



Participatory Policy Analysis

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**assumptions, assumptions....everywhere...
but do they still 'hold water' ???**

- the rages of a policy analyst -

**the positivist assumptions of
determinism and objectivism
are responsible for:**

- **the non-sense of the 'fact-value dichotomy'**
- **the non-sense of 'evidence-based policy making'**
- **the 'It's got to have numbers' non-sense**
- **the non-sense of 'Risk Benefit Analyses for NIMBYs',
biotechnology risks, and other policy failures**

**⇒ are we the approaching 21st century policy
challenges with the right mindset?**

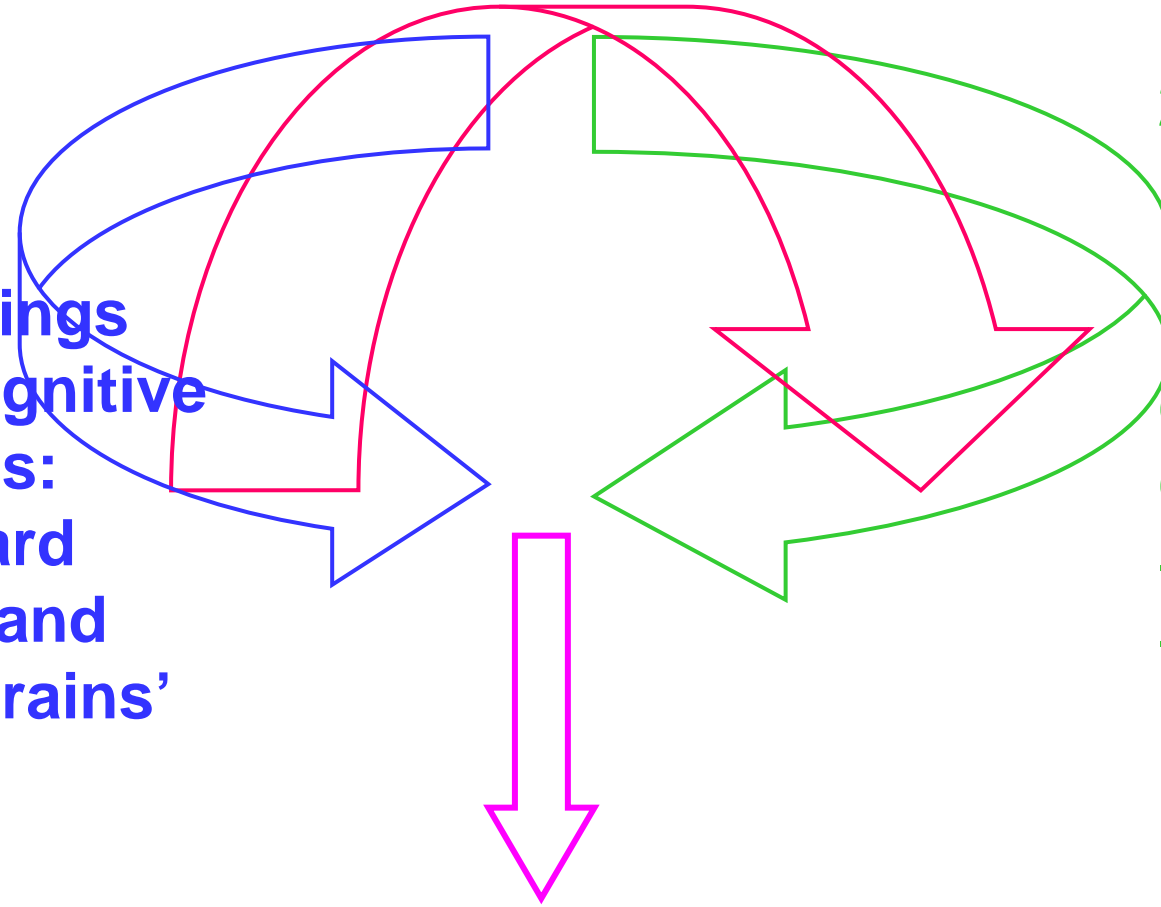
Topics

**1. Philosophical assumptions of science and knowledge:
positivism and post-positivism**

**2. Participatory
Policy Analysis
models: How?**

**Consensus
Conference
- in Denmark &
- New Zealand**

**3. Warnings
from cognitive
sciences:
'cupboard
brains' and
'fuzzy brains'**



Ready for 21st century policy analysis?

