The Role of Public Administration in Building a Harmonious Society

Strategies to Build Up Holistic Governance

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Abstract

Holistic governance, compared to traditional public administration and new public management, poses a daunting challenge to current level of governance. The nature and goal of holistic governance is the creation of a new paradigm in which directly appeals to the needs of the public. While initiatives like "joining-up government" are correcting the system flaws that come from the fragmentation of functional departments, holistic governance aspires to go beyond these current efforts. In order to institutionalize the ideals of holistic governance, other than a strong committed political leadership, it is suggested that three strategies should be adopted to serve as institutional drivers to realize the goal: online governance, integrated government organizations and an active civil service.

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The concept of "Holistic Government" was first advocated by British scholar Perri 6 in 1997. In his 84 pages book on Holistic Government, 6 argues that, in the next phase of government reform, government must become:

1. holistic: integrated across the public sector.

2. preventive: moving away from curing to the prevention of problems.

3. outcome-oriented: focused on outcome not measures of activity.

4. culture–changed: concentrated around persuasion and information rather than coercion and command.

His criticism of the fragmentation of government structure and organization was embraced by Tony Blair's New Labor administration. In order to overcome the fragmentation of functionally divided departments, the British government advocated a join-up government (JUG) concept as one of its principle themes in the 1999 white paper on *Modernising Government*(Cabinet Office, 1999). The reason that New Labor quickly endorsed the holistic governance concept includes three factors. First, many task forces and policy reviews commissioned in the first few weeks in office recommended increased integration and coordination across fields of policy formulation and implementation. Second, the new administration inherited many major initiatives toward integration from the previous government, like urban programs and electronic government programs that it had neither ideological reason nor a political desire to abandon. Third, "wicked problems", like social exclusion, required a wide range of integrative activities (6 et al, 2002: 19). Thus, under JUG, the U. K. as well as some other OECD countries are pursuing a holistic approach that is markedly different from traditional functionally divided departmentalism. Holistic governance literatures stress the importance of the institutionalization of the holistic approach but does not offer concrete solutions. This article tries to fill in the gap.

Pro and Con of Departmentalism

Based on the principle of a functional division of labor, departmentalism requires only a small head office and a large vertically organized division of departments. It is a valid organizational norm in an era when communication and the management of

knowledge are costly. Separate departments deal with issues of defense, finance, foreign affairs, education, economy, and home affairs. Three other types of departments generally have close relationship with particular professions: education with teachers, health with doctors and home office with the police. Departmentalism is often very efficient because of the specialization and knowledge base invested in the departments and tends to have clear lines of accountability. It can prevent corruption and waste. It can get things done in efficient manner (Mulgan, 2005).

However, there are drawbacks of this model. The "silos" perspective of different departments hinders the problem solving capability of government. Many important issues could not fit perfectly into departmental slots. Vertical organization has no keen interest in preventing problems, as the benefits of preventive action often go to another department. It will ignore the cross boundaries issues. But worst of all, it entails the risk of problems and individuals being "dumped" by one agency onto another (6, 1997: 31).

Is Holistic Governance New?

Departmental fragmentation is the key problem that holistic governance theory wants to tackle, and coordination and integration of the related departments seems to be the answer. It has seen criticized that "joining up" only seems new: the coordination of policy making and administration is the latest manifestation of one of the oldest preoccupations in the field of politics and public administration (Pollitt, 2003: 36). Pollitt presents many instances in which the British government experimented with several approaches in solving fragmentation problems: for example, Churdrill's system of "overlord" ministers between 1951 and 1953 and Heath's white paper entitled the Reorganization of Central Government which proposes a more coordinated, strategic approach to policy making. However, policy documents advocating coordination aside, government action in fostering institutional framework was almost non-existent until the Blair administration.

The reasons that the "joined-up" concept rose up the agenda in the 1990s and became institutionalized in Blair's administration, according to Geoff Mulgan, the director of the Strategy Unit in the Cabinet Office, are (Mulgan, 2005):

1. Many significant problems—poverty, competitiveness, family and environment—were evidently ill-suited to existing structures or tools.

2. The new public management of the 1980s, which based on breaking issues down into their component parts, had turned out to be particularly ill-suited to

more complex problems, and was prone to worsening the "dumping" of problems across organizational boundaries.

