Policy…:

1. What is policy?
2. Definitions
3. Cycle, square, or what…?
4. Logic & 'policy theory'

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What is policy?

- A document/report?

- Election promise?

- Statement of values and e...

- The budget papers?

- Any decision or action t... an area?

- Media statements?

- Unspoken rules and underlying ... done?

The actions of government and the intentions that determine those actions.
(Cochran *et al.* in Birkland, 2005: 18)

Diverse activities by different bodies are drawn together into stable and predictable patterns of action which (as often as not) come to be labelled 'policy'.
(Colebatch, 1998: x)

'Policy' is a general term used to describe a formal decision or plan of action adopted by an actor ... to achieve a particular goal ... 'Public policy' is a more specific term applied to a formal decision or a plan of action that has been taken by, or has involved, a state organisation.
(Richards and Smith, 2002: 1)

Whatever governments choose to do or not to do.
(Dye in Birkland, 2005: 18)

Decisions by governments to retain the status quo are just as much policy as are decisions to alter it.
(Howlett and Ramesh, 2003: 5)

Attention should not focus exclusively on decisions which produce change, but must also be sensitive to those which resist change and are difficult to observe.
(Smith in Hill, 2009: 15)

Discussions of policy analysis

Public policy is hard to research as it is a composite of different processes that cross-cut most branches of government and involve many decision-makers.
(John, 1998: 9)

Given the staggering complexity of the policy process, the analyst must find some way of simplifying the situation in order to have any chance of understanding it.
(Sabatier, 2007a: 4)

Are these (health) policies?

- **National Health and Hospital Reform Commission, Preventative Health Taskforce, Primary Health Care Strategy Reference Group**

- **COAG National Partnership Payments**

- **Ratifying the Kyoto Protocol**

- **Carbon Tax**

- **Having or abolishing a Minister for Water and Climate Change (and Energy Efficiency)**

- **The Millennium Development Goals**

- **Closing the Gap**

- **Social Inclusion Board**

Policy statements

- **Values and aspirations**
  - *e.g., Health for All by the year 2000*
- **Values, intent, and activities of public agencies**
  - *e.g., primary health care services will be coordinated through a community health improvement plan*
- **Values and routine practices**
  - *e.g., patients requiring urgent care will receive priority treatment; hospitals will be paid on the basis of casemix*

- **Policy statements can cover outcomes, processes, and inputs**

Policy definition

- A course of action adopted by an individual, group, or government, or the set of principles on which they are based

- Colloquially: the way things should be/are done around here

   (this seems similar to colloquial definition of 'culture')

Policy definition

Policy
is the expressed intent to
resolve an issue through
the allocation of
resources in a specified
time frame

Policy definition issues

Public policy – whatever governments choose to do and/or not to do?

Health policy = A course of action that affects the set of institutions, services, and funding arrangements in a health system (or that affects health risks and status in the community)?

Includes all policies within the health portfolio or all policies that affect health ?

Public health policy...

Includes healthcare policy and policies for health improvement?
Distinguish between system-level vs clinical level?

