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Boundary Work: Theory and Praxis

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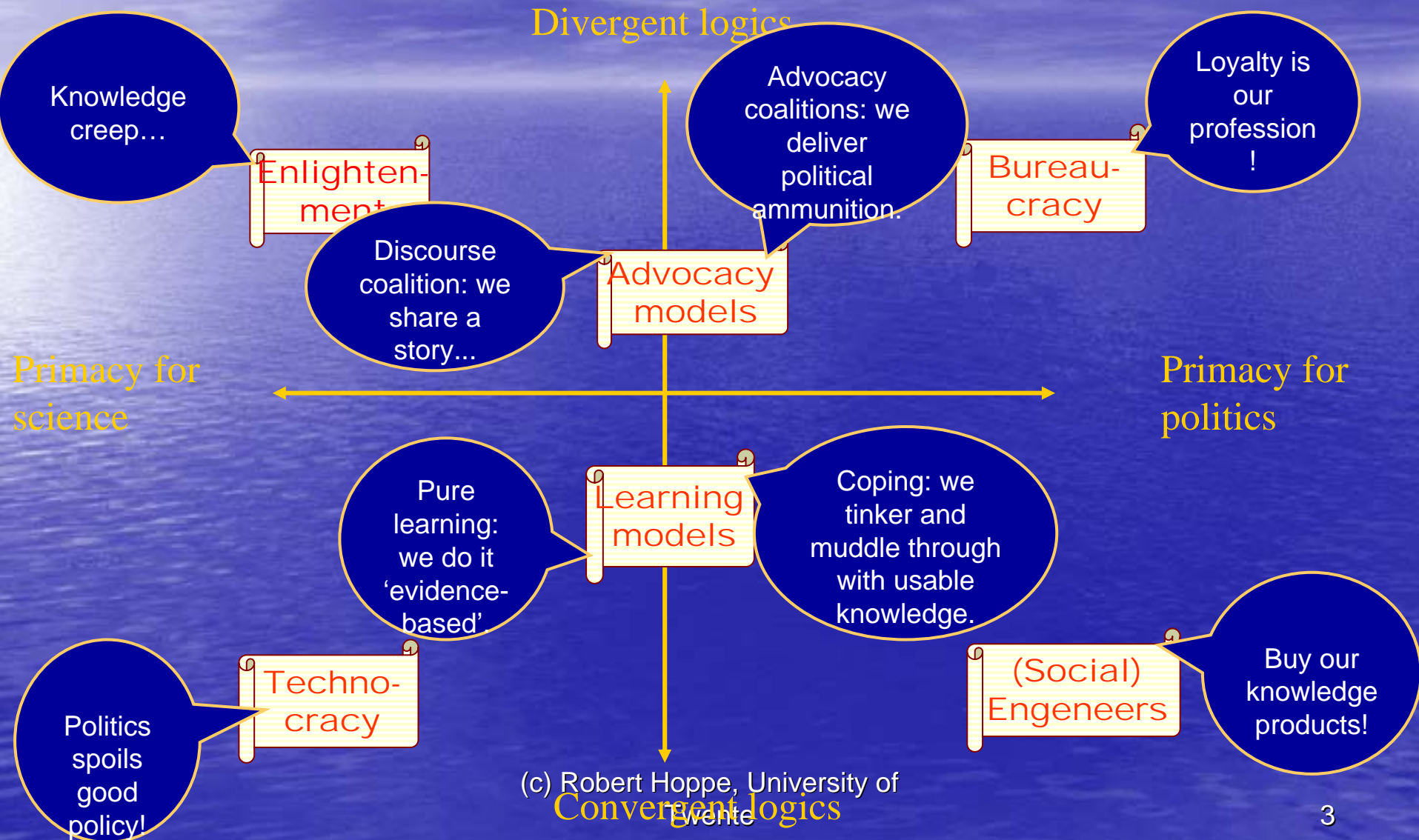
Prepared for panel 3.6 Implications for the Science-
Policy Interface, RMNO Conference "Towards
Knowledge Democracy", Leiden, August 25-27, 2009

Boundary work defined (Shapin, 1992; Halffman, 2002)

- Boundary work defines a practice in contrast with other practices, protects it from unwanted participants and interference, while attempting to prescribe proper ways of behaviour for participants and non participants (**demarcation**);
- at the same time, boundary work defines proper ways for interaction between these practices and makes such interaction possible and conceivable (**coordination**). (Shapin 1992; Halffman 2002)



