

The Politics and Public Policies I Hope for

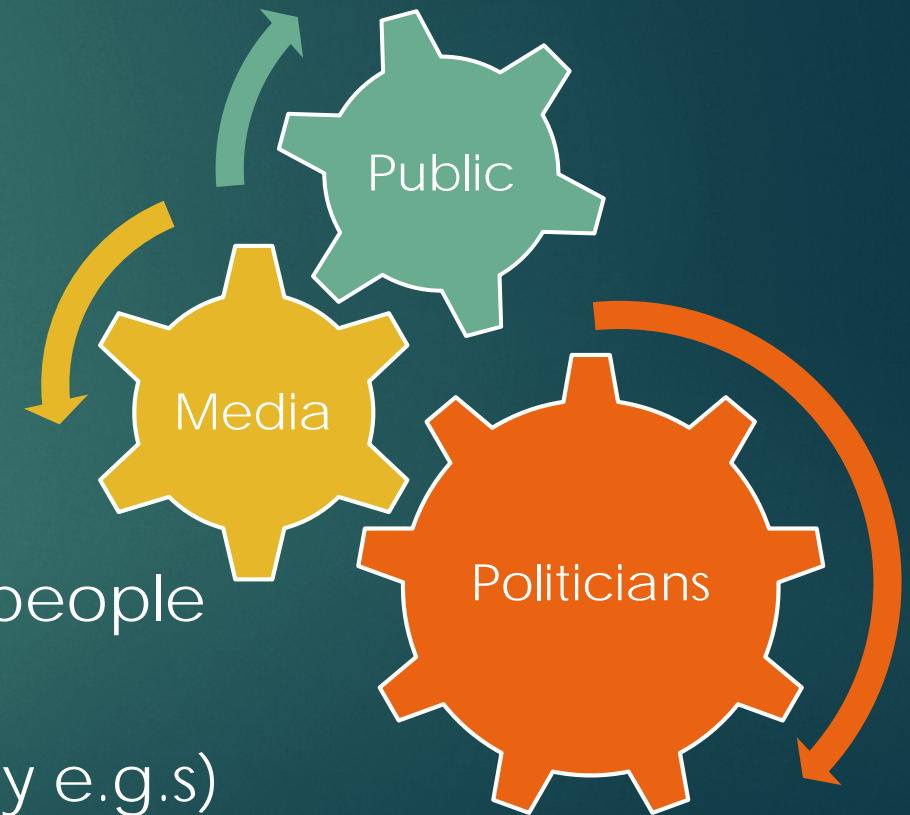
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The problem: Politics

- ▶ Politics is rarely about policies
- ▶ Politics is often about “optics”:
 - ▶ Personalities (drink-a-beer-with-ability)
 - ▶ Scandals (-gates)
 - ▶ Who made a mistake (or flipped a flop)
 - ▶ Socio-historical voting institutions (e.g. farmers)
- ▶ This process encourages the wrong kind of people to get into politics
- ▶ Bad politicians make bad policies (too many e.g.s)



