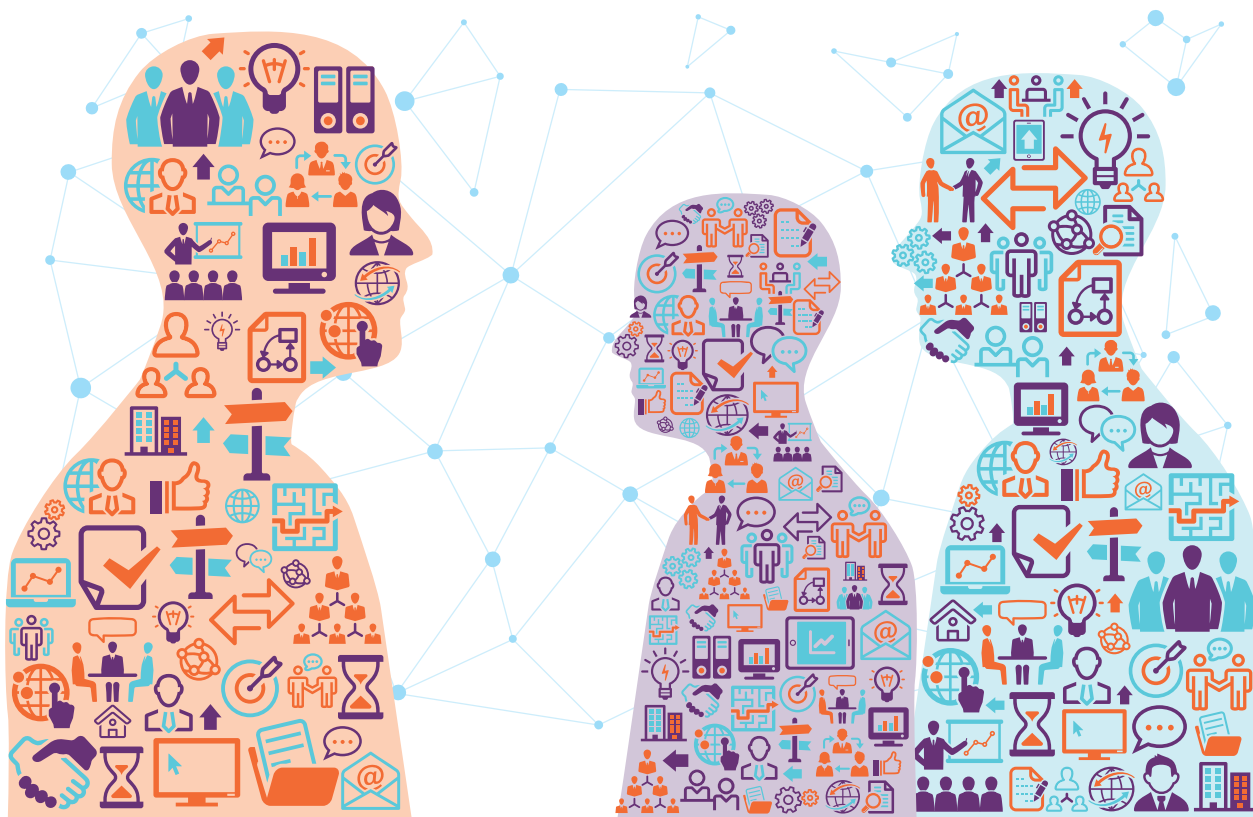


ETHOS



Civil Service College
Singapore



The Power of Games to
Drive Policy Outcomes

Peter Ho

From Scarcity to Generativity: New
Approaches for Governing Resources

Aaron Maniam

Public Institutions and
the Productivity Imperative

Gary Banks

Committed Leadership
in a Changing World

Interview with Jean-François Manzoni



ETHOS

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EDITORIAL

The political upheavals of 2016 must have prompted deep introspection in governments the world over. Despite (or perhaps due to) a remarkable recovery from the brink of economic disaster after the Global Financial Crisis, societies the world over remain mired in unease, made more profound by the relentless pace of social and economic change wrought by globalisation and technological advancement. Unprecedented levels of peace and prosperity may no longer sate a growing concern with the status quo nor a longing for an imagined golden past, in the face of a future that has yet to be adequately envisioned, or even agreed upon. This is a worrying failure of vision and leadership. While technical competence and clean, impartial government remain critical to good governance, the credibility, relevance and impact of the public sector seems more than ever to depend on finding ways to connect, collaborate and create consensus with the society it serves, as the world moves into ever more turbulent waters.

One way to do this, as former Head of Civil Service Peter Ho suggests, is through approaches such as games and simulations that can help policymakers

and their stakeholders imagine and then play out a variety of scenarios, exploring issues from different perspectives (*p. 6*). Such exercises build up useful cognitive muscles and habits, and help communities surface assumptions and points of contention in a safe yet focused setting, as well as to form bonds. Certainly, regular drills and a shared vocabulary have helped Singapore develop a powerful mechanism for responding swiftly to crisis in a broad, yet coordinated manner (*p. 14*). More nimble, distributed forms of capacity and resilience, with robust ties between all agencies across government, not just a strong centre, will be important in confronting volatile times where the implications of events can reach far from the original source or intervention (*p. 23*). Lessons from New Zealand suggest that timing is also crucial to the success of significant public sector reforms, as is the commitment of public officers to a spirit of service (*p. 29*). Professor Gary Banks has argued that strong and inclusive independent public institutions can help achieve national outcomes that will depend as much on political knowhow as technical expertise. (*p. 46*). The experience of

Singapore is that such structures — the Public Transport Council, for instance (*p. 52*) — can not only help ensure accountability and efficacy, but also gather meaningful insights from the public that may not be apparent in the design of policies and services, and in the process nurture confidence that the government welcomes and heeds well-intentioned feedback — a key step in maintaining public trust (*p. 41*).

Research and technology offer fresh approaches to achieve public goals by means other than edict. We can help people help (and govern) themselves. Advances in data gathering, analysis and application can help make public policy and interventions much more thoughtful, targeted and pragmatic, opening up innovative opportunities to overcome seemingly intractable challenges (*p. 58*). But this may demand a bold departure from conventional ways of thinking about the resources available to us (*p. 68*). Government can play a catalytic role in enabling people to make the most of the rich potential available to them, for the benefit of all.

Over the past fifty years, our Public Service has worked hard to do its

best for Singapore. A striking insight from the experience of celebrating the nation's 50th anniversary last year was how fulfilling and empowering it can be to work *with* Singaporeans (*p. 76*). Despite our diversity and differences, we can stand together in times of need, and strive as one when inspired by a shared vision of where we need to go. Our institutions are strong and in touch with the ground; public trust remains high. Nor do we lack a capable new generation with the passion to do well for the country (*p. 86*). This spirit is heartening and should be embraced. If we can continue to look ahead, clear-eyed and resolutely committed to each other as a nation, we can hope to weather the 21st century with more optimism than most.

I wish you an illuminating read.

Alvin Pang

Editor-in-Chief
ETHOS

The Power of Games to Drive Policy Outcomes

Well-designed games and simulations can broaden outreach, bridge divides, and offer engaging ways to understand and further public policy goals.

BY
PETER HO

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A version of this article was delivered as a keynote speech at the 2nd Public Sector Games Exchange on 8 September 2016 at the Civil Service College.



Play is natural. From young, people and animals naturally seek out playful experiences. Even as we mature, we continue to play: the games we play grow in complexity. But games do more than engage and entertain us. They can impart knowledge and skills, different from the explicit knowledge that is formalised, codified, and written down, for others to learn.

This is “tacit” knowledge, which is embedded in complex systems and situations that are difficult to codify. More often than not, tacit knowledge pertains to the “real world”, which is inevitably complex, and which behaves in a non-Newtonian fashion where inputs do not necessarily lead to predictable outputs. The tacit knowledge of this real world can often only be acquired through lived experience.

Tacit Knowledge and the Civil Servant

The lived experience of civil servants, although they would like to think otherwise, is inherently complex, if not chaotic. Although we often think that it is merely *complicated*, in which cause leads to predictable effect, most of the

time it is not. This is why, sooner or later, most plans and policies outlive their usefulness. They become unfit for the purposes that they were designed for, as assumptions are invalidated over time and as circumstances change. This is a consequence of the complex or real world we live in.

Civil servants need to learn how to cope with this complexity. This means that it is as important for them to acquire tacit knowledge as it is to learn explicit knowledge. Besides on-the-job training, simulations, exercise and games — often referred to as “serious games” — are an important, if underutilised, means to convey tacit knowledge.

Simulations, exercises and games provide a useful shortcut in the learning process, so that when we do encounter similar situations in real-life, we would have a reasonable sense of how some of these events might play out for real, and then some instinct for how to respond to them. Studying such simulations can help public servants prepare for such eventualities before they occur in the real world.

The lived experience of civil servants, although they would like to think otherwise, is inherently complex, if not chaotic. Civil servants need to learn how to cope with this complexity: simulations, exercises and games provide a useful shortcut in the learning process.

LEARNING FROM GAMES

TeachLIVE

At the University of Central Florida, trainee teachers undergo a realistic and interactive simulation called TeachLIVE that exposes them to common student archetypes that they are likely to encounter in the classroom. Controlled by a human “interactor” who has improvisational skills, the virtual student characters, who are in reality actors, respond — or not — to a trainee teacher’s instructions. With five levels of obedience, trainee teachers are exposed, and have to respond immediately, to a variety of classroom scenarios — but in a safe environment. This allows the trainees and their instructor to revisit a scenario, but employ different approaches. With cohorts of trainee teachers going through this simulation, those who do become teachers after the experience have a common reference point and language to discuss their real students.

World of Warcraft

On 13 September 2005, a glitch in *World of Warcraft*, a Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG), led to players contracting and spreading a disease that killed them off over time. While the disease was supposed to be confined to a particular locale in the game, the glitch enabled players to transmit the disease — as in real life — beyond the boundaries of that area. When the disease first emerged, there was a lot of confusion and uncertainty. Some players deliberately spread the disease to populated cities, leading to the death of many characters in the game, and laying waste to large swathes of populated areas. On the other hand, there were some players with in-game healing powers who cured those with the disease. Others helped by warning people to stay away from the cities. There were also some who went into the epicentre out of curiosity, despite the danger, much like journalists attracted to crises. This virtual plague, often referred to as the Corrupted Blood incident, has been studied by epidemiologists¹ because it mimicked the behaviour of people in real-life pandemics, proving more realistic than mathematical models.

NOTE

1. One such researcher was Professor Nina H Fefferman, who argued that relevant games could be used to improve the applied simulation modelling in the research on infectious diseases. This was in part because a real world scientific experiment would be potentially unethical.

EMPATHY THROUGH GAMES

That Dragon, Cancer

This interactive video “game” takes the player through the real-life journey of a family with a child stricken with terminal cancer. Players experience the small joys and painful memories narrated by the actual parents of the child. It is a different way for people to relate and connect with one another over a topic that would otherwise be difficult to talk about. It creates empathy, and allows the player to consider a different perspective.

Syrian Journey

This BBC-produced, online “choose your own adventure” narrative about Syrian refugees escaping to Europe¹ was based on research done by BBC journalists and supplemented by reports and stories from actual refugees. It highlights the difficulties and experiences of Syrian refugees, helping players to enter the frame of mind of the refugees, without having to make the actual journey to Syria.

NOTE

1. This game can be played at www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32057601.

Nurturing Empathy and Interpersonal Understanding

Simulations, exercises and games have benefits that extend beyond training and development. They do more than impart tacit knowledge. They are able to evoke emotions and awaken our senses. Among other things, these aid our ability to take on different perspectives, which is important when tackling wicked problems. To be able to craft citizen-centric policies that address not just the mind, but also the hearts of our residents, policymakers in Singapore must be able to walk in

their shoes. Serious games are therefore a useful tool in a policymaker’s toolkit. Some government agencies are already using this methodology meaningfully.

Ministry of Manpower

Singapore’s Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has created games to help participants experience the tensions and challenges of working and living in three future scenarios. The joys and frustrations experienced in these games by the participants gave them much food for thought and for reflection, insights that could inform the enhancement

of existing manpower policies. This method of engaging the audience, while driving home a serious message, was adapted by the Strategy Group of the Prime Minister's Office to help public sector leaders consider the potential challenges that jobseekers will face in the future.

To be able to craft citizen-centric policies that address not just the mind, but also the hearts of residents, policymakers must be able to walk in their shoes.

When the SGFuture Public Engagement sessions were introduced, MOM once again decided to use a game format to reach out to members of the public.¹ Over four rounds, players either had to seek out jobs that met their expectations, or hire employees that met minimum requirements. Participants imbibed the message of investing in lifelong learning to stay relevant to the global economy. Not only was this a more engaging method of connecting with the public, the experiential activity also helped participants better understand the expected shifts in the future environment of work, which enriched the ensuing dialogue.

Driving (Understanding of) Policy Implementation

Policymakers should not look at serious games as a one-way street. In addition to helping policymakers understand the

ground, games are an excellent way to allow different groups of people to better understand one another, as well as the constraints faced by government in coming up with policies. With the power to reach out to the masses and bridge divides, games can also be a great platform for fostering collaboration between groups of people.

Land Transport Authority

Our local agencies are also in the game. The Land Transport Authority (LTA) recently piloted their Travel Smart Rewards,² which encourages commuters to shift their travel times to outside of the morning peak period. In addition to gamifying the programme by awarding points, LTA also incorporated a modified Snakes and Ladders game to further engage commuters, allowing them to win up to \$1,500 in cash rewards. LTA has gathered useful feedback and meta-data, which have been used to develop a second version of the programme. This time, they intend to introduce more games to appeal to different commuter segments, including one that incorporates elements of skill, rather than just pure chance.

Health Promotion Board

Through the feedback and results gathered by a few pilots and health challenges, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) designed and launched the National Steps Challenge last year to encourage Singaporeans to keep active. HPB paired

Chair the Fed

In this online game created by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco,¹ players act as the chair of the Federal Reserve for four years, enacting monetary policies to achieve full employment and low price inflation (known as the dual mandate). The game allows players to explore the impact of interest rate changes on unemployment, production growth, inflation and other economic indicators. This helps educate the public on the different instruments that the Federal Reserve Bank uses to do its job. Not only does it excite players enough to make them interested in finding out about the different policy tools, the “main underlying motivation for [the game] was to give some sense of what monetary policy makers face in the real world.”² There are even resources such as lesson plans for teachers to use the game in classrooms, to reach out to younger generations of US residents.

Hack the Pentagon

Between April and May 2016, the Pentagon invited and attracted more than 1,400 programmers to hack five public Department of Defense (DoD) websites. Successful hackers would be rewarded a cash bounty if they could demonstrate and document their hacks. About US\$75,000 in bounties were awarded, for 138 legitimate and unique vulnerabilities found³ — it would have cost an estimated US\$1 million to hire a security firm to do the same job. Contrary to expectations, there were no negative consequences of inviting people to hack these websites. The DoD is now planning to expand the programme to other websites. Other companies like Facebook, Twitter and Uber have also used such bug bounty initiatives, leveraging crowdsourcing to resolve cyber security issues.⁴

Red Cross Climate Centre

The Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Centre, an international non-governmental organisation, has at least forty-five games to communicate to policymakers and communities alike the importance of paying attention to various humanitarian issues arising from climate change effects. These games have been played across five continents and at least forty countries,⁵ helping players realise the need to work together to mitigate our impact on nature, as well as to prepare for future eventualities. The utility of the games was such that Dr Pablo Suarez of the Climate Centre was able to conduct an engaging game via video conferencing during the Civil Service College’s 2nd Public Sector Games Exchange.

NOTES

1. This game can be played at <http://sffed-education.org/chairthefed/WebGamePlay.html>.
2. Glenn Rudebusch, Executive Vice President at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco.
3. More information can be found at <https://hackerone.com/resources/hack-the-pentagon>.
4. More information can be found at <https://www.wired.com/2016/03/uber-bug-bounties/>
5. More information can be found at www.climatecentre.org/resources-games/games

a wearable steps tracker with a game-based incentive system, through the Healthy 365 mobile app. The app nudged and motivated its users to clock steps, attracting over 156,000 participants to sit less and move more. The scheme was so popular that at one point, the Health 365 mobile app was receiving around 3,000 hits a day, making it the number one trending app in the whole Singapore. Importantly, HPB was able to follow up with people who dropped out of the scheme to understand why they discontinued. From the lessons learnt, Season 2 of the challenge promises to be more engaging,³ and HPB is already sourcing for new ideas for Season 3.

The Future of Policy Games

Of course, game development is not the core business of the Public Service. This is why we need to reach across to the non-public sector, to explore opportunities for collaboration and innovation. In particular, the non-public

sector can help the government keep up-to-date with constantly changing technology, the newest products and their possibilities.

Virtual Reality

According to US firm Touchstone Research, Virtual Reality (VR) is expected to experience a staggering 200% growth over the next three years, and will spawn some 25 million users worldwide. VR technology is already used in the NUS School of Medicine for undergraduates to better understand anatomy dissection and how to deal with emergency incidents. The immersive media experience has the potential to evoke strong emotional responses, and can be a powerful tool for games, exercises and simulations.

Augmented Reality

Augmented Reality (AR) takes simulation one step further, allowing the user's device to recognise its environments,


thereby increasing the interactivity of the experience. While not necessarily a new technology, the global popularity of Pokemon Go is certain to spawn greater interest in AR.⁴ The public sector should consider the far-reaching potential of this technology in engaging with the public.

Cognitive Computing and Artificial Intelligence

Cognitive Computing and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are yet another area to consider. A few government agencies have incorporated the “Ask Jamie” virtual assistant function into their websites, allowing web users to get fast and quite accurate answers to their queries. Over time, as more visitors use this feature, the system will be able to improve its accuracy to deliver better customer service. In some other systems, the programmes are even able to recognise the tone in the responses, and react in a manner appropriate to the situation. In the same way, Cognitive

Computing and AI could be pulled into games-based training and policy formulation, by learning about human behaviours and replicating them in simulated exercises. Such technology is currently quite expensive, but a few years down the road, and with a few agencies coming together to explore options, there are good possibilities.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the Public Service will need people to work out how to use games, exercises and simulations to teach our civil servants how to operate in a complex environment. A whole ecosystem of skills will be needed, including storytellers, programmers, game designers, game developers, learning design specialists, pedagogues and even improvisational actors, and certainly psychologists. Ministries and agencies will need to think carefully about what capabilities they need to engage or invest in, in order to properly use this methodology. 

NOTES

1. The uniqueness of this approach was covered by Olivia Ho of *The Straits Times* in “SGFuture dialogue: Plenty of jobs, but few takers – why?”, 6 March 2016.
2. More information can be found at https://www.travelsmartrewards.sg/learn_more/
3. More information can be found at www.healthhub.sg/programmes/37/nsc
4. According to a 4 August 2016 article “Imagination in the Augmented-Reality Age” in *The Atlantic*, the game attracted more than 21 million users since its release in July 2016. While a Bloomberg Markets article on 23 August 2016 reported that the game was already on the decline, the game is arguably just the tip of the iceberg in terms of AR adoption.

Singapore's Whole-of-Government Approach in Crisis Management

Deliberate and concerted effort has been key to building up Singapore's state capacity to resolve crises, but more should be done to strengthen the community's role in future.

BY
JAMES LOW

Dr James Low is Lead Researcher at the Institute of Governance and Policy, Civil Service College. His research interests include administrative history, case study methodology, whole-of-government issues, public trust and crisis management. This article was adapted from a paper first presented at the 2016 World Congress of Political Science at Poznan, Poland, 23 to 28 July 2016. The views expressed herein are his own.



A Structure for Inter-agency Crisis Management

Literature on whole-of-government (WOG) issues rarely dwells on crisis management. Most scholarly work on WOG concentrates on improving public service delivery and addressing “wicked problems”,¹ which is understandable given the extent and significance of these areas. Yet the coordination of multiple government agencies to deal with catastrophic events is critical: the lives and well-being of people in situations from large-scale disasters to terrorist attacks depend on it.

For independent Singapore, the genesis of crisis management can be traced to the Laju incident in 1974. The Laju was a ferry hijacked by four foreign terrorists in a bid to escape after setting off bombs at the Shell oil refinery.² The terrorists’ grievances were not directed at Singapore but against the Netherlands — Shell being a Dutch company — for supporting Israel in the Middle Eastern conflict. Police prevented the terrorists from escaping but they took the Laju’s crewmen hostage. After eight days of standoff, the hijackers agreed to release the hostages in exchange for safe passage out of Singapore.

