



## Governing Low Profile Issues: A Frame Analysis of Drug Addiction in a Local Setting

by Dragana Svraka and Ringo Ossewaarde  
University of Twente; University of Twente

*Sociological Research Online*, 16 (4) 4  
<<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/4/4.html>>  
10.5153/sro.2479

Received: 21 Feb 2011 Accepted: 29 Sep 2011 Published: 30 Nov 2011

### Abstract

Frame analysis was developed by Erving Goffman as a sociological concept, used for understanding how individual actors relate themselves to the world, creating coherent frames out of individual social experiences. We apply frame analysis in the emergent field of sociology of governance, using the example of low profile public issue of drug addiction in a specific local social and political context of a municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to understand the roles of governance actors and their social interactions in the attribution of meaning. We focus on mental organization of governance experiences related to drug addiction and the strategic involvement of different governance actors which use given frames. We discuss the importance of frame coherence and ways in which it can be achieved for the low profile issues.

**Keywords:** *Frame Analysis, Sociology of Governance, Low Profile Issues, Frame Coherence*

### Introduction

**1.1** Since the publication of Erving Goffman's magnum opus, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* in 1974, frame analysis has become an established method in sociology (Scheff 2005; Diehl and McFarland 2010; Vliegenhart and Van Zoonen, 2011). In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman conceptualizes social experiences, as value-laden patterns of meaning that are organized in the mind of individual actors under sociological enquiry. Frames, Goffman (1974: 247) stresses, are not simply matters of mind-set, but correspond to strategies by which actors organize some aspects of their social experiences. Actors use frames strategically, benevolently or malevolently, as a way of mentally organizing their experiences and act to fit the world to their frame; and thereby attribute meaning to their experiences and make sense of their worlds (Goffman 1974: 563).

**1.2** In the past decades, sociologists have applied Goffman's frame analysis to interpret different social experiences in a wide variety of empirical realms. Rein and Schön (1994) applied frame analysis to the world of individual actors, public policy practitioners, which struggle to account for the worlds they are confronted with, and reflect on policy controversies of high profile public issues, their continuation and resolution. Other sociologists have conducted frame analyses of collective actors and frames used by social movement organizations, focusing on how frames are created and selected to gain public support, and how collective actors act to strategically manipulate shared meanings (Diehl and McFarland 2010: 1719). Vicari (2010), for instance, investigates grievances, which she analyzes as protest movements' product of self-interpretation, framing and strategic tactics, while Straus (2011) concentrates on how citizens create and use policy symbols and frames to address policy issues they find important. Furthermore, sociologists have applied the frame analysis to entire worlds, to find out how strategic actions link to culturally valued ends. McLean (1998) examines the strategic use of diverse frames by individual actors which seek to build patronage relations with each other in the world of Florentine Renaissance. Finally, sociologists have applied the frame analysis to sociology itself, in an attempt to make their science more reflexive and sensitive to the cultural context in which sociological research is embedded. Diehl and McFarland (2010) conceptualize sociologists' experiences in different cultural contexts as being grounded in different sociological frames and they analyze how historical changes in these contexts affect such frames.

**1.3** In the realm of the sociology of governance, a developing sociological field in which the social activity of governing is the key empirical object (Fasensfest, 2010), frame analysis still needs to find its way. While frame analyses have been conducted to analyze individual and collective actors and their worlds, in such different empirical realms as nuclear disarmament (Benford 1993), the social construction of social problems (Loseke 1999) and media discourses (Tucker 1998), a frame analysis of governance experiences of resolving public issues is yet an unexplored domain. Other types of analysis have been conducted by sociologists of governance, generating different sociological insights in the workings of power and how different worlds are governed into existence (Crawshaw and Simpson, 2002). Lukes (1974) has introduced the notion of frame control, which, in his analysis, connects with the ideological working of the power (his so-called 'third dimension of power'), which shapes consciousness, perception and cognition of public issues. Rose and Miller (1992) have conducted a Foucaultian discourse analysis of power to show how, in governance or governmentality relationships, individual citizens are not merely the subjects of power but come to play a part in public issue resolutions. Fox and Ward (2008) have drawn on Gramscian notions of hegemony and consent, to show how administrative relations between governance actors are achieved and sustained within a changing social context and how governance processes impact on individual actors, their audience, and institutions organized around public issues. Offe (2009) executes a critical analysis of the theory and practice of governance, to reveal how the concept of governance is often used as a political elite's rhetorical device or strategy of persuasion to mystify results in settling public issues and to legitimize their use of the powers of citizens as resources of public policies.

**1.4** In this article we wish to introduce frame analysis in the emergent field of sociology of governance. In order to do this, we will analyze a low profile public policy issue in a specific local social, political and legal context of the town of Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina; we have chosen to study drug addiction. In Banja Luka, as in the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, drugs, drug use and drug addiction are not perceived as important public issues: they are not subjects people talk about, they are mostly absent from the media or only related to deviance and criminality. In particular, drug addiction, its prevention and treatment of addicts are remote from the public eye. Here, we link drug addiction policy with the workings of power and order among local governance actors, and created perceptions among local population. We looked into the policy documents on drug addiction in Bosnia and Herzegovina and found a superficial approach to it: they list policy objectives and expected policy results mostly without presenting policy instruments, measures, activities or budgets necessary to achieve them<sup>[1]</sup>. They refer also to local governance actors, who have freedom to create their frames of drug addiction organizing their governance experiences, defining their worlds of governance and level of involvement with the issue. In Banja Luka these actors include local government, civil society associations and specialized public agencies, directly involved with drug addiction. With this example, we seek to develop the concept of frame and establish its connection with the field of governance studies. We propose, for purposes of our research, to theorize individual actors as (frame using) governance actors, social experiences as governance experiences of policy worlds, and strategies as governance strategies of attributing meanings.

