

## RESEARCH

# Chained translations as a cause of wicked problems: How to analyse the interplay of organisational problem-constructions

Robert Jungmann\*, Jana Albrecht\*\*, Nadine Arnold\*\*\*

## Abstract

We develop a theoretical framework to analyse overlapping organisational constructions as a driving force of wicked problems by conceptualising chained translations of ill-defined problems in fields as processes fuelling such wickedness. More specifically, this overlap between divergent translations is the actual cause of struggles, misunderstandings, or mutual ignorance between a set of organisations with divergent world views. We offer and illustrate an episodic-reconstructive approach to analysing overlapping organisational problem-constructions and their (un-)intended consequences. Our framework highlights the processual unfolding and dialectical potentials to powerfully control these processes as fuelling wickedness. From this perspective, multi-stakeholder involvement, often called for, fosters wickedness itself.

**Keywords:** wicked problems, structuration, organisations, issue-based fields, translation, power, labour market integration of refugees

## 1. Introduction

Wicked problems are characterised by being far-reaching, ill-defined, and connected to mutually exclusive norms and ideas. Rittel and Webber (1973) prominently coined this term in pointing to a growing pluralism of relevant stakeholders in (post-)industrial societies. As a result, *wickedness* means that “the nature of the ‘problem’ and the preferred ‘solutions’ are strongly contested” (Head 2008: 101), and the problem is

---

\* University of Trier, Universitätsring 15, 54286 Trier, Germany, e-mail: jungmann@uni-trier.de

\*\* Department of Sociology, Technical University of Berlin, Fraunhoferstr. 33-38, 10587 Berlin, Germany, e-mail: jana-maria.albrecht@posteo.de

\*\*\* Department of Sociology, University of Lucerne, Frohburgstrasse 3, 6002 Lucerne, Switzerland, e-mail: nadine.arnold@unilu.ch

not solvable via planning or steering. Rittel and Webber (1973) argued that wickedness arises due to the increasing pluralism, complexity, and uncertainty of societal issues. Therefore, they emphasise that the pluralistic society is the primary reason why definitive “solutions” to policy problems are elusive (Rittel and Webber 1973: 155).

While the literature in public policy, administration, and planning scholarship on wicked problems has predominantly dealt with the question of how policy-makers and other societal actors (should) approach and deal with wicked problems (Head 2019), this article directs attention to the *causes of wickedness*. Sociological studies engage with these causes, often with reference to social theories. Rather than simply describing wickedness as a defining feature of contemporary societies, these scholars strive to understand and explain the causes of wickedness by drawing upon specific theories of overarching societal dynamics (Ackoff 1974; Schimank 2019; Wexler 2009; Zywert and Quilley 2018). Complementary to their macro-level explanation of wicked problems, this article will illuminate *how inter-organisational dynamics drive wickedness at a meso-level*. A simple proposition motivates our framework. While administrative and political organisations need to engage with a diverse set of relevant organisations in dealing with policy problems, we aim to take seriously that this *diversity of organisations produces distinct constructions of a problem overlapping in time and space*. Organisations are key actors in modern society (Besio et al. 2020; Meyer and Jepperson 2000). The consideration of actors is important because elaborate approaches to the causes of wickedness point us to the distance between actors (Turnbull and Hoppe 2019: 333) and their constellations (Selg et al. 2022). Beyond established approaches to the strategic framing of wicked problems by organisations (Daviter 2017; Schön and Rein 1994), we therefore assume that *we need not only to engage with how reflexive organisations construct the ‘nature’ of a policy problem according to their world views, but especially how they work on others’ problem constructions* to explain causes of wickedness.

To address this question, we draw on a concrete wicked problem from the field of refugees’ labour market integration in Germany – an issue some of the authors have previously explored in depth through empirical research (see Albrecht and Jungmann 2023). In practice, stakeholders often address this problem under the umbrella term of labour market accessibility, and we will demonstrate how it is constructed, contested, and implemented based on different rationales. As a case in point, we focus on the difficulties public policy faces in developing a consistent framework for governing and funding language courses aimed at preparing refugees for the labour market. Throughout the article, we selectively revisit empirical snapshots from earlier work on this topic to inform and advance the development of the theoretical argument that forms the centrepiece of this article.

Specifically, we develop the concept of *chained translations of problems in fields* to identify causes of wickedness at the level of inter-organisational relations and ground our processual framework in conceptual insights from structuration theory and its recursive-relational conception of power (Giddens 1984). This will shift attention to the *only partly controllable overlap and unfolding of organisational problem constructions in time and space* as an important cause of the fuelling of wickedness. Against this backdrop, we ask: How can we analyse overlapping organisational problem constructions as causes of the wickedness inherent to recent policy problems?

The theoretical tool to analyse the only partly controllable overlap and unfolding of organisational problem-constructions in time and space as a source of wickedness consists of a conceptual triad: organisationally orientated *translations* of problems, their *recursive chaining in time*, and their positioning in *fields* as relational spaces constituting the issues at stake. To avoid excessive abstraction, we will illustrate this framework with empirical examples from the field of refugees' labour market integration (1). Following this, we critically discuss the prominent framing concepts in the debates on meso-level causes of wickedness (2), develop our processual framework (3), and conclude with a brief reflection on the framework's implications and contributions (4).

## 2. Wicked problems and their causes: social theory and empirical observations

While scholars in the field of social theory have made substantial efforts to explain the increasing significance of wicked problems, the term '*wicked*' has become a societal self-description and an omnipresent ethno-category, meaning a term used by practitioners (not just scientists) confronted with planning for a long time. In a reconstruction of the origins and spread of the concept, Head (2008: 103), for example, concluded that "even the business management literature is rediscovering 'wicked problems' as a way of understanding the role of business strategy". Therefore, we agree with Rittel and Webber's (1973: 160) initial note on an ubiquitous perception of recent social problems as wicked problems that are not restricted to all-encompassing policy problems or to distinct *objective* features.

Classically, Ackoff (1974) approached wickedness through the lens of complexity theory and systems thinking, seeking to understand it as a manifestation of social messes arising from growing complexity. Taking a critical stance, Wexler (2009) pointed to the necessity of the value-laden dimensions underlying the wicked problems and the resulting moral struggles. Schimank (2019) argued that beyond mere complexity, there are more reasons on the societal level for their wickedness, namely functional differentiation, globalisation, modern capitalist dynamics, legitimacy procedures in recent democracies, and globalisation. Furthermore, Zywert

and Quilley (2018) situated wicked problems in the dynamics of reflexive modernisation. Taken together, these scholars have concurred that comprehending the causes of wicked problems requires a more comprehensive conceptual framework and assert that these causes are situated at the macro-level. This aligns with Rittel and Webber's (1973) original argument emphasising the role of a pluralised society.

