Communication and language strategies used in the democratic public policy process.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an investigation into the type of language or discourse that is used in the policy process with the aim of giving a description of the characteristics of the language or discourse of public policy for public policy.   This, therefore, includes a description of discourse and communication strategies by means of which stakeholders in the decision-making process (and ultimately also ordinary citizens) persuade or manipulate or are persuaded or manipulated to accept policy on issues directly affecting them. Newspaper articles which reported on the "Plastic Bag Policy" debate are analysed to discover which language or discourse strategies have been employed.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie dissertasie ondersoek die aard van die taal wat in die beleidsproses toegepas word met die doel om die eienskappe van beleidstaal of die beleidsdiskoers te beskryf. Dit sluit dus in 'n uiteensetting van taal- en kommunikasie strategieë waarmee aanspraakmakers in die besluitnemingsproses (en uiteindelik ook gewone burgers) oortuig of manipuleer of oortuig word of gemanipuleer word om beleid te aanvaar ten opsigte van sake of probleme wat hulle direk raak. Koerantberigte oor die "Plastieksakke Beleid" is geanaliseer om vas te stel van watter taal- of diskoers strategieë gebruik gemaak is.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Politics is a social activity, which primarily expresses itself through language – speeches at political rallies and written policies passed by the legislature are examples of this. The language used argues debates, persuades, critiques, and informs public policy. Public policy is therefore the result of the interplay among groups through the medium of language (Edelman 1964, cited in Theodoulou and Cahn 1995:31). Imposing policy unilaterally is not encouraged in modern democracies.

Decision-making by discussion or 'government by discussion' as advocated by John Stuart Mill (Ebenstein 1969) in the eighteenth century is having a revival in the twentieth and twenty-first century. And so South Africa, as a new democracy, too, is making serious attempts to create a responsive[1] or 'deliberative' democracy where policy decisions are made after discussion, deliberation, and argumentation within various forums.

Many 'advanced' industrial countries are rethinking the roles of government, community organizations, and citizens in the formulation of public policy. Clinton, former U.S. president, for example, has been on record for supporting the initiation of certain programmes which reflect an endeavour to improve "the effectiveness of public policies and make them more responsive to citizens" (Ingram and Rathgeb Smith 1993:1). Ingram and Rathgeb Smith (1993) foresee a democracy in which the processes of policy-making are continuous, interactive and dynamic. They

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[1] The term democracy can have various connotations and meanings, but here it is used to mean when a political decision is made by collective choice; although this meaning may be criticized as being an 'ideological illusion.' Further, a 'responsive' democracy is used to mean a democratic system in which there is dialogue or as described above, 'a two-way discussion', that is, the people are able to (and do) respond to the speeches, utterances or policy proposals by politicians or other policy-makers. Gutmann and Thompson (1997) use the term 'reciprocal' which carries the same meaning as responsive – therefore a responsive or reciprocal democracy. Shaw (2001) speaks of a "functional democracy".

envisage a democracy where public policy empowers, enlightens and engages citizens in the process of self-government (Ingram and Rathgeb Smith (1993:1). This is also the case in developing countries who are endeavouring to establish democratic governance; and in South Africa too. After decades of a fragmented and segregated society the South African government endeavours, by means of its constitution, its policies, and programmes such as the RDP, to depolarize its people and to actively involve previously disempowered and disenfranchised communities in the policy process. It is applying a bottom-up approach to policy-making, which involves negotiation and consensus building. This process produces particular language strategies.

Often language is thought to be merely a rather neutral medium to convey ideas, and it is assumed that it can be taken for granted that a person means what he/she says.   The language of politics, however, is far from neutral; it becomes verbal strategy, through which words are used to 'steer and govern' (Connolly 1983:1). One of the functions of this is thus frequently that of concealing and obscuring rather than exposing or clarifying. In other words, language is used as a tool or weapon to get one's own way. In the political context, meaning is often structured in such a way that thought and action are channelled in certain directions. The discourse of policy-makers can define, unite, divide, and marginalize communities or stakeholders involved in the policy process.

The potential of political rhetoric or discourse is a means of controlling the citizens through language (Yunis 1996). Yunis refers to the metaphor 'taming democracy' which Plato used to describe successful persuasive political rhetoric as that which managed and controlled the 'beastlike' citizenry (*demos)* of ancient Athens. The ideal political rhetoric, according to Yunis (1996: 29), is a rational, instructive, political discourse that exercises human intelligence and resolution to make the citizen body wiser and better[2]. In modern terminology this would be called 'transparency'. The question is whether policy-makers actually want to use

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[2] This is an ideal, which distorted and manipulated by politicians and policy-makers for their own purposes, eventually exists only as a symbol of solidarity for the 'people'.

discourse which will enable the citizen body to become 'wiser and better', or whether they prefer discourse that is intended to 'manage and control' the citizenry.

The verbal behaviour of a government, as well as that of policy-makers, is seldom random. It is generally designed to advance the national interest and, like any military or economic strategy, intended to produce certain predictable and desired effects. An ingredient of this discourse may contain certain commonly recognised symbols. That, is, citizens are often persuaded by powerful symbols to form a cohesive group, to support each other and the government. These symbols are often concepts such as 'terrorism', 'drugs', 'the home' which when used convey an underlying meaning which implies more than is actually said, and evoke anxieties or reassurances. Symbols, and myths, are part of persuasive political language. The assumption amongst politicians and policy-makers exists that the building of a particular, political order depends on the continuation of these myths and symbols. In South Africa, for example, any mention of 'the struggle' immediately unites all those who were involved in the anti-apartheid movement. The concept 'the struggle' is also used successfully to get them back into the fold when the populace seems disillusioned with those they voted for in the post-apartheid era. Plato, for instance, viewed the use of myths as a means by which a few ruling guardians could 'put something over' on the rank and file of the community (Lasswell *et al.* 1952:1).

These kinds of verbal strategies are crucial elements of politics.   So much so that in the policy environment many policies are based on common symbols and shared meaning. Stanley Hoffmann's (cited by Pettman 1975:230) comment on world politics could also describe the arena of the policy-maker in a democracy:

> ...[World politics is viewed as] less of a struggle for power than as a contest for the shaping of perceptions. When force loses some of its prominence, power - my exercise of control over you - becomes the art of making you see the world the way I see it, and making you behave in accordance with that vision. International politics in the past was often

an arena of coercion without persuasion; it is tending to become an arena of persuasion, more or less coercive.

In a contemporary democracy the physical force may decrease, but the psychology of persuasion is a growing phenomenon. For contemporary public policy this means that a focus, even greater than before, is placed on political discourse. This includes the discourse of the media because they too influence policy-making and decisions in the way that they report on or communicate policy issues.

1.2   THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The *research question* to be investigated in this study is:

Which communication and language strategies are employed in the democratic policy-making process; and how are these exemplified in the Plastic Bag policy policy of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism?

The *rationale* behind the study is that generally in governance and policy formation, a great deal of subliminal manipulation by politicians and political parties takes place. A responsive[3] democracy, however, is an alert democracy and therefore this study will attempt to highlight the ways in which stakeholders in a particular public policy may persuade, dissuade or manipulate in order to get a policy passed in which they have a vested interest, or rejected if it is not to their advantage. One would hope, however, that as stakeholders and the public become more aware of these verbal strategies, they are more likely able to avoid manipulation and coercion and be able to argue for more equitable policies. A responsive democracy would imply citizens responding to policy, not just acquiescing to it; and citizens able to argue in an appropriate manner to achieve an equitable and fair policy to the satisfaction of all or most stakeholders involved.

This study points out communicative, symbolic, and distortive elements that may be contained in public policy hoping to raise public awareness of why it (the public) contributes 'blood, work, taxes, and applause' to policy-makers

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[3] Refer to footnote 1 (p 1) on 'responsive' democracy.

and influencers, and does so willingly – and not always to its own good and benefit.

1.3   METHOD

This is a theoretical study based on a literature review. The literature review will include literature from the areas of communication theory, rhetoric, persuasive language, discourse analysis, as well as from political theory. The study will also use a case study to show how some of these devices were used to disseminate information about a specific policy, namely, the Plastic Bag policy policy of the Department of Environmental Affairs and tourism.

1.3.1 Literature Overview

Advances in Policy Studies since 1950 (Dunn & Kelly 1992) provides the historical and theoretical background of the policy process and established where political discourse and rhetoric fit into the process. Yunis' (1996) in-depth discussion of models of political rhetoric provides a background to the understanding of 'ideal' democracy and how the instructive (and especially persuasive) potential of political rhetoric was employed in the management of the Athenian citizenry. This can be related to the democracies of the modern world and the discourse and rhetoric used to 'maintain' or 'manage' them.

Hill (1997) and Parsons (1997) present a clear and comprehensive description of the policy process. Both stress the view that a great deal of manipulation of language and creation of crises occur in the policy process. Parsons, in particular, addresses the role of language in the policy arena. He provides an extensive list of contributors to the issue of linguistics and symbolic aspects of politics and policy-making. The fact that it serves as a guide to political theory and the policy process makes it an important work on which to base the other readings.

The primary source for the investigation of language in the policy process of this study is Majone's *Evidence, Argument, & Persuasion in the Policy Process* (1989)*.* It challenges the assumption that policy analysts engage in an objective and rational assessment of policy alternatives, and advances the inclusion of practices such as

persuasion, rationalisation, and advocacy, in the scope of policy analysis. The issue of discourse and the social power involved in, *inter alia*, the policy process, is taken up by Van Dijk (1996).

Discourse analysis is a multidisciplinary field and a relatively new development in the humanities and social sciences. Van Dijk provides insights into natural forms of language use in the social context in sociolinguistics, and focuses on the analysis of style, rhetoric, argumentation, and persuasive communication in, among others, political discourse. He also examines the effects of the mass media on politics, in particular.

Hogan (1998) in his *Rhetoric and Community: Studies in Unity and Fragmentation* focuses on rhetoric and its influence on communities. The essays contribute new understandings of how rhetoric not only reflects but also shapes the character of specific communities and their place in society - emphasising the fact that rhetoric has a major role to play in the environment of politics and policy.

Edelman is one of the most prominent scholars of political language and symbolism. *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1988) and his other works will be used as primary and secondary sources on political language, symbolism and the pervasiveness and consequences of the media's role in constructing and reconstructing news and the political scenario.

1.4   Structure of Study

Section 1 introduces the background to the study, the rationale for it, and the methodology applied in the study. This is followed by two sections discussing the theory which underpins the study. Section 2, entitled *Communication and symbols in public policy,* which discusses the form and function of language with the purpose of communicating policy. It investigates the elements of meaning, discuss interpretation, and reality. The role of the communication of symbols are identified and explained. *Discourse strategies in public policy*, the topic of Section 3, focuses on a discussion of how and why a particular discourse is used containing the strategies of deliberation, argumentation, bargaining, persuasion, coercion, and distortion.

The practical application of the theories is described in the final sections. Section 4, An *analysis of the discourse strategies in the "Plastic Bag Policy"*, makes deductions about the communicative, deliberative and argumentative discourse and rhetoric from analysing extracts from articles in newspapers and on the internet about the "Plastic Bag policy". Section 5 provides a summary of the major findings that emerge from the analysis in the previous section.

Section 2

COMMUNICATION AND THE USE OF SYMBOLS IN PUBLIC POLICY

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The policy-making process in a representative democracy involves the identification of issues, and formulation of programmes. This follows more or less the following procedure: the electorate discusses issues, and candidates or parties indicate a preference for a programme; the legislature translates a programme into laws while in constant debate with the opposition; after which it is carried forward and the executive (and the bureaucracy) implements specific policies. In a representative democracy the entire procedure involves various participants and stakeholders[4] in the process who will interact at all levels of the process and, so, eventually they come to the formulation of a specific policy. This chapter will consider the concept of communication and how policy information is communicated from one phase to another in the policy process and what factors impact on what is communicated and the language strategies employed.

2.2   THE STAKEHOLDERS OR PLAYERS IN THE POLICY PROCESS

The first distinction between participants in the design and formation of a policy is that they either belong to a large group of unorganized citizens who have certain expectations of and demands on a policy, or to a smaller, organized group of citizens. Within the organized group there are the various interest groups, the political parties, and representatives of government, each representing the expectations and demands of a group of citizens or the authorities (as an example refer to 4.2).

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[4]   Renn et al use the term stakeholders in the sense of those participants who have an interest in the policy issue under discussion. In this study, my use of the term includes all individuals and groups who are involved or have a stake in the policy issue – this may usually be an interest group representing a larger group of citizens or it could on occasion be the citizens themselves.

Cahn (1995: 333) speaks of the public policy process being called a game in which policy actors maximize their interests by means of rational strategies. Ideally, if players or stakeholders want to win, they need knowledge of the policy bureaucracy, access to persons in this bureaucracy (network), the support of citizens (their constituency – the more the better), money for political contributions, and resources such as the media to launch an effective campaign.

The policy contest is primarily for the distribution of goods as well as for the distribution of power. The stakeholders who meet at the discussion table are: citizens who will be affected by (have a stake in) the policy (often they are represented by either an interest group or their local political representative), interest groups (this would include non-governmental agencies), political parties, and government officials from the department involved in the implementation of the policy. Renn *et al* (1993:189) divide the participants into 3 categories: *Stakeholders*, who are valuable resources for eliciting concerns and developing evaluative criteria because their interests are at stake, and they have already made attempts to structure and engage the issue. *Experts*, who are required to provide the data base and the functional relationships between options and impacts; and third, the *citizens*, the potential victims and benefactors of proposed planning measures. Citizens are also the best judges to assess the diverse options available – on the basis of the concerns and effects submitted by the other two groups.

Citizens as political actors, from the perspective of the public peace process, for example, interact with different groups in order to bring about change (Saunders 2001). Although Saunders, in his work A *Public Peace Process* (2001) focuses on conflict resolution, his notion of citizens as political actors can be directly applied to their role as stakeholders in the policy process. Their role involves a "progression of interacting ideas and actions" (Saunders 2001:59). In this [peace] 'process' a disparate group of citizens come together "as an engaged public and create a public space in which they can form relationships and associations and make the choices necessary to address a public problem". This coming together provides a conceptual framework for sharpening communication strategies and tactics.

2.3   COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION IN THE POLICY PROCESS

If there is interaction there is communication.   The seemingly simple process of formulating policy, and in turn communicating it, is complicated by the play of power and influence, the uneven distribution of knowledge and expertise, diverse interests, and, frequently, the passive participation of the electorate (Majone 1989:2). If policy-makers are serious about democracy, as the South African government seems to be, there needs to be two-way (if not four- or five-way) interaction. This (because of the nature of politics)   will involve persuasive language with the purpose of convincing participants   or stakeholders involved in the programme to adjust their views and understanding of the reality of the policy issue to those proposed by   one of the 'other' parties. (For an example, refer to 4.3.1.1)

Albæk (1995:90) asserts that because of the centrality of persuasion and discussion to democracy, modern political-administrative institutions cannot be reduced 'to pure power structures'. These democratic institutions have no other choice but to regulate and institutionalize public argument and discussion by ensuring that all views are expressed and heard. Albæk points out that politico-administrative decision-making is 'rooted in language and based on argumentation and discussion', and that is why the decision-making processes are never completely arbitrary; and it is the reason that their form and content cannot be attributed to a particular stakeholder or an alliance of stakeholders. Arguments are subject to rules, procedure and the context, and final decisions about policy are subject to an appeal to the 'wider public interests and the actual merits and values of the case' (Stone 1988).

 Another reason for the revival of 'discussion' and interaction (and thus effective communication skills) is that there has been a major shift from authoritarian rule to democracy in recent decades, worldwide. This transition, for instance, is noticeable in the 1994 and post-1994 South African government's approach to the policy-making process and the discourse applied in the various simplified documents relating to the constitution and laws and policies made available to the general public. An increased participation in the process by diverse stakeholders involved in

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forums, for example, has changed the pattern of communication, the manner that social problems are placed on the agenda, defined, decisions are reached, and how the resulting policies are communicated to the public[5]. Hence stakeholders need to be effective communicators.

2.4   Communication in and of Public Policy

Given the diversity of interests, opinions, and values of the various participants in the policy process, various communicative strategies are inevitably employed in order to shape the policy under discussion.

Before describing the various communicative strategies it might be helpful to examine the concept of communication, and in particular, its format with regard to the policy process.

According to Cleary (2000: 10) communication is

> a two-way process that results in a shared meaning or common understanding between the sender and the receiver. The sender is involved in encoding the message which is decoded by the receiver. Feedback is the receiver's response to the message and can take various forms. Communication takes place in various contexts: intrapersonal; interpersonal; public; small-group; organisational or mass.

This is a rather technical definition of communication that, in relation to the policy-making process only describes one level of communication, that is, the level of information exchange. This would happen when, for example, ordinary citizens discuss a particular problem or issue. In such instances it is likely that there is shared meaning amongst the interactants and that the difference in knowledge about the topic under discussion between the communicants is not too large.

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[5] In South Africa, the televising of parliament, a freer press, the simplification of government documents for the benefit of the general public, all indicate the intention to involve citizens at all levels. This is also happening in Middle Eastern countries such as the Sultanate of Oman and Bahrain where women are now able to participate in government structures (simplified government documents distributed to the S.A. public on the SA constitution, the Labour Law and others; personal discussions in the Sultanate of Oman and general articles in various copies of *The Times of Oman* from 2001 to 2002).

However, communication theory offers more complex definitions such as a definition focusing on the *transactional* aspects of communication.   In the policy-making process, communication namely entails more than a simple exchange of information. Language as it is used in the formulation of public policy is not simply a means of conventional communication, but a device which is shaped and adapted to convey certain political intent or defend a particular interpretation of a policy. Since the policy-making process involves various participants, each with their own interests, ambitions, and, thus, their own agenda, it thus follows that a more complex definition of communication than Cleary's (2000:11) above, is needed to describe the role of language and communication in the policy-making process.

A *transactional* definition of communication is an extension of other definitions. In the transactional sense communication not only entails the exchange of meaningful messages, but is also a transaction between the participants which focuses on the quality of the relationship. Steinberg (1997: 14) defines communication from this viewpoint as "a transactional process of exchanging messages and negotiating meaning to establish and maintain relationships". Transactions such as deliberation, argument, persuasion, bargaining and negotiation are essential elements in participatory politics, and by extension in a democratic policy-making process.

The one-to-one model below (Diagram 1) is a basic model of communication, which could also be applied to situations involving more than two people. This model describes a typical situation in the policy-making process. It may be a politician communicating his/her policy to a constituent or group of constituents (public); or it may be one stakeholder or a group promoting a certain policy to another stakeholder/ other stakeholders. Above all, it must be emphasised that communication is a dynamic process involving the encoding, transmitting, receiving and decoding of messages, and, most importantly in the case of policy, eliciting *the desired response*. Effective communication, that is getting the desired response, is particularly important in democratic policy-making. In a true democracy diverse participants with

diverse interests will make persuasion and negotiation imperative in order to reach consensus or "sufficient consensus" about the appropriate policy.   Poor communication, therefore, leads to possibilities of error, misjudgements, and misperceptions, which then may result in inappropriate policies that are open to subversion.
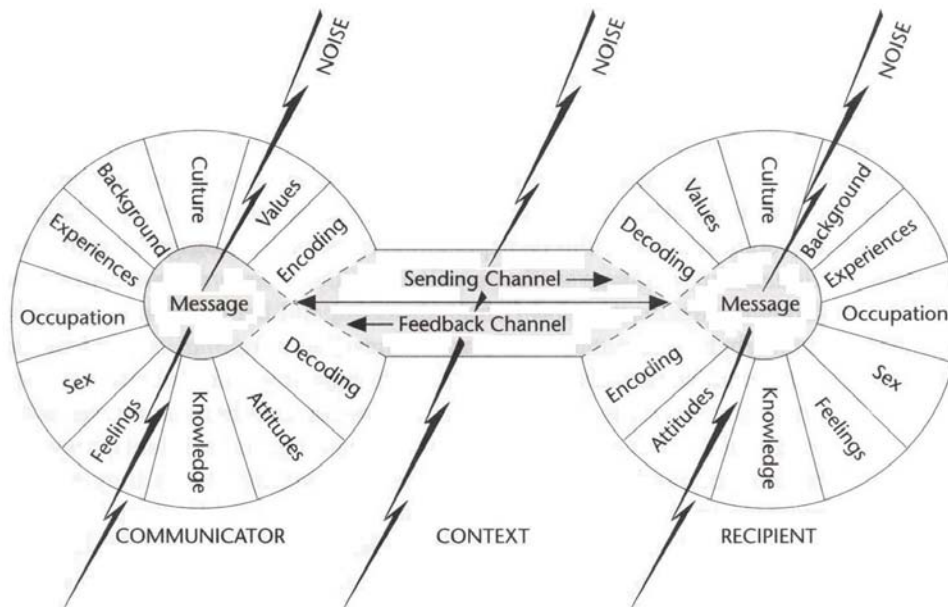
Diagram 1. **An adapted transactional model of communication** (adapted from Verderber 1992 and Steinberg 1997).

