

## London smog warning as Saharan sand sweeps southern England

Strong winds and desert storms deposit fine dust on UK streets amid fears of high air pollution levels in capital





▲ The prime minister's car covered in fine dust outside No 10 on Tuesday morning after overnight showers.

Photograph: Steve Back political pictures.co.uk

The Met Office has forecast one of the year's worst smogs in London this week, following a combination of strong winds and powerful dust storms in

- David Cameron: "a naturally occurring weather phenomenon"
- Boris Johnson: "I'm urging people just to have a little balance here. I cycled this morning and it seemed perfectly fine to me. I think we need to keep a little bit of a sense of proportion"

⇒Conflict leads to interest, not the other way around

#### London smog warning as Saharan sand sweeps southern England

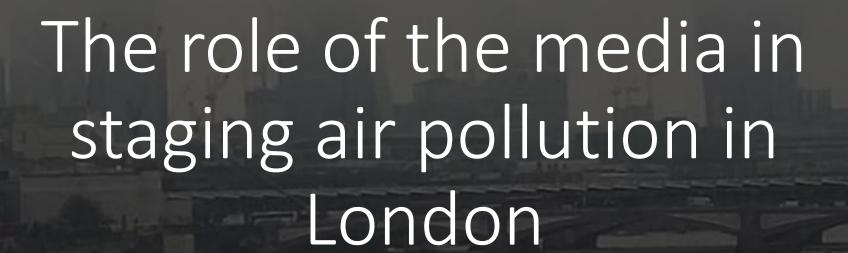
Strong winds and desert storms deposit fine dust on UK streets amid fears of high air pollution levels in capital





▲ The prime minister's car covered in fine dust outside No 10 on Tuesday morning after overnight showers Photograph: Steve Back politicalpictures.co.uk

The Met Office has forecast one of the year's worst smogs in London this week, following a combination of strong winds and powerful dust storms in



Dr. Anneleen Kenis

Post-doctoral research fellow of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO)

Affiliated with KU Leuven (Belgium) and King's College London (UK)

- 1997-2017: 5 'leading' newspapers: The Guardian, The Financial Times, The Independent, The Daily Telegraph and The Times
- Automatic search via NEXIS & manual check
- 1594 articles which deal with air pollution/quality in London/the UK in the strict sense





QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS



PRELIMINARY
DEDUCTION OF
CRITICAL
DISCOURSE
MOMENTS AND
PERIODS



QUALITATIVE
ANALYSIS TO
UNDERSTAND
WHAT HAPPENED
PRECISELY



REFRAMING OF
CRITICAL
DISCOURSE
MOMENTS AND
PERIODS

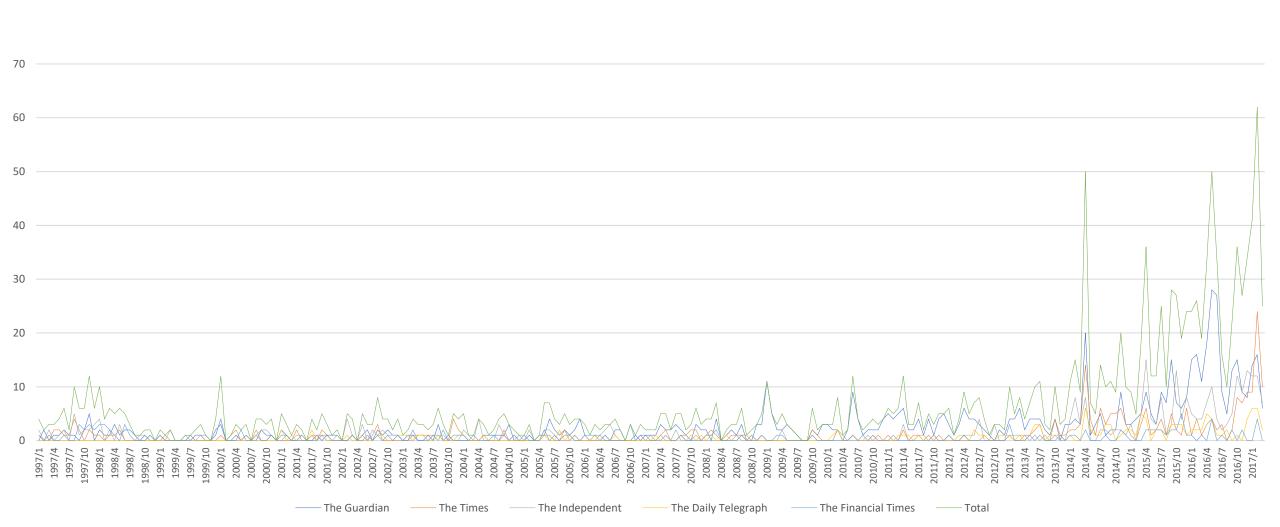


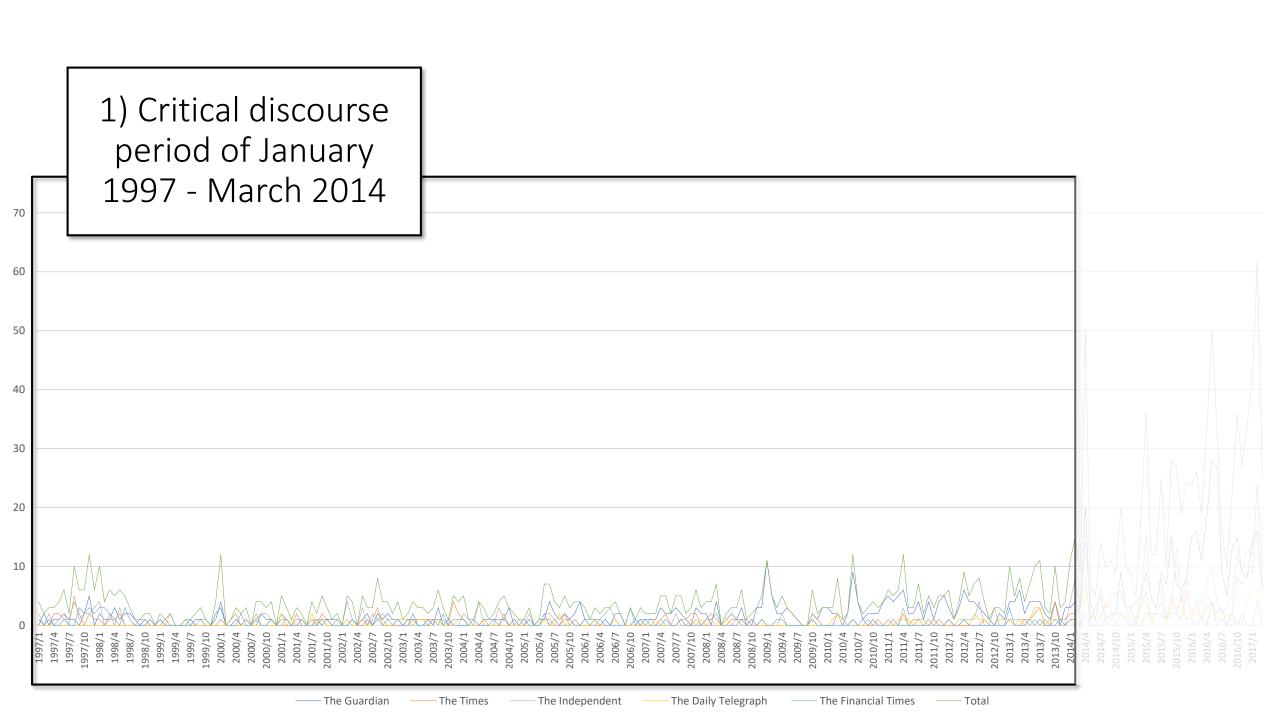
POLITICAL THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

#### **METHODOLOGY**

### RESULTS

### Media coverage of air pollution in the UK 1997-2017





Key elements are present, but the interest doesn't catalyse:

- 'Single' articles
- Attempts to stage the topic, but without much success
- All important topics are present and story lines start to unfold
- Building up to what comes to an explosion in 2014?



#### City air worse than nuclear fallout

David Rose

NEWS

April 3 2007, 1:00am, The Times Everyday hazards such as inhaling polluted city air or other people's cigarette smoke are potentially worse for your health than being exposed to the radioactive fallout of an atomic bomb, according to new research.





