

TEN YEARS AFTER “BIGGER THAN SMALL”: STRUCTURING THE PROBLEM IN CZECH DRUG POLICY 1998¹

Jan Morávek

Objective: *To structure the problem in Czech drug policy as it emerged in a rich policy controversy over the so-called anti-drug bill of 1998 which criminalized the possession of “bigger than small” amounts of illicit drugs.*

Methods: *A textual analysis of a sample of 94 press articles and 102 communications in the Czech legislature addresses a controversy over the anti-drug bill. Subjectivist perspectives in the study of policy problems as well as frame theory guided the grounded theory analysis.*

Results: *Four competing rhetorical frames were identified in the policy controversy: (1) the symbolic disapproval frame, which problematizes a permissive environment and commits public policy to sending a message that “drugs are bad”; (2) the punitive frame, which challenges the impunity of drug traffickers and/or drug users and calls for a harsher repression of their activities; (3) the harm minimization frame, which discusses punishment as one of the means to reduce drug-related harms to users and society; and (4) the civil liberties frame, which predicts the unintended consequences of the bill with regard to a spectrum of democratic values.*

Conclusions: *The study contributes to the problem structuring in contemporary drug policies. Structuring the drug problem empirically informs both policy analysis and the participants in policy debate about competing problem frames.*

Keywords: *drug policy, Czech Republic, problem structuring, frame analysis*

Jan Morávek—Ph.D. candidate, Institute of Sociological Studies, School of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague
Contact: U Kříže 8, 158 00 Praha 5, Czech Republic,
e-mail: jan.moravek@gmail.com

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Introduction

A post-communist drug scare emerged in Czech newspapers in the mid-1990's. As a result, discussions of possible repressive changes in the drug laws began in the Czech Parliament in 1995 (Zábranský 2004, 666). In 1996, a bill to introduce criminal punishment for the possession of illegal drugs was proposed for the first time but rejected by the Parliament. However, as perceptions of a “drug crisis” escalated, two other proposals were tabled in late 1997: a more radical criminalization proposal by Deputy Matulka a more modest one by the Czech Government (ibid., 669). Matulka's bill criminalized the possession of drugs in any amount. The governmental proposal sought to levy criminal penalties on the possession of “bigger than small” amounts of illicit drugs and foresaw modest administrative penalties for “small” amounts of drugs. A fierce policy controversy arose in the press as well as in the Parliament. In 1998, the Government's proposal was passed. The controversial nature of the legislative process was exemplified by President Havel's veto and a subsequent overriding vote by the legislature (see Zeman 2007 for legal details and current implementation). This paper analyzes competing perspectives on, or frames of, the drug problem in the Czech Republic in 1998 as they emerged during the policy controversy in the public and political arenas.

Utilizing Frame Analysis for Policy Problem Structuring

Based on subjectivist perspectives in the study of policy problems, the present analysis aims at *problem structuring* in Czech drug policy. An exercise in problem structuring seeks to analyze competing definitions by different stakeholders and to delineate various perspectives and boundaries of the policy problem. The analyst attempts to describe the variety of viewpoints, rather than recom-

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mending which perspective should be assumed by the policymaker (Vesely 2006, 14–18). Such findings can be utilized not only to inform subsequent policy analysis (ibid.), but also to cultivate a *frame-reflective discourse* in the policy arena—a “policy discourse in which participants would reflect on the frame conflicts implicit in their controversies and explore the potentials for their resolution” (Rein and Schön 2002, 150). Problem structuring can thus inform both policy research and policy debate.

In order to illustrate the variety of perspectives in the Czech drug policy debate, I have utilized the concept of rhetorical frame analysis. The idea of frames was first introduced by sociologist Erving Goffman (1974). Adapting Goffman’s works for the realm of public policy, Rein and Schön (1996) developed frame-reflective policy analysis. Frames are defined by the latter authors as “strong and generic narratives that guide both analysis and action in practical situations. Such narratives are diagnostic/prescriptive stories that tell, within a given issue terrain, what needs fixing and how it might be fixed” (ibid.). This set of problems and favorable solutions is cemented by an integrated set of facts, values, theories, and interests (Rein and Schön 2002).