### **The concept of frame and the governance of low profile issues**

**2.1** The concept of frame, as it is used in frame analysis, was first developed by Goffman (1974). Goffman provides different definitions for the frame concept (Scheff 2005), such as 'principles of organization which govern the subjective meanings we assign to social events' (Goffman 1974: 11) and 'schemata of interpretation' (Goffman 1974: 21). Frames, it can be said, are mental constructs which enable actors to organize their worlds and organize involvement in specific social contexts, through monitoring and adjusting of their own activities to the situation (Goffman 1974: 345; Diehl and McFarland 2010: 1717). Frames, Goffman (1974: 21) points out, function to enable actors 'to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined.' Frames, Goffman stresses, are culturally inevitable, since the complexity, ambiguity and ambivalence of social experiences, and the actors' interpretation of worlds, necessarily leads to the issue of organization. Frames enable actors to mentally organize their social experiences in cultural resources like myths, words, games, propositions, experiments, gestures, jokes, lessons, taboos, anecdotes, procedures, tones, appeals, codes, data, images, logos, etc. Thereby the world becomes meaningful for the actor and force is given to the terms in which actions are articulated (Scheff 2005: 382; D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010: 5-6; Vliegenhart and Van Zoonen, 2011: 103).

**2.2** Goffman teaches that the meanings of the worlds are the projection of the frame in which they are embodied. Meanings are most adequately dealt with in terms of the strategies that actors use to organize their social experiences of the worlds and to relate themselves to, transpose or cancel other frames (Jameson 1976: 119; Scheff 2005: 268). Frames are organizers but they do not limit or control experiences and interpretations of worlds but instead provide actors with a mental structure that enables them to become aware of, and attend to, a shared definition of the situation and hence arrive at mutual understanding, coordinated interaction, internalization of past experiences and future guidance (Diehl and McFarland 2010: 1717; Vicari 2010: 506). Hence frames make social interaction possible. In the world of governance, frames enable governance actors to understand the governance process in which they are engaged and enable them to use different stories, facts, procedures, etc, about a public issue they are, within a given context, expected to approach and handle (D'Angelo and Kuypers, 2010: 1). In other words, given the context, it is expected that the governance actors' understanding results in a meaningful governance relationship to the public issue (Rein 1983: 86). Frames are revealed through their use for mental organization of experiences through which actors present themselves and execute their policies.

**2.3** In Goffman's conceptualization of the frame, individual actors are endowed with the reflexive capacity that enables them to mentally move across frames and shift interpretations and manipulate meanings as an important social skill (Diehl and McFarland 2010: 1720). Defined as frame users, actors implement context-specific strategies for choosing their frames (McLean 1998: 52). Reflexive governance actors

decide how to fit worlds of governance in general and specific public issues in particular to their frame, using some specific cultural resources like stories, data, values or images while leaving out others (Stone 2002; Vliegenhart and Van Zoonen, 2011: 112). Such reflexivity implies that governance actors stamp their own subjectivity, biased indeed, upon the resolution of the public issue. Governance actors present their own bias in the public domain to retain the coherence of the complete picture of worlds of governance. They fit their cultural resources together in order to perceive a public issue as something that is coherent and no longer ambivalent or filled with controversies and competition between different frames.

**2.4** Goffman's concept of frame presupposes that social relations between actors are established through interaction with the available frames within given contexts. The context, for Goffman, is a culturally-given cognitive space in which a variety of frames are deployed. In other words, the frames are anchored in the cultural determinisms of 'society' (understood as a process) itself, as concrete historical phenomena (Jameson 1976: 129). The context of governance is typically one in which high profile public issues trigger public debates, whereas low profile public issues do not draw public attention (Rein and Schön 1993). In the governance context of high profile issues the media functions to control the strategies of the governance actors and the frame coherency that seek to achieve or sustain. Also, high profile public issues attract, apart from the governance actors directly involved in the handling of the issues, a wide variety of governance actors, including media groups, activists, lobbyists, governmental bodies, funding organizations, and so forth (Rein and Schön 1993: 157). In such a context, the awareness of existent frames that enable actors to interpret the public issues is typically high, since the basis for the media debates are clashes between different frames of the same issue (Rein and Schön 1993: 159).