\_\_\_\_

SPORT

FINAL SAY

#### Leading article: The Government must act now on air pollution

CULTURE

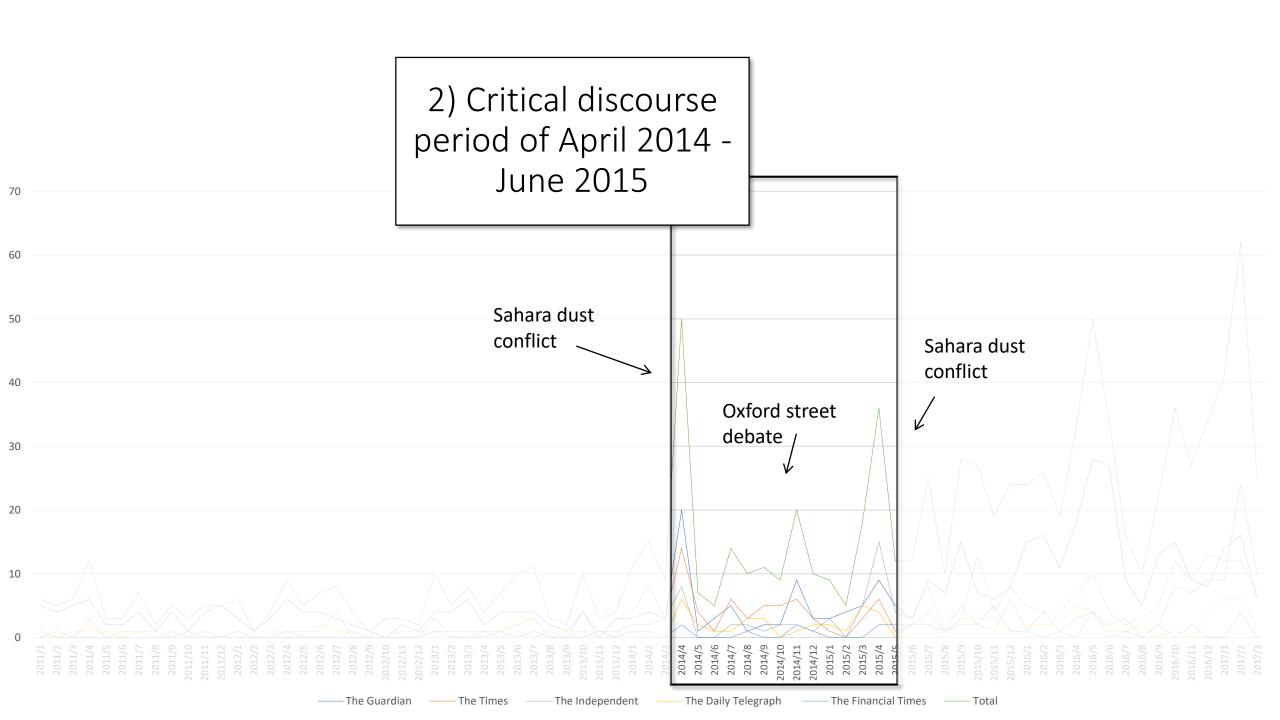
Sarah Fulford-Brown, 45, moved to Lytham St Annes in Lancashire from central London eight years ago. Two of her three children had serious asthma, particularly her daughter Georgina, who was four at the time. Now, away from the pollution of the capital, both Georgina and her younger brother Benedict have made full recoveries.

VIDEO

INDY/LIFE

HAPPY LIST

INDYBEST



- The issue is taken up by key actors, but is also dismissed
  - **David Cameron**: "a naturally occurring weather phenomenon"
  - Boris Johnson: "I'm urging people just to have a little balance here. I cycled this morning and it seemed perfectly fine to me. I think we need to keep a little bit of a sense of proportion"
- A controversy is created  $\Rightarrow$  (media) outrage
- First conflict line: the 'seriousness' and 'nature' of the crisis

#### London smog warning as Saharan sand

#### sweeps southern England

Strong winds and desert storms deposit fine dust on UK streets amid fears of high air pollution levels in capital



nister's car covered in fine dust outside No 10 on Tuesday morning after overnight showers, eve Back political pictures, co.uk

Office has forecast one of the year's worst smogs in London this combination of strong winds and nowerful decisions.