Rein and Schön (1996) distinguished between rhetorical and action frames. An analyst can reconstruct *rhetorical frames* from the policy-relevant texts that play important roles in policy debate, such as speeches, memoranda, or journalistic essays. In contrast, *action frames* can be reconstructed by observing the patterns of action of policy practitioners (for example, the operation of programs such as needle exchange, treatment communities, or anti-drug police).

The study of frames can proceed at three levels. At the most *fundamental level*, it is necessary to name the issue terrain, identify the competing frames, and specify the forums in which discourse occurs (Rein and Schön, op. cit.). At the *level of frames*, there are concrete social actors with specific interests who sponsor frames as their tools in advancing preferred problem definitions and policy solutions. These “frame sponsors” are defined as persons who formulate, repeat, and impose views central to their frame at the policy forum (Hajer 2002). They include institutional sponsors, such as officials and established interest groups (Rein and Schön, op. cit.). Furthermore, frames help stage certain problems and corresponding solutions. Specific policy consequences can thus be identified with each frame (Hajer 2002). At the *level of specific problems*, four interconnected elements can be identified: (1) problem definition—“determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits”; (2) diagnosis of causes—“identify the forces creating the problem”; (3) moral judgments—“evaluate causal agents and their effects”; and (4) remedies—“offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects” (Entman 1993, 52).

Methods

A qualitative textual analysis of a sample of 94 press articles and a set of 102 legislative communications was undertaken. The sample of *press articles* comprised an opportunity sample² of the *MF Dnes* daily and the *Respekt* political weekly from the first six months of 1998. Articles that dealt with the aforementioned anti-drug bills were included in the sample. News articles, editorials, op-eds, and letters to the editor were among the genres represented. Articles that dealt with illicit drugs but did not mention the anti-drug bills were not included. The set of *legislative communications* consisted chiefly of speeches on the two competing proposals that were given during plenary sessions in Czech Parliament’s Chamber of Deputies and Senate between July 1997 and May 1998. Furthermore, explanatory memoranda accompanying the bills and the President’s veto were included.

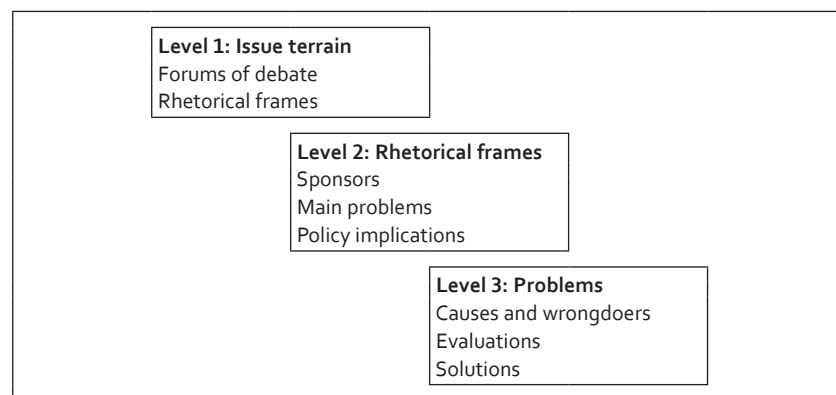
Figure 1 on next page summarizes the elements of rhetorical frame analysis applied for the present paper. At level 1, the issue terrain, forums of debate, and competing rhetorical frames are identified. Level 2 describes rhetorical frames in terms of their sponsors, main problems, and policy implications. Level 3 defines specific problems, including their causes and/or persons to be blamed, underlying values and moral judgments, and suggested solutions.

Grounded theory methods were used to explore the research topic in the text sample (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). During the open coding process, I coded the main problems, causes and wrongdoers, and moral judgments. Predictions about the policy proposal (e. g., “Will the new anti-drug law solve the problem?”) were also coded. Axial coding helped reconstruct the individual frames. During the axial coding process, the relationships between problems and corresponding solutions were explored. A frame was developed when a strong and unique relationship between certain problems and policy preferences was found.

