David Bromell

The Art and Craft of Policy Advising

A Practical Guide

Second Edition

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Springer

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Foreword

David Bromell hasn't written only one book: *The Art and Craft of Policy Advising* presents ideas, methods and tools that could have filled two or maybe even three volumes. While reading through the six chapters, it quickly becomes clear that the author obviously does not only *mean* what he is writing, he actually *follows* his own advice to provide a concise, coherent and helpful perspective on the many challenges that confront a public policy advisor. The author's sometimes quite private account of his experiences reveals a lot about the needs and worries of working in the public sector and knowledge, strategies and techniques to do so effectively.

Every paragraph of the book is crafted with sound judgment: no colleague, senior executive or elected official is harmed in this book. Bromell masters the task of abstraction by using just enough layers of scholarly attention to deliver a perfectly objective account of his research. In every chapter, he connects theoretical reflections with practical perspectives and tools. The range of his study spans wide: we are confronted with Greek dialectics or a short discussion of different concepts of contemporary policy analysis, only to be surprised a few pages later by finding tips for designing document templates or spreadsheets.

Bromell sums up truly important points of knowledge for working in the public domain, which has become ever more complex. Nobody needed the chaos of an erratic "Team Trump" meandering through the transition to the White House to be reminded that "public service occurs within a democratic compact—society delegates coercive powers to the state, but does so with the expectation that public powers will be exercised in the public interest, in accordance with the law, and with forbearance, good reason and transparency".

Those words are worth keeping in mind, not only when bringing new administrations to life but also in mastering everyday concerns in the political process. Bromell partitions the main tasks of public servants in analysing, advising and advocating and reminds us that "Ours is to advise; politicians to decide". This perspective on division of labour also highlights the necessity of co-operative effort to develop and implement public policy.

Can the effort of "making public policy" ever come to an end? Of course not—Bromell encourages us not only to respond to urgent, here-and-now problems

but to do this civilly, with an eye to the long-term public interest. His empha-
sis on ethical competencies for public service, and especially the call for prudence
as a forward-looking, responsibility-enhancing concept, is valuable advice to any
"Government of the day" that also works for "tomorrow".

   The Art and Craft of Policy Advising was largely written at the NRW School of
Governance at the University of Duisburg-Essen. During his Mercator Research
Fellowship in May–July 2016, David Bromell introduced us not only to his
research interests but also conveyed some of the techniques and methods now
displayed *en détail* in his book. By providing these insights, he left a permanent
impression that will help refine our own perspective on "political management" as
a key concept for modern governance. The encouragement to support politicians
as "honest brokers of policy alternatives" will find an echo in courses taught in the
various study programmes at the NRW School of Governance.

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Christoph Bieber
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Preface to the Second Edition

The Art and Craft of Policy Advising emphasises the importance of relationships, integrity and communication in effective public policy advising, illustrated by personal anecdotes and reflections on my own public service in New Zealand's Westminster-style system of government. The relatively informal, conversational style reflects my advocacy for an apprenticeship model of learning on the job, with or without formal study in politics and public policy.

I wrote this book especially for new policy advisors and new policy managers. It has been encouraging to hear that it has proved to be a useful resource for on-the-job training and self-directed learning, and as a text for university courses in public policy.

Five years on from when the first edition was published, my thinking about politics and public policy advising has continued to evolve. This is reflected in this second, revised edition, particularly Chaps. 2, 3 and 4.

For many years, I have been preoccupied with pluralism and super-diversity and how to manage conflict between people who want and value different things. Chapter 2 asks, **Who are my clients, and what do they need from me?** I have re-worked and expanded Sect. 2.2.3 on working with multiple clients, emphasising that public policy-making is an inescapably political (rather than a merely analytical) process. As we decide who and what to pay attention to, when and why, public servants in policy advice roles need to acknowledge stakeholders' common, different and competing or conflicting interests, including our own interests, and facilitate agreements and ways of working together that are in the long-term public interest. In my experience, nothing about this is easy and public policy education has not always prepared us well for effective engagement in a pluralist democratic politics. Based on my more recent work in strategic planning and stakeholder analysis and prioritisation in regional government and as a trustee of an NGO, I offer an expanded framework for stakeholder identification, analysis and prioritisation in relation to our own strategic frame (vision, identity, values, goals and objectives). Dannielle Hemelryk kindly helped render new Fig. 2.3 on stakeholder interest and influence.

I have also been rethinking a public value approach to public policy advising (Chap. 3). This revised chapter distinguishes two ways of coming at this. The first is broadly utilitarian and relatively straightforward—eliminating waste in

public services, working efficiently, and designing and implementing policies that represent value for money (a favourable benefit-cost ratio). The second approach (Sect. 3.2.3) concerns the role and responsibilities of public servants in defining strategic goals and creating public value in the long-term public interest. In this, I have sought to align and integrate theory about the public interest, public value and anticipatory governance.

Prompted by an exchange in the November 2021 issue of *Administration & Society* between Mark Prebble, Mark Moore, Jean Hartley, John Benington, Guy Peters and Timo Meynhardt, I have been persuaded by Prebble that it is not possible to judge the value of a public value proposition with sufficient confidence to justify the use of public authority. We cannot, however, avoid making morally significant decisions, and some courses of action (and strategic goals) are morally preferable to others. Therefore, public value creation is and remains *political*. There is no science or technocratic rationality by which we can *verify* the truth of a public value proposition, but we can *validate* it by reference to law, democracy and process. This requires public policy advisors to develop skills in facilitating democratic decision-making, including conflict resolution and compromise, in a spirit of service to the community and in ways that respond to immediate needs without compromising future collective well-being (the long-term public interest). Nothing about this is easy.

The revised Chap. 4 reflects the New Zealand Treasury's continued development and latest (2021) iteration of its Living Standards Framework. In Sects. 4.2.3.3 and 4.3.2, I have incorporated the Treasury's analytical prompts (or lenses) of distribution, resilience, productivity and sustainability into a "fair go" framework for public policy.

The material on science and public policy (Sects. 4.2.1, 4.2.2) has gained relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope this sheds some light on why democratic governments have rightly weighed up the best available science and public health advice against long-term social, economic and environmental implications and global responsibilities to arrive at various prudential, *political* determinations of the right thing to do, for now, in specific local contexts.

I have revised the text throughout (learning to write well is a lifelong task!), and updated the references. I offer this second edition to a new cohort of advisors who have the privilege and responsibility of helping to shape public policies that, even if they do not create the best of all possible worlds, may at least prevent the worst and hopefully leave things a little better and fairer than we found them.

Christchurch, New Zealand   David Bromell
February 2022

Preface to the First Edition

This book is a contribution to building knowledge, skills and confidence in the art and craft of effective public policy advising. It is the book I wish I could have read when in 2003 I was appointed to a senior policy analyst role in the New Zealand Government's Ministry of Social Development.

This was a mid-life career change. Like many who transition into public policy advising, I had no formal training or previous experience in public policy. I had previously worked in tertiary education, parish ministry and social services management and governance in the community and voluntary sector.

When I applied for the position, I knew very little about what a policy advisor does on a day-to-day basis. For some months, as is common in a new job, I felt like a fraud. I had to dig deep and rely on skills that fortunately transferred well to my new role. With coaching from an experienced manager and a great deal of learning on the job, I found my feet and began my apprenticeship in the art and craft of policy advising.

I stayed at the Ministry of Social Development for ten years, including secondments as a private secretary to the Minister for Social Development and Employment and to the Institute of Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, and as a Chief Policy Analyst in the Ministry of Education. Within the Ministry, my career progressed from Senior Analyst, to Principal Analyst, to Principal Advisor. During my final year there, I was acting Chief Policy Advisor, managing a team of senior policy and research specialists.

In 2006, when I returned to the Ministry of Social Development after a year in the Minister's office, I was determined to improve the quality of our policy advice. I worked with colleagues to develop and maintain a Policy Advice Toolkit, provided induction training, coaching and mentoring to new policy analysts and managers, supported senior managers with an annual external review and benchmarking of the quality of the Ministry's policy advice and advised a number of other state sector agencies on policy capability building.

In 2013, I moved south to Christchurch to work as a principal advisor in the strategic policy team at the Canterbury Regional Council (known as Environment Canterbury). In this role, I am expected to model good practice, help build policy capability and improve the quality of advice provided to decision-makers.

Personally, I have never wanted to be a politician, but I enjoy being a policy advisor. As public servants, we do not make policy decisions ourselves but we have

the privilege of informing and influencing decisions that can improve the quality of life in our communities and contribute to sustainable prosperity. This is primarily what motivates me, and most of the public servants I know—the opportunity to make a difference.

Being a policy advisor is a good career choice if you have a curious mind, have wide-ranging interests and lack the instinct to focus on one field of specialisation year after year. I am an intentional generalist and relish the great diversity of policy fields and topics I get to work on. In my current role, this includes regional economic development, population analysis, improving access to fast broadband in rural areas, integrated planning of regional transport planning, freshwater management, education and training for a skilled workforce, newcomer and migrant settlement, visitor strategy, and supporting regional governance and policy capability building. The variety and inherent interest of our work is a significant drawcard to pursuing a career in public policy.

Being a policy advisor has not, however, always been easy for me. At times, I have found it technically, interpersonally or ethically challenging. I have often had to admit that "I don't know" and to ask for help. Like everyone who works in public policy, I have had to walk the line between the practical and the ideal and to accept what is "good enough for now". I have had to navigate tensions between politicians, and between politicians and senior public servants. I have struggled with managers who prefer to tell politicians what they want to hear, rather than what they need to hear. On occasion, I have had to work to policy agendas that were not well supported by evidence, that were motivated by short-term political expediency rather than the long-term public interest or that were likely to have consequences that conflict with my personal values and aspirations for New Zealand and its peoples. In short, public policy is fraught with ambiguity. And when I moved to local government in 2013, I resolved to start again in some respects and do some things differently.

The challenges of doing the job, and doing it both ethically and effectively, have driven me to "stand back and think about it", to discussion with colleagues, to listening, reading and learning. For the most part, I have worked this out in articles written for fellow practitioners published in *Policy Quarterly*, the journal of the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies. Teaching a course on political philosophy and public policy in the Master of Public Policy programme at Victoria University of Wellington since 2012 has also provided rich opportunities for critical reflection on what is at stake for democracy and good governance in how we provide policy advice.

In other words, I have written this book *as a practitioner for practitioners.* It contains relevant theory, processes, tools and techniques that I have been driven to learn or develop by my practice as a public servant. I want to pass on what I have learned so you can learn from what has worked for me and learn from my mistakes without needing to repeat them yourself. (You will make enough mistakes of your own and hopefully learn from them too.) I will elaborate on some of the challenges in terms of both theory and practice and offer tips and tricks to make the job quicker and easier as you engage the various audiences for your advice and

provide decision-makers with what they need to do their job. Above all, I hope this book will communicate my passion for public service and for the institutions and practices of democratic government.

Contents

Introduction: Theory and Practice of Effective Policy Advising

1.1   Who This Book is For and What It is About

A policy is "a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in particular situations that has been agreed to officially by a group of people, a business organisation, a government, or a political party" (Policy, 2015). Sometimes a policy is an idea or plan of what *not* to do (Birkland, 2016, p. 8).[1] Maintaining the status quo (doing nothing different) is always an option.

Governments make public policy (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 2). Public policy advisors are people who present information, analysis and recommendations to support public decision-making about policy, informed by social values (Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 23).

This book is a practical guide for policy advisors to elected and appointed officials in local, state, central or federal government. Elected and appointed officials include:

- Senior managers and chief executives/heads of government agencies;
- Members, commissioners and chairpersons of the boards of governance of public agencies; and
- Politicians (ministers, legislators, mayors, members and chairs of local authorities).

Throughout, I describe public policy-making as *incremental social problem-solving*. While there are exceptions that require transformative policy responses (Sects. 3.3.1, 6.2.3), policy advising in democratic states for the most part aims at iterative change and continuous improvement, rather than radical innovation

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[1] Hence Thomas Dye's (1981) definition: "Public policy is whatever governments choose to do or not to do" (p. 1).

and disruption of the status quo. The goal is evolution rather than revolution (Lindblom, 1959, 1979), in order to achieve both short-term and long-term objectives.

At the end of this chapter, I provide some suggestions on how to read and use the book and outline its content. Each chapter provides reflection on theory and practice, and process, tools and techniques to help get you up and running, especially if you are a new policy advisor who has come to the role without formal training in public policy. New policy managers will also be able to make good use of it—particularly if you have come from an operational role and have not previously worked as a policy advisor yourself.[2]

Because being an effective policy advisor requires ongoing learning and reflection in the ever-changing and always challenging world of policy and politics, more experienced policy advisors and managers may find it useful, as a guide to career development and to honing the art and craft of policy advising.

For students in university courses in politics and public policy, many excellent texts are available on policy analysis.[3] Few resources are available on the skills required for effective policy advising.[4] If you intend to apply for jobs in the public sector, this book will help prepare you to apply theory in practice—and perhaps to decide whether you do after all wish to apprentice yourself to the art and craft of becoming an effective policy advisor.

People who provide policy advice in the private sector, or the community and voluntary sector, may also find this book relevant and useful, as many of the same principles apply: focus on your audience, anticipate what your clients need, build a relationship of confidence, maintain the integrity of your advice, communicate effectively and create value.

Public servants, no matter how experienced we are, need to keep on refining and improving the art and craft of policy advising, for three reasons.

1. We work for agencies of state that have inclusive and coercive powers. The policies on which we give advice, once adopted and implemented, affect the lives and well-being of a very large number of people, imposing costs and distributing benefits in ways that have unintended consequences and enduring impacts.

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[2] Policy advisors and analysts mostly work in teams with managers who report upwards through various tiers of management to a chief executive.

[3] Texts on policy analysis and managing the policy process that I have found useful include: Althaus et al. (2013), Bardach and Patashnik (2019), Birkland (2016), Brans et al. (2017), Cairney (2021), Fischer et al. (2019), Howlett et al. (2009), Mintrom (2012), Scott and Baehler (2010), Weimer and Vining (2016), Wu et al. (2017). On policy advisory systems in the Westminster tradition, see Craft & Halligan (2020). On government and politics in New Zealand, see Hayward et al. (2021, esp. Parts 5–6).

[4] Michael Mintrom's *People skills for policy analysts* (Mintrom, 2003) has a similar focus to my own on skills to improve the effectiveness of policy analysts and advisors. See also the concluding chapter of Wu et al. (2017).

2. We are paid from the public purse and have a responsibility to taxpayers to provide the best possible value for money by what we do and how we do it. This responsibility is heightened when we are paid salaries well in excess of the average income of our fellow citizens.
3. Professional practice needs to adapt and keep pace with new challenges, developments in technology and periodic disruptions to the status quo that shake us to the core and test the institutions and practice of government.

Where I live, this happened quite literally. The Canterbury earthquakes of 2010–2011 were New Zealand's worst and most expensive natural disaster. One hundred and eighty-five people were killed from more than 20 countries, and several thousand were injured. The central business district of Christchurch, New Zealand's second-largest city, was substantially destroyed. The Government declared a national civil defence emergency and created a new government agency, the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, to help manage the initial response, recovery and early stages of the rebuild.

After-shocks rattled the region and frayed the nerves of its residents. Between September 4, 2010, and September 3, 2015, 4341 after-shocks were recorded at greater than Magnitude 3.0. At a total estimated cost for the rebuild of NZ\$40 billion (N.Z. Treasury, 2014, pp. 119–121), or close to 20% of GDP, the task of rebuilding the city will continue until at least 2025.

This presented a host of policy and practical problems, disruption of institutional arrangements and gradual adjustment to a "new normal" beyond the emergency response period. Within my own agency, the Canterbury Regional Council, we had to learn to work differently, based in eight temporary offices around the city, on matters of perplexing complexity and with a sense of urgency. Finally, in April 2016, we moved into a new building, back in the inner city.

It was exciting to be part of this from 2013 and to test the theory and practice of policy advising in extraordinary circumstances. What we learned from this experience has in turn been tested in November 2016, when a Magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck North Canterbury and once again disrupted our lives and regional economy, and by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whether it is natural disasters, pandemics, constitutional crises or acts of terrorism that shake our world and our lives, or slow-burn challenges like climate change, we need to cultivate and practise ways of governing that are resilient to disruption and discontinuity with what has gone before, while retaining our best values and hard-won traditions of public service and democratic government.

1.2   The Public Servant as Analyst, Advisor and Advocate

People employed in policy roles are sometimes called analysts and sometimes called advisors. In practice, the terms are often interchangeable but it is useful to maintain a distinction between the functions of policy analysis and policy advising.

In fact, public servants involved in policy-making fulfil at least three distinct functions—analysis, advising and advocacy (Bromell, 2010). Policy analysts/advisors (regardless of their job title) typically fulfil all three functions, although senior managers commonly step in where advocacy is required. But these are functions—not roles—and most policy projects involve some component of each function.

Policy analysis gathers relevant data and turns this into information to support decision-making—most commonly by identifying two or more options to address a problem, challenge or opportunity and assessing the strength of the evidence for and against each option. Public sector policy analysis is expected to be evidence-informed, technically competent and politically neutral.

I deliberately use the phrase "politically neutral" rather than "apolitical". In a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy, political neutrality does not mean that public servants are "not political", or that we cannot or should not exercise political freedoms and expressions of citizenship. We are required, however, to act impartially to implement the Government's policies and to provide consistent services, including consistently free and frank policy advice (Sect. 4.3.3) to the Government of the day. Essentially, this means keeping our jobs out of our politics, and our politics out of our jobs.

While the analysis of data and information may be merely "one small piece in a larger mosaic of politics, bargaining, and compromise" (Callahan & Jennings, 1983, xiii), it is the function of analysis that contributes depth and integrity to policy advice.

Policy advising bridges the gap between analysis and decision. Policy advisors support decision-makers to select and implement their preferred policy options—preferred because they align with the values and agenda that drive them; because, on the available evidence, they are most likely to achieve the desired results; and because they are practically and politically implementable. Policy advising involves communication of policy analysis that has been undertaken, recommendations based on this analysis and decision-making support.

Public policy advisors have duties on at least three fronts:

- To serve the government of the day faithfully by providing advice that is free, frank and politically neutral and by implementing policy decisions, once made, without criticism or re-litigation;
- To serve the public by promoting better policies and protecting the long-term public interest in how we advise politicians, implement policies and deliver public services; and
- To respect and improve the democratic process by which policy decisions are made (McPherson, 1983, p. 76).

Sound analysis is a major component in the integrity of policy advice but advisors need to be more than analysts. An effective advisor wins the confidence of decision-makers and secures a licence to operate with both rigour and relevance in the real-world cut and thrust of politics:

> Analysis can be rigorous (but of course, it sometimes/often is not) but it may also be rigorously irrelevant (to actual policy-making) if it does not speak constructively to the agendas that are driving decision makers. (Gregory, 2005, p. 26)

In the public service, policy advisors are responsible for "speaking truth to power" (Wildavsky, 1987) in ways that maintain the confidence of both present and future ministers, legislators and the public—or, in a local authority context, present and future mayors, councillors and the public. We do this by being "honest brokers of policy alternatives" (Pielke, 2007), anticipating and communicating the inevitable trade-offs they present, and by showing how decision-makers' preferred options might be implemented and at what cost.

Policy advocacy seeks to persuade and advocate for recommended options. Unless we communicate analysis in ways that persuade, even the most competent, evidence-informed analysis may fail to win political support. As Wildavsky (1987, p. 13) put it, "Analysis, which is in part rhetoric, should be persuasive". Geva-May (1997) explains:

> Neutrality serves policy analysis well during evaluation conduct—at the modelling and alternative design stages—but it becomes impedimentary once findings and recommendations are presented, discussed and acted on by organizational actors. Then it becomes subjected to the power and politics of major organizational players. Lacking advocacy and organizational basis, proposals have little capacity of survival. (p. 145)

Becoming an effective policy advisor requires mastery of rhetorical and dialectical skills, "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" (Majone, 1989, xii).

Moving into an advocacy role as a public servant is, however, a risky business. On what basis and in whose interests are we advocating, and how as unelected officials are we accountable to the public for the advocacy we engage in?

Hawke (1993) urges policy advisors to focus on the issue, not a routine application of individual beliefs, because "working together may be damaged by officials following their own agendas rather than showing commitment to the policy process" (p. 37). New Zealand's State Services Commission[5] (2008) reminded state servants that:

> A partisan statement made or position adopted by a State servant may not be forgotten easily and it could colour the way that Ministers (or future Ministers) relate to that State servant or to the agency employing that person. The consequences could be to reduce the credibility of the State servant and the agency (and the State Services generally). (p. 3)

Chapter 4 introduces an approach to policy analysis in practice, but this book does not primarily focus on policy analysis. Neither is it a handbook for policy advocacy. Rather, it aims to improve effectiveness in the *policy advice* role. It

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[5] In New Zealand, the Public Service Act 2020 repealed and replaced the State Sector Act 1988 and re-named the State Services Commission as Te Kawa Mataaho | the Public Service Commission.

passes on what I have learned about winning the confidence of senior managers and elected officials and securing opportunities to present free and frank advice persuasively to decision-makers.

1.3   Policy-Making in Theory and Practice

Public policy-making is often taught in university courses as proceeding in cycles and stages of rational, goal-oriented decision-making and applied problem-solving. This approach goes back to Laswell (1958), and as Alford et al. (2017, p. 756) note, the many versions of the policy cycle fundamentally set out a series of stylised steps from problem identification or issue framing to implementation. The stages do not necessarily occur in lockstep order and are typically more variable than textbooks suggest.

Howlett et al. (2009), for example, provide the descriptive model of policy-making summarised in Fig. 1.1: agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation. A central approach of their book is the representation of policy-making as "a cycle of problem-solving attempts, which results in '*policy learning*' through the repeated analysis of problems and experimentation with solutions" (p. 3, emphasis theirs; cf. Wu et al., 2017).

Althaus et al. (2013) have expanded this into an "Australian policy cycle" they intend to be both descriptive and prescriptive. Descriptively, the model offers a heuristic (a mental organising device to assist learning and problem-solving)—in this case, to make sense of more or less distinct activities involved in policy development. Prescriptively, their eight-stage model (Fig. 1.2) encourages an orderly routine to help define the roles and respective responsibilities of each player along

Fig. 1.1 Howlett et al. (2009) descriptive model of policy-making
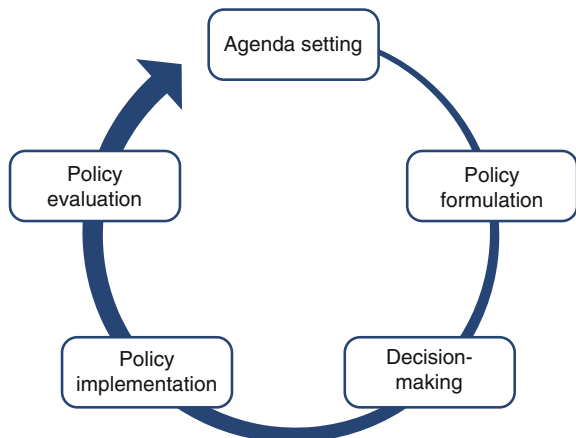
Fig. 1.2 The "Australian policy cycle" (Althaus et al., 2013, pp. 37–40)
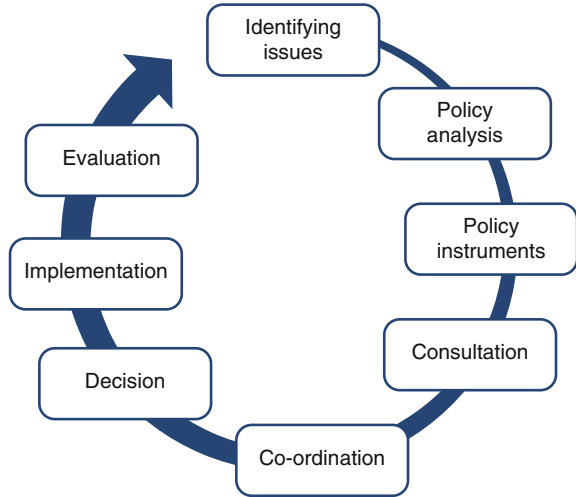
a recognised sequence of decision-making and implementation, while acknowledging that policy-making is non-linear and commonly follows "a winding or zig-zag path, even a recursive one" (p. 33).[6]

The eight stages in their Australian policy cycle are:

1. **Identifying issues**—recognising a problem and defining it as an agenda for public policy;
2. **Policy analysis**—gathering information to frame the issue and help decision-makers understand the problem;
3. **Policy instruments**—identifying appropriate tools and approaches to address the problem;
4. **Consultation**—discussions and interaction with relevant agencies and interest groups to test ideas and gather support;
5. **Co-ordination**—ensuring funding can be made available to implement the policy, and coherence and consistency with overall government direction and other existing and planned policies;
6. **Decision**—confirmation of policy by government, usually via Cabinet consideration;
7. **Implementation**—giving expression to the decision through legislation or a programme designed to achieve goals agreed by Cabinet; and
8. **Evaluation**—reviewing the effects of a policy and adjusting or rethinking its design.

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[6] For brief overviews of theories of public policy-making, see Althaus et al. (2013, pp. 34–35), Nixon (2016, pp. 14–17).

A problem with policy cycles and staged models of the policy-making process is that taken at face value, they bear little relation to policy analysis and advising as we actually do it. I hear this complaint from post-experience Masters students in the School of Government where I teach, and it echoes my own sense of the limitations of "rational comprehensive" approaches to policy-making (Scott & Baehler, 2010, p. 26), for three reasons.

First, there is nothing in the policy cycle model itself that tells me when one stage is complete and the next ought to commence. How do I know when I have adequately defined the problem, gathered sufficient information or done enough consultation? Defining the problem, for example, often takes longer than we had anticipated, particularly if on closer analysis the problem is not what we had initially assumed or as it has been framed by decision-makers. What is the causal theory that underlies the policy cycle, driving the cycle from one stage to the next (Sabatier, 1991)?

It is better to think of some stages, particularly gathering information and consultation, as ongoing processes that run through all the other stages. Consultation, for example, is needed to identify and frame issues, understand the problem, determine the appropriate policy instruments, co-ordinate and develop consensus prior to Cabinet consideration, shape programme design and implementation, and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of a policy once implemented.

Secondly, a staged model over-simplifies complex problem-solving processes that policy practitioners often describe as "iterative"—a fancy word for repetition, trial and error, advancing then backtracking (or even going around in circles) until we find an approach that wins political acceptance as good enough for now and the foreseeable future, all things considered.

And thirdly, models of the policy cycle tend to focus attention on decision-making within government and in this sense are "top down". They do not capture well the influence of non-state actors on public policy-making or modes of engagement with citizens and communities other than consultation.

Models of policy cycles and stages serve a useful purpose, however, if they help make sense of the policy process and remind us of things to think about, and not necessarily in the prescribed order, if we are to be responsible as well as responsive policy advisors.

The same is true of models or lists of key steps for doing policy analysis. These are useful if they remind us of what we should be thinking about when we do the analysis that informs our advice to decision-makers (Weimer & Vining, 2016, Chap. 15). I will expand on this in Chap. 4.

Bardach and Patashnik (2019) have provided a handbook for beginning practitioners of policy analysis with precisely this goal. It is the latest (sixth) edition of a general approach developed by Bardach over decades of teaching policy analysis. Given a choice between imposing too much or too little structure on what is a complex problem-solving process, Bardach and Patashnik have developed "the Eightfold Path" summarised in Table 1.1.

Bardach and Patashnik emphasise that the eight steps on the path are not necessarily taken in this order, not all are of equal significance in every case, and the

Table 1.1 Bardach and Patashnik's (2019) "eightfold path" for policy analysis

1. Define the problem
2. Assemble some evidence
3. Construct the alternatives
4. Select the criteria
5. Project the outcomes
6. Confront the trade-offs
7. Stop, focus, narrow, deepen, decide!
8. Tell your story

process of problem-solving is an iterative (repeated) process of trial and error that requires us to assemble and analyse evidence along the entire path.

Mintrom's (2012, p. 3) six key steps in policy analysis, summarised in Table 1.2, do not include information and evidence gathering as a separate step, on the understanding that evidence needs to be gathered and assessed throughout the entire process of doing policy analysis.

Provided we remember the limitations of staged and cycle models of policy analysis and of the policy-making process overall, these models can help organise our thinking and focus our attention on important elements of the task (Birkland, 2016, p. 28). A key message of this book, however, is that at heart, effective policy advising is less about cycles, stages and steps, and more about *relationships, integrity* (both of the advisor and the advice) and *communication.*

Relationships: Effective policy advising requires above all building and maintaining relationships of confidence with the various audiences for your advice; that is, your client, or clients (Nixon, 2016). Unless you succeed in winning the confidence and trust of decision-makers, you will have limited opportunities to present advice to them and they may choose not to listen to you. Anneliese Parkin (2021), deputy chief executive, policy, in New Zealand's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, has commented:

> The worst thing that can happen to your career as a policy leader is that you lose your minister's trust. It is difficult to convince your chief executive that you're doing a great job if your minister is refusing to meet with you. (p. 196)

Table 1.2 Mintrom's (2012) six key steps in policy analysis

1. Engage in problem definition
2. Propose alternative responses to the problem
3. Choose criteria for evaluating each alternative policy response
4. Project the outcomes of pursuing each policy alternative
5. Identify and analyse trade-offs among alternatives
6. Report findings and make an argument for the most appropriate response

Policy advisors also help broker and facilitate consultation and engagement with interested and affected parties (stakeholders) and with the public generally. Managing relationships with multiple clients will be the focus of Chap. 2. Stakeholder engagement and collaborative governance will be discussed in Chap. 6.

Integrity: As a public policy advisor, my duty is to do my job in ways that secure the confidence of future as well as present politicians, legislators and the public. Being an effective policy advisor requires both personal and professional integrity. This theme runs throughout the book. I will elaborate on it in Sect. 1.5, and also in Chaps. 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Communication: policy advisors advise decision-makers but we have little or no scope to make policy decisions ourselves. The power we exercise is the power of persuasion, which means we need to communicate effectively—in writing, in face-to-face conversations, and in briefings and presentations to a range of audiences.

Moreover, policy advising is a social activity that involves collective thinking and social problem-solving. We work in teams with other analysts and advisors, service delivery colleagues, research and evaluation specialists, financial analysts, communications advisors, senior managers and so on. Policy advising is not a job for lone rangers. Increasingly, creating public value and providing better public services requires us to facilitate cross-agency and cross-sectoral co-operation, co-ordination and collaboration, compromise and conflict resolution, community consultation, engagement and collaborative governance.

Creating public value in the policy advice role is discussed in Chap. 3. Communication skills are the focus of Chap. 5. The knowledge and skills to facilitate collaborative governing for the long term is the subject of Chap. 6.

1.4 Learning on the Job

Many public sector policy advisors come to the job with no formal training in public policy. Some senior managers prefer it that way. Policy advisors with established notions of the right way to do things, particularly when combined with a narrow advocacy stance on the right things to do, seldom become effective policy advisors. I hear them described by politicians or senior managers as too pure—or, in the context of environmental management, too green. It usually indicates that the advisor has not yet won the confidence of decision-makers and may have demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to confront the complexity of a policy problem or to contribute usefully to negotiating the sorts of practicable compromises that are the stuff of politics.

A narrow advocacy stance may also express a life position from which the advisor, consciously or (more commonly) unconsciously, communicates conditional OKness: "I'm OK; you're not OK (but you too can be OK, so long as you follow my expert advice)". Advisors who operate from this sort of life position commonly over-use the words *should*, *ought* and *must* when what decision-makers want to hear is *could, can* and *will!*

In other words, a relationship of confidence between advisor and decision-maker cuts both ways. The decision-maker needs to be able to trust the advisor. The advisor also needs to build and maintain confidence in the decision-maker as a person of goodwill, who also wants to make a difference, advance the public interest and improve human flourishing (individual and collective well-being, now and in the future).

A relationship of confidence cannot be built to a formula or reduced to an algorithm. This is largely why effective policy advising is more an art and a craft than a science. We cannot take textbook models of how public policy is made, or ideals of how it could or should be made, and apply them directly to the tasks we are asked to do in a public policy role. What we have learned in university courses on public policy may give us some useful tools in our toolbox, but knowing what a chisel is and what you can use it for does not mean you can fashion a serviceable mortise and tenon joint.

Becoming a master craftsperson requires an *apprenticeship*. Apprenticeship is a kind of on-the-job training in which the apprentice is taught, coached and mentored by experienced practitioners, often in combination with part-time, formal teaching and learning at a university or technical college. While we usually associate apprenticeships with trades training (carpenters, electricians, plumbers and so on), doctors, lawyers and many other professionals also learn their trade through an apprenticeship model of training and development.

Mastering the craft of public policy advising takes years, rather than months, of practice, reflection and learning. If you are in your first job as a policy advisor, or you are about to take up a policy advice role for the first time, understand that what your manager and your colleagues will value you for is not what you know, but your willingness to learn.

Michael Mintrom (2003) provides a valuable reminder that those around us represent important resources:

> By carefully managing our interactions with our colleagues, we can keep ourselves informed of broader policy developments, find out about emerging opportunities, learn tricks of the trade, and save ourselves time. Treating our colleagues as valuable resources, to be managed with care, is a good career strategy. But working hard to make the most of the interactions we have with others is also important at the human level. When everybody in an office or organization is on good terms, the work is much more enjoyable, and a lot more work gets done. (p. 27)

In a policy team, your manager may provide some of your training, but policy managers are not necessarily themselves master craftspeople. More likely, they will function as the foreperson or overseer of the team. As part of your induction, you may be linked up with a buddy who will support you in your first weeks on the job, but your buddy will not necessarily have a great deal more experience than you have yourself. Your task is to identify the journeymen (experienced, competent fellow workers) and master craftspeople in your team, and to apprentice yourself to them.

This does not have to be a formal, or explicit, arrangement. Many of the people from whom I have learned the craft would scarcely have noticed that I was watching and learning from them. Neither was there any single person from whom I acquired the skills to become an effective policy advisor. Rather, as I needed to learn a new skill to tackle a task, I looked for someone who seemed to be further along the four stages of learning (unconscious incompetence; conscious incompetence; conscious competence; unconscious competence[7]) than I was myself.

Over the years, as I have learned the art and craft of policy advising, I have identified and learned from people who excel at certain tasks: demographic analysis and interpreting statistics for public policy; economic evaluation of policy options; using criteria and decision rules to identify preferred policy options; design of institutional arrangements, systems and processes; strategic planning; stakeholder analysis and prioritisation; project management; analysis of legal implications and of risk; relationship management; writing, editing and advanced word processing and document design; spreadsheet tools and formulas; putting together engaging presentations and visuals; speech writing, media releases and so on.

No one journeyman or master craftsperson can teach you everything you need to learn about the art and craft of policy advising. In my decade at the Ministry of Social Development, I benefited greatly, however, from conversations with a senior colleague—an "old hand" with extraordinary institutional memory who embodied the ethos of public service and was generous in his time and encouragement to me as a less-experienced colleague coming up through the ranks.

Now I too am one of the "grey heads"—beyond ambition for career progression. I do not want more responsibility; I want more time, and I want my work to count for something. I want to contribute to the development of others and pass something on to the next generation. I am in what Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 1981) termed the "generativity versus stagnation" stage of the life cycle. It is a source of great satisfaction to me when I am able to coach and mentor younger colleagues, help them improve their effectiveness as policy advisors and advance their careers. That is why I have written this book—and as an encouragement to my fellow journeymen and master craftspeople to be generous in sharing the art and craft with those who will eventually take our place.

1.5   Ethical Policy Advising

On a holiday in Vietnam with my son, we visited the Temple of Literature in Hanoi. Emperor Ly Thanh Tong dedicated the temple to Confucius in 1070. Six years later, his successor Ly Nhan Tong expanded the complex and built Quoc Tu Giam—the first university of Vietnam and an imperial academy for the training of

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[7] The learning stages model was first developed by Noel Burch at Gordon Training International in the 1970s (Adams, 2011). See also Process Coaching Center (2001–2015).

mandarins. (We continue to describe certain very senior and influential bureaucrats as mandarins.) The academy continued there for 700 years until 1779, after which the Nguyen dynasty founded its capital in Hué from 1802 and established a new imperial academy there.

The Temple of Literature is divided into five courtyards. The first extends from the main gate to the Great Middle gate (Dai Trung), with a central path between lotus ponds to right and left. To either side of the Great Middle gate are two smaller gates. Our guide explained that the gate to the left is the Attained Talent gate (Dai Tai); the gate to the right is the Accomplished Virtue gate (Thanh Duc). These gates lead through to the second courtyard and the Constellation of Literature pavilion.

It was the symbolism of the two side gates that seized my imagination—the Attained Talent gate and the Accomplished Virtue gate. The twin gates suggest that being an effective mandarin requires the cultivation of both talent and virtue.

- *A policy advisor who has talent and skills but lacks virtue is dangerous.*
- *A policy advisor who has virtue but lacks talent and skills is useless.*

Our guide further explained that it is customary in a Confucian temple to enter through the gate to the right, and to exit through the gate to the left. Entering through the right-hand (Accomplished Virtue) gate suggests that we should understand building ethical muscle (Bromell, 2019, Chap. 8; Plante, 2004, Chap. 8) as something of a prerequisite for mastering the art and craft of being a mandarin. It reminded me of Noel Preston's comment that "nothing is more dangerous to the well being of the body politic than a public official who is technically competent or strategically astute but ethically illiterate or unfit" (Preston, 1994, p. 1). Effective public policy advisors are *trustworthy*, and trustworthiness is a function of both character and competence (Mintrom, 2012, p. 23).

Doing public policy ethically is a theme that will run throughout this book. Ethics matters for at least three reasons.

1. The state is not a voluntary association. It is an involuntary association that includes everyone within a given territory and exercises coercive powers over us. For example, state agencies can set rules that tell us what we can and cannot do with our private property; deduct taxes from our income and when we buy goods and services; prescribe what our children learn in school; arrest and detain us, and if convicted in a court of law, fine us or sentence us to imprisonment and deprive us of liberty. The state has a monopoly on the legitimate use of force.
2. The people to whom we give policy advice lead busy lives and juggle multiple responsibilities. We cannot expect them to retain at front of mind all the information and details of every policy and project across their agency or portfolio. They rely on advisors to look after the details and, at the same time, keep an eagle's eye view on the big picture and advise them accordingly. While there are systems and processes (checks and balances) in the public service to detect

and correct for this, an unscrupulous advisor can manipulate decision-makers, for a time at least, with misleading, false or partial information and selective advice.

3. Policy advisors in the public sector are *public* servants, not only *government* servants. We are rightly expected to serve the Government of the day, but to do so as guardians of public value with an eye to long-term outcomes, the public interest and the rule of law.

Michael Mintrom's (2012) chapter on "Doing ethical policy analysis" introduces five ethical principles, following Thomas Plante (2004), that Mintrom then usefully applies to each of his six steps in policy analysis (Table 1.2). The five ethical principles are integrity, competence, responsibility, respect and concern.

My own reflection on ethical competencies for public service (Bromell, 2010, pp. 66–71) draws on Kenneth Winston's work at the Kennedy School of Government (Winston, 2008, 2010) and highlights four ethical competencies in particular:

1. **Civility**—the capacity to engage in reasoned, reflective judgement that makes itself accountable to diverse publics;
2. **Fidelity to the long-term public interest**—skill and responsibility in dealing with vast complexity and dynamic change along the horizontal continuum of time, as distinct from being merely responsive to the demands of the present moment and to vertical accountabilities (managing upwards);
3. **Respect for citizens as responsible agents**—because people are more than objects of policy interventions, our duty extends to respecting and improving the democratic process by which policy decisions are made, and to facilitating citizens' participation in self-government; and
4. **Prudence**—the exercise of practical wisdom, informed by critical reflection on accumulated experience, in concrete situations.

I elaborate on ethics and public policy advising in Chaps. 3, 4 and 6.[8]

Table 1.3 summarises some characteristics of effective policy advisors, in terms of what we know, what we do and how we are.[9] Specific subject knowledge does not feature in my list of desired attributes, because while it is critical that government policy shops engage and retain specialist experts with deep knowledge

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[8] In a book on *Ethical competencies for public leadership: Pluralist democratic politics in practice* (Bromell, 2019), I propose six ethical competencies for public leadership, which I state in the form of personal resolutions: *When exercising public leadership with people who want and value different things, I will … civil, diplomatic, respectful, impartial, fair and prudent.*

[9] See also the Policy Skills Framework developed within *The Policy Project* of the N.Z. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2020). The Framework similarly outlines Knowledge (what I know), Applied Skills (what I can do) and Behaviour (how I am/act). Wu et al., (2017, Chap. 7) summarise political capacity in terms of analytical, operational and political skills and resources, at the individual, organisational and system levels.

Table 1.3 Characteristics of effective policy advisors

What we know
• We are well informed about politics and current events
• We know how to learn and find relevant information quickly
• We can interpret statistics and turn data into information
• We understand the machinery of government and how policy decisions get made and implemented
What we do
• We listen before we speak, and think before we write
• We look after the details while keeping an eye on the big picture
• We communicate clearly, concisely and persuasively, in plain language
• We use technology confidently
How we are
• We are open and approachable and "play nicely with others"
• We are good networkers and create collaborations that work
• We are confident and assertive, but respectful and socially appropriate
• We are pragmatic, flexible and resilient

and institutional memory,[10] the vast majority of policy advisors are required to be generalists who will work in a range of sectors and agencies and in more than one policy field during our public service careers. For policy generalists, core competencies are general intelligence (and knowing how to learn), and certain attitudes, behaviours and the ability to get on and work well with people.

Over the years, I have assisted with short-listing and interviewing candidates for policy advisor roles in the public sector. When we recruit, we consider:

- Overall grades, rather than subjects studied (although economics may be an advantage);
- Written communication, as evidenced in the presentation of the curriculum vitae and covering letter;
- Previous work experience;
- Participation in sport, arts and culture and/or contribution to the community and voluntary sector and any other evidence of being well-rounded and a team player;

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[10] A regrettable consequence of the managerialism instituted in the New Zealand state sector as part of New Public Management reforms (Sect. 2.2.1.1) was a hollowing out of applied science and research and specialist skills and experience from policy agencies and a loss of deep institutional memory (Chapple, 2019; Knight, 2021). A step towards correcting this has been the appointment of departmental chief science advisors from 2011 (Gluckman, 2021, pp. 153–154; Parkin, 2021, pp. 199–200).

- Conduct and communication in the interview setting, including the ability to tell a concise, coherent story; and
- The quality and presentation of any written exercises set as part of the selection process.

Because we are assessing EQ (emotional intelligence quotient) as well as IQ (intelligence quotient), we are likely to ask how you deal with difficult people in the workplace and about your techniques for managing stress. We may throw you a confronting question at interview, to observe how you handle it. Some agencies routinely require psychometric profiling as part of the recruitment process. I am always interested to hear how candidates have presented themselves to receptionists or executive assistants on arrival.

We do this because it is impossible to package all the skills to become an effective policy advisor into a university course or degree programme in public policy. Essentially we are looking for recruits with the capacity to develop political nous (or savvy): the skills to suss out the lie of the land, navigate through swamps and dark forests, avoid wolves and bears, and find ways through seemingly impassable mountains. We value the soft skills to communicate persuasively, negotiate effectively, resolve conflict, form alliances and collaborate to get better results. *We need to assess whether you have the makings of a capable apprentice.*

1.6   How to Use This Book

The kind of people who make effective policy advisors are likely to be impatient to access the information they need to do the job, then get on with it. While the chapters of this book follow in a logical order, you do not need to read them in sequence. Each chapter is self-contained and can be read in its own right. Relevant references are provided at the end of each chapter.

This chapter has outlined the purpose and structure of the book as a practical guide to the art and craft of public policy advising and summarises some of the themes that run through it. Subsequent chapters each introduce a particular challenge and opportunity for skill development, elaborate this in terms of both theory and practice, and provide processes, tools and techniques to help you learn the craft.

Chapter 2 discusses relationship management with multiple clients—an inescapable fact of life for public policy advisors. It provides a framework for identifying stakeholders and prioritising who and what we pay attention to, when and why. Process, tools and techniques introduced in this chapter are clear commissioning, the art of listening and note-taking, anticipation, timeliness and "working backwards".

Chapter 3 invites reflection on how much government is good for us and thoughtfulness about what is private, what is public, what is in the public interest and how we might best create public value in the policy advice role. It provides a set of questions to guide definition of the value proposition, an introduction to

cost-benefit analysis and its strengths and limitations, and reflection on winning the confidence of decision-makers and leading from behind in the co-creation of public value.

Chapter 4 argues that policy advice needs to be evidence-informed while also engaging with emotions and values. Much of the task of policy analysis involves crafting the right questions to facilitate incremental social problem-solving. One framework we can use to do that is to ask which of several policy options is most likely, on the available evidence, to give the people affected by it "a fair go". Process, tools and techniques introduced in this chapter include collective thinking and storyboarding, multi-criteria decision analysis, and scrutinising the integrity of our advice against free, frank and other f-words.

Chapter 5 is about facilitating social problem-solving by how you tell the policy story to a variety of audiences in a range of different ways. The **7 Cs** of effective communication are that it is *clear, concise, concrete, complete, consistent, coherent* and *compelling*. Writing well, and writing better, is a discipline that requires life-long practice. Crafting recommendations is a particularly important skill to master, in order to support meetings that make decisions and enable action to occur. Process, tools and techniques introduced in this chapter include designing and using document templates, peer review and the art of giving and receiving feedback, and some techniques for preparing and presenting oral presentations.

Chapter 6 is about different ways of working with others to create public value. All public policy-making involves or affects a wide range of other parties. Approaches to managing this occupy different places along a continuum between competition and collaboration. The mode and method of engaging and working with others need to fit the policy problem under consideration in a specific context. Working together in the long-term public interest requires policy managers and their teams to maintain and review a balanced portfolio of functions and tasks. The chapter concludes with further reflection on interpersonal skills for effective collaboration, "scheming virtuously" and ethical competencies for public service.

