

Problems: Windows to see into contexts and vehicles to enter

Note: This is a team learning class, so please sit in your teams and prepare by doing the exercise listed below.

One of the challenges of development is ‘seeing’ contexts—it is easy to say context matters and even to list things about the context that matter...but how do we actually assess the things that matter? Even more important: How do we ensure that what we ‘see’ when we are assessing these things is actually real and static, such that we can develop plans around what we ‘see’?

This class will suggest that the best way to really assess contexts is to engage with the contexts directly, by finding problems that broad sets of agents care about, draw attention to the problems, and then use the problems as ‘windows’ that really show us how the context works.

This problem driven approach gives us a direct way of working out what the context looks like and how things really work, which is a vital step we need to take in the effort to fit management tools to contexts.

Required reading:

Andrews, M. 2013. *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development*. Chapter 7.

Additional readings (I will draw on these in class):

Cameron, K. 1984. “Assessing institutional ineffectiveness: A strategy for improvement.” *New Directions for Institutional Research*, vol. 1984, 67–83, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/doi/10.1002/ir.37019844108/pdf>.

Vis, B. and van Kersbergen, K. 2007. “Why and how do Political Actors Pursue Risky Reforms?” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* Vol. 19. No.2: 153-172.

Dorey, P. 2005. *Policy Making in Britain*. London: Sage. Chapter two: Defining Problems and Devising Policies. www.sagepub.com/upm-data/9607_019989ch02.pdf

Vesely, A. 2007. Problem delineation in public policy analysis. *Central European Journal of Public Policy*.
<http://www.ceeol.com.aspx/getdocument.aspx?logid=5&id=deb704a22c1b463fbb43a989cf44b9cc>

[Levy, J. 2003. ‘Applications of Prospect Theory to Political Science’ *Synthese* 135: 215–241.](http://fas-polisci.rutgers.edu/levy/2003%20Prospect%20Theory%20-%20Synthese.pdf)

Luechauer, D.L. 1999. ‘Applying Appreciative Inquiry Instead of Problem-Solving Techniques to Facilitate Change’
http://www8.esc.edu/ESOnline/Across_ESC/Forumjournal.nsf/web+view/5A8D486A2C5F9B0E852568FD00561F17?opendocument