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International Perspectives on the Future of Public Service

Public administration is not like physics (Meier, 2005). If I drop a ball in Abu Dhabi or Zagreb it will fall just the same; but take an administrative practice from one country and apply it in another, and you may end up creating something entirely different. Administrative practices are both path dependent within a country's traditions, and culturally dependent upon their societal context. This might lead some people to reject lessons from other countries on the grounds that they don't apply to New Zealand. Tony Bovaird and Elke Löffler noted the tendency of public administration to reject lessons from other jurisdictions because of the dissimilarity of their situations: 'nothing new works and, if it works somewhere else, it must be because they're weird' (Bovaird and Elke Löffler, 2005, p.2).

And yet, administrative contexts are not *entirely* different. Governments configure into smaller administrative units (departments and agencies), and these provide policy advice, administer regulation, and deliver services to individuals, families, communities and businesses. They face challenges that are categorically similar, even if the details vary – being responsive and implementing the government's priorities while retaining political neutrality, prioritising with scarce resources, coordinating across diverse functions, acting with consistency and impartiality while being compassionate to the needs of individuals. Every jurisdiction could, in theory, create all their administrative practices wholly *de nouveau*, but in practice we can and should learn from the experiences of others (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000). Therefore, one challenge for the public service is, 'how can we learn from the experiences of others, when their contexts are dissimilar?' As Bob Behn wrote, 'No two organisational circumstances are identical. Thus, all learning must come from dissimilar situations, which requires the ability to look beyond the specifics of a situation to understand the underlying principles' (Behn, 2006, p.2).

In creating this special issue, we solicited new ideas and concepts from international authors, with the hope that these contributions would help inform New Zealand practice. Contributions were sought on the theme 'international perspectives on the future of public service'. We were overwhelmed by the response and offer a heartfelt thanks to everyone who put pen to paper because they wanted to contribute to New Zealand public service practice. These authors refer to studies from their own jurisdictions where the context was different from ours. The questions they ask are different from the questions we would ask. But we hope that the contribution they make may offer fresh perspectives that inform New Zealand public administration practice.

We begin the special issue with two articles that explore how our future is influenced by our relationship with the past. One rationale for a permanent, politically neutral public service is that it can act as a repository for institutional memory, remembering (and hopefully learning from) the experiences of the past (Corbett et al., 2018). Alastair Stark explores institutional memory and institutional forgetting: too much forgetting means lessons are never learned; too much remembering can act as an impediment to trying things again. Guy Peters and Maximilian Nagel explore the policies that continued to be tried despite never working – 'zombie policies' – and how we can transcend these patterns.

The next two articles explore the role and context of the public service. Sheryl Lightfoot looks at policies in the context of the relationship between indigenous and colonial people, institutions and practices. Aaron Maniam looks at the metaphors we use to talk about public administration and how the choice of metaphor affects the solutions we employ: public administration has previously been described as leviathan, an iron cage, a machine, a network and a platform, but this article explores metaphors of cathedrals, bazaars and moral ecology to imagine different roles for public administration.

The next two articles explore the people of the public service workforce. Lisa Conway and colleagues reveal the experiences of indigenous Australians in participation in the public service, of culturally unsafe workplaces and being asked to carry a cultural load on top of their stated role. Fiona Buick and colleagues explore the shift from physically present office-based roles to increasingly flexible and hybridised ways of working, and the implications for how we think about the nature of work, teamwork and performance.

The final article addresses the challenge of coordinating between the many component parts of government, variously described as the 'holy grail' (Peters, 1998) and 'philosopher's stone' (Jennings and Crane, 1994) of public administration. To solve the biggest policy problems, John Bryson and colleagues contend, departments will need to be able to develop strategies at a scale that spans department boundaries.

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Alastair Stark

Institutional Amnesia in Government
how much is enough?

Abstract

The concept of institutional amnesia represents a means of describing the loss of policy-relevant knowledge across time. This loss is keenly felt in all government institutions and typically leads to a conclusion that institutional amnesia is a problem to be fixed. However, there are positives that can be associated with a lack of memory. This article explores the good and the bad of memory loss by asking 'how much amnesia is enough?' This question prompts a discussion of the nature of amnesia in government, where it is most keenly felt, what causes it and the effects it produces.

Keywords institutional amnesia, organisational memory, public policy, public sector performance, historical storytelling

The inability of policymaking agencies to recall and use past knowledge in contemporary practices represents a form of institutional amnesia. This lack of memory permeates every aspect of the policymaking process and is an inherent feature of all policymaking institutions. Indeed, one might argue that memory loss is intrinsic to all large-scale organisations, simply because of the inevitable tides of turnover and change that wash over them. These tides erode memory of the past and leave us with a feeling that we have lost something in terms of our knowledge of public policy. Consequently, we tend to view memory loss as a negative thing. It's not hard to see why. Regardless of whether we use the term amnesia or simply talk about organisational memory loss, we are still dealing with a metaphor that tells us we are missing something important. What few studies we have about institutional amnesia tend to reinforce this negativity by emphasising the many problems caused by a lack of public service memory (Pollitt, 2000, 2009; Stark, 2019). However, there are benefits to forgetfulness. When it comes to public policy, amnesia can help us move on from problematic pasts, innovate away from dysfunctional histories and develop greater levels of generalist knowledge at the systemic level. These benefits are largely ignored in the research on memory, but they beg the question that headlines this article: how much amnesia is enough? This article addresses this question through a theoretical discussion that defines institutional amnesia, explores the nature of memory and its loss, and then sets out the benefits and problems associated with institutional amnesia.

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Memory loss in the precincts of the policy process

We can begin to address the question set out above by defining the concept of institutional amnesia and exploring how it influences policymaking broadly. A simple definition from Stark and Head gives us a starting point, as they tell us that

institutional amnesia is reflected in 'the intentional or unintentional ways in which government agents and organizations or non-government agents and organizations no longer remember or record policy-relevant lessons from the past' (Stark and Head, 2019, p.1526).

This rather prosaic definition can be brought to life by looking at its constituent elements and how they apply in the various precincts of the policy process. Our first step in this regard is to understand institutional memory, which we can do through the identification of four locations in which we can find knowledge of the past (ibid.). In each location we can define what institutional memory looks like and then think about its absence, which takes us to amnesia:

- *Formal institutional storage bin*s. These are the locations which knowledge management specialists might typically focus upon. In these locations memories from the past are encoded and stored in the business-as-usual practices of the organisation: the rules, the operating procedures, the objectives, and, of course, the files, however kept (Walsh and Ungson, 1991). The converse image of amnesia we can get from this view of memory tells us that it can be evidenced in the decay or abandonment of these organisational features, and that this can lead to an inability to retrieve and use the past knowledge which created them in the first instance. Thus, as we lose organisational capacities created from the lessons of history, we create institutional amnesia.
- *Social remembering in organisational cultures.* Organisational cultures are made up of shared ideas and the individuals who talk about them. Memory resides within these stories. Among other things, people talk about the creation of the organisation they work for, the times when the organisation has faced turbulence in the form of a crisis, and other moments of monumental change in which the culture itself has adapted (Boje, 2008). These stories and the ideas within them memorialise past events but, of course, they do so in a selective way which is stylised and changed through hindsight, time and the process of forgetting (Linde, 2009). Despite these reinterpretations, narratives of the past are a crucial location for memory because they can explain and justify the reasons why the world (in policymaking terms) looks the way it does. The converse image we get from this view of memory is a world in which institutional amnesia means that we do lots of things without ever really knowing the story of why we do them (Stark and Head, 2019). Thus, as we lose the narratives of the past, we create institutional amnesia.
- *External memory 'out there'.* Backing up your computer's memory in an external storage location just makes good sense, but when it comes to policy memory, there is a tendency to think about it as something that ought to be retained in-house. Yet the policy world now contains as many external actors as it does internal ones in government. Consequently, we need to also think about external forms of memory, which can be found in different sectors and non-governmental actors. It's an open question whether non-government organisations have more memory than their government counterparts, but the implication of acknowledging their existence in terms of memory means that we need to think about amnesia in networked or systemic terms (Corbett et al., 2018). In a policy community some actors might hold certain memories while others do not, and vice versa. Thus, as the world of non-state policymaking grows and we 'outsource' memory to external sites, institutional amnesia is created within government but only if government actors cannot connect to those external locations.
- *Political framing.* The Merriam-Webster dictionary has three definitions for amnesia. The first two – a gap in one's memory or a loss of memory – are conventional, but the third tells us that amnesia is also about 'the selective overlooking or ignoring of events or acts that are not favorable or useful to one's purpose or position'. This takes us directly to the politics of memory and amnesia's role within it. Politicians frame issues in ways which promote one version of history and downplay others. This is an enduring feature of politics, with many facets (Brändström, Bynander and 't Hart, 2004). However, at the level of policy we can also observe the same efforts from those who wish to engender reform (de Holan, 2011). In both cases those who wish for change are mobilising the past in ways that allow for their preferred actions in the present, which means that a selective form of memory exists in the politics of any given day. In this process, a degree of amnesia is indispensable because a clear and coherent memory of past events cannot be manipulated easily: time and forgetting are required for the past to become malleable. Thus, as political actors exploit this malleability, institutional amnesia is created.

> Today's young climate change activists … tell us that past generations were asleep at the wheel, that we denied climate change was happening and that they (not us) are now paying the price for our lack of stewardship.

How do these dimensions of amnesia play out in the policy process? In the political beginnings of that process, we can

see institutional memory loss in many of the demands that are made about what should be on the agenda of government. Today's young climate change activists, for example, frame their policy demands through indictments of previous generations and past decisions. Their narratives tell us that past generations were asleep at the wheel, that we denied climate change was happening and that they (not us) are now paying the price for our lack of stewardship. These efforts rewrite history in a manner that leads to 'a forgetting' of the fact that those previous generations fought (and won and lost) in the same battle that they now believe they own exclusively. This framing is important for their momentum as they draw energy for their activism from it.

Perhaps, you might think, memory is better served in the political organisations which subsequently decide upon policy that has made it onto the agenda. Our legislatures and executives are, after all, some of our longest surviving institutions. However, while visitors continue to flock to the guided tours and souvenir shops that teach the history of a parliament, those who serve inside them come and go with such regularity that these institutions can never obtain a working institutional memory. This amnesia, when combined with the overriding political impulse to propose reform and decide on change, regularly leads to a recycling of old ideas as the next big thing (Pollitt, 2000). The list of ideas that have come, gone and returned again is as long as your own age and memory allow for: if you are old, you will have seen many New Public Management ideas circling continuously; slightly younger and you will have observed how the need for evidence-based policy or joined-up government have come and gone in various ways over the years; and (if you are very young) behavioural economics might seem very here and now, but not if you were around the first time we discussed 'bounded rationality'. All of these aspects of policy and public management have been done before, all have been partially forgotten and partially remembered and then all have been repackaged and resold politically in certain respects.

In the bureaucratic milieu of the policy process we see similar dynamics, but (perhaps) greater awareness of them. Long-serving public servants see their colleagues coming and going because of the patterns of turnover and structural change that define their organisational homes. And they know that these patterns will affect the ability of their organisations to remember the decisions that explain why policies and business-as-usual look the way they do. Alongside the loss of what researchers call the 'why' rationale (why do we do this? Why do we not do that?) are a series of other claims about the loss of memory in our public agencies. Among other things, institutional amnesia is said to render policy learning gains meaningless because we cannot recall them when the next issue strikes (Stark, 2019). Memory loss is also said to lead to a lack of commitment to long-term reform as we cannot remember why or who had the will to change in the first instance or what the point of it all was (ibid). And amnesia can also be registered in declines in coordination and connectivity in government as memory of who does what and why shifts (ibid.).

... the two primary benefits that can come with amnesia: innovation via freedom from historical decisions and processes ..., and an enlargement of inter-organisational knowledge ....

However, we have already stated that institutional amnesia can also be positive. Accepting that amnesia can be a good thing begins with an acceptance that change can also be healthy and productive. For the individual public servant this can be felt most easily in the benefits that come with a change in post. If you have spent a considerable period of time in your previous role, the organisation that you worked in is likely to keenly feel the loss of the memory you have taken with you. Potentially, your replacement (assuming your post has been replaced, of course) will struggle the most to work out why the world you know so well looks the way it does and how they can navigate through it effectively. However, your new organisation will certainly benefit from your past and your experience, and, again potentially, your replacement might also enjoy a new position in which they are not bound by the past and are able to do things differently and (perhaps) more creatively. These are the two primary benefits that can come with amnesia: innovation via freedom from historical decisions and processes (de Holan, 2011), and an enlargement of inter-organisational knowledge (Corbett et al., 2018). In relation to both, the benefits are not merely situated at the level of the individual. The more secondments and movement we have across a public service, the more we develop a general level of systemic knowledge. The more we free ourselves from the institutional straightjackets of the past, the greater the innovations might be at an organisational or even systemic level.

These positives and negatives animate an ongoing debate among researchers about memory loss in government. Some have come to the study of organisational memory with negative baggage from their specialist research areas. Studies of lesson-learning after crises and disasters, for example, show how post-crisis lessons are formulated, accepted, and very often implemented, but by the time the next big crisis arrives, they have been forgotten (Stark, 2019). The cyclical patterns that repeat the failures of past crises therefore urge them to vilify amnesia. However, others push back against this cynicism with evidence that memory is strong in certain policy areas because of its deep ingraining in organisational cultures and discourse (Corbett et al., 2018). Both views have merit, and of course they beget a better

question than whether institutional amnesia is good or bad, which is: what level of amnesia is appropriate in a public service context? How much amnesia is enough? The spoiler alert in relation to the answer to this question is that, unfortunately, you will need to answer that for yourself in relation to your specific context. And to compound the issue, that answer will need to be qualitative, as we cannot capture an amount of memory in quantitative terms. However, what follows can guide you towards your own answer via a theoretical discussion of the positives and negatives of amnesia, the variety of types of memory loss that public sectors experience, and the differences we see in it across a variety of organisational locations.

While originally created as a means of avoiding patronage and corruption, these principles can today be applied to contemporary problems and, consequently, we can see the use of temporary secondments and the movement of public servants between posts more generally as a positive thing.

The positives and the negatives of institutional amnesia

There has been an optimistic turn in the policy sciences recently, which is characterised by studies of policy and public administration success ('t Hart and Compton, 2019) and larger calls for policy researchers to push back against negativity (Douglas et al., 2021). In recognition of this let us begin by setting out some of the positives that underscore why we should not default to a mode of negative thinking about institutional amnesia.

Innovation and strategic action

Organisational scholars, albeit ones who have focused primarily on private sector companies, have made the case that organisational forgetting is necessary when it comes to innovation. Indeed, for de Holan (2011, p.317), 'the impact of organizational forgetting can be momentous' in this regard because once it is recognised as a necessary element in organisational change, amnesia can be encouraged strategically to good effect. The goal in this regard is realised when change makers ensure that problematic pasts have been forgotten so that reform-focused futures can be pursued. This state of amnesia is reached, according to de Holan (ibid., p.318), through processes of 'unlearning' in relation to established behavioural patterns that are a problematic manifestation of the past. These manifestations reside in a variety of locations which typically hold memory in any organisation: assets, routines, structures and understandings.

This kind of amnesia is purposeful rather than accidental, and it represents a form of 'managed unlearning' (de Holan and Phillips, 2004, p.1611) which allows dysfunctional knowledge to be discarded. The momentum behind this active process, it is argued, should come via an acknowledgement that change efforts will be less effective in the absence of deliberate efforts to forget. This is because organisational forgetting ensures that elements from a problematic past do not exist simultaneously with new innovations in the present. When both exist, innovations are only adopted partially and conflict and instability are likely in a change process (ibid.). This final point is certainly reinforced in the many analyses of intransigence conducted in the policy sciences that show us how efforts at reform fail. These tell us that efforts at change continually run into resistance, which leads to partial forms of implementation and a consequential form of outcome that exists somewhere between a problematic past and a completely reformed future (Pierson, 2004; Mahoney and Thelen, 2010; Lipsky, 2010). If the organisational theorists concerned with unlearning are correct, however, some of the resistance to change that we see in these analyses could be ameliorated if (at the very least) reform leaders focused actively on unlearning and (at the very most) encouraged an active form of dismantling of historical discourses and practices to 'clear the decks' prior to the introduction of an innovation. Institutional amnesia would be the end state of this unlearning process and the beginning state for an effective reform process.

Generalist knowledge, systemic learning and avoiding stagnation

One of the most persistent myths associated with the public servant is that they are – and ought to be – generalists (Presthus, 1964; Greenaway, 2004). In its original form this view spoke of the roundly educated 'amateur' whose liberal arts degree meant that they had the training to speak to all policy concerns and work in all the major branches of government. Generations of scholars have spoken about the demise of this myth in public service systems around the world, but, of course, the principles that led to the emergence of the generalist myth were sound ones. Public servants should not operate exclusively in their own fiefdoms and they should have an awareness of the whole of government and their place within it.

While originally created as a means of avoiding patronage and corruption, these principles can today be applied to contemporary problems and, consequently, we can see the use of temporary secondments and the movement of public servants between posts more generally as

a positive thing. Thus, rather than seeing turnover and the rotation of staff as amnesia-inducing dynamics, we might instead see them as a means of enhancing the collective intelligence of a public service, which in turn might enhance coordination and collaboration at a systemic level. This view reflects a long-running focus that can be found in studies of public administration, which have reflected on what a good level of public service turnover looks like. As far back as 1936, for example, nuanced arguments were being made that suggested that high levels of staff 'churn' does not immediately equate to a dysfunctional public service. As Mosher and Kingsley (1936, p.286) stated, '[t]here is no single desirable rate of turnover for all establishments, except that it should be (a) sufficiently large to prevent stagnation and (b) sufficiently small to reflect healthy working conditions'. Abelson and Baysinger (1984) more formally proposed an inverted U-shaped relationship between turnover and organisational performance: low to moderate levels of turnover would be likely to improve performance with the injection of fresh ideas and energy and the replacement of low-performing employees, but costs would start outweighing this benefit with higher rates of turnover. More contemporary studies have also found that turnover can be beneficial in terms of improving street-level delivery of public services, such as education (Meier and Hicklin, 2007).

Overcoming trauma and catharsis

Institutional forgetting can be beneficial when it comes to overcoming collectively shared trauma (Edkins, 2003). Studies of memorialisation after conflicts, for example, tell us that societies can heal by putting violence behind them through a degree of social forgetting (Bell, 2006). In keeping with the discussion above, we can certainly see moments within the life of a public service or a specific policy domain which ought to be forgotten so that a new future can be moved towards. Public inquiries, for example, often provide a degree of catharsis around policy failures, which then allows a new policy path to be opened and the failure forgotten. Similarly, we can observe organisational restructuring or significant organisational reform in the same way: a line in the sand is drawn, a new direction is taken, and the negative emotions associated with the past can be moved away from. There are two sides to this potential benefit, however. In colonised contexts, for example, we can observe powerful opposing arguments which suggest that this is highly problematic because it can be a means of erasing memory of trauma that needs to be better recognised in the here and now (Alcof, 2007). When it comes to First Nations policymaking, for example, a form of wilful amnesia has been identified as a cause of settlers 'looking away' from the past in order to ignore the ongoing problems of colonisation in the present. This form of 'epistemic ignorance' can lead to problematic forms of policy inaction, which in turn leads to deliberate forms of 'forgetting' (Brown and Stark, 2022).

> When the memory of the crisis is strong coordination efforts make sense, but slowly, as memory evaporates, resource-consuming efforts at coordination naturally start to reduce and the next public inquiry will make the case all over again that better coordination is required.

This final point alerts us to one of the many problems caused by amnesia. We can now turn to those more fully. As discussed above, the view of amnesia as a negative state of affairs is much more prevalent in the literature, which means there is much more research which discusses the problems rather than the positives of amnesia. For the sake of brevity, three of the most important issues are focused on below. More can be found in Pollitt (2009) and Stark and Head (2019).

Policy learning issues: recycled ideas and repeated behaviour

When it comes to learning about policy, a public service needs to be able to remember what has not worked in the past. Yet when it comes to policy learning we can see institutional amnesia creating an input and an output problem. The input problem is simply expressed: we forget about the ideas that did not work in the past and then resuscitate them as new innovations, which tend to be doomed to fail. Thus, problematic ideas that have already been tested and found wanting are re-used as the genesis of new reforms. This reinventing of the wheel occurs on multiple levels. At the individual level, public servants regularly conduct analyses and evaluations of policy which have been done before. When it comes to this issue at the systemic level, any long-serving public servant can easily reel off a series of changes which they have experienced that have disregarded past failures of a similar nature. Waves of centralisation and decentralisation, for example, continue without much regard for an understanding of their effects in the past. Regardless of whether it is systemic or individual learning that is affected, the key issue is that reinventing the wheel is an inefficient way to recycle failed policy ideas.

At the outcome end of the policy learning problem is the combined problem of weak storage bins and poor storytelling. This problem can appear at the end of a successful process in which learning has taken place, a change has been implemented, but both are then forgotten. An illustrative example relates to policy coordination. If you choose any large-scale crisis or disaster in New Zealand's recent history, you will

see that one of the lessons identified was the need for better coordination. This is a ubiquitous finding of almost every post-crisis inquiry. Consequently, public agencies learn and coordinate better in the immediate aftermath of failures. But these gains are short-lived. When the memory of the crisis is strong coordination efforts make sense, but slowly, as memory evaporates, resource-consuming efforts at coordination naturally start to reduce and the next public inquiry will make the case all over again that better coordination is required. This represents another seemingly inevitable process of recycling caused by amnesia.

Long-term reform failure

When long-term reform demands sustained expenditure commitments over time, reform champions are required. The most powerful of these are, of course, found in executives. When ministers act as champions for reform the forces of inertia can be reduced, and change can occur, but it is not difficult to see why momentum from the minister's office cannot always be sustained. Cabinet reshuffles, leadership changes, electoral dynamics linked to the whims of the public, and, of course, the modern media cycle all mean that ministers have a very low capacity when it comes to memory. They are constantly moving and do not have the time or inclination to look backwards. This can blight a long-term reform journey and leave stakeholders frustrated. External stakeholders, for example, often lament the time and resources that they feed into the minister's office in order to help them learn their portfolio only for the reset button to be hit through a reshuffle and the process to begin all over again (Stark, 2019). Ministers themselves also feel frustrated by the lack of continuity (Stark and Head, 2019), and it is interesting to reflect on the idea of ministerial memory in that regard. Resources certainly exist to ensure continuity of government during moments of ministerial change, but these tend to be procedural in nature and do not necessarily allow ministers to understand policy in a substantive way. Knowledge management, it often seems, is something for the public official but not necessarily the minister. Yet if long-term policies are to be championed across time, then these fast-moving hyper-amnesiacs will need much more support.

