# Introduction to Public Policy

Week 9: Agenda Setting

Theodolou & Kofinis, pp. 117-128.

Knill & Tosun, pp. 106-120.

# Agenda Setting

- Why issues enter & survive on the agenda & finally considered for some policy action.
  - Stages in which issues develop & emerge within a public & government agenda

- How issues gain attention
  - The theoretical & practical process by which issues emerge onto the political & policy agenda

# Agenda Setting: List of Ignored Problems???

- Which Problems Enter Agendas?
  - Problems that are high in cost and scope are more easily perceived as important

- Which problems can or can not be ignored?
  - Environmental problems
    - Global warming; Ocean pollution
  - Economic crises
  - Refugee crisis
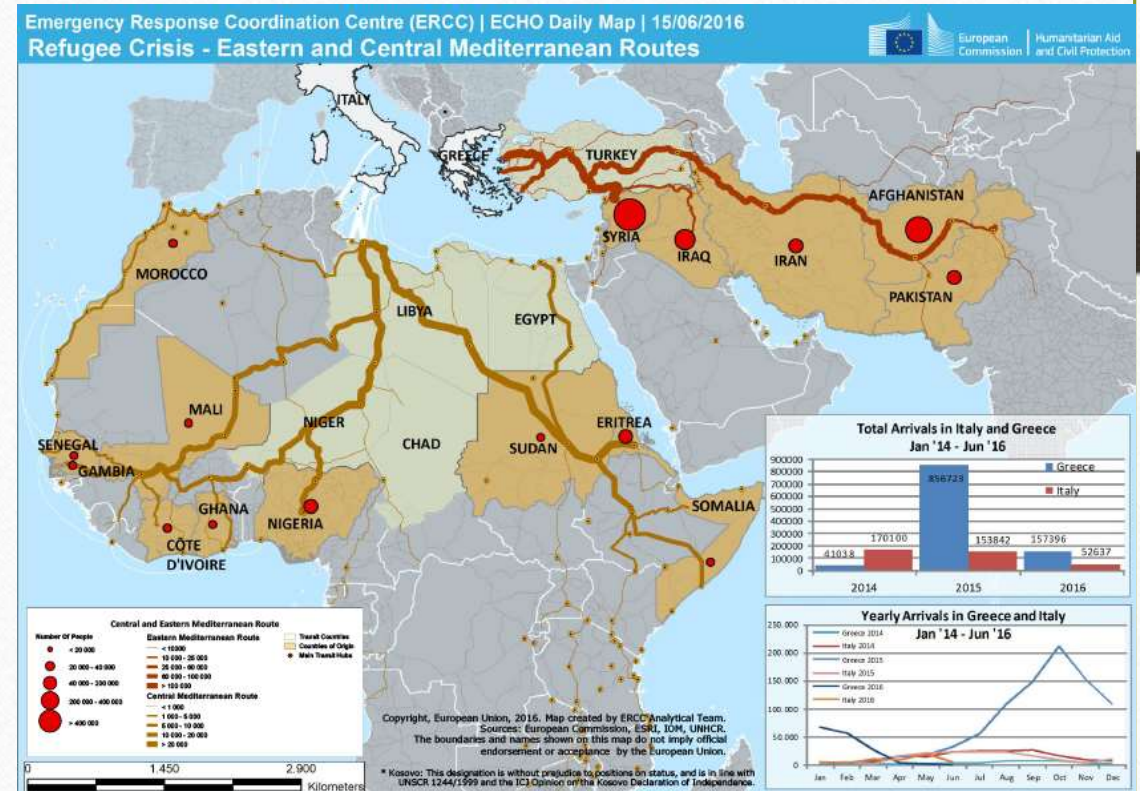
# Applications to the Turkish Ombudsman, 2018

KDK THE OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

**Figure 3:** Distribution of the Complaints as per Subjects in 2018

Services provided by local governments
%6,38

Justice, national defense and security
%6,84

Education, youth and sports
%11,82

Labor and social security
%24,56

Public personnel regime
%26,76

# Agenda Setting

- The dynamic process by which an issue rises from obscurity (being unknown) to gain public and political attention.

  - Important pre-decision stage
  - Entering the agenda is necessary for an issue to be considered for policy action.