While we agree with macroscopic explanations, we suspect additional causes linked to the role of organisations that are commonly acknowledged as key actors or principles of current societies. Specifically, we suggest that organisations build specific constructions about the nature of the problem according to their interests, goals, and world views. These observations reflect and are supported by a long-standing debate on organisations as key actors (Meyer and Jepperson 2000) or core principles (e.g., Coleman 1982) of current societies. Although the organisational dimension of wicked problems is constitutive for debates on complex societies, functional differentiation, reflexive modernisation, or globalisation (Arnold et al. 2025; Bartley et al. 2019; Besio et al. 2020; Jungmann et al. 2024), it has been largely overlooked in the discourse on the causes of wickedness informed by social theory.

Even elaborate approaches to the causes of wickedness pointing to different ideas or interests of collective actors (Turnbull and Hoppe 2019: 333) and their strategic framing of policy problems (Daviter 2017; Schön and Rein 1994), or policy network approaches treating interorganizational cooperations as a way to tackle complexity (Ferlie et al. 2013; Roberts 2000) or taking conflicting arenas between diverse stakeholders into account when designing a multi-party governance systems (Dentoni et al. 2018; Termeer et al. 2015) do not fully treat them as organizations or use the elaborate conceptual resources from debates on interorganizational dynamics to analyse their interplay, as it was proposed early on in other policy debates (see e.g. Milward 1982; Provan and Lemaire 2012). In focusing on interested organisational problem framings or strategic interorganisational coalitions, they de-centre the (un-)intended consequences of interorganisational dynamics as a distinct and important cause of wickedness.

Given this acknowledged importance of organisations in shaping and reshaping problem understandings, we will take the organisational dimension more seriously on a conceptual level and mobilise an empirical example in the area of refugee integration to illustrate this. Despite growing attention to the implementation of migration and integration policy, the role of organisations as collective actors in shaping and translating policy problems in substantial research on this topic remains under-theorised as well. Existing organisational studies often focus on certain organisational dimensions but do not address the conflictual dynamics between organisations or their mutual influence. For example, Schammann (2020) uses classical field theory (DiMaggio and Powell 1983) to typify organisations of local governance. Similarly, Bakoben et al. (2019) explain how refugees actively co-produce local social

policy by interacting with institutional structures, emphasising the importance of sustained and professionally organised provision of knowledge about policy measures directed towards the refugees, be it by private or public service providers or refugee self-organisations. Maletzky de García (2021) studied how a specific type of organisation, the professional chambers, relates to and manages certain institutional logics. Eckhard et al. (2021) highlight the flexible management and inclusion of non-members by public administration to manage the so-called refugee crisis. Yet, their focus remains on singular types of organisations rather than inter-organisational processes. While such perspectives offer valuable contributions to understanding wicked problems like refugee integration, they tend to underappreciate how organisations interact with and reshape each other's problem constructions, thereby generating overlapping interpretations and (un)intended consequences that perpetuate wickedness. We will clarify our perspective using the example of the labour market integration of refugees, especially in Berlin (for further details on the study's methods and setting, see Albrecht and Jungmann 2023).

Regulating refugees' integration into the German labour market after the long summer of migration in 2015 is a wicked problem because no clear-cut definition of the correct balance between accessibility and limitation for refugees to enter labour markets exists. Furthermore, accessibility and closure are two goals that need to be balanced but negate each other in practice. Moreover, the practitioners interpret the broadly used category '*accessibility*' rather distinctly, as we will illustrate later on. Consequently, experts describe refugees' access to the labour market as an ambiguous and complicated legal-administrative situation (Aumüller 2016: 14).

This ambiguity results from conflicting problem constructions in debates about a more inclusive labour market that draw on divergent rationales in their constructions about the very *truth* of the problem. This is due to both growing complexity (Ackoff 1974) and functional differentiation pluralising world views (Schimank 2019) and cannot simply be reduced to divergent strategies or interests. We can identify (at least) five relevant rationales which we developed inductively through a systematic qualitative analysis of empirical material, including policy documents, organisational statements, and interviews with key actors in the field. At the same time, we reflected on and iteratively related our findings to the broader literature on institutional logics in integration regimes. For example, Maletzky de García (2021) identifies economic, administrative, and community logics as structuring principles in the governance of migration and integration, drawing on neo-institutional and structuration theory. However, we do not simply transfer these theoretical categories to our case; instead, our typology is developed from the bottom up, based on the specificities of the context under study. The elaborated rationales are therefore not to be conceived as the only possible ones, nor are they to be considered completely separately from one another. As they are only analytically separated, they influence

each other. The following five rationales thus serve as flexible, empirically observable points of reference for analysing how the problem of labour market integration of refugees is constructed, contested, and implemented:

1. An economic rationale for missing employees in Germany was pushed by a widely acknowledged lack of skilled workers (*Fachkräftemangel*).
2. The complex residence law distinguishes seven different residence titles. These determine the rights of the respective persons. Depending on the official classification of a person, e.g., how the right and duration of residence are determined, this includes accessibility to the German labour market (BMAS 2020). The complexity of law creates uncertainties while also compelling actors to adhere to the complex norms of law.
3. An established rationale in migration politics promoted by conservative right-wing parties (Bannas et al. 2015) argues that strengthening accessibility would signal to possible migrants that there is a reason to migrate to Germany.
4. A rationale of several associations of employers argues that the immigration of skilled labour and the immigration of refugees should not be intermingled. Skilled labour is an important factor in promoting Germany's economy in the future, while supporting refugees is merely driven by humanitarian aid (BDA 2018: 9).
5. Another rationale is that accessibility is a humanitarian act and mutual assistance in a crisis between equal persons (Ataç and Steinhilper 2020).

These mutually influencing rationales judge the degree of accessibility as right or wrong in varying ways. This reflects the point made by Rittel and Webber (1973) that there seems to be an objective definition to this problem, but normative pressures from divergent perspectives are at play.

However, these overarching societal rationales come in combination with distinct organisational ones. For example, we empirically observed a participatory process, where it was the political will to include refugees, as well as civil society and migrant organisations, in developing integration programmes. In the development process, however, the federal administration perceived stakeholder participation as too complex to handle practically. Consequently, the administrators decided to reduce the number of participants to only those organisations and individuals that had a former relationship with the administration. Moreover, the administrators decided to craft the final version by themselves. This is a brief example of what we suggest to conceptualise as a chained organisational translation of a vague policy problem.

Firstly, political decision-makers translated accessibility into participation, hoping to gain political legitimacy. Secondly, the broad participatory process was translated into a discussion between actors with established relations to the administration. Thirdly, this led to a process that worked in favour of the administrators. These findings show that what appears as institutional chaos – frequent regulatory changes,

shifting access rules, and a proliferation of actors – is, in fact, patterned by the recursive chaining of organisational decisions. Organisations serve as key nodes/actors in these chains, selectively translating and implementing policy in ways that reflect both societal and organisation-specific rationales.