The loss of craft as a capacity

A strong public service needs technical excellence and public administrators who have 'craft' skills (Rhodes, 2016). These skills often relate to the intangible and tacit skill set required to do the job: political nous, judgement, diplomacy, relationship building and stewardship, among other things. However, viewing craft skills as a capacity means acknowledging how experience builds a public servant's identity, their ethical compass, and the variety of relational skills required to navigate successfully in the public sector world. Mastery of these skills requires time, as a great deal of craft knowledge is not written down but rather learned on the job. As Goodsell noted, 'to be taught, the subtleties of administration require direct demonstration; to be learned they require first-hand experience' (Goodsell, 1992, p.249).

However, the forces of institutional amnesia can undermine the development of craft skills in at least two ways. First, as the notion of the permanent public sector career is forgotten, the identity of the public servant changes, moving from something long-term to something shorter-term. This shift in identity can undermine the commitment to long-term craft skill building that comes with a co-commitment to career and a vocation. Second, when public services are volatile in terms of institutional change – meaning lots of turnover and lots of structural reform – it can become difficult to develop skills across the longer term because the accrual of experience often requires stability. There is, therefore, a link between losses in memory and losses in craft capacity.

Conclusion

How much amnesia is enough? We certainly want enough memory loss to encourage necessary breaks from problematic pasts. When bad policy processes and outcomes prove to be intransigent, they ought to be changed and then quickly forgotten about as bad behaviours that we wish to move away from. However, we also need enough memory to remember those intransigent failures as cautionary stories for the future so that the bad wheel is not reinvented in a new guise. We need to have public services with mobile staff who can develop their skills and knowledge in inter-organisational ways, and we need to accept that the creation of good generalist knowledge in this way comes with some institutional amnesia. However, this mobility should not mean the loss of those crucial 'why' rationales that explain everyday practices and business-as-usual processes. Nor should it undermine the development of the craft of the public servant because that craft facilitates the long-term stewardship of large-scale policy programmes. Indeed, the concept of stewardship is crucial here and worth reflecting on. Rather than asking how much amnesia is enough today, that concept encourages us to ask instead: what state will our public services and public policies be in tomorrow when the next generation inherits them? This is a much better question because it reminds us that we curate our history and fight to maintain our memory in order to serve the future.

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B. Guy Peters and Maximilian L. Nagel

Zombie Ideas: policy pendulum and the challenge of effective policymaking

Abstract

Ideas are important as a foundation for public policy, but they can also become 'zombie ideas' which survive even though they have been proven to be ineffective. Both the political right and the political left have their own zombie ideas, and when there is a change in government old ideas may return. This article presents the concept of zombie ideas and discusses its relevance for policy in New Zealand.

Keywords policy ideas, zombie ideas, policy pendulum, path dependence, majoritarian politics

When most people think about public policy, they think of laws, or of the money being spent on policies, or perhaps of the organisations responsible for delivering the policy. Those factors are important, but also, behind each policy there is an idea (Béland, 2009). Those ideas may be very general, such as a commitment to social justice, or they may be more specific, but public policies are manifestations of ideas about what government should do.

Ideas can rarely be a sufficient cause for creating a policy, or for terminating an existing policy. Rather, they require individuals and groups that will advocate for the idea and act as policy entrepreneurs to attempt to have the idea put into effect. Ideas also represent the interests of groups in society – labour unions, indigenous populations, the wealthy – and those political interests utilise ideas to justify the policies that would give them what they want from government action.

We therefore can think of the politics of public policy as being a clash of ideas. Some important models of policymaking, such as the advocacy coalition framework (Sabatier and Weible, 2007), are based on coalitions of actors with different ideas vying to control some domain of policy. Policy entrepreneurship as a source of policies and policy change assumes that those entrepreneurs have ideas, and especially innovative ideas, that will improve the quality of the services being delivered to citizens.

Sometimes, however, policy ideas can be too successful, and can survive long after their utility has passed. Not only do ideas survive in organisations and political groups, but they also continue to be adopted after they have failed, and perhaps failed many times. We call these 'zombie ideas' (Peters and Nagel, 2020) – ideas that will not die. We argue that these are more

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prevalent in policy than is sometimes recognised, and that they represent a major challenge to good policymaking.

The concept of zombie ideas

When Liz Truss unveiled her political agenda as UK prime minister in September 2022, many observers probably felt transported back in time. In quasi-*Back to the Future* style, Truss declared that she intended to introduce tax cuts for the rich and businesses, as this would benefit the poorer and less privileged population (Elliott, 2022). This auspicious promise for some is often cited, although there is no data to support the thesis. The policy is well known as trickle-down economics and was introduced in the US and the UK in the late 20th century. However, the policy could not keep its promise and led towards more inequality. It led to the opposite of what it was supposed to achieve. Even though Truss didn't succeed as prime minister and resigned in October 2022, one could ask why ideas that have failed in the past, like trickle-down economics, keep coming up again and keep marching around like zombies.

We call bad ideas like trickle-down economics zombie ideas. Zombie ideas are ideas that 'will not die, no matter how often they are disproved' (Peters and Nagel, 2020). Trickle-down economics is one example of a policy that keeps returning to the policy agenda and, just like a zombie, it appears to be an idea one cannot kill. Bad ideas that don't die can be found in various policy fields, organisations, and within societies, even though we live in a world of evidence-based decision and policymaking.

However, there are not only zombie ideas that continue to be adopted, even though they have been demonstrated to be ineffective. There are ghost ideas as well. Ghost ideas are ideas that have the potential to be effective, yet they haven't been adopted. These ideas are already on the agenda. They 'languish in a policymaking limbo, and are unlikely to ever be adopted and implemented' (ibid.). Ghost ideas are, in many cases, the results of zombie ideas. Sometimes a good idea is not adopted because an old zombie idea is still in place. Zombie ideas can be locked in (Schön, 2010) and can become the standard response to policy problems. One ghost idea is gun control in the United States. Whenever there is a mass shooting in the US, some call for national gun control laws and the topic makes it to the political agenda. However, these demands fade, and then find their way back to the agenda right after the next mass shooting. Gun violence cannot be addressed solely at the local or state level, due to the ease of purchasing firearms across state lines. The dynamic behind national gun control is very similar to the survival of zombie ideas. Several factors explain the survival of zombie ideas and the failed attempts to adopt ghost ideas. Before we take a brief look at these factors, we give a few examples of zombie ideas.

Even though Truss didn't succeed as prime minister and resigned in October 2022, one could ask why ideas that have failed in the past, like trickle-down economics, keep coming up again and keep marching around like zombies.

Tax cuts produce economic growth

We have already named trickle-down economics as a zombie idea, and it is probably 'the most enduring zombie idea in American politics' (Peters and Nagel, 2020). The basic argument here is that tax cuts for corporations and the rich lead to higher spending, which leads to economic growth. And if the economy grows, then the poor will benefit as well. Basically, the benefits of the prosperous will trickle down and the less prosperous benefit as well. However, as mentioned before, the idea continues to persist despite empirical evidence.

Prohibition as a means of addressing substance abuse

In theory it makes a lot of sense to ban the consumption of a certain toxic product if you don't want people to use it. Toxic products like alcohol or soft drugs such as marijuana cause health and social problems for the people and the state (Schrad, 2010). Banning the consumption, sale and possession of these products should address these problems.

However, the real world is not that easy and if you ban a product, then people will find a way to consume it. In addition, when you keep a soft drug illegal, then it is likely that the product is more expensive. Furthermore, and even worse, soft drugs become interesting for gangs to trade. So, banning soft drugs could lead to more crime. And if you make a product illegal to consume it might be more difficult to help those who became addicted. This was true for the 14-year ban on alcohol consumption in the United States and is true for the use of soft drugs (like marijuana) in many countries today.

Prohibition as a means of addressing substance abuse can be linked to gambling in Germany. Until 2012 the state had a monopoly on remote sports betting and other kinds of gambling. Like alcohol and marijuana, gambling can become an addiction, so the idea here was that it is better to have a controlled offering. However, the state-owned businesses were not allowed to advertise their products and many German consumers used the internet to place their bets with other providers, because they offered better rates. In 2011 the estimated market volume of remote sports betting in Germany was 7 billion euro, yet the turnover of the state-owned company amounted to 185 million euro (Wojtek, 2011). Clearly, the ban wasn't working, despite good intentions.

Transparency

Many times, transparency is promoted as a solution to various concerns in government decision making. When decisions are made openly, this results in more public support and lowers the level of corruption. Some even consider transparency to be a human right. However, transparency might have unexpected consequences because it could increase secrecy. Politicians and officials may use informal ways to negotiate certain policies because they fear public scrutiny. This means that there will be no public record. This is especially crucial when tough decisions need to be made. Maybe politicians opt for the politically safe but substandard policy decision. Here, transparency may undercut its main purposes. Transparency is important, but it should not become the standard response to all problems.

Why do zombie ideas survive?

We have shown that many policy ideas that have little positive impact tend to survive, to survive for long periods of time, and to recur again and again. If we assume governments are attempting to govern well and to provide policy solutions for problems, how are failed ideas able to survive? Several factors support zombie ideas and, therefore, tend to reduce the likelihood that governments will address their policy problems more effectively. Space limitations prevent presentation of all the ideas (see Peters and Nagel, 2020), but the following are some of the more important.

Simple path dependence

The simplest explanation for the persistence of ideas is path dependence, usually associated with historical institutionalism (Sydow, Schreyögg and Koch, 2009). The logic is that an institution, once created, will tend to persist until it is replaced by another, usually through a rather extreme change. Later versions of change within historical institutionalism (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010) identified less dramatic forms of change, in which the institutions – or, in our case, ideas – would be transformed while retaining some elements of the original idea. Or, alternatively, a policy domain may be characterised by several layers of ideas, with older ideas continuing to have some influence despite the presence of newer policy concepts.

Beliefs can be especially powerful as political devices if the policy idea can be made analogous to the everyday lives of voters, such as the (largely false) analogy that is made between the household budget and the national budget.

The path dependence argument is especially important for understanding policy ideas that have been successful at some point but later failed. That failure may result from changing politics, or more likely changing socio-economic conditions, whereby a policy idea becomes outmoded. If we adopt Pierson's (2000) arguments about path dependence, some actors in the policy process will have been receiving positive feedback from the idea and will continue to utilise it until sufficient evidence, or political power, accumulates to alter their behaviour. For example, agricultural subsidies in Europe have been criticised for years as being outmoded, but persist because both political elites and agricultural interests receive positive feedback from them.

Beliefs and ideologies

We are discussing the influence of ideas on policymaking, and those ideas and beliefs tend to endure in populations of both elites and ordinary citizens. Some ideas are embedded in the culture and, therefore, policy proposals that derive from those embedded ideas are more likely to be successful politically, and can be adopted again and again. As well as specific policy beliefs, general ideologies also influence policy choices – for example, the preference for public ownership by socialist political parties, and the contrary belief in the virtues of the market by conservatives.

Beliefs can be especially powerful as political devices if the policy idea can be made analogous to the everyday lives of voters, such as the (largely false) analogy that is made between the household budget and the national budget. Analogies can also be powerful if they link past, well-known events with current policy decisions. For example, that any negotiation with an adversary is appeasement is a belief that persists in many governments, after having helped produce events such as the Vietnam War (Lebow, 2000).

Organisational commitments

Organisations within the public sector also maintain and reuse zombie ideas. These ideas tend to have been successful for them in the past – politically, as policy, or both – and hence they are employed again and again when the organisation is confronted with a policy challenge. Of course, some well-worn ideas continue to work, but we are interested in the persistence of failed ideas. For public sector organisations, these commitments may involve both broad approaches to a problem and the selection of particular policy instruments with which they are familiar.

This failure to learn from policy failures by organisations has several roots. It can be seen as a form of selective amnesia by the organisation (Pollitt, 2000), remembering its values and policy commitments but forgetting its failures. Organisations have values and use those values to train new members and to select responses to policy problems. The socialisation within the organisation perpetuates the ideas and makes it more difficult for the organisation to change.

Politics and power

The first explanation that political scientists might consider for zombie ideas

is politics and power. Ideas are a means of justifying self-interest, and of clothing political power in a more acceptable garb (Hay, 2011). Just as the individual's self-interest may be relatively stable, so too may the ideas that are employed to justify it politically. The zombie ideas that are being used to maintain and enhance political power cannot stand on their own and must have an audience that accepts the logic of the ideas. For example, the various market-based ideas that have been capable of surviving past their normal life span have done so because a significant portion of the American population believes in free market economics, albeit in a somewhat unstudied manner. In particular, the analogy between the economy of the household and that of a nation state has pervaded popular thinking about fiscal policy.

Consensus-based politics in the Low Countries and Scandinavia, as described by Arend Lijphart (2012), might be seen as promoting zombie ideas, given that most parties accept most policies in place and reform is incremental. Paul Krugman (2020) makes the contradictory argument, emphasising the role of division and politicisation in maintaining poor policy ideas. His analysis of contemporary American politics is that the extreme division between right and left has made it possible for comfortable ideas within each camp to persist unchallenged. Further, each of the warring tribes develops its own facts, as well as its own ideas, so that again there is no effective challenge to the persistence of failed ideas.

Versions of some of the classic examples of zombie policies mentioned ... have been found in New Zealand, but there also appears to be a special penchant for policies that, while not necessarily failed, have inherent limits, and have opposites that also have some benefits and costs, producing pendulums that swing back and forth.

Blame avoidance

Some argue that policymaking, and governance more generally, is about claiming credit and avoiding blame (Hood, 2011). Political leaders who can plausibly take credit for positive outcomes and can avoid being connected with negative outcomes are likely to be successful. Given that we are focusing on the role of failed policy ideas in government, the possibilities for claiming credit appear limited, making blame avoidance more important. Choosing a policy that has failed previously might appear an unlikely way to avoid blame, but in practice it may not be. If the policy being chosen has been tried before, it has to some extent been included in the (notional) list of approved policies for governments. Therefore, choosing such a policy is less dangerous politically than choosing an innovative policy.

The absence of alternatives

Finally, policymakers may readopt a failed policy because they can see no alternative. That failure of vision may be a function of one or another of the factors mentioned above, but can be a powerful tool for narrowing choices and returning to an old policy. Politicians can argue that we need to accept the familiar, if failed, policy because there is nothing else. McConnell (2020) has argued that when policymakers are confronted with a problem for which they have no solution they will adopt 'placebo policies', simply because they must do something. Zombie ideas are good sources of placebos, given that the idea has been accepted before and appears to be a safe response.

The New Zealand experience

We make no claims to be experts on public policy in New Zealand, but it appears that the government of New Zealand has not been immune to zombie ideas. Like seemingly all governments, it has used policy ideas that will not go away even after they have been proven to be ineffective. Versions of some of the classic examples of zombie policies mentioned above have been found in New Zealand, but there also appears to be a special penchant for policies that, while not necessarily failed, have inherent limits, and have opposites that also have some benefits and costs, producing pendulums that swing back and forth.

Concern with swings of the pendulum in public policy and administration goes back at least to Herbert Simon, who noted that many of the normative recommendations in public policy and public administration came in pairs. Both members of the pair had virtues, but also had vices, so the search for a single right answer to policy and administrative problems has frequently involved going back and forth without ever finding that answer (on coordination versus specialisation, see Bouckaert et al., 2010).

In New Zealand there have been several swings back and forth between centralisation and decentralisation. For example, health care has been moved between centralised and decentralised delivery, with each producing its benefits and costs (Tenbensel, Cumming and Willing, 2023). This and similar reform efforts are indicative of what may be a more general zombie idea (shared by many governments) that changing structures will produce policy results and greater efficiency (Norman and Gill, 2011). However, the commitments of organisations to their own ideas may prevent the adoption of structural change – for example, in border protection.

Again, as is true in many countries, the swings of the policy pendulum have often been a function of the policy ideas and commitments of political parties. While New Zealand is no longer a two-party system, the usual left and right ideas tend to come and go as different parties take control of government. Also, the ruling parties tend to have more control over government and its policies than would be true in many 'consensual democracies'. Each side of that ideological divide continues to advocate their familiar policies, some of which may attain zombie status – for example, nationalisation of economic activities. These differences are often visible in economic policy, but have also occurred in policy areas such as criminal justice (Barretto, Miers and Lambie, 2018).

Suggestions for coping with the pendulum swings in policy, and with them the survival of zombie ideas, have been advanced. The State Services Commission has advocated creating basic policy frameworks that different governments could fine-tune to match their preferences, but which would provide more stable policies and more stable services for citizens (see State Services Commission, Treasury and Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2014). If adopted, something of this sort would make New Zealand more like the consensual democracies mentioned above. The real trick in this, however, will be finding a framework on which all major actors could agree. Although the majoritarian nature of New Zealand politics has been reduced by electoral reform, there seems to be a continuing pattern of swinging back and forth between options. That some of the same options persist over time, seeming to become at least nascent zombie ideas, remains true after changes in the electoral system.

Points for practice

The concept of zombie ideas has various implications for policymakers and practitioners, operating in the public and the private sphere. It is crucial to understand why certain ideas prevail and how they prevent effective policymaking and may hinder organisational progress.

First, it is important to recognise a zombie idea. Policies and ideas need to be evaluated to determine whether they are zombie ideas. Within an evaluation, various methods can be used: one could develop a survey based on the explanations we introduce in our book. This survey can be circulated within public agencies, ministries, and private and public organisations. Based on the findings, one can interview politicians, public servants, or other organisational members to address the findings, resulting in a thick description of the zombie idea. The zombie idea might stem from ideological beliefs or the influence of organised interests.

> The challenge for New Zealand and all other governments is not only to identify zombie ideas, but also to develop mechanisms to ensure that policies are based on effectiveness and facts and not on traditions or simple beliefs.

It is important to educate the public about the pitfalls of zombie ideas. Some policies prevail because they symbolise a certain idea, and other ghost ideas are not accepted because they would destroy the symbol, like a speed limit on the German autobahn. The Covid-19 pandemic is just one example of recent crises that highlight this. Fake news, alternative facts and conspiracy theories that have spread widely during the pandemic show how easily zombie ideas may dominate the public discourse. When decisions are no longer based on reality but on fallacies, then zombie ideas will probably survive.

Contexts of policies may change, and a policy that once was good in the past can easily become a zombie in the present. Against this background, it is crucial to monitor policies constantly and to be open to new developments. Policymakers must make sure that their policy is still the most adequate solution for a problem. They have the option of contacting local communities and assessing the effect of their policies. By doing so, policymakers can learn about intended and unintended consequences. Overall, policies within one's jurisdiction should be reviewed. Maybe a change in prioritisation or allocation of resources is needed.

When designing a policy, it may be useful to incorporate agile thinking. Contexts can change and policies need to align with the changing realities. It is important to prepare for different futures and to allow flexibility.

For public sector organisations it is crucial to be aware of the impact of zombie ideas. Take the tragedy of the two NASA space shuttles that crashed. The lives of the astronauts may have been saved if the organisation had addressed false beliefs and questioned its problematic culture. Within public sector organisations, there must be leadership to foster such a reflective culture that allows civil servants to challenge the status quo and to thrive for better performance. This is especially important in times of reforms, such as the digital transformation of the public sector.

Conclusion

The survival of zombie ideas in public policy is not limited to a political system or nation; this fascinating phenomenon can be observed globally. New Zealand, with its essentially majoritarian system, illustrates how policy and zombie ideas live, die and are reanimated. The pendulum swinging between the ideologies leads to diametrically opposed policy opinions. This cyclical swing can also lead to déjà

vu moments, when dead policies are reanimated, and old beliefs return to life under new flags. These pendulum swings in New Zealand show that political change is not always progressive. From time to time political change can also be reactive, and even nostalgic. Furthermore, New Zealand's bureaucracy shows how important it is to be adaptive on the one hand and to be resilient on the other. Public institutions navigate through complex settings and relabel their approaches, because they must fit the current narrative.

The search for an equilibrium in which policies are both effective and enduring is complex. The challenge for New Zealand and all other governments is not only to identify zombie ideas, but also to develop mechanisms to ensure that policies are based on effectiveness and facts and not on traditions or simple beliefs. The State Services Commission's suggestion offers an interesting approach to discuss, a future in which policymaking is flexible and consistent at the same time.

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Sheryl Lightfoot

Must Indigenous Rights Implementation Depend on Political Party? Lessons from Canada

Abstract

Canada and New Zealand were two of only four countries which voted against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, before eventually moving to support. Since then, this declaration has influenced Canadian politics and practices, particularly the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 'calls to action', legislation, and subsequent action plans on both the federal and provincial levels. Different political parties' priorities affect the implementation of indigenous rights policies. Nonetheless, Canada demonstrates the importance of normative change, outside of legislation or formal policy change. Norms of co-development, co-design and co-drafting create opportunities for indigenous peoples to have a say in policies that affect them.

Keywords indigenous rights, Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, United Nations, free, prior and informed consent

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We are proud to support the Links to Learning event which will help First Nation economic development and land management officers come together and discuss ways to increase economic development opportunities in their communities. This investment is a clear demonstration of our ongoing commitment to enable First Nations to take advantage of Canada's economic prosperity.

— Bernard Valcourt (Conservative Party of Canada), minister of aboriginal affairs and northern development, Canada

I agree that it's unacceptable that some communities are still waiting. I can assure you that everywhere there's a long-term drinking water advisory left there's a project team and an action plan in place to resolve it.