**2.5** In the governance context of low profile issues, on the other hand, media control is typically absent and frame awareness is typically low. Also, frames tend to be more incoherent and different frames of the same issue may co-exist without leading to controversy or frame conflicts. Therefore, the questions who controls the frame coherence and how remain highly important for such issues. Framing is the process whereby actors act to construct a particular point of view that encourages the issue to be viewed in a particular manner, with some features of the issue made more noticeable than others (Kuypers, 2010: 300). Incoherent framing with gaps or paradoxes is typically left unnoticed or obscured by the larger public and in such situations governance actors might be tempted to use contradictory frames, depending on their changeable needs of the moment, knowing that there is no public control against incoherent framing. Frames for low profile public issues are formed in governance processes involving only governance actors whose social positions depend on precisely these issues. In such social positions, some governance actors have a drive to defend the status quo, since it enables them to function without actually engaging themselves with the issues which are out of focus for the media or general population. These actors are expected to pursue the strategies of mental organization with the aim to prevent these low profile issues to become high profile, but without eliminating them completely from their agenda. However, there can be governance actors which may not be satisfied with the status quo, because their current social position in the world of governance is not stable or favourable, the significance attributed to their governance activities is low, etc. Such actors are expected to raise public awareness about the importance of the low profile issues, blowing up their profile. In the governance world of low profile issues, the confrontation between the governance actors is not manifest but latent, while the strategies for framing, stories and gestures they use, symbols and interpretations, have different orientations: status quo versus change.

## **A frame analytical research approach**

**3.1** A typical world of low profile governance can be found in the Municipality of Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Drug addiction in Banja Luka is a low profile issue, devoid of public attention; only few local governance actors deal with it. We used a saturation sampling to select these actors: it showed that six governance actors, ranging from public bureaucracies to civil society organizations, deal with drug addiction; they know each other, often communicate and cooperate. We contacted these actors by telephone and emails in January/February 2010, explaining the purpose of our research, their roles and formally asking to use the data they will provide for us. We held series of interviews and collected different strategic documents in February/March 2010. Via further email contacts additional information was obtained in period May/July 2010.

**3.2** The interviews (four of them) were the central part of our data collection activities. We kept in mind that we dealt with a small sample, but we acknowledged that total number of governance actors locally dealing with drug addiction was also small; we established contact with other actors (two of them) via email. In order to assure that we interviewed respondents who really dealt with the low profile issue of drug addiction, we approached executive managers of some actors and staff working on drug addiction issue.<sup>[2]</sup> Interviews were semi-structured and organized in a form of conversation designed to tackle beforehand defined set of themes (importance given to drug addiction, main focus in work, ideas for changes, view on the future, cooperation, opinions about the position of this issue on the local political agenda, etc). During the interviews, no precise questions were posed. Instead, themes were discussed and notes were taken about comments and striking remarks, allowing reflexivity and flexibility in the respondents' answers. Interviews were accompanied by notes with observations; additionally we have collected governance actors' documents of strategic orientation (i.e. annual reports or plans, prepared presentations for wider public, etc) and used internet sources (actors' official web-pages).

**3.3** All gathered data were divided in categories that were expected to be significant for each actor under investigation. These categories included (1) data about drug addiction governance activities, which were further divided in main and additional activities (based on the interview answers and reports about performed activities); (2) data about presentations of the actor, including the focus in communication, what it regards as its strengths, together with specificities of its governance activities (e.g. targeting some specific aspect of drug addiction issue). In order to interpret communication strategies, we especially concentrated on approachability of governance actors, their willingness to communicate, the atmosphere in

their premises, the use of cultural resources to underline hierarchical position, the communicative strategy (e.g. dialogical or monological). Interviews and official documents provided information about strategic orientation (status quo or change) of the governance actors: answers to the questions about governance activities initiated and/or executed by the actors, their future (planned) activities and possible changes compared with the current situation generated these insights. Finally, we compared the gathered information for each actor, checking for inconsistencies in the actor's governance activities: gaps between what is said and what is done, incoherence in actor's governance activities through time. These data were useful for evaluating the firmness of the given frames.

**3.4** The data we collected allowed us to interpret actors' perceptions of drug addiction issue and worlds of governance in which they were involved. Collected data allowed us to typify actors based on the broadness of their policy agendas (specialists for drug addiction or actors covering wider agenda), and their strategic orientation (action or inaction). We evaluated firmness of the established frames asking the actors, in interviews or via emails, to explain their priorities in work on drug addiction: while actors-specialists mostly had ready answers, actors with wider agenda evaded clear answers claiming that anything can be regarded as priority, depending on a situation. We used Goffman's assumption that an individual follows the expectations conforming to the frame it uses: frame organizes actor's involvement. Finally, we found the information about the frame characteristics related to the actor: this was revealed through the analysis of governance activities, values inherent in these activities and in the cultural resources used through which meanings were attributed to such activities. Therefore, we could interpret how actors perceive drug addiction as related to themselves and their social position in dealing with it, adding to this the coherence in the actor's approach to resolving this public issue.

**3.5** The main problem we encountered during the data collection was related to the variety in data sources, quality and quantity of gathered data, for different actors; frame analysis asked for subtlety in handling different pieces of data and interpreting them in a meaningful way. Frame analysis constantly asked for checking if our interpretations were coherent with other obtained information, in direct contact with actors (asking for clarifications), or through indirect interpretation of problematic data (in the context of actor's strategic orientation). We were aware that there are two possible sources for gaps and paradoxes in the frames: lack of interest for drug addiction in Banja Luka (typical for low profile issues) and strategic intention of deliberate creation of gaps between communication and action being aware that wider audience probably will not notice and/or care about it; these two sources were combined. We had to avoid mentioning gaps and paradoxes in cases where actor might perceive that as a critique of its work and focus on their interpretations in the whole context of meaning attributed to drug addiction by the actor and actor's strategic orientation. All this amounts to frame analysis: uncovering the structure behind specific experiences related to and approaches to deal with the issue of drug addiction, and allowed us to make conclusions about the factors which influence firmness and coherence of culturally given frames.