- How a large set of issues compete for policy attention

  - How the set/agenda of issues to be considered for policy action become limited in number.
  - Some issues may be recognized as important, but not all important issues enter onto the policy agenda.
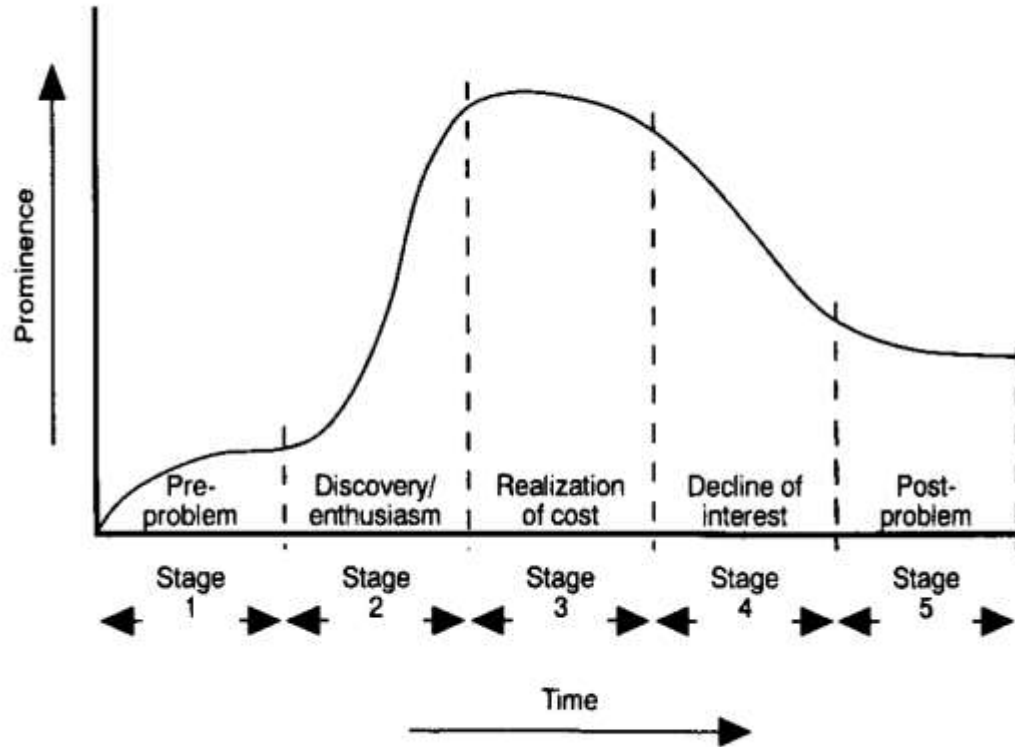
# Agenda Setting

- To consider issues, policy actors have
  - Limited time
  - Limited energy
  - Limited resources (Money, personnel…)
  - Limited amount of interest

- The issue selection process is
  - Competitive
    - Competition between beliefs, perceptions & attention
  - Not fair or just
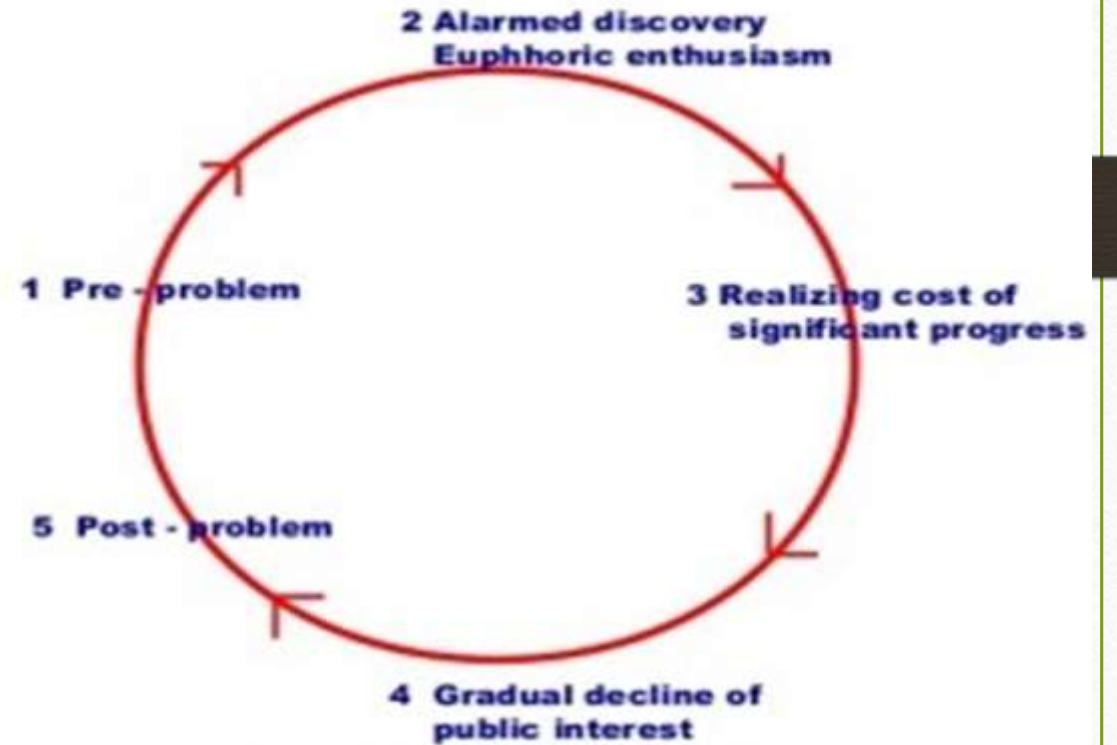
# Agenda Setting

- Three Theories of Agenda Setting
  1. Downs' Issue Attention Cycle

  2. Kingdon's Multiple Streams Theory

  3. Cobb & Elder's Systemic & Institutional Agendas
     - Interaction between two policy agendas

# 1. Downs' Issue Attention Cycle



**ISSUE ATTENTION CYCLES (IACs)**

(Anthony Downs : 1972)

2 Alarmed discovery
Euphhoric enthusiasm

1 Pre - problem

3 Realizing cost of
significant progress

5 Post - problem

4 Gradual decline of
public interest

# 1. Downs' Issue Attention Cycle

- How a private issue becomes a public issue that attracts public attention?
  - Presents the «life cycle» of issues

- Examples
  - Obesity
  - Islamic State (ISIS) Terror

# **Downs' Issue Attention Cycle**

1.Pre-Problem Stage:

Experts and policy-makers may be aware of the problem, and knowledge may have been produced, but there is negligible public interest.

