

Public Policy

Agenda Setting

Theodolou & Kofinis, pp. 117-130.

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

«Politicians Discussing Global Warming» Sculpture

by Isaac Cordal (2011) in Berlin, Germany

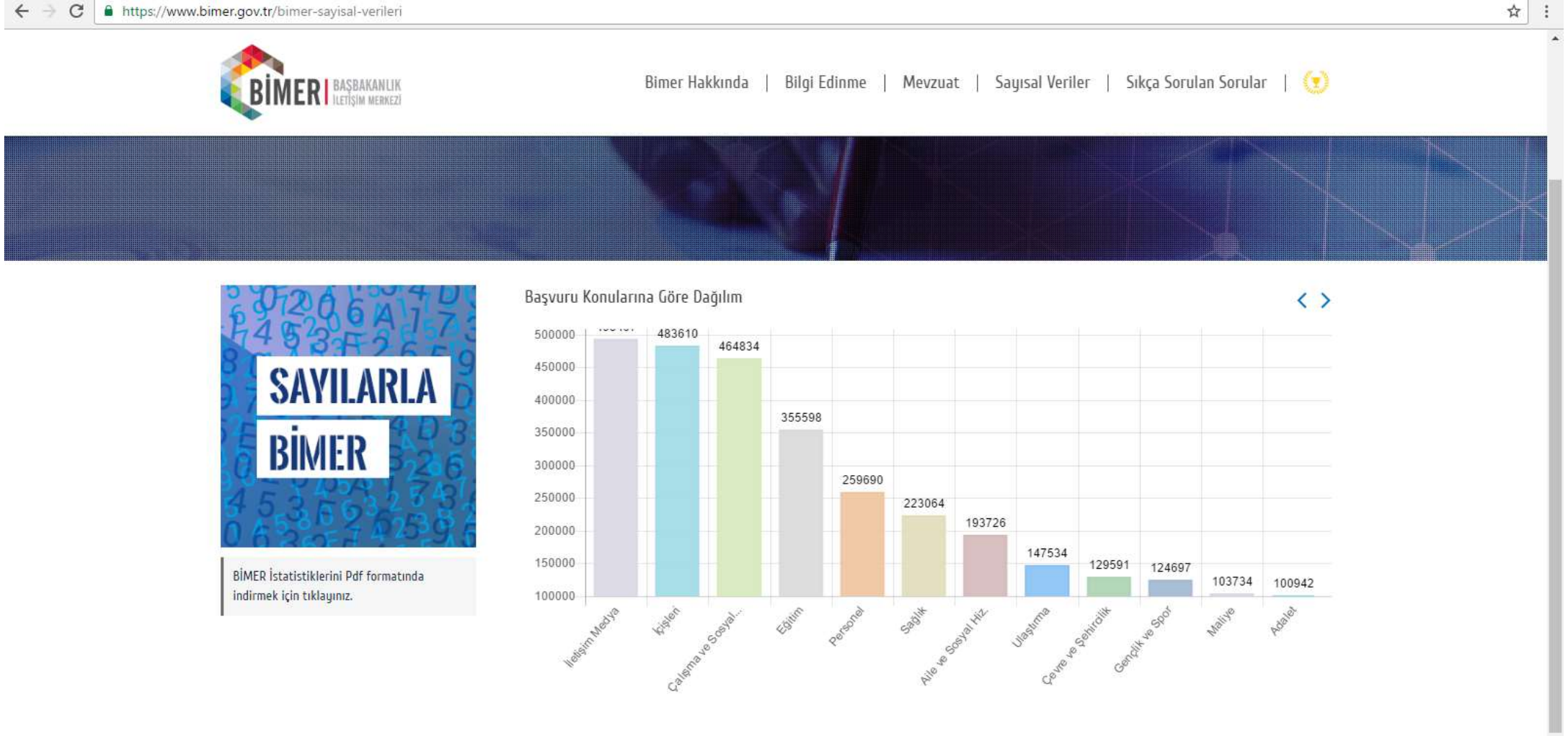


Agenda Setting: List of Ignored Problems???

- Which Problems Enter Agendas?
 - Problems that are high in cost and scope are more easily perceived as important
- Which problems can be ignored?
 - Environmental problems?
 - Global warming
 - Ocean pollution
 - Economic problems?