Results

The issue terrain analyzed was identified along its local and temporal dimensions as *Czech drug policy in 1998*. This particular drug problem structure

² The opportunity to draw a sample of *MF Dnes* and *Respekt* articles arose from the fact that they were the only Czech newspapers with fulltext issues of the year 1998 available online. Most articles in the sample come from *MF Dnes* which, in 1998, represented the second most popular Czech newspaper (after the tabloid *Blesk*). *Respekt* was not among the most popular weeklies at that time.

Figure 1—Applying rhetorical frame analysis to the drug policy debate

Source: Author

emerged as a result of a drug scare brought about by Czech news media in the mid-1990's and a policy controversy which arose around two competing legislative proposals tabled in the Czech legislature in 1997. Two separate forums of debate were analyzed: (1) The *Czech legislature* forum saw a debate in which, according to constitutional procedures, only the members of Parliament, Government ministers, and the country's President participated. (2) The *press* forum provided for a debate among stakeholders such as politicians and practitioners, as well as press commentators and general readership. Discussions at other forums, and especially any expert debate occurring outside the press/legislature forums, were not analyzed.

Although separate in terms of eligible participants, both debate forums in the 1998 Czech drug policy controversy saw the same four competing problem frames (see Table 1). The *symbolic disapproval* frame problematized a permissive environment and committed public policy to sending a message that “drugs are bad”. The *punitive frame* challenged the impunity of drug traffickers and/or drug users and called for harsher sanctions for their activities. Within the *harm minimization* frame, participants discussed punishment as one of the means to reducing drug-related harms to users and society. Finally, the *civil liberties* frame predicted unintended consequences of the anti-drug bill to the rights of individual and to the democratic society as a whole. The following text elaborates on the problem content, sponsors, and policy implications of each individual frame.

Table 1—The issue terrain of Czech drug policy in 1998

Debate forums analyzed	Rhetorical frames
Legislature	1. Symbolic disapproval
Press	2. Punitive frame
	3. Harm minimization
	4. Civil liberties

Source: Author

Symbolic Disapproval

The first rhetorical frame was centered around a symbolic disapproval of drug use. Debate participants talked about a permissive social environment which was conducive to drug use:

Sen. Vyvadil (plenary): A certain part of the population, especially the young, accepts drug use as a standard form of behavior.

The permissive environment was constructed as a problem for public policy:

Dep. Severa (plenary): The government should not permit drugs to be accepted as a normal social phenomenon, or even to become part of society, thus being taken for normal... An ill-advised, excessive drug tolerance means nothing else than our society's surrender in the fight against the destructive consequences of illegal drugs.

Proponents of criminalization thus sought to commit policy to sending a message that “drugs are bad”:

Kovářová and Garkisch (MF Dnes): It is a signal by the society that taking drugs is not normal.

The *symbolic disapproval* frame was developed by Deputies Matulka of the Communist Party – KSČM, the sponsor of one of the two bills), Severa of the Christian Democratic Party – KDU-ČSL (the sponsor of a failed criminalization proposal of 1996), as well as Senators Vyvadil (Social Democratic Party – ČSSD) and Zahradníček (KDU-ČSL).

The central problem of permissive environment can be characterized as follows: the widespread use of drugs along with a lack of relevant norms and sanctions lead to the acceptance of drug use as a normal social phenomenon. As drug prevention failed and drugs spread in peer groups like an epidemic, many young people began to see drug use as a standard form of behavior. However, drug use could not be tolerated, as it leads to a vast array of harms such

as criminal acts committed by the addicts, suffering of their families, and the deterioration of drug users’ health and morals. This immoral behavior affected both drug users and the society as a whole. The growing social acceptance of drug use had to be curbed by means of punishing drug users. The law was to clearly say that “drugs are not OK”.