Models of boundary work arrangements (in academic literature)



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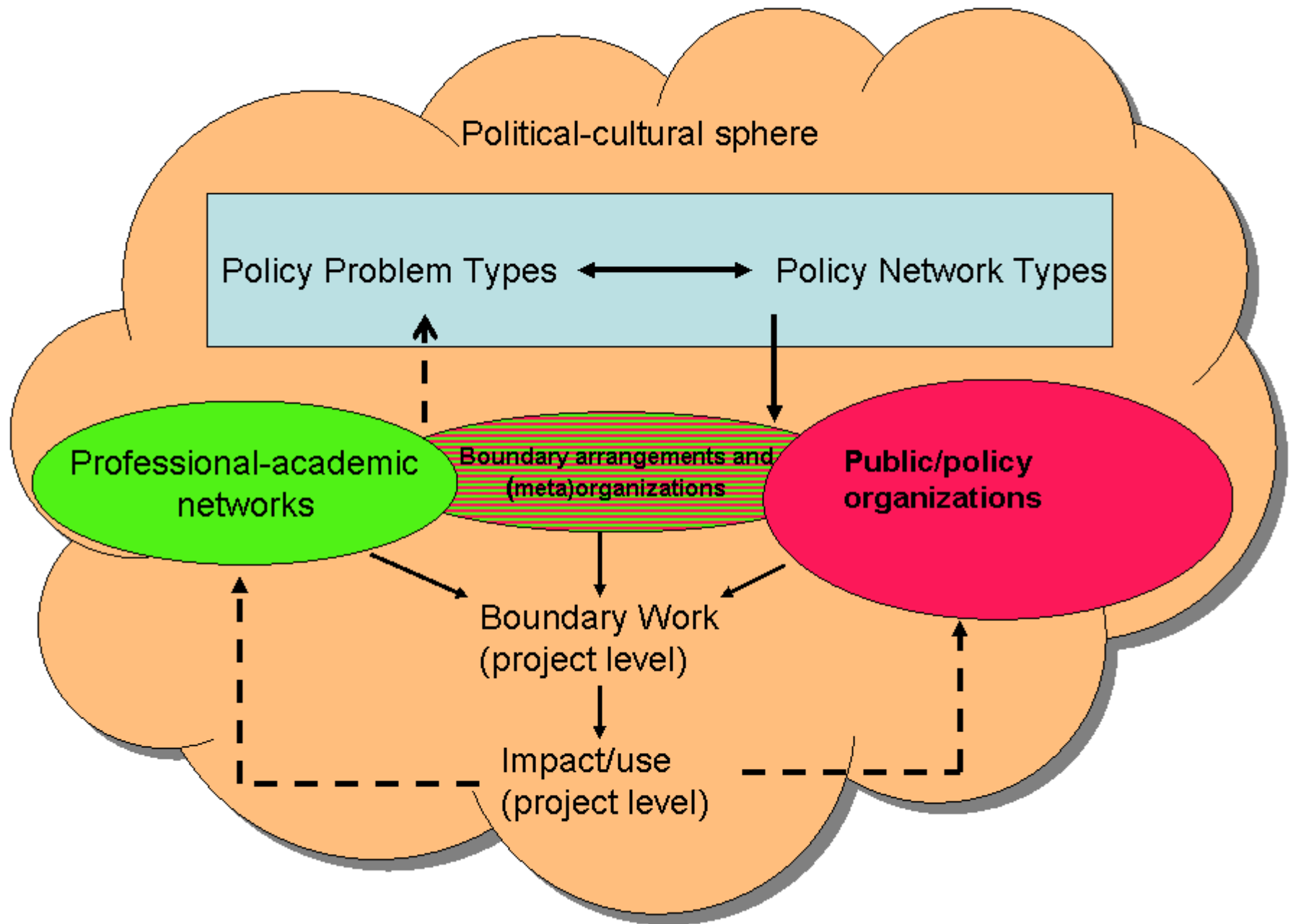


Figure 1. Multilevel conceptual framework for understanding science/policy interactions

Selected facets for special consideration

- How do idealtypes deal with **values**?
- How do idealtypes deal with **knowledge conflicts**?
- How do idealtypes deal with **uncertainties**?
- ...with (im)possibilities for shaping **institutional nexus**?
- ...affect the likelihood of policy-oriented **learning**?
- ...impact on the creation, maintenance, erosion of **trust**?

