

TITLE: Critical Policy Analysis

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Good policies are pillars to the milestone progress of society. Cokery, Lad and Bossuyt (1995) assert that policy framework plays a critical role in directing the performance of public sector institutions, households, corporations and other economic institutions. Policies are designed by government and government agencies to impact economic and social spheres of a society. Corkery, Land and Bossuyt (1995) opine that quality of policy is influenced by a government's or government arm's ability to manage the process of policy making. It is for this reason that economic, social and political development of a country hinge on quality of policies, which is influenced by the policy making process. The policy making process is described as an irrational, messy and challenging. This makes it hard to study, define and put into practice the policy making process. However, policy making process is studied in what is termed as critical policy analysis. Yanow (2007) defines critical policy analysis as the study that focuses "on figuring out what policy-relevant elements carry or convey meaning, what these meanings are, who is making them, and how they being communicated."

Critical policy analysis incorporates basic building blocks and integrative concepts. The three basic building blocks are players in the policy making process and comprise of actors, institutions and ideas; integrative concepts comprises networks and coalitions and storylines. The actors convey policy interests and actions to be taken in realising their interests. Institutions play the role of defining policy regulations, standardising them and merging them together. Ideas are critical in defining policy problems and conceiving solutions. Integrative concepts are critical as they guide the interaction of actors, in the case of network and coalitions, and describing mobilisation of ideas by different actors and how the ideas influence the policy making process, in the case of storyline. In practice, critical policy analysis takes a systematic approach that commences by identifying the challenge. Defining the aim and objective of the plan is the step

that follows identifying the main challenges. Actors, institutions and ideas are identified and spelt. Coalitions and networks and storylines are developed to facilitate communication, networking and working together among actors and institutions. An overall analysis is carried out to evaluate processes, recommendations, success and failures. In conducting critical policy analysis, it is important to establish interest and goals of actors; evaluate their storylines; their involvement, either direct or indirect in policy implementation and the successes and loses of the process.

Critical Policy Analysis for Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy

The Bristol development framework core strategy is a plan to craft how the city will develop over the next 15-20 years. It is designed to replace the Bristol Local Plan that came into force in 1997. The core strategy as contained in the Bristol Development Framework spells out three key things that is: the current strategic issues, social, physical and economic spheres, facing Bristol City, the strategic vision and objective of the city in 2026 and the delivery strategy to make the vision and objectives a reality. The delivery strategy is divided into spatial strategy and development principles. Bristol City Council (2011) illustrates that the spatial strategy spells out the council's strategic policies for various parts of the city. It describes the council's vision of how different parts of the city will look like in 2026, such as the transport system, jobs, homes, services and recreation spaces. Development principles are policies designed to ensure proposed developments and improvements solve strategic problems and issues facing Bristol City.

Bristol's people, climate, economy and environment

Bristol city, which is the largest city in the South West of England, covers an area of approximately 110km², with a projected population of 421,300 people. The city is ranked as a core city in England, and included in the list of eight major cities in the country. Bristol City

Council (2011) asserts Bristol's population is estimated to reach 519,800 people by 2026.

Population figures indicate that the city's population will grow at a rate of 26% between 2006 and 2026. One distinct feature of Bristol is its population demography that comprises more of young people than the pensionable aged. Figures, according to Bristol City Council (2011) estimates that Bristol has more children under the age of 16 than pensionable aged people.

Another distinctive demographic feature of Bristol is that, it is home to the largest number of black and minority people among cities in the South West. Bristol is home to two universities- University of Bristol and University of West of England. The population of students as of 2011, according to Bristol City Council (2011) is estimated to be at 52,400 up from 45,600, in 2001.

The city is scenic characterised by the unique landscape of the valley of the Rivers Avon, Trym, Frome and Malago, Dundry slopes and the flood plain of the Severn Estuary. The city boasts of rich heritage such as Georgian parts of Clifton, the city Centre's medieval core, Kingsdown, St Paul's and Hotwells. Victorian Neighbourhoods such as Easton, Southville and Bedminster located next to the city centre, also define Bristol. The city is rich in historical village identity such as Henbury, Stapleton, Bishopsworth and Brislington. Besides the exquisite scenery and historical buildings, Bristol has well maintained local parks, historical squares and multifunctional open areas such as Clifton Downs and Durdham.

