

The Creative Bureaucracy: A think piece

Summary: Is there a new organizational ethos which should shape the characteristics and operating dynamics of the early 21st century public bureaucracy? Is this radically different from the efficiency and effectiveness paradigm associated with the late 20th century? Does being resourceful, strategically agile, responsive and creative lie at its core?

Key points

- What characteristics are needed for the 21st century public bureaucracy? Do they need to be different from what went before? In which ways will they need to be different?
- The bureaucracies we have were developed to solve the problems of their time and reflect the culture of their age. At their best they sought systematic procedures to bring transparency, fairness and equity to decision making. Yet as they evolved weaknesses appeared.
- Bureaucracies were once seen as benign and modern if somewhat technocratic. Has its latest focus on efficiency created a neo-bureaucratic centralism that needs to be reassessed especially in the context of user driven service innovation?
- Changes are already afoot in the organisational practices of the public sector, commercial companies and in the wider world. It includes a shift to involving users more and co-creating policies, products or solutions; a shift from hierarchical to network thinking, a breakdown in traditional disciplinary boundaries, and cultural cross-fertilization. These have implications for how bureaucracies need to operate.
- The 21st century bureaucracy needs to combine the best of the 20th century bureaucracy and evolving lessons about what makes a good organization work.
- The creative bureaucracy thesis seeks to marry two seemingly incompatible concepts – creativity and bureaucracy – in order to do this. Creativity focuses on resourcefulness, imagination and flexibility.
- With the recognition of the power of integrated, joined up thinking is a new generalist required able to understand specialist knowledge as well as be able to range across disciplines

- There is a need to shift the negative perceptions of bureaucracy and those that work in them. Many people who work in bureaucracies are not expressing their full talents. Can we create conditions to better harness their imaginations, creativity and competences?
- Finally, the world at large poses new and urgent challenges from greening to dealing with diversity. Bureaucracies need to be inventive and effective in dealing with these.

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The Creative Bureaucracy

'Creative' and 'bureaucracy': two words that do not seem to fit together. The first hints at curiosity, imagination, looking at things afresh, bringing unconnected things together in unusual ways, having initiative. It seems dynamic, loose and flexible. Creativity is multifaceted resourcefulness and responsiveness. The second triggers in the mind words like structure, hierarchy, rules, routine, process. It seems mechanical, lifeless, eviscerated and static. 'Bureaucracy' is embedded with negative connotations in English, likened to a nuisance or even tyranny at odds with *public* or *civic* service. Bureaucracies are maligned, they drain the spirit it is said. In German and French, by contrast, the equivalent words are less pejorative.

The 'creative bureaucracy' idea is not a plan, but a proposed way of operating that helps create better plans and better future ways of operating. It is an adaptive, responsive and collaborative organisational form that in principle can harness the initiative and full intelligences of those working in them and respond to the changing demands of those they seek to serve.

Bureaucracies exist in the public, private and community spheres in various forms. They can be complex in their precise characteristics depending on their purpose, mission, scope and size. A bureaucracy is the organizational structure of larger organizations which have systematic procedures, protocols and regulations to manage activity. These dictate how most processes are executed as well as the formal division of powers, hierarchies, and relationships intended to anticipate needs and improve efficiency. Here the focus is on the public domain, yet it has as much relevance to how large corporations operate as to public institutions. Key principles have evolved in how they operate such as neutrality or leaving vision

making to politicians. This can constrain initiative, motivation and creative potential.

This note tries to differ from most other discussions of the topic. It attempts to combine questions of organization and structure, culture and values in organizations with how people *feel* emotionally and psychologically at work and especially those lower down who are often responsible for putting plans in to action. It puts the *lived* experience of the person centre-stage. For organizations to be effective people want to be able to take initiative and have more control, influence or power.

There is a vast body of literature on making organizations or bureaucracies more competent, innovative and entrepreneurial; on how to develop joint 'visions'; on the merits of different regulation and incentives regimes; on the relationship between bureaucracy, power, politics and interests and effectiveness; and on the balance between certainty, predictability, standardisation, codes, fairness and their opposites. This note will not address these, instead this Viewpoint asks a central question: Are there new organizational principles which should shape the qualities, characteristics and operating dynamics of the early 21st century bureaucracy. Are they radically different from those associated with the late 20th century?

Where are we at?

The predominant organizational form of the 20th century had its genesis in military forms and later industrial modes of production, encapsulated at its worst by Taylorism, which could reduce people to mere drones and did not harness their potential talent. It emphasized control. Its forms were characterised by hierarchical management systems, sharply defined departments and divisions of labour and left little scope for self-expression. Yet bureaucratic forms developed in response to the arbitrariness of previous rulemaking and sought to provide efficiency within a framework of accountability, transparency, neutrality and equality. It evolved thus as part of the democratic impulse. It contains attributes that should not be lost in the new cultural context of greater individual empowerment and choice, where the ability to take initiative, to be imaginative and creative are seen as important in solving problems and creating opportunities. Equally creativity and innovation simply for the sake of it is by no means desirable.