While the Laju hijack thus ended without bloodshed, the authorities at the time clearly lacked the proper capabilities to deal with the situation. An official book on the Singapore Police

Force (SPF) acknowledged: “The Laju incident exposed the weakness of not having a sufficient reserve of trained officers who could be relied on to supplement regular officers during a security crisis”.³ Anti-hijacking forces and dedicated negotiators were not available as options to manage the crisis. Questions also arose over whether the director of internal security from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) or the director of intelligence from the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) should lead the crisis management.⁴ The political leadership placed MINDEF’s director of intelligence in charge and the hijack was eventually resolved. But the incident highlighted the need for coordination among different agencies during such crises.

The coordination of multiple government agencies to deal with catastrophic events is critical: the lives and well-being of people depend on it.

The Executive Group (EG) was subsequently set up “to handle hijacking and hostage taking”.⁵ The structure identified the leadership for handling such situations, appointing the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs as Chairman of the EG. Comprising senior officers from the security forces and various ministries (including communications and diplomatic agencies),

1986: Hotel New World Collapse

When the Hotel New World collapsed in 1986 trapping survivors in the rubble, the Executive Group (EG) was fortuitously in the midst of a routine meeting and was able to coordinate the multi-agency rescue efforts immediately. The Singapore Police Force, Singapore Fire Service and the recently-created Singapore Civil Defence Force responded immediately. The Singapore Armed Forces, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community Development, Public Works Department and other agencies were also mobilised to provide additional manpower, medical support, counselling for families of victims and engineering support. It was effectively a WOG operation. In all, 33 died but 17 lives were saved. The disaster vindicated earlier decisions to develop crisis response capabilities, as well as the effectiveness of the EG in coordinating inter-agency responses.¹

1991: SQ117 Hijack

In 1991, four Pakistanis hijacked Singapore Airlines Flight SQ117 *en route* to Singapore. They held 114 passengers and 11 crew members hostage, in order to pressure the government of Pakistan to release some prisoners. The EG's frequently-drilled plans went into action.² A Negotiation Team comprising specially-trained police officers and psychologists established contact with the hijackers. When there was no breakthrough from the overnight talks, as the foreign authorities rejected the hijackers' demands, the increasingly agitated hijackers threatened to kill the hostages at daybreak. EG ordered a storming of the plane. In less than 30 seconds, commandos killed all four terrorists, freeing all hostages. The successful resolution of the hijack vindicated earlier investments in specialised capabilities. It also demonstrated the value of regular cross-agency peacetime exercises in preparation for a crisis: they helped to blur boundary lines among agencies, forging various state capabilities into a single focused instrument for crisis resolution.

2003: SARS

When the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus reached Singapore in early 2003, the EG was activated to coordinate a government-wide response. The entire Public Service and citizen-volunteers were mobilised to conduct contact tracing and monitoring for 2,500 wholesale centre workers and 55,000 food centre workers across the country. This helped prevent the epidemic from spreading further through the vegetable supply chain. Although four Singaporeans succumbed to the virus, these coordinated efforts were effective

in containing SARS: on 30 May, with no new cases recorded for 20 days, the World Health Organisation took Singapore off its “SARS list”, praising Singapore’s handling of the crisis as “exemplary”.³ The incident highlighted the need for the EG to be prepared for crises other than security threats: it soon set up cross-agency functional groups to cover areas such as transport, border control, education and housing.⁴

2013: Transboundary haze

In 2013, trans-boundary haze caused by slash-and-burn plantation farming in neighbouring Indonesia reached hazardous levels in Singapore. The health of the population, especially those with respiratory conditions, the elderly and young. The Homefront Crisis Executive Group activated its Crisis Management Group (Haze), which mobilised thousands of public officers from 23 different sectoral agencies along with citizen-volunteers. Together, they provided a comprehensive response to mitigate the socio-economic repercussions and to seek diplomatic solutions to the crisis. Well-rehearsed processes, strong executive capacity, the urgency of the situation and a collective sense of the national good meant that public officers looked beyond agency interests to tackle the haze. Eventually, a shift in wind direction at about the same time helped dissipate the haze and improved the situation.

NOTES

1. James Low, “Overcoming Crises, Building Resilience,” in *Heart of Public Service: Our Institutions* (Singapore: Public Service Division, 2015): 132–45.
2. Jagjit Singh, interview with author, March 19, 2015.
3. Stephen Lambert, “Singapore: Waves of Transmission,” in *SARS: How a Global Epidemic Was Stopped* (Geneva: World Health Organisation, 2006): 101–08.
4. Chua Mui Hoong, *A Defining Moment: How Singapore Beat SARS* (Singapore: Ministry of Information and the Arts, 2004).

the EG was the first inter-agency coordination platform across the Singapore Public Service.⁶

Whole-of-government: Aligning Mindset to Structure

Ideas such as whole-of-government

began appearing in the discourse of the Singapore Public Service around 2004. By then, “joined-up government” and “networked government” had been gaining traction in countries like Britain and New Zealand. There, the impetus arose from the fragmentation

of public services stemming from large-scale new public management reforms. Singapore, having also corporatised some government functions to enhance efficiency, had encountered similar issues. How to apply WOG approaches to prepare for and deal with complex dilemmas, including crises, has since

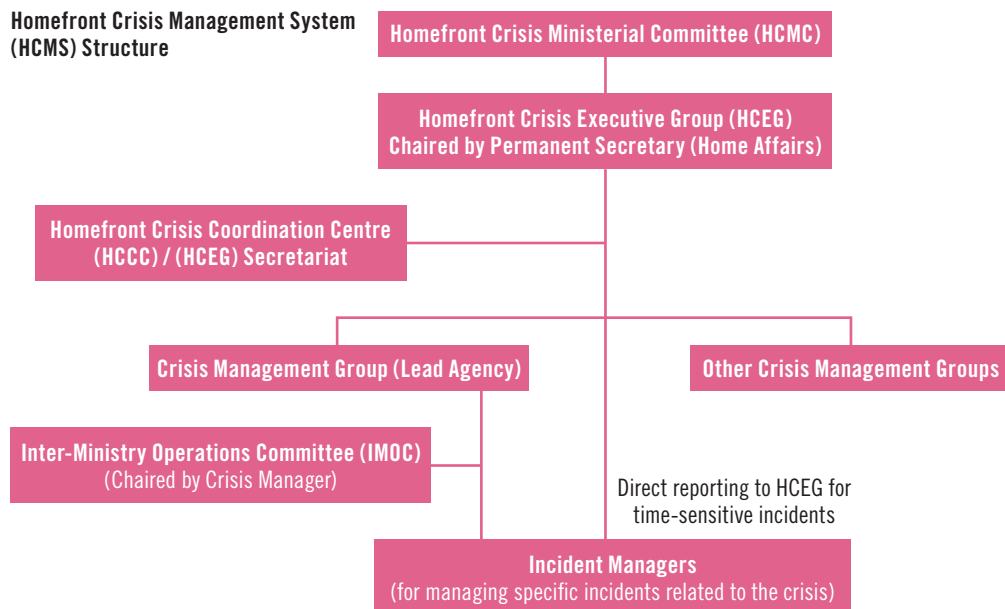
become a recurring theme in addresses by government leaders to public officers.

Crises are not restricted to security concerns, and could be highly complex, with wide-ranging implications on society and the economy. To render Singapore's crisis management capabilities more comprehensive, the EG was reorganised in 2004 into the Homefront Crisis Executive Group (HCEG) (see Figure 1). HCEG comprised senior representatives from all ministries, reporting ultimately to the elected leadership for political direction. Under the HCEG's oversight were taskforce-like Crisis Management Groups which could muster different

Regular cross-agency peacetime exercises helped to blur boundary lines among agencies, forging various state capabilities into a single focused instrument for crisis resolution.

Figure 1. Structure of the Homefront Crisis Management System⁷

Source: National Security Coordination Secretariat, *1826 days: A diary of resolve: Securing Singapore since 9/11* (Singapore: National Security Coordination Secretariat, 2006): 62.



Commit time, resources and practice to make it work

Organisational structures by themselves have nominal authority over agencies. It is the commitment of key leaders, as expressed in the adequate investment of time and resources, including frequent drills to anchor capabilities, that cements the credibility and effectiveness of the coordinating structure. Constant exercises smooth out the interface between agencies and personnel, allowing any unforeseen frictions or hindrances to be identified and rectified. Drills may pull agencies and officers away from routine work, and managers may cite important duties as justification to skip them, but the commitment and discipline to regular exercises is the “software” that allows the “hardware” of structural arrangements to be effective in inter-agency coordination.

Strong leadership with a shared ethos is a must

High-performing leadership across the bureaucracy allows the application of the best and most suitable minds towards managing crises when they arise. The high level of executive capacity aggregated in the EG and later the HCEG has certainly been instrumental in resolving Singapore’s various crises. Equally significant is the “shared language and culture” cultivated among the small cadre of public sector elite.¹ The ethos among Administrative Officers in leadership positions up and down the hierarchy and across the Public Service helped ease communication and coordination among agencies during crisis management.

Whole-of-government culture needs to permeate the whole of government

A WOG-mindset among public officers at all levels is the software that lubricates the machinery of inter-agency crisis management, particularly when the numbers mobilised scales into the thousands for complex scenarios. In the Singapore Public Service, the constant reiteration of WOG thinking — along with communications about the larger national purpose they are serving — helps motivate officers to persist in the face of adversity, and to exercise initiative when needed at the working level.

NOTE

1. Ow Foong Pheng, “View from the Centre: Working as One Government,” *Ethos* 9(2003): 15–17.

clusters of relevant agencies to deal with different types of incidents.

While the HCEG may harness the whole Public Service to respond comprehensively to complex contingencies, the number of personnel to be mobilised now ranges in the thousands. At the same time, the continual drive to inculcate a whole-of-government mindset across the entire public service has helped to orient large numbers of public sector personnel — both towards improved public services, but also towards concerted action in the event that a government-wide response is needed, including during times of crisis.

Adaptability of Lessons, What's Next for WOG?

Replicability and Adaptability of Lessons

Singapore is fortunate: its geography is relatively sheltered from natural disasters. The small jurisdiction and unitary system of government, unencumbered by multiple layers of bureaucracy seen elsewhere, aid governance. Furthermore, the country encountered crises that increased in intensity incrementally, allowing the state to scale up capabilities gradually to match. Singapore's capacity to deal with crises has stemmed from deliberate, purposeful and comprehensive development, supported by an extended period of political continuity and economic growth.

Nevertheless, some of Singapore's challenges are not dissimilar to those

faced in other jurisdictions. Government agencies and civil servants around the world tend to be domain-specialised and instinctively turf-minded. Inter-agency collaboration can seem counter-intuitive to those in public sector in Singapore as elsewhere. In that regard, some of Singapore's experiences in WOG could offer material for reflection.

National problems will become ever more complex: in some cases, the role government can play may be limited or constrained.


From WOG to Whole-of-Society, Whole-of-Nation

The role the community could play in complex crises is becoming increasingly relevant. In Singapore, the public has shown itself ready to step forward in times of crisis. This was evident as early as the Hotel New World disaster, when citizen-volunteers with prior training joined regular personnel in the rescue efforts. Such civic-mindedness resurfaced during the 2003 SARS outbreak, and at the height of the 2013 haze episode, when individuals — without any prompting from the government — spontaneously stepped forward to help the needy people among the community.

The community could come to play yet more instrumental roles. After the

September 11 attacks on the United States, local radicals calling themselves the Jemaah Islamiyah plotted terrorist attacks on targets in Singapore. Amidst risks of possible tension tearing at the fabric of the multi-ethnic society, leaders of different religious and ethnic communities rallied to denounce the hijacking of religion for terrorism and rallied together for ethnic harmony. Well respected Islamic teachers stepped forward to counsel and rehabilitate the detained radicals. These are roles the government cannot undertake with outcomes as effective as those played by the community.

National problems will become ever more complex: in some cases, the role government can play may be limited or

constrained. While the government in Singapore has been effective in aligning the whole bureaucracy to function in whole-of-government fashion thus far, how can it seek to align the whole of society in the same way? If the Public Service is to help orient the whole of society, perhaps working as conveners, coordinators and interlocutors between government and the community in times of crisis, how can they be best prepared for this role? Some early work has started to consider these questions⁸ but more and deeper research on these issues should be carried out towards developing and strengthening whole-of-nation approaches to problem-solving and crisis management. 

NOTES

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OPINION

Evolving the Centre of Government: Three Key Insights

For centres of government to play a meaningful role in coordinating state responses to complex issues, they should be clear and purposeful about their impact on the public sector at large.

BY
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Governments are becoming more concerned with meeting contemporary challenges, which increasingly span organisational and sectoral boundaries. Public officers must grapple with complexity, ambiguity, and volatility in the face of greater time, resource and other pressures. Jocelyne Bourgon, former Clerk to the Privy Council of Canada, observes that, “with a rise in the cross-cutting and “wicked” challenges facing government in the post-industrial era, the Centre of Government is increasingly being called upon to provide coherence to government action”.¹ As centres of government adapt to change, what are some important insights that can be drawn from best practices both in Singapore and around the world?

Centres of government generally perform similar functions. They facilitate collective action by building shared understanding on government-wide direction and arbitrating trade-offs where needed, prioritising and allocating resources so that ministry plans are aligned with government-wide priorities. They focus on medium to long-term planning and identify emerging issues. Centres also enhance the ability of government to perform by building capabilities: whether through incubating new functions, training, nurturing leaders, reorganising for greater efficiency, or monitoring delivery in key areas. Centres of government steward the Public Service as an institution, safeguarding its values.²

These similar functions notwithstanding, centres of government in different countries are organised in ways that best fit their contexts. While the United Kingdom (UK) has two central agencies, others, like Canada and New Zealand, have three. Some countries merge the roles of the Cabinet Secretary and Head of Civil Service; others split them. Canada's Treasury Board Secretariat and the duties of the State Services Commissioner in New Zealand are both entrenched in legislation. But in most cases, the structures and roles are dynamic. As centres of government evolve to be fit for purpose, there are three key insights that should be borne in mind.

As policy challenges become more complex and demands on government increase, it may be tempting for the centre of government to take on more.

(I) The Centre Needs to be Clear About Its Role

First, centres of government must be strategic about the roles they perform. The centre needs to periodically review and re-prioritise to prevent bloat and internal incoherence. It needs to be clear about its purpose, and how it adds value to the work of government.

As policy challenges become more complex and demands on government increase, it may be tempting for the centre of government to take on

more. Indeed, historically, centres of government have grown in tandem with the complexity and volume of challenges. In the UK, the demands of coordinating government during World War I led to the creation of the Cabinet Office in 1916. Australia's Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been described as moving "from postbox to powerhouse". Once a mere "clearinghouse" for the Prime Minister's correspondence, it now serves a much more comprehensive and strategic role in government.³

In 2010, a UK House of Lords Select Committee observed that the British Cabinet Office had, in the past, housed a wide variety of units with different functions, and had therefore "tended to function less as an incubator and more as a dustbin".⁴ A former Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office advised that to avoid this outcome, organisational changes needed to be "deeply considered and properly planned and timed".⁵

The centre of government must especially have clarity in its role vis-à-vis line agencies. It should refrain from doing line agencies' work for them, especially since they possess more expertise in the areas under their charge. Rather, central agencies should focus on where they can add value and enable line agencies to do their jobs more effectively. The centre can assist by removing barriers that inhibit agencies from working together, across silos. In considering how it can best add

value, the centre of government should also be watchful about the compliance costs it imposes on agencies as it seeks to foster greater alignment throughout government.

Overall, the centre must facilitate and strengthen whole-of-government performance and ethos. Decentralisation efforts in the 1980s and 1990s led to gains in efficiency and flexibility for individual organisations, but hampered government's ability to work across agencies to deal with complex challenges. From the late 1990s, there has been an increased emphasis on "the whole-of-government" or "joined-up government". Countries are now using a variety of tools and platforms to help agencies to consider the government-wide implications of policies and plans. There is, however, a limit to the number of new entities that can be created to handle cross-cutting issues. Each new unit creates new demands on resources. The runaway from sensing an emerging issue to conceiving a new organisation or platform, establishing it, and inducting new people can be unsustainably long. Moreover, governments run the risk of setting up *new* silos that they may subsequently have to be overcome.

As such, another way the centre can foster a whole-of-government mindset is by enhancing collective leadership. First, good central management of talent can balance between empowering public servants to forge their own careers and enabling them to gain a

government-wide perspective of issues. This can be achieved by having leaders rotate between agencies and sectors, providing officers with opportunities for secondments, and ensuring that they work with each other on inter-agency projects. Second, senior leaders can regularly meet outside formal decision-making platforms to discuss issues or share perspectives. Deputy Ministers in Canada, for example, do this each week when they meet for Deputy Ministers' Breakfast. Finally, senior leaders can be made accountable for both the performance of their own organisations and for system-wide outcomes. Canada's Deputy Minister Committees look after either a policy that cuts across several domains or an issue that pertains to the stewardship of the public service. Similarly, New Zealand's Chief Executives are accountable for the individual performance of their agencies as well as how their agencies contribute to system-wide outcomes.

The centre of government should refrain from doing line agencies' work for them. It should also be watchful about the compliance costs it imposes on agencies as it seeks to foster greater alignment throughout government.

(II) Central Agencies Need to Work Closely Together

The relationship between central

agencies is frequently described as one of “creative tension”. The “tension” occurs because central agencies bring different but necessary perspectives to the table. This means that leaders at the centre may have to weigh, for example, a government’s ambitious agenda against concerns for fiscal prudence, or the drive for cost efficiencies in the present against building capabilities for the long-term. This tension is nevertheless “creative”, both because creativity is needed to reconcile different perspectives, and because reconciling these perspectives allows government to create value for citizens in an optimal, sustainable way. Diversity at the centre can help to improve the quality of decision-making.

Rather than performing their roles separately and sequentially, central agencies should collaborate, especially upstream, to ensure that initiatives are well-designed and delivered.

At the same time, central agencies must work together closely. Canada’s three central agencies have been described as functioning like a “three-legged stool”. A review of New Zealand’s State Services Commission said that New Zealand’s central agencies “must speak publicly with one voice and demonstrate strong and collective ownership and accountability for delivering better services”. The review also said that

central agencies’ leadership had to be “joined at the hip”.⁶ Indeed, the centre’s ability to work well depends upon regular communication between its officers and leadership. Rather than performing their roles separately and sequentially, central agencies should collaborate, especially upstream, to ensure that initiatives are well-designed and delivered. Deliberate cross-deployment of officers between central agencies and regular meetings between senior leaders of central agencies can help to build centre of government expertise and relationships.

Diversity at the centre can help to improve the quality of decision-making.

(III) The Centre Needs to Build Capacity for Change

Volatile, uncertain, and complex times require that governments have a great capacity to absorb change. This capacity needs to be distributed throughout the system, and relies not only upon a strong centre of government, but also robust relationships between the centre and line agencies, and between leaders throughout government. Regular meetings can allow leaders to acquire and transmit between each other and down their organisations not just the broad strokes of needed shifts, but also important nuances and details that can ensure better alignment and nimbleness

throughout a government that needs to change direction quickly.

One key means by which the centre can build capacity for change is by proactively and quickly adjusting structures of government to respond to emerging needs. This can allow the centre to rapidly incubate new functions or capabilities. For instance, centres of government around the world have used various structures to improve implementation as they grappled with the challenges of delivering better services. The UK created a Prime Minister's Delivery Unit in 2001 and a Major Projects Authority in 2010 – both have subsequently been reorganised. Australia created a Cabinet Implementation Unit in 2003. New Zealand strengthened its State Services Commission as it launched the Better Public Services reform from 2012 onwards, and Canada created a Central Innovation Hub and the position of Deputy Secretary for Results and Delivery in the Privy Council Office in 2015.⁷

Another way in which the centre can build capacity for change is by helping government to better anticipate and prepare for medium to long term change. Line agencies are predominantly focused on managing current or short-term issues. As such, they may lack the bandwidth to sense the weak signals of change, mitigate risks and prepare to seize opportunities. In this vein, centres can identify and build the capabilities that will allow government to not only

be fit for purpose today, but also ready for the future.

Volatile, uncertain, and complex times require that governments have a great capacity to absorb change distributed throughout the system, not only a strong centre of government.


