

SAFEGUARDING THE FUTURE THROUGH BETTER ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

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19 October 2017

SOME QUOTES

The future whispers while the present shouts.

Al Gore

When human politicians choose between the next election and the next generation, it's clear what usually happens.

Warren Buffett

We cannot face the future with the tools of the past.

Jose Manuel Barroso

OUTLINE

1. The nature and importance of good governance
2. The many risks to good governance
3. The concept of anticipatory governance
 - Origins
 - Definition
 - Attributes
 - Assessing the quality of anticipatory governance
4. Adaptive governance
5. Enhancing anticipatory governance in New Zealand
6. An example
7. Conclusion

THE NATURE OF GOVERNANCE

1. Large and growing literature
2. Fundamentally about steering, oversight and prioritization
3. Many types or modes of governance
 - collaborative, adaptive, anticipatory, participative, network, regulatory, public, corporate, etc.
4. Good public governance has many attributes
 - effective, efficient, responsive, transparent, accountable, honest, prudent, resilient, sustainable, etc.
 - and forward looking – anticipatory
5. Good public governance is critically important for safeguarding current and future interests
 - many vital public and private interests cannot be protected without the wise use of public power

RISKS TO GOOD GOVERNANCE

Many causes of government failure:

1. Demand-side and supply-side failures
2. Societal conflicts and ideological polarization
3. Low societal and political trust
4. Weak civil society institutions
5. Fake news, post-truth era
6. Corruption
7. A presentist bias in policy-making
8. Weak foresight
9. Many policy problems are towards the 'wicked' end of the spectrum and thus inherently difficult to 'solve'

PRESENTIST BIAS

1. Democratic decision-making is characterized by a presentist bias (or political myopia) – i.e. a tendency for governments to prioritize short-term interests over long-term interests

Examples include:

- Prioritization of policy options with positive, short-term electoral payoffs
 - Inadequate focus on ‘creeping’ or ‘slow-burner’ policy issues
 - Inadequate ‘policy investment’ (fiscal, regulatory, etc.) to mitigate long-term risks and protect long-term interests (economic, social and environmental)
 - Unsustainable policy settings
 - Limited investment in foresight and weak anticipatory governance (Fuerth and Faber, 2012)
2. The presentist bias is particularly evident where solutions to policy problems require significant non-simultaneous exchanges
 - i.e. there is an asymmetrical flow of costs and benefits: costs are front-loaded, benefits are back-loaded

THE MANY CAUSES OF THE PRESENTIST BIAS

1. The human condition
 - impatience, narrow self-interest, bounded rationality, cognitive biases, attention deficits, etc.
2. Epistemic determinants
 - General and political uncertainty, limited information on future impacts, limited or weak 'danger' signals and slow feedbacks, policy complexity and poor understanding of causality
3. Domestic political and/or institutional factors
4. Weak international institutions for protecting global public goods
5. Value conflicts and trade-offs across goods involving different systems of value (financial costs in the near term versus non-financial benefits in the future)
6. Inadequate conceptual, analytical, accounting, reporting and monitoring frameworks
7. Mind-sets, world views and ethical frameworks

CREEPING PROBLEMS – SLOW THREATS

Characteristics:

1. Slow, gradual deterioration, at least initially
2. Tipping points unclear and generally distant
3. Limited public visibility, imperceptible changes
4. Little media attention
5. Few focusing events
6. Sometimes scientific uncertainty and/or debate over the scale of the risk/harm
7. Time horizons spread well beyond the normal life of a government

CREEPING PROBLEMS - EXAMPLES

1. long-term demographic changes
2. increasing inequality of income and wealth
3. the spreading obesity pandemic
4. the increasing incidence of antimicrobial resistance
5. the increasing surveillance of individuals and groups within society
6. the rising concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere
7. the increasing frequency of intense precipitation events
8. the slow accumulation of toxic chemicals and microplastics in the environment
9. the decline in the populations of important pollinators
10. the gradual loss of freshwater supplies
11. the steady decline in agricultural land due to urbanization and soil degradation
12. the increasing damage to ecosystem services from pollution, invasive species
13. the gradual loss of biodiversity and wilderness areas
14. the growing threat to societal trust and evidence-informed policy-making from fact-averse political movements, post-truth narratives and fake news outlets

ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE - ORIGINS

1. Alvin Toffler (*Future Shock*) – early 1970s – ‘anticipatory democracy’ (participative)
2. David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (*Reinventing Government*) – 1993 – chapter on ‘anticipatory government’ (prevention rather than cure)
3. Canadian Masters Thesis – 1993 – ‘anticipatory governance’
4. Concept employed in various disciplinary areas – national security, future studies, science and technology studies, planning, complexity, sustainability, climate change, etc.
5. Increasingly widely used in academic literature
6. No agreed definition or set of attributes
7. Linked to ‘adaptive governance’ via literatures on sustainability, resilience, climate change, etc.