It is rare these days for a public policy advisor to read a book in the course of going about our day-to-day responsibilities. The information we need to do the job is largely sourced from the internet, from journal articles and research papers, and we learn to read quickly, skimming for only the information we need to do the job now. You can skim read this book like that or you can read it more slowly, to *reflect and understand rather than to consume*.

When I read a book to reflect and understand, I find it helpful to study the table of contents first, to get an idea of the structure and contents of the book. I then read the introduction to get a sense of the questions the author seeks to address, how she or he proposes to address them and what might be in it for me if I commit time to read and think about the book. (After all, I always have the option of reading some other book, or doing something completely different with my time and mental energy.)

Then, if I am still interested, I will read the body of the book (its chapters), noting key messages and ideas that make sense to me, or that I disagree with or want to think about some more. Talking to a friend or colleague about these ideas

is, I have found, the most effective way to anchor them in my thinking before they are blown away by whatever problem or preoccupation comes along next.

If you want to read this book reflectively, as a resource to support your apprenticeship in the art and craft of policy advising, I offer some questions at the end of each chapter, as prompts to further thinking and discussion. Whichever way you choose to read this book, I hope it will increase your knowledge and understanding and show you some pathways to skill development that will improve your competence and your confidence as an effective policy advisor.

1.7   For Reflection

- Does my job mostly require me to work as an analyst, an advisor or an advocate? Which of these three functions am I most/least comfortable with and skilled at?
- What are the stages or key steps I follow when developing a policy project or doing policy analysis? Do the models discussed in Sect. 1.3 help me make sense of this?
- In my work as a policy advisor, what has been my biggest challenge to date: relationship management, maintaining my own integrity and the integrity of my analysis and advice, or the communication of my advice to decision-makers? Which chapters of this book will most help me develop the skills I want to build?
- Do I know or work with someone who is an expert practitioner of some aspect of the art and craft of policy advising? What can I learn from them and how might I best do that?
- Which of the characteristics of effective policy advisors (Table 1.3) are my strengths, and which are competencies I want to develop in the next 12 months?

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Who Are My Clients and What Do They Need from Me?

2

2.1 Introduction

During 2005, I worked as a private secretary to the Minister for Social Development and Employment. My job was to support communication between the ministry, the minister, the Cabinet Office and committees of parliament, ensuring an effective flow of information and advice and conveying decisions taken by the minister and by cabinet to the ministry.

While the minister respected the fact that I was a seconded public servant rather than a political appointee, I was a member of his staff and for my day-to-day work I reported to his senior private secretary. The Associate Minister for Social Development also regularly called on me for assistance. And if the prime minister or her chief of staff requested information or advice, that trumped all other work priorities.

Within the ministry, I reported to the manager responsible for seconded private secretaries. I also stayed in contact with my home manager—the manager of the team I had been seconded from—and attended weekly meetings with the ministry's chief executive, who liked to remind me that he paid my salary.

As is common in public sector roles at all levels, I had multiple and competing clients. Within the ministry, these included the chief executive, the senior leadership team and my managers and colleagues. Within the executive branch of government, my clients included the minister, the prime minister and other members of cabinet and their staff. Within the legislature, my clients included the government caucus, members of parliament, select committees and their clerks, and other officers of parliament. More broadly, the public was my client—my job was, in my own small way, to help make the system of government work within established rules, guidelines and processes.

Who was my primary client during that secondment? When I discussed this with other private secretaries past and present, it came down to choosing between the minister and the chief executive. This was never a straightforward choice or

an exclusive either-or. Some of my colleagues, particularly if they worked in a minister's office for an extended period, gravitated towards the minister as their primary client. Others regarded the chief executive as their primary client. I sought to walk the line between them but I cannot pretend this was easy or that I judged matters correctly in every case.[1] Sometimes the best I could do was annoy the minister one week and the chief executive the next!

When I moved to Christchurch to work in local government, I continued to have multiple and competing clients, including my manager, the chief executive and the executive leadership team, the chairperson and members of the Canterbury Regional Council, and the chairpersons and members of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum, Chief Executives Forum and other regional forums.

With the benefit of experience, managing the tensions between multiple clients caused me much less anxiety than I felt as a private secretary a decade previously. But it still required regular reflection and discussion with my manager on how best to prioritise and provide a prompt and professional service to our multiple clients.

This is all the more important when we are playing a long game (Sect. 6.3.2)—weighing up short-term wins against long-term impact, securing the confidence of the public and of future as well as present politicians, and maintaining our professional and personal integrity as public servants.

For all the difficulties of managing our responsibilities to multiple and competing clients, on a day-to-day basis *being an effective policy advisor requires a consistent customer focus*. I will elaborate on differences between clients and customers in Sect. 2.2.1, but the key point is that whether we are relating to clients or customers, effective policy advisors consistently aim at service excellence and approach this from the customer's perspective.

What brought this home to me personally was the minister's "weekend bag". Every Friday afternoon, staff in the minister's office (private secretaries, political advisors and press secretaries) collated papers for his reading and decision over the weekend. This included papers for the weekly cabinet meeting on Monday morning, high-level portfolio update reports, briefings on his five ministerial portfolios, correspondence and draft replies, caucus briefings, proposed releases of official information, and so on.

We placed these papers in two large pilot briefcases that the senior private secretary locked and sent securely to his home address. When the minister returned to the office on Monday morning, he gave the papers back to us with his comments, questions and decisions. He completed some of this work in the car while being driven from his hometown to Wellington, the capital city.

Service excellence starts with putting yourself in the other person's shoes. By Friday afternoon, I was looking forward to the weekend and some free time. After spending a good part of Saturday in his electorate office, the minister had to wade

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[1] On non-partisan advisors in ministers' offices and maintaining neutrality, see Cole (2020a, 2020b, 2021).

through the pile of paperwork his officials had created for him during the week. I wanted to know how we could make his job easier.

A number of processes were already well established.

- Portfolio briefings had coloured cover sheets that immediately identified which portfolio they concerned.
- Papers were organised in the briefcases by portfolio and within each portfolio, by order of importance and/or urgency.
- Private secretaries read and analysed all papers and provided a one-page memorandum for each paper that summarised key information, identified risks and provided second-opinion advice on the decisions sought.
- Departments used document templates to prepare reports, with the most important information and recommendations on the first page. (When you read many reports, it helps if information appears in the same format and in the same order—Sect. 5.3.1.)

I identified two additional areas where I hoped to make a difference. The first was that no system was in place to track what briefings had been requested or offered, by when and from whom. This made it difficult to manage the flow of work across the year. A surprisingly large number of projects promised, for example, to report back "by 31 December" during New Zealand's summer parliamentary recess, at a time when ministers and most public servants took annual leave. From my perspective in the minister's office, the lack of a tracking system also gave too much power to the ministry to decide whether and when to provide briefings. The solution was simple—a spreadsheet shared and agreed weekly between the ministry and the minister's office.

Incidentally, this created a disincentive to policy advisors to promise routine, information-only report backs on ongoing projects. An alternative was to provide a brief note in the weekly update to the minister, which helped reduce the number of stand-alone reports that added little value. If the minister wanted to know more, he could (and did) ask.

The second area where I hoped to make a difference was a more long-term challenge—to build my own and others' abilities to provide effective policy advice. Because I also had to read reports that went to the minister, I began looking at the quality of our policy advice from the customer's perspective. Some of the most important things I learned to focus on were:

1. A concise purpose statement that focuses the audience's attention on what we are inviting them to know, decide or do;
2. A forthright problem definition and value proposition (Sect. 3.3.1) that identifies the issue and what is at stake, in terms of risk, challenge or opportunity;
3. Identification of interested and affected individuals and groups (stakeholders) and the nature and strength of their interests, with recommendations on whether, why, when and how to engage with them;

4. Reasoned, evidence-informed analysis of policy options and clear identification of which option or options officials recommend and why;
5. Analysis and recommendations that talk to each other—tightly worded recommendations that are well supported by the analysis in the body of the report, and analysis in the body of the report that is comprehensively captured in the recommendations;
6. Advice on risks and how to manage them;
7. Information on next steps and who will do what by when—to support action-focused accountability;
8. A clear structure signalled by meaningful headings;
9. Sharp writing in plain English, with short sentences, short paragraphs and no wasted words;
10. Clean, error-free presentation, with data accurately and appropriately presented, and writing that is free of typos and spelling and grammatical mistakes.

Customer-focused policy advising is as simple, and as difficult, as the Golden Rule (ethic of reciprocity): *Treat others the way you would like others to treat you.* In other words, provide the kind and quality of policy advice you would want to receive if you were the client.

Politicians, after all, are rarely geniuses or exceptional human beings. They are elected by and of the people and are mostly ordinary women and men performing extraordinary duties and responsibilities. Our role as public servants is to support them to the best of our abilities, with client-oriented advice (Weimer & Vining, 2016, pp. 24, 342–343) that supports incremental social problem-solving.

Chapter 3 develops the idea of the value proposition and creating public value in the policy advice role. Chapter 4 outlines a practical approach to doing policy analysis. Chapter 5 elaborates on effective communication, smart use of document templates, writing recommendations and using peer review to polish the content and presentation of policy advice. Chapter 6 expands on the ethics of working together with others in the long-term public interest.

In the remainder of this chapter, Sect. 2.2 explores differences between customers and clients, reflects on duties and responsibilities of public servants and provides a framework for prioritising who and what we pay attention to, when and why. Section 2.3 discusses clear commissioning of policy analysis and advice, the art of active listening and some good policy management practices: anticipation, timeliness and "working backwards".

2.2   Theory and Practice

This section addresses the question: How do we decide who or what to pay attention to, when and why? It discusses differences between customers and clients and constraints on an unqualified customer focus in a public sector context. It provides

a framework, informed by stakeholder theory, for identifying stakeholders and prioritising our response to their interests in relation to our own strategic frame (our vision, identity, values, goals and objectives).

2.2.1 Customers and Clients

A **customer** purchases or receives goods or services. I am a customer, for example, when I buy groceries at a supermarket and petrol at a service station, or pay an electrician to install an additional power point in my house.

A **client** is a loyal, repeat customer or someone who has entered into an ongoing business or professional relationship with a provider of goods or services.

For example, I am a client when I consult my solicitor, with whom I have had an ongoing professional relationship for many years. If, however, I engage a second solicitor on a one-off basis to provide me with independent, second-opinion advice before signing a contract or deed, then I am a customer, rather than a client of that second solicitor.

Similarly, if I am selling my house, I enter into a sales agreement with a real estate agent that sets out the terms and conditions of their service to me and our respective duties and obligations. I am the real estate agent's client. I expect the agent to demonstrate excellent customer service when they deal with people who may be interested in purchasing my house, but I enter into a contract with them to represent and work for me as the client-vendor, not for the customer-purchaser. Their job is to help me sell my house at the highest possible price.

Some businesses use loyalty reward schemes to "turn customers into clients". My caffeine addiction drives me to seek a fix at least twice a day and usually I go to the same café. The rewards for being a loyal customer might include being greeted by name, a discount (every tenth coffee free) and even having my coffee made ahead of others in the line.

This leads me to make four points about customers and clients.

- The term "client" implies an ongoing professional or business relationship with certain explicit or implicit expectations about behaviours, duties and obligations.
- Where we have multiple, competing clients, we often need to distinguish between primary and secondary clients. We commonly do this by reference to political and organisational hierarchy, in relation to our own position and role in the organisation. Generally, the best way to serve my manager is to deliver what my manager's manager needs.
- When engaging with other stakeholders (for example, private sector firms and various interest groups), it can help to think of them as "customers" rather than "clients". Our working relationships with some of these stakeholders may transition from a customer- to a client-type relationship but they are not our primary clients.

- Whether we are dealing with clients or customers, *effective policy advisors consistently aim at service excellence and approach this from the customer's perspective.*

I will now proceed to qualify this fourth statement, before introducing stakeholder theory and a framework for managing relationships with multiple clients.

2.2.1.1 New Public Management

During the 1980s and 1990s, governments applied New Public Management (NPM) techniques and practices to reform public administration in a number of countries, most notably the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia (Larbi, 2003, p. 1; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).[2] NPM is a summary description of a way of thinking about and organising public sector agencies to bring their management, reporting and accounting practices closer to those of the private, for-profit sector (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994, p. 9). It has not been implemented without criticism.

The theoretical underpinnings of NPM have been public choice theory and principal-agent theory (Hood, 1991; Larbi, 2003, p. 2). Public choice theory responds to a desire to curb the role, growth and cost of government, encourage privatisation and quasi-privatisation, strengthen the links between costs and outputs, and improve public sector performance and specifically its responsiveness to service users (customers). Principal-agent theory also responds to concerns about information asymmetry and monopoly characteristics of public services and promotes exposure to competition and private sector management practices.

Principal-agent theory when applied to public policy implies a double principal-agent relationship:

1. The Government as principal for agents in public services (i.e., government agencies—ministries, departments, offices, Crown entities, state-owned enterprises, etc.); and
2. The public as principal for elected and appointed public officials (politicians and bureaucrats) as agents (Lane, 2013).

Introducing market and quasi-market type mechanisms into public administration was partly intended to make public services more user-friendly, with service users re-conceptualised as "customers" or "clients". Many countries followed the example of the U.K. Citizens Charter by establishing charters or guarantees of standards of service that clients can expect. Larbi (2003, p. 7) reported, for example, that customer surveys had been used in Ghana, with Public Complaints Units established in all ministries. Malaysia established consultative panels with customer representatives and introduced a national Clients' Charter in 1993. The use

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[2] For a classic New Public Management manifesto, see *Economic Management* and *Government Management*, the N.Z. Treasury's (1984, 1987) briefings to incoming Governments (cf. Hood, 1991, p. 6).

of report cards in some parts of India allowed service users to evaluate service providers. Singapore established a Service Improvement Unit to investigate and respond to complaints from service users.

This emphasis on customer orientation has been supported by developments in technology that enable citizen self-servicing online and via smartphone applications. In New Zealand, for example, I can go online at a time convenient to me to access an increasing number of central government and local authority services. I can register my dog, apply for or renew a passport, submit my tax return, pay my property rates, tender for a government contract and download my COVID-19 vaccine pass. Technology developments coincide with the drive to contain costs, do more with less, and collect "big data" for monitoring, reporting and policy design.

I have suggested that effective policy advisors consistently aim at service excellence and approach this from the customer's perspective. When the dust settled on NPM reforms, however, three dilemmas surfaced that qualify an uncritical customer focus in public administration (Norman, 2006, p. 26).[3]

2.2.1.2 Outputs or Outcomes?

Tightly defined, measurable outputs can motivate focused effort but within short-term horizons and potentially at the expense of long-term outcomes that are more difficult to measure and evaluate. In other words, a public sector that is narrowly focused on serving its primary client (the government of the day) may deliver its desired outputs but in important respects fail to preserve and build capability to serve successive governments and ensure outcomes that are in the long-term public interest.

A report to the New Zealand Cabinet in May 2011 on the second tranche of Performance Improvement Framework reviews noted as a key theme "short-term responsiveness, but limited medium-term view or strategic positioning"[4]:

> Agencies tend to be reactive, focusing on the short-term and delivering (well) what ministers ask for today, but this is often at the expense of their obligation to ensure that advice is robust over time, and capability exists to meet the needs of ministers and the public in the future. (Minister of State Services, 2011, p. 4)

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[3] For an introduction to New Public Management, see Lane (2000). On New Public Management and post-New Public Management developments in New Zealand, see Aderbach & Christensen (2001), Boston (1996), Boston et al. (1991), Gregory (2003, 2006), Hughes & Scott (2021), Mazey & Richardson (2021a), Rennie (2020), Scott (2020), Whitcombe (2008).

[4] The Performance Improvement Framework (PIF) is a joint central agency initiative to help senior leaders in the public service lead performance improvement in their agencies and across the system. Users of the framework start with the question: "What is the contribution New Zealand needs from this agency (or sector or system) in the medium term?" They then use the framework to identify the critical gaps and opportunities between the current and desirable future capability and performance (N.Z. Public Service Commission, 2020). An independent review of the PIF process by the School of Government (2017) found that overall, it helped agencies focus on long-term goals and strategic alignment with short- and medium-term priorities (p. 35).

2.2.1.3 Political Responsiveness or Free and Frank Advice?

In New Zealand, the State Sector Act 1988 established a single line of accountability between departmental chief executives and portfolio ministers (Sect. 32). This creates strong incentives to react and respond, rather than to provide free and frank advice anchored in politically neutral professional competence—despite the requirement in the same section of the Act to do so.

The Act as amended in 2013 made explicit that the role of the State Services Commissioner includes "working with State services leaders to ensure that the State services maintain high standards of integrity and conduct and are led well and are trusted" and promote "a culture of stewardship in the State services" (Sect. 4A). This was mirrored in Sect. 32, responsibilities of state sector chief executives. The single line of accountability remained, however: "The chief executive of a department or departmental agency is responsible to the appropriate Minister for … the stewardship of the department or departmental agency, including of its medium- and long-term sustainability, organisational health, capability, and capacity to offer free and frank advice to successive governments".

Richard Norman (2006) asked: "Given employment conditions which place public sector chief executives on fixed contracts, how do senior public servants reconcile the professional expectation that they provide frank and fearless advice with the possibility that career safety might lie in minimising the frankness?" (p. 26).

Bill Ryan (2011) similarly commented on the need for a culture change in government:

- Ministers need to adopt "a wider institutional understanding of the whole system of government in which they have chosen to work and the wider obligations they should meet"; and
- senior officials need to take "a stronger line in asserting their expertise, interdependence and agency" (p. 119).

The Public Service Act 2020 repealed and replaced the State Sector 1988. The single line of accountability between chief executives of departments and departmental agencies and "the appropriate Minister" is substantially retained, however, in the new Act (Sect. 52), with chief executives responsible to the Public Service Commissioner only "for carrying out the responsibility to uphold the public service principles" in a strictly limited sense (Subsect. 12(5)).

As public servants, we live with the tension captured in Richard Mulgan's question: "How much responsiveness is too much or too little?" (Mulgan, 2008). On the one hand, our job is to be responsive to portfolio ministers and to the prime minister and cabinet. On the other hand, long-established conventions of public service in the Westminster tradition are that we should not become over-responsive and merely reactive. The role of a permanent, politically neutral civil service is to be loyal to the government of the day, yet with sufficient independence, knowledge, expertise and experience to influence and shape present and future government priorities and policies, and not only to implement these.

2.2.1.4 Customer or Citizen?

Norman (2006, p. 26) notes that one of the ironies of public sector reform is that improvements in services can result in increased demands for better services from customers—the same taxpaying citizens who are reluctant to fund their own increasing expectations.

More broadly, the idea of democracy is government by the people, for the people; that is, citizen participation in self-government. Increasing expectations of participatory governance and co-production require active citizenship, which involves different relationships and ways of working from provider/customer transactions. People who access public services are more than customers. They are also citizens and the public to whom public services are accountable through the executive and the people's representatives in the legislature.

In any case, when a government applies its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, a different kind of relationship is set up from what is typical in the private sector:

> A citizen who is stopped by the police, or required to pay taxes, or to pay a fine for polluting a river, cannot easily be seen as a customer. The point of this kind of encounter is not to please or delight the client in the transaction! And it is not to hope for more encounters of the same type—public managers don't aim for "repeat business" of this kind, but for less business! (Benington & Moore, 2011, p. 7)

These three dilemmas (outputs/outcomes, responsiveness/free and frank advice, and customer/citizen) qualify the assertion that effective policy advisors consistently aim at service excellence and approach this from the customer's perspective. They require policy advisors to be critically reflective about primary and secondary clients, short-term responsiveness and long-term outcomes and accountabilities.

Scott and Baehler (2010) capture some of the complexities of this when they write:

> Unlike other advice providers, it could be said that public officials are expected to be biased toward the well-being of all citizens, not just the loudest or most powerful or most politically salient; biased toward sound reasoning and evidence; and biased toward the collectively determined priorities of the government of the day, but with an ear always cocked for issues awaiting future governments. These duties are sometimes rolled into the shorthand term "impartiality", but it fails to capture the rich subtleties of the role. (p. 57)

2.2.2 Knowing One's Place in the Constitutional Scheme of Things

During 2004, I worked on a complex, multi-agency strategy for social development, published as *Opportunity for All New Zealanders* (Minister for Social Development & Employment, 2004). When a final draft went to cabinet for approval, several ministers requested late changes to the document.

It had been a tortuous process building agreement on the strategy among 31 social sector agencies while meeting the minister's expectations, which themselves were not always clear. When the general manager of our group told me about last-minute changes requested by cabinet, he was concerned about the impact this might have on me.

In fact, by this stage in the project, I had got my head around my role as a public servant in ways that not only made me more resilient in that particular instance (I groaned and got on with it!), but that have continued to underpin how I approach policy advising.

First, it was never my strategy. My name appeared nowhere in *Opportunity for All New Zealanders*. While I may have "held the pen", the strategy was the product of a working group, a steering group of senior officials, external consultation, internal peer review and the supervision of my manager. Nothing I do in the public service is entirely my work.

Secondly, when the minister released the strategy, he had to front the media and the parliamentary opposition, not me. Politicians are directly accountable to parliament and the public in ways that policy advisors are not. I had the privilege of remaining a largely anonymous public servant, whose role was to advise, not to decide.

To be effective as a public policy advisor, we need to understand political processes as well as various techniques of policy analysis (Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 24). That means learning what the rules are and how to play the game. These rules are both formal (and usually defined in legislation), and informal (established by convention and "how we do things here").

In New Zealand's Westminster-derived political system, legislation and convention support four broad propositions, as identified by Sir Kenneth Keith in his introduction to the Cabinet Manual (Keith, 1990). Public servants are:

- To act in accordance with the law;
- To be imbued with the spirit of service to the community;
- (As appropriate) to give free and frank advice to ministers and others in authority and, when decisions have been taken, to give effect to those decisions in accordance with their responsibility to the ministers or others; and
- When legislation so provides, to act independently in accordance with the terms of that legislation.

Sir Kenneth adds, "Public servants meet those obligations in accordance with important principles such as neutrality and independence, and as members of a career service".

In other words, public service occurs within a democratic compact—society delegates coercive powers to the state but does so with the expectation that public powers will be exercised in the public interest, in accordance with the law and with forbearance, good reason and transparency.

In practice, this is rarely as straightforward as the theory suggests. Analysis by Alford et al. (2017) of interviews with senior public managers in the United

Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand found that the lived experience of public managers is a "purple zone" where the "red domain" of politics interacts with and overlaps the "blue domain" of public administration, with no sharp line between them. For any given issue, in any given context, public managers may choose to operate in the purple zone. Three contextual factors are:

- The degree of controversy over a political issue;
- Politicians' inability or unwillingness to crystallise their own position on an issue; and
- The relative power of the two parties, including the extent to which politicians have alternative sources of information available to them (Alford et al., 2017, p. 761).

Their interviews also identified certain constraints on managers. First, ministers have more influence over managers' employment tenure than vice versa, particularly under NPM-style reforms (Sect. 2.2.1.1). Secondly, the purple zone is a shared zone in which both politicians and managers operate, so each is subject to pressure from the other. Thirdly, the values and skills of public managers are a constraint: "Interviewees reported that they (and their colleagues) were more aligned to achieving public purposes than to pursuing their own agendas at the expense of the public or politicians". Alford et al. (2017) conclude:

> Our empirical evidence shows that many public managers—even in Westminster systems where they are particularly expected to be impartial—find it necessary to push into the shared area of the purple zone to do their jobs better…. Furthermore, these forays into politics have a degree of legitimacy in the eyes of public managers: Their purpose, as they report it, is not to usurp the role of politicians, but rather to assist them in achieving public purposes, particularly where issues are complex (wicked) and pressured. They endorse prosocial views and uses of politics rather than self-interested ones, and use political skills in a variety of contexts, with a range of stakeholders. (p. 760)

Chapter 4 unpacks the relationships between science, policy and politics, and between evidence, emotions and values in decision-making. It challenges the idea that public policy advisors are rational functionaries who can cleanly separate facts and values, means and ends. Political neutrality (faithfully serving the government of the day in accordance with the law) is not to be confused with ethical or moral neutrality, or freedom from normative commitments.

What, then, might be a framework for managing relationships with multiple clients, that enables public policy advisors to work effectively and with integrity in the purple zone where politics and administration meet?

2.2.3 Working with Multiple Clients

Francis Fukuyama (2018) has reflected:

> Stakeholder analysis is something that every successful politician in the world has performed from the beginning of time. That is the essence of politics: generating sufficient power by gathering allies and undermining opponents; it's just that good politicians don't apply a structured methodology to this task.

Introducing their public policy primer on managing the policy process, Wu et al. (2017) remind us that policy-making is a *political* process: "Merely understanding policy-making as an analytical exercise—identifying the costs and benefits of different policy alternatives, for example—is not enough; policymakers need also to come to grips with the political dynamics underlying the policy activities in which they engage" (p. 3). They suggest that successful policy actors:

- Identify other actors involved in and affected by policies and policy-making;
- Map out their essential interests, ideologies and relationships;
- Assess the waxing or waning of their sources of power and leverage within the process; and
- Understand how and why to compromise and help craft others' compromises, in order to secure agreement among contending policy actors and their interests (pp. 3–4).

Stakeholder theory has developed since the mid-1980s as a way of managing market-based organisations. It is commonly traced back to Freeman (1984) and Freeman et al. (2010).[5] Stakeholder theory suggests that the strategic management of a corporation requires more than attention to inputs (investors, suppliers, employees) and outputs (products and services supplied to customers). Corporations in fact deal with a wider range of stakeholders, including investors, suppliers, trade associations, employees, customers, governments, political groups and communities (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). These relationships are complex and run not only two-way in dyadic ties between a firm and its stakeholders, but also between stakeholders, in complex network structures (Rowley, 1997).

Freeman developed stakeholder theory to help private sector managers answer the question of "who or what really counts". How is value creation possible and how can business and ethics be brought together, both conceptually and practically (Freeman et al., 2010, pp. 4–6)?

Public sector managers and policy advisors must answer similar questions. When dealing with complex networks of stakeholders with multiple objectives, who or what do we decide to pay attention to, when and why? How might we prioritise responding to stakeholders' interests in relation to our own organisation's vision, purpose, values, goals and objectives? And how can we manage relationships with multiple clients responsibly, in ways that we can explain and justify in the public sphere?

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[5] Mainardes et al. (2011) provide a useful summary of the development (and limitations) of stakeholder theory as it has been developed to date. See further Freeman et al., (2010, pp. 177–90) on stakeholder theory in the public policy, public administration and environmental policy literatures.

For example, the Canterbury Regional Council, the agency for which I worked between 2013 and 2020, interacts with networks and sub-networks of stakeholders that include: central government (the cabinet, ministers and central government agencies); local authorities and umbrella organisations that represent them (Local Government New Zealand and the Society of Local Government Managers); a Māori tribal authority (Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu) and its constituent rūnanga (sub-tribal councils)[6]; sector groups (e.g. Irrigation New Zealand, Federated Farmers of New Zealand and the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce); non-governmental organisations (e.g. Forest and Bird, and Fish and Game New Zealand); think-tanks and research organisations (e.g. the New Zealand Initiative, Crown research institutes and tertiary education institutions); local authority-controlled or majority-owned organisations, such as airports, ports, electricity lines companies, economic development agencies and tourism organisations; private-sector firms; and of course ratepayers and residents.

2.2.3.1 Stakeholders and Interests

A stakeholder, by Freeman's definition, is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p. 46).

As Mitchell et al., (1997, p. 856) noted, the definition is very broad and leaves the idea of a "stake" and the field of possible stakeholders so open as to include virtually anyone and anything.[7] They note (pp. 856–57) that by contrast, Clarkson (1994) offers one of the narrower definitions of a stakeholder as a voluntary or involuntary risk-bearer—in other words, a stake is only something that can be lost.

I think of a stakeholder as someone who has an interest (a stake) in something. An interest is always *someone's* interest—the interest of a specified individual or a group of individuals. They are the *subject* of the interest. The *object* of their interest is something[8] that affects their situation, needs, wants, beliefs, aspirations,

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[6] Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and other iwi object to being engaged with in ways that group them with other stakeholder or interest groups, because of their claims to "partnership" with the Crown by virtue of the Treaty of Waitangi (1840). See, for example, Tumahai and Harding (2021, p. 61). I have elsewhere argued (Bromell, 2019, Chap. 3) that in general, public policy goes better when we refrain from asserting non-negotiable, absolute rights claims (including permanent special group rights claims) and instead negotiate interests "in the public interest". This implies open, inquiring engagement with stakeholders and skilful re-framing of rights-demands as interests-claims that need to be justified through reasoned argument and negotiation. At stake in debate about Treaty partnership in the New Zealand context is whether we want our future to be that of ethno-nationalism or liberal-democratic nationalism (Rata, 2021).

[7] Bleisch and Huppenbauer (2011, p. 26) point out that if the definition of a stakeholder is so wide as to include any individual or group who can affect the achievement of an organisation's objectives, then terrorists would also count as stakeholders.

[8] In relation to public policy, the "something" might be a policy, institutional arrangement or course of action.

values, emotions and preferences (cf. Flathman, 1966, pp. 15–16; Rees, 1964, p. 19; Stone, 2012, p. 14; Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 281).

Brian Barry suggested that when we say "*x* is in *A*'s interest", what we mean is that policy *x* puts *A* in a better position over time to satisfy *A*'s wants, compared to policy *y* (Barry, 1964, p. 4, 1965, pp. 175–86). His definition has six implications.

First, the emphasis on *time* is important. Barry's definition allows some distinction between long-run and immediate interests; i.e., something we should be and are interested in even though we may not be right now (cf. Cassinelli, 1962, p. 46). What most of us judge to be in our interest is to be able to satisfy our present wants without reducing our chances of satisfying future wants (cf. Barry, 1965, p. 186).[9] And interest groups often try to attract members and supporters by informing and persuading them about interests they don't (yet) know they have (Stone, 2012, p. 229).

Secondly, this way of defining an interest (or stake), and stakeholder theory generally, is *politically pluralist* (Mainardes et al., 2011, p. 239). Individuals form associations with others who share their interests in some role or capacity (interest groups). These shared or common interests may be commercial, vocational, professional, educational, cultural, religious, charitable, political, environmental, recreational, and so on. While many interest groups are formed for essentially nonpolitical purposes, they may nevertheless have an interest in political decisions that bear on their defining interest or interests (Mulgan, 2004, p. 216).

A society comprises a complex of overlapping interest groups (Dewey, 1927, p. 70). Membership in interest groups is, moreover, not mutually exclusive—people have plural interests and may affiliate with more than one interest group. Because of this diversity of individuals and groups with plural and conflicting interests, rarely, if ever, can the public interest be identified as the unitary sum of the interests of everyone in a society. Rather, politics in a liberal-democratic society needs to take account of group behaviour and sectional interests, as different groups with different interests and values interact (Mulgan, 2004, pp. 7–9):

> Pluralists … assume that people's interests derive from their long-term and relatively stable wants and subjective preferences. At base, that is, the best judges of people's own interests are people themselves, whether as individuals or as members of particular groups, rather than any particular critic with a single view of how people ought best to live their lives. (Mulgan, 2004, p. 11)

Thirdly, the concept of an interest is *necessarily comparative*—a certain policy or action is "in *A*'s interest" when compared with some alternative policy or action, and "contrary to *A*'s interest" when compared with another policy or action (Barry, 1965, p. 194), which is often simply the status quo continued (Barry, 1964, p. 7). We should not, therefore, speak in blanket terms about people or groups with common or opposed interests; rather, of people and groups whose interests coincide

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[9] Having "wants" or "desires" is thus a necessary but not a sufficient condition of having an "interest" (Rees, 1964, p. 20).

or conflict with respect to policy or action *x* rather than policy or action *y* (Barry, 1965, pp. 195–96)—and, I would add, at point in time *z*. The selection of policy options for comparison is therefore of critical importance (Sect. 4.3.2). As Barry (1964) notes, "Any policy can be made 'preferable' by arbitrarily contrasting it with one sufficiently unpleasant" (pp. 7–8).

Fourthly, people may be affected in different ways by a policy or action as it impacts on them in *different roles or capacities*. As a motorist, I may not perceive a lowering of speed limits within the city to be in my interest; as a cyclist or pedestrian, however, it may well be. So we need to distinguish, Barry says, between a person's interests in some particular capacity, and her or his net interest in a policy, or how affected they will be overall (Barry, 1962, p. 194). Moreover, people's interests are held with varying degrees of *intensity* (Birkland, 2016, p. 12; Tullock, 1984, p. 95).

Fifthly, and specifically in relation to public policy, there may be a public interest not so much in government acts of type *x*, but in *a policy under which acts of type* x *will be carried out* (Barry, 1962, pp. 200–201; 1965, p. 197). For example, there may be no single road or bridge which everyone will use and therefore has an interest in funding. But it may be in everyone's interest to contribute to the costs of implementing *a policy* under which roads and bridges will be built wherever some criterion of need and/or benefit-cost ratio (Sect. 3.3.2) is satisfied.

Similarly, government needs to plan for and manage natural hazard risks. If a river floods and breaks its banks, not everyone in a community will be affected, but maintaining effective stopbanks is in everyone's interest if no one knows in advance whether they will be flooded or otherwise affected (Barry, 1965, p. 196), for example, by an increase in insurance premiums.

Sixthly, in some circumstances we need to *distinguish between the public interest and popular interests*, or what the public happens to be interested in (Cassinelli, 1958, p. 48). A private interest has consequences (value effects) which, even if they are or could be of popular interest, are of insufficient magnitude to warrant the use of inclusive rather than exclusive procedures of choice or decision (Lasswell, 1962, p. 64) and the exercise of public authority. Policy-making also risks a "presentist bias" (Sect. 6.2.3) if we pay attention only to what the public is interested in right now, to the neglect of future collective wellbeing (the long-term public interest, Sect. 3.2.3).

To summarise, in the context of public policy-making, a stake or interest is *something* (a policy, institutional arrangement or course of action) that puts *someone* (a stakeholder) in a better position over time to get what they want or value, compared to some other policy, institutional arrangement or course of action.

So practically, how might public policy makers, and policy advisors, go about identifying which individuals and groups have a legitimate interest in a particular policy or service we are designing, implementing, evaluating or reviewing?

2.2.3.2 Define Your Own Strategic Frame

Before engaging with others, it helps to be clear about our own agency's vision, identity, values, goals and objectives. Who is the "us" engaging with "them", and

Table 2.1 Examples of decision criteria for strategic goal-setting

Importance	• The issue affects a large number of people, or a small number of people is severely affected
	• The issue has an impact on other negative outcomes, now or in the future • Without intervention, the issue will still be important in 5–10 years' time
Mandate	• The issue is of general public concern • The issue relates to our agency's legitimate role and responsibilities
	• We can expect strong sector support if we engage and/or lead on this issue
Feasibility	• We have the knowledge and skills (capability) to influence outcomes in a measurable way • We have or can attract sufficient resources to achieve this goal • We have capacity to achieve this goal without displacing or compromising our other strategic priorities

what are our own interests? Through stakeholder consultation and engagement, we may well tweak and refine our own strategic frame, particularly in relation to our goals, objectives and measures or indicators of success, but entering into political negotiation and crafting collaborations and compromises with other policy actors always goes better when we are clear from the outset about who we are, what we want to change and achieve (and why), how we propose to do that, what specifically we bring to the table, and values that limit how we will and will not work with others to achieve our mutually agreed goals and objectives.

Our **vision** is the impact we want to have over the long term. What do we want to change or achieve, and why? What would success look like?

Our **identity** is our purpose (or mission) and role in achieving the change we want to create. What specifically can we do to contribute to achieving our vision?

Our **values** describe what we stand for, setting limits on what we will and will not do, and how we will and will not engage and work with others.

Our **goals** are the strategic priorities we want to focus on over the medium-term. Often we begin with a long list, informed by something like a PESTEL (political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal) analysis of external opportunities and threats. We then filter this down to a manageable short list using decision criteria like *importance, mandate and feasibility* (Table 2.1).[10]

Our **objectives** are specific, measurable actions that we will take within a defined timeframe in order to achieve our goals. When we set objectives, we focus on implementability, including capacity and capability and our own organisation's internal strengths and weaknesses. And in the interests of accountability and organisational learning, we define measures or indicators of success for each objective.

Being clear about the why (our vision), the who (our identity and purpose), the how (our values) and the what (our goals and objectives), informed by a frank assessment of external opportunities and threats and internal strengths and

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[10] Decision criteria need to be defined in context and explicitly agreed by decision-makers.

Table 2.2 Analysing stakeholder interests in relation to our own interests

Strategic goal			
Stakeholder interests in relation to our own interests	*Common*	*Different*	*Competing/Conflicting*
Stakeholder 1			
Stakeholder 2			
Stakeholder 3 …			

weaknesses (capacity and capability), prepares us to engage effectively with stakeholders. This is especially important because achieving collective impact nearly always requires us to negotiate and compromise with stakeholders whose interests differ in significant respects from our own.

2.2.3.3 Identify Stakeholders and Analyse Their Interests

When we know what we want to change or achieve and why, the next step is to map out the various stakeholders with whom we might expect to interact on a particular strategic goal or policy issue. I find it useful to brainstorm this with others, sketching out on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper clusters and sub-clusters of stakeholders and existing collaborations between them, and thinking about the structures and institutions that constrain and influence them, and the ideas and interests that drive them (cf. Howlett et al., 2009, p. 2).[11]

As we do this, it is important to take time to think about the long-term public interest and those who are unable or unlikely to voice and assert their interests effectively in public life. This may include children and young people, people with disabilities, some minority ethnocultural groups (particularly where there are language barriers to communication), people who are otherwise marginalised or disengaged, and future generations yet unborn (Sects. 3.2.2, 6.2.3). How might we capture these silent or muted stakeholders in a "rich picture"[12] of issues, interests and networks of policy actors?

Then, as we prepare to move on from stakeholder identification to prioritisation for engagement, I have found it helpful to step back from what is likely to have become a very tangled web of connections and concerns, capturing in a table stakeholder interests that, *in relation to our own interests*, are common, different, competing or conflicting (Table 2.2).

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[11] See also Weimer and Vining (2016, p. 276), who provide an example of a political analysis worksheet that maps in a table: policy actors (the individuals and groups who have an interest in an issue) and the motivations, beliefs and resources they bring or represent.

[12] On "rich picture" building in soft systems methodology, see Peters (1992), University of Cambridge (2016).

2.2.3.4 Prioritise Who and What We Pay Attention to

Identifying the range of relevant stakeholders in any particular case can be relatively straightforward. Assessing the legitimacy of their claims and prioritising who and what to pay attention to, when and why, can be more difficult.

Mitchell et al. (1997) proposed that we evaluate stakeholder salience (significance) in terms of the relative absence or presence of three attributes—power, legitimacy and urgency (Fig. 2.1).

- **Power** is not a substance that anyone possesses; it is a social idea and an attribute of the relationship between social actors, not of the actors themselves (Frooman, 1999, p. 192). Power describes the kind of relationship in which social actor *A* can get social actor *B* to do something that *B* might not otherwise have chosen to do. Etzioni has suggested that in an organisational setting, the exercise of power in social relationships can be *coercive*, based on the physical resources of force, violence or restraint; *utilitarian*, based on material or financial resources; or *normative*, based on social norms and symbolic resources that express these (Etzioni, 1964, p. 59; Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 865).
- **Legitimacy** is "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Mitchell et al., 1997, p. 866; Suchman, 1995, p. 574). Bullying, for example, is an illegitimate exercise of power, as is terrorism.
- **Urgency** has a double sense of time sensitivity and criticality and introduces a dynamic element into stakeholder management (Mitchell et al., 1997, pp. 867–68).

On a day-to-day basis, something like these three attributes explicitly or implicitly influences who or what we pay attention to.

Fig. 2.1 Stakeholder attributes (Mitchell et al., 1997)
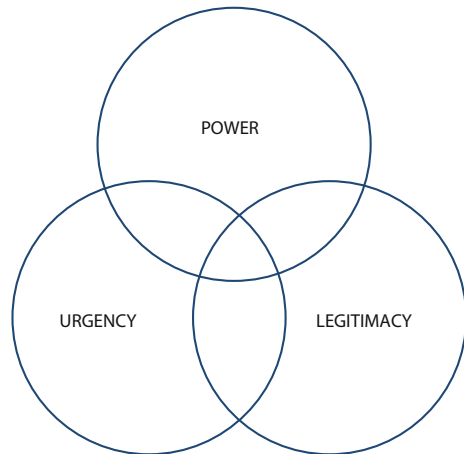
- Political and organisational hierarchy often dictates priorities—for example, a request from our minister or council chairperson usually trumps a request from a manager, largely by the exercise of normative and utilitarian *power*. (This is our first rule of thumb for distinguishing primary and secondary clients, and prioritising our work for them.)
- Particularly in a public sector context, however, power must be *legitimate*— exercised according to legislation and convention. For example, while public officials (elected and appointed) may feel that processing and releasing official documents to the media, academics and other members of the public under official information legislation is a low priority and often not in their own interests, this work must be accommodated where *legitimate* requests for information are made according to the law.
- And while the urgent constantly threatens to displace the important, *time sensitivity and/or criticality* frequently require us to set aside planned work for what needs to be done right now.

The three stakeholder attributes can be thought of as a Venn diagram, as in Fig. 2.1. Where power, legitimacy and urgency overlap signals our highest priorities for attention. And where one, two or three attributes are present, Mitchell et al. (1997) suggest that we distinguish different types of stakeholder, as in Fig. 2.2: Definitive, Dominant, Dangerous, Dependent, Demanding, Discretionary, Dormant and Non-stakeholder.

This is useful as a rough-and-ready way to identify and assess stakeholder and issue significance. In terms of how we have defined a stake (interest), we do need to exercise some caution, however, in applying this framework to public policy.

Fig. 2.2 Stakeholder attributes and different types of stakeholder (Mitchell et al., 1997)
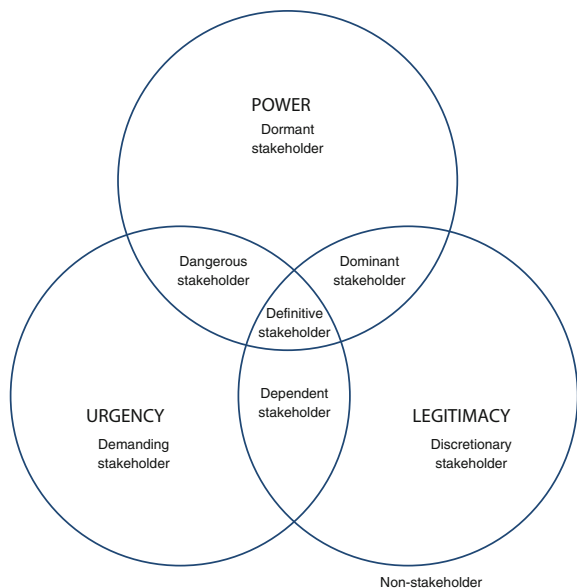
- In considering *power*, we need to check that we are not only listening to the loudest or most dominant voices. Effective public policy advisors are not only focused on making the boss look good, managing upwards and doing "whatever it takes". We are public servants, not only government servants, and when a politician tells us to jump, the appropriate response is not necessarily to ask "How high?"
- In assessing *legitimacy*, we need to ask in what role or capacity this individual or group has an interest or asserts a claim. If they have an interest in a private capacity but advocate for it in a public role or capacity, this may in fact indicate a potential or actual conflict of interest.
- In considering *urgency*, we need to distinguish between long-run and immediate interests, the urgent and the important, and still budget time and resource for anticipatory policy-making (Boston, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; DeLeo, 2016; Mazey & Richardson, 2021b) and to build capability to address future demands for information, analysis and advice (Sect. 6.2.3).

A next step in stakeholder analysis is to prioritise stakeholders in terms of their *level of interest* and *level of influence* (or power) over the achievement of our strategic goals and objectives (Fig. 2.3), building on the initial analysis of
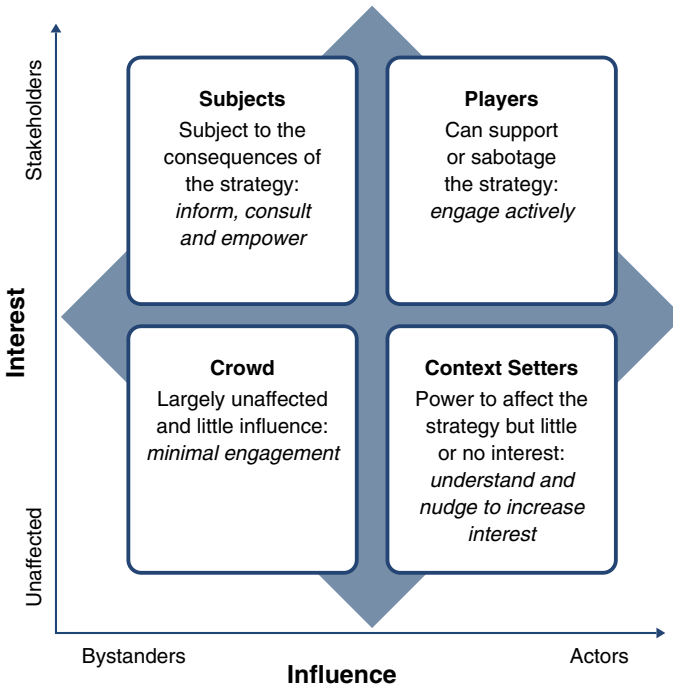
Fig. 2.3 Stakeholder interest and influence (adapted from Eden & Ackermann, 1998, pp. 121–125; Ackermann & Eden, 2011, pp. 230–252; Bryson, 2011, pp. 405–409)

stakeholder interests in relation to our own interests (common, different, competing or conflicting) (Table 2.2) and of stakeholder attributes (Figs. 2.1, 2.2).

In public policy-making, we never have enough time or resources to engage with every possible stakeholder in the same way or to the same extent. Analysing levels of interest and influence directs our attention to the stakeholders in the quadrants on the right-hand side of Fig. 2.3. Our priority stakeholders are those with high interest and high influence over what we want to change or achieve (the top right quadrant). Because of their potential to aid or hinder the achievement of our goals and objectives, we should also focus on those with high influence but low interest (the bottom right quadrant), seeking to nudge them towards a higher level of interest and recognition of our common interests.