A plethora of new management techniques have since been adopted to respond and to overcome perceived weaknesses and to harness the imagination and energy of staff, such as: 'the organization as a learning system', 'excellence theories', 'motivation theory', 'cultural intelligence', 'strategic management', 'continuous improvement', a focus on 'core competences' to name a few.

At least in some quarters there are discernible new patterns of organisation in companies, 'bureaucracies' and society as a whole:

- **Sharing, co-creation and openness.** 'Open innovation' is the catchphrase. This is reconfiguring how companies operate, well beyond IT and initiatives like open source. There are new technical possibilities to relate to audiences, clients or citizens, for example through Web 2.0. There is a greater shift to the user and some already talk of a far more interactive Web 3.0. This is enhancing possibilities to deepen and reinvent democratic processes and the relationship of individuals to organizations.
- **A shift from hierarchical to network thinking.** Traditional organizational thinking looked at boundaries, levels, precise functions and set responsibilities through which efficiency or product and policy innovation was to occur. It appeared neat and clear. Now new platforms for collaboration and partnerships between citizens, corporations and public institutions are developing. Relationships can cut across organizational types or geographic borders and connections

are more permeable. Things can seem fuzzy. In this process the nature of innovation itself is changing especially in rethinking and redesigning services and how they are delivered.

- **Breaking down divisions between disciplines.** Silo thinking and working is increasingly showing its weakness. It lacks knowledge coming from within the interconnections. Whilst acknowledging specialist knowledge working across boundaries can create new or joint insights. Within organizations the developmental, marketing and communications roles are seen as more significant than before. These latter capacities do not sit easily with public sector organizations.
- **Increased mobility and cultural cross-fertilization.** Identities are being reshaped. Multiple perspectives on issues are emerging. The acknowledged canon in many disciplines is being questioned. As the terra firma shifts issues of trust, loyalty and the role of the expert are being reconsidered.
- **Creativity as a resource.** The ability to be imaginative and inventive is increasingly seen as an important asset. This requires organizations that allow individuals to be curious and that foster a culture of debate. Fluidity, suppleness, adaptability and responsiveness are the organizational watchwords. How, in this context, do organizations allow for greater creativity?
- **The rise of the new generalist.** As a result of these changes new kinds of jobs that never existed before are being invented. One that is likely to emerge as significant is the 'new generalist'. This is a person who understands the essence and core arguments of specialist subjects, but has the capacity to range over disciplines, is able to make connections and create synergies and develop new insights. This contrasts to the somewhat maligned 'old generalist'. In stereotype this was an amateur who knew little of substance.

The above needs to be seen in the light of new complex problems. These include greening and sustainability which if treated seriously, will need to reshape our landscape of thinking and behaviour and how we do things. Some refer to this as the rise of wicked problems. Many public policy problems, such as obesity which cut across health and social issues or getting people to change their behaviours with the threat of climate change are severely complex. They have been called wicked problems (Ritter & Webber and

Horn). They are seemingly intractable, made up of inter-related dilemmas, issues and interweave political, economic and social questions. Wicked problems cannot be tackled by traditional approaches where problems are simply defined, analysed and solved in sequential steps. They have characteristics that make traditional hierarchical, top down thinking less adept and appropriate to solving them. For example, there is no definite way or unique "correct" view of formulating the problem; and different stakeholders see problem and solutions differently often with deeply held ideological views. With these problems comprehensive data is often uncertain, difficult to acquire or missing. In addition they are connected to other problems and every solution reveals new aspects of the problem that needs adjusting. In some sense the problem is never solved and solutions are merely better or worse. Organizationally dealing with these problems requires adaptability, agility and responsiveness.

Can bureaucracies remain as they were in this unfolding world of messy issues? We do not assume that bureaucracies are inherently against innovation. Part of their rationale is in fact to slow things down so that issues can be thought through. The real question is whether the slowing down dynamics of the system itself becomes its *raison d'être*.

In considering these changes all organizations whether in the public or private sphere will reflect the character and frailty of human diversity. These include the tendency to be tribal, the danger of group think, the use of hierarchy to exert power. There will be mavericks, rule benders and those who push against the grain as much as rule junkies. Yet how can mavericks or creatives slot in to organizations that by tradition see the benefits of caution or more slow paced considered approaches?

Questions to consider

- Is there an inner logic to all organizations across cultures and time that constrains and reduces people potential to be creative?
- Are there organizational forms, cultures or rules systems and mechanisms that are able to empower and enrich?
- If so, is the organizational ethos and its resulting culture different, in that it rewards openness, responsiveness and flexibility? Can large more bureaucratic organizations develop such an ethos?