## **A frame analysis of low profile governance in Banja Luka**

**4.1** In our frame analysis of the collected data, we seek to find out how governance actors in Banja Luka organize their governance experiences with regard to the policy control of drug addiction including their strategic involvement in their worlds of governance, in terms of the given mental organizational premises of the frames they use. In order to deliver an answer to our research question, we (1) describe the governance actors that have organized themselves around the public issue of drug addiction in Banja Luka; (2) identify the frames in question; (3) interpret the governance actors' strategic uses of the frames.

### **The governance actors**

**5.1** The policy dealing with drug addiction in Bosnia and Herzegovina was recently developed (the earliest adopted strategic documents dating from 2008), mainly as an answer to the exterior pressures coming from EU governance.<sup>[3]</sup> Strategic policy documents in this policy field in Bosnia and Herzegovina cover all distinctive aspects of drug addiction, while concrete governance activities, strategic choices, policy design and implementation are mostly relegated to the lower governance levels (municipal governance actors). These actors (frame users) include the local government, civil society associations and organizations which deal with health issues or social protection. Even though the policy documents explicitly urge the cooperation among such organizations, their position is insecure: it lacks stable funding, pre-given guidelines and approaches to drug addiction. In such a context, governance processes at the local level become increasingly important in the creation of the meaning. Since individual actors cannot approach and act in this policy field alone, due to the lack of funds, personnel and/or expertise, they have necessity to cooperate.

**5.2** For local government drug addiction is an issue out of focus on the policy agenda; since local government deals with many public issues at once, its attention is concentrated on those issues where public asks for immediate results, and drug addiction is not among them. Governance actors connected with local government include the municipal Department for social activities and Security Forum of the City of Banja Luka, who both deal with many local public issues, including drug addiction. The Centre for Social Work Banja Luka is a public governance actor active in the domain of social services and social protection, including addiction. A local medical actor, Clinical Centre Banja Luka, has an organizational part Methadone Centre which deals with drug addiction (detoxification and counselling of addicts). Civil society associations organized around the issue of drug addiction include two specialized local actors (nongovernmental organizations) which deal exclusively with drug addiction.

### **The frames reconstructed**

**6.1** In our analysis of different frame manifestations for each governance actor, we have identified three distinctive frames of drug addiction which are used by the different local governance actors. These frames

are conditioned by social positions of the governance actors, the level of their strategic involvement with the issue of drug addiction, and the place given to drug addiction on the actor's agenda.

### **The integration frame**

**6.2** We named the first identified frame the integration frame. The key feature of this frame is that it gives a special significance to integration of governance activities, perceptions and experiences concerning the resolution of the issue of drug addiction by the frame users involved. Governance actors who use this frame want to show their involvement with the issue, even though actions they perform are limited and scarce, due to lacking resources. The users of this frame are fully aware of their resource limitations and act to compensate through the cooperation with other frame users operating in the same world, making governance processes of cooperation, communication and sharing key organizational premises for this frame. For example, a respondent from the Centre for Social Work (user of integration frame) stressed the lack of personnel working on drug addiction and concluded that Centre's 'partnership model' is indispensable: *'I see my role as case manager who investigates the problem and coordinates'*. This model relies on building network relations with other frame users, with the Centre acting as coordinator among specialised actors in the field, and using so-called Memoranda about cooperation as instruments appropriate to establish and maintain long-term relations with other local actors. Memoranda pledge cooperation without concentration on specific projects or activities, but rather on building trust and sharing the information, with mutual benefits. Another respondent, from Methadone Centre, commented on the inevitability of cooperation, since one actor alone cannot be involved in all the phases and aspects of drug addiction, it lacks necessary expertise, experience, funding and position: *'Our primary roles are on detoxification and motivation of addicts to continue with the treatment elsewhere'*.

**6.3** All observed frame users which perceive drug addiction through the integration frame typically see the potential for themselves in mediation between other governance actors. The concrete use of the mediation is further conditioned by the social position of individual actors. An example from the Centre for Social Work clearly illustrates this orientation: it participated in the local project called 'Adrenaline against drugs' executed during autumn 2009 as a promotion of extreme sports (in this case parachute jumping) as an alternative for drugs for young people who look for something new, unconventional and exciting to try. Centre's documents about this project showed that they extensively communicated with different governance actors involved, organized meetings, managed overall activities, gave formal opinions, while their concrete involvement in the execution of activities was minimal, and consisted mainly in integration, organization and monitoring of activities.

### **The expert frame**

**6.4** The second identified frame we named the expert frame: it allows its users to emphasize their expertise and professionalism in the execution of everyday activities to tackle drug addiction, while in the communication they focus on conducted governance activities, executed projects and concrete policy results, using the simple and clear language, approachable also to non-specialists. Documents presented by these actors simply list executed activities, providing the necessary details and clarifications in order to make their work understandable to wider public and/or potential interested parties. During the interviews, respondents from such actors were typically approachable, less formal and hierarchical, more open to dialogue and critical reflections on their experiences of their worlds of governance: as the respondent, managing director of association Viktorija, stated *'We have our work priorities, but they are conditioned with the funding we can get'*. Approachability is noted at different actors: the humanitarian organization Poenta is located in a building where anyone can enter without special procedure or registration, while association Viktorija uses a logo with holding hands to symbolize support and cooperation.