Agenda of the Citizens

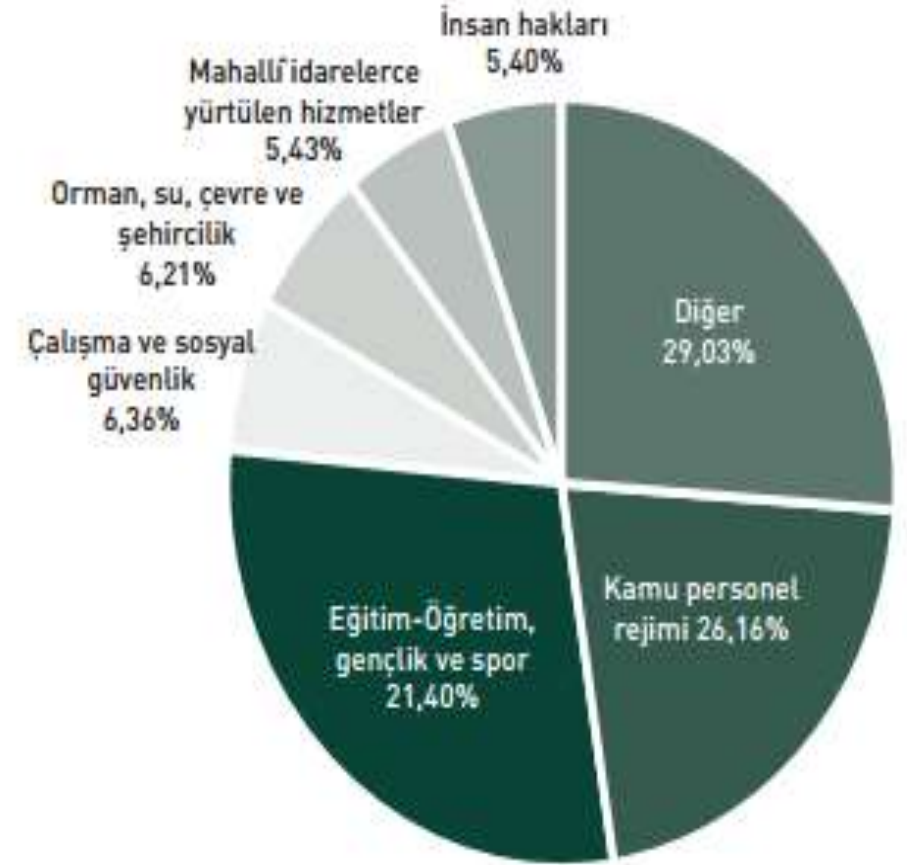
Based on Applications to Government, <https://www.bimer.gov.tr/bimer-sayisal-verileri>, 11.30.2016



Applications to the Turkish Ombudsman, 2013-15

<http://www.ombudsman.gov.tr/contents/files/2015%20yillik%20rapor%20.pdf>, sf. 43, 11.30.2016.

Şikâyet Konusu veya Alanı	2013 Sayı	2014 Sayı	2015 Sayı	Toplam	2015 Yüzde
Adalet, milli savunma ve güvenlik	455	283	190	928	3,14
DİĞER	141	381	384	906	6,34
Orman, su, çevre ve şehircilik	198	186	376	760	6,21
Mülkiyet hakkı	239	144	188	571	3,10
Ulaştırma, basın ve iletişim	271	125	95	491	1,57
Sağlık	158	131	130	419	2,15
Enerji, sanayi, gümrük ve ticaret	166	64	111	341	1,83
Engelli hakları	87	106	111	304	1,83
Kadın ve çocuk hakları	32	40	103	175	1,70
Sosyal hizmetler	46	73	52	171	0,86
Nüfus, vatandaşlık, mülteci ve sığınmacı hakları	37	17	26	80	0,43
Ailenin korunması	13	28	37	78	0,61
Bilim, sanat, kültür ve turizm	32	13	22	67	0,36
Gıda, tarım ve hayvancılık	28	18	14	60	0,23
TOPLAM	7638	5639	6055	19332	100,00



Şekil-5: 2015 Yılı Şikâyet Konularına Göre Dağılım (%)

Agenda Setting

- The dynamic process by which an issue rises from obscurity to garner 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.