- What is the next focus to enhance organizational achievement? Another restructuring with a new organigramme? Is it instead developing a refreshed understanding of how organizations can succeed with a greater emphasis on assessing the psychological effects of the work place and its impact on people? Will this achieve more to encourage motivation than changes in structure?
- Does changing the ethos of an organization require changing its physical setting? Have these changed enough to make them creativity inducing places and people in them more productive? Do organizational consultants, architects, project planners, the construction industry understand the language of space, place and design sufficiently?
- What would the prototypes for the 21st century responsive, effective bureaucracy look like? Are organizations like SEMCO run by Ricardo Semler and known for its radical industrial democracy models or are they not appropriate for a public sector bureaucracy?
- How can people at different levels of the organization feel more fulfilled? What models exist to give people operating at levels four or five more scope to take initiative and have influence?
- What is the right metaphor for this emerging organizational form one that moves from a vertical structure to a more horizontally integrated and networked one? What metaphor marries the benefits of organizational structure with flexibility? If it is not the machine is it a living organism where human potential is optimized? Is it the network? Is it how Google operates? Is it the garden? Is there something better?

What might the 21st century bureaucracy look like?

A bureaucracy, crucially, is not only a structure, a mere organigramme with functional relationships and roles. It is a group of people with lives, emotions, aspirations, energy, passion and values. Those that work in them often have strong values, great intentions and good ideas. Most want to do good and not be negative. Somehow, however, good intent can evaporate as the dynamic of the organizational 'system' unfolds. Can the positive virtues and potential of public sector bureaucracies and the people working in them be rediscovered? These include fostering fairness, equity, equality of opportunity, being neutral and transparent. These are important achievements of democracy, yet the focus on efficiency can obscure these intentions.

The need for effective organization, administration and management is not questioned. The issue is what ethos and culture is encouraged by organizational priorities and ways of thinking. Is it possible for bureaucracies to add to their culture the suppleness and fluidity we associate with creativity? My contention is two fold. First the ability for organizations to be more resourceful, responsive, imaginative and innovative is key to their democratic mission and effectiveness. Second, by empowering staff in this way they offer more and it makes them more committed so creating a positive feedback loop. This makes resolving the tension between the two concepts 'creative' and 'bureaucracy' a central aim of the 'new bureaucracy'..

People want more fulfilled lives and with this they work better. The ability to be creative stands as a proxy for this desire. It means being able to think for oneself, to have initiative, explore and experiment. Creativity then becomes a general problem-solving and opportunity-creating capacity. The essence of creativity is flexible resourcefulness. It generates the ability to find one's way to solutions for intractable, unexpected, unusual problems or improve day-to-day circumstances through many micro innovations. This keeps organizations alive and adaptable. It is applied imagination using qualities like intelligence, inventiveness and learning along the way. This enables potential to unfold.

Life in a bureaucracy

I have interviewed perhaps 50 people in the UK and elsewhere both professionals who had a high degree of autonomy and those further down the hierarchical chain since my interest in bureaucracies

developed in 2004. The two main questions I asked of participants were:

'Are you working at full capacity?'

'What would the organizational conditions be for you achieve more?'

Most of the high level professionals were relatively satisfied in their work, claiming they were operating at around 65% to 75%. Those operating at level three or four in the hierarchy, on the other hand, were less satisfied, averaging out at around 60%.

The conditions conducive to satisfaction boiled down to a few things:

- Creating greater autonomy and control over one's job and in how to achieve goals. Being subjected to outcomes and targets imposed from far away was the main problem.
- Enabling people to break out of departmental constraints in order to solve problems which require working across the organization without needing to go up and down the hierarchy.
- Respecting, valuing and rewarding under-acknowledged capacities, such as the ability to build relationships or networks internally and externally.
- Encouraging a culture of critical thinking so that the organizational becomes more of a 'learning system'.
- Developing a sense of organizational continuity that allies predictability to responsiveness.

The most profoundly negative effect felt by people in organizations in the last two decades is the tendency for endless tinkering and restructuring to adapt organizations to new times. This will to restructure comes from many sources, for different reasons and in many forms, including: the new broom syndrome; new government or local authority policy; a valid recognition that a structure is out of date or the need for flexibility to achieve a competitive edge.

Is it time to reconsider the balance of effort put on restructuring as distinct from investing in an understanding of how people become more motivated and harness their capabilities. Which route is more effective?