A further tool when analysing stakeholders' levels of interest and influence is to apply two different logics to our prioritisation: an *expressive logic* and an *instrumental logic*. Bundy et al. (2013) explain how an organisation's identity and its strategic frame use different core logics that influence who and what we prioritise, why and when:

> Organizational identity guides issue interpretation using an *expressive* logic, which is related to how the firm defines and displays conceptions of the self, while a firm's strategic frame facilitates issue interpretation using an *instrumental* logic, which is predicated on the rational pursuit of organizational goals. (p. 353; cf. Donaldson & Preston, 1995)

Identity-driven actions may be taken, not to achieve an organisation's rational interests (using an instrumental, cause-and-effect logic), but to affirm and express its collective identity and how it wants to be perceived (using an expressive or normative logic).

In 2014, I helped the chair of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum plan two workshops that initiated the development of a regional economic development strategy. We needed to decide who to invite to participate in and present to the workshops, and who to invite to become partners and/or members of an ongoing reference group for the project. In hindsight, we intuitively applied what I subsequently learned to recognise as an expressive logic and an instrumental logic.

- Applying an *expressive logic* meant asking who we should prioritise engaging with as partners in the project, given the Mayoral Forum's identity, role and mandate, and to give the project credibility.
- Applying an *instrumental logic* meant asking which individuals and agencies had knowledge, resources and activities that could enable the Mayoral Forum to achieve its objective of growing the underlying (largely agricultural) economy of Canterbury and positioning this for when the rebuild following the 2010–11 earthquakes would come to an end and cease to inflate regional GDP.

Some stakeholders stood out for both expressive and instrumental reasons: Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, the local iwi (tribe), was an obvious partner for normative and symbolic reasons (recognised and in some respects reinforced by legislation

and convention), but also for instrumental reasons because the iwi is a major economic power in the South Island.[13]

To develop an economic development strategy, Canterbury's Mayors also needed to engage with the Canterbury Development Corporation (subsequently re-branded as ChristchurchNZ) and the Canterbury Employers' Chamber of Commerce. They needed to be seen to be involved to give the project credibility. They also had specialist knowledge and expertise to contribute, so from the outset, the Mayoral Forum invited these three agencies to be partners in developing the Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy. Subsequently, the Committee for Canterbury was added for expressive reasons—its vision and objectives aligned well with those of the Mayoral Forum.

Mayors invited a wider group of stakeholders to participate in an ongoing reference group for instrumental reasons. They included leaders from the education, farming, transport and tourism sectors. They all had "skin in the game" and their knowledge, skills and resources were essential to achieving the Forum's objectives.[14]

2.2.3.5 Decide Modes of Engagement

A final step in stakeholder analysis and prioritisation is deciding modes of engagement. This builds on the analysis of stakeholder interests in relation to our own interests (Table 2.2), analysis of stakeholder attributes (Figs. 2.1, 2.2) and levels of interest and influence over the achievement of our strategic goals and objectives (Fig. 2.3), and the core logics (expressive and instrumental) that might influence which stakeholders we prioritise and why.

Section 6.2.1 will introduce modes of working together on a continuum from Competition to Collaboration (Fig. 2.4). As I explain there, one mode is not superior to any other mode. Rather, we need to identify the mode that is fit for purpose in a particular time and place to achieve objectives that satisfy our common interests and/or that we judge to be in the public interest.

We should not, however, overlook the option of little or no engagement with stakeholders who are largely unaffected by what we want to change or achieve and who have little influence over it (the lower left quadrant in Fig. 2.3). And because public policy-making is a political process, we also need to give conscious thought to how we might win over, accommodate or neutralise opposition (Bozeman & Crow, 2021, p. 128; Fukuyama, 2018) in ways consistent with democratic norms and values and public sector ethics (Sect. 2.2.2).

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[13] Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu is the sole trustee of the Ngāi Tahu Charitable Trust, which in turn owns and operates Ngāi Tahu Holdings Corporation Ltd and its subsidiary companies and related trusts.

[14] The 2015 Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy was renewed in 2017, then replaced by the Mayoral Forum's Plan for Canterbury in 2020, framed around four aspects of intergenerational well-being (environmental, economic, social and cultural) and informed by an overview of the "four well-beings" prepared as part of briefings to incoming Mayors following local body elections in October 2019 (Canterbury Mayoral Forum, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020).

Fig. 2.4 From competition
to collaboration
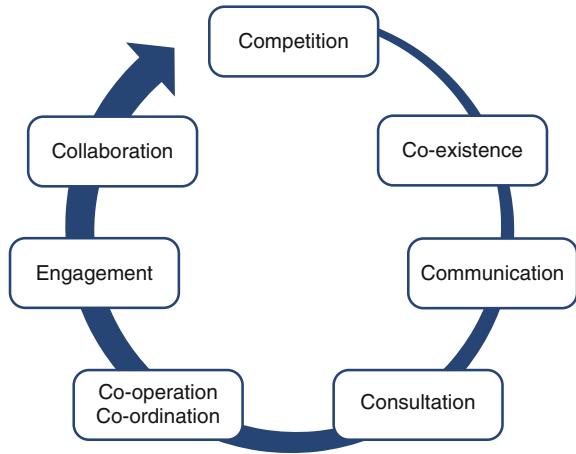
2.2.3.6 Summary: Stakeholder Analysis and Prioritisation

Public policy advisors work in contexts where inevitably we juggle competing demands from multiple clients. How might we decide who or what to pay attention to, when and why?

A first rule of thumb is to distinguish between primary and secondary clients, and between clients and customers, generally based on political and organisational hierarchy (Sect. 2.2.1). This is easier said than done, however, and in my experience, it often requires discussion with my manager.

Before starting on a more formal stakeholder analysis, it helps first to get clear about our own strategic frame—our vision, identity, values, goals and objectives (Sect. 2.2.3.2). It is then useful to map out those who have a stake (an interest) in the policy project we are working on, creating a "rich picture" of the structures and institutions that constrain and influence various stakeholders, and the ideas and interests that drive them. Who are they, what do they want, and what do we want from them? Can we group them into clusters and sub-clusters? (Sect. 2.2.3.3). And in relation to our own strategic frame, which interests do we have in common, which are different, and which compete or conflict? (Table 2.2).

Then we prioritise who and what we choose to pay attention to (Sect. 2.2.3.4). We might first look for points of intersection between *power*, *legitimacy* and *urgency* (Fig. 2.1) to analyse stakeholder attributes (Fig. 2.2). We might then reflect on stakeholders' levels of *interest* and *influence* over the achievement of our own strategic goals and objectives (Fig. 2.3). We can then check and cross-reference our conclusions using both *expressive logic* (alignment with our own organisational vision, identity, mandate, values and norms) and *instrumental logic* (alignment with our strategic frame and ability to help us achieve our purpose and objectives).

A final step in analysis and prioritisation is to locate stakeholders on the continuum between Competition and Collaboration (Fig. 2.4), on the understanding

that it is impossible and certainly inefficient to attempt to engage with all stake-holders in the same way or to the same extent. And because public policy-making is a *political* process, skilled policy advisors work in the purple zone (Sect. 2.2.2) to support decision-makers in deciding whether, when and how opposition might be won over, accommodated or neutralised, in ways consistent with democratic norms and values and public service ethics (Sect. 2.2.2). This includes:

- Paying conscious attention to the rule of law and the authorising environment that legitimises the use of power and the practice of government;
- Supporting and enabling political equality, and not only listening to the loudest voices; and
- Distinguishing between the important and the urgent, and working together in the long-term public interest (Sect. 3.2.3; Chap. 6).

2.3   Process, Tools and Techniques

This section returns to the theme of service excellence and approaching this from the customer's perspective. Having identified relevant stakeholders and prioritised how, when, where and why we will engage with them, there are some processes, tools and techniques that help us maintain a consistent customer focus:

- Clear commissioning;
- The art of listening—and note-taking; and
- Anticipation, timeliness and working backwards.

2.3.1   Clear Commissioning

The most common complaint policy advisors make about the policy process is that managers do not commission work clearly. The result is not getting it right first time and the inefficiency of having to re-do work. At worst, a manager takes a piece of work off one advisor and gives it to someone else who "gets it". This sets up an A team and a B team and is destructive and wasteful.

Fault lies on both sides. Some policy advisors are not good listeners—more on that in Sect. 2.3.2. We assume we know what the commissioning manager wants, or we do not want to admit that we do not understand what a manager is asking us to do. In public policy advising, attempting to read others' minds is never a good idea. In my experience, it brings at best a 50:50 success rate and I do not like being wrong at least half the time.

On the other hand, policy managers may also try to read decision-makers' minds, fail to take the time to commission work clearly, and neglect to use this as

an opportunity to coach and develop staff. Sometimes they too pretend to know what is required because they do not completely "get it" themselves.[15]

There is a practised intuition that comes with experience, developed through attentive listening, interpretation of the political context, and tuning in to how decision-makers think, make decisions and characteristically act. We call this political nous (or savvy). It develops during the policy advisor's apprenticeship and not everyone gets there all at once, if at all. It is the skilled craftsperson's knack for the sort of knowledge that goes beyond anything they can immediately point to or even put into words (Berlin, 1996; Toulmin, 2001, p. 181).

An agreed process for policy commissioning helps. Policy advisors and managers both need to own the problem and take time to engage with each other in a structured inquiry, asking and answering questions and thinking together about how best to respond to the client in any particular case. This limits the number of unstated assumptions, creates joint ownership of the work and often identifies questions we need to take back to decision-makers for clarification.

The process we developed at the Canterbury Regional Council was to create a one-page commissioning checklist and secure the agreement of the chief executive and the executive leadership team to use it. The checklist is a conversation starter for commissioning a new piece of work and for subsequent checking in and review. The goal is to reduce re-work, add value, improve productivity, support development of a coaching culture and demonstrate a consistent customer focus.

Here are eight sets of questions that can usefully be included in such a checklist. They should align with peer review criteria used in your organisation (Sect. 5.3.2).

1. **Who is the intended audience?** Who will receive this paper or presentation? Will it subsequently progress further up the decision-making chain—for example, from the executive leadership team to a committee of council to a full meeting of council? Or from the executive leadership team to a minister to a cabinet committee to a full meeting of cabinet?
2. **What is the timeframe for this piece of work?** When is it due and how urgent is it in relation to other work? Do work priorities need to be re-assigned? Is there any wiggle space in the timing?
3. **Who is the client for this piece of work?** Who will sign it out, and when are they available to review and approve it? Who will present the paper to decision-makers and is the author able to attend and listen to the discussion?
4. **What is the problem (risk, challenge or opportunity)?** What is at stake, for whom? What might be the value proposition (Sect. 3.3.1)? What risks have we identified (cost, effectiveness, acceptability, implementation risk, reputation risk, legal risk, etc.)?

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[15] In an interview (Lewis, 2021), former N.Z. conservation minister Eugenie Sage urged middle management to get out of the way and not to second-guess what ministers want. As a minister, she wanted free and frank advice (Sect. 4.3.3) on options, with analysis of the good and bad of each of them, with public servants then letting decisions be made at the political level.

5. **What is the purpose of this piece of policy advice?** What do decision-makers need to *know*, *decide* or *do*? What are we actually proposing? What might be the key recommendations? Are any options off the table and if so, which and why?

6. **What is the preferred format?** Options include a verbal briefing (when, where, to whom?), a few bullet points in an email, a memorandum, an aide-mémoire, an A3 poster, a set of presentation slides and/or a formal report or cabinet paper. The intention here is to provide the most efficient form of communication that is fit for purpose and meets the client's needs in as few words as possible.

7. **Who do we need to consult or engage with and why?** Who are the internal and external stakeholders who have an interest in this piece of work, how will we find out, who will consult or engage with them and how might we prioritise their claims? And who should the advisor go to for information and for advice on practical implications of policy implementation? (Many a policy has failed because policy advisors omitted to talk to colleagues or other agencies who had to implement it.)

8. **Does this piece of work have communications implications?** Is it likely to be of interest to the media and do we need to draft a media release? Is it a good news story that our organisation could promote on its website and on social media? Who will talk to the communications team and when might be the best time to do that?

For a complex policy assignment, where there is any uncertainty about what I am to provide, I write a quick email back to the commissioning client, summarising what I understand them to need and how and when I propose to provide that. Taking time to get the commissioning clear at the outset can save a great deal of stress when a deadline is looming and our client judges at the last minute that we have missed the mark.

It sounds lazy and self-interested but the objective through all of this is to *do the least that is necessary to provide decision-makers with the information and advice they need to perform their responsibilities.* Focus on the client, do it once and do it right. Why write a formal report if a few bullet points in an email will give a client what she or he needs without having to wade through a whole lot of words that mostly tell them what they already know?

Doing the least that is necessary to get the job done frees up resources from react-and-respond policy advising. We can then commit time and resources to environmental scanning, research, evaluation, and longer-term, future-focused agenda-shaping and policy co-production (Sect. 6.2.3). It also means we can finish our work, go home on time and get on with leading our own lives.

2.3.2 The Art of Active Listening

Effective policy advisors listen more than they talk—or as Stephen Covey puts it, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood" (Covey, 1993, pp. 235–60).

When I first joined the public service, I wondered why my colleagues carried notebooks around with them and scribbled assiduously in them during meetings. I quickly learned the value of keeping a record of what was agreed and key points of discussion.

Attentive listening and note-taking is one way we identify stakeholders and gain an indication of their interests. To be effective in the policy advice role, we need to tune in to our social context and the political nuances that people express in what they say—and do not say. If we tune out during meetings, we miss an opportunity to understand the ideas and interests that drive our internal and external stakeholders, and to orient and prioritise our own work in relation to them. Advisors who tune out generally fail to exhibit political savvy.

Another way of explaining this is to distinguish between active and passive listening. Passive listening hears the words; active listening concentrates on the message. When we listen passively, we hear but do not engage with the speaker. We may just listen for what we want to hear. At worst, we let the words wash over us as so much noise.

Active listening engages not only with the words spoken but also with the emotional tone and intent of the speaker—with what they are thinking, feeling and wanting. We try to get inside the speaker's head, to understand what they want to communicate, from their point of view, rather than ours. I will say more about communication that appeals to reason, emotion and values in Sect. 4.2.2.

In a personal conversation, we demonstrate active listening by nodding, holding eye contact and looking interested, using filler words such as "Yes…", "Alright", "Mm… hmm", or "Go on …", asking questions and paraphrasing what we have heard. In a more formal meeting, we exercise active listening by paying attention, looking alert, taking notes, and paraphrasing and summing up as appropriate.

The novelist Robert Harris's Cicero trilogy (*Imperium, Lustrum* and *Dictator*) is a fictional biography of Marcus Tullius Cicero. The narrator is Marcus Tullius Tiro, Cicero's slave and later freedman who served as his secretary, supporting Cicero's voluminous letter writing and speechifying. Tiro is thought to have invented an early form of shorthand and in Harris's fictional account it is Tiro's ability to capture—rapidly, accurately and beyond dispute—who said what, where and when that contributed significantly to Cicero's political influence and power.

As I read the trilogy, I identified with the secretary Tiro, rather than the politician Cicero. The policy advisor's ability to listen, and to record accurately what is said, is a powerful tool to support and influence decision-making. Here are five examples of how I have used active listening and note-taking in my work.

- During meetings, I take notes even when I am not responsible for recording minutes. I focus particularly on noting stakeholder interests and concerns, the words people use to say what they mean, coded messages that indicate unease, disagreement or at least different agendas, and follow-up actions. I use these notes to check the draft minutes, making sure we have the tone right, and

to fill in the action sheet arising from the meeting. These notes also inform de-briefings after the meeting with the chair and with those who have to implement decisions made in the meeting.

- The Mayoral Forum devised the overall shape of its 2015 Canterbury Regional Economic Development Strategy in two workshops that each ran from 3.00 to 5.00 p.m. My manager and I sat in on these workshops to take notes. One of us took a detailed record; the other listened for high-level points of agreement on the emerging strategy. We then dashed back to the office to prepare and copy a one-page summary for further discussion by mayors during a working dinner. These summary notes became the record of the workshop and formed the basis for subsequent agreement and detailed strategy development. It involved much more than passively taking notes—already we were weaving what we heard into a narrative that, once confirmed by mayors, became the strategy story. The art of it was ensuring that mayors could hear their own thoughts and words reflected back, in a concise, coherent and compelling summary that made sense and that they recognised as their own.
- Active listening during a meeting, and trying out a concise summary at key points to test consensus, direction and next steps, helps keep meetings action-focused and brings them to a conclusion with clarity about who will do what, why, how and when. This is a practised skill. It requires you to listen and think at the same time. I find it works best if I keep my summary short and somewhat tentative, and focus on three or at most four key points. It needs to be offered for the agreement of the meeting and in a manner that supports and does not undermine whoever is chairing or facilitating the meeting.
- When I first began working with the chair of the Canterbury Regional Council, drafting correspondence from her to central government ministers, I had to tune in to her style and "voice". Sometimes a letter went through three drafts before we hit on a turn of phrase that communicated what she wanted to say. Having found the words, we used those phrases in other letters, speeches and presentations. My job was to draft the letter in ways that expressed her voice, rather than mine. When I am asked to draft a letter for someone else, I always take a lot of notes, capturing as rapidly as possible not only the desired content of the letter but also the tone and purpose of the communication and the actual words the client uses. When they sign a draft letter without making any changes, it means I got the listening right.
- Sometimes I use Microsoft OneNote® to record notes in meetings. The advantage is that I can share an entire notebook, or email a single page to my manager and relevant colleagues, which lets us swap notes on what we have heard and all be "on the same page". It also helps cut through instances of multiple commissioning and duplication of work.

The more effective you become as a policy advisor, the more important it is to remember your place in the constitutional scheme of things (Sect. 2.2.2). The ability to tune in to decision-makers, and to take their words and craft them into a coherent story, brings with it the power to influence and lead from behind

(Sect. 3.3.3). Decision-makers rightly react when they suspect policy advisors have exceeded our mandate and are telling them what to think, by putting words in their mouths or otherwise leading them by the nose.

For this reason, it is probably not a good idea for any decision-making body or politician to become overly dependent on a particular policy advisor. Staff rotation is one solution, as is conscious attention to capability building and performance management, so all members of the team can perform strongly and we do not end up by default with an A team and a B team.

2.3.3 Anticipation, Timeliness and Working Backwards

Effective policy advisors aim to anticipate our clients' needs as best we can. Oral parliamentary questions are a good example. In the New Zealand parliament, a minister's office is advised around 10.15 a.m. that their minister has a question addressed to them for when the House sits at 2.00 p.m. Where possible, staff meet with the minister around 10.30 a.m. to discuss a possible response and anticipate likely supplementary questions and where the opposition might be going with this. Private secretaries then request any required information from their departments and, when this comes in, draft material that the minister's political staff (often in consultation with the prime minister's office and the government whips) shape up into a response that is confirmed with the minister around 12.45 p.m., then finalised ready for when the House sits at 2.00 p.m.

For any parliamentary question, staff may support the minister with up to 20 single-sided pages of information. The first page provides the oral question and an answer agreed with the minister. Anticipated supplementary questions with suggested answers follow, one per page. At the back are relevant data and other information that the minister wants to have at her or his fingertips. It is all about anticipation and organising information in a useful way.

This is a customer-focused way to structure almost any briefing. What goes up front is the information your client needs now. What follows are crisp summary notes on, for example, the background and context (including past decisions and actions), key stakeholders and likely next steps. In other words, provide a succinct reminder of "the big picture", rather than piecemeal information delivered in dribs and drabs as your client asks for it. Sometimes we assume too much about policy decision-makers' ability to remember the details of multiple, complex projects and keep all the information in their heads.

I was reminded of this the first time I provided an annotated agenda to the chair of the Mayoral Forum. I had seen annotated agenda to be useful in central government contexts but this was a new practice in my local government agency. I was a little anxious that she might think I was telling her how to suck eggs. As I gave her the agenda, I explained that I had annotated it, "because I don't know how you keep everything in your head". She replied, "Well, of course, I don't. I rely on you for that".

I use an annotated agenda to prompt the chair with information about, for example:

- Guests to be welcomed (and how to pronounce their names);
- Attendees who are to be congratulated or farewelled;
- Who will speak to each item;
- Where in the meeting agenda papers to find each item and its recommendations;
- Suggested timings;
- Risks to be managed, and so on.

Anticipation also applies to the timeliness of policy advice (Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 377). This is why, when policy work is being commissioned, we ask when it is due and whether there is any wiggle space. It is rare in a policy advice role to have the luxury of working on one project at a time—we work with multiple clients and are besieged with requests for random acts of advising. I manage this by planning ahead and, whenever possible, ensuring that work is completed before it is due. This lets me under-promise and over-deliver and saves both the client and me a great deal of stress as deadlines loom.

Early in my public sector career, a colleague taught me to "work backwards". For example, if I have to prepare a Cabinet paper, I start with when it needs to go to Cabinet. Then, using standard processes and timeframes, I construct a project plan, in reverse chronological order:

- Cabinet committee decisions go to a full meeting of cabinet;
- Cabinet committee meets and discusses the paper;
- Minister signs out the final cabinet paper to the Cabinet Office for cabinet committee consideration;
- Prepare a final version of the cabinet paper, have it peer-reviewed and approved to go to the minister for signature, with a covering report;
- Minister's office communicates any changes required as a result of consultation with cabinet colleagues, parliamentary support parties and the government caucus;
- Prepare a revised version of the cabinet paper, have it peer-reviewed and approved to go to the minister for ministerial consultation, with a covering report;
- Minister's office communicates feedback on the initial draft to the department;
- Prepare an initial draft cabinet paper, have it peer-reviewed and signed out to go to the minister for feedback, with a covering report;
- Minister's office identifies a date when the paper can be considered by the cabinet committee and cabinet;
- Prepare a Regulatory Impact Statement and/or Business Case if required;
- Prepare a report, have it peer-reviewed and signed out to go to the minister, seeking determination of the policy recommendations to go to cabinet and a proposed timeframe for this.

The Cabinet Office determines timeframes for submitting cabinet papers. The Cabinet Manual specifies a minimum number of working days for ministerial consultation. Internal processes and timeframes for peer review and sign-out are different in each agency. Working backwards from known dates and using established timeframes indicates when you need to complete each task and stage in the process.

At both the Ministry of Social Development and the Canterbury Regional Council, I created a simple timeline calculator using Microsoft Excel®. This outlines key steps in the process and when you enter the date advice is due to decision-makers, it spits out a series of dates for all the intermediate steps. In the example in Table 2.3, before council considers a paper, it must first be discussed by the executive leadership team. Given agreed processes for peer review and sign-out, this means that to get a paper to council on 23 June, I need to have a first draft ready by 27 May, which in turn assumes that the actual commissioning and policy analysis have been undertaken in early May.

To create such a timeline calculator yourself, format the date column in your preferred date style, then enter a formula in each cell deducting the number of days from the final due date to comply with your agreed processes and deadlines. For example, where I work, we need to submit papers to the council secretariat

Table 2.3 Example of a policy timeline and working backwards

Task	Due Date
Book agenda times with Governance Services	Wed 25 May
Draft leadership team paper to manager for initial feedback	Fri 27 May
Draft paper to relevant director/s for information/feedback	Mon 30 May
Draft to General Counsel for review of legal implications	Mon 30 May
Paper finalised; peer review completed	Wed 01 June
Sign-out by manager; paper to Governance Services by 4 p.m.	Thu 02 June
Paper considered at leadership team	Mon 06 June
Draft council paper to manager for initial feedback	Tue 07 June
Discuss new/major proposal with portfolio councillor by	Thu 09 June
Draft to relevant director/s for information/feedback	Thu 09 June
Draft to General Counsel for review of legal implications	Thu 09 June
Peer review completed; sign-out by manager	Mon 13 June
Paper to Governance Services by 12 noon	Tue 14 June
Paper discussed at council	Thu 23 June

nine days before a council meeting, so the formula for the penultimate row in the worksheet is, in this calculator, B15-9. Working backwards, the first row (book agenda times) is B15-29 (days).

In practice, we seldom have all the time required to follow the process in every respect—and a careful analyst/advisor would spot that June 6 is a public holiday in New Zealand. The tool is useful, however, as a reminder of ideal process and a basis for discussion with managers about which steps we can abbreviate or omit under urgency.

In summary, this chapter has proposed that effective policy advisors consistently aim at service excellence and approach this from the customer's perspective. Section 2.2.1 on theory and practice delved into differences between customers and clients, and limitations to an unqualified customer focus in a public sector context. That heightened the question: How do we decide who or what to pay attention to, when and why?

Section 2.2.3 introduced stakeholder analysis theory as an approach to identifying stakeholders, prioritising our engagement with them and neutralising opposition in ways that are consistent with our democratic norms and values and public sector ethics.

The section on process, tools and techniques returned to the theme of service excellence and approaching this from the customer's perspective. An agreed process for the clear commissioning of policy work can reduce the need for re-work, add value, improve productivity, support development of a coaching culture and demonstrate a consistent customer focus.

Paying attention, active listening and skillful note-taking are critical to effective policy advising. The policy advisor's ability to listen, and to record accurately what is said, is a powerful tool to support and influence decision-making. And anticipation and planning timeframes by working backwards, allowing wiggle space for other urgent requests that inevitably come up, is a vital technique to meet our clients' needs in a timely and efficient way.

Running through this chapter has been an emphasis on knowing one's place in the constitutional scheme of things (Sect. 2.2.2). Government agencies are not corporations and public policy advisors have duties and responsibilities that go beyond making the boss look good, managing upwards and doing "whatever it takes". We are public servants, not only government servants. We need to be critically reflective about primary and secondary clients, short-term responsiveness and long-term outcomes and accountabilities. In short, our job as public servants is to *create value in the long-term public interest* (Chap. 3).

2.4   For Reflection

- Who are your clients? How well do you understand what they need and want from you?
- Can you distinguish primary from secondary clients, and clients from customers? Who is your primary client?

- In setting your work priorities, how do you decide who or what to pay attention to, when and why?
- What are the structures and institutions that constrain and influence you, and the ideas and interests that drive you and your organisation? (Being clear about our own interests can help us see others' interests more clearly.)
- Can you map the stakeholders you are dealing with, and prioritise your engagement with them using the framework outlined in Sect. 2.2.3?
- How clearly is policy work commissioned in your organisation? Could you use the sets of questions about audience, timeframe, client, problem, purpose/proposal, format, consultation and communication to achieve clear commissioning from your manager and to invite their coaching and feedback?
- How well do you pay attention, listen actively, tune in to your political context and take useful notes of meetings? Who in your workplace does this well, how does it contribute to their effectiveness and what can you learn from them?
- How do you plan your policy projects and deliverables to provide a timely service to your clients and customers? Would creating a simple timeline calculator help you work backwards and factor in wiggle space for other urgent requests that inevitably interrupt your work?
- As a public servant, do you ever feel ethically compromised by requests that come from internal or external stakeholders? How do you respond to and deal with these?

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Creating Public Value

3

3.1   Introduction

The public service works in contexts of resource scarcity. A good deal of public policy advising supports decision-making about who gets what, when, how (Lasswell, 1950)—and who pays. There are limits to the amount of time, money and human resource we can apply to any project and to resolving any particular policy problem.

The global economic and financial crisis that began in August 2007, however, catalysed something more than the usual—an enduring period of austerity in public services (Benington & Moore, 2011, p. 12). This coincided, as Benington and Moore note, with far-reaching, disruptive changes in the global environmental, political, economic, technological and social contexts in which governments govern. It resulted in pressure to do more with less, reduce transaction costs and improve public sector performance, productivity and value for money—not only in the design and delivery of infrastructure and public services but also in how we go about designing and developing public policy.

I could not do my job without the support of many other people. I am thinking of executive assistants and administrative staff, and business support staff in IT, human resource management, finance and communications. I am also thinking of the service staff and baristas in the cafés that fuel us and the cleaners who appear in the evening, largely unseen and unacknowledged, to mop up after us. These service workers are paid significantly less than we are as policy advisors. Many of them are paid little more than the minimum wage and all pay income tax on their salaries or wages. I imagine they would prefer their taxes to be spent on improving health and education services and better infrastructure, rather than on policy wonks. The onus is on me to demonstrate to myself, to my organisation and its governors, and to the public at large that what I do as a policy advisor also adds value.

There are two aspects to this. The first is broadly utilitarian and relatively straightforward: eliminate waste in public services, work productively and efficiently, and design and implement policies that represent value for money in terms of a favourable benefit-cost ratio (Sect. 3.3.2).

One of the most satisfying projects I worked on during 2015 was the digital connectivity workstream of a Canterbury regional development strategy. Through workshops with stakeholders (described in Sect. 2.2.3.4), Canterbury's mayors repeatedly heard that the availability, uptake and use of digital connectivity, enabled by fast broadband in rural areas, is critical to the region's development in all four aspects of well-being (environmental, economic, social and cultural). Fast, reliable broadband enables, for example:

- Freshwater management, including precision irrigation, nutrient management, and environmental monitoring and reporting;
- Stock control, machine-to-machine communications, farm management and increased productivity in the agricultural sector;
- Value-added production and manufacturing;
- Land transport management and logistics;
- Enhanced experiences and safety for tourists;
- Access to education, training, health and emergency services;
- Civil defence and emergency management;
- E-commerce and online services (particularly important in rural areas); and
- Attraction and retention of a skilled workforce, for example by providing the ability to work remotely and by supporting social connectedness, which is critical to the successful settlement of migrant workers and their families.[1]

Central government had called for expressions of interest in phase two of its Ultra-Fast Broadband (UFB) project and the Rural Broadband Initiative (RBI). While Canterbury councils participated in this process, there were widespread views at the time that provision of fast broadband in rural areas was an instance of *government failure*—the RBI, in particular, looked to deliver too little, too late, with data speeds of "at least" 5 Mbps (megabits per second) inadequate for the uses precision agriculture wanted to make of digital connectivity.

It was also an instance of *market failure*—the private sector was not yet delivering what the market required, largely due, we suspected, to an *information asymmetry*.[2] Senior executives were making decisions in Auckland (our biggest

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[1] The critical importance of digital connectivity has subsequently been reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

[2] Information asymmetry occurs when one party to a transaction has more or better information than the other party/parties. The seller of a used car, for example, often knows more about the vehicle than a prospective purchaser. This imbalance of power can contribute, in some cases, to market failure. For an introduction to analysis of markets, market failure, government failure, comparative institutional analysis and rationales for public policy, see Mintrom (2012, Chaps. 9–12) and Weimer and Vining (2016, Chaps. 4–10).

city), without the benefit of full and complete information about potential uptake and use of digital technology to drive development in rural Canterbury.

The Mayoral Forum used its networks to make contact with the managing director of Spark New Zealand (formerly Telecom) and organised a workshop involving senior executives of Spark, farmers engaged in precision agriculture, and people from the irrigation and manufacturing sectors, electricity lines companies and economic development agencies.

Executives from Spark listened, followed up through further conversations with Irrigation New Zealand and enlisted the support of the Mayoral Forum as they built and assessed their business case for an accelerated roll-out of 4G wireless broadband across the region. They asked, for example, how many households live in rural Canterbury. Using census data, we were able to extract not only the number of rural households in each district but also whether they had internet access and their annual household income (as an indicator of affordability). We also provided a single point of contact in each district council to confirm whether planning consent was required for particular cell tower sites and to ensure that design and consenting processes were as efficient as possible.

Less than six months after the Mayoral Forum made contact, Spark announced it would roll out 4G wireless broadband across the region within 12 months, delivering data speeds of 50–100 Mbps at close to urban broadband pricing levels. Previously they expected to do this piecemeal, over a two- to three-year period.

In this example, local government created public value through leadership, advocacy and facilitation. Local government collaboration and a common vision and objectives for digital connectivity made it easier for a private-sector provider to take a whole-of-region approach. Councils worked together to provide data, information and efficient consenting processes and collaborated with Spark in communications about the launch. This helped lower the risk of private sector investment and enabled a *market solution.*

To set a baseline for monitoring and evaluation, we had used GIS mapping to record broadband coverage across the region, using publicly available data. When we repeated the exercise 12 months later, it was exciting to see the difference wireless broadband was making as blank areas on the map were filled in. By December 2016, Spark's 4G services covered 96% of the places people in rural Canterbury live and work.

What did all this cost? Spark had invested $158 million in a government auction to use blocks of the 700 MHz spectrum for its 4G services. The Canterbury upgrade represented a further investment of $14 million. The cost to local government (thus, ratepayers) of the Mayoral Forum's collaboration with Spark was one meeting room booking with lunch and a contribution in kind (a few hours of public officials' time). By any account, this was excellent value for money.

A second aspect to creating public value in the policy advice role is more complicated and controversial. How much government is good for us (Sect. 3.2.1), how might we best understand "the public" and "the public interest" (Sect. 3.2.2), and how might public policy advisors go about defining strategic goals and creating value in the long-term public interest (Sect. 3.2.3, Chap. 6).

Section 3.3 picks up the idea of a value proposition introduced in Sect. 2.3.1, summarises cost-benefit analysis as one way of addressing in a reasoned way whether something is worth doing, and reflects on leading from behind to add value to policy development and political decision-making.

3.2   Theory and Practice

Ronald Reagan, 40th President of the United States (1981–1989), liked to say, "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are: I'm from the government and I'm here to help".

In this chapter, I argue that the purpose of public policy advising is to create public value by improving decision-making by elected or appointed officials (Mintrom, 2003, p. 248, 2012, p. 17), in the spirit of service to the community and with a view to the long-term public interest. In doing so, we should not assume that the government can and should do everything. It is also important to clarify what we mean by "the public", "the public interest" and "public value".

3.2.1   How Much Government is Good for Us?

I have spent a great deal of my working life in meetings where elected and appointed officials discuss, decide and make judgements about public policy. A lot of big ideas are expressed or implied in these discussions, but mostly in an unthinking (even unconscious) way. The result is that we tend to skate over confusions and contradictions in our own and others' thoughts and too frequently talk past each other.[3] Deborah Stone (2012) reminds us that:

> Ideas are the very stuff of politics. People fight about ideas, fight for them, and fight against them. Political conflict is never simply over material conditions and choices but also over what is legitimate and right. The passion in politics comes from conflicting senses of fairness, justice, rightness, and goodness. Moreover, people fight *with* ideas as well as about them. (p. 36)

Howlett et al. (2009) discuss some of these big ideas in terms of how they affect policy actors' expectations of government. They argue that *capitalism, liberalism* and *democracy* form an important part of the meta-institutional and meta-ideational context within which public policy-making occurs in most modern societies:

> These over-arching institutions deserve particular attention, not only because they are influential among policy-makers, but also because they are not intrinsically compatible and

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[3] For an account of how these confusions and contradictions drive me to "stand back and think about it", and of political philosophy as a resource for reflective practice, see Bromell (2016).

hence must be somehow constantly reconciled, leading to unstable compromises that pose major challenges to liberal-democratic countries. (p. 52)

Moreover, these ideas, or some particular expression of them, can become hegemonic and so much part of our mental furniture that we take them for granted and do not realise the extent to which they shape and constrain our imagination of what is desirable and possible in politics and policy.

Capitalism is a socioeconomic system. It refers to:

> … both a market-oriented political economy or system of production and exchange and to a society in which control over the property required for production (capital) is concentrated in the hands of a small section of the populace, while most of the rest of the population sells their labour-time in a system of wages. (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 53)

Ownership of production inputs and decisions about what is produced are largely in private hands, with rights to do so guaranteed by the state. Firms need to make profits (accumulate capital) or the system grinds to a halt, so they look to governments to provide operating environments that enable continued and expanded capital investment (ibid., p. 54). This can take the form of infrastructure provision (transport, water, energy, fast broadband, etc.), and policy instruments including regulation (or the lack of it), fiscal policy, monetary policy, subsidies and tax regimes.[4]

Liberalism emerged as a political ideology in tandem with capitalism[5]:

> Liberalism is centred on the assumption of the primacy of the individual in society. It views individuals as having inalienable natural rights, including the right to own property and to enter into contracts with other individuals concerning the disposition of that property. These rights have to be protected from intrusion by collective social organizations such as the state, churches, or trade unions. A good society in liberal theory is one that guarantees individuals freedom to pursue their interests and realize their potential. This freedom should be restricted only when one person's freedom erodes that of another, for example, through theft or violence. (ibid., p. 55)

Two important ideas about government follow from liberalism:

- The residual state—the state should only undertake activities that markets cannot perform; and
- The corrective state—the state can legitimately act to correct micro- or macro-level market failures and to moderate harm caused by an unbridled exercise of individual liberty that directly or indirectly has consequences for others whose

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[4] On policy instruments and common policy tools by category, see Howlett et al., (2009, Chap. 5); Mintrom (2012, Chap. 3) and Stone (2012, Part IV).

[5] For brief accounts of liberalism, its various strands (classical liberalism, social liberalism and neo-liberalism) and its institutionalisation in liberal democracy, see Bromell (2008, pp. 14–19; 2019, Chap. 7).

interests will not be furthered unless they are furthered by the state (cf. Barry, 1964, p. 16).

Democracy is another major meta-institution affecting states and policy-making. Howlett et al., (2009, p. 56) cite Therborn's (1977) definition of modern democracy as: "(1) a representative government elected by (2) an electorate consisting of the entire adult population, (3) whose votes carry equal weight, and (4) who are allowed to vote for any opinion without intimidation by the state apparatus" (p. 4).

Democracy enables the representation of minority interests in government, which shapes not only how the state functions but also, through the use of state authority, how markets function. This sets up tensions between capitalism, liberalism and democracy:

> To the extent liberalism and its corollary, capitalism, are about individual rights while democracy is about collective rights, the two are fundamentally contradictory, notwithstanding the common term "liberal democracy" often used to describe countries with both systems in place. (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 57)

In my professional context as a public servant, I could not be effective if I was fundamentally opposed to these big ideas of capitalism, liberalism and democracy. My own bias, shaped by more or less critical appropriation of ideas, attitudes and values from my meta-institutional and meta-ideational context, is to prefer less rather than more government, but better (in the sense of more effective) governance.[6] This inclines me to be sceptical, but not cynical, about the size, role and function of the state and what it can legitimately attempt and achieve.

We take government so much for granted that it is easy to overlook the extent of the state's corrective interventions in markets and its constraints on the exercise of individual liberty. In its final report on regulatory institutions and practices, the N.Z. Productivity Commission (2014) included this account of *A day in the life of a New Zealand family*:

> It's 6 am and the kids barge through the door wearing their safety standard-compliant pyjamas. You reach over and turn on the clock-radio. The local station is playing its regular morning show, the content of which is subject to a code of practice for radio broadcasting. Scratching your head you rise from your recently purchased mattress (which is covered by the Consumer Guarantees Act), make your way to the bathroom and turn on the light. The light complies with the energy performance standards administered by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority. The price and reliability of the electricity used to power the light comes through a transmission network overseen by the Electricity Authority. You turn on your shower. The quality of water flowing from the tap is regulated by the National Environmental Standard for drinking water, while the Commerce Commission regulates the amount you pay for the gas that heats the water. You wash your hair with anti-dandruff shampoo approved for sale by the Minister of Health. The soap runs down a drain built in compliance with the New Zealand Building Code. Once out of the shower, you dry yourself

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[6] On the shift in thinking from government to governance, see Heinelt (2019, pp. 24–26).

and reach for the shaving cream, or perhaps some makeup. The packaging proudly proclaims that the product was not tested on animals—a claim subject to scrutiny under the Fair Trading Act. You fill a glass of water and take your daily vitamin tablets—which are regulated under the Dietary Supplements Regulations administered by Medsafe. Once dressed you make your way into the kitchen to get breakfast for the family—cereal topped with banana. The cereal has its nutritional value printed on the side of the carton. The information complies with the Nutritional Information Requirements of the Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code. The banana is from the Philippines, but it poses little threat to biosecurity due to New Zealand's quarantine regulations. You tip milk on the cereal. The quality of the milk is regulated under the food safety standards, while the price you paid for it is monitored by the Commerce Commission. After breakfast you take the kids to school. On the way out of the house you lock the door. Maybe you have recently purchased the house, having paid attention to some of the provisions in the Property Law Act. Or maybe you are renting the property under the conditions set out in the Residential Tenancies Act. Either way, you probably used the services of a real estate agent who was legally bound to act in accordance with the Real Estate Agents Act. You buckle your children into a car seat that meets the joint New Zealand/Australian standard and then start your vehicle (which of course has a current registration and warrant of fitness). You then drive (under the authorisation of your New Zealand driver's licence) to your children's school—being sure to obey local traffic regulations as you only have 10 demerit points left on your licence! You drop your children off at school, where their teacher is registered by the New Zealand Teachers' Council as being capable to deliver the New Zealand Curriculum and the newly-elected school board is charged with giving effect to the Government's National Education Guidelines. As you drive away, you wonder how the project to earthquake strengthen the old school hall to the Ministry of Education's building design standards is going. At work, regulations administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment promote a safe working environment, while the Human Rights Act seeks to protect you against discrimination from your co-workers. Your pay and conditions are covered by the Employment Relations Act which (among other provisions) protects the holiday entitlements you negotiated with your employer. And all this before smoko [morning tea and/or a cigarette break]—which of course is outside. (pp. 22–23)

As I argued in Sect. 1.5, public servants do well to remember that we work for agencies of state that have inclusive and coercive powers. The state is not a voluntary association. It is an involuntary association that includes everyone within a given territory and exercises "the monopoly of legitimate force" (Weber, 2007, p. 369), including the right to use physical coercion against us. Moreover, the policies on which we give advice, once adopted and implemented, affect the lives and well-being of a very large number of people, imposing costs and distributing benefits in ways that have unintended consequences and enduring impacts.

I like to apply four principles of biomedical ethics (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994, pp. 12–13) to public policy-making:

- *Respect for autonomy*: respect and protect citizens' liberty to lead self-directed lives;
- *Non-maleficence*: first, do no harm—and if we are uncertain that our intervention will do any good, do nothing (or at least do nothing different; that is, maintain the status quo);
- *Beneficence*: do good wherever we can; relieve, lessen or prevent harm; provide benefits and balance these against risks and costs; and

- *Do justice*: seek to distribute benefits, costs and risks fairly (Sects. 4.2.3, 4.3.2).

Consequently, some questions I ask myself about government, institutions and policy-making are:

1. What is the most desirable, or least undesirable, form of government, and how much government is good for us?
2. How might we best design political institutions and public policy in order to balance "me" and "us", the private and the public, freedom and individual liberty with belonging, community and social responsibility?
3. What should we assume about human nature in policy and politics?
4. When and by whom can coercion legitimately be exercised, and what are the limits to a state's legitimate use of force?
5. How is a liberal state to deal with pluralism and with both reasonable and unreasonable disagreement when people want and value different things?
6. How might public policy respond to current needs and demands without compromising future individual and collective well-being?

I will discuss values pluralism and public policy in Sect. 4.2.2.3 and anticipatory governance in Chap. 6. For now, I want to turn to a difficult but important question: What exactly do we mean by "the public" and "the public interest" (Sect. 3.2.2), before introducing a public value approach to policy advising (Sect. 3.2.3).

3.2.2 "The Public" and "the Public Interest"

First, what is public and what is private? Modern states are complex and differentiated societies in which we can distinguish between state and non-state aspects of social life; i.e., a public and a private sector (Mulgan, 2004, p. 2). The boundaries between state and non-state are, however, blurred and imprecise. States and firms "are both particular combinations of public and private, serving and excluding different aggregations of private interests" (Crouch, 2011, p. 73).

For example, a state school or hospital in New Zealand may be publicly owned and subject to regulation but free of direct responsibility to ministers and parliament, and it may derive some income from fees and/or private donations. State-owned enterprises, which may be 100% government-owned but are required to operate as successful businesses, similarly blur boundaries between state and non-state activity. So distinguishing public and private in the sense of "state" and "non-state" does not take us very far.

Following Brian Barry (1962, pp. 195–96), we can define something as public if it directly or indirectly concerns, or could potentially concern, any member or members of a community indiscriminately.

For example, a facility is public not because every member of a community uses it, but because it is open in principle to anyone at all. We use "public" in

this sense when we talk about going to "the pub" (a public house) or a "public meeting", using "public transport" or "public toilets", or "the publication" of a book. Any member of a community can walk into a public bar and drink there—provided they are old enough, are not intoxicated and can pay for their drink. Any member of a community can use public transport—if they have paid the fare. They can attend a public concert—if they have a ticket. They can purchase a published book or borrow it from a public library.

By contrast, a private event or facility is not open to any or all members of a community indiscriminately. Private film screenings are by invitation only. Unless you are a member or the guest of a member, you cannot use the facilities of a private club or gym. My house and garden are private property and indiscriminate members of the community are not welcome to walk through the gate uninvited to picnic on my lawn. Neither is my private library available for anyone at all to use.

"The public", in other words, does not necessarily mean everyone in an absolute, aggregate sense. It means everyone in the sense of "anyone at all" (Benn, 1959–1960, p. 134; Douglass, 1980, p. 112).[7]

A "public", moreover, is constituted within history, in a specific context (Barry, 1965, p. 192; Etzioni, 2015a, p. 24). When we say that a rail strike has inconvenienced "the public", we do not mean the strike has inconvenienced absolutely everyone within the nation. We mean primarily rail passengers, people sending freight by train and those awaiting the delivery of goods by rail. Similarly, when fog closes an airport, delayed and cancelled flights inconvenience "the travelling public" and those they were going to visit or meet. For theatre managers, "the public" is "the theatre-going public"; for the public health system, it is "patients".

An important point to bear in mind, however, is that a person who never travels by public transport, visits the theatre or requires public health services, might nevertheless consider what arrangements and services they would prefer *if they were a member of the relevant public* within a given context at a particular point in time (Reeve, 2009).

Secondly, we can distinguish public from private in terms of *the direct and indirect consequences of actions*, when those consequences are serious enough to justify governmental intervention.

An example is going to the dentist (Dewey, 1927, p. 51). Visiting a dentist is a private transaction—I want to get my teeth fixed and I pay a dentist to do it. If the dentist neglects to clean his equipment properly, however, the consequences (e.g., transmission of hepatitis or HIV, with significant and ongoing personal and social costs) can be sufficiently serious to justify the state regulating the professional registration of dentists and the practice of dentistry. The public, in this context anyone at all who needs to visit a dentist and anyone at all who contributes through taxation to the public health system, has an interest in the safe practice of dentistry that justifies government regulation.