Conclusion: Evolving the Centre in Singapore

July 2015 saw the creation of a new unit in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Singapore. The Strategy Group (PMO-SG) was tasked with enabling government to identify its priorities and strengthen alignment across government so that it acts as one. Led by the Head of Civil Service, PMO-SG supports the government by identifying national priorities, managing issues that cut across multiple agencies or domains, incubating new functions and capabilities, and planning for the medium and long term. On 1 August 2016, the National Population and Talent Division and National Climate Change Secretariat also joined the Strategy Group.

PMO-SG joins Singapore's polycentric network of agencies in the central administration sector. The centre of government includes the Ministry of Finance, the Public Service Division of the PMO, and the Ministry of Communications and Information and

PMO's Communications Group, which together oversee communications coordination and capability-building for the whole of government. The Ministry of Law oversees the legislative programme. The "centre of government" in Singapore operates in a context where there is already a strong whole-of-government ethos, and where inter-agency co-ordination is facilitated through platforms and processes. Singapore has benefitted from a political culture that enables the public service to carry out its role effectively, as well as from

strong generalist and specialist public sector leaders.

Singapore starts from a position of strength as it builds more cohesion in government. The centre of government in Singapore will no doubt continue to evolve to ensure that it is fit for purpose, shaped by both historical and contemporary context. As central agencies work to ensure better cohesion in government, they will have to be mindful of the system's need for nimble and decisive action. 

NOTES

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Lessons from New Zealand's Better Public Services Reforms

Successful and sustainable public management reform will depend on picking the right time and focus, and engaging an intrinsic passion for service.

BY
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Ryan Orange was a Deputy Commissioner at the New Zealand State Services Commission from 2011 to 2016, where he led work on the Better Public Services reforms. Ryan currently balances being the primary caregiver for his three young children with his passion for advising countries on delivering sustainable public service reform.



Introduction

From 2011 to 2015, the New Zealand public management system underwent a significant overhaul of its legislation, policy and financial settings, incentives, decision-rights and approaches to governance. These *Better Public Services* reforms sought to address poor outcomes on complex cross-agency issues and to modernise service delivery in response to changing citizen expectations.¹ The reforms have now shifted from a period of enabling change to ongoing implementation. The phase of enabling change offers practical lessons about what it takes to sustain significant reform.

Why the Better Public Services Reforms are Interesting

New Zealand's last wave of radical reforms in the 1980s drew international attention for signalling a paradigm shift from the long ascendancy of Public Administration to the rise of New Public Management.² New Zealand went further and faster than other jurisdictions in instilling corporate discipline on government agencies through sharp accountability matched with strong agency autonomy to marshal and compete for the resources to deliver on their outputs.

This focus on accountability, autonomy and competition cultivated an environment in which individual agency performance was incentivised, but cross-agency cooperation was not. On complex cross-agency issues it is

difficult to align and integrate finances, resources and decision-rights. The easier, more rewarded path was to go it alone on one part of the problem rather than struggle through the uncertainty and difficulty of working across agency boundaries. The Better Public Services reforms address the strengths and weaknesses of the radical shift to New Public Management, marking a further paradigm shift towards New Public Governance.³ In a complex and rapidly changing world there is a global demand for public services that are citizen-centred, flexible-at-pace and capable of networking and working with partners in the private and non-governmental sectors. New Zealand's reforms are notable for focusing on achieving financially sustainable performance improvements through delivering complex medium- and long-term results, in a period where many jurisdictions turned to austerity as a lever of change.

Without responsiveness to political decision makers and citizens, the civil service is not serving.

While not heralded with the triumphant, reformist zeal of New Public Management in 1987,⁴ the Better Public Services reforms represent an organic attempt to put the still developing theory of New Public Governance into action.

Figure 1. New Zealand's Better Public Services Results

	Results	Targets
1	Reducing long-term welfare dependence	Reduce working age client numbers by 25% to 220,000 from 295,000 as at June 2014, and an accumulated actuarial release of \$13 billion by June 2018
2	Increase participation in early childhood education	In 2016, 98% of children starting school will have participated in quality early childhood education
3a	Increase infant immunisation	Increase immunisation coverage for children at 8 months to 95% by December 2014
3b	Reduce rheumatic fever	Reduce first episode rheumatic fever hospitalisation annual rate to 1.4 per 100,000 by June 2016
4	Reduce assaults on children	Reduce children experiencing substantiated abuse to 2,954 annually by June 2017
5	Increase proportion of 18-year-olds with National Certificate of Educational Achievement Level 2	85% of 18-year-olds will have achieved NCEA Level 2 or an equivalent qualification in 2017
6	Increase proportion of 25- to 34-year-olds with New Zealand Qualification framework Level 4 or above	60% of 25- to 34-year-olds having a qualification at Level 4 or above in 2018
7	Reduce the rates of total crime, violent crime and youth crime	Reduce the June 2011 violent crime rate by 20% and the youth crime rate by 25% by June 2017 and the total crime rate by 20% by June 2018
8	Reduce re-offending	Reduce June 2011 reoffending rate by 25% by June 2017
9	New Zealand business have a one-stop online shop for all government advice and support	Reduce December 2012 business costs from dealing with government by 25% by 2017. Government services to business will have similar key performance rating as leading private sector firms by July 2017
10	New Zealanders can complete their transactions with government easily in a digital environment	An average of 70% of New Zealanders' most common transactions with government will be completed in a digital environment by 2017

THE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

Figure 2. The public management toolkit

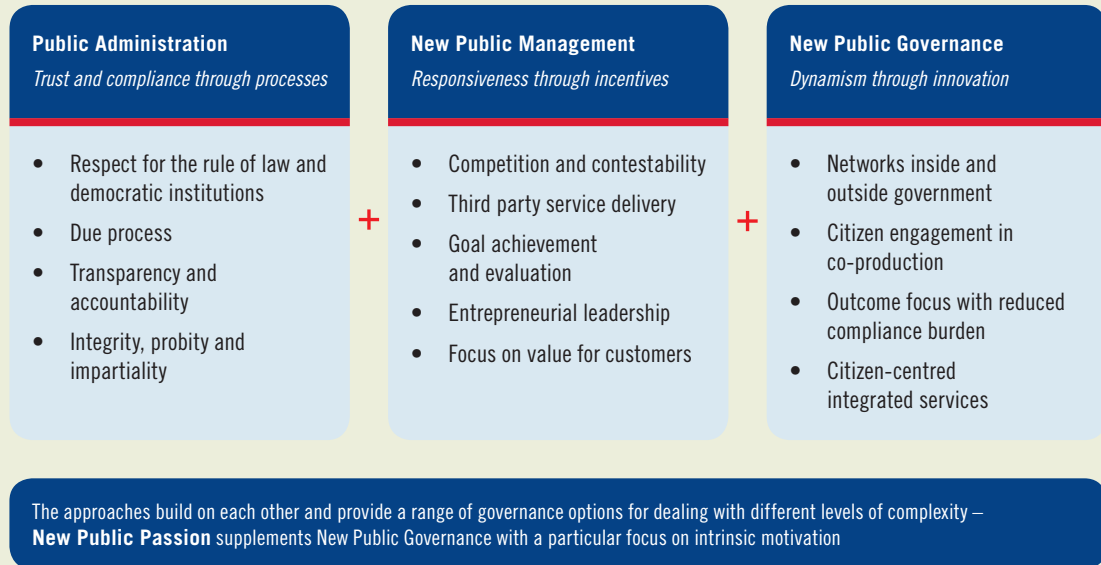


Figure 2 draws on Stephen Osborne’s discussion of the *three regimes* to make the case that Public Administration, New Public Management and New Public Governance build on each other and provide a range of governance options for dealing with different levels of complexity.¹

The values established by **Public Administration** remain the lifeblood of an effective civil service. Integrity, professionalism, merit-based appointment and political neutrality take different forms in different contexts, but a clear and consistent approach to these issues is foundational, and builds critical trust. However, those core values are often channelled into routine compliance activities where the enforcement of rules and the tyranny of process supersede real service to citizens. The primary motivation becomes one of compliance or, even worse, of self-preservation in the face of the forces of change. If change is accelerating and the civil service is rigid rather than adaptable, responsiveness is bound to suffer. Without responsiveness to political decision makers and citizens, the civil service is not serving.

New Public Management addresses shortcomings in responsiveness through a central focus on accountability. What gets measured, gets done — and, if accountability for delivery

is clearly assigned and incentives for performance aligned, then responsiveness will follow. As a result, New Public Management tends to favour competition and clarity of focus over collaboration and joint responsibility. Sharp accountability can drive high levels of responsiveness on complicated issues, but not necessarily the stewardship and dynamism required to ensure long-term delivery on complex issues where sole accountability cannot be assigned.²

New Public Management is a powerful tool for improving performance, but struggles to provide a framework for effectively addressing rapid change in a complex interdependent environment. **New Public Governance** seeks to address this by harnessing networks inside and outside of government to enable dynamic responses to complex issues. It emphasises an outcome focus with a reduced compliance burden, the integration of citizen services, and citizen engagement in the coproduction of services.³ New Zealand's Better Public Services reforms reflect the shift towards New Public Governance in the 2010s.

In environments where the public discourse on bureaucracy is focused on waste- and cost-cutting, however, attempts to implement New Public Governance-style reforms may still rely on extrinsic incentives, rather than intrinsic motivation, to drive change. Decades of New Public Management practices can also make it challenging for institutions and leaders to harness intrinsic motivation beyond the boundaries of an individual agency — as was the case in New Zealand. Yet successful reform depends the performance of civil servants, and sustained performance depends on their engagement and motivation. High levels of intrinsic motivation are the public service's natural advantage, but that advantage needs to be encouraged and stewarded or it is lost. **New Public Passion** is an attempt to bridge the motivational gap and sustain dynamism in a complex and rapidly changing environment.

NOTES

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Key Features of the Better Public Services Reforms

The key features of New Zealand's Better Public Services Reforms include:

Results

- A results-based approach: the Prime Minister's 10 Better Public Services Results for New Zealanders is a focused selection of complex cross-agency issues given clear 5-year targets, individual and collective Ministerial and Chief Executive accountability and 6-monthly public-facing reports on progress.⁵
- Legislative change to the State Sector Act⁶, Public Finance Act⁷ and Crown Entities Act⁸ to remove perceived barriers to cross-agency work and enable flexibility.
- Strengthened cross-agency governance and funding arrangements to allow collective decision-making and action.⁹
- Mobilising capability and information across agency boundaries, including whole-of-government "big data" through the Integrated Data Infrastructure.¹⁰

Stewardship

- Redefining the Chief Executive's¹¹ legislated role to include stewardship over departmental wellbeing and the collective interests of government, with

matching incentives and indicators for cross-agency performance.¹²

- An integrated Four Year Plan that brings together strategic, financial, human resources and ICT demands, replacing fragmented departmental plans and reports.¹³
- Aligning independent and public-facing reviews of agency performance with the requirements of reform.¹⁴

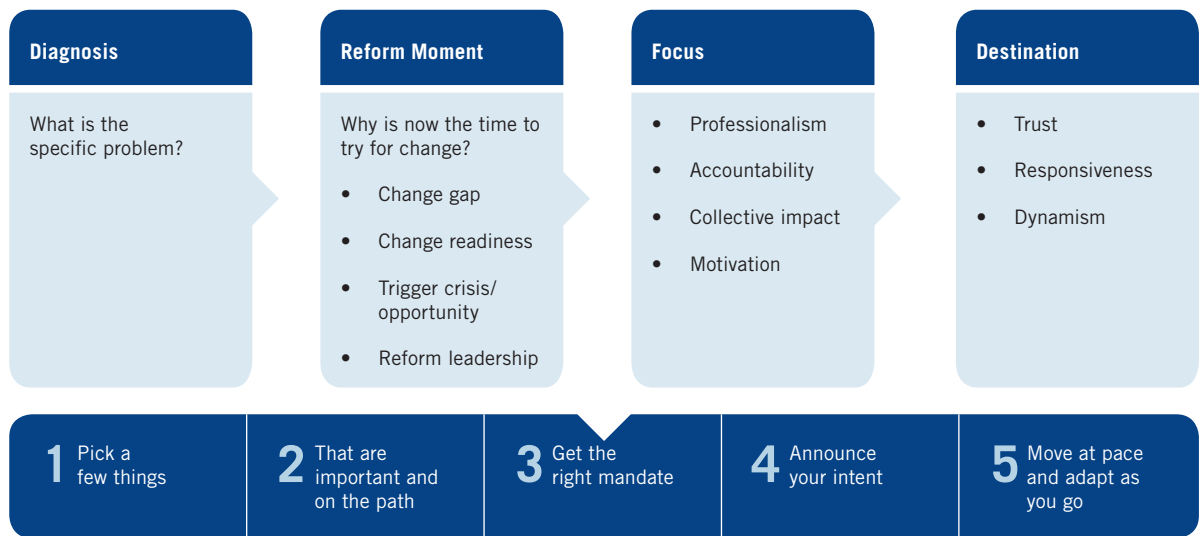
System leadership

- A new Cabinet-mandated Head of State Services role for the State Services Commissioner, accountable for the overall performance and stewardship of the State services and for bringing together Chief Executives to collectively advise Government on further systemic change.¹⁵
- Significant strengthening of cross-agency powers for ICT, property and procurement, improving effectiveness and efficiency in major areas of government investment with collective implications.¹⁶

Key Lessons from the BPS Reforms

As outlined in Figure 3,¹⁷ New Zealand's Better Services Reform experience offers three key lessons for sustaining reform: (i) the features of a ripe Reform Moment; (ii) the critical importance of selective

Figure 3. Key lessons for sustainable reform



focus in creating change momentum; and (iii) the risks of underestimating intrinsic motivation as a driver of public service, performance and change.

The Reform Moment

The Better Public Services Reforms were not the first attempt at mitigating the shortcomings of New Public Management. The diagnosis of prioritising accountability over the ability of agencies to work together where required had long been established – from as early as the Schick Report of 1996.¹⁸ Initiatives between the late 1990s to the late 2000s had all made significant efforts to adjust this balance, with limited returns.

The relative success of the Better Public Services reform effort indicates the importance of the Reform Moment.

Four features made 2010–11 particularly auspicious for reform in New Zealand:

1. **Change gap** – The context for the New Zealand State services had clearly changed since the reform of the 1980s. ICT, globalisation and the rise of the non-governmental sector had increased complexity and the pace of change. Changing citizen expectations demanded a change in public sector service delivery.
2. **Change readiness** – No system can successfully constantly reform. The passage of time from one period of intense reform to another is important for renewing energy and acceptance for the need to change.

The two decades since the last major reforms had given sufficient time for the shock of that reform to pass, the gains to be realised and the weaknesses to be clear.

3. **Trigger crisis or opportunity** – New Zealand was partially insulated from the effects of the 2009 Global Financial Crisis, but it still led to a shift from surplus to deficit and a need to tighten government expenditure. The move to cap agency funding baselines and staff numbers forced government to reconsider how to deliver improved citizen-centred services at reduced cost. It chose to focus on delivering savings through improved results rather than simply pursuing cost-cutting and austerity.
4. **Reform leadership** – Bill English, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, had experienced the non-sustainable impact of severe cost-cutting as a Government Minister in the early 1990s. He was well positioned to lead change with a deep understanding of the role and value of the State services and a relentless appetite for innovation and experimentation. He secured the support of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for reform and routinely spoke to senior public servants of the importance of their roles and the clear expectation that they deliver differently.¹⁹

Reform is difficult and expensive and more often than not fails. If you do not have a Reform Moment then do not attempt reform.

The importance of focus

There will always be more that requires reform than there will be capacity for change. So you must choose your focus wisely.

Do not attempt to change everything at once. During the reform process, there were significant attempts to generate grand unifying frameworks to describe, measure and change the performance of the entire New Zealand public management system. For the reform-minded this is a tempting pursuit, but with the power of hindsight it is apparent that these efforts contained the seed of their own failure. Complex systems defy comprehensive categorisation. Instead, the reforms progressively gained momentum by shifting the focus from comprehensive restructuring to improving the rules to enable change and then focusing on specific areas for implementation.

Do not try and change the things beyond the scope of this Reform Moment. For the Better Public Services Reforms, the clearest example of this was the interface between Ministers and Chief Executives hindering effective cross-agency collaboration. Changing the role of Ministers was not up for debate; the consistent desire for Chief Executives to concentrate on it as an issue reduced —

rather than increased — the potential for significant change. Instead, focusing on changing the behaviour of public servants ultimately had some impact on Ministerial arrangements and behaviours.

Be results-focused. The Better Public Services Results have worked as a reform tool because of their degree of focus:

1. **Pick a few things** – There are only 10 Results: they are not everything important government is doing in New Zealand and they are not even necessarily the 10 most important things that government is doing.
2. **That are important and on the path** – The Ministerial decision to not engage in a lengthy analytical and consultation process for determining the 10 Results was key to capturing the Reform Moment in early 2012.
3. **Get the right mandate** – Labelling the Results as the *Prime Minister's* Results sent a clear message to Ministers and civil servants that the Results mattered and that they needed to be prioritised against other work.
4. **Announce your intent** – The radical step of publicly declaring the Result, the target and accountable Ministers and officials before having an agreed approach was a catalyst to cross-agency engagement in a

system where most incentives ran in the other direction. Six-monthly reports have been publicly released on the progress on Results including the Cabinet paper, dashboard and underlying data.²⁰

5. **Move at pace and adapt as you go** – There was a clear imperative for agencies to develop an approach with urgency to deliver on Ministerial expectations and meet public reporting requirements. Having a target in place provided a catalyst for action; the targets and measures in turn could be strengthened with experience.

Intrinsic motivation and dynamism

One-off change is no longer enough. A complex and rapidly changing world requires dynamism. The strong focus on enabling, rather than prescriptive legislative change, recognises this imperative. However, the policy and design work for New Zealand's reforms sought exclusively to depend on accountabilities, incentives and performance measurement to drive change. These approaches, derived from a New Public Management mindset, led to underplaying the importance of capturing hearts and minds in implementing reform.

Dynamism requires harnessing extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Successful reform required not just New Public Management and New Public Governance

MAKING NEW ZEALANDERS' DEALINGS WITH GOVERNMENT EASY IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Better Public Services Result 10¹ seeks to enable New Zealanders to complete their transactions with government easily in a digital environment. The measure of success is the proportion of New Zealanders' most common transactions with government that are completed in a digital environment.

A Cabinet-approved Result 10 Blueprint sets out a shared vision for digital services that are digital by design, digital by default and digital by choice. The 10 actions in the Blueprint support customers to move to digital, redesign services and increase system capability.²

The target is to improve from 29.9% of services in June 2012 to 70% of services in December 2017. The shift achieved as at March 2016 is 52.2%.³ Ten services were measured, ranging from SmartGate departures and arrivals by NZ Customs Service, to filing and paying taxes through Inland Revenue and applying for financial assistance at the Ministry of Social Development.⁴

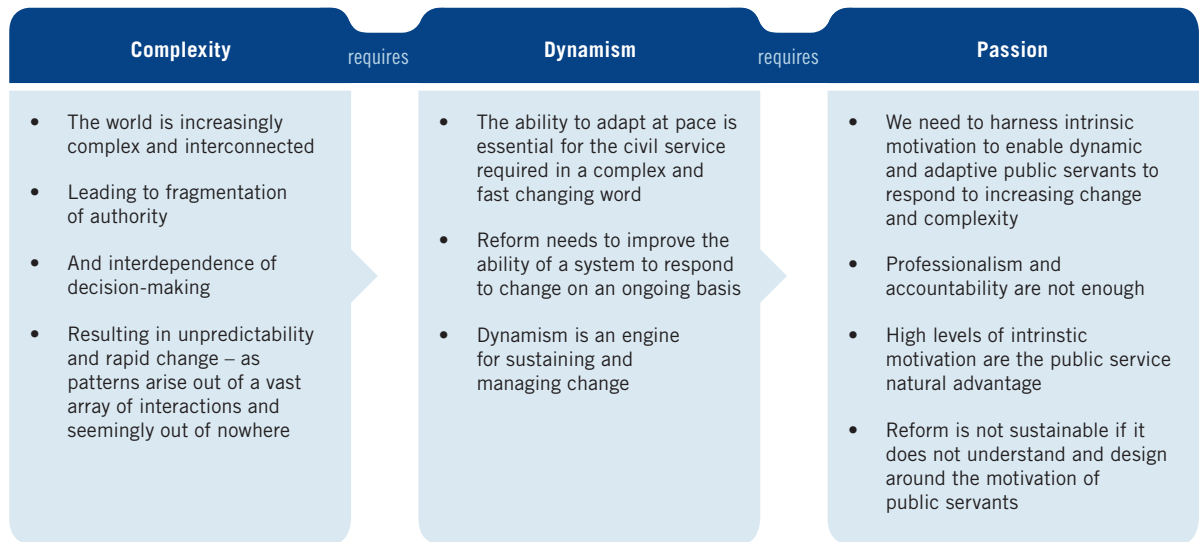
Ten Services Measured

- SmartGate departures and arrivals
- Renew adult passport
- Apply for visa
- Book Department of Conservation asset
- Pay fines on time
- Pay for Vehicle Licence
- Apply for an IRD Number
- File an Individual Tax Return
- Pay Individual Tax
- Apply for Financial Assistance

NOTES

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Figure 4. New Public Passion



but also New Public Passion.²¹ The ten Results successfully aligned intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, but this was more by accident than design. The Results spoke to the key drivers of why many of the people working on the Results had become public servants in the first place. The passion of the leaders and teams for improving the lives of New Zealanders was essential in sustaining their efforts to overcome resistance to working differently.²²

Conclusion

The Better Public Services reforms have changed the rules, incentives and decision-rights of the New Zealand public management system to enable a step-change in cross-agency cooperation on complex and pressing issues. Despite

this bureaucratic success, the proof of the value of this reform will only be in how it delivers improved results for New Zealanders. The Better Public Services Results will provide a clear and publicly transparent lead indicator of whether this change is taking place, with the current ongoing commitment to reporting six-monthly progress results, and on setting more challenging targets once the original objectives are reached.²³ However, for the reform to be sustained, it will have to deliver more than ten results. The ongoing rate of change demands dynamism and the New Zealand public service will have to develop a passion for adaptation to continue to deliver on New Zealanders' needs. ✨

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OPINION

Public Trust in Government Institutions

Australia's former Public Service Commissioner offers insights on maintaining the people's trust in the public sector.

