Usable knowledge in public policy

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The range of usable information for public policy is complex and distributed but policy debate is still dominated by instrumental and centralised information constructed and controlled by functional and managerial experts — the creed of expertise. In recent years other types of 'usable' knowledge has begun to flow back into policy streams and in particular local knowledge (sometimes called community knowledge) is staging a major revival. This inductive knowledge is now being merged with the deductive paradigms of new public management.

In the first section I illustrate the key features of expert-based knowledge and how it pervades our thinking about how policy happens and the valued content of policy.Then I outline the types of usable information that flows into government and therefore constitutes the basic building blocks for knowledge. Finally, I drill down to expand on the idea of community knowledge and illustrate what it actually looks like.

It appears to me that our science of public policy has been founded on a false premise — namely that the laws governing our unfolding knowledge of the physical world are paralleled by laws which will unfold and constitute the key knowledge building blocks of our social world. Not so it seems. Despite the pretence of rationality, expertise, cascading goals, program structures and the word 'knowledge' as a required prefix to most labels in the public sector nowadays, when I ask people to show me some knowledge about departments or programs causing 'outcomes' I elicit one or more of the following responses:

- a lot of blank looks;
- directed to the librarian, now called the knowledge bank manager;
- shown the latest whiz bang database that the consultants will shortly have working;
- given the latest annual report to parliament illustrating numerous 'achievements' in the past year and absolutely no 'failures';
- told to await the outcomes of the evaluations of the current plethora of pilots.

Since I rarely get very far with this line of inquiry I change tack and ask another question, namely what are the types of knowledge that are relevant to policy considerations in your program/ department and how is such knowledge constructed?

This tends to generate more blank looks or perhaps vague statements about the importance of 'evidenced-based policy making'.

Now it could well be that the eclectic nature of the responses are not simply because of my esoteric line of inquiry but because we don't have a knowledge orientation to our work in public administration and public policy — despite the rhetoric. Even more seriously it could be that we don't know what knowledge looks like because it has become self-referential — that is, the way we work and the tools we use largely define what is good and proper in policy work.

In the first section of this article I will sketch out the nature of the problem of self-referential policy knowledge based on the dominance of functional and managerial expertise — the creed of rationalist expertise. As this self-referential knowledge is dominated by expert knowledge in the next section I outline various other types of usable knowledge relevant to public policy and the improvement of governing capacity. In

the third section I focus in on the example of place and community-based knowledge as one important type of usable knowledge coming back into public policy debates.

Rationalist expertise

Knowledge is the modern currency of public policy. It is made up primarily of facts and ideas and values which, when assembled in particular ways, guide judgments about what to do. The most important feature of knowledge is the creation of meanings that guide action. That guidance includes an explicit or implicit theory of action — that is, what causes something to happen. Facts and information on their own are not really knowledge, they are building blocks towards knowledge.

Knowledge in public policy can be understood from a range of perspectives, for example the nature of the reasoning that is applied (economic reasoning which deals with scarcity/ social reasoning which deals with distributive issues/legal reasoning which deals with the application of rules) (Diesing 1962).

Knowledge can also be understood in terms of its 'power' source — for example, Max Weber delineated types of authority (traditional/charismatic/legal rational) and the types of knowledge that flowed from these sources (Weber 1952).

Throughout the history of public administration and the more recent history of the policy 'sciences' there have been various attempts to understand the nature of both these disciplines (public administration and public policy) and their subject matters (such as policy skills) through the lens of theories of knowledge, but such theories have never become central to the teaching or practice of either, especially in Australia.

Many of the early discussions about knowledge in public administration and in public policy were concerned with attempts to separate facts from values (a doomed enterprise if ever there was one) and to understand the play between human and institutional agency (eg through the new institutionalism (March and Olsen 1989; Steinmo *et al.* 1992). Since much of this early theorising led to intellectual cul de sacs and indifference from practitioners it has been left to the post-modernists (Fox and Miller 1995; Farmer 1995) and a few others such

as Frank Fischer (Fischer 2003) to keep the debates alive. The core debate in the literature (loosely defined as the philosophy of knowledge) is about the role of human agency in the construction of knowledge and the extent to which normative constructs are enmeshed in what we come to see as objective realities. In other words how we know what we know.

In Australia Peter Wilenski (1986) canvassed some of the issues but basically our public policy and public administration writers have steered clear of knowledge debates and concentrated on the successes of practice. However, one of the consequences of taking the eye off the knowledge ball is that we fail to see just how much knowledge is a constructed process rather than some objectified process that we 'tap into'. That is, knowledge is the product of what we choose to see and value within a specific historical and institutional conjuncture.

A short story of knowledge

What is valued as knowledge changes over time and before illustrating the nature of our current frame I will present a short narrative (illustrated in Table 1) on the historical development of knowledge frames relevant to the Westminster (or Washminster) system we now have in Australia. This story of changing knowledge paradigms leads us to our modern conundrum of being stuck with institutions and instruments and ways of thinking about them that may no longer be as usable as they used to be.

In feudal times knowledge and absolute power were centred in individual 'lords of the manor' and their hereditary peers. With the advent of the enlightenment and 'reason' the range of usable knowledge applied to public policy issues expanded to include the court of the monarchs and especially the knowledge derived from interpretations of Christian theology mixed with the spirit of capitalism.