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[7] Understanding "the public" as "anyone at all" rather than "everybody whatsoever" has important implications for public consultation and engagement (Sect. 6.2.1).

Barry, taking a lead from Jeremy Bentham's *Principles of Penal Law* (Bentham, 1843)*,* similarly distinguishes private and public in terms of the consequences of actions:

- A *private injury* damages one or more identifiable individuals (we know their names);
- A *reflective injury* damages one's own self;
- A *semi-public injury* affects a portion of the community and, depending on the duration and severity of the offence, may justify governmental action; and
- A *public injury* produces some common actual or potential danger either to all the members of a state or to an indefinite number of non-assignable individuals (anyone at all) in a specific context who may be affected by the consequences of an action (Barry, 1965, pp. 191–92).

I defined an interest (or stake) in Sect. 2.2.3.1 as something (a policy, institutional arrangement or course of action) that puts someone (a stakeholder—an individual or group of individuals) in a better position over time to get what they want or value, compared to some other policy, institutional arrangement or course of action.

This suggests that whatever we mean by "the public interest" is always political. The public interest is not something that can be specified in the abstract, whether by would-be philosopher-kings defining "the common good" or by public officials treating well-being dashboards and scorecards as ends instead of means to inform democratic decision-making. The public interest is something that needs to be discerned, debated and determined through the exercise of what Amartya Sen (1999, 2009, Chap. 11) describes as *opportunity freedom* and *process freedom*—citizens' *capabilities*[8] to participate in democratic decision-making (directly, or indirectly through the periodic free election of representatives) that authorises and validates the use of governmental authority to protect and advance agreed collective interests, now and in the future. This has four implications for public policy-making.

We need to acknowledge frankly that people have interests, individually and as members of social groups.[9] We should not speak pejoratively about people having interests in politics and public policy. As James and Argyle (2014) note, the pursuit of our individual and collective interests in an open, democratic society is an "unexceptionable, natural human interaction" (p. 53).

Public officials, whether elected or appointed, also have interests, not all of which are altruistic. A democratic society needs to establish and maintain systems, rules, guidelines and processes to manage apparent, potential and actual

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[8] On a capabilities approach to wellbeing and human development, see Dalziel et al. (2018), Nussbaum (2000, 2011), Robeyns & Byskov (2021), Sen (1999, 2005, 2009).

[9] A social group comprises a number of people who interact with one another, share some common interests and a common identity, and display some degree of social cohesion.

conflicts of interests, and to prevent politicians and public servants from misusing the powers vested in them by virtue of public office (Ho, 2011, p. 2).

While we should not lose sight of the extent of our shared or common interests, many of our interests conflict and not all are able to be reconciled. Policy-making in the public interest requires inclusive, transparent and accountable decision-making processes that:

- Acknowledge our different interests, including our different values and ideas about how to live well together;
- Take a long-term view; and
- Manage conflict by building at least the minimal agreements necessary for the operation of a democratic society (Benington, 2011; Downs, 1962, p. 5).

I find it useful and important to conduct a stakeholder and interests analysis as outlined in Sect. 2.2.3. We can then factor this analysis into how we determine the *significance* of a proposed policy intervention: Who has an interest in this proposal and why? What is the nature of their interest, in what local context and at which point in time? What is at stake? Who is affected, how, when and to what extent? This in turn helps determine appropriate methods of public *engagement* along the competition–collaboration continuum (Sect. 6.2.1.1).[10]

"The public interest" particularly involves interests that are not likely to be protected or advanced unless by the state. Private interests can, for the most part, be aligned or reconciled and conflict resolved privately or through the operation of markets. When private relationships break down and markets fail, the exercise of public authority may be justifiable "in the public interest" (Barry, 1964, p. 16; Benditt, 1973, p. 299). As Bardach and Patashnik (2019, p. 2) put the question: "What private troubles warrant definition as public problems and thereby legitimately raise claims for amelioration by public resources?"

This is not to suggest, however, that the state has a merely residual, last-resort function, for the following two reasons.

Our interests include our values, norms, ideas and ideals. Conducting a stakeholder and interests analysis (Sect. 2.2.3) is an opportunity to engage with ethics in public life. I do not think it is possible, however, in an argumentative context such as ours, to equate "the public interest" with a substantive, normative vision of "the good society" or "the common good". The public interest is context-dependent, comparative and an outcome of democratic political deliberation to identify and build on common interests (including our ethical values), and resolve conflict over divergent interests (including our ethical values).

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[10] In 2014, the New Zealand Government amended the Local Government Act 2002 (Subsect. 76AA) to require every local authority to develop and adopt a significance and engagement policy.

Determining what is, or is not, in the public interest requires more than a simple aggregation or reconciliation of current interests. It requires us to factor in our common and divergent interests over the long run and all things considered, including the interests of persons who are not yet born (Etzioni, 2015b, p. 192; Pennock, 1962, p. 180). Prudent, anticipatory governance for the long term requires correction for a presentist bias (Boston, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; DeLeo, 2016; Mazey & Richardson, 2021) and is not characterised by the struggle of competing interests alone, but rather by a complex mix of searches for justice and attempts by individuals and social groups to advance their own desires (Cochran, 1974, p. 337).

In other words, the public interest is something we need to consider *over time.* It requires us to factor in enduring human interests and values in ways that are transparent and accountable to the public, and that respond to current needs and demands without compromising future individual and collective well-being.

With a stated bias towards less government but better governance, and having explored what I think can be meant by "interests", "the public" and "the public interest", I will now outline a public value approach to policy advising, to highlight that:

- The public interest is always political;
- All of us have interests, as individuals and as members of social groups;
- Some of these interests will neither be protected nor advanced without governmental action;
- Our interests include our values, norms, ideas and ideals; and
- Determining what is, or is not, in the public interest requires more than a simple aggregation or reconciliation of current interests.

3.2.3 A Public Value Approach to Policy Advising

Mark Moore (1995, 2013) developed his public value framework to inform and support public management and the delivery of public services. In reaction to New Public Management (NPM),[11] Moore challenged neo-liberal thinking in his U.S. context on three points:

1. *The role of government in society*—to be more than a regulator, service provider and social safety net; rather, a creator of public value and an active shaper of the public sphere;
2. *The role of government managers*—to be more than passive servants to political masters; rather, custodians of public value and stewards of public assets, whose

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[11] See Sect. 2.2.1.1 on NPM. On differences between NPM and Public Value Management, see Shaw (2013), Stoker (2006).

role is to help governments discover what might be done with those assets to create public value; and

3. *The techniques needed by government managers*—more than bureaucratic administration; rather, working in partnership with other stakeholders and agents, in ways that ensure policy choices are made in the public interest and that legitimise, animate and guide implementation, in order to improve outcomes for the public (Benington & Moore, 2011, pp. 3–4).

A public value framework offers an antidote to NPM's strong focus on instrumental logic and behaviour and encourages us to direct public management towards socially desired results (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017, p. 173). Providing public services is not, in itself, a sufficient justification for taxpayer-funded state intervention. The question is rather: Does this service or intervention advance valued social or economic outcomes, and how do we know? And the answer to that question can only be determined through engagement and exchange between the relevant stakeholders and public officials (Stoker, 2006, p. 47).

3.2.3.1 The Strategic Triangle

The central construct of Moore's framework is the "strategic triangle" (Moore, 1995, p. 71; Fig. 3.1). Public sector strategy must align three distinct but interdependent processes:

1. *Defining public value*—clarifying and specifying strategic goals in a particular context, which will create or add public value for citizens through programmes, projects and services;
2. *Legitimating and authorising action*—creating an "authorising environment" that builds a coalition of stakeholders from the public sector (primarily, but not only, democratically elected representatives), the private sector and civil society, whose support is necessary to legitimise actions to achieve the desired public value outcomes; and
3. *Building operational capacity*—harnessing and mobilising operational resources both within and without the organisation to implement policy and achieve the desired public value outcomes (Benington & Moore, 2011, pp. 4–5).

Fig. 3.1 Mark Moore's strategic triangle of public value (Moore, 1995)
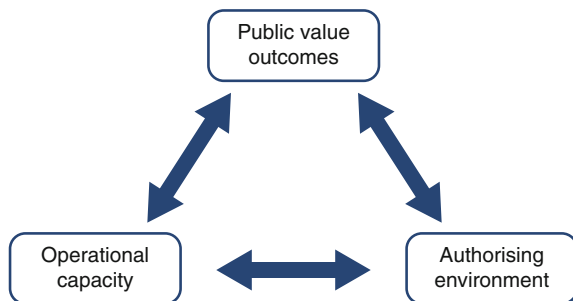
Benington and Moore's (2011) restatement and edited collection of international perspectives on a public value approach suggests that the framework is relevant not only in Washington but also in Westminster-type systems of government, as in Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.[12]

Benington (2011), in particular, has sought to reformulate a public value approach into a framework that starts with the public and the collective as primary units of analysis, rather than the private and the individual. He argues that public value can best be understood and achieved within "the public sphere":

> The public sphere can be thought of as the web of values, places, organizations, rules, knowledge, and other cultural resources held in common by people through their everyday commitments and behaviours, and held in trust by government and public institutions. (p. 43)

Public value is what "the public" values and what adds value to "the public sphere", but "the public" is something that is not so much given as made (Dewey, 1927). A public is more than an aggregation of individual consumer interests (Benington & Moore, 2011, p. 10). It is continuously created and recreated within specific contexts within a heavily contested space where competing interests collide. We can establish what constitutes public value in any particular case, therefore, only through a continuing process of public deliberation:

> Public value provides a conceptual framework within which competing values and interests can be expressed and debated, in a deliberative democratic process, by which the question of what constitutes value is established dialectically. (Benington, 2011, p. 50)

While public value is not created by the public sector alone, Benington (2011) argues that public servants have particular responsibilities as co-creators and guardians of public value:

> Because of the focus on outcomes, public value focuses attention on, and is measured over, the medium to long term … Governments, dictated by electoral cycles, inevitably tend to focus on the shorter term, but public managers also have a responsibility to focus on the longer-term public interest, and to act as guardians of the public sphere in the interest of future generations yet unborn, who lack a voice in current decision-making. (p. 49)

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[12] Whether and to what extent Moore's public value approach is appropriate in a Westminster system of government has been vigorously contested. Rhodes and Wanna (2007), for example, think Moore's approach can be useful in operational service delivery to support innovation and continuous improvement but express concern when it is applied further up a "ladder of value", if public managers adopt the role of platonic guardians deciding the public interest. Alford (2008) replied that Rhodes and Wanna have misrepresented Moore's ideas and that they appear to be legitimising a disturbing trend towards over-responsiveness to political masters in public administration. Rhodes and Wanna (2008, 2009) responded with further expressions of concern and a reassertion of the primacy of politics over administration. They caution against a utopian view of government as benign that ignores the "dark side" of governmental activity.

Moore's *Recognizing public value* (Moore, 2013) offers a further elaboration on his public value approach and focuses on how public managers might monitor and measure the public value created by their work. He proposes a Public Value Account as an alternative to private sector models built on customer satisfaction and the "bottom line". Public value is to be measured against the achievement of collectively defined missions, the fairness with which agencies operate and the satisfaction of clients and other stakeholders. Moore (2013) proposes to supplement this with a Public Value Scorecard:

> … designed to capture an organization's standing with all those individual and collective actors who provide it with the social legitimacy, public authority, and public funding necessary to sustain itself (the legitimacy and support perspective) and a set of measures designed to capture the organization's ability to engage in the activities and produce the outputs that are thought to be consistent with achieving desired social outcomes (the operational capacity perspective). (p. 12)

3.2.3.2 Public Value and Policy Design

To date, a public value framework has predominantly been thought about and applied in relation to public management and the delivery of public services. What might a public value approach mean for policy design and the policy advice role?

Scott and Baehler (2010) reference Moore's strategic triangle in defining three broad domains of policy work:

- *Strategic policy*—"pushing the frontier";
- *Responsive policy*—"making the Government's ideas work"; and
- *Operational policy*—"keeping things running" (pp. 13–15).

They affirm that policy is a story about creating public value and explain:

> The link between the Policy Triangle and the Strategic Management Triangle reflects the reality that good governance requires a dense web of connections between policy and management functions to ensure that government's activities are effective, efficient, and aligned with society's fundamental values. (p. 16)

Mintrom and Luetjens (2017) also want to tighten connections between policy design and public management. By "policy designers", they include legislators, their advisors, policy analysts in government agencies and members of government task forces and advisory committees (p. 176). In their article, they set out to make three contributions. First, they emphasise the pursuit of public value through policy design—an under-explored application of the public value framework. Secondly, they encourage exploration of the interface between public managers and clients, long identified as a gap in analytical practice (Elmore, 1979; Fullan, 2008). Thirdly, they show how a focus on public value creation can provide "a coherent link across all elements of government action, from the conception and design of public policies to their effective implementation and evaluation" (Mintrom & Luetjens, 2017, p. 177). In applying a public value approach to policy design, they

urge explicit discussion of policy goals and the outcomes they are intended to promote, and a high level of engagement with evidence (p. 178), particularly on local factors that shape policy effectiveness (p. 185).

3.2.3.3 Creating Public Value is Always Political

A public value approach to policy advising requires policy advisors and managers to identify and engage with clients and other stakeholders, focusing particularly on collective interests, and to facilitate agreement on policy design, institutional arrangements and courses of action that are most likely to create better outcomes for citizens over the long run and all things considered.

Prioritising stakeholder claims in terms of *power*, *legitimacy and urgency,* and levels of *interest* and *influence* (Sect. 2.2.3.4), provides a link to Moore's emphasis on legitimation and the authorising environment. Further prioritising who and what we pay attention to by applying both *expressive logic* (identity, mandate, organisational culture, values and norms), and *instrumental logic* (strategic frame, vision and objectives) is also consistent with Moore's desire to go beyond NPM's more or less exclusive focus on instrumental logic. And Benington's (2011) discussion of the public sphere is consistent with material introduced in Sect. 3.2.2 on the public and the public interest.

I want to sound a note of caution, however, about a public value approach to policy design and policy advising. As Bozeman and Crow (2021, pp. 50–55) acknowledge, there are three conceptual problems to address: an *identification problem* (the difficulty of knowing a public value when you see one), an *instrument problem* (there is no guarantee that policy or operational instruments used to achieve public values will be effective and lead to demonstrably better results), and a *motivation problem* (policy actors have plural interests and motivations and do not pursue "pure" public values).

While Bozeman and Crow maintain (p. 55) that there are viable if imperfect solutions to these problems, Prebble (2021a) has argued that it is not possible to judge the value of a public value proposition with sufficient confidence to justify the use of public authority. His article, together with responses by Moore (2021), Hartley and Benington (2021), Peters (2021), Meynhardt (2021), and Prebble's (2021b) response to their commentaries, suggests to me that:

- Policy actors cannot know which government actions will achieve or advance public value (or the public interest, or collective well-being) with sufficient confidence to justify the use of public authority.
- Some courses of action (and intended outcomes) are, however, morally preferable to others. As Prebble (2021a) puts it, "the inability to assess collective well-being does not mean that any government action is equally valid or proper" (p. 1598). In both private and public life, we cannot avoid making morally significant decisions in the absence of certainty, and we are responsible and accountable to one another in various ways for these decisions.
- Therefore, public value creation in the long-term public interest is and remains *political*. There is no science or technocratic rationality by which the truth of

a public value (or public interest) proposition can be *verified*, but it can be *validated* by reference to law, democracy and process. Validation is sufficient, at the very least, to reduce the risk of damaging uses of public authority (Prebble, 2021b, pp. 1647–1649).

- Because public value creation is political, creating public value requires policy actors to develop skills in facilitating agonistic pluralism (Bromell, 2019, Chap. 2; 2022, Chap. 7), engaging with people with diverse interests in public value creation as "a *contested* democratic practice" (Hartley & Benington, 2021, p. 1612, emphasis theirs).
- Creating public value in policy design and public management therefore demands, as Prebble (2021a, 2021b) suggests, humility and the exercise of toleration, discourse and compromise. It implies incrementalism and bounded rationality (Peters, 2021, p. 1627), "muddling through" (Lindblom, 1959, 1979; Meynhardt, 2021, p. 1639) and "piecemeal engineering", rather than utopianism (Popper, 1971, Chap. 9). Public policy once implemented will not create the best of all possible worlds or the Ideal State, but perhaps we can prevent the worst and make things at least a little better and fairer than they are now. I expand on this in Sect. 4.2.1.3.

For policy advisors, this reinforces the importance of remembering our place in the constitutional scheme of things and our public service ethics (Sect. 2.2.2). A public value approach to policy advising is characterised by respectful relationships, critical thinking, creative conversation and strategic collaboration. It is modest and realistic, in a spirit of service to the community, and it requires us to build practised competence in:

- Paying conscious attention to the rule of law and the authorising environment that legitimises the use of power and the practice of government;
- Holding values conversations and clarifying purpose with policy decision-makers;
- Facilitating de-centralised co-design and co-production with a range of stakeholders and sectors, in ways that support and build deliberative democracy and "networked governance" (Stoker, 2006)[13];
- Supporting and enabling political equality, and not only listening to the loudest voices;
- Distinguishing between the important and the urgent, and working together in the long-term public interest (Sect. 6.2.3); and
- Cultivating and maintaining networks and alliances that secure ongoing legitimacy, support and capacity for sustainable policy-making and implementation.

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[13] Horner and Hutton (2011) suggest that the core intent of a public value approach to public policy and public management is about "placing individuals and groups as citizens centre stage in the decision-making process so that public resources best serve the needs of different publics, and are balanced against the wider public interest, and [do] not mainly reflect the interests of public managers or professionals, or the interests of one particular group of citizens" (p. 116).

3.3   Process, Tools and Techniques

In this section, I offer some processes, tools and techniques to support a public value approach to policy advising as discussed in Sect. 3.2.3. First, I elaborate on the idea of the value proposition introduced in Sect. 2.3.1. Secondly, I introduce cost-benefit analysis as one tool to estimate whether something is worth doing. Thirdly, I offer some further reflection on practical approaches to leading from behind and acting as public servants rather than Rhodes and Wanna's feared platonic guardians (Rhodes & Wanna, 2007, 2008, 2009, and footnote 12).

3.3.1   Defining the Value Proposition

One set of questions to include in a clear commissioning checklist for policy advice (Sect. 2.3.1) is:

> **What is the problem (risk, challenge or opportunity)?** What is at stake, for whom? What might be the value proposition? What risks have we identified (cost, effectiveness, acceptability, implementation risk, reputation risk, legal risk, etc.)?

When I have been involved in developing report templates for policy advice, I like to see this information on the first page of a report:

- *Title*;
- *Purpose*: What you need decision-makers to know, decide or do—one sentence, 25 words or less;
- *Significance (Value proposition)*: What is at stake, for whom and why, with a brief summary of any cost-benefit analysis;
- *Key points:* Provide an executive summary if a paper is more than four pages long; and
- *Recommendations*: These should relate to the Purpose of the paper.

The actual statement of the value proposition is, for most policy papers, a single paragraph of just one to three sentences. Further analysis of stakeholder interests, significance and engagement follows in the body of the report, along with analysis of financial implications, legal compliance, consistency with previously agreed and notified council policy, risk assessment and mitigation, and communications implications. The value proposition on the first page is a summary statement and, like all effective policy communication, it requires much thought and few words.

I first started thinking about a public value approach to policy advising in 2012, arguing that this requires, above all, creative conversation, co-design and co-production with a range of stakeholders, inside and outside government (Bromell, 2012). Of course, none of this is possible without having first won the confidence of decision-makers and engaged in careful listening (Sect. 2.3.2).

What follows in this further development of my thinking about a public value approach to policy advising is not proposed as a formal analytical framework or

Fig. 3.2 A public value
approach to policy advising
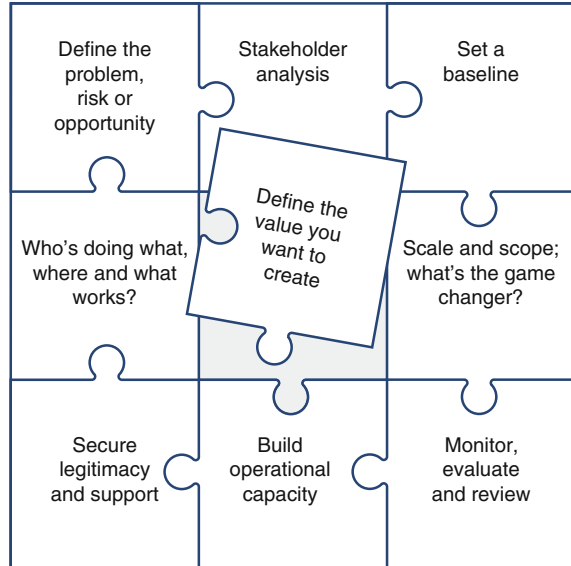
staged model for policy development, but rather a set of things to think about, and not necessarily in this order. I have summarised the approach in Fig. 3.2 as a jigsaw that we need to assemble, in which various pieces may fit in different parts of the puzzle.

Define the Problem/Risk/Opportunity.

What is at stake, and why do we care? What is driving us to think about this now?

Stakeholder Analysis to Identify Interested and Affected Individuals and Groups.

Who has an interest in this inside and outside government and what is the nature and strength of their interest? How might we prioritise their claims? What values are important to them and which interests do they have in common? What can they contribute to achieving our strategic objectives? How might we work with them in order to create and re-create the public and facilitate deliberative democracy and networked community governance (Benington, 2011)?

Define the Value Proposition.

What is the public value we want to create? What do we want to change, and why? What does the public value, and how do we know? What are the social, cultural, economic, political and environmental dimensions of value we want to add to the public sphere, and can we quantify them in any way (Benington, 2011, p. 42; Kelly et al., 2002; Reich, 1988, pp. 5–6)? Can we agree on the results we want to achieve over the long run? How do we facilitate decision-making that involves difficult trade-offs between competing priorities, over short-term and

long-term timeframes? How might we develop common purpose out of our diverse perspectives?

These questions need to be pursued through open-ended, forthright conversations between decision-makers, their advisors and other stakeholders, and with reference to previous political agreements "enshrined in the legislation that defines public managers' mandates for action" (Moore, 1995, p. 106).

As Mintrom and Luetjens (2017, p. 179) have emphasised, policy advisors should bring evidence-informed analytical rigour to these conversations and a long-term strategic perspective. Ken Henry (2007) noted:

> Strategic advice, at its best, has depth, looking beneath immediate events and preoccupations, to underlying drivers and trends; it has breadth, adopting a systemic rather than partial focus; and it has reach, identifying and addressing medium-term risks and opportunities. (p. 5)

Defining public value thus requires dialogue and engagement with current publics and consideration of the long-term public interest, including the interests of future generations of citizens yet unborn (Benington, 2011, p. 31; Benington & Moore, 2011, p. 22).

Set a Baseline for Monitoring and Evaluation.

What is the current state, and what evidence supports this assessment? Is the problem as we think it is? Can we distinguish between causes and symptoms (Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 345)? How would we know whether we have made a difference and achieved better results?

Map Who Is Currently Doing What, Where.

Given that "very few policy problems are truly unique" (Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 325), who is already active in this field of policy or service delivery, nationally and in other jurisdictions? What is their mandate and role and how successful are they in it? What have they tried and with what measure of success? At what stage of implementation are existing programmes and projects? Systematically review evaluations of what works, for whom and why.

Determine Scale and Scope.

Will doing more of the same (only better) get us where we want to go (i.e., continuous improvement); or do we need to do something different and innovate, in discontinuity with past and current practice (Hartley, 2011), to develop transformative approaches to emerging challenges and "wicked problems" (Baehler & Bryson, 2009; Rittel & Webber, 1973)?[14]

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[14] In Sect. 1.1 and throughout, I describe policy-making as *incremental social problem-solving* because more often than not, policy advising in democratic states aims at iterative change and continuous improvement rather than radical innovation and disruption of the status quo. The goal

Look for the Game Changer.

If we need to innovate to create value, what is the bold idea that could be a game changer; i.e., the action or actions that might make the greatest difference to achieving better results in the medium to long term? How strong is the evidence to support a calculated risk on a game-changing initiative? What would it take to implement this effectively, and how might we evaluate its success?

Secure Legitimacy and Support.

Who needs to give legitimacy and support to this project, inside and outside government, and how will we engage with them so it is politically viable and sustainable and can achieve the medium- to long-term results we are looking for? Given inevitable conflict and contestation in the public sphere, who do we need to take with us and who are we prepared to leave behind (Sects. 2.2.3.4, 2.2.3.5)?[15] How might we assure citizens that we are pursuing genuinely public purposes rather than our own selfish interests or odd or untested ideas (Moore, 1995, pp. 135, 148)?

Build Operational Capacity.

Which is the best sector and agency to lead this project and why? What do we need in terms of resources to develop and implement this policy and who might contribute those resources? What does the lead agency need other agencies to keep on doing, stop doing or do differently in order to achieve mutually agreed objectives? Are we likely to get the best results by centralising or decentralising power (Stone, 2012, pp. 364–69)? What are the most efficient, light-handed and effective governance arrangements to support policy development and implementation?

Monitor and Evaluate Whether Our Actions Make a Difference.

Measure and report results against the baseline (current status), then review and revise as necessary; i.e., learn as we go and do not keep doing what clearly does not work. Review and renew our agreed purpose (the public value we want to create).

In summary: When we listen carefully and work with others to find our way through these sorts of questions, it is not overly difficult to define the value proposition—the public value we want to create, what is at stake for whom and why, and what might be the costs, benefits and risks of adopting our recommended policy option.

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is evolution rather than revolution (Lindblom, 1959, 1979). There are exceptions that require transformative policy responses—and explicit justification, given how disruptive they tend to be.
[15] Stoker (2006, p. 53) comments: "In a democratic system, the participation of all is not required; rather, its defining characteristic is its openness to all". Cf. the definition of "public" (Sect. 3.2.2) as "anyone at all" without discrimination, rather than "everyone" in an absolute, aggregate sense.

3.3.2   Cost-Benefit Analysis

Defining the value proposition often requires us to provide an assessment of the benefits of a policy proposal relative to its costs. When we are working out whether something is worth doing, a cost-benefit analysis is often a useful place to start (though not end, for reasons I will explain).

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) has its philosophical foundations in utilitarianism, with its injunction to "maximise happiness impartially" (Greene, 2013) by choosing the option that, compared to the status quo (doing nothing different) and other practicable options promises the most happiness for the least pain over the long run and all things considered. In short, something is worth doing if the benefits outweigh the costs.

As Mintrom (2012, p. 225) points out, we do this more or less intuitively on a daily basis. Shall I take the bus, or drive my car to work and pay for all-day parking? What are the pros and cons of each option? On the face of it, a monthly bus pass looks dearer, but not if I factor in parking and car running costs in addition to fuel. The bus is a lot slower and less convenient, but I can use that time to unwind at the end of the day and I do not have the stress of driving in rush-hour traffic. One less car on the road has an environmental benefit, but it also puts me in close proximity to people who may be unwell, posing a risk that I might get sick. Costs and benefits … we weigh them up against each other and then make a decision.

CBA is a powerful, if limited, tool for public policy-making. What it usefully does is highlight trade-offs in the allocation of public funds, as one input to decision-making. The New Zealand Treasury's guide (N.Z. Treasury, 2015) outlines the following steps in a CBA.[16]

Step 1: Define Policy Alternatives and the Counterfactual.

The counterfactual is the situation that would exist if a policy decision is not made; i.e., the status quo or benchmark. We measure the benefits and costs of policy options against the counterfactual, in order to identify and compare the *incremental* or *net benefit*.[17] Consider, for example, the decision whether or not to build a bridge over a river:

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[16] Weimer and Vining (2016, pp. 356–59) provide a concise introduction to cost-benefit analysis, qualitative cost-benefit analysis, modified cost-benefit analysis and cost-effectiveness analysis. For a more comprehensive introduction to CBA, the economics of efficiency, risk analysis and present value, see Boardman et al. (2011), Bellinger (2016). On the rise and fall of CBA in the U.S. policy-making context under Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump, see Livermore & Revesz (2020).

[17] This relates to the definition of an interest (Sect. 2.2.3.1) as necessarily comparative—a certain policy or action is in person A's interest when compared with an alternative policy or action, which is often simply the continuance of the status quo.

Suppose that the bridge costs $20 million and that it will save travellers $25 million worth of travel time and vehicle operating costs, in present value terms. The bridge would appear to have benefits that exceed the costs. The net present value (NPV) of the bridge is $5 million. But suppose that in the absence of a bridge being built, there is every expectation that a private ferry operator will start [a] business. The cost is $10 million in present value terms, and the social benefits are $20 million in present value terms. The ferry operation has an NPV of $10 million.

Compared with the ferry operation, a bridge would cost $10 million more and would produce $5 million more benefits. Against this counterfactual, the bridge has an NPV of -$5 million.

Against the "no bridge, no ferry" counterfactual, the bridge would seem worthwhile. But against the "ferry" counterfactual, the bridge is not.

Equivalently, the ferry could be presented to decision-makers as an alternative to the bridge. This would still show the ferry to be the better option, despite the fact that the bridge has greater total benefits (N.Z. Treasury, 2015, p. 9).

Step 2: Identify Who Gains and Who Loses.

Who will be affected by a decision, and whose costs and benefits should be taken into account? The Treasury distinguishes between an "economic" (or "social" CBA), where analysis is conducted from a national perspective, a "financial" CBA, which is conducted from a departmental or agency perspective, and fiscal costings which typically are included in a cabinet paper or other decision-making paper. An economic (or social) CBA seeks to identify all people within a national jurisdiction who are or might be affected by a policy.[18]

The Treasury guide acknowledges that identifying winners and losers is not straightforward and proposes that:

- While the focus should be on those ultimately affected rather than on intermediaries, there may be good grounds for taking the impact on intermediaries as a reasonable proxy for the impact on those ultimately affected;
- Government sector CBAs ignore benefits or costs accrued to people outside national borders, on the grounds that the government only has responsibility for the well-being of those within the relevant jurisdiction (e.g. New Zealand); and
- The current generation has the prerogative to make decisions that could affect the welfare of future generations. The current generation may care about the welfare of future generations, but we need to assess this, whether empirically or through the political process, in terms of the current generation's willingness to pay.

All three propositions are, of course, debatable and indicate some limitations of CBA. In addition, we may have to distinguish between the legal incidence of a tax (who we send the bill to) and its economic incidence (whose pocket the money eventually comes out of). We send local authority rates demands, for example, to

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[18] This relates to the definition of an interest (and the public interest), the distinction between public and private, and the framework for stakeholder identification introduced in Sect. 2.2.3.3.

the owner of a property, but if the property is tenanted, the landlord recovers this from the rent they charge.

Step 3: Identify the Costs and Benefits.

Costs and benefits need to be identified as comprehensively as possible, in terms of observable and measurable consequences for people and in ways that exclude double counting. As a general principle, only real (incremental) costs and benefits should be taken into account. Costs or benefits that do not change because of the decision should be ignored but opportunity costs (alternative uses of a resource) should be taken into account. Externalities (whether positive or negative), induced behaviour and the deadweight cost of taxation should also be factored into the analysis.

- *Externalities* or "spill-overs" are goods that once produced or consumed create a non-excludable benefit or cost to a third party. An individual who "consumes" education services and gains qualifications and skills also generally benefits the wider society; for example, by being able to perform more highly skilled jobs, earning a higher income and paying higher taxes. This creates *a positive externality*. Manufacturing that generates air pollution imposes a cost on the whole community in terms of respiratory health, maintenance of buildings and environmental impact. This creates *a negative externality*.
- *Induced behaviours* are behavioural changes that a policy is likely to induce if implemented. For example, building a new bridge not only shortens the trip for existing traffic; it is also likely to induce more people to travel who were previously put off by having to drive the long way around.
- *Deadweight cost of taxation* is a way of factoring in the distortion of people's consumption choices from what they would prefer in the absence of taxes. For example, above a certain point, income tax tends to discourage working (or at least working additional hours) in favour of leisure or home-based activities. The New Zealand Treasury recommends a default deadweight loss value (in the absence of an alternative evidence-based value) of 20%, so public expenditure should be multiplied by a factor of 1.2 to incorporate the effects of deadweight loss.

Step 4: Value the Costs and Benefits.

This step requires the analyst to quantify all costs and benefits in terms of a single value, most commonly by monetising these (converting all costs and benefits into dollar values). New Zealand Treasury guidelines suggest that:

- Benefits should be measured in terms of willingness to pay;
- Costs should reflect opportunity costs (the value foregone from alternative uses of a resource);
- Values should be adjusted for risk and expressed in terms of ranges and/or a variety of scenarios (CBA is essentially a forecasting exercise);

- The evaluation period should be whole of life;
- Benefits and costs should be measured in real terms (constant prices); i.e., net of inflation; and
- Multiplier effects should be ignored unless there is high unemployment.

Step 5: Discount and Compare Costs and Benefits.

Costs and benefits should be identified for each year over the life of the project, discounted to a common point in time. Discounting means that costs or benefits that occur later are given less weight than costs and benefits that occur sooner, because we place a higher value on what we can do with a dollar today than on what we can do with it in, say, 10, 20 or 50 years' time. The discounted value is also called the *present value*. The analysis then proceeds to set out on a spreadsheet the costs and benefits (ideally in ranges) for each year, to identify which policy option produces the highest benefits relative to the costs, discounted to a common point in time.

There are several ways to present the result.

- The net present value (NPV) is equal to the sum of the discounted benefits less the sum of the discounted costs.
- The benefit-cost ratio (BCR) is the ratio of the sum of discounted benefits to the sum of discounted costs.
- The internal rate of return (IRR) is the discount rate that provides an NPV equal to zero (assuming that positive cash flows can be reinvested at the project's IRR rate).
- The modified internal rate of return (MIRR) is calculated assuming the benefits and costs are financed or reinvested elsewhere in the market at the recommended discount rate.[19]

Step 6: Assess the CBA: Is More Research Required?

The Treasury guide acknowledges that CBAs can either be done "on the back of an envelope" or involve empirical research costing in excess of $1 million. Whether to proceed with a large-scale, formal CBA (let alone a Monte Carlo simulation) itself requires some CBA thinking about whether it is worth doing.

Step 7: Prepare Final Report.

The report to decision-makers communicates the results of the CBA. The Treasury recommends that its centrepiece be a summary cost-benefit table that sets out (on one page) the main project alternatives, the main benefits, the main costs and the summary measures (NPV, CBR, and/or MIRR).

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[19] Scenario building and sensitivity analysis may also be conducted at this stage, or a Monte Carlo simulation commissioned (N.Z. Treasury, 2015, p. 38 and Appendix 1).

Government agencies often contract out formal, large-scale CBAs to specialist consultants so very few policy advisors need to know how to conduct these. What policy advisors do need, however, is a broad understanding of the technique, in order to perform small scale and more informal estimations of benefit to cost, to provide advice on whether a formal CBA is worth doing in any particular case, and to support commissioning and interpretation of a consultant's report.

Above all, it is the broad principle that matters: *recommending those policy options that on the best available evidence are likely to yield the greatest benefit for the greatest number for the least cost, now and in the future.*

The policy advisor has to be aware, though, of some limitations of cost-benefit analysis.

- Determining the appropriate discount rate is somewhat arbitrary and varies significantly by jurisdiction (Argyrous, 2013; Moore et al., 2004).
- CBA does not deal well with non-quantifiable costs and benefits and may conflict with our moral intuitions, particularly when calculating the statistical value of a human life, or when estimating Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) or Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs) as part of a cost-benefit analysis of, say, a particular public health or medical intervention.
- Estimating willingness to pay is very difficult in the contingent valuation of environmental and cultural values. For example, how much would people be willing to pay to prevent the loss of a native species or a minority language? Be aware, too, that in public policy debates, people often argue unwillingness to pay as inability to pay. Mulgan (2011, p. 213) cautions that the different methods used to assess value (using monetary equivalence) can generate wildly different numbers and miss what people turn out to value most.
- While CBA is a powerful tool for decision-making about the allocation of resources, particularly investment in physical infrastructure ("Is it worth building this bridge?"), it is not designed to take account of distributional issues and equity considerations or to measure the likely impact of a proposal on well-being.[20] It only seeks to maximise one value—efficiency—and does not itself factor in other values such as justice and liberty that compete and conflict with efficiency in policy decisions (Amy, 1984, pp. 577, 587).

CBA is thus only one tool in the toolbox but it usefully provides an analysis of the comparative value for money of a set of policy options, as a "financial backdrop against which other important considerations can be assessed" (Mintrom, 2012, p. 226).[21] Unless CBA is used wisely, however, it creates an illusion of "spurious accuracy" (N.Z. Treasury, 2015, p. 43). At worst, it is a technique that bolsters a certain kind of arrogance in policy advisors—the conviction that our superior

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[20] See further Sen (2000) and Sandel (2009, pp. 41–48).
[21] I will provide an example of multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) in Sect. 4.3.2 as an alternative approach to evaluating policy options with implications for the distribution of goods within a society.

knowledge of "the evidence" and techniques to analyse and interpret it should drive and determine, rather than inform and support decision-making. Value is not an objective fact that can be demonstrated by means of a spreadsheet formula, and in public policy it is always refracted through political argument (Mulgan, 2011, p. 217).

3.3.3 Leading from Behind

The vast majority of policy advisors join the public service because we want to make a difference and because we recognise that governments play a major role in promoting and enabling well-being (Mintrom, 2012, p. 10). It is politicians, however, who make policy decisions. The role of a policy advisor is to advise, not to decide. But as discussed in Sect. 2.3.2, when we take the time to win the confidence of decision-makers and earn their trust, we can exert a great deal of influence on public policy-making by leading from behind.

Creating public value in the policy advice role also increasingly involves facilitation of co-design and co-production with a range of stakeholders and sectors. Benington comments:

> One of the biggest challenges facing governments in a networked, multilevel, polycentric society is how to "lead" not only in partnership with other levels of government and with organizations from other sectors, but also with active involvement from informal associations, community groups and individual citizens. (Benington, 2011, p. 36)

I will discuss leading from behind in this sense in Chap. 6. For now, I want to focus on leading from behind in the relationship between politicians and policy advisors.

Before we can win the confidence of decision-makers and exercise any sort of influence at all, we first have to make ourselves useful. Making ourselves useful starts with listening and tuning in to our political environment and the concerns and priorities of decision-makers (Sect. 2.3.2). A common blunder is to adopt an advocacy stance towards our political masters as if we know better than them what public value is and looks like for the people they represent. Policy advisors who do this come across as too pure or, in environmental management, too green. Or we may communicate an over-optimism about the rationality and robustness of our analysis and what we think the evidence says about the best policy option.

Politicians quite rightly do not like to be told what to think or what they should do. Public service demands a certain humility. Politicians are better connected to their constituencies than we are as policy advisors and have sources of information that are not available to us (Parkin, 2021, p. 194). They are also accountable to the public in ways we are not.

Bozeman and Crow (2021, p. 168) quote Anne-Marie Slaughter, executive director and chief executive of New America: "Especially in traditional Washington politics, you can accomplish anything as long as you don't want credit for

it". Making ourselves useful starts with listening and tuning in, and remembering our place in the constitutional scheme of things (Sect. 2.2.2).

Secondly, we make ourselves useful by consistently delivering high-quality policy advice within agreed timeframes. In Sect. 2.3.3, I discussed anticipation, timeliness and working backwards to achieve this. In planning my policy projects, I factor in wiggle space wherever possible, in order to accommodate requests for random and inevitably urgent acts of advising. Consistency, timeliness and reliability make us trustworthy and win decision-makers' confidence.

Thirdly, we should not underestimate the practised skills of turning evidence into information to support decision-making, and of writing well—crafting words into a concise and coherent story that communicates effectively. I will expand on Doing Policy Analysis in Chap. 4, and on Effective Communication in Chap. 5.

Fourthly, we simply have to be patient and take time to build the sorts and quality of relationships that, having won the confidence of decision-makers, permit us to engage in forthright conversations about public value and about the ends (goals and objectives) of public policy and not only the means to achieve these (Washington, 2021).[22]

Public servants are guardians of public value, particularly in jurisdictions with a permanent, professional public service appointed on merit. Politicians are often swayed by short-term considerations dictated by the electoral cycle (Weimer & Vining, 2016, pp. 173–74). Public policy advisors have a duty to the long-term public interest (Sect. 6.2.3). Benington and Moore comment in relation to legitimacy and the authorising environment:

> Political mandate is one important kind. But so is the law. And so is professional knowledge and technical expertise. And there might even on some occasions be a kind of moral legitimacy created by public managers and professionals reminding society and its representatives of important values that are being put at risk by actions that are politically supported, have legal sanction, and would likely work technically, but fail to protect or promote foundational moral values. (Benington & Moore, 2011, p. 11)

Finally, winning the trust of decision-makers is in part a confidence game. Effective policy advisors are confident and assertive but socially appropriate. Practised social skills are indispensable to winning the confidence of senior managers and politicians. Those who lack social skills find themselves relegated to back

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[22] In human resource management, managers are encouraged to have "courageous conversations" with under-performing employees. I have deliberately not used this term to describe conversations between policy advisors and politicians. Mark Prebble, a former New Zealand State Services Commissioner, once reminded me that providing free and frank advice to ministers does not require courage. The public servants who demonstrate courage are the front-line workers who must decline services to clients because their need does not meet current government thresholds or criteria. I think, for example, of the Work and Income case manager in small town New Zealand who must decline an application for welfare assistance when her client knows where she lives and where her children go to school. That is why I prefer the phrase "forthright conversations" in the context of free and frank advice to policy makers (Sect. 4.3.3).

rooms. Those whose confidence over-reaches and comes across as arrogance or manipulation will not win the trust of decision-makers and ultimately will not be effective as policy advisors.

To sum up, this chapter has encouraged a public value approach to policy advising that makes the best possible use of available resources, distinguishes between what is private and what is public, and does not assume that government is the answer to everything. It is good practice to pay explicit attention to the value proposition and not to assume that everything we do in the public service necessarily adds value.

While it has its limitations, cost-benefit analysis (Sect. 3.3.2) is a useful tool. It helps us identify policy options that, on the best available evidence, are likely to yield the greatest benefit for the greatest number for the least cost, now and in the future.

Section 3.3.3 returned to the theme of ethics and public policy and to attitudes and behaviours that enable us to win the confidence of decision-makers, to lead from behind and to support policy-making that creates public value.

3.4 For Reflection

- How do you measure and assess the value of your work as a policy advisor? What does a good day/week at work mean for you?
- To what extent is your private life, and the personal liberty of you and your family, enabled or constrained by government regulation and/or the actions of government agents? How do you decide how much government is good for you—and for your fellow citizens? At which points do you welcome government intervention to limit individual liberty and the free operation of markets?
- How might you distinguish between "the public interest" and "special interests"—particularly when "special interests" claim to advocate on behalf of "the public" and "the public interest"? How might you go about assessing their claims and deciding who and what you will pay attention to?
- What skills do you need to develop so you can work effectively with a range of stakeholders and sectors to facilitate the co-production and co-governance of public value? Who do you see doing this well, and how might you learn from them and gain experience and skills in this area?
- Think about the last piece of policy advice you contributed to: how clearly did it summarise what was at stake and why we should care?
- How do you weigh up costs versus benefits when making personal decisions about whether or not something is worth doing? How might you use the concept and broad framework of cost-benefit analysis to create public value in the policy advice you prepare and present to decision-makers?
- If you were a politician, what would you need policy advisors to know, do and be, in order for you to trust them and have confidence in their advice?

- How do senior advisors and managers in your agency get on top of their nervousness about presenting to policy decision-makers? What can you learn from them about preparing yourself for ministerial briefings and conveying a confident professionalism that is both assertive and respectful?

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Doing Policy Analysis

4

4.1 Introduction

This book is a practical guide to the art and craft of policy advising. It is not a textbook on policy analysis but you cannot be an effective policy advisor without doing analysis, so this chapter introduces doing policy analysis in practice.

In Sect. 1.2, I outlined some distinctions between the functions of analysis, advice and advocacy.

- **Analysis** gathers relevant data and turns it into information to support decision-making—most commonly by identifying two or more options to address a problem (or opportunity) and assessing the strength of the evidence for and against each option.[1]
- **Advice** bridges the gap between analysis and decision, supporting decision-makers to identify, select and implement their preferred policy options—preferred because they align with the values and agenda that drive them, because on the available evidence they are most likely to achieve the desired results, and because they are practically and politically implementable.

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[1] Majone (1989) usefully distinguishes between data, information and evidence. Evidence is "information selected from the available stock and introduced at a specific point in the argument in order to persuade a particular audience of the truth or falsity of a statement. Selecting inappropriate data or models, placing them at a wrong point in the argument, or choosing a style of presentation that is not suitable for the intended audience, can destroy the effectiveness of information used as evidence, regardless of its intrinsic cognitive value. Thus, criteria for assessing evidence are different from those used for assessing facts. Facts can be evaluated in terms of more or less objective canons, but evidence must be evaluated in accordance with a number of factors peculiar to a given situation, such as the specific nature of the case, the type of audience, the prevailing rules of evidence, or the credibility of the analyst" (pp. 10–11).

- **Advocacy** seeks to persuade politicians and the public of the merits of recommended options. While fraught with risk for public servants, unless we communicate analysis in ways that persuade, even the most competent, evidence-informed analysis may fail to win political and popular support.

Most policy projects involve some component of each function—analysis, advice and advocacy—and people employed in policy roles are sometimes called analysts and sometimes called advisors, with little distinction in role or function between the two titles. An effective policy advisor needs to develop practised skills in analysis, which contributes depth and integrity to policy advice.

Some useful books on policy analysis include Althaus et al. (2013), Bardach and Patashnik (2019), Birkland (2016), Brans et al. (2017), Cairney (2021), Fischer et al. (2019), Howlett et al. (2009), Mintrom (2012), Scott and Baehler (2010), Weimer and Vining (2016) and Wu et al. (2017). In various ways, they introduce useful frameworks and techniques for policy design and analysis.