Our empirical illustration presupposes that wicked policy problems are not just translated with reference to certain societal rationales but also with rather specific organisational rationales that are chained in time and relate to translations of other organisations. These observations echo the call of Selg, Klasche, and Nögisto (2022) to link explanations of wicked problems more closely to sociological reasoning by unpacking the processual relations.

This motivates us to develop hereafter a theoretical framework that enables capturing and analysing overlapping problem constructions resulting from chained translations of policy problems in organisational fields as causes of wickedness.

*Translation* refers to the powerful, often interested, relational interpreting and shaping of the actual *nature* of ill-defined problems by organisations. Even describing or explicating a practically handled problem always involves translating it to some degree. Moreover, we focus on (sometimes conflictual) overlaps between divergent constructions produced by organisations trying to influence certain conceptions of the reality of a policy problem by translating its *nature*. In and through their relational character, translations of vague problems are also a means and an ontological precondition orienting these interferences. Sometimes, they feed more actively or passively led struggles between competing meanings about which kind of interpretation of a problem will prevail for some time (Persson 2015). These battles are an important and often acknowledged cause of wickedness today. In other cases, divergent constructions shaped by distinct rationales about the problem overlap more indirectly or intermesh without direct struggle (Herrmann 2010). Nevertheless, one must assume that wickedness may also unintentionally result from such overlaps engendered by organisations, and this is what we aim to conceptualise.

### **3. From strategic framing to overlapping problem constructions**

In debating meso-level causes of wickedness, the *framing* of wicked problems has developed into a vital research focus within policy literature (Head 2019). Framing refers to “selecting, organising, interpreting, and making sense of a complex reality to provide guideposts for knowing, analysing, persuading, and acting” (Schön and Rein 1994: 146). Given that specific frames of stakeholders can compete and conflict with each other (Daviter 2017), a plural society is not the only source of wickedness. Lower societal levels are important sources too, and it is suggested that “frames are in effect statements of facts” (Daviter 2017: 76). To analyse dominant framings,

studies imply an *agent-centric concept of power*. Stakeholders' frames compete with each other, and stakeholders use their resources strategically to enforce their frames.

While the study of competing framings renders visible the conflicting and contested interpretations of organisations, the debate still *lacks theoretical tools for a more nuanced analysis of intersecting world views* of the organisations involved in policy-making, adding to this strategic dimension. This means that although strategic framing is important, there are diverse ways in which different interpretations of the issue at stake come to life. The more fundamental question, therefore, concerns the constructions about the problem itself, which might inform aspects such as strategic framing, ignorance of certain aspects, hidden lobbying, and engaging in rather practical activities. The mostly agent-centric conception of power in framing studies leaves unresolved the questions of how actors (and *their* resources) are constructed as relevant and legitimate (Khan et al. 2007), as well as their institutional embeddedness (Serrano Velarde 2015). As a result of this simplistic understanding of power, framing concepts are not well equipped to explain wickedness arising from the intersection of these different stakeholders, because they do not pay attention to different actors actively working on the underlying ontological assumptions about the problem, nor the specificities of the actor-constructions involved.

Considering these weaknesses and the focus on inter-organisational relations, we develop a structurationist framework with a partly different conception of the social constitution of wicked problems and the role of power. Specifically, we suggest studying the *practical unfolding and positioning of attempts at persuasion work in time and space*. Immanent to such a processual framework, seen from a practice-based perspective, is a dialectical view of control (Giddens 1984). Our conception points to a relational understanding of power and a similar but slightly different critique of an actor-centric approach. Giddens argues that nobody is completely in control of the outcomes of their activities and highlights the structural exclusion not from discourses or procedures of deciding but more generally from knowledgeable interventions in the world. He asks what is not done and who is not able to exercise power. His processual understanding of power as a "transformative capacity" (Giddens 1984: 15) is intrinsically linked to learnt social practices and their temporal unfolding in time and space, which decides who counts as a knowledgeable agent (Giddens 1984: 2). Such a processual and relational approach has the potential to complement the existing approaches of strategic framing and its constructionist critics. This is because it makes a difference in how organisational attempts to change the constructions underlying a policy problem are arranged in time-space, which attempts are stabilised, which are not reproduced, and how the relations between them change during a certain period. Furthermore, structuration theory is well established in organisational research and has developed a nuanced conception of organisations and their relation to wider fields (Sydow and Windeler 2020; Windeler and Jungmann 2023).

According to structurationist thought, there is no reason to deny the importance of attempts at strategic framing, but in practice, such framing is always a focused and therefore necessarily restricted one shaped by distinct organisational practices like reflexive management or planning (Ortmann et al. 2023).

## 4. Overlapping organisational problem-constructions: analysing chains of translation in fields

We propose that organisational *translations of a policy problem* are *recursively chained* in dispersed processes of structuration unfolding in time and space (Giddens 1984). This means that organisational translations of problems are temporally contiguous and are shaped by their spatial – and thus relational – embedding. For the identification of the latter, we must detail the *positioning of organisations in fields*, which are relational spaces constituting the issues at stake. Below, we elaborate on our conceptual triad of organisational *translations* (3.1) and their *recursive chaining* and relational embeddedness in fields (3.2). Moreover, we will point to *overlapping problem-constructions* resulting from chained translating *in fields* as fuelling wickedness (3.3), and we sketch out and illustrate an episodic-reconstructive approach to analyse them (3.4).

### 4.1 Translation of a problem as organisational constructions of the issue at stake

Organisation scholars emphasise that ideas and interpretations change when they diffuse and circulate between organisations. The shifts in policy problems' meaning are explained by the active reinterpretations that occur when an idea enters an organisation and/or inter-organisational relations. Translation thus points to the creation of local variety when policies diffuse, and different organisations grapple with seemingly the same problem (Czarniawska and Joerges 1995; Sahlin and Wedlin 2008). This means that the concept of translation “stresses the circulation of ideas and practices as highly interactive following various routes” (Wæraas and Nielsen 2016: 245), often resulting in divergent constructions about the problem and possible solutions. In the case of the translation of wicked problems, the scope for interpretation is particularly high, due to the problems' vagueness.

Such translations can be observed by the conversion of integration policy to *accessibility* in Berlin, as introduced in Section 1. In this case, the translation reveals a divergence between political decision-makers and their political parties. While they translate the notion of *accessibility* as broad participation of all relevant stakeholders, the administrators interpret participation as the involvement of a limited group of actors whom they experience as reliable partners. However, similar translations of different organisational actors can also be noticed. In the field of Berlin

integration policy, the issue of teaching job-specific language skills exemplifies this. An interest group of 16 large Berlin employers defined job-specific language skills as a precondition for expanding their workforce in times of a recognised shortage of skilled workers, in line with an economic rationale. In consequence, the interest group started political lobbying for job-specific language courses for refugees. This strategy interplayed well for a certain period, with a rather pragmatic problem-construction of refugee initiatives, which criticised the overly bureaucratic system of language course provision in Berlin and translated the practical problem of a lack of language skills as a call to start teaching, even without licensed teachers.