The Punitive Frame

The second frame was also centered around a moral disapproval of drug-related behavior. However, emphasis was put on appropriate punishment. Many debate participants decried an alleged impunity of drug traffickers. The failure to punish them was consensually depicted as a problematic, immoral situation. This was, for instance, acknowledged by Deputy Langer, who was himself not a sponsor of the punitive frame:

Dep. Langer (*plenary*): There is no doubt that this Chamber wants to rightfully punish all those who gain profit out of drugs, that is manufacturers, traffickers, distributors, sellers... that is a strike in the right direction, and there is no doubt about that.

One of the bills’ sponsors argued why existing policy was incapable of punishing drug traffickers:

Dep. Matulka (*plenary*): When fighting the drug crime, the Police often do not have enough evidence. When they arrest a person who has any given amount of drugs on them, it is very difficult to prove, during investigation, the perpetrator’s intent to sell the drug, as opposed to having it for their own personal use.

The following quote from a news editorial explains why criminalizing drug possession was expected to make punishment more efficient (a view not sanctioned by the journalist):

Kontra (*Respekt*): When we do not prove drug trafficking to them, we will at least be able to prosecute them for having the drugs on them.

However, some doubted that the Government’s policy solution, criminalizing “bigger than small amounts”, would prove efficient. The expected increase of drug prices might even benefit the drug mafia:

Dep. Matulka (*plenary*): It is primarily the dealers who will learn how to distinguish the relevant quantities of drugs. And they will only have the officially determined quantity, the official dose, on them.

Langer (*MF Dnes*): Ironically, the organized crime will be the only party to gain from the increased price of drugs.

Not only the impunity of drug mafias, but also that of drug users was problematized:

Letter to the editor (*MF Dnes*): It is necessary to harden up and not succumb to them. Our society should strike junkies as much as possible, rather than making poor, helpless people out of them.

The Government sought to punish drug users through administrative sanctions:

The Government (*explanatory memorandum*): The proposed law will make it possible to encompass relatively large numbers of drug users.

Predictably, both Deputy Matulka and the representatives of the Government, sponsors of the two criminalization bills, engaged in building the *punitive frame*. Other sponsors included Deputy Severa (KDU-ČSL), Deputy Krampera of the extreme-right Republican Party (REP), and Senator Palečková of the Civic Democratic Party (ODS).

The central problem can be described as impunity. It came in two variants: one blamed drug traffickers, while the other blamed both traffickers and drug users. (1) The *impunity of drug traffickers* was seen as caused by an existing legal loophole which prevented the Police from prosecuting most drug dealers. When arrested, the dealers used an excuse that the drugs they possessed were for their own personal use. Drug trafficking was seen as an immoral, parasitic business. Not only drug users (children and young people), but also the entire society fell victim to drugs. A solution was seen in strengthening the penal sanctions against drug sellers. (2) The existing legal environment, which did not provide for any sanctions against drug possession for personal use, created the problem of *impunity of drug users*. Drug users rather benefited from the system of free health care and harm reduction. However, by drug use they were driving themselves irresponsibly into addiction, which made them commit property and violent crime and caused their health and morals to deteriorate. Families of drug users also suffered as a result of this. Drug users were thus seen as perpetrators, “gamblers of their own lives”, rather than victims. The main solution was seen in penal or administrative sanctions against the possession of drugs for personal use.

Harm Minimization

The third frame of debate was concerned with negative consequences (harms) of drug use for individuals and society. The main question was: to what extent might criminalization help minimize drug-related harms?

Harms of drug use to users and society were recounted, often in dramatic language:

Minister Svoboda (*Senate plenary*): A clear view of the damaging effects of drugs to the individual, the family, and the society is widely accepted; not only damage to the health, but also to the economy and the morals, a damage which can lead to a degeneration of our entire society.

Dep. Matulka (*plenary*): The estimated survival time from the onset of use is now approximately fifteen years.

Drugs were viewed as a widespread threat to children and young people:

Sen. Vašínková (*plenary*): 41.2 percent of Czech youth between the ages 14 and 18, and even 52.5 percent in Prague, have had an experience with drugs.

Sen. Špaček (*plenary*): They are ruining their health, their wellbeing, and risking their chances for a healthy and productive life.