BY
STEPHEN SEDGWICK

Stephen Sedgwick was the Australian Public Service Commissioner from 2009 to 2014, and has served as secretary of various Departments in the Australian Public Service.

Of one thing we can be certain: although the world in twenty five or fifty years may well be very different to our current experience of it, the need for effective government underpinned by public trust in our major institutions is unlikely to be any less an imperative — and may well be a greater one.

Without trust in public institutions and government decision-making, proponents of welfare-enhancing reforms may not be given the time to explore the case for beneficial changes.

I say that for two reasons. First, the rapid growth in the vehicles available to the noisy — to quickly reach large audiences and oppose change they fear will disadvantage them — is unlikely to

dissipate. Second, demand is growing for governments to take explicit account of individual circumstances in designing policy interventions, which challenges established concepts of equity. It often takes time for the potential beneficiaries of change to appreciate the expanded opportunities available to them; it can also take many years before empirical evidence shows whether policies that treat individuals differently are fair and effective. Without trust in public institutions and government decision-making, proponents of welfare-enhancing reforms may not be given the time to conduct the public discourse necessary to explore the case for beneficial changes.

All public services must continuously reinvent themselves: to ensure they properly understand the contemporary needs of the community they serve and to ensure they invest in the capabilities needed to

address them. These capabilities include: policy development and program design that are informed by evidence, quality analysis and imagination; meaningful consultation; professional relationships with community groups and creative thinkers; and effective programme delivery. A fundamental trait without which public trust will erode, however, is a values-driven, ethical public service culture. Ethical conduct transcends complying with the law. It requires continuously doing the right thing, even if at some cost to individual public servants. Culture relates to more than rules and guidelines: it refers to how an organisation operates even when no one is watching!

Trust will be higher when public servants are seen to be willingly accountable, transparent in their dealings, and open in acknowledging and remedying mistakes or misjudgements.

There are many dimensions to this issue. I make six of many possible points: First, communities are very diverse. The needs of different groups often diverge. However, those with legitimate concerns that they may be disadvantaged by a proposal may be assuaged if they are confident that their concerns have been fairly weighed and judged impartially and that the case for change is persuasive.

The growing ubiquity of data coupled with access to sophisticated analytical tools has increased the capacity of groups and individuals to challenge public policy. This is unlikely to diminish in coming decades. There is no monopoly on wisdom. Public acceptance of change will be stronger when public consultation and engagement has been effective and the public service is seen to be open-minded, professional and characterised by good analysis, balanced judgment and quality evidence. Perceptions will also be enhanced when the public service is both highly qualified and broadly reflective of the community that it serves.

Public servants and ministers frequently exercise coercive powers of the state. This concept is broader than powers to arrest. For example, they collect taxes and spend the proceeds, possibly not to the benefit of all who paid tax. Decisions about approaches to regulation and service delivery can impose significant costs or confer benefits. Communities more willingly acquiesce if they believe that such decisions are well based and that government and their advisers apply society's resources wisely, fairly and well, minimising the costs incurred. Societies that doubt their government's ability to achieve high levels of efficiency, equity and relevance may begin to regard regulatory compliance and taxation as optional activities.

Second, our communities constantly change, including in response to global

trends and influences. The public's trust is likely to be lessened if they perceive that the public service is inward or backward looking and change resistant. A demonstrable focus on reinvention and repositioning to meet contemporary needs, even if personally unsettling to public servants, is both right and trust-inducing. A public servant might be reluctant to declare that a programme they designed is not working and needs surgery. Similarly it may be challenging to acquire new skills or end public activities if more appropriate delivery models are now available. Yet these are the right things to do if circumstances warrant it.

Third, ethical conduct requires that each individual be treated with courtesy and respect and their claims assessed fairly under the law. This applies whether the assessment relates to an individual's liability to pay tax, their compliance with the regulatory regime or their claim for government support (no matter how delivered). Many government services have traditionally been designed as entitlements. Access to them is conferred by meeting explicit criteria and there is little role for judgement on the part of those tasked to assess an individual's entitlement. However, government intervention may become more discretionary and personalised in future. This will increase the need for more transparency, greater accountability of decision makers, as well as professionally conducted and

reported evaluation to demonstrate that individuals or groups have been treated equitably, even if unequally to start with.

The growing ubiquity of data coupled with access to sophisticated analytical tools has increased the capacity of groups and individuals to challenge public policy.

Fourth, trust will be higher when public servants are seen to be willingly accountable, transparent in their dealings, and open in acknowledging and remedying mistakes or misjudgements. If anything, demands are growing for clear and more personal accountability within public institutions. In some countries, there is criticism that the roles, responsibilities and personal accountabilities of individual public servants are too diffuse, leading to ineffective governance and poor responses when errors occur. There are particular dilemmas to be addressed in a public sector context. For instance, transparency and accountability have implications when most discussions between Ministers and their advisers are confidential in nature. There are political overtones to acknowledging a mistake in an adversarial political system. The importance attached to broad consultation within government could risk associated dangers such as "group think" and "decision by committee". Yet it is unlikely that the need to resolve

such pressures will abate into the future; indeed social media may well force a suboptimal response unless this issue is addressed early.

Governments expect public servants to respond to their agenda; the community expects the public service to focus on their needs. Getting this balance right requires tact and good judgement.

Fifth, the relationship between the public service and the government of the day needs to be clearly articulated and generally accepted. Australia's tradition derives from Westminster. Historically, a change of government led to minimal change in the most senior ranks of the public service, which by convention had to be seen to be (and to practise) strict political neutrality. Effective public servants understand the nature of politics and how to build constituencies for change. However, they would undermine trust in them by the public and other political parties were they to appear to act in a party political way. There are other traditions. The Washington model, for example, includes very significant change in the senior ranks of the US civil service whenever the Administration (or even the Minister) changes. What matters is that the rules are clear, well understood by all, and obeyed.

Sixth, trust by government in the professionalism of the public service will be reduced if the service is seen as entirely passive — an ideas-free zone. Governments look to their public service advisers to help them devise and articulate a policy agenda that reflects contemporary needs and evidence about what works or presents the most prospective response. While governments also expect public servants to respond to their agenda and their understanding of community, the community expects that the public service's contributions will focus on community needs and how to meet them, not on what will advance the government's political interests. Yet persuasively pursuing good, relevant public policy could reasonably be expected to have that effect as a by-product. At times getting this balance right requires tact and good judgement on all sides. Within government, it also requires that both parties are open-minded, willing to explore ideas and to appreciate the value of honest, even at times, robust debate. These imperatives are likely to become even more important in future as politics increasingly becomes more localised, more pervasive, more personal and possibly more unpredictable.

At times, correctly steering a course between issues such as these can be difficult. As is so often true, leadership is key to equipping individual public servants to deal with possibly

confusing and competing pressures. Leaders should set the tone within an organisation; and it is leaders who must consistently call out bad or unethical behaviour (and model good behaviour) — unwillingness to promote and articulate ethical behaviour could lead to a slow but growing erosion of standards. In Australia, analyses of lapses in good practice over the past decade or so has often identified insufficient management attention or courage in insisting on good behaviour in respect of “little things” as significant contributing factors. And from little things, bigger things grew...

Effective public servants understand the nature of politics and how to build constituencies for change.

In short, although the future is uncertain, the importance of maintaining high levels of trust in public institutions and the public service is unlikely to become any less important. Key to this is a professional, outward looking, adaptable and ethical public service. Achieving this is a major responsibility of public service leaders at all levels. ✎



OPINION

Public Institutions and the Productivity Imperative

An independent public institution could better identify, analyse and communicate the reforms necessary to improve national productivity.

BY
GARY BANKS

Professor Gary Banks AO is Dean of the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG). He is also Chair of the OECD's Regulatory Policy Committee. From 1998 to 2012, he was the inaugural Chairman of the Australian Productivity Commission.

Despite unprecedented “pump priming” by government authorities since the global financial crisis, investment and growth have languished in most developed economies. Conventional and unconventional macroeconomic measures alike have been found wanting, serving mainly to push up share prices and land prices, rather than production and real incomes.

The resulting historically low interest rates and high debt levels have left many governments little room for further manoeuvre. Yet, with living standards for the average citizen stagnating or declining in many countries and unemployment persistently high, political pressures on governments to turn things around have been mounting.

So what can governments do? And

how might their public administrations assist them?

The Fundamentals of Economic Progress

In seeking answers to these questions, it is important to recognise that there are really only two means by which the incomes of a country's citizens can be increased over time: by producing more output from available resources, or by getting higher (world) prices for what is produced.

In practical terms, only the former is directly amenable to government policy, since movements in a country's terms of trade are driven in large part by developments on world markets.

Further, the policies needed are those that can improve the functioning

(“efficiency”) of the *supply* side of an economy, rather than merely serving to stimulate demand. Policies to support productivity growth and labour force participation are both important in this respect, since they affect how much is produced relative to the population. That said, while scope exists to do more in both domains, there are obviously limits to increasing the average hours worked by the population. (High labour force participation in itself need not mean high per capita incomes, as the experience of some of the world’s poorest countries attests.)

This leaves productivity as the key ongoing mechanism for increasing per capita output and incomes. As Paul Krugman from MIT has put it, “productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run it is *almost* everything”.¹

The Productivity Imperative

As the post-GFC malaise moves from “short run” to “long run” phenomenon, the underlying failure of productivity growth is increasingly implicated. For example, taking the OECD as a whole, labour productivity growth has been in decline for at least the past 15 years. In Australia, a productivity boom in the 1990s was eclipsed by a terms of trade boom in the early 2000s; but although the terms of trade have fallen again, productivity has not attained earlier growth rates and per capita incomes are falling.² In Singapore, labour productivity growth has been sluggish

and in domestically oriented sectors has actually been negative over recent years. In both countries, the need to raise productivity has become elevated in policy discussion.³

While monetary and fiscal policy can potentially stimulate aggregate demand and employment, they generally have little bearing on productivity. This has been acknowledged by G20 countries, who in their Brisbane Declaration of 2014 committed themselves to a range of structural reforms across product, labour and infrastructure markets. The IMF estimated that those reforms had the potential to lift global GDP by some 2%.⁴ However, despite good intentions, little progress could be reported at the G20 meeting a year later.

The Political Obstacles

The reality is that some of the policies most needed to promote productivity growth are ones that face the strongest political opposition. Pro-productivity policies must not only address “enablers” such as education and training and essential infrastructure, which have been attracting more attention, they must also target the incentives for firms and industries to be more productive, and the flexibility they need to respond to market challenges and opportunities. That means, for example, reforming regulations that inhibit competition or rigidify labour markets, or that otherwise impose undue cost burdens and

constraints on production, investment and innovative activity.⁵

And while innovation within firms is central to productivity improvement, so too is the displacement of poorer performing firms by better performing ones — what economists since Schumpeter have labelled “creative destruction”. Indeed international empirical studies attribute between 20% to 50% of productivity growth to such compositional changes.⁶

It follows that reforms needed to improve productivity and income growth can be expected to create some losers in the short term. With the losses typically being more concentrated and immediate than the (larger) gains, mooted structural reforms generally face more active opposition than support. Indeed, interests opposing such reforms will often gain the sympathy and support of sections of the community who would most benefit.

“Pro-productivity” policies would benefit from having distinct institutional sources of information that identify not just the technical “what” of better policies, but also the political “how”.

This inherent asymmetry in the politics of reform can be compounded by a government’s own administrative structures. In most countries, public administration tends to be segmented along sectoral lines (industry, transport,

education, environment etc.). Such administrative systems promote engagement and information flows useful to policy development in those areas, but are less capable of articulating the economy-wide effects of policy or, worse, can involve bureaucratic sponsorship of sectoral interests.

While innovation within firms is central to productivity improvement, so too is the displacement of poorer performing firms by better performing ones. It follows that reforms can be expected to create some losers in the short term.

Institutional Remedies

“Pro-productivity” policies would benefit from having distinct institutional sources of information that not only help identify what policies and reforms are likely to be most nationally beneficial, but that can also serve to improve community understanding about why that is so, despite the protestations of pressure groups.

The importance of such institutions to better policy outcomes has been recognised by the OECD, which in its country reports has increasingly addressed not just the technical

“what” of better policies, but also the political “how”.

In a recent initiative, the OECD has established a Global Forum on Productivity, with an agenda that includes institutional support mechanisms. In a paper commissioned by the OECD for its first meeting in Mexico City in 2015, I reviewed the experience internationally, assessing different institutional forms against features judged necessary to support pro-productivity policies and reforms.⁷

Key design features for such institutions include:

- a strong research and analytical capacity;
- a mandate to illuminate the economy-wide or community-wide impacts of policies and reforms;
- links to policy decision-making processes, albeit with sufficient independence to be immune from undue influence;
- operations that are open to public participation and outputs (findings and advice) that are subject to public scrutiny.

Ultimately of course all policy is political. (The French language makes no distinction!) The purpose of such institutional features is simply to ensure that policy decisions bearing on economic performance and living

standards can be well informed from a national perspective, and to help create a more receptive political environment for reform.

A Taxonomy of Existing Institutions

Many countries already have institutions that to varying degrees embody some or all of those features. Principle examples include:

- **Think tanks and research centres:** such as the Institute of Policy Studies at the National University of Singapore, the Brookings Institute in the United States and Australia’s Centre for Independent Studies and Grattan Institute. Such organisations vary greatly in governance, funding and areas of focus. While active contributors to public discussion, many lack the linkages with government needed to inform policy decisions in a timely way.
- **Research bureaus and strategic agencies within government:** these are better placed to be directly influential, and often have strong research capacity, but commonly lack sufficient independence and public transparency.
- **Advisory councils:** instituted to enable governments to tap expert or representative advice, these bodies can also promote consensus around reform needs and agendas.

Singapore has a number of them, including a National Productivity and Continuing Education Council, as does Australia and other countries in the region. Varying in form and focus, most operate primarily as sounding boards or consultative mechanisms.

- **Ad hoc policy “taskforces” and inquiry bodies** have also been used in many countries. Again they vary greatly, but have commonly been headed by eminent experts and resourced to conduct research and public consultations. For example, Canada has engaged “review panels” on a variety of policy topics, including competition reforms. New Zealand formed an influential “Working Group” on taxation reform. Singapore has a high-level Committee on the Future Economy, with industry and ministerial representation. Australian governments have commissioned public inquiries into financial markets, competition policy and red tape, among many other topics. Denmark and Norway also recently established independent “productivity commissions” with wide remits to investigate the causes of lacklustre productivity and propose measures to revitalise it.
- **Standing review and inquiry bodies:** only a few countries have created institutions with an ongoing

remit to provide information and recommendations on policies to promote productivity and living standards. The oldest of these is Australia’s Productivity Commission. An equivalent organisation was recently created in New Zealand. Both have statutory independence, strong research capabilities and undertake public inquiries on policy topics assigned by government. A body with a similar role has also been created in Chile.

Have They Made a Difference?

Unsurprisingly, although various institutions in these categories have made a positive contribution at different times, the ones providing most support for productivity-enhancing reforms have generally been those established expressly for that purpose. For example, the institution I know best, Australia’s Productivity Commission, is generally recognised as having been instrumental in a program of structural reforms that transformed Australia’s economic performance.

Comparing the last two categories, permanent institutions would seem better able to build capability and public credibility over time; ad hoc bodies have the advantages of flexibility and a lesser budgetary commitment. However, in practice, the impact on policy outcomes has often depended more on such factors as the choice of what policy issues to review and when;

the calibre of appointments; and, not least, how well governments handle the reports.⁸ No such institution can be effective if the government is not amenable to a consultative, evidence-based approach.


How Translatable?

Clearly there can be no “one design fits all” institutional template. Nevertheless, scope exists in most countries to devise tailored institutional arrangements that would satisfy the broad requirements.

A way forward for some countries could be to extend or adapt the role of an existing institution. (Australia’s Productivity Commission has distant origins in a statutory body called the Tariff Board.) Another option is to make greater – or more effective – use of special taskforces to conduct public reviews in specific reform areas or, as in the Scandinavian model, to perform

a stocktake of the policy landscape to identify priorities. In some countries, such arrangements could be precursors to establishing permanent institutional arrangements.

This suggests considerable potential for governments to learn from each other’s experiences. As noted, the OECD provides one platform for such learnings, but so too could regional forums and organisations such as APEC and the Asian Development Bank. Singapore and Australia have been strengthening their bilateral ties over recent years, and there would seem to be much scope for institutional learning in both directions.

With productivity growth being the core determinant of a society’s living standards in the long run, efforts to enhance administrative capability in this area of policy-making have the potential to bring large rewards. 

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Engaging with Stakeholders for Better Public Transport Outcomes

Taking on a new advisory role, the Public Transport Council finds keeping an open mind and engaging diverse views makes for more balanced and useful recommendations.

BY
HENG JU-LI

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The Voice of the Commuting Public

The mission of the Public Transport Council (PTC) is to collaborate with commuters, public transport operators and Government agencies to improve Singapore's public transport system. One of the ways to achieve this mission is to provide objective, evidence-based advice to the Government to improve the service quality of public transport and commuters' travel experience.

On 8 January 2016, the PTC took on a new role as advisor to the Minister for Transport on public transport matters. The PTC's new advisory role complements its primary role as the regulator of train and bus fares. Under its new mandate, the PTC will conduct public transport research, surveys and focus group discussions to build up its understanding of commuters' diverse needs, experiences, and expectations.

For the PTC, hearing first-hand from commuters helps us ensure that our recommendations are based on feedback obtained directly from the people whose needs we are serving — the commuters. We also have to engage stakeholders to better understand the challenges they face in service delivery so that our recommendations can be balanced, practical and cost efficient.

A Commuter-focused Engagement Process

We approached the engagement process

with an open mind. Whatever issues were raised came spontaneously from commuters, without any prompting on our part. These views formed the basis of our first advisory report, released on 1 August 2016.

Hearing first-hand from commuters helps to ensure that recommendations are based on feedback obtained directly from the people whose needs we are serving.

During our interviews and focus group discussions, we kept our questions general,¹ so that commuters could raise any topic that they felt strongly about. We distilled the findings into seven matters of importance to our commuters: *safety, reliability, affordability, comfort, ease, customer service* and *helpfulness*. Our subsequent recommendations directly addressed the seven matters of importance to commuters, if they were not already being looked into by the Government, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) or public transport operators.