3. The nature of the interconnectedness of problems. The avoidance of social exclusion has to do with the risk factors and protective factors in early life.

4. Rapid progress in technology and the ensuing rapid reductions in the costs of horizontal communication and coordination. Cheaper communication made complex and efficient organization possible.

5. The influence of consumerism which offers citizens the most efficient and convenient services.

6. Systemic thinking is replacing the atomistic models of thinking that dominated the first half of the 20th century.

What Has Been Done?

Although the challenge to improve coordination horizontally within government is an external one (6, 2004: 2), the British "joining-up" slogan is not used in other Anglophone countries. Canada preferred to call it "horizontal management", Australia used "connecting government", and New Zealand adopted the term "whole of government" (Farlard, 2004: 42). Among these four countries, the critical British report "Wiring It Up" (2000) is the document which most comprehensively that carefully examines the complex nature of dealing with cross-cutting issues. The report details the ways to realize the vision of holistic government. It asserts that ministers and senior civil servants need to provide strong leadership for cross-cutting work in order to create a culture which fosters cross-cutting initiatives. In the meantime, leaders should be judged and rewarded for their performance in securing cross-cutting objectives (Cabinet Office, 2000: 28). It also lists different forms of cross-cutting interventions and joint working (Cabinet Office, 2000: 16):

1. organizational change;

2. merged structure and budgets;

3. joint teams (virtual or real);

4. shared budgets;

5. joint customer interface arrangements;

6. joint management arrangements;

7. shared objectives and performance indicators;

8. consultation to enhance synergies and manage trade-offs;

9. sharing information to increase mutual awareness.

In the U. K., the Cabinet Office set up a Strategy Unit to coordinate the joining-up initiatives which tracts and implements the great majority of recommendations from submitted reviews(see http://www.nao.gov.uk/publications/workingprogress/joinedup1.htm). By 2003, nearly half of the Strategy Unit's work was initiated by departments rather than by the Prime Minister's Office (Mulgan, 2005).

The pursuit of "joined up" government was not a uniquely British phenomenon. The fact that it is found throughout many different countries suggests that it is at least in part connected to a wider tendency (Ling, 2002: 618-621). In Australia, examples of joined-up working include Centrelink, which provides information to the public on behalf of a number of agencies, and an inter-agency approach to combating drug use. In Canada, joined-up working has two dimensions: first, between the federal government and the local states and territories, and second, across departments. The "Programme Review" reform in 1994 let public services share resources. In Holland, joined-up government extends in three directions: between the central and the local levels of government; between departments; and between "social partners" (for example, advisory groups). In New Zealand, government set out Strategic Priorities and Overarching Goals that include cross-cutting targets. In the US, joined-up work is primarily between the federal and state governments. Major programmes for delivering childcare, training and community safety depend upon the voluntary sector, for example: Boost4Kids, the Child Care Partnership Project, 21st Century Skills, and Safe Cities (Ling, 2002: 621).

Strategies to Institutionalize Holistic Governance

According to Perri 6's reasoning on holistic governments, twelve major changes of policy and style of government managwment are called for (6, 1997: 10-12):

1. Holistic budgeting: budget should be organized not by functions or organizations but around outcomes and geographical areas.

2. Organizations defined around outcomes.

3. Integrated information systems: One-stop shops should become the principal means by which the public deals with government.

4. Case Workers: The roles of frontline staff should be developed, empowering them to purchase services that suit the needs of the individual.

5. Outcome-based contracts.

6. Audits for prevention.

7. Enhancing the status and role of preventive work.

8. Early warning systems with safeguards: All public agencies should make greater use of risk assessment tools, futures tools, contingency planning and scenario planning.

9. Smarter purchasing.

10. Culture audits. Audits on the cultural dimensions of key problems to identify beliefs, attitudes, values, habits and assumptions among service users and the wider public.

