

**Final Progress Report**  
**Sustainability Science Program**  
**Term: September 1, 2014 – July 31, 2015**

**Name:** Manoela Assayag

**Your field(s):**

Political Science; International Relations

**Your degree program, institution and expected graduation date:**

Ph.D, International Relations/ Political Science, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Switzerland, Expected 2016

**Faculty host(s) at Harvard name and department:**

William C. Clark, Harvard Kennedy School

**Description of SSP-related research activity:**

Governing sustainability: How do peaks of issue attention drive innovation and access to innovation in health?

Abstract: The crosscutting nature of sustainable development requires attention to health, as the high prevalence of illnesses compromises the attainment of other goals and presents risks to inclusive human well-being. This approach acknowledges a broader meaning of health and a thicker institutional framework, as more actors and interests seek representation. While decision-making and priority-setting become more complex, harmonizing strategies becomes more challenging. My research asks whether peaks of issue attention contribute to innovation in governance institutions, health technology and/or means and mechanisms for access to medical technology. Why only some issues capture global attention and inspire innovation? I look at two policy cycles to investigate the specificities of global advocacy coalition formation and the role of the different sources of power in shaping the issue-attention cycle. I argue that the likelihood of guaranteeing attention for a health issue depends on the ability of issue advocates to (1) connect with leading actors (gatekeepers) and institutions imbued with the objective and means to put forward an agenda (enabling platforms), and (2) to leverage various sources of power and use them strategically. With interest for implementation, I show the process of coalition formation to support my claim that different levels of attention will influence whether governance innovation and access to innovation for health might take place. In doing this I recognize that governance for health takes place in a complex system, in which the prioritization process for issue attention influences the options available for implementation, and in which implementation products (e.g. institutional arrangements, new sources of technology) influence future prioritization. My case studies are the evolution of neglected tropical diseases and the inclusion of non-communicable diseases as global priorities. The first is one example of a long process of coalition formation for an issue that received increasing vertical attention, although these health issues never became a top global priority. The second presents a good example of a short trajectory toward the apex of the cycle and a great illustration of what influences success whenever two or more competing coalitions attempt to influence the agenda. The juxtaposition of these two cases illuminates a larger narrative about the potential for innovation and challenges to access in global health. Using qualitative content analysis, I have conducted archival research and interviews with stakeholders.

**Identification of the problem you address:**

This research focuses on how the dynamics of global advocacy coalition formation and the leverage of different sources of power influence the emergence of and expansion of access to governance and technology innovation in global health.

**Key question asked about the problem:**

Do peaks of issue attention contribute to innovation in governance institutions, health technology and/or means and mechanisms for access to medical technology?  
Why only some health issues capture global attention and inspire innovation?

**The methods by which you answered that question:**

Qualitative content analysis, through archival research (World Health Organization, Rockefeller Archive Center) and expert interviews.

**Principle literature upon which the research drew:**

My theoretical framework combines insights from literature in public policy, international relations, public health and systems dynamics. I argue that by putting these elements together I am able to represent the dynamics of global agenda formation and implementation as a complex system in many ways akin to the domestic prioritization process.

**Empirical data acquisition description:**

I have conducted archival research on prioritization for neglected tropical diseases using the World Health Organization's and the Rockefeller Foundation's collection. I have conducted interviews on prioritization for neglected tropical diseases and non-communicable diseases in Geneva, Switzerland, and remotely, with various organizations and relevant actors. This extensive work has helped me to identify the influencing conditions, important actors and transition moments.

**Geographical region studied:**

Global

**Recommendations that might be relevant for your problem:**

Improving how the relevant global actors define their new priorities for health issues by enhancing the attention to complex background events and understanding the opportunities and constraints provided by existing governance arrangements and technology tools.

**A description of the final product(s) you have/are aiming to produce:**

- PhD dissertation (two empirical chapters)
- Two SSP working papers
- One conference paper

**Description of major other intellectual or professional advancement activities over the past academic year:**

- Conference paper, presented at the International Studies Association 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana, February 2015
- Book chapter (book on active learning in International Relations to be published in Brazil in 2016)
- Two dissertation chapters

**Please list citations for reports, papers, publications and presentations that built on your fellowship research:**

Governing sustainability: how do peaks of issue attention drive innovation and access to innovation for global health?, accepted for presentation at the 56th International Studies Association Annual Convention, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 2015.

When attention is not enough: the evolution of innovation and access to innovation for neglected tropical diseases, to be published as a SSP Working Paper.

A tale of two paths: the emergence of non-communicable diseases as global priorities, to be published as a SSP Working Paper.

**Please describe any collaborative activities with other SSP Fellows that you are involved with.**

MIT/Harvard Working Group on Evaluating Technology and Policy for Sustainable Development

**Principal collaborators outside Harvard (list name and institution):**

Liliana B. Andonova, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies  
Marcelo M. Valença, State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)

**List any awards or grants that you have received this year for the current or coming year.**

Tuition scholarship, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, September 2014

**If you are moving to a new position, please list your contact information there:**

Lecturer

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