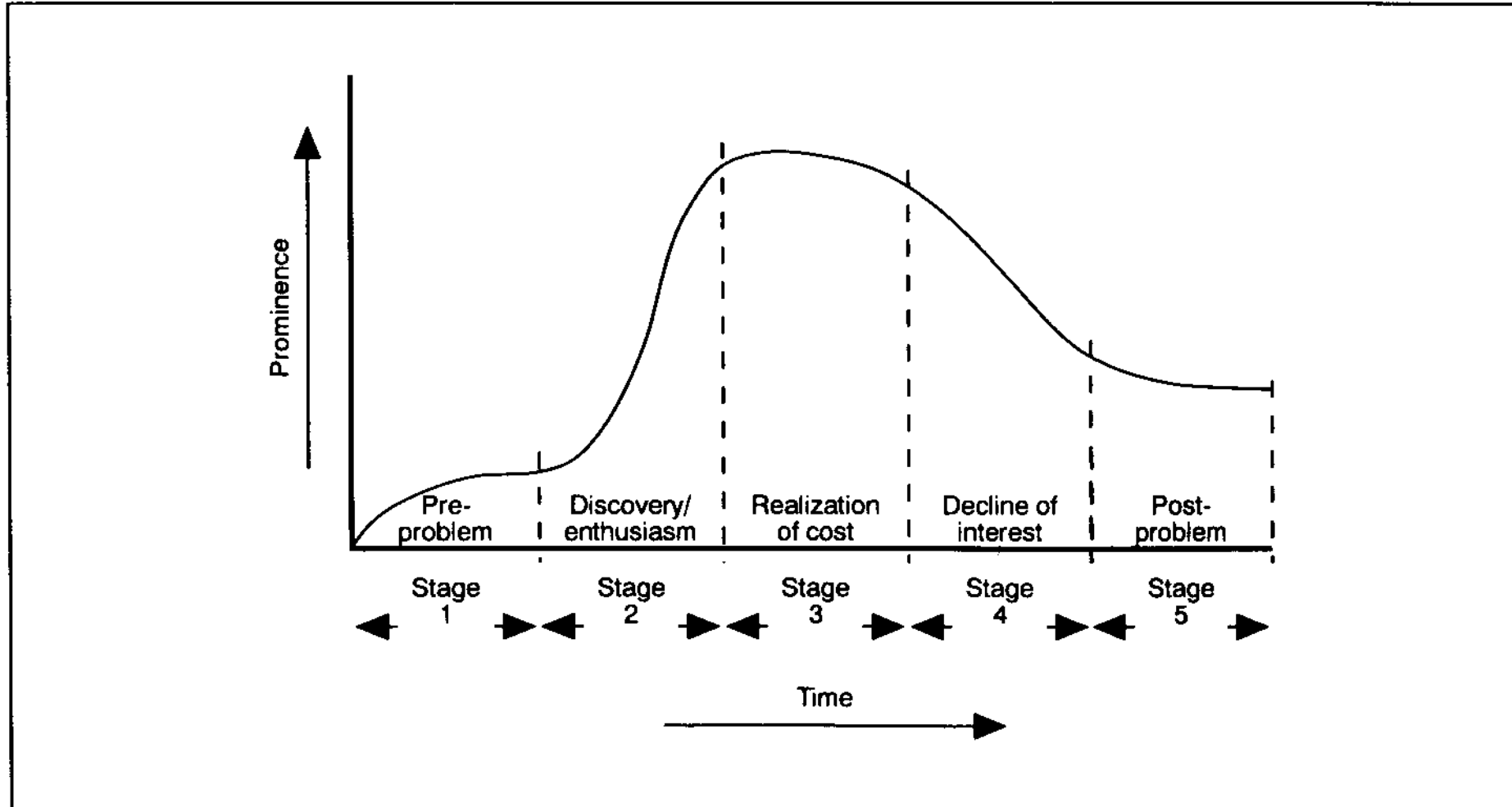
Agenda Setting

- 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



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

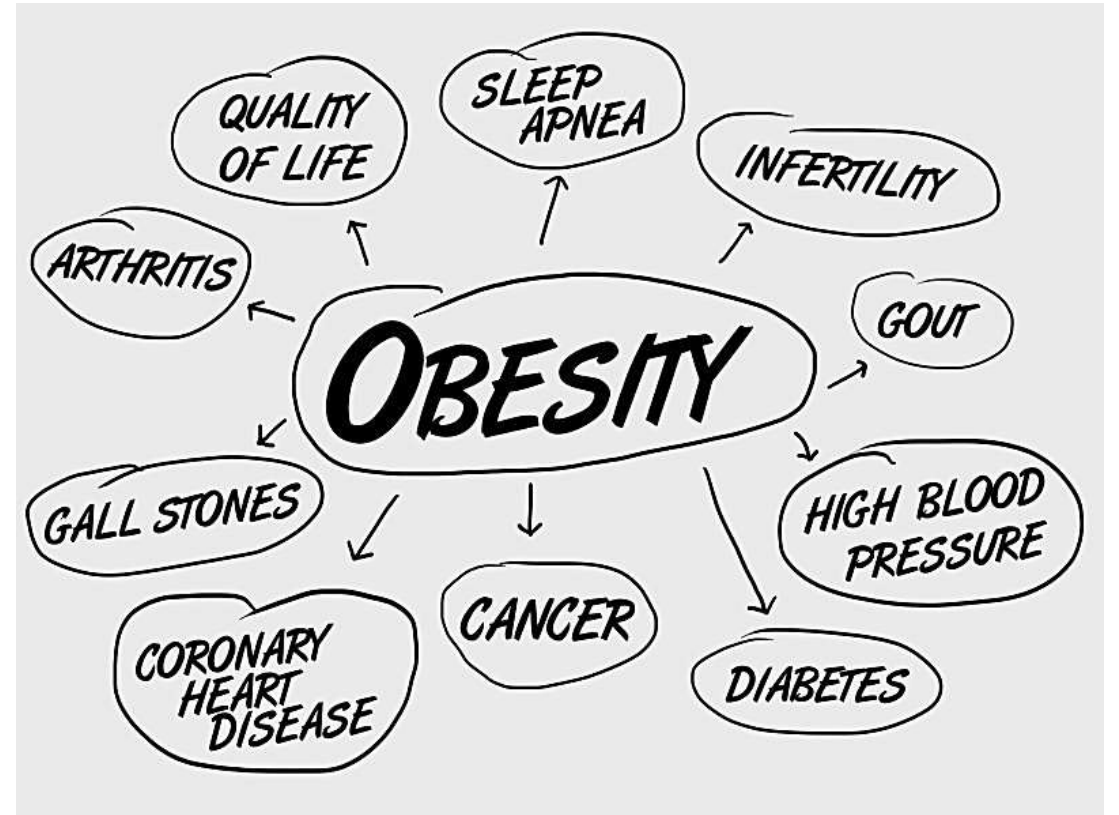
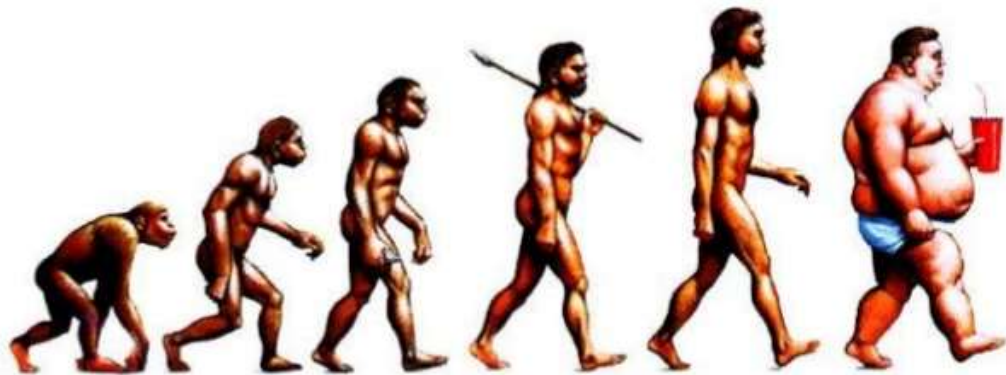
Obesity Problem

LeBootCamp
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Obesity

Evolution – Costs - Origins – Remedies

By Valerie Orsoni (Founder of LeBootCamp.com)





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. Alarmed Discovery and Euphoric (Joyful) Enthusiasm Stage:

The issue is recognized as a problem, prompted by a disaster and 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.

1. Downs' Issue Attention Cycle

ISSUE ATTENTION CYCLES (IACs)