**6.5** Expert actors use framing of drug addiction to position themselves as reliable partners for resolving drug addiction issue on the local level, using the key organizational premise of this frame (expertise) to promote their active role in the execution of specialized activities. Users of this frame typically seek to boost the profile (of the issue of drug addiction and of themselves), in an attempt to open up possibilities for easier execution of their specialized activities. All governance actors from the group of experts stressed the lack of funding for the execution of their activities which endanger sustainability of their involvement with the issue. For example, the respondent from the association Viktorija, did not talk about governance activity as such, but mentioned how the lack of funding forced this actor to decline help to some drug addicts, since they had no means to organize the therapeutic community for female patients. This message communicates clear urgency to do something, stated in a way which is understandable to wider public and which points at actor's expertise to do the job (they already manage one therapeutic community).

### **No frame**

**6.6** The third identified frame we named the no frame: gathered data showed that a group of actors lacks a congruent perception of this low profile issue. For them, drug addiction is positioned so low on the overall agenda that they do not dedicate time to develop constant approach to it, but rather act by inertia or in cases when they find some action strategically favourable or necessary. One respondent from this group, a representative of Municipality working on health issues and drug addiction, declared in emails that this actor produces quarterly reports about the state of drug addiction in Banja Luka, without explaining their use or effects, but focusing on executed work without any critical appreciation. Produced reports presented statistical data (number of overdoses admitted to the local Clinical Centre, number of people receiving methadone therapy, number of drug related arrests, number of lectures concerning drug addiction), but there lacked strategic approach to drug addiction, planning and prioritization. In email contact, this actor

stated that the issue is important and that it has to be addressed, without explaining how or by whom: *'Drug addiction issue is among priorities in the work of this department'*. Another respondent, coordinator working for Security Forum, acknowledged that their dealing with drug addiction misses strategic orientation, without suggesting any concrete changes. Therefore, these actors are oriented towards status quo, mostly due to the lacking interest in dealing/resolving drug addiction issue.

**6.7** Contact with governance actors which pertain to the no-frame allows us to make conclusion that communication is not their priority. When faced with request for information, the respondent from Municipality reacted as being challenged or criticized, supplying the reports as a proof that some work was really done, and commenting in email that *'providing the data to our request required staff to work overtime'*, while received data were irrelevant and our concrete questions were disregarded. The respondent from the Security Forum provided some documents, but commented that drug addiction is not their specialty and suggested us to contact some other governance actors for more information. Gathered data were confusing due to the immediately noticeable gaps between what respondents said in the emails<sup>[4]</sup> and what is actually done. Communication with these actors was formal, lacking the dialogue, and focusing on appearance that the issue of drug addiction is dealt with in some way. The actors did not present a vision for their future work on drug addiction or their world of governance. We can conclude that drug addiction for no-frame users is perceived as one additional unimportant issue on the policy agenda and they do not welcome changes in approach to it.

### **The strategies observed**

**7.1** Since the official policy on drug addiction is vague and not obligatory, governance actors involved in the municipal community of Banja Luka have very little restraints when using the given frames, limits determined by cultural standards and social roles (Goffman 1974: 562). In attributing meaning to drug addiction, governance actors combine their own mentally organized experiences and meaning making with those communicated from other familiar actors working in the field. The specific culture of this world of governance relies significantly on cooperation and support, both in attributing meanings and in concrete governance actions and policy implementation. To communicate the frames actors use different channels: cultural resources like official documents and presentations, different symbols and artefacts, gestures, jokes, and approachability. All directly interviewed respondents talked about the gap between their (frame-mediated) understandings of drug addiction, closely connected with empathy and help, and the perception of the same issue by the wider audience which often involves prejudices: *'I even know some doctors who think that drug addiction is a whim and not a medical condition'* (managing director of association Viktorija); *'I feel ok working with addicts, but that is not always a case'* (respondent from the Centre for Social Work). Governance actors interested in drug addiction organize their governance experiences with the idea to change perception of drug addiction as an 'unworthy issue'.

**7.2** Even though this governance world of actors has its distinctive culture characterized by understanding, empathy and promotion of importance of dealing with drug addiction, there are noticeable differences in actors' approaches, rooted primarily in their individual social positions. Civil society organizations are accessible and less formal in communication, while public sector bureaucracies show more official approach using the symbols like video surveillance (in the Centre for Social Work), porter and imposing building (seat of municipal administration), warning notes for the patients not to stick around (in the Methadone Centre). These symbols show how symbolic worlds of governance are adapted to communicate approachability/proximity or formality/distance. Also, seeing the premises which different actors use for reception and counselling gives an idea of their approach in governance activities: in the association Viktorija we noted an unthreatening light room with plants next to the window and old furniture to sit on, while in the office in the Centre for Social Work we found a coat of arms on the wall, underlying the official status, bureaucratic formality and (legal-rational) authority of this actor.