My experience of working in large organisations is limited I have had shorter periods in Brussels at the European Union and later at the World Bank in Washington. I set out below the insights I have gained over the past 25 years of advising and consulting with cities and working with their bureaucracies as an outsider - principally helping them adapt to the new global conditions. The main lessons I have learnt are:

Energy and Passion

The most effective organizations are those where people feel they can be engaged and where their commitment to the organization lies beyond a contractual relationship and where a deeper emotional bond can be established both to the work itself and the organization. In these situations people feel they are able 'to be our true selves' and to have a 'creative presence' so that working gives the sense of 'pregnant possibilities' and where they can develop 'an intensity that feels and appears effortless'. Here energy and passion can come into alignment. The wider ethos of such organizations follows.

Strategically principled, tactically flexible

The organisations most effective in being agents rather than victims of change are those that operate with strong public acknowledged principles. These act as a compass and guide to provide direction. They are not prescriptive. Rules, regulations and laws instead serve ethical, value-laden principles: If the aim is to reduce energy consumption, how you achieve that goal is up to you. How you legislate and implement by-laws shifts over time as long as the principle intent is achieved. The skill of being strategically agile is key.

Vision shaping rules, rather than rules shaping vision

Conversely, innovation is often thwarted by institutional myopia. In the context in which I am most comfortable – cities – rules are rarely designed with a wider urban outcome in mind, such as creating a great neighbourhood or urban vitality. Instead they are concerned with a very particular aspect – health, safety, privacy, road guidelines, traffic flow. In addition to being single issue, the rules try to be uniform across boundaries of all kinds demanding a standardised code framework. This is something the private sector also wants as it simplifies things and gives certainty. When someone comes up with a bright idea comprising a more holistic vision for the city, they are often rejected by officials who might state 'this is not in line with government guidelines' and so a strict modus operandi based on existing rules prevails.

In order to achieve most of the complex outcomes cities desire means rethinking guidelines and rules. For instance, many cities want to be 'networked' or 'vibrant'. Consider the notion of 'networked'. This describes a place of hubs and nodes with centres of urbanity criss-crossing the city. It is a place where public transport is privileged over the private, and people over cars, it is an accessible, walkable place; where building a sense of place is a priority and creating distinctiveness is a common striving; a place of good streets, interesting public spaces; a place that is sustaining and sustainable and that inspires their people and outsiders too. Rules made for specific elements of the city are unlikely to achieve this on their own. The vision and its principled intent should determine the nature and application of rules.

Optimizing not maximizing

The nonlinear and complex nature of the challenges faced by organisations today requires correspondingly complex, adaptive solutions. It is important to consider the difference between optimizing and maximizing a situation. Complex systems do the former. Maximising individual elements, like traffic flow, environmental protection, building densities, safety and health standards which tends to happen in siloed organizations may not address an overarching problem and indeed make it worse. The challenge is to optimize the balance between the different aspects. A simple analogy is the body: if you maximize the function of every part of your body, such as the lungs, the heart, the liver and kidneys you collapse and die. The bodies tries to optimize. For instance, if you have a kidney problem your lungs adapt, your heartbeat might rise whilst your liver functions slow. In short, the elements communicate with each other adaptively to optimise the situation.

Without diminishing the importance of specialist knowledge, fragmented knowledge and expertise can lead to reduced insight and the capacity to solve problems or develop opportunities. Such silo thinking privileges the individual discipline in isolation and can encourage a celebration of individual targets and thus linear maximisation.

Horizontal not vertical, devolved and less centralized

Public institutions remain largely vertically integrated. You look upwards for instructions. The UK remains with Japan the most centralized liberal democracy in the world with around 75% of a local authority's resources coming from central government. To address a complex problem like obesity that has multiple causes and which needs addressing on a number of fronts simultaneously

in an orchestrated way you need to be able to agglomerate responsibility in one place. This is fraught with difficulty. A local authority, for instance, has little traction over what a hospital or university do who are both important players in tackling obesity. There are different accountability structures and money streams are usually centrally dictated which constrains the freedom to act.

Other examples of cross-cutting issues where similar problems occur include place-making, creating sustainable communities and healthy urban planning.

There is an increased recognition that to solve many problems or to grasp new opportunities in the future it is necessary to create horizontal more open networks which allow solutions to emerge from within user communities. This requires a decentralizing drive. With centralization this remains very difficult if not impossible to achieve.

Interdisciplinary not multidisciplinary

Projects should be run on interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary lines where skills intermesh, joint solutions emerge and perspectives change through working together. Contrast this with a multidisciplinary approach where experts share information and knowledge, but usually feed in their expert opinion without changing views.

In the interdisciplinary world the aim and intent - making a great place or street, for example - is central and continually in focus. The various experts jointly agree the characteristics and qualities of such a place. The only question then is how the expert discipline can help that overall goal.

In most stakeholder consultation processes after environmental services, highway engineering, the disability and safety specialists, retailers and other considerations have had their say the project may fall apart. Instead of asking 'what are the highway or disability rules that apply to this project?' the question should be 'how can disability or highway legislation be flexibly used to make a great place?'