For example, seniors may be afraid of using escalators which were too fast and steep. This was an issue relating to their safety when taking trains. To take care of the needs of our seniors, we recommended that escalators' speeds be slowed down during non-peak hours at stations with a high volume of seniors, or at stations located near hospitals. Another group of commuters we talked

to was parents with young children. We discovered that many such families with young children would like to buy a car if they could afford it, due to the challenges faced when taking public transport with their young children. In particular, the policy requiring prams and strollers to be folded when boarding buses meant that parents were not allowed to seat their child in an open stroller during bus rides. This was challenging as they had to carry the child, fold the stroller and carry other bags all at the same time. Arising from this feedback, the PTC recommended that the LTA review its stroller policy in consultation with parents, public transport operators and experts.

Insights from the Public

In the course of our engagement process, we uncovered some interesting insights from commuters. First, we found that commuters were generally helpful with each other. Day-to-day acts of kindness and care, while not always reported widely, do indeed occur. Whenever there is a need, commuters do step in to help, whether to assist seniors with directions or to take care of someone feeling faint on a train. There is great potential to develop this sense of community among commuters. Second, we found that commuters themselves were pleasantly surprised to be consulted for their views. They felt that the attitudes and

responsiveness of our public transport frontline staff could make a difference to their commute. Such insights remind us not to underestimate the power of the human touch. While no system is perfect, the human touch can mitigate many issues.

Enhancing the Engagement Process

It was not easy to find some 400 commuters willing to spend 1 to 1.5 hours of their time with us. We wanted to be closely involved in the process, so we facilitated many of the discussions ourselves. This meant that we had to rely on our contacts to get us as many people as possible. As we were meeting many of them for the first time, we wanted to make it convenient for them. Participants got to decide on the places and times where we would meet: we travelled to many different parts of Singapore for these engagements, arranging for discussions to suit their schedules, be it the lunch hour, in the evenings, or on weekends and public holidays. Our objective was to make it as fuss-free as possible for the people we engaged.

Given how our commuters have responded and how our recommendations have been accepted, the PTC plans to continue with a similar approach for future engagements. Our commuters' views were captured through a variety of qualitative and quantitative research

DIVERSE VIEWS MAKE FOR BALANCED RECOMMENDATIONS

The PTC also engaged stakeholders such as the Land Transport Authority, National Taxi Association, National Transport Workers' Union and public transport operators, sharing with them what we had learnt, and seeking their side of the story on issues raised by commuters.

For example, wheelchair users said that they found it difficult to hail taxis on the street, as taxi drivers avoided picking them up. When we discussed this with taxi drivers, we saw the issue from their perspective: they shared that they received training on how to handle wheelchairs but not the person, and were afraid of injuring them. We then recommended that taxi operators collaborate with disability agencies to provide sensitivity training and disability etiquette training for taxi drivers.

Gathering different perspectives helped us make balanced recommendations that have been well received by the authorities.¹

NOTE

1. In response to the PTC's first advisory report, Minister for Transport Khaw Boon Wan mentioned in his blog post on 1 August 2016 that he supports the PTC's focus on commuters. On 26 September 2016, the Land Transport Authority announced that they had studied the PTC's recommendations and were rolling out several initiatives to enhance the travel experience for all.

methods. We conducted 44 in-depth interviews and 51 focus group discussions. These face-to-face discussions were complemented by findings from a survey of 2,132 commuters and also 513,413 social media sentiments from the period between 1 June 2015 and 31 May 2016. The triangulation of results from the different streams of research helped to ensure that our findings were robust.

In our engagement, we focused not only on quantity, but also diversity. We ensured that there was widespread and

diverse representation from different groups of commuters. Specifically, we spoke to six groups of commuters, and engaged them in English and other local languages, including dialects. The six groups were working adults from different geographic areas in both business and non-business hubs; tertiary students; parents with young children; seniors; wheelchair-bound commuters travelling independently; and car owners who use public transport.

The PTC only had about six to

PTC CHAIRMAN RICHARD MAGNUS: FIVE LESSONS ABOUT ENGAGEMENT

1. Ground engagement and consultation are the sine qua non to good public policy and its effective implementation. The challenge in public policy and its implementation is to know and overcome the emotional and cultural barriers of our target population.
2. There will be pleasant surprises: how citizens can offer warm solutions to the issues; how they are prepared to help another fellow citizen.
3. Our citizens can easily discern and single out our non-verbal cues to gauge our sincerity and genuine concern for their welfare, even when we have no immediate solutions or when there needs to be painful trade-offs.
4. Engagement, soft comments and human touches foster and entrench a sense of community; this adds to our social cohesiveness and resilience.
5. Behind every citizen is a story of his or her life: we want to be able to empathise with the story and make that story more meaningful.

seven months to complete this entire engagement exercise. We therefore had to focus on certain segments of commuters first. However, our engagement efforts have not yet ended. We are continuing to reach out to other groups of commuters that we have not had a chance to engage for our first advisory report, such as hearing- and visually impaired commuters. The findings will be released in future reports. We will continue to use the approach of wide representation and a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods in future engagement efforts. ✎

Commuters felt that the attitudes and responsiveness of frontline staff make a difference to their commute. Such insights remind us not underestimate the power of the human touch. While no system is perfect, the human touch can mitigate many issues.

NOTE

1. Some of the questions put to commuters included: What are your positive experiences on buses/trains/taxis? What challenges do you face when taking buses/trains/taxis? What improvements can be made for buses/trains/taxis?



OPINION

Using Data to Create Better Government

Public agencies in Singapore and elsewhere have already begun to use data analytics to transform public policy thinking and delivery.

BY
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AND
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Technology has drastically shifted our ability to capture and analyse data. In recent decades the capability that has come to be known as *big data analytics* has evolved rapidly. While big data was originally viewed narrowly as a means for retailers to understand their customers better, insights drawn from collecting and analysing data can now deliver benefits across an expanding range of services. The impact of big data is being felt in corporations, governments, and even individual households. It has been applied in a wide range of activities, from remote monitoring of off-shore oil rigs to tracking health metrics using personal fitness bands.

Governments that harness this power can optimise use of resources, improve

citizen and business satisfaction, and create more accurate predictions of future needs. Big data analytics could help governments develop insights from a cascade of information that may significantly improve public sector performance at all levels, from municipal to national.

Coming of Age

Big data is growing. The International Data Corporation estimates that the amount of data collected and stored worldwide will expand tenfold between 2013 and 2020, from 4.4 zettabytes to 44 zettabytes. (For scale, *The Economist* noted that 1 zettabyte is equal to 142 million years of high-definition video.) Part of this imminent data explosion

will be driven by wide-scale use of connected devices, often referred to as the Internet of Things (IoT). The number of connected devices is expected to increase from 10 billion in 2013 to 50 billion by 2020.¹ Many of these devices will be linked to smart-city programs, such as sensors embedded in streets and other public areas. By 2020, smart-city initiatives in Europe will generate 100 exabytes (or one tenth of a zettabyte) of data daily, four times more than the global data generated daily from all usages in 2015.²

New technology and techniques — such as the IoT, advanced machine learning, and artificial intelligence — are amplifying our ability to collect, distribute, and analyse data. At the same time, new tools, such as data visualisation applications, are making it easier for governments, businesses and others to understand and respond to the insights delivered from the analysis.

Governments are well positioned to benefit from this coming of age. In particular, they can use big data analytics

to trigger improvements across three broad areas:

- **Resource optimisation:** Cost savings can be achieved by using data to eliminate waste and direct resources more effectively. One powerful example of this is better management of human resources. Using data analytics, one US federal agency halved its staff attrition rates and saved more than US\$200 million in the first year, by eliminating retention programmes that it found had no real impact and focusing instead on more effective programmes.
- **Tax collection:** Governments can identify and stop revenue leaks, especially in tax collections. The Australian tax authority analysed more than one million archived tax returns from small- and mid-sized businesses and identified groups with a high risk of underreporting. Targeted reminders

SMART WATER MANAGEMENT

The UK water distribution company Southern Water deployed smart water meters providing utilities, property managers and users with real-time data on water usage. Smart meters can reduce operating expenses, for instance, by automatically locating costly leaks and eliminating the need for manual meter readings. Smart meters were installed for 90% of the utility's customers, contributing to a 17% drop in water use. In Southampton alone, smart meters saved an average of 5.3 million litres of water a day.

and notices increased reported taxable income by more than 65% within those groups.

- **Forecasting and predicting:** Big data analysis can help governments understand ongoing trends and predict where resources are needed. For instance, the Los Angeles police department has used a predictive analytics system to comb through data such as historic and recent criminal activity, predicting where and when specific crimes might occur and dispatching officers accordingly. One study suggests the system is twice as accurate in predicting crime as traditional methods.³

Governments already collect vast amounts of macroeconomic and individual data that can form the basis for a strong database reaching across industries and public agencies.

The Two Sides of Data Analytics and Government

Governments have two complementary roles to play in using big data analytics to deliver better and more efficient public services. The first is using data to shape those services, and the second is to use the state's authority and reach to build an integrated ecosystem of data collection and use.

Using data to inform and guide

public services is perhaps the most common first step by governments. Generally, public authorities start with efforts most likely to generate early wins and demonstrate the value of such new initiatives. For example, London's Citymapper app for mobile devices uses data such as maps, real-time congestion information, rail and bus timetables to offer optimal routes to commuters, cyclists, and pedestrians. Time saved by such apps in London is estimated to be worth about US\$150 million yearly.⁴

These early wins can set the stage for bolder commitments and strategies. Chicago, for example, announced a Tech Plan in 2013 that aspires to use data analysis and other new technologies for improvements across all municipal departments. Among other aspects, the plan states that "data-driven decision-making is helping the city reduce costs and offer services better tailored to public need... Using data science to continually improve and streamline government processes is one way to emphasise and strengthen Chicago's position as a leading global technology hub."⁵

Beyond collecting and analysing data, governments also have the mandate and scale to shape the overall data ecosystem, creating a large and transparent repository that benefits the public and private sectors. Governments already collect vast amounts of macroeconomic and individual data that can form the

basis for a strong database reaching across industries and public agencies. The growth of smart-city initiatives and programs will continue to build on this arsenal. To encourage the development of a data ecosystem with broad benefits, governments should provide standards and regulations to shape data sets that can be read and used widely.

Governments have a unique role in creating institutions and developing at

scale the capabilities needed to generate useful insights from the flood of data. They can also expand the benefits of making data sets — with tight privacy safeguards — broadly available, giving the public the opportunity to create, collect, manage, and analyse data for their own purposes. For example, France and the United Kingdom have explicitly stated that data should be open by default. The McKinsey Global

PROTECTING PRIVACY AND PERSONAL DATA

Global market surveys have shown that citizens are concerned about their privacy: many fear personal data may be compromised and misused with the advent of big data analytics. As part of the effort to shape the volume and texture of data collected, governments must credibly assure individuals and corporations that all data collected and handled will be protected vigorously and not susceptible to manipulation or unauthorised access.

Governments can build the necessary trust to promote a good data ecosystem in several important ways. First, they must develop a comprehensive legal framework to protect personal and sensitive data, including clear and effective repercussions in the event of any compromise. Estonia's data management is exemplary in this regard. If there is private data that the state cannot legally be prevented from seeing, affected citizens can at least get a record of who viewed their data and when. They can also file an official inquiry if they find that such access is not justified.¹

Second, governments should invest in data systems that prevent intrusions but allow efficient access to authorised users. Third, effective processes must be in place to assure that open data is anonymous, cannot be linked to individuals, and doesn't contain identifying information. In particular, an intrusion in one data set should not compromise personal data in others. Finally these measures must be communicated clearly to the public to allay lingering concerns.

NOTE

1. McKinsey & Company, <http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/transforming-government-through-digitization>.

Institute estimates that more than US\$3 trillion in value can be created annually with open access to such data.

More Than Just Data

Many corporations and governments struggle to implement a big data programme that can capture the full potential of these new technologies. To ease this burden, governments must craft a deliberate approach to data analytics that considers current and future needs.

Using insights gleaned from data to inform decisions and guide policy can be a radical departure for organisations that have traditionally relied on personal knowledge and, at times, instinct. However, real power will be unleashed when analytics-based approaches become deeply embedded in government culture, with data-based predictions and prescriptions shaping the government's core strategies.

While data is obviously a key aspect of such programmes, three other factors also carry significant weight: strategy, people, and organisation. A comprehensive programme that considers all four aspects has the greatest chance of delivering the full benefits of big data analytics.

Strategy

Businesses and governments are often enticed by the allure of big data and launch initiatives without a clear

strategy to guide them. Analytics for its own sake will struggle to deliver on its promise. Instead, organisations must formulate a clear strategy based on an understanding of the likely benefits, with clear and measurable targets and the support of top leadership.

A healthy start would be to focus on use cases, with individual applications designed to deliver a specific result. Choosing use cases that produce obvious benefits for citizens, from structured and clean data that is readily available and is supported by key stakeholders, can often deliver quick wins. By building a strategy around use cases, governments help assure that the benefits captured align with public policy and priorities.

In Singapore, for example, one use case has centred on better home-based monitoring of the elderly.⁶ One system implemented uses wireless sensors to track the activities and health of the elderly in their homes and can alert caregivers to any anomaly. The system is supported by an application that is easy to launch, features large font sizes and contrasting colours, and includes a text-to-speech function, reducing the need to type. The application is embedded in devices sold to the elderly. The system offers a safe and less expensive alternative to retirement homes and community-based care.

As part of overall strategy, governments may also have to re-examine a monolithic approach to data security. Not all data

is sensitive or poses a privacy concern, and governments should consider ways to allow access to non-sensitive data to enable its use more broadly.

In one approach, the United Kingdom has classified data under three security tiers, with the lowest, most open tier containing the vast majority of the information it collects. While data in top two tiers remains subject to stringent controls and is accessible only by the government, data in the lowest tier is protected using a commercial threat model similar to that used by commercial banks.⁷

Using commercial solutions eliminates the need for custom security controls and systems and allows governments to consider less-expensive cloud-based solutions. This also allows agencies to adopt different solutions based on their individual needs. For example, HM Revenue & Customs agency deployed Microsoft Surface Pro and a customised set of Google Apps for its staff.

The UK approach to opening up data access extends beyond the public sector. In London, for instance, the Datastore system aggregates data sets from public and private sources and makes them available publicly.

Data

Raw, unorganised data, collected and stored almost randomly, is difficult to use effectively. Governments should build comprehensive data sets that are

granular, standardised, and machine-readable, and that protect anonymity.

Analytics for its own sake will struggle to deliver on its promise. Instead, organisations must formulate a clear strategy based on an understanding of the likely benefits, with clear and measurable targets and the support of top leadership.

For example, governments should collect transaction-level data that can be used flexibly based on individual use cases, rather than rely on broad summaries of activity. In Singapore, the Land Transport Authority collects individual, anonymous data on each transaction, including the time, beginning, and end of a trip. The data collected has proven useful in helping to identify new direct transportation routes that commuters may wish to have, for example, to get to work every morning. This information has been fed into a digital mobility platform called Beeline, developed by the Government Technology Agency, which helps match commuters' demand for new travel routes with supply by private bus operators.⁸

Also, governments must ensure that data is shared appropriately among public agencies, breaking silos that can hinder success. Estonia, which *The Atlantic* magazine has called “the

world's most tech-savvy government,"⁹ has established the X-Road system, a service-oriented architecture that eases communications among public and private databases. In 2013, more than 170 databases were connected to the system, with more than 2,000 services offered. More than 900 organisations used it daily.

Behind functional capabilities, governments should develop a culture that is conducive to digital innovation and which attracts the best talent.

People

Using big data analytics is a change from traditional operating practices, and civil servants at all levels must understand the benefits of the program and support it. In New Zealand,¹⁰ the government offered a digital and analytics masterclass to more than 70 senior administrators to present the fundamentals of big data analysis and other aspects of new technology, such as the agile methodology and design approaches. Similarly, San Francisco established a Data Academy programme to train city officials and workers and build capabilities.¹¹

Behind functional capabilities, governments should develop a culture that is conducive to digital innovation and which attracts the best talent. Israel used experience from its military training programme to create a talent

development kit that helped attract recruits with strong engineering and digital skills.¹² The UK's Government Digital Service, working under the motto "We are revolutionising government", has created a decidedly non-bureaucratic work environment with distinctive locations and programming events such as "hackathons" to identify potential recruits.¹³

Organisation


Organisational changes will probably also be needed to create a strong data ecosystem that spans government agencies. One successful model is to establish a centre of excellence for big data analytics that works across agencies and is responsible for aggregating and bundling data and championing its use.

In 2013, New York created the Mayor's Office of Data Analytics to drive change across city agencies.¹⁴ The six-person office collaborates with agencies to improve service delivery using data, managing the internal data sharing platform, DataBridge, and the public platform, NYC OpenData. It also implements special city data initiatives, such as disaster response and resiliency efforts, and develops capabilities among city agencies through training programmes.

Conclusion

Governments at all levels are charged with delivering the best services to their constituencies from available resources.

Whether municipal, regional, or national, governments can draw significant benefits from big data analytics. Resources can be used more efficiently, citizens served more effectively, and plans developed with a more accurate vision of the future.

To achieve success, governments must develop a clear strategy, understand the nature of data, ensure they have built the right capacities, and develop organisations that are fit-for-purpose within a healthy data ecosystem. 

SINGAPORE: A SMART NATION BUILT ON DATA

As part of its Smart Nation initiative, Singapore is building a nationwide infrastructure to enable better sensing of how the city works, and to optimise the running of smart city services. Singapore is putting in place systems to collect data, perform analytics to interpret real-time data as far as possible, and ultimately, to visualise insights to help public agencies make better planning decisions, and enhance their operations.

For example, the GovTech's Data Science team, in collaboration with various government economic agencies, is working on an initiative called the **Pulse of the Economy** that looks at high-frequency big data, including electricity consumption, public transport, online job listings and other urban data sources, to develop new indicators for better economic and urban planning.¹

Traditional economic indicators such as GDP and Employment take a longer time to gather. With Pulse of the Economy, real-time big data sources can be merged to create a richer picture of the state of the economy, offering early warning signals for intervention with more detail in terms of location and sectors. For example, the amount of electricity consumed in a particular industrial region in Singapore and the number of people alighting at bus stops in the region can provide a timely indicator of how much economic activity is happening there (see Figure 1).

As more meaningful big data sources become available, new ways of improving people's lives will become possible. For example, we can use crowd density data to understand how people commute and access key social amenities (for example, parks, healthcare, places of worship), and thus improve the distribution and accessibility of these amenities. Similarly, better data could improve transport modelling to relieve congestion and enhance public transport options.

~ GovTech Singapore

Figure 1. Data visualisation shows the electricity consumption and passenger drop-off volume at each industrial region in Singapore. The jobs shown are online job listings which are located within each industrial region.

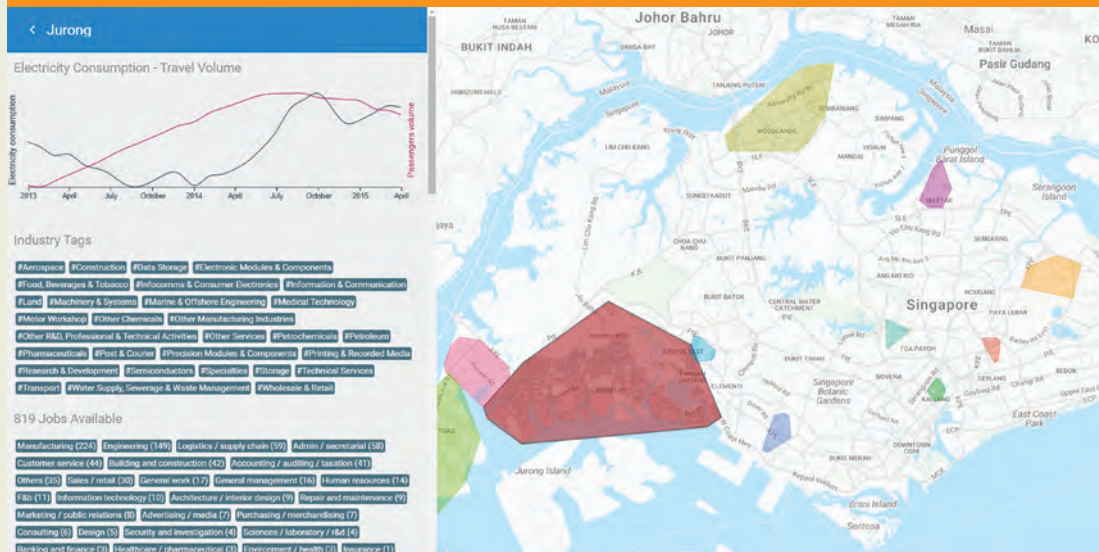


Image courtesy of GovTech Singapore.