In a policy context the various components could be replaced as follows:

Communicator – a stakeholder/ politician/ government representative

Receiver – a stakeholder/ a citizen or group of citizens/ constituents of party

Message – definition of the problem/ policy agenda/ policy formulation/ justification of policy implementation

Medium – persuasive language/ argumentative language/ ambiguous language/ symbol/ non-verbal communication (e.g. mode of dress)

Channel – live speech/ report in newspaper, on television, or on radio

Noise – see footnote 5

In terms of the public policy-making process, the components in the above communication model are formed by the stakeholders operating within the context of a particular issue. The message involves the definition of a problem, at other times it may centre on the discussion of the agenda for a meeting, or the formulation or the justification of the implementation of a policy. The content and context of the

message will determine the medium (the physical means) by means of which, and the channel (the route) along which the message is transmitted. The medium could be, among others, persuasive language, argumentative language, ambiguous language, and non-verbal communication such as mode of dress or actions; and the channel could be a live speech, or a reported one in the press, radio, or television. The kind of response the communicator wants will also determine the kind of discourse or the medium used, and along which channel. This approach stresses the fact that language is not a random use of subject-specific words, but consists of carefully chosen words, constructions, and in the case of spoken language, intonation and tone, to convey a specific meaning to the recipient. The one rider is that its intended effect must be to the communicator's advantage. For example, if the communicator is the representative of a political party, seeking the vote of constituents, the communicator will use verbal and non-verbal language to elicit the recipient's response indicating the acceptance of the party's policy. It follows that the sending channel (Diagram 1) does not contain a random message but rather one specifically selected to elicit a very specific response, that is, the kind of feedback anticipated or hoped for.

In the context of the policy-making process the communicators must ensure that they know the background of the recipient well enough to choose effective words and symbols, as well and non-verbal language - such as clothes, gestures and actions. In this way the communicator tries to ensure that the message is decoded in such a way that the recipient will interpret the meaning of message as intended by the communicator. 'Shared meaning' between the sender and the receiver is thus manipulated. In terms of 'noise',[6] and in policy discourse the interference must particularly be understood to be semantic, the recipients are frequently unaware that the communicators' words are wilfully aimed to elicit a particular response. Thus it could be argued that the creation of shared meaning in this fashion provides a stimulus that interferes with the communication because it is, and is intended to be,

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[6] In communication the concept *noise* means "any stimulus that interferes with the transmission and reception of messages". These can be external (a cold room, dogs barking, traffic), internal (thought, attitudes, moods, prejudices), and semantic (meaning of words) (Steinberg 1997:16). In politics and policy it could be the mode of dress, the accent, nationality, the interest group: anything that is different from the audience addressed.

manipulative. In other words, equity can well be absent in the transaction conducted in the communication process.

It is also clear that the more open the channels of communication between individuals, between individuals and governing institutions, between groups and between groups and governing institutions are, the greater is the opportunity for the creation of a well-functioning democracy.

According to Schnyder (1985:23-25), democracy is based on dialogue that in turn relies on proper communication.   Schnyder proffers three levels on which communication works: on a factual level; on a cultural level; and on a relational level. He cites the example of communicators A and B who fail to reach understanding on any of the three levels.   An example of communication being incomplete or unsatisfactory is if

- ➤ A is not interested in B's problem   (factual level)
- ➤ B does not understand B's language   (cultural level)
- ➤ A fears B   (relational level)

On a factual level, therefore, citizens may feel they cannot understand everything of the political issue, or they feel unconcerned, or unable to relate to the issue. A problem may concern them so much that they forget the context within which the problem is based. This results in important components of the problem being repressed or deemed taboo. This may be the case in nature conservation. Communities whose standing or self-worth is measured by having land for subsistence farming will not see the use of setting land aside for game reserves or if communities are starving they cannot see the use of preserving the game.

On a cultural level, language determines the quality of communication. There has been a considerable growth of 'specialist' languages (jargon). This, together with rapid change of the concept of traditional values, has led to individuals and groups not understanding each other. This can be between old and young, doctor and

patient, the court and the accused, Christian and Muslim, African and European, or East and West.

Most communication problems occur on a relational level (for an example refer to 4.3.1.2). Stratification is viewed as a 'them and us' structure in which fear or suspicion more often than not shapes the quality of communication or prevents it. Prejudice, thinking in clichés, suspicion, and intolerance, all prevent free and open communication. Once the desire for communication is there, dialogue has to be established because communication and dialogue are the basis of democracy. For example, the problem of street children can only be solved if the parties addressing the problem are willing to talk. However, if two of the stakeholders are the police and the street children, open communication will only be possible if the police are willing to see the children as children with a problem not as youthful criminals and the street children will need to see the police in the role of helpers not as persecutors. This also applies to the 'plastic bag' policy where the environmentalists have to be willing to enter consultation with 'big business', the plastic manufacturers and retailers if they want to reach agreement on what is the best solution for all parties involved.

Dialogue functions on three levels: a *willingness* to conduct a dialogue; an *admission* and perception of the existence of a problem; and the *knowledge* of judgmental factors used by partners involved in the dialogue (Gerdes: 238-239). These functions are complicated, first, by the fact that willingness to conduct dialogue presupposes respect of others' opinions, tolerance, ability to listen, time, and adherence to factuality. The glut of information and the complexity of it complicates the definition of problems and so stakeholders have to resort to simplification, typification, and categorization of an issue, using secondary instead of primary information. Judging a problem is complicated by personal interests, different sets of values, and ideological stances (Gerdes 1993: 239). Communication and dialogue are the mainstays of a democracy because only if citizens, interest groups or politicians representing them and the government are in constant dialogue and communication, will it remain a functional democracy. Only with these

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considerations as background, can we   examine communication in terms of policy. (For an example, refer to section 4, 4.3.1.3)

Decision-makers and stakeholders as participants in designing or formulating policy patently communicate by means of argumentation, persuasion, ambiguity, distortion and symbols, or a combination of strategies depending on the ultimate aim of their communication. The intensity of the communication will be dictated by the degree of 'need' of the communicator.

2.5 Factors impacting on Policy Meanings and Communication
2.5.1 Unequal access

Communication also entails a shared discourse. However, although discourse is perceived as allowing equal interaction between participants or stakeholders Van Dijk (1996: 86) asserts that as with other "valued social resources" there is "unequal access" to specific kinds of discourse. Van Dijk (1996: 86) points out that not everyone has "equal access to the media, or to medical, legal, political, bureaucratic, or scholarly text and talk". In education, for example, the teachers usually control a communicative event, distribute speaking turns, and have access to educational discourse. Similarly in the medical domain doctors mostly control the setting (appointments), the topics (medical problems) and the communication style. Particularly significant, in terms of policy, is the general public's access to the mass media, particularly the fact that the public generally has only passive access, that is, as readers, listeners or viewers. With South Africa's high rate of illiteracy much of the public only has passive access to radio and perhaps television if they know someone with a television. Further, dominant groups are likely to be interviewed by journalists and are so in a position to influence the public. Lack of access to journalists means that stakeholders representing minority groups will be less quoted than the more powerful groups. These minority groups have less opportunity to present their arguments to the general public, unless, as has become an alternative practice in South Africa, through street protests. This may, however, have the backlash that their behaviour will be further defined as "a confirmation of prevailing stereotypes and prejudices" (Van Dijk 1996: 94).

Access by certain stakeholders   (usually the ones most affected by a specific policy) to educational and scholarly discourse is also limited – not only by the mystification of the language used, but also in the research carried out and the definitions applied. For example, the research discourse is often dominated by academics belonging to a certain ethnic group who have power or situations relating to such groups. Hence, the language surrounding policy discourse becomes a 'reproduction of power and dominance through discourse'. Pertinent issues then are, who controls the preparation (the problem definition, research), the participants (the general public, stakeholders), the goals (policy formulation, outcome), the language (the genre, the register), the speech acts, the topics, the schemata, the style, and the rhetoric of communicative events (Van Dijk 1996:102). Those in control will most likely control the final policy formulation.   Clearly in the policy process communication is not a simple process, nor discourse a simple communication medium; both are shaped by whoever uses them and for what purpose.

Access to a specific policy discourse is not the only factor which impacts on the final policy, but also interpretation of the problem for which policy needs to be formulated, as well as the interpretation of the policy formulation itself.

2.5.2 Interpretation

Lasswell (1966) places *contextuality* in the centre of the policy sciences.   The interpretive approaches to policy analysis have reinforced this focus.   It is therefore now generally accepted that the meanings of words and concepts used in public policy vary according to the setting or context in which they are used (Swaffield 1998:199).   Yanow (1995:111) states that policy meanings are important but understanding them is not a simple matter, because they require meticulous interpretation. She says that policy interpreters are faced with two questions: *What* does policy mean? And *How* does it mean? What complicates the answer is that policy can mean more than one thing and the meaning can be expressed in different ways.   This gives rise to different interpretations of one policy by different

stakeholders. Each stakeholder views a social problem from his/her different *reality* or from his/her interpretation of that reality. (For an example, refer to 4.3.2.1)

According to Heclo (1972:85), it is a fallacy that a policy comprises unambiguous, scientific data. Instead, policy is made up of a fusion of constructions, each construction coming from an individual or particular reality. A study by Hofmann (1995:128) adds to the discussion of reality. She asserts that the interpretive aspect of policy problems is usually not considered because a problem is assumed to be neutral. Hoffman submits that the belief is that the policy processes consist only of interest groups pursuing their own material advantages. She also maintains that policy researchers will frequently see themselves as neutral observers.   This means that the standard conceptualization of the policy process has a serious flaw because it ignores the interpretive *ambiguity* of the research object: that is, the social problem, the context, the constraints on action, the power relations, and others (each being a 'reality' in their own right and each accompanied by values and emotions which nullify any potential of neutrality).   Political strategies should be seen as 'operationalized interpretations' of the policy process and the political power struggles as shaped by interpretations and reality - the reality as experienced by each of the stakeholders involved in a particular policy issue.

 Linked to the above is the issue of *multiple meanings*. This was investigated by Swaffield (1998:200). He concluded from his research into the multiple meanings of the concept 'landscape'[7] as used in resource policy in the New Zealand high country, that plurality in meaning and the disputes arising from them are 'inevitably embedded within policy discourse'.   Some stakeholders and analysts may regard emerging differences in the meaning of a concept as a problem. Swaffield, however, views differences as 'expressions of different advocacy positions'. He holds that the challenge for policy analysis is to develop methods of interpretation which 'reveal the

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[7] Swaffield (1998:208-213) found that the most typical use of the word 'landscape' was held to be the appearance of land, as physical setting. It was used as a metaphor (29 metaphors) which expressed landscape as a picture or a panorama. Distinctive associations or patterns of use linking 'landscape' to a particular set of abstract ideals were identified. The function of the word in the user's speech was identified – was the term 'owned' by the user or assigned to others? An awareness of the way language can be 'owned' by particular groups was noted. The word was used as a subjective thing; but it was also used pejoratively to distinguish the views of 'others'. It was used as something to get public support for. The word was also used in contrasting ways depending on what the users' hoped-for outcomes were; depending on the desired end goal certain aspects of the term were stressed or downplayed.

significance of difference'.   Swaffield (1998:217) asserts that strategic language use by different interest groups is one of the most effective weapons against the opposing party. Swaffield states in the conclusion of his study that the 'linguistic turn' in social and policy sciences brings attention to "the particularity and contextuality of meaning of commonly used terms within public policy formulation" (Swaffield 1998:218)[8]. It must be concluded that every policy issue deliberation will produce different meanings of significant terms in the policy as they are employed by competing parties in the context of each party wishing for different outcomes with regard to the policy issue at hand. It is not surprising that different meanings subtly shape the arguments used to persuade the other stakeholders involved.

An interpretive approach thus shows that the policy-making process has to contend with a *multiplicity of realities* (realities which are socially or collectively constructed) and has to be based in the appropriate political context - this would be the context of participatory democracy.

Other researchers point out other aspects to be considered in terms of 'realities'. Rochefort and Cobb (1994:10), for example, point out the distinction that is made by cognitive psychologists, between general and phenomenal realities. The first forms the actual basis of existence while the second is made up of the assortment of thoughts, perceptions, and feelings. It is the phenomenal reality that makes up each person's 'constructed reality'. This construction is made up of an individual's physical environment, one's own qualities, and other people's behaviour towards one. From a person's own reality a variety of issues or problems are identified, interpreted, and related to the person's view of a larger situation (Hogwood and Gunn 1984:109). The constructed reality has to be taken into account when involved in the process of policy formulation and decision-making. The phenomenal realities are no less valid, no less true, than objective, scientific, academic realities. In fact, they may prove to be of much value in finding solutions or promoting action.

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[8]In terms of public policy, Swaffield's (1998:216) study raises the questions of how strategic use of language impacts upon policy outcomes; to what degree, and for whom, multiple meanings constitute a policy problem; and what an interpretive analysis of language use contributes to a more general understanding of policy formation.

Combs (1981: 55) explains: "Reality is always   more   complex,   inchoate, contradictory, and inexplicable than our images and metaphors of it." Hence, no two people, parties, or policy stakeholders are likely to see the partial picture in the same way, and consequently the reason for the political struggle in policy matters over the definition of the problem, understanding the causes, the preference for certain solutions, and allocating resources for implementation.   It is because of this inevitable conflict that language strategies become vital to each stakeholder involved. Each wants their version of the policy reality to be accepted. Language in all its persuasive forms, myths, and symbols, eventually forms the strategies to gain the general acceptance of a group's reality.

However, Edelman (1988: 104-107) warns against what he calls the construction of political reality, a reality that is deliberately constructed in order to control and manipulate.   He maintains that these days through the mass media, people experience an event through the language describing the event and not the event itself. Even policy events close to us take their meaning from the language that describes them, for example in the media. And so, the political language - if there is conflict over meaning it becomes political - becomes political reality.

From the above research it is clear that the examination of meaning calls for a study and an awareness-raising of the different realities from which a certain policy can emerge; and how the realities of the issue and each individual stakeholder influence argumentation and communication in the process of policy formation.

2.6   COMMUNICATING BY MEANS OF SYMBOLS

As mentioned above, communication by means of myths, and symbols, is also a means by which stakeholders will argue to gain the general acceptance of their group's reality and hence acceptance of their version of the policy being discussed argued and debated. The background to the meaning and use of symbols is discussed below.

2.6.1 Origin and significance of symbols

As we grow up we assimilate a vast and complex amount of material, and we learn language. We learn many thousands of words and phrases so that we can maintain the intricate social and cultural systems we operate in. However, we learn more than mere words.   We learn connections between words, signs or symbols, and meanings, from interaction with other people, as well as about changing realities. And so, "we use and are used by language" (Cuzzort and King 1995: 325).

Saussure (1975 translation) argues that the meanings of words derive from the structures of language not from the objects to which the words refer – thus meaning is created internally within the language.   To this he adds, that not only sounds (speaking) or marks on paper (writing) can create meaning, but that any object systematically distinguished (if we see it often enough) can create meaning. For example, a traffic light when red means 'stop' and green 'go' and yellow 'get ready'. It's not necessarily the colours that create the meaning but the difference in the situation when they occur (Giddons 1994:714). Saussure called the study of non-linguistic meanings semiology, today known mainly as semiotics[9].   If symbolic content is shared, interaction is fairly simple. Where it is not shared, interaction can be inhibited or lead to many misunderstandings.   Lasswell (1966: 91) explains symbols as meanings (for example, the word 'constitution' as a symbol with various meanings).

G.H. Mead (in Giddons 1994) developed the ideas of symbols and language. Mead asserts that language enables us to become self-conscious beings, that is, become aware of our own individuality.   The key element is his view is the symbol – something that represents something else (Giddons 1994:715). For example, the word 'tree' represents the object 'tree' or the word 'car' represents the object that transports us from place to place.   Mead argues that once we have mastered a concept, such as 'tree' or 'car' we can think of it without actually seeing it. We have then learned to think of the object symbolically. Symbolic thought therefore frees us

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[9] Semiotic studies can be done on many different facets of human culture – for example, clothes and customs. Some cultures wear black for a funeral. Again it is not the colour black that is the issue, but that they are dressed differently from how they are usually dressed.

from being limited in our experience to only what we can actually see, hear, or feel. Social interaction becomes an exchange of symbols. In our interaction with others we look for clues about what type of behaviour is appropriate in that context, or how to interpret the context or what others intend to communicate. We relate our 'self' to others by means of symbols.   Ultimately, the essential element in the interaction employing symbols is shared meaning.[10]

The objection can be made that symbols are not real, that human social order is rooted in something more substantial than symbols. This may be so if we seek to locate community in the family, the market place, or the military. However, if we try and account for the continuity of these activities, we discover that a community's history is sustained by symbols. According to Mead (in Giddons 1994), history in a sense offers the community a mirror in which it can see the reflection of its collective self. And thus, just as the concept of self is vital for the individual and provides the link between the person and the community; so histories enable a community to develop a sense of identity or self. Symbols provide us with a past and a future that can be discussed in the present. We can also construct imagined futures to which we respond in the present. The future can be expressed in symbols by a politician or policy-maker and our response in the present would be to vote for or against or accept a policy. It is by the very fact that we use symbols and share their meaning, thus binding us in a community, and so becoming vulnerable to being used by them in the hands of policy-makers. Lasswell *et al* (1952: 3-5) submit that Plato described the political myth or symbol as a device used by rulers, leaders, or elites to bind the whole body politic with the strands of common belief; not so much as them 'putting something over' the ordinary members of the community.[11]

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[10] While writing this chapter, I am teaching in a Middle Eastern country where sometimes I find relaxed interaction difficult, not only because I don't speak Arabic, but also because the people around me and I do not share the meaning of various 'symbols'. This does not only apply to signs which do not mean the same here as in my own country, but things I do that express something different to what it does in my own culture. By not covering my hair, for example, or not speaking with downcast eyes to a man or the way I shake hands, may be taken to mean that I am not a respectable woman as I do not fit what they in their culture view a respectable woman to be. It also indicates that I am still unfamiliar with their network of values, meanings, concerns, and labelings, as my hosts are with mine – we do not yet share meaning.

[11] The word symbol is derived from the Greek word symbolon. In ancient Greece it was a custom to break a slate of burned clay into several pieces and distribute them within the group. When the group reunited the pieces were fitted together (Greek symbollein). This confirmed the members belonging to the group (http:// www.symbols.com. Access: 12 January 2002).

2.6.2. Application of symbols

There are key symbols which occur regularly in political statements. Symbols are part of the life experience of all people, irrespective of status or education, and therefore these key symbols are part of the body politic. Key symbols are focal points of the shaping of attitude, uniting child with adult, layman with expert, and man of thought with man of action. The key symbol is the common denominator of doctrine, formula, and folklore (miranda) (Lasswell *et al* 1952:14). The unifying role of symbols is not restricted to institutions of power but is also found in the discourse of lay people. Key symbols are placed into different categories: those referring to persons and groups (symbols of identification), those according to preferences and volitions (symbols of demand), and those referring to assumptions of fact (symbols of expectation).

An ideology can be assessed according to the key symbols being given mainly negative or mainly positive treatment. The South African Apartheid government, so for instance, had its share of negative symbols for the opposition; the 'Black' danger ('die swart gevaar'), the 'Red' danger ('die rooigevaar'), and the commonly used symbols conjured by the terms such as 'terrorist', 'agitators'. The anti-apartheid movement, in turn, used 'freedom fighter' (positive), 'the struggle' (negative), the 'regime' (negative) and others to create solidarity amongst their followers.

Between the key symbol and creeds and codes, there is the political cliché which is a phrase or a sentence widely quoted, for example, George W. Bush's 'compassionate conservativeness' in the 2001 election. Both key symbols and clichés are not limited to words. Flags, coats of arms, logos are also examples of symbols of identification.

Related to symbols are the slogans of politics, and Lasswell *et al* define them as "brief statements addressed to the masses for their guidance" – for example, the 'One settler, one bullet' slogan of the PAC.

Symbols can change, be accepted or rejected.   This may be because a government, a political party, or policy is defeated – then the symbol is rejected. However, if the symbol is accompanied by victory and prosperity its acceptance is assured. South Africa has in recent years seen the change in national symbols. Symbols that had been created for the white population, and were thus rejected by the black population, have been replaced by new symbols (a new flag, a 'new' anthem combining Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika, Die Stem, and The Call of South Africa) and coat of arms reflecting the Government of National Unity. The aim of the new symbols is to provide people with new representations of themselves – their 'self' and their community. The ANC government is involved in a battle over the past to change the future. It needs to create a new identity for its people and bring about reconciliation and solidarity.   This serves as a consolidation of power. (See, for example, the use of national government priorities as symbols in the plastic bag policy: 4.3.3.)