The transport system of Bristol comprises of road network, railway system and an airport. The council estimates 57% of employed people in the city use cars as a means of travel; those who do not own cars cycle or walk, with estimates putting walking and cycling trips at 25% of commuter trips. The city has an elaborate railway system with numerous railway stations on the main rail route and Severn Beach line; Temple Meads being the major railway station on the mainline. Bristol is home to the ninth busiest airport in the United Kingdom, Bristol Airport. The airport is

located in North Somerset, 10 miles south of Bristol. Bristol Airport offers landing to both domestic and international flights, scheduled and chartered.

Bristol has one of the most robust and varied economy in England, with 2006 figures indicating the city's Gross Value Added was 30% above the national average. According to Bristol City Council (2011), the city centre economic base provides 109,500 jobs. Bristol acts as a financial and professional services hub for the South West region, thus described as South West office capital. Bristol has a vibrant industrial sector. St Phillips Marsh and Avonmouth are the largest industrial locations of the city. Due to its vibrant economic and industrial sectors, Bristol experiences lower unemployment rate than the national rate. For instance, in 2009, Bristol had an unemployment figure of 5.3% compared the national rate of 6.2%.

The city has a rich environment legacy with numerous conservation areas, historic parks, gardens, archaeological sites and listed buildings. Bristol is a leading city when it comes to green spaces and urban wildlife. Among the notable urban wildlife areas in the city include nature park situated on Brandon Hill and Avon Gorge, an international acclaimed site. The green heritage made the city nominated in 2008 for the European Green Capital Award. The city has an air quality monitoring system to check air quality in areas that do not meet the air quality objectives.

Issues and challenges

Critical policy analysis starts with identifying challenges that the policy intends to solve. Bristol city issues and challenges can be categorised into three areas namely social, economic and environment. The social issues include the city having adequate homes to meet projected housing needs, providing quality health services and better environment for living, provision of quality education. Economic issues facing Bristol now and in 2026 include the provision of more and varied employment opportunities, reduce income disparity improve physical infrastructures, ease

transport congestion in the city centre, develop sports and tourism activities to enhance local opportunities, thus reduce travel. Bristol faces the numerous environment and physical issues, which if not addressed will worsen by 2026. They include:

- i. Conserve the natural environment and proper utilisation of open spaces.
- ii. Combat crime in the city.
- iii. Protect Bristol's historical sites and environment heritage.
- iv. Construct sustainable urban infrastructure throughout the city.
- v. Mitigating and controlling climatic changes such as floods in Avonmouth and in the city centre. Controlling pollution levels in the city
- vi. Improve air quality in Air Quality Management Areas and water quality in the inner city.
- vii. Enhancing waste management practices by minimising waste at source.

Actors, Institutions and Ideas

The Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy, as other policies, comprises of actors, institutions and ideas as building blocks of the policy framework. For the local authority administration to achieve its goals and objectives, it needs to bring together actors of the policy, institutions defining regulations and ideas together. The actors in this context include Bristol City Councils, residents of Bristol or members of the public, industrialists in Bristol, employees in Bristol, Bristol Port Company, entrepreneurs in Bristol, educationists in Bristol, environmentalists in Bristol, urban planners in Bristol, motorists in Bristol, conservationists in Bristol, building contractors, civil engineers, police and government workers working in Bristol. The actors will express their policy interests and the way they would like goals and objectives of the core strategy achieved. The institutions include Job Centre Plus, the Skills Funding Agency, local community-based agencies, South West Regional Development Agency, Home and

Communities Agency, Hartcliffe and Withywood Community Partnership, Environment and Highway Agency, Site Allocations & Development Management DPD, Natural England and Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board.

In the core strategy there are six plans that tackle the highlighted issues and challenges. The first strategy in the policy is about regenerating South Bristol to have mixed development supported by improved infrastructure. The actors included local people, private sector players and the City Planners. The ideas were conceived and supported during the public engagement on strategy formulation. The policy ideas include the development of additional office space, regeneration of land for industrial and warehousing and provision of new homes. Regeneration and development of South Bristol will be supported by infrastructural development in road networks, green infrastructure, hospitals, Healthplex, recreational facilities and skills academy. Implementation of the policy was to be regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency and South West Regional Development Agency.