NOTE

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OPINION

From Scarcity to Generativity: New Approaches to Governing Resources

Data, knowledge and connections can increase rather than decrease in value with use: but we need a new public language to make the most of them.

BY
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In the spirit of knowledge generativity, the author wishes to express his gratitude to Eddie Choo, Goh Wei Leong, Kwok Jia Chuan, Sean McDonald, Simon Schillebeeckx, Alex Teo and Keith Toh for their invaluable comments on an earlier draft; and to Sean for drawing attention to the Matthew Effect and helping to coin the term “generated scarcity”.

“... last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.”

~ T. S. Eliot, “Little Gidding” in *Four Quartets*

One of my most abiding memories of studying Economics is how the first chapters of nearly all our textbooks were titled *Scarcity: The Central Problem of Economics* (or something similar). This made sense, since so much of the discipline is concerned with reconciling unlimited wants with limited resources, often through optimisation processes that “maximise” some variable (utility, profits, wages, lifetime income et al) within certain constraints and parameters. Such maximising approaches

have extended to public policy, where efficient resource utilisation is often cited as a key priority of governments.

Beyond Scarcity

The fundamental assumption of scarcity works well for physical (and therefore finite) resources like oil or land, or even non-physical but nonetheless finite resources such as time. But it is less clear if scarcity characterises what we might call the “new resources” increasingly important in modern economies — data,

knowledge, and connections underpinned by relationships — which can grow rather than deplete from being used, particularly given the rise of analytic capabilities and Internet-enabled network effects.

Consider some simple examples. Data begets more data once it has been interpreted and analysed: raw data on road usage, for instance, can generate new insights leading to new studies and models, perhaps even the collection of new data. One person's knowledge — say, in a book or article like this one — can catalyse new ideas, interpretations and innovation. All successful thinkers and scholars stand on the shoulders of their predecessors and antecedents; even the most ground-breaking work draws on prior research. What Robert Putnam called the “social capital” underpinning relationships benefits from being tended, so that trust, reciprocity and predictability are created and nurtured, much like gardens generate new life from regular maintenance. Of course, data and knowledge need physical storage (although technological advancements challenge these limits) and relationships take attention and time to maintain and sustain. But one could call these limitations *second-order scarcities*: in and of themselves, the resources involved have no physical form, and no physical quantities to be “depleted” from use, so they are not “consumed” in the literal sense.

The Paradigm So Far

Traditional economics is only partially helpful in understanding the nature of such resources. Drawing on Elinor Ostrom's Nobel Prize-winning studies of how common-pool resources are governed,¹ and the prior work of Paul Samuelson,² resources like data, knowledge and relationships would be seen as

1. Non-rivalrous or non-subtractable: Person A's consumption of data and knowledge, or experience of a relationship, does not prevent the simultaneous consumption/experience by Person B;
2. Non-excludable: Person A could not stop Person B from consuming data or knowledge, or from being in a particular relationship.

The new resources increasingly important in modern economies — data, knowledge, and connections underpinned by relationships — can grow rather than deplete from being used.

Where the concepts of rivalry, subtractability and excludability falter is their assumption that goods do not change in the process of being utilised or experienced. Public goods, like street-lighting, lighthouses and defence, which Samuelson cites, or the rivers, fisheries

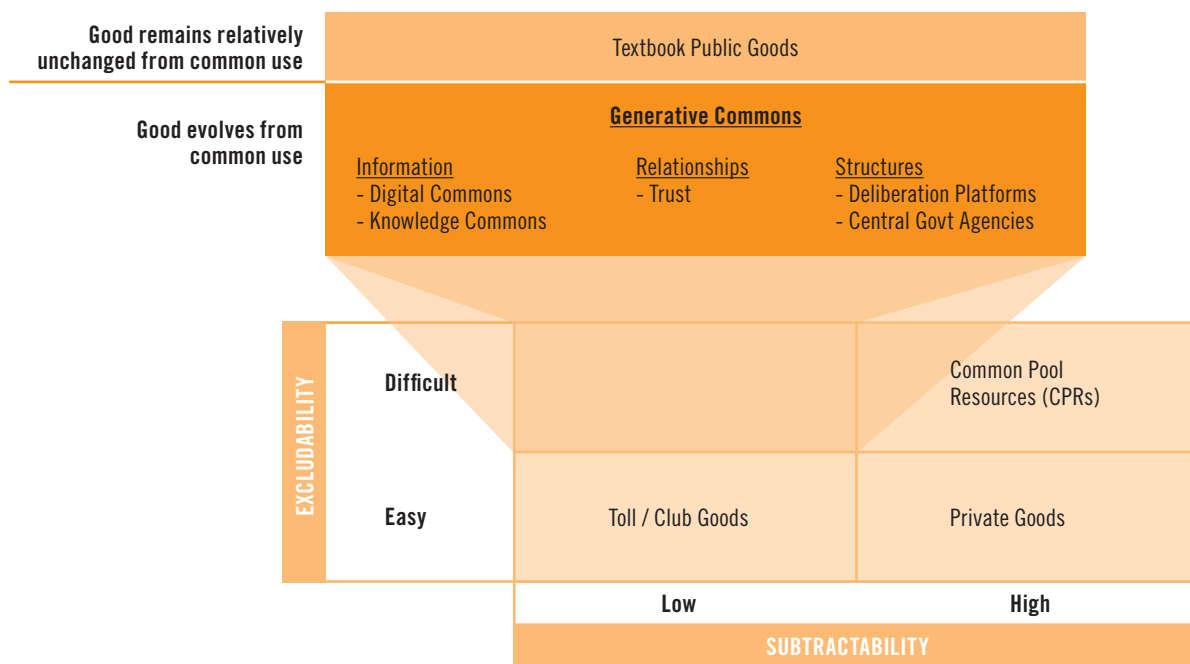


Figure 1. Types of Resources

and forests that formed Ostrom’s key case studies, all stay relatively unchanged because of consumption, even if they can transform due to external or systemic factors. In contrast, data, knowledge and relationships are fundamentally altered when they are utilised, because this very utilisation results in more of each resource being created. This unique category of resources is reflected in Figure 1.

Generative Resources

As outlined in Figure 1, I describe such resources as “generative”. Given the inadequacy of existing descriptions, we need what T. S. Eliot might have called a

fundamentally different *language for*, and way of *thinking about*, what generative resources are and how they work. Some useful ideas come from French sociologist Marcel Mauss’ work on what he terms a “gift economy”, where things have intangible value even if their tangible worth is unclear, and are exchanged reciprocally rather than as instrumental, capitalist commodities.³ However, while Mauss’ *process of exchanging gifts* is indeed generative, he does not account for the generativity of the gifts themselves (the additional usage created for each resource).

On this latter issue, the conceptual heavy-lifting is only just beginning. For

now, five themes seem to be particularly critical in defining this new vocabulary:

1. Generative resources are not static but **constantly evolving**. This might seem obvious, until we remember that for the better part of history, our notion of resources has focused on substances like wood, iron and oil, which stayed by and large the same during a productive process. Physical states sometimes changed, but at its core, each resource was relatively immutable. In contrast, generative resources are dynamic and iterative: data feeds on itself, networks generate cycles that can be virtuous or vicious, and social capital can undergo both quantitative and qualitative transformations as a result of relationship-building within a community.
2. Generative resources exhibit **“input-output polymorphism”**. It is difficult to tell whether things like data, knowledge and social capital constitute input into, or output from, productive processes. I suspect that the input-output dichotomy, while useful for a world where goods and services were produced in linear, discrete processes, is much less relevant when resources and raw “materials” are less tangible. There are inevitable feedback loops between input and output, each feeding into and fed

by the other. Old lines between production and consumption, or producers and consumers, will grow less salient over time. We will all increasingly become “prosumers” in our interactions with generative resources.

3. Generative resources suffer, not from overuse (which prompted Garrett Hardin to coin the famous term “tragedy of the commons”⁴), but **underuse**. Websites bereft of traffic; physical and online networks atrophying under the weight of sluggish usage; prediction algorithms with insufficient training data; neglected communities on the sidelines of cities — the lost potential and capacity in each of these are certainly tragic. But the tragedy lies in insufficient rather than excessive exploitation — sometimes by choice, in the case of relationships, and sometimes because we lack the computational and/or cognitive power to analyse new data or knowledge. Again, underuse is related to second-order scarcities: time, attention and capacity are limited, even if the resources on which they act are generative. In fact, on the issue of knowledge, Ostrom and her collaborators⁵ distinguish between ideas themselves (which display generativity), and the artifacts and facilities that contain them (which are subject to second-

order scarcities). We could apply similar reasoning to relationships, differentiating between the generative social capital of the relationship itself, and the scarce repositories or structures within they play out. The sobering reality is that such second-order scarcities will not disappear easily, although they can be mitigated with technological improvement and innovation.

The existence of data, knowledge and relationships does not signify that we are somehow moving into a world of utopian abundance. There will still be more wants than can be met with current productive capacity.

4. As a result of their evolving nature, generative resources do not have clear boundaries, but **fuzzy and dynamic edges**. We usually rely on well-defined boundaries when governing a resource: knowing the boundaries of oil deposits, for instance, is key in deciding the validity of ownership claims. But where do things like data, networks and relationships start or end? If clear boundaries allow for clear principles of governance, then fuzzy and dynamic boundaries may also require governance by fuzzy and adaptive logic — broad norms underpinning the use of a resource,

rather than mere physical concepts like quantity. Ostrom's work on fisheries and forests offers clues on what such norms might look like — fishermen collectively choose to adhere to norms of throwing young fish (below a certain length) back into the water, while trees with trunks below a certain diameter are deliberately left untouched by loggers. These norms can only be imperfectly enforced — hence their fuzziness — and may need to evolve with time. But Ostrom suggests that self-organising, self-monitoring communities can actually achieve reasonably high rates of adherence within these conditions — in some cases, better than outcomes achieved by either top-down state interventions or market-based solutions. This could apply equally to data and knowledge (collective norms in universities on plagiarism, for instance) or norms governing the behaviour of communities, both on- and offline.

5. The intangible and evolving nature of such resources mean that there are **few clear “equilibrium” points** in the way they can be used or managed. Much as equilibria help to simplify analysis in what economists call “comparative statics”, the real world does not usually exhibit stable or immutable equilibria. Instead, the ways in which data, knowledge

and relationships are used, as well as sustained, are likely to be much more emergent and unpredictable *ex ante*. The optimisation approaches so ubiquitous in much of Economics may need to start giving way to design-based, behavioural approaches that emphasise iterative and experimental learning by discovery.

What's Next — Policy Implications

The existence of data, knowledge and relationships does not signify that we are somehow moving into a world of utopian abundance. Many important resources will continue to be scarce — oil, minerals, water, time. There will still be more wants than can be met with current productive capacity. Wants that are satisfied will still be subject to inequity of outcomes and/or poor distribution systems. Generative resources may not be exhaustible in the orthodox economic sense, but they can still be degraded (e.g. falsified data or relationships that corrode without trust): the property of generativity just means that the mechanics of their generation and exhaustion are different from those of more classical resources.

But Singapore and the world can certainly afford to move away from a pure scarcity mindset — particularly since the digital economy has significantly accelerated the trend of generativity. The claims of commentators like Jeremy Rifkin, heralding the rise of “The Zero

Marginal Cost Society”,⁶ are probably overstated — second-order scarcities may continue to mean that not all that is “free” is also usable, and new problems may arise from data overload and informational or relational promiscuity. But opportunities are undeniably created when digitalisation reduces the cost of duplication or replication of data, knowledge and connections until it reaches close to zero.

Second-order scarcities mean that not all that is “free” is also usable.

To help us harness these opportunities, the new language of generativity will have to lead to new thinking, particularly in how we make and implement policy. For instance:

1. The evolving nature of generative resources, as well as their input-output polymorphism, will require **changes in how we measure economic value** — not just through static traditional measures like GDP, but through new measures that capture the catalytic effects caused by resource use. Such new measures are very much works-in-progress, but it is telling that new and more variegated indicators of human welfare, like the Legatum Institute's Prosperity Index, include a sub-index on generative resources like Social Capital.

2. Tragedies of the generative commons, arising from under- rather than over-use, will need **new and creative approaches to tax and regulatory policy**, in which some forms of exploitation should be encouraged rather than limited. The numerous examples of such existing constraints — big companies protecting the data they gather, relationships being confined to narrow networks (e.g. traditional old boys' clubs), or knowledge restricted behind paywalls — might actually be described as a third order of scarcity: a “generated scarcity” that is contrived in order to maintain particular individual or organisational interests. The great sociologist of science, Robert Merton,⁷ refers to the Gospel of Matthew (25:29) when he describes such generated scarcities as examples of the ‘Matthew Effect’, where “... whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them”.

Greater public participation in public policy — more deliberation by citizens on the decisions that affect their lives, and more policy that is truly “of, by and for” the people — is one key way to guard against the risk of underuse. In many ways, generative resources are like muscles, and public participation is

a good way to ensure their constant use, stretching and suppleness. Indeed, such engagement can itself be generative, leading to the creation of new knowledge and learning, civic awareness and social capital among mutually engaged citizens.


3. Fuzzy and dynamic edges will have important ramifications for **how we define intellectual property**, which will need to be seen as much more dynamic and kaleidoscopic. Assigning precise ownership over extended periods will grow increasingly complicated — and will need to be calibrated in order to avoid third-order scarcity induced by the Matthew Effect, and to maintain the generativity of resources.

Generative resources are like muscles, and public participation is a good way to ensure their constant use, stretching and suppleness.

4. Lack of clear equilibrium points calls for a **more systems-oriented approach** that considers not just individual agents and nodes, but their interactions within larger ecologies. This means analysing

the interactions among pieces of knowledge, exploring the creative potential of networks, and tapping into the collaborative capacity in generative relationships. Some of this has already been proposed by scholars of complexity science and complex adaptive systems, who explore how non-linear, interdependent systems require fundamentally different approaches from the stable, predictable systems popularised by the European Enlightenment. But the links can be deepened and broadened through further research.

New Directions

It is probably too soon to predict what the first chapters of Economics textbooks will look like in a few years, but hopefully the new language of generativity begins to creep into them, to supplement (even if it does not entirely supplant) the deep assumption of scarcity. This new language may not lead to new answers immediately, but will still be useful if it raises new questions that eventually mark out paths towards new words and new voices. 

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3. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London: Cohen and West, 1966). Translation by I. Cunnison.
4. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162(1968): 1243–8.
5. Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom, eds., *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011).
6. Jeremy Rifkin, *The Zero Marginal Cost Society: The Internet of Things, the Collaborative Commons, and the Eclipse of Capitalism* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).
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SG50: What The Public Service Learnt

The successful year-long celebrations strengthened the Public Service's capacity to engage with its partners in new, collaborative ways that bode well for the future.

BY
YEE LAI FONG

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In 2015, Singapore celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence with SG50: a broad, year-long series of inclusive and people-oriented activities, initiatives and programmes — from large-scale signature events to sectoral or community-led projects, and ground-up initiatives. SG50 sought to rally Singaporeans to reflect on and celebrate what we had achieved together and what being Singaporean meant, in order to deepen national pride and cohesion, and optimism about our future.

There were many avenues for Singaporeans to be involved in SG50: as a participant, a volunteer, an organiser, a vendor or a sponsor; or a combination of different roles in various initiatives. For the Public Service, SG50 was a remarkable opportunity to connect with Singaporeans in diverse new ways. As recounted by public agencies after the event, SG50 yielded a range of learning experiences and insights centred on four aspects: **planning and strategic communications, multi-agency collaboration in large-scale events, community engagement** and the **government as catalyst**.

Planning & Strategic Communications

Planning for the celebrations started over two years leading up to 2015 and played a critical role in weaving the range of SG50 activities into a cohesive whole. Public communications was important in ensuring that the SG50

celebrations were broad-based and inclusive — involving all ages and the less privileged. Strategic communications was also important in galvanising the public to participate through tailored messaging and activities, and building the mood from a tone of reflection and memory to shared celebration and optimism about our future.

Multi-agency Collaboration in Large-Scale Events

The year-long SG50 celebrations was marked by several signature, national and even regional events: from the SEA Games to the Jubilee Weekend around National Day itself and the future-oriented *Future of Us* exhibition¹ which capped the jubilee year. All of these involved extensive multi-agency collaborations and coordination, as well as tens of thousands of volunteers from all walks of life, on a much larger scale than in past years. The planning and execution of this range of mass events in a single year tapped not only the public sector but also people and private-sector resources.

The complexity and significance of the SG50 events were further heightened by the passing of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founding Prime Minister, on 23 March. The week of national mourning that followed Mr Lee's passing saw an unprecedented outpouring of emotions by Singaporeans. Events to mark his passing, including the Lying-in-State,

PLANNING AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

A guiding narrative based on people and shared values

A reference narrative was developed to guide the overall planning of programmes and communications. Conceived as the story of Singapore's people and the nation's shared values (rather than the conventional storyline of economic and technical progress) it provided a coherent thread across the broad range of celebratory activities, with a crucial human touch.

Inclusiveness

Special efforts were made to reach out to Singaporeans from all walks of life, including, the elderly and those with special needs. The novel approach to allow free use of the SG50 logo helped to encourage mass awareness and adoption. Staying true to this principle of inclusiveness allowed the SG50 celebrations to resonate widely with Singaporeans.

Keeping track of public sentiment

Investment in research and regular monitoring enabled a timely understanding of public mood and the impact of other national developments. This allowed adjustments to programming and communications to be made. For example, all SG50 campaigns, programmes and activities were significantly toned down during the week of mourning following Mr Lee Kuan Yew's passing. In the weeks that followed, marketing campaigns were reviewed in response to online chatter about Singaporean spirit and values.

Contingency Planning

To mitigate potential risks, contingency planning was taken seriously throughout the celebrations. For example, the Jubilee Weekend programmes, which were enjoyed by 1.7 million Singaporeans, entailed extensive co-ordination and pre-planning to minimise the chances that any incidents might mar the celebrations.

demonstrated exemplary coordination and collaboration within Government and also between the public, private and people sectors. It was a poignant moment that brought forth the very essence of the Singaporean spirit, values and sense of national unity that SG50 hoped to evoke.

Community Engagement: A Shared Sense of Place

Developing a shared sense of place was one of the intents of community engagement during SG50. This refers to "a sense of the character or identity" associated to certain places, as well as "a sense of belonging" or "a sense of our

Multi-agency coordinating structure to facilitate planning and execution

A central coordination platform comprising multi-agency representatives formed the backbone of the organising structure of mega events under SG50. Roles were identified based on the strengths of each agency, for example: People's Association's extensive experience in community engagement, the Home Team in handling public safety and security, and the Ministry of Communications and Information in public communications. Within the central coordinating team, regular communications was integral in keeping everyone posted on developments, facilitating coordination and anticipating issues. Agencies also set aside or modified their agendas in order to achieve more impactful, whole-of-government outcomes. For example, the Urban Redevelopment Authority adjusted their plans for the launch of the Jubilee Bridge in order to accommodate the Jubilee Big Walk¹ in November 2015.

Collaborations to Manage Resources

To make prudent use of resources given the scale of SG50, the organisers leveraged

existing and planned events as far as possible. This helped to contain budgets and the use of agency resources. Partnership was a key approach in the development of programmes, tapping on external expertise from the people and private sectors. This also generated a sense of ownership from all involved.

Real-time Updates and 'Go-To' Persons

In organising mega events, public safety and security were of paramount importance. During the Jubilee Weekend, a central operations centre carried out real-time coordination; a mobile application offered live updates to help manage crowd control and traffic. Mainstream media, including newspapers, radio and television broadcasts in the different national languages remained essential in public communications. The establishment of 'Go-To' persons in the respective agencies — points of contacts familiar with in-house efforts in relation to the bigger national SG50 vision — was critical for making it possible to coordinate across agencies in a timely and effective manner.

NOTE

1. <https://www.sg/en/SG50/Pulse/Jubilee%20Big%20Walk.aspx>

SG50: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

Fostering Human-to-Human Connections through Stories

Through a six-month crowdsourcing exercise, the SG Heart Map¹ initiative encouraged Singaporeans to tell their stories of fond memories and emotional connection with specific places in Singapore. The exercise generated some 100,000 stories, which underlined the power of stories in nurturing a sense of place and making heritage a living practice. Some 70% of the stories were submitted through hardcopy, despite the availability of digital submission channels, highlighting the value of physical interaction and the human touch, even in an age of digital technology. The involvement of some 74,000 students in the mySG trails and exhibitions,² one of the Ministry of Education's SG50 initiatives, helped our youth to appreciate the deeper meaning and values behind a community's experiences of a place as it evolves over time. It also helped strengthen personal bonds between the students and the 36,000 members of the public they led on the guided tours, offering a fresh perspective on Singapore viewed through the eyes of its young people.

