AGENDA SETTING ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS
SERVICES POLICY: TWO CASES STUDIES

By

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ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Agenda setting on Telecommunications Services Policy: Two Cases Studies
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This research aims to examine the policy agenda-setting model as applied to the process of policy making for the telecommunications policy in Thailand in order to determine how policy issues become the subject of government action. The study also seeks to determine what role different people, events, and activities play in that process. The main research question for this examination is "how and under what conditions did the policy community members and the process of three streams lead to an agenda status in Thai telecommunications policy?"

For analysis, the research methodology uses the qualitative case study method through the analysis mixing data from document and interview. The method is used with an analytical framework that focuses on the interactions among three independent streams within the policy process: problem, politics, and policies, which coupling while the policy window opens. The perspectives guided the analytical framework come from three models: Kingdon's stream, Bureaucratic politics, and Group theory.

The finding of study supports the analytical framework that three streams are constantly floating around a policy environment, waiting for the opportunity of policy windows being opened. The first stream, politics, comprises such factors as the government turnover and groups pressure from affected organizations. The generation of policy alternatives and politics development comes into play in order for a telecommunications issue to emerge as a priority for government action. Although numerous factors related to problems stream, the second stream, also consists of two main factors. The first factor is the recognition of the problem by policy participants, namely the government, TOT and CAT unions, concessionaires and academic institutions. The second factor is the definition of the problem that is given variously,
depending on their different interests. The last, policy stream, embodies the two factors. The first factor is a viable idea or proposal from policy entrepreneurs. The second factor is a support from other entrepreneurs through the using strategies of ability to influence. Regarding the issue of influence, the study confirms that the politicians have a direct impact on the specific content of the new policy agendas. The influence of academic or other interest groups is not on policy formulation; the primary effect is during the setting of the policy agenda and even before.

Nevertheless, the window of opportunity opens in a very short period and only from time to time. The study also finds that the mix of variables that contribute to agenda setting varies by issue. The privatization issue is influenced by events in the problems and politics streams more than by the policy stream, while the concession conversion issue is most affected by policy stream occurrence.

From this examination, it can be concluded that there is little support from the linear model of policy process and the decision making is understood as a discrete event which much relies on a web of interacting forces and complex power relations, through various publications, conferences and meetings. Thus, participants in the agenda setting process may be able to more effectively influence the agendas by focusing their efforts on those factors most likely to lead to the desired outcome.

The analysis result in this study suggests that the agenda setting of telecommunications policy varied in the individual perspective and activity. The analysis also implies that the agenda setting activities resulted in substantive policy changes.
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Sumalee Wongwitt
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