

Fuelling Expectations: the Evolution of UK Government's position in the Biofuels Debate

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Outline

1. Introduction
2. My Research Approach in the Sociology of Expectations
3. Public Authorities as Intermediaries of Information
4. Findings from Case Studies
5. Conclusions

Introduction

- How **accountability towards policy making** influences the way in which public authorities strategically use statements of technological expectations and visions (TE & V)
- Comparative Study:
UK Government's VS
 - Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (RCEP)
 - Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee (EFRAC)
 - Environmental Audit Committee (EAC)
- Documentary Analysis:
Official Correspondences (Published on PA Websites)
UK Government \leftrightarrow other UK Public Authorities'
Focus on:
 - official visions on biofuels technologies
 - optimism on biofuels technologies
 - weight given to stakeholders (the industry)

Statements of Expectations

- **‘as doing things’**: Performativity
(how TE&V influence technology developments)
- **‘as resources used to do things’**: to catch attention
(how TE&V are used to advertise technology)
 - often with **Hype**: which inflates
Cycles of Hype and Disappointment
 - and consequential damages to
Reputations and Investments
- but, what is the role of reputation?

Reputation

- SoE: reputation marginal: focus on content of TE&V
- However, implicit a learning process:
 - actors observing and remembering about past performances of other actors identified as sources of information
- IE: reputation as a **'criterion for selection of quality'**
- What are the implications for public authorities?

Public Authorities

- **Public Authorities as Intermediaries**
experts, stakeholders, intermediaries & general electorate
- Reputation as: expert and reliable information source

How do public authorities react to **new TE&V**
discrediting previous policies/endorsements ?

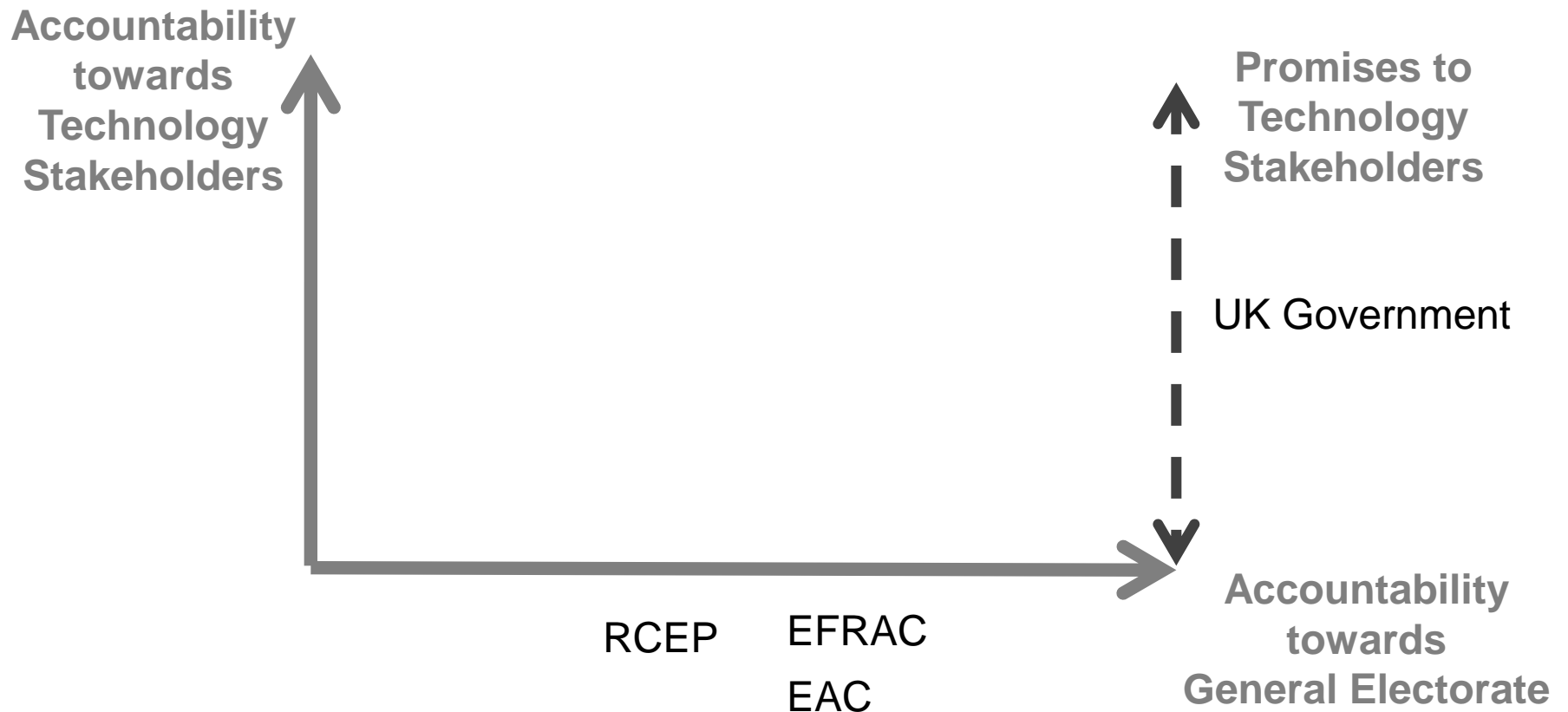
- the more the accountability towards policymaking
the more the incentive to strategically use statements to
defend previous choices
- the government is the public authority most accountable
towards policymaking