We also see South Africans remaking the past by adapting and changing symbols. The former National Party has changed its name (the New National Party), its logo and its old pro-apartheid image (which probably includes checking the wording of its constitution and policies). The new party ideologies have had to accommodate themselves to local-level discourses in order to attract South Africans of colour. Development projects may also become symbols of a nation and will be accepted or rejected depending on their success or failure. In South Africa, two projects which have become symbolic of political change and reconciliation in the country are the Reconstruction and Development programme (2002 - The Year of the Volunteer for Reconstruction and Development) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The real success of both has been argued, but it cannot be disputed that they have been successful as symbols of political change.

Symbols are used to manipulate us because one of the functions of symbolization is that it generates a feeling of well-being: the resolution of tension. Edelman (1995) points out that creating this sense of well-being is not only a key function of widely publicized regulatory statutes, but also of their administration. Widely publicized

administrative activities are likely to convey a sense of well-being to the observer because they suggest great activity, while in fact they are usually a sign of inactivity or protection of the 'regulated'.   Symbols are thus used to obtain the quiescence of the citizens (For an example, refer to 4.3.3., b).

Issues are expanded or contained by means of symbols. The wide reaching effect of symbols depends on the following factors (Cobb and Elder 1972):

i) *Historical precedence*: symbols may have a long historical background within a certain political community and thus they can be used to provoke positive or negative reactions – for example, terms associated with apartheid.

ii) *Credibility*: symbols have to be used in the appropriate context otherwise they will do more harm than good to the cause they are being used for.

iii) *Saturation*: if a symbol is overused it will lose its impact.

iv) *Reinforcement*: a symbol will be more effective if it is used with other symbols which reinforce it – for example, the Government of National Unity's effort to create unity and solidarity in South Africa, focuses on the new flag, the coat of arms, and the 'new' anthem as a group of symbols reinforcing themselves and the concept that they are meant to represent, which includes the government's national priorities of job creation and economic growth, poverty alleviation, a better living environment, nature conservation, the building of a common patriotism and the promotion of the African Renaissance.   In the 'Plastic Bag' policy these priorities are stressed because they have become a symbol of 'a government at work' to create a better life for its citizens or 'people' (The term 'community' used in the 'plastic bag' policy debate also has the connotation of 'the people').

v) *Urgency or portent* of a symbol: if a symbol implies action or a warning of a catastrophe it is bound to be picked up faster by a greater part of the public (thus a scare tactic).

Strategies in terms of symbol-use that stakeholders will employ to argue their case are: couching definitions in ambiguous terms, stressing the social significance of an issue, employing non-technical language on the one hand, but on the other sometimes using euphemism or terminological confusion, indicating the long-term

relevance of an issue or its distinctiveness – not having a precedent (Cobb and Elder 1972). (For an example, refer to 4.3.3 c.)

The ordinary citizens, in unorganized (usually large) groups, and therefore in unfavourable strategic positions are, in terms of public policy issues, often exposed to distorted, stereotyped, inexact information which is transmitted with the aid of symbols and reinforced by the mass media as an instrument of influential policy-makers. The mass media are used to elicit action such as arousing concern, provoking action, deterring the opposition, demonstrating strength of commitment and affirming support (Parsons 1997: 129).

2.7   CONCLUSION

This section has examined meaning, interpretation, and reality, and their potential for affecting communication within and of policy. It has highlighted the need for stakeholders to be aware of and accept different realities and to form collective realities for the formation of effective policy. This is only possible if communication is effective between the stakeholders. In addition, the section has investigated symbols – the space between the words (that which is not stated) that construct meaning. It has indicated how ordinary citizens and stakeholders may be reassured and controlled by symbols - primarily because many are unable to analyze complex situations rationally (symbols tend to whip up emotions and remind of and induce biases). This, to a large extent, is the result of the discourse employed in presenting the issue. The language strategies such as deliberation, persuasion, and distortion or manipulation, used in conjunction with symbols in the policy process are discussed in the next section.

Section 3

DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN PUBLIC POLICY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In simple terms, public policy can be viewed as the public solutions that are implemented in an effort to solve public problems. This section examines the language strategies which may be used when deliberating about, discussing, formulating and communicating public policy. These strategies are employed in a struggle for power to secure specific ideas and interests and put them into practice. The quality of the language in this 'interplay' is best described by Edelman in *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (1988: 102) when he declares: "The ingenuity of the human mind in constructing worlds and the capacity of language to indulge that talent are subtle and concealed, but they are also fundamental influences upon politics".

However carefully words are used, and however meticulously their meanings are refined, language tends to simplify and then just as easily to misrepresent the complexity of the real world. Heywood (1993) warns that if we mistake the 'word' for the 'thing' we are in danger, as the Zen saying sums it up, of mistaking the finger pointing at the moon as the moon itself. In politics, and in the policy process, this can be a deliberate tactic to mystify an issue for the voter.

The political changes in many developing countries and the concomitant shift towards a responsive democracy, and an awareness of how language is used to polarize and to control (Hogan 1998; Edelman 1985, 1988), has caused a new interest in discourse and rhetoric and in the role of the orator and the audience in the process of change.   Hence the need in this study to define the orator's and

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audience's   position   and   role,   as stakeholders, in the policy process, as well as their use of language strategies.

3.2 LANGUAGE STRATEGIES

Policy-making is among other things a problem-solving process, subject to power struggles and conflicts of interest (Hofmann 1995:127), and moral disagreement[12] . Stakeholders try to achieve a position of power within the policy process because, generally, other parties are likely to submit to the policy presented by the stakeholder with the most power; hence the essential role of argumentation and the development of various language strategies. (Gutmann and Thompson (1997) introduce moral deliberation into the equation, which in its own way shapes the strategies applied in arguing for a policy.)

Majone (1989: xii) contends that it is vital that a policy analyst be able to recognize a good or satisfactory policy, as well as learn rhetorical and dialectic[13] skills, which he defines as being "the ability to define a problem according to various points of view, to draw an argument from many different sources, to adapt the argument to the audience, and to educate public opinion". Hence the strategies most likely to be used in the policy process will be examined below. (Refer to section 4, 4.3.4.1)

3.2.1 Deliberation

The ultimate aim of communication in policy is to get someone to agree with an idea, concept or policy statement and then to vote in favour of it. It does, however, not come about simply, swiftly, and conveniently, since it involves the 'give-and-take' of

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[12] That is, conflicts about fundamental values (Gutmann and Thompson 1997).

[13] Dialectic and dialectical: According to The Oxford Companion to the English Language (1992) it is the art or craft of argument ; dialectical relates to (the nature of) logical argument; especially as a means of investigating or uncovering the truth of a theory or a point of view; or the association or interaction of ideas, forces, arguments, etc., that conflict and compete. G.W.F. Hegel, one of the great influences on modern political thought, submitted a theory of the dialectic. He believed that only by comparing an object or concept to its opposite could the original object be understood. The dialectic, therefore, consists of a threefold (a triad) historical movement in which a given condition referred to as the "thesis', generates its own opposition (its "negation') or "antithesis". The subsequent struggle between these opposing forces brings about a new state or condition – the "synthesis". The process doesn't stop here. Hegel's triad is a continuum. The synthesis forms the thesis and thus creates its own opposed conditions (Cuzzort and King 1995: 89).

ideas during deliberation followed by collective decision-making by several actors or stakeholders. Deliberation is however necessary as a first phase if the aim of a government or its representatives is to have a responsive or reciprocal[14] democracy.

Deliberation is not a new concept but a revival[15] of ideas as old as democracy itself, as indicated by Elster (1998:1) when he quotes the words of Pericles 500 BC in his eulogy of Athens:

> Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters; for, unlike any other nation, we regard the citizen who takes no part in these duties not as unambitious but as useless, and we are able to judge proposals even if we cannot originate them; instead of looking on discussion as a stumbling-block in the way of action, we think it an indispensable preliminary to any wise action at all (Thucydides II.40).

The suggestion is thus, that before the decision is made, it be preceded by deliberation (a strategy that encourages *reciprocity*: see footnote 2) collectively by citizens and their representatives before it is taken to parliament.

If decisions were made collectively by free, equal, and rational individuals deliberation would not be needed. However, this is not the case.   Deliberation is needed because different views, definitions, formulations, and solutions are brought to the policy discussion from different realities. In the everyday policy process the

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[14] Gutmann and Thompson (1997) state that in a deliberative democracy, citizens and public officials are required to justify public policy by giving reasons that can be accepted by those who are bound by it. The essence of the process of deliberation therefore, is to seek justifiable reasons, and this implies 3 principles: reciprocity, publicity, and accountability.   Reciprocity entails reasoning that is mutually acceptable – offers reasons that can be accepted by others who are similarly motivated to find reasons that can be accepted by others.

[15] The revival may well have come about because television and radio have once more involved the citizens – the politician or decision-maker who is their representative, comes into their living room on television/radio to argue his/her case. Their representative is accountable to them and they can register their disapproval by means of their vote. Of course, it is possible that what the citizen as viewer is presented with, may be biased and manipulated; something of which citizens hopefully are aware. In addition to television, the Internet also has the potential for direct access, for instance, in 'electronic democracy' where there is direct contact by means of the Internet (Euronews E-news, 16 April 2002).

stakeholders do not have equivalent degrees of communicative competence; they are not all free, equal, and rational and the situation is not free of domination, self-deception, and strategic interaction, nor do they have equal access to information.

That deliberation is a significant element right from the beginning at the problem-defining stage, is reflected in an observation by Wolman (1981:463), namely, that policy agendas reflect the mobilization of political demands rather than a rational process of evaluating needs, values, and objectives. Thus 'problems' frequently appear on the decision-making agenda without having been adequately conceptualized or thought through. Related to this, is Gutmann and Thompson's contention (1997: 33) that some policymakers do not reject deliberation outright, but attempt to avoid moral disagreement by avoiding the need for a substantive moral discussion. Hence serious deliberation is apparently seldom an option in the policy process or considered a strategy which would produce successful policies.

Yet, by deliberating, stakeholders deepen their understanding of the consequences of the various options for themselves and for the stakeholders whose cooperation is critical. Deliberation establishes a common ground from which action can be taken – it provides a starting point and gives general direction to the process. It will also establish whether there is political will to pursue the course or direction chosen and therefore commitment to finding a solution (Saunders 2001: 63).

It is argued that deliberation, under certain conditions can do more harm than good. If the quality of the outcomes declines rapidly with time, then long deliberation is a waste of time. There is further the possibility that in public discussion some stakeholders may be deceived by another's eloquence, thus leading to conformism. Added to this, through discussion, stakeholders get to know each other's preferences and weaknesses, take advantage thereof, and the weaker stakeholder may then acquiesce to the stronger. In terms of information, lobbies can manipulate the information (Gambetta 1998: 21-22). Discussion may introduce more issues and hence more conflict, making choice indeterminate, and extending the discussion.

However, Gutmann and Thompson (1997) argue that although there is the risk that once the moral sensitivities of citizens and officials are involved they may be less willing to compromise, not raising them can make unjustifiable compromises more common. Moral deliberation is preferable to other ways that are employed to deal with moral conflict, such as violence or manipulation (instead of reasoning).[16]

As already mentioned, the everyday operation of the democratic policy process is imperfect, as too are its structures and outcomes. However, on balance it does more to benefit than to harm the quality of decisions or their legitimacy, or both. Gutmann and Thompson (1997: 40-41) admit that both officials and citizens have limited generosity and incomplete understanding, and therefore, whatever takes place in the policy process frequently falls short of the moral ideal required. Landy (1993: 24) goes so far as to suggest that for most people, "good citizenship, like physical fitness, doesn't come naturally". But this increases, not lessens the need for deliberation. Deliberation acts as an in-built control over too much self-interest, especially at a local government level.[17]

Gutmann and Thompson's (1997: 37 – 51) arguments for encouraging deliberation, and in particular the need for moral deliberation, are specially relevant to the context of countries such as South Africa where the majority of citizens were denied freedom of speech and the basic opportunity and dignity to live a decent life – the fundamentals of democracy.   Gutmann and Thompson defend the need for deliberation by asserting that ignoring or denying the need for applying moral arguments to the imperfections could lead to more imperfections or amorality. A deliberative majority may better protect basic liberties and opportunities.

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[16] Moral deliberation cannot be left only to the courts, where it is an essential element of case argumentation.

[17] Landy (1993: 24) cites Jane Mansbridge (Beyond Adversary Democracy. 1980. Basic Books) and Michael Walzer ("Civility and Civic Virtue in Contemporary America". Radical Principles: Reflections of An Unconstructed Democrat. 1980. M. Walzer. (ed).s.l. Basic Books.) as arguing that decentralization offers the best hope of providing arenas for citizenship because citizens function better in policy-making when close to home. Adversarial goals and tactics will dominate at the national level.

It is suggested that democratic deliberation address the problem of moral disagreement and offer a moral response to moral conflict. The following point to a way *how* deliberation deals with moral conflict (Gutmann and Thompson 1997: 41-43):

1. The first source of moral disagreement is the problem of *scarce resources*. When resources are scarce some citizens will not get what they want or need, and they may even receive nothing. Any decision, however difficult, should at least be acceptable to those who receive less than they deserve or nothing. Deliberation shows that everybody's claims have been considered, and considered on their merits, not on basis of wealth, status or power. Citizens are more likely have a different attitude to policy decisions with which they disagree if they have been adopted after careful consideration of all the diverse moral claims on the resources. Gutmann and Thompson (1997: 42) point out that while moral justification does not make up for being deprived of resources, it does help sustain the political legitimacy that will make it possible to acquire or share in those resources in the future. Moral justification will help stakeholders live more cordially with each other.   Forums that are more deliberative are like a double-edged sword. On the one hand they bring previously excluded voices into the forums, but also increase the risk of more conflict.   This, however, has the advantage of revealing legitimate moral dissatisfactions that would have been suppressed by other ways dealing with disagreement. Citizens seek a consensus that represents a truly moral standpoint that they can accept on reciprocal terms. However, they will probably continue to disagree, and deliberative consensus will never be complete, but more will have been achieved than by not instigating deliberation and discussion at all.

2. *Limited generosity* is another source of moral disagreement in politics and policy. Forums are created for deliberation in which citizens are encouraged to view issues more broadly than they otherwise would. More public-spiritedness is encouraged. John Stuart Mill is quoted as saying about the deliberative process, that when a citizen participates in political discussion he is "called upon…to weigh interests not his own; to be guided, in case of conflicting claims by rule than his own partialities; to apply, at every turn, principles and maxims which have for the reason of their

existence the common good". While not   all stakeholders will suddenly think in terms of the common good they will at least view things from a broader perspective and take into account the claims of a greater number of their fellow citizens. In the process, moral arguments may hopefully weigh heavier than claims of political power. To what degree stakeholders will be influenced by being exposed to different viewpoints will depend on the backgrounds of the various stakeholders: how well-informed they are (South Africa, for example, how much access do citizens have to the media and what do they know about the 'reality of the other stakeholders'? Or in terms of this study: are environmentalists unemployed?); the distribution of resources among them (how much of the resources do they have – only a little, none, or much more than the other stakeholders?); the nature of their political culture (in South Africa, for example – the population group they belong to? Or in Sri Lanka – whether they are Tamils or Sri Lankans; or Nigeria – whether Muslim or Christian).

3. There is frequently moral disagreement because of *incompatible moral values*. Once again deliberation can bring the conflict into the open, "helping to distinguish between the moral, the amoral, and the immoral, and between compatible and incompatible values" (Gutmann and Thompson 1997: 43). A proper decision cannot be made if there are issues that are kept hidden, but which are the cause of constant disagreement. Deliberation will separate self-interested claims on resources from the public-spirited ones and isolate those that are truly incompatible. Stakeholders may discover that they have been operating with insufficient information or incorrect information, or they may find ways to settle conflict by bargaining (not self-interested bargaining), negotiation, and compromise. Being confronted with the seriousness with which 'opposing' stakeholders view certain issues, can bring about a mutual respect for each others values even when they continue to disagree.

4. *Incomplete understanding*[18] is another source of moral conflict. Through the give-and-take   of   argument   understanding   can   become   more   complete.

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[18] See the argument about *access* to information by van Dijk, T.E. 1996. "Discourse, power and access". In *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis* edited by C.R. Caldas-Coulthard and M. Coulthard, London: Routledge or a brief summary in chapter 3 of this study under the subheading 'Power from a communicative perspective'.

Stakeholders learn from each other and   recognize their own individual and collective mistakes. Hence, they develop new views and policies that are more widely justifiable. "Deliberative democracy contains the means of its own correction". When stakeholders deliberate they move beyond the conventional patterns of group politics – "communicating by sound bite, competing by character assassination, and resolving conflicts through self-seeking bargaining" (Gutmann and Thompson 1997: 12). Deliberation leads to changes of mind more than to shifts in power, and there is a greater chance of directing attention towards improvement. Shifts of power are generally a result of groups and individuals bargaining and negotiating on the basis of preferences and self-interest, not for what is best for those directly affected by the policy-decision.

Landy (1993: 23) offers a similar viewpoint regarding the 'mind-changing' characteristic of deliberation. He states that even though each stakeholder has particular goals and ambitions, and though a committee chairman who presides over the proceedings, has already orchestrated the meeting of stakeholders to produce predetermined policy objectives or outcomes, the discussion it brings about inevitably introduces new facts or perspectives, understanding may deepen, and opinions will likely be changed.

Fearon (1998: 45) (who terms deliberation 'discussion') and Gambetta (1998: 24) together offer the following benefits of deliberation which closely resemble Gutmann and Thompson's elucidation:

‣   reveals private information
‣   lessens or overcomes the impact of bounded rationality
‣   forces or induces a particular mode of justifying demands
‣   legitimizes the ultimate choice
‣   is desirable for its own sake
‣   makes for Pareto-superior decisions
‣   makes for better decisions in terms of distributive justice
‣   makes for a larger consensus

‣　　improves the moral and intellectual qualities of the participants

Not all are in agreement: Elster (1998) suggests that the last argument and the one about legitimacy do not stand on the same footing as the others. A particular decision-making procedure or persuasive strategy would not be chosen for its impact on the character of participants; however, it could be a by-product of the deliberating process. Fearon (1998: 45) bases his argument of bounded rationality[19], hence its advantage as a strategy, on the inventiveness of deliberation. Decision-making does not only entail the choosing between alternatives, but also the generating of new alternatives. Przeworski (1998: 155) rejects the idea of deliberation bringing about legitimacy. He argues that deliberation brings together similar beliefs, and locks individuals into equilibria which he asserts are collectively sub-optimal even according to the Pareto criterion[20]. There is a potential danger of public communication or deliberation being prone to manipulation.

Despite the shortcomings of deliberation, citizens should have the right to exercise their capacities for judgment and deliberation. There is little enough opportunity for them to be directly involved in political life, therefore they should be able to be involved at the level of deliberation either themselves (in an interest group) or by means of representation and therefore to use deliberation as a positive strategy to produce effective policies. And so it is their right "to demand [that] the agents of the state remain responsive to citizen concerns and enrich public discourse" (Landy 1993: 25)[21]. Thus deliberation should be a part of the policy discussion

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[19] Fearon (1998: 49-50) explains that discussion "may lessen the impact of the fact that our imaginations and calculating abilities are limited and fallible; and so, facing a complex problem individuals may prefer to pool their limited capabilities through discussion/deliberation and increase the odds of making a good choice".

[20] Pareto–optimality, defined according to the Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics, is: If there is a state of affairs C such that no (further) Pareto improvements can be made, C is Pareto-optimal. That is, it is a situation in which nobody can be made to feel better off except by making at least one person feel worse off. The set of all Pareto optima is called the Pareto frontier.

[21] If there is serious disagreement about the resolving of a policy issue a consideration would be the 'sustained dialogue' between stakeholders as proffered by Saunders (2001: 88-90). He declares that " only through repeated interactions do people come to feel safe enough to open themselves to a degree that may be painful or respectful enough to give an opposing view a careful hearing".

even though it means spending more time thrashing out definitions and formulations.

3.2.2 ARGUMENTATION AND PERSUASION

Building on deliberation, stakeholders make use of argumentation to present each group's case. Majone asserts (1989: 7) that in a system of government by discussion policy analysis has less to do with problem-solving than with the *process of argument*. Argument is central to all phases of the policy process, particularly if the system is democratic. The stakeholder seeking selfish goals still has to justify the policy by appealing to the public concern and presenting the intellectual or rational merits of the case.