Results of a Q-method research in boundary work discourses in NL: a working consensus (1)

- Learning between science and politics is hard work – not chance.
- Scientific experts are not, and should not be, like lawyers.
- Dutch boundary workers are socialized in a system of political consultation ('overlegdemocratie' = 'consultative democracy').
- Three functions of scientific expertise for politics:
 - (1) bounding its scope of action,
 - (2) reducing political transaction costs, and
 - (3) boosting legitimacy.

Results: a working consensus (2)

- Science and expertise have the political function of a 'freezer' for issues that, for some reason or another, are 'too hot to handle';
- But sometimes they are a 'hot-house' too!
- Lay and practitioners' knowledge deserve a standing at the policy table equal to science.
- Knowledge is not just another commodity; but occasional outsourcing is not bad.

Seven discourses on boundary work

- Factor 1: rational facilitators of accomodation;
- Factor 2: knowledge brokers;
- Factor 3: megapolicy strategists;
- Factor 4: policy analysts;
- Factor 5: policy advisors;
- Factor 6: post-normal scientists/analysts;
- Factor 7: deliberative proceduralists.

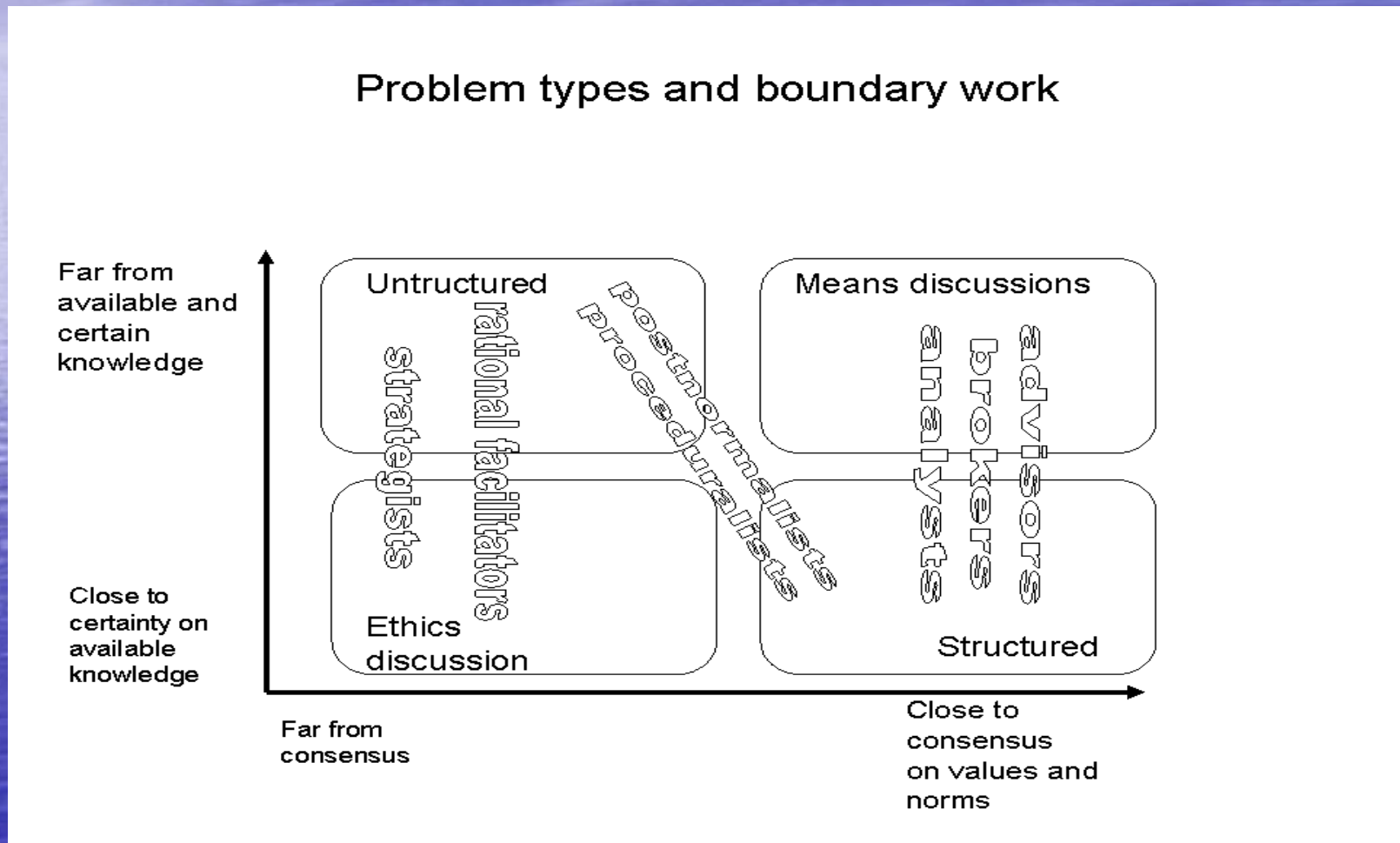
Conclusions (1)