# Downs' Issue Attention Cycle

2. <u>Alarmed Discovery and Euphoric (Joyful) Enthusiasm Stage:</u>

The issue is recognized as a problem, prompted by a disaster or positive event, which focuses concern and leads to demands for government action

# Downs' Issue Attention Cycle

3.Counting the Costs and Benefits Stage:
   Policy makers and the public become aware of what progress will cost.


4.Decline of public interest in issue


5.Post-Problem Stage:
   The issue slips down the public agenda. New issues replace the environment in public opinion and policy agendas.
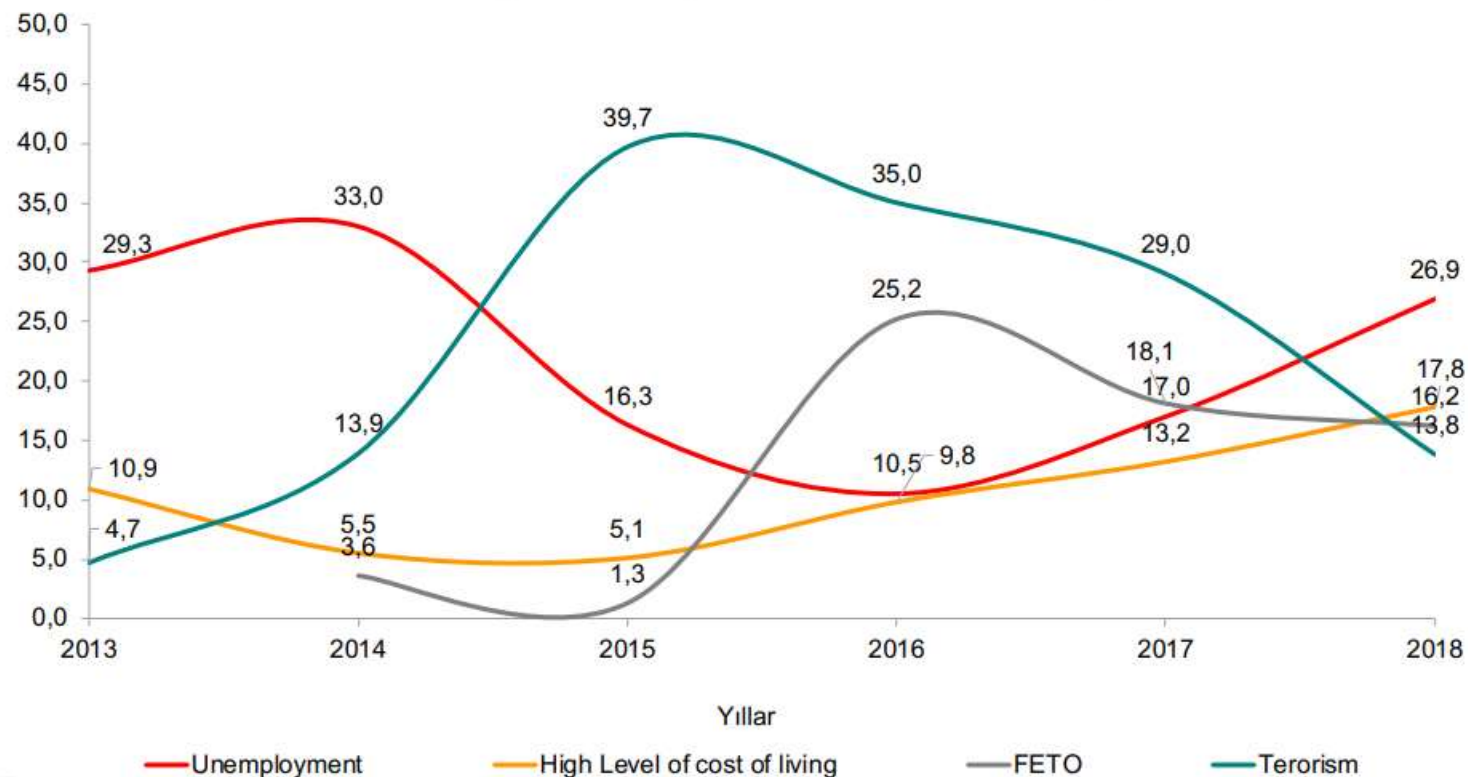
# Issue Importance & Public Interest

