

Response with Responsibility: Policy-making for public risk in the 21st century

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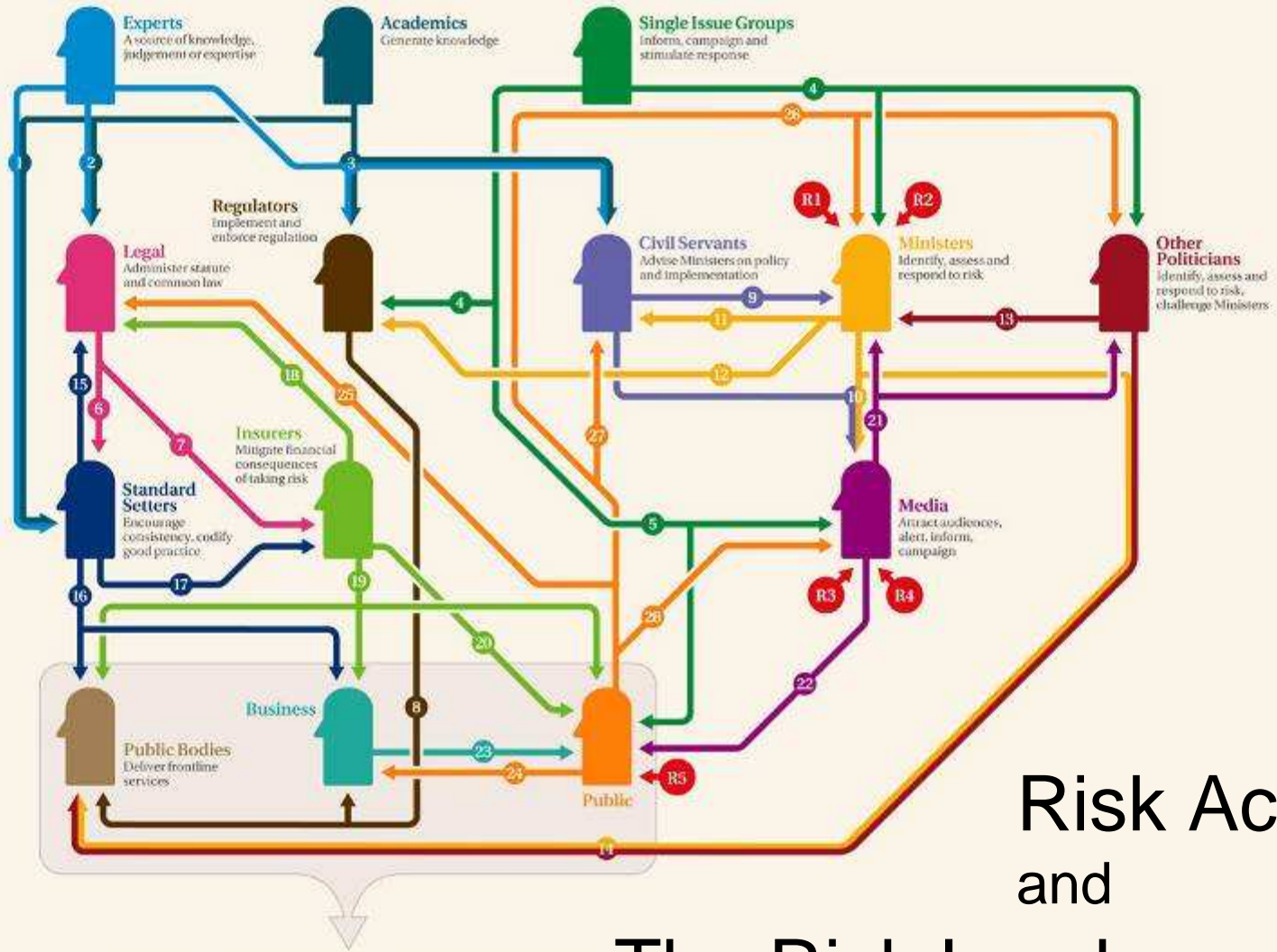
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Public Risk

those risks that may affect any part of society and to which government is expected to respond