Depends on topic? (e.g., immunisation? Nutrition? Aboriginal health?
National registration of health practitioners? Private health insurance
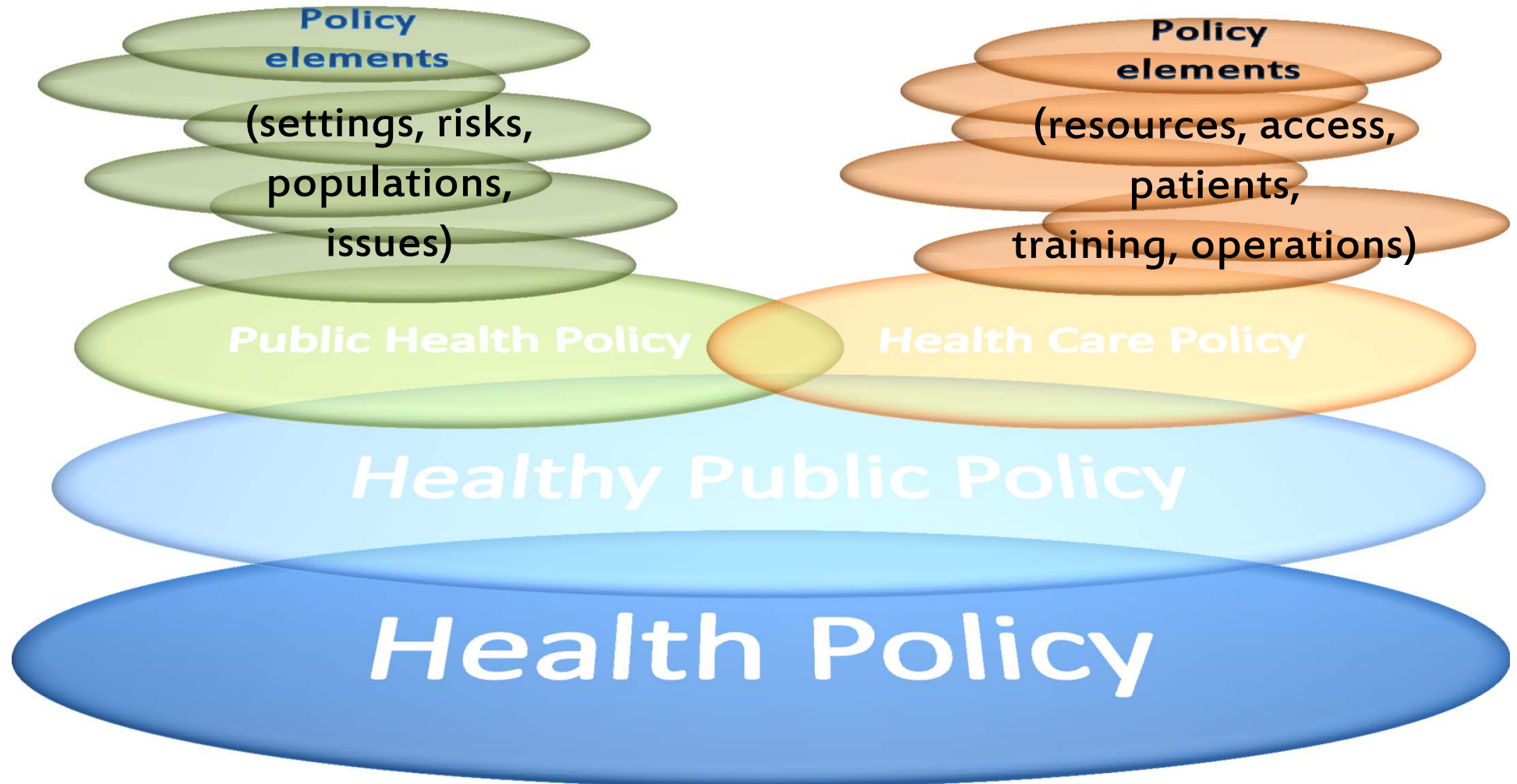rebates?)

Depends on responsible decision-maker? (Climate change? Social
inclusion?)

Depends on definition of public health? (e.g., A set of programs? An
approach to health system? A social enterprise – the organised effort by
society to protect and promote health, and prevent disease and
disability?)

Depends on purpose? (e.g., to improve the health of the population)

Public health policy...

Policy elements
(settings, risks, populations, issues)

Policy elements
(resources, access, patients, training, operations)

Public Health Policy

Health Care Policy

Healthy Public Policy

Health Policy

Public health policy...

Policy elements

(settings, risks, populations, issues)

Policy elements

(resources, access, patients, training, operations)