### **The strategies classified**

**8.1** Strategic uses of the three frames of drug addiction can be classified. We identified three types of frame uses. First, we identified the actors for whom the primary interest is to show that some work about the issue is done with focus put on formal procedure in dealing with it; those actors often (but not always) pertain to the no-frame. Second, there are actors which aim to attract the attention or donors by enhancing the profile of drug addiction issue. Generally, these actors are highly involved with the issue, have high vested interests rooted in their expertise and experience; they perceive drug addiction through the expert frame. Third, there are local actors which cover wider policy agenda and which have mixed governance experiences dealing with different local public issues, including drug addiction. Organizational parts of these actors dealing with drug addiction use the created frame to boost their profile inside the larger organization (actor as a whole). Boosting the profile of drug addiction can be achieved through coordinated interaction with other frame users (using the integration frame), and/or concentrating on development of specific expertise (using the expert frame).

### **Showing that something is done**

**8.2** The first type of frame use can be called 'show that something is done'. The aim of this strategy is to assert that the issue of drug addiction is being dealt with in a correct way. With this aim in mind, governance actors use different symbols and artefacts which can immediately communicate that something is done. Frame manifestations like produced reports, organized meetings, people working on drug addiction, cooperation with other actors in the field, are presented as proofs that drug addiction is an important issue. This strategic use of frame can relatively easily hide the fact that drug addiction is not perceived as something worth the action, and is used by the governance actors with busy agendas where drug addiction has low priority. Since governance actors are aware that nobody will check the results of the

actual policy on drug addiction, they concentrate on the complexity of an issue, common action by different actors (placing responsibility for action elsewhere) and their formal participation in dealing with it.

**8.3** We have noticed in the communication with respondents from public sector bureaucracies that such actors tend to show that action is done, as a formality (e.g. reports produced by the local government), or as part of a formalization process (e.g. formal opinions, reports, minutes from the meetings, their number and formal style, which the Centre for Social Work produced on the project 'Adrenaline against drugs'). Symbols which are used by these actors allow superficial check (reports are really produced), while communication and presented results are not clear or lean on other governance actors. Often this manner of framing is supported by the official position of the local authority which the governance actor has, making the organization less approachable and more difficult for the general audience to check its activities and results. Our experience in contact with the local government illustrates this: we received official data about some formal work on the issue (periodical reports), but when we insisted to get some information about concrete projects and initiatives by the local government (which were mentioned in the reports) they were denied with an excuse of large amount of data to handle.

### ***Attracting attention or donors***

**8.4** A second identified strategic use of frame of drug addiction we named 'attract attention or donors'. Governance actors who manifest this strategic use of the frame want to raise the attention of the general audience to the issue of drug addiction, the importance of settling the issue and the need for more action. In order to attract attention, governance actors communicate two different things: the importance and worthiness of drug addiction and need to tackle it, and their own expertise to properly deal with the issue. In this type of strategy, actors organize themselves to attract attention and boost the profile of the issue, communicating that change is needed and that drug addiction should have more prominent place on the overall local policy agenda. An example from humanitarian organization Poenta confirms this: during the interview with their managing director we were introduced with their project of harm reduction, where this actor provides clean injection sets for active drug users. Our respondent stressed how it was important to communicate alarming consequences of sharing needles by drug addicts (growing infection with hepatitis C and AIDS), together with their good position as unconventional humanitarian organization to distribute clean injections, which led to donations and execution of this project.

**8.5** This strategic frame use is typical for those governance actors which want to improve their social position through more prominent place given to drug addiction on the local agenda. In this type of strategy, change is sponsored. We found that this sort of strategy was typically manifested by governance actors from civil society which have common objective to improve their insecure position, to be perceived as strategic partners, indispensable for dealing with drug addiction at the local level. They use expert language and lively examples, assign meanings to all concrete frame manifestations (educative activities, counselling services, therapeutic work, promotion of healthy life-styles, etc) in order to communicate the complexity and multidimensionality of drug addiction and the crucial role played by experts in dealing with it. For example, the respondent, managing director of association Viktorija, used catchy stories talking about their work on education of policemen and prison guards in Banja Luka so they would perceive drug addicts as ill people and not merely as criminals, or mentioned this actor's participation in local courts, giving expert opinions in cases concerning drug addicts.

### ***Boosting the profile***

**8.6** Third type of strategic use that we identified is boosting the profile of drug addiction inside the larger organization. This strategy is typical for larger governance actors, which have a complex agenda, and where the low(er) profile issues are often disregarded. Examples of such actors are the Methadone Centre and the department for treatment of addiction in the local Centre for Social Work. Strategic involvement of personnel working on drug addiction for these large actors and the conflict between different worlds of governance, seem to have inspired the development of this strategy. The strategy is used by actors which are confronted with two contradictory worlds of governance: world of the actor as a whole which has a wider policy agenda and makes gradation between more or less important issues on it, and world of drug addiction in which the actor looks for a sponsor to improve the profile of this issue on the overall actor's agenda. By showing how its activities on drug addiction are important and should be taken as administrative priority, the actor aim to improve its own position inside the larger bureaucracy.