— Justin Trudeau (Liberal Party of Canada), prime minister of Canada

In a manner analogous to New Zealand, the relational dynamics between the Canadian government and indigenous peoples undergo notable shifts in emphasis and tone corresponding to the government in power at any given time. While both countries generally acknowledge the imperative to engage with indigenous communities and pursue some form of restorative justice, the strategies employed often exhibit substantial variations, frequently contingent upon the political party in power. The October 2023 election in New Zealand is the most recent example of how widely political gyrations that can occur vis-à-vis indigenous peoples, when the Labour-led government was voted out in favour of a new coalition of the National, ACT and New Zealand First parties. In overly general terms, the political ideology of centre-right parties tends to prioritise economic and resource development, whereas centre-left parties frequently adopt a more social services-oriented approach centred on narrowing disparities. At the same time, however, when it comes to indigenous peoples, the public service has always had a tendency to view its role through the lens of effective service delivery rather than indigenous rights implementation as articulated in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, or, put another way, as treaty partners, or in nation-to-nation style relationships. This prompts a critical enquiry: are divergent political ideologies fundamentally incongruent in the implementation of indigenous rights, or could there be viable avenues for more consistent realisation of indigenous peoples' rights, irrespective of partisan orientations and governmental changes, where the public/civil service plays a key role? Is there a way that indigenous rights, as defined by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), can be more consistently implemented within the public service and rise above huge variations in political will within different political ideologies and governing coalitions? While the two national contexts clearly differ in some important historical, geographical, legal and demographic respects, are there lessons from the Canadian experience implementing UNDRIP that are relevant to New Zealand's public service?

This article presents the Canadian experience implementing UNDRIP. It explores the mechanisms driving the implementation of UNDRIP in Canada, tracing Canada's evolving relationship with indigenous rights across several governing ideologies. Special attention is paid to the ongoing development of two concrete areas of implementation that are especially relevant to the public service: implementation legislation and action plans, which together help advance socialisation of partnership norms at both the federal and provincial levels of the public service. The convergence of these elements holds the potential to at least partially surmount political oscillations, fostering greater uniformity in the recognition and implementation of indigenous rights within the day-to-day workings of government.

... are divergent political ideologies fundamentally incongruent in the implementation of indigenous rights, or could there be viable avenues for more consistent realisation of indigenous peoples' rights, irrespective of partisan orientations and governmental changes, where the public/civil service plays a key role?

Indigenous peoples of Canada

Similarly to New Zealand, Canada was inhabited by indigenous peoples before contact and colonisation by European powers. Indigenous peoples of Canada include a multitude of cultures, languages and ethnicities, currently totalling approximately 1.8 million indigenous individuals and 5% of the total population (Statistics Canada, 2021). For comparison, approximately 900,000 New Zealanders identify as Māori, 17% of the population (Statistics New Zealand, 2023).

Unlike New Zealand, where the context for relationships between the indigenous peoples and the Crown is established by a national overarching treaty (te Tiriti o Waitangi), many agreements and treaties have been signed between the Canadian Crown and various indigenous peoples, including pre-confederation peace and friendship treaties, the Robinson treaties, the Douglas treaties, and then the numbered treaties, and more recent modern treaties since 1973 addressing land rights (Hall, 2011). The Canadian government has frequently breached obligations under these treaties and from time to time seeks to address these breaches through negotiating specific land claims (Gretchen, 2015). Existing treaties between the indigenous peoples of Canada and the Canadian Crown were reinforced by section 35 of the Constitution Act 1982, which forms part of the Canadian constitution. Section 35 recognises and affirms existing aboriginal and treaty rights.

Canada is a federal state, made up of ten provinces and three territories, with a population of approximately 40 million people, or eight times that of New Zealand. Provinces derive their power from the Constitution Act 1867, whereas territories are governed by federal statute that delegates powers. In theory, provinces have a great deal of power and are considered co-sovereign. Provinces are responsible for delivering the largest share of public services, such as health care, education and social welfare, funded through transfer payments from the federal government. In

practice, the policies relating to transfer payments afford the federal government considerable influence on how services are delivered (Beaudoin, 2006).

Canada's evolving relationship with UNDRIP

Canada's engagement with UNDRIP has been a complex and evolving journey, reflecting changes in the country's approach to indigenous rights and their implementation. There are a number of notable milestones and developments in Canada's relationship with UNDRIP over time, from initial resistance to eventual support, followed by subsequent concrete steps taken to implement indigenous human rights in a more consistent and long-lasting manner, where the public service plays a key role.

Canada was actively involved in, and generally supportive of, the drafting process and negotiation of the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples between the launch of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1982 by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the consideration of the draft declaration at the Human Rights Council for decision in 2006 (House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, 2006). When the draft declaration came to a vote in the Human Rights Council in June 2006, Canada, under the leadership of Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, cast a contentious vote against it. The vote against the draft declaration was primarily rooted in concerns about the potential impact of its provisions, particularly those related to free, prior and informed consent, resource development and national sovereignty. The government under Harper was apprehensive about how these provisions might limit its ability to make decisions about resource extraction on indigenous lands (ibid.).

When the draft declaration was presented to the Human Rights Council for a vote in 2006, only Canada and the Russian Federation, out of 47 members of the council, voted against (United Nations, 2006). Up until that point, Canada had a long-standing tradition of supporting and championing human rights on the global stage. Voting against the draft declaration in 2006 represented a stark departure from this long tradition, raising eyebrows both domestically and internationally. The vote sparked concern about whether Canada was willing to support and align with global standards on indigenous rights, as articulated in the draft declaration (Joffe, 2010).

In 2007, New Zealand voted against the declaration on the floor of the General Assembly while led by a centre-left government, and in 2010 announced its support for [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples] under a centre-right government ...

The following year, Canada repeated its stance by voting against UNDRIP in the United Nations General Assembly. The only countries to join Canada in voting 'no' on the floor of the General Assembly were the United States, Australia and New Zealand, all of which gave very similar reasons for their opposition (Government of Canada, 2007). As in 2006, Canada's primary concern revolved around the right of self-determination and the concept of free, prior and informed consent, which was seen as a possible impediment to economic development on indigenous lands, often inaccurately described as an indigenous 'veto' (Papillon and Rodon, 2019). This vote further solidified Canada's image as a nation resistant to recognising the inherent rights of indigenous peoples on the international stage, contrasting with its usual global reputation as a human rights leader.

In the next couple of years, Canada's stance on UNDRIP began to gradually shift, and in 2010 the government, still under Prime Minister Harper, issued a qualified endorsement of the declaration. The government stated that while it could not fully support the document as written and this endorsement would not give latitude to change Canadian law, it would work towards implementing its principles in a manner consistent with the Canadian constitution (Government of Canada, 2010). This qualified support marked a subtle but significant change in Canada's approach to UNDRIP, given the contentious opposition votes at the Human Rights Council in 2006 and the General Assembly in 2007.

For context, New Zealand's position on UNDRIP also changed over the same period. In 2007, New Zealand voted against the declaration on the floor of the General Assembly while led by a centre-left government, and in 2010 announced its support for UNDRIP under a centre-right government (Key, 2010).

In the years to follow, the Harper government did little with its qualified support of the declaration, continuing to operate on the premise that full support was not plausible and not necessary, given the advanced legal framework in Canada, where section 35 of the Canadian constitution already recognised existing aboriginal and treaty rights. During these same years, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was working to address the legacy of residential schools and promote reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Canada.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and its 94 'calls to action', released in June 2015 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,

2015), played a pivotal role in bringing new attention to the need for implementation of UNDRIP in Canada. Many of the calls to action explicitly reference UNDRIP or are closely aligned with its principles. Call 43, for example, describes the adoption and implementation of UNDRIP as 'the framework for reconciliation in Canada' and specifically calls on 'federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments to adopt and fully implement' the declaration. Additionally, several calls to action emphasise other key principles of UNDRIP, including self-determination, participatory decision making, and free, prior and informed consent, in decisions affecting indigenous peoples' rights. This alignment helped to draw attention to the relevance and importance of UNDRIP in addressing the historical injustices and ongoing challenges faced by indigenous peoples.

The TRC's emphasis on implementing UNDRIP throughout all levels and sectors of society demonstrated a new and very tight connection between domestic reconciliation efforts and international human rights standards. The normative discourse in Canada began to shift, in all sectors and at all levels, including within the public service.

The direct connection the TRC drew between reconciliation and UNDRIP implementation underscores the significance of UNDRIP as an internationally recognised framework for indigenous rights, and it raises awareness about the need for Canada to adhere to these standards and principles. Its call for the creation of mechanisms to monitor and report on the government's progress in implementing these actions also solidified the importance in adhering to international human rights standards (ibid.). This focus on doing day-to-day business differently as well as on accountability mirrors UNDRIP's emphasis on accountability and transparency in upholding indigenous rights. By highlighting the need for monitoring and reporting, the TRC contributed to a broader conversation about how to ensure UNDRIP's effective and consistent implementation.

Following the release of the calls to action in 2015, there was an increased level of pressure on the Canadian government, both domestically and internationally, to take more concrete and lasting steps towards reconciliation and the implementation of indigenous rights as articulated in UNDRIP. The TRC's work garnered significant public attention, leading to increased awareness and advocacy of indigenous rights. While, in the eyes of the Canadian courts, UNDRIP was not binding in Canada in the same way that international treaties and conventions are, the TRC's calls to action gave a significant boost to the declaration's normative effects and expectations. This broader public awareness, coupled with renewed political advocacy by indigenous leaders and organisations, created new momentum and political appetite for aligning Canadian laws, policies, and governmental practices, with the principles of UNDRIP in order to better advance reconciliation and justice for indigenous peoples.

In many respects, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action were Canada's 'game changer' on UNDRIP. They brought renewed attention to the declaration, which had been nearly set aside by the Harper government following its 2010 partial endorsement and tepid response. Further, the TRC acted as an important catalyst, making clear the connection between domestic reconciliation efforts, in all sectors – public, private and non-profit – and the global normative framework provided by UNDRIP. The commission made the domestic applicability of UNDRIP explicit and highlighted the need for comprehensive recognition of and respect for indigenous rights in Canada at all levels of governance, and regardless of political party. The clear and concise direction provided by the TRC, which clearly defined reconciliation in Canada as implementation of UNDRIP, began to shift the public conversation on UNDRIP: from this point forward, one could not be opposed to UNDRIP without also being opposed to the TRC, and, conversely, supporting the TRC also necessarily meant supporting implementation of UNDRIP. Expectations within the public service also began to shift and an UNDRIP lens began to appear, gradually, in practice as individual public servants became aware of UNDRIP and its expectations for a more partnership approach to indigenous affairs.

> … the 2015 federal election in Canada brought … a change in leadership, with Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party … [f]ully implementing the calls to action was a piece of the Liberal Party's election platform, including, but not limited to, the implementation of UNDRIP

Just months after the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, the 2015 federal election in Canada brought about a change in leadership, with Justin Trudeau's Liberal Party forming the government. Fully implementing the calls to action was a piece of the Liberal Party's election platform, including, but not limited to, the implementation of UNDRIP (Trudeau, 2015).

In 2016, under the leadership of Prime Minister Trudeau, Canada announced its unqualified support for UNDRIP (Government of Canada, 2016). This marked a significant departure from the previous government's stance and signalled a commitment to recognising and implementing the rights of indigenous

peoples in accordance with UNDRIP. It committed Canada, as a whole, to shifting its behaviour vis-à-vis indigenous peoples. The minister of indigenous and northern affairs, Carolyn Bennett, stated that Canada is now a full supporter of the Declaration, without qualification, is an important step in the vital work of reconciliation' (ibid.). The minister further departed from the previous government's concerns about incompatibility between tenets of the declaration and Canadian law, affirming that this shift was 'breathing life into Section 35 of Canada's Constitution, which provides a full box of rights for Indigenous peoples'. Though there were many steps still to take before a complete box of indigenous rights could come to exist in Canada, full support of UNDRIP opened a door for formal frameworks to facilitate more consistent implementation at all levels of government.

Also in 2016, Cree member of Parliament Roméo Saganash introduced private member's bill C-262 in the House of Commons, which sought to ensure that Canadian law is consistent with the declaration. The Trudeau Liberal majority government, looking to translate its support for UNDRIP into legislative action, voted unanimously to adopt the bill. However, despite passing in the House of Commons (by 206 to 79 votes), the bill faced challenges in the Senate and ultimately failed to become law (Parliament of Canada, 2019). This setback underscored the complexities and challenges associated with implementing UNDRIP at the federal level despite ongoing and intensifying political will to do so among elected legislators.

While federal implementation of UNDRIP faced obstacles, the province of British Columbia took a proactive step by adopting its own implementation legislation in 2019, co-developed and co-drafted with indigenous peoples of the province, thus enacting the partnership principles of UNDRIP in the process of drafting legislation. British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act 2019 requires the provincial government to work collaboratively with indigenous peoples to align British Columbia's laws with the principles of UNDRIP. Reflecting both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's and the declaration's emphasis on accountability, the Act requires that the provincial government draft an action plan to meet the declaration's objectives and conduct regular, transparent reporting on progress. Further, British Columbia reinforced the connection between domestic reconciliation efforts and the global framework offered by the declaration by citing the Act as part of the province's efforts to meet the TRC's calls to action. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act passed unanimously in the provincial legislature in November 2019, and its passage demonstrated the potential for other governments in Canada to develop their own implementation legislation, and work across party lines to do so.

In 2021, the federal government, still under Prime Minister Trudeau, introduced government bill C-15, which was ... co-developed and co-drafted with national indigenous organisations.

British Columbia's Declaration Act Action Plan, released in 2022, was also co-developed by the provincial government in partnership with indigenous peoples of the province. The action plan articulates the steps that all government ministries will take over a five-year period to implement UNDRIP within their portfolios. It includes 'achievable actions in the areas of self-determination and self-government, rights and title, ending anti-Indigenous racism, and enhancing social, cultural and economic well-being' (British Columbia, 2023).

In 2021, the federal government, still under Prime Minister Trudeau, introduced government bill C-15, which was also co-developed and co-drafted with national indigenous organisations. This legislation passed in both houses of Parliament, received royal assent and became law (An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2021). The Act requires that the government of Canada ensure that the laws of Canada are consistent with the UN declaration and work actively to advance its objectives. Like British Columbia's implementation legislation, it contains a direct tie to the TRC's calls to action, enshrining the close relationship between domestic action and legislation and the UN declaration in Canadian law. This marks a significant milestone in Canada's efforts to implement UNDRIP at the national level.

Similarly to British Columbia's legislation, Canada's federal legislation also required the creation of a five-year national action plan, in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples of Canada. This plan 'outlines a whole of government roadmap for advancing reconciliation with indigenous peoples through a renewed, nation-to-nation, government-to-government, and Inuit–Crown relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership as the foundation for transformative change' (Department of Justice Canada, 2023, p.20). Like in British Columbia, the vast majority of the steps outlined in the action plan are specifically directed at the public service, and represent the emergence of a new paradigm of partnership and cooperation rather than a top-down, public service delivery approach, even in the absence of significant implementation progress with the courts.

Slow legal progress and variations in political will

Amid increasing public and political awareness, but prior to mandates, actionable policy or implementation legislation, the objectives and principles

of UNDRIP appeared in court rulings at both the federal and provincial levels. Even before the draft declaration's consideration at the Human Rights Council in 2006, *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)* asked whether the Canadian government had a duty to consult with and accommodate indigenous peoples before making decisions that could affect indigenous rights and title claims and whether a duty of that nature would extend to other parties (Ugochukwu, 2020). The British Columbia Court of Appeals determined that both governments and third parties, including non-governmental organisations and corporations, were obligated to consult and accommodate. On appeal, the Supreme Court of Canada determined instead that 'third parties cannot be held liable for failing to discharge the Crown's duty to consult and accommodate. The honour of the Crown cannot be delegated, and the legal responsibility for consultation and accommodation rests with the Crown' *(Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)* [2004] 3 SCR 511).

Thirteen years later, *Ktunaxa Nation v. British Columbia (Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations)* ([2017] SCC 54) considered the issue of indigenous sacred sites and the duty to consult and accommodate identified in *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)*. Though the Ktunaxa case demonstrated increased awareness of UNDRIP among participating lawyers making submissions in the case who encouraged the court to use UNDRIP as an interpretive tool, the Supreme Court ruling did not mention UNDRIP, nor does it draw on its objectives. In doing so, despite arguments in favour of UNDRIP being available to the Supreme Court, to inform their decision the court opted to adhere to the limits of precedent rather than the recent full endorsement of UNDRIP. In light of these rulings, Andrew M. Robinson finds that the Canadian constitution does not currently have 'a full box of UNDRIP rights' and that, in terms of sacred sites, Canada's constitutional jurisprudence appears to be 'out of step' with UNDRIP. Robinson therefore recommends against an over-reliance on the courts to implement UNDRIP and, rather, that a multi-pronged legislative, regulatory and constitutional approach should be taken (Robinson, 2020).

Norm socialisation and behavioural change

There have been hurdles in realising mandates, endorsement and policy at both the provincial and federal levels of government until very recently, and hesitance from the courts to depart from the limited rights afforded by precedent in favour of those laid out by UNDRIP. Federico Lenzerini, rapporteur of the International Law Association's Committee on the Implementation of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, calls on scholars to continue to assess 'the level of effective implementation of the international legal standards concerning Indigenous peoples' rights – particularly those enshrined in the UNDRIP' (Lenzerini, 2019). Lenzerini urges scholars to make the results of their studies and the information they collect available to the public around the world so that they may push governments and international institutions to intensify their actions in the field and make the implementation of the declaration more effective. Indeed, behavioural change among public servants, private industry, scholars and institutions in favour of declaration implementation is firmly underway in Canada, at least in part due to the action plan and reporting mandates of implementation legislation.

While the federal obligation to UNDRIP does not directly extend to the regulatory level of industry, Basil Ugochukwu notes that corporations in Canada seem to understand that they also have obligations to uphold indigenous peoples' human rights (Ugochukwu, 2020). Canadian law is clear that states hold primary responsibility for protecting indigenous peoples' rights and that responsibility cannot be transferred to private corporations. Indeed, UNDRIP is not aimed at corporations, but at UN member states. Private industry is not mentioned in the declaration's articles or preambular paragraphs, but corporations are 'routinely implicated in situations and environments where massive violations of Indigenous rights have occurred' (ibid.), making private industry a key player in UNDRIP implementation. Ugochukwu argues that even though corporations are not specifically mentioned in the declaration, it is necessary to subject them to UNDRIP standards as a key part of implementation. This is particularly true for resource extraction industries, which are often located on indigenous peoples' lands, domestically and internationally. The key element for corporations is establishing free, prior and informed consent before a corporation engages in activity that might have an impact on the rights of indigenous peoples.

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The implementation of the principle of free, prior and informed consent is highly contested globally, and Canada is no exception. As in many other parts of the world, the norm is often problematically characterised as either a full indigenous 'veto' at one end of the spectrum, all the way to a procedural obligation to seek, but not necessarily obtain, consent (Papillon and Rodon, 2019). Canadian governments and industry tend to limit their interpretation of free, prior and informed consent to consultation, as seen in *Haida Nation v. British Columbia (Minister of Forests)*, and subsequent litigation, policy and practice (ibid.).

Rosemary Nagy agrees that the opportunity space for UNDRIP

implementation within section 35 of the Canadian constitution, which recognises aboriginal rights, is likely limited to 'mere tinkering with the colonial status quo' (Nagy, 2022). Nagy instead sees 'grassroots and transnational mobilisations and strategies' as the key to transforming systems and structures – including the public service – to align with UNDRIP. Where constitutional accommodations and court rulings have been limited in their interpretation of UNDRIP, especially regarding its application to private industry, Ugochukwu similarly argues that corporations are actually well equipped to work directly with indigenous peoples, engage with them and establish best practices (Ugochukwu, 2020).

The process of engaging with free, prior and informed consent, then, moved away from being driven by the state to being a process driven by indigenous peoples.

Demonstrations of free, prior and informed consent: private industry and indigenous normative implementation

Just as the UN Ruggie principles, which seek to voluntarily enshrine norms of social responsibility in private industry, favour offering guidance for non-governmental policy and practice over state mandates, the declaration provides guidance for private industry to shift practices related to free, prior and informed consent, even in the absence of governmental policy developments. Ugochukwu (2020) considers the applicability of UNDRIP to corporations, noting the preponderance of Canadian corporations with internal indigenous affairs departments and the formulation of indigenous policy principles to guide their actions. The rapid development of in-house policy among corporations is both an indicator of and a factor in increasingly consultative and relational practices between private industry and indigenous peoples.

The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business has also created a monitoring mechanism for what they call 'progressive aboriginal relations' (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, 2022). Companies can earn gold, silver, bronze or committed status based on a number of metrics. Ugochukwu analyses the indigenous relations policies and practices of four corporations in Canada to assess the extent to which they are aligning with UNDRIP. Extending previous studies that examined business practices in Canada and how well they built relationships with indigenous peoples, Ugochukwu finds that UNDRIP has expanded the expectations for corporate and business practices. In some cases, policies are deliberately intended to align with UNDRIP; others purport to engage in best practice but make no mention of the declaration.

A number of indigenous peoples in Canada have begun to operationalise free, prior and informed consent through the creation of their own decision-making mechanisms, which can include community-driven impact assessments as well as full protocols. Papillon and Rodon (2019) highlight two cases in particular: the James Bay Cree mining policy and the community-driven impact assessment process of the Squamish Nation. The James Bay Cree mining policy was adopted in 2010. It indicates that the Cree are not necessarily opposed to mining development on their traditional territory, but states that all mining developments must respect existing policy. The forward to the policy indicates that no mining will take place without agreements with the Cree communities involved, and those agreements must take into account a range of environmental, economic and social concerns. While the policy has no legal force under Canadian law, its goal is to clearly lay out a process for the mining industry to follow, building on the existing duty to consult to encourage practices that better resemble free, prior and informed consent as articulated in the declaration.