Public Health Policy

Health Care Policy

Healthy Public Policy

Health Policy

Health Policy

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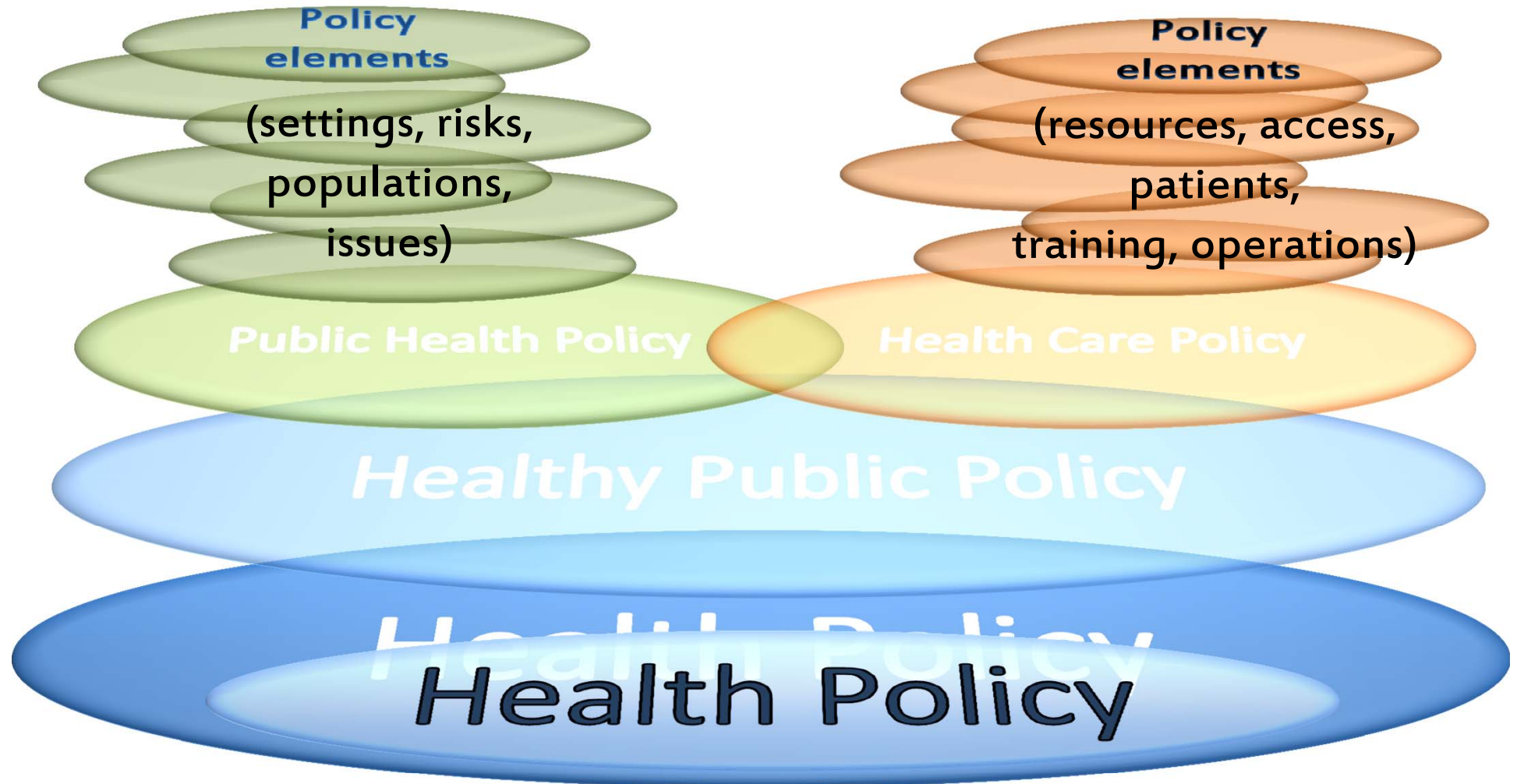
Attributes of policy

(Colebatch, 1998)

Multiple meanings and uses, multiple makers and users, cover different issues, made in different arenas, adopting different processes

All share similar attributes:

1. authority (endorsement by decision-maker),
2. expertise (knowledge of problems and what to do about it), and
3. order (system and consistency)
   (consider government as well as other institutions)

Attributes: authority

Final authority for a policy decision will rest with an identifiable person (a Government Minister) or group (the Cabinet)

There will be officials involved in the process of channeling policy matters to these people

There will be formal procedures for becoming involved in the process (for example, making submissions to select committees)

Attributes: expertise

The process involves the gathering of expertise

The pool of experts includes government officials, academics, business people, lobbyists and consultants

Other experts (policy analyst) are involved more directly in the process

Attributes: order

Policy involves the creation of a shared understanding

Creating this 'order' will involve dealing with the values of individuals and groups, and the perspectives of organisations

This interaction may challenge the assumptions and working practices of those concerned