From the practice of 'government by deliberation' in the city-state, the Greeks had further developed a general technique of critical discourse, which they termed dialectic[22]. Characteristic of this method are the nature of its premises and the social context of its applications. A dialectic argument doesn't begin from abstract assumptions, but from the viewpoint already held in a community; and its conclusion is not formal proof, but *shared understanding* reached on the issue being deliberated. Majone (1989:6) points out that dialectic (as opposed to scientific disciplines) can be used by everybody because we all at some time or other either criticize or defend an argument.

For the Greeks (and for a democracy utilizing forums to deliberate policy issues) dialectic has 3 main uses (Majone 1989:6). First, it is used as a method of critical enquiry into the fundamental tenets and assumptions of the various specialized disciplines. Second, it is used both as a technique for arguing in favour of one's own opinions and a procedure for elucidating controversial issues. Lastly, it is employed as process of education that changes the common man into an informed citizen, and the expert into someone able to communicate with his fellow citizens.

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[22] See footnote 3, page 30, for a definition.

According to Majone (1989: 6), policy analysis is similar to dialectic in that it starts with a believable premise, with challengeable and shifting viewpoints, not with hard facts or irrefutable proof. Nor does it produce formal evidence, but only *persuasive arguments*. Wildavsky (1979: 42) predicts that if any proposed solution to a policy issue is implemented, it creates a whole set of new issues, ensuring that no public problem ever dies. (See 4.3.4.2 (vii)) For example, the implantation of foetal tissue into the brains of sufferers of Parkinson's disease (Kolata 1990). This technique holds promise for this debilitating condition, but widespread opposition has arisen based on the fear that the technique will encourage abortions, and so a new issue emerges. So policy analysis contributes to public deliberation through critique, advocacy, and education and benefits the policy debate, based on argumentation, because in amongst the many issues and perspectives, it provides standards of arguments and an intellectual structure for public discourse. These are essential for fruitful discussion and debate. An unorganized deliberative body is vulnerable to disruption, which may prevent appropriate and effective policy formation. There is thus a necessity formal or structured parliamentary, electoral, administrative, and judicial procedure; however, time should also be allowed for presenting individual perspectives.

The following underlie disputes that need to be argued through to form policy:

▸ The cause - somebody or something is blamed: for example, who is to blame for the litter problem? Is it the consumer who indiscriminately throws away the plastic bag or the retailer who provides them or

▸ The perceived social significance, implications, and urgency of the situation: for example, the dispute about the need for the Plastic Bag policy policy highlights the negative impact on tourism and the environment of the citizens living in under-privileged areas, and on the other hand the loss of jobs.

▸ The solution/s to the problem: for example, should the government generate money by imposing a levy on plastic bags? Should the cost be absorbed by the retailers or manufacturers?   Should the government provide money towards consumer education; or is it the role of the retailer or manufacturer? (For examples refer to 4.3.4.2 (iv))

Stakeholders employ diverse methods of argumentation to get their own perspective accepted. The first, since the context is a democracy, is to argue in such a way to recruit as many new participants for an issue as possible. It is usually the weaker stakeholder who will have to work out an alternative to get the dispute going. The stakeholder who controls the acceleration or limitation of the number of participants involved in the dispute has the upper hand. Definition and redefinition of a problem are used as tools by opposing stakeholders to gain advantage. Defining issues in procedural or narrow technical terms, so that few understand them, will restrict participation (Nelkin 1975); which could be viewed as a strategy by a stakeholder who wants to push an argument through without any deliberation. Should another stakeholder wish to intensify participation, issues may be connected to broad social themes, such as justice, democracy, and liberty. Conflict may occur spontaneously in the forum and cause confusion. Stakeholders may attempt to direct the conflict's course by strategic manoeuvres based on problem definition or the solution (Rochefort and Cobb 1994:5). For an example, refer to 4.3.4.2 (ii) and 4.3.4.2 (vi).

Considering policy in service of some policy-making authority will compel such stakeholders to use policy analysis as an applied profession. This implies a technical method of argumentation involving logical steps for diagnosing problems and devising cost-effective solutions. They will wish to formulate a policy, which includes the listing of expenditures, deployment of personnel, and development of procedures that will decrease or eliminate the undesirable problem without unnecessary harmful consequences to any related activities.

Each of the stakeholders will enter the fray with a different style of argumentation. Each type of politicking will be different, and ultimately, whether an issue will reach the policy agenda, and whose version it will be, depends much on their argumentation and persuasive skills.   Further, different public arenas (legislatures, courts, bureaucracies, and the media) are satisfied by different policy definitions. Baumgartner and Jones (1993: 37) declare " Where the

rhetoric begins to change, venue changes become more likely. Where venue changes occur, rhetorical changes are facilitated". This once more indicates the importance of language to understanding, to argumentation, and individual and group expression, in order to present policy for public attention; and its role as medium that reflects, advances, and interprets the alternative realities presented in the policy-making contest.

The first step in the policy process involving argumentation is defining the norms that make the policy. There are two distinctions that have to be made: norms are set, and norms are used to implement the policy. Contrary to what is frequently assumed, these are not two different worlds. Norm setting and norm 'using' should not be undertaken by two different bodies - the decision-makers (setting the standards) and the administrators (carrying out the standards). There should be agreement about both what the problem is, and the solution; and so both bodies should be involved in the whole policy process. Another reason for bringing the two functions (norm setting and norm using) together, is that the language of legislative mandates is frequently vague and ambiguous. The resulting uncertainty makes input by both experts and administrators necessary – resulting in better policy because the content of the inputs will be argued. For example, consider a facet of poverty (example adapted from Rochefort and Cobb 1994): A two-parent family with five children is poor although the father is employed. The reason for this could be one of several.

Stakeholders will argue this problem from different perspectives. They may agree on the problem, but not on the causality factor or the implementation. The causes argued may be:

▸   The father's wages are too low
▸   His qualifications are too low
▸   He has not worked hard enough to get a good job
▸   The mother is unwilling to work
▸   The mother has no qualification and cannot find work

‣ The family cannot find adequate day-care facilities for the children not at school yet – there are none

‣ They cannot afford day-care facilities

‣ The day-care fees take up almost all the money the mother would earn if she went to work

‣ The parents should not have had so many children in the first place

When a stakeholder chooses a variable to emphasize, various methods can be applied:

A stakeholder can focus on the argument from a different *level of analysis* - from micro-individual forces to macro-social forces. With the poverty-stricken two-parent family the question arises whether the policy should implement a family-planning programme, an adult education programme, tax-relief, or a child – support program, or provide more day-care centres.   The problem can be viewed from the perspective of the individual, the social system or the plane of fundamental beliefs and cultural agreements. These, in turn, are embedded in larger processes that would involve forces such as business and technology, economics and other social forces.

Statistics, numbers, or *measurements* are a popular way to stress an argument. However, no two analysts will gauge a social problem's scale, rate of change, or distribution in the same way (Rochefort and Cobb 1993:12). For example, the wry observation during the height of anti-apartheid demonstrations in Soweto (and the resulting number of deaths) that policemen can't count is perhaps evidence of the imprecision of measurement. Similar situations occur in the many conflict-ridden areas worldwide. (For examples, refer to 4.3.4.2 (vi))

How stakeholders argue an issue often depends on its *connection* with another. (For examples, refer to 4.3.4.2 (ix))

So for instance, if there were an issue involving allocation of funds to education and a greater part would end up going to schools who had been previously advantaged (South Africa's white Education as opposed to black Education), a

stakeholder whose schools had in the past received substantially less of the state allocation to education, will feel strongly against any more money being allocated to the advantaged schools.

Stakeholders may, further, argue in order to win '*ownership*' of a problem, that is, to be the body serving as "the recognized authority on essential questions of causes, consequences, and authorities" (Rochefort and Cobb 1993:14) (For examples, refer to 4.3.4.2 (x)). These stakeholders may form a well outlined, specialized "community of operatives" (Hilgartner and Bosk 1988) that advocates and provides the theories and data on which the problem is based and suggests the method of implementation. It is a sign that a problem is owned when a certain paradigm of explanation shaping policy development is not challenged by argumentation or is marginalized (if the arguments are not listened to) in the decision-making process. Depending on the issue, such ownership may be sought by religious, professional, economic, or ideological groups. Rochefort and Cobb (1993:12) offer as an issue with unresolved ownership the matter of the homeless, for which three points of view have emerged, namely that homelessness is the result of a housing shortage, of economic dislocation, and of mental hospital de-institutionalization.   For each explanation there are advocates and providers, who are well-organized and armed with relevant data and research findings.   Each wishes public financing for services within his/her domain whether it be for affordable housing, job training, or community health programmes. Frequently a holistic approach is taken by policy-makers and the resources are thinly spread to give each group something. This has not yet proved to be effective.

Policy discourse explains, describes, recommends, and especially, persuades. Each level of the process is likely to contain one or two of the following elements: *Causality*: problem definition invariably includes something about its origins, how it came about. Hence culpability will be sought. This will provoke blame and fault-finding – a favourite strategy by politicians. One of the considerations is whether the causes are individual or impersonal. This forms the basis of the

traditional debate between liberalism and conservativism. According to the left, poverty, for example, is caused by the failure of the economic system; and the right tend to blame the lack of individual or group effort. Stone (1988, 1989) makes a distinction between causes viewed as intentional (purposive action to bring about a certain result) and accidental. If the action is seen to be in the public interest and effective it is termed a rational success. However, if the outcome proves to be harmful, the action is investigated and words such as 'victims' and 'conspiracies' are bantered about. (For an example, refer to 4.3.4.2 (iv))

A social problem can also be presented in terms of *severity.* Since the aim is to capture public interest the argument will warn of the consequences of the problem if ignored. There will be mention of a threshold that has been crossed and how a situation will grow worse. Two policy issues suited to this kind of argumentation is the South African crime rate and the prevalence of AIDS. Their severity ensures them a place on the agenda. (For examples, refer to 4.3.4.2 (xi)).

The frequency and the prevalence or *incidence* of a social problem serves as another way to draw attention to it. Stakeholders using this to get the public attention hope the public will demand rapid intervention. Statistics is the most useful way to represent the incidence of the problem. Incidence can also be depicted on a class-basis – either highlighted or downplayed, depending on the effect sought. Highlighting the fact that child abuse occurs at all class levels has made it a more universal concern. On the other hand, if the incidence of the problem is identified with a particular population group, for example, infants with AIDS, or homeless aged, this may elicit more sympathy along with greater allocation of resources.

 An appeal can also be made in respect of the *novelty* of an issue and draw attention to it. These issues can be in the limelight for a while until the public and the media lose interest. It will depend on the involved stakeholder to keep the

interest for a solution. Usually there is no consensus about the problem because there are no familiar solutions.   The previously mentioned example about Parkinson's Disease and foetal brain tissue would be an issue dealt with in this way, as well as those where families wish to have a baby which can act as a tissue donor for a terminally ill sibling who then with the help of genetic engineering ensure a match.

If an issue can claim personal relevancy it is assured of wide support. Stakeholders thus argue that an issue has *proximity*.

A word widely-used to win support is *crisis*. The argument will contain warnings of calamities and emergencies.   South Africans can recall the warnings of 'rooigevaar' and 'swartgevaar' by the Apartheid government and more recently all over the world but particularly in the United States, the words 'September 11', 'ground zero', and 'terrorism'. These words can form negative perceptions and lean towards coercion.   The result can be that if the concept of a 'problem population'[23] is generally accepted the negative perception could lead to fewer resources being allocated to them. (For examples, refer to 4.3.4.2 (xi)).

Whatever method is chosen by a stakeholder to influence opinion with the public policy process, from recognizing problems, to finding causes and choosing solutions to implement the pattern will depend on the issue, the audience, and the availability of the solution.

3.3   Illicit persuasion and non-rational argumentation

The function of positive argumentation is to inform, educate, and persuade, but can just as easily distract, deceive, and manipulate.   The 'dark side' of rhetoric or argumentation resides in (and did so in the context of World War I and afterwards) imperialistic manipulation, propaganda, smear campaigns, and mass psychological indoctrination (Sauer 1997:63).   Orwell (1984) described this negative aspect as the abuse of language. This negative type of argumentation

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[23] For instance the focus on Muslims and associating them as a group with acts of terror. Cf. Covering Islam by Edward W. Said (1997. London: Vintage).

is as much part of political discourse as is the desire of many policy-makers to use language to advance democracy.

3.3.1 MANIPULATION AND COERCION

According to van Dijk (1996:85), a great deal of "'modern' power in democratic societies is persuasive and manipulative rather than coercive (using of force), or incentive, such as the explicit issuing of commands, orders, threats, or economic sanctions". Discourse therefore plays a crucial role in 'manufacturing the consent' of others (Herman and Chomsky 1988). (Refer to 4.3.4.2 (xiii))

In the particular context of policy-making, Przeworski (1998: 142) similarly argues that citizens are vulnerable to manipulation, and thus proponents of deliberation must first persuade us that people will indeed vote on the basis of good reasons (after having deliberated) when they participate in free, equal, and reasoned public deliberation. This is, however, not a given. He submits that if everyone has information of the same quality, and has the same ability to interpret it; deliberation would then not modify beliefs held by each individual or group. If beliefs are changed as a result of communication during deliberation it must be because there is unequal access to information or that someone has an inadequate reasoning ability. In such a case it is natural to adapt one's perspective to someone else's greater information. Inequality of information may come about only because stakeholders come from different work environments. Being in an unfamiliar context or discipline can lead to the tendency to take the information offered by 'experts' in a field as the truth, without questioning the information or considering it from another perspective or 'reality'.

In a world of conflicts of interests, therefore, arguments need to be critically examined through the eyes of the other stakeholders. Przeworski (1998: 145) speculates that if someone holds a true [technical[24]] belief, would it not still be

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[24] According to Przeworski (1998: 143), "if individuals are able to choose among policies, they must have beliefs about the consequences of their vote for the outcomes about which they care. There are two kinds of beliefs a) technical beliefs: models of causal relations between policies and outcomes; and b) equilibrium beliefs: beliefs about other people's beliefs.

possible to acquire a false belief as a result of communication.   He describes aspects of "strategic talk": (a) while some people hold true beliefs and others none, truth cannot be plausibly communicated because speech predictable from the interest of the speaker is not credible; or (b) somebody who held no beliefs about a particular matter can be told and accept falsehood. If one person knows he/she does not have the costly information, but that someone else has it, then false beliefs can be communicated and accepted.   However, Przeworski does admit that more people hold true beliefs as a result of communication than without it. But he (1998:146) asks whether it is really impossible for more people to hold false beliefs as a result of deliberation.   He puts forward two ways of being deceived into holding false beliefs: a person may know who he/she is, but holds a false belief about the actions that promote his/her interests; or he/she may hold the correct technical beliefs, but identifies him/herself with a group (stakeholder) of which he/she is not part but believes the group will promote his/her interests.   Przeworski adds the example of large companies spending vast amounts of money to place an advert in a newspaper which disseminates certain information to the public. He questions the agenda of the company. Are such companies who are spending money to communicate doing so merely to throw away money or to persuade their audience to hold beliefs not in their best interests? He argues that the body that has the truth wants to share it with those who do not have it to 'level the playing field' - and it will cost money. Deliberation is only effective if there is inequality – and so, he asserts, that as soon as there is a soupçon of self-interest, it will smack of 'manipulation', 'indoctrination' or 'brainwashing'.   The 'veld' schools as part of the curriculum prescribed by the former South African government's Education Department were perceived to be a device to indoctrinate the youth. This makes the introduction of a subject such as 'political literacy' difficult because it can be construed as indoctrination[25].

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[25] Indoctrination refers to the various techniques that are used to induce beliefs in others; that is, a person is taught in such a way that his freedom to think independently about a subject or an issue is curtailed. This may be done by censorship or by presenting information or arguments to the advantage of the indoctrinator only (Fairbairn and Winch 1991).

Indoctrination, ambiguity of meaning, the use of complex terminology, failing to distinguish between fact and opinion, sophistry, and the use of emotive language are illicit and non-rational language strategies that manipulate and coerce. There is a fine line between persuasion and manipulation – the offering of ideas does not become control until it creates dependency and then, with that, the capacity to control and hence to manipulate (McLean 1996, s.v. 'power'). Stakeholders with less information and less power can persuade or manipulate the powerful as much as vice versa. In South Africa, for example, Apartheid guilt can be used as leverage to change or accept a specific policy. If a stakeholder can point out that a policy contains an element of racism or discrimination the other stakeholder may retreat. Manipulation (McLean 1996, s.v. manipulation') is the turning of a situation to advantage. It involves control being exercised without threats, using resources of information and ideas (one can include symbols). Usually people are not aware of being manipulated or it would not work (McLean 1996, s.v. 'power'). Manipulation, for example, through political language and symbols is subliminal. During the apartheid era various strategies were used to keep the black people suppressed and the whites ignorant. Though the government has changed, the nature of politics has not; now the purpose of the negative language strategies are most likely aimed at other parties or groups – however, certain symbols are still employed in an attempt to polarize and alienate the different races (fortunately there are also efforts to promote solidarity).

Manipulation also occurs when statistics or research results woven into an argument intentionally present only one side of the argument or are not entirely accurate. This is not always attributable to the desire to mislead – sometimes policy-makers or a specific group of stakeholders need to take a decision fast about an issue they do not know much about and the temptation is to take that which supports their preference and is readily available[26]. Errors in policy analysis also stem from the analysts perspective: typically, some important part of the context is misconstrued too narrowly or overlooked altogether.

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[26] See Patton,C.V. and Sawicki,D.S. 1993. "Chapter 3 - Crosscutting methods". Basic Methods of Policy Analysis and Planning for how to communicate data.

Ambiguity in problem definition, for example, can be a useful device in policy-making and may be exploited for 'political' purposes'. Edelman (1977) found that policies can be successful at the symbolic level (getting or manipulating people to believe in them) but that they fail at the practical level. He points out that while coercion and intimidation help check resistance, it is the use of key symbols, myths, and language that obscures rather than informs or enlightens, that encourages people to remain quiescent and support policies that may not be to their benefit. Ambiguity and obscurity of language distances policy from the people, as though it is not part of everyday life. This gives policy-makers a free-hand in deciding policy to their advantage. As Orwell (1946) wished English as political language to be simplified, so Edelman believes the main task of policy analysis should be the simplification of policy discourses and the demystification of the myths and symbols employed by policy-makers (Edelman1977;1988; 1995). The question is, however, considering the acquiescence of people, whether analysts want the language to be demystified since this may entail confronting issues they may wish to ignore because they do not want to take responsibility for them.

While symbols may lead to agreement, despite any ambiguities, the same ambiguities and confusions will still prevent clear description of objectives of policy and so prevent the proper identification of reasonable means for its achievement. It has been said that the language used by politicians sometimes threatens to turn euphemism into an art form, at times approaching the extremes of Orwell's 'Newspeak'[27].

Arguments are skillfully crafted and symbols are manipulated in order to shape the composition and distribution of values, and also to exploit the sense of personal insecurity in citizens (Parsons 1997:178).   Insecurity is reinforced by the technique of *association*. The phrases 'war against terrorism' or 'September

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[27] Originally a simplified artificial language based on George Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-four (1949), which has now become the term in the language at large for misleading (especially political) jargon, and is the source for a large number of words modelled on it, such as nukespeak and teenspeak (McArthur and McArthur 1992).

11' are introduced into policy issues to create in the listeners mind the association of terror and fear that would the result if they did not agree with the speaker's policy approach. This is an attempt to frame or mould the reality (which may in fact not be the actual reality) to which a policy is to be applied. A very clear example is the showing of the American flag that was recovered by firefighters at Ground Zero. It is a powerful symbol, which can be interpreted as a symbol used to create solidarity among the American people, or on the other hand, by displaying it at the opening of the Winter Olympics of 2002 it could be a symbolic challenge to negative forces that the United States will not be intimidated, or at a policy level it could perhaps be used to keep people's support for George W. Bush's 'war against terrorism' policies by reminding them of the fear and terror associated with that day. In terms of this study, the symbol of 'community' is used both to emphasise the negative impact of the Plastic Bag policy regulations on the communities' jobs or incomes (by the plastic manufacturers and labour unions) and the impact of pollution on the environment of the communities (by the government and environmentalists) (See section 5).