The Squamish Nation created its own impact assessment process to assist it in decision making around development projects on its traditional territory and ensure that the nation's aboriginal rights and title are protected. In doing so, both the Squamish Nation and James Bay Cree redefined free, prior and informed consent beyond the duty to consult articulated by the federal and provincial governments, but rather as a question of indigenous jurisdiction over relevant projects. The process of engaging with free, prior and informed consent, then, moved away from being driven by the state to being a process driven by indigenous peoples. For example, the Squamish Nation signed an agreement with Woodfibre Natural Gas in 2014 wherein the project proponent agreed to three key considerations: financial coverage of the consultation process; information sharing; and, notably, a confidentiality clause meant to ensure that the proponent's engagement with the Squamish Nation did not substitute for the federal and provincial governments' duty to consult. This arrangement satisfied the need of the proponent to ensure legal certainty and provided a framework for the Squamish Nation to exercise authority in their territory, but was not recognised by the federal or provincial governments. Nonetheless, the Squamish Nation and proponent reached an agreement – including 25 conditions set out by the Squamish Nation and committed to by the proponent – subverting governmental hesitance around free, prior and informed consent and reframing what is expected of private industry. Even in the absence of governmental policy or participation supporting the implementation of the declaration, behavioural norms are shifting to support relational work on free, prior and informed consent between indigenous peoples and private industry.

Papillon and Rodon were writing before British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and

federal implementation legislation, as provincial and federal governments sat on the precipice of necessary steps to move forward with UNDRIP implementation. Regardless, change was underway in society, well beyond governments. Neither the James Bay Cree nor the Squamish Nation developed frameworks or campaigns to be included in state government decision making regarding whether the duty to consult was fulfilled. Instead, both took ownership of free, prior and informed consent based on community-developed parameters and processes. This shift works to sever the association in Canada between free, prior and informed consent and the federal and provincial duty to consult, instead retying free, prior and informed consent to its declaration foundations in indigenous self-determination and wider expectations about relations between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples and institutions.

Takeaways for the public service

By 2023, Canada not only had federal legislation that provides a framework for implementing UNDRIP, but the province of British Columbia had similar legislation in place, which passed unanimously in its provincial legislature. Following the adoption of federal and provincial legislation, both levels of government worked in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples on action plans to guide the practical implementation of UNDRIP, primarily within the public service. These action plans aim to address various aspects of indigenous rights, including economic development, land and resource management and cultural preservation, and they do so by fundamentally shifting the approach of the public service on indigenous issues from a service delivery model to a partnership and government-to-government approach. Implementation legislation, in both cases, also mandates annual reporting on progress. Alongside these efforts, advances in the judiciary and practices in industry demonstrate wider socialisation of indigenous rights norms in Canada. Advances in industry that support the principles of UNDRIP, even in the absence of a clear regulatory mandate, indicate that the principles of UNDRIP are increasing in normative strength, and across political party lines.

One of the key takeaways in the Canadian experience with UNDRIP implementation is the crucial importance of legislation which mandates legal reviews but, more importantly for the public service, mandates clear and concrete action plans and reporting mechanisms. These action plans and reporting requirements immediately and tangibly change the incentives of public servants and encourage day-to-day adaptation of policies, procedures and approaches towards ones that align with the principles of UNDRIP, including consultation, cooperation and partnership approaches. While ruling parties and their ideologies will come and go, once implementation legislation and action plans are in place and operational, it would take much more political effort to dismantle them, so greater consistency in implementation is achieved.

Another important takeaway is the major role the public service and other non-political actors play in wider normalisation of the principles of UNDRIP. Alongside the development and passage of implementation legislation, judicial advancements and gradual alignment of corporate practices, the Canadian public service has also become much more dialogical, relational and consultative with indigenous peoples and organisations in recent years, consulting indigenous peoples frequently and carefully considering their views and concerns in policy development and implementation, across ministries. Agencies such as Indigenous Services Canada, the attorney general's office, Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Global Affairs Canada have all developed a robust and active consultative and partnership relationship with indigenous organisations and rights holders. Norms of co-development, co-design and co-drafting have emerged and taken firm hold among public servants both federally and in British Columbia, following the practice of indigenous participation in decision making in matters that affect them, which was modelled so effectively in the co-drafting of UNDRIP implementation legislation itself.

New Zealand and Canada were among only four countries in the world to oppose the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, before both changed their stance and issued statements of support in 2010.

Further, inquiries like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission offer an opportunity to advance implementation of UNDRIP in a normative manner, even as political will vacillates – sometimes wildly – with changes in ruling parties, and as implementation proceeds slowly and sometimes unevenly through the legal system. Inquiries like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hold the entire nation accountable for the systems and structures that caused and continue to perpetuate injustices against indigenous peoples, and can play a crucial role in establishing a new normative paradigm, based on UNDRIP, for how state systems and structures should relate to indigenous peoples.

Conclusion

New Zealand and Canada were among only four countries in the world to oppose the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007, before both changed their stance and

issued statements of support in 2010. The effects of the declaration on the Canadian government at both federal and provincial level have been significant, but effects in New Zealand are not as easily identified. From initial resistance to unqualified support, only 12 years passed between the Canadian government opposing UNDRIP, and the passing of provincial legislation in British Columbia in 2019 and federal legislation in 2021.

At the same time, the principles of UNDRIP, specifically the importance of indigenous participation in decision making, have become increasingly socialised and active throughout public and private life across Canada. While political parties will most certainly continue to debate the value of economic development versus social service provision in their relationship with indigenous peoples, the norms and principles of UNDRIP, which Canada is gradually adapting, provide a longer-lasting and more robust pathway to UNDRIP implementation of the declaration.

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Aaron Maniam

Beyond Control Towers, Vending Machines, Networks and Platforms towards more dynamic, living metaphors for governance

Abstract

Metaphors affect how humans perceive and interact with reality, not least in governments, so our metaphors for government and governance matter. In this article, early metaphors such as government as Leviathan, machine, control tower and vending machine are shown to be limited, as are their replacements, like government as network and government as platform. Instead, the article suggests conceptualising government and governance as a 'moral ecology', to do justice to the complex and evolving roles of public sectors and public officials amid global turbulence and increasingly challenging domestic circumstances.

Keywords governance, public administration, public policy, metaphor, complexity, paradigms

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Introduction

What unites the following sentences?

- I will defeat that argument.
- Children blossom into adults.
- I don't have room for this in my life!
- Life has cheated me.
- Scarcity has given birth to a generation of paranoid teenagers.

I've started several recent talks by posing this question to the audience. After a few attempts at identifying similarities in the sentences' very diverse content, someone in the audience usually picks up that none of them is a literal description. Instead, each employs a metaphor of some kind – a comparison of one thing to another – to highlight particular characteristics. Arguments are likened to battles or fights; children to flowers; life to a physical space or game. The concept of scarcity is anthropomorphised: treated as human in its ability to 'give birth'.

Metaphors like these matter. Usually seen as the exclusive tools of writers and poets, they are in reality used by nearly everyone and have been among the most basic building blocks of communication for as long as language has existed (see Box 1). Metaphors shape how we perceive the world and think about issues; how we

Box 1: Metaphors - a brief recent history

Lakoff and Johnson recognise the centrality (and what they call the 'systematicity') of metaphors, devoting a whole book to *Metaphors We Live By* (2003). Not everyone uses their exact terminology, including the term 'metaphor', but there is a consistent and substantial body of scholarly work on this issue.

Senge (2006) and his broader work on systems thinking and learning organisations centre on what he calls 'mental models', defined as 'deeply ingrained assumptions, generalisations, or even pictures and images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action'. Senge's 'pictures and images' are essentially metaphors.

Similarly, Goffman's seminal work *Frame Analysis* (1986) proposes the notion of mental frames (essentially metaphors) that shape our perceptions of the world and the information we process.

Bolman and Deal discuss metaphors and frames for leadership. Their *Reframing Organizations: artistry, choice, and leadership* (2017) observes that leaders' priorities and decisions differ according to whether they see leadership as a process that fundamentally involves structure and analysis; human resources; symbols and culture; or navigation of political power relationships.

Morgan (2006) examines metaphors for composite entities like companies, government agencies and teams, noting that different images (machines, families, cultures, and others) each highlight, but also elide, different aspects of what it means to be an organisation.

Inayatullah (1998) cites 'myth and metaphor' as the foundational layer of 'causal layered analysis' (a framework for having generative conversations about possible futures), from which other aspects like 'structures, discourse and worldviews', 'social causes' and 'litanies' emerge.

conceive of and carry out life in an institution; how we view ourselves and one another in relation to our organisations. Our choice of metaphor can subtly affect not just what we think, but also what we do. For instance, in relation to the first sentence on the list above, consider how saying 'I will *engage* in that argument' instead of 'I will *defeat* …' might change the tone and tenor of our interaction with the source of that argument.

Building on these ideas, and some of my previous work on metaphors for strategy (Maniam, 2016), creativity (Maniam, 2018) and learning (Maniam, 2022), this article explores how some current metaphors for public service are proving increasingly limited, given the more complex work expected of public officials, and the more volatile and turbulent environments in which they operate. It also suggests a new set of metaphors and examines how they might do more justice to the wider, richer range of roles played by public sector agencies and their staff.

Metaphors for government – the story so far

Metaphors for the public sector are as old as government itself. Hobbes compared the work of governments to the biblical beast Leviathan, capturing the sense of scale and power that governments were meant to possess. Weber's image of the 'iron cage of bureaucracy' is another well-known metaphor, for how bureaucratic rules can end up constricting public officials' discretion: this starts with the best of intentions, to limit the power of vested interests, but has pernicious long-term consequences when the creativity and innovation of public service providers is curtailed. In my previous policy roles, when meeting counterparts from other countries, we often found ourselves referring without question to the idea of 'the government machinery', echoing the metaphor of machines that Morgan (2006) discusses.

More recent metaphors include Slaughter's (2009) image of government as a network, referring particularly to the sources of American power in its foreign policy, and O'Reilly's (2011) image of government as a platform, building on his earlier work popularising the terms 'open source' and 'Web 2.0'. Both Slaughter's and O'Reilly's metaphors are juxtaposed against two prior ideas: first, the aviation metaphor of government as a control tower, possessing all relevant information and hence able to make decisions about where and when policies or programmes might be implemented, much like air traffic controllers make decisions allocating flight timings and airspace; second, the metaphor of government as a vending machine (Kettl, 2008) providing a range of choices and responding to popular preferences as long as citizens pay their taxes.

The ideas of governments as networks and platforms certainly capture more than their antecedents. Both metaphors share a core conception of government as more open than either Leviathans or iron cages, and providing diverse options for citizens. Both make space for non-linearity in governments' own work and their operating environments, through ideas like network effects and platform synergies. Both capture the interdependent nature of government work, with connections among government agencies being akin to the links among nodes in networks or among different platform users.

But both metaphors also suffer from three particular limitations. Most fundamentally, they present a view of public sectors as essentially static and structured, rather than dynamic and evolving. Both networks and platforms can, of course, be replaced by newer versions, much as smartphone operating systems can be regularly updated; but can the network and platform itself be living, dynamic, untidy and evolutionary, breathing with life rather than dying and being replaced? This seems a critical requirement for any government of the future, which will have to deal with constant flux and strategic discontinuities like financial crises, pandemics, the emerging effects of climate change, and

ever more pervasive digital technology, and will need to constantly reinvent rather than having the luxury of starting anew.

Second, both metaphors assume government dominance vis-à-vis other actors. While public sectors will certainly continue to be central players, rather than systems descending into anarchy, the rise of phenomena like public–private–people (3P) partnerships and participatory policymaking (e.g., through deliberative polling and other modalities) suggests that different stakeholders will play more, and more diverse, roles in public life. Individual citizens, businesses of all sizes and civil society organisations will not just be consumers of government decisions, even if those decisions come from networks or platforms and result in an admittedly larger choice set than offered by a vending machine; rather, non-government stakeholders will be active shapers of and contributors to policy processes. Put another way, governments will no longer solely form the networks and platforms, nor will they even be primary players; instead, they will share that space with other agents, in a more polyarchic system. Emerging literature on collaborative governance points in a similar direction (see, for instance, Ansell and Torfing, 2018). In response, we need metaphors for the broader process of governance – how governments, businesses, citizens and civil society organise themselves in complex interactions – rather than metaphors for government alone.

Third, the network and platform metaphors have a distinctly positive (as opposed to normative) air to them. The connections between network members or platform agents are substantive but often transactional and functional, involving transfers of ideas or capital of various kinds. There is little concomitant space for the moral dimensions of the interactions among their components – mutual investment in collective outcomes, and mutual regard for one another's welfare. We speak of networks and platforms, after all, and not communities with kinship ties. This is not to suggest that all the agents and components in a governance group coexist harmoniously; the existence of increasingly sharp and polarising identity politics and other sources of inter-community friction clearly suggests otherwise. But even these more negative occurrences suggest the existence of an in-group, defined in opposition to an out-group, within which members are connected by moral affinities and allegiances that are not fully reflected in the ideas of networks or platforms.

The lack of allowance for moral ties and other normative considerations could be addressed by seeing governance as a process of family interactions, which would capture the interlinkage that networks and platforms downplay.

Towards better metaphors

What metaphors can improve on the images of networks and platforms, to address the three pitfalls cited above? Several candidates come to mind.

The problem of overly structured approaches is well addressed in Raymond (2008), which uses the language of software engineering to contrast and distinguish between two different free software development models. In the cathedral model, source code is available with each software release, but code developed between releases is restricted to an exclusive group of developers – much like clergy in a cathedral control access to and flow of information. This is unlike the bazaar model, in which the code is developed over the marketplace of the internet in full view of the online public.

Applied to public services, cathedrals are similar to the earlier metaphor of the control tower, with all its structure and systematisation. The bazaar metaphor captures some of the inherently and increasingly messy aspects of public sector work. A better metaphor for governance would involve something more ordered and less idiosyncratic than the bazaar, but also less rigidly ritualised than the cathedral.

Drawing from art, one might consider governance as a sculpting process – creating something new and locating what Michelangelo described as 'the 'angel in the marble'. This metaphor is attractive not least because it makes removal a form of adding, chiselling leading to a more refined final product. This seems particularly important when many governments worldwide are experiencing bureaucratic bloat and prove far more adept at adding than removing functions of public agencies. The downsides of this metaphor are the static nature of the final product – it is difficult to change a sculpture after completion – and how it emerges from a singular artistic vision that dominates others, even if the process of stonework is shared among multiple apprentices. If governance is an act of sculpting, and governments are the main sculptors, then there are still insufficient roles for citizens, business, civil society and other players.

The lack of allowance for moral ties and other normative considerations could be addressed by seeing governance as a process of family interactions, which would capture the interlinkage that networks and platforms downplay. In my previous work in the government of Singapore, we often spoke of 'ministry families' when referring to clusters of agencies. Families can be extended, so the reach of this metaphor could be quite wide. But an immediate problem arises: governance involves mutual moral links and commitments, but these are not always as close as family ties. The family metaphor can also be problematic when we note its potential darker side – families can be dysfunctional, even abusive to their members – which good governments should seek to avoid or minimise.

Governance as moral ecology

One way to fill the three gaps in earlier metaphors – dynamic evolution, governance rather than action by governments alone, and the need for links between actors that are moral, not just transactional – is to conceptualise governance as a moral ecology. This is a more complex and slippery concept than the metaphors listed earlier, and is characterised by two core qualities: first, governance is a dynamic ecological system; and second, it is an ecological system governed by moral, not just natural biological, laws.

On the first quality, governance as an ecology would be dynamic in a living, breathing way. This metaphor acknowledges the aliveness of the actors in governance – people, collectivities like companies and communities that comprise people, and other living entities with which people interact (this last group is particularly important as we contemplate imminent climate change and the lack of consideration in past policies for the broader natural environment). The diversity of these actors is also recognised, almost by definition. The healthiest ecologies (whether gardens, oceans, rivers, forests, deserts, savannas or a mix of these) house multiple life forms, each with unique contributions, and avoid over-reliance on any one. Tellingly, many recent innovations in governance reflect this living, organic nature of governance. Citizen juries, the inclusion of design thinking principles when developing public services, and the incorporation of behavioural insights into policy design, to name a few, all reflect a tilt towards recognising and harnessing the interests and agency of citizens as living, evolving beings.

The second quality, on moral relationships, is important because ecologies alone are still imperfect metaphors. In natural ecological systems, apex predators hunt prey, which in turn consume other entities lower in the food chain, but with impunity since animals are, in most circles, not assumed to have the capacity for moral reasoning. In governance, however, such mutual moral connections are critical. Citizens vote for political leaders; public officials are bound by codes of conduct to create public value and not harm the public interest; companies operate by at least minimal principles of responsibility, as seen in the advent of ESG (environmental, social and governance) as corporate priorities; citizens increasingly understand that they have moral duties to those around them, even those they might not know or like. Governance of human society aspires to be more than just a collection of impersonal predator–prey relationships. The qualifier that governance ecologies must also be 'moral' is therefore key to capturing how all of us – governments, businesses and citizens alike – are invested in the lives of those around us.

The core priority should be to recognise and value the living, dynamic nature of the different actors and stakeholders in a policy process, rather than have the process be a black box within a government agency.

The deeper one probes, the richer the metaphor of a moral ecology proves to be as a representation of governance processes. Such ecologies are inherently untidy and subject to feedback loops that can be difficult to anticipate, but become clearer over time. This is much like governance of any human group, where policies can have unintended consequences that the best governments learn from and adjust to over time. Longstanding examples exist in policies to manage demographic trends, which have evolved over time to be less blunt, while recent experiences with the Covid-19 pandemic reflected the need for governments to constantly monitor responses from citizens to initiatives like mask-wearing and vaccinations, and to regularly incorporate these responses into future iterations of each policy.

Moreover, death and destruction are important parts of any ecology, to be accepted rather than feared. Some of this can occur naturally, as with cycles of life and regeneration, but some can also be induced, as with processes of pruning a garden. In a more alive way than the earlier metaphor of sculpture and chiselling, ecologies capture the reality that life must ebb and flow – something that many bureaucracies acknowledge conceptually, but struggle to implement. One senior leader in Singapore once commented that all policies should come with a sell-by date, to reflect that circumstances will evolve and good public policy should not remain wedded to old assumptions and world views. Thinking of governance as being characterised by such ecological cycles makes the process of revisiting and revising policies much less controversial, as such changes will be normalised rather than interpreted as critiques of previous policies (and their originators).

Policy implications

What would adopting 'moral ecologies' as a guiding metaphor mean for scholars and practitioners of public policy?

At its core, the processes of policy formulation, delivery, execution and operationalisation must evolve. Citizens and businesses need to be involved by design, not just as afterthoughts. Policymakers need to provide space for iterative adjustments to policy as it is being developed and implemented, rather than assume that policy research, assessment, implementation and evaluation can happen in a neat and linear fashion. Communication of each policy should also be baked into all stages of the formulation–implementation process, rather than only developed at later stages. The core priority should be to recognise and value the living, dynamic nature of the different actors and stakeholders in a policy process, rather

than have the process be a black box within a government agency.

Many of these ideas, particularly the notion of dynamism and experimental iteration, are reflected in disciplines that have begun creeping into policy processes, including systems thinking, design thinking and complexity science. In Singapore, for instance, such approaches have begun to permeate more deeply into the policy and political process, with such vocabulary featuring much more prominently in policy formulation in the past decade. In the US, the more entrepreneurial members of the Santa Fe Institute, which specialises in complexity thinking, as well as design consultants at global firms like IDEO, have managed to incorporate their methods into public sector agencies, including sections of the Office of Personnel Management. More of these insights should be included in policy processes as features, not bugs, so that the ecological potential of governance systems and processes can be more deliberately harnessed.

Much will also need to change in how we educate and train current policy practitioners – but also citizens at large, given their more active and substantive roles in governance-as-ecology. Singapore has for several years now included complexity, design and systems thinking (alongside other skills like futures thinking and scenario planning) in the core syllabi of its leadership training programmes for civil servants earmarked as talent, who are groomed for future leadership positions. Public policy schools like the one I teach in have also begun to include such skills in their curricula, and adopted creative training methodologies like simulations and immersive experiences to cultivate the instincts needed by civil servants of the future. Such approaches also need to include citizens, businesses and civil society leaders, so that members of the entire ecosystem are included in capacity-building efforts; which means that schools will need to include such skills in syllabi for much younger students than currently practised.

Government recruitment will also need to evolve. Specialists like engineers, economists and lawyers will continue to be critical, especially as some of the most pressing challenges facing societies call for high levels of technical fluency – designing and managing digital technology; challenges of poverty alleviation, international development and climate change; harnessing the benefits while managing the risks of increased trade and interconnected global supply chains. But governments will also need to hire historians, philosophers, ecologists and biologists, who understand the ecological and moral interconnections among human agents, and between humans and their broader world. Critically, there will also be a more pronounced need for broader generalists who can bridge multiple disciplines, since many of the most complex and wicked problems of governance will involve both highly technical and highly human elements – what I like to tell my students is a combination of 'high tech and high touch' approaches. These generalists may be easily criticised as shallow practitioners of all trades, rather than having deep mastery; but their job will be to keep the entire moral ecology in mind, with all its intricate interconnections, both the obvious and less visible.

All this will involve significant effort, in terms of resources, time, stamina and shifts in mindsets and culture. There will be tensions and trade-offs involved, including between governments' drive to optimise, run efficient agencies and be part of 'representative' democracy, while catering for the untidiness and contingency capacity needed in dynamic ecosystems, as well as more participatory aspects of democratic life. Like all metaphors, which highlight some aspects of phenomena while downplaying others, the idea of a moral ecology will need to be seen as an approximation rather than an exact description of everything that happens in governance; and at some point, it may require updating in its own right. But for now, it seems a useful conceptualisation to ensure that the full, dynamic and living potential of governance can be realised.

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Lisa Conway, Lee-Anne Daffy, Samantha Faulkner, Julie Lahn, Steve Munns and Geoff Richardson

First Nations First

First Nations public servants, the future of the Australian public service workforce[1]

Abstract

This article imagines a future public service that is culturally safe and supportive of First Nations employees and end users, a place where transformative policy can emerge. The authors, First Nations and settler/non-indigenous academics and public servants, offer visions for change in five key areas, drawing on our academic research and public service practice.