The increasing extent of drug use was seen as a failure of existing policy:

Dep. Matulka (*explanatory memorandum*): The rising number of persons using drugs and the rising incidence of criminality along with a diminishing efficiency of preventive measures [proves existing legislation inefficient].

The following two quotes explain why the criminalization bill promised a solution to drug problems through supply reduction. The demand for drugs was described as fairly price-sensitive:

Kobělková (*MF Dnes*): The law will constrain the supply of drugs in the market and thus increase their prices.

Dep. Severa (*plenary*): I do not know a child who won't have twenty crowns – or even two-hundred-and-fifty crowns – for the first drug fix. However, I know that who will start doing drugs if they are much cheaper.

A police official, quoted by a journalist, related that the sanctions directed at users sought to reduce the demand for drugs:

Wilková (*MF Dnes*): If all young people at the discotheques knew that they will get in trouble with the Police if they take a drug, many of them would say to themselves – I don't need any trouble, I'd rather stay away from drugs.

Opponents of criminalization claimed that demand reduction would be undermined by a “forbidden fruit effect” and that criminal justice would not help heal addicted users:

Závozda (*MF Dnes*): Threats and prohibitions will rather make drugs more popular, especially among students.

Pišoftová (*MF Dnes*): Ill people will end up in prisons, where drugs are also taken. It is naive to incarcerate someone and expect them to stop taking drugs once they're out of jail.

Various unintended consequences of criminalization in terms of harm minimization were debated. Addicted users were predicted to accommodate the increase in drug prices by committing more property crime. Others were expected to drop out of harm reduction programs:

Garkisch (*MF Dnes*): The drug will be more expensive, and therefore addicts will have to acquire more money for it. Their criminality will rise too because, in principle, they do not have a choice; they must have their fix at any price.

Kontra (*Respekt*): Addicts risk getting arrested on their way to get a sterile needle.

Drug availability was sometimes predicted to remain high:

Toman (*MF Dnes*): There will always be enough people who find easy profit in drug selling.

The *harm minimization frame* was sponsored by a wide array of actors, including the Government, Deputies Langer (ODS), Rujbrová (KSČM) and Janeček (KDU-ČSL), and members of the professional community, such as harm reductionist Jiří Presl and epidemiologist Tomáš Záborský. Both proponents and opponents of drug criminalization were among them.

The cluster of problems within the harm minimization frame consisted of the increasing threat of drug use to children, and various harms of drug use to users (addiction, damaged health, fatalities) as well as the entire society (e. g., property crime, infectious diseases). Existing drug policy was seen as inefficient in curbing the supply and availability of drugs. The demand for drugs was also problematized.

There were differences of opinion about the expected outcomes of criminalization. For example, no consensus existed on whether sanctions against drug possession for personal use would help prevent demand. Opponents of the bills believed that unintended consequences would prevail: health outcomes of drug users would worsen, and increased drug prices would lead to more property crime.

Civil Liberties

Debate within the fourth frame was concerned with civil liberties. Participants predicted unintended consequences of the anti-drug bills with regard to the rights of individual, and a democratic society as a whole.

Predictably, arrests and incarcerations were described as an encroachment of personal liberty. Harms of criminalization to employability were also emphasized:

Sen. Kondr (*plenary*): I feel threatened by the danger that my children will be inappropriately criminalized based on accidental drug experimentation.

Dep. Rujbrová (*plenary*): No addict will come even close to getting a job if they have a criminal record.

The Government acknowledged, yet downplayed the risk of stigmatization:

Minister Ruml (*Chamber of Deputies plenary*): Eighty to ninety percent of the drug population or addicts could only be affected by the misdemeanor sanction and will not be exposed to criminal penalties. This will prevent an unnecessary stigmatization of mostly young people experimenting with drugs.

Opponents of criminalization argued that addicted users were not to be punished, as their habit is a disease rather than immoral behavior. Proponents promised that the treatment apparatus, rather than prisons, would take care of addicted users:

Holecová (*MF Dnes*): Large numbers of ill people who do not belong to jail will come to jails.