Aligning professional mindsets

Even though we have increasing expertise in the technical aspects that make up a neighbourhood or a building, those insights do not seem to provide the answer. The places, estates, institutions and buildings and often their programmes disappoint.

Planners project, surveyors cost, engineers calculate, architects visualize. Professions have their way of achieving insight, a particular set of organizing attributes and dispositions – in short, a mindset. But no profession can claim for itself, as many do, to understand the overarching complexity of places and how they work, be that a neighbourhood, a hospital or housing estate.

The task, then, is to shift to making a place as distinct from doing a project. This involves the complex art of seeing, understanding and acting upon how the physical, social, economic, emotional, psychological and cultural dynamics work. This applies not only to those defined as core professions, such as planners, engineers or architects, but also those concerned with issues such as health, urban entertainment or social care. Particular professional skills should become subsumed to the broader goals of successful place making. Mindsets need to be aligned. Professionals need to understand the essence of other disciplines and their professional languages.

The New Generalist

The new generalist, in the context of cities, knows how to think conceptually, spatially and visually and recognises multiple intelligences. This more rounded person is not the Jack of all trades or gifted amateur of older times. Their higher order skills help them analyse situations better by being able to grasp the essence of other specialist disciplines and to see the connections between them. They have a roving mind. Overlaid on this base are general personal qualities. These include: openness, listening and empathy as well as the capacity to judge the right timing and appropriateness to move into their near opposites of decisiveness and implementing things.

The requirements, for example, to create good cities go beyond the classic disciplines associated with urban development like design, planning, valuing and engineering. It requires people who can think about hardware and software issues simultaneously. For example, they will be able to understand the emotional effects of physical structures like roads or buildings. They will be able to combine attributes some of the specialist disciplines bring such as being acute observers, good visualisers, able information gatherers, sharp strategists or inspirers, sensitive facilitators and mediators, clear presenters and interesting story tellers.

Creative connectors: Overcoming entrenched interests

Successful places seem to have many creative connectors, who might be organizations or individuals. The connectors and

facilitators stand above the nitty gritty of the day to day, important as this is, and look at 'what really matters' instead of getting stuck in detail or short term problems.

By standing above the fray they can focus on bringing people, organizations and ideas together and avoid getting involved in interest group politics. They take an eagle-eye view of things and rove over concerns and see the lines of possible alignment. They look for the common agenda and see issues many organizations view as quite important, but not as of prime importance as it is not their main *raison d'être*. In most silo based organizations many issues slip through under-acknowledged, yet they may be the most important task for a place or organization. Examples include a city's global positioning, developing cultural richness or assessing talent from a broader perspective. This is a task well beyond the educational sector, although they play an important part. After all school or university occupies only five to seven hours a day yet we behave as if it were 24 hours. Some of the most effective learning outcomes happen outside formal institutions.

The connector organization has a difficult role to play. It needs to present itself as beyond self-interest and be both powerful and not powerful simultaneously. Its needs power to draw credible people and organizations together. If it takes too much credit others will be jealous, yet it needs authority or to operate. The connector needs an unusual set of qualities, they include: Sharp focus, clarity, strategic intent, diplomatic skills, flexibility, the capacity to read situations and deal with power play; strong conceptual thinking to understand the essence of arguments, summarizing skills, the ability to chair and make meetings work.

Reframing

'Reframing' is changing the nature of something or a situation by looking at it from a different standpoint and by doing so unleashing potential and a fresh view. There is nothing radical in the idea itself except that it is rarely aspired to. But when it is, the results can be powerful. By turning strength into weakness, for example, the famous Emscher Park project in the industrial Ruhr area of Germany used its industrial degradation to its advantage. By developing a new industrial sector for environmental protection it transformed its degraded landscape and revitalised the economy. In similar exercises in reframing, children have been employed as planners in places like Rouen and Locarno. Taking a women's perspective in Emscher and Vienna has highlighted facilities traditional planning tends to forget: enhanced spaces for social interaction; greater emphasis on play areas; better attention to lighting and safety

issues; rethinking the interiors of apartments with greater attention to kitchens as the central place in households.

Co-creation

Co-creation between producers and users has existed in some spheres for a long time, in product design, community arts and the dispersed networks that track the sky. It has reached a new pitch with the possibilities of the internet and more recently the interactive Web 2.0. At its core it involves engaging users, creating feedback loops, co-defining products or outcomes expected, co-owning the process. There is a dynamic relationship.

We have lived with the idea that inventions and innovations should be protected by patents as this guards the income stream that repays the effort, research, resources expended and risk. Yet patent protection now appears has a flipside. It can reduce creative capacity and innovation potential because it locks in ideas within the domain of rights holders, monopolizes it and blocks others developing an idea, a product or process. Most evolving business models lure users as participants and producers. Examples include the social networking sites like My Space, Twitter and Facebook, where a core organisation provides a platform and creates a large community of users who generate, share, amend and distribute content. Public service organizations can develop similar feedback loops with their audiences and generate a mass of micro improvements and innovations to improve care, health, safety and education.