Keywords First Nations, workforce policy, public service, cultural safety, indigenous affairs

Lisa Conway is a Sir Roland Wilson Foundation Pat Turner Scholar who recently completed a PhD at the Australian and New Zealand School of Government and Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University. **Lee-Anne Daffy** is a Sir Roland Wilson Foundation Pat Turner Scholar currently undertaking a PhD at Charles Darwin University. **Samantha Faulkner** is a visiting fellow at the Australian National University. **Julie Lahn** is a fellow at the Australian National University. **Steve Munns** is a Sir Roland Wilson Foundation Pat Turner Scholar and recent PhD graduate of the School of Regulation and Global Governance at the Australian National University. **Geoff Richardson** is an executive at First Nations Development Service. He spent 40 years working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in the Australian public service.
All the authors except Julie and Geoff are currently employed by the Australian public service; the opinions presented here are our own.

We are a group of colleagues – First Nations and settler public servants and academics – who share a passion for improved workplace environments and a commitment to supporting public service problem-solving through rigorous research. In this article we address the question of the future of First Nations peoples' employment in public service workplaces. The topic is multifaceted and we have chosen to write individually based on our interests, experience and research insights. The article explores current context, policy history, cultural safety, gender, mentoring, physical safety in service delivery and public service skills as they relate to the First Nations public service workforce. We write in the first person and introduce ourselves and our positionality. We write deliberately in this way to go against the tradition of writing in a single voice, to instead privilege our diverse experiences and insights. We take this approach to

honour indigenous[2] ways of doing research which make space for multiple voices. We are also acknowledging that public service workplaces are complex places and that there are no single fixes for addressing workforce issues; it requires everyone to pay attention and a relational approach to bring it all together.

Context setting

This article is being completed shortly after Australians voted 'no' in the referendum to create a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous Voice to Parliament; a vote where 80% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people supported a voice. A 'yes' vote would have, first, recognised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia, and established a body known as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to provide advice to government on matters affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Australian Government, 2023a). Instructive and thoughtful opinion pieces on the outcome written by First Nations and other scholars have already appeared (e.g., Nakata, 2023; Williamson, 2023). By the time this article appears in print, much will have been said about the outcome and how Australia lags behind other nations in formalising space for First Nations voices to speak to governing bodies and public service agencies. At this point, perhaps it is enough to say that the 'no' vote is a heartbreaking reminder of sharp divisions fracturing Australia, and that an opportunity has been missed to establish a mechanism that promised to enhance people's lives through the work of government and the public service.

In the absence of a representative Indigenous Voice to Parliament, what are the implications for future public service institutions that seek to make policies for First Nations peoples? First Nations public servants in any settler colonial nation should never be expected to take the place of absent representative voices. Until a permanent structure is created to allow communities to speak directly to government agendas, there is much work to do inside the bureaucracy that will improve outcomes for First Nations peoples and the experience of First Nations public servants.

The Australian government has already signed up to the challenge of transforming government entities on the inside. In 2019 a National Agreement on Closing the Gap between First Nations and non-indigenous peoples in statistical and other measures was initiated. This landmark agreement, negotiated between the federal government and a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations (the Coalition of Peaks), was significant in bringing indigenous organisational and service delivery expertise and government together to identify areas for improvement. It is unsurprising that one of four agreed areas for reform were government institutions themselves. Priority reform area 3's focus is on 'Transforming government organisations', whereby 'Governments, their organisations, and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund' (Coalition of Peaks, 2023).

Some progress has occurred in this area, but the Coalition of Peaks lead, Pat Turner (Secretaries Board, 2022), and the Productivity Commission's recent review (Productivity Commission, 2023) have been critical of progress. Much is yet to be achieved to change the culture of government departments and agencies. In this article we put forward multiple areas where public service agencies must change for there to be improved employment experiences for First Nations workers, enhanced decision making, and better outcomes for communities.

We, the authors, each write in our own voices, offering our standpoints and our research- and practice-led insights. One central thread binding our visions is the need for a redirection in workforce policy away from the tired and well-worn focus on headline statistics and First Nations public servant capabilities. A key insight is, rather, that the focus needs to shift towards improvements required within government agency workplace cultures to realise the current reform agenda for changing government entities on the inside.

When thinking about enhancing future workforce outcomes for First Nations peoples within the public service, it is instructive to note that 2023 marks 50 years since the Australian public service first began working on this issue.

First Nations employment in the public service – a 50-year history

Samantha Faulkner is a Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal woman with family ties to Badu and Moa islands in the Torres Strait and the Wuthathi and Yadhaigana people of Cape York Peninsula. Julie Lahn is a German-Scottish heritage settler who grew up in north-eastern Australia.

When thinking about enhancing future workforce outcomes for First Nations peoples within the public service, it is instructive to note that 2023 marks 50 years since the Australian public service first began working on this issue. The 1967 referendum in which the Australian population voted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people be allowed to vote and included in official population statistics paved the way for the federal government to make legislation and policy for First Nations peoples (previously this was the exclusive purview of subnational political jurisdictions) (see Ganter, 2016, for an historical account). In 1973 the

Public Service Board issued a two-page circular which read, in part:

> While Aboriginals are already employed in Commonwealth departments, the Board is of the view that new measures are required which, having regard to the increasing numbers of Aboriginals seeking employment in urban and non-urban areas, and to the rising levels of educational attainment of young Aboriginals, will give them increasing access to employment in the service ... In addition, such new measures are required to permit the Service to utilise fully the particular skills and talents that Aboriginals may contribute. (Office of the Public Service Board, 1973, p.1)

Following this first policy directive was the first survey in 1973 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants (Office of the Public Service Board, 1974). The policy and the survey established an agenda for action and a baseline for reporting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public service employment. These policy visions have been repeated, nuanced and statistically measured every year since 1973 (with rare exceptions). First Nations employment in the public service has been an ongoing concern for a very long time.

Much has improved in 50 years. Statistical representation has increased substantially, to the point where numbers are approaching parity: most recent estimates are 5,437 or 3.5% of all employees (Australian Public Service Commission, 2022). Behind the statistics, challenges remain. Employees remain disproportionately clustered at lower levels. Increased representation at senior executive levels (numbering 44 individuals as at June 2022 (ibid.) is a positive sign, particularly after having stalled for a decade (Australian National Audit Office, 2014; Faulkner and Lahn, 2019). But gains have been hard won and involve replacement of those departing. A new goal to increase representation across the Australian public service to reach 100 senior executive-level First Nations public servants, the 'SES 100', is now underway (Secretaries Board, 2022). The initiative asks that those applying be ready to 'make a difference' and 'influence decision-making processes', and individual preferences to 'remain on Country' will be considered rather than everyone being expected to move to the national capital (Australian Government, 2023b). Such initiatives may assist with the ongoing challenge to halt the significant churn across the board whereby annual intake figures in the service are high, but shorter median periods of service and early exit persist to diminish or even eclipse gains (APS Indigenous Steering Committee, 2018; Australian National Audit Office, 2014). A now substantial literature indicates a long list of obstacles getting in the way of improved workforce outcomes, including exit linked to feeling undervalued and underutilised, racism, pigeonholing, problems with managers, pressure to move from regional offices to the national capital, opaque 'unwritten rules' of bureaucracy, unconscious bias in recruitment and a lack of cultural safety (eg. Bargallie, 2020b; Lahn, 2018; Larkin, 2013; Leon, 2022). In this article we dig in to look beyond headline statistics to consider the conditions of employment in the public service. This is where we start our series of vision statements.

Without actively identifying the issue of workplace discrimination that Mob face in public service workplaces, it is unlikely that lessons can be taken from those experiences Mob have, and the urgency of addressing these issues is not realised.

Public service agencies must be culturally responsive and recognise that cultural load is not okay

My name is Lisa Conway and I am a Yorta Yorta woman. My recently completed PhD research focused on how to build cultural capability in public administrations, with a specific interest in the Australian public service.

There are three overarching barriers to achieving a culturally safe and responsive public service. The first is understanding and acknowledging what the current state of the public service is and how it is experienced by its indigenous peoples who work there. This is despite the growing body of research on this critical issue (e.g., Bargallie, 2020a, 2020b; Faulkner and Lahn, 2019; Larkin, 2013). The second barrier is a lack of an agreed definition and vision of what a culturally safe and responsive workplace looks like. A third and crucial hurdle is the need for a comprehensive understanding of what is required to shift from the current state to one that is culturally safe and responsive.

As a public administration, the Australian public service has not effectively addressed workplace discrimination experienced by Mob[3] (often labelled as cultural safety issues). A recent comparative discourse analysis of the Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy (the Mob strategy) and the Australian Public Service Disability Employment Strategy demonstrated a significant difference in how discrimination was addressed by each strategy, and how the Mob strategy went on to further reinforce the perception that it didn't exist and was not an area of focus (Conway, 2023).

Without actively identifying the issue of workplace discrimination that Mob face in public service workplaces, it is unlikely that lessons can be taken from those experiences Mob have, and the urgency of addressing these issues is not realised. As these employees are the canaries in the coalmine (Conway, 2020), the Australian public service needs to be more aware of this discrimination if it is to deliver on its

commitment to priority reform 3 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, to transform mainstream public administrations to be more culturally safe and responsive (Coalition of Peaks, 2023).

Currently in the Australian public service there is no agreed definition of what a culturally safe and responsive workplace is and no vision for what this future state looks like. What is clear, though, is that a culturally *unsafe* workplace is one where ongoing workplace discrimination endangers the psychological safety of its indigenous workers. This can be demonstrated through reported experiences of racism, as well as retention rates, which can be calculated via available data, but are not actively calculated nor reported on by the Australian public service (Conway, 2023).

If I were to describe my vision of a culturally safe and responsive workplace in an Australian public administration setting, one that as a Yorta Yorta woman I'd be happy to work in, I would be seeking three main attributes. First, it would have a shared accepted value of relationality; second, all staff would have a strong understanding of their cultural identity and that of their workplace; third, all knowledge would be valued, regardless of the knowledge holder's origin, and each worker would be responsible for their own cultural capability and Mob would not carry that as additional unpaid labour (often referred to as cultural load) (Bargallie, Carlson and Day, 2023).

Relationality is an important value in many indigenous groups (Tynan, 2021). It relates to the importance of connectedness, and each part's role in contributing to the whole. It's not about a hierarchy, where certain people are at the peak, but sees all things as equal and a necessary part of the whole. To embrace relationality, the Australian public service would be more conscious of the ripples created by its decisions in design and implementation of policy. Decision makers would be clear about policy intent and the repercussions of their decisions.

Additionally, bias would affect the public service less. Staff would be aware of their own cultural identity, and how it may impede decision making (yes, even the white[4] Australian workers, who mostly believe that 'race' equals 'non-white' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p.13). Mob would be able to share knowledge and experiences with decision makers and they would also be heard. The public service would understand that it currently privileges the knowledge of white Australians and take careful steps to now also consider Mobs' input in its actions.

And finally (though I could go on), Mob would be remunerated for their work in the public service, but not be expected to provide additional work on top for no compensation. We would not bear the load of being expected to teach our white colleagues about indigenous culture, and how Mob experience interactions with the public service. Instead, our white colleagues would embrace their own responsibility to become culturally safe and responsive, and it would not have to happen at our expense. The Australian public service will have changed the mindset and culture rather than expecting Mob to suppress our true selves and assimilate to save white Australia the discomfort of learning to work, think and behave in different ways.

Without an acknowledgement and understanding of the current levels of cultural safety and responsiveness within the Australian public service, and having no vision of what this future state looks like, the public service is not ready to overcome the third barrier, which is the 'how' of getting from the current to the desired state. Only once the public service has worked through the first two barriers can we even begin to plan and deliver real change for Mob.

Improving retention by reducing service user violence and aggression against public servants

I'm Steve Munns, and I am a Gumbaynggirr/Bundjalung man with my Mob being from Grafton in the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales. I'm a psychologist and cognitive neuroscientist and in my working life as an Australian public servant, in youth services, prisons and mental health worker roles, I have been aware of and witness to aggressions towards service staff.

I was recently supported by my public service employer to undertake a PhD at the Australian National University's School of Regulation and Global Governance under the Pat Turner Scholarship scheme, to identify factors involved in and strategies to reduce violence against public service staff by service users during the provision of social services. The majority of indigenous staff continue to be employed at lower levels and in out-servicing and frontline client-facing work, in contract employment, and overwhelmingly in service provision agencies. These are areas where frontline public servants face service user violence and aggression. This is a significant issue with serious consequences for recruitment, retention and public confidence. More can be done to make interface situations safer for both parties.

Prior research into service user violence and aggression has focused on the health sector, where violence and aggression is committed against attending nurses and doctors (Wressell, Rasmussen and Driscoll, 2018; Hills, Joyce and Humphreys, 2013). Little research has been conducted in public service organisations such as social services (such as Centrelink) or veterans'

> My survey of staff found that 51% of employees in Services Australia and 69% of Department of Veterans' Affairs staff had been subjected to service user violence and aggression during the previous 24 months.

services. To understand the issue in the public service context I employed a multifaceted approach focusing on three domains: the public service organisation, public servants and service users. The study was conducted with both non-indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Understanding these domains requires a multi-method approach. I undertook a thorough assessment of the environment, the structures, policies and experiences of service users and frontline public servants. I conducted multiple ethnographic site observations of interactions inside service provision agencies. I also spoke one-on-one with those who had been involved in aggressive incidents through in-depth interviews with service users and public service staff. In addition, almost 5,000 service users completed surveys. Triangulating data across all methods showed a high degree of alignment in the findings. I found that, looking across the three domains, there are clear areas of intervention where additional support can be provided that can interact to reduce violence.

Getting better data is a critical place to start. My survey of staff found that 51% of employees in Services Australia and 69% of Department of Veterans' Affairs staff had been subjected to service user violence and aggression during the previous 24 months. Part of the public service data problem I found was an under-reporting of violence and threats of intimidation. Official data significantly underestimated the number of incidents in the same period. There are multiple factors at play in under-reporting. Some frontline public servants simply feel it is part of their role to take the abuse from others and justify it with reference to the challenging life circumstances their service user clients face. Other public servants are reluctant to report receiving abuse out of fear they may be perceived as incompetent, resulting in job loss; this was a particular concern among contract staff. In addition, public service agencies lack consistency in how reporting service user violence and aggression is managed. This was found between Services Australia and the Department of Veterans' Affairs, as well as across the Services Australia network. Staff noted that the process was often cumbersome and too long, or that they had been discouraged from completing the online reporting tool.

One negative flow-on from a public service culture of under-reporting is that public servants see violence and the threat of it as the norm; this normalisation can affect people's mental health and their ability to stay composed at work. Public servants may not recognise when they're stressed and anxious at work. If a service user walks in and is upset and abusive there's a big risk that burnt-out public servants will themselves respond (robustly or forcefully), leading to unnecessary escalation. Staff-initiated conflict can also be more pronounced when agencies rely on contracted public servants who may be less empathetic or who may not have received the same level of training. Contractor-initiated triggering behaviours were reported to have accounted for a significant proportion of aggression incidents in my study.

Changing workplace expectations to promote a zero tolerance approach to aggression and encourage reporting of abuse and aggression would also give agencies the data to set up targeted initiatives. One example could be a rotation regime to prevent burnout by periodically rotating staff in and out of high-risk offices. Other supports for staff include putting in place appropriate training. De-escalation training is very important. A 'tick and flick' exercise such as a 20-minute video is ineffectual, but intensive and high-quality role-play training can equip public servants with the knowledge and the confidence to be able to assess the likelihood of aggression or implement multi-network regulation across agencies that work with the same individual. Understanding triggers on both sides through mental health training can assist staff to understand their clients, how mental health issues can present, and the triggers and practical strategies for avoiding and diffusing situations.

On the public service side another significant trigger is policies and procedures. This issue of policy-induced anxiety leading to aggression and self-harm is now well known in Australia, as recent royal commissions have been able to identify specific policies and procedures which have directly led to service users self-harming, and also acting aggressively towards public service staff. This also came through in my research and I was able to document where verbal threats were made to staff during calls, but also incidences of suicide threats by service users. Designing policies and procedures that are true to the legislation but are mindful of the potential for harm is critical in reducing the potential for violence.

Having a multi-networked approach to managing clients who require a number of support services can also reduce the likelihood of violence by reducing the number of interactions with public service agencies and staff. Educating public servants about the Privacy Act and helping them to understand what information can be shared is required for this sort of approach. Many don't currently understand that if there is a history of violence, or individuals are being threatening or aggressive, that information can be shared across agencies to design approaches to prevent possible incidents taking place.

Combining a multi-network approach with improved risk-assessment strategies can be a powerful combination for building awareness of triggers. If someone is noted

Having a multi-networked approach to managing clients who require a number of support services can also reduce the likelihood of violence by reducing the number of interactions with public service agencies and staff.

to be agitated, or we have insight into a possible aggression, a risk assessment could be undertaken on them. If the assessment indicates that they are at a higher level of risk, an alternative servicing arrangement could be put in place – for example, allocating one main contact and stipulating that interaction can only take place by telephone. The one main contact should be a staff member who has skills in being able to work with clients who have a tendency to become aggressive. This may be due to the client's mental health, neurological conditions or other factors.

Improving physical safety and mental wellbeing at work in public service agencies may also improve staff retention (Johnson et al., 2018; Tummers, Brunetto and Teo, 2016). Focusing on physical safety, personal wellbeing and retention of public service staff will have important flow-on benefits for the clients who present to these agencies.

Enhancing workforce retention and career progression of Aboriginal women through mentoring

I'm Lee-Anne Daffy, an Aboriginal woman with Taungurung clan group heritage from my mother's family. As a public servant of nearly two decades, I have witnessed the ever-evolving way in which the Australian public service has sought to increase its First Nations Australian workforce using specific models.

Specific models have seen increased recruitment of First Nations public service staff. However, in the same time frame, the Australian public service has seen high attrition rates for the same cohort (Australian National Audit Office, 2014). More concerningly, exit interviews, once routinely offered, have ceased, thus making it difficult to measure the reason in real time why so many leave.

As a researcher currently undertaking a PhD, it has become more and more apparent to me that there need to be several intersections of influence in the public service workplace to create change on a larger scale; change that requires positive challenge to be embraced. This is not an easy achievement. It requires people to be brave. It requires people to be psychologically safe. It demands a level of unrelenting determination, some degree of influential but measured confrontation, and purposeful creativity. It has the potential to allow robust debate that can bring about great ideas and new pathways.

As an Aboriginal woman my research passion has been to provide a mechanism to share stories of First Nations Australian women. Coming from a history of intergenerational trauma, my outlook has been to 'make it count'. My history has shaped my life, my outlook, my tenacity. Making it count is why I wanted to be a researcher, a researcher who could use the Western ways of writing to the advantage of indigenous Australians. Despite the difficulties of walking in two worlds, being able to shape future programme and policy design continues to inspire me.

I have made it my vision to highlight the strengths and tenacity of First Nations women in their desire to improve their life outlook through employment; in this instance employment in the Australian public service. First Nations women are an important cohort within the Australian public service: they make up more than two-thirds of all indigenous employees (Australian Public Service Commission, 2022). I use a qualitative, yarning approach to make space for women to speak their life journeys in entering the public service through entry-level programmes. The focus is on what is called 'apprenticeships', a 12-month programme whereby, generally, entry is at the low-level Australian Public Service level 3, and the programme ends in their promotion to level 4. Additionally, there is a graduate programme whereby entry is for those who have completed university at either undergraduate or postgraduate level.

> Acknowledging the value of differences in thinking for public service work is not only relevant to indigenous women; it can be a transferable insight to other minority groups, enhancing inclusivity and truly representing the multicultural make-up of the Australian population, nationwide.

Using my experiences, exposures and relationships provides me with a vast life library to draw from. I stand as a Taungurung woman: solid in my gender, solid in my culture; solid in my knowing, being and doing. Solid in my ability to relate, to engage and to keep it real. This is my standpoint. I am educated with two degrees, and currently completing a doctorate. I am a minority within a minority: tertiary educated as an Aboriginal woman. Married for more than 30 years, with a mortgage and employed full-time; still a minority within a minority. Statistically, housing and employment are key areas of concern for First Nations peoples. Understanding that employment is a significant key to improving other socio-economic outcomes, I hope to provide a diverse voice here.

In these programmes mentoring is offered at various times, with varying delivery and results. Mentoring does not automatically guarantee positive results but I have found that mentoring is a key element that does sit behind all positive outcomes for women employed at these levels. For women these positive outcomes include feeling psychologically and physically safe at work, having increased confidence, and the real possibility of career progression. Mentoring that started early in the placement was seen as highly productive. Those with this type of ongoing

support, particularly the First Nations apprentices, reported a sense of enhanced engagement and understanding. As women, having mentors who understood family connectedness and responsibilities outside work employment was also identified as important.

Effective change for the betterment of programme delivery and policy uptake should include working to understand the gaps in support and the successes. Achieving embedded improvements for women must begin with a broad investigation of what changes are necessary.

dominant social structures and the power differential. By viewing First Nations women as strong, capable and creative, the power shifts are dynamic. To achieve meaningful and sustained increases in retention and career progression for First Nations women, change must be required of mainstream line managers, office managers and senior executives. The areas to address these positive outcomes are many and far-reaching. Appropriate modelling to induce parity by making mentoring an integral part of the employment journey is essential.

A lot of areas don't deliver Indigenous programmes, but they have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, and struggle to find the relevance, to see the connections between their programmes and First Nations outcomes.

Using my lens from an indigenous Australian women's standpoint (Kwaymullina, 2017), understanding how the Aboriginal Australian woman brings immeasurable worth to public service is the core of my research. Ways of being, through this cultural lens, provides a foundation for difference in thinking. This unique perspective ensures that there is a more robust and representative knowing and doing. The value of targeted workforce strategies encourages cultural diversity (Larkin, 2013). Acknowledging the value of differences in thinking for public service work is not only relevant to indigenous women; it can be a transferable insight to other minority groups, enhancing inclusivity and truly representing the multicultural make-up of the Australian population, nationwide.

Viewing First Nations peoples from a deficit discourse must end. My research continues to challenge the mainstream, the

Being provided with the opportunity to speak doesn't translate to actual, effective change until all the actors involved are serious about the value of cultural diversity in agencies, departments, and the entirety of the Australian public service. It is only then that we can truthfully argue that the public service as an employer of choice.

All government agencies have a role; all public servants have a role: recognising and valuing the soft skills required for First Nations policy work

I'm Geoff Richardson, a descendant of the Meriam people of Murray Island (Mer) in the Torres Strait and the Kuku Yalanji/Djabugay peoples of North Queensland. I spent 40 years in the Australian public service, all in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs portfolio, and was the first Torres Strait Islander to reach the senior executive service level, where I spent 22 years. I retired in 2017 and now run an organisation connecting governments with First Nations communities.