Finally, contemporary public discourse is often characterized by 'rhetoric of hate' or 'grammar of hostility' in which dialogue has been replaced by name calling, denunciation, and intolerance – not uncommon in the South African context (refer to 4.3.4.2 (xiv)). This can spillover to the language or discourse of policy. The contributors to *Rhetoric and Community* (Hogan 1998:xv), while diverse in their interests and approaches, all recognize that communities are "largely defined and rendered healthy or dysfunctional, by the language they use to characterize themselves and others", and they are concerned with how communities are composed or sustained (or threatened and disrupted) "by the words their leaders choose to characterize themselves and others. The question is raised whether the use of hate vocabulary has become a national pastime". Hart (1998:xxvii) asked a question which people refused to answer – "Can people come together only by opposing others?" This same question can be asked in the policy context, because this is a method of argumentation that is also common to the policy process. As well as being a strategy to create solidarity against a

maligned stakeholder, it is also a strategy used to keep attention away from other stakeholders' arguments. The sad thing about hate is that it gives people a purpose – and it groups men according to friend and enemy. This makes honest deliberation and discussion difficult if not sometimes impossible. It adds another dimension to the negative strategies employed in arguing for a certain policy. In addition to the great potential for distorted communication when there are competing parties vying for the control of a specific policy issue, there is the *suspicion* of distortion and manipulation by the 'other' party. This suspicion makes it difficult to generate knowledge claims that will be credible to the other participants. Approaching discussion of the problem in an adversarial manner creates the risk of delay and deadlock in the policy process because there is no common ground of technical knowledge or research from which to negotiate agreement (Busenberg 1999: 2). Too many people enter dialogue or discussion forum ready to do battle, using confrontation, criticism, anger, and even violence to dismiss the other stakeholders' arguments, instead of entering the dialogue[28] willing to talk until a common ground is found. The bottom line is: there needs to be a will to change. Busenberg (1999: 2) terms this collaborative analysis[29].

3.4 CONCLUSION

The above discussion indicates that the content (specific issues) of a social problem or policy issue requires the presentation of clear and valid evidence and that the final policy should be reached by means of the contributions to deliberation and argumentation by the various stakeholders who hopefully are able to distinguish between sound and poor evidence, and are aware of certain patterns in political language which may be employed to influence their vote or decisions concerning a policy issue.

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[28] See in H.H. Saunders, the section in the Epilogue titled "Changing a Culture of Confrontation and Violence".

[29] Busenberg (1999:1-2) defines 'collaborative analysis' as the procedure followed when groups in involved in a policy debate " work together to assemble and direct a joint research team, which then studies the technical aspects of the policy issue in question. Representatives from all the participating groups are given the ability to monitor and adjust the research through its evolution. Collaborative analysis aims to overcome suspicions of distorted 9communication by giving each group in the debate the means to assure that the other groups are not manipulating the analysis. The ultimate goal is to generate a single body of knowledge that will be accepted by all the groups in the debate as a valid basis for policy negotiations and agreements".

In order to promote a responsive democracy, participation in the policy process, the employment of deliberation and sound, logical argumentation, and integrity need to be encouraged; and where there has been major conflict there is especially a strong argument for collaborative analysis to facilitate the resolution of policy dispute (Busenberg 1999). It presupposes a willingness to talk and a willingness for honest and clear communication between all stakeholders. The following chapter investigates whether this, in fact, is so in the communication of the Plastic Bag Policy in the press.

SECTION 4

AN ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN THE PLASTIC BAG POLICY

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The recently introduced Plastic Bag Policy is analysed in this section to illustrate how language is employed in the South African democratic policy process, namely how and when communication and discourse strategies (refer to sections 2 (pp.8-27) and 3 (28-50)) are used by the stakeholders involved in developing a specific public policy.

New regulations (under section 24(d) of THE ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION ACT (Act No. 73 0f 1989) prohibiting the manufacture, trade and commercial distribution of plastic bags with a wall thickness of less than 80 micrometres and with printing, painting or any marks of any kind, came into effect from 9 May 2003. The regulations were introduced by Valli Moosa, at the time Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. The regulations were first mooted in 2000. The reason given for the action was that brown environment issues, such as air pollution and waste management deserved more attention as they impacted on the lives of South African citizens and those living in under-privileged areas in particular. Industrial polluters and indifferent ("don't care) citizens were indicated as the targets of the regulations (Moosa 2000).

4.2   STAKEHOLDERS

(Refer to 2.2)

The communication and discourse strategies examined in this study are used by the stakeholders with interests in the Plastic Bag policy.

The headlines from newspaper articles selected from 2000-2003, the period during which most of the discussion and debate took place, are on their own already an indication of the debate between the stakeholders. The major stakeholders whose

arguments for or against the policy are reported in the press The stakeholders involved in this policy issue are the government, the public, the environmental interest groups, the plastic bag manufacturers, the retailers and the unions. The environmentalists join the side of the government for the policy and the plastic bag manufacturers and the unions forming the opposition, with the retailers' position not always quite clear. As time goes by the stakeholders gather into two camps: those for and those against the plastic bag regulations. There are also signs of power shifts between the various stakeholders as the policy debate progresses (refer to **2.2** pp.8-9; 2.4.1 p.17).

4.3 ANALYSIS OF THE COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE STRATEGIES APPLIED IN SELECTED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES FROM 2002 TO 2003

The information and arguments concerning the new regulations examined in this section are mainly from newspapers and a radio interview as interpreted and reflected by a number of articles from the print media (and thus may contain the reporters' personal biases).

4.3.1   Communication Strategies in Public Policy
(Refer to Section 2 for elaboration)

4.3.1.1   *Communication and Interaction (refer to **2.3** p.10)*
A democratic government must invite discussion before laying down policy (refer to page 10, par. 2) and this was done if the first headings of the selected articles are considered, as well as in the reporting of the different stakeholders' arguments for and against the policy. The chronological order of the headlines as given in 4.3.4.2.i) (the line of argument followed) indicate both the communication of the policy by government and the responses of other stakeholders and that interaction took place between them.

4.3.1.2   *Levels of communication*
a) There are three levels of communication referred to by Schnyder, namely factual, cultural and relational (refer to 2.4 p. 15-16)

The major strategy used by the stakeholders reported in the article below is the use of communicating on a relational level and using emotive language; the others strategies are will be indicated in brackets.

'NATIONAL FLOWER' UNDER FIRE (Daniels January 2002)

Until now most of the arguments in the media have been presented by the government and environmental interest and pressure groups. In this article the arguments by opposition stakeholders are offered too.   The argumentation consists of what Schnyder (1985) terms as a relational level of communication where there is "them and us" stratification (2.4, p.16 par. 3). In this case it is government versus the plastics industry and the unions who are represented as 'them' and 'us'.

Government is described as wielding the "big stick" and probably not prepared to negotiate the proposals for the plastic bag regulations. Although there is an element of their decisive stand in how the proposals are communicated to all stakeholders, there are also indications of persuasive arguments. Government justifies their proposals for the waste management regulations by arguing that the plastic bags generally used in SA are too thin to make recycling viable and that the plastic bags have led to a chronic littering problem.

The environmentalists' main objection to plastic bags is littering and they offer alternatives. To strengthen their arguments they introduce statistics (refer to section 3:41) - people can visualize the enormity or degree of the problem, but also be manipulated). According to the South African Environmental Project, South Africa uses eight billion thin plastic bags annually – "one for every human on the planet or two each for those in China and India".   Another strategy they use is to mention that increasing the thickness of the plastic bags is a "global trend", and that it is a global trend not only in developed countries but also in developing countries such as India. (The argument could cause resistance if only developed counties were cited as example. South Africans are sensitive to having solutions imposed from developed countries.)

The plastics industry, represented by the president of the Plastics Federation of South Africa, Wolfgang Raffalsky, is "shocked" and "concerned" and further on "flabbergasted" – these emotive words, and the fact that it is the president (an 'expert' (refer to section 3: 45), *and* one who is named which lends more credibility) is a strategy used to persuade other stakeholders to listen and rethink their approach or position.   The plastics industry's objections hinge on the collapse of the industry and the resultant job losses.   Numbers or statistics (an estimated 4000 job losses) are quoted to stress the argument (refer to section 3: 47).   Raffalsky argues for reducing the proposed thickness of 80 microns to 25 microns to avoid having to replace the present equipment with new.   The industry's arguments are based on economics and so the term "cost-effective" is used and warnings about "investments" being made redundant in addition to the job losses.   Mentioning loss of investments is a scare tactic and is actually an illicit method of persuasion (refer to section3: 45).   Raffalsky accuses government of sending the wrong signals to investors. He further argues that the problem is not the plastic bags but littering (this is a different perspective the problem; a different definition of the problem (refer to section 3: 38).)

The Chemical, Energy, Printing Wood and Allied Workers' Union (Ceppwawu) supports the Plastics Federation.   It warns that not only will the "massive job losses" be in the plastics industry but also related industries such as retail, raw-material suppliers and printing will be affected.   Added to this is the inconvenience that will be caused to "communities" (using the term "communities" may be a scare tactic – to scare the government with the idea of the "people" or all citizens, the electorate, being inconvenienced by the regulations).   The unions suggest recycling as an alternative pollution reducing method.   They also quote 'expert' information to back up their arguments – a National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) study.   They also use the "poverty" scare tactic by arguing that the loss of jobs resulting from the proposed regulations is likely "to push workers and their dependants into poverty".   This threat is further backed up by statistics (Nedlac research predicts a possible loss of 71 401 jobs).   The action the unions say they plan to take

makes them a very strong stakeholder and at this stage, before the passing of the legislation they may be the stronger stakeholder, or at least one that cannot be ignored. The part of their plan of action that in terms of language (because it is in legal jargon and sounds professional and impressive – see 4.3.3 c) above) lends the most strength to their argument is when they declare that they will attempt to engag[e] "alliance partners and other progressive organs of civil society and mobilis[e] its members and the Congress of South African Trade Union affiliates for protests in terms of Section 77 of the Labour Relations Act. The power of their argument comes from their bringing in a great number of citizens who may not have been part of structured groups of stakeholders before. Structured groups, potentially, may be able to formulate more effective policy – or, formulate it more effectively (refer to section 3: 37-38); and refer it to legislation.

The article ends with arguments by The South African Environmental Project which mentions the "global trend" and that littering has an impact on tourism and agriculture. In a democracy this sets the scene for deliberation (refererred to above in 4.3.4.1.) – to consider job losses and the impact of littering on the economy, in particular, in the area of tourism and agriculture.

4.3.1.3   *Levels of dialogue* (2.4, p.16**)**
There are 3 levels, namely, a willingness to conduct a dialogue; an admission of the existence of a problem; and the knowledge of judgmental factors used by stakeholders involved in the democratic dialogue (debate, discussion).
A media briefing by Moosa is exhorts CLEAN UP SOUTH AFRICA FOR A BETTER LIFE (13 August 2002 Internet www.iafrica.co.za).
Government instructs "clean up", but tempers it (as if showing that government is not being authoritarian but reasonable) with the assurance of "a better life". Government is communicating, not enforcing – being democratic. The tone has changed from the first few clear and decisive headings. The argument is more appeasing, showing a willingness to conduct a dialogue.
There is also a sense of encouraging dialogue in the next article.

LITTER A NATIONAL SCOURGE – MINISTER (*Mail & Guardian*, 7 June 2000)

Of the articles used in this study the earliest comment on the impact of plastic on the environment was in the *Mail & Guardian* (*M&G*) of 7 June 2000. Here, government, as represented by Ronnie Kasrils, Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, encourages everyone "to examine the state of the environment and to consider carefully the actions that are taken". From the government's side, therefore, open communication and dialogue is encouraged. (Also see analysis of article MINISTER, COSATU CLASH OVER PROPOSED PLASTIC BAG BAN (*M&G* 11 May 2002: 4.3.3 a))

In the newspaper articles that appeared in the press just before and after the implementation of the new plastic bag regulations, reaction by stakeholders was generally positive and Minister Moosa declares that there is clearly an acceptance of the problem and a willingness on the part of the public to take responsibility for the problem. In article 19. NO PLASTIC BAG POLICE – MOOSA (Internet: www.overberginfo.com   posted 15 May 2003), which was a press release in which government (Minister Moosa) reassured the public that there would be no plastic bag inspectorate.   He first informs the public of the wide acceptance of the regulations: "I am pleased by the response of both retailers and consumers…the idea has caught on and is happening" and then to show how democratic and generous government by not taking any money from the public "and we have no intention of using the taxpayers' money to set up a plastic bag inspectorate". Then he gives the issue proximity (refer to section 3: 44) or personal relevance by saying, "The members of the public will be the plastic bag inspectorate…and there are millions (of people) out there". He provides proof for his argument by mentioning examples of "world public support" for the regulations, and that "the department had been inundated with calls from the public, even in small "dorpies"", and therefore he anticipates "a deluge of calls" to the dedicated hotline.

4.3.2   Factors impacting on communication and policy meanings

Interpretation

a) <u>contextuality</u> (refer to p.18)

PLASTIC SET TO FLY (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 20 May 2002)

The verb "fly" could imply the meaning of "taking off", namely that the issue or the regulations are now ready to become legislation. It could mean "flying in the face of" and so imply that the regulations will be set despite opposition. As with any democratic policy, interpretations can differ. This article can be considered from Lasswell's (1966) idea of contextuality or from Swaffield's (1998) multiplicity of meanings (refer to **2.4.2**).

4.3.3   Communication and symbols (refer to 2.6, p.21)

Strategies involving symbols

a) <u>Unify or create solidarity</u> (refer to **2.5.2**, p. 24, par. 2 onwards)

SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WORLD'S BEST AT RECYCLING (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 June 2001)

Here the tone of the headline expresses praise of *all* citizens and is probably intended to create a sense of unity towards a common endeavour.

 NATIONAL FLOWER UNDER FIRE (Daniels 2001)

Here the word "national" unites. "Under fire" implies attack – decisive action. It may raise the question with other shareholders whether the "fire" is warranted or should they "return fire".

In the next article the union uses its members' solidarity as a means to force government to rethink the policy:

MINISTER, COSATU CLASH OVER PROPOSED PLASTIC BAG BAN (*M&G* 11 May 2002)

Here we are informed that Minister Valli Moosa has backed down on a section of his proposed plastic bag regulations. As mentioned in the

analysis of the above article it appears that at this point in the policy debate the Congress of SA Trade Unions is the stronger stakeholder and that its communication and argumentation strategies have been effective. Despite Moosa's willingness to set a new limit on the previous minimum thickness of 80 micron for plastic shopping bags, the unions are still pushing for the addition of other measures to supplement ones already proposed. By using the threat of mass action as a strategy, the unions are forcing the government and its supporting stakeholders to reconsider and deliberate on the arguments presented by the unions. The first argument against the regulations given by the unions is the likelihood of large retailers importing 80 micron bags which in turn would result in an increase of over one percent in food prices. The words 'unacceptable' and "devastating", with the connotation of "shocking" or "demoralising", are used to reinforce the argument. This is a scare tactic which aims at increasing to opposition to the regulations. Mentioning the loss of "up to 70 000 jobs" further fuels the insecurities of the public.   The president of Cosatu uses inciting words such as "ignoring" and "rejected" to place the government in a bad light. These words imply inaction or intractability on the part of government. By declaring that government "rejected research sponsored jointly by Nedlac constituencies, including its own representatives" he anticipates drawing the Nedlac constituencies as well as government representatives into his camp. Including "its own representatives" gives the impression that government dos not even listen to its own representatives. Will government then listen to anyone else? Stakeholders may ask. This being the case Cosatu "feared" (this introduces an apologetic note into what is a threat) that "it would have no choice" but to declare a dispute – and this could prevent the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable development. Ceppwawu promises to "mobilise" its members and those of its affiliates. This threat is made force the government to deliberate once more on the regulations; and to help the anti-regulations camp to get its way.

Towards the end of the article, the tone of discourse by the opposing stakeholders is reasonable and this is conveyed by words describing their proposal as "viable" and a "sound alternative", and would "even" create jobs. This indicates that the process is still democratic. There is still a willingness for dialogue (**2.4** p. 16).

b) Obtain the quiescence of citizens and relieve tension by creating a feeling of well-being (refer to top of p.26)
    NO PLASTIC BAG POLICE – MOOSA (Internet: www.overberginfo.com   posted 15 May 2003)
    This headline appears to be an attempt on the part of government to appease other stakeholders that "big brother" will not be keeping an eye on people.
    VALLI MOOSA HAS NO INTENTION OF SETTING UP A PLASTIC BAGS INSPECTORATE TO ENFORCE NEW REGULATIONS (*The Sowetan* 16 May 2003)
    This conveys a similar impression as the above headline.

c) using non-technical language, but using euphemism or terminological confusion (refer to p26)
    This is a strategy commonly used by stakeholders. The view of 'experts' is introduced into the argument. As an example refer to 4.3.4.2.j the article titled SOUTH AFRICA CRACKS DOWN ON PLASTIC BAGS.

A very clear example of terminological confusion is when in the article NEW PLASTIC BAG LEVY PROPOSED (Pressly 22 October 2003) the National Treasury Director of tax policy describes the tax or levy as follows: "a market based instrument to internalise the negative externalities associated with the use of such plastic bags". The director clearly wants to avoid being blamed for this new tax and attempts to hide behind confusing rhetoric and justifies the tax by stating that the decision came from "an agreement between the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), business and labour".

4.3.4   Discourse Strategies In Public Policy (refer to Section 2, p.29 and onwards)

4.3.4.1   *Deliberation*

A BETTER LIVING ENVIRONMENT (South Africa 2000)

In this address by the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism the stage is set for the new policy and a 90 day period is given for deliberation and comment as is appropriate for a democratic policy process.

The article below is an example of successful deliberation and argument:

MOOSA AND PLASTICS INDUSTRY BURY THE HATCHET (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 26 September 2002)

The three major stakeholder groups - The Environmental Affairs Ministry, labour and business - signed an agreement – thus the deliberations, discussions, communication and argumentation have been successful. The existing regulations (September 2002) are amended by the agreement. The policy debate, according to this report, has ended in a win-win situation. The government's last words in the argument or debate: "The campaign around plastic bags has raised unprecedented awareness about the importance and socio-economic benefits of environmental protection". Cosatu general secretary expresses satisfaction that a massive potential job loss has been averted and up to 4000 jobs have been created, and food prices will be lowered. For the moment the language strategies applied in the debate have

been successful.   The   union representative declares, "This is a sign of victory following proper consultation and democracy".

4.3.4.2   *Argumentation and Persuasion*

i)   *The line of argument*

This refers to Majone's comment (1989: xii) (refer to **3.2** p. 29 par. 2).

> …it is vital that a policy analyst be able to recognize a good or satisfactory policy, as well as learn rhetorical and dialectic skills, which he defines as being "the ability to define a problem according to various points of view, to draw an argument from many different sources, to adapt the argument to the audience, and to educate public opinion". Hence the strategies most likely to be used in the policy process will be examined below.

The line of argument or process of argumentation is illustrated by the following headlines (also refer to 4.3.1.1 *Communication and Interaction* above for comment.)

1.   A BETTER LIVING ENVIRONMENT (South Africa 2000)

Government as the major stakeholder puts the problem on the table together with government's solution – the Plastic Bag policy.

2.   LITTER A NATIONAL SCOURGE – MINISTER (*Mail & Guardian*, 7 June 2000)

Government defines and reinforces the argument.

3.   A radio broadcast (Mitchell Internet: www.saep.org   accessed 5/11/03) interviewing a member of the public, an environment officer and the media advisor to the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism is titled:

SOUTH AFRICA CRACKS DOWN ON PLASTIC BAGS

The headline still presents the government's point of view (by the minister's media advisor), but two additional stakeholders are introduced: the public and an environmentalist.

4.   SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WORLD'S BEST AT RECYCLING (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 June 2001)

This headline shows that the policy is still being *MAIL & GUARDIANdictated* by government.

5.   NATIONAL FLOWER UNDER FIRE (Daniels 2001)

Here too the arguments are still presented from the side of government.

6.   BRING YOUR BASKET, BAGS ARE BANNED (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 25 Nov. 2001)

The policy is still presented as a *fait accompli.*

7.   MINISTER, COSATU CLASH OVER PROPOSED PLASTIC BAG BAN (*M&G* 11 May 2002)

For the first time a stakeholder in opposition to the policy introduces an opposing argument.

8.   PLASTIC SET TO FLY (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 20 May 2002)

The word 'fly' can have two interpretations which indicates two sides involved in the argument.

9.   A media briefing by Moosa is exhorts CLEAN UP SOUTH AFRICA FOR A BETTER LIFE (13 August 2002 Internet www.iafrica.co.za).

Government reinforces its argument.

10.   MOOSA AND PLASTICS INDUSTRY BURY THE HATCHET (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 26 September 2002)

11.   HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLI? (*MAIL & GUARDIAN 23* October 2002*)*

Government's argument is being examined.

12. SHOPPERS SET TO PAY FOR PLASTIC BAGS (Internet:

www.Iafrica.co.za posted 8 April 2003)

It is apparent government is in control of the direction the policy issue is going.

13.   "NATIONAL FLOWER" NEARS EXTINCTION (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 2 May 2003)

Government is still controlling the debate.