1. Philosophical assumptions of science and knowledge: positivism and post-positivism

“It's got to have numbers. If it doesn't, it won't be accepted. That's just anecdotal evidence and doesn't have any value. The evaluation was done by a bunch of qualitative researchers exercising their own opinions and wasn't much use to anyone. It's got to be measurable. What can be measured, matters. When we say it's 'evidence-based' we mean evidence and analysis based on the canons of science.”

Bill Ryan (2007). “Elephant in the room: The embeddedness of positivism in public sector practice”. Paper presented at the conference paper: QuallT 2007 – Qualitative Research: From the Margins to the Mainstream.

1. Philosophical assumptions of science and knowledge: positivism and post-positivism

- **Positivism**: Newtonian, 17th century principles of science
 - **Objectivism** (the fact-value dichotomy; => the “Westminster model”)
 - **Determinism** (measurability => the ‘king treatment’ of quantitative methods, of economics),
- **Post positivist** principles: modern physics, 21st century sciences
 - (Einstein’s ‘General’) **Relativity**; constructedness of knowledge; **Contextuality**
 - **Uncertainties & in-determinacy** (quantum theory; the Uncertainty Principle of Heisenberg => probability functions)

For more, see: Morkol, G. (2001). “A new mind of policy analysis”. In VUW library.

1. Philosophical approaches to policy analysis

Who answers the “What should we do” question?

=> Different perspectives on policy analysis:

- **Positivism: the policy expert/adviser answers + scientists.** Quantitative research methods; Cost-Benefit analyses; economic models, “objective” (i.e. economic) evaluation criteria: social welfare, efficiency.
- **Post-positivism: citizens & stakeholders, NEXT TO the policy advisor.** Qualitative methods. “Optimal” rather than “best solutions” for wicked policy problems
=> Participatory Policy Analysis models (PPAs)

2. The focus and practical usefulness of PPA methods differ in terms of

Some names: Consensus Conferences; scenario workshops; 'Parables to policy'/ Narrative policy analysis; Simulations / Games; "Highlander Method"; Electronic Meeting Systems.

Questions to ask:

- 1) Who are the actors in the process and what is allowed to whom (competences)?
- 2) Activities / 'stages' in the policy analysis process addressed

2. The focus and practical usefulness of PPA methods differ in terms of

3) What 'flows' between actors?

What is being 'exchanged'? Three "things" can "flow":

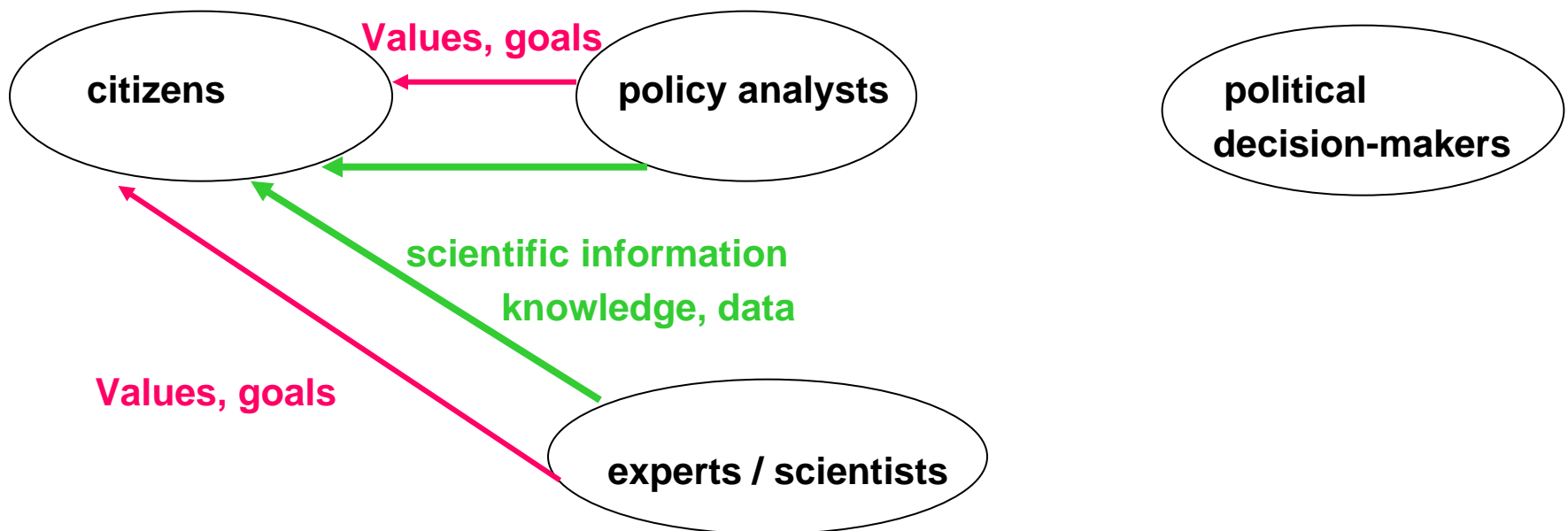
- knowledge/data/scientific findings;
- values / perceptions / insights / worries/ clarification questions / info on interests' priorities;
- policy recommendations.