When you retire you think a lot about what you've achieved and what remains to be done. Reflecting on the history of the Australian public service, the nearest we came to a vision for indigenous affairs at the policy level was under Prime Minister Whitlam; that was 50 years ago. Self-determination was the vision then, and it has to be the vision today. Currently, Closing the Gap is the main policy focus – achieving parity. But Closing the Gap is not a vision, it's a step towards it. Without a vision you can't hang your hat on anything. If, for example, indigenous affairs policy was linked to a vision for self-determination, you could ask about every policy initiative, 'how does that contribute towards the vision?' You can't say that about Closing the Gap. It would be an amazing thing to close gaps in outcomes, but that's a policy outcome, not a vision. If we reach parity, that's not the same as self-determination. Having a vision in public service is like the lighthouse on the hill: it keeps you focused on the way you work towards closing those gaps in outcomes.

The majority of policy affecting First Nations peoples actually comes from mainstream not indigenous policy areas. A lot of areas don't deliver indigenous programmes, but they have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, and struggle to find the relevance to see the connections between their programmes and First Nations outcomes. Of the total amount of money spent, indigenous-specific spending is roughly 20%. The heavy lifting always has to be done in mainstream agencies. But the specific criticism has always been of indigenous agencies like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the National Indigenous Affairs Agency. They are an easy target for disdain felt by non-indigenous agencies: 'it's not our problem, it's theirs'. In reality, every agency deals with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Embedding this awareness to ensure all departments see how their areas affect indigenous people is sorely needed in the public service. The government needs to make that very clear: it is everybody's business.

One of the things that the public service struggles with, because of the silos, is complexity. For example, take an issue like climate change: the way the public service works, internationally too, they struggle and go through a process of reductionism, reducing a complex issue to bite-sized chunks so that they can push it out to agencies to design and deliver targeted programmes. Reductionism is our biggest enemy, reinforcing the silos. Everyone owns their part. Reductionism does not recognise the interconnectedness and there is no responsibility for the whole. Indigenous affairs suffers from this sort of mindset.

Much more internal public service work needs to occur to instil community development-type skills – mediation, facilitation, and system and subsystem skills. If those sorts of programmes are rolled out and embedded as standard, you are going to grow a different kind of public servant and that will influence the culture within the public service; that will play out in the workplace and affect how those public servants relate to other colleagues. It will improve both policy and programming, but also the employment experience.

I came up with these domains of skills to work effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In my opinion there are four skill domains required for the public service now and in the future. You need a facilitation domain to be able to mediate, to broker things when you go into the community. In our space of indigenous affairs you need that. You also need development skills, to impart knowledge skills and work with a developmental mindset. You need systems skills to see things holistically and understand how systems map and work out, how things interconnect. Lastly, you need cross-cultural skills to communicate effectively. Most people have touches of these skills; some people have big doses of some but not others. The complete public servant will have big doses of all four skills.

Thinking specifically about working within indigenous affairs, some of these skills need to be brought into work-level standards of employment. These should reflect the skills needed to work in an indigenous space, especially with the importance of cultural knowledge skills. They should recognise and value the range of soft skills that many indigenous (and non-indigenous) staff can bring and these sorts of skills should be built into position descriptions. This will avoid the situation where the wrong sort of people (those who use indigenous affairs as a stepping stone) come to work in the space.

I would like to finish with the notion of 'cashing my credits', the additional work that indigenous people take on to get things done within the bureaucracy. It is those relationships that we have as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that we draw on, those years spent on building networks, working on relationships, that we use within our work domain. Not many non-indigenous senior executives would have done this. If we don't step in and do the work, bring people together for community consultation, for example, then it won't get done, or get done in a culturally appropriate and respectful way. In my experience, community thanked us for turning up and giving time and being honest. This is a part of adding value to the process.

The Australian public service needs that value. Relationality, connection and working in a 'good way' cuts through.

A key future opportunity then rests with the ability of public service agencies to value First Nations public servant insights, to invest in time away for them to dig into issues, and take opportune risks to facilitate implementation and transferability.

Conclusion

In this article our first priority has been to present research-led ideas for improving future public service workforce outcomes for First Nations peoples. A key focus of settler colonial governments is to recruit and retain indigenous peoples within public servant ranks. Headline target statistics are created and reported on to maintain focus on this policy aim. But, looking beyond the big statistics, agencies will improve retention if they attend to underlying issues for employees, such as feeling culturally, mentally and physically safe at work, being supported and understanding the 'unwritten rules' of public service workplaces at entry and when seeking to move through the ranks to senior levels, and recognition of the unique value of First Nations peoples' contribution, including those soft skills that are vital to future public service work. Thinking about employment in indigenous affairs sphere specifically, a unique set of skills is required of all employees, non-indigenous included. Recognising and formalising these skill sets will create safer workplaces for all and improve coordination of programme and service delivery for First Nations peoples.

A secondary purpose of our article is to demonstrate the value in supporting First Nations public servants to investigate deeply the issues they've identified in their everyday work. During Geoff's 40 years of service in government, he and other First Nations colleagues pursued such projects within the confines of the public service and in addition to their everyday workload. Lisa, Lee and Steve have, on the other hand, been supported to step outside their public service roles and investigate issues they have identified as relevant to their public service agencies through PhD research under the Pat Turner Scholarship programme; Samantha was supported by the Australian Public Service Commission via direct temporary secondment to a

university research position to work with Julie. The results of this support speak for themselves. They are also echoed in the recent Thodey-led review of the Australian public service, which asked what it would take for a future public service 'to become more porous, with people moving in and out during their careers, bringing expertise and insight from other sectors', because 'the public service will never be at its best working in isolation' (Thodey, 2018).

From Thodey's recommendations and Geoff's insight we can envision a public service that values and makes space for innovation and testing of ideas from inside the public service. Any future public service should also be looking to invest in its First Nations public servants by encouraging staff to take their ideas into the academy to investigate public service issues and test the practice-based ideas and fixes. The benefits of doing this are threefold: benefits to the specific public service area under investigation; benefits to First Nations public servants as they build skills and confidence in a different (research) domain; and benefits to First Nations career advancement (if not uptake of the research findings).

A broader benefit is to build the research capacity of the public service generally. Of course, a known issue arising from such initiatives is translation and implementation, with uptake stifled by gaps in knowledge systems and professional practices separating academia and public service (see, for example, Mercer et al., 2021). A key future opportunity then rests with the ability of public service agencies to value First Nations public servant insights, to invest in time away for them to dig into issues, and take opportune risks to facilitate implementation and transferability.

1 Throughout this article this expression refers to the Commonwealth public service.
2 In this article 'indigenous' refers to Australian indigenous people (often capitalised now).
3 A term often used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to refer to themselves and their communities.
4 In this article 'white Australian' refers to the dominant socio-cultural group.

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Adopting a Purposeful Approach to Hybrid Working integrating notions of place, space and time

Abstract

Hybrid working is a prevalent way of working, representing a significant change for public sector organisations. The change management literature brings together the notions of place and space; however, little research on hybrid working has used this framing. In this article, we extend this framing to include time, arguing that key to hybrid working effectiveness is the adoption of a purposeful approach to integrating place, space and time. This article has the potential to assist public sector human resource practitioners, managers, employees and policymakers as they navigate their way through these changing times.

Keywords hybrid working, public sector, change management, working from home, telecommuting, temporal flexibility

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Hybrid working is here to stay. It involves employees splitting their time between working from home (or remotely) and at employer sites (Gibson et al., 2023; Halford, 2005). The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in many Western organisations, including public sector organisations, moving to widespread working from home (Berry, Trochmann and Millesen, 2022; Fischer et al., 2023). We now see the continuation of working from home in the form of hybrid working. It is so prevalent as to be considered the 'new normal' (Babapour Chafi, Hultberg and Bozic Yams, 2021; Choudhury et al., 2022; Hamer, Waddon and Guilfoyle, 2022; Llave et al., 2022).

Many organisations are currently in a transition phase of implementing and embedding hybrid working (Raghavan, Demircioglu and Orazgaliyev, 2021). While the initial crisis of the pandemic has passed, establishing hybrid working arrangements still represents a significant organisational change that continues to require adaptability. The change management

literature brings together the notions of place and space and examines their effect on organisational life; specifically, how organisations are disrupted and consequently change, adapt and evolve (Wright et al., 2023). However, little research on hybrid working has explicitly used this framing. We note studies in adjacent areas: feminist geographers have examined place in the context of working from home (Orman, McGuirk and Warren, 2023); researchers have considered space in relation to co-working spaces (see, for example, Bouncken, Kraus and Martínez-Pérez, 2020) and virtual spaces (see, for example, Petani and Mengis, 2021). Our article goes some way towards filling this gap.

Additionally, while there is extensive literature on remote working and working from home, fewer researchers have focused on the public sector since the onset of the pandemic (those who have done so include Buick et al., 2022; Fischer et al., 2023, Palumbo, 2020; Schuster et al., 2020; Williamson et al., 2023; Williamson, Colley and Foley, 2022). Research on how hybrid working is undertaken in the public sector is even more scant. Public sector organisations, therefore, have limited academic research to draw upon as they design and implement hybrid working. We aim to rectify this situation by using the framing of place and space, as well as time, which is a key component of hybrid working, to identify main considerations for public sector organisations embedding hybrid working. Our study has wide applicability, as one study found that 50% of public servants – which included frontline workers – could work from home for at least two days a week (NSW Innovation and Productivity Council, 2020).

We provide an overview of the emerging literature on hybrid working, noting that the paucity of research on hybrid working in the public sector means we are unable to solely focus on public sector research. However, we draw out insights which are relevant to the public sector. Additionally, we include findings from two of our most recent projects examining flexible, and hybrid, working in the public sector in Australia (Buick et al., 2022; Williamson and Colley, 2022). These studies have focused on the perceptions of managers and employees, which is the lens we adopt in this article. We argue that key to effectiveness is the adoption of a purposeful approach by managers, teams and individuals to integrating place, space and time. We use this framing as these elements are inextricably linked, with this approach useful to highlight the synergies and tensions inherent within hybrid working. We aim to assist public sector human resource practitioners, managers, employees and policymakers as they navigate their way through these changing times.

> … … adopting a purposeful approach to place [is] focused on optimising the benefits of working both from home and from employers' sites. It involves the careful consideration of the reasons for working in different locations

Place

'Place' focuses on *where* employees work, with locations typically including working from home and employers' sites. Hybrid working involves employees operating from both locations, making decisions about how much time is spent in each. Examining working at home first, recent research highlights that decisions to work from this location are shaped by the type of work undertaken by employees, with Working from home enabling employees to focus on tasks that require deep concentration (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2022). This is particularly important for those engaged in knowledge-based work or when working on complex aspects of a project or task (Buick et al., 2022).

This deep focus and fewer interruptions results in increased productivity (Bloom, Han and Liang, 2023; Williamson and Colley, 2022; Williamson et al., 2023). Working from home is also reported to aid work–life balance (Williamson and Colley, 2022) and, in turn, enhance employee well-being (Vyas, 2022). However, challenges associated with working in a home environment include professional and social isolation (Babapour Chafi, Hultberg and Bozic Yams, 2021) and digital exhaustion (Microsoft, 2021). For some employees, working from home is associated with an increase in work–life conflict due to blurred lines between work and leisure (Palumbo et al., 2022; Vyas, 2022). It also presents limitations to the development and maintenance of quality relationships in the workplace, with concerns about the impact of sustained working from home on organisational climate and cultures (Hilberath et al., 2020). Therefore, home as a place of work has both positive and negative aspects.

Conversely, working from employers' sites is valued by those working in collaborative projects, who have high levels of task interdependence and a need to solve complex problems. These activities all benefit from face-to-face communication (Buick et al., 2022). Research shows that employees in consultancy and advisory roles do not feel the need to have their own workstation, as their job roles require them to be outside the office often. They instead value workspaces that enable collaboration (Skogland, 2017), such as employer sites. Working from the office is also considered central to strengthening team cultures (Gallagher, 2021; Hirsch, 2023), including in the public sector (Babapour Chafi, Hultberg and Bozic Yams, 2021). It is also considered important for the effective onboarding of new employees and

strengthening relationships and connections within teams or groups (Buick et al., 2022). Some managers also prefer their team to work from the office due to the perception that face-to-face engagement improves motivation and effective performance management (Gratton, 2021; Hopkins and Bardoel, 2023). Face-to-face interactions also aid employee well-being, due to facilitating improved communication and relationship quality (Beckel and Fisher, 2022; Charalampous, Grant and Tramontano, 2022; Simone, Geiser and Lockhar, 2019).

Reasons for office-based working are therefore varied, covering task/project, motivation, performance, well-being and relational factors. However, the challenges of working in office environments are well-known, and include frequent interruptions and distractions, particularly in open-plan workplaces (Puranik, Koopmann and Vough, 2020; Salvadori, Hindmarsh and Heath, 2023), which can impede both employee productivity and well-being. In a Covid-normal context, employee health and safety concerns also present additional challenges for use of open-plan office space (Samani and Alavi, 2020; Spicer, 2020).

The increased use of hybrid working has exposed tensions in working preferences and expectations of employees and senior managers regarding place (Gratton, 2021; Hirsch, 2023; Hopkins and Bardoel, 2023; Pianese, Errichiello and Da Cunha, 2023). For example, employees prefer to work from home two to three days per week, whereas senior managers would prefer employees to work from the office at least three days per week (Aksoy et al., 2023; Hirsch, 2023; Williamson and Colley, 2022). Our research suggests this may be, at least partly, due to employees focusing on the benefits of working from home to them individually, whereas senior managers focus on the implications for team and organisational functioning. These tensions are also underpinned by the perception that the different locations are opposing, rather than complementary. They focus on whether employees work from home or the office, rather than considering the benefits of working from both locations.

> … a purposeful approach to space … involves a shift from employers focusing on where people work to creating an optimal space in which employees can deliver their work outcomes

Our research suggests that these tensions can be resolved through adopting a purposeful approach to place, focused on optimising the benefits of working both from home and from employers' sites. It involves the careful consideration of the reasons for working in different locations, including task requirements (including level of task interdependence), team requirements, and what activities are needed to maintain a positive and supportive work environment and quality relationships. It also involves conversations among team members (and managers) regarding when task and team goals could be aided by face-to-face interactions, enabling high performance at the team level. Finally, it entails attaching primacy and value to maintaining team cultures, identifying ways to ensure desired behaviours are consistently encouraged and reinforced. Once this is established, such an approach involves utilising a combination of locations to ensure that individual and team outcomes are achieved. This includes managers, teams and individuals adopting a coordinated approach to office-based working, ensuring that employees who need to work together attend the office at the same time. However, this needs to work in conjunction with 'space' to ensure that benefits are optimised.

Space

Space focuses on how the various spaces involved in hybrid working are used. These spaces include both the physical workspace (office and home-based) and the virtual workspace in which work is conducted. This is due to hybrid working allowing employees the flexibility to work both from conventional office spaces and remotely, utilising digital technologies. Consideration of space recognises that the benefits gained through hybrid working are largely shaped by how these spaces are configured.

First, we examine the space when working from home. Physical aspects include the configuration and use of space within home offices and at employers' sites. Working from home is valued as employees have more control over their home work environment (Gratton, 2021; Taylor et al., 2022). This control includes arranging work equipment to facilitate comfort and accessibility, and controlling noise levels within the environment, thereby increasing well-being and productivity due to reducing interruptions and distractions. This may be why older workers prefer to work from home, as research suggests this demographic group prefers more privacy and quiet work environments (Hoendervanger et al., 2018; Leesman, 2017; van den Berg et al., 2020). It is also a core reason why employees with sensory sensitivities and disabilities prefer to work from home (Williamson et al., 2023).

However, research conducted during Covid-19 lockdowns highlighted how the blending of work and personal spaces at home heightened interruptions and worsened work–life balance (Craig and Churchill, 2021; Dockery and Bawa, 2020). In addition, unavailability of ergonomic work equipment and a dedicated work area, the risk of overwork, and psychosocial problems, such as sleeping disorders and social isolation, were highlighted as some of the main hazards of working from home

during the pandemic (Buomprisco et al., 2021).

Second, we consider space and employers' premises. Physical aspects of employer sites primarily concern workspace design. Organisations have experimented with different workspace designs, primarily focused on hot-desking, activity-based working where employees do not have assigned workstations but instead share office spaces optimised for different types of activities (Hoendervanger et al., 2019), and traditional office environments (Eismann et al., 2022; Migliore, Ceinar and Tagliaro, 2021).

Key debates regarding space concern whether hot-desking and activity-based working environments are more efficient and effective than traditional office set-ups. They have been popular due to being more cost effective (Van Der Voordt, 2004) and because they can facilitate collaboration and interactions (Eismann et al., 2022). However, key challenges of hot-desking and activity-based working are frequent interruptions and noise (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2022), due to being open-plan. The distractions and lack of privacy in office spaces impose additional demands on employees, resulting in them spending extra energy, cognitive resources and time to complete work, thereby impeding job satisfaction, health and well-being (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2020; Hodzic et al., 2021; van den Berg et al., 2020).

Our research highlights that negative perceptions of activity-based working emerge for various reasons. These include employees not having their own workstations, associated disruptions caused by needing to unpack and re-pack belongings each day, being restricted to certain spaces, and the configuration of the physical workspace (Buick et al., 2022). Our research also highlights that workspace design and configuration shapes experiences and perceptions of the attractiveness of employer sites. We also found that interruptions and noise are most disruptive when collaborative and social spaces are not enclosed, and/or there are insufficient quiet spaces to work from. This contributes to perceptions that employees are unable to undertake focused work from the office (ibid.). This is particularly important due to the recent focus on how employees might be 'attracted back to the office' (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2022, p.2).

> … virtual space, which bridges both home and employers' sites … enable interactions, collaboration and knowledge sharing

Research explores how office workspace design characteristics influence employee choices regarding space (Ansio, Käpykangas and Houni, 2020; Arundell et al., 2018; Engelen et al., 2019). However, a deeper understanding of the differences in spatial experiences is needed to determine the impact of these experiences on employees and organisations (Wright et al., 2023). This means that there are a range of factors requiring consideration, and that the current emphasis on making offices more sociable, to entice workers back (Capossela, 2022), may be oversimplified. A nuanced approach to determining where work is best performed would be beneficial for both organisations and employees.

Finally, we consider virtual space, which bridges both home and the employer's site. While the physical workspace remains relevant for employees who choose to work at employers' premises, the virtual space offers opportunities to employees (Halford, 2005). The virtual space encompasses virtual platforms and online communication tools (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams). The effective utilisation of the virtual environment relies heavily on access to resources, including adequate internet connectivity, and effective digital literacy skills. As employees return to offices after pandemic lockdowns, the use of virtual space has increased. One study has found that online messages increased by up to 20% when employees worked from home, and 10% even on the days when employees worked from their employer's site (Bloom, Han and Liang, 2023). This suggests that even as employees work side by side in an office, they are increasingly preferring virtual communications.

Our research highlights how these platforms and tools enable interactions (formal and informal), collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees who are geographically dispersed. Teams who reported high levels of connectivity and engagement used these platforms and tools frequently for a range of purposes. This included more informal exchanges, including sharing GIFs in chat rooms and discussing social matters, and more formal exchanges of information for work purposes. Such usage can enhance accessibility and inclusivity of employees from diverse groups (e.g., people with disabilities), mitigate the risk of social isolation when working from home and remotely, and help maintain positive team climates (Buick et al., 2022). However, utilising the virtual space presents challenges for managers as it constrains their ability to observe employee behaviours and track team performance (see Downes, Daellenbach and Donnelly, 2023).

Further, research highlights that some teams may find virtual collaboration more effective than in-person collaboration, meaning that a working from home, deep thinking/working in the office, communicative-based work binary is too simplistic (Pozen and Samuel, 2021). Our research also found, however, that some employees lack these resources and skills, thus posing risks for inclusion and ability to participate in team interactions online. This finding supports our argument for a purposeful approach to space, considering both physical (employer sites, home-based offices) and virtual spaces. This involves a shift from employers focusing on where people work to creating an optimal space in which employees can deliver their work outcomes (Falkman, 2021; Scottish Futures Trust, 2021), while facilitating positive

work environments and employee well-being.

Focusing on optimal workspace involves purposeful workspace design and the utilisation of all three spaces in hybrid working. In home-based offices, purposeful workspace design requires employees to have control over their work environment. This includes the ability to control noise levels and the number and type of interruptions experienced, as well as having the resources to set up their workspaces in an ergonomically safe way. In employer sites, this includes configuring space to foster serendipitous interactions, collaborative working and social interactions, thus ensuring that the space supports team and organisational-level productivity. It also includes configuring space in a way that facilitates acoustic and visual privacy, enabling focused work and private conversations. This means that building design considerations should include practical interior design elements, such as locating quiet zones away from social zones (Candido et al., 2021), and allowing employees the flexibility to choose their workspace for collaboration with colleagues. This enables employees to feel part of a team and not isolated.

Purposeful design is important due to recent research showing that employees who prefer to work from home for focused tasks also prefer to do communicative work in the office (Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2022). This suggests that employees do want to work from both their homes and the office; however, they also need workspaces that enable communication and collaboration, as well as focused work. When space is not managed in a purposeful way, employees can be deeply resistant to office attendance and critical of requirements to work from the employers' premises (Colenberg et al., 2021). Ultimately, it acts as a deterrent to working from employers' premises, with a strong preference to solely work from home; this has the potential to erode the quality of team dynamics and relationships. Virtual spaces can bridge the work/office divide and ameliorate any resistance. They can support collaboration and enhance connectivity and inclusivity of employees. They can also replicate ad hoc queries and discussions between team members through chat functionality, and availability for such interactions can be easily displayed on several common virtual platforms.