The Risk Landscape



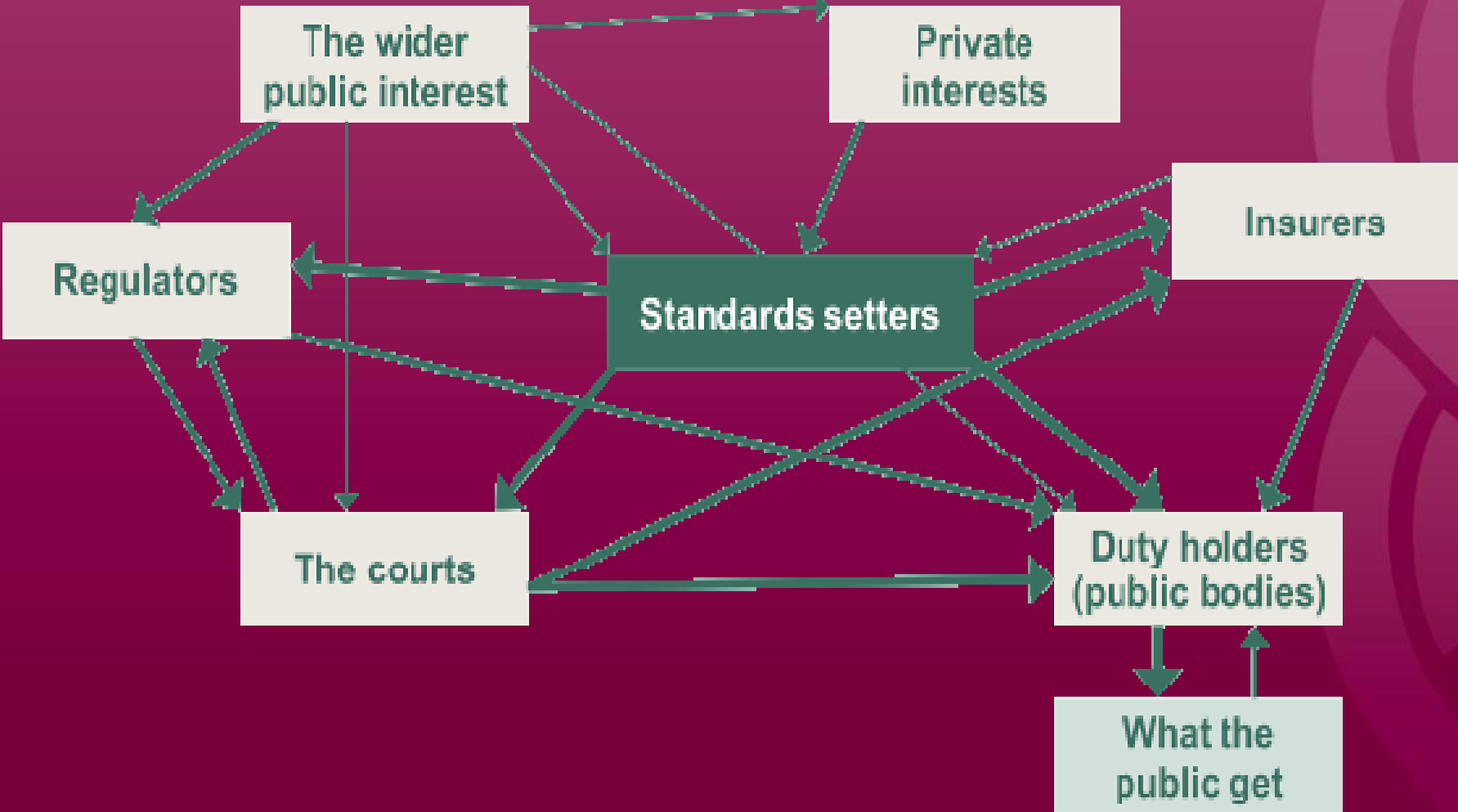
The behaviour and actions of Business, Public Bodies and the Public are shaped by the interactions shown in the Risk Landscape

Risk Actors and The Risk Landscape

Standard Setters

- Seen as a key “Risk Actor” and subject to separate research
- <http://www.berr.gov.uk/deliverypartners/list/rrac/index.html> - for research paper
- We took a very UK view, rather than international, but Public Risk is culture-specific in some ways.

Standard Setter's Risk Landscape



What level of safety do we want?

- This is ultimately a political question.
- It is also a toxic political question that few politicians will tackle properly.
- But it is another ratchet effect in the erosion of responsibility – it only goes up.
- But safety is only one benefit and may be less than others.

Trees and BS 8516

- Out of 60 million people in the UK, an average of 6 die each year from trees.
- BSI consulted on a new tree safety management standard that involved 5 yearly expert inspection.
- On a Risk Benefit Assessment, the value of trees to the environment and well-being needs to be set against a 1:10,000,000 danger.

Impact on Business

- Many countries are gripped by Admin Burden Reduction programmes – yet none want to compromise safety.
- How much does the safety industry cost regulated societies?
- Has the level of safety benefit been costed against both the cost of safety measures and the cost of other benefits foregone?

“Acceptability” or CBA?

- Is there a threshold test that can be applied?
- One approach is straight Cost / Benefit Analysis – is there a net benefit?
- Or there can be quantified acceptability levels, e.g. HSE’s Tolerability Test.
- But in governments it tends to be *ad hoc* politics.

Limits on Standards

- Safety is a political issue but what political accountability do standard setters have?
- How often is the limit mainly the progress of science, as in TSE regulation?
- Is a Risk Benefit Assessment part of good practice and who would quality assure it?
- Are there standards for Standards, e.g. HSE's "Tolerability of Risk" model or the Valuation of a Statistical Life?

Standard Setter's Risk Landscape