The risk in systematising what policy analysts do, however, let alone prescribing what policy analysts should do, is that it gives policy analysis the appearance of being more rational and systematic, less time-constrained and pragmatic than it is in actual practice.

This is especially so because a majority of public servants in policy advice roles are and have to be generalists. We work on a wide range of policy issues and across many different fields of public policy. Some advisors do specialise and may work for many years on, for example, the design of the welfare system or some part of it, tax policy, land transport policy or fisheries management. Policy specialists build an in-depth understanding of the evidence base for their field of policy, analytical methods to generate, develop and apply this evidence base, a deep knowledge of the relevant literatures, ongoing relationships with academics and consultants in their field and with experts in other jurisdictions, and networks of stakeholders with whom they regularly interact.

Like the majority of policy advisors, I am not a policy specialist. I am an intentional generalist who knows a little about a lot, rather than a lot about a little. In various ways, I have contributed to policy design and analysis in the fields of social and economic development, science, research and technology, the collection and use of national statistics, demographic analysis, environmental management and regional development. Within those broad fields, I have worked on topics as diverse as social sector strategy, positive ageing and older peoples' policy, population diversity and social cohesion, educational transitions, skills and tertiary education strategy, immigration policy, investment in infrastructure, and regional visitor strategy.

There is no single model, process or technique, no one-size-fits-all, that works for policy analysis across these varied assignments, so this chapter will not promote a right way to do policy analysis but will encourage you to do analysis that is fit for purpose. While pragmatic, my practice is not, however, devoid of theory. Three questions, in particular, I have had to think about and struggle to resolve.

1. What are the relationships between facts and values—and between science, policy and politics?
2. How might we factor emotions and values, as well as evidence, into decision-making on public policy?
3. How can we incorporate concerns about equity and fairness into policy design?

Section 4.2 picks up each of these questions in turn and suggests that doing policy analysis is largely about *crafting the right questions to facilitate incremental social problem-solving*. Any models, techniques and tools we use should support durable social problem-solving—they are means, rather than ends in themselves.

Because policy-making is social problem-solving, Sect. 4.3.1 encourages collective thinking (before the analyst starts writing anything) and introduces the technique of storyboarding a piece of policy advice. Section 4.3.2 introduces multi-criteria decision analysis as a technique to complement cost-benefit analysis when we need to consider multiple values, including equity or fairness (and not only efficiency or cost-effectiveness) in assessing policy options. And Sect. 4.3.3 picks up the theme of integrity in our policy analysis, with reflection on free, frank and other f-words.

4.2   Theory and Practice

In Sect. 4.2.1, I return to discussion of the policy cycle and staged models of policy analysis first introduced in Sect. 1.3. My experience has been that these models are of only limited value in practice. To unpack this, we need to think about the relationships between science, policy and politics, so we can get clear on what our business is as public servants in policy advice roles. As I have come to understand it, doing policy analysis involves *crafting the right questions to facilitate incremental social problem-solving*.

In a democracy, science is not the only basis for political decisions. While evidence is a critical input to policy analysis, policy-making involves the art of public persuasion. Because people are not persuaded solely by facts or rational arguments, effective policy advising has to factor in emotions and values as well as evidence. I elaborate on this in Sect. 4.2.2.

One such value is fairness. Section 4.2.3 offers a framework for thinking about a fair go in public policy-making, to support analysis of policy options where we must factor in non-quantifiable costs and benefits, and when distributional issues and impacts on social well-being are at stake.

4.2.1   The Policy Cycle Re-visited

Models of the policy cycle commonly identify a series of stylised steps, such as: (1) define the problem, (2) propose alternative responses to the problem, (3) choose criteria for evaluating each option, (4) project the outcome of pursuing each option,

(5) identify and analyse trade-offs among options, (6) report findings and make an argument for the most appropriate response (Mintrom, 2012, p. 3).

As discussed in Sect. 1.3, this approach has both strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, staged models of the policy cycle remind us of dimensions of the task, if not necessarily in the prescribed order or with equal importance attached to each stage. On the other hand:

- Models of the policy cycle lack a causal theory (What exactly drives policy-making from one stage to the next?);
- Some stages, particularly information gathering and consultation, are best thought of as continuous processes across the entire cycle; and
- The models over-simplify complex social problem-solving processes and tend to be "top down", failing to capture the influence of non-government actors on public policy-making, or modes of engagement with citizens and communities other than consultation.

Moreover, as a policy practitioner I hardly ever get to work on a "tame" policy problem that lies entirely within my agency's power to solve and for which I simply need to define the problem, gather evidence, identify possible policy instruments, apply decision rules to select recommended policy options, present these to decision-makers, implement the agreed option and evaluate its effectiveness. Mostly I work on "wicked" policy problems (Australian Public Service Commission, 2012; Rittel & Webber, 1973) or "Grand Challenges"[2] that cannot be solved in tidy steps, in a top-down manner and in an orderly progression through a standard model of policy development.

At heart, though, my objection to the policy cycle and to staged models of policy analysis is the implication that policy-making is itself a science, with the public servant as a "rational functionary" (Parsons, 1995, p. 7) whose primary task is to align public administration with government priorities. As Callahan and Jennings (1983) describe this 1960s–1970s positivist approach to policy analysis and public administration:

> Having been assigned a particular goal by the policymaker (who, in turn, was acting on authority delegated by democratically elected representatives), the social scientist was to analyse particular policy options which, on the basis of empirically confirmed generalizations about human behaviour, could be evaluated in terms of their potential consequences, the relationship between costs and benefits, and their likely effectiveness. (p. xvii)

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[2] The concept of Grand Challenges has been applied for some years in both science and policy. It refers to challenges that are complex in at least three dimensions (technical, temporal and societal). These are major long-term challenges faced by society (e.g., climate change mitigation, overpopulation, food security, water supply and infectious diseases) whose costs will increase over time and which (globally) influence the lives of people in very different ways (Stiftung Mercator, 2015, p. 32).

In 2011, the New Zealand Treasury perpetuated this conception of policy analysis as a rational, technical activity concerned with the efficient fitting of public administration means to politically determined ends. In the first of a series of publications on higher living standards, the paper initiated an important and useful discussion on improving and measuring the well-being of New Zealanders over time. The authors disavowed responsibility, however, for normative, values-based analysis and policy advice:

> To maintain an apolitical position, Treasury avoids making value judgments on what represents a "fair" distribution of living standards…. Where normative approaches ask what the distribution of living standards should be, positive approaches ask what the distribution is. They also consider whether there is evidence to suggest that a particular distribution poses social or economic problems and the effect different policy interventions may have on how living standards are distributed. Treasury takes a positive approach to distribution as opposed to a normative, value-based one. (N.Z. Treasury, 2011, pp. 27–28)

The Treasury paper reflects a linear, and positivist, understanding of the role of science and of expert advisors in public governance. The elected government of the day determines its distributional priorities; public servants as technical experts make no value judgements on these distributional priorities and provide advice grounded in empirical economic analysis on how the Government might best implement its stated goals and objectives.

This ostensibly values-free approach to policy advising is naïve and potentially dangerous. If the public servant is nothing more than a technician who identifies efficient means to achieve the government's ends, how are we to respond to the likes of Adolf Eichmann when he justified his role as a "mid-level functionary" of the Nazi state?

> Now that I look back, I realize that a life predicated on being obedient and taking orders is a very comfortable life indeed. Living in such a way reduces to a minimum one's own need to think. (transl. Cohen, 1999)

Political neutrality (faithfully serving the government of the day in accordance with the law) is not to be confused with ethical or moral neutrality, or freedom from normative commitments. As Callahan and Jennings (1983) argue, "even the most quantitative and formalistic policy-analytic techniques contain concealed value choices and inextricable normative implications" (p. xix). And as policy analysts and advisors, we ourselves have complex interests, including beliefs, values and moral commitments that can never be entirely separated from the policy analysis we provide (Parsons, 1995, pp. 7, 87–88). These shape our perceptions of reality and influence, in particular, the critical problem definition stage in policy analysis:

> The act of identifying a problem is as much a normative judgment as it is an objective statement of fact; thus, if analysis proceeds from the identification of a problem, and the problem is defined normatively, then one cannot say that any subsequent analysis is strictly neutral. (Birkland, 2016, p. 18)

Stone (2012) similarly comments:

> Problems are defined in politics to accomplish political goals—to mobilize support for one side in a conflict. To define an issue is to make an assertion about what is at stake and who is affected and, therefore, to define interests and configure alliances. There is no such thing as an apolitical problem definition. (p. 247)

Policy analysts are not a species of social scientist in the sense of "technicians of the social life" (Nielsen, 1983, p. 117). The analysis of data and information is only "one small piece in a larger mosaic of politics, bargaining, and compromise" (Callahan & Jennings, 1983, p. xiii) in the process of public policy-making. As Gruen et al. (2011) from the Australian Treasury commented on the New Zealand Treasury's 2011 paper on living standards, there is good reason for being cautious about becoming lost in the normative jungle, but there is no avoiding the jungle (p. 6).

So on balance, network participatory, blended model and "anti-model model" approaches to policy-making fit my actual practice as a public servant better than rational comprehensive policy cycle and staged models, at least to the extent that they focus attention on institutions and actors, and on co-design and co-production of public policy.[3]

Stephen Toulmin (2001) urged a better balance between rationality and reasonableness. Table 4.1 summarises some of the features with which he characterises these two approaches to thinking and acting. When I think about the difference between rationality and reasonableness, the character Sheldon Cooper on *The Big Bang Theory* springs to mind—he is frequently rational, but seldom reasonable! Reasonableness is critical to durable public policy-making (Sect. 6.3.3).

4.2.1.1 Science and Policy

Van Zwanenberg and Millstone (2005) provide a useful typology of ideas to clarify our thinking about science and policy-making. They compare four models: the technocratic model of Henri de Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte, the decisionist model of Max Weber and Émile Durkheim, an inverted decisionist model, and a co-production or co-evolutionary model.[4]

A **technocratic model** of science and policy-making (Fig. 4.1) asserts that policy-making should be evidence-based, with a direct line between science (expert knowledge of "the facts" and "what works") and policy decisions. Wilkinson and Pickett's (2010) aspirations in *The Spirit Level* to an "evidence-based politics" (p. ix), for example, imply a technocratic model of governance.[5]

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[3] On theoretical approaches to public policy, see Althaus et al., (2013, pp. 32–37), Brans et al. (2017), Cairney (2016, 2021), Fischer et al. (2019), Howlett et al., (2009, Chaps. 2 and 6), Sabatier (1991), Scott & Baehler (2010, pp. 26–41).

[4] Van Zwanenberg and Millstone also distinguish a fifth model (a risk-management model), which I have included in this summary as a variation on the inverted decisionist model.

[5] Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) do not merely report evidence. They present evidence in an attempt to warrant a normative argument about what developed nations ought to do. Admittedly, they

Table 4.1   Balancing rationality and reasonableness (Toulmin, 2001)

Rationality	Reasonableness
Formal solutions to abstract, perennial problems	A substantive exchange of reasons to address particular problems of particular people at a particular time
Pure theory to be refined—then applied (universally)	Exploratory, experimental and open to revision Practical, pragmatic and humanly useful Avoidance of premature generalisation
Projection tending towards prediction	Situation-specific scenarios to test "futuribles" (possible futures we can reasonably hope to bring about)
Abstract, logical, self-validating ("invariably")	Concrete problem-solving informed by practical experience ("generally")
A singular set of procedures and formal rigour	Different methods for different topics and tasks that balance stubborn facts, shared values and rival interests
Certainty	Scepticism
"Value-free", data-driven and factual: "Do your sums right"	Practical decisions and actions reflecting actual human values and practices: "Do the right sums" and define changes it would be good to achieve
Rigour	Relevance
Objectivity and detachment	Participation and engagement
Disciplinary	Cross-disciplinary
Arguments presented with intellectual force	Moderation of manner

Fig. 4.1   Technocratic model of science and policy-making (adapted from Van Zwanenberg & Millstone, 2005)

The technocratic model assumes constant progress in science and technology and presupposes that science is value-neutral, objective and sufficient to solve complex problems (Kowarsch & Edenhofer, 2015, p. 115). Its vulnerability lies in scientific uncertainty and complexity and disputes between experts about the selection of relevant evidence and assessment of what it means.

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present their argument in relatively straightforward consequentialist terms with little reference to ideas of justice, but as Marquez (2011) has noted, it is clear that Wilkinson and Pickett do think that income inequality is unjust, at least on account of its consequences.
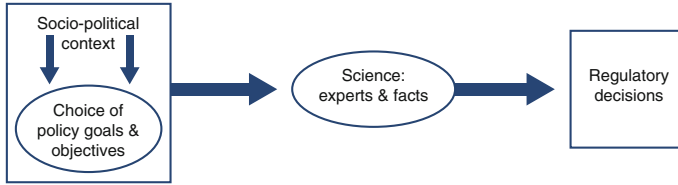
Fig. 4.2 Decisionist model of science and policy-making (adapted from Van Zwanenberg & Millstone, 2005)

In a **decisionist model** of science and policy-making, policy goals and objectives are set by ministers, who are responsible to elected representatives for their choice of policy goals and through them to the electorate (Fig. 4.2). Bureaucrats and experts are:

- Accountable to ministers for evidence-based design and effective implementation of policies and programmes to achieve these goals and objectives; and
- Responsible to their professional colleagues for the knowledge and judgements they bring to bear on this.

The first New Zealand Treasury paper on living standards (N.Z. Treasury, 2011) implies a decisionist model of governance. A decisionist model requires a division of labour between ends (policy objectives) and means. Like the technocratic model, it assumes that facts and values can not only be distinguished but also separated— an assumption that has become increasingly difficult to maintain (Douglas, 2009; Putnam, 2004). Deborah Stone (2012) notes: "Sure, policy disputes entail some disputes over facts, but the deeper and more important conflicts are over values" (p. 312).

An **inverted decisionist model** of science and policy-making, in response to critique of the technocratic model, has scientific experts identifying policy problems, goals and objectives, with policy-makers deciding the most appropriate means with which to reach science-defined targets (Fig. 4.3).

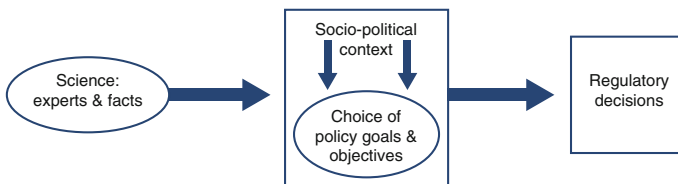**Fig. 4.3** Inverted decisionist model of science and policy-making (adapted from Van Zwanenberg & Millstone, 2005)
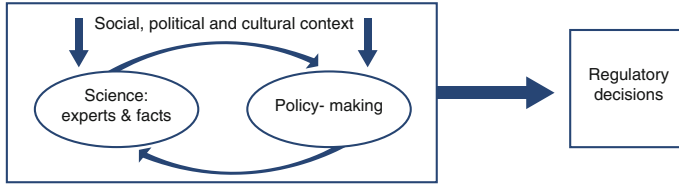
Fig. 4.4 Co-production model of science and policy-making (adapted from Van Zwanenberg & Millstone, 2005)

An inverted decisionist model of governance is in force when, for example, taskforces and expert advisory groups (with or without a secretariat of seconded public servants) define policy problems, propose desired outcome frameworks, objectives and key results and recommend policy options to government in order to achieve these objectives. The executive arm of government then determines which options to implement when, how and at what cost.

A variation on this model replaces the vocabulary of "science" (or "evidence base") with the vocabulary of "risk assessment", and the vocabulary of "policy goals and objectives" with "risk management" (Van Zwanenberg & Millstone, 2005, p. 25).

A **co-production model** of science and policy-making abandons both decisionist and technocratic approaches, acknowledging that scientific deliberations are located in particular social, political and cultural contexts that affect both the content and direction of these deliberations (Fig. 4.4).[6]

Peter Gluckman (2011), inaugural Chief Science Advisor to the New Zealand Prime Minister from 2009–18, observed that decisionist and technocratic models of science and policy-making rely on three conditions that are increasingly difficult to fulfill:

- The need for uncritical public trust in the values and outputs of the scientific process;
- Acceptance of the notion that science is a process that establishes incontrovertible and absolute fact; and
- Complete separation between scientific advice and policy judgement (p. 7; cf. Cairney, 2016, pp. 20–21; Jasanoff, 1990, pp. 230, 245; Weingart, 1999, pp. 154–57).

In a series of publications, Gluckman (2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b, 2021a, 2021b) has commended an iterative, co-production model of policy-making, in which "policy makers, expert advisors and society negotiate to set policy goals and regulatory decisions that are agreed to be scientifically justifiable

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[6] This model is sometimes called a Pragmatic-Enlightened Model, building on the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism (Kowarsch & Edenhofer, 2015, p. 118).

(in terms, say, of the information available and the levels of future risk that are tolerable) as well as socially and politically acceptable" (Gluckman, 2011, p. 8).[7]

Gluckman is concerned to promote more and better use of evidence in policy-making but notes that caution is needed "to avoid co-opting scientific advice as an inappropriate proxy in difficult decisions that should be made on other grounds" (ibid.). Both the "scientification of politics" and the "politicisation of science" are to be avoided, as the boundary between science and politics is constantly redrawn (Weingart, 1999, p. 160). Gluckman (2021a) explains:

> Policy-making is always about making choices. Evidence and analysis can define the options, their relative strengths and weaknesses, and their unintended consequences in so far as they can be identified. But ultimately it is not the evidence alone that determines what happens. Because all policy-making affects different stakeholders in different ways, there's always a political as well as policy choice about the option chosen, and this decision will be based on ideology, public opinion, political evaluation, diplomatic and reputational considerations and of course fiscal priorities. (p. 154)

Kowarsch and Edenhofer (2015) summarise this sort of approach to science and policy-making with the metaphor of the cartographer who produces maps:

> Scientific experts therefore assume a role akin to that of the cartographer. Jointly with stake-holders, they explore the political solution space by mapping out different pathways and their trade-offs or overlap, while clearly marking implied value assumptions and uncertainty along the way. Maps do not replace travelling; it is the policymakers who remain the navigators. Sound scientific advice does not provide one-dimensional recommendations for complex policy problems, but instead provides information on alternative policy pathways, each with its own trade-offs and obstacles. (p. 119)

To clarify relationships between science, policy and politics, Roger Pielke (2007) offers a thought experiment to identify four idealised roles. Imagine that a visitor has come to town for a conference and asks you for advice on where to go for dinner. How might you respond?

- If you adopt the role of **Pure Scientist**, you give the visitor a copy of guidelines for nutrition and healthy eating. What the visitor does with that information is their responsibility.
- If you adopt the role of **Science Arbiter**, you answer factual questions that the visitor thinks are relevant, like "Where can I find a steakhouse with mid-range prices that isn't too far to walk?"—but you do not tell the visitor what they should prefer.
- If you adopt the role of **Issue Advocate**, you try to convince the visitor to eat at a particular restaurant or type of restaurant, making a case for one alternative over others and seeking to persuade the visitor to eat there.
- If you adopt the role of an **Honest Broker of Policy Alternatives**, you engage in a conversation with the visitor and provide information on restaurants in the

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[7] See also Gluckman & Bardsley, (2021), Gluckman et al. (2021).

area to clarify the scope of choice, taking into account questions of preference and value from the visitor's perspective (adapted from Pielke, 2007, pp. 1–3).

Pielke further identifies two criteria that arise from the decision-making context and also shape the role of the expert advisor in policy and politics:

- The degree of values consensus on a particular issue; and
- The degree of empirical uncertainty.

These contextual criteria generate what he calls Tornado Politics and Abortion Politics.

- **Tornado Politics** ("Is a tornado coming our way and do we need to take shelter?") can resolve commitment to a specific course of action primarily through the systematic pursuit of knowledge (science).
- **Abortion Politics** ("Should abortion be practised in our community?") requires a different sort of process of bargaining, negotiation and compromise, in order to deal with diverse and conflicting values and objective and subjective uncertainties about outcomes associated with particular decisions and actions (Pielke, 2007, pp. 40–41).

Given that policy-making "nearly always entails taking positions on value-laden issues and designing actions to address them" (Scott & Baehler, 2010, p. 21), public policy advisors need to function as "honest brokers of policy alternatives".

4.2.1.2 5W1H: Who, What, Why, Where, How and When?

A lot of the analysis I provide in the course of my work falls into the category of "quick and dirty"—drawing on practised skills to clarify the issue and what is at stake, understand the background and context, find relevant data and information, talk to the right people, identify two or three practicable options to address the issue, and present these with a recommended option to decision-makers within tight timeframes.

What exactly are the mindsets and thought processes that sit behind these practised skills? In fact, I do not think there is a right theoretical model for doing analysis and generating the "right" policy responses. Rather, I focus on *asking the right questions*. I use some combination of the questions for clear commissioning of policy advice outlined in Sect. 2.3.1, supplemented by the sets of questions for defining the value proposition in Sect. 3.3.1, and peer review criteria I will introduce in Sect. 5.3.2.

In summary, I set about doing policy analysis by asking the **5W1H**: **Who? What? Why? Where? How?** and **When** (Fig. 4.5).

Who?

Who is the audience? Who is the client? Who are the interested and affected parties (internal and external stakeholders), what is the nature (and intensity) of
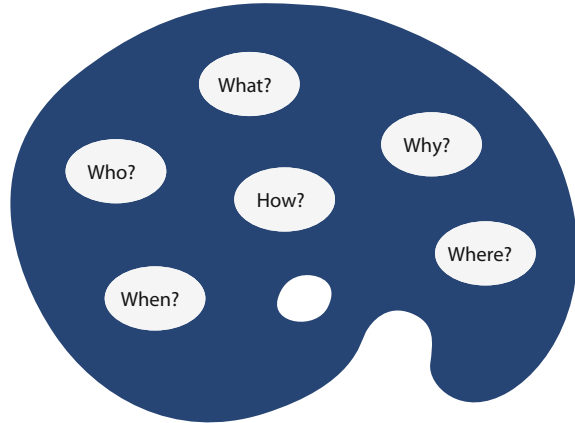
their interest and what do they perceive to be at stake? Do they want the same thing
or different things? Who is the relevant public? (Sects. 2.2.3, 3.2.2). Does the issue
affect a large number of people to some extent, or a small number of people to
a significant extent—and how do we know? Who needs to give legitimacy and
support to this policy and its implementation?[8]

What?

What exactly is the presenting problem (or risk, challenge or opportunity)? Is it a
real problem and can I quantify it? Or is there an underlying problem and do we
need to distinguish between symptoms and causes? What is the public value we
want to create? (Sects. 3.2.3, 3.3.1). And what do decision-makers need to know,
decide or do?

Why?

Why do we care? Why this issue, now, and not some other issue? Why are we
picking it up in our agency and in our particular policy team?

Where?

What is the context and current state of play (the status quo or counterfactual)?
Is this a local, national, regional or global issue? Given that there is nothing new
under the sun, where else has this been an issue (including in our own institu-
tional past) and how have others dealt with it? Where else is it currently an issue
and how are other jurisdictions responding? Where might I find relevant data and
information?

How?

How might we best reach agreement on this issue? Is it a case of Tornado Politics
or Abortion Politics (Sect. 4.2.1.1)? Which analytical frameworks and techniques

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[8] On policy implementation planning, see Weimer and Vining (2016, Chap. 12).

will best support decision-making? Will continuous improvement achieve the desired results or will our policy intervention need to disrupt, innovate and transform (and to what extent)? What might be the game changer? Which options are on (and off) the table? How might our recommended policy options best be brokered, implemented, monitored, evaluated and reviewed?

When?

What is the timeframe for this policy issue and decision-making on it? Is this a case of crisis or emergency management, long-term foresight or something in between? What time trends can we observe and what are the implications of those trends now and in the future? What is the current allocation of costs and benefits between past, present and future generations? When do we need to present analysis and advice to decision-makers and in what format? What is the timeframe for public engagement? And what might be next steps in policy development and implementation?

4.2.1.3 Incremental Social Problem-Solving

I have deliberately framed this approach to policy analysis as a set of questions because public policy-making is the art and craft of social problem-solving rather than a science of rational, empirical utility maximisation. And it is *incremental* social problem-solving because more often than not, policy advising in democratic states aims at iterative change and continuous improvement, rather than radical innovation and disruption of the status quo. The goal is evolution rather than revolution (Lindblom, 1959, 1979).

Anneliese Parkin (2021), deputy chief executive, policy, in New Zealand's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, has reflected that sometimes, particular policy packages or interventions are classed as failures because they have not solved "wicked problems". She comments:

> In general terms I would say that the responsible governments did not expect that they would. I have never worked with a minister who did not genuinely want to deal with these wicked problems. All governments are exercised by them, and at a visceral level. But nor have I often worked on a wicked problem that the responsible minister thought she or he would be able to solve in three years, with limited electoral support and with the tightly circumscribed "additional" funding available through the budget process... My sense though is that ministers are usually trying to put a credible dent in wicked problems, rather than to solve them per se. (p. 198)

Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen (2009a, 2009b) urges us to abandon the technocrat's ambition to create perfect systems in a perfectly just world with perfectly just institutions and opt instead for "realisation-focused comparison". Sen means by this the relatively modest ambition of identifying, choosing and acting politically to address remediable injustices, locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

Amitai Etzioni (2014) has similarly urged us to view public policy as a fixer-upper, rather than a new construction. Policy-making is less about defining a goal,

considering options to get there and implementing the most cost-effective option, than it is about asking what can be done with the conditions we have been given and the unfolding trends we may ride, and working out how we might make things better than they are now, within the resources at our command.

The model of democracy that this implies is government by discussion through a public exchange of reasons and "open impartiality" (Sen, 2004, 2009a, pp. 321–54). We will never achieve a perfectly just society, but we can make our society less unjust than it is now, by proceeding from a reasoned assessment of conflicting claims, through practical, public reasoning, to democratic decision-making on a range of feasible alternatives.

Of course, the work of policy analysis goes better when it is planned in a logical and systematic way, when it is informed by the best available science and when it is presented in the form of reasoned argument by honest brokers of policy alternatives. But policy analysis is not itself a science. It is an art and a craft. We can never reduce the right thing to do in public life to an algorithm, and public administration is and has to be more than clever technocrats manipulating policy "levers" on the "machinery" of government.

Questions are more important than answers—at least, the sorts of questions that initiate conversations and facilitate collective problem-solving, with feedback loops that enable learning, adaptation and agility in the face of uncertainty.[9] To be effective in the policy advice role, the analytical frameworks and techniques we most need are *prompts and permissions to craft the right questions.*

4.2.2   Evidence, Emotions and Values

Here is another way of coming at this, to clarify our thinking about policy-making as the art and craft of incremental social problem-solving.

Public policy-making needs to be informed by relevant evidence about the facts and what works, and much of the task of analysis involves turning data into information to support decision-making. People are not, however, persuaded solely by the facts or by what works, and many "wicked problems" are values laden and cannot be addressed solely through the direct application of science to public policy. Gluckman (2014b) mentions as an example "the exploitation of scientific complexity in climate change modelling to obfuscate what is essentially a values debate about inter-generational economic equity".

Policy-making as incremental social problem-solving involves *the art of public persuasion.* Relying on evidence and empirical analysis alone is like trying to sit on a one-legged stool—it is neither stable nor comfortable for any length of time. Effective policy advisors have to engage not only with relevant data and empirical

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[9] On dynamic change and the adaptive state, see Cunliffe (2021). On better public policy via feedback thinking, see English (2021).

Fig. 4.6 The art of public persuasion—*logos, pathos* and *ethos*
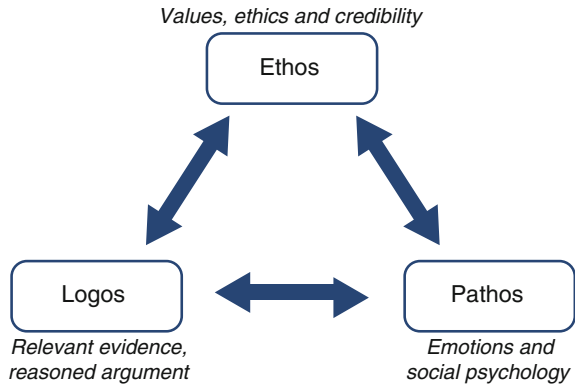
analysis, but also with emotions and social psychology, and with values and moral argument.

As far back as the fourth century BCE, Aristotle framed the art of public persuasion (rhetoric) in terms of *logos* (which we might interpret as relevant evidence and reasoned argument), *pathos* (emotions and social psychology) and *ethos* (values, ethics and the character and credibility of the speaker) (Aristotle, 1991; Rapp, 2010, especially Sect. 5; Rowland-Campbell & Thompson, 2011). I will discuss each of these in turn as *evidence, emotions* and *values* (Fig. 4.6).

4.2.2.1 Evidence

The evidence-based policy movement developed early momentum in the 1970s and was popularised as a mantra of the Blair Government that came to power in the United Kingdom in 1997. The slogan subsequently caught on in Australia and in New Zealand under the fifth Labour Government (1999–2008).[10]

Sustainable improvements in well-being for all citizens are unlikely to be delivered by policies and programmes founded on a weak or non-existent evidence base. We especially need to know, through monitoring, evaluation and review, whether policies, programmes and services are effective in achieving the outcomes citizens want and expect from them.

Science cannot, however, supplant moral argument in public policy-making because it is difficult, if not impossible, to construct a logical bridge between descriptive or existential "is" and moral or prescriptive "ought" (Hume, 2007, Book III.1.1; Pielke, 2007, pp. 12–13).[11] Evidence only takes us so far in moral

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[10] For a brief genealogy of evidence-based policy and the linear model of the relationship between evidence and policy, see Freiberg and Carson (2010, pp. 153–56), St John & Dale (2012, pp. 39–40). Head (2010, 2015) usefully summarises key issues and challenges in reconsidering evidence-based policy and promoting evidence-informed policy-making. On "big data", analytics, policy and governance, see Bachner et al. (2017).

[11] Logically one can derive a moral "ought" from an "is", but only if the "is" expresses a truth about a reality that embodies a moral norm. Grisez et al. (1987) provide an example: "Thus, from

argument and public policy-making. Science provides methods of explanation and interpretation of phenomena but cannot answer questions about what we should value, how we should live or which outcomes we should prioritise over others (Cairney, 2016, p. 42; Weber, 1949, 1968, 302ff.).

No compilation of facts or evidence alone can tell us, for example, whether the distribution of income and wealth within a society is fair (Barry, 2005, p. 13). That requires explicit critical reflection and political deliberation on values and normative theory.

So there are at least two pitfalls to avoid in public policy-making. The first is to decide policy on the basis of weak or non-existent evidence; for example, by relying primarily on polling and focus group findings, or on anecdote, intuition or ideological propositions that are taken on faith. The second pitfall is to proceed as if empirical analysis of the facts and what works is not only necessary but also sufficient.

Paul Cairney (2016) urges careful separation and analysis of some distinct problems in evidence-based policy-making:

- The lack of reliable or uncontested evidence on the nature of a policy problem;
- The tendency of policymakers to pay insufficient attention to pressing, well-evidenced problems unless well-worked out solutions are available;
- The lack of reliable or uncontested evidence on the effectiveness of policy solutions;
- The tendency of policymakers to ignore or reject the most effective or best-evidenced policy solutions—because they must weigh up not only the available evidence on impact but also cost and value for money, opportunity cost and political feasibility; and
- The tendency of policymakers to decide what they want to do, then seek enough evidence, or distort that evidence, to support their decision, particularly under pressure to act quickly and often in the absence of unequivocal information (pp. 120–121).

4.2.2.2 Emotions

Evidence alone is unlikely to be the major determinant of policy outcomes (Damasio, 2005; Freiberg, 2001; Freiberg & Carson, 2010; Westen, 2008). Debate about public policy is hardly ever an emotion-free zone. We bring our passion and commitments to it (Stone, 2012, pp. 32, 320) and our emotional responses are relevant data for moral argument about the right thing to do. Policies are more likely to be adopted and implemented successfully when we pay attention to our stakeholders'

'This is the act an honest person would do' one can deduce 'This act ought to be done'" (p. 102). See also Jonas (1984, esp. pp. 130–35).

hopes and fears, and what drives and motivates their behaviours.[12] David Hume commented in the eighteenth century:

> And as reasoning is not the source, whence either disputant derives his tenets, it is in vain to expect that any logic, which speaks not to the affections, will ever engage him to embrace sounder principles. (Hume, 1777, Part I, opening paragraph)

Take the case of Stewart Murray Wilson, the so-called "Beast of Blenheim". Wilson was imprisoned for 21 years in 1996 after being convicted on 22 charges against women and children between 1971 and 1994. The charges included rape, attempted rape, ill-treating children, bestiality, stupefying, assault and indecent assault. He was released on parole, aged 65 years, in August 2012, under the most stringent parole conditions ever imposed in New Zealand, including the requirement to live in a house on Whanganui Prison grounds.

This was strongly opposed by the local community. The Whanganui District Council filed proceedings with the High Court to try and prevent him being sent to Whanganui from prison in Canterbury. When the High Court ruled against the Council, Councillor Ray Stevens started a campaign to have Wilson trespassed from Whanganui shops. Some of the newspaper headlines at the time read:

- *Mayor: "Beast of Blenheim" not part of our community*
- *Beast of Blenheim "better off in jail"*
- *Council forced to accept "Beast of Blenheim's" release*
- *Trespass notices withheld against the "Beast of Blenheim"*
- *Beast of Blenheim: I'm still a human being.*

Staff of the Department of Corrections had a duty to protect Wilson's human rights and uphold the rule of law, while at the same time engaging with and taking account of strong emotions in the local community. To dismiss such emotions as mere NIMBYism (Not in My Back Yard) would not have respected the real fears felt by the prison's neighbours for their safety or the anger voiced in the wider community.[13]

We should not underestimate the influence of emotions on our practical and moral reasoning (Haidt, 2012; Hibbing et al., 2014; Inbar & Pizarro, 2014; McAuliffe, 2016). This does not mean abandoning science for intuition or reasoned, empirical analysis for emotion, but it does require us to recognise emotion

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[12] The application of behavioural insights to public administration is promising but requires careful reflection if it is not to lead back to a technocratic application of science to policy-making. See, for example, John et al. (2011), Strassheim and Korinek (2015), Thaler and Sunstein (2009).

[13] Wilson was subsequently recalled to prison in February 2013 following a breach of his parole conditions. He was granted parole again in December 2014 and released to live in a house on the grounds of Whanganui Prison where he was subject to GPS monitoring and supervision if he left the house. In 2018, he was sentenced to two years and four months' imprisonment for further historical rape charges. He died of natural causes in October 2021, aged 74 years.

and affect, and complex drivers of human behaviour, within a "reasoned and open dialogic process of policy formulation" (Freiberg & Carson, 2010, p. 161).

4.2.2.3 Values

There is increasing acceptance that scientific evidence sits alongside society's value preferences and political judgement in public policy-making (Committee on the Use of Social Science Knowledge in Public Policy, 2012, Introduction). Evidence-informed policy-making has to pass a double test: *effectiveness* in terms of achieving defined objectives, and *legitimacy* in terms of achieving expected normative goals (Heinelt, 2019, p. 43). Public policy-making is not a values-free zone, and neither are public servants in policy advice roles ethically or morally neutral, as distinct from politically neutral in faithfully serving the government of the day in accordance with the law.

The difficulty lies in determining whose values, and which values, should prevail in public life, because plural values and understandings of justice and the right thing to do have been in evidence since at least the fourth century BCE when Plato wrote *The Republic* and Aristotle his *Nichomachean Ethics*:

> Since … all knowledge and all purpose aims at some good, what is this which we say is the aim of Politics; or, in other words, what is the highest of all realizable goods? As to its name, I suppose nearly all men are agreed; for the masses and the men of culture alike declare that it is happiness, and hold that to "live well" or to "do well" is the same as to be "happy". But they differ as to what this happiness is, and the masses do not give the same account of it as the philosophers. (Aristotle, 1893, Book I.4)

People are committed to basic moral principles in different ways, to diverse conceptions of the good and to conflicting theories about justice and the right thing to do. John Rawls (2005) noted that this diversity of "comprehensive doctrines" is itself a significant human achievement and something to be celebrated, however personally and socially challenging it may prove to be:

> The political culture of a democratic society is always marked by a diversity of opposing and irreconcilable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines. Some of these are perfectly reasonable, and this diversity among reasonable doctrines political liberalism sees as the inevitable long-run result of the powers of human reason at work within the background of enduring free institutions. (p. 4)

Given a pluralism of values, we live and work in an argumentative context where some arguments about values and basic moral principles are better than others, but no argument can win (Flynn, 2000). In a liberal-democratic society, we turn to politics to manage pluralism. Liberalism is less a set of values and moral standards to which a liberal society must adhere than a way of managing conflict and living together without violence, despite a diversity of values and moral commitments (Sect. 3.2.1; Bromell, 2019, 2022, Chap. 7; Kukathas, 2003).[14]

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[14] Pluralist societies also host unreasonable doctrines that generate different and more difficult questions about the limits of liberal tolerance. See further Bromell (2019, Chap. 4).

Table 4.2 Moral foundations of politics (adapted from Haidt, 2012, Chap. 8)

Liberty	Safeguard freedom	Control aggression, domination, abuse of power	*Oppression*
Care	Care for the vulnerable	Protect from harm	*Harm*
Fairness	Ensure equality; fair exchange; honour contracts	Fairness as proportionality: take out only what you put in	*Cheating*
Loyalty	Form cohesive coalitions to achieve social goals	Cultivate identity, belonging, group pride	*Betrayal*
Authority	Maintain trust in social and political institutions	Respect hierarchical relationships, traditions, institutions	*Subversion*
Sanctity	Preserve purity, sanctity, order, cleanliness	Avoid shame, dirt, pollution, contaminants	*Degradation*

Besides, many of our different moral commitments and theories overlap in complex ways. And it is this overlapping that creates possibilities for policy actors to move beyond talking past each other and relying solely on "a convergence of self- and group-interests, or on the fortunate outcome of political bargaining" (Rawls, 1987, p. 2). We may not be able to reach consensus on a comprehensive theory of justice but, more often than not, we can arrive at an overlapping consensus or working agreement that enables action to occur through a public exchange of reasons informed by relevant evidence.[15]

One framework I have found useful in working with values pluralism is Jonathan Haidt's six moral foundations of politics (Haidt, 2012, Chap. 8; Table 4.2). For each of six positive poles (liberty, care, fairness, loyalty, authority and sanctity), there is a corresponding negative pole (oppression, harm, cheating, betrayal, subversion and degradation). Each polarity generates both positive and negative moral imperatives.

Haidt notes that Western liberals, and Western political theory, tend to focus on the first three polarities (liberty/oppression, care/harm, and fairness/cheating), but all six moral foundations are important, even to Westerners. For example, the "wellness" industry's preoccupation with de-toxifying diets and New Zealand's tourism marketing ("100% pure") both appeal to the sanctity/degradation polarity.

By way of a case study, in November 2002, Transit New Zealand[16] halted construction for three weeks of 100 m of an expressway in the Waikato because Ngāti Naho, a local hapū (sub-tribe), had objected that construction would disturb the habitat of the one-eyed taniwha, Karutahi. A taniwha is a mythical monster/guardian that lives in deep pools in rivers, dark caves or the sea. The existence

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[15] On the idea of an overlapping consensus, see Rawls (1971, pp. 387–88, 517, 580–81; 1987; 2001, pp. 37, 26–38; 2005).

[16] Transit New Zealand was a Crown entity responsible for operating and planning the state highway network from 1989 to 2008. It was merged with Land Transport New Zealand in 2008 to form the New Zealand Transport Agency | Waka Kotahi.

and activities of taniwha are not empirically falsifiable and engaging in debate solely on rational, empirical grounds was highly unlikely to create an overlapping consensus any more than the sensationalised reporting of the case in national and international media.

In fact, the dispute was resolved within three weeks by modifying the design of an embankment at an extra cost of NZ$20,000. Re-aligning the embankment also preserved a spring that feeds a small remnant of kahikatea forest, thus protecting a site of environmental as well as cultural significance. The outcome was the preservation of a good relationship between Transit New Zealand and Ngāti Naho, and by extension, the wider Tainui iwi (tribe).

Spending $20,000—0.024% of the final project cost of $83.5 million (King, 2006)—seems a small price to pay for attending to all six of Haidt's moral foundations of politics, and for resolving a conflict of values in a manner that preserved trust in government and its institutions (Harmsworth, 2005; Keane, 2015).

To sum this section up, public policy cannot be narrowly evidence-based but does need to be evidence-informed. Policy advising may be more art and craft than science, but respect for evidence and public, reasoned argument prevents the craft from being exercised in ways that are merely crafty.

Policy-making has to go beyond evidence, however, by also factoring in emotions and values. This requires public servants in policy advice roles to be more than back-office implementers of what politicians want. Our role as honest brokers of policy alternatives is to support and facilitate public reasoning that factors evidence, emotions and values into collective social problem-solving, and to do this in ways that are both technically and morally competent (Sects. 1.5, 6.3.3).

Analysis is not, therefore, something that public servants do at their computers behind closed doors:

> Whatever else policy analysts may be, … they should be advocates of citizen participation…. Designing policies that facilitate intelligent and effective participation is an essential task of policy analysis. (Wildavsky, 1987, p. 255)

4.2.3   "A Fair Go" in Public Policy

Fairness/cheating is one of the six moral foundations of politics identified by Haidt (2012; Table 4.2). In this section, I introduce a "fair go" framework to support policy development where analysis must factor in non-quantifiable costs and benefits, and when the *distribution* of social goods is at stake. I have found something like this necessary to supplement cost-benefit analysis (Sect. 3.3.2), which is better suited to decisions about the *allocation* of public goods when costs and benefits can be quantified and converted (usually monetised) into a single unit of value.

I have opted for a fair go framework because the norm of fairness seems to be universal and a product of both nature and nurture, like the acquisition of language, and because this universal concern for fairness is amplified in my own New

Zealand context, where appeal to a fair go has particular cultural and political salience (Bromell, 2014, 2019, Chap. 6).

On the first point, having reviewed an emerging consensus in recent years between anthropologists, animal behaviourists, psychologists, neuroscientists, game theorists and behavioural economists that a concern for fairness is a wired (if not hard-wired) trait in humans, Peter Corning (2011) concludes that "altruistic sharing backed by a threat of punishment for selfish violations is a fundamental element of human nature, coupled with the strong expectation for reciprocity from others" (p. 9).

On the second point, a wired concern for fairness is amplified in the New Zealand context by appeal to a fair go in everyday habits of thought and speech and in political rhetoric. Historian David Fischer (2012) has provided an extended comparative study of New Zealanders' characteristic preoccupation with fairness, and his fellow Americans' corresponding preoccupation with freedom (or liberty). The respective emphases on fairness and freedom reflect distinct waves of imperial expansion in reaction to different social conditions and pressures, and different geographies and material conditions in the new settler societies.

Of course, you don't have to be a New Zealander to care about fairness! The notion of a fair go is useful generally to bridge a gap between more abstract accounts of political principles and the actual beliefs and actions of political actors (Klosko, 1992, p. xii). As Sen notes (2009a, p. 54), we have good reason to be persuaded by Rawls (2001) that the pursuit of justice has to be linked to—and in some sense derived from—the idea of fairness.

As a policy advisor, I have certainly found it more productive to think about what a fair go means in public policy, and to structure policy debate in these terms, than to attempt to assess or justify policy options in terms of rights or by appeal to some or other theory of justice.

As discussed in Sect. 4.2.2.2, emotions play a more prominent role in social decision-making than we often care to admit. "That's not fair!" is commonly voiced as an intuitive or emotional reaction to an actual or proposed state of affairs or distribution of benefits and costs. Only when we ourselves have second thoughts or are challenged by others, do we apply reasoning, somewhat after the fact, to explain and justify our moral judgements. As Haidt (2012) puts it, "Moral reasons are the tail wagged by the intuitive dog" (p. 48).

I offer the following framework to facilitate an exchange of public reasons and comparative assessment of whether and to what extent policy options give the people affected by them a fair go.

4.2.3.1 Setting the Scene

It is important to clarify at the outset the *context*, *relationships* and *temporal dimensions* of the policy problem. What is fair depends on the people who are the participants, and their relationships and interactions within a specific context at a particular point in time (Corning, 2011, p. 19; Fleurbaey & Maniquet, 2011, p. 234).

- *Context*: In what context has the question of a fair go arisen? What is at stake for whom, and why? What is the local history, culture and political system, and can we define a policy problem that is sufficiently narrow in scope that it could plausibly be solved (Fukuyama, 2018)?
- *Relationships*: Who are the key stakeholders (interested and affected parties)? What is the nature and history of the relationship between them? Are there existing agreements, contracts or treaties between the parties? Do their respective interests converge, compete, conflict or are they simply different (Sect. 2.2.3.3)?
- *Time*: What time constraints do we face? What time trends can we observe, and what are the implications of those trends now and in the future? How are costs and benefits currently allocated between past, present and future generations? How might we avoid short-termism and support responsible governing for the future (Chap. 6).[17]

Having set the scene, we can proceed to focus our attention on *fair process* (procedural fairness) and *fair outcomes* (substantive fairness).

4.2.3.2 Fair Process

How things work is as important as what works. The procedures that govern public services, and the perceived fairness of how rules are set and implemented, significantly shape public responses to policy and regulation: "These responses can condition trust in public services, and determine how willing people are to cooperate with service providers: cooperation that, in turn, can be crucial to achieving the objectives of a service" (Pearce, 2007, p 11; cf. Pettit, 1997, pp. 246–247).

Fair process requires impartiality, deliberative fairness, transactional fairness and transitional fairness.