4) What is the 'sense' of those flows – from which actor to which actor?

These are PPA '**matching questions**' and '**design questions**'. Critical for PPA successful application

The positivist Risk-Benefit Analysis method mapped into the framework (questions 3 and 4)

**Technocratic approach to the NIMBY problem –
“Hazardous wastes anyone?”**



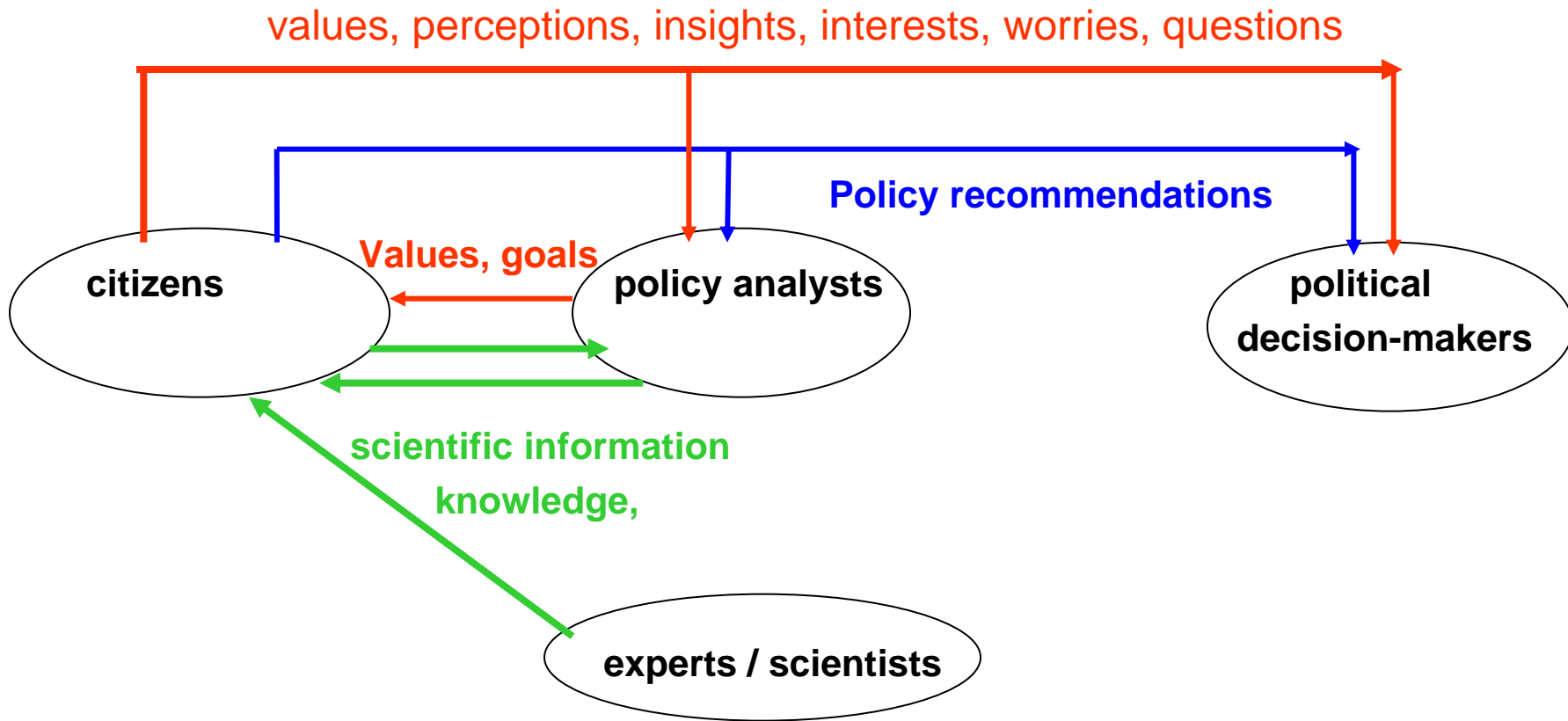
2. Consensus Conference in Denmark

CC refined in Denmark and used 22 times between 1997-2002.

The Consensus Conference Process:

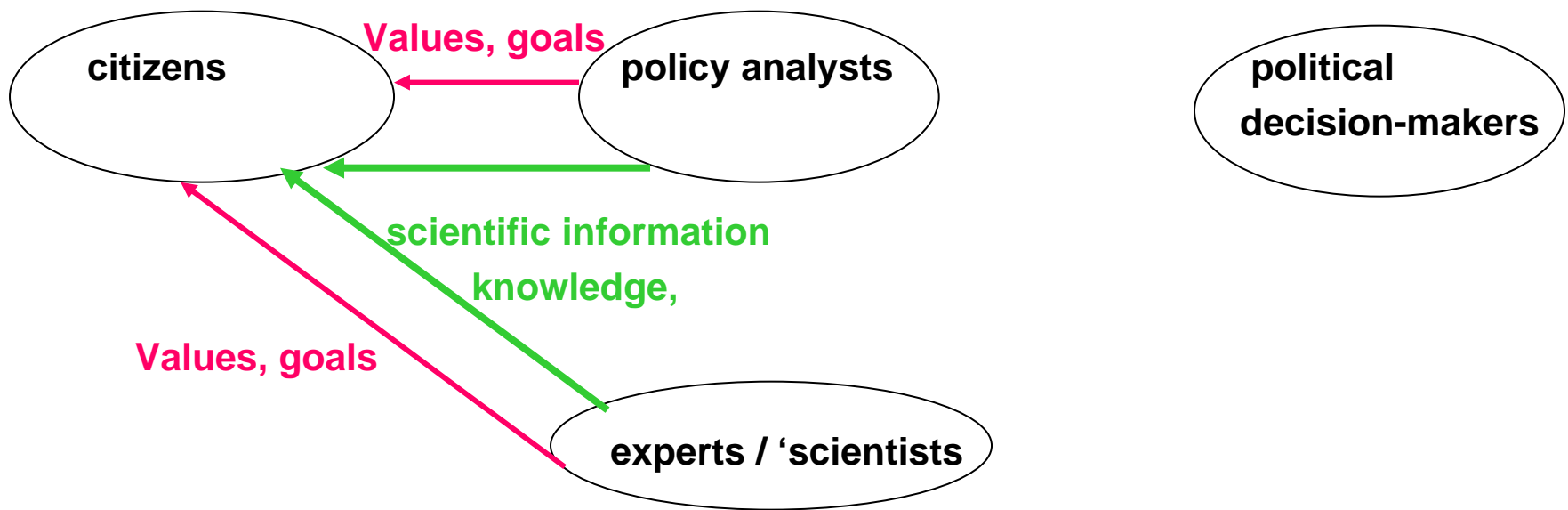
- Select Advisory Committee (AC = 8–10 impartial members)
- Recruit citizens' panel (typically 10 – 20 people)
- Set up a pool of experts (including scientists, ethicists; 12-15 members: **CHOSEN BY CITIZENS!!**)
- Citizens' panel preparation: governmental analysts + independent actors!!
- Selection of questions to be asked of experts: **CHOSEN BY CITIZENS!!**
- Consensus conference unfolding 3 – 4 days
- Final report and recommendations circulated to the media, public, policy analysts, or even politicians

2. Consensus Conference – as intended and used generally, and in Denmark



Application of CC on GMF – in New Zealand

- 1) Citizens were not asked to formulate policy recommendations
- 2) GMF was framed by organizers as “Knowledge uncertainty” type of problem.
Organizers’ real goal: public education and awareness raising
- 3) Focused on problem exploration only (no ‘alternative ‘options’, criteria’ etc)
- 4) ‘Things’ flow: mostly **knowledge/facts**; bits of “**values/perceptions/insights**”;
- 5) ‘Things’ flow in one sense only: ‘knowledge’ & ‘values’ TOWARDS citizens



2. Consensus conference – as applied in New Zealand:

2. What went wrong with CC design in New Zealand?

Method mismatch / misuse - organizer statement: “*Public understanding of science is important, it is a gap that needs to be filled, and this was a suitable process to try and fill the gap.*” (in Govan, 2003).