Creating Conditions for the Community to Contribute

Under the guidance of professional artists, ordinary citizens were encouraged to express themselves with art, and to contribute to the beautification of their neighbourhoods through art, through the People's Association's

PAssionArts movement.³ When residents saw their artistic creations displayed in their estates, they experienced a great sense of pride. The process of co-creation with fellow residents also helped to deepen neighbourly ties across different backgrounds and ethnicities. The use of art to engage the community was also instrumental in the Portraits of the People campaign,⁴ which encouraged members of the public to express their reflections and hopes for Singapore through art. It took place over 30 weeks across 60 locations nationwide, covering education institutions, shopping malls, libraries, and community platforms, and yielded some 73,000 responses from the public. Such participatory arts initiatives often involved an iterative process of experiential learning and experimentation, underpinned by a belief in the value of hearing from citizens at large from all walks of life.

Furthering Shared Interests, Engendering Ownership

The revamp of the National Museum of Singapore in time for SG50 was part of the bigger aspiration to make it the people's museum. Shifting in its role from a traditional content provider and subject expert to a facilitator actively involving people in shaping its content, it sought deeper connections with people and organisations which already had an interest in history and heritage, finding ways to further those interests and engender ownership of the museum.

United by a Shared Responsibility in Service of Others

Singapore hosted the SEA Games and ASEAN Para Games in June and December 2015, respectively. “Team Nila” — the 23,000-strong community of tireless volunteers of all ages and walks of life, who served many roles from performers to protocol officers, photographers, ushers and cheer leaders — were the unsung heroes of the games, exemplifying unity towards a higher calling: Service of others. Volunteers in their teens alongside those in

their 70s; children alongside their parents; expatriates alongside citizens. Many amongst the volunteers, beneficiaries and organisers recounted stories of transformative experiences. Elsewhere, the Community Chest’s Care & Share Movement⁵ rallied voluntary welfare organisations, corporations and individuals to reach out and help the needy. Over 110,000 volunteers responded, raising in excess of \$300 million through more than 2,000 fund-raising and volunteerism events. This was matched by a Government grant of \$500 million.

NOTES

1. <http://www.heartmap.sg/>
2. <https://www.moe.gov.sg/microsites/sg50/events/mySG-trails-exhibitions/>
3. PAssionArts was established in 2012 by the People’s Association (PA) as one of the key pillars in the Community Engagement Masterplan. https://www.pa.gov.sg/Our_Programmes/Community_Arts
4. <https://www.nationalgallery.sg/see-do/highlights/portraits-of-the-people>
5. <https://www.comchest.org.sg/careandshare/>

own identity as shaped in relation to those places”.² Scholars have highlighted the critical role of community participation and storytelling in developing the sense of place, in making heritage a living practice. They described such collective engagement as occurring not only in space, but also over time, “with meaning evolving as the past becomes more distant and the present changes.”³ These seem to have been borne out throughout the various SG50 experiences.

Community engagement during SG50 involved the community organising and participating in activities, often in ways that expressed values of mutual care, social cohesion, national pride and belonging. Many of these initiatives helped strengthened Singaporeans’ connection with their shared physical and communal heritage and with each other. Such activities included: the SG Heart Map, SG50 Concerts in the Park, mySG trails and exhibitions, Portraits of the People, PAssionArts, revamp of

CATALYSING CHANGE

Government as Enabler

The SG50 Celebration Fund, set up to support worthwhile ground-up initiatives to engage and connect Singaporeans in meaningful ways, attracted some 2,095 applications — 10 times the original forecast. A total of 420 projects were approved, each funded for up to \$50,000. The success of the fund showed that Government can indeed help catalyse self-organising, ground-up initiatives that benefit society. A new \$25-million Our Singapore Fund¹ has since been launched to sustain the momentum of active citizenry in shaping the future of Singapore.

Government as Convenor

Complementing MOE's National Education dialogues, the National Youth Council (NYC) organised "YouthSpeak",² a series of 50 youth engagement conversations, reaching over 5,000 participants. The organisers worked with different youth influencers to boost the reach and impact of engagement. For SG50, the National Arts Council also convened the "Got to Move" platform to encourage ground-up, broad-based participation in dance, attracting over 7,200 participants island-wide. Both initiatives highlight the public sector's role in bringing specific interest or target groups together, by creating the initial conditions for them to foster new connections and explore new possibilities. To be an effective catalyst, public officers have to invest time in

nurturing relationships with key influencers and stakeholders within different networks, and to be aware of issues and interests that matter to them.

Government as Facilitator

Singapore: Inside Out was a travelling showcase celebrating Singapore's spectrum of contemporary creative talents across various disciplines.³ The showcase, which rallied local talent from across fields as diverse as architecture, cuisine, design, fashion, film, music and the literary, performing and visual arts, travelled to Beijing, London and New York before returning to Singapore.⁴ In the same spirit of collaboration, the SG50 Partnership Committee, comprising industry leaders from 32 associations and federations,⁵ developed a framework to coordinate efforts by corporate organisations to support or start SG50 initiatives.⁶ Such platforms point to the need for public officers to have a good grasp of the Public Service's goals and priorities and the skills in bridging interests of diverse stakeholders — bringing the most unlikely partners together, resolving conflicts and facilitating agreements for collective actions. Such public officers have been described as "public entrepreneurs".⁷ They have also been depicted as "boundary spanners",⁸ rising above agency silos to work across boundaries in managing inter-organisational relationships.

NOTES

1. http://www.singaporebudget.gov.sg/budget_2016/BudgetSpeech.aspx
2. <https://www.nyc.gov.sg/media/k2/attachments/MR27062015.pdf>
3. Singapore: Inside Out Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/singaporeinsideout/>
4. Singapore (Tan Quee Lan Street, Bugis) 27 November to 6 December 2015; <https://www.stb.gov.sg/news-and-publications/lists/newsroom/dispform.aspx?ID=625>
5. <http://app.msf.gov.sg/Portals/0/List%20of%20SG50%20Partnership%20Committee%20Members.pdf>
6. Companies and associations were invited to participate in the following ways: <http://app.msf.gov.sg/Partner-Us/Partner-Us-Ways-to-Participate>
7. B. Ryan, et al, "Managing for joint outcomes: Connecting up the horizontal and the vertical," *Policy Quarterly* 4(2008): 14–21.
8. P. Williams, "The competent boundary spanner," *Public Administration*, 80(2002): 103–24.

the National Museum, SEA Games, ASEAN Para Games, and the Care & Share Movement.

Government as Catalyst: Making Things Possible

As an inclusive, people-focused celebration, SG50 opened up many avenues to actively pursue a participative approach to involve as many Singaporeans as possible in planning, execution and involvement in its many public programmes.⁴ A wide range of initiatives was generated based on different modes of public participation, with Government playing the role of catalyst. These included ground-up initiatives supported by the SG50 Celebration Fund and the YouthSpeak conversation series convened by the National Youth Council in partnership with youth organisations.

This catalytic role may involve providing information, platforms and funding; connecting people with similar interests and ideas to achieve synergy; and connecting them to others with the experience and expertise to further shape and actualise their ideas towards the betterment of society. It has been described as government becoming the hub of a series of relationships in society, organised for acting with others rather than doing things to or for them.⁵

Analysis: Singapore as Relational State?

The learning aspects that have emerged from the public sector's SG50 experience — planning and strategic communications, multi-agency collaboration in large-scale events, community engagement and government as catalyst — are consistent

THE LEGACY OF SG50

The impact of SG50 continued to be felt even after 2015 drew to a close:

- The SG50 Care & Share movement continued to benefit many through the substantial funds it raised for voluntary welfare organisation programmes.
- The SG50 Jubilee Walk, now a permanent marked route in the Civic District, continues to draw many to reflect on the story of Singapore's past, present and future.
- The SG50 Time Capsule, containing items and messages by thousands of Singaporeans, is buried in Gardens by the Bay, slated to be opened in 2065.
- Together with the Future of Us exhibition in November 2015, the SGfuture series of thematic discussions and workshops was launched to engage Singaporeans in imagining and being involved in our nation's future.
- Building on the successful SG50 Celebration Fund, Our Singapore Fund was launched in August 2016 to support projects to strengthen national identity or meet community needs.


with concepts of the relational state⁶ and collaborative, networked government⁷ proposed by contemporary public sector thinkers. These also reflect the new approaches needed in order for governments to navigate the realities of today's increasingly uncertain and complex environment, in which national outcomes are beyond the control of any one public agency, or even the Government, alone. The success of society will come to depend not on traditional, vertical hierarchies alone, but on a complex web of interdependencies between flexible, connected, collaborative nodes, both within the public sector and across the different sectors in society. Describing

this shift, Mulgan envisions government becoming the hub of a series of connections in society "which are organised in ways that create trust, legitimacy, and public value." Relationships become the core.

Reflecting this paradigm shift in governance, Head of Civil Service Peter Ong made the point in *The Straits Times* that "No one has the monopoly on ideas and the public service may not always have the answer, or be the answer. We are constantly on the lookout for opportunities to crowdsource, consult and co-create — both within the service and with Singaporeans — as we shape our future together ... Beyond hard structural changes, we must internalise

systems thinking and collaboration as part of our shared culture so that it will be second nature for all of us to work across agency boundaries and tackle issues of priority. We will then be able to tap the wisdom of crowds as well as innovate and adapt as we work at delivering higher public value.”⁸

The success of the SG50 celebrations would not have been possible if these new

capabilities, mind-sets and behaviours have not already begun to take root. Having delivered on SG50 in partnership with Singaporeans, the Public Service has gained the experience and valuable insights necessary to continue on its journey of transformation with confidence, as Singapore looks forward to the next 50 years and beyond. 

NOTES

1. <https://www.facebook.com/thefutureofus.sg/>
2. J. Malpas, “New media, cultural heritage and the sense of place: Mapping the conceptual ground,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 14(2008): 197–209.
3. E. Giaccardi and L. Palen, “The social production of heritage through cross-media interaction: Making place for place-making,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 14(2008): 281–97.
4. In particular, the SG50 logo was intentionally designed for easy customisation and use by partners and the general public, as a common branding for the Golden Jubilee Celebrations.
5. Geoff Mulgan, “The Rise of the Relational State” (paper presented at the NS6 International Roundtable, London, United Kingdom, 16–18 November 2010).
6. See note 5.
7. Jocelyne Bourgon, “The future of public service: A search for a new balance,” *The Australian Journal of Public Administration* 67(2008): 390–404; E. Klijin, “Complexity theory and public administration: What’s new?” *Public Management Review* 10(2008): 299–317.
8. Peter Ong, “Public service wants to crowdsource, consult and co-create,” *The Straits Times*, 5 November 2015, <http://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/public-service-wants-to-crowdsource-consult-and-co-create>



BOOK REVIEW

Surveying Singapore's Future

BOOK DETAILS

The Birthday Book

Edited by Malminderjit Singh
Ethos Books (2016); 252pp.; \$23.36

REVIEWED BY

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Early in 2016, fifty-one community leaders, civil servants, and private-sector innovators (one for every year of Singapore's independence) were asked to respond to the question "What is Singapore's Next Big Thing?", as a collective effort to extend the "momentum of reflection" from Singapore's jubilee anniversary in 2015. Their essays, presented by Malminderjit Singh in this volume, address topics ranging from Singapore's international law obligations to the "Maker Movement". Together, they affirm a wide — if by no means exhaustive — variety of perspectives, experiences, and personal concerns, through fifty-one self-contained, illuminating visions of Singapore's future.

Key Themes

While the editor has categorised the essays in this book around four broad foci — conceptualised as quadrants along the axes "Looking inwards / Looking outwards" and "Revisiting the old / Uncharted waters" — several cross-cutting themes transcend these divisions. Some reflect wider debates in Singaporean civil society; others hint at similar frames of thinking among the young, Anglophone "influencers" who have been invited to contribute.

An intriguing number of essays present the argument that "Singapore's next big thing is small", to quote the title of Vaughn Tan's call for more flexible, diverse personal skills. Kia Jie Hui, for one, locates the next big thing not in

any “big, orchestrated affair” under the state’s direction, but in “personal, intimate networks” of citizen concern. Likewise, Adrian Kuah begins his essay with “a pitch for ‘going small’”, arguing that Singaporeans should learn to be “comfortable even when no big thing seems to be happening”. While shying away from the more sensational implications of the prompt, these essays still discuss ideas for changing Singapore in a “big” way, in terms of the scale and depth of their application, or, in some cases, their moral significance. But their calls to reclaim the personal, immediate or familiar echo the sentiments behind recent civil society-led campaigns in heritage preservation (such as “My Kampong Gelam” and the “Tiong Bahru Flea Market”, organised by the Singapore Heritage Society and the Seng Poh Residents’ Committee respectively), as well as state-led moves (such as the HDB’s recent Good Neighbours Project¹) to kindle a supposedly lost *kampung spirit*.

Another emergent theme is trust: the importance of the state placing trust in its citizens, and vice versa. Describing it as the “oxygen of a thriving society”, Jeremy Au holds that we need to restore trust especially in “low-income and blue-collar communities”. Other authors frame trust in different terms: while Grace Sai describes the value in question as “courage” on the government’s part in allowing

citizens to take greater ownership of their causes, Farah Cheah sees it as “resilience in the face of intolerance”, built on an “embracing spirit of *gotong royong*”. These reflections on the value of trust are, however, reined in by the same authors’ arguments that a level of caution is nonetheless necessary for Singapore’s developmental momentum. Sai, for example, acknowledges that “healthy paranoia ... is the fuel for preparation and resilience”, suggesting that the country should, on balance, still tread carefully. For many of the contributors, perhaps, societal trust remains primarily a state-led, top-down quality.

Further ideas that recur throughout the book include scientific innovation, community activism, and national identity: natural themes for a technologically literate, socially engaged and cosmopolitan corps of young civic leaders. One almost wishes for a more diverse or daring range of causes (despite the public reverberations of the past year, no-one has written about the death penalty, LGBT rights, or political succession, for instance), but perhaps it is the broad similarities running through the book that render some of the contributors’ more out-of-the-box suggestions, such as on space travel, night markets and the possibility of a regional dialect (“SEAnglish”, anyone?) doubly refreshing.

Striking a Balance

The essays collected in *The Birthday Book* vary in terms of persuasion and persuasiveness. Less convincing pieces speak generally of “making new” as a virtue in its own right, at best skimming over specific or practical applications. For example, Philbert Gomez’s call for Singapore to “extend [its] tried-and-tested model of innovation” not only advocates a general “constellation of different new things”, but explicitly presents innovation as something Singapore *already does*, leaving the reader to wonder what exactly is new here. Elsewhere in the collection, Kwok Jia Chuan’s call for “A Singapore in Permanent Beta” falters on a similar note: the author’s insistence on maintaining a spirit of constant adaptation, without focusing on an area where this is not already the case, falls flat between essays which apply this argument to Singaporeans’ social networks and public uses of technology respectively.

Another virtue of the collection’s more persuasive essays is their willingness to balance opposed ideals.

However, its more successful essays are not only able to envision specific (and hence relatable) futures, but do so in sectors which escape the public eye, such as high-tech agriculture and impact investing. Two in this vein are Sheryl Foo’s proposal for using Augmented

Reality to address shifting national identities, and Natalya Twohill’s advocacy for locally-grown produce as a nexus of cultural pride and economic opportunity; both sketch convincing solutions without making their newness a distracting point of interest. More ambitious pieces, such as Aaron Maniam’s argument for reconceptualising resources as “generative” rather than “scarce”, seek to reinvent specific concepts rather than issues, but are equally able to flesh out what this means for the future, both positively and negatively. “Generative” resources such as “data, networks, and relationships” — all of which appreciate rather than deteriorate with use — will encourage more public participation because we all have something to add to them, but also tend to leave an interpretation gap as our analytical capacities struggle to keep pace with the potential represented by our networks (Aaron Maniam shares fresh insights on governing generative resources on page 68).

Another virtue of the collection’s more persuasive essays is their willingness to balance opposed ideals. Grace Chua’s perceptive essay advocating a more flexible approach towards immigration weighs well-trodden ideals of economic growth and regional security against the demographic potential and engagement value of hyphenated citizenship. The volume often reaches for editorial balance by pairing complementary essays: for instance, Fang Eu-Lin’s call for a stronger sense of corporate

responsibility in the private sector comes after, and responds to, Daniel Lim Yew Mao's call for entrepreneurship in the public service — with both seeking a compromise between market practices and communitarian ideals. This dialogue is an important part of catalysing connections among the book's contributors, in line with the project's goal of laying the foundations for a broad "movement" that "thinks critically about Singapore's next chapters".

Beyond the Singapore Story

Since it is the future of a *national* community (replete with established symbols and narratives) that is under consideration, many essays pay homage to practised tropes of Singapore's nation-building narrative: the "pioneer generation", for example, is lauded as "a communal mix of migrants" (Farah Cheah) that "inherited limited resources" (Daniel Lim), and triumphed "despite the odds" (Fang Eu-Lin). Contributors drawing on more conventional accounts of Singapore's success tend to envision state-led, or at least state-guided, futures. Cassandra Pee, who begins by quoting Lee Kuan Yew's dream of a

"great metropolis", calls for a 'resilient government in partnership with resilient people', while Roger Liew, citing our past use of technology to address "perennial concerns over national sovereignty ... and economic sustainability", argues that the state should step forward to support scientific innovation.

A significant number, however, are more willing to re-think aspects of the Singapore Story, consequently yielding more inclusive, ground-up visions of the future. Some, like Ervin Yeo, present a candid assessment of specific decisions made by the "pioneer generation", pointing out for example that the choice to prioritise home ownership may have led to undue inflexibility for today's young Singaporeans. Changing realities demand changing responses, he argues, and Singapore cannot remain closed to "inflows of people and ideas from elsewhere". Others, like Eugene K B Tan, question the continuing relevance of an increasingly dated narrative — the Singapore Story, he states, "has little resonance for many Singaporeans, especially millennials". A third, and perhaps most articulate group, revisit some core assertions of

Contributors drawing on more conventional accounts of Singapore's success tend to envision state-led, or at least state-guided, futures. A significant number, however, are more willing to re-think aspects of the Singapore Story, yielding more inclusive, ground-up visions.

national history. “No one doubts the validity of the Singapore proposition”, Tong Yee writes, but:

“The suggestion that David must continue to beat Goliath, every other day of his life, is a narrative that quickly moves beyond the joy of a miracle, into either a sure act of faith or the creeping doubt that we may be living an exhausting delusion.”

Instead, he goes on to argue, Singaporeans should expand their individual capacities to give, but also invest in self-care and emotional health so as to avoid fatigue.

The facet of the Singapore Story which attracts greatest criticism in this volume is that of race. Authors such as Mohamad Saiful Md Anuar challenge the ways in which “multiculturalism in Singapore has always been paired with nationalistic pride”, arguing that this has birthed a “subtle xenophobia against foreign nationalities”. On a similar note, Saleemah Ismail highlights the insufficiency of approaches like “integration” and “tolerance” in dealing with divides of class and religion, and advocates more activist efforts at inclusion. Others point out that race has *always* been a problematic part of the question of a Singaporean identity. In a particularly powerful piece, Vernie Oliveira shows how the term “Singaporean” has expanded beyond a label attached

to class and whiteness — and must once again embrace various “liminal sources” of identity. These authors join the emerging ranks of public thinkers for whom discussions of race are no longer taboo. Space is being claimed to examine, in sober and informed terms, what have conventionally been seen as “out-of-bounds” issues.

Reconsidering a received narrative about the past, as these authors have done, can only help with reimagining a future that has thus far been largely the province of planners and politicians. As Thia Shan Zhi muses in his essay, maybe Singapore’s next big thing lies “in showing all the different versions of our story and how ... they remain inextricably linked to who we are as a people”. But what do the discussions in this book mean for those among us who *are* planners and public leaders? *The Birthday Book* presents policymakers with two challenges. First, to take the sentiments and suggestions offered in good faith, as the pulse of an emerging generation of community leaders who (if they are not already) will soon be the key interlocutors for state policy directed at Singapore’s creative, manufacturing, technological, and social sectors. Even if the dreams here are not turned directly into policy, they must be seen as opportunities for engagement on the issues raised by the author to begin. Secondly, and more broadly, as accelerating news

The onus is on the public sector to take a leaf from those in the community who are already imagining beyond the next press conference or by-election, and develop flexible futures that will withstand and encompass short-term change.

cycles and the pressures of social media increasingly define political engagement in Singapore, the onus is on the public sector to take a leaf from those in the community who are already imagining beyond the next press conference or by-election, and develop flexible futures that will withstand and encompass short-term change.