If organisations translate, the process is shaped by distinctive features. According to Giddens (1990: 302), *organisations are specific social systems* characterised by their high degree of reflection on the conditions of their own system's reproduction (Ortmann et al. 2023). Within organisations, the question is asked: What does this construction of the problem mean for our organisational goals, practices, or structures? How can we benefit from the fact that the problem is viewed in this way? What do we have to lose as an organisation? Organisations act with a specific focus and thus aim to find formulations, views, and contents of problems at stake that fit with this focus. The specific feature of organisations from a structurationist perspective is that they *set aside expertise, procedures, and the workforce* (e.g., management staff) to reflect on favourable internal and external conditions of their reproduction (Windeler and Jungmann 2024). These organisational devices are often directed to translate a vague problem into a favourable construction about the nature of this policy problem (e.g., via campaigning or lobbying).

As translation studies indicate, organisations sometimes incorporate strategic considerations into their translations and therefore deviate from circulating organisational models (cf. van Grinsven et al. 2016). Nevertheless, these strategic components and the knowledgeability of organisations are always restricted by their distinct focus, as many unacknowledged conditions are an intrinsic part of organisational activity. This applies to strategic organisational problem framings as well. In our view, they are important but always focused and therefore restricted to some degree by that specific focus of an organisation. Moreover, we think it is important to note that internal dynamics beyond formal rules shape these problem constructions, e.g., micro-political constellations or simply certain historical pathways of the organisation.

## 4.2 Overlapping problem-constructions arising from recursively chained translations

If different organisational translations of a problem are produced in parallel, divergent constructions coexist or overlap within an interconnected actor constellation, at least for a certain period. This overlap could lead to struggles, which are conflictual

relations between divergent organisations trying to influence certain conceptions of the reality of a policy problem via the translation of its meaning. These struggles about meaning might be more or less implicit or explicit, might be articulated loudly or quietly, and might be directly related to each other, or they might function by indirectly influencing certain contexts. In other cases, there is no such struggle, and divergent constructions are nested in certain sub-populations of a field without any direct contact with – or controversy between – each other.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that these divergent translations influence each other, be this in a more indirect or mediated way. For example, the case of the Berlin administration's translation of limited accessibility to allow only certain actors to participate in political processes has been widely successful. However, the administration was publicly criticised for various initiatives advocating unrestricted accessibility. Similarly, in the case of providing job-specific language skills to refugees, the interplay between the interest group's translation of these skills as a practical prerequisite to expand the workforce and the pragmatic problem-construction by refugee initiatives creates political pressures on the official, highly bureaucratic system of language courses. These pressures lead to an interpretation of a need to increase the capacities for official language courses rapidly and to new commercial course providers entering the field, internally defining language courses as a means to realise profits. As elaborated later, this specific chain of constructions has led to a decline in the quality of the courses that field experts reported.

In the following, we focus on the time-related, processual facets of such direct or indirect overlaps in the problem constructions shaped by organisational rationales. We start with Giddens' (1984) thesis about the recursive nature of social life. Actual activities and structures rely on previous ones as conditions of their praxis. Applying this to the translation of wicked problems by organisations, we learn that each translation of the meaning of a problem connects to previous translations, creating a recursive chain of translations.

Our processual approach suggests studying the organisational translation of an actual policy problem by relying recursively on former translations and their position in a specific episode of translating. It is important to examine the historicity of these constructions, not as a heroic process of controlling the construction of the problem, but as involving dialectical power relations between organisations, unintended shifts resulting from intentional activities, and slow drifts in meaning. Arguing that, in addition to the temporally and recursively interlinked translations of the organisations involved, it is essential to analyse how the translation is shaped by the spatial embedding in an organisational field.

### 4.3 Overlapping problem-constructions in fields

Spatially, we situate organisational translation efforts and the overlapping problem-constructions arising from them within issue-based fields (Hoffman 1999). We point to local organisational fields as contexts in which divergent attempts at translating lead to interferences. In issue-based fields, interested organisations inter-play regarding prevailing formulations to problems. Often, they are arenas “where multiple field constituents compete over the definition of issues” (Hoffman 1999: 352). In this case, competing organisations promote meanings and constructions that are favourable and beneficial to them or simply fit their world views. We can therefore conceptualise the field level as an arena for social struggles, with the translation of wicked problems as the actual object of these struggles. So, we contend that organisational translations and constructions that unfold within these fields shape and govern the issues at stake, although the governance of organisational fields has only received limited attention to date (Hinings et al. 2017). The example of the different interpretations of accessibility has already made it understandable that different constellations of actors with varied values confront each other. The administration stands for ease of implementation and thus limited accessibility. Selected political parties stand for unrestricted accessibility of participation. The critiques of the initiatives also reveal a processual character of the field. We can observe a relatively stable, established, and largely standardised field of language course provision in the beginning, with certain isomorphic pressure, e.g., certificates on the supply side. The field started to become more conflictual after a high number of refugees came to Germany in 2015. Although with quite different rationales in mind, initiatives and large employers challenged the existing language course supply for being too bureaucratic and too disconnected from everyday social life. This led to continually changing coalitions, negotiations, and struggles within the field, e.g., the interplaying constructions of the initiatives and the interest group of employers resulted in a fragmented landscape of courses. We will reconstruct these changing constellations in further detail (see 3.4.).

From a structurationist perspective, organisational fields are specific systems. These systems are instantiated when competent actors refer to a field-level order in their situated activities. This type of order emerges and stabilises via the mutual recognition of relevance for a specific issue: “Social actors in fields *observe* each other [...], they also become *mutually aware, recognise each other as relevant, and embed [...]* field activities, relations, and occurrences around them in time and space” (Windeler and Jungmann 2023: 1296). While instantiating certain field practices, actors do not need to agree on a single interpretation of an issue. Rather, the actors need to recognise each other as relevant to the issue. The social order of a field is a set of rules and resources that actors interpret and enact differently. It always implicates a

potentially conflict-ridden dialectic of controlling powers (Giddens 1984), in which no actor involved is completely *powerless*.

We thus see fields as relational spaces in which a diverse set of organisations addresses and translates a policy problem. In fields that form around wicked problems, it is to be expected that fields become locales of overlapping problem constructions and sometimes even struggles, contexts to which such constructions are related and which have the potential for conflict. Administrative and political organisations – together with firms – are important driving forces that are realising their assets in novel constellations. The subtle formation of the field order provides a framework for orienting different organisational interests and world views, because as actors are mutually perceived as relevant, they cannot escape or ignore each other. This does not mean that advocates and opponents necessarily disagree; rather, they regard each other as relevant actors, sometimes mediated by the media, scientific interpretations, consultants, and associations.