11. Building information and persuasion into budgets.

12. Cross-functional outcome measures.

Although Perri 6 expands the concept of holistic government to holistic governance in his third book in 2002, and revises some of the above mentioned principals, a paradigmatic switch on the functioning of government emerges. The traditional bureaucratic paradigm is deeply rooted in Max Weber's mechanistic view of organizations, and prevailed before the 1980s in the field of public administration. Functional division of labor, hierarchical operation, rule-bound working environment, and input-orientation are the basic tenets. On the other hand, New Public Management emphasizes professional management, performance, benchmarking, competition, market-orientation, and decentralization. The traditional bureaucratic administration tries to do everything that is "public" in nature, while the NPM tries to undertake public work with private sector logic. It is the holistic government paradigm that switches the "public affairs" angle to "the public" angle, namely citizens, taxpayers, and clients (see Table 1). It makes no sense that citizens have to learn all the knowledge about the complex structure and organization of government in order to ask for help in saving problems. It also makes no sense that the governments have

developed into an unrecognizable maze not only for laymen but also for insiders.

Table 1: Three Paradigms of Public Administration

	Traditional Bureaucracy	New Public Management	Holistic Governance
Time	Before 1980	1980-2000	After 2000
Management Concept	Public Management	Private Sector Management	Public/Private Partnership Central/Local Partnership Join-up Departments
Operational Principle	Functional Division	Partially Functional Integration	Integrated Operation
Organizational Type	Hierarchy	Market/Specialization	Network
Performance Criteria	Input	Output	Solving People's Problems
Operation of Power	Centralization	Decentralization	Sharing of Power
Financial Base	Annual Budget	Market/Competition	Integrated Budget
Civil Service	Rule Bound	Discipline/Efficient	Ethics and Values
Main Resources	Manpower	Information Technology	Online Governance
Public Service	Offer Public Service	Ensure Public Service	Meet the Needs of Public Service

In view of the globalization phenomenon and the internet environment, the meaning of government has to include levels of sub-national, national and cross-national. With the proliferation of different types of government organizations, like agencies and the variety of public bodies, public-private partnerships have become a widespread phenomenon in every country (Flinders & Smith, 1999; Light, 2000). With the help of low cost information technology, e-government has become an inevitable governing option. Integrated budgeting, although still not in sight for a significant number of countries, is a technically feasible vision.

The theory of holistic governance indeed covers more ground than the ensuing "joined-up" public sector reform projects in many countries. The authors of holistic

governance theory suggest many ways to realize the ideal state of holistic governance, but do not propose any strategy that will institutionalize the holistic governance operation.

It is evident that political leadership will play the most important role in achieving the momentum that the holistic governance ideal demands. The contribution of Margaret Thatcher to the New Public Management is enormously important and so is that of Tony Blair in his contribution to the "joined-up" initiatives.

Other than the political leadership required in promoting holistic governance, there are three related strategies that will facilitate the realization of holistic governance: online governance, integrated organizations, and active civil service. These three strategies are necessary and complementary institutions that will pave a solid foundation for holistic governance. The three strategies represent three dimensions of infrastructure: technological foundation, organizational foundation, and human resources foundation.

Online Governance

Internet technology enables human society to break the barriers of time and place in unprecedented ways. In the late 1990s, internet technology spread around the world almost instantly. Not only did internet technology change economic and societal operations, it also fundamentally changed the organizational operation. From the perspective of governmental function, information technology and the utilization of the internet has produced many new words to describe governance, such as wired government (O' Looney, 2002), virtual state (Fountain, 2001), electronic government (Grönlund, 2002), and digital government.