# Issues Rising & Declining in Importance on the Agenda



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**Turkey and Its Problems (2)**
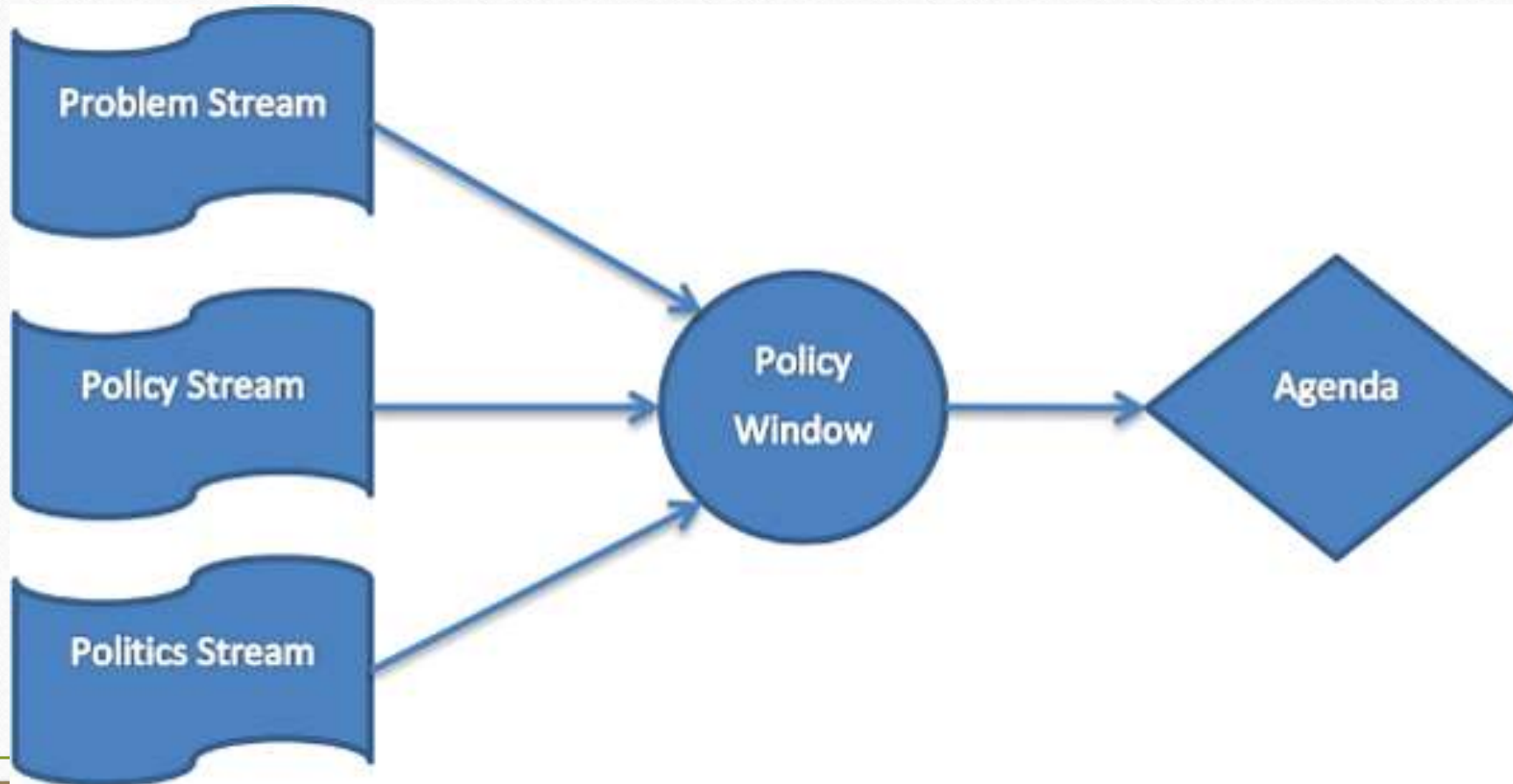
The most important problem of Turkey

Yıllar

Unemployment — High Level of cost of living — FETO — Terorism

| Basis | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|       | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 |