14.   IT"S A DRAG TO PAY FOR PLASTIC BAGS (Internet: Iafrica.co.za posted 6 May 2003)

An argument is presented from the viewpoint of the public.

15.   PLASTIC BAG PROGRAMME STARTS ON FRIDAY (Quinn 7 May 2003)

The policy is presented as a *fait accompli*.

16.   PLASTIC BAG CLAMP DOWN LOOMS (Internet:www.Iafrica.co.za posted 8 May 2003)

This headline expresses a similar view to the one above

17.   BE MORE [RESPONSIBLE] – Woolworths' plastic bag

For the first time a retailer, presents an argument – in support of government – exhorting the public to be responsible.

18.   THE ENVIRONMENT IS IN YOUR HANDS – Woolworths' plastic bag

This is a similar argument offered by the retailer and shows this retailer is arguing from the same perspective as government: the environment.

19.   NO PLASTIC BAG POLICE – MOOSA (Internet: www.overberginfo.com posted 15 May 2003)

Government defends its approach.

20.   VALLI MOOSA HAS NO INTENTION OF SETTING UP A PLASTIC BAGS INSPECTORATE TO ENFORCE NEW REGULATIONS (*The Sowetan* 16 May 2003)

Government is still defending its approach.

21.   PLASTIC BAG FIRMS FEAR JOB CUTS (Newmarch 6 June 2003)

The plastic manufacturers now enter the debate.

22.   PLASTIC BAGS RAISE SHOPLIFTING FEARS (Internet: www.Iafrica.co.za posted 20 June 2003)

Another opposing argument is introduced probably directed at the public so that it can put pressure on government.

23.   WARNING OF JOBS BLOODBATH (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 August 2003)

Another opposing argument is introduced.

24.   P'n P SLASHES PRICE OF PLASTIC BAGS (Internet: www.Iafrica.co.za posted 11 August 2003)

A retailer introduces the argument about cost.

25.   RECYCLABLE   PLASTIC, DISPOSABLE   JOBS   (Internet: www.lafrica.co.za posted 25 August 2003)

This presents the dilemma in the policy. Which do you choose – a clean environment or jobs/

26.   WE ASK HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLI (Feris 2003)

Government's argument is examined.

27.   NEW PLASTIC BAG LEVY PROPOSED (Pressly 22 October 2003)

A new solution to the cost issue is introduced.

28.   GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING PLASTIC BAGS LEVY (Internet: www.lafrica.co.za posted 23 October 2003)

This repeats the above as a solution.

29. BAG LEVY WORRIES COSATU (Hills 24 October 2003)

The opposition reacts to the new argument introduced.

The article analysed below also clearly show the argumentation process applied in the policy being examined.

PLASTIC SET TO FLY (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 20 May 2002)

 Despite the strong arguments and the threats by the unions, government says that the plastic bag regulations will become law in May 2003. This means that on the surface the government still appears the stronger stakeholder in the policy debate. Government argues that there has been adequate consultation. The unions and industry are still trying to reopen talks. Government (represented by Moosa's spokesperson) points out it has always been aware of the new regulations would raise industry's costs but that the need to protect the environment needs to be balanced against the damage to the economy. Talking about "adequate consultation" and that it has considered "a range of alternatives" "before finalising the regulations" seems to be the government's rebuttal of the statements by the opposition that it was ignoring alternatives offered by other stakeholders. Although their arguments are less heated than in the previous article, the threat of a dispute and strike action by the unions is not retracted. They repeat their prediction that plastic bags may have to be imported which will raise costs, and then the *pièce de résistance*, the argument which is likely to

scare consumers onto their side, retailers might pass the increase in costs to the consumer "in the form of more expensive FOOD" (RMc: my emphasis). The level of communication is relational because there is a distinct "them and us" with the government being the "them" and the unions and industry the "us" (refer to **2.4**, p. 16).

ii)   *Defining or establishing the argument* (p. 38)
A BETTER LIVING ENVIRONMENT (South Africa 2000)
Part of the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Valli Moosa's, address on the occasion of the 2000 budget vote is on the issue of environmental issues and in particular waste management. The section of his address covering this is given the heading above and establishes from which point of view government wants to argue the regulations, namely, "a better life".
The government expresses its intentions (thus defining the problem and putting down 'the reality' from which government is approaching the problem) with the new regulations it wishes to put in place:

   *   It is our intention to put industrial polluters on terms this year.
   *   Following on the recent chlorine leak from the Polfin plant in KwaZulu/Natal the Department will be withdrawing its permit until it has satisfied us that sufficient prevention steps have been put in place.
   *   On Tuesday next week we will release draft regulations aimed at prohibiting the use of plastic carry bags as we know them. The public and industry will be given 90 days within which to comment. (South Africa 2000)

The address reiterates the government's national priorities of "job creation and economic growth, poverty alleviation, a better living environment, nature conservation, the building of a common patriotism, and the promotion of the African Renaissance" (South Africa 2000). (RMc: These used together serve as a collective symbol for what the present government represents or has promised and so become positive symbols (refer to **2.6** p. 21) if the government is successful in delivering on them. They also represent the public's or electorate' s expectations of government.)

iii)   *Persuasive language as part of   argumentation*

"NATIONAL FLOWER" NEARS EXTINCTION (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 2 May 2003)

This article consists mainly of stakeholders trying to persuade consumers to accept the new regulations with following arguments:

• The plastic bags themselves are "not toxic". We *just* have a litter problem (Plastics industry's argument - 'National flower' nears extinction, 2 May 2003)

• the thicker bag is "better"; it "enhances" recycling (Plastics industry's argument - 'National flower' nears extinction, 2 May 2003)

• the price of the plastic bags will include value-added tax and an environmental levy of 2c "which the government will use to *clean up* South Africa and *educate* citizens on environmental issues (Plastics industry's argument - 'National flower' nears extinction, 2 May 2003)

• although the demand for plastic bags may drop, the manufacture of thicker bags might even "create about 200 more formal jobs and additional informal jobs" (Plastics industry's argument - 'National flower' nears extinction, 2 May 2003)

• Pick 'n Pay has introduced an alternative *environment-friendly* bag: "In the Western Cape we've sold R20 000 [worth] of these bags in two days, so it seems that consumers have *accepted* this new regulation (retailer's argument - 'National flower' nears extinction, 2 May 2003) (RMc: my emphasis in all the above points.)

iv)   Factors in disputes that <u>need</u> argumentation and discussion or are part of argumentation and persuasion:

   a) <u>cause or causality of the problem or policy issue</u> (refer to p8 and p.42)
   Government establishes the lack of thickness of plastic bags handed out free of charge to the consumer public as the cause of the problem and the irresponsibility of industry and consumers who 'don't care' – hence the legislation (refer to Addenda B articles 1 & 2). The opposition stakeholders prefer to see it as the lack of education about littering – as having to "change the culture that 'it's okay to throw away'" (refer to addenda – B, article 5).

   b) <u>social significance of an issue</u> (refer to p.38)
   SOUTH AFRICA CRACKS DOWN ON PLASTIC BAGS

This shows decisiveness (the phrasal verb "crack down") in ridding the country of the social problem. Using "South Africa" communicates that it is a problem which applies to all stakeholders.

The next example is an example of both how symbols are used to create an association and the social significance of the issue:

> HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLI? (*MAIL & GUARDIAN 23* October 2002*)*

This headline plays on the words of the book title *How Green is My Valley* (A book on the Welsh coalmines in an area that was once green by Richard Llewellyn)*.* The dominant symbol is "green" associated with the environment and nature conservation, which is reinforced by the use of "Valli" for "valley the meaning of which could be that Valli, the minister is responsible for the greenness of our valleys. The "our" could be communicating the unity of all stakeholders or South Africans; or persuasively telling us that minister Valli Moosa is "one of us". Communication will only be successful if all stakeholders attach the same meaning to the symbols.

The next example is similar to the above combining the symbol 'green' with its social significance.

WE ASK HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLI (Feris 2003)

This again plays on the book title *How Green is my Valli*, with the emphasis on "green" – the environment. That 'valley' is substituted with 'Valli' (referring to Minister Valli Moosa) could suggest that government is being tested in terms of their commitment to the environment.

c) <u>solution/s of an issue or problem</u> (refer to p.38)

BRING YOUR BASKET, BAGS ARE BANNED (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 25 Nov. 2001)

The alliteration (words beginning with a b) lends a poetic sound to the heading. Perhaps the aim is to persuade the public to take their baskets and join a sing-along to the shops - to solve the problem.

v)   *Controlling the argument* (p.38)

In the policy debate stakeholders attempt to control the argument. In these reports on the Plastic Bag policy the government's determination to keep control of the issue is noticeable.

SHOPPERS SET TO PAY FOR PLASTIC BAGS (Internet: www.Iafrica.co.za posted 8 April 2003)

This headline seems to communicate that paying for plastic bags is now a *fait accompli* - there is no turning back.

"NATIONAL FLOWER" NEARS EXTINCTION (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 2 May 2003)

Here an environmental symbol sharply jolts the attention. A national flower is one of the symbols a government uses to unite its people; reinforced by the flag and the national anthem. Here the public is informed that it is almost extinct. It is used ironically – perhaps a strategy to shock or to prepare for radical change.

IT"S A DRAG TO PAY FOR PLASTIC BAGS (Internet: Iafrica.co.za posted 6 May 2003)

This is the first headline to reflect the view of the public as stakeholder. Until now they were only on the receiving end of the information and persuasive strategies about the regulations. It communicates reluctance or the sense that paying for bags is a bother ("a drag").   This may be an attempt by the opposition stakeholders, or even the print media to wrest the control from government.

That government retains control despite allowing for deliberation and discussion is clear from the next two examples.

PLASTIC BAG PROGRAMME STARTS ON FRIDAY (Quinn 7 May 2003)

The communication is clear. Deliberation and argumentation are over.

PLASTIC BAG CLAMP DOWN LOOMS (Internet:www.Iafrica.co.za posted 8 May 2003)

This headline communicates an ominous sense of doom ("loom") and enforcement ("clamp down").

The next examples indicate control or power changing hands.

PLASTIC BAG FIRMS FEAR JOB CUTS (Newmarch 6 June 2003)

After the initial announcement of the plastic bag regulations and the discussion between stakeholders which apparently resolved the conflict (headlines 6 & 9) the environment symbols change to job losses. The arguments have changed and this could predict a shift in power. Where the government initially seemed to have held the position of power in the policy debate it now seems to be shifting to the opposition.

vi)   *Conflict use in argumentation* (p.38)

MINISTER, COSATU CLASH OVER PROPOSED PLASTIC BAG BAN (*M&G* 11 May 2002)

This is the first headline to indicate another stakeholder and the verb "clash" predicts conflict. Counter argumentation can be expected which will use different symbols and unite different stakeholders. Conflict can be used by a shareholder to force the other one's hand. It can also on a superficial level merely point out that there may not be "shared meaning" – the problem may not be shared by all South Africans (Shared meaning is an essential element needed for effective communication – also see **2.4.2** on multiple meanings (p.19) and multiplicity of realities (p.20)). Not having shared meaning raises the awareness of the next factor (4.3.4.2 f). If stakeholders are approaching a policy issue or problem from different levels of analysis it may have to be redefined.

MOOSA AND PLASTICS INDUSTRY BURY THE HATCHET (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 26 September 2002)

According to this headline another major stakeholder is also involved: the plastics industry. There is also the indication of conflict between the two stakeholders (government and the plastics industry), but which has been resolved ("bury the hatchet"). This point is also related to communication strategies(4.3.1.3), that is, indicating a willingness for dialogue which reflects on the 'reasonability' and therefore their being democratic, of the stakeholders.

The next example presents the conflict encountered by decision maker.

RECYCLABLE PLASTIC, DISPOSABLE JOBS (Internet: www.lafrica.co.za posted 25 August 2003)

This headline presents the predicament: if you decide for the environment you will dispose of jobs, and vice versa. By forcing stakeholders to face up to this conflict they must decide for one or the other. It will also force them to decide on the best solution.

vii)   *Introducing a new issue (*p. 37*)*

When a new issue is introduced it changes the dynamics of the argument.

PLASTIC BAG FIRMS FEAR JOB CUTS (Newmarch 6 June 2003)

In June 2003 plastic bag manufacturers announce a drop in demand for plastic shopping bags and fear they may be forced to cut jobs. A new issue is now communicated to the government - the issue of making it law to charge consumers for plastic bags. However, now it is the retailers who want this done. Plastic bag manufacturers on the other hand, fear that consumers will continue to resist paying for plastic bags. (So we see that retailers such as Woolworths and Pick'nPay charge for plastic bags and Mr Price does not – the reason is however clear. Mr Price, a clothing and household goods retailer, spends less on plastic bags because the company does not need to provide as many plastic bags as do retailers who sell groceries and foodstuffs).

NEW PLASTIC BAG LEVY PROPOSED (Pressly 22 October 2003)

The issue of a government levy on plastic bags is introduced into the debate. Government, confronted by the argument of job losses, has to think of an alternative to counter the arguments of job losses and the extra costs of paying for the thicker plastic bags.

GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING PLASTIC BAGS LEVY (Internet: www.lafrica.co.za posted 23 October 2003)

The government may only be "considering" it. It is not a fact yet.

BAG LEVY WORRIES COSATU (Hills 24 October 2003)

Cosatu points out that although it remains committed to the agreement it finds the proposed levy excessive. Cosatu repeats that the agreement signed between several stakeholders was that a compulsory levy would fund a Section 21 company which will, amongst other things, ensure that there is greater transparency in bag pricing. This is an indication that the Plastic Bag policy debate has now shifted to a new issue and so will continue until agreement has been reached on this aspect.

viii)   *Measurements or statistics* (p.40)

If an argument can quote numbers it has added strength as the 30 000 jobs mentioned in the article referred to below:

SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WORLD"S BEST AT RECYCLING (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 June 2001)

Minister Moosa launches a strong argument for his plastic bag policy by praising the Collect-a-Can project for its "sterling work" and for being "a source of pride to our country" and for providing informal employment for about *30 000 people.* It also "obviates the need for the government regulation of the use of cans".

ix)   *Connection of issues* (p. 41)

SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WORLD"S BEST AT RECYCLING (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 June 2001)

Minister Moosa launches a strong argument for his plastic bag policy by praising the Collect-a-Can project for its "sterling work" and for being "a source of pride to our country" and for providing informal employment for about 30 000 people. (It also "obviates the need for the government regulation of the use of cans". He then connects (refer to 3: 42) its success to the other waste products. He probably uses this argument in the hope that positive reinforcement of successful waste management will lead to the acceptance of future waste management policies.

In the same article in which Minister Moosa's arguments are quoted, namely

SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WORLD"S BEST AT RECYCLING (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 June 2001)

He once more connects (refer to 3: 42) the government priorities of job creation and poverty-relief to his arguments to promote the waste management projects when he adds that "a further 1 350 people (also refer to 4.3.4.2.8 *measurements)* were being employed in poverty-relief projects aimed at the rehabilitation of the South African coast".

In the examples below the retailer connects the issue of the plastic bags to the environment as well as pointing out the social significance (4.3.4.2. b) of taking responsibility.

BE MORE [RESPONSIBLE] – Woolworths' plastic bag

THE ENVIRONMENT IS IN YOUR HANDS – Woolworths' plastic bag

This retailer urges responsibility hence supporting the sentiments of the government, showing acceptance of the existence of a problem which forms the basis of communication and dialogue. (Of course being seen as environmentally-friendly may attract environmentalists as customers and thus this is also an economic strategy.)

Another retailer connects the Plastic Bag policy with the issue of the costs involved. This is a different approach to the retailer mentioned above.

 P'n P SLASHES PRICE OF PLASTIC BAGS (Internet: www.lafrica.co.za posted 11 August 2003)

This retailer addresses the problem of the cost implications of the new regulations for consumers; reducing the price of plastic bags - to attract more customers in terms of saving money.

x)   *Ownership.of problem* (p.41)

Stakeholders argue in order to win '*ownership'* of a problem, that is, to be the body serving as "the recognized authority on essential questions of causes, consequences, and authorities" (Rochefort and Cobb 1993:14)

See the comment below under 4.3.4.2. (xi) which also relates to 'ownership'.

xi)   *Severity* (p.42) and *Crisis*   (p.43) (These are frequently interchangeable and used together, as well as the strategy of pointing out the incidence or frequency of a problem to indicate that its severity may become a crisis.)

LITTER A NATIONAL SCOURGE – MINISTER (*Mail & Guardian*, 7 June 2000)

The government's approach to the issue focuses on pollution and cleaning–up ("unacceptable", "more and more polluted" "filthier and filthier" "rampant lawlessness", ""don't care" attitude", "the rot must stop") – is indicated by words of intensity to illustrate the severity (see 3: 42) of the problem. The *M&G* of 7/06/00 repeats the strategy by government to back-up the justification for the "cleaning-up" regulations with the government priorities of "poverty, employment, ecological integrity and waste management, invading species, water security and health". The urgency for a clean environment is created by using following words and phrases: "scourge of litter", "driven" (an intensifying word) to reduce the use of plastic, "litter clean-ups".

SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WORLD"S BEST AT RECYCLING (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 June 2001)

A further strategy by Moosa to win acceptance for intended policies is to point out the urgency of the situation (refer to Section 3: 38): "Mountains of waste continue to mushroom everywhere. We must act before it is too late".

PLASTIC BAGS RAISE SHOPLIFTING FEARS (Internet: www.Iafrica.co.za posted 20 June 2003)

Another possible result of the plastic bag regulations is raised; one which had not been introduced into the debate previously – shoplifting. The emergence of another aspect shows that deliberation has produced unexpected implications. This introduces the sensitive symbol of "crime". Connecting it to another social problem, namely crime, which is viewed by many as a crisis, may have been used to persuade stakeholders to side with the opposition.

 WARNING OF JOBS BLOODBATH (*MAIL & GUARDIAN* 8 August 2003)

This suggests that the new regulations may have severe ("bloodbath") implications and using "jobs" in the same context as "bloodbath" exploits the public's insecurities about job losses.

The following radio interview with people representing and thus reinforcing the government's stand illustrates the use of intensifiers to indicate the severity of the problem that requires to be addressed by the policy regulations:

SOUTH AFRICA CRACKS DOWN ON PLASTIC BAGS (Mitchell Internet: www.saep.org accessed 5/11/03)

 In this radio broadcast the reporter, Mitchell, interviews a member of the public, an environment officer, and the media advisor to the Minister of for Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and the director for a consultancy, Eco Waste.

Although the member of the public brings up the matter of inconvenience caused by the regulations, all the other stakeholders are on the side of the government and share its concern about the environment.   These are stakeholders from interest groups who side with the government (here represented by the media advisor) in terms of protecting the environment and hence their discourse contains arguments for the new regulations:

Mitchell refers to the regulations and the perspective of opposing stakeholders about the regulations: "ubiquitous plastic bag"; "South Africa ...taking what many believe is a radical approach"; "reached crisis point"; "tough new regulations"; "offenders…heavily fined…a prison sentence". Mitchell also raises the issue of opposing views - "massive debate"; and then a possible environmental solution: the matter of reuse and recycling.   Then she picks up on the opposing stakeholders' argument of job losses ("many jobs will be lost") and that the plastic bags are "unfairly targeted because they are "only a small percentage of the waste *stream"* and therefore there "are bigger *fish* to fry". (The words in italics are metaphors related to water – part of government's campaign against littering. These become a symbol of pollution-free and safe water, which in turn is connected with health – disease-free drinking water and toxin-free fish. (This could raise another question: What is more important now – jobs and money or the health of the people?) Her role as interviewer is that of devil's advocate to set off the debate.

The environment officer's arguments agree with the standpoint presented by the reporter on plastic bags being everywhere ("plastic bags hanging around trees, fences, everywhere …all over the place"); and adds one about the impact on tourism ("It's so bad, it's having a negative impact on our tourism" - here the focus is rather on the economy and tourism than on the health of the poor as argued by government in a previous extract. *Our* may be used to highlight the incidence of the problem as being universal or across all classes in SA. (refer to 3:43) or may have been used to unite people in their concern for *our* country's tourism industry, i.e. implying it all South African's concern). She also argues for environmental awareness-raising, as well as for improved waste management, thereby echoing the government's argument when it presents the need for regulations. She is, however, careful not to present the opposition as "offenders". She concedes to the argument of the threat of unemployment but does not come up with a solution or alternative. Her attempt to answer it is rather vague (see Addendum: extract No. 3) which weakens her argument because the vagueness seems to be from lack of knowledge more than from trying to disguise any alternate agenda. The overall aim of arguments by environmentalist groups could be to win "ownership" of the problem (refer to 3: 42).