Before the late 1980s, the concept of electronic government meant using information technology to execute administrative work. The main task of the early period was to increase the automation of government activities. The invention of internet technology transformed the concept of electronic government from a stand alone computer system to a networked system. The impact of internet technology on electronic government is to build up a mutually communicated and interactive computer system. There are three levels of e-government functioning: First, using internet technology to put government forms and tax application online. Second, government can connect employees, suppliers, and customers with internet technology. Third, digital technology can improve efficiency, effectiveness, and service quality of governmental operations. That is to say that e-government can obtain three kinds of objectives: efficiency, quality, and democracy (Grönlund, 2002).
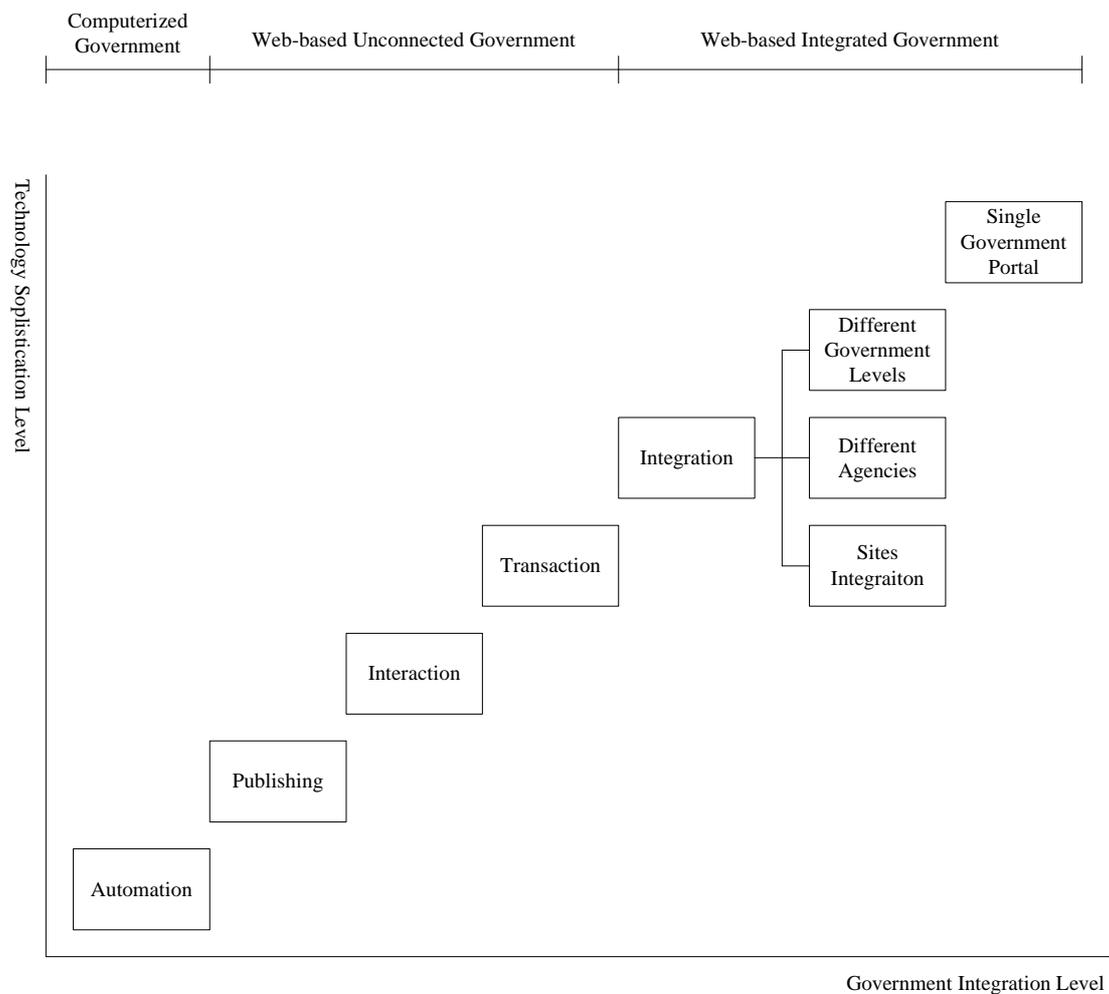
Although e-government is high on the agenda of almost every country, the "integrated public service" that permits two-way information exchange, service provision, and transaction is still in its early stage. It is expected that with constantly improving website technology, an integrated web service available to all will reach the level of sophistication in a very short time.

Since the beginning of the internet age, governments with substantial computer investment and internet connections, which national or sub-national, are all settings up websites to serve the public with information and services. To some extent, governmental websites have become the showcase of governmental services. Peng identifies the early age of internet usage of governmental portals as the web-based unconnected government (Peng, 2002a, see figure 1). This early stage can be further divided into three sub-stages: publishing, interaction, and transaction (Accenture, 2001). At the publishing stage, governmental websites offer only information about certain organizations, this serving as an instant bulletin board. However, the publishing function already greatly enhanced the accessibility of government information which never existed before. When government websites can interact with their users, the communication channel becomes two-way which effectively improves the relationship between government and the general public. When transactions can be executed on government websites, like paying tax dollars or buying products/services, the potential for internet technology is further utilized. At this stage, to for citizens not so familiar with the structure and relationships among governmental organizations, government websites remain somehow in convenient. From the perspective of holistic governance, why can't the general public obtain all the public services from a single portal, at a time when internet technology has progressed to such a sophisticated level?