**8.7** The problem in strategic orientation is mostly conciliated through cooperation with expert actors performing concrete actions, or by improving actor's own specific expertise. Governance actors focus on the network relations and cooperation which is necessary in order to successfully address the issue, acknowledging its complexity. Inside the network these actors have to show that they possess some specific expertise, that their work on drug addiction is indispensable. For example, Methadone Centre develops its expertise in detoxification and counselling, securing its position by providing specific services (and developing specific governance experiences in dealing with drug addiction) which distinguishes it from other local actors. Balancing between different actors, frames and frame uses, often lead to compromises and might endanger frame coherence; too many references on work done by other governance actors can confuse the audience with limited knowledge and interest in this low profile issue. Therefore, governance actors which strategically use frame in this way should clearly identify and communicate their roles and advantages in dealing with drug addiction.

### **Strategic intentions and frame coherence**

**9.1** Our identification of three frames and three types of strategic uses was followed by additional observations. In some cases, frames differed significantly depending on how thoroughly we would



investigate and interpret actor's motivations, intentions and their presentations. This point is supported with the example of local government. Officially it presents itself as an integrator, but when investigated deeper in its governance experiences with drug addiction, it becomes clear that the ideas which it has about drug addiction issue are incomplete and contradictory, which reclassifies it in the group of actors which do not have a frame as a consistent mental structure of this issue. Since we deal with the low profile issue, the cases of 'double framing' (one in official communication, other in everyday work) can persist for a longer period without causing any reactions from public. The actors which do not have firm frame of the issue are those which normally do not act on it and lack meaningful governance experiences to form a coherent pattern of meaning. Their dealings with drug addiction are relatively rare and mostly rooted in the strategy to show that something is done, using the symbols like 'proofs' (e.g. reports about drug addiction) and relying on their authority to dismiss requests for further information or clarification. No matter if frame inconsistencies were caused by the lack of interest and knowledge about the issue or the conscious manipulation, they should be noted.

**9.2** Other observation relates to different strategic frame uses by the same actors. Frame uses should not be regarded as exclusive, but as something which can be used by same actors in parallel, depending on the concrete situations and audiences. For example, an actor like the Centre for Social Work might use its frame of drug addiction (integrative frame) to boost the profile of an issue in the organization, while showing that something is done about drug addiction to the general public not much interested in the issue, and trying to attract the attention to some concrete drug addiction related project, all at the same time. These different frame uses do not necessarily endanger frame coherence like 'double framing' does, and they clearly illustrate how frame uses in governance studies are always related with policy practice. Since frame represents the way to organize concrete social and governance experiences with the issue, it sets the basis which can be used for different strategic purposes. Different frame uses can be seen as projections of the same frame, which communicates the specific world of governance of an actor to the wider public.

## Concluding remarks

**10.1** Our analysis investigated the organisation of governance experiences and governance processes as rooted in everyday activities and governance actors' strategic involvement leading to frame creation for public issues; created frames are further 'embedded in ongoing reality' (Goffman 1974: 250). We focused our attention on low profile public issues as relevant and not yet sufficiently investigated empirical topic, with specificities such as: low awareness of the problem by the wider audience, lack of urgency to effectively deal with them, lack of public interest, and, consequently, lack of media control of the policy results in the field. These specificities influence governance processes in which the low profile issue of drug addiction is being framed, where governance relations gain importance and cooperation (rather than conflict) between governance actors is accentuated. We also noted the existence of diverse frames of the same issue and the factors which sustain multiple frames in a longer period. We approached frames in relation to governance actors and their strategic involvement with the issue.

**10.2** In our frame analysis, it appeared that social interactions among governance actors shape the perceptions of drug addiction, as a source of information about the issue, a framework for action, and an excuse for self-inertia. Low profile issues, like drug addiction in Banja Luka, showed that citizens' role in governance is hindered due to the lack of urgency about such issues; in order to be governed, public issue first has to be problematized (Rose and Miller 1992). Low profile issues are also relevant for the analysis of power in the public domain (Lukes 1974); here relatively few frame creators can control the frame through their influence on perception, or presenting an issue in a possibly biased way emphasizing only some aspects, without being critically checked or sanctioned by the general public. Governance actors dealing with low profile issues are driven into mutual cooperation which create compromises and sustain biases, being aware that some tackling of an issue is better than none at all. Low profile issues, their framing and approach to them allow the mystification: illogical framing, gaps between rhetoric and action, are tolerated due to the lack of interests in low profile issues by wider population, while some frame users profit from mystification using their position of authority and governance relations with lower positioned governance actors to hide their own inactivity. Hence a key difference between the Foucaultian discourse analytical and the Goffmanian frame analytical approach to governance issues can be observed (c.f., Hacking, 2004). While Rose and Miller's approach is directed at discourses, entire systems of thought (political rationalities) and genealogies (the coming into being of power relationships), the Goffmanian approach is directed at given frames, everyday face-to-face encounters within peculiar institutional governance settings without asking how frames and governance settings come into being or are related to wider cultural complexes.

**10.3** Frame analysis provides a background, a setting, through which we approach the public issue and which enables us to understand it, creating a structure from disjointed individual experiences with it. The primary problem for the governance of low profile issues is not dissent or conflict around different frames, but sustained existence of conflicting or contradictory frames of the issue for a longer period of time, without causing a conflict between engaged governance actors or public debate about the issue. Rein and Schön (1993: 147) have observed that 'framing is problematic because it leads to different views of the world and creates multiple social realities', but for low profile issues these different worlds of governance do not lead to an open conflict, due to the absence of high stakes (at least for some actors) and the general lack of interest in such issues. Lack of awareness of contradiction in existing frames makes it possible to manipulate meanings and frames, in the sense that governance actors consciously (or not) misguide the wider audience in order to show some superficial policy results and/or boost their image and authority. Frame analysis may help generating sociological insights into distinctions between actors' real and superficial interest in a low profile issue, into real (vision, which leads to concrete activities and their results) and superficial (symbolic actions, like organization of meeting and making reports) results in settling such issues. Frame analysis of low profile issues helps to identify the key point in approaching low profile issues in governance studies, where primacy should be given to mobilization of local public in order



to recognize and engage in protecting the frame coherence against the changeable interests of frame manipulators.