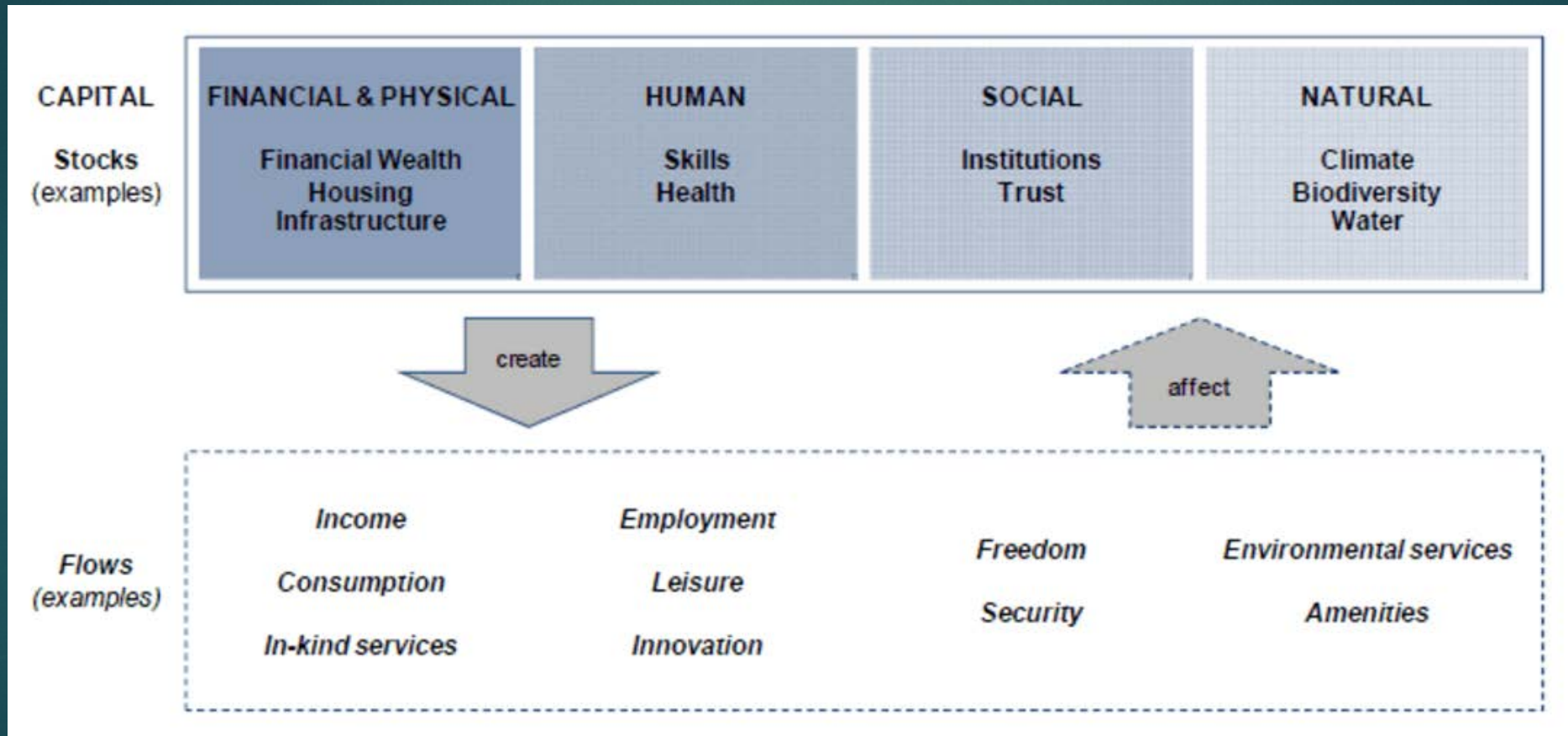
Bad policies?

- ▶ Policies that are not evidence based (or worse)
- ▶ Policies that look good but don't really do anything
- ▶ Policies that have negative wellbeing effects for many New Zealanders
- ▶ Policies that have negative wellbeing effects for New Zealanders that are already struggling
- ▶ Policies that may improve some indicator but do not improve wellbeing
 - ▶ E.g. Doing something that increases production but not wellbeing

Good policies?

- ▶ Policies that efficiently and fairly promote wellbeing
- ▶ Efficiency is a common policy goal
- ▶ Fairness is complex, but includes treating like alike (not necessarily in the Don Brash way)
- ▶ Wellbeing = when peoples' lives go well (for them)
- ▶ Promoting wellbeing is probably best pursued through providing *capabilities*
 - ▶ *Real* opportunities to pursue (non-anti-social) views of the good life

Like using the Treasury's Living Standards Framework



But how to get politicians (and the public) interested in good policies?

A naïve proposal for a richly democratic wellbeing-centred political-policy process (Overview)

- ▶ Generate a list of NZers goals for NZ
- ▶ Political parties rank the goals
- ▶ Political parties generate policy proposals
- ▶ The policy proposals are assessed relative to the goals
- ▶ “Actual” rankings are assigned to political parties
- ▶ The media report on the policy goals information
- ▶ Citizens vote for political parties (informed by goals)

Richly Democratic Wellbeing-Centred Political-Policy Process: Generate Goals

- ▶ Stats NZ arranges for a large study of NZers goals for NZ (similar to Australian efforts circa 2012)
- ▶ A list of (~10?) common goals are created
- ▶ The list is included in the census for NZers to rank
 - ▶ Gets amended via the same process as adding religions to the census

RDWPPP: Political parties rank the goals

- ▶ Parties use their own processes to decide their policy goals
- ▶ They can combine the new goals information with their own polling etc.
- ▶ The parties can campaign on the goals they are prioritizing
 - ▶ (instead of saying they are pro everything good)

RDWPPP:

Policy proposals are assessed relative to the goals

- ▶ A specialised government department (part of Treasury?) assesses each (major) political party's policy proposals against the goals
- ▶ The assessments are fully transparent
- ▶ They include a user-friendly goal-based summary and specific comments
- ▶ This would be a lot of work up front and X months out from each election
- ▶ Journalists, think tanks, and academics should monitor and assess these assessments to keep them honest

RDWPPP:

“Actual” rankings are assigned to political parties

- ▶ Political parties are assigned a ranking of the goals based on their proposed policies
- ▶ The assigned rankings are updated as new policy proposals are released and especially enacted by government
- ▶ The rankings are publicised in a user-friendly way
 - ▶ ?A specific set of graphical indicators is always used?