A single entry portal that offers all government services requires three dimensions of website integration: integration among different levels of governments, integration among different departments, and integration among websites. At present, many countries are working toward this vision with different levels of success. The difference among countries is the extent that the single government portal can offer integrated services.

To achieve a fully integrated single governmental portal requires tremendous efforts of integration among numerous units of government organizations. During the integration process, all the administrative regulations and procedures have to be carefully examined and rationalized to allow for transparent public scrutiny. In the meantime, the general public can access government services with ease, just like

using credit card in the daily life. When the single government portal advances to the fully integrated level, online governance can be truly realized. Online governance will be the main driver for holistic governance. If the goal of online governance is fully understood and accepted by political actors, administrators, and the general public, the integration problems of administrative activities and website presentation can be solved professionally and administratively rather than politically.

Computerized Government	Web-based Unconnected Government	Web-based Intergrated Government

Technology Sophistication Level

Single Government Portal

Different Government Levels

Integration — Different Agencies

Sites Integraiton

Transaction

Interaction

Publishing

Automation

Government Integration Level

Source: Peng, 2002a.

Figure 1: The Development Phases of E-government

Integrated Government Organizations

The theory of holistic governance tries to remedy service fragmentation that comes from the departmentalism prevailing in all countries. Departmentalism exists at the central government level as well as at the local level. Even when dealing with foreign affairs, the central government has to depend on different departments to fulfill various functions as situations unfold. The structural pattern of departments

among central governments reveals that similarities far exceeds differences. Due to the different historical backgrounds, the number of departments in different countries is between 12 and 30 (Heady, 2001: 80). During the last two decades, Peng found a convergence pattern in a number of departments in central governments among OECD countries (Peng, 2002b). On the one hand, in post-communist countries, the number of central government departments increased from 5 to 6 in 1980 to 14 to 16 in 2001. On the other, those countries with more than 20 departments were reducing the number of departments. Although the number of departments spread from 7 and 26 in 2001, most OECD countries have anywhere between 10 to 19 departments. If we zoom in a little bit further, there are 10 countries that have 14 to 16 departments and if we neglect the different titles, it seems that every country has 13 core functional departments: home affairs, foreign affairs, finance, economic affairs, defense, education, justice, transportation, labor, agriculture, culture, environment, and social security. Department of labor have to do with specific groups of people. All the other departments are basically functional divisions. Viewing from the angle that current division of departments is primarily based on functional lines rather than administrative processes, clients, or geographical division, the departmental fragmentation should be considered a result of evolution among OECD countries. This fact poses a question: in order to establish organizational structure for the sake of holistic governance, should functional departmentalism be totally replaced, or should it be kept intact with some revision? The former option seems unrealistic in that the built-in efficiency of departmentalism could not be traded off easily with any significant benefit.

Organizational revision becomes more favorable not only because of its theoretical beauty but because of the reorganization trend since the NPM movement. The NPM reform trend transforms government organizations to a substantial degree. The agency system adopted by the U. K. after 1988 has spread to many other countries with various ramifications (Flinders & Smith, 1999). The agency system can be regarded as a different form of departmentalism. There are two dimensions in promoting departmental integration: horizontal integration and integration with a matrix type organizational framework and an integrating mechanism for the current organizational operation. A matrix type organizational framework refers to the combination of functional departments and the cross-cutting departments that serve the purpose of coordinating cross-boundaries issues. Cross-cutting departments include departments of human resource management, planning, and information technology. The functions of cross-cutting departments are the same as those of Chief Personnel Officer (CPO), Chief Research Officer (CRO) and Chief Information Officer (CIO) in the private sector. Functional departments and cross-cutting

departments can be linked by internet technology and communication tools to interact more frequently and efficiently. The logic that is embedded in the functional matrix organizational system is as follows:

1. Departmental organization primarily based on functional division.

2. Cross-cutting units, like CIO, CPO, or CRO work with functional departments to form a centripetal, integrated organization.