- Start of cyclic iterative process: a self-reinforcing spiral of public interest and media coverage
- Media professionals search actively for newsworthy items
- New events are more easily taken up and further influence the debate
- July 2014: Oxford Street debate



#### Oxford Street is the most polluted place in the world, say scientists

Buses are to blame for high levels of NO2

Christopher Hooton | @christophhooton | Monday 7 July 2014 12:17







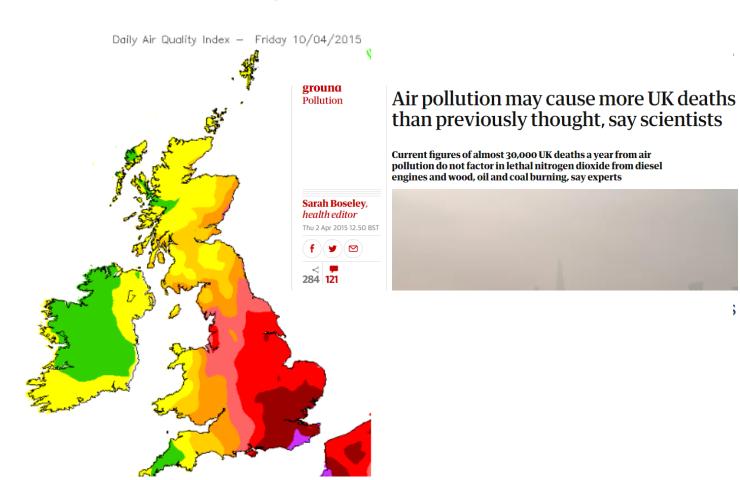




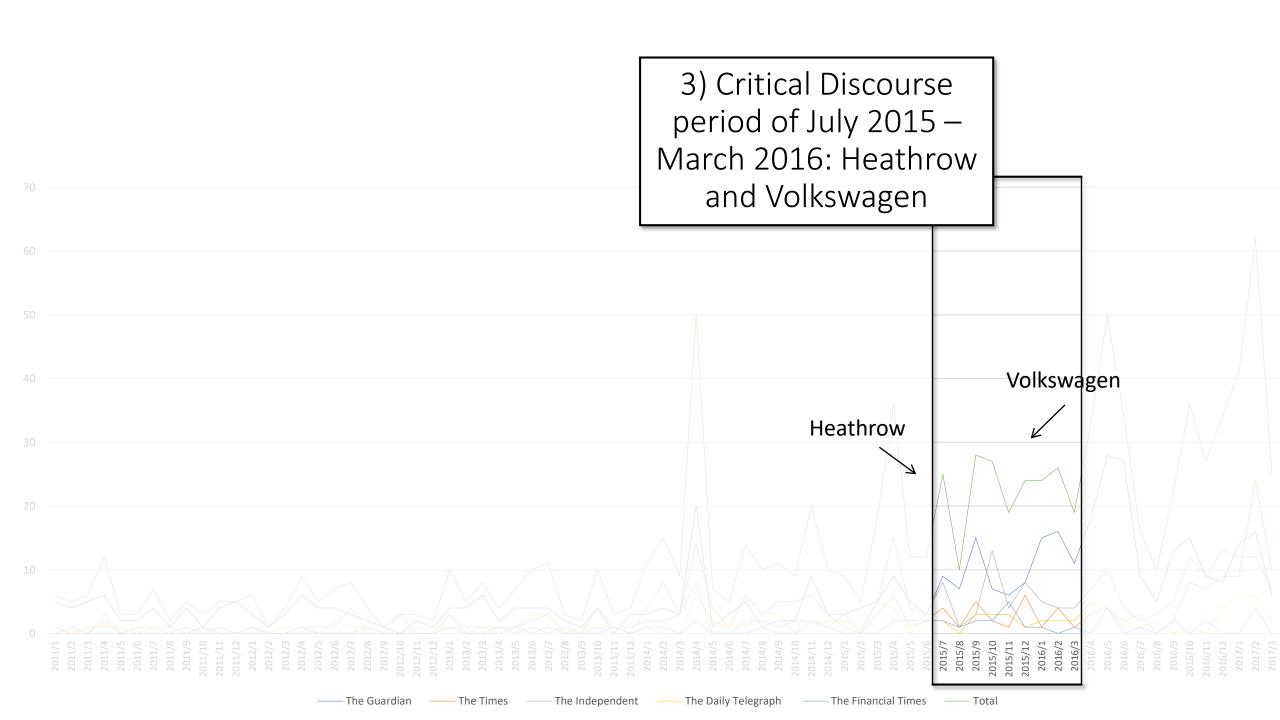


- The issue is taken up by key actors, but at the same time dismissed
- Boris Johnson: a 'ludicrous urban myth'; London's air is 'better than Paris and other European cities'
- Conflict/controversy is key!
- November 2014: Boris Johnson admits the scientists 'are right'  $\Rightarrow$  consensus 'established'  $\Rightarrow$  small dip in media interest

The episode is blamed on a combination of dirty air from the continent, the fine weather conditions and Saharan dust, which contributed to several days of serious pollution one year ago. Temperatures are expected to reach almost 20C in some areas on Friday.