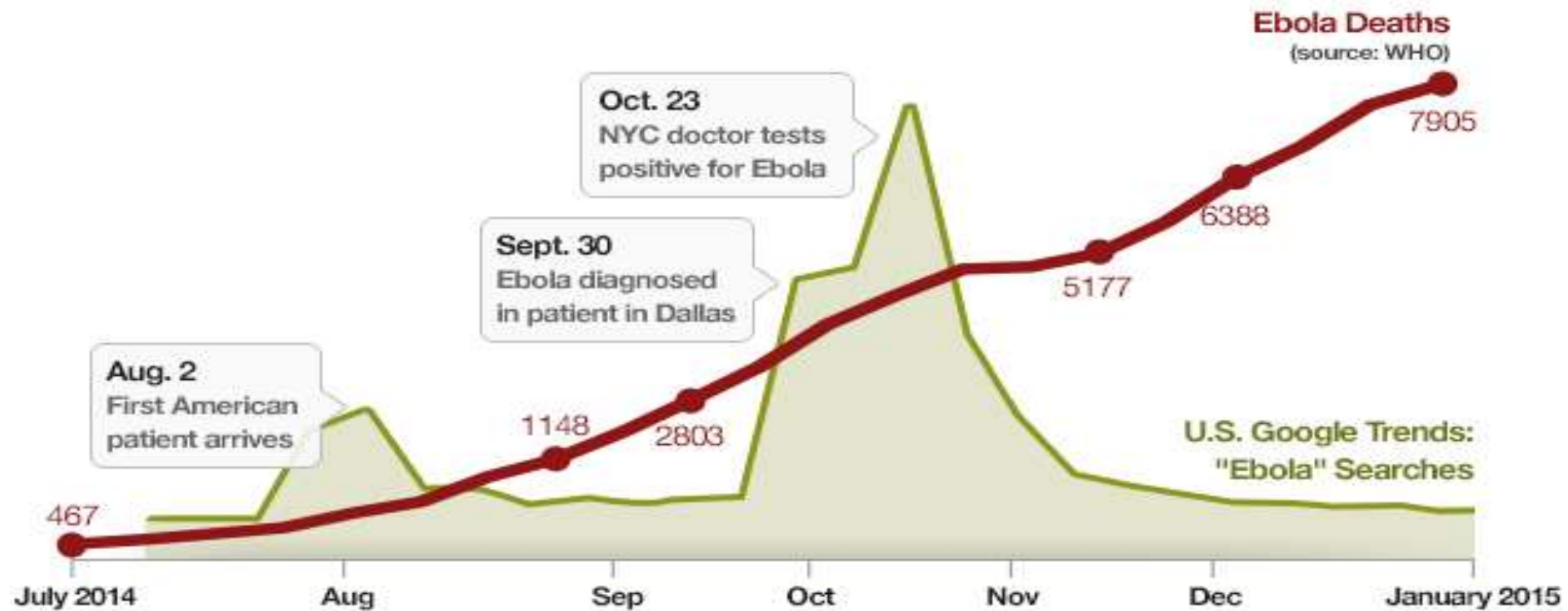
(Anthony Downs : 1972)