One of the most life-changing aspects of growing up must be learning the truth about oneself: self-reflexivity and circumspection are crucial marks of maturity for individuals and communities alike. Amidst the fireworks and speeches, any birthday marked by the gift of an ambitious, truth-telling book like this one is certainly worth celebrating. ✧

NOTE

1. www.hdb.gov.sg/cs/infoweb/goodneighboursproject



Putting the Public Back in Public Service

In this edition of the ETHOS Roundtable, participants of the 9th Leaders in Governance Programme discuss the challenges of technology, public trust, and the need to nurture strong ties between government and citizens.

The ETHOS Roundtable was conducted by ETHOS Editor-in-Chief Alvin Pang in September 2016 with a group of participants in the 9th Leaders in Governance Programme (LGP). Organised annually by the Civil Service College, the LGP draws from Singapore's development experience to offer practical insights into the fundamentals of good governance and effective policy implementation for sustainable economic development and social cohesion. Over the seven-day programme, participants interact with senior government officials and thought leaders, and visit key government agencies to understand their operating philosophies and values.

PARTICIPANTS

Hon Christine //Hoebes, Deputy Minister, Office of the Prime Minister, Namibia

Mr Aung Naing Oo, Director General, Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development, Myanmar

Ms Shazainah Shariffuddin, Permanent Secretary (International), Prime Minister's Office, Brunei Darussalam

On technology as challenge and opportunity

Hoebes: In our context, I see the main challenges as technological advancement and skills development. Technology will transform how we engage with citizens; how we think and act; how we draft or craft our policies. In the long run, technology will replace bureaucracy. The public sector, including civil servants and the political leadership, must keep up with a rapid pace of change.

In my country, we have developed a series of interventions in this direction. We have introduced e-banking in the private sector; and in the government sector, we have a whole range of online services we call e-governance. We have digitised our national documents. We have also initiated e-recruitment: you apply online, come in for an interview, and are informed of the outcome in two to three days.

Aung Naing Oo: For a relatively small economy like Myanmar, it is a huge challenge to catch up with the development of technology: the government is always lagging behind the private sector. Nevertheless, we are looking into initiatives such as an online registry for companies, mobile banking and so on. One of our key hurdles is financing for these developments. Another is the skills gap: younger members of the public are quite savvy with technology, but most of the officials in government are aged 40 and above. In terms of technology and expertise, the public sector is limited by the talent available to it, which in turn is limited by what salaries we can offer. For the digitally savvy, the private sector is able to pay much better and is more attractive. Transboundary concerns, regional and ethnic differences, as well as unemployment, remain pressing issues, all of which make demands on scarce government resources.

In the long run, technology will replace bureaucracy.

Shazainah: As a small population, Brunei is also constrained by our limited human resources. For us, the challenges have to do with the global environment we find ourselves in. Globalisation and technology have brought changes to the

regional and international landscape, with significant political, economic and social impact on people's lives. At the same time, these trends have also led to significant increases in opportunity, exposure, and people's expectations are changing. Of course, governments everywhere have to accommodate and adapt to these changes. The public sector has to ensure that people are continually trained and updated to keep pace with the appropriate skills they will need. It comes down to education.

On rallying the people to address national priorities

Aung Naing Oo: If we look at our domestic concerns, the number one issue is that most of the citizens in the country don't know what the government's vision is. Therefore, consultation and education will indeed be important. Whatever the government wants to do, it should consult and listen to the public first, and also try to explain what it plans to do in future, as well as what the costs and benefits are. Many of the problems in the past have to do with an inability to get the vision out to the public in a way they can understand, or to convince the public on what we plan to do.

Shazainah: It is a question of reaching out to people. But how do you reach out? You need to get a real sense of people's concerns; where they are coming from.

There is very often a gap between the people in public service and the people in a community: between the governors and the governed. So you have to build bridges, and make sure these connections are strong, so you can understand the root causes of people's concerns and the best way to address them as well as you can.

When you send a middleman, you do not know if the message gets transmitted the way you would like. There is no running away from the human touch.

Hoebes: You have to rally people around a common purpose, a common vision. In Namibia, we have a national government but also sub-national, regional and local government authorities, all interlinked. When a new policy comes out, we make sure that everybody is informed. Fortunately, with a very small population of 2.3 million, we have channels through which information can be transmitted from person to person. I've seen our Minister of Education, going around the country, having public meetings and town hall meetings to explain the new policy. We do this consistently. When we introduced our New Equitable

Economic Empowerment Framework, there was public resistance, so we went back to the people, down to individuals at village level. It took our officials at least three months to contact everyone and explain in detail what the new framework means, seeking buy-in. Of course, resistance remained, but there was very much more support after that.

This sort of nationwide consultation is a new approach. In the past, we would gather senior officials and councilors and get them to spread the message. But when you send a middleman, you do not know if the message gets transmitted the way you would like. The middlemen may not all understand the message fully, or may not feel an obligation to deliver it in a way that is consistent with the message. There may be conflicts of interest and so on. So now we do it ourselves directly. There is no running away from the human touch.

On the value of public trust

Shazainah: Trust is obviously important: because you need to get the public on board and have their support for the policies you are going to introduce and implement. And if you find that things are not going the way they are supposed to go, the public sector must respond and adjust in a timely matter. At the same time, it's also about striking a balance.

Hoebes: There's an interesting relationship between trust and competence.

In 2014, our president won the elections with 87% of the vote; the ruling party received 82% of the vote. These are huge margins, representing a great amount of trust that citizens have placed in both the president and the party. When the president was sworn in, he had to put together his cabinet. We have a party list system, so there were those on the list we were sure would have an office appointment. But he asked for their CVs. So potential office-holders had to submit their credentials and based on their abilities and experiences were appointed to specific portfolios in which they had expertise. Why? Because our party had been given an extraordinary public mandate, we were also expected to deliver extraordinary performance. We had to deliver. Every day, we are looking to better the lives of our people. If you are given this level of trust, you have to be competent to live up to it.

Once you lose the public's trust, it is hard for you to act even when you're doing to do what's right.

Aung Naing Oo: For me, trust is the most important element in government. In the late 1980s, there were strikes across my country: there very little trust in the socialist government, because socialism led to poverty, and there was a gap between the leadership and the general

public, leading to great dissatisfaction. After the military coup in 1988, we had 23 years under a military regime. Despite the military government's attempts to further the development of the country, corruption and nepotism meant that they too lost the people's trust. By the time President Thein Sein's administration took office, the people had formed the assumption — because he was also a general — that he was not looking out for the people, even though he was a forward-looking leader who did many good things for the country. The government's image had already been damaged by past experiences, so the opposition won an electoral landslide in 2011. Once you lose the public's trust, it is hard for you to act even when you're going to do what's right.

On nurturing the citizens of tomorrow

Hoebes: One advantage we have, not just in Namibia but also in Africa, is that we have a youthful population, unlike many parts of the world which are aging. This is a resource that should be harnessed. This means giving them education and training, bringing them on board with current realities, current threats and opportunities. The youth of today have a very different values system from what we grew up with. As the previous generation, it is really up to us to instil in them the values we stand for, and which will see them into the future. We have launched a nationhood

campaign called 'My Namibia My Pride' to do just that: connect young people with their language, culture, roots and values. It is something that we have to work consciously at.

Aung Naing Oo: We do have a lot of initiatives, not just in terms of a comprehensive education system but also non-academic activities. The younger generation in Myanmar spends a lot of time playing video games, for example. But what we are trying to do is to attract them to join grassroots programs, visit museums to learn our history, and take part in society. This requires a lot of resources and effort, as well as close cooperation between

schools, parents, young people, and other institutions in society. It's easier said than done.

Shazainah: One basic approach is to really invest in reaching out to youth, trying to understand where they are coming from and to establish common ground with them, and at the same time managing their expectations. It will not be easy to go back to the values of the past. But the onus is on government to come up with innovative ideas to reach out to young people and to instil the values that we want to see, that society will need to progress in tomorrow's world. 🌸

The onus is on government to come up with innovative ideas to reach out to young people and to instill the values that society will need to progress in tomorrow's world.



INTERVIEW WITH JEAN-FRANÇOIS MANZONI

Committed Leadership in a Changing World

To excel, tomorrow's public leaders will have to be competent, resilient, inclusive and emotionally connected to their people.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS MANZONI

Jean-François Manzoni recently took over as President (Dean) of IMD, where he also holds the Nestlé Chaired Professorship. Professor Manzoni's research, teaching and consulting activities are focused on leadership, the development of high performance organizations and corporate governance. He spent the previous 5 years at INSEAD's Singapore campus, where he founded and directed the "Leadership Excellence through Awareness and Practice" programme for senior executives, co-directed the "International Directors Program", INSEAD's flagship programme for Board members, and co-directed the launch of a new executive development programme entitled "Leading the Business of Sustainability". Between January 2011 and September 2013 he directed the Global Leadership Centre supporting INSEAD's leadership-related coaching, teaching and research activities throughout the world. Professor Manzoni is a member of the Board of the Civil Service College.

Prof Manzoni shared these views in conversation with ETHOS Editor-in-Chief Alvin Pang and CSC Senior Researcher Sueann Soon on 17 November 2016.

A New Context Brings New Challenges

Several significant trends are fundamentally changing the way organisations around the world operate. One of these is digitisation, which has led to increasing acceleration, both of activities and expected results. In parallel, there are growing expectations of transparency, which in turn lead to more assertive and demanding customers, employees and citizens. This is all happening in an environment in which competitive conditions are tightening everywhere and resources are increasingly scarce.

Public sector agencies, like other organisations, have employees and bosses, so some of the issues they face in light of this new context will be similar to those in the private sector. But they are also unique in several important ways.

First, the public sector has historically been a monopoly, in terms of being a supplier of certain types of services. However, this monopoly is being increasingly challenged: many such activities have been privatised, and non-state players are starting to offer alternative ways to deliver some services.

The presence of alternative providers means that there is now growing competition for some of the services the public sector have traditionally provided, which contributes to the greater assertiveness of citizens, who in the past might have been likely to be more grateful and compliant even if they were not completely satisfied with public services delivered.

If you measure everything against very intense, short-term targets, you risk crowding out breakthroughs that require more time, investment and perhaps even a temporary drop in performance.

Second, it is never easy to measure the performance of an organisation, even for those that have a profit motive. Performance measurement is particularly challenging for the civil service, because the outcomes are so varied and can involve significant trade-offs. If performance cannot be measured accurately, it becomes difficult to assess if you have allocated enough of the right resources in the right way for the proper functioning of the organisation towards its mission. The education system is an example. How do you measure performance? There are standardised tests, or the number of people you can place in university and so on. We can measure short-term academic success, but how do we measure

students' willingness and ability to be happy and productive citizens throughout their lives, especially in a fast changing world? And if we can't measure success accurately, it's hard to assess the extent to which we should re-allocate resources between groups or types of students.

Third, the Singapore Public Service has become particularly effective and efficient, in large part through a relentless search for incremental improvement within organisational boundaries: an agency or ministry working actively and continually at improving its performance. I think this presents the Public Service with two challenges. First, the relentless pursuit of incremental gains often ends up reducing one's ability to produce breakthroughs. When you are working very hard for a two percent improvement every year, you are not spending as much time asking how you might be able to improve by twenty percent. There is a point at which, if you measure everything against very intense, short-term targets, you risk crowding out breakthroughs that require more time, investment and perhaps even a temporary drop in performance.

In addition, when you work so intensely within institutional entities, you do not necessarily foster as much cooperation across agencies, which is typically needed to provide an effective and sustainable solution to the big problems the Public Service is now trying to tackle. For instance, if the long-term goal is to get

people out of poverty, several organisations must collaborate to create sustainable solutions. Some will be more focused on alleviating symptoms, others will focus on short-term and longer term enablers. But unless these agencies work together effectively in service of the overall goal, the whole will be less than the sum of the parts. Putting the two aspects together, i.e. the pursuit of improvements that are incremental and within organisational boundaries, may be an area where the public sector is reaching the limits of a model that has served it very well in the past.

We live in a world where it really pays to involve people in finding answers that they themselves are going to be committed to.

Last but not least, we live in a world where it really pays to involve people in finding answers that they themselves are going to be committed to. Leaders should be able to specify desired outcomes, especially when there is some potential ambiguity or trade-offs between these outcomes. Leaders will then need to be able to create processes which the various stakeholders can engage with to arrive at solutions that they are able and willing to help implement quickly. This is less of the traditional top-down

approach and more of a model that requires a greater degree of comfort with uncertainty and lack of complete control on the part of leaders.

Leaders need to be hard of hearing, but not deaf.

Four Traits of Effective Leadership

As always, success in this new context will require leaders to display a wide range of behaviours. But I would like to highlight four dimensions that will be particularly important.

First is a leadership that models the attitudes we want our staff to display towards our customers and citizens. In settings where care matters: hospitals and schools, for example, we know that the way leaders treat staff translates into the way staff treat their patients or students. Leaders must model the attitude they want employees to demonstrate. In particular, they will need to be participative *and* productively assertive at the same time. The former is important because we live in a world where it is increasingly difficult to tell people what you want them to do all the time: people want to be involved and engaged, and leaders have to make room for that. At the same time, bosses need to learn (and to model for their staff) how to be assertive in a way that *also* allows others to be assertive. Leaders need to listen, *and* they also need to

decide: on occasion, there will be no consensus, or the consensus will be wrong. So leaders will have to manage their openness towards feedback and noise: listen when necessary, but also act on their own judgement. One way of saying this is leaders need to be hard of hearing, but not deaf.

Second, leadership needs to be honest and fair, and to be *perceived as* honest and fair. In a world where there is growing loss of public confidence in institutions and in the elite — whether business or political — this dimension is becoming exceedingly important. We have seen around the world that such loss of confidence can lead to immense public anger and frustration. On the other hand, the evidence is clear that when we approach people in ways that are perceived to be fair, they are more willing to go along with negative outcomes. “Patients” are more willing to accept pain when they understand *why* the course of action is the least bad solution and when they trust the “doctor”: there is a plan, and at an individual level there is credibility and trust that after the pain things will improve over time.

Third, leadership will need to be cooperative and focus on the big picture. In the public sector, that means focusing on your own unit *as well as* on the bigger picture, and the increasing need for cooperation with other units for the greater good.

Fourth, leaders will have to be resilient. We live in a tough world, where stuff happens all the time, and not necessarily in the way we would like. Leaders have to be able to take hits all day and still remain productive and positively oriented. A senior corporate board member I interviewed recently says that he actively looks for people who have failed. Those who haven’t failed, he thinks, are either deluding themselves or haven’t tried anything significant. Instead, he wants to see how people have managed their failures and recovered from them, what they’ve learnt from the experience. The idea is not to look for leaders that are bullet-proof; it is to identify those who have taken bullets and have been able to recover well and learn from their experience.

The evidence is clear that when we approach people in ways that are perceived to be fair, they are more willing to go along with negative outcomes.

Developing Leaders for the Future

It is *not* natural for human beings to be involving, cooperative, patient, nurturing *and* assertive *and* comfortable with uncertainty or failure *and*.... All of us

can be some of these things. In fact, most of us can be all of these things, but at different times! We're simply not designed to be all of these simultaneously. How then do we cultivate a kind of leadership which approaches things differently?

At the risk of stating the obvious, I think the first lever is to have good role models, and these have obviously got to start at the top. For these good examples to be found at the top, they need to be selected, and then developed and nurtured to embody these skills.

How do we do this? One, we need to be very articulate about what we want and specify the characteristics we are looking for. We then need to recruit, promote and offer incentives according to these traits. We will continue to need smart, technically capable people who are great policymakers. But we probably also need more individuals who in addition to being good policy makers are also outstanding leaders, who can enable and magnify the performance of hundreds of people within and around their agency.

Beyond recruitment and promotion, we can also *help leaders* to develop new capabilities over time. Some will wonder whether this is really possible. Can leaders really learn to produce behaviours that do not come “naturally” to them? We have all seen competent and well intentioned individuals attend leadership development programmes

and return to work full of resolve, e.g., to delegate or listen more. But somehow, after a few weeks this resolve tends to wane and nature seems to regain the upper hand...

The idea is not to look for leaders that are bullet-proof; it is to identify those who have taken bullets and have been able to recover well and learn from their experience.

Research on this subject is increasingly clear: When human beings work hard and intelligently enough at it for long enough, they *can* develop new capabilities — they can learn to produce behaviours that do not come to them “naturally”. That is what Warren Bennis concluded toward the end of an illustrious career devoted to studying and developing leaders: “The truth”, he said, “is that major capacities and competencies of leadership can be learned, and we are all educable, at least if the basic desire to learn is there (...). Furthermore (...), nurture is far more important than nature in determining who becomes a successful leader.”¹

Displaying a new behavioural response feels awkward at first, but with practice we become increasingly effective (i.e., we successfully produce the desired behaviour at a high level of quality) and efficient at it (i.e., displaying the desired behaviour

requires a decreasing amount of effort). Business schools and organisations like the Civil Service College have a major role to play in this development process.

What Tomorrow's Leaders Should Do Today

My most important piece of advice for leaders who want to succeed today and tomorrow? Take your continuous professional and personal development very seriously! While you may start out with a good education, intelligence and other credentials, we live in a world of permanent and rapid change in which new challenges are emerging every day. More than ever, a leader's ability to continue to develop new competencies over time is going to be the best predictor of their future success. Beyond learning new content, this also means learning new capabilities and behaviours. Ultimately, leaders impact the world less through what they *know* than through what they *do* and the *way* they do it.

Ultimately, leaders impact the world less through what they know than through what they do and the way they do it.

In particular, you might want to invest time and energy to developing your ability to help people to do what they don't want to do in order to achieve the goals they do want to achieve. As US political commentator George Will put

it, "Leadership is, among other things, the ability to inflict pain and get away with it — short-term pain for long-term gain." There can hardly be any progress without some delayed gratification. That is true at the individual, team, organisational and even country level. So your ability to help people to "do the right thing even when — in fact, especially when — it's unpleasant" will be a very important asset for you as a leader.

Three possible avenues for you in this quest: First, honestly examine your motives as a leader. Are you mainly focused on helping your organisation to achieve its goals and your employees to succeed and grow? Or are you very focused on ensuring your own success and career progression? Some degree of personal ambition is not unreasonable and can in fact be very healthy, but research also shows that other things equal, individuals and organisations tend to respond better to leaders who are devoted to a greater purpose than themselves. People are more likely to accept pain from you if they know that your main motivation is their welfare and success than if they feel they are pawns on your career's chessboard.

They are also more likely to accept pain from you if they feel that you understand the pain you are causing — if they feel you are intellectually and emotionally connected to them. Some degree of empathy will be helpful, in this respect.

By the way, empathy can be also be a bit of a double-edged sword, as excessive empathy can lead to bad public policy. Compassion, which combines feeling sympathy for the plight of others and a desire to help, is a more promising avenue for leaders.²

More generally, you will have to work at finding the right level of emotional connection/distance at any point in time. While some degree of distance can undoubtedly help leadership effectiveness (including because intense emotions can hamper the quality of decision making), too many leaders end up distancing themselves excessively from their own and others' emotions. In the same way that you cannot be engaging if you're not engaged, you must be connected to your own emotions in order to be able to connect to others' emotions.

Last but not least, learn to involve and enrol others into the process of

finding solutions to problems they want to solve. French poet Antoine de Saint-Exupéry once said: "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea."³ Agreeing on the outcome we want to create is a powerful step to involving the troops into identifying the way this goal can be reached. Involvement leads to commitment, which leads to superior effort and performance.

These four dimensions are relatively easy to write about and very easy to read. They are much harder for leaders to enact every day, especially when under pressure caused by performance goals, time and resource constraints. For most of us, it will be the journey of a lifetime. ✧

NOTES

1. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (New York: Harper and Row, 1985).
2. For more on the difference between empathy and compassion, see the excellent work done at the Max Planck Institute by Tania Singer and her team (e.g. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-hKS4rucTY>) or a good article at <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/compassion/definition>
3. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Wisdom of the Sands (Citadelle)*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

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