# 2. Kingdon's Multiple Streams Theory
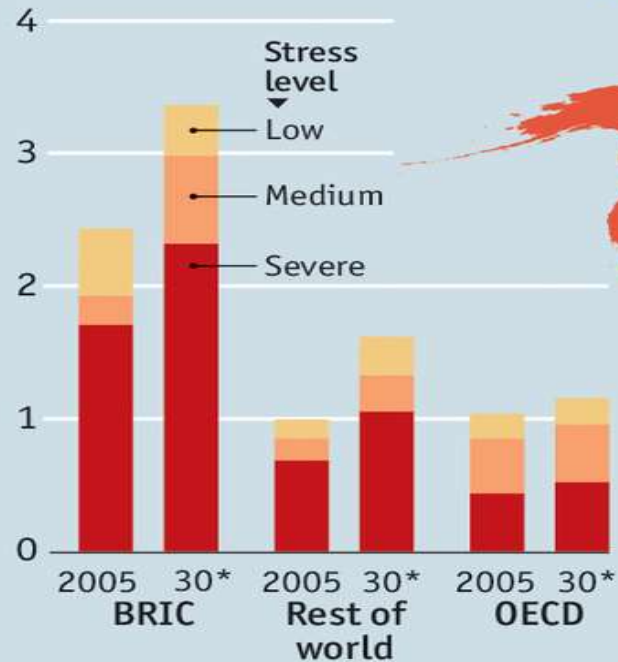
# 2. Kingdon's Multiple Streams Theory

- Highlight the role of «timing» in the public policy process

- Streams
  - Problem Stream
  - Policy (Solution) Stream
  - Political Stream

# Problem Stream

- Issues that policy actors focus on

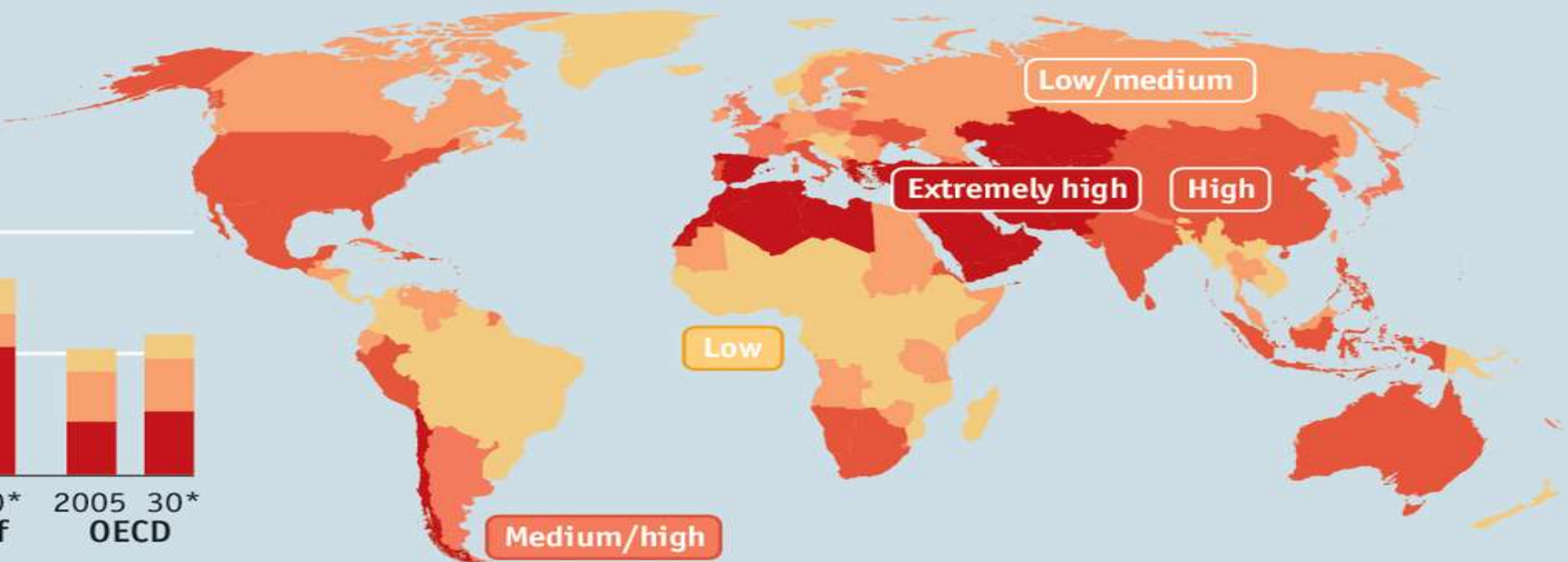  - Based on indicators, focusing events (such as a crisis or a disaster) & feedback

# Policy Stream

- Ideas and solutions debated among policy actors & entrepreneurs

- Role of <span style="color:red">policy entrepreneurs</span> (girişimci)
  - Expecting rewards (prestige, power, wealth…) for successful matches between problems and policies
    - Examples
      - Hayrettin Karaca (TEMA Foundation)
      - Ahmet Mete Işıkara (Deprem Dede; Grandfather Earthquake)
      - Kemal Derviş (Economic reforms)

# Policy Stream

- Factors affecting the selection of policies
  - Technical feasibility
    - Manned Mars missions?
  - Value acceptance by the policy community
    - Smaller or larger role for government or the private sector?
  - Tolerable cost
    - Free Internet access to everyone?
  - Anticipated public acquiescence/support
    - Sending soldiers to Syria to fight ISIS?
  - Political acceptability
    - Accepting more Syrian immigrants to Turkey?

# Political Stream

- The broad political context
  - The national mood
    - Shared concerns & interests

  - Organized political forces
    - Interest groups

  - Members of the government
    - The elected, appointed & bureaucracy

# «Politicians Discussing Global Warming» Sculpture

### by Isaac Cordal (2011) in Berlin, Germany

# Policy Windows of Opportunity

- Opportunities for action
  - Stay open only for short periods

- Syrian refugees example
  - A window of opportunity for Turkey's EU membership?

  - Problem: Refugees
  - Policy: Keep refugees in Turkey
  - Politics: Is it acceptable for Turkey, for the other policy actors?

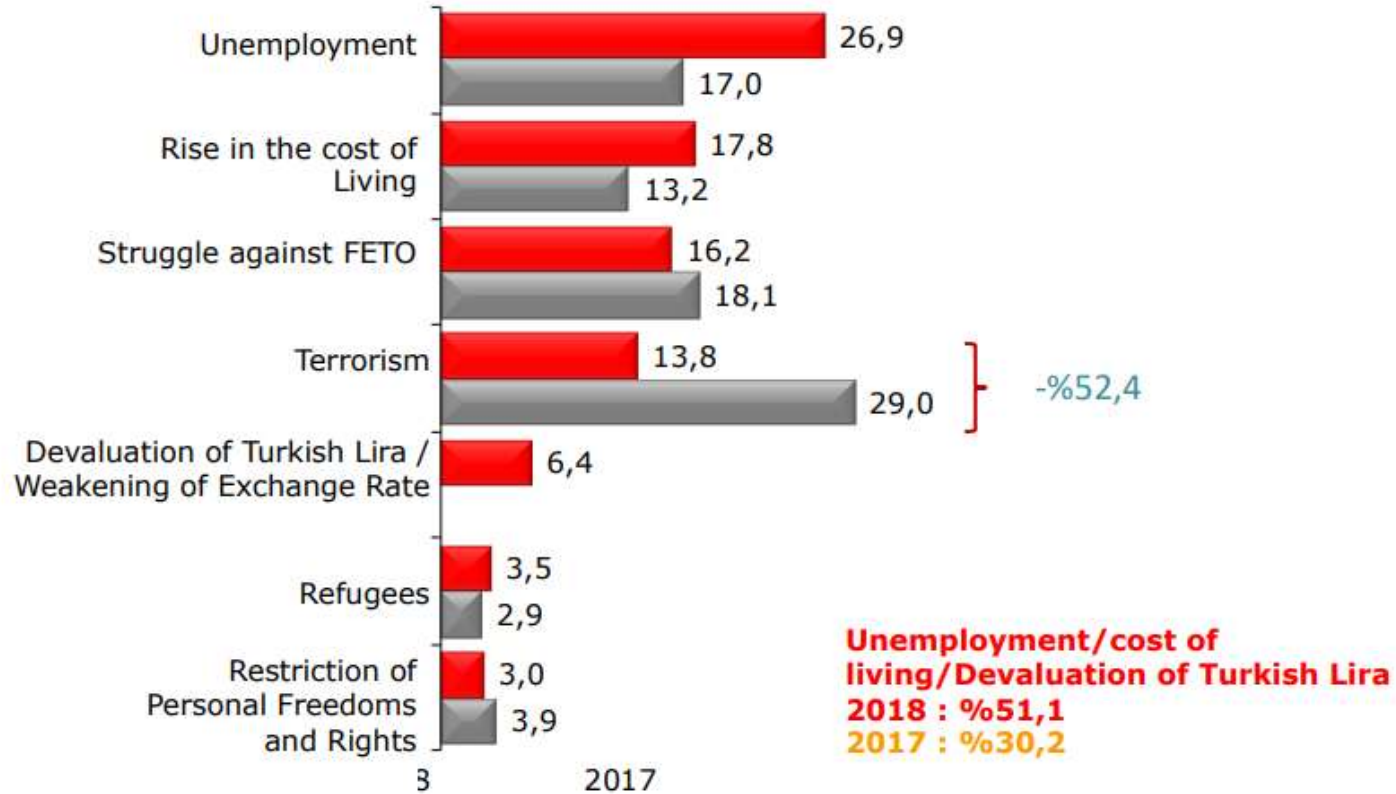# 3. Cobb & Elder's Systemic & Institutional Agendas

