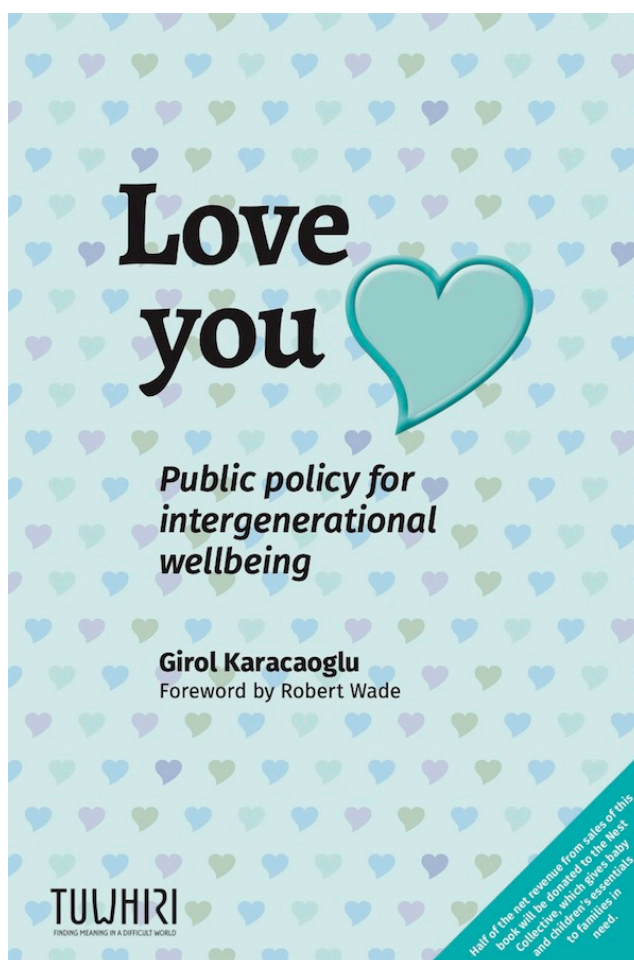


For the philosopher Walter Kaufman, 'I love you' means:

'I want you to live the life that you want to live. I will be as happy as you if you do; and as unhappy as you if you don't.'

How would we design, implement and evaluate public policy if it were based on our love for future generations?

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Love you



*Public policy for
intergenerational
wellbeing*

Girol Karacaoglu

Foreword by Robert Wade

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How would we design, implement and evaluate public policy if it were based on our love for future generations? For the philosopher Walter Kaufman, 'I love you' means:

'I want you to live the life that you want to live. I will be as happy as you if you do; and as unhappy as you if you don't.'

We have no idea what future generations will value and how they will want to live. Nor do we wish to prescribe how they choose to live, so long as they do not prevent others from living the lives they value.

We want to prepare and look after the 'wellbeing garden' – the broader ecosystems – that will provide them with the opportunities and capacity to survive and thrive, to flourish in safety. As another philosopher, Walter Benjamin, put it, 'We want to liberate the future from its deformation in the present.'

Wellbeing is about the ability of individuals and communities to live the lives they value – now and in the future. This is their human right. It would be extremely unjust to prevent the enjoyment of valued lives. Preventing such injustice across generations should be the primary focus of a public policy that has intergenerational wellbeing as its objective.

This book examines the processes by which wellbeing-focused public policy objectives are established, prioritised, funded, implemented, managed, and evaluated, while ensuring that they remain relevant as social preferences change over time.

A must read for anyone wanting to be of service to the public and enhance our collective wellbeing.

– **David Hanna**, CLD Influencing and Practice Lead, Inspiring Communities

Girol Karacaoglu ... elaborates the moral frame that supports the expansion from growth of conventionally measured GDP as our most important objective to a multi-dimensional index of wellbeing, including income as one dimension. And he proceeds to spell out how a government, with New Zealand specifics, could make this switch.

– **Robert H. Wade**, Professor of global political economy, London School of Economics

A great contribution to the growing wellbeing and public policy field and one that is properly holistic. Rich and highly relevant to the challenges we are facing.

– **Nancy Hey**, Executive Director, What Works Wellbeing

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Preface

In *The faith of a heretic* (1961), the German philosopher Walter Kaufman proposes four cardinal virtues as a foundation for answering the following questions: How are we to live? By what standards should we judge ourselves? For what virtues should we strive? His four cardinal virtues are: 'humbition' (a made-up word referring to a fusion of humility and ambition), love, courage, and honesty.

It is the second one of these (love) that is the centre of interest for this book. Kaufman gives the word a very specific meaning. As Wes Cecil, the producer and narrator of the lecture series *Forgotten thinkers*, interprets it, 'I love you' for Kaufman means: 'I desire for you the same way that I desire for me – I want you to have what you want, what you wish, what you need, and to avoid what you do not want, exactly the same way I feel about it for me. Not that I want the same things for you as I do for me; but if you think you want something, I have the desire for you to get it as strongly as you do.'

In short, 'I love you' means that I want you to live the life that you want to live. I will be as happy as you, if you do; and as unhappy as you, if you don't.

This book asks and answers the question: how would we design, govern, implement, and evaluate public policy if we based it on our love for future generations, true to the meaning

that Kaufman gives to: ‘I love you’?

We have no idea what future generations will value and how they will want to live. Nor do we wish to prescribe how they should choose to live – so long as they don’t prevent others from living the lives they value. We want to prepare and look after the ‘wellbeing garden’ (the broader ecosystems) that will provide them with the opportunities and capabilities to *survive* and *thrive* – to flourish in safety. As Walter Benjamin expressed it, ‘We want to liberate the future from its deformation in the present’.²

Wellbeing is about the ability of individuals and communities to live the lives they value – now and in the future – as an aspect of their human rights.³ To prevent the enjoyment of valued lives would frustrate those rights. Ensuring justice across generations should guide a public policy that has intergenerational wellbeing as its objective.