This is a different focus than simply making the value chain more effective. Instead it takes participation to the next level to co-design services. This is impossible within a vertical structure and will require people like safety officers, fire officers, youth workers, traffic engineers to rethink their roles and to reskill themselves.

Conclusion

New economic, cultural and social conditions require new organizational models to make them work well. A world where user driven problem solving and co-creation is more prevalent and which increasingly acknowledges the importance of engaged employees needs to create structures where their imagination, initiative can express itself more fully. The primary organizational focus then shifts. It demands greater fluidity, responsiveness and strategic agility. It does not give up trying to efficient, it seeks instead to be 'creatively bureaucratic' as a means of enhancing civic creativity.

The challenge for the new bureaucracy is to foster *civic creativity* as its ethos and to persuade their citizen partners and others that problems and opportunities are better addressed in this way. Civic creativity is imaginative problem-solving applied to public good objectives. It involves public sector institutions being more entrepreneurial and responsive to its various audiences within accountability principles and the private sector being more aware of its responsibilities to the collective whole.

Conclusions

- The public interest bureaucracies we have are insufficiently achieving what they set out to do, and failing to respond to major shifts on the horizon, such as the deep trend towards co-creation, will make this worse.
- The operating dynamics of the 21st-century bureaucracy that is responsive to its citizens and users and that provides fulfilling lives for those that work in them will be different in significant ways from what we are used to.
- One central organizational challenge is to shift from vertical structures to more horizontal ones and from hierarchies to networks and looser time dated task specific arrangements.
- The skills and core competences to run complex bureaucracies will change. A range of generic skills will become far more important such as the capacity to build relationships and ability to broker, to rove across disciplines and to understand the essence of each, to think conceptually, to learn the languages of different sectors, to communicate, to work in teams, to delegate and give up power for increased influence.
- There is under-exploited talent in most bureaucracies that wants to burst out. There should be a shift in focus to asking how we harness talent rather than adjusting structures.
- Centralization does not encourage creative bureaucracies. Decentralization and more autonomy remain key drivers to generate innovation and are essential to build creativity in to the system as the potential of more actors is harnessed.

A final thought

- Many attributes of the successful bureaucracy are difficult to measure as they concern attitudes and organizational cultures. Yet as Daniel Yankelovich the renowned American pollster noted: 'The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is okay as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that

which can't be measured or give it an arbitrary value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume what can't be measured isn't really important. This is blindness. The fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide!

- The question 'what is the value of a 'creative bureaucracy'' should be reversed to 'what is the cost of not having a creative bureaucracy'

Examples:

Inventing rules afresh: Calgary's Community Standards Process

Calgary recognized that getting people to comply with by-laws requires different tools and personnel with different skills than are normally found in enforcement jobs. Environmental by-laws are enacted to regulate and control actions or behaviours. Frequently, by-laws are developed based on a few complaints from a very vocal citizen group. Living in close proximity we by default influence each other's lives, so it then becomes necessary to agree reasonable standards for things that affect our neighbours and a simple, safe process for resolution. This process generally happens with little input from citizens.

The vision behind the Community Standards by-law project is based on a few cornerstones or principles.

- Most people will abide by-laws they understand, agree with, see as relevant and feel they have been considered in the process – very few people will simply do as they are told.
- By-laws need to reflect the standards the community desires. What works in one place does not in another.
- The public needs to drive the process to set the guidelines to achieve compliance which includes getting violators to be part of the solution. The aim is to create a self-regulating system.
- Neighbourhood liveability requires a blend of respect and tolerance and processes that foster and support resolution, not punishment. By-laws, if properly constructed and applied, can provide a peaceful resolution to most issues. Strictly regulated by-laws can become a weapon in a neighbour war with the local by-law officials drawn in.
- The concept tries to get at least 95% of the public voluntarily to comply with by-laws because they make sense, can be understood and deserve support. Calgary calculated that they could not enforce against more than 5% of the population given the sheer volume.

As an example, take property. There were 12 different by-laws. All were created at different times and in isolation of each other and included things as: unsightly premises, nuisance, levels of waste,

fire hazards, open burning, graffiti, noise or drainage. Several were very old and there were many areas of conflict within the rules.

The Community Standards programme set up an advisory committee made up of three members from each of the 14 electoral wards, one of which had to be young, as well as representatives from a variety of community/interest groups.

Starting with a blank piece of paper they assumed there were no by-laws. Over several months the group agreed what they want their city to look and feel like. They reached a consensus on what are acceptable/desirable activities in the community, what are problematic and need to be prohibited, what are potentially problematic and need to be regulated and what are outside of their ability to regulate.