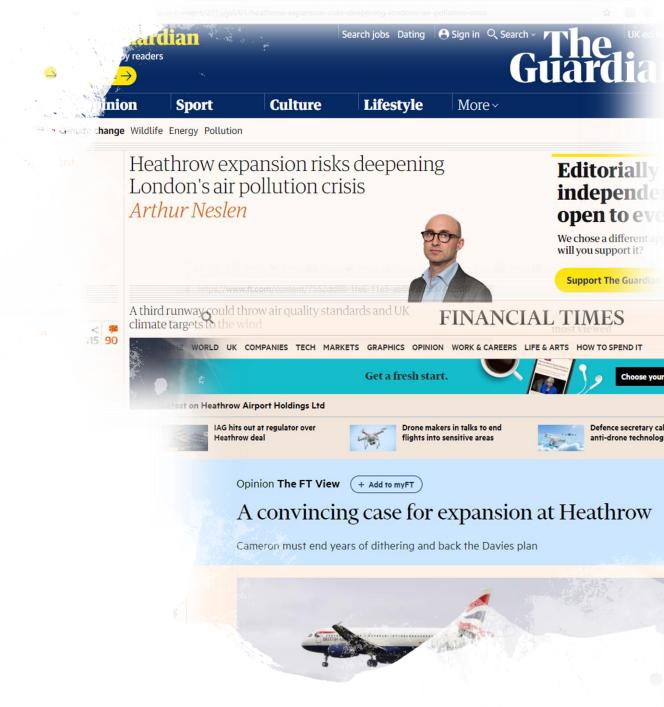


- April 2015: journalists successfully play last year's game
- The story is made even more spectacular
- ⇔The conflict seems to be overcome with this smog episode
- !) New conflict lines will be needed to put the topic centrally on the public agenda again



1 July 2015: UK government's Airports Commission recommends a third runway at Heathrow. Air pollution figures centrally in the debate

⇒ The conflict moves beyond the nature and seriousness of the problem to its societal root causes





#### VW scandal hits other EU carmakers

FINANCIAL TIMES

Share price performance (rebased)



More ·

Lifestyle



Available for everyone, funded by readers



The focus on new fault lines does not mean old fault lines have completely disappeared