Often, single organisations or coalitions try to enforce a shared construction of the problem that is in their favour. These intentional attempts to control provoke unintended consequences. This is mostly because organisations can neither foresee nor control outcomes of translations dispersed in time and space, but these outcomes continually enter their current attempts at translating as relevant conditions that they cannot ignore. Independent of how *strong* or *weak* an organisation's potential to enforce its constructions of a problem may be, the organisation is always part of an interested shaping of the problem, which knows no uniform development and no centre. The reason for this is that no one is fully in control of the process. Every potential to control these processes rests on the potential of relevant others possibly acting differently in the next episode – on shaky coalitions, so to speak. Additionally, fields are embedded in broader contexts, and exogenous shocks or other events from (sometimes rather distant) contexts (that enter the positioning, potentials of control, or relations within the fields) (Hoffman 1999).

In sum, the handling and perception of problems as ill-defined and vague is not a fact but an outcome of divergent constructions overlapping in time and space. These dispersed and parallel constructions are fuelled by interconnected organisations in fields. For example, the accessibility of refugees to the labour market in Germany is often debated regarding the consequences of demographic change on the labour market or their integration in a much broader sense. Organisational problem-constructions are thus not only recursively linked to former interpretations in time, but they are also simultaneously relationally linked to other (potentially conflicting) constructions in the field. As a result, organisations' translations might emerge, stabilise, or transform. All this is set against the background of former problem-constructions entering the actual translating as a condition of acting. The temporal recursive chaining of translations in fields in their interplay often results in

unintended consequences of (sometimes) intended, explicit accounts of translating a problem.

#### 4.4 An episodic-reconstructive approach for analysing chained translations

To capture these recursive-relational chains of translation, we opt for an episodic-reconstructive approach inherent to the concept of structuration. Giddens (1984) suggests reconstructing the unfolding of episodes as an “analytical cut into history” (Giddens 1984: 244). Consequently, the actual translating of a problem is to be considered as an ongoing sequence of critical “events having a specifiable beginning and end” (Giddens 1984: 244). Each episode is constituted by a diverse set of actors that draw on the rules and resources of manifold social orders while enacting social practices (Giddens 1984: 25).

##### *Reconstructing the practical succession of events*

Studying translation requires the reconstruction of the *practical succession of events* with reference to the *constellations of structures* and *actors* involved. This helps to analyse the stabilisation and change in divergent problem constructions as implying the structuration of relevant social systems, promoting or preventing them. Specifically, this means “studying the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction” (Giddens 1984: 25). Consequently, it is crucial to illuminate the powerful (re-)production of organisations, local organisational fields, and their relations in situated activities of competent actors. This kind of recursively chained structuration results in partly intended and partly unintended consequences. Notably, “unintended consequences may systematically feedback to be the unacknowledged conditions of further acts” (Giddens 1984: 8). This is particularly relevant when events are not solely controlled by a singular, powerful actor (as the dialectical conception of power suggests), or when initially intentional activities have consequences for distant contexts. Furthermore, there are unintended, subtle shifts in meaning that might over time result in an only indirectly steered “slow “drift” away from a given practice” (Giddens 1990: 304) of interpreting a policy problem. While we agree that the processual relating (Selg et al. 2022) is important, our approach suggests reconstructing two constellations focusing on the actual social practices of translating the problem itself as it unfolds in a certain situation (or event). The handling of these practices is core to legitimate, display, and position us as knowledgeable agents and collective agents in certain *constellations of social actors* (Giddens 1984: 2). Moreover, it is the continuous (trans-)formation of these social practices by knowledgeable agents that renders certain

*constellations of structures* relevant, like rules of signification, rules of legitimation, or resources (according to the three dimensions of the social in Giddens, 1984: 29).

Against the background of this understanding, we advise reconstructing *constellations of organisational actors relevant to translating* a policy problem in a distinct field. Actors become relevant by being recognised players in the field of debating this problem. It is therefore an analytical question whether actors speak about the *same* problem and play in the *same* field. Both questions can only be answered empirically by pointing to the continuous transformation of social practices involved in translation.

On the structural level, the framework highlights the *constellations of constructions formed by organisational rationales about a policy problem*. Additionally, since this approach perceives organisations as inherently open systems rather than closed ones, it is essential to analyse whether these patterns are predominantly organisational ones or extend to broader social fields or even societal totalities such as capitalism, globalisation, and differentiation (Schimank 2019), or the dynamics of reflexive modernisation (Zywert and Quilley 2018; Windeler and Jungmann 2023). The convergence of various constructions leads to overlapping problem-constructions of different types.

In sum, in explaining the wickedness of recent policy problems, our framework points to an episodic and reconstructive analysis of distinct organisational patterns of cognition and interpretation. Such a reconstruction starts with describing the context before the unfolding of certain events or situations. It goes on to reconstruct an unfolding of relevant situations leading to an end that the analyst describes as well. For each situation, we unpack and link two constellations, namely the constellation of actors in a distinct field and organisational truth constructions, resulting in overlapping problem constructions, at least if they differ. We use these constellations to *understand and explain what consequences* of a singular situation or event, or the whole episode, are intended, and what effect is unintended. To illustrate the immanent episodic and relational reconstruction within the framework, we mobilise a specific example of refugees' labour market integration in Berlin: the provision of job-related language skills. This case is a typical example of policy field expansion and diversification. However, our analysis does not focus on the reforms or programme proliferation per se. Instead, we direct attention to the underlying process: the interplay of organisations around the issue of job-related language promotion, field-specific power relations, and the rule formation that structures and restructures the field in often unpredictable ways. By tracing how organisational actors translate and retranslate the issue across institutional boundaries, we reveal how sudden and inconsistent regulatory shifts, as well as the emergence of new actors, are not merely outcomes of top-down reforms but the result of chained collective agency and overlapping problem constructions. This approach allows us to

show how apparent institutional chaos can coexist with persistent patterns and why analysing these mechanisms is crucial for understanding the structuring of wicked problems in this and similar fields.

### ***An example of job-related language promotion***

As outlined in the introduction, to illustrate the immanent episodic and relational reconstruction within the framework, we draw on a specific example of refugees' labour market integration in Berlin: the provision of job-related language skills. The extensive refugee immigration since 2015 has led to a reorganisation of language promotion in Berlin. Previously, there were clear regulations for migrants regarding eligibility for state-funded language courses. For refugees, however, there were limited available options and inconsistent regulations on a case-by-case basis. This situation changed because of the growing number of newcomers to Germany and a shift toward a more inclusive immigration policy, enhancing accessibility.

Below, we illuminate the specific changes regarding the translation of job-specific language courses and reconstruct the temporal course unfolding in two episodes. We can only indicate internal organisational processes here, as we aim to highlight the importance of their interplay. In doing so, we illustrate that the simultaneity of different translations led to overlapping problem constructions and unintended consequences.

