



Politics and Public Value

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Does politics need to exist?

- Understanding the answer to this question helps us to debate the connection between politics and public value
- Two negative answers and two positive answers
- Two call for 'rule' and two call for 'politics' as I understand it

Politics and human misbehaviour



- The original sin argument: the human soul is flawed and prone to base acts
- Hobbes and Machiavelli: humans need to be ruled
- Modern economic version: humans are self-interested. Motivation that is considered positive in the commercial/market realm is negative in public realm and needs to be managed
- Designing institutions for knaves: rules, monitoring, incentives and regulation



Politics exists because of manufactured conflicts

- The idea that people would really agree with one another given the chance is widely held
- One of the strongest findings from social psychology is that people tend to assume that others (w)should agree with them
- Among social theories the idea a consensus exists to be found is common: Rousseau, Marx, some deliberation thinking and many managerial perspectives
- We need to be organized towards consensus by taking the heat out of politics



Two positive arguments

- Because of the idiosyncrasy and partiality of human judgement: we value different things
- Because in an interdependent world we need to co-operate but our competing sense of values make it difficult to do so



Public value debate has not focused sufficiently on politics

- Politics and management have become more intertwined
- And increasingly relate to one another in a more challenging environment
 - ~ multiple sources of policy advice
 - ~ complex and competing accountabilities
 - ~ speed and intensity of delivery pressure
 - ~ vertical integration more enhanced



Indeed key trend has been towards the denial of politics

- Partnership seen as a way of keeping short-term politics at bay
- The role of independent bodies and commissions
- Excessive faith in regulation
- Politics is seen as having failed:
Governance of Britain



We argue instead to expand the repertoire of politics

- Exploring the art of representation
- Developing forms of direct engagement
- Meta-governance capacity
- Greater reflexivity



All in the context of a realist understanding of politics

- Conflict is real but not always base or instrumental
- Power is always present: reconciling interests and values according to standing
- Politics works thru reason and beyond