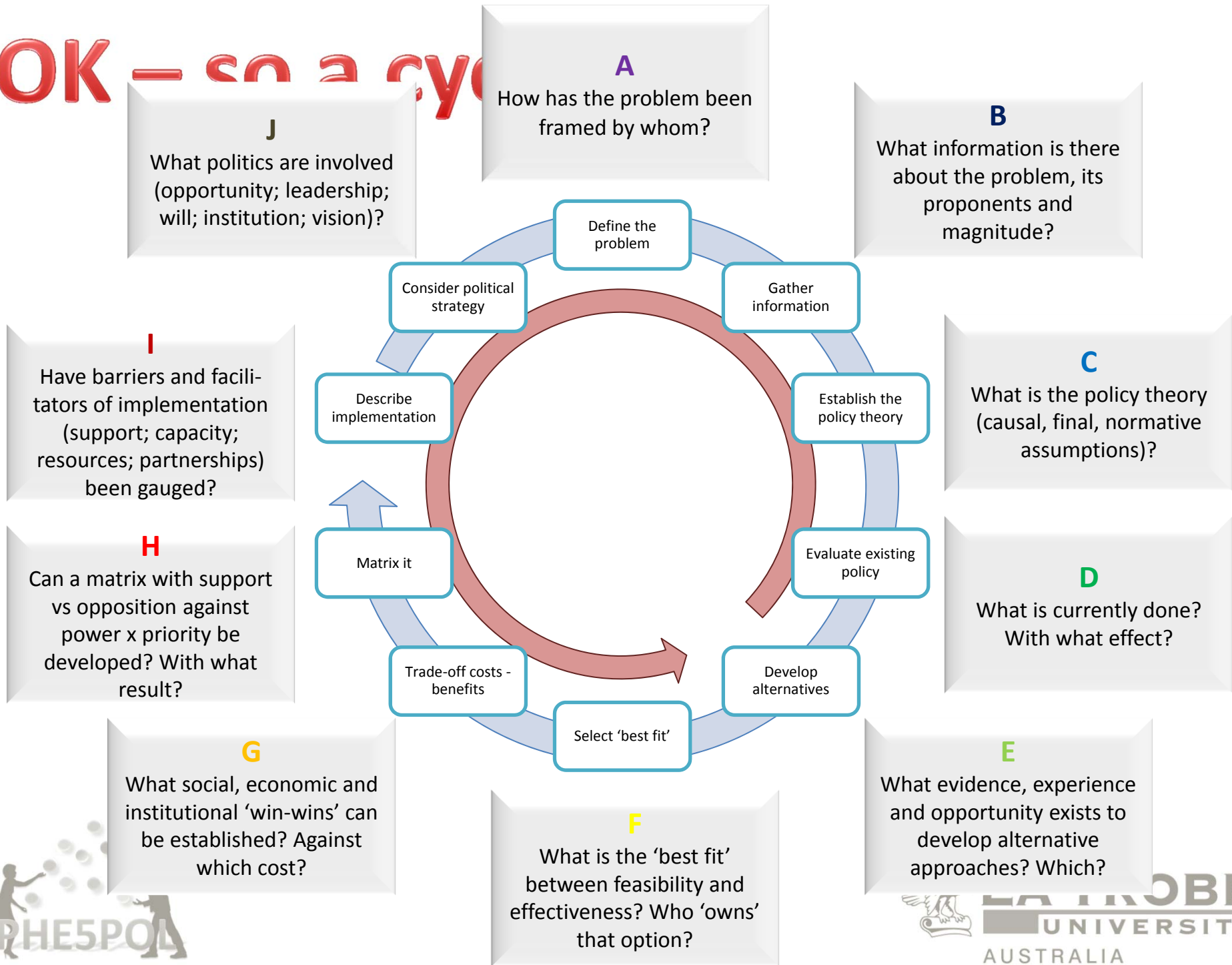PHE5POL

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Naïve stages heuristic

1. Problem identification and issue recognition – how issues get on the policy agenda
2. Policy formulation and policy decision – the making of policy
3. Policy implementation
4. Policy evaluation