### **The beginning: the long summer of migration in 2015**

In 2015, there were more asylum applications (around 442,000) in Germany than ever before. As a result of this situation, many refugees were – and are still – looking for work, but the legal regulations are not easy to grasp. The question of suitable language courses for refugees is central, as it is recognised that insufficient job-related language skills are an obstacle to successfully entering the labour market.

In Berlin, job-related language courses for migrants are funded and organised at the federal level as an additional offering alongside general language courses. These courses are offered by professional language providers, who are paid by the federal government. The state level (here, Berlin is regarded as a state) does not pay for its job-specific language courses for refugees until then. The language courses offered at the federal level, in turn, exclude refugees who do not meet the access requirements. Decisive for access to the courses are residence titles and acquired general language certificates. Beyond these formalised courses, initiatives (and in individual cases also companies) develop general language course formats to support refugees practically. Hence, there is no explicit struggle between the practically and legally orientated rationales, but the legally orientated constructions of organisations interfere with individual refugees' trajectories to the labour market in a way that is problematic for their enduring labour market integration, because administrative

agencies question or formally reject their practical skills. With their translation, the initiatives try to address this problem in other ways and to provide the refugees with general language skills.

### Episode 1: Companies challenge the existing field regulation (2017/2018)

At the end of 2017, the *interest group for refugees* publicly complained about the state-based language education of trainees. This interest group is an association of 16 Berlin-based companies. At the suggestion of this association, a startling article was published in the well-known daily newspaper *Tagesspiegel* on March 11, 2018. It strongly criticised the conditions of job-specific language training in Berlin. The state felt pressured by this and initiated its own job-specific language course programmes. Berlin has been trying to convince language schools to offer more job-specific language courses for trainees so that they can meet the demands of companies.

*Actor and structure constellations within the field.* The interest group is doing both lobbying for the interests of refugees and connecting the integration of refugees with the general need for skilled labour. So far, the federal level has offered courses in Berlin. The Berlin state is now under pressure to become more involved. Heterogeneous organisational actors engage with this topic; these include actors from the domain of language education, actors from the legal-political domain, and *new* field actors from the economic domain, such as the interest group. While the state administrations have long stuck to the formalised structures of the existing system, the new actors promote more pragmatic and flexible handling.

*Overlapping problem-constructions in chained translations of the wicked problem.* In translating language skills as a means to expand the workforce quickly, the interest group actively intervenes in the regulation of the field. The organisations that are part of the interest group all see problems in the refugees' language skills and thus in their everyday work. In particular, the interest group takes part in a rather explicit struggle concerning distinct and chained translations of the problem of language promotion. With its criticism, the interest group challenges established language schools, as well as the government. According to the interest group's translation, job-related language skills are practically necessary for labour market integration, because they are reflexively aware of a widely recognised shortage of skilled workers and the economic rationale of the problem-construction. This translation is combined with the pragmatic interpretation established by the initiatives in the first episode – a chained translation. Due to their powerful economic position, the interest group does not just persuade but indeed demands to make practically effective job-specific language promotion a pressing government issue.

*(Un-)intended consequences.* The state of Berlin gave in to the demand of the interest group and has responded by offering job-specific language courses for

refugee trainees in upper secondary schools (*Oberstufenzentren*), starting from 2019 (zgs 2019). Moreover, Berlin has gradually developed additional financial support structures. The goal involved in this chained translation process is that refugees (who do not meet the legal requirements of the federal government) can participate in the courses offered in Berlin. The state, language course providers, and the interest group agree on this.

### **Episode 2: Fragmentation on the supply side (2019)**

At first glance, there seems to have been a positive turn regarding the problem of a lack of access to language courses for refugees. Both established and new language schools are being funded – partly by Berlin, but also partly by the federal government. This is because the federal government recognises the relevance of improving vocational language offerings for refugees.

*Actor and structure constellations within the field.* Job-specific language is now negotiated between various organisational actors. As a result of the state subsidy, a rather chaotic emerging set of actors composed of many new as well as established language providers operates in the field. Thereby, the state of Berlin and the federal government each act as sponsors of different courses. Simultaneously, the funding structures have gained in complexity so that different programmes take effect depending on the residence status and language certificates of the refugees. A formerly relatively homogenous and formalised regime has turned into a diversified one in and through the *chained* collective action.

*Overlapping problem-constructions in chained translations of the wicked problem.* Given that the federal government only wants to support groups of refugees with specific residence titles and having acquired language certificates, long-term labour market integration is still not possible for every migrant. Therefore, the state of Berlin has created additional funding to facilitate integration for more refugees and hence to preserve its position of authority in the field. State agencies reflexively try to solve the problem of the refugees' lack of language skills in the professional sector by increasing subsidies for courses. They translate the problem by following their idea of offering as many language courses as possible in a short period. Accordingly, the financing of different language schools is approved. This increases competition between old and new providers. The sponsored providers refer to the general economic rationale of a widely acknowledged lack of skilled workers in Germany. Thus, there is an overlap of this construction with the practical interpretation of a lack of language skills and a problem construction highlighting a need to increase the overall quantity of courses to provide certifiable skills for as many refugees as possible. These constructions in the chained translation of the problem do not compete. Rather, they interplay in a process of increasing the number of courses.

*(Un-)intended consequences.* Overall, the wickedness inherent in regulating access to the labour market increases through the interplay of constructions. In particular, the interest group subtly contributes to this. On the field level, we observe fragmentation. This means a combination of three structural features: that firms offer a diversity of courses and programmes, that these have different access requirements, and that the funding structures increase in complexity. Due to the large number of providers and funding structures, it is easy for both the refugees and the companies to lose track. Moreover, the financial support of manifold new companies leads to a dramatic proliferation of job-specific language courses. For this reason, some companies are now seeking individual solutions. Their criticism of a lack of capacities leads them to engage in increasing their capacities for educating refugees. Additionally, the quality of the language courses has been increasingly criticised by initiatives and the media, and actors plead for improved evaluation. Furthermore, it is criticised that certain groups of refugees are still excluded. Hence, not even the original problematic facet has been fully resolved, while new ones are emerging.