Sen. Babka (*plenary*): When someone has a drug on them and a police officer arrests them, and if he is a user, we will not punish him; we will treat him.

The following marijuana user, quoted by a journalist, defended his behavior as essentially harmless:

Hovorková (*MF Dnes*): I am not addicted to drugs. However, from time to time, my friends and I light up a joint of marijuana. I do not find it to be an offense as serious as, for instance, shoplifting.

Others said drug users only caused harm to themselves for which they should not be prosecuted, as a matter of principle:

Holub (*Respekt*): The law will allow the Police to prosecute citizens for merely purchasing drugs, that is, risking their own health.

Los (*MF Dnes*): They surely deserve punishment, but such that is governed by the parents (a spanking). And that is not the Parliament's, or even the President's business.

Borovička (*MF Dnes*): The new law will... even criminalize part of the normal, decent, educated population.

However, the construction of drug use as a private problem was contested:

Sen. Šenkýř (*plenary*): The health treatment of an addict costs hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of crowns. We all pay that money from the shared health insurance.

Finally, drug laws were seen as a threat to the fabric of democratic society, including the rule of law and the value of tolerance:

Fendrych (*Respekt*): The dark possibility of abusing this “flexible” Paragraph 187 is a real breakthrough into our rights and freedoms.

Dep. Jičínský (*plenary*): You are giving the courts something very unsound and dangerous. It will definitely help weaken the consistency of courts' decisions.

Celeryn (*MF Dnes*): Passing the law would equal to openly encouraging intolerance toward certain people.

Borovička (*MF Dnes*): This law is one step on a way toward gulags and concentration camps.

The *civil liberties* frame was, along with harm minimization, sponsored by Deputies Langer and Rujbrová as well as professionals Presl and Záborský. Deputies Jičínský and Buzková (both of ČSSD) also contributed to this frame. Finally, newspaper commentators Schmarcz and Komárek of *MF Dnes* as well as Fendrych and Kontra of *Respekt* were among those building the frame.

The civil liberties frame saw two groups of problem claims—threats to the individual and to the democratic society as a whole. (1) The first cluster of problems can be characterized as threats to the personal integrity of drug users. Punishing drug users was seen as a door to their stigmatization, including their exclusion from schools and jobs. Incarceration would lead to wrecked lives of young people. The “flexible” legal distinction between small and “bigger than small” quantities of drugs facilitated blackmailing of drug users by the Police and increased the legal uncertainty of court prosecution. Proponents of the anti-drug bills offered guarantees against police abuse and a legal fiction that the “bigger than small” provision would only be used to prosecute drug dealers. (2) The second cluster of problems comprised of alleged threats to the fabric of democratic society. The following outcomes of drug criminalization were unacceptable for principal reasons: punishing “decent citizens”, including typical marijuana users, weakening the presumption of innocence, or allowing more police discretion. The bills were thus seen as attacking the values of democracy, tolerance, and limited government.

Summary

Main results of the problem structuration for Czech drug policy 1998 are presented in Table 2 on next page.

The proponents of *symbolic disapproval* sought to eliminate an alleged ambiguity in existing drug laws, whereby drugs were officially illegal but their use

Table 2—Competing rhetorical frames, their sponsors, and policy implications in Czech drug policy 1998

Frame	Sponsors	Problems	Policy implications
Symbolic disapproval	Legislature: social conservatives	Permissive environment	Approve the criminalization bills
Punitive frame	Legislature: Government, social conservatives, extreme right	Impunity of drug traffickers and/or drug users	Approve
Harm minimization	Legislature: Government, diverse members of Parliament Press: professional community	Threat to children, harms to drug users, social costs	Ambiguous
Civil liberties	Legislature: diverse members of Parliament Press: professional community, press commentators	Threat to personal integrity Undermining a democratic society	Reject

Source: Author

was not punishable. Thus they fought for the criminalization of drug possession in order to send a clear message that “drugs are bad”. The policy implications of this frame were clearly to pass the criminalization bills.