The second policy is to enhance Bristol City Centre as a regional hub of South West Region. This is to be achieved through the idea of developing offices, retail, tourism, leisure, entertainment and art and cultural facilities. The policy framework envisages that developments in 2026 will include completed additional quality office spaces, completed new homes and improved transport systems, which will include new cycling and pedestrian routes, transport hubs and public transport. The policy recommends expansion of the University of Bristol and British Royal Infirmary sites. There will also be more efficient land use in the city centre, with the development of all-purpose use buildings. All developments will be of utmost standard to ensure sustainability, conservation of environment and heritage and maintenance of green infrastructure. The policy also expects expansion of services that encourage and foster diversity

in Bristol. Floods caused by climate change will be mitigated by construction of flood defenses.

Major institutions to oversee implementation of this policy will include the Environment Agency, English Heritage, the Homes and Communities Agency and South West Regional Development Agency.

The third strategy concerns increase of the level of homes in Bristol by 2026. Increased population and economic growth will result to increased demand for housing, thus the need to add the number of housing units in the city. This policy objective will be achieved through development of houses on open areas and construction of houses on previous developed and regenerated areas. The policy outlines that in a 20-year period, between 2006 and 2026; there will be at least 26,400 additional homes. The main actors in this policy are private developers; the Bristol City Council is the institution defining and standardising policy regulations.

The fourth strategy/plan contained in the policy aims to foster economic growth of Bristol City through creation of employment opportunities. The policy outlines that robust economic growth and performance will be achieved through reducing barriers to employment opportunities, marketing Bristol as an investment hub and providing adequate employment land. The plan envisages that 236,000m² of employment land will be created by 2026; ten hectares of land will have been regenerated for industrial and warehousing purposes. The actors of this policy include Bristol City Council, industrialists and members of the public. The institutions defining policy regulations include Job Centre Plus, Skills Funding Agency, community-based agencies and Young People's Learning Agency.

The fifth plan concerns green infrastructure capital. The policy aims to protect and develop green infrastructure capital to improve Bristol's quality of life. According to the policy, green assets include open space recreation parks, geological and biological conservation sites, landscape

features, natural gardens, street trees, open countrysides and green corridors. The policy recommends for the protection and conservation of green assets, and in addition to the expansion of existing green assets. The actors of this policy include residents of Bristol City, Bristol City Council, conservationists and environmentalists; Institution are governed policy regulation include Natural England.

The sixth strategy concerns the development of transport infrastructure in Bristol. Traffic congestion is an impediment to the realisation of economic growth, thus the need for a good transportation system to facilitate connection with the city. The main actors in the policy include Bristol City Council, civil engineers, members of the public living in Bristol and players in the transport industry. Among the policy goals and objectives to be realised by 2026, include an expansion of Bristol Bus Network, new park and ride networks, improved road links and new rail projects. Institutions defining policy include Highway Agency, Department for Transport, Central Government.

Network, Coalition and Storylines

There is a need for continuous engagement between the actors and institutions to facilitate exchange of ideas and share interests. In the case of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy, actors and institutions share the goal of developing Bristol to be the best city in Europe and a regional hub for the South West region of England. During the preparation of the strategy, there was building of partnership, similar to the networks and coalition, between the Bristol City Council and various stakeholders. The networks are meant to facilitate easy policy delivery and realisation of set policy goals and objectives. Interactions and storylines were critical to facilitate an efficient and effective policy formulation process. Interactions occurred through formal and informal engagements. Engagements gave rise to action plans and planning documents to

complement the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy, and in some cases supplemented the core strategy. For instance, engagement between Bristol City Council with Environment Agency, English Heritage, the Homes and Communities Agency and the South West Regional Development Agency gave rise to Bristol Central Area Action Plan; a framework to develop Bristol City Centre. The Major strength of the Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy is the linkages between Bristol City Council and the various stakeholders/partners to facilitate policy delivery. The strength of the policy framework is shown by the commitment of actors and institutions to ensure successful policy delivery by 2026. The Bristol City Council is expected to dominate since the council is the sponsor of the strategy, and working on behalf of the public interests, who are the major stakeholders of the plan.

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