- Only enlightenment lacking from actual discourse; therefore, **considerable resemblances** between academic cartography and occurring discourses.
- But **differences as well**:
 - Only strategists [= discourse coalition] and knowledge brokers [= coping] show one-to-one relationships;
 - All others mix/merge ingredients of at least two different ideal types.
- Discourse coalition model enjoys most normative support.
- Advisors and post-normalists have a hard time achieving consistent positions.

Conclusions (2)

- 'Primacy for politics' is a 'noble lie' in the working consensus, and in practice.
- Boundary workers appear to disagree on how to handle uncertainties (in relation to policy/politics).
- Boundary workers (now mostly working in alliance with national government) are challenged by a more pluralistic and multi-level political landscape.

Conclusion (3): Boundary work contingent on problem type



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Sources:

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- R. Hoppe, W. Halffman, (2005). "Science/policy boundaries: a changing division of labour in Dutch scientific policy advice." in P. Weingart, S. Maassen, eds., *Democratization of Expertise? Exploring Novel Forms of Scientific Advice in Political Decision-Making*, Sociology of Sciences Yearbook XXIV. Dordrecht, Springer.: 135-152.
- Hoppe, R. (2009). "Scientific advice and public policy: expert advisers' and policymakers' discourses on boundary work", *Poiesis & Praxis*, 6, 3-4, 235-263 (on-line doi 10.1007/s10202_008-0053-3, 2008)
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thanks for your attention

Read about boundary work as important ingredient in the governance of problems:



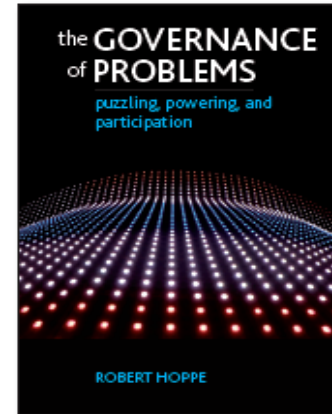
The Policy Press

ADVANCE TITLE INFORMATION

The governance of problems

Puzzling, powering and participation

Robert Hoppe



Policy analysis usually gives more attention to problem solving than problem finding and there is a real threat of mismatch between problem perceptions by citizens and problem definition by their elected and appointed policy makers. Contemporary democracies need to develop a better governance of problems, as all too often, policy is a sophisticated answer to the wrong problem.

This book offers a compelling new approach to problem processing and policy design – problem-finding, problem-framing, problem-structuring, problem-definition and problem-solving. It brings together aspects of puzzling, powering and participation, relating them in interesting and different ways to cultural theory, to issues about networks, to models of democracy and modes of citizen participation. The author pays serious attention to creating the institutional conditions for more reflexive, deliberative practices of problem structuring in governance structures.

The book, which is part of a growing body of work in policy analysis literature, is clearly written and accessibly presented. Key points are lucidly set out and well illustrated with examples, making this an ideal text for academics and postgraduate students.

HB £70.00 ISBN 978 1 84742 629 1 • 272 pages tbc • May 2010

Contents: Introduction; The governance of problems: a map; Analyzing policy problems: a problem structuring approach; Cultures of public policy problems; Problem types and types of policy politics; Problem structuring dynamics and meta-governance; Making policy analysis doable and reflexive; Problems and policy design: towards problem-oriented policy analysis; The plural democracies of problems: a meta-theory; Public engagement and deliberative designs; Coda: responsible and hopeful governance of problems.