- **Impartiality**, or equal consideration of interests, declines to introduce private considerations into decisions that should be made on public grounds, using public reasoning (Barry, 1995, p. 13). It respects equality of moral worth, democratic equality (Anderson, 1999) and principles of natural justice. In my view, it also excludes permanent special group rights based on, for example, ethnic identity, ancestry or indigeneity (Bromell, 2008, Chap. 10; 2019, Chap. 5). It is an open rather than closed impartiality that invites the views of people beyond the immediate focal group (Sen, 2009a, p. 131) and mitigates the risk

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[17] Hubert Heinelt (2019, p. 102) reflects that in governing democratically, *time resources* are increasingly constrained (due to the increasing speed of technical and social innovations, pressure to make an increasing number of necessary decisions and a shrinking horizon of predictability), while the *time horizon* is expanding (the range of decision-making effects is growing, planning per decision is increasing as a result of growing contingencies, and the cultural and social basis of decision-making is increasing the time required for making decisions that are accepted by majorities).

of political deliberation being captured by local group prejudices and special interests.

- **Deliberative fairness** is about how the rules are set. Brian Barry (1995) suggests we can shed light on the question, "Is it fair?" by rephrasing the question as, "Could it reasonably be rejected?" (p. 113).[18] Deliberative fairness requires commitment to public justification—an exchange of public reasons, together with the social, economic and cultural conditions (capabilities)[19] that enable the free and equal participation of citizens in the governance of our common life.

- **Transactional fairness** is about how rules are operationalised, and playing by the rules once set. When implementing a new policy (e.g. banning the use of handheld mobile phones while driving), there may be a phase-in or amnesty period, but within a reasonable period of time we expect the same rules to apply to everyone in the same situation in the same way. Transactional fairness requires administrative consistency, transparency and rights of review and appeal. It requires ongoing investment in maintaining the machinery of government (political institutions, structures and processes) needed "in a good society composed of humans rather than angels" (Waldron, 2016, p. 3).

- **Transitional fairness** requires reasonableness in how rules are changed or repealed, particularly with regard to the timing of policy implementation (Royal Commission on Social Policy, 1988, p. 740). For example, if a government were suddenly to change the policy settings for New Zealand Superannuation (retirement income) without any transitional period, a cohort of older people would be affected with no time or opportunity to prepare for changes to criteria and the age of eligibility, or to the amount of money they are entitled to receive. And any transition from a pay-as-you-go (PAYGO) system to a save-as-you-go (SAYGO) system would need to be managed carefully to avoid the transition generation having to pay twice: once for their parents' generation, and again for their own retirement.

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[18] Appeal to public reason does not restrict us to *logos* (evidence and reasoned argument), to the exclusion of *pathos* and *ethos* from the public sphere (cf. Section 4.2.2). The important contrast, Barry notes, is with authority, prescription, revelation or coercion: "In this context, 'reason' means reasoned argument, from premises that are in principle open to everyone to accept. We can add a contemporary gloss to this by saying that these are premises which reasonable people, seeking to reach free, uncoerced agreement with others, would accept" (Barry, 1995, p. 7). Sen (2009a) has similarly noted that: "Rationality is in fact a rather permissive discipline, which demands the test of reasoning, but allows reasoned scrutiny to take quite different forms, without necessarily imposing any great uniformity of criteria. If rationality were a church, it would be a rather broad church" (p. 195).

[19] On a capabilities approach to well-being and human development, see Dalziel et al. (2018), Nussbaum (2000, 2011), Robeyns & Byskov (2021), Sen (1999, 2005, 2009a).

4.2.3.3 Fair Outcomes

A fair go requires more than fair process. Outcomes (results) also matter and need to be seen to be fair, including and especially our outcomes relative to one another:

> Humans have a sense of fairness, i.e. an interest in the ideal of equity. This sense allows them to compare their own efforts and subsequent outcomes with those of others, and thus to evaluate and react to inequity. (Bräuer & Hanus, 2012, p. 256)

Fair outcomes cannot, however, be defined in the abstract, in advance, once and for all, and as Klosko (1992, p. 66) reminds us, "Because of the inevitable imperfection of all social arrangements, a certain measure of unfairness should be expected and accepted". Rather, we need to arrive at a social evaluation of fairness in a specific context, by reference to the nature and history of the relationships between the interested and affected parties and with proper consideration of solutions that will prove durable because they are seen as fair over time.

I am thus arguing for Sen's "realisation-focused comparison" through the exercise of practical judgement, rather than the "transcendental institutionalism" (Sen, 2009a) of technocrats setting out to create a perfectly just system or arrive at "a single, uniquely rational, determinate, answer" (Gauss, 2010, p. 64). The aim is to find "workable ways of making life just a little bit more bearable for everyone" (Binmore, 2008, p. 332) (Sect. 4.2.1.3).

With this in mind, there are at least two ways we might proceed, both of which require comparative assessment of policy options against each other and the status quo (do nothing different):

- Assess the substantive fairness of policy options by the extent to which they contribute, or might reasonably be expected to contribute, to an overall increase in well-being and to improvement in the distribution of well-being over time; and/or
- Assess the substantive fairness of policy options against the extent to which we can reasonably expect them to actualise an agreed set of values or normative precepts.

These two approaches are not mutually exclusive and there is no reason why we cannot use both within a framework for comparative assessment and public justification.

Well-being and the Distribution of Well-being

We might, for example, assess fair outcomes using something like the OECD's *How's life? 2020* framework for managing well-being (OECD, 2020), or the New Zealand Treasury's Living Standards Framework (N.Z. Treasury, 2021a), which has built on the OECD framework.

The Living Standards Framework has evolved over time (N.Z. Treasury, 2011, 2018, 2021a).[20] Its 2021 version has three levels and a series of analytical prompts that apply to each level.

- Level 1 is *individual and collective well-being* over 12 domains[21] that capture resources and aspects of our lives identified by research or public engagement as important for our well-being as individuals, families and communities.
- Level 2 is *institutions and governance*, capturing the role that our political, economic, social and cultural institutions play in facilitating the wealth of individuals and collectives, as well as safeguarding and building our national wealth.
- Level 3 is *national wealth* in terms of our natural environment, financial and physical capital, social cohesion and human capability.

The Treasury offers four analytical prompts to assess the impacts of policies across all three levels of the Living Standards Framework.

- *Distribution*: How is our aggregate wealth and well-being distributed across time, place and groups of people?
- *Resilience*: Do individuals, collectives, institutions, organisations and the environment have an ability to adapt to or absorb stresses and shocks?
- *Productivity*: How effectively is our wealth used to generate well-being and things of economic value?
- *Sustainability*: How well are we safeguarding our national wealth for the benefit of future generations?

If there is agreement that the Living Standards Framework broadly captures outcomes desired by a majority of citizens, we can use these analytical prompts or lenses (distribution, resilience, productivity and sustainability) to assess whether and to what extent a particular policy option is more likely than alternative options to improve individual and collective well-being over time. In other words, a particular policy, or set of policies, gives the people affected by it a fair go when it improves their overall well-being, and the distribution of well-being, now and in the future.

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[20] The Living Standards Framework Dashboard (N.Z. Treasury, 2021b) is a measurement tool to inform the Treasury's advice to Government and its production of a Well-being Report that the Treasury is required to publish before the end of 2022 and then at intervals not exceeding four years (Public Finance Act 1989, Subsect. 26NB). See also Karacaoglu et al. (2019).

[21] The 12 domains of individual and collective well-being are health; knowledge and skills; cultural capability and belonging; work, care and volunteering; engagement and voice; income, consumption and wealth; housing; environmental amenity; leisure and play; family and friends; safety; and subjective wellbeing.

Values-Based Assessment

An alternative (or additional) approach is to assess the substantive fairness of a policy by reference to an agreed set of values or normative precepts. Proceeding in this way prompts explicit public deliberation on the kind of society we want to create, inhabit and pass on to the next generation, and the quality of life we wish to enjoy with one another, now and in the future.

Corning (2011) proposes a biosocial contract based on three normative precepts:

- Goods and services must be distributed to each of us according to our basic needs (in this there must be *equality*);
- Surpluses beyond the provisioning of our basic needs must be distributed according to merit (there must also be *equity*); and
- In return, each of us is obligated to contribute proportionately to the collective survival enterprise in accordance with our ability (there must be *reciprocity*) (p. 154).

Isbister (2001), in envisioning social and economic fairness, appeals to three dimensions of social justice—equality, freedom and efficiency—noting that these can and do conflict with each other: "People deserve to be treated as equals, they deserve to be free, and they deserve to get the best they can out of their limited resources" (p. 4).

Any selection of values or moral precepts is somewhat arbitrary. The values set needs to be sufficiently broad and inclusive to enable people with diverse conceptions of the good, and rival political theories, to engage with one another in realisation-focused comparison. The point is not that the value set be comprehensive, but that it resonate sufficiently with a broad range of policy actors to keep them at the table long enough to arrive at a practical agreement on what is to be done.

Four values I propose for starters are *freedom, equity, reciprocity* and *efficiency*.

1. *Freedom* is both negative (freedom from …) and positive (freedom for …, freedom to …). Thinking about negative freedom requires us to reflect on whether a policy, once operationalised, intrudes to an unjustifiable extent on the liberty of the individual and the free operation of markets. Thinking about positive freedom is a prompt to factor in the social, economic and cultural conditions (capabilities) that enable people to pursue their own conceptions of the good. Critical enablers of positive freedom are access to primary health care, education and training, appropriate housing and opportunities to engage in meaningful paid work. This in turn implies that our pre-eminent social obligation as policy-makers in a fair society is first to meet the basic needs of our fellow citizens (Corning, 2011, Chap. 7).
2. *Equity* is proportional equality in the distribution of costs and benefits, taking into account factors such as age, needs, luck, agreements (e.g., treaties), merit, effort and contribution. It allows for social recognition of unequal needs,

unequal talents and abilities, unequal application of those abilities and unequal contributions to our common life:

> No doubt talented people do not deserve any moral credit for their native talents. But they do deserve moral credit for *developing* their talents and for *using* them for our common benefit (Harsanyi, 2008, p. 74, emphasis his).[22]

Fairness thus requires breadth of consideration (Hooker, 2005), and a distinction between different sources of inequality, rather than assuming that everyone should necessarily have, or get, the same distribution of social goods. Equity also challenges us to consider the intergenerational accumulation of advantage and disadvantage, in order to ensure that future as well as present generations get a fair go.[23]

- *Reciprocity* means give and take, over a complete life, with opportunities to belong, participate and contribute to the collective enterprise proportionately in accordance with our abilities (Corning, 2011, p. 154). Public policy should promote and facilitate "reciprocity between the state and its citizens and among citizens themselves" (Conrad, 1981, p. 19) so that together we can live, live well and live better. As Rawls puts it, "we are not to gain from the cooperative labours of others without doing our fair share" (Rawls, 1971, p. 112). Reciprocity is, moreover, what makes a fair go sustainable:

> If I am motivated by a desire to behave fairly, I will want to do what the rules mandated by justice as impartiality require so long as enough other people are doing the same. Thus, people motivated by fairness reinforce one another's motives. (Barry, 1995, p. 51)

- *Efficiency* requires us to make the best use of available resources to achieve desired social ends (Isbister, 2001, p. 21). It is less a goal in itself than a way of getting there that helps us attain more of what we value (Stone, 2012, p. 63). A policy that spends public monies to little good effect, or that uses inefficient means to achieve a good that might be delivered at less cost, does not deliver a fair go either to the recipients of the service or to the taxpayers who fund it. Including efficiency in the framework protects against a risk highlighted by Kaplow and Shavell (2002, p. xviii) of giving weight to notions of fairness that in practice make everyone worse off. Zajac (1995) argues that "all other factors being equal, one might consider economic efficiency to be a necessary fairness condition in any reasonable definition of fairness, while granting that,

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[22] In arguing contra Rawls (1971, pp. 65, 101–04) that "justice itself requires us to reward superior performance in a suitable manner", Harsanyi nevertheless concurs with Rawls that "we must not create needless economic and social inequalities". He maintains that "such a policy would be fully compatible with significantly smaller economic and social inequalities than we have today" (Harsanyi, 2008, p. 76).

[23] On equity, see further Stone (2012, Chap. 2).

depending on the definition of fairness, some economically efficient allocations may be fairer than others" (p. 14).[24]

Section 4.3.2 provides a multi-criteria decision analysis matrix using the fair go framework to support comparative evaluation of policy options where we need to factor more than one value into the analysis.

4.3   Process, Tools and Techniques

This section encourages collective thinking and social problem-solving, and intentional construction of a policy story in order to define and contest policy problems and options (Stone, 2012, p. 158). It introduces the technique of storyboarding a piece of policy analysis and highlights the importance of thinking before we write. It also introduces multi-criteria decision analysis (Sect. 4.3.2) and concludes (Sect. 4.3.3) with some reflections on free and frank advice, reiterating a theme that runs throughout the book—public servants in policy advice roles are public servants, not only government servants, and have duties and responsibilities that go beyond telling decision-makers what they want to hear.

4.3.1   Collective Thinking and Storyboarding

When tasked with a new piece of policy analysis, it is a mistake to think you can sort it on your own by going back to your desk, opening a document template and starting to write. If you do this, you are unlikely to produce high-quality policy analysis or advice.

Thinking by writing runs the risk of thinking too little and writing too much. We are likely to become attached to our own words, locked into our initial framing of the policy problem and options, defensive about peer review and insufficiently focused on the client and on effective communication. It is a strength, not a weakness, to invite your manager and selected colleagues to engage with you in collective thinking as you set about the task and shape up your approach to it. This is the case whether you are working within a project team on a major policy development, or "holding the pen" on a piece of analysis and advice for which you are primarily responsible.

4.3.1.1 Collective Thinking
Given that most policy analysis we undertake relates to "wicked" rather than "tame" policy problems, and that policy-making is a form of incremental social problem-solving, then from the outset we need to initiate and facilitate collective

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[24] On efficiency, see further Stone (2012, Chap. 3).

thinking. Two, or three, or four brains are always better than one. The point is to think, and to think together with others, before we start writing.

Section 2.3.1 introduced eight sets of questions to support clear commissioning of policy advice. Corresponding to these are criteria for peer review and quality assurance (Sect. 5.3.2). Section 3.3.1 provided a set of things to think about in order to define the value proposition. And Sect. 4.2.1.2 proposed a questioning mode of doing policy analysis that captures all this as the **5W1H**: **Who? What? Why? Where? How?** and **When?**

In order not to waste your colleagues' time, start by working through the **5W1H** on your own, making rough notes to clarify what you know (and what you know that you do not know), and to identify holes in the policy story and tricky bits that might most benefit from discussion with others.

Then talk with your manager about who you might invite to workshop your analysis with you. You need to be strategic about this, identifying just three or four people who can bring relevant information and critical thinking to the task and add value to your policy analysis. They will not necessarily be from your own policy team. If what you are proposing has implications for service delivery, involve someone from the outset who will have to implement whatever policy decisions come out of your analysis and advice. If it has regulatory implications, involve a legal advisor. If it has significant communications implications, involve a communications advisor. If your analysis will require you to gather and work with data, involve a technical expert who understands the data and how to work with it. Create an agenda for your initial workshop and circulate this in advance, so participants know what you are asking them to think about and contribute, and come prepared.

When you meet, review your summary thinking on the **5W1H** and test and confirm as quickly as possible what you have identified as the known knowns and a broad approach and project plan (with timeframes) for completing the analysis and preparing advice to decision-makers. Then focus on the holes (known unknowns) and specific information and guidance that you need others to provide, and secure agreement on who will do what, by when and how much resource to allocate to this piece of work relative to other projects.

Depending on the scale and complexity of the policy problem, you may then be able to move immediately into storyboarding your advice, again using the **5W1H** framework to get you started. Alternatively, you can storyboard your advice in a second workshop, with the same or different people.[25]

Involving a principal advisor can provide a check and balance on the robustness of your analysis and introduce broader institutional knowledge and strategic context. You might also consider inviting external stakeholders to participate in workshopping analysis and/or storyboarding your policy advice.

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[25] Majone (1989) notes that because analysis cannot produce conclusive proofs, only more or less convincing arguments, analysis should be done in two stages: "the first stage to find out what the analyst wants to recommend, and a second stage to make the recommendation convincing even to a hostile and disbelieving audience" (pp. 40–41). See further Chap. 5.

4.3.1.2 Storyboarding

A storyboard is a graphic representation of how a movie or video will play out, shot by shot, scene by scene. It comprises a series of frames, each on a single piece of paper (or section of the whiteboard), with a doodle or cartoon representing the shot and notes about what is going on in the scene and what the script says for that shot.

By extension, journalists use storyboarding to sketch out a storyline, define its parameters within available resources and develop the logic, structure, content and presentation of the story (Graduate School of Journalism, UC Berkeley, 2016). The technique is similar to brainstorming or mind mapping, but I find it more useful for policy advising than either technique because it prompts us to go beyond mapping ideas and the connections between them to *constructing a compelling story*.

In public policy, storyboarding is a technique to bridge analysis and advice,[26] and to incorporate elements of policy advocacy. It helps us:

- Break a story down into its logical parts, initially in a non-linear manner—the logic and the order of the parts comes later and we do not have to start at the beginning;
- Experiment with different ways of ordering and presenting the parts;
- Check for holes in the story;
- Think about the best media to communicate any one part effectively; e.g., text, a map, a diagram or table, a video clip or an A3 poster;
- Zoom in for detail and zoom out for an eagle's eye view to the big picture and the long-term public interest (Sects. 3.2.2, 3.2.3; Chap. 6);
- Plan from the outset (and not as an after-thought) how to communicate our analysis effectively to decision-makers and stakeholders; and
- Think about the time and other resources needed to work up this policy story and match the task to available resources.

Various computer applications and online tools are available to support storyboarding, but all you really need is a whiteboard and some pens, or some large pieces of paper you can stick on the wall.

When I first started work as a policy analyst, my manager regularly invited me to join him in a meeting room with a whiteboard, where together we sketched out an approach and the bare bones of an argument. We did this together, both before I started writing anything and after I had produced a first draft—as a way of checking and improving on the analysis, the logic and flow of the policy story, and the coherence of the recommendations with the body of the report.

For a complex piece of policy advice, storyboarding is better done on sheets of paper that we can stick on the wall and re-order until we have found a logic that creates a whole out of the parts. When we find holes in the story, we may go back

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[26] See Mintrom (2003, pp. 164–169) on brainstorming and analytical discussions.

to the commissioning client for clarification and guidance, or flag them as notes to self for further information gathering and analysis.

The more experienced analysts with whom I did my apprenticeship encouraged me to start with the recommendations. What are we asking policy-makers to know, decide or do, and why? As we keep thinking and start writing, we will undoubtedly revise these recommendations, but brainstorming and storyboarding them at the outset helps keep our advice action- and outcome-focused.

As a final check on the logic of the policy story and how its parts fit together into a coherent whole, I focus on two of the **5W1H** in particular: *What?* and *Why?* (Fig. 4.7).

- Starting at the bottom, with our proposed policy interventions, work back up, asking at every stage, "*Why* are we doing this?" This tests whether proposed actions align with strategic objectives and the long-term public interest.
- Starting at the top, with our high-level objectives, work back down, asking at every stage, "*What* are we doing about it*?*" This anchors our aspirations in concrete action, tests our causal assumptions, and prompts reflection on whether and to what extent our proposed actions are likely to deliver our desired outcomes.

Together, the *Why?* and the *What?* make explicit the intervention (or programme) logic of our policy proposals.

Admittedly, the pressures of the job make it difficult consistently to set aside time to workshop policy analysis and storyboard policy advice. Quite apart from time pressures and the haste with which much policy advice is prepared, two organisational culture barriers prevent consistent attention to collective thinking.

Fig. 4.7 Strategy and action—checking the What? and the Why?
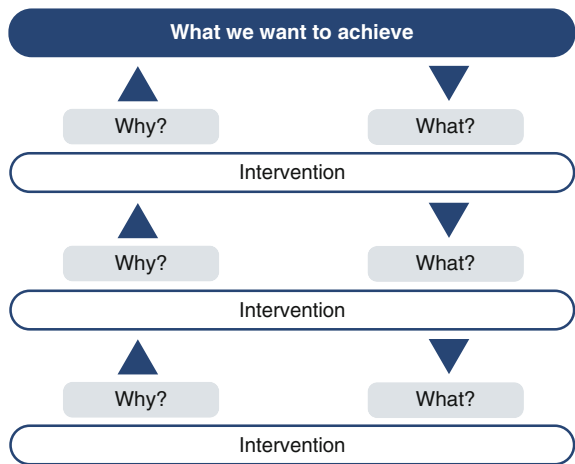
- Policy managers get caught up in doing instead of managing. Supporting staff to workshop analysis and storyboard advice should be a key deliverable and performance indicator for policy managers. It is an opportunity to coach and mentor staff and build policy capability. It helps the team get it right first time and minimises the need to re-work policy analysis and advice. Too often, policy managers pitch in, sometimes at the insistence of their own managers, to do some of the work themselves, which takes time away from managing staff and supporting collective thinking.
- Policy analysts, on the other hand, need to relinquish personal ownership of policy projects and go about our work as a collective enterprise. We also need to get ourselves organised and plan ahead so that, wherever possible, we can think together with others before we open a document template and start writing.

If there simply is no time, or management culture does not readily accommodate workshopping analysis and storyboarding advice, then at the very least *do the exercise in your imagination.* Use the **5W1H** framework to organise your thinking and tasks for analysis. And use storyboarding to plan and outline your advice and think creatively about the most effective ways to communicate your proposal. You may then come up with some questions or requests for information that you can address to specific individuals by dropping past their desk for a chat, or by phoning or emailing them. The point is to *think before you write* and to find ways to incorporate *collective thinking* into policy analysis and advice.

Talking to yourself is hazardous in an open-plan office, so I try not to do it. But I do spend a good part of every day in an internal dialogue, imagining myself in conversation with the various clients and other stakeholders with whom I work, reflecting on what I know of their interests and perspectives, and shaping my thinking and writing in ways that, given what I know of them, are likely to communicate and persuade. This is also a form of collective thinking, but of course it remains a poor substitute for actually sitting down and engaging with others in collective thinking—before you write.

4.3.2   Multi-criteria Decision Analysis

Section 3.3.2 introduced cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and its strengths and limitations. While CBA is a useful and necessary technique for analysis of options that involve the allocation of public funds, CBA has much more limited application when the issue is equity, or the distribution of goods within a society, or where costs and benefits cannot be converted to a single unit of value. Weimer and Vining (2016) remind us that "no single value, such as economic efficiency, can provide an adequate basis for all public decision making" (p. 40).

Multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) is one tool for when we want to assess two or more policy options in terms of their likely outcomes against multiple values or decision criteria. MCDA highlights not only trade-offs between policy

Table 4.3 A simplified multi-criteria decision analysis (MCDA) matrix

Criteria		Options and Projected outcomes			
Value	Weight (%)	Option 1 (status quo)	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
A		Score × Weight (%)			
B					
C					
Total	100				

options but also makes transparent our decision criteria (values) and trade-offs between these.

The basic idea is simple: construct a matrix with your policy options in the column headings and your values or decision criteria in the row headings (Table 4.3). Option 1 will usually be the status quo or counterfactual,[27] and your matrix should include at least one additional option. Then, for each option, complete the matrix by projecting likely outcomes against your values or decision criteria.[28] You might, for example, assign a score of 0 to the status quo, and scores of −10 to +10 for each value or decision criterion, for each of your other policy options. Some values may be of higher priority to decision-makers than others, in which case you can assign a weighting to them and incorporate this explicitly into your analysis.[29]

The intention here is to inform decision-making, not to coerce decision-makers into adopting our recommended option because our empirical analysis and modelling have convincingly demonstrated that "there is no alternative". That would be to act in the role of an "issue advocate" (Sect. 4.2.1.1). The "honest broker of policy alternatives" uses MCDA to highlight trade-offs between values, and between a range of practicable policy options. So eliminate from the start policy options that politicians will never consider seriously because they are manifestly at odds with their election manifesto and priorities, or could never be implemented, whether for fiscal or political reasons.

(There have been times when I thought political considerations were ruling out options that seemed to me perfectly reasonable, or at least worth considering. I had to learn not to provoke decision-makers by re-litigating past decisions or voicing the parliamentary opposition's pet ideas. Faithfully serving the government of the day sometimes requires policy advisors to suck it up—we work within the bounds of what is politically and not only practically feasible.)

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[27] Bardach & Patashnik (2019) encourage us not to characterise the status quo as "do nothing", although we could think of it as "do nothing different". They comment: "It is not possible to do nothing or to 'not decide'. Most of the trends in motion will probably persist and alter the problem, whether for better or for worse" (p. 23).

[28] Criteria for assessment may include abstract principles or concrete effects (consequences). See Scott & Baehler (2010, pp. 131–36).

[29] On projecting outcomes, see Bardach & Patashnik, 2019, pp. 49–70.

Having identified your options and decision criteria, the idea of MCDA is to use your common sense to project outcomes as best you can and quantify them wherever possible. Past and current trends and evaluation of existing programmes provide a reasonable basis for projections, provided we remember, as Bardach and Patashnik (2019) caution, that: "Past trends will only provide a reasonable basis for making projections, however, if the implicit assumption holds that whatever factors influenced changes in outcomes in the past will continue to operate the same way going forward" (p. 54). With this qualification, quantitative modelling, scenario building and sensitivity analysis can provide indications of a range of alternative outcomes, with magnitude estimates.

Remember, however, that *projections are not predictions*. We can never be confident that individuals, firms, institutions and complex systems will continue to act and perform as they have in the past, so it is of vital importance that we factor in the ethical costs of optimism and avoid an over-confidence in the rationality of our own analysis:

> The ethical policy analyst always poses the question, "If people actually were to follow my advice, what might be the costs of my having been wrong, and who would have to bear them?" Keep in mind that the analyst typically is not one of the parties who have to bear the costs of her mistakes. (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019, p. 62)

Of course, I would say the same of cost-benefit analysis and just like CBA, the technique can be useful even when it is done "on the back of an envelope". In 2004, as part of developing a social development strategy for New Zealand, the lead Minister asked us to identify five critical social issues as priorities for interagency action over the medium to long term. We canvassed social sector agencies for their ideas and then narrowed this long list down to a manageable set of five.

The proposed critical social issues were, in this case, our policy options. We then developed, consulted on and revised a set of (unweighted) criteria:

- The issue affects a large number of people, or a small number of people is severely affected;
- The issue has an impact on other negative outcomes, now or in the future;
- The issue increases inequalities within and between populations;
- The issue will still, without government intervention, be important in five to ten years' time;
- The issue relates to the work of a number of government agencies and requires their collaboration to deal with it effectively; and
- The issue is perceived to be of general public concern.

Our analysis of the proposed critical social issues was as crude as drawing a matrix on the whiteboard and assigning ticks to options against criteria they fulfilled to a greater or lesser extent (or not at all)— some boxes got three or four ticks, others none at all.

While we did not apply a rigorous methodology to this exercise, our intuitions and common sense were informed by our knowledge of the sector we worked

within, indicators of social and economic well-being and evaluations of policy interventions past and present. Using MCDA even in this evidence-informed but rough-and-ready way highlighted five critical social issues:

- Improving educational achievement among low socio-economic groups;
- Increasing opportunities for people to participate in sustainable employment;
- Promoting healthy eating and healthy activity;
- Reducing tobacco, alcohol and other drug abuse; and
- Minimising family violence, and abuse and neglect of children and older persons (Minister for Social Development & Employment, 2004, p. 56).

Significantly, as decision-making progressed through a cross-sectoral working group of officials, a steering group of deputy chief executives, the minister's office and cabinet, these five issues were confirmed as critical for interagency action over the medium to long term. The technique we employed had proved to be fit for purpose.

MCDA has its critics, particularly among practitioners of cost-benefit analysis. Dobes et al. (2016) alert us to:

- The lack of a theory or specific guidelines governing the selection of values or decision criteria, and the temptation for an analyst to second-guess the preferences of decision-makers;
- The risk of double counting;
- The essentially subjective and arbitrary weighting accorded to values; and
- Reservations about the mathematical appropriateness of aggregating disparate attributes measured in incommensurable units by linking them to scores and weights (Appendix 2).

When using MCDA, Scott and Baehler (2010) advise:

> Beware of overly confident outcome projections and false precision. When you do not have enough information to address all of the interior boxes, you must resist the temptation to fill them on the basis of hunches and popular wisdom. It is better to leave some boxes blank than to guess wildly. Do not project beyond the available knowledge. Trust your instincts, but explain your reasoning. (p. 149)

This being said, I find MCDA and outcomes matrices a useful technique when assessing policy options against each other and the status quo, and against multiple values or decision criteria. Provided we make our assumptions explicit and transparent and do not pretend that our methodology is more rigorous than it is, MCDA highlights trade-offs between options and between operative values in policy-making. And it creates opportunities for forthright conversations between policy advisors and decision-makers about values and ethics in public policy.

Section 4.2.3 introduced a fair go framework to support policy development where analysis must factor in non-quantifiable costs and benefits, and when the distribution of social goods is at stake. This framework can readily be applied

using an MCDA matrix, as in Table 4.4, to support comparative assessment of policy options where it is important that public policy deliver, and be seen to deliver, a fair go to citizens.

While assessment of options against each criterion should be quantified where possible, this matrix is offered simply as a reminder of things policy advisors, their

Table 4.4 A multi-criteria decision matrix for assessing a fair go in public policy

Set the Scene				
Context	• In what context has the question of a fair go arisen? • What is the policy problem? (What do we want to change or achieve?)			
Relationships	• Who are the interested and affected parties? (clients and other stakeholders)? • What is the nature of the relationship between them? • Are there existing agreements, contracts or treaties between the parties?			
Time	• What time constraints do we face? • What time trends can we observe, and what are the implications of those trends now and in the future? • How are costs and benefits currently allocated between past, present and future generations?			
Multi-Criteria Comparative Assessment				
Criterion	Option 1 (status quo)	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4 …
Fair process				
Impartiality				
Deliberative fairness				
Transactional fairness				
Transitional fairness				
Sub-total: Procedural fairness				
Fair outcomes				
Assessed in terms of the Living Standards Framework and its four lenses				
Distribution				
Resilience				
Productivity				
Sustainability				
And/or assessed against an agreed set of values, for example				
Freedom				
Equity				
Reciprocity				
Efficiency				
Sub-total: Outcome fairness				
Overall assessment				

clients and the public need to think and talk about. Quantitative analysis can and should inform public policy-making but empirical analysis is not the cure for all policy ills, and while better information typically generates improved efficiency, it can also contribute to the unfair distribution of social goods (Chavas & Coggins, 2003).

The task of policy analysis and advising is to support incremental social problem-solving that factors in emotions and values as well as evidence and empirical analysis and leaves the world at least a little fairer than we found it. MCDA is one tool to help us achieve that.

4.3.3   Free, Frank and Other f-Words

Public servants in policy advice roles have a duty to provide free and frank advice to decision-makers and to "speak truth to power". Regardless of the political system, this means at the very least telling decision-makers what they need to hear, and not only what they want to hear.

In an address to staff in 2007, Australian Treasury Secretary Ken Henry provided a chart to help staff think about the role they play as advisors to government (Henry, 2007; Fig. 4.8). I use this framework to guide my thinking and decision-making about who to tell what, why, when and how.

The world of politics is a high-stakes game for those who play it. I worked for one minister with whom I felt I could speak plainly but checked with him one morning whether he minded me being so free and frank. He replied, "As long as you're free and frank with me, I won't end up red and embarrassed".

I disagree with public servants who say that our job is to ensure a government is re-elected. But as a public servant, if a government is not re-elected, I do not want that to be because of anything we have done or said, or anything we have failed to do or say.

Andrew Kibblewhite, then-Chief Executive of New Zealand's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Head of the Policy Profession, gave an address to the Institute of Public Administration New Zealand in August 2015 in which he
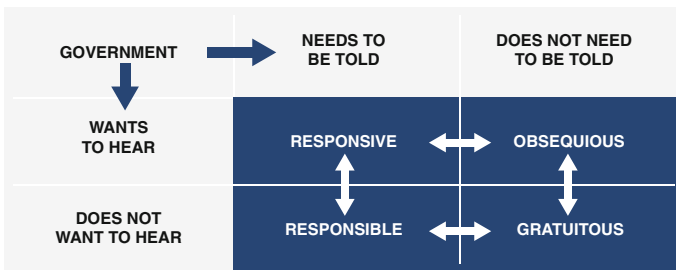
Fig. 4.8 Dimensions of policy advice (Henry, 2007); chart courtesy of C. Eichbaum, School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington

unpicked what policy advice looks like in terms of free, frank and other f-words (Kibblewhite, 2015). Good policy advice is:

- *Free*: offer your best advice to decision-makers, and do not withhold key evidence or information (as opposed to sharing your personal opinions with anyone, anywhere);
- *Frank*: be open and honest (but not foolish);
- *Full*: bring all the available evidence and multiple perspectives together to provide comprehensive insight into real-world problems;
- *Focused*: on the outcomes the government wants to achieve and the people it is trying to achieve them for, remembering that "almost by definition ministers are more in touch than public servants with the aspirations and challenges of citizens" (ibid., p. 9)[30];
- *Without favour*: provide politically neutral advice that is impartial to interest groups or particular sectors of society or the economy (while factoring into your advice an understanding of how stakeholders are likely to react to any policy change);
- *Fearless*: be bold in striving for new and different ways of doing things and don't hold back from presenting "scary" options to ministers;
- *Fallible*: advice and its underpinning evidence and assumptions need to be clear and testable; and
- *Future-focused*: keep an eye on the future and provide advice that is resilient to shifting contexts or trends.

Kibblewhite emphasised above all that what creates space for free and frank advice is trust earned and developed in respectful relationships:

> In giving free and frank advice, we must never lose sight of our role as public servants. Ours is to advise; Ministers to decide (ibid., p. 5).

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[30] Anneliese Parkin (2021) reflects that ministers are "often much more aware of how problems play out in the real world than officials are. Ministers tend to come from a more diverse range of backgrounds than officials, and electorate MPs in particular do get regular insights into problems faced by communities through their electorate-office work" (p. 194).

So there are rules to be observed,[31] just like the road code, but learning to be an effective policy advisor is, he suggests, like learning to drive a car—and "policy managers need to take their 'driving instructor' roles seriously" (ibid., p. 7).

To pick up the driving metaphor, I offer three additional reflections. First, if you do not know where you are going, do not keep driving! Stop the car, turn on the navigation, look at a map or ask someone. In other words, if a senior manager or politician asks you for information and you do not know the answer, *do not bluff*.

The prime minister's press secretary once called me from a provincial airport and told me the PM wanted to speak with me. They were on their way to a meeting and needed some information—urgently. I thought I knew the answer but it was a little out of my field, so I said I would check with someone else and ring back within five minutes. The PM accepted this and I cannot recall any senior manager or politician ever objecting to my wanting to check information and get back to them within an agreed timeframe. Building trust is, I think, better achieved by consistently providing accurate (but timely) advice than by blurting out an instant response that is right most (but not all) of the time.

Secondly, the trip can be a great deal more pleasant if you refrain from driving during rush hour. Senior managers and politicians need time to prepare themselves before meetings and to wind down after them. Sometimes they have bad days dealing with difficult and complex problems you know nothing about. Their job is inevitably more stressful than yours, so choose your time carefully. Executive assistants (to managers) and senior private secretaries (to ministers) can help you find a break in the traffic and avoid at best congestion and at worst a pile-up.

Thirdly, when I am driving, I do not need to keep up a constant burble about what I am seeing and how I am reacting to it. My passengers just want a safe and comfortable ride to our destination. So balance the communication of information and advice against over-burdening busy people with "too much information". Free and frank advice is all the more powerful when we are not in decision-makers' ears at every opportunity. And especially when you are (literally) driving between

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[31] Kibblewhite (2015, pp. 5–6) specifically referenced the 2013 amendments to the State Sector Act 1988 (Sect. 32) which elevated "free and frank" from a convention to a legislative obligation, as well as the State Services Commission's Standards of Integrity and Conduct, the Cabinet Manual and the Official Information Act 1982. See also the N.Z. State Services Commission's (2017) guidance on free and frank advice and policy stewardship. The Public Service Act 2020 repealed and replaced the State Sector Act 1988, and re-named the State Services Commission as Te Kawa Mataaho | the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Act para. 12(1)(b) stipulates as a public service principle: "when giving advice to Ministers, to do so in a free and frank manner". New Zealand's Local Government Act 2002 does not use the term "free and frank" but does require local authority decision-making to: (a) seek to identify all reasonably practicable options for the achievement of the objective of a decision; and (b) assess the options in terms of their advantages and disadvantages; and (c) if any of the options identified involves a significant decision in relation to land or a body of water, take into account the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral land, water, sites, waahi tapu [places or things that are sacred or spiritually endowed and held in the highest regard], valued flora and fauna, and other taonga [treasured possessions] (Sect. 77).

meetings, give it a break—we do not need to talk about work the whole time, or even talk at all.

To sum this up, doing policy analysis is not about learning and cleverly applying some rational comprehensive model, process or technique. Doing policy analysis is above all the art and craft of asking the right questions, in the right way, at the right place and the right time, to facilitate policy-making as incremental social problem-solving.

This is especially important because, while evidence and reasoned argument are indispensable, we also need to factor emotions and values into the decision-making process. Neither life nor politics is as tidy or as rational as we like to think and science is not the cure for all our ills, however much politics and policy can benefit from more and better science advice.

A "fair go" is one framework that encourages us to think together evidence, emotions and values in public policy-making. But the point is precisely to *think together* and to engage in collective thinking—before we start writing anything.

I have introduced the techniques of storyboarding and multi-criteria decision analysis to support the honest brokering of policy alternatives, and free and frank advice on those policy options where distribution and not only allocation is at stake and decision criteria cannot be reduced in a sensible way to a single unit of value.

Throughout, I have encouraged mindfulness of the public servant's place in the constitutional scheme of things (Sect. 2.2.2), and of ethics and public policy (Sect. 1.5). Ours is to advise; politicians to decide. Our effectiveness as public servants depends on good relationships, personal credibility, the integrity of our analysis and advice, and effective communication.

Chapter 5 picks up this theme of effective communication in the policy advice role because no matter how good we are at doing policy analysis, our advice will not fly unless we communicate it persuasively, whether verbally or in writing.

4.4   For Reflection

- Do you think science should have a privileged place in policy-making? How did your government balance public health advice against economic, environmental and social (including equity) concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- If someone expresses strong feelings about a proposal, is this a reason to call a pause and consider policy options that might accommodate their concerns?
- What are your most important values? How do they influence and shape the work you do and how you approach it?
- Think about the last time you felt you were not treated fairly. What was that about, and what needed to happen for you to feel you were getting a fair go?
- How do you go about outlining the structure and content of written work before you start writing?
- How do you strike a balance between taking responsibility for your own work and engaging others in collective problem-solving?

- Which decision criteria and values would you apply if you were deciding whether to accept a job, buy a house or move in with someone?
- How do you decide whether, when and how to communicate information to your manager?

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Effective Communication

<div style="text-align: right">**5**</div>

5.1   Introduction

Chapter 1 emphasised that effective policy advising is less about cycles, stages and steps, and more about relationships, integrity and communication. Chapter 2 introduced stakeholder theory as a way of managing competing and conflicting demands from multiple clients and encouraged a consistent focus on service excellence to meet legitimate client needs. Chapter 3 outlined a public value approach to the policy advice role with an eye to the public interest, which requires policy advisors to hold creative conversations with decision-makers about desired outcomes and the value proposition. Chapter 4 framed policy analysis as asking the right questions to facilitate incremental social problem-solving that factors in evidence, emotions and values and seeks fair outcomes that are publicly justifiable. Chapter 6 elaborates on social problem-solving by reference to the collaboration continuum and working together in the long-term public interest.

Taken together, policy advising requires mastery of communication. Policy-making in a democracy is a process of argument and persuasion (Majone, 1989, p. 2; Stone, 2012, p. 385). However competent it may be, analysis does not persuade—analysts do (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019, p. 89). And to persuade, we must be able to communicate effectively.

Section 1.2 discussed three distinct but related roles of public servants working in policy advice roles—analysis, advising and advocacy. Advocacy in a public service role is and needs to be constrained by legislation, convention, public sector ethics (Sect. 2.2.2) and an eye to creating value in the long-term public interest (Sect. 3.2.2, Chap. 6). But unless analysis and advice are communicated persuasively, even the most competent, evidence-informed analysis may fail to win political and popular support. This is particularly the case when our analysis indicates a need for innovative responses that depart significantly from the status quo:

New ideas generally lack strong empirical and theoretical support. Time is needed until favourable evidence accumulates and auxiliary theories come to the rescue. For all these reasons, objective analysis, unassisted by advocacy and persuasion, is seldom sufficient to achieve major policy innovations. (Majone, 1989, p. 36)

This chapter introduces effective communication in the policy advice role. It assumes much of the theory introduced in Chaps. 2, 3 and 4. Section 5.2 expands on the art and craft of persuasive argument. Section 5.2.1.7 introduces **7 Cs** of effective communication: *clear, concise, concrete, complete, consistent, coherent* and *compelling*. Section 5.2.2 explains why recommendations are important in formal policy advice and provides guidance on how to frame these. Section 5.2.3 reiterates the theme of policy advising as an apprenticeship and encourages evaluation and post-project review that use "feedback thinking" (English, 2021) to create a learning organisation and better public policy.

Section 5.3 provides practical advice to support effective communication in the policy advice role. Section 5.3.1 introduces the design and use of document templates. Section 5.3.2 is about peer review as an essential tool for quality assurance and discusses giving and receiving feedback. Section 5.3.3 provides tips for effective oral presentations.

5.2   Theory and Practice

Effective communication begins with knowing your audience and clarifying their needs (Mintrom, 2012, p. 81). In public policy-making, however, we have multiple clients and other stakeholders (Sect. 2.2.3), and we often find ourselves needing to appeal to different audiences in different ways. These audiences can be as varied as individual constituents, interest groups and other lobbyists, public meetings, the legal profession, academics, the media and of course the legislature. Some audiences may be friendly, some hostile, others indifferent or disengaged for various reasons.

A large part of our job as policy advisors is to support policy-makers with persuasive, evidence-informed arguments that will communicate effectively with these various audiences throughout the policy-making process—from prospective (pre-decision) agenda-setting and analysis, through to retrospective (post-decision) justification, evaluation and review (Majone, 1989, pp. 7, 33).

Majone suggests the appropriate technique for this is what the Greeks called dialectic:

Like dialectic, policy analysis usually starts with plausible premises, with contestable and shifting viewpoints, not with indisputable principles or hard facts. Like dialectic, it does not produce formal proofs but only persuasive arguments…. Finally, policy analysis, like dialectic, contributes to public deliberation through criticism, advocacy, and education. Good policy analysis is more than data analysis or a modelling exercise; it also provides standards of argument and an intellectual structure for public discourse. (Majone, 1989, pp. 6–7)

Arguments are not formal proofs, like logical or mathematical proofs that can only be either true or false. An argument is the "link connecting data and information with the conclusions of the analysis" (ibid., p. 63); "arguments are only more or less plausible, more or less convincing to a particular audience" (ibid., p. 3).

The implication is that to be effective, public policy advisors need to develop skills in dialectic and rhetoric (the art of public persuasion).[1] In essence, this means cultivating "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" (ibid., p. xii; cf. Stone, 2012, Chap. 9; Weimer & Vining, 2016, pp. 283–284).

We do this within an argumentative context constrained by legislation and convention. Rules and procedures institutionalise and regulate public deliberation (Majone, 1989, p. 3). Public servants in policy advice roles faithfully serve the government of the day, but not by acting as its spin-doctors (Fifield, 2022). (Political parties and ministers employ other staff for that.) Public servants in policy advice roles have ethical responsibilities to tell decision-makers what they need to hear and not only what they want to hear (Sect. 4.3.3), to promote better policies, and to respect and improve the democratic processes by which decisions are made (McPherson, 1983, p. 76).

Karen Baehler (2005) outlined features of a public argument model for policy-making:

- Establish clear principles and rules of thumb to distinguish public and non-public policy rationales (cf. Section 3.2.2);
- Scan the ideological terrain and map out competing policy approaches (cf. Section 3.2.1);
- Use evidence as one ingredient, linked with logic, linked with an appeal to people's values (cf. Section 4.2.2), to build and support the argument framework; and
- Engage ministers in the goal of building public good arguments.

Baehler (2005) explains:

> Policy advisers must give expression to ideas and aspirations that are often inchoate and complex. To do so requires both a good, collaborative relationship with the minister so that the minister's ideas can be drawn out and developed, and an eloquent tongue (pen) for articulating the ideas honestly, accurately, and in ways that will help build political coalitions and win public support. In particular, advisers need to be able to engage ministers in crafting the outcome statements that sit at the top of results chains. (p. 7)

When we do this well, in ways that are both useful and have integrity, we deposit "money in the bank"—personal, political and organisational capital to

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[1] On the relationship of dialectic to rhetoric, and the question of whether rhetoric can be an art, see Rapp (2010, Sect. 3).

communicate advice both now and in the future, and to push out the boundaries of the possible on even more important policy problems and opportunities (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019, p. 89; Majone, 1989, p. 70).

Stephen Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument* (1958) distinguishes six elements in the layout of arguments:

- *Claim*—a statement you are asking someone to pay attention to, accept as true and/or act upon;
- *Grounds*—the data, observations and other evidence on which you base your claim ("What have you got to go on?");
- *Warrants*—the (frequently implicit) statement or statements that bridge grounds and the claim ("How do you figure that?"), and which may appeal to emotions and values as well as evidence (cf. Section 4.2.2);
- *Backing*—statements that support the authority of the warrants, even if they do not necessarily provide compelling reasons in themselves for the claim;
- *Qualifiers*—indicate the strength of the argument or express reservations about whether and when a claim should be accepted and/or acted upon; and
- *Rebuttals*—counter-arguments or statements that indicate when a claim does not hold true.

Table 5.1 applies Toulmin's layout of arguments to debate on child poverty, to illustrate how the six elements can inform and nuance a public policy argument.