> … our research highlights the need for planned synchronous work, both in-person and virtual. Practitioner research also emphasises the need for effective planning of asynchronous work, to ensure workflow and to manage group input …

Time

Hybrid working enables employees to work to a different conception of time. The Industrial Revolution quantified time as people moved to cities to work. Rather than working to complete tasks, workers became employees and worked to linear conceptions of time. This rigid and static conception of time is known as 'time discipline', revolving around standard working hours in a standard week (Lee and Liebenau, 2002). Widespread working from home – and other forms of temporal flexibility – disrupt this time discipline. This is due to less emphasis being placed on *when* employees work than on what they are achieving (Buick et al., 2022). Research highlights that providing employees with temporal flexibility and autonomy over time can reduce work/life conflict, and improve employee well-being (Gonsalves, 2020). It can also enable productivity gains through enabling individuals to undertake work aligned with their circadian rhythms (Martin, 2023). The increased use of temporal flexibility has led to traditional conceptions of time being disrupted, even as organisations and managers attempt to impose rigid working hours to alleviate concerns that employees working flexibly will be less productive (Gratton, 2021; Kotera and Correa Vione, 2020; Lee and Liebenau, 2002).

Key debates have been around whether the traditional focus on chronological time around specific schedules (e.g., 9–5) is helpful or whether it is useful to instead think about what needs to happen in synchronous ways and what can take place asynchronously (Gratton, 2021). Since the onset of the pandemic, technological improvements have enabled both synchronous and asynchronous working. Teams have become more comfortable working hybridly, and asynchronous working has increased (Gallagher, 2021; Whillans, Perlow and Turek, 2021). While this is beneficial, our research highlights the need for planned synchronous work, both in-person and virtual. Practitioner research also emphasises the need for effective planning of asynchronous work, to ensure workflow and to manage group input (Teevan et al., 2022). Additionally, asynchronous collaborative working can increase inclusion, giving all team members the opportunity to participate; however, it can also be more time-consuming due to increased levels of consultation (Whillans, Perlow and Turek, 2021).

Another key debate concerns whether employees should be required to spend a minimum amount of time working from their employer's site. Some organisations, notably Twitter, Amazon, Zoom, Disney and the Commonwealth Bank in Australia (Mahdawi, 2023; Nolan, 2022), are that mandating employees return to the office for at least part of the week. In research conducted by Williamson, 40% of 5,000 survey respondents stated that their organisation imposed a cap on the number

of days employees could work from home. The most common cap was two days a week at home (Williamson and Colley, 2022). These mandates appear to be arbitrary and not supported by any evidence. Furthermore, they can result in backlash from employees (Castrillon, 2023) and are not the most effective way to encourage in-person communication and collaboration. Therefore, ongoing debates regarding the amount of time that employees should work in the office (see, for example, Appel-Meulenbroek et al., 2022; Barrero, Bloom and Davis, 2021; Hedges, 2023) may become irrelevant, as hybrid working enables time for concentration, thus aiding productivity, *and* for team-based communication.

Our research suggests that a purposeful approach to time is needed for effective hybrid working. Managers, teams and individuals all have a role to play in adopting this approach. Managers need to veer away from the traditional focus on core business hours and towards a more fluid and dynamic focus on time. Teams need to openly and frequently communicate about team priorities and activities, agreeing on what activities require them to work synchronously, either virtually or in person, and adopt a coordinated approach to synchronous working (e.g., attending the office at the same time). This can enable a central focus on team goals and productivity, clarifying what is required for high performance at the team level, and adopting an outcomes focus, rather than just measuring outputs. This is particularly important in contexts where work outputs are not easily measured, where managers require a combination of control measures to ensure that productivity is maintained. It also enables managers to monitor the attitudes of employees working remotely, which is important for maintaining performance (see Downes, Daellenbach and Donnelly, 2023).

Teams also need to agree on what activities and tasks can be done asynchronously. This approach also involves providing employees with sufficient autonomy and control to determine how to configure their working day in order to undertake asynchronous activities in a way that optimises their productivity and well-being. The effective implementation of a purposeful approach to time relies on mutuality and negotiation, with discussions centering on how to meet organisational, team and employee needs.

We argue that adopting a purposeful approach to integrating place, space and time within hybrid work models enables the tailoring of work experiences that foster enhanced productivity at both the individual and team levels, with benefits experienced at the organisational level.

Discussion and conclusions

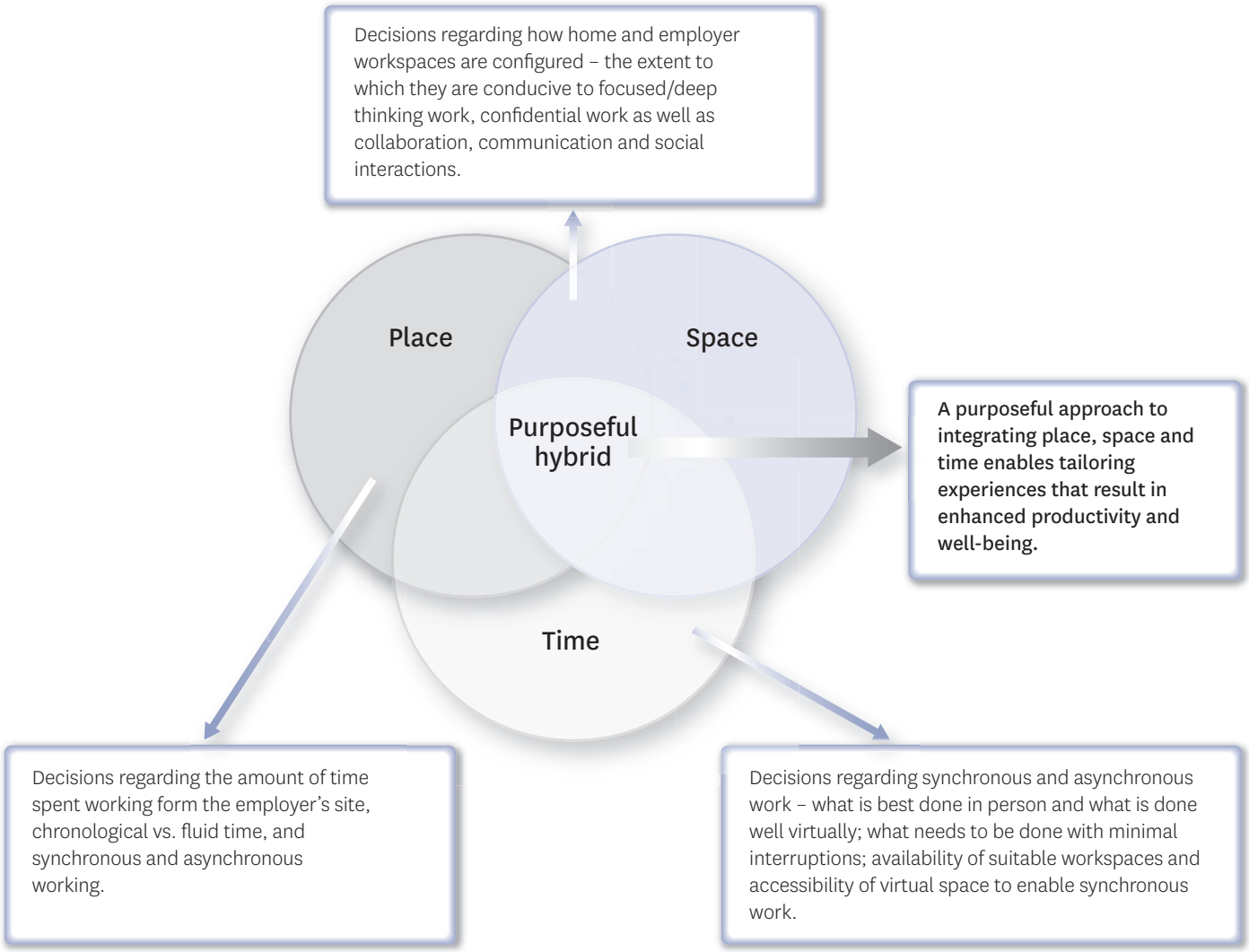
The change management literature has brought together the notions of place and space and has examined their effect on organisational life (Wright et al., 2023). We have used and extended this framing to understand hybrid working by incorporating notions of time. We contend that hybrid working requires a paradigmatic change in the previous ways of working, where the workplace encompasses not only the employer's site but also the employees' homes and other locations; the workspace is not confined to the employer's office space but also includes the home and virtual spaces; and time includes not only rigid time discipline, but also fluid time.

We have highlighted that existing debates on hybrid working are often narrow and simplistic. They adopt binary arguments with preferences of working either from employer sites or home and working either to rigid time or fluidly. What is often overlooked is that when managed well, hybrid working involves the utilisation of all spaces, physical (employer, remote) and virtual. Hybrid working also enables more fluid notions of time, particularly through thinking about what activities need to happen in synchronous ways and what can take place asynchronously (Cazaly, 2022; Gratton, 2021). As such, we propose that the notions of place, space and time inevitably overlap when working hybridly (see Figure 1).

We argue that adopting a purposeful approach to integrating place, space and time within hybrid work models enables the tailoring of work experiences that foster enhanced productivity at both the individual and team levels, with benefits experienced at the organisational level. It has the potential to enhance individual, team and, consequently, organisational productivity through centring the need for optimal work environments, considering how employer sites can be designed to support collaboration, communication and social interactions while also providing quiet spaces for focused and confidential working. It also involves consideration of how to optimise virtual spaces for team meetings and interactions, ensuring that collaboration is accessible to all (GitLab, 2023). Doing so shapes decisions regarding place and time in a more nuanced way, moving away from the binary portrayals that have dominated discourse to date.

Similarly, purposefully integrating place, space and time in hybrid work models has the potential to optimise employee well-being. It does this through emphasising the need for employees to work across multiple locations, engaging

Figure 1: Overlaps between place, space and time in hybrid working



in both solitary, focused work and team-based working and activities (in person and virtually). This mitigates feelings of isolation and fosters a more balanced and fulfilling work experience. It also centres the need to provide employees with the autonomy to shape their work, having the freedom to choose the place to work from and creating workspaces aligned with individual needs. Such measures mitigate the stressors associated with rigid office environments and contribute positively to employee well-being. Further, the autonomy to choose the 'time' of work that hybrid working permits also has significant influences on employee well-being (Wang et al., 2021). Free from the constraints of fixed schedules, employees can align their work hours with their personal commitments, enhancing their overall work–life balance. This, along with the reduced stress of commuting, enables more flexibility to manage work and personal lives, thereby contributing to heightened well-being.

Organisations, including public sector organisations, would benefit from recognising the nuances in hybrid working. As we have shown, hybrid working involves much more than working in two (or more) locations. The binary framing of hybrid working which has dominated debates and practices obscures the interstices and overlaps between home and work. Using a framing of place, space and time reveals that where, how and when work is conducted are all related, yet each has specific factors requiring consideration. Additionally, academic theorising around the intersections of space, place and time could be further developed. There is still much work for practitioners, human resource professionals, policymakers and academics to do to fully realise the benefits of hybrid working, particularly to ensure that this form of working is available for a wide range of public service roles. We acknowledge that the feasibility of hybrid working and how it is implemented depends on the context and the type of work undertaken. However, we also argue that the emergence of novel technologies presents immense opportunity for public sector organisations to minimise the contextual restrictions for implementing hybrid working.

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John M. Bryson, Bill Barberg and
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The Future of Public Service and Strategy Management-at-Scale

Abstract

Increasingly, government agencies and non-profit organisations are called on to address challenges that go well beyond any individual organisation's boundaries and direct control. Strategic management for single organisations cannot respond effectively to these cross-boundary, cross-level, and often cross-sector challenges. Instead, a new approach called strategy management-at-scale is required. This article compares strategic management with strategy management-at-scale. It responds to the question, what does strategy management-at-scale look like, and what seems to contribute to its success? The new approach helps foster – but hardly guarantees – direction, alignment and commitment among the multiple organisations and groups needed to make headway against the challenge.

Keywords strategic management, strategy management-at-scale, strategising, strategic planning, strategy mapping

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Increasingly, government agencies and non-profit organisations are called on to address challenges that go beyond any individual organisation's boundaries and direct control. In other words, a significant mismatch exists between the scale of the challenges and what any single organisation – including any government – can do to address them. Unfortunately, there is little evidence and not enough theorising about how strategy management at the scale of these cross-organisational, cross-level, cross-sector challenges can lead to better outcomes and greater public value (Ansell, Sorensen and Torfing, 2021; Taylor et al., 2021). What is it about this new context that requires adaptations or rethinking of strategic planning and management for organisations (aka strategic management), and what kinds of adaptations are necessary? How can strategic planning and management contribute to robust governance in these challenging situations wherein multiple organisations and groups are affected, involved, or have some responsibility to act? Specifically, what does strategy management-at-scale look like, and what seems to contribute to its success (Bryson et al., 2021, 2023; Bryson, Crosby and Seo, 2023)?

Strategic management is a well-established feature of public and non-profit organisations. Substantial research indicates that strategic planning and management can positively affect organisational performance. Strategic planning is an approach to helping organisations figure out what they should do, how and why. Meta-analyses show that strategic planning can result in moderate, statistically significant, positive outcomes in performance (e.g., George, Walker and Monster, 2019). Strategic management is 'the reasonable integration of strategic planning and implementation across an organisation (or other entity) in an ongoing way to enhance the fulfillment of mission, meeting of mandates, continuous learning, and sustained creation of public value' (Bryson, 2018, p.24). Studies of strategic management approaches also demonstrate that they tend to have a positive effect on organisational performance (e.g., Berman and Hijal-Mograbi, 2022). At its best, strategic management fosters ongoing strategic thinking, acting and learning so that challenges – including at least some aspects of those that are beyond a single organisation's direct control – are effectively identified, anticipated and addressed. Strategising thus becomes a continuous activity, not limited to formal strategic planning efforts.

Strategic management for single organisations basically presumes that the organisations have at least some authority and agency to pursue their missions. The organisations may not be fully 'in charge', but they are at least presumed capable of making some progress towards fulfilling their missions and achieving their goals. Unfortunately, many of the issues society faces cannot be addressed successfully by single organisations. Instead, actions by and contributions from multiple organisations across multiple boundaries, sectors and levels are required if significant progress is to be made. No organisation is close to being fully in charge in such a shared-power world (Crosby and Bryson, 2005; Ansell and Torfing, 2015). The scale of the challenges is simply too big for any single organisation to make much of a difference. Consider the challenges of climate change, major natural disasters, the Covid-19 pandemic and future pandemics, an aging population with rising prevalence of dementia, uneven performance and failures of major parts of the economy, unevenly effective and adequate healthcare and education systems, family justice systems that contribute to harm for the families they serve, deepening inequality and its concomitant effects, and historic distrust in a broad range of institutions. No one is in charge, but many are affected, involved, or have some partial resposibility to act. The future of public service depends on its contributions to strategy management-at-scale (Bryson et al., 2021).

What happens to strategic planning and management when the presumption is that no one oversees the systems enmeshed in and producing major public challenges? In other words, how does strategy management-at-scale differ from strategic management of a single organisation? In this article, we move towards answering those questions based on the literature and our own considerable experience. We compare and contrast strategic management with strategy management-at-scale along several dimensions, including: (1) purpose and strategic focus; (2) governance, leadership and stakeholder involvement; (3) communication, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and co-alignment; (4) feasibility assessment, resourcing in general, funding in particular, and prioritisation; (5) implementation, action plans, performance, responsibility and accountability; and (6) evaluation and learning. We will provide brief illustrations from four cases. And we will emphasise strategy mapping as an approach to helping groups figure out what to do, how and why, and how to monitor progress.

Based on our experience, we argue that a promising technique – though hardly a silver bullet – for facilitating strategy management-at-scale is strategy mapping. We assert that this is true whatever specific approach to strategy management-at-scale is taken – for example, collective impact or social movements (Bryson et al., 2021). Strategy mapping results in a causal map, a statement-and-arrow diagram in which statements are causally linked to one another using arrows. The map shows the interrelationships between a set of changes, reflecting the means–ends or if–then relationships: in other words, an arrow means 'might cause', 'might lead to', 'might result in', or some other kind of influence relationship. In causal strategy mapping, each chain of arrows indicates the causes and consequences of an idea or action. This makes it possible to present many ideas and their interconnections in such a way that people can know what to do in an area of concern, how to do it and why (Bryson et al., 2004, p.xii; Ackermann and Eden, 2011, p.3). There are a variety of approaches to strategy mapping (Bryson et al., 2004, 2023; Bryson, Ackerman and Eden, 2014). There are also some recent reviews of different approaches (e.g., Madsen and Stenheim, 2015; MacLennan and Markides, 2021). The strategy mapping examples in this article used the InsightVision software to manage strategy implementation

[Strategy mapping] shows the interrelationships between a set of changes, reflecting the means–ends or if–then relationships: in other words, an arrow means 'might cause', 'might lead to', 'might result in', or some other kind of influence relationship.

(InsightInformation Inc., 2023). A recent review rated it the best software for strategy implementation (Bryson et al., 2023).

The article proceeds as follows. First, the four cases of strategy management-at-scale are presented in brief. Second, strategic planning and management for organisations and strategy management-at-scale are compared and contrasted along each of the dimensions listed above. Finally, conclusions are offered regarding what strategy management-at-scale implies for the future of public service.

The cases in brief

Four cases of strategy management-at-scale are used to illustrate selected aspects of strategy management-at-scale in practice. Two are from Canada and two are from the United States. Bill Barberg has served as a facilitator in each of the cases.

Transforming the family justice system in Alberta, Canada

Leaders who had decades of experience with the problems with the family justice system in Alberta, Canada saw the need for change. The combination of compelling research reports on the harm resulting from current practices and growing appreciation of brain science and effects of childhood trauma added both urgency and knowledge to their desire to reform the system. The goal was to prevent harms arising in adversarial legal processes and support family restructuring. A broad-based collaboration formed to reimagine the family justice system. Participants recognised that incremental process fixes, an innovative programme or two, or training on being 'trauma-informed' would fall far short of the multi-sector system transformation that was needed. Instead, they envisioned a multitude of interdependent changes that would transform a 'system' that required shared authority of multiple organisations aligning their efforts towards a shared outcome of family wellbeing. A similar collaborative formed in neighbouring British Columbia; the two collaboratives work together (Jerke and Lowe, 2023).

Dementia Network Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Dementia Network Calgary offers a second example of a broad coalition that embraces the need for system transformation. The focus is on the broad range of issues related to Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia (Dementia Network Calgary, 2023). Many experts believe that dementia will be the most costly health issue facing North America over the next 20 years, exceeding cancer, heart disease and diabetes (CDC, 2023).

> … strategy management-at-scale is focused on altering the supra-organisational system level that produces challenges affecting multiple organisations and stakeholder groups.

Communities of Hope, Detroit, Michigan, USA

Communities of Hope was founded as a non-profit organisation designed to work alongside a for-profit firm that developed and managed affordable apartment complexes that were heavily dependent on tax subsidies and housing vouchers. The vision of Communities of Hope was to break the cycle of poverty and poor health among the people living in these apartment communities, enhancing their lives while simultaneously improving the financial success of the property management firm and property owners (Communities of Hope, 2020).

Restore Hope and its 100 Families Initiative, Arkansas, USA

Restore Hope was launched as a collective impact effort to take a trauma-informed, system-thinking and strategy-aligned approach to addressing the complex challenges related to child welfare, foster care, incarceration and recidivism (Restore Hope, n.d.). A key emphasis was on strengthening families to prevent children from going into the foster care system, to improve reunification with biological families, and help individuals and families go from crisis to self-sufficiency and make progress towards thriving. In each county where participants worked, they deployed a collaborative case management platform and established an alliance called the 100 Families Initiative (InsightInformation Inc., n.d.).

Comparing and contrasting strategic management for organisations with strategy management-at-scale

In this section we compare and contrast strategic management with strategy management-at-scale along several dimensions. We provide some brief illustrations from the four cases. Note that what we pose as a dichotomous contrast between strategic management and strategy management-at-scale is in practice a continuum, with strategic management at one end and strategy management-at-scale at the other end. In addition, the dichotomy ignores differences between federal systems found in Canada and the United States and the more unitary system found in New Zealand.

Purpose and strategic focus

Strategic management is typically focused on a single organisation. Mission statements typically express an animating purpose for the organisation that articulates its reason for existence. The purpose is presumed to guide the organisation's design and positioning in a specific niche. The strategic focus will be on doing something special for some specific group of stakeholders. In contrast, strategy management-at-scale is focused on altering the supra-organisational system level that produces challenges affecting multiple organisations and stakeholder groups. These organisations may operate in one or more fields, levels or

Table 1 – purpose and strategic focus

Strategy element	Strategic management of organisations (SMO)	Strategy management-at-scale	Comments regarding strategy management-at-scale
Purpose	Strategic management emphasises finding a sustainable position in a specific niche. The emphasis is on agreement and alignment around an organisational mission and vision that can serve as the foundation for developing implementable and sustainable strategies that will be successful in ways that the organisation defines as success. This almost always means doing something special for some stakeholders and not trying to be all things to all people.	The emphasis in strategy management-at-scale is on understanding the dynamics of complex issues and systems that no single organisation can address effectively, and then working to clarify a set of interrelated changes that would make a significant difference in bringing about desired outcomes. The organisations involved in addressing the challenge may have different missions, visions and priorities. Nonetheless, they can still coalesce, collaborate, or at least co-align around a strategy map framework to advance all or part of a strategy that contributes to the shared purpose of minimising or overcoming the challenge.	In strategy management-at-scale, the overall effects of each organisation's strategies can be magnified if they are aligned around overarching, co-created strategies that allow individual organisations to focus on leveraging their strengths. Organizations do not have to agree on a specific mission, vision, or SMART goals to make major headway against major challenges. Agreement on principles, high-level goals, and broad strategy outlines can offer the necessary guidance for a coalition to advance via collaboration and co-alignment toward desired outcomes.
Strategic focus	Much of the critical thinking in developing an organisation's strategy is about prioritising what to do and what not to do. Organisations typically fail if they try to do too many things.	Much of the critical thinking when developing a coalition or community strategy centres on understanding the interdependencies and dynamics of the larger system which coalition members seek to improve. Based on that understanding, informed choices can be made about how best to intervene in the system to improve overall outcomes. No one organisation can do everything needed, but enough complementarities may be found or created to make significant headway.	The strategic focus in strategy management-at-scale shifts up a level from the organisation to the boundary-crossing challenges to be addressed. The emphasis is on systems thinking, including understanding the interactions among coalition or community members and their effects that may undermine collective achievement. Shared understandings may be developed that make more good things, and fewer bad things, happen.

sectors that comprise the system. The idea is that by aligning around shared purposes (goals, desired outcomes, high-level aspirations), these organisations can make headway against the big challenge. Each organisation draws on its own purposes and resources to do so and seeks to leverage the strengths of the other organisations. A very specific, measurable mission, vision and set of goals may be desirable, but also may not be necessary (or even possible); the good news is that simple agreement on very high-level goals, general principles or a general strategic framework may be enough for a coalition to form and make progress. (See Table 1.)