1. Problem definition
2. Setting goals and objectives
3. Defining options and strategies
4. Assessing policy options
5. Selecting and adopting policy option
6. Implementation
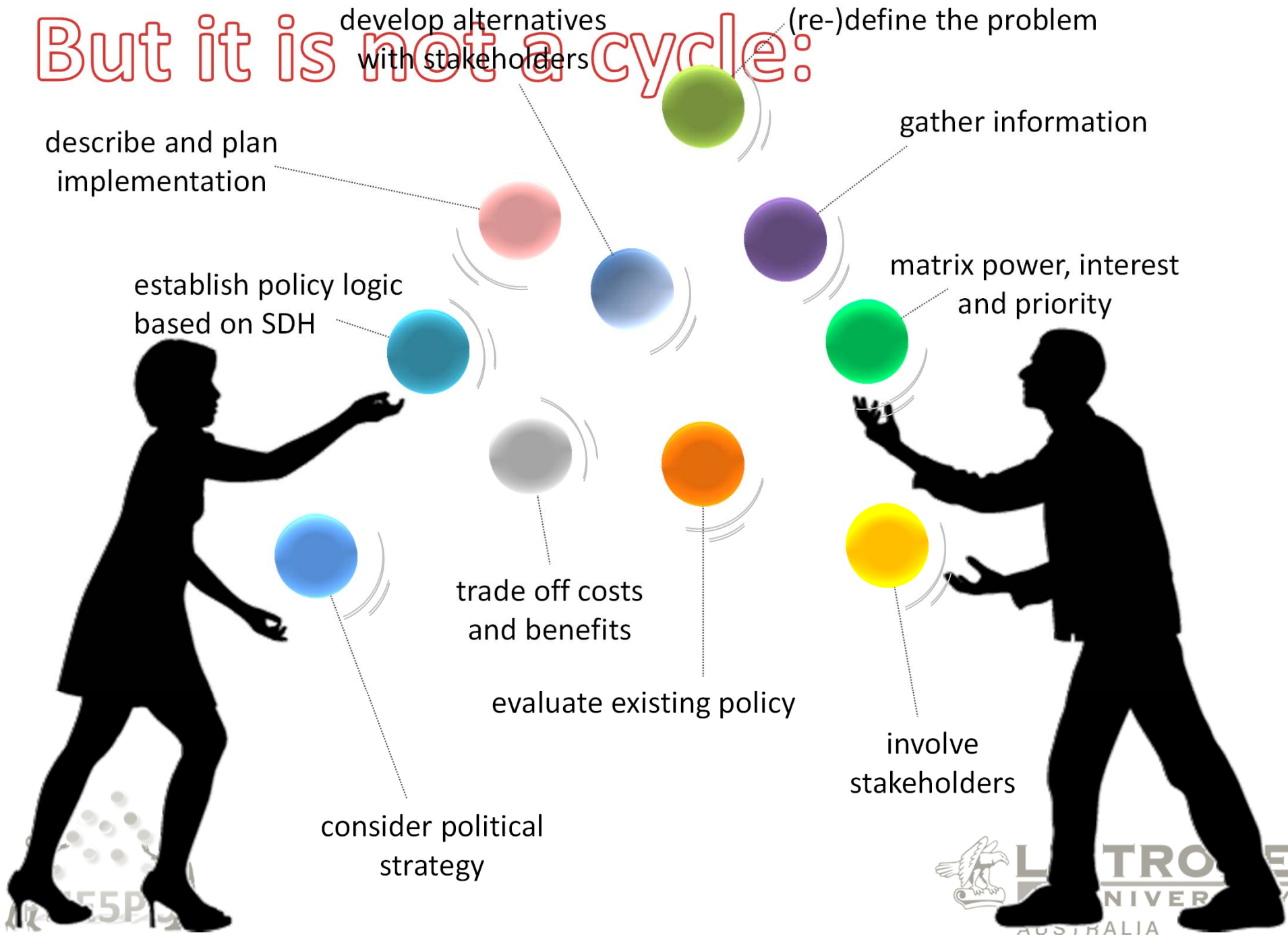7. (Monitoring and) Evaluation

OK – so a cycle

A
How has the problem been framed by whom?

B
What information is there about the problem, its proponents and magnitude?

J
What politics are involved (opportunity; leadership; will; institution; vision)?

I
Have barriers and facili-tators of implementation (support; capacity; resources; partnerships) been gauged?

C
What is the policy theory (causal, final, normative assumptions)?

H
Can a matrix with support vs opposition against power x priority be developed? With what result?

D
What is currently done? With what effect?

G
What social, economic and institutional 'win-wins' can be established? Against which cost?

E
What evidence, experience and opportunity exists to develop alternative approaches? Which?

F
What is the 'best fit' between feasibility and effectiveness? Who 'owns' that option?