This book covers the processes by which wellbeing-focused public policy objectives should be established, prioritised, implemented, managed along the way, funded, and evaluated on an ongoing basis – while also ensuring that they remain relevant as social preferences change over time. In short, it is about governing and investing for intergenerational wellbeing.

² Wellmon (2020).

³ See Hunt (2007) on the evolution of human rights as an idea.



Introduction (an excerpt)



The rest of the book is structured as follows.

In chapter 2, I define wellbeing in terms of the ability of individuals and communities to live the lives they value, provided they do not interfere with others' rights to do the same. I provide six critical and complementary justifications for a radically different approach to public policy when its objective is to enhance wellbeing. First, wellbeing is *multidimensional*. Second, wellbeing is *intergenerational*. Third, the various dimensions and sources

of wellbeing are strongly *interdependent*. Fourth, individual lives are lived in *social settings*. Fifth, the ‘large world’ in which our social life is embedded is *radically* (or fundamentally) *uncertain*. Sixth, both individual and social lives are dominated by *adaptive complexity* and *reflexivity*. It is the universal and simultaneous presence of all six justifications that demand a radically different approach to public policy.

Chapter 3 articulates a framework for a wellbeing-focused public policy in a world of radical or fundamental uncertainty and complexity. At a *system* level, such a framework has three complementary dimensions. First, an environment (natural, social, and economic environment – the ‘wellbeing garden’) which makes the pursuit of valued lives possible (i.e. the *opportunities*). Second, investments that provide individuals and communities with the *capabilities* to pursue their valued lives. Third, a shift of policy focus from *direction* to *nourishment* – from looking for ‘optimal solutions’ to well-defined problems, to *building resilience* to potential (unknown) systemic risks that threaten valued ways of living, partly by encouraging creative responses to systemic shocks through both individual initiative and cooperative community mechanisms.

Chapter 4 further develops the theme that in a world of fundamental uncertainty, *investing in resilience* provides the critical bridge to the sustainability of wellbeing across generations. Wellbeing-resilience has two key and complementary dimensions: *surviving* and *thriving*. These will be delivered through investments that create the capacities to absorb systemic shocks to how we want to live (*surviving*), as well as adapt towards enhancing our collective wellbeing in the aftermath of shocks (*thriving*). In an intergenerational context, adaptability also involves the ability to respond positively to the changing preferences of younger gen-

erations. The chapter also discusses ways in which resilience to potential systemic risks can be built.

Chapter 5 is about governance arrangements underpinning a wellbeing-focused public policy. I argue that, in a world dominated by radical (or fundamental) uncertainty and adaptive complexity, a public policy that aspires to deliver sustainable wellbeing across generations as its primary *outcome*, needs to be supported by governance arrangements that can deliver five critical *outputs*: a long-term focus on policy making; inclusive decision-making mechanisms that aggregate the wisdom, expertise and experience of all stakeholders; institutions that enable and encourage (and indeed mandate) an integrated environmental, social and economic approach to public policy; a suitable supporting funding infrastructure; and adaptive time consistency, that is ongoing alignment of public policy with collective wellbeing as the preferences of society evolve over time.

Chapter 6 places communities at the centre of inclusive policy processes, and explores different avenues for giving effect to inclusivity. Individual and family lives are lived in social settings, and the imperative of social cohesion for sustainable wellbeing means that the engagement of communities as full participants in the end-to-end public policy and management process is critical. Amartya Sen (2018) refers to this as evidence-informed and discussion-based, participatory governance. In a world of adaptive complexity, in the absence of genuine community engagement and participation, it is impossible to generate sustainable improvements in social cohesion and environmental quality. I acknowledge however that *localism* does not provide a panacea; and ensuring genuine participation by communities is a major governance challenge in itself.

Chapter 7 is about the assessment of the effectiveness of a

wellbeing-focused public policy. I argue that four complementary types of assessment are required. First, whether more resources are being made available to support better lives. Second, whether these resources are being converted into higher capabilities and opportunities for a better life. Third, asking people whether their lives are improving or not. Fourth, whether public policy is creating the platform in the form of a suitable wellbeing garden for sustainable intergenerational wellbeing.

Chapter 8 looks at policy priorities. I argue that, given where New Zealand is right now as a country, the top two priorities of a public policy that has intergenerational wellbeing as its primary objective should be a universal and comprehensive ‘leave no one behind’ strategy, complemented by long-term environment-friendly investments that generate sustained employment growth.

Chapter 9 highlights the congruence and alignment of individual and social wellbeing. It proposes that when individuals live lives that enhance collective wellbeing, their individual wellbeing also improves.

This book was substantially completed before the Covid-19 pandemic rolled across the world. While most unfortunate, this event nevertheless provides a perfect platform for rethinking public policy in a radically different way. In the epilogue, I take the opportunity to highlight how a wellbeing framework can be helpful in designing and implementing public policy in response to Covid-19 in a way that enhances wellbeing across generations.





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Half of the net revenue from sales of this book will be donated to The Nest Collective, which gives baby and children's essentials to families in need.

A collective of volunteers across Aotearoa, they work alongside social workers to ensure families are supported in their parenting journey, gifting new, pre-loved, handcrafted and repurposed essentials, including clothing, bedding, books and much, much more.

The Nest Collective believe that together we can make a real difference for the families who need it most. Their soon-to-be-launched website will be at:

<https://thenestcollective.org.nz>