The outcome, a Community Standards by-law, is a baseline of minimum acceptable standards for Calgary based on citizens' expectations. The process does not stop with drafting a by-law. Implementation involves an extensive program of education and awareness, working with communities and others in a program called Partners in Compliance. By taking ownership of their neighbourhood the community participates in maintaining compliance. The local authority assists with resources to do community clean ups or other programmes that will lead to better compliance. The aim is to create a self regulating community where enforcement is rarely needed, yet voluntary compliance is high.

The by-law becomes a community tool written in a more flexible manner that does not rely solely on a set technical standard but provides regulations subject to interpretation, such as what type of noise is disturbing.

Their experience shows a 90 – 95% success rate in resolving issues compared to 30% of situations where there is third-party intervention relying on regulatory orders and which require follow-up intervention.

The broad goal is to provide a framework or agreed standards and provide mechanisms for self-regulation. The regulatory hammer lives in the background to intervene in cases where there is no desire to work collaboratively and to provide encouragement to seek non-regulatory resolution.

Thanks to Bill Bruce Calgary's director of Bye-Laws for providing me with the material for this example.

The Bicycle Bell: Rules that build social capital

In Calgary there are 650 kilometres of shared-use pathways jointly used by walkers, cyclists, skateboarders and roller-bladers, runners and dog walkers. Rules enforced by the by-law officers ensure the system can operate safely. One is that all bicycles have to have a bell to alert other users. The penalty for failing to have one is a \$57.00 fine. Failing to pay can have further consequences. Historically, officers would patrol the pathway and stop cyclists without a bell and fine them. These interactions were unpleasant and stressful for both the officer and cyclist. After the confrontation the cyclist would ride away angry with their \$57.00 ticket but still with no bell on the bike – no compliance. Administering the fine cost the taxpayer \$100 and more if the cyclist ended up in court.

The simple solution was to revisit the original goal of compliance and to review options to achieve it. The city were able to buy 100 bells wholesale at \$1.00 per bell and 12 screwdrivers for each of the rangers.

Officers were given bells and a screw driver with the instruction to continue to enforce the regulation but to do it differently. During the dialogue with 'offenders', the officer covers the reasons why the bell is needed and the penalty for noncompliance. He then says they are lucky as he has a bell and a screw driver and if the cyclist is willing to install it now, the officer will not a ticket them. During the installation time, the officer takes advantage to continue the positive dialogue and educate the cyclist on other safety related regulations. At the end of this five- to ten-minute encounter, the cyclist rides away in compliance, educated and in a positive mood as they have been given a gift. The officer returns to duty after a constructive, unstressful encounter. The prime goal of compliance is achieved. To date, no one has declined to accept the bell and take the ticket option. This approach is far cheaper. Crucially with financial capital, the more you use it the more the less you have; with social capital the more you use it the more it achieves.

Freiburg: We had principles and we meant them

There are nearly as many solar installations in Freiburg, an historic university city in Southern Germany with a population of 200,000, as in the whole of the UK. Why, when most technologies are tried and tested, is the UK so far behind most of Europe? How did a largely conservative city become the 'green' capital of Europe? The main lessons are less in the details and much more concerned with showing principles, vision, will, motivation, and tenacity.

As Wulf Daseking the chief planner involved since the early 1980s noted in conversation:

'It was all relatively easy, we had a few principles and we meant them – full stop. We discussed things with citizens and major players like the developers and through education and awareness raising got them on board – we showed them how in the long run they would benefit from our plans. Once they understood the framework, things were clearer. We provided a structure and predictability – that is really all they want. We were flexible about the look of buildings, we only insisted that the corner buildings that were prominent met the highest standards of design, many of those in between are not very attractive, but when they are part of an assembly of buildings they look alright. We had one advantage, Freiburg was growing so this gave us a lot of power. I have always said the key thing is not give power away to the developers, they have to work within our guidelines'.

In the early 1980s the threat of a nuclear waste plant being sited near the city galvanized interests across the political spectrum. When the Chernobyl disaster happened in the Ukraine in 1986 this gave an important impetus to rethink the city's energy platform and the solar grouping proposed an alternative solar based strategy. Their impact grew and over time the political attitudes of all the major parties coalesced around the idea of Freiburg becoming a solar city.

Principles

The idea has been most fully worked through in two new major settlements: Riesefeld with 7,000 inhabitants and Vauban with 6,000 inhabitants.

Three main principles characterize these developments. First, there are strong ecological objectives such as integrating solar heating, feeding district heating systems with a combined heat and power plant, rainwater collection and upgrading the surrounding nature to

reserve status. Second, there are traffic systems that give priority to public transport, pedestrians and bicycles. The secondary streets especially in Vauban are largely car-free as there are dedicated parking houses so encouraging children to play on the street. Third, priority is given to mixed use both in terms of income groups, local shopping and nearby work opportunities. Furthermore, public and private spaces interweave well creating green lungs in the developments and there is a flexible urban design framework that allows for future adaptation.