Producing good arguments and persuasively advocating for our recommended policy options with integrity and in the long-term public interest depends more on "knowing how" than "knowing that" (Majone, 1989, p. 44). We need to learn how and when to assert claims and construct reasoned arguments that use grounds, warrants, backing and qualifiers effectively and deal well with rebuttals. This is a craft and learning it requires an apprenticeship:

> The common-sense notion of craft includes, as basic elements, a body of skills that can be used to produce useful objects; careful attention to the quality of the product; and a sense of responsibility both to the ends of the client and to the values of the guild. In light of these characteristics, to speak of the analyst as a craftsman is actually more than merely using a metaphor: the similarity between the work of the analyst and that of the traditional craftsman is real. In policy analysis, as in the traditional crafts, successful performance depends crucially on an intimate knowledge of materials and tools, and on a highly personal relationship between the agent and his [sic.] task. Good analytic work cannot be produced mechanically any more than handicraft can be mass-produced. (Majone, 1989, p. 45)

5.2.1   Plain English and 7 Cs of Effective Communication

I was in my mid-forties when I started working as a policy analyst. I thought I was a good writer but it was only when I became a policy advisor that I began learning the craft of writing well and writing better.

Table 5.1 Applying Toulmin's layout of arguments to debate on child poverty

Claim	New Zealand is urged to "introduce a systemic approach to addressing child poverty, in particular Māori and Pasifika children, including establishing a national definition of poverty" (U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016, p. 12)
Grounds	Survey data indicated that 22% of children aged 0–17 years in 2014–2015 lived in households below a poverty line defined as 60% of median equivalised disposable household income after housing costs (fixed line measure, anchored at 2007); around 8% of children live in severe material hardship
Warrants	Persistent and severe material deprivation, especially in early childhood, has negative and enduring impacts and imposes significant economic and social costs: lower educational achievement, higher unemployment, higher health care costs, lower productivity growth, increased family violence and other crime
Backing	New Zealand is a signatory to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and has endorsed the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals New Zealand, like other developed countries, has an ageing population and needs to nurture its future workforce Child poverty disproportionately affects people who identify ethnically as Māori and Pacific peoples, who also have higher fertility rates
Qualifiers	New Zealand's tax-transfer system significantly re-distributes income and reduces inequality and hardship that would otherwise exist. Around half of households with dependent children receive more in transfers and tax credits than they pay in income tax Child poverty is complex and is not only about household income. We almost certainly cannot eliminate it but have a moral duty to reduce it
Rebuttals—*and responses*	There is no single, meaningful measure of child poverty—*but there are methodologically sound ways of measuring trends in relative and absolute poverty, income distribution, inequalities and material hardship* Child poverty is multi-dimensional and difficult for governments to address—*but policy can make a difference and has, for example, resulted in low relative poverty and deprivation rates for New Zealanders aged 65+years*

How I had been encouraged to write at university was not fit for purpose in public policy. Peer review (Sect. 5.3.2) knocked a lot of that out of me. Here are five lessons I had to learn about effective communication of policy advice.

5.2.1.1 Focus on the Audience

What do we know and what can we find out from others about them? What is their background, prior knowledge and experience in this policy field? How do they go about making decisions? How do they prefer to receive communication—in an oral briefing, or in writing (and if so, in a formal report, an A3 poster, a short

memo or a few bullet points in an email)? If we are preparing advice for formal consideration in a meeting, what is the purpose of the meeting, who chairs it and how do they prefer to conduct it? In other words, who are our clients and what do they need from us (Chap. 2)?

When we are clear about our audience, then we can focus on their needs rather than our own. Good policy advice does not set out to demonstrate everything we know about a subject, every step we have undertaken in our analysis and every reference we have consulted. It focuses our audience's attention only on what is relevant and important.

The principle to follow in client-focused communication is "less is more"— simple is better than complex, and over-detailing is worse than under-explaining. Decision-makers can always ask us to elaborate but many, though not all, are too polite to tell us to shut up.

5.2.1.2 Communicate with a Purpose

During the commissioning of policy advice (Sect. 2.3.1), get clear on what we are asking decision-makers to *know*, *decide* or *do*. It will be one or more of these three verbs—telling them information they need to know; inviting them to decide between options; and/or suggesting that they do something; e.g., discuss a policy proposal with caucus colleagues, attend an event, or approve and sign the final version of a cabinet paper and submit it to the Cabinet Office.

When we are clear on the purpose of our communication, we can engage in collective thinking with our colleagues and storyboard our policy advice with them (Sect. 4.3.1). This includes thinking about the best way to communicate our advice and by what means. Who in turn will they need to persuade, and can we reduce re-work by preparing for the ultimate audience at the outset? What kinds of arguments persuade our audience(s)? Do they hone in on problems, or get excited about possibilities? Are they big picture or detail people? Do they think like poets and prophets, or like engineers and accountants? Do they like to read a story with a beginning, a middle and an end? Or do they prefer to see all the main points and connections between them laid out with options on one page? What is their tolerance of risk and how do they approach risk management?

The more time you have taken to build a relationship with your primary client(s), the better placed you are to answer these questions. If you are in a junior policy advice role with limited access to decision-makers, you will almost certainly have to rely on others' knowledge of your audience(s), and their advice on how best to construct and present persuasive arguments.

The point is to communicate with a purpose, and present persuasive arguments to support deliberation and public justification of policy decisions and actions.

5.2.1.3 Write for the Ear, not for the Eye

Write it how you would say it. You are crafting arguments for public deliberation. What you write has to fall off the tongue easily.

For example, in everyday spoken language, most people avoid saying "whilst" or "amongst" with that awkward terminal –st. It is much easier to say "while"

and "among". Similarly, when we are talking we do not normally use words like "nonetheless" or "notwithstanding", and we say "but" more commonly than "however". So write it how you would say it.

Writing for the ear means short sentences and short paragraphs. For policy advice, I aim for sentences of no more than 25 words and paragraphs of no more than three sentences. I number paragraphs so my audience can refer to "paragraph six" and everyone else can immediately find the relevant section of the report.

I first learned to write for the ear, not the eye when creating scripts for radio broadcasts in the early 1980s. Later, I received the same advice for drafting media releases—provide sound bites, write it how you would say it, and check for words and phrases that are difficult to speak aloud.

When I am drafting text for a web page, this is even more important. Sentences are shorter. Paragraphs may contain only one or two sentences.

5.2.1.4 Use the Active Rather Than the Passive Voice

This is a particularly difficult habit to break.[2] Here is an example of the active and passive voice:

- *Active*: "Sarah sent an email".
- *Passive*: "An email was sent by Sarah".

In the passive voice, the subject ("an email") *is acted upon* by someone or something ("Sarah"). Grammatically, the passive voice is more complicated:

- *Active*: subject (Sarah), verb (sent), object (an email);
- *Passive:* subject ("An email"), verb + auxiliary "be" ("was sent"), prepositional phrase ("by Sarah").

A sentence in active voice is simpler, more direct and easier to understand, especially when spoken aloud. A sentence in passive voice may also create uncertainty about who exactly is doing the acting. For example:

- "We have been informed that a paper will be submitted to cabinet on 13 February proposing an increase in the excise tax on tobacco products." (Who exactly informed us? Which minister will submit a paper to cabinet?)

In the active voice, this sentence might read:

- "The Treasury has advised us that the Minister of Finance is taking a paper to cabinet on 13 February proposing to increase the excise tax on tobacco products."

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[2] If you use Microsoft Word®, you can set proofing options to check for Grammar and Style, including passive sentences. Word then alerts you with a squiggly line. Right click for options to improve the grammar and style.

This is sometimes why we use the passive—to obscure, make ambiguous or mask something we do not fully know or understand. For the most part, though, we fall into the habit of using the passive voice when writing formal English because we confuse politeness with indirectness. Plain English that communicates directly is more effective and helps keep our policy advice free and frank (and all the other f-words) (Sect. 4.3.3).[3]

5.2.1.5 Provide Your Most Important Information First

Many of us developed the habit when writing university essays of building an argument as if we were "spinning a mystery yarn" (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019, p. 88; Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 380). Step by patient step, the argument leads to the dénouement and brilliant conclusion on the last page!

Effective policy communication gets the most important information in the first paragraph of the first page. Bardach and Patashnik (2019) advise:

> Start with the conclusion, the bottom line, the absolutely most interesting point you intend to make. Then present all the reasoning and evidence that you have to make your audience reach the same conclusions you have reached. In short, follow the opposite strategy from that which a novelist would follow. (p. 89)

Section 5.3.1 discusses document templates. Presenting the most important information first is the rationale for a template providing headings like Purpose, Key Points and Recommendations on the first page, so decision-makers cannot miss what we are asking them to know, decide or do.

For the same reason, put your "topic sentence" (the sentence that expresses the main idea) as the first sentence of a paragraph, not the last sentence. Depending on your agency style, many of your paragraphs may only consist of one sentence, perhaps with some bullet points to explain or justify the argument. In this case, put your topic sentence as the first paragraph in a section.

Here is an example of a topic sentence with three bullet points that expand and explain the message:

Write for the ear, not the eye:

- Write it how you would say it;
- Use short sentences and short paragraphs; and
- Write in the active, not the passive voice.

The principle is to state your main point first and then provide information and arguments to explain and justify this. When we write topic sentences well, it helps the audience skim-read the document. Even if they read only the first sentence of each paragraph, they can grasp its message at a glance.

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[3] Helen Sword (2016) provides a useful resource to support plain English writing. Her website (https://writersdiet.com/) includes an online test to identify flabby prose weighed down by passives, prepositions and waste words (it, this, that and there).

5.2.1.6 Write and Speak in Plain English

George Orwell (1946) published a famous essay on *Politics and the English language*. He criticised the abuse of language in political speech and writing, especially a lack of clarity and concreteness, and the use of vague and meaningless words to hide the truth rather than communicate it. In his essay, he quotes Ecclesiastes 9:11 in the Authorised (King James) Version[4]:

> I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Orwell then translates this into "modern English of the worst sort":

> Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compel the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

Having made his point, Orwell provides six rules to "cover most cases".

1. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Fortunately, the style of political writing criticised by Orwell is going out of favour, with plain English campaigns and awards instituted in a number of countries. Ed Smith (2013), reflecting on Orwell's essay, suggests that the danger may now lie in the opposite direction—politicians whose preferred technique is to convey authenticity by speaking with misleading simplicity. Think, for example, of how often a politician prefaces a statement with "Let's be clear…" or, "At the end of the day…" Skilled oratory and extended arguments are out of fashion; jargon, bullet points and sound bites predominate.

This too is a trick as old as politics. Smith (ibid.) quotes Shakespeare's *King Lear* (Act 2, Scene 2), where Cornwall and Kent argue about the correlation between directness and authenticity. Cornwall says:

> These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
> Harbour more craft and more corrupter ends

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[4] Rights in the Authorised Version in the United Kingdom are vested in the Crown. Reproduced by permission of the Crown's patentee, Cambridge University Press.

Than twenty silly-ducking observants,
That stretch their duties nicely.

Plain English does not justify a lack of rigorous analysis and systematic, critical thinking. It does not justify "listing without explaining" (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019, p. 88), or uncritical use of metaphors to represent a policy problem. Neither is the role of a policy advisor to mask insincerity and debase public debate with deceptively plain speaking. Our role is to support policy-making with the effective communication of persuasive arguments.

Stone (2012, pp. 171–78) urges us to be aware of metaphors that imply narrative stories and prescribe action. While we may hear (and use them) as unthinking jargon, they imply a story that sits behind the story. Some common political metaphors she discusses are:

- Social institutions as living organisms (communities and groups are said to have "a life of their own" and organisations have "goals");
- Machines and mechanical devices (working parts that need to be kept "in order" and "in balance" within the "machinery of government"; policies are "instruments");
- Wedges and inclines ("ramp up" a response; "slippery slopes"; "steps" and "staircasing");
- Containers and space ("leaks", "seepage", "spillover", "safety valves");
- Health and disease ("healthy" balance sheets, negative behaviours that "spread" and become "infectious", "epidemics" of poor social outcomes);
- War and battles ("smoking guns", "campaigns", "targets", a "war" on drugs, a "battle" against cancer).

I do not mean to suggest that the language of policy and politics should be stripped of metaphor. That would be an impoverishment—and an impossibility. The challenge is to develop better metaphors and not to allow "dead metaphors" to degrade into unthinking jargon and meaningless communication (cf. Lakoff, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

5.2.1.7 Seven Cs of Effective Communication

Both at the front end, when storyboarding a piece of policy advice (Sect. 4.3.1), and at the back end, during the peer review process, I use **7 Cs** to review how adequately we are presenting persuasive arguments that will communicate effectively with our various audiences throughout the policy-making process. Is our advice: *Clear, Concise, Concrete, Complete, Consistent, Coherent* and *Compelling*? (Fig. 5.1).

Clear policy advice is in plain English and avoids "compulsive qualifying" (Bardach & Patashnik, 2019, p. 88). It speaks directly, in the active voice, and does not gloss over difficulties and ambiguities. Headings reveal the structure of our advice and navigate the audience through the argument, leaving them in no doubt about
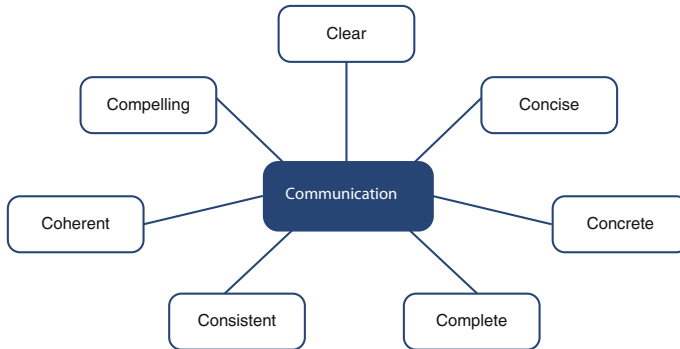
Fig. 5.1   7 Cs of effective policy communication

what we are saying. Clear policy advice is transparent and sheds light on complex, difficult matters.

Concise policy advice is as long as it needs to be and as short it can be. There are no long, complex paragraphs or wasted words. Through revision and peer review, we have deleted everything (words, sentences, paragraphs, diagrams, tables, appendices, etc.) that is not necessary to present a persuasive argument.

Concrete policy advice prompts decisions and action, not an endless loop of bureaucratic process and progress updates. It focuses on outcomes (better results) and implications (the value proposition—Sect. 3.3.1). It states at the outset what we are inviting decision-makers to know, decide or do. As far as possible, it is evidence-informed but does not over-detail merely "to let other people know that we are clever and that we have done a lot of work" (Mintrom, 2012, p. 87). Our recommendations are practically and politically implementable, and our advice includes how to evaluate and review the results.

Complete policy advice packages up a coherent set of information and arguments and does not dole these out piecemeal to decision-makers, giving them only part of the story at any one time.[5] Remember that politicians lead busy lives and we cannot expect them to retain everything in their heads on every policy portfolio and issue. This is where storyboarding, a clear structure and headings that reveal the structure of your story are critical, with the most important information up front. Your advice needs to strike a balance between *concise* and *complete*, and while your audience may not need to know everything in fine detail, you need to master the detail to be an effective advisor. Mintrom (2012, p. 91) reminds us that the

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[5] If advice on a complex policy problem does need to be presented in a series of briefings, provide a navigation aid or index that reminds the audience what was discussed at the previous briefing, what they need to know, decide or do today, and what will be presented in subsequent briefings.

definition of a policy wonk is someone who knows everything backwards (w-o-n-k = k-n-o-w).

Consistent policy advice creates confidence that we are developing and implementing work programmes in a strategic, planned manner. In general, policy-makers and the public develop a greater confidence in our advice if it proves to be consistent across time, consistent with the priorities of the Government of the day, and consistent with international treaties and conventions. We also earn confidence when we consistently provide free and frank advice (Sect. 4.3.3) and present this with a consistent agency "voice". In a well-performing policy agency, decision-makers cannot readily identify which analyst has prepared a report. A consistent agency style communicates the agency's advice, rather than an individual analyst's advice.

Coherent policy advice hangs together and is free of internal contradictions of fact and argument. The body of the report supports the recommendations; the recommendations capture implications for decision and action in the body of the report (Sect. 5.2.2). The evidence we present is coherent with the problem definition and proposed policy options. We present data accurately, we round numbers appropriately to avoid false precision (Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 380), and our tables add up.

Compelling policy advice factors evidence, emotions and values (Sect. 4.2.2) into a coherent set of arguments that persuade and inspire. This is where we look for opportunities to "push out the boundaries of the possible" (Majone, 1989, p. 70). Bardach and Patashnik (2019) advise:

> If one of your goals is to engage a lay audience, keep in mind that ordinary folk are rarely moved by statistics alone. Indeed, relying on numbers to demonstrate the importance of addressing a problem can actually undermine the psychological processes needed to prompt a response; people may not only fail to grasp the statistics, they may be numbed into inaction. Data and statistics are obviously indispensable to analysis, but when it comes to telling your story to a general audience, be sure to put a human face on the problem. And show how your solution could make life better for real people. (p. 85)

The **7 Cs** are daunting criteria for effective policy communication and for good writing generally. I have consciously focused in writing this book on communicating in ways that are clear, concise, concrete, complete, consistent, coherent and compelling. Still, I will have failed to fulfil all seven criteria in every section of every chapter. Becoming a good writer is a craft that we master only with constant practice, constructive criticism and conscious attention to the art of public persuasion (Sect. 5.2.3).

5.2.2   Decision, Decisions … and Writing Recommendations

Policy decision-making mostly happens in meetings, including executive leadership team meetings; meetings to brief senior managers, chief executives, local

authority councillors or ministers; caucus meetings; meetings of local authority councils and their committees, or of cabinet and its committees; and in the legislature and its committees.

Policy-making is a process of incremental social problem-solving and meetings are where we "transform problems, ideas, information, and motivation into mandates for considered action" (Mintrom, 2003, p. 143). If attending meetings feels like a waste of time it is often because we have failed to plan and facilitate them well, not because we object in principle to collective problem-solving.[6]

Our job as policy advisors is to support the effective conduct of meetings, most commonly by preparing reports, with recommendations, that constitute the agenda. With good leadership, supported by a sensibly structured, annotated agenda for the chairperson (Sect. 2.3.3), a meeting is more likely to reach considered decisions without wasting anyone's time. How we write and present reports also contributes significantly to meetings that work, and our recommendations are key to this.

Some meetings do not record minutes—the recommendations as amended and agreed following discussion become the minutes of the meeting, sometimes supplemented by an action sheet that records who will do what, by when. Where this is the practice, it is especially important to write good recommendations, because once adopted, they become the record of what the meeting agreed.

Section 4.3.1.2 suggested starting with the recommendations, as part of storyboarding your advice before you start writing. As we proceed with our analysis and develop the report we will undoubtedly revise the recommendations, but brainstorming and storyboarding them at the outset helps keep our advice action- and outcome-focused.

When we have completed a tidy draft of our report, and as part of the peer-review process, it is important to check that every recommendation is justified by evidence and argument provided in the body of the report, and that we have captured every implicit decision or action in the body of the text as an explicit recommendation.

Good recommendations capture in a few words all the important information, decisions and actions we are inviting the audience to know, decide or do.

- If the audience needs to *know* something, the recommendation commonly takes the form: "That the Committee note …"
- If the audience needs to *decide* something, the recommendation commonly takes the form: "That the Committee agree…"
- If the audience needs to *do* something, the recommendation involves an action verb, for example: "That the Committee receive/agree/direct/invite …"

If we find our report only has noting recommendations, we might ask ourselves whether it needs to be on the agenda at all. An alternative is to circulate it by email for information, or at least to structure the agenda so items for strategic

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[6] See Mintrom (2003, Chap. 7) for some useful tips on preparing for and facilitating meetings.

direction setting and decision come first and receive the most attention. Then, if time permits, the meeting can consider items for information. The chairperson might propose that the meeting take these items as read and simply provide a brief opportunity to ask questions for clarification.

The very worst sort of recommendations (actually, non-recommendations) ask decision-makers to do our analysis for us and tell us what to think—by recommending, for example, that they "provide guidance" on policy options or a course of action.

When drafting recommendations, we need to remember our place in the constitutional scheme of things (Sect. 2.2.2). Our place is to advise, not to decide. Our recommendations come in the form of invitation and advice from "honest brokers of policy alternatives" (Sect. 4.2.1.1; Pielke, 2007), not as instructions or prescriptions (Majone, 1989, p. 38) with overtones of should, ought or must.

To help get the tone right, certain conventions have evolved. Cabinet, for example, may "direct" a government agency, but "invite" a minister to do something. Another convention is to write recommendations in the subjunctive mood, rather than the imperative or the indicative mood.

- We use the *indicative mood* (present, past or future) to state what is/was/will be the case: "The members of the Health and Safety Committee are/were/will be Smith, Brown, and Jones".
- We use the *imperative mood* to express an instruction or command, with an implied "you": "Keep off the grass!"
- We use the *subjunctive mood* to express a hypothetical or desired future state or action, and to express wishes and suggestions: "If I were President, I would ban private ownership of military-style, semi-automatic weapons".

Using the subjunctive mood in policy recommendations leaves a clear public record that at the point a decision was made, something was not the case, but the meeting agreed that it become the case. The convention is to introduce the subjunctive mood in this sense with "that":

> We recommend that: The members of the Health and Safety Committee be Smith, Brown and Jones.

In this example, at the point the meeting reached agreement, it was not factually accurate to say, "The members of the Health and Safety Committee *are* (present indicative) Smith, Brown and Jones". Rather, the recommendation invites decision-makers to make something the case that is not presently the case. We use this convention both for factual accuracy, for the record, to avoid any uncertainty at a future date about when exactly Smith, Brown and Jones were appointed as members of the Committee. Policy advisors also use the subjunctive mood in recommendations as an expression of politeness, to communicate a suggestion and avoid going beyond direct to directive.

I have had colleagues, and managers, who were impatient to get rid of the subjunctive mood because it does not sound like plain English and perhaps because they had not learned or been taught how to use it correctly. In everyday speech, we do often replace the subjunctive mood with an indicative or a conditional verb:

- I wish I were there …/I wish I was there (or could be there) …
- If I were President …/If I was President …

With suggestions and commands, however, we still commonly use the subjunctive:

- The fishmonger suggested that she steam the fish.
- She demanded that he leave the premises.
- The designer suggested that he paint the walls green.

For precision, and as a way of signalling that we are not pre-empting policymakers' decisions, the convention of using the subjunctive mood in public policy recommendations is worth maintaining as a tool of the trade. If you find this difficult, look for someone who has studied grammar, usually by learning a second language, who can help you use the subjunctive correctly. We work in teams for a reason, and good policy writing is a team effort.

5.2.3 Practising the Craft

Policy managers often lament a shortage of good writers. It helps to remember that good writers do not emerge from the womb ready to write. Good writers are made, not born. Writing is an acquired skill that we can learn and improve.

Avid readers and tidy thinkers have an advantage, but no one becomes a good writer except by writing—and constantly striving to write well and write better. Self-criticism, through drafting, revision and re-working, is an essential discipline. We can always improve on our first drafts but this alone is seldom enough. Inviting and responding to the criticism of others is how we learn to write well. This is why publishing houses employ editors, academic journals use blind peer review and policy teams have formal quality assurance and sign-out processes (Sect. 5.3.2).

Policy advice to support incremental social problem-solving can only benefit from collective thinking. Even if you hold the pen, the work is not yours alone. You are preparing advice on behalf of your manager, chief executive or agency. You are not preparing personal advice to decision-makers. So let go, and let others in.

Personally, I would rather a colleague spotted an error or flawed analysis in a report I have drafted than to have my mistakes pointed out to me by a client, even if they do it in the nicest possible way. I am enormously grateful to peer reviewers who help me avoid looking or sounding like an idiot. Yet I have worked

with colleagues who use all manner of tricks to avoid peer review. Here are three of them.

- *Do not plan and manage your policy projects.* Do everything just in time. Then you can create an impression of being terribly busy and overwhelmed by deadlines: "No, there isn't time for a substantial revision, so can you please just glance over it and check for typos and obvious mistakes".
- *Find peer reviewers who you trust to be nice to you.* Start with people you like, and who like you. They are not likely to create a lot of extra work for you, but you will have complied with the quality assurance process.
- *Set narrow parameters for peer review.* For example, tell your reviewers that you have consulted widely with stakeholders and the content has already been agreed with them, so can they please just focus on the presentation, not your analysis of the policy problem and options to address it. (This tactic works best in combination with the first—there is no time to go back to stakeholders.)

Holding on to work too long and avoiding peer review cheats you of opportunities to become a better analyst and policy writer. It risks poor quality advice going to decision-makers. This in turn will affect your reputation and have an impact on confidence in the advice provided by your team, manager, agency and chief executive.

Policy advising is a team effort that requires complementary knowledge and skills. People with good literacy skills do not always have strong numeracy skills and vice versa. Many policy advisors who are excellent thinkers and writers are somewhat introverted and may not be good at networking and stakeholder management. Good talkers do not necessarily make good writers. Big picture systems thinkers may be careless about details. Process-oriented analysts who get into the detail and keep projects on track may fail to see the wood for the trees and miss the point of it all.

Effective policy managers recruit diverse teams, so we compensate for each other's strengths and weaknesses. They encourage and coach us to develop our skills. They create a workplace culture where it is normal to think collectively before we write and to peer review each other's work. They supervise our project planning and management, so there is always adequate time for peer review and quality assurance, and they intervene when we use avoidance strategies and hold work to ourselves.

Post-project review is a sadly neglected opportunity for team learning and organisational development. I have seen it used effectively in public management, as a way of debriefing on IT and service development projects. Curiously, I have not seen post-project review used consistently or well in public policy, despite an insistence on evaluation as part of the policy-making process.

We assume that what we need to evaluate is the *outcome* of our policy recommendations as implemented. It is also important, however, to evaluate the *process* we used to prepare and present advice, as a contribution to policy learning and organisational and staff development (Howlett et al., 2009, Chap. 8).

Post-project review does not have to be complicated. It can be simple as taking time to reflect on four questions:

- What went well?
- What did not go well, and why?
- Would we do anything differently next time?
- Is anything left unresolved and, if so, how will we address this?

The art of it is remaining open to our own and others' criticism, holding forthright conversations that are free of blame, and committing to collective problem-solving, systems thinking, team learning, and developing our skills to achieve better results and create public value (Sect. 3.2.3). Post-project review encourages us to apply our experience to new tasks and situations in an intentional way. When we do this, we become what Senge (1990) described as a learning organisation, capable of continuous adaptation and improvement. Post-project review builds personal and organisational agility and helps create better public policy (English, 2021).

Becoming an effective policy advisor means learning on the job, like an apprenticeship (Sect. 1.4). No firm would get away with taking on an apprentice and not releasing them regularly for formal learning and development in addition to on-the-job training. So one of the most important things a policy manager can do is secure resources for investment in staff development.

A core competency for policy advisors is good writing. We can always get better at it. Well-designed courses in plain English writing and in thinking before we write (Sect. 4.3.1) help. Workshops with a skilled facilitator where we pick apart a piece of policy writing and make it better are also very effective and build the case for taking peer review seriously. When together we persevere with mastering the craft of good writing, we can lift our team and agency's performance and help create public value (Chap. 3).

5.3   Process, Tools and Techniques

Effective policy communication does not just happen. It takes conscious effort and involves hard work. There are processes, tools and techniques that make the job easier. These include document templates (Sect. 5.3.1), formal quality assurance processes and peer review (Sect. 5.3.2), and techniques for preparing and presenting an oral briefing (Sect. 5.3.3).

5.3.1   Document Templates and How to Use Them

There are at least three good reasons for using document templates when preparing policy advice.

First, a template helps create a consistent agency style and "voice". Every report looks the same and has the same structure. This is important when our objective is service excellence and a consistent customer focus (Sect. 2.1). The template becomes familiar to decision-makers. They know exactly where to look for key information. It has the right amount of white space on the page. The layout supports skim reading. It also minimises individual idiosyncrasies of style, expression and formatting—it looks and reads like the agency's advice, rather than a letter (or worse, essay) from an individual analyst.

Secondly, a template supports policy analysis. The headings prompt us with things to think about—the purpose and value proposition, key points, recommendations, risk and mitigation, financial and legal implications, human rights implications, communications implications, next steps, and so on. Even if a heading or prompt is not relevant, the template obliges us to stop and think about it.

Thirdly, a template saves time. Government pays policy advisors to advise—not to format documents. A good template auto-formats text as much as possible. It looks after the presentation of our advice, so we can concentrate on the content.

By doing all this, a good template helps put policy advisors on a level playing field, even when we have different levels of skill in document formatting and word processing. Policy advisors' computer skills are largely self-taught and we are generally less highly skilled than we think we are. Document templates compensate for this and make the job easier.

I have been involved in template design in both central and local government. From this experience, I offer the following tips, some of which relate specifically to Microsoft Word®.

- Before you can design a template, you need to confirm or agree a corporate style, usually with your agency's communications team. This requires obsessive attention to detail; for example:
    – The size and placement of the logo and other branding elements;
    – Reducing costs by removing design elements that require colour printing, if physical copies of reports will be printed;
    – An acceptable compromise between white space (header, footer, margins—for readability and to leave room for notes) and printing costs—less of an issue when meeting agenda papers are circulated only electronically for reading on-screen;
    – Font and font size;
    – Styles for three levels of heading;
    – Paragraph format;
    – Styles for two levels of bulleted text (as in this paragraph);
    – Footnote style;
    – Page numbering and style; and
    – Where in the report to record the date (and in what style), the file reference, the author's name, the responsible manager, verification of peer review and other administrative details.

- Talk to your Business Support/IT Manager and discuss how they might roll the template out across the organisation, how staff will access it, what will be involved in maintaining and updating it, and who will be responsible for this.
- Talk to your Records staff about public records requirements and ensure your template will support compliance with these requirements.
- Prepare a mock-up and test it with decision-makers who will receive the report. They are the audience and the template has to work for them. Pay particular attention to their feedback on headings and the order in which material is presented.
- Develop the template. (This is a specialised task and best contracted out.)
- Give the developer a list of sensible style names (like Numbered Paragraph, Bullet 1, Heading 2) and ask them to remove default styles from view. Ask them also to ensure that when someone saves the template, it automatically saves as a .docx, not a .dot, and does not overwrite the original template.
- Check all the styles embedded in the template in every detail. Have they defined the style for the following paragraph? Are the tabs set correctly? Do line breaks and page breaks work as expected?
- User test the template with a mix of junior and senior policy staff.
- Identify and train champions in each workgroup to support staff when IT rolls out the new templates, and plan to do this when your agency is unlikely to be scrambling to provide advice to tight timeframes.
- Ask your Business Support/IT Manager to embed the final agreed styles into the normal .dot template in Microsoft Word®, so that whenever an analyst opens a new document, the default styles are identical with your template styles. This is the fastest way to ensure that your agency's documents are in a consistent style.
- Collect and analyse feedback, tweak as necessary and review at least annually how well your templates are working for you and opportunities to improve them.

Here are some dos and don'ts for template users.

- *Do* use the template, and open a new template every time.
- *Do* save the template with a new filename as soon as you have opened it, using your agency's file-naming convention.
- *Do* use the styles embedded in the template. In Microsoft Word®, you can access these from the "ribbon" at the top of your screen, and from the pull-down arrow in the lower right-hand corner of the Styles section of the ribbon. They are there to make your job easier. If you do not know how to use Styles, ask someone to show you, then practise using them until it becomes second nature.
- *Do* make friends with function button F1 on your keyboard. It opens the Help dialogue box. Microsoft Word® is capable of helping you and making the job easier in more ways than you can imagine. Asking a search engine will also bring up lots of tips and tricks.

- *Don't* over-type an old document, even if it was written to the template, as the template may have been updated in the meantime. You may also have deleted headings that were irrelevant to the previous advice, but that you should think about for your current report.
- *Don't* think by writing in the first instance—stop and think before you write, and outline or storyboard your advice before you start filling in the template (Sect. 4.3.1).
- *Don't* click on the bullet or numbering button in the Paragraph section of the ribbon—these revert to Microsoft® default styles.
- *Don't* be a slave to the template—use it intelligently. This applies particularly to headings. We would be silly to mess with headings on the first page (Purpose, Key points, Recommendations …), but most headings in the body of a report are there as placeholders and prompts. Headings are like X-rays that reveal the bones of your argument, so use them creatively to do that. The Outline view in Microsoft Word® will let you see just the bones, for example the headings and the first line of each paragraph.
- *Don't* keep using the software the same way you always have—get curious, learn shortcuts, ask for help, expand your skills and use technology to make writing more pleasure than pain.

Most policy agencies also have templates for Microsoft PowerPoint® presentations. Well-designed presentation templates provide:

- A design that works for both on-screen presentation and for printing as a handout;
- A design with only two or at most three colours that provide a strong contrast between text, graphics and the background;
- A clean, uncluttered space for entering content;
- A placeholder for recording public records information; e.g., the date, the agency logo, the audience and the file reference;
- Font and paragraph formatting that is consistent with the agency's agreed style; and
- Slide numbering for ease of reference during discussion.

Here are some dos and don'ts for PowerPoint® users.

- *Do* storyboard your presentation first (Sect. 4.3.1.2), with each slide presenting one point.
- *Do* prepare separate presentation notes, and distinguish between what you want to present and what you might show on-screen to support that.
- *Do* use concise phrases and bullet points.
- *Do* use images and graphics creatively to communicate your arguments—and check the copyright on these.

- *Do* provide an outline or navigation aid in longer presentations, either in a text box in the corner of each slide or in section header slides that punctuate the presentation and make its structure and argument explicit.
- *Do* practice giving your presentation to get the timings right, ideally in the room where you will present so you can check text is easily readable from the back row.
- *Don't* overload your slides with material or reduce the font size to cram more information onto the slide—limit each slide to a maximum of three points.
- *Don't* put everything into the slides and bore your audience with a redundant presentation they might just as well have read on-screen or in a handout.
- *Don't* write in complete sentences, or clutter the slide with capital (upper-case) letters.
- *Don't* use a lot of statistics, tables full of numbers or gimmicky clip art and GIFs.
- *Don't* use too many animation effects, as these become distracting rather than an aid to communication.
- *Don't* panic if the technology fails—you are the presenter, and PowerPoint® only provides the slides.

5.3.2 Peer Review—And Giving and Receiving Feedback

I have not found a process, tool or technique that works better than peer review to improve the quality of policy advice. Peer review is critical to building policy capability and the reputation of our "policy shop" for providing useful, high-quality information and advice.

Peer review ideally happens as part of an agreed quality assurance and sign-out process. Good quality assurance practice incorporates the following steps.

- The advisor prepares a draft report for initial discussion with their manager.
- The manager provides feedback and discusses with the advisor who might peer review the report. There should be at least two reviewers—someone familiar with the subject, and someone unfamiliar with the subject. This provides a check on both the content and its communication to a non-specialist audience.
- The advisor gives the reviewers at least a day's notice and discusses with them how they would prefer to receive feedback.
- The advisor revises the report in light of peer-review feedback. Where there is disagreement between reviewers, or between a reviewer and the advisor, the manager (or a principal advisor) may need to arbitrate or make a judgement call. The important thing is for the process to be transparent—communicate back to the reviewers how you have incorporated their feedback. Their reputation is on the line as well as yours if you present advice they have reviewed and do not agree with.
- The manager reviews and signs out the final report.

By working backwards (Sect. 2.3.3) and building time for it into your project planning, peer review does not have to be a stressful process rushed through at the last minute. Policy managers can support this by:

- Using the peer review and sign-out process as an opportunity to coach and develop staff;
- Building peer review into the performance management system and assessing the percentage of policy reports that have been formally peer-reviewed;
- Declining to receive or progress advice that has not been peer-reviewed;
- Reinforcing collective accountability by meeting with the author and peer reviewers to discuss reports that went to decision-makers and were found wanting; and
- Reflecting during post-project review (Sect. 5.2.3) on whether and how well staff and their managers followed the quality assurance process.

Peer review always goes better when we work to an agreed set of criteria. Peer review includes proofreading for typos and for spelling and grammar mistakes but it is more than proofreading. Peer review should focus first on whether the advice is fit for purpose for its intended audience, secondly on the content and quality of the analysis and advice, and thirdly on its communication and presentation.

For over a decade, the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER) has reviewed the quality of policy advice for both central and local government agencies. NZIER does this against well-established and tested criteria that reflect standards expected by the users of policy advice—central government ministers, local authority councillors, corporate boards and senior managers. Table 5.2 reproduces the NZIER (2016) criteria for a standard appraisal.

The criteria are not only useful for reviewing a near-final draft report. You can also use them at the outset of a policy project, when you are planning and storyboarding your advice, and as a reminder of standards and things to think about as you proceed with your policy analysis. They remind us that effective policy advising is about:

- *Relationships*—and customer focus (Chap. 2);
- *Integrity*—credible analysis creates public value (Chap. 3), is evidence-informed (Sect. 4.2.2.1), and free, frank and all the other f-words (Sect. 4.3.3); and
- *Communication*—plain English speaking and writing that exhibits the **7 Cs** (clear, concise, concrete, complete, consistent, coherent and compelling) (Sect. 5.2.1).[7]

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[7] See also the policy improvement frameworks and tools developed in The Policy Project of the N.Z. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2020).

Table 5.2 Peer review criteria for policy advice. NZIER (2016)

Customer focus and contextually aware	
Anticipation	• Does the paper address the likely next steps and timeframes
	• Is all the necessary content to support next steps included (e.g., talking points)
Risk and mitigation	• Has the paper included the key risks, and are mitigation steps provided?
Purpose and context	• Is the objective of the briefing stated clearly and early?
	• Is there enough background to shape the discussion?
	• Does the paper make linkages to wider matters, such as strategy, long-term drivers, related objectives or other parts of the system?
Credible and rigorous analysis	
Problem definition	• Is there a clear problem definition?
	• Is the scale and scope of the issue clear?
Framework and options	• What evidence or logical approach is there to support the analysis?
	• Is there a clear framework that provides criteria for analysis?
	• Are there clear reasons for options and to dismiss credible alternatives?
	• What consultation/engagement/expert advice has been undertaken?
	• Do the recommendations flow logically from the discussion?
Data and evidence	• Is the paper clear about the strengths, sensitivities and limitations of evidence?
	• Have the numbers been double-checked for accuracy?
	• Is there good use of examples or international comparisons to show mastery of the subject?
Implementation	• How much confidence is there that the advice can be implemented?
	• What comments are included from those who would implement the advice?
Presentation and communication	
Language	• Is the paper in plain English with minimal jargon?
	• Does the paper use short sentences and paragraphs to make the reading task easier?
	• Does the paper need a proofread to reduce clutter, eliminate typos and fix grammatical errors or other slips?
Structure	• Is the paper concise and does it avoid duplication or unnecessary clutter?
	• Is there good use of subheadings as signposts and do they tell a logical story?
	• Is the Executive Summary actually that—not an introduction or context section?

Table 5.2   (continued)

Customer focus and contextually aware	
Format	• Has the best medium been selected (report, poster, presentation, one-pager) to fit the situation?
	• Are the tables and charts easy to understand and read?

Peer review involves giving and receiving feedback. Neither is easy, especially when we are pressed for time. As I have thought about this over the years, discussed it with colleagues and reflected on my own and others' mistakes and bruised egos, I have developed guidelines to maximise the value and minimise the pain.

When you are asking someone to peer review your work:

- Check at least a day ahead whether they are available and allow them time to review your work and give you feedback;
- Clearly state the timeframe you are working to; and
- Discuss how you would prefer to receive feedback.

I do not always find it helpful when a reviewer emails me the document with their feedback in the form of tracked changes. When I am receiving feedback from at least two peer reviewers as well as my manager, I would rather not be dealing with three or more different versions of a document. I prefer reviewers to write on a paper copy of the document, then sit down with me and discuss it face to face.

When someone asks you to peer review a document:

- If at all possible, say yes—this is an opportunity to add to your own knowledge and contribute to the success of your colleague and your agency;
- Schedule time to do the review—it can take at least an hour to review a policy report thoroughly;
- Discuss and agree with them when and how you will provide feedback;
- Review the content against its purpose, and then its presentation, against a standard set of criteria like those in Table 5.2; and
- Read it from the audience's perspective.

When you give feedback to a colleague:

- Be constructive and respectful—review the work, not the person, and limit your advice-giving to what is fair and necessary;
- Refer back to the peer review criteria and affirm what they have done well—do not only zoom in on weaknesses and inadequacies;
- Remember that they may be acting under instruction on how to approach the analysis, structure and presentation of their report, so be curious and ask "why?"
- Think about what is missing—holes in the analysis and in the argument;

- Do not solve all their problems for them—ask questions and invite them to identify alternative and potentially more effective approaches to analysis and communication; and
- Ask to see a revised version of the report if you have serious concerns about the draft you have peer-reviewed—as the peer reviewer, your reputation is on the line too.

When you receive feedback from a colleague:

- Expect to have to revise your report and allow yourself time to make changes, or there is little point in bothering with peer review;
- Do not take criticism personally—the policy advice you are preparing is your agency's advice, not your personal advice, and you are more than your work;
- If you disagree with your reviewer's feedback, talk it through with them and negotiate for common ground, perhaps by sitting together at your computer and wrangling with words and sentences until you are both comfortable with them;
- If you cannot reach agreement, involve a principal advisor and/or escalate it to your manager—do not simply ignore or block feedback you do not like or agree with; and
- Say thank you—even if the feedback was hard to receive and required considerable re-work, your peer reviewer has helped you improve the content and presentation of your advice and possibly spared you embarrassment and a damaged reputation.

Peer review is one moment in a process of what Majone (1989, Chap. 8) calls multiple evaluation and accountability. Peer review by critical friends prepares us to support, as best we can, policy-making as incremental social problem-solving.

5.3.3 Preparing and Presenting Oral Briefings

Getting a policy report drafted, peer-reviewed, finalised, signed out and submitted is often a stressful experience. The relief of getting it out the door has often led me to forget that writing a report is one thing, presenting it is something else. A number of times I turned up on a Monday morning to present a paper to the executive leadership team under-prepared to present and to persuade. Unconsciously I lapsed back into a linear, rational and technocratic way of thinking (Sect. 4.2.1)— the evidence and arguments are all laid out in my report, I have checked them against the **7 Cs,** and my peer reviewers have confirmed that the report is fit for purpose. What more do I need to say?

If policy decision-makers all conscientiously read and thought about every page of every report they are asked to consider, and if they all processed information visually (by reading), then perhaps the report writer (or their manager) only needs to be there to answer questions for clarification. My experience tells me, however, that decision-makers do not pay attention to every page of every report, and many

need to hear and voice (and not only read) the play and counter-play of argument and shape their considered views through discussing them with others. Democracy is government by discussion and our job as policy advisors is to set up a discussion, not coerce agreement by the sheer force of our analysis.

Consequently, we should not view oral presentations as secondary or incidental to our written work. Giving a presentation is a fundamentally different activity and we should not underestimate the thought, preparation and practice that needs to go into it (Mintrom, 2003, pp. 91–92). When I speak to a policy report, I do not want to waste decision-makers' time. The most useful contribution I can make is to provide a crisp summary that highlights what I am inviting my audience to know, decide or do.

You are well prepared when you can give an "elevator speech": imagine you get into a lift with your boss on the seventh floor and have one minute to explain to her what your report is about before you get to the ground floor and the door opens. A simple outline might be:

- This report is about (the policy problem, risk or opportunity) …;
- The key points are …;
- The most important recommendations are …; and
- The next steps will be ….

Incidentally, I have also learned the hard way that it is wise to go over my elevator speech with my manager before the meeting, to check that we are on the same page and to agree who will speak to what. And this is a great way for managers to coach and develop staff. If you want your policy advisors to make you look good, take the time to meet before a presentation, agree on your tactics and rehearse it with them.

The art of an effective presentation is to inspire confidence in the integrity of our advice and to present our recommended options persuasively. The medium is also the message. Our dress, grooming, posture, tone of voice and practised ability to maintain eye contact with everyone around a room while following our notes is all part of the craft we need to master and brush up on from time to time.

If you find giving presentations nerve-wracking (and most of us do), the most important advice I can offer is: *Remember to breathe.* A flustered, over-anxious delivery (and too many words) does not inspire confidence. The most powerful tool in public speaking is silence—the pause that awaits attention and leaves space for an idea to penetrate thought. Put both feet flat on the floor; breathe from your belly, not your chest; sit up straight and drop your shoulders. Control your breathing, to command your audience. Slow down, speak clearly and calmly, and do not waste words.

Body language may give you some feedback about who needs persuading on what, but do not read too much into this. There is always more going on than policy advisors at the lower ranks of an organisation know about, and if a decision-maker appears distracted or grumpy, it is not necessarily anything to do with you, your report or your presentation. I try not to read minds. State your case as concisely

and compellingly as you can, then let the meeting get on with its discussion and decision-making. If your recommendations are not agreed, it is highly unlikely that anyone will die as a result. So withdraw, de-brief with your manager and get over it.

From time to time, you may have to make a public presentation. Getting the practical details clear is a good first step. How long do I have? What is the venue? How many people am I speaking to? How will the room be set up? Will there be a lectern? Will I have a microphone (lapel, stand or handheld)? Who else is speaking? Can I use visual aids like PowerPoint®? Will there be a question and answer session and if so, who will moderate it? Will media be present? What is the dress code?

When it comes to preparing the actual presentation, get clear above all on *what you want to achieve from your presentation* (Mintrom, 2003, Chap. 5; 2012, pp. 91–92). The public service does not always get a good rap. Policy wonks, in particular, can be perceived as boring, over-paid bureaucrats who are out of touch with the reality and everyday lives of the people our policies affect. So in addition to any immediate objective, I always hope to counter these perceptions when I give a public presentation. That means preparing in such a way that, as a public servant, I come across as:

- Committed, lively and interesting;
- Professional and politically neutral;
- Well informed and thoughtful; and
- Open to others' experiences, perspectives and arguments.

How I want to connect with my audience shapes how I approach my preparation. I prefer to prepare a full script, writing it how I would say it. This lowers the risk of going over time, or shooting my mouth off in the heat of the moment and saying something I might regret later. It lets me wordsmith what I want to say and make my language more memorable. It forces me to pay attention to the beginning and the end: how will I open my presentation and hook the audience, and what closing words will round it off and leave my audience on a high note and ready for whatever comes next?

I then rehearse my presentation, editing out awkward words and phrases. When I have largely memorised it, I can deliver it while maintaining eye contact with my audience.