Sponsors of the *punitive frame* sought to make drug-related behavior more punishable. Criminalization of drug possession was expected to make punishment of drug users possible, and that of drug traffickers more efficient. Although some said that criminalization of drug possession would make drug mafias richer, the increased possibility to punish was seen as more important. The policy implications of this frame were to pass the anti-drug bills.

Sponsors of *harm minimization* were concerned with cutting down the negative consequences of drug use for users and society. While some believed that criminalizing drug possession would help reduce drug supply and/or demand, others did not believe in its efficiency or thought that unintended consequences would prevail. The policy implications of this frame can thus be described as ambiguous.

The *civil liberties* frame saw the criminalization of drug possession as a threat both to the rights and welfare of individuals and to the values and institutions of a democratic society as a whole. Although proponents of the an-

ti-drug bills offered guarantees against the stigmatization of drug users, the overall policy implications of the frame were to reject the bills.

I note in line with Zábanský (2004) that frame sponsorship cut across the traditional political spectrum in the Czech drug policy controversy. However, some trends were identified. The symbolic disapproval frame was developed by social conservatives of the Communist and Christian parties. The punitive frame was embraced across the board, although its most vigorous sponsors came from among the social conservatives and the extreme right. The harm minimization and civil liberties frames were most visibly sponsored by members of the professional community and press commentators, joined by a diverse group of political actors.

Each of the four frames represents a strong and unique relationship between certain problems and policy preferences. This does not mean that the frames are mutually exclusive. In contrast, some overlap in terms of their sponsors and/or problems. Some sponsors “traveled” across frames: Government ministers embraced both harm minimization and punishment as a goal in itself; Deputy Langer switched between civil liberties and harm minimization. The theme of drugs and drug dealers as a threat to children was something almost every participant had something to say about. However, solutions differed. Within the punitive frame, the children’s problem was transformed into – and obscured by – that of the impunity of drug dealers; jailing and punishing dealers thus became the appropriate solution. Similarly, the civil liberties frame transformed the threat of drugs into a threat of drug policy. Only the harm minimization frame discussed in what terms and to what extent the anti-drug bill would actually reduce the drugs’ threat to children.

Discussion

The above analysis has structured the perspectives on the “drug problem” as they emerged in the debates over two Czech Republic’s 1998 anti-drug bills. Despite their social and historical embeddedness, the results reveal some important values and beliefs that drive contemporary drug policy debates.

I suggest that problem structuring, as a meta-reflection of the competition between problem definitions, can be utilized in two ways: cultivating the competition, and informing relevant policy research.

First, participants in future drug debates may want to be more aware of the different competing frames, including their main problem formulations, underlying values, and preferred solutions. Frames should also be seen as tools in the hands of concrete social actors—sponsors, who usually have a vested inter-

est in the realms of politics or policy practice. A better understanding of problem frames can greatly improve policy debate and argumentation.

Second, problem structuring can inform policy research. One example is the “Impact Analysis Project of the New Drug Legislation in the Czech Republic” – PAD (Zábranský et al. 2001). I have argued (Morávek 2007) that PAD modeled drug problems using the *harm minimization* frame, while the other three competing frames were not represented. This particular frame choice facilitated PAD’s argument that the anti-drug law of 1998 was not an efficient addition to Czech drug policy. Naturally, such conclusion was criticized by sponsors of other frames, such as officials of the Department of Interior (Radimecký 2007). Indeed, an impact analysis might prove the policy efficient if it used a frame such as *symbolic disapproval* for reference. Future analyses should thus incorporate problem structuring and explain their particular framing choices.

The limitations of the type of frame analysis presented in this paper arise from its exclusive focus on the rhetorical dimension – what was said or written about drug problems, when, where, and by whom – whereby other actions of frame sponsors are only marginally described. The structural relations as well as the dynamic of social action which create and maintain rhetorical frames are not fully grasped. Therefore, further research should focus on the analysis of action frames. For example, the existence of a treatment apparatus should be taken into account when studying the harm minimization frame, and observation of anti-drug police squads should help us better understand the punitive frame. The competition between frames in the public policy arena could thus be explained in relation to underlying social movements, power relations, and economic forces.

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