---

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> We analyzed following documents: Strategy for Monitoring of Opiate Drugs and Containment of Opiate Drugs Abuse in the Republic of Srpska for the period 2008-2012 (May 2008), and State strategy for monitoring the opiate drugs, prevention and repression of abuse of opiate drug in Bosnia and Herzegovina for period 2009-2013 (March 2009), as two main strategic policy documents relevant in the field. The effective policy on drug addiction at the local level is still lacking.

<sup>2</sup> The reason for this choice was to approach persons who are really engaged with the issue of drug addiction; in larger organizations covering wide range of issues higher officials are not always familiar with low profile issues like drug addiction.

<sup>3</sup> For example, document issued by the EU 'European Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina' (2006) put the development of State drug policy conformed to EU standards on the list of priorities for the country.

<sup>4</sup> We were unable to organize interviews with respondents from these actors (local government of Banja Luka and Security Forum of Banja Luka), so our contact with them was limited to emails.

---

## References

- BENFORD, R. D. (1993) 'Frame Disputes within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement', *Social Forces* 71 (3): 677-701.
- CRAWSHAW, P. and Simpson, D. (2002) 'Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Addressing a 'Problem' in Local Governance or Creating One?', *Sociological Research Online* 7 (1).
- D'ANGELO, P. and Kuypers, J. (eds.) (2010) *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- DIEHL, D. and McFarland, D. (2010) 'Towards a Historical Sociology of Social Situations', *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (6): 1713-52. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1086/651941]
- FASENFEST, D. (2010) 'Government, Governing, and Governance', *Critical Sociology* 36 (6): 771-774. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0896920510378192]
- FOX, N. J. and Ward, K. J. (2008) 'What Governs Governance, and How Does It Evolve? The Sociology of Governance-In-Action', *British Journal of Sociology* 59 (3): 519-538. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2008.00206.x]
- FISHER, F. and Forester, J, Eds. (1993), *The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning* Durham: Duke University Press: Rein, M. and Schön, D, *Reframing Policy Discourse*: 145-166.
- GOFFMAN, E. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- HACKING, I. (2004) 'Between Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman: Between Discourse in the Abstract and Face-To-Face Interaction', *Economy and Society* 33 (3): 277-302. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0308514042000225671]
- JAMESON, F. (1976) 'On Goffman's Frame Analysis', *Theory and Society* 3 (1): 119-133. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF00158482]
- KUYPERS, J. (2010) Framing Analysis From a Rhetorical Perspective: 286-311. In D'Angelo, P. and Kuypers, J. (eds.) *Doing News Framing Analysis: Empirical and Theoretical Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- LOSEKE, D. R. (1999) *Thinking About Social Problems: An Introduction to Constructionist Perspectives*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- LUKES, S. (1974) *Power: A Radical View*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan
- MCLEAN, P. D. (1998) 'A Frame Analysis of Favor Seeking in the Renaissance: Agency, Networks and Political Culture', *American Journal of Sociology* 104 (1): 51-91. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1086/210002]
- OFFE, C. (2009) 'Governance: An "Empty Signifier"', *Constellations* 16 (4): 550-562. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2009.00570.x]
- ROSE, N. and Miller P. (1992) 'Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government', *The British Journal of Sociology* 43 (2): 173-205. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.2307/591464]
- REIN, M. and Schön, D. (1993) Reframing Policy Discourse: 145-166. in Fisher, F. and Forester, J, Eds,

*The Argumentative Turn in Policy Analysis and Planning*, Durham: Duke University Press.

REIN, M. and Schön D. (1994) *Frame Reflection: Toward The Resolution Of Intractable Policy Controversies*. New York: Basic Books.

SCHEFF, T. J. (2005) 'The Structure of Context: Deciphering "Frame Analysis",' *Sociological Theory* 23 (4): 368-385. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2751.2005.00259.x]

STONE, D. (2002) *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

STRAUS, R. M. (2011) 'Citizens' use of policy symbols and frames', *Policy Sciences* 44 (1): 13-34. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11077-010-9115-1]

TUCKER, L. R. (1998) 'The Framing of Calvin Klein: A Frame Analysis of Media Discourse about the August 1995 Calvin Klein Jeans Advertising Campaign', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 15 (2): 141-157. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15295039809367039]

VICARI, S. (2010) 'Measuring Collective Action Frames: A Linguistic Approach to Frame Analysis', *Poetics* 38: 504-525. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2010.07.002]

VLIEGENHART, R. and Van Zoonen, L. (2011) 'Power to the Frame: Bringing Sociology Back to Frame Analysis', *European Journal of Communication* 26 (2): 101-115. [doi://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0267323111404838]

YANOW, D. (2000) *Conducting Interpretive Policy Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.