DEFINITION OF ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE

David Gunson (2008/2014)

...a broad-based capacity extended through society that can act on a variety of inputs to manage emerging knowledge-based technologies while such management is still possible.

My suggestion (modifying Leon Fuerth, 2009)

... a system of institutions, rules and norms that encourages the use of evidence, analysis and foresight to manage and reduce risk and identify opportunities for improvement, and increase the system's resilience and capacity for precautionary, proactive, preventative and adaptive interventions in the context of complexity, uncertainty and evolving needs.

ATTRIBUTES

1. An emphasis on foresight and related techniques
2. A precautionary approach
3. Proactive policy interventions
4. A systems approach – holistic
5. Adaptive management
6. Pursuit of resilience and sustainability
7. Support for participatory modes of decision-making
8. An emphasis on embedding long-term interests in day-to-day decision-making

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

See table

- 1.** Overarching principles
- 2.** Planning processes and foresight
- 3.** Policy and regulatory frameworks
- 4.** The representation of future interests
- 5.** Performance measures and reporting
- 6.** Resilience, risk reduction and emergency management
- 7.** Measures for problem solving and consensus building for long-term policy challenges

ADAPTIVE GOVERNANCE

Institutional and political frameworks designed to adapt to changing relationships between society and ecosystems in ways that sustain ecosystem services; expands the focus from adaptive management of ecosystems to address the broader social contexts that enable ecosystem-based management.

Carpenter and Folke, 2006

- Recognizes the inevitability of change, including abrupt change
- Alert to complexity, uncertainty, risk, social traps, vested interests
- Concern with the social sources or renewal and reorganisation
- Values policy learning, flexibility and resilience
- Recognizes the importance of multi-level governance, self-organization, social networks, social capital, bridging organizations
- Mostly been applied to environmental policy, planning, resource management
- Related to adaptive policy-making, adaptive management, complex adaptive systems, dynamic adaptive policy pathways

WAYS TO ENHANCE ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE IN NEW ZEALAND

1. Constitutional reform
2. Improve long-term reporting
3. Improve foresight capability
4. Strengthen future-focused institutions
5. Embed the future within policy frameworks
6. Nurture a future-focused political culture
7. Improve environmental stewardship
8. Improve adaptive governance

ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

1. Adaptation unavoidable
2. Many problems can be readily anticipated:
 - sea level rise, impacts and the need for managed retreat
 - strong political resistance likely unless compensation for losses
 - many sub-national governments will lack the resources to manage the scale of the problems
 - insurance companies will not fund managed retreat
 - use of legal processes (tort) not a viable or equitable solution
3. Efficient and equity handling of sea level rise will require new planning and funding models
4. A pre-disaster, national-level fund is needed to deal with the costs of managed retreat (cf EQC – post-disaster fund)

CONCLUSION

- 1.** Anticipatory governance is an important attribute of good governance
- 2.** Anticipatory governance has various distinctive attributes
- 3.** The quality of anticipatory governance can be assessed and enhanced
- 4.** Various reforms are needed to enhance NZ's capacity for anticipatory governance

SOME RECENT RELEVANT LITERATURE

1. William Ascher, *Bringing in the Future: Strategies for Farsightedness and Sustainability in Developing Countries* (Chicago University Press, 2009)
2. Jonathan Boston et al (eds) *Future-Proofing the State: Managing Risks, Responding to Crises and Building Resilience* (ANU Press, 2014)
3. Leon Fuerth with Evan Faber, *Anticipatory Governance: Practical Upgrades* (George Washington University, 2012)
4. Alan Jacobs, *Governing for the Long Term: Democracy and the Politics of Investment* (Cambridge University Press, 2011)
5. House of Commons (UK), *Governing the Future*, Public Administration Select Committee, March 2007
6. House of Commons (UK), *Leadership for the long-term*, Public Administration Select Committee, March 2015
7. Oxford Martin Commission, *Now for the Long Term: The Report of the Oxford Martin Commission* (Oxford, 2013)