## 5. Conclusion

We suggested examining the processual embeddedness and interplay of divergent constructions about the *true* nature of policy problems in time and space more explicitly (see, similarly, Selg et al. 2022). More specifically, we elaborated on a processual framework pointing to the dynamics of overlapping problem constructions between organisations in fields as fuelling the wickedness of problems, transferring classical calls in policy research to taking interorganisational dynamics seriously (Milward 1982; Provan and Lemaire 2012). The framework combines three concepts of organisation theory via a structurationist grounding: translation (Czarniawska and Joerges 1995; Sahlin and Wedlin 2008), reflexive organisation (Ortmann et al. 2023; Windeler and Jungmann 2024), and issue-based fields (Hoffman, 1999; Windeler and Jungmann 2023). In doing so, it contributes to a better understanding of (un-)intended inter-organisational dynamics as distinct sources of the problems' wickedness. It adds that wickedness also results from organisational problem-constructions overlapping in time and space, in addition to macro-dynamics of pluralised societies that scholars in social theory engage with (see Ackoff 1974; Schimank 2019; Wexler 2009; Zywert and Quilley 2018). Such a focus complements existing organisational research on causes of wickedness, pointing to different ideas, interests, and strategic framings of policy problems of organisational actors (Daviter 2017; Schön and Rein 1994; Turnbull and Hoppe 2019), interorganisational policy network approaches focusing on cooperation as a way to tackle complexity (Ferlie et al. 2013; Roberts 2000), or multi-party governance systems as a way of handling conflicting arenas of stakeholders (Dentoni et al. 2018; Termeer et al. 2015) by combining elaborate conceptual resources from

debates on interorganisational dynamics to analyse their interplay. We propose to focus on (un-)intended consequences resulting from inter-organisational dynamics and overlapping organisational problem constructions as a source of wickedness. For further research, it would be fruitful to emphasise internal organisational processes and link them to this inter-organisational perspective.

More fundamentally, our findings demonstrate why a specific focus on the organisational factor is crucial for understanding the mechanisms behind the (re-)structuring of wicked problems. While societal rationales provide the broader frames of reference, it is through the specific translation of these rationales within and between organisations that concrete policy outcomes and field dynamics emerge. Organisations do not simply mirror these societal rationales; rather, they reinterpret, prioritise, and combine them with their own interests, routines, and forms of expertise. This process produces both the overlap and friction between problem-constructions that fuel wickedness, as well as the patterned regularities that persist despite apparent chaos. By conceptualising organisational fields as key locales where societal and organisational logics intersect, our framework not only explains the persistence and escalation of wicked problems in the refugee integration field but also offers a lens for analysing similar mechanisms concerning other complex policy problems. Thus, organisational analysis is crucial for understanding how societal and organisational practices and rationales interact to structure, and sometimes intensify, wickedness across different domains.

Subsequently, beyond a focus on a singular organisation's strategic framing of policy problems (Daviter 2017; Head 2019; Schön and Rein 1994), it especially points to the processual interplay between focused organisational problem-constructions, the latter always involving distinct blind spots. Given that chained overlapping problem-constructions involve a dialectic of control and often result in (un-)intended consequences, we gain a better understanding of solution attempts as processes fuelling wickedness. The framework is beneficial in analysing the social sources of wickedness because it directs us to examine overlapping problem-constructions in interlinked episodes of translating problems. Usually, even studies that follow our general impetus reconstruct one-off episodes. The study of such one-off translation processes does not fully capture the complexity of the interfering constructions in translating wicked problems, because it neglects the fact that translations are chained and relationally embedded in a spatial context. By examining overlapping problem constructions as situated in time and space, we gain a more realistic understanding of how organisations translate problems and why the meaning of the problems remains multiple. To date, researchers emphasise that wicked problems are difficult to resolve because new problem dimensions keep emerging. Classically, Wildavsky (1979: 70) noted that "past solutions create future problems faster than present troubles can be left behind", and Rittel and Webber (1973: 165)

emphasised that “removal of that cause (problem) poses another”. According to our framework, this is at least partly due to the involvement of organisations differing in their particular world views. Their relational interplay results in a continual progression of problems in problem-solving processes, because no one can fully control or foresee these processes and their outcomes. Consequently, the ongoing calls by administrative science scholars for multi-stakeholder designs and collaborative governance (e.g., Head 2019) require critical reflection. Multi-stakeholder and collaborative governance processes are, according to our framework, to be understood as potential drivers for wickedness. This is especially true if stakeholders differ in their constructions of the nature of the problem itself. Critically, one could consequently conclude that wicked problems scholars might themselves be part of the reinforcement of wickedness. Guiding such revisions by deconstructing overlapping problem constructions as resulting from specifically chained organisational translations of policy problems is an important aim for understanding the recent role of a diversity of interconnected organisations in and for demanding societal issues (Arnold et al. 2025; Bartley et al. 2019; Besio et al. 2020).

## Literature

- Ackoff, Russell. 1974. *Redesigning the Future*. New York: Wiley.
- Atac, Ilker, and Elias Steinhilper. 2020. “Arenas of fragile alliance making.” *Social Movement Studies* 21(1-2): 1-17.
- Albrecht, Jana, and Robert Jungmann. 2023. “Pluralised Attempts to Translate Refugees’ Labour Market Integration.” Pp. 109-132 In *Organising Immigrants’ Integration*, edited by A. Diedrich and B. Czarniawska. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Arnold, Nadine, Raimund Hasse and Hannah Mormann. 2025. “Organizational Society Revisited: From Archetype to New Forms of Organization.” *Journal of Organizational Sociology* 3(3), 325-350.
- Aumüller, Jutta. 2016. Arbeitsmarktintegration von Flüchtlingen. Bertelsmann Stiftung. Available at: [https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/28\\_Einwanderung\\_und\\_Vielfalt/Studie\\_IB\\_Arbeitsmarktintegration\\_Fluechtlinge\\_2016.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/Projekte/28_Einwanderung_und_Vielfalt/Studie_IB_Arbeitsmarktintegration_Fluechtlinge_2016.pdf) (accessed Sept. 2022).
- Bakoben, Sandrine, Andrea Rumpel and Thorsten Schlee. 2019. Koproduktion lokaler Sozialpolitik für und durch Geflüchtete. IAQ-Report, No. 2019-08, Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation (IAQ), Duisburg: <https://doi.org/10.17185/dupublico/71450>
- Bannas, Günter, Johannes Leithäuser, Eckart Lohse, Majid Satter. 2015. Koalitionsgipfel. Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 7 September. Available at: <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/fluechtling-skrise/koalitionsgipfel-keine-zeit-fuer-zwist-13789998/hoffnung-deutschland-13790315.html> (accessed Sept. 2022).
- Bartley, Tim, Matthew Soener and Carl Gershenson. 2019. “Power at a distance.” *Sociology Compass* 13(10): e12737.
- Besio, Cristina, Paul Du Gay and Kathia Serrano Velarde. 2020. “Disappearing organization? Reshaping the sociology of organizations.” *Current Sociology* 68(4): 411-418.
- BDA. 2018. Fachkräftezuwanderung erleichtern. Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände. Available at: [https://www.arbeitgeber.de/www/arbeitgeber.nsf/res/Stn-Fachkraeftezuwanderung%20erleichtern.pdf/\\$file/Stn-Fachkraeftezuwanderung%20erleichtern.pdf](https://www.arbeitgeber.de/www/arbeitgeber.nsf/res/Stn-Fachkraeftezuwanderung%20erleichtern.pdf/$file/Stn-Fachkraeftezuwanderung%20erleichtern.pdf) (accessed Sept. 2022).