⇒ Complex web of always more conflict lines coming together

#### **Opinion** News

Environment ► Climate change Wildlife Energy Pollution

**Sport** 

#### Pollution

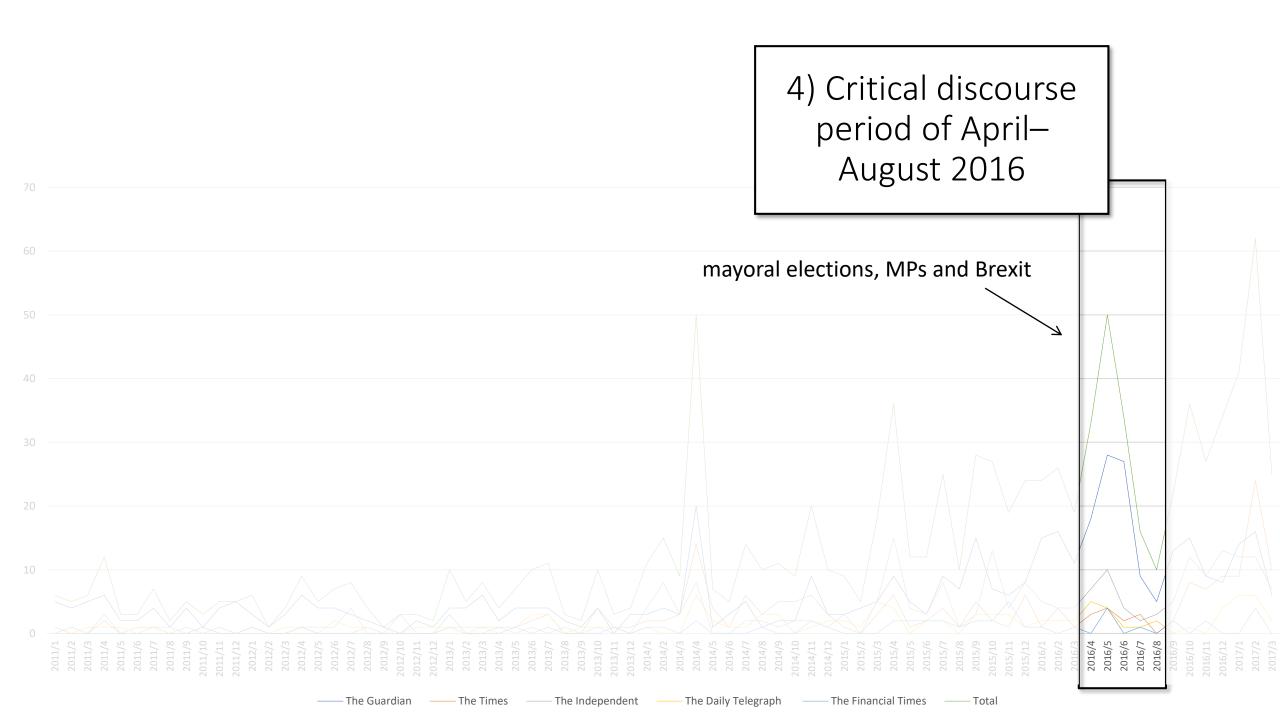
#### London breaches annual air pollution limit for 2017 in just five days

Culture

Brixton Road in Lambeth has already broken legal limits for toxic air for the entire year, with many other sites across the capital set to follow









#### **Pollution**

This article is more than 3 years old

## MPs: UK air pollution is a 'public health emergency'

Cross-party committee of MPs says the government needs to do much more to tackle the crisis, including a scrappage scheme for dirty old diesel cars





#### **FINANCIAL TIMES**



HOME WORLD UK COMPANIES TECH MARKETS GRAPHICS OPINION WORK & CAREERS LIFE & ARTS HOW TO SPEND IT

Sign In

Subscribe

Get a fresh start.



Choose your FT trial

#### Latest on Pollution



India swelters as record temperatures become 'new normal'



Tackling the climate crisis should be Britain's national crusade



Climate change: in praise of air conditioning Premium



Japan, China and South Korea must end support for coal

Pollution

+ Add to myFT

### London's mayoral rivals compete for green vision

Concern mounts that other global capitals offer a more pollution-free future





Waiting for experience.tinypass.com...

NEWS POLITICS VOICES FINAL SAY SPORT CULTURE VIDEO INDY/LIFE HAPPY LIST INDYBEST LONG READS INDY100 VOUCHERS MINDS

Voices

## What has the EU ever done for you? Quite a lot, actually



They cleaned up our beaches, gave us paid holiday time, improved our air quality, made our holidays cheaper - and even ensured that a bottle of wine costs less than it ever has

Hannah Fearn | @hannahfearn
Thursday 23 June 2016 14:37 |











New shift in conflict lines: air pollution is taken up as a key political priority of the highest level and becomes part of the electoral struggle

