Fund is being created. This fund will be devoted to those priorities identified by local communities. Six million euro will be available for this Just Transition Fund in 2020.”
- “To help communities determine the most pressing priorities, the Minister ... will shortly appoint a Just Transition Commissioner.”
- Unhelpful in the face of The Four I’s?



# ***A Resilience Frame for Ireland?***

- 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
- Helps ameliorate the impact of the Four I’s

# Conclusions

- Political issues at heart of problem (as usual)
- Many climate action frames possible and in play
- Framing is not inconsequential
- Irrationality as part of problem and solution
- 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 our disciplines have to offer looking ahead to a 'macro' policy challenge

***To Irrationality!***

THE CAUSE OF  
-AND  
SOLUTION  
TO-



ALL OF  
LIFE'S  
PROBLEMS