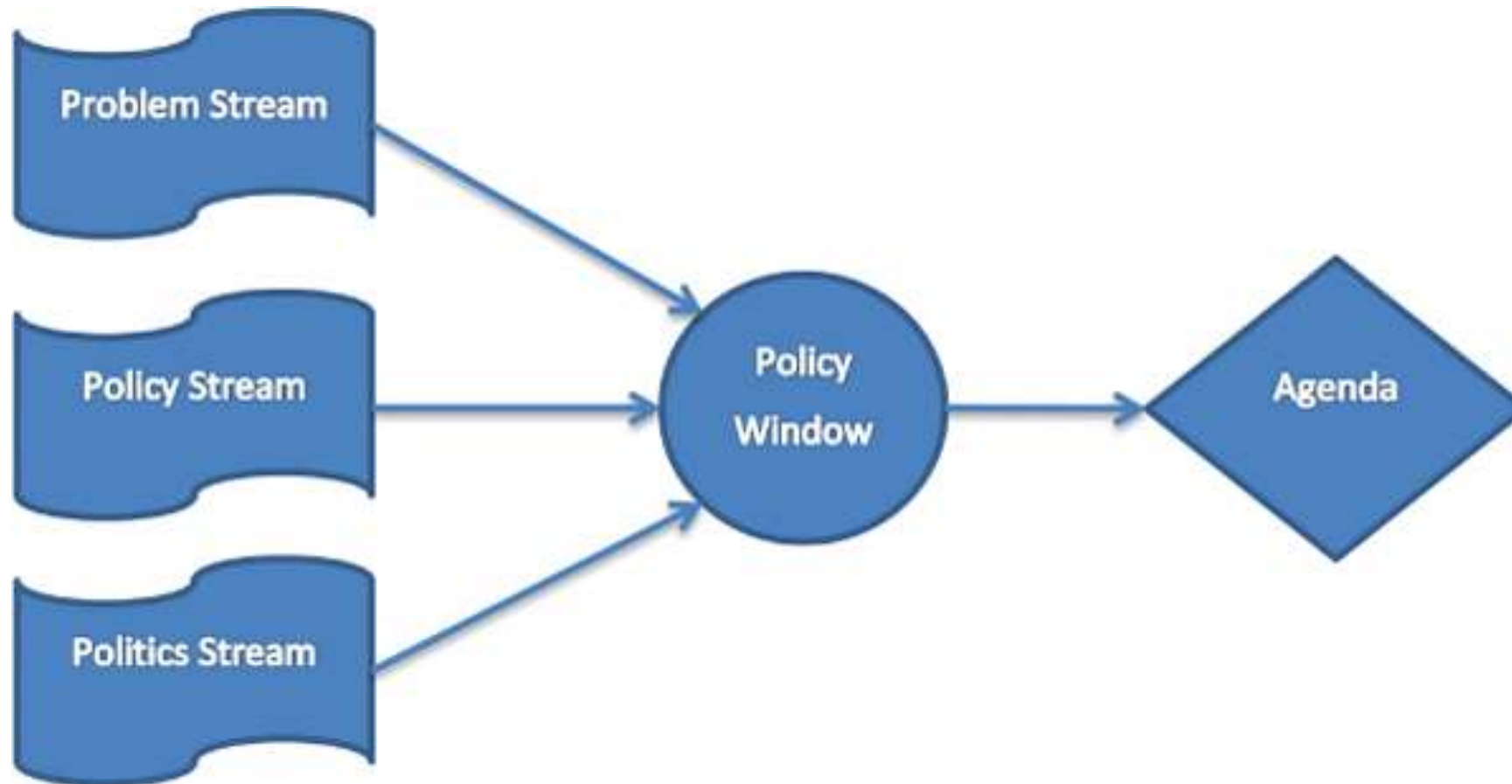
Issue Importance & Public Interest

EBOLA TRENDS:
Death toll rises while U.S. interest wanes

JULY - DEC. 2014



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 policy entrepreneurs (girişimci)
 - Expecting rewards (prestige, power, wealth...) for successful matches between problems and policies

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?
 - 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?