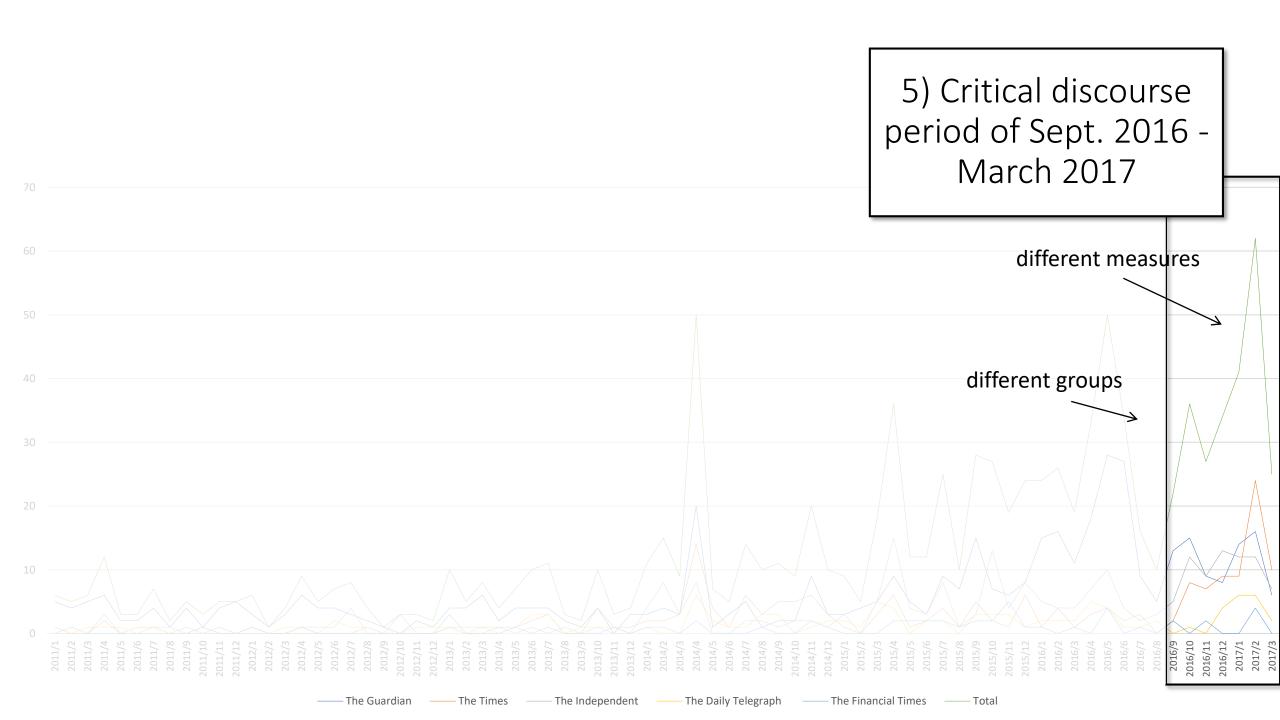
⇒ strategies for change

- Which governance level can deal most adequately with air pollution? European, national, city-level, local?
- What is the power of the different policy levels and how do they relate to each other?
- The game of multilevel governance is played out in several ways



Election of Sadiq Khan: triumph for air pollution

> Brexit: defeat for air pollution



Conflict line 1: social divisions: 'we are not all affected in the same way'

## Black Lives Matter protest stops flights at London City airport

Police arrest seven of nine people chained to tripod on runway in protest against impact of air pollution on black people



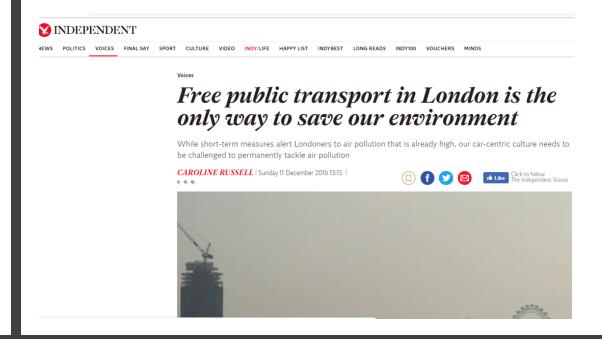
Matthew Weaver and Jamie Grierson

Tue 6 Sep 2016 11.44 BST



### Conflict line 2: Which visions on future alternatives?

Which measures should be put in place? Are all green measures good measures?



#### THE

#### Average speed cameras to reduce air pollution deaths

Ben Webster, Environment Editor

December I 2016, I2:01am, The Times



Cameras which track speed over a set distance are thought to help smooth traffic flow ANDREW MATTHEWSIPA