# 3. Cobb & Elder's Systemic & Institutional Agendas

- A potential problem: A negative effect on some segment of the society, group or individual
  - Is there a need for public action?
    - Are previous attempts to solve the problem privately failed?
  - Is the issue a crisis?

- Example: Unemployment

## Turkey and Its Problems (1)

### The Most Important Current Problem in Turkey

*Please indicate from the selection provided on the card what is the most important current problem in Turkey?*



Data under 3,0% is not included in the chart.

Listed based on the top 6 problems in 2018.

Unemployment/cost of living/Devaluation of Turkish Lira
2018 : %51,1
2017 : %30,2

Basis: 1000

# Factors that Affect Agendas

- Agenda types framed & defined by beliefs, actors & resources.
  - Organizational culture
  - Ideologies
  - The need for reelection/political calculations
  - The preferences of citizens

- Example: The proper role of government in health
  - PPP: Public-Private Partnerships

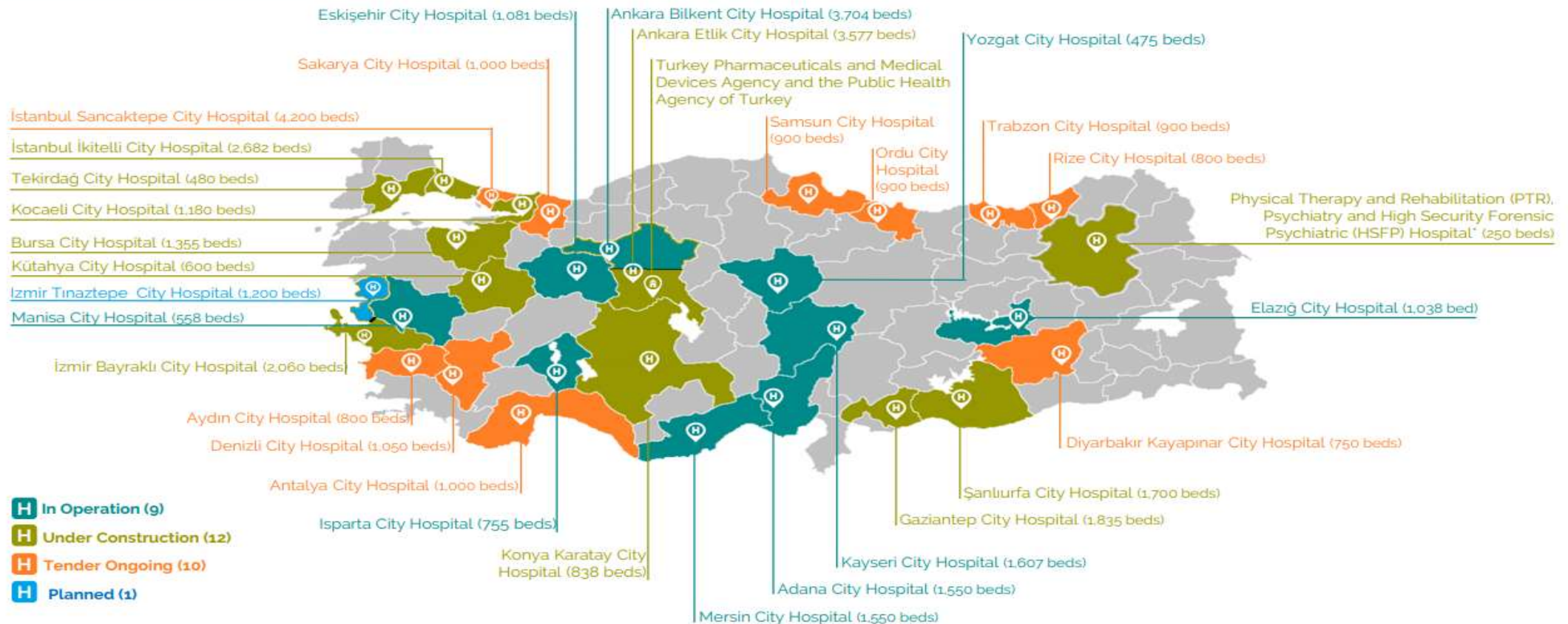# Proper Role of Government in Health: The PPP Model