Define the problem

Gather information

Consider political strategy

Describe implementation

Establish the policy theory

Matrix it

Evaluate existing policy

Trade-off costs - benefits

Develop alternatives

Select 'best fit'

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Australian policy cycle

1. Identify issues
2. Policy analysis – consider alternatives
3. Policy instruments – consider how to lock in policies for implementation
4. Consultation – with key stakeholders
5. Coordination – across government portfolios
6. Decision
7. Implementation
8. Evaluation

But it is not a cycle:

develop alternatives with stakeholders

(re-)define the problem

gather information

describe and plan implementation

matrix power, interest and priority

establish policy logic based on SDH

trade off costs and benefits

evaluate existing policy

involve stakeholders

consider political strategy

Formal government & policy

Legislature/Executive/Judiciary Branches

Federalist/Unitary systems

Westminster system

Parliament, Government (Cabinet, Minister), and the Bureaucracy

Line agency/Central agency

Statutory authorities

Law-making in Australia

Legislation is proposed – by ministers, parliamentary committees, inquiries

Proposal is refined – discussion paper and public consultation

Cabinet approval and Party approval

Bill is introduced – debated during second reading

Royal assent – Governor General gives approval

Policy – allocation of resources

Develop proposals - 6-9 months in advance

Negotiation with Treasury and Finance – 3-6 months in advance

Negotiation within Cabinet – 3 months in advance

Budget announcement

Budget bills to Parliament – 3 months after

Funds flow – 3-6 months after

Policy as organised action

Coherence (ideally) – all the bits of the action fit together

Hierarchy – authoritative set of instructions about what will be done

**Instrumentality** – pursues particular purposes (and solves particular problems)

In this semester to follow:
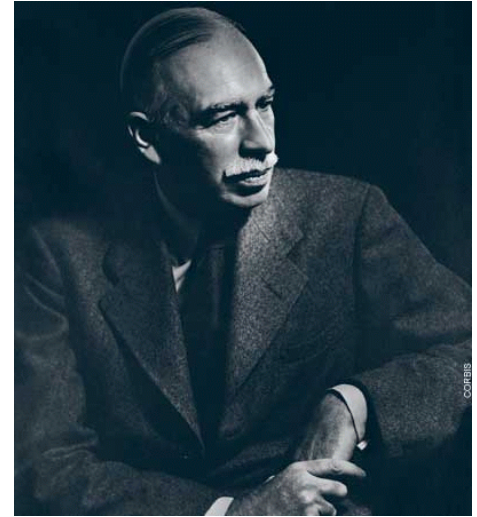
"There is nothing a Government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult"

Keynes, J.M. & D. Moggridge, ed. (1982) The collected writings of John Maynard Keynes. Vol. 21. Activities 1931-1939; World crisis and policies in Britain and America. London: Macmillan; New York: Cambridge University Press; for the Royal Economic Society, p. 409

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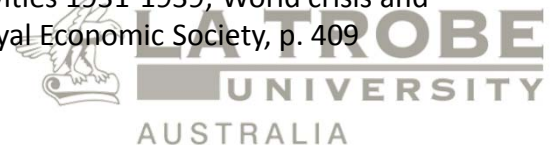
In this semester to follow:

Eight domains of inputs to good policy process
- utilising information and evidence
- people management in relation to policy development
- managing stakeholder relationships
- managing intra-portfolio, cross-portfolio and inter-governmental relationships
- working between policy development and program management
- policy evaluation and monitoring
- managing the policy process
- leadership

In this semester to follow:

The stakeholders

- "The decision-maker"
- "The bureaucrat"
- "Government"
- Party policy committee?
- Independents in the Senate?
- Staffers?
- Analysts?
- NGOs, professional bodies, and other advocates?
- Communities?
- Industry?

("The medical-industrial complex")

(Everyone is potentially a policy practitioner, if not a policy-maker?)

In this semester to follow:

The reality:

- Prescribed institutions and rules for decision-making – legislation, budgets
- Formal consultative processes – bureaucracy, legislated or other formal structures and processes
- Political processes – within party and parliament
- Informal consultation – by convention (profession/industry, consumers) and through lobbying
- Polling (especially marginal seats)
- Social media
- Continuous, iterative processes and continuous pressures for change – which processes and voices matter?

(Tentative) conclusion:

- Understand policy not as officially proclaimed goals and statements
- See policy as process of continuous negotiation, as well as patterns of everyday practices
- Involves evidence and contingency (argument and politics)
- Reflects tension between choice (action) and structure (context)
- ("From above comes policy, and from below comes counter-strategy")