


Energy policy discourses after the 1973 oil price shock in the UK and Germany

Dataset**Author(s):**

[Metz, Florence](#) ; Schick, Veronika; Rapp, Martina

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Description of data gathering – UK

For the dataset “Energy policy discourses after the 1973 oil price shock in the UK and Germany”

August 23, 2019
Florence Metz

1. Time

Data gathering took place from beginning of June to end of August 2019, within 12 working weeks. Martina Rapp, our Research Assistant (RA), performed the data gathering under my supervision.

2. The Data Set

The data set was created in four steps. First, we selected the country. We selected the UK for the first preliminary case study, because the UK is an ideal majoritarian pluralist system. It is a fossil-fuel rich country with coal and oil resources. In the 1970s, UK had 30% of oil-based electricity generation. The UK has tried to promote alternative energies, nuclear and renewables. The UK is also a nuclear power with potential interest in civilian use of nuclear. However, until today the UK has not been successful in promoting alternative energy. Thereby, the UK provides an ideal case to study the role of the polity in providing access to new/outside actors to decision-making.

2.1. Newspaper selection

In a second step, we selected the newspaper. Our RA, made an overview about UK newspapers. We considered daily newspapers that already existed in the 1970s, with comparably high coverage and a politically moderate orientation. The most moderate or politically independent newspaper, The Independent, has been founded after the oil crisis and The Observer is a weekly newspaper. Among the London Times (center-right) and the Guardian (center-left), we opted for The Times. While the Guardian requires a paying subscription), The Times is available for free to university members. The Times is available as digital full-text archives in txt.-format going back to the 1970s through:

<https://gdc.galegroup.com/gdc/artemis?p=TTDA&u=unibern>

2.2. Sampling of articles

In a third step, we sampled articles from The London Times for the timeframe 1970-1985 based on a number of keywords and operators (energy policy, AND Britian, NOT EEC, OR oil crisis, OR nuclear, OR efficiency, OR electricity, OR alternatives, OR wave energy, OR fuel) as explained in detail in the document “Sampling Scheme_UK”. The RA limited the publication section to news and business news; and restricted the document type to Article, Case overview, Case study, Column, Conference notes, Discussion, Financial report, Front matter, Interview, Report, Survey. Thereby, we avoided options such as “buyers guide”, “letter to the editor”, etc. which were written in a more subjective or normative style.

The above-defined criteria resulted in a total of 79’918 articles. These articles were sorted by “relevance” (a ranking option that the galegroup website provides. The ranking is based on a formula to determine how closely each item focuses on the defined search terms).

From this point onwards, the RA selected the articles reading the headlines and the main keywords contained in the article (which are highlighted by the galegroup website) based on case-study knowledge. The case study knowledge is based on a literature review about the UK’s energy policies that we performed in this project. We stopped sampling after 500 selected articles.

Having significantly less articles for the years pre-crisis, i.e., before 1974, a second round of sampling was conducted targeting the 1970 – 1973 period. This was done using the same keywords but changing the search term “energy crisis” to an OR criterion instead of an AND criterion (for more details see “SamplingSchemeUK_v2”). This research gave a total of 16’026 results, from which we downloaded 59 articles.

We combined articles downloaded from the first and the second round in a single database, and coded a total of 559 articles.

3. The Coding Procedure

3.1. Coding

In a third step, the RA read all the articles and manually encoded their contents in the Discourse Network Analyzer software (version dna-2.0-beta24.jar with rDNA 2.1.16 from February 17, 2019) based on our codebook.

She did two rounds of coding. After the first round, I made plots of the coding results in order to get an overview of the data and spot mistakes.

The research assistant, then performed a second round of coding, i.e., checked all of her codes in all the articles, in order to correct mistakes and ensure consistent coding.

During the coding procedure, a total of 88 articles have been discarded (because the whole article was not relevant or because no significant statements could be found). Thus, at the end of the process, 471 articles were coded.

3.2. Codebook

The codebook “Coding Scheme” has also been uploaded. The codebook was derived from theory (i.e., a project proposal) in its first version. Then, the research assistant coded articles and adapted the codebook to what she observed empirically. This means that some codes were adapted as to properly capture what we are interested in theoretically, e.g. supply-side policies were discussed in the newspaper articles targeted at different energy sources, so we introduced a code for supply-side policies targeted at nuclear, oil, gaz, coal, or alternatives.

Moreover, we continuously worked on improving the codebook and consistency of coding. To this end, I coded 10 articles and compared my coding to the RA’s coding. We then sat together, further improved the codebook and also discussed codes, agreed on how to code consistently and corrected the database for coding errors. After this first round, we performed a second round in which we both coded the same 10 articles. The second round’s purpose was to perform the intercoder reliability test, see below.

3.3. Intercoder reliability

The RA and me both coded the same 10 articles. The assistant had annotated/highlighted the sentences that she coded (without indicating which codes she used). I then coded those highlighted sentences. Thereby, we achieved a 69 % of intercoder reliability. This is a good outcome considering that similarity between the research assistant and my coding only exists if three things are congruent: First, we both need to code the same actor; secondly, we both need to choose the same code (policy preferences, events, actions) among 32 different codes; thirdly, we both need to use the same qualifier, i.e., whether or not the actor supported or rejected a policy.