Empirical findings

Comparative Analysis	UK Government	RCEP, EFRAC, EAC
Which the most keen to accept changes in official storylines and policies according to new TE&V?	less keen especially when contradicting previous endorsements and promises to the industry	more keen irrespectively of the government's electoral implication or the industry's financial implications
What reactions to peaks of either optimism or pessimism?	always cautious	more receptive to changes of "mood"
Which weight more the industry?	more weight when liable of previous promises to that specific industry	less weight only focused on the central goal of the policy

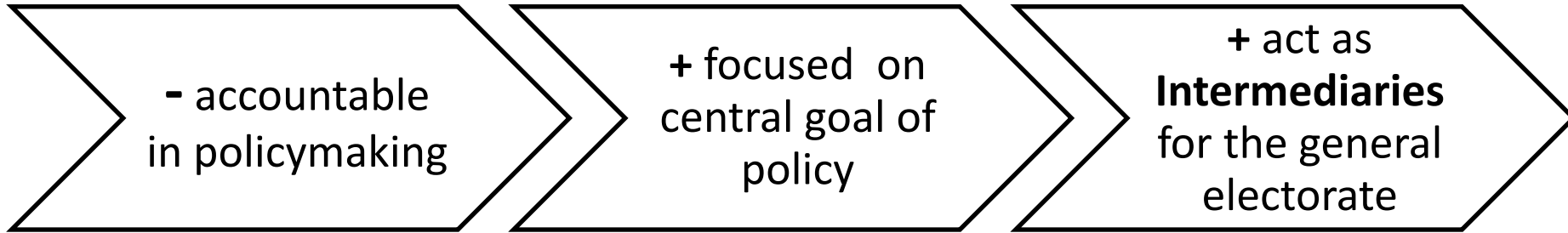
Empirical findings

Main observation: **accountability towards technology stakeholders**
strong driver and peculiar to government



Conclusions

Public Authorities



Government Double Identity

Government as Intermediary	Government as Stakeholder
Reputation as Intermediary vis-a-vis general electorate	Reputation as Stakeholder vis-a-vis stakeholders involved with previous policies
Necessary to maintain: - legitimacy in policy of intervention	Necessary to maintain: - effectiveness of technology policies

Conclusions

Government's temporal dilemma to new TE&V

Possible courses of action	Government as Intermediary	Government as Stakeholder
Accepting changes?	Reputation maintained	Risk to lose TRUST of stakeholders → technology policy might become ineffective
Delaying changes?	Risk to lose LEGITIMACY vis-a-vis the general electorate → electoral downturn	Reputation maintained

Conclusions

Trade off:

neutrality towards technologies VS accountability towards policies

According to this view:

- In any debate on technologies, the double identity of the Government would need to be counterweighted by Public Authorities less accountable in policymaking
- These latter would equilibrate the balance of interests in technology policy debates on behalf of the whole electorate, by making sure that:
 - the interests of stakeholders are not overrepresented
 - the government does not exceed in delaying the introduction of new TE&V in the policy agenda

