Policy influence: learning to lead a big conversation

October, 2012
Jakarta

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Caveats

- Cases
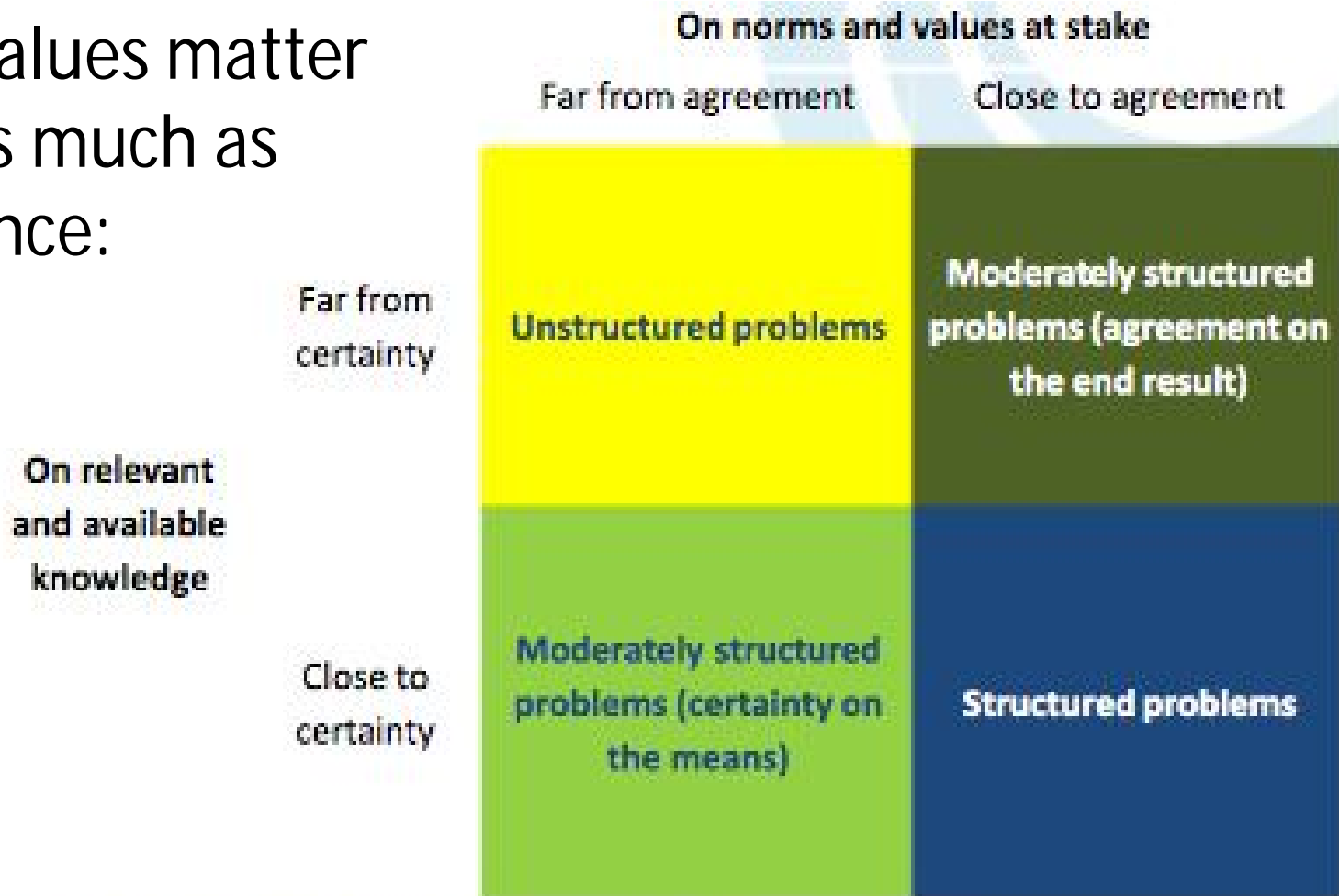- Observation
- Reflection
- Judgment
- Values

Content

1. Obviously, context is important
2. Influence is not the same as evidence informed policy
3. Influence can happen in many ways –and is rarely direct and traceable
4. New challenges
5. So what is the best way to influence policy?

1. Context matters

And values matter just as much as evidence:

On norms and values at stake

	Far from agreement	Close to agreement
Far from certainty	Unstructured problems	Moderately structured problems (agreement on the end result)
Close to certainty	Moderately structured problems (certainty on the means)	Structured problems

On relevant and available knowledge

Based on framework developed in Hisschemoller and Hoppe (1996)

1. Different contexts define different roles

- Unstructured: build capacities, make sense, explain the problem

- Agreement on ends (values and norms): search for solutions

- Agreement on means (knowledge): ask more fundamental questions

- Structured: why not break the consensus?

2. 'Policy influence' and 'evidence informed policy' are not the same

- Emma Broadbent's Political Economy of Research Uptake cases in Africa:
  - Whose evidence?

- Clarke et al's DFID Zambia user fee removal 'success':
  - Decision not based on evidence but funding

2. Dangers of focusing only on changing policy

- **@Society level:**
  - Undermining of other less 'liked' or 'popular' (e.g. political parties) yet important players (Bolivia)
  - Privatization of advice on issues of public interest (Argentina)
  - The absence of fundamental skills for public policy (Ecuador)

- **@Think tank level:**
  - Limits your options because…

3. Influencing can happen in many ways

- Direct advice and implementation (easy)
- Revolving door of **staff**
- Formal and informal '**training**' of future decision makers
- Affecting the way **individuals make decisions** with new data or methods
- Creating and maintaining **spaces** to reflect on issues of public interest and develop new relationships
- Informing the **public agenda** via the media
- Brokering **linkages** between decision makers and third parties

3. Some innovative approaches

- Improving the political debate in the run-up to **elections**: CIES in Peru, FARO in Ecuador, Fedesarrollo in Colombia, CIPPEC in Argentina
- Establishing an independent 'cost of living **index**': JCTR in Zambia
- Building **decision making tools** such as poverty maps: SMERU in Indonesia
- Launching a research **competition** for young graduates using a new methodology: CIUP in Peru and CIEP in Mexico
- Running an **internship** programme: BCSP in Serbia
- **Online** communications: Nick Scott for ODI

3. Do not forget

- Policy decisions are choices over the **fair** allocation of resources/rights/responsibilities

- In a democratic society '**fairness**' in policy is the domain of elected politicians

- Researchers inform, hold them to account, educates them, try to influence them, etc.

4. New challenges

- New technologies are changing the way we:
  - Participate and relate to each other; and
  - Access and use knowledge

- This means:
  - **Openness** is expected; nothing less will do; and
  - New **competition** is likely to increase

5. How to influence?

- By developing **arguments** and big ideas
- ...and look for battles 'of ideas'
- By working with **others**
- ... but not for others
- By **not taking over the roles** that belong to others
- ...or at least **help them** fulfill those roles
- By **leading** in articulating the problem, learning and bringing the public along