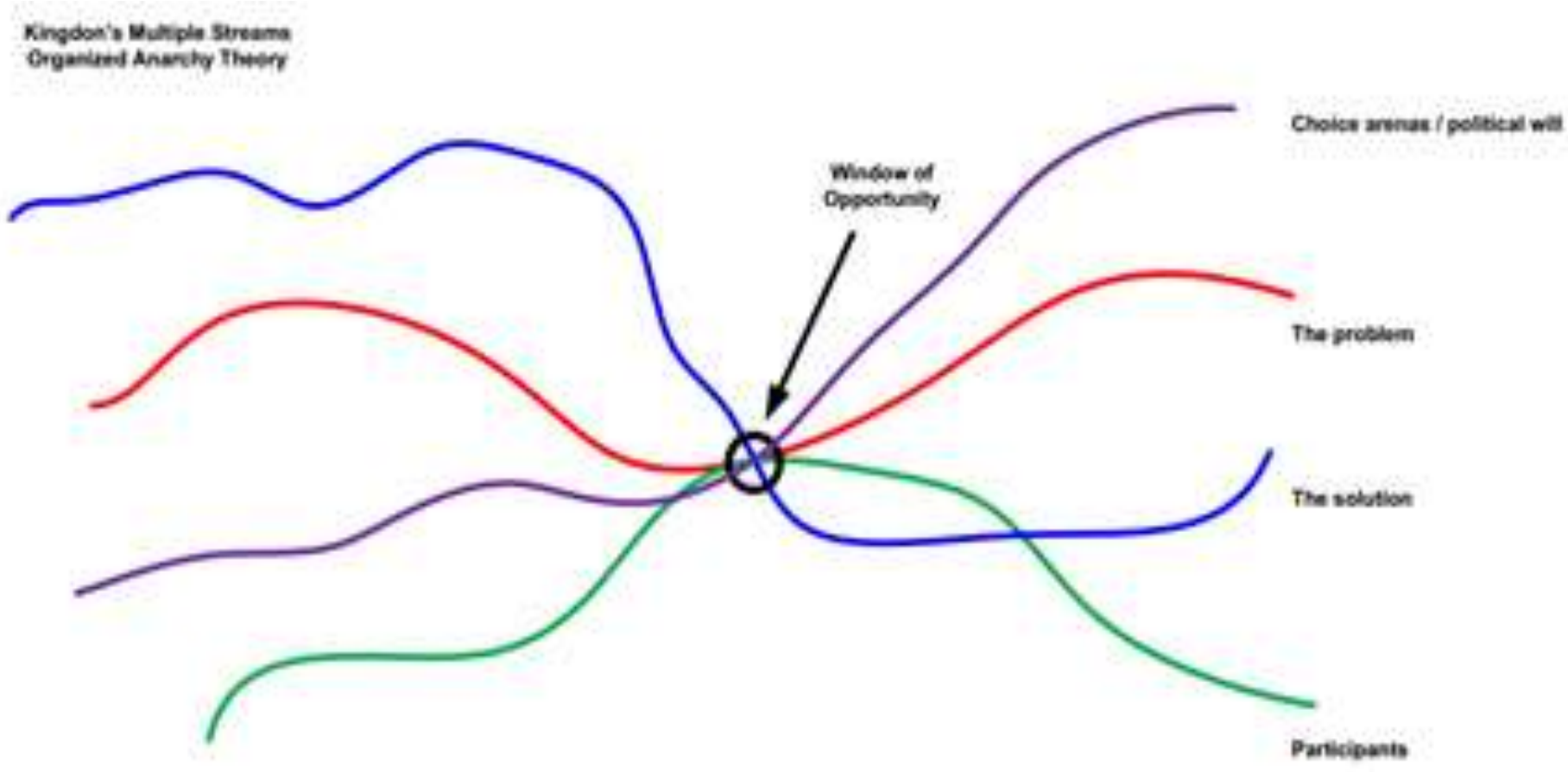
Political Stream

- The broad political context
 - The national mood
 - Shared concerns & interests
 - Organized political forces
 - Interest groups
 - Members of the government
 - The elected, appointed & bureaucracy

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 policy actors?

2. Kingdon's Multiple Streams Theory



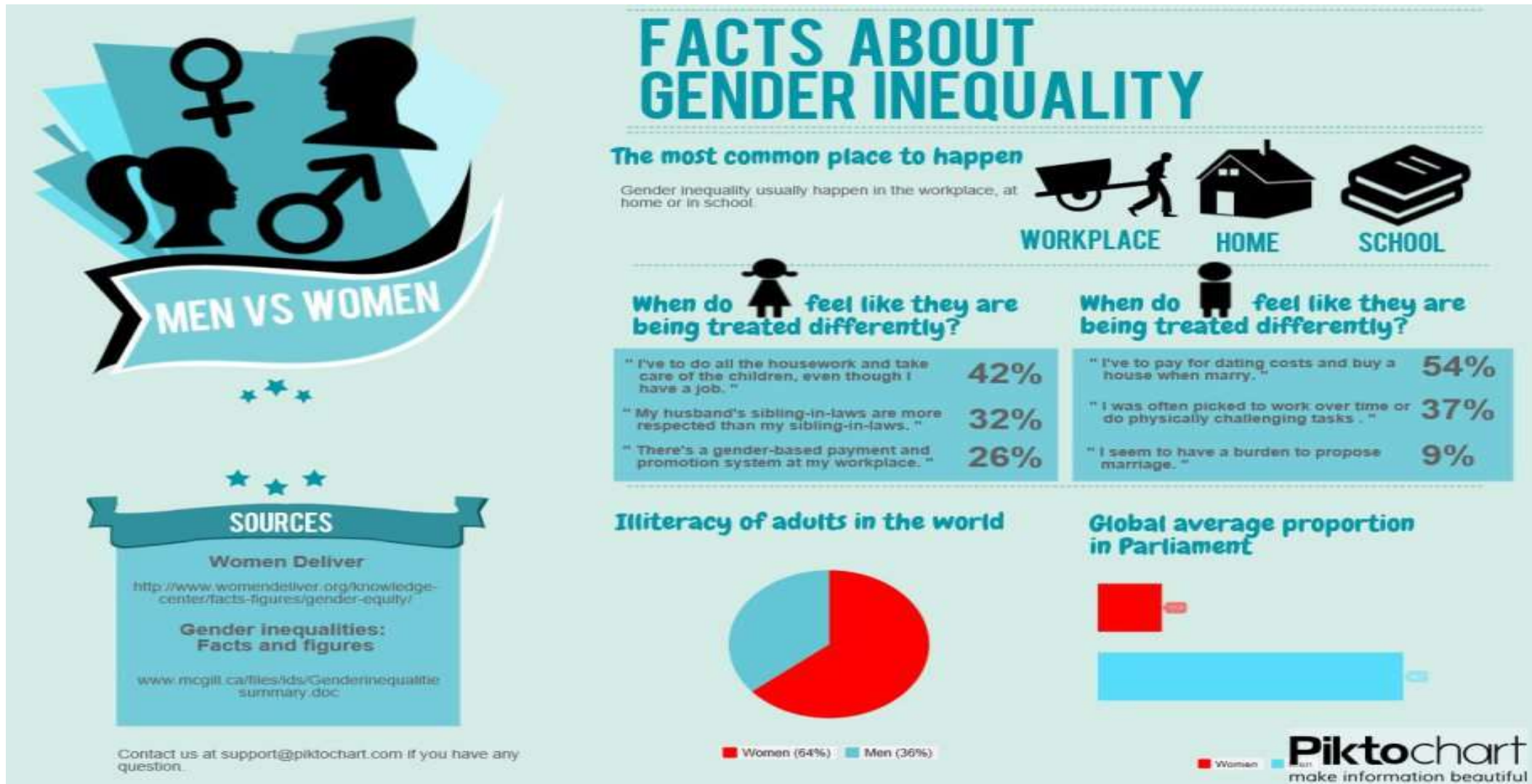
3. Cobb & Elder's Systemic & Institutional Agendas



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: Gender inequality in the workplace

Gender Inequality Example



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, education, etc.