Thank you

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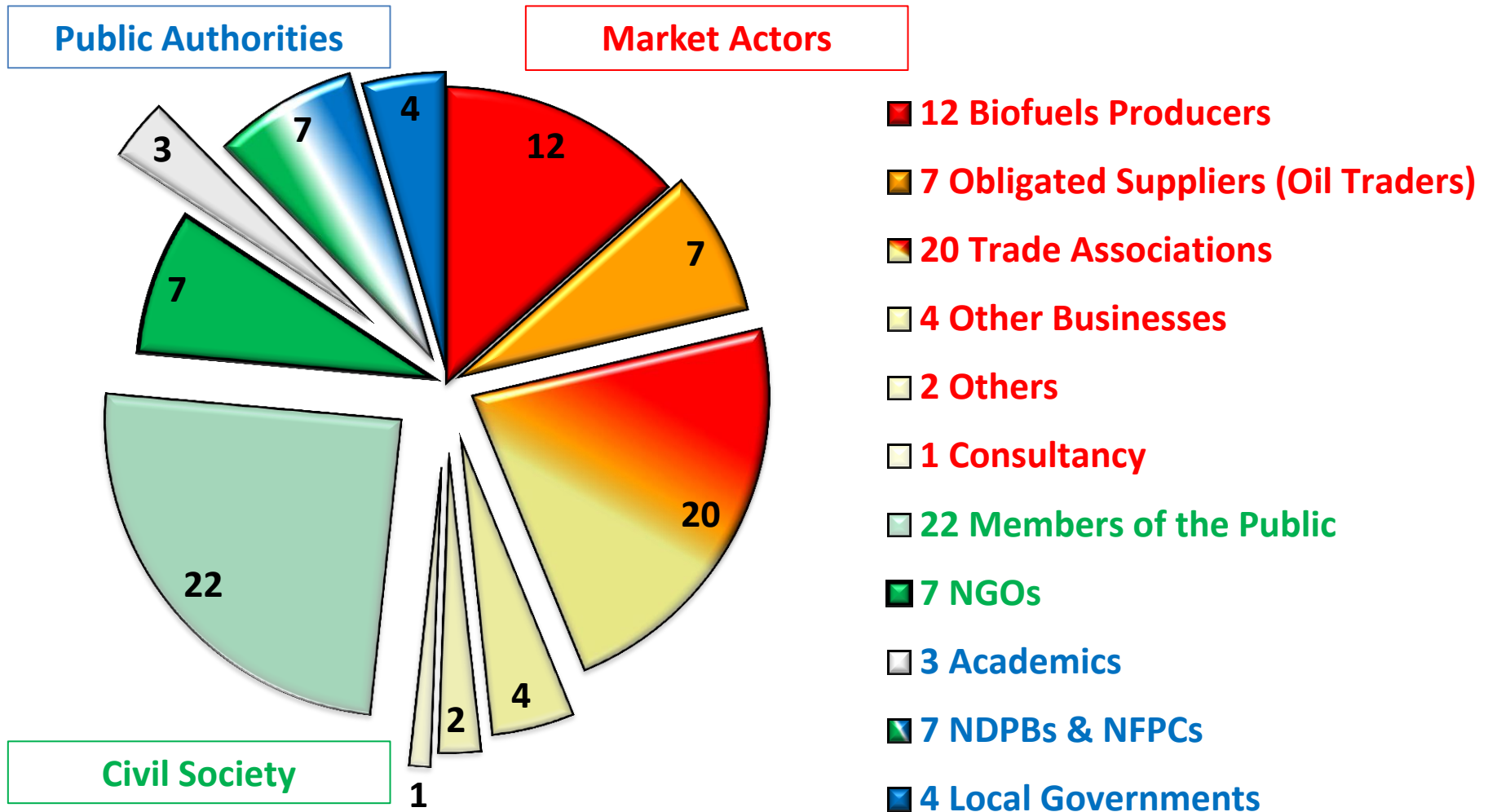
**ESRC
genomics
network**

Second Part of the Project: the analysis of a consultation

- **Consultation on the Renewable Transport Fuels Obligation (RTFO) (Amendment), Order 2009**

- Launched the 15th October, 2008 – Closed the 17th December, 2008

- 89 responses received (67 from organisations)



Second Part of the Project: the analysis of a consultation

- *what is my DfT consultation?*
 - ***opinion survey***: sampling techniques:
heterogeneity/diversity, expert, self selecting samplings
- *what was the goal of my DfT consultation?*
 - ***to collect views, not to represent stakeholders***
- *in other words, my DfT consultation is a:*
 - snapshot of opinions
 - from self-selected participants
 - in a specific time and space

→ It identifies:

 - the range of opinions of the actors who chose to directly interact with the UK Government in biofuels policymaking

Second Part of the Project: the analysis of a consultation

- *Spatial Approach: analysis of*
 - *statements of TE*
 - *additional information on actors*
- *Consultation: only self-selected interested parties*



Investigation of the official vision chosen by the UK Government
→ (approximate) answers to questions as:

- *Who were the actors behind it?*
- *Which were the interests enclosed into it?*
- *Which visions have been marginalised?*

Ultimately, this approach should help investigating :

- *How competing statements of TE and stakeholders' interests combined to form the official vision of the UK Government*