The media advisor reiterates the determination of government to clamp down on offenders: "the aim is *really* to send *very, very clear messages* to *all and sundry* that we will not tolerate a situation where this type of pollution carries on" (RMc: my emphasis. The words in italics serve to emphasise the government's determination not to back down. It is probably a strategy to show the government's strength and decisiveness.). He introduces the issues of lives and development being affected by waste. The word "development" may be used to remind other stakeholders that government is thinking of the poor (e.g. the development of the under privileged; in SA the word development is associated with or connected to (refer to 3: 42) the poor or under-privileged citizens), or of analyzing the problem from a different level - in this case from general development (healthy water, safe and healthy environment) instead of from

employment (refer to 3: 41).   As a counterargument to jobs lost in the plastics industry he suggests an alternative kind of job – manufacturing other products with similar uses; or, in terms of deliberation, he offers an alternative for opposing stakeholders to deliberate on or to change their way of viewing the problem which allegedly results from the new regulations. (This could lead to the anti-regulations lobby having to give up "ownership" of the problem.)   To strengthen his argument he points out the incidence of support for alternative jobs, and, he tries to get the government's reality to accepted by the use of repetition – "the *reality* is that *many*, *many* small groups have come up already with alternatives to the plastic bag" (RMc: my emphasis).

What is interesting about Mitchell's comment to the director of Eco Waste, is the down-playing of the incidence of littering:

Mitchell: "Even though our littering problem is nowhere near as severe as in countries like South Africa… ".

The director does not respond to this comment but goes on to explain the process of reusing and recycling. His role in the discussion is probably to bring in the view of an "expert" – a persuasive strategy to impress other stakeholders with the technical knowledge and language (see **4.3.3.** c).) .

xii)   *Incidence or frequency* (p.42)

LITTER A NATIONAL SCOURGE – MINISTER (*Mail & Guardian*, 7 June 2000)

The word "scourge" indicates the intensity of the issue (compared to a plague) and is used to remind the public and other stakeholders of its seriousness; something that must be got rid of. The word "national" makes it a problem which concerns everybody. The title thus puts two stakeholders firmly in the middle of this policy issue – the government and *all* the citizens of the country. Its aim is to persuade the stakeholders to accept the regulations. It is of course possible that the "poor" citizens living in disadvantaged areas could refuse to take "ownership" of the problem (refer to section 3: 42) because they do not see litter as a greater problem than having to pay for plastic bags or worse, job losses. Their reality is different

from that of other stakeholders. However, their acceptance of the regulations will depend on how convincing the government's argument is.

xiii)   *Manipulation and Coercion* (p. 44)

In August 2003, after the plastic bag issue appears to have been settled, retrenchments or job losses become an issue once again and headlines warn of JOBS BLOODBATH (*Mail & Guardian*, 8 August 2003) and RECYCLABLE PLASTIC, DISPOSABLE JOBS (*Mail & Guardian*, 25 August 2003). This article reflects more manipulation than the others. There is more evidence of scare tactics and threats. This may be because the issue had been settled when unexpectedly there were significant job losses. The latter article shows that the dispute is here mainly between the unions and the retailers, who earlier in the debate had not featured as strongly as government, the plastics industry and the unions. Another stakeholder has been drawn in – the suppliers of capital (banks and equity fund managers) and so the dispute has shifted to another context – the private business sector. The arguments now involve symbols of loyalty to local products and once again refer to the national priorities – symbols of the people's rights to jobs, economic growth, poverty alleviation. The unions now demand from the capital suppliers to place pressure on the retailers to sign a code of conduct which they have placed before the retailers. The unions wish to persuade (or rather coerce or force – refer to **3.3.1**) retailers to agree to the code of conduct by persuading the banks and asset managers to in turn threaten "to terminate the commercial relationship with and/or equity holding in the retailer, its subsidiaries and holding company". Words and phrases used by this stakeholder to imply as if this was previously not the case (and thus forcing retailers to defend themselves), include "promote" local employment and "decent" jobs; sign the code of conduct that "commits" to "local" procurement, "support" for the "local" manufacturing industry; "commitment" by suppliers to "promote" "fair" labour practices in their commercial contractual arrangement with manufacturers; and "promote" job creation and job security. As a concluding argument the unions point out the severity of the problem and use the word "crisis" as leverage while also showing their members and the other stakeholders their strength when

Cosatu secretary general states, "These job losses will aggravate *poverty* and the *crisis* facing our *communities* (RMc: used as a symbol to indicate the ordinary citizen) and *decisive action* is needed" (RMc: my emphases).

xiv)   *Rhetoric of hate or name calling* (p. 48)

Beyond the more forceful tone in the above article it is encouraging to encounter no hate rhetoric. This may be because the causality of the problem cannot be clearly put before the door of one of the stakeholders.

4.4   CONCLUSION

From the headlines only, the difference in stakeholders' objectives and perspectives was already obvious. The regulations also had different implications for each stakeholder. It is however clear from the articles examined in this study that there was deliberation and dialogue between the stakeholders who were grouped into three major groupings: government, business and labour. The strategies used by individual interest groups wavered between on the one hand pointing out the seriousness of the problem and urging the public to take responsibility for the problem, and on the other, exploiting the public's insecurities concerning extra expense, inconvenience and job losses. The symbols of 'poverty' and 'community' as part of the key symbols (refer to 2: 24) connected to the ANC government, and everything associated with these symbols were used to this end. To the credit of all stakeholders, one of the negative strategies not used in this policy issue is that of character assassination or name-calling.

SECTION 5

SUMMARY

The causes of littering, the perceived social significance and implication of littering, and the urgency of coming up with a solution, and then deciding which is the best solution, all underlie the debate between the various stakeholders.

The emphasis of the government's approach is on the health (clean water, clean surroundings) of the citizens living in less advantaged areas; whereas the plastics industry and the unions focus on unemployment and the impact of the policy on the poor. This means that government had to consider an alternative source of jobs and the lowering of costs of the thicker plastic bags after passing the "plastic bag" regulations, as well as decide on the amount of the proposed levy.

From the press articles it is apparent that the stakeholders take into account that in a democracy discussion should be encouraged – this demonstrates a democratic policy process in which consultation takes place.

The arguments presented by the various stakeholders sometimes described the severity of the problem by using intensifiers and repetition. This strategy is used to capture public interest.

In the discourse and argumentation different approaches, different perspectives and different realities are expressed. On a factual level of communication, those who stand to lose their jobs do not appreciate why littering is a great problem; to them being without a job is a far greater issue.

Stakeholders against the regulations cite numbers – that is, the number of jobs which will be lost. This strengthens the arguments of the stakeholders against the regulations because what that implies scares the citizens – no job, no food. Numbers imply measurements or statistics which serve to impress citizens

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There is a relational level of communication between the stakeholders – the stakeholders distinguish between "them" and "us": government and environmentalists versus unions and the plastics industry. This strategy is employed to alienate ordinary citizens from "them" who are different from "us". The ordinary citizens are included amongst the "us".

A positive feature of the argumentation is that no character assassination takes place in the debate mediated by the press. Argumentation remains polite. The negative strategy of manipulation employed is that of emotional manipulation when a stakeholder wants to reinforce his/her arguments. Stakeholders, particularly the unions, refer to poverty and how the communities are disadvantaged by the plastic bag policy– reminding government in a subliminal way that it is not keeping to its election promises and that they (the unions) are also reminding the electorate (the communities) of it.

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_____   *Clean up South Africa for a better life* – posted 13 August 2002

_____   *Shoppers Set To Pay For Plastic Bags* – posted 8 April 2003

_____   *Plastic Bag Clamp Down Looms* – posted 6 May 2003

_____   *Plastic bags raise shoppers' fears* – posted 20 June 2003

_____   *P 'n P slashes price of plastic bags* – posted 11 August 2003

_____   Newmarch, J. *Plastic bag firms fear job cuts* – posted Friday, 06 June

2003

_____   Pressly, Donwald, *New plastic bag levy proposed* – posted

Wednesday, 22 October 2003

APPENDIX

A. Headlines of 29 articles:

1. A BETTER LIVING ENVIRONMENT (South Africa 2000)

Government as the major stakeholder puts the argument on the table.

2. LITTER A NATIONAL SCOURGE – MINISTER (*Mail & Guardian*, 7 June 2000)

Government defines and reinforces the argument.

3. A radio broadcast (Mitchell Internet: www.saep.org   accessed 5/11/03) interviewing a member of the public, an environment officer and the media advisor to the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism is titled:

   SOUTH AFRICA CRACKS DOWN ON PLASTIC BAGS

The headline still presents the government's point of view (by the minister's media advisor), but two additional stakeholders are introduced: the public and an environmentalist.

4. SOUTH AFRICANS ARE WORLD'S BEST AT RECYCLING (*M & G* 8 June 2001)

This headline shows that the policy is still being dictated by government.

5. NATIONAL FLOWER UNDER FIRE (Daniels 2001)

Here too the arguments are still presented from the side of government.

6. BRING YOUR BASKET, BAGS ARE BANNED (*M & G* 25 Nov. 2001)

The policy is still presented as a *fait accompli.*

7. MINISTER, COSATU CLASH OVER PROPOSED PLASTIC BAG BAN (*M&G* 11 May 2002)

For the first time a stakeholder in opposition to the policy introduces an opposing argument.

8. PLASTIC SET TO FLY (*M & G* 20 May 2002)

The word 'fly' can have two interpretations which indicates two sides involved in the argument.

9. A media briefing by Moosa is exhorts CLEAN UP SOUTH AFRICA FOR A BETTER LIFE (13 August 2002 Internet www.iafrica.co.za).

Government reinforces its argument.

10. MOOSA AND PLASTICS INDUSTRY BURY THE HATCHET (*M & G* 26 September 2002)

11. HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLI? (*M & G 23* October 2002*)*

Government's argument is being examined.

12. SHOPPERS SET TO PAY FOR PLASTIC BAGS (Internet:

   www.lafrica.co.za posted 8 April 2003)

It is apparent government is in control of the direction the policy issue is going.

13. "NATIONAL FLOWER" NEARS EXTINCTION (*M & G* 2 May 2003)

Government is still controlling the debate.

14. IT"S A DRAG TO PAY FOR PLASTIC BAGS (Internet: lafrica.co.za posted

   6 May 2003)

An argument is presented from the point of the public.

15. PLASTIC BAG PROGRAMME STARTS ON FRIDAY (Quinn 7 May 2003)

The policy is presented as a *fait accompli*.

16. PLASTIC BAG CLAMP DOWN LOOMS (Internet:www.lafrica.co.za posted

   8 May 2003)

This headline expresses a similar view to the one above

17. BE MORE [RESPONSIBLE] – Woolworths' plastic bag

For the first time a retailer, presents an argument – in support of government –

   exhorting the public to be responsible.

18. THE ENVIRONMENT IS IN YOUR HANDS – Woolworths' plastic bag

This is a similar argument offered by the retailer and shows this retailer is

   arguing from the same perspective as government: the environment.

19. NO PLASTIC BAG POLICE – MOOSA (Internet: www.overberginfo.com

   posted 15 May 2003)

Government defends its approach.

20. VALLI MOOSA HAS NO INTENTION OF SETTING UP A PLASTIC BAGS

   INSPECTORATE TO ENFORCE NEW REGULATIONS (*The Sowetan* 16

   May 2003)

Government is still defending its approach.

21. PLASTIC BAG FIRMS FEAR JOB CUTS (Newmarch 6 June 2003)

The plastic manufacturers now enter the debate.

22. PLASTIC BAGS RAISE SHOPLIFTING FEARS (Internet:

   www.lafrica.co.za posted 20 June 2003)

Another opposing argument is introduced probably directed at the public so that

   it can put pressure on government.

23. WARNING OF JOBS BLOODBATH (*M & G* 8 August 2003)

Another opposing argument is introduced.

24. P'n P SLASHES PRICE OF PLASTIC BAGS (Internet: www.lafrica.co.za

   posted 11 August 2003)

A retailer introduces the argument about cost.

25. RECYCLABLE PLASTIC, DISPOSABLE JOBS (Internet: www.lafrica.co.za
posted 25 August 2003)

This presents the dilemma in the policy. Which do you choose – a clean
environment or jobs/

26. WE ASK HOW GREEN IS OUR VALLI (Feris 2003)

Government's argument is examined.

27. NEW PLASTIC BAG LEVY PROPOSED (Pressly 22 October 2003)

A new solution to the cost issue is introduced.

28. GOVERNMENT CONSIDERING PLASTIC BAGS LEVY (Internet:
www.lafrica.co.za posted 23 October 2003)

This repeats the above as a solution.

29. BAG LEVY WORRIES COSATU (Hills 24 October 2003)

The opposition reacts to the new argument introduced.

B. Complete versions of selected articles

1. ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TOURISM ON THE OCCASSION OF THE BUDGET VOTE

19 May 2000

A BETTER LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Brown environmental issues, such as air pollution and waste
management, deserve far more attention in this country as they
impact directly on the quality of life of our citizens, in particular those
living in under-privileged areas.

It is simply unacceptable to allow the air that we breathe to become
more and more polluted and our streets and countryside to become
filthier and filthier. There is rampant lawlessness among industrial
polluters and a 'don't care' attitude amongst many citizens. The rot
must stop.

1. It is our intention to put industrial polluters on terms this
year.

2.Following on the recent chlorine leak from the Polifin plant
in KwaZulu/Natal the Department will be withdrawing its
permit until it has satisfied us that sufficient prevention steps
have been put in place.

3.On Tuesday next week we will release draft regulations
aimed at prohibiting the use of plastic carry bags as we know
them. The public and industry will be given 90 days within
which to comment.

The Deputy Minister will provide the House with more details.

90

2. **LITTER A NATIONAL SCOURGE - MINISTER**

Mail & Guardian   07 Jun 2000

THE Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has begun a nationwide clean-up as part of World Environment Day. The Environmental Affairs and Tourism minister, Valli Moosa, said the event marks a time to create awareness around important issues such as poverty, employment, ecological integrity and waste management, invading species, water security and health. "Our focus this year is on the scourge of litter, which is one of the most important environmental issues in the country. This is one of the reasons why we are so driven to reduce the use of plastic," he added. Moosa said litter clean-ups are being held in Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Northern Province, Northern Cape, Western Cape, and Kwazulu-Natal. Ronnie Kasrils, Water Affairs and Forestry minister, said everyone is encouraged to examine the state of the environment and to consider carefully the actions that are taken.

3. Radio Broadcast

South Africa Cracks Down on Plastic Bags

Broadcast on Saturday 10/02/01

Summary:

If we're talking about waste, you can't go past the ubiquitous plastic bag. In South Africa they're taking what many believe is a radical approach to the problem.

Transcript:

Woman: We often take a bag and use our own bags, but when we're working and we're in a rush we always take the bags they give us.

Natasha Mitchell: So it's a matter of convenience really.

Woman: Yes. Yes, that's right. Normally when I go to the supermarket I don't take plastic bags, I pack them into boxes in my car, and the only plastic bags I do get I recycle with my garbage.

Woman: Well I just worry about what other people do with their plastic bags, I mean where do they go? Well I just try to use them as little as possible, for environmental reasons.

Natasha Mitchell: In Australia, most of us spare at least a thought for how we use plastic bags.

But in South Africa the plastic bag has been dubbed the country's new national flower. In the townships, it's reached crisis point, with bags polluting every corner of the landscape.

The South African government wants to change that, with tough new regulations.

Belemane Somoli is an environment officer with the Southern Africa Environment Project in Capetown.

Belemane Somoli: Wherever you go here in South Africa you see plastic bags hanging around trees, fences, everywhere there's plastic bags all over the place. It's so bad, it's having a negative impact on our tourism.

Natasha Mitchell: And how would you describe people's attitudes to throwing out plastic bags in South Africa?

Belemane Somoli: It's a problem of environmental awareness. I think there isn't much being done in order to promote environmental awareness in South Africa, so most of the people, especially people from the townships in these rural areas, don't see anything wrong like they just throw away their plastic bags, just litter. And again, they don't have adequate waste management facilities in the rural areas and the townships, so that's why littering is such a huge problem here in South Africa.

Natasha Mitchell: In South Africa the thickness of your average shopping bag is a puny 17 microns, much thinner than those we have in Australia. The bags usually break after first use and they're not recyclable, so people throw them away.

The South African government's proposal for new plastic bag regulations have sparked a massive debate. The plastics industry is on one side, and the government and environmental NGO's on the other.

The laws would eventually ban all bags thinner than 80 microns. Offenders will be heavily fined and may even face a prison sentence.

Onkgopotse JJ Tabane is a media advisor to South Africa's Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Valli Moosa. He's speaking to me on his car phone.

Onkgopotse JJ Tabane: The idea is that bags are a little bit bigger and thicker then it lends itself more to being reused over and over again, rather than being thrown away, and the aim is really to send a very, very clear messages to all and sundry that we will not tolerate a situation where this type of pollution carries on. I think our strategy is that the polluter must pay. If you produce something, you must make sure that from cradle to grave you can account for how your product is going to affect the environment, and therefore affect people's lives, development and so on.

Natasha Mitchell: But the plastic bag industry as I understand it, the plastic manufacturers, argue that many jobs will be lost through these regulations, that in fact plastic bags are only a small percentage of the waste stream, and

that plastic bags are being unfairly targeted, that there are bigger fish to fry, so to speak, when it comes to the waste problem in South Africa.

Onkgopotse JJ Tabane: We have never really said that plastic bags were the only issue in waste management, in fact the government has a whole comprehensive policy on waste management. That includes issues that relate to recycling, issues that relate to other types of waste and how this could be dealt with, issues that relate to responsibilities of companies, the government and so on. But it is the most visible sign of our pollution and it's making our landscape, which is otherwise very beautiful, to look ugly. And now in terms of jobs, the reality is that many, many small groups have come up already with alternatives to the plastic bag. They've come up with thatch bags, paper bags, enviro-bags, all sorts of bags. It is our assessment that that will in fact create more jobs.

Natasha Mitchell: Tell me, is there any evidence in fact that increasing the thickness of plastic bags will shift people's behaviour when it comes to littering the bags? Even if they are more durable, is that necessarily going to stop people from littering them?

Belemane Somoli: Yes, because there's also this threat of unemployment, which is so high, and some people will be able to take these plastic bags for recycling and make a living out of that, and for example now, for cold drink bottles you can recycle them and get 50 for the bottle, so you never see any bottles lying around in the street anywhere, so I guess if we have to pay for the plastic bags from the retailers, say 50-cents or so, there'll be an incentive to reuse the plastic bag again.

Natasha Mitchell: Belemane Somoli, from the Southern Africa Environment Project. And before him, JJ Tabane, media advisor to South Africa's Minister for Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Even though our littering problem is nowhere near as severe as in countries like South Africa, we still have a problem with where our plastic bags end up. Are they being reused and recycled, as they could be? Mark Glover is the Director of the consultancy Eco Waste.

Mark Glover: I think universally they're not. Some are reused at supermarkets. I think you'd have to say that most of them now are finishing up in landfills because that's the only ultimate disposal option. They can, if they feature with other plastics, be reused with other plastics, they certainly get reused again in most people's kitchens as bin liners, but at the moment they are still part of our old lineal flow of resources, they're extracted, they're converted, they're consumed and they're disposed of, and we have to start to use these materials again rather than landfill them.

Natasha Mitchell: So what would you see as being the best options for plastic bags and their reuse?

Mark Glover: I think we'll go through a phase in the next five to ten years of

first of all at least recovering the energy, so some sort of thermal combustion process, but in a very controlled – this isn't mass burner incineration. And eventually there's no reason why this mixed polymer material as a hydrocarbon source can't go back into reprocessing re-refinery processors, where they're broken down into their basic hydrocarbons and reformed into whatever polymer we want at the time. But that's economically and technologically probably still five to ten years away.

Alexandra de Blas: Mark Glover, Director of the consultancy, Eco Waste, speaking with Natasha Mitchell.

Further information:

Southern Africa Environment Project
http://www.saep.org/

South African Ministry for Environmental Affairs and Tourism
http://www.environment.gov.za/

:

Background on Plastic Bag Regulations
Summary of the issue compiled by the Southern Africa Environment Project
http://www.saep.org/subject/solid_waste/Plastic/WASTEfurtherdetails.htm

accessed 5/11/2003

4. South Africans are world's best at recycling cans

Date: 08 Jun 2001
Barry Streek South Africa holds the world record for the recycling of tin cans, Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Mohammed Valli Moosa has disclosed. The "Collect-a-Can" programme recycled as much as 63% of the cans used in the country and provides informal employment for an estimated 30 000 people. "The sterling work being done is a source of pride to our country. The Collect-a-Can project obviates the need for the government regulation of the use of cans," Valli Moosa said in his policy speech to the National Assembly.
However, the same could not be said for many other projects and this year the government will be paying more attention to products like tyres, glass bottles, plastic ó technically, polyethylene terephthalate ó containers, building rubble and medical waste. Valli Moosa said a clean environment is a fundamental human right, and announced that a special national waste summit wil be held this year to intensify the war on waste. "Mountains of

waste continue to mushroom everywhere. We must act before it is too late," Valli Moosa said. During the current financial year, the government will spend R31,5-million to fund 20 poverty-relief projects, employing 1 892 people, which are aimed at cleaning up the country. Valli Moosa said he was pleased that the creation of a clean environment is a priority for many of the country's local authorities. "The bold beginnings by the Johannesburg waste utility company Pikitup with its 1 800-strong workforce is a breath of fresh air. I am now hopeful that Johannesburg will be one of the cleanest cities in the world." Valli Moosa added that a further 1 350 people were being employed in poverty-relief projects aimed at the rehabilitation of the South African coast.