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)

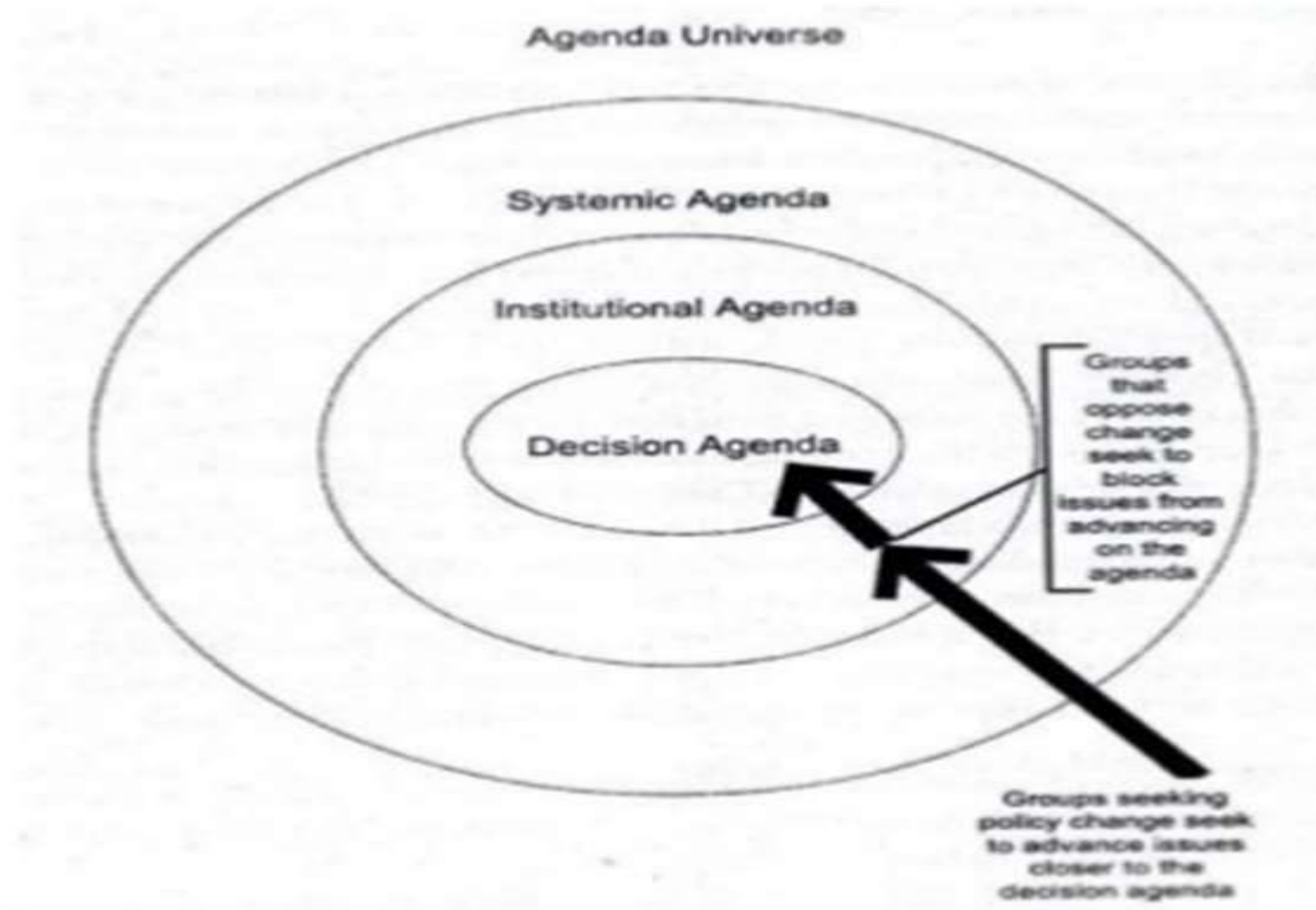
- Internal Triggers

- 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

Levels of Agenda (Thomas Birkland, 2006)



Questions

1. Which other factors affect the transfer of issues from systematic to institutional agendas?
2. Provide an example to the opening of a window of opportunity.