Example: Transforming the family justice system in Alberta, Canada

Participants took a broad approach to system change (Geels, 2004; Bryson et al., 2021). The group used 'zoomable' strategy mapping to clarify the broad, interrelated set of overarching goals, strategies, and asset- and capacity-building objectives needed to change the system. The zoom feature allowed digging into more details in the same way Google maps does. They also used an online software platform to track changes and inform dialogue and deliberations about what to do and why. As the many parts of the strategy were discussed, coalition partners no longer saw an overwhelming set of tasks that their barely funded coalition would need to do, but rather an elegant framework around which the work of many funders and organisations could align, opening up silos, reducing fragmentation, and enhancing the efficiency of communication and collaboration. (For more on the effort, see Bryson et al., 2021, 2023.)

Example: Dementia Network Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Dementia Network Calgary is a collective impact coalition with a steering committee made up of people with lived experience and individuals from private, public and non-profit organisations, with only one full-time leader, who works with a larger non-profit organisation (the 'backbone' organisation), the Alzheimer Society of Calgary. Many types of organisations in this city of over 1.3 million people have a significant interest in the success of a multifaceted strategy to deal with dementia. The high stakes for so many organisations creates an opportunity to define the 'what's in it for me' upside that can be used to inspire these different organisations to participate in the work of developing and implementing shared regional strategies for addressing this complex issue. People from healthcare, housing, universities, local governments and community-based organisations all had reasons to participate. Their strategy map helped them have a greater appreciation both of their role in parts of the strategy and also of the roles that others would play.

A zoomable strategy map was developed over a series of workshops and had over 25 high-level objectives. These objectives were organised into six themes: prevent and delay; understanding and influence; dementia-inclusive community; caregiver supports; care systems; and policy and funding changes. Most of the objectives were linked to a more detailed strategy map

containing more detailed sub-objectives. The robust framework allows different organisations and coalitions to find ways in which their work can be part of a larger strategy, knowing that others are working on complementary efforts.

Leadership, stakeholder involvement and governance

Leadership may take a different form in the move from strategic management to strategy management-at-scale. In a single organisation, leadership is likely to be anchored in people designated as leaders and followers, but at a system transformation level there are a multitude of leaders and followers, with different people, groups and organisations sometimes leading and sometimes following. At the strategy management-at-scale level, it makes sense to think of leadership as everything that might go into attaining direction, alignment and commitment – the DAC model proposed by Drath et al. (2008). Leadership conceived this way includes people, processes and structures (Huxham and Vangen, 2000), and even artifacts of various kinds, including strategy maps (Latour, 2005; Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012; Franco, 2013). Collective leadership is necessary and collective leadership development may be needed (Arkedis et al., forthcoming).

In a single organisation, most of the stakeholders involved in strategy formulation and implementation are likely to be insiders, although outsiders may be involved in various ways. In contrast, in strategy management-at-scale virtually everyone will be an outsider, since the effort must engage multiple organisations that come together and work in alignment. Governance of single organisations, regardless of sector, is likely to be the responsibility of governing boards and senior managers with legal responsibility and delegated authority to act. Not so with strategy management-at-scale, where organisations are all participating voluntarily. Governance in this case is via consensus, norms, and shared aspirations, goals and principles. (See Table 2.)

Example: Transforming the family justice system

Given the ambitious aspirations for transforming the family justice system, it would seem that a large, well-funded organisation with significant authority to act would be needed. That has not been the case. The collaboration 'leads' were people who could have retired after impressive careers, but who instead decided to commit their time and energy to leading the transformation efforts. They built a network of people who saw the need for change. The network is co-convened by the key institutions of the justice system (courts, government, legal profession) and leaders in indigenous and family support services to champion the initiative and create a 'license to innovate' (Cahill and Spits, 2017), which inspires confidence and the social licence to undertake real change. They used strategy mapping to foster direction, alignment and commitment. With a more coherent and elegant strategy, they were able to get additional grant funding, and the Canadian Institute for

Table 2: Leadership, stakeholder Involvement, and governance

Governance	Strategic management for organisations	Strategy management-at-scale	Comments regarding strategy management-at-scale
Leadership	Top organisational leaders have significant influence over the mission, vision, structures, systems, processes and employees. The basic leadership ontology consists of leaders and followers.	Most of the coalition's leadership group are likely to be participating on a voluntary basis and can leave at any time. They need a solid and continually reinforced understanding of why participating in the coalition is worth their time. The basic leadership ontology is one in which many people produce direction, alignment and commitment. Collective leadership is needed.	Mutually beneficial and mutually reinforcing actions are needed to keep coalition or community members involved by demonstrating verifiable progress in addressing the challenge at hand.
Stakeholder involvement	People working on the strategy generally work for, or are hired by, the organisation that creates the strategy. Organisational members and partners are expected to do things that support the strategy	A collaborative or coalition strategy is typically created by a diverse group of stakeholders who are not specifically hired to play a role in implementing the strategy. The collaboration's leadership needs to help attract and engage a growing group of entities that benefit by being aligned with and working towards outcomes that they value, but cannot realistically accomplish on their own.	Organizations involved in the coalition or collaboration almost always have other priorities, so ongoing encouragement and progress will be needed to keep them involved.
Governance	Government agencies, non-profit organisations and businesses all typically have a board that must authorise major decisions and budgets and to which management is responsible. These boards may delegate responsibilities and mandate broad participation in particular kinds of decisions, but typically the board ultimately bears major responsibility for decisions and their consequences.	In situations where no one is fully in charge, multiple boards and senior leaders typically are engaged to the extent that their individual organisations are participating. There may be an overarching steering committee or governance board, but typically decisions must be reasonably consensual, and implementing organisations get to decide for themselves what to implement.	Major governance roles are essentially performed by principles, norms and overarching goals decided upon by multiple, essentially autonomous boards and other kinds of decision makers.

Table 3: Communication, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and co-alignment

Strategy element	Strategic management for organisations	Strategic management for organisations	Comments regarding strategy management-at-scale
Communication, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and co-alignment	Internal communication, cooperation, coordination and co-alignment are crucial for achieving organisational success. For organisations dependent on grants, much communication attends to funder requirements for information and compliance. Collaboration and external co-alignment are typically far less important.	Cross-boundary, cross-level and cross-sector communication, cooperation, collaboration and co-alignment are necessary for coalition success in addressing the major system-level challenges. Early communication focuses on synthesising collective wisdom regarding the system to be changed and desirable interventions. Later communication is on how to improve alignment around strategy and better leverage the strengths of each organisation.	Organisations that historically have competed with one another for funding will need an intentional process to build trust, see the value of investing in working together, discern each other's comparative advantages, and become team players. Skilled facilitation is almost certainly necessary.

the Administration of Justice agreed to be a financial sponsor. This gave them further reach and credibility, and people in other provinces began to explore engaging in similar strategies.

Example: Dementia Network Calgary

As the sole staff person dedicated to Dementia Network Calgary, the employee of Alzheimer Calgary focuses on being a coordinator and facilitator of a 12-person, cross-sector leadership team, the strategic council. People from healthcare, housing, universities, local governments and community-based organisations all had reasons to want to see more progress on a regional strategy for this complex issue. With the support of the strategic council, the network was able to engage dozens of additional participants in the development of a strategy map that encompassed a much more ambitious aspiration than any organisation could realistically pursue on its own. The network worked with a consultant who facilitated a series of five online workshops to develop the strategy map, which has helped the members of the network have a greater appreciation both of their role in parts of the strategy and of the roles that others would play. Many organisations feel an ownership of and buy into the strategy map framework.

Communication, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and co-alignment

In strategic management, communication, cooperation and coordination are very important, but occur primarily within a framework of hierarchy and authority that helps guide communication and other organisational efforts. In strategy management-at-scale, communication, cooperation and coordination are also very important, but so are collaboration and co-alignment, since no one person, group or organisation is in charge. It is almost impossible to underestimate the amount of communication, mutual understanding and mutual support that are necessary to achieve strategy management-at-scale success (Vangen and Huxham, 2003). (See Table 3.)

Feasibility assessment, resourcing in general, funding in particular, and prioritisation

In strategic management, organisational strategies must be directly linked to the organisation's purpose, capabilities and resource constraints. The mission and funding will be more narrowly focused than the overarching challenge prompting strategy management-at-scale. Anything outside the organisation's mission and foreseeable capabilities, resources and funding is simply a non-starter. In strategy management-at-scale the approach is different. The aspirations will almost certainly go beyond any one organisation's mission, capabilities and resources. Strategy management-at-scale strategy maps will invite organisations to pool capabilities and resources with those of other organisations and activate underutilised capabilities and resources in pursuit of system changes. Capabilities and resources are thus leveraged and magnified in pursuit of the overarching purpose. Strategy management-at-scale can also promote creative thinking about how pooled capabilities and resources might be used and stimulate innovative approaches to resource development. Funders should focus their own strategies on addressing cross-organisational, and often cross-sector, challenges; building coalition capacity to address the challenges; and staying in the game long enough to make a significant difference at the system level. (See Table 4.)

Example: Communities of Hope

In spite of its bold aspirations, Communities of Hope didn't have any money for grants or projects. They had to show how improved alignment and coordination, working with the property management firm, and engaging residents as partners would reduce waste and headaches while leading to better outcomes for each organisation and for the collective whole. By inviting different organisations that had money and responsibilities for impact to consider how they would better work with the apartment properties and residents, Communities of Hope was able to help many organisations get better results with less effort. Furthermore, Communities of Hope helped harness the time and talent of the apartment residents to improve their own lives and those of their neighbours. It created wins for these organisations and residents by helping them take advantage of the facilities and relationships that the apartment's property management company could provide. For example, many programmes and services were brought on-site using space donated by the apartment buildings, dramatically reducing the transportation challenges that often were barriers to participation.

Table 4: Feasibility assessment, resourcing in general, resourcing in particular, and prioritisation

Strategy Element	Strategic management for organisations	Strategy management-at scale	Comments regarding strategy management-at-scale
Feasibility Assessment	Given the constraints that any one organisation has, there are often major questions about the feasibility of strategies that will strongly affect whether they should be adopted or not.	A large-scale coalition or collaborative strategy map will likely include aspirations that are not obviously feasible; that said, the idea is that the framework will help advance the thinking, creativity, problem-solving and other work to find new ways to do things.	Working with a collaborative strategy map over an extended time prompts (re)consideration of the strength of the 'if–then' hypotheses that are built into the strategy map and also stimulates remapping when necessary.
Resourcing in General	An organisational strategy answers the question: What are we going to do, and what resources do we have or need to do it? When a strategy is for one organisation, the objectives on a strategy map are things that the organisation intends to do, and they should realistically draw on resources available to do it. Otherwise, it is an unrealistic fantasy. An organisation creating its own strategy cannot reasonably expect other organisations to contribute their resources to do the organisation's work.	A coalition or community strategy answers the question: What will it take to achieve the desired outcomes, and what resources might we obtain? When a strategy map is being created by a coalition, the desired outcomes are those valued by many organisations – including many outcomes that might not initially have been part of many individual organisations' strategies. Having a strategy framework that embodies systems thinking prompts looking for partners, innovations and creative ways to make progress on achieving the main strategy objectives.	The coalition almost never knows where the resources will come from, or how much will be required. The better the strategy map, the more successful the coalition will be in attracting others to contribute resources to accomplish various parts of the overall strategy.
Funding in Particular	Funding is typically predicated on, and specific to, the organisation's mission, and does not encompass addressing issues beyond the organisation's competence. In addition, organisations addressing social issues are often required by their funders to focus on an evidence-based intervention. This often limits their strategy choices in unfortunate ways, because most research done to build the evidence base is focused on isolated interventions, not system-thinking strategies that weave together many mutually reinforcing activities over several years.	Instead of trying to pick the 'correct', evidence-based, isolated intervention, strategy management-at-scale often works backwards from the outcome objectives using a system-thinking approach that considers innovative and interconnected possibilities in addition to more narrow evidence-based interventions. This is where a strategy map becomes powerful because it visually depicts this system thinking. Then, different organisations can collaborate or co-align their efforts to use their respective strengths to achieve the objectives and learn as they go along.	Funders should support the process of multi-organisationally and collaboratively developing and refining a strategy map; engage the leaders, staff and boards of collaborating organisations in how they can support the strategy; and support the many efforts that align with the strategy.
Prioritisation	Organisations typically have limited resources and funding and thus need to make often very difficult decisions about how to prioritise the use of their limited resources. A scarcity, zero-sum mentality can prevail.	Coalitions often have very different dynamics regarding resources. Improving alignment and having many different organisations better using their strengths can generate huge value without requiring more resources. The more that organisations align and share things (information, processes, or other types of easily shared resources), the more they all have to work with. Rather than be captured by a scarcity mentality of only doing a few things, the process encourages positive-sum thinking that engages more stakeholders and envisions strategies that generate all-gain value..	A collective strategy that emphasises tapping into underutilised resources can greatly increase the available resources for accomplishing change. These might include resources that can provide behind-the-scenes assistance to other organisations.

Example: Restore Hope, Arkansas

Restore Hope in Arkansas had built a robust strategy for addressing an extraordinarily difficult mix of challenges facing families dealing with incarceration, poverty, substance abuse, trauma, and housing insecurity or homelessness. They knew that dramatic improvements could be achieved if they had a way to better coordinate the existing services and the underutilised time and talents of people who wanted to help those in need. Restore Hope struggled with winning competitive grants, and they wanted to avoid the frustrating process that often twists the mission of the organisation into 'apply for grants and then do whatever the grants you win require you to do'. Two unconventional resources have been especially helpful in enabling them to make impressive progress in recent years: in-kind, non-cash donations, and a compelling case to allocate underused federal funding. As the Restore Hope community-based system change approach demonstrated results, decision makers in the state of Arkansas have realised that allocating more money to these efforts actually enables them to reduce spending in other areas.

Implementation, action plans, performance, responsibility and accountability

Strategy implementation in a strategic management context often involves making changes to organisational systems, including operational systems, to improve mission accomplishment and stakeholder expectations. In a strategy management-at-scale context, the approach is very different, since coalition members do not control other members' operational systems. The focus instead is on fostering the kinds of communication, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and co-alignment needed to change the overarching system. The focus will be enabling different stakeholders to work in mutually reinforcing ways to bring about the change. The details of what is going to be done, who is going to do it and when tend to emerge after the strategy map is initially created.

In strategic management, organisational units and personnel are given responsibility and are expected to be accountable for the achievement of narrowly defined strategic objectives. In strategy management-at-scale the focus of performance and accountability shifts to the system level. Individual organisations still have their own accountabilities, but what is added is heightened attention to improvements at the system level. Accountability is mainly enforced via cross-organisational norms regarding transparency and taking responsibility for aspects of the strategy map. (See Table 5.)

Example: Transforming the family justice system

The clarity provided by the strategy maps inspired people and organisations to deepen their commitment to the movement. Justice Rod Jerke, co-convenor of the Court of King's Bench in Alberta, was approved for a nine-month study leave during which he focused on ways that the courts could align their practices to support key objectives in the overall strategy.

The city of Grande Prairie (population 63,000 plus), the county of Grande Prairie (population 22,000 plus), and a number of indigenous communities in the region (population 50,000 plus) had the combination of needs, willing participants, and a size that was appropriate for piloting

Table 5: Implementation, action plans, responsibility, performance and accountability

Strategy element	Strategic management for organisations	Strategy management-at-scale	Comments regarding strategy management-at-scale
Implementation	Strategy implementation often involves making changes to organisational systems, including operational systems, typically in order to better satisfy mission accomplishment and stakeholder expectations.	Coalitions do not control their members' operational systems. Beyond that, the larger supra-organisational systems are rarely intentionally defined or managed. The strategy focus, therefore, is on encouraging collaboration, or at least co-alignment, of efforts and in moving from unplanned systems to ones that are more intentionally planned. There is also a focus on breaking complex social issues down into smaller parts that might be a fit for different organisations to work on.	The strategy management-at-scale approach is very different from changing the operations of single organisations. The focus is on what is needed to create a new system, or transform a poorly functioning one. The new system is often quite informal, but typically makes use of new technology.
Action plans	Since the organisation creating the strategy is the one that will generally do the things that are included in the strategy, the strategy is usually accompanied in fairly short order by a detailed action plan.	A collaborative strategy map is often an exploration of the options for accomplishing a specific change and involving different stakeholders working in mutually reinforcing ways to bring about the change. The details of what is going to be done, who is going to do it and when tend to emerge after the strategy map is created.	While a strategy map should be aspirational, there is also a danger the coalition's or collaboration's objectives will be too pie-in-the-sky. Participants should focus on objectives that have a realistic chance, given promising innovations, improved alignment of effort, and more engagement of people who have a stake in seeing the outcomes accomplished.
Responsibility	Organisational members often 'own' objectives and are responsible for getting them accomplished.	Too much emphasis on accountability can keep people from being willing to take on a volunteer role for the coalition or collaboration. It is better for people in a coalition to be 'lead advocates' for an objective that depends on many others to move the objective forward.	Responsibility is more diffuse in a strategy management-at-scale collaboration and fostering a strong sense of collective responsibility usually requires a significant investment of time and effort to build.
Performance and Accountability	Organisations are expected to demonstrate that they are responsible for producing positive outcomes. Each organisation strives to not depend on the actions of others. This can pit organisations against each other, with each organisation wanting to take credit for any success and blame others for any failures. Strategies may be designed to undermine the success of other organisations.	Coalition members can look at what is working or not working in the overall system and collectively join in understanding and overcoming obstacles to success. Rather than fighting for getting credit or avoiding blame, this approach leads to clarifying issues by exploring who in the coalition can best address the issues that are hindering success so that the collective overall can win.	The focus of performance and accountability shifts to the system level. Individual organisations still have their own accountabilities, but what is added is heightened attention to improvements at the system level. It is important for funders to reward organisations for being team contributors rather than driving them to fight over who gets credit for outcomes.

Table 6: Evaluation and learning

Strategy Element	Strategic management for organisations	Strategy management-at-scale	Comments regarding strategy management-at-scale
Evaluation and learning	Evaluations by a funder are typically formative or summative and look at how the organisation can get credit, or not, for attaining the outcomes it is funded to accomplish.	Evaluations of a coalition's or collaboration's strategies are more likely to be principles-focused or developmental. Evaluations of individual entities should be focused on how well they play their role in implementing specific parts of the coalition's strategy.	Consider the following analogy: in American or Canadian football, offensive linemen are not evaluated on how many points they scored, but rather on how well they blocked their opponent and protected the quarterback or other ball carrier. Winning is a team-level objective analogous to a strategy management-at-scale objective; blocking well is a lineman's objective, analogous to a strategic management objective.

some of the key elements of the strategy related to helping families to build skills and deploying ways to support families, rather than focusing on a legal, adversarial battle that actually causes more harm for families. The collaboration then worked with the courts and with community organisations in Grande Prairie to apply for grants and create pilots aligned with the larger strategy.

Example: Dementia Network Calgary

Since the coalition's work is done by people who are not paid by Dementia Network Calgary, it is important to show how their work aligns with the goals and interests of the organisation that is paying them. Given the high cost (and for other stakeholders, high revenue) of dementia, many organisations are motivated to be involved. For example, the city of Calgary has a person dedicated as an issue strategist for Age-Friendly Calgary. Alberta Health Services, a province-wide integrated health system with over 100,000 direct employees, has an executive director for seniors, palliative and continuing care. Numerous academic centres focus on some aspects of aging and dementia, including the Caregiver Centered Care initiative that involves multiple universities and healthcare providers. Each of these have leaders involved with Dementia Network Calgary. The strategy map, co-created through a process that involved dozens of organisations like these, provides a structure for action teams that focus on the important things that need to be done next to make progress in accomplishing each objective.

Evaluation and learning

In strategic management, evaluation is mainly tied to performance of the overall organisation or to a specific strategy, programme or project. Typically, formative and summative evaluations predominate (Patton and Campbell-Patton, 2021). Learning is focused mainly on the work of a specific organisation and its more immediate environment (Munteaunu and Newcomer, 2020; Newomer, Olejniczak and Hart, 2021). In strategy management-at-scale, evaluation and learning will be at the coalition or collaboration level and is far more likely to be principles-focused or developmental in nature, since no pre-existing model exists (Patton, 2010, 2017; Bryson et al., 2021). Systematic use of system-wide learning forums will allow participants to assess results of evaluation efforts and decide what to do differently in order to change the overarching system. Software for tracking progress, such as InsightVision, is especially valuable for informing the work of learning forums. (See Table 6.)

Conclusions: implications for the future of public service

We conclude with five implications for public service. First, an important part of the future of public services depends on becoming good at strategy management-at-scale. Second, strategy management-at-scale is very different from strategic management. This means that strategic management approaches should not be imposed on situations for which they are not designed. Third, when it comes to strategy management-at-scale, there is simply no substitute for collective leadership involving a host of leaders and managers intent on developing reasonable direction, alignment and commitment across multiple organisations, programmes, projects and initiatives in pursuit of jointly shared aspirations (Crosby and Bryson, 2005). Fourth, strategy mapping is a particularly helpful approach to developing direction, alignment and commitment in situations where no one is in charge, and many are involved, affected or have some partial responsibility to act (Bryson et al., 2023). Finally, the coalition or collaboration may not know where the resources will come from, or how much will be required. The better the strategy map, the more successful the group is likely to be in attracting others to contribute resources. Beyond that, strategy management-at-scale can change the incentive structures facing single organisations who participate, whereby they can join with others in leveraging and mobilising untapped or underused resources to advance the common good and help them better achieve their own organisational missions.

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