Practice

The commitment to these principles has manifested itself in wide-ranging policies of which the following are only a few:

Vaubon's 'energy plus' homes are built on a North-South axis to make the most of sunlight, producing more energy than they consume.

One-third of Freiburg's streets are reserved for bicycles, one-third for trams and buses and a third for private vehicles.

The implementation of urban development is based on agreements between the city and private owners. An important element has been getting building contractors and architects on board and this means keeping everyone well informed.

Freiburg has sold off plots of land to groups of families so they can employ an architect and build their own flats.

Impacts

Importantly Freiburg's reputation has led to a series of significant economic spin-offs. First, it has attracted Europe's foremost solar power research institute as well as other organizations and research centres related to alternative energy. These have encouraged experimental prototype solar buildings. Second, it has led to an active economic sector leading the world in a variety of technologies. Third, in collaboration with its economic development agency it created the major solar energy exhibition and trade fair that has become so successful that it has been franchised and transferred to Munich. In addition it helped create a sister event in San Francisco. Finally, expert visits to Freiburg have become a niche tourism market largely provided by the municipality accounting for 20000 visits. Freiburg shows that there is more to a green vision than house-building alone.

Apps for Democracy

"Apps for Democracy produced more savings for the D.C.government than any other initiative." – Vivek Kundra, former Chief Technology Officer of Washington, DC and currently President Obama's Chief Information Officer

In the autumn of 2008, Washington's Office of the Chief Technology Office asked iStrategyLabs how it could make its vast Data Catalogue useful for citizens, visitors, businesses and government agencies in Washington, DC. The Data Catalogue contains all manner of open public data featuring real-time crime feeds, school test scores, and poverty indicators, and is the most comprehensive of its kind in the world.

The old way - the Web 1.0 way - they felt would cost a couple of \$million by outsourcing it to a single supplier and would probably not deliver a very good product. They felt combining with citizens talent would be far more effective. Only two rules applied, the first was to use the Washington Data Catalogue and the second to use open source with creative commons licensing so the results could be shared.

Their solution was to create Apps for Democracy. The first edition contest cost the local authority \$50,000 and returned 47 iPhone, Facebook and web applications with an estimated value in excess of \$2,600,000 to the city. They include: A car pooling organizer, new biking maps, a 'We the People Wiki' peer-led community reference website that anyone can edit based on the public data, an application called 'Aware Real Time Alerts' on crime reports, building permits and the like.

The next round is the "Community Edition" and they are looking for 5000 feedback items. It has two aims: to engage the people of Washington, DC to ask for their input into the problems and then to crowd source ideas that can be addressed with technology. Second, to build the best community platform as well as their ideas about the perfect system to receive feedback and service requests through blog posts, email surveys, video testimonials, voice call-in captures or twitter update submissions. At the conclusion the applications that win will be considered for government support and helped with commercialisation

Conclusions

- The public interest bureaucracies we have are insufficiently achieving what they set out to do, and responding to major shifts on the horizon, such as the deep trend towards co-creation, will make this worse.
- The operating dynamics of the 21st-century bureaucracy that is responsive to its citizens and users and that provides fulfilling lives for those that work in them will be different in significant ways from what we are used to.
- One central organizational challenge is to shift from vertical structures to more horizontal ones and from hierarchies to networks and looser time dated task specific arrangements.
- The skills and core competences to run complex bureaucracies will change. A range of generic skills will become far more important such as the capacity to build relationships and ability to broker, to rove across disciplines and to understand the essence of each, to think conceptually, to learn the languages of different sectors, to communicate, work in teams, to delegate and give up power for increased influence.
- There is under-exploited talent in most bureaucracies that wants to burst out. There should be a shift in focus to asking how we harness talent rather than adjusting structures.
- Centralization does not encourage creative bureaucracies. Decentralization and more autonomy remain key drivers to generate innovation and are essential to build creativity in to the system as the potential of more actors is harnessed.

A final thought

- Many attributes of the successful bureaucracy are difficult to measure as they concern attitudes and organizational cultures. Yet as Daniel Yankelovich the renowned American pollster noted: 'The first step is to measure whatever can be easily measured. This is okay as far as it goes. The second step is to disregard that which can't be measured or give it an arbitrary value. This is artificial and misleading. The third step is to presume what can't be measured isn't really important. This is blindness. The

fourth step is to say that what can't be easily measured really doesn't exist. This is suicide!

- The question 'what is the value of a 'creative bureaucracy'' should be reversed to 'what is the cost of not having a creative bureaucracy'

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