# Systemic and Institutional Agenda (Cobb & Elder)

- Transformation of an issue into an (institutional) agenda item
- Expansion of an issue from a specifically concerned attention group to a wider interested or attentive public

# Systemic and Institutional Agenda (Cobb & Elder)

- Systemic Agenda
  - All issues commonly perceived by members of a political community as meriting public attention of public authorities
  - Shared concern of a sizeable portion of the public

- Institutional Agenda
  - Explicitly up for active and serious consideration by decision-makers
  - May be an old item which is up for regular review or is of periodic concern; or it may be a new item.

# Issue Triggers (Cobb & Elder)

- Internal Triggers
  - Natural catastrophes
  - Unanticipated human events
  - Technological changes
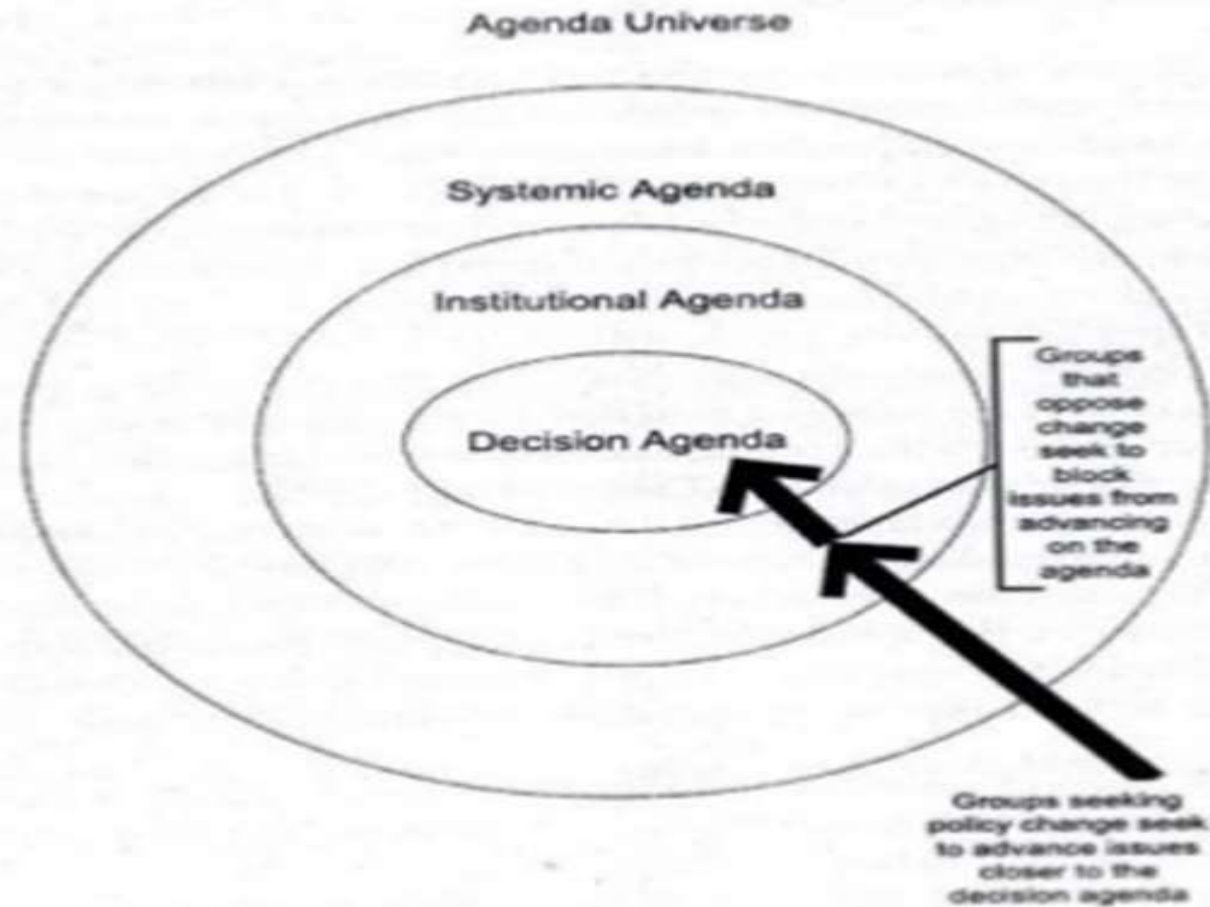  - Imbalance or bias in the distribution of resources
  - Ecological change

- External Triggers
  - Act of war
  - Innovations in weapons technology
  - International conflict
  - Patterns of world alignment

# Ecological Change

# Levels of Agenda (Thomas Birkland, 2006)

# Types of Agenda

According to Cobb and Elder:

- Systematic Agenda: It refers to social problems, is general and does not have a precise definition.

- Institutional Agenda: It is more specific and concrete than the systematic agenda. (Legislative-Judiciary-Executive-Administrative-Judicial institution agendas etc.)

According to Kingdon:

- Draft Agenda: referred to as the government agenda. They are subjects that attract attention and are being studied.

- Decision agenda: The issues on which the government has agreed on the draft proposals and decided to put the issue on the agenda of the responsible decision-making body.