- BMAS. 2020. Arbeitsmarktzugang für Flüchtlinge. Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales. Available at: <https://www.bmas.de/DE/Themen/Arbeitsmarkt/Infos-fuer-Asylsuchende/arbeitsmarktzugang-asylbewerber-geduldete.html> (accessed Sept. 2022).
- Czarniawska, Barbara and Bernard Joerges. 1995. "Winds of organizational change." Pp. 171-209 In *Research in the Sociology of Organizations Vol. 13*, edited by S. B. Bachrach, P. Gagliardi and B. Mundell.
- Daviter, Falk. 2017. "Coping, taming, or solving." *Policy Studies* 38(6): 571-588.
- Dentoni, Domenico, Verena Bitzer and Greetje Schouten. 2018. "Harnessing wicked problems in multi-stakeholder partnerships." *Journal of Business Ethics* 150(2): 333-356.
- DiMaggio, Paul J., and Walter W. Powell. 1983. "The iron cage revisited." *American Sociological Review* 48(2): 147-160.
- Eckhard, Steffen, Alexa Lenz, Wolfgang Seibel, Florian Roth and Matthias Fatke. 2021. "Latent hybridity in administrative crisis management." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 31(2): 416-433.
- Ferlie, Ewan, Louise Fitzgerald, Gerry McGivern, Sue Dopson, and Chris Bennett. 2013. *Making wicked problems governable?* Oxford: OUP.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. "Structuration theory and sociological analysis." Pp. 297-315 In *Anthony Giddens. Consensus and Controversy*, edited by J. Clark, C. Modgil and S. Modgil. London: Falmer Press
- Head, Brian W. 2008. "Wicked problems in public policy." *Public Policy* 3(2): 101-118.
- Head, Brian W. 2019. "Forty years of wicked problems literature." *Policy and Society* 38(2): 180-197.
- Herrmann, Svea Luise. 2010. "A speaking cure for conflicts: Problematization, discourse stimulation and the ongoing of scientific 'progress'." *Critical Policy Studies* 4(3): 278-296.
- Hinings, C.R., Danielle Logue, and Charlene Zietsma. 2017. "Fields, institutional infrastructure and governance." Pp. 163-189 In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by R. Greenwood, R.E. Meyer, T.B. Lawrence and C. Oliver. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.
- Hoffman, Andrew J. 1999. "Institutional evolution and change." *Academy of Management Journal* 42(4): 351-371.
- Jungmann, Robert, Michael Grothe-Hammer and Niels Åkerstrøm Andersen. 2024. "(Re-)Vitalizing the Concept of Organization." *Critical Sociology* 50(7-8): 1305-1318.
- Khan, Farzad R., Kamal A. Munir and Hugh Willmott. 2007. "A dark side of institutional entrepreneurship." *Organization Studies* 28(7): 1055-1077.
- Maletzky de García, Martina. 2021. "Bridging the state and market logics of refugee labour market inclusion." *Comparative Migration Studies* 9(1): 25.
- Meyer, John W. and Ronald L. Jepperson. 2000. "The 'actors' of modern society." *Sociological Theory* 18(1): 100-120.
- Milward, H. Brinton. 1982. "Inter organizational policy systems and research on public organizations." *Administration & Society* 13(4): 457-478.
- Ortmann, Günther, Jörg Sydow and Arnold Windeler. 2023. "Organisation as reflexive structuration." *Journal of Organizational Sociology* 1(1): 109-140.
- Persson, Monika. 2015. "A policy problem that cannot escape its past." *Critical Policy Studies* 9(2): 158-176.
- Provan, Keith G. and Robin H. Lemaire. 2012. "Core concepts and key ideas for understanding public sector organizational networks." *Public Administration Review* 72(5): 638-648.
- Rittel, Horst W. J. and Melvin M. Webber. 1973. "Dilemmas in a general theory of planning." *Policy Sciences* 4(2): 155-169.
- Sahlin, Kerstin, and Linda Wedlin. 2008. "Circulating ideas." Pp. 218-242 In *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism*, edited by R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin and R. Suddaby. Thousand Oaks (CA): Sage.
- Roberts, Nancy. 2000. "Wicked problems and network approaches to resolution." *International Public Management Review* 1(1): 1-19.

- Schammann, Hannes. 2020. "Kommunale Migrationspolitik." Pp. 115-122 In *Toens Innovation und Legitimation in der Migrationspolitik*, edited by R. Pioch and K. Toens. Wiesbaden: Springer VS: 115-122.
- Schimank, Uwe. 2019. "Politische Gesellschaftsgestaltung heute." *dms – der moderne staat – Zeitschrift für Public Policy, Recht und Management* 12(2): 251-265.
- Schön, Donald A., and Martin Rein. 1994. *Frame Reflection*. New York: Basic Books.
- Selg, Peeter, Benjamin Klasche, and Joonatan Nõgisto. 2022. "Wicked problems and sociology." *International Review of Sociology*, online first.
- Serrano Velarde, Kathia. 2015. "Words into deeds." *Critical Policy Studies* 9(1): 41-57.
- Sydow, Jörg, and Arnold Windeler. 2020. "Temporary organizing and permanent contexts." *Current Sociology* 68(4): 480-498.
- Termeer, Catrien J. A. M., Art Dewulf, Gerard Breeman and Sabina J. Stiller. 2015. "Governance capabilities for dealing wisely with wicked problems." *Administration & Society* 47(6): 680-710.
- Turnbull, Nick, and Robert Hoppe. 2019. "Problematizing 'wickedness'." *Policy and Society* 38(2): 315-337.
- van Grinsven, Marlieke, Stefan Heusinkveld, and Joep Cornelissen. 2016. "Translating Management Concepts." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 18: 271-289.
- Wæraas, Arild, and Jeppe Agger Nielsen. 2016. "Translation theory 'translated'." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 18(3): 236-270.
- Wexler, Mark N. 2009. "Exploring the moral dimension of wicked problems." *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 29(9/10): 531-542.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1979. *The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Windeler, Arnold, and Robert Jungmann. 2023. "Complex innovation, organizations, and fields." *Current Sociology* 71(7): 1293-1311.
- Windeler, Arnold, and Robert Jungmann. 2024. "Reflexive Organization and Radicalized Modernity." *Critical Sociology* 50(7-8): 1457-1476.
- Zgs. 2019. Bekanntmachung. Interessenbekundungsverfahren Berufsbezogene Sprachförderung an Berliner Beruflichen Schulen (OSZ). zgs consult GmbH. Available at: [https://www.zgs-consult.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/sprachfoerderung/Berufsbezogene\\_Sprachfoerderung\\_Bekanntmachung.pdf](https://www.zgs-consult.de/fileadmin/Dokumente/sprachfoerderung/Berufsbezogene_Sprachfoerderung_Bekanntmachung.pdf) (accessed Sept. 2022).
- Zywert, Katharine, and Stephen Quilley. 2018. "Health systems in an era of biophysical limits." *Social Theory & Health* 16(4): 188-207.