



THE POLITICAL PROCESS

- defined as the complex activity of making public decisions
- described as a system of **interacting component parts**



Relevant Groups/Actors:

- **Interest Groups** (articulate/make known views of the group)
- **Political Parties** (forge consensus among various interests into a coherent program - a.k.a. *platform* - of political action to seek support from population)
- **Legislatures or the Assembly** (law making branch of government)
- **Executive** (branch of government that proposes and administers laws and policies)
- **Judiciary** (branch of government that interprets laws)



THE POLITICAL PROCESS

- **Bureaucracy** (implements laws and policies)
- **The Media** (communication about the political system in the public domain with the purpose of serving the public interest)
- **Elections and Electoral System** (organization and conduct of general elections in accordance with election laws)

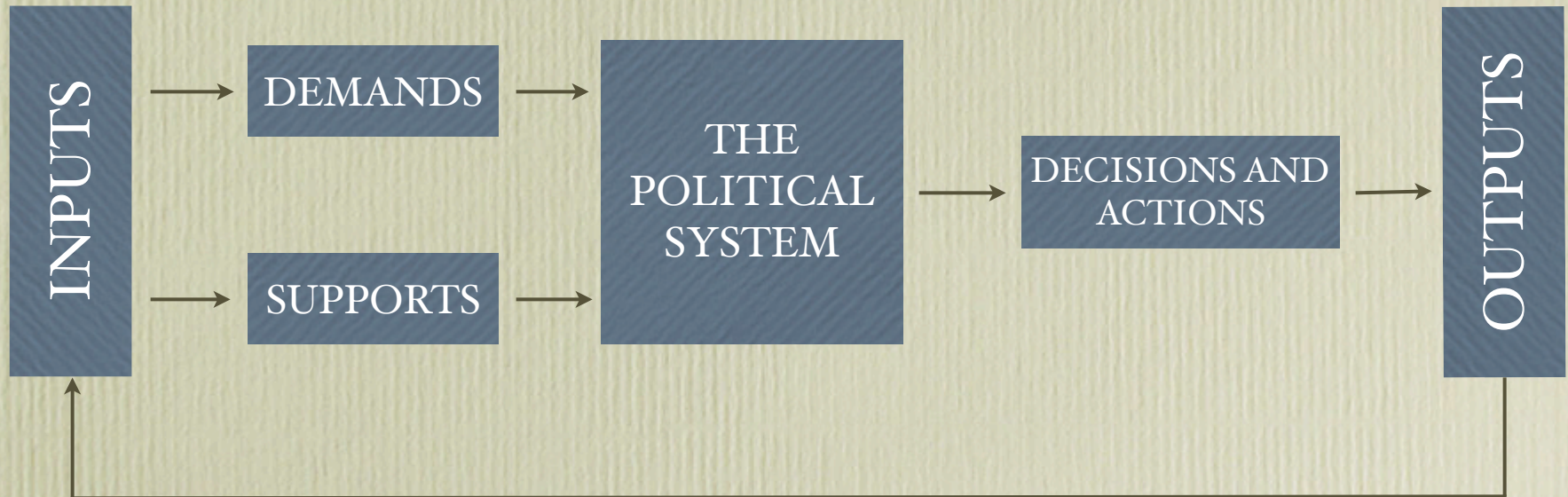
Together, these component parts are sometimes referred to as a Policy Community.

The political process can be described as a systematic process. In other words, a connected set of structural and functional components converting inputs into outputs which then determine the need for decision-making.



The Systemic Flow of Politics

THE ENVIRONMENT





Component Parts

INPUTS: generated by the interests of society - two types:

1. ***Demands***: what people would like government to do for them
2. ***Supports***: give legitimacy to government

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM: represents the process of *government* and *politics*, composed of informal and formal (legal) institutions. E.g. ? (refer to Fig. 22.2 on p. 353)



DECISIONS AND ACTIONS: generic mechanisms or tools converting demands and supports into outputs

OUTPUTS: laws and policies which then generate new demands and supports

ENVIRONMENT: the *political culture* of society (set of attitudes, values, and beliefs). This is the source of all inputs and the destination of outputs. It sets the context for the systemic flow of politics



Homework

1. Read Chapter 22 on pp. 351-356 in your text.
2. Use Figure 22.2 as your guide to complete the following questions:
 - a. How is the pluralistic nature of society portrayed?
 - b. Give an example for each of the types of **inputs** (*Demands, Expectations, Supports*) in the model.
 - c. What are the functions of each of the seven structures which carry out the **conversion** process (*Interest Groups, Political Parties, Media, Assembly, Executive, Judiciary, Bureaucracy*)?
 - d. Give an example for each of the types of **outputs** (*Laws and Public Policies*) in the model.
 - e. Distinguish between the *informal* and *formal-legal* institutions of government.



ACTIVITY

In groups of 2/3, research a recent controversial Canadian law or policy (each group must have a different one).

1. Draw and label a diagram modeled on Figure 22.2 to capture the essence of the political process involved in passing the legislation or adopting the policy (examples might include, but are not limited to, *Gay Marriage*, *Immigration Bill*, *Gun Registry*, *Climate Change*, *Financial Crisis Response*, *Legalizing Marijuana*, the *HST*, or the *Maternal Health Initiative*).

The purpose is to identify as far as possible the political actors and interactions involved in dealing with the issue, not to pass judgment on it. I would recommend you start by carrying out a topic search for articles on the website of a national newspaper such as the *Globe and Mail*.

2. Draw your flow diagram on a flip chart paper.

3. Present your diagram to the class, preceded with a brief introductory background of the issue

4. The class will review your group's diagram and comment on the political actors which have been identified and the associated political process. If required, they will also suggest which political actors may be missing.