#### THE TIMES

VIDEO

#### Drivers of toxic diesels must pay to enter cities

Ben Webster, Environment Editor | Graeme Paton, Transport Correspondent

November 3 2016, 12:01am, The Times



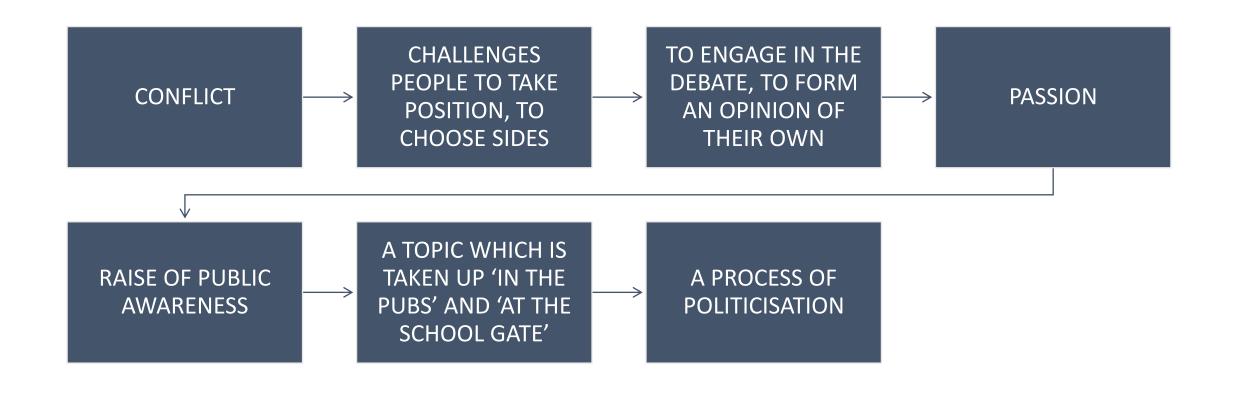
Britain has failed to draw up plans to ensure that it meets EU limits on air pollution, which causes more than 40,000

721.fls.doubleclick.net...

## ⇒ Up the spiral, more detail in the debate

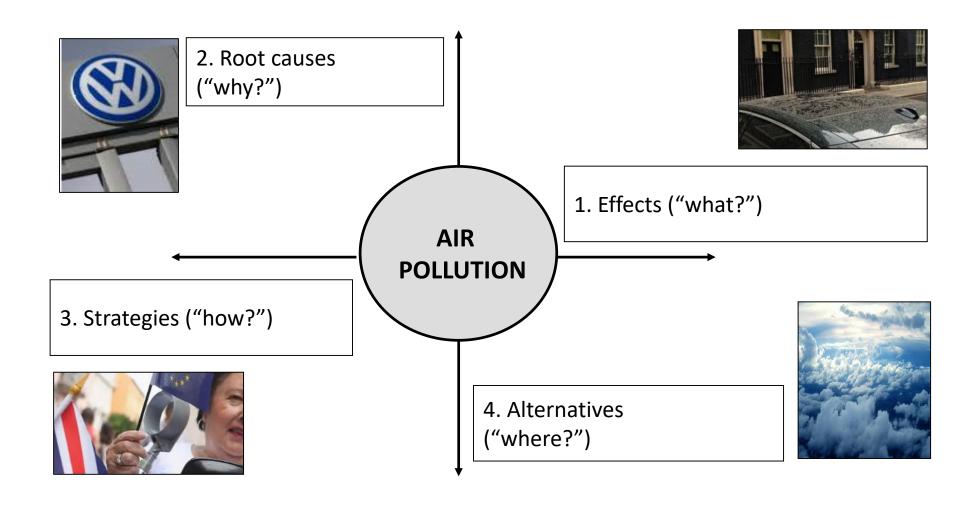
- Further unfolding and mixing up of several conflict lines
  - E.g. Sadiq Khan's pledge to pedestrianise Oxford Street
  - Boris Johnson's plea to leave the EU: (Have) fines fuelled the current heightening of Mr Johnson's hostility towards the EU?' (The Guardian, 31 May 2019)
- + single news items in much higher numbers
- ⇒Self-reinforcing cyclic iterative process whereby higher media coverage and public awareness mutually reinforce each other
- ⇒Conflict is a crucial driving factor





!) Not debate because there is interest, but interest because there is debate

The conflict lines can be mapped onto Jensen's (2002) model of different levels of knowledge and awareness formation in environmental education.



### Risks

- Stories are published which aren't double-checked
- Call for quick fixes, rise of gimmicks
- People might become passively anxious

The smart bus stop traps harmful pollutants via a filtration system, and is said to create 95 percent cleaner air in the central spots where Londoners are most vulnerable to toxic air pollution.



Airlabs unveiled a series of 'anti-pollution bus stops' in London in 2017 CREDIT: AIRLABS

Greg Dickinson

13 FEBRUARY 2018 • 11:03AM



# Coming to an end

- Level of 'saturation'
- New issues which take the foreground

What we don't talk about when we only talk about Brexit

Jonathan Freedland



Warming oceans, war in Yemen, the fate of the Uighurs, Gaza ... We've been too busy with the backstop to notice the world







## THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Comments, questions and suggestions are very welcome