üvenli değil | ctrs.khas.edu.tr/sources/TSSEA-2018-EN.pdf ☆ 📄

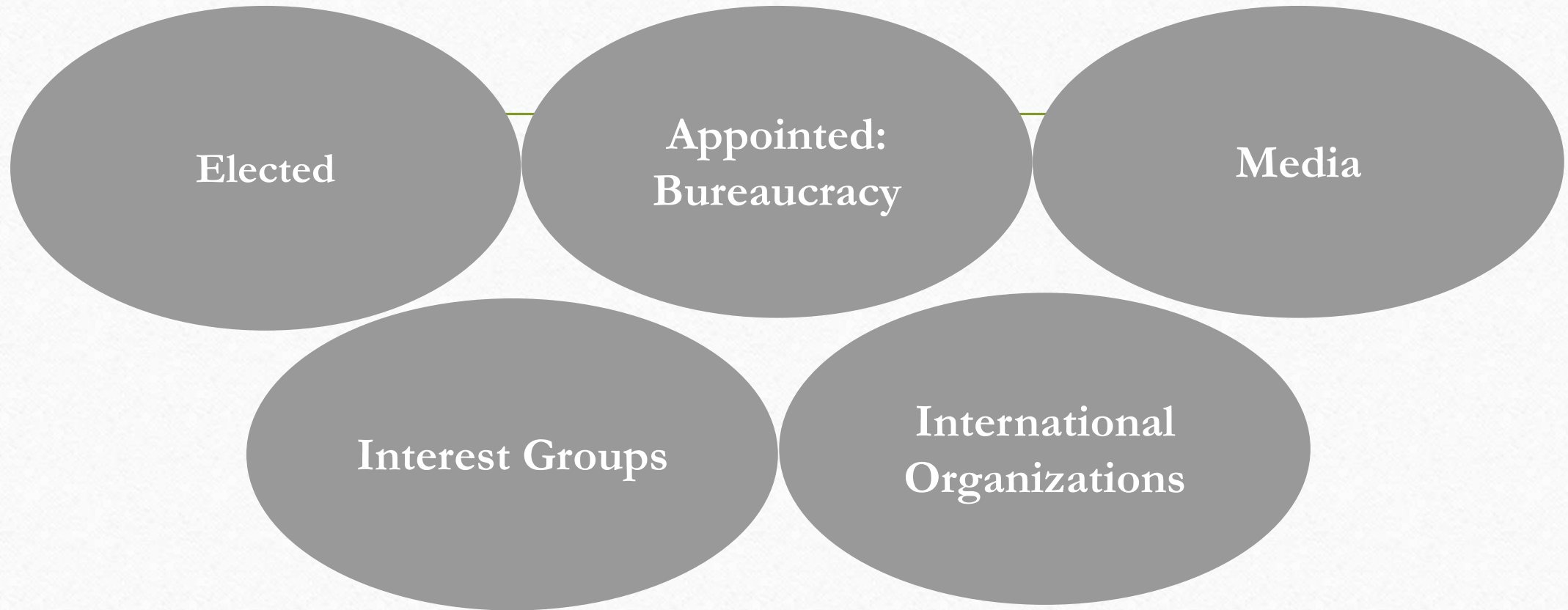Research on Social & Political Trends in Turkey | 19

**Turkey and Its Problems (5)**

CENTER FOR TURKISH STUDIES

AKADEMETRE

## The most important problems
## Ankara/Izmir/Istanbul

Which is the most important problem of X-City?

| Problem | Value |
|---|---|
| Traffic Congestion | 29,7 |
| Infrastructure problems | 21,6 |
| Unemployment | 19,0 |
| Urban Transformation | 13,8 |
| Quality or lack of educational opportunities | 7,2 |
| Lack of Green Space | 2,6 |
| Economic Weakness | 2,4 |
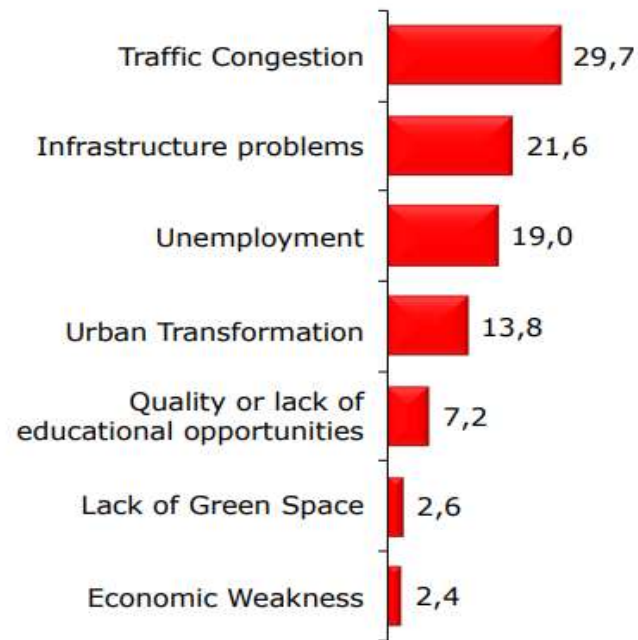
Basis: 458
(Based on Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir)

# Agenda Setting: Main Actors

Elected

Appointed: Bureaucracy

Media

Interest Groups

International Organizations

# Agenda Setting: Final Notes

- We can distinguish agenda types as systematic, institutional, draft and decision agendas.

- The main actors in the agenda-setting process are elected public officials, bureaucracy, media and interest groups.

- The political agenda can also be shaped by international influences.