5. 'National flower' under fire

Mail & Guardian   25 Jan 2002

Glenda Daniels

Collect-a-bag scheme? Biodegradable plastics? Spot fines for litterbugs? Brown paper bags? Ten cents for your own plastic bag? These proposals are probably not up for negotiation before the government uses its big stick on environmentally unsound plastic bags.

Regulations were passed last year, and from January next year stiff penalties – up to R10 000 or a year in jail – will be imposed on lawbreakers. The law has not yet been gazetted, giving up-in-arms labour and plastic manufacturers their last chance to dissuade the government from forging ahead.

Labour has warned of protests this year against the banning of plastic bags because of job losses in the industry of up to 7 000, and more than 70 000 when related industries are included.

The government and environmental groups are on the same side, making persuasive arguments against the use of thin plastic bags. The government says plastic bags used in South Africa are too thin to make recycling economically viable. These bags have led to a chronic littering problem; hence the ban on all plastics less than the 80 microns the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has stipulated.

Currently the average supermarket bag is 17 microns.

The South African Environmental Project says South Africa uses eight billion thin plastic bags a year – "one for every human on the planet or two each for those in China and India".

This NGO says the problem with thin plastic bags is littering, but there are alternatives:

• Increasing the minimum thickness of bags, which is the global trend in developed countries and some developing countries such as India.

• Imposing harsh fines for littering, as in Singapore.

• Switching to biodegradable plastic, where starch and other additives are put into the mix.

The president of the Plastics Federation of South Africa, Wolfgang Raffalsky, says his organisation is "shocked" at the government's move and he is concerned about the collapse of the industry and the resultant job losses. His estimate of job losses is 4000 in industries under the Plastics Federation umbrella.

However, he says, the federation has a year in which to try to convince the government to change its mind and reduce the regulated thickness to 25 microns rather than 80 microns, which would require new equipment.

The federation is proposing making bigger bags so that fewer are used. In addition, these would be more cost-effective to recycle and there would be less of a throw-away problem.

"Ultimately, we have to change the culture that 'it's okay to throw away'. That's why we are flabbergasted the government wants to go ahead with this legislation," says Raffalsky.

"We believe the government is making the wrong decision. Besides the job losses, the legislation would make the investment in the country of about R500-million redundant. We are sending out the wrong signals for a region seeking investment."

Plastics are not the problem, Raffalsky argues, littering is. The federation intends to step up public-awareness campaigns, while urging the government to do the same. The industry is also proposing a collect-a-bag scheme as an incentive to clean up litter.

The Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing Wood and Allied Workers' Union says that besides the massive job losses in the industry, related industries such as retail, raw-material suppliers and printing will also be affected.

The union says communities will be inconvenienced, with consumers having to carry plastic bags to shops, and argues that the government should consider alternatives to cut pollution, such as waste recycling.

The union's assertions are supported by a recent National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) study, which says the "major impact, in terms of labour, of the proposed regulations is the impact on jobs and, cascading from this, the impact on wage earners' dependants. The impact of these two factors is modified by the quality and remuneration of the jobs lost or gained. In brief, the loss of jobs is likely to push workers and their dependants into poverty."

The Nedlac research shows that the closure of the domestic plastic industry, and its off-shoots, would mean a total of 71 401 jobs lost.

This year the union's plan of action is to try to force the government to consider alternative proposals such as waste recycling, which would have positive spin-offs for job-creation; lobbying members of Parliament; engaging alliance partners and other progressive organs of civil society and mobilising its members and the Congress of South African Trade Unions affiliates for protests in terms of Section 77 of the Labour Relations Act.

The South African Environmental Project says there is a global trend towards legislating the thickness of plastic bags, including in developing countries such as India.

"So many plastic carrier bags end up as litter that they have been dubbed the new national flower. The problem is most severe in low-income areas where waste-collection services are inadequate. To address this growing problem the government has suggested banning plastic bags.

"This will not solve the real problem, namely littering, but VCBs (vest-type carrier bags, or the common ones), although they make up less than 5% of the total litter stream, are a very visible aspect of littering that has an impact on tourism and agriculture. It is a step in the right direction towards solving the litter problem and has opened up a much-needed debate on the issue."

ENDS

7. **Minister, Cosatu clash over proposed plastic bag ban**

Mail & Guardian 11 May 2002

ENVIRONMENT Minister Valli Moosa's backing down on his plan to ban plastic shopping bags and instead set a new limit on their thickness, has been greeted with scepticism and a strike threat by the Congress of SA Trade Unions (Cosatu).
Moosa, who first announced two years ago his intention of banning plastic bags thinner than 80 microns as from January next year, dropped those plans on Thursday and set the lower limit at 30 microns, with effect from May 2003.
The new regulations would also prohibit advertising on bags thinner than 80 microns, which will make them easier to recycle.
But Cosatu said on Friday it saw the compromise as having no effect as 70 000 jobs could be lost if the new regulations were to be carried out.
Cosatu president Zwelinzima Vavi said on Friday that unless supplemented by other measures, the regulations would result in larger retailers shifting to imported 80 micron bags.
"The result would be an increase of over one percent in food prices - an unacceptable outcome given the current devastating food inflation.
"Furthermore, if consumers then decide to re-use the bags, we could lose up to 70 000 jobs of supermarket packers," he said.
Addressing the media at the offices of the Chemical, Energy, Paper, Printing and Wood Allied Workers Union (Ceppwawu), Vavi accused the government of ignoring any alternative proposals, including specific plans for recycling which would have a lower cost and create more jobs, since it first announced its plans two years ago.
"The government rejected research sponsored jointly by Nedlac constituencies, including its own representatives, yet it has published any other evidence to support its own positions."
The only expected benefits from the new regulations would be reduced litter, while pollution from the production of the plastic bags would remain.
Cosatu feared it would have no choice but declare a dispute at Nedlac, which could affect the country's ability to host the upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in a unified fashion.
Ceppwawu general secretary Welile Nolingo said the union would mobilise its 65 000 members against the regulations.
"We will go out to mobilise our members and also those from other Cosatu affiliates such as Saccawu who could also be affected by the new laws," he said.
Meanwhile, the Plastics Federation of SA (Plafsa) has expressed "disappointment" that Moosa had ignored its proposed alternatives to the new regulations.
Plafsa president Wolfgang Raffalsky said in a statement the federation had proposed a 25 micron limit and a moderate levy on plastic bags. The proceeds from this levy would be used for better collection of discarded plastic, and for regular clean-ups of "hot spots".
Education programmes would be launched to create public awareness of litter.
These activities would be controlled via a new Section 21 company that would include all major stakeholders, including government.
"As far as the industry is concerned, this proposal is a viable and sound alternative that would even create jobs, and the industry therefore believed that it was receiving the careful consideration of government and a favourable response was anticipated.
"The announcement of the regulations in parliament was therefore received with some dismay," Raffalsky said. Sapa

8. Plastic set to fly

Mail & Guardian   20 May 2002

Controversial retail plastic bag regulations promulgated last week by Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Mohammed Valli Moosa will become law in May next year - despite the heated opposition of industry and labour.

Phindile Makwakwa, Moosa's spokesperson, said there was little room to alter key aspects of the regulations because interested parties had been adequately consulted.

The regulations have been attacked for failing to meet the ministry's objective of striking a balance between environmental protection and damage to the economy, by destroying jobs and raising imports. Only about 20% of bags are currently imported.

The regulations require that retail plastic bags are produced at a minimum thickness of 30 microns for plain bags and 80 microns for printed bags. This is up from the current 17 microns. A micron is a thousandth of a millimetre.

Makwakwa said the currently stipulated levels, relaxed from the initial 80 microns for both printed and unprinted bags, are the minimum possible level needed to encourage recycling. Printed bags pose added problems to would-be recyclers.

Wolfgang Raffalsky, president of the South African Plastics Federation, said this week the federation would seek to reopen talks with the government.

Industry's main objection is that most of the equipment in use is designed to cope with a 15- to 25-micron range, and the requirement of thicker bags will render equipment worth R1-billion obsolete.

A study commissioned by the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac) confirmed this view. It estimated direct resulting job losses at 3 800.

Raffalsky insisted industry knew of no country that used retail bags 30 microns thick. Manufacturers would have to retool for an untested product that had no visible market. The retail industry is valued at R12-billion, with the retail and packaging plastic sub-sector accounting for R500-million of this.

Makwakwa responded that the government had always conceded the new regime would raise industry's costs.

"But we need to balance that against the need to protect the environment," he said. A range of alternatives had been considered before finalising the regulations.

In an uncharacteristic show of joint force, the Congress of South African Trade Unions's (Cosatu) chemical union has also objected to potential job cuts.

Union spokesperson Welile Nolingo, said labour had called for the required thickness to be reduced to 24 microns, and for printing on bags thinner than 80 microns to be restricted. The union has not ruled out a dispute and strike action, with Cosatu's support.

Its expects retailers to import 80-micron bags, so that they can be printed. This would lead to higher costs, which retailers might pass to consumers in the form of more expensive food.

10. Moosa and plastics industry bury the hatchet

Mail & Guardian   26 Sep 2002

The Environmental Affairs and Tourism Ministry, labour and business signed an agreement on the management of plastic bags on Wednesday.

The agreement forms part of the country's waste management and environmental protection programme and effectively amends existing regulations on plastic bags, promulgated on May 9. The agreement comes into effect May next year.

The regulations set the absolute minimum thickness for plastic bags at 30 micrometers. No printing is allowed on bags of 30 micrometres.

Thirty micrometres is the set standard, some manufacturers maintain their machines can only produce bags of up to 24 micrometres thick. They will be allowed to manufacture bags with these machines for up to five years.

The regulations will be amended to allow for printing on up to 50% of the surface of the bag where the type of ink used has no detrimental effect on the recycling potential of the plastic bag, and of up to 25% where other inks are used. This will still ensure the bags can be recycled.

The agreement was signed by Environmental Affairs and Tourism Minister Valli Moosa, and representatives from the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), National Council of Trade Unions, the Chemical and Allied Industrial Association and the Plastics Federation of South Africa.

Moosa said regulations aimed to address the problem of discarded plastic bags scattered about the land and encourage the re-use and recycling of plastic bags.

"The agreement will dramatically strengthen the recycling industry, creating much needed jobs for unemployment and retaining current jobs in the plastic industry," he said.

Moosa said his department, in consultation with the Trade and Industry Department, will ask the South African Bureau of Standards to develop a standard for this.

The parties agreed business should disclose the cost of plastic bags. "The full cost of the bags will be passed to the consumers.

At the moment there is a false impression that the consumers do not pay for the bag whereas the price is included in the groceries they buy.

"The retailers will now have to take off the money from the groceries and consumers will have a choice to pay for the bags. They can also re-use the bags," he said. A Section 21 company will be established to promote efficiency in the use, re-use, collection, recycling and disposal of plastic bags and investigate and make recommendations to government regarding new markets for recycled material, Moosa said.

"A levy will be raised from the plastic bag manufactures to be used by the Section 21 company to achieve its objectives and the company will become the member of Proudly South African Campaign."

"The campaign around plastic bags has raised unprecedented awareness about the importance and socio-economic benefits of environmental protection," he said.

Cosatu general secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi said he was pleased a massive potential job loss had been averted and instead up to 4 000 jobs had been created.

"We are also pleased that the food prices will be lowered as food price inflation is a major concern for the poor.

"This is sign of victory following proper consultation and democracy," Vavi said.

The agreement would not change the current labour practice with regard to till-packing services and till packers would continue working for the next five years, Moosa said. - Sapa

13. **'National flower' nears extinction**

Mail & Guardian   02 May 2003

South Africa's "national flower" and "roadside daisies" face extinction
as the deadline draws close for shops to stop providing consumers with free thin
plastic bags.

The bags fluttering from fences and basking on land throughout South Africa
should fade into unpleasant memory and consumers will think twice before
discarding plastic bags when they have had to pay for them.

From May 9 the price of bags will be listed on the till slip. The 15- to 17-micron
freebie will be replaced by slightly thicker 24-micron bags that will cost
between 25c and 46c at supermarkets.

Wolfgang Raffasky, vice-president of the Plastics Federation of South Africa,
said consumers have already been paying for the supposedly free plastic bags
because their price is incorporated into the price of the products we buy. Now
that consumers must consciously pay for their packaging they are expected to
think twice before tossing them away.

"The plastic bags themselves are not toxic. We just have a litter problem. It will
no longer be a 'national flower' because the plastic will be given value. The
thicker packet is better for the environment because it enhances recycling,"
Raffasky said.

The price includes value-added tax and an environmental levy of 2c, which the
government will use to clean up South Africa and educate citizens on
environmental issues.

Plastic manufacturers will be allowed to produce plastic bags with a minimum
thickness of 24-microns for the next five years, but afterwards they will not be
allowed to make bags thinner than 30-microns. Failure to comply is subject to a
fine of up to R100 000 or a year in jail. A second conviction could land the
offender in jail for up to 10 years.

Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Valli Moosa says the penalties
demonstrate the government's desire to send a tough message: "We have to
clean up our country. These regulations on plastic bags are the start of a
broader look at waste management. Simply put, we as a nation have to start to
recover a higher percentage of our waste lest we drown in our own garbage."

Raffasky said the plastic bag industry expects demand will drop to 30% of
current production, but that this will not lead to job losses. The manufacture of
the thicker bags might even create about 200 more formal jobs and additional
informal jobs.

"By getting serious about what it calls the 'litter' problem for plastic bags and
the throw-away culture that exacerbates pollution, the government is motivating
industry to find creative ways around the problem," said Patrick Dowling, an
environmentalist from the Wildlife and Environmental Society of South Africa.

"One new sight will be plastic bags with the logo of one store being used openly in a different shop as part of the multi-stakeholder agreement that no business may ban the use of another's bags on its premises."
Pick 'n Pay has already introduced an alternative to the plastic bag. The environmentally-friendly bag is made from non-woven polypropylene and costs R5.
"In the Western Cape we've sold R20 000 [worth] of these bags in two days, so it seems that consumers have accepted this new regulation," said Graeme Laithwaite, a director.Consumers would still be given free plastic bags at the bakery, deli and fruit and vegetable sections of the supermarkets, he said.

PRESS RELEASES
CAPE TOWN
19. **No plastic bag police - Moosa**
Posted Thu, 15 May 2003

Addressing the Cape Town Press Club on Thursday, Environmental Affairs Minister Valli Moosa said the department had no intention of setting up a plastic bags inspectorate to enforce new regulations outlawing the manufacture and commercial distribution of thin plastic bags.

"I am pleased by the response of both retailers and consumers… the idea has caught on and is happening… and we have no intention of using the taxpayers money to set up a plastic bag inspectorate," he said.

Valli said the matter of phasing out the plastic bags used at shops enjoyed world public support and the department had been inundated with calls from the public, even in small "dorpies", questioning the legality of shops still handing out the old plastic bags.

Dedicated hotline

"The members of the public will be the plastic bag inspectorate… and there are millions (of people) out there."

He said a dedicated hotline to respond to the deluge of calls could be operational on Thursday, and any action that will be taken against transgressors of the new legislation would not be too harsh.

"We are now looking at other waste products, not aluminium cans, but used tyres which are a huge environmental problem, and will also take a closer look at glass bottles."

Overberginfo.com – accessed 27/10/03

PLASTIC BAGS
21. **Plastic bag firms fear job cuts**

Jocelyn Newmarch
Posted Fri, 06 Jun 2003

Plastic bag manufacturers have been hit by falling sales and may be forced to cut jobs.

Demand for plastic shopping bags has fallen by up to 80 percent following the enactment of legislation on minimum thickness, reports Business Day.

Packaging company Transpaco told the paper its sales were at 20 percent of normal levels and said it would have to retrench staff if the situation did not improve.

Transpaco said it was "very concerned" but refused to say how many jobs were threatened.

However the company as a whole would not be affected, as plastic shopping bags contributed only 20 percent to the group's total revenue, according to the spokesperson.

Trevor Evans, who chairs Nampak, was quoted as saying: "The situation is serious and the business is running at a loss."

Nampak's plastic bag factories are reportedly operating at 30 percent of capacity, down from 90 percent.

Evans said Nampak's view was that consumers had overreacted in refusing to buy bags.

However he was confident the company could "ride out the rough patch" and that consumers would soon start buying more bags, said the daily.

According to Evans, Nampak's plastic bag business was a "fraction" of the group's operations, and so the packaging firm was not in trouble.

Astrapak produces a very small amount of the bags, but told Business Day it had also noticed a 50 percent drop in demand.

Chair of the Plastics Federation of South Africa, Bill Naudé, said in Business Report initial projections for the drop in demand resulting from the new system had been about 50 percent.

However the actual situation was "significantly worse". "It's about 80 percent to 90 percent", the newspaper quoted him as saying.

There was also a misconception that retailers were required by law to charge consumers for plastic bags, noted Business Report.

The newspaper said there was no existing law requiring this, but only an agreement signed last year by unions, retailers, plastic bag manufacturers and the government.

Retailers wanted this issue to be made law and were to meet with government on Friday to lobby for the change.

But plastic bag manufacturers, according to the report, are against this change, fearing consumers will continue to resist buying the bags.

27. Business NewsLEVY

New plastic bag levy proposed

Donwald Pressly
Posted Wed, 22 Oct 2003

A draft Revenue Laws Amendment Bill, on which parliament's Finance Portfolio Committee was briefed on Wednesday, proposes a new levy on certain plastic bags.

National Treasury director of tax policy Martin Grote told the committee — which was sitting with the select committee of the National Council of Provinces — that the Bill made provision of a tax on "certain types" of plastic bags.

While those certain types have not been made clear, it is understood that it would apply to substandard bags.

In a submission by treasury it noted that the decision originated "from an agreement between DEAT (the Department of Environment Affairs and Tourism), business and labour".

The Treasury noted that it viewed the levy on plastic bags "as a market based instrument to internalise the negative externalities associated with the use of such plastic bags".

In terms of the Bill, the Customs and Excise Act 91 of 1964 will be amended to provide for a levy of 10 rand per kilogram on the plastic bags. The levy would be imposed on the basis of weight.

The levy would be applicable on certain types of plastic bags manufactured in South Africa or imported. In this regard the plastic bag levy will be similar to the General Fuel Levy, it will only be applicable in South Africa, unlike other excise duties that are applicable in all Southern African Customs Union countries.

Revenue from the plastic bag levy will be for the National Revenue Fund and will not form part of the SACU revenue pool.

Treasury said that there was "an understanding" that some of the revenue will be used for waste management.

On May 9 regulations came into effect introducing the use of thick and recyclable plastic bags and replacing thin bags. It is now standard procedure at South African shops to pay for shopping bags.

I-Net Bridge

29. BAG LEVY WORRIES COSATU

The Citizen 24 October 2003 by C. Hills

The congress of South African Trade Unions yesterday said that is was disturbed at reports that government was imposing a new levy on plastic bags.

Cosatu said in a statement that there had been no discussion with labour on the levy's amount.

"The proposed levy of R10 a kilogram is excessive, likely to lessen demand for bags still further and aggravate the job losses that are already threatened because of the drop in sales," the federation said.

According to an agreement signed between labour, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT), the Plastics Federation of SA, the Chemical and Allied Industries Association and a number of major retail companies, a mandatory levy will be used to fund a Section 21 company which will, among other things:

- Promote efficiency in bag use, collection, recycling and disposal;
- Stimulate participation in education campaigns; and
- Support the Proudly SA campaign.
- There is no legal requirement for retailers to charge for plastic bags.
- There should be greater transparency in bag pricing.

"We remain committed to the spirit of the agreement but will work to ensure that the levy is not set too high and jobs are not lost as part of the process. We are disturbed that the chief director of tax policy in the treasury, Martin Grote, stated he had 'no idea what exactly was contained I those agreements'."

The plastic Federation of SA in September said more than 300 jobs had been lost since the DEAT introduced its plastic legislation.

Bill Naude, PFSA executive director, said plastic bag manufacturers were producing only 15% of what they used to. This could lead to a further 300 jobs lost before the end of the year.

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