RDWPPP:

The media report on the policy goals information

- ▶ All reporting is highly user-friendly
- ▶ Discrepancies between stated and “actual” goal rankings
- ▶ Changes in a party’s stated or “actual” goal rankings
- ▶ Comparisons between different parties’ rankings
- ▶ ?Ways to refine the system in light of the above?

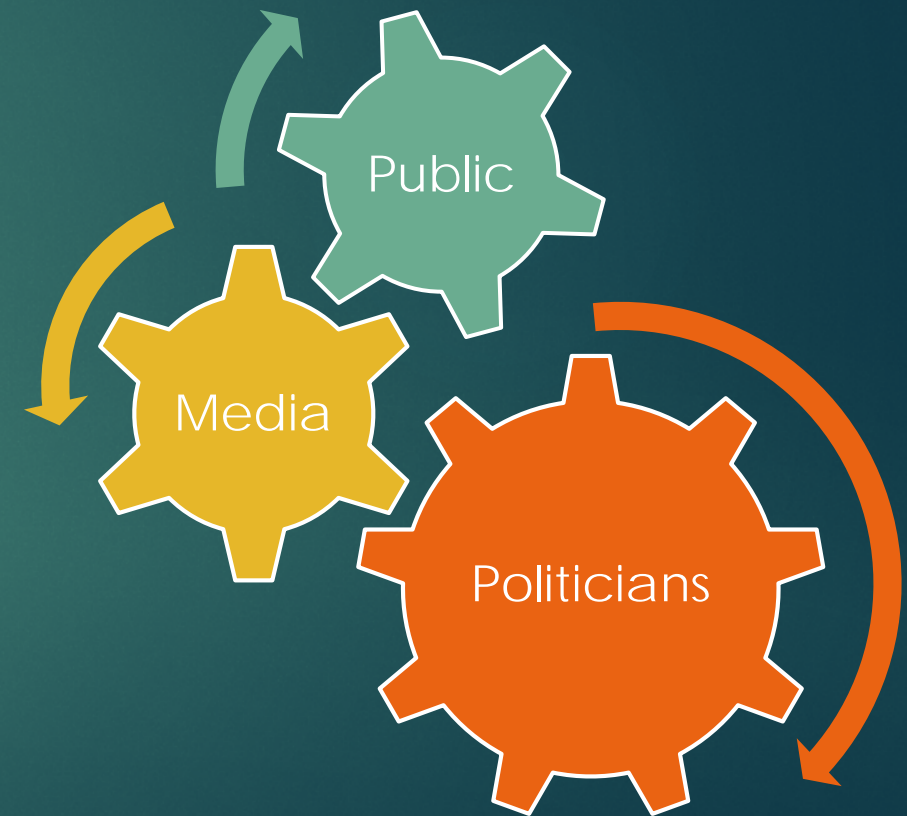
RDWPPP:

Citizens vote for political parties (informed by goals)

- ▶ Citizens can introspect their own goal ranking
- ▶ Citizens could use software to discover their policy goals ranking
 - ▶ E.g. Multiple pair-wise choices
- ▶ Citizens could use software to see which political parties best match their policy goal ranking
- ▶ Citizens can easily find user-friendly unbiased policy assessments

?The solution?: RDWPPP

- ▶ Media workers find it easier to report on policies and political party's policy goals
- ▶ Citizens now find it easier to investigate (or hear about) whether specific policies or political parties share their policy goals
- ▶ Politicians come under pressure to make politics about good policy



Interesting potential issues

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- ▶ What if NZers wanted aspects of subjective wellbeing as the main policy goal?
- ▶ What if NZers came up policy goals that we don't know how to bring about via policies?
 - ▶ Set up government funded contestable research grants to find out how to give people what they want
- ▶ How to incorporate efficiency and fairness?
 - ▶ Efficiency: the same (e.g. via cost benefit analyses of options)
 - ▶ Fairness: Possibly have versions of fairness appear as values (e.g. Via equality of inputs/outcomes)