Poor design and biased ‘experts’ and Advisory Committee: pro-biotechnology. Problem framing by AC led the citizens’ panel to give the conclusion desired by AC (as in France!):

“*Scientists have an obligation to inform the public of their current research, not only via traditional research documents but in lay terms and more readily accessible literature. In this market driven age there is a need for science to sell itself and enhance its public image.*” (quote in Govan, 2003).

Sources for the CC in NZ case study:

- Govan, J. (2003) *Deploying the consensus conference in New Zealand: democracy and de-problematization*. *Public Understanding of Science*, 12, 4, 423-440. (Journal Article)
- Govan, J. (2002) *Citizens and Deficits: Problematic Paths toward Participatory Technology Assessment*. In S. Karner and B. Wieser (Ed.), *Conference Proceedings of the International Summer Academy on Technology Studies: Technology and the Public*. (75-84). Graz, Austria: IFF/IFZ. (Chapter in Book)

2. What went wrong with CC design in New Zealand?

“Leaving aside the fact that genetic engineering is a faster and more targeted technique of plant improvement than classical plant breeding, there is really no difference between the two techniques”

“Individuals and groups have rights to property. One must have respect for others and for what belongs to them. Ownership may confer rights to use property as one wishes. Ownership established in law is not always agreed to by others. History of plant breeding is of free access worldwide”

Statements from an “ethicist” (former biotechnology expert who later became a priest, and so could fill in the ethicist role)

2. What went wrong with CC design in New Zealand?

The Consensus Conference Process:

- Advisory Committee (A.C: **only pro-biotechnology analysts and scientists**)
- Scientists and ethicist: **chosen by A.C!! No citizens' choice**
- Selection of questions that experts should address: **AC influenced citizens** to squeeze out inconvenient questions
- No disagreements at all among scientists during conference, as it normally happens to generate debate
- Low / no interests from political actors in the process and outcomes

CC application in NZ had no real impact on the policy process regarding biotechnology and GMF regulations (Govan, 2003)

2. What went wrong with CC design in New Zealand?

Many factors influence the choice, design and success of PPA methods:

- level of training and experience of policy analysts with post-positivist approaches
- the institutional context and administrative culture
- lobby groups and the social status of scientists in society / level of respect for 'technocracy'
- level of political interest in genuinely engaging citizens rather than seeing them as 'objects' of governance

3. Warnings from cognitive sciences: 'cupboard brains' and 'fuzzy brains'

'Cupboard brains' were first =>

Positivism has an evolutionary advantage

=> the same for economic models and neo-liberalism

The 'post-positivist brain' is mostly 'fuzzy' =>

- PPA and 'climate change consequences' pose serious cognitive challenges to large segments of our societies

Martin Manning: in his life-long experience, the elderly and women seem to be the societal segments most concerned to climate change dangers

=> Yes Martin, cognitive science agrees with you:
'fuzzy brains' are dominant among them !!

=> **Would PPAs be most appealing for women & elderly ??**

3. Warnings from cognitive sciences: 'cupboard brains' and 'fuzzy brains'

The 'cupboard (part of) brain' fights back:

- SOG student confession: *I understand the background and benefits of PPAs, but I feel a strong attraction for structured, neat, positivist models like Intervention Logic, though I am aware of its black boxes and limitations*
- Einstein had difficulties accepting quantum theory...
- *Erwin Schrodinger* (you know...."Schrodinger's cat...") talking about the Uncertainty Principle of quantum theory
"I don't like it, and I'm sorry I ever had anything to do with it."

Ready for 21st century policy analysis?

swim or sink

.....is up to you.....

My next talk:

8 September 2010, Time: 12.15 - 13.15

Seminar Series of
Victoria Management School
(thanks for the invitation, VMS!):

**‘Neo-liberalism and Sustainable Tourism:
likely bedfellows?’**