This takes practice—years and years of practice. Find out who in your agency is good at public speaking. Watch them, learn from them—and then develop your own style. You can never communicate effectively if you are imitating or trying to be someone other than you are. Anchor your persuasion in your personal integrity, and in the integrity of your analysis, because effective policy advising is all about relationships, integrity and communication.

To sum this chapter up, learning, practising and perfecting skills in communication is critical to effective policy advising. Public servants in policy advice roles support decision-makers with incremental social problem-solving through

public persuasion. This requires skills in argument, and in written and oral communication that is clear, concise, concrete, complete, consistent, coherent and compelling.

How we draft policy recommendations contributes significantly to effective governance that makes decisions and initiates action to produce better results. Peer review and post-project review sharpen our skills in this and other aspects of policy communication. Document templates let us focus on the content of our communication and support consistent presentation of our advice.

It is a mistake, however, to think that we do our most important work sitting at a computer. Because public policy-making is incremental social problem-solving, it requires collective thinking and an exchange of arguments, much of which occurs in meetings. For this reason, a policy apprenticeship includes developing skills in verbal argument, thinking on our feet and public speaking. Democracy, after all, is government by discussion.

5.4   For Reflection

- When does the skilled use of dialectic and rhetoric become manipulative rather than persuasive? How do you recognise the difference?
- How comfortable are you with the idea that you craft persuasive arguments for a living?
- Do you learn best by seeing, hearing or doing? What do these three modes of learning suggest for how you might effectively present policy advice to different audiences?
- Use the word count function in Microsoft Word® to check, on average, how many words you write to a sentence. Then check how many sentences you write, on average, in a paragraph and review your writing style.
- How might you use the **7 Cs** to develop your writing skills? Which of the seven is your greatest strength, and which do you need to develop?
- Who within your team has skills that are complementary to yours? How might you support and learn from each other?
- How do you prefer to receive feedback? Is this consistent with how you give feedback to others?
- What is the image you want to project when you are giving an oral presentation?

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Working Together … in the Public Interest

6

6.1   Introduction

When I joined the public service in 2003, there was a growing realisation that New Public Management (NPM, Sect. 2.2.1.1) was not fit for purpose in some important respects. The required focus on measurable outputs created little incentive to address complex social, economic and environmental challenges with a view to long-term outcomes. A narrow application of principal-agent theory and silo-isation, resulting in part from the institutional separation of policy agencies from service delivery agencies, further undermined public sector capacity to address complex challenges.

When the Blair government came to power in the United Kingdom in 1997, it introduced "joined-up government" (JUG) as a central plank of its plans for public sector reform (Althaus et al., 2013, p. 148). In Australia, the Commonwealth government talked about "integrated government", "connected government" and "whole of government", defining this as "public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues" (Management Advisory Committee, 2004, p. 1). In New Zealand, the talk was of breaking down "departmental silos" in favour of "whole-of-government" approaches, with the unfortunate acronym, WOG.[1]

JUG and WOG initiatives aimed in various ways to tackle problems of vertical and horizontal alignment:

> Horizontal alignment refers to the need for interorganisational cooperation and collabora-tion in order to battle problems of "silos" that stifle coordination and prevent "outsiders" from positively contributing innovation, quality and new ideas. Vertical alignment, on the

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[1] See further the N.Z. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's (2014) foundation report for the New Zealand Government's Policy Project.

other hand, seeks to connect goals, resources and structures so that policy intent matches program design and delivery. (Althaus et al., 2013, p. 147)

Alignment initiatives included:

- Taskforces with "lead agencies";
- Interagency committees and forums, and committees with non-government stakeholders;
- The establishment of boards tasked with governance of activities undertaken on behalf of government;
- Agreements and protocols for case management across agency boundaries;
- The creation of "mega-departments" and "one-stop-shop" co-ordination of multiple functions to provide a "seamless service" to citizens; and
- Efforts to re-balance relationships between "central agencies" and other government departments (ibid., pp. 140–43).[2]

Because no single agency (or sector) has all the answers to complex policy issues, it has become increasingly necessary for policy advisors to acquire and practise skills in co-ordination, collaboration and networked governance. This, Stoker (2006) suggests, will take us beyond both traditional public administration and NPM.

This chapter builds on the critique of NPM (Sect. 2.2.1.1), the framework for stakeholder analysis and prioritisation (Sect. 2.2.3), and the proposal that we adopt a public value approach to policy advising in the long-term public interest (Sects. 3.2.2, 3.2.3). It reiterates the priority of relationships and effective communication over models of policy development that imply top-down, linear processes, stages and steps (Sects. 1.3, 4.2.1 and Chap. 5). And it rounds off this practical guide to the art and craft of policy advising with some further reflections on the theme of ethics and moral leadership introduced in Sect. 1.5.

6.2 Theory and Practice

Public policy is susceptible to capture by dominant concepts that quickly become jargon and start to mean anything—or nothing. Two words that risk having all the meaning sucked out of them by over-use are "engagement" and "collaboration".

How exactly does engagement differ from communication, consultation, co-operation, co-ordination, collaboration or partnership? How do these terms differ from one another, and how might we decide which mode of working together in the long-term public interest is best fitted to achieve a specific objective?

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[2] A focus in the New Zealand state sector was integration of services, whether provided by the public sector, NGOs or private sector organisations, using life events (e.g., becoming a victim of crime), people-centred service design and digital technology (N.Z. Department of Internal Affairs, 2014).

Section 6.2.1 defines modes of working together along a continuum between competition and collaboration.

Section 6.2.2 introduces "gifting and gaining" as an approach to collaborative governing that differs from standard approaches to negotiation and conflict resolution. Section 6.2.3 reflects on policy advising in the long-term public interest, building on the discussion of the public and the public interest in Sect. 3.2.2.

6.2.1   Modes of Working Together

Section 6.2.1.1 defines modes of working together, or not working together, along a continuum from competition to collaboration. It emphasises that while collaboration promises many benefits, it is hard work, resource intensive and entails risk. Collaboration is not the answer to everything. Section 6.2.1.2 highlights some benefits and costs of collaboration and the value of an explicit written agreement to manage risks inherent in working together with others to address complex problems.

6.2.1.1 From Competition to Collaboration

Eppel et al., (2008, p. 14) developed a continuum of "inter-governmental integration" that runs from Co-existence to Communication to Co-operation to Co-ordination to Collaboration, with corresponding levels of formality, relationship supports and relationship characteristics. What follows is my adaptation of this basic idea, developed through conversations and workshops with colleagues and with Trish Hall of the Partnership Brokers Association/Thought Partners Ltd. It reflects the framework for stakeholder analysis and prioritisation outlined in Sects. 2.2.3.2 and 2.2.3.3.

Figure 6.1 shows seven modes of working with others in public life, along a continuum from competition to collaboration. One mode is not superior to any

Fig. 6.1 From competition to collaboration
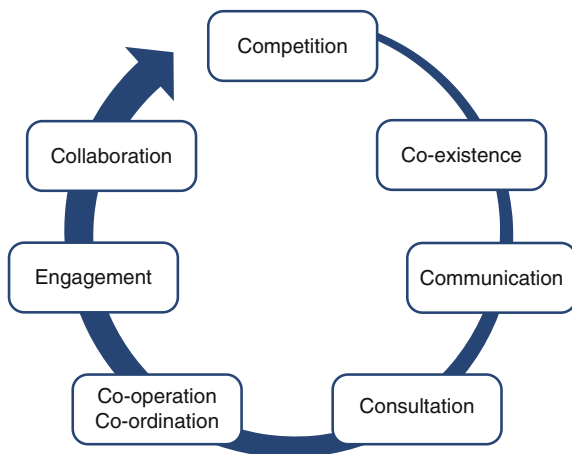
other mode. Rather, we need to identify the mode that is fit for purpose in a particular time and place to achieve objectives that satisfy our common interests and/or that we judge to be in the public interest (Sect. 3.2.2).

I have defined an *interest* or *stake* as something (a policy, institutional arrangement or course of action) that puts someone (a stakeholder—an individual or group of individuals) in a better position over time to get what they want or value, compared to some other policy, institutional arrangement or course of action (Sect. 2.2.3.1). It is natural and unexceptionable that people have interests. Many of these interests conflict and we cannot always reconcile them. It may not, in fact, be in the public interest to do so. For this reason, I include competition and co-existence as modes of relating to others.

Competition is essential to the efficient operation of markets. In general, it encourages innovation and the provision of more diverse products and services at lower prices and higher quality. Many countries, for example, have adopted measures designed to control monopolies and open up competition in core services like telecommunications, electricity generation and distribution, and air travel.

Competition is inherent in the practice of democratic government—political parties compete in elections and in the legislature to offer citizens meaningful choices in the governance of our life together. We also use competition in public administration when, for example, we contract out services and allocate contestable funding.

Co-existence is a mode of working with others when we have divergent but not opposing interests. We may choose to co-exist when we do not need each other's involvement to achieve our objectives, and when our decisions and actions have no significant impact on the other party or parties. The most efficient course of action is simply to keep out of each other's way and get on with it. An example is two neighbouring local authorities that have different contractual arrangements and service specifications for maintaining local roads and footpaths.

Before adopting co-existence as a mode of relating to others we need to be confident, however, that our actions do not in fact have consequences for the long-term public interest by, for example, providing markedly different and potentially inequitable levels of service across local authority boundaries, or by causing reputation damage to the sector we work in.

Communication is exchanging information with others that we think they need to know because we have some interest in common, or because we judge this to be in the public interest. Some examples of government communication are media releases, agency websites, social media posts and the publication of annual reports and newsletters.

When we communicate, we do not necessarily ask for feedback. At interagency meetings, for example, we may share information without asking others to decide or do anything. We are simply communicating information we think they may be interested to know because we have some common interests.

Sometimes our communications do convey that we want people to do something and that we expect them to comply because this is legally mandated and/or in the public interest. Public health directives, civil defence warnings and signs that alert the public to health and safety hazards, for example, convey information but also express or imply expectations of compliance, without necessarily inviting feedback or debate.[3]

Consultation is sharing information with others and asking them what they think. We consult to let others know what we are thinking of doing, to get their feedback and to make better decisions. Consultation assumes that the other parties have an interest in what we are proposing, or that a proposal has public interest significance. Usually we consult on an idea or proposal we have already developed to draft stage, and when we hold the decision-making power.

An example is a working party inviting public submissions on a discussion document, a parliamentary select committee inviting submissions on a proposed bill, or a local authority notifying a draft long-term plan or district plan and holding public hearings on it.

Co-operation and **Co-ordination** involve working together on projects when we have a common interest we judge to be of higher priority than our divergent interests, or when we choose to over-ride divergent interests in the public interest.

- *Co-operation* often implies "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours". We do this because we have a common interest, or recognise that working together in this way is in the public interest. An example is a central government agency working with and funding community providers to address social housing needs.
- *Co-ordination* occurs when a lead agency or central agency uses utilitarian or normative power (Sect. 2.2.3.4) to get other agencies working together effectively despite divergent interests, in order to achieve objectives that are in the public interest. An example is mandating an agency to lead co-ordinated, inter-sectoral initiatives to reduce abuse and neglect of children.

Engagement initiates an ongoing working relationship to achieve a common goal. We engage when we want to involve people (particularly when we are defining policy agenda), build relationships, explore common interests and invite mutual understanding and contribution. Engagement implies a blank, or nearly blank, sheet of paper and is different from consultation, which tells people what we are going to do and asks them what they think about that.

Engagement does not assume common interests, but seeks to establish whether we have common interests, and to build an overlapping consensus or working agreement (Sect. 4.2.2.3) on policies and actions that we agree are in the public

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[3] Where an agency does invite feedback and participation, for example in citizen science, the mode of working has shifted from communication to engagement.

interest. An example of engagement is inviting identified stakeholders to participate in workshops to create a strategy or plan, or a regional council working with various farming sectors (dairy farming, mixed cropping, dryland farming, etc.) to agree best practice for managing nutrient limits on farm.

Collaboration is deliberate working together across organisational boundaries to solve problems that a single agency cannot solve, or easily solve, by working alone. We collaborate to advance our common interests and/or the public interest. Collaboration involves shared ownership of the problem and desired outcomes, shared risks and benefits, and shared but not necessarily equal responsibility and accountability for achieving agreed objectives. It usually involves a more or less formal partnership agreement or memorandum of understanding.

An example is the Canterbury Mayoral Forum's development and implementation of a regional development strategy (Sect. 2.2.3.4), backed by a triennial agreement ratified by the member councils.

We may decide to collaborate in the short term to achieve a specific objective, after which we disband. We may form a longer-term partnership to address a complex issue—or jointly found a new organisation to take on the purpose of the partnership, deliver a service on an ongoing basis and scale up what we have been able to achieve in the initial collaboration. Whether we collaborate short term or long term, we seek to leverage collective impact.[4]

Note that as we move along the continuum from competition to collaboration, relationships become more formal, investment in time and resources increases, different types and levels of leadership and support become necessary, and success depends on higher levels of mutual trust.

The next step beyond collaboration is some form of amalgamation that establishes new institutional arrangements and structures. No longer are there two distinct parties working together—rather, there is a new, unitary "us". The disruption caused by amalgamation should not be under-estimated, but neither does collaboration come without cost.

6.2.1.2 Benefits and Costs of Collaboration

Collaboration is costly and entails risk.[5]

- To be effective, collaboration requires partner agencies to surrender a degree of autonomy, at least in relation to the issue the project seeks to address. Divided

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[4] On collective impact, see further Kania and Kramer (2011). They identify five conditions of collective success: common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and "backbone support".

[5] On challenges of collaboration, see further Eppel & O'Leary (2021, Chap. 2). They note that collaboration is in tension with aspects of New Public Management (NPM; Sect. 2.2.1.1) and requires significant modification of the standard NPM operating model.

loyalties (what is in my agency's interest vs. what is in our common interest—or the long-term public interest) can make decision-making difficult and prompt agencies to back off or withdraw at critical stages in a project.

- It requires a considerable investment of time for collaboration to become truly effective. Investing time is the only way to build understanding of our common, different and competing or conflicting interests (Sects. 2.2.3.1, 2.2.3.3), the language we use to express and communicate these interests, and the authorising environments (Sect. 3.2.3) in which we each work.
- Collaboration may require investment of resources over and above what agencies have budgeted for business as usual. In a local authority context, for example, resourcing for collaborative projects on a regional basis may exceed statutory requirements or a council's mandate from its local ratepayers. This is all the more difficult when a project requires investment up front and can only demonstrate better results and value for money over the medium to long term.
- Collaboration on major projects often requires dedicated secretariat and executive support to deliver both the substance of the work and to maintain the processes that support it (Partnership Brokers Association, n.d.). This support extends beyond organising meetings, drafting papers and taking minutes, to facilitation and process navigation, bridge building, managing expectations and helping to communicate the story of what the partners set out to achieve—and what they have achieved. For staff who provide this support, collaboration often results in complex reporting and accountabilities that do not always align well with individual agencies' line management.
- It is rare for agencies to make an equal contribution. Feelings that others are not pulling their weight or that an agency is taking over require careful management.

On the other hand, collaboration brings significant benefits.

- Collaboration pools organisational capacity and skills to develop and implement sustainable solutions to complex issues—solutions that may be out of reach for any single agency acting on its own.
- Collaboration pays explicit attention to the "spaces in between", inserting leadership to join the dots in complex systems to achieve better results.
- Success in collaboration makes everyone look good, even where a partner may have only been able to make a small contribution.
- Collaboration enhances the reputation of public services because the public generally expects us to work well together and provide coherent, joined-up services that represent good value for money.
- Working together on collaborative projects grows the knowledge and skills of everyone involved, builds relationships and trust, and leads to a better-informed awareness of the interests of other organisations and sectors. This creates capital for working together effectively on other projects in future and helps to overcome past differences, disputes and distrust arising from these. The co-benefits

Table 6.1 A checklist for collaboration— adapted from Waitakere City Council (2009)

Collaborate when
• We cannot achieve what we want to on our own
• The problem we want to address is complex
• Others can add significant value to help us achieve our goals
• We are willing to help others achieve some of their goals
• We are willing to share power, decision-making and accountability for shared outcomes
• We are committed to a long-term approach and ongoing relationships
• We have time to develop and implement partnering processes, structures and work programmes
• There is flexibility about how goals might be reached
• We are prepared to take risks
Do not collaborate when
• We can achieve our objective without significant help from others
• We want or need to own this piece of work and what results from it
• Timeframes are short and/or fixed
• Our agenda, goals or desired results are already determined and we have little scope to deviate from them
• We require certainty and are not prepared to take risks
• Our agency is internally divided on the benefits of collaboration in this instance
• We lack the people and resources to make this collaboration work
• We can independently contract others to deliver on the task, service or goal

and spin-offs from collaboration may exceed in public value the outcomes of the specific project on which we worked together.[6]

The benefits and costs of collaboration suggest that when we do our stakeholder analysis (Sect. 2.2.3) and determine an appropriate mode of working with these stakeholders, we should apply cost–benefit analysis thinking (Sect. 3.3.2), weigh the benefits against the costs and not assume that collaboration is the answer to everything.

Table 6.1 provides a checklist adapted from a partnering practice guide prepared in 2009 by the Waitakere City Council in Auckland, New Zealand.[7] We can use this to support decision-making about when to collaborate and when not to collaborate.

When we do decide to collaborate, we can manage some of the risks inherent in this by developing an explicit, written agreement. This might record, for example:

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[6] On the promise and pitfalls of collaboration in public service delivery, see further Kekez et al. (Eds.) (2019).

[7] Waitakere City Council was amalgamated into the Auckland "super city" in 2010 and this resource is no longer available online.

- Who the parties are to the agreement—i.e., the authorising environment and political mandate (cf. Section 3.2.3.1);
- What we want to achieve together, why and by when—both in terms of a long-term vision and specific, time-limited objectives that each agency is able to commit to;
- What each partner wants to get out of working together in this way;
- A work plan that specifies who will do what, why, where, how, by when (5W1H, Sect. 4.2.1.2);
- Governance and decision-making procedures, including acknowledgement of which sorts of decisions must be referred back to the partners' governing bodies;
- Rules of engagement—expected behaviours and communications protocols;
- Funding and other resourcing arrangements, including secretariat and executive support and staff secondments;
- How and when success will be measured and reported;
- Ownership of intellectual property that emerges from the collaboration;
- Disputes resolution and processes for partners to exit the collaboration, and for new partners to enter it;
- Risks, and how these will be managed and mitigated; and
- The date of the agreement, and when and how it will be reviewed, revised, renewed or terminated.[8]

6.2.2 Gifting and Gaining

Working together with others goes best when everyone involved is clear about their own interests and values, and what they want to get out of it. Collaborating effectively requires assertive negotiation of our respective interests. We should not confuse playing nicely with others with being a push-over.

This is not straightforward when we are committed to creating public value in the policy advice role. The interests of the various parties include our values, norms, ideas and ideals. And determining what is, or is not, in the public interest requires more than a simple aggregation or reconciliation of current interests. It requires us to factor in our common and divergent interests over the long run and all things considered, including the interests of persons who are not yet born (Sects. 3.2.2, 3.2.3).

A distinctive New Zealand contribution to collaboration is the idea and practice of "gifting and gaining". In 1995 a group of concerned local Fiordland users and community representatives formed the Guardians of Fiordland's Fisheries Inc. (Fiordland Marine Guardians, 2018). The Guardians included commercial and

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[8] See further the N.Z. Government's Kia Tūtahi Relationship Accord Engagement Guide (N.Z. Department of Internal Affairs, 2016).

recreational fishers, charter boat and tourism operators, marine scientists, environmentalists, community representatives and the South Island iwi (tribe), Ngāi Tahu. The Guardians' vision was "that the quality of Fiordland's marine environment and fisheries, including the wider fishery experience, be maintained or improved for future generations to use and enjoy" (ibid.). Guided by this vision, they developed the Fiordland Marine Conservation Strategy.

In agreeing to proposals for the integrated management of the Fiordland marine environment, stakeholder groups relinquished short-term benefits and advantages in the interests of ensuring the quality and long-term, sustainable management of the marine environment and fisheries. The Guardians referred to this process as "gifts and gains" (Carey, 2004).

The concept was subsequently picked up by Te Korowai o Te Tai ō Marokura, the Kaikōura Coastal Marine Guardians, who developed the Kaikōura Coastal Marine Strategy 2012 and "applied a philosophy of gifts and gains where each stakeholder group has gifted concessions to sustain the integrity of the whole resource for the future" (Te Korowai, 2012, p. 1).

Gifting and gaining is different from the sort of politics that aggregates (does the numbers) and goes with the majority. It is different from win-lose and even win–win styles of negotiation and collective problem-solving. The gifts involve real concessions by individuals and stakeholder groups for the sake of long-term gains that will accrue to the public at large, and to the natural environment of which we are a part. There is neither promise nor guarantee of direct, long-term gain to those who gift these concessions. The gifting is for the sake of generations to come, as expressed in Ngāi Tahu's tribal whakataukī (proverb): *Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri, ā muri ake nei*—"for us and for those who come after us".[9]

Collaborative governance processes in the Canterbury Water Management Strategy similarly involve gifting and gaining. The Strategy's vision is: "To enable present and future generations to gain the greatest social, economic, recreational and cultural benefits from our water resources within an environmentally sustainable framework" (Canterbury Mayoral Forum, 2009, p. 6; Eppel, 2015). This has required the various interests that come together in water catchment zone committees to gift and gain.

Whether gifting and gaining is ultimately effective largely depends on the willingness of decision-makers in mainstream political processes to respect, adopt and implement recommendations arrived at through collaborative governance processes. If regulators split collaboration from governance and fail to implement recommendations arrived at through gifts and gains, interest groups can eventually give up and walk away from the collaboration.

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[9] On implications of this for Ngāi Tahu's participation in public policy-making, see Tumahai & Harding (2021).

6.2.3 Policy Advising in the Long-Term Public Interest

I have emphasised throughout that the public interest is something to consider over time, and that prudent, anticipatory governance for the long term requires correction for a presentist bias in public policy-making (Boston, 2016a, 2016b, 2017; DeLeo, 2016; Mazey & Richardson, 2021). It requires us to factor in enduring human interests and values in ways that keep ethics alive and well in policy and politics.

Policy managers and their teams need to plan and manage their workflow in ways that create durable policy advice, build capability and protect resource for more than here-and-now responsiveness to current policy issues (Nixon, 2016). As a framework for doing this, Scott and Baehler (2010, pp. 215–27) propose an Australia-New Zealand policy hexagon based on a typology developed by Mayer et al. (2004) in the Dutch policy system.

Figure 6.2 illustrates the high-level elements of Scott and Baehler's hexagon. They suggest (p. 216) that a different version of their hexagon might be constructed for each jurisdiction. I would go further and suggest that policy managers work with their teams to create a customised framework of tasks and responsibilities within their own agency context and review this annually to shape and refresh work
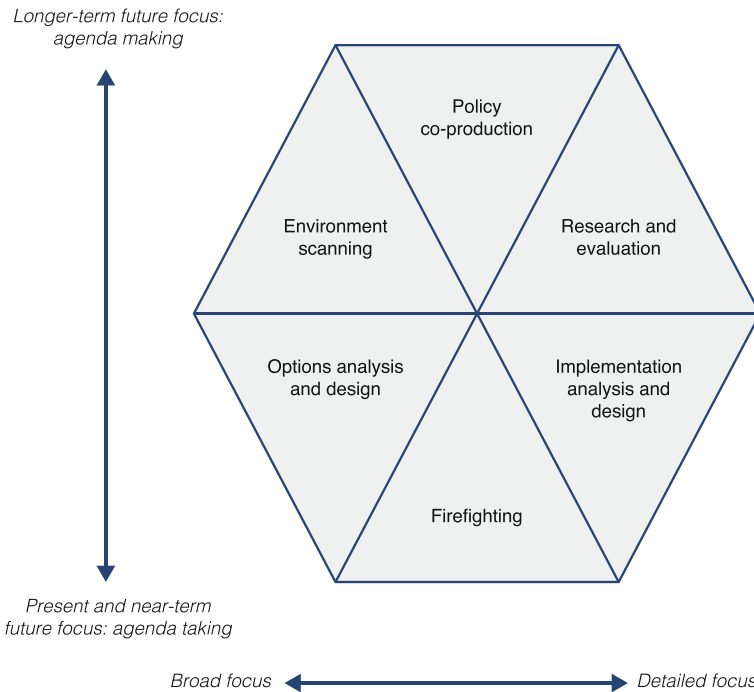
Fig. 6.2 The Australia-New Zealand policy hexagon. Adapted from Scott and Baehler (2010, p. 216)

priorities and renew commitment to creating long-term public value (Sect. 3.2.3). This is all the more important if there has been a change in governance—for example, when we have a new minister or the government changes.

The strategic policy team I worked in at the Canterbury Regional Council did this. Within an overarching purpose of supporting regional leadership, and taking account of changes and developments in governance, we focused our activities on three overlapping categories:

- React and respond;
- Inform, relate and report; and
- Build capability and develop new thinking.

Each year we reviewed our activities in each category and revised our priorities, generally assigning the highest priority to activities in the overlaps between the three categories. We then checked that the assignment of roles, responsibilities and resources across the team would achieve our objectives for the next 12 months.

A Strategic Policy Toolkit developed by the Australian government provides another framework to remind us of dimensions of policy advising in the long-term public interest. The original resource appears to have disappeared into cyberspace. Table 6.2 reproduces the main elements of the framework as I have adapted and used it.

The framework reminds us at every point to think beyond our immediate context and the demands of the present moment. While the vast bulk of public policy-making is incremental and iterative, the framework encourages us to prepare for uncertainty and unpredictable disruptions to the status quo (Sect. 1.1) and to consider opportunities for transformative change (Sect. 3.3.1; Matthews, 2016). It reminds us of our duty to facilitate deliberation and deepen the practice of democracy (Sects. 1.2, 3.2.3.3, 5.2). It acknowledges that policy-making involves a great deal of argument and that we need to communicate clearly and persuasively (Chap. 5). It prompts policy managers to commit time to policy evaluation and post-project review (Sect. 5.2.3), and to invest in ongoing staff development so policy advisors effectively support anticipatory governance in the long-term public interest.

6.3   Process, Tools and Techniques

I have argued that in practice, effective policy advising is less about cycles, stages and steps, and more about relationships, integrity and communication. Or, put differently, effective policy advising is at least as much about mindsets and mandates as it is about methods (Weimer & Vining, 2016, p. 24).

A mindset is an established set of attitudes and values—an habitual way of thinking and reacting that predisposes us to interpret situations and respond in a particular way. Mindsets are like automatic settings on a camera—they free us up to "point and shoot" (Bromell, 2016). At worst, a mindset can degenerate into

Table 6.2 Dimensions of policy advising in the long-term public interest (adapted from the Australian government's Strategic Policy Toolkit)

A strategic policy framework	
Longer-term horizons	• Think beyond the next incremental decision
	• Position governance for the future through actions today
Holistic perspective	• Think beyond agency silos
	• Consider issues from whole-of-government, whole-of-society perspectives
Underlying problems	• Focus on causes, not symptoms
	• Listen, then ask (and answer) the right questions
Innovative and creative solutions	• Consider radical ideas for transformational change
	• Borrow ideas, approaches and solutions from other domains and jurisdictions
Strong evidence base	• Apply the most robust analysis to the best available evidence
	• Turn data into information to support decision-making
Shape the future debate	• Create space for new debates and discussions
Inclusively engage stakeholders	• Understand and account for diverse views, to ensure well-informed advice and innovative solutions
Plan to implement	• Connect policy to service delivery
	• Implement change through the whole delivery system
	• Plan to manage implementation risks
Communicate compellingly	• Communicate in a clear, concise and logical fashion that is persuasive to your audience
Multi-disciplinary perspective	• "Inter-systems" thinking—think beyond any particular portfolio or disciplinary perspective

prejudice or a cripplingly narrow way of experiencing and responding to the world. (Certain mindsets can set fanatics on a trajectory of literal point and shoot.) But at best, mindsets make us more efficient by allowing us to repeat what works almost intuitively, based on our previous experience.

An apprenticeship as a policy advisor involves cultivating mindsets and skills to support decision-makers with incremental social problem-solving. The implication is that effectiveness in a policy advice role involves a process of being and becoming, as much as a process of learning how to do stuff.

Section 6.3.1 elaborates on an idea first introduced in Table 1.3 that effective policy advisors can be characterised by what we know, what we do and how we are. Specifically, effective policy advisors are open and approachable, play nicely with others and are skilled at creating collaborations that work.

Section 6.3.2 acknowledges that politics can be a dirty game. Public servants in policy advice roles need to cultivate practised skills in scheming virtuously.

Section 6.3.3 continues the theme of ethics and public policy and expands on ethical competencies for public service introduced in Sect. 1.5.

6.3.1   "Plays Nicely with Others"

Working together in the public interest requires policy advisors to function effectively within and across organisational teams. It also requires skills in relationship management in complex networks across organisational boundaries, and the ability to work well with partner organisations that may have divergent, even conflicting, interests and different cultures, management mandates and ways of doing things.

Rosemary O'Leary reflected in a workshop with local government policy advisors in Canterbury, New Zealand: "Effective collaboration is deeply dependent upon the skills of officials and managers. You are only as good as the person who represents you at the table".

O'Leary referred to a 2007 survey of 247 global executives by the Center for Creative Leadership (Criswell & Martin, 2007). Based on the sample, over 97% of executives surveyed believe leaders in their organisation must collaborate to succeed, but only 47% of 115 executives believed leaders in their organisations are actually good at it (ibid., pp. 8–9). The report identified authenticity as "the next celebrity". A participant in Rosemary's workshop commented that an "ego-off button" helps! This is particularly the case when we need to lead from behind (Sect. 3.3.3), exercising leadership when we are not in charge.

What kind of person do we need to be or become, in order to work well together in the public interest? In 2012, O'Leary and Gerard surveyed 1417 local government staff in the United States on their experience of working across boundaries. Their responses identified the following individual attributes for effective collaboration in descending order of priority: open-minded, unselfish, patient, trustworthy, self-confident, risk-oriented, flexible, honest, persistent and diligent, goal-oriented, empathetic, respectful, diplomatic, decisive, self-aware, friendly and with a sense of humour (O'Leary, 2014; O'Leary & Gerard, 2013).

The implication is that public service is a profession, even a vocation, rather than a job. It demands being and becoming, not only doing. Becoming authentic as a public servant takes time, experience, conscious reflection and more than a few hard knocks. This is largely why a policy apprenticeship takes around ten years. We cannot master the art and craft of policy advising without also learning to master our own selves.

6.3.2   Scheming Virtuously

"Politics" and its adjective "political" refers to institutions, processes, methods and behaviours that govern (enable organised control over) or influence human social organisation. Politics particularly concerns the allocation, distribution and use of power, resources and status.

When we enter into the world of politics and policy-making, much is at stake. Politics involves contests over big ideas (Sect. 3.2.1). At best, it can be robust. At worst, it can be a dirty game. They say it helps to have sharp elbows or strong

knees. Politics is not a game for the weak-willed or the half-hearted. How might policy advisors operate authentically, and ethically, in this space?

John Rawls (1987) described the task of political philosophy in these words:

> The politician, we say, looks to the next election, the statesman to the next generation, and philosophy to the indefinite future…. Political philosophy is not mere politics: in addressing public culture it takes the longest view, looks to society's permanent historical and social conditions, and tries to mediate society's deepest conflicts. It hopes to uncover, and to help to articulate, a shared basis of consensus on a political conception of justice drawing upon citizens' fundamental intuitive ideas about their society and their place in it. (pp. 24–25)

What Rawls described as the task of political philosophy is a worthy, if demanding, aspiration for public servants in policy advice roles. Creating public value in the long-term public interest (Sects. 3.2.2, 3.2.3) requires us to balance two conflicting impulses.

On the one hand, when we embrace public service as a profession, we want to make a difference. We want to get better results, improve social, economic and environmental outcomes and do what we can to leave the world at least a little better and fairer than we found it (Sect. 4.2.3). Many of us have a strong sense of urgency about that. We think things could be better than they are and we do not want to become either complacent about or complicit with the status quo.

On the other hand, we need to remember, and never forget, our place in the constitutional scheme of things (Sect. 2.2.2). For the most part, our role is to advise, not to decide. And we often need to look beyond the here and now, to plan and work for durable policy into an indefinite future.

A policy manager once told me I had to learn to play a long game. He made the comment in passing and I doubt he realises the impact his comment had on my subsequent career. When I see colleagues getting in a flap, or I myself feel worked up about something, I have learned to ask myself a circuit-breaker question: "Is anyone going to die?" I do this to stop taking myself too seriously, and to avoid getting hooked into the crisis of the moment in ways that take my eye off our strategic goals and objectives.

In policy advice roles, we often have to cease and desist until, for example:

- There is an election or a cabinet re-shuffle, and we have a new minister;
- A chief executive or senior manager moves on and new leadership brings different opportunities;
- The budget is back in surplus and we have some fiscal leeway for new initiatives;
- There is a crisis, to which we just happen to have a potential response in our back pocket; or
- New evidence comes to light that enables us to construct more compelling arguments (Sect. 5.2).

Gilles Paquet coined the term "scheming virtuously" (Paquet, 2009). Nicholas Charney has picked the concept up and explored practical implications of scheming

virtuously for public servants who want to renew and create change in the public service without ending up a dead hero. Charney (2008) suggests that:

- *Scheming* means "given to making plans, sly, crafty".
- *Virtuous* means "conforming to moral and ethical principles".
- So *scheming virtuously* means "making crafty plans that conform to moral and ethical principles" (p. 6).[10]

Charney urges us not to keep our heads down. Instead, public service renewal depends on keeping our heads up to look for opportunities (not just problems) and take on new challenges. His handbook (pp. 14–19) provides the following hints for scheming virtuously in the public service.

Get motivated—find your inspiration, then celebrate it with others and make it contagious: "Nothing stops innovation and stewardship like indifference" (p. 14).

Marshal support—inside and outside your organisation.

Identify blockages—and if something does not work, do not keep doing it.

Isolate and influence—first approach key influencers who see the value of what you are doing; isolate the roadblocks and keep them out of the equation for as long as possible.

Gather evidence—support your argument, use your networks and find similar initiatives that others are implementing elsewhere. Present your case for change in a compelling way that aligns with your organisation's vision or mission. "In the end, you need to build a case without completely dismantling your relationships—remember this is most likely an iterative process, not a one-shot deal" (p. 16).

Follow the rules (whenever possible)—understand the system you work within, and whenever possible feed your ideas into the system through the proper channels and in the proper format.

Don't underestimate small victories—big victories are elusive on long-term time frames. Score early and often, and leverage the sum of small victories to get more people on side.

Relish victories (privately)—do not let the need for personal recognition overshadow the value of the work itself.

Build a narrative—work culture is an aggregate of the stories people tell. Change the stories to change the culture. Listen to and pass on others' stories when they represent the culture you want to create.

Bend the rules (when you want to break them)—sometimes the only way to change something is to bend the rules a little. But if you are going to bend the rules, you had better produce results—and be willing to live with the consequences. Maintain self-respect for what you decide and do.

Act now—move beyond the history of the organisation.

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[10] Cf. my reflection in Sect. 1.5 on the twin gates at the Temple of Literature in Hanoi, Vietnam—the Attained Talent Gate and the Accomplished Virtue Gate. Public servants in policy advice roles need to cultivate virtue, as well as talent and skills.

Charney (2008) concludes:

> Choose engagement over avoidance. Accept consequences and take risks.… End learned helplessness…. Have the courage, the judgment and humility to get involved, to take risks, to stand on points of principle, call nonsense by its name, and temper all of that with good judgment. (p. 19)

While having a big ego seems to be a prerequisite for the job, politicians are mostly ordinary women and men performing extraordinary duties and responsibilities. Our job as public servants is to support them. Bringing ethics into policy and politics is not the responsibility of politicians alone—those who advise them also need to cultivate ethical competencies for public service, and ensure that when we scheme, we do so virtuously.

6.3.3   Ethical Competencies for Public Service

Section 1.5 introduced four ethical competencies for public service, drawing on Kenneth Winston's (2008, 2010) work at the Kennedy School of Government: civility, fidelity to the long-term public interest, respect for citizens as responsible agents, and prudence.[11]

Civility is more than good manners. Another word for it is "publicity" in the sense of engaging in reasoned argument that is persuasive and accountable to a diverse public. As Baehler (2005) expresses it:

> Citizens (including officials) who propose policies that involve coercion of their fellow citizens ought to refrain from using non-public reasons to support those proposals, out of respect for each other and the democratic system. Public reasons are understood as the kinds of reasons that other reasonable people might accept as reasonable without necessarily having to agree with them. (p. 6)

I have explored implications of civility for the theory and practice of policy advising in Chaps. 4 and 5 (cf. Bromell, 2019, Chap. 2).[12]

Fidelity to the long-term public interest means faithfully serving the government of the day without being captured by it or losing longer-term perspectives inherent in being public servants, not only government servants. It requires "a sense of purpose that transcends the present and serves as a sense of direction in shaping public policies to improve the long-term well-being of society" (Gawthrop, 1984, pp. 120–21). It demands policy advice that is responsible as well as responsive (Sect. 4.3.3).

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[11] In a book on *Ethical competencies for public leadership* (Bromell, 2019), I propose six ethical competencies for public leadership, which I state in the form of personal resolutions: *When exercising public leadership with people who want and value different things, I will be … civil, diplomatic, respectful, impartial, fair and prudent*.

[12] On a crisis of civility in U.S. politics, see Boatright et al. (2019).

I have discussed implications of fidelity to the long-term public interest, particularly in Chaps. 3, 4 and Sect. 6.2.3.

Respect for citizens as responsible agents requires us to rein in technocratic and paternalistic instincts that assume we know best. Amartya Sen (1985, 1999, 2009, Chap. 13) argues that both the well-being aspect and the agency aspect of persons are relevant to the assessment of states of affairs and actions:

> Whereas well-being freedom is freedom to achieve something in particular, viz., well-being, the idea of agency freedom is more general, since it is not tied to any one type of aim. Agency freedom is freedom to achieve whatever the person, as a responsible agent, decides he or she should achieve (Sen, 1985, pp. 203–04).

Respect for citizens as responsible agents requires skill in situating public policy between power and rationality (Arts & Van Tatenhove, 2004), and managing increasing demands for subsidiarity, networked governance and citizen co-production (Alford, 2009, 2011). It underlies my insistence throughout this book that as public policy advisors, we must know our place in the constitutional scheme of things, and respect and improve the democratic processes by which decisions are made.

Prudence is the exercise of practical wisdom in concrete situations, informed by critical reflection on accumulated experience. Prudence goes beyond being careful (prudent) in our own self-interest (Campbell, 2010). It is a virtue exercised by applying practical as well as technical reason to incremental social problem-solving.

- *Technical reason* is the rational selection of instrumental means to achieve given ends—for example, using cost–benefit analysis (Sect. 3.3.2).
- *Practical reason* concerns the acceptance or rejection of norms, especially norms for action, whose validity can be supported or opposed with public reasons (Habermas, 1974, p. 3).

Practical reason of the prudential sort factors emotions and values into decision-making, as well as evidence (Sect. 4.2.2). Robert Bellah (1982) argues that the purpose of prudential practice "is not to produce or control anything but to discover through mutual discussion and reflection between free citizens the most appropriate ways, under present conditions, of living the ethically good life" (p. 36). Prudence draws on who we are and what we have become, and on our cumulative experience to make strategic, contingent judgements in the full awareness of moral ambiguity, the fallibility of human planning and the inevitability of unintended consequences (Winston, 2010, p. 5; cf. Uhr, 2005, Chap. 3).

Much of what I aspire to as a policy advisor is captured in Stephen Toulmin's (2001) encouragement to *reasonableness* (cf. Section 4.2.1).

> The future belongs not so much to the pure thinkers who are content—at best—with optimistic or pessimistic slogans; it is a province, rather, for reflective practitioners who are

ready to act on their ideals. Warm hearts allied with cool heads seek a middle way between the extremes of abstract theory and personal impulse. The ideals of practical thinkers are more realistic than the optimistic daydreams of simple-minded calculators, who ignore the complexities of real life, or the pessimistic nightmares of their critics, who find these complexities a source of despair. (p. 214)

I cannot offer processes, tools or techniques to become an ethically competent policy advisor. I have argued elsewhere (Bromell, 2010, 2019, Chap. 8) that ethical competence in public life can, however, be supported in public management by staff recruitment and induction practices, an apprenticeship model of training policy advisors (Sect. 1.4), and above all the exercise and modelling of ethical leadership by chief executives and their senior staff.

Recruiting a workforce with diverse professional backgrounds and academic training in arts and humanities as well as soft and hard sciences helps protect against a group-think application of technocratic reason to public policy-making.

Staff induction processes should include explicit discussion of public sector ethics, codes of conduct and the employing agency's own purpose and values. Too frequently, induction to ethics in public policy fails to go beyond asking new employees to sign a document certifying that they have received and read a copy of the code of conduct. This is backside-covering human resource management of the worst sort.

Ethics can be taught, in the sense that policy advisors can learn to think more reflectively and systematically about professional practice. Post-project review (Sect. 5.2.3) is an opportunity for managers and their staff to do this, within a continuing process of thinking together about doing the right thing (and the right thing to do).

As Noel Preston (1994) notes, however, "The teaching of ethics to those determined to be corrupt or unethical is unlikely to make a difference" (p. 6). If we concentrate only on the individual's behaviour or focus narrowly on "risk and assurance" in the prevention and detection of unethical behaviour, the impact on public service ethics will be limited (Rhode, 2006, pp. 34–35). Rather, we need to socialise and institutionalise ethics within the structure, relationships and distribution of power within public sector organisations (Preston, 1994, p. 8; Sampford, 1994).

Ethics is caught as well as taught. As I undertook my own policy apprenticeship, trusting relationships with senior colleagues provided me with safe space and sounding boards for critical reflection on doing the right thing as a public servant. This suggests organising policy teams in ways that maximise formal and informal contact, coaching and mentoring between "old hands" and less-experienced staff—and not so over-loading principal analysts and advisors with project work that they have little time or opportunity to contribute to policy capability building in this way.

Ultimately, however, what makes or breaks public sector ethics is the tone created by chief executives and their senior staff. What staff remember, of course, is not what we say and do on the good days when we are performing at our best, but how we conduct ourselves when the going gets tough. Deborah Rhode

(2006) reminds us that "No corporate mission statement or ceremonial platitudes can counter the impact of seeing leaders withhold crucial information, play favorites with promotion, stifle dissent, implement corrosive reward structures, or pursue their own self-interest at the organization's expense" (p. 39). She particularly urges senior managers to solicit diverse perspectives and dissenting views, because a defining feature of moral leadership is a willingness to ask and to hear uncomfortable questions.

Moral leadership in public service goes beyond responsiveness to responsibility (Sect. 4.3.3). It is not narrowly or merely ethical—it ventures beyond doing no wrong, to doing the right thing (Hanson, 2006, pp. 291–92; Lilla, 1981). Exercising moral leadership in public life requires us to be and become our best selves.

6.4   Concluding Remarks

Some years ago, I was struck by a comment by Andrew Sharp (2002, p. 9) that he intended to "refine and complicate" our thinking. The best academic writing does that.

A great deal of public policy advising also needs to refine and complicate our own and others' thinking. We communicate as clearly as we can what the problem (or opportunity) is and options to address it, but we do not confuse simple with simplistic. Our arguments are as complicated as they need to be, and we frankly acknowledge that if a policy problem is worth addressing at all, it is unlikely to be solved easily.

In this book, I set out to refine and complicate thinking about the art and craft of policy advising. Becoming effective as a policy advisor is not as simple as following a textbook process, in ordered stages and steps. It depends more on relationships, integrity and communication. It is less about defining answers and more about crafting the right questions to facilitate incremental social problem-solving. The questions we ask, and how we go about asking them, is ultimately what drives good policy-making.

The challenges of doing this well have driven me to read, learn, discuss with others and work out for myself the theory, process, tools and techniques I have introduced in this book. Not all of the material I have introduced will be relevant to the tasks and challenges you currently face as a policy advisor, but I hope you find it to be a useful reference book—something to come back to when your practice throws difficulties at you that provoke new and different questions.

Above all, I hope I have conveyed my passion for public service as a profession and a job worth doing well. The policies on which we give advice affect the lives of a great number of our fellow citizens and have an enduring impact. Supporting decision-makers as honest brokers of policy alternatives is a privilege and a responsibility.

More than that, policy advising creates opportunities to exercise moral leadership and make a difference for good. Who we are, and how we work with others

in the public interest, becomes at least as important as any analytical technique we can perform. Our integrity persuades as much as our arguments.

The public service needs good people. Not the sort who come in telling us how clever and experienced they are and yes, of course they can do the job. Rather, the sorts of people who:

- Are open and willing to learn;
- Can be patient with a lengthy apprenticeship, and play a long game;
- Think and communicate clearly;
- Work well with others;
- Are inclined to influence change through evolution rather than revolution; and
- Can strike a balance between "good enough for now" and ambition to leave the world at least a little better and fairer than we found it.

6.5   For Reflection

- Think of stakeholders you work with. Where does your agency's relationship with them sit along the Competition—Collaboration continuum?
- How does your agency decide whether and when to collaborate with others?
- Review a memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement your agency has with one or more stakeholders. Does it cover the points raised in Sect. 6.2.1.2? Make some notes for yourself, for the next time you need to draft an interagency agreement.
- How do you apply gifting and gaining in your interpersonal relationships?
- How do you currently allocate time at work to reading, research and futures-shaping thinking?
- On a scale of 1–10, how do you rate yourself for each of these attributes for effective collaboration: open-minded, unselfish, patient, trustworthy, self-confident, risk-oriented, flexible, honest, persistent and diligent, goal-oriented, empathetic, respectful, diplomatic, decisive, self-aware, friendly, sense of humour?
- What do you want to change about how your agency provides policy advice?
- How might you scheme virtuously with others to initiate and achieve change?
- What do you understand to be the difference between ethics and morals?
- What does it mean for you to exercise ethically competent leadership in public life?
- Why do you want to be a policy advisor? Is it a job (perhaps as a stepping stone to something else), or do you see it as a profession—or a vocation?
- How might you choose whether to pursue a career as a public servant, a politician or a political philosopher?

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