3. Establish regular and irregular integrating mechanism.

4. Regular reviews on the extent of the integrating process and results with budget constraint and goal management tools.

5. Establish integrating systems with the help of information technology system design processes.

6. Systematic communication with related policy stakeholders, such as other governments, clients, voluntary sector, NGOs, and internet groups.

The integration of government functions needs not only a integrating mechanism but also a changing of values structure in government operation. A well integrated government administration requires a delicate and enforceable accountability system to support the monitoring function (Wilkins, 2002; 6 et al, 2005). When the governance relationship become more complex and many levels of government and many departments are involved in a specific policy area, the accountability structure may turn into an unsolvable and unrecognizable maze. At any stage in the establishment of a single portal e-government, the design of e-governance will need full cooperation from a full range of actors, policy makers, and even clients. The value system of a well integrated organization, by definition, requires values that include: integrity, accountability, service, equity, innovation, teamwork, excellence, honesty, commitment, quality, openness, communication, recognition, trust, effectiveness, leadership and ideas(Kernaghan et al, 2000: 269). These organizational values are dynamic, interactive, forward-looking, and active in nature and are markedly differently from the traditional unidimensional thinking and its associated values like legal regulation, power, status quo, centralization, departmental. How to cultivate these values and make them the backbone of governmental operation requires a different breed of civil servant.

Active Civil Service

If "world government" is a utopian goal, then holistic governance may be another. The first strategy to realize online governance, with the aid of a rapid development of information technology, is gradually becoming within our reach. The second strategy of integrating government organization is possible only when we can reform the government structure, make good use of information technology, and integrating financial and human resources to upgrade the efficiency and effectiveness of the government capability. However, in the final analysis, holistic governance will become reality only when an active civil service is firmly in place.

In retrospect, the NPM movement and various government reengineering processes have deeply reformed the administrative culture in a performance, efficiency, results-orientation, and competitive direction. But the public administration community has begun to express anxiety about decentralization, contracting-out, delegation, and privatization. Denhardt's "New Public Service" (2003) can be seen as a counter balance argument which criticizes the private sector bias of the NPM. Denhardt asserts that managers of the public sector should have the following qualities (Denhardt, 2000: 189):

1. commitment toward organizational values;

2. serving the public;

3. empowerment and leadership sharing;

4. pragmatic incrementalism;

5. dedication toward public service.

In order to realize holistic governance, managers as well as civil servants should display the above-mentioned ethical behaviors. Civil servants should serve as a "moral entrepreneur" (Hart, 1984). Louis Gawthrop further asserts that administrators should have strong democratic and ethical convictions, deep belief in the superior values of democracy, and the moral vision of democracy (Gawthrop, 1998: 24). However, although an active civil service is necessary and highly desirable in constructing holistic governance, it is a challenging task for any country. An active civil service needs a new system of human resources management that recruits and selects civil servant possessing qualities like moral sense, firm commitment, and initiative taking. Other than the advanced selection methods to screen out qualified civil servants, an active civil service should have a comprehensive system to develope and reward civil servants. When the governing environment becomes even more

complex and delicate, the knowledge expertise required of these civil servants will be enormous. A new development plan for civil servants' career has to be created accordingly. And only when the idea of holistic governance enters civil servants' blood stream and integrated operations become natural can the success of holistic governance be achieved (Richards and Kavanagh, 2000: 9).

Conclusion

Holistic governance, compared to the traditional public administration and new public management, poses a daunting challenge to current the level of governing sophistication. The nature and goal of holistic governance presents the public administration community with a new paradigm that directly appeals to the needs of the public. While initiatives like "joining-up government" are correcting the systemic flaws that come from the fragmentation of functional departments, holistic governance aspires to go beyond these current efforts. In order to institutionalize the ideals of holistic governance, other than a strong committed political leadership, it is suggested that three strategies should be adopted to serve as institutional drivers to realize this goal: online governance, integrated government organizations and an active civil service.

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