The emergence of democratic forms of governance based on simultaneous small-scale place management (electorates) and large-scale place management (the nation-state) created the conditions for the development of distinctive administrative knowledge based on a combination of technical expertise and seniority to support and interpret representational knowledge (expressed collectively through parliaments and governments).

By the 1950s, expert knowledge, based on a rationalist faith in science and 'getting down to the facts', was beginning to dominate public administration and the new 'policy sciences' emerged to define and apply the laws of social science to public policy issues. Technical and legal knowledge slid into the background with functional knowledge (eg about Keynesian economics) and management knowledge (eg planning and budgeting systems) coming to the fore.

This is essentially the knowledge frame we still have today although dressed up as 'economic rationalism', New Public Management or more disparagingly as 'managerialism'.

This brief historical excursus illustrates how so much of what we take for granted today in public policy (eg things called departments and programs) are actually our own artefacts. Not only that, they form a frame — a set of assumptions that create a view of the world — through which we construct views of the building blocks of knowledge — ideas, facts, values and histories.

Embedded assumptions of public administration

Public administration has a series of inherited knowledge assumptions which we rarely explore because they are so embedded in our ontology — they are part of the lens through which we view the world. Some of these assumptions include:

- that departments are an efficient and effective organisational unit for the administration of democracy;
- departments should have goals and objectives and plans and performance measures and so on;
- that functional organisation (eg health and education departments) is the best way to coordinate and deliver services;
- that the public sector is best placed to deliver public services (recently under challenge from markets and now from communities);
- that cause and effect can be teased out through 'program logic';
- that outputs and outcomes are the key organising principles for allocation (outputs) and accountability (outcomes);
- the idea that cause and effect is attributable within performance systems (eg that lower class sizes 'causes' or at least is 'correlated' with certain educational outcomes);
- the idea that cause and effect between systems can be aggregated (eg that outputs can be aggregated to outcomes that constitute wellbeing and prosperity);
- that policy is created after objectives are set, not before;
- that goals are purposive and departments instrumental.

Table 1 Historical development of knowledge frames

Historical era	Source of knowledge guiding public policy
Feudal	Absolute power of the feudal Lord — largely hereditary assumption of 'wisdom'
Monarchy	Hereditary plus patronage interpreting secular and religious 'law' — assumption of 'wisdom'
Democratic, late century onwards	Representational (Westminster) plus seniority interpreting authority — assumption of wise judgments derived from authority
Democratic with a technocratic graft (1960s onwards)	Representational (Westminster) plus merit based applying social science expertise — assumption of program rationality and good management

Note: This distinctively European history is quite different from other histories such as tribal indigenous histories in Australia or the clan histories of much of the Asia Pacific.

All of these are contestable. One of the many consequences of such assumptions is that they shape how we think about policy knowledge and what constitutes 'good' knowledge and indeed 'good governance'. That is, they influence our views of what constitutes values as well as facts. In particular they tend to privilege *expert* knowledge and *management* knowledge, which combine to organise (including what counts as relevant) information to meet the 'standards' of expertise and rationality. For example, for the past 20 years we have experienced the hubris of the New Public Management as the predominant public sector knowledge frame. This knowledge tends to be deductive, atheoretical and ahistorical and as a result much of the collective 'wisdom' about other forms of knowledge has been lost and devalued.

Illustrating the creed of expertise

The knowledge assumptions within the creed of expertise are expressed in many subtle ways — through words and discourse; through values and ideas; through the institutions and instruments we use in day-to-day policy work.
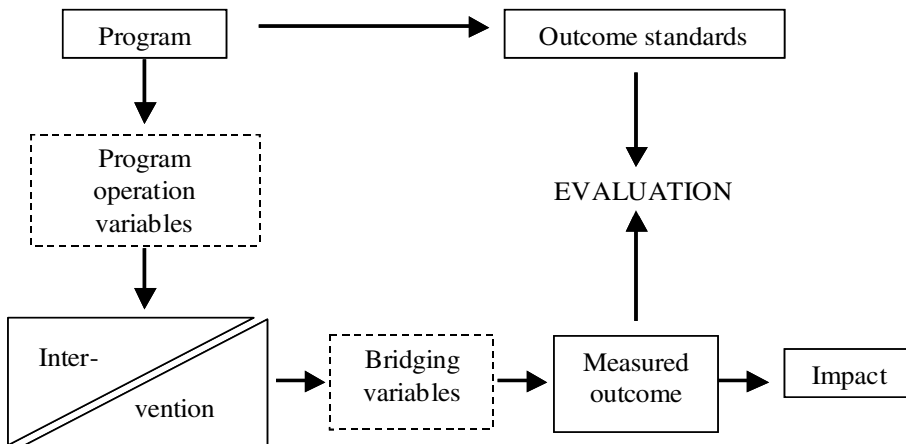
Instruments are nodal points where institutional logic is expressed. They are thus quite useful as a point of entry for analysis of flows of knowledge. For example, an 'annual report to parliament' entails the institutional logic of accountability of the performance of bureaucracy to the people through parliament. An executive performance contact entails the institutional logic of both directing and then measuring the 'merit' in merit-based appointments and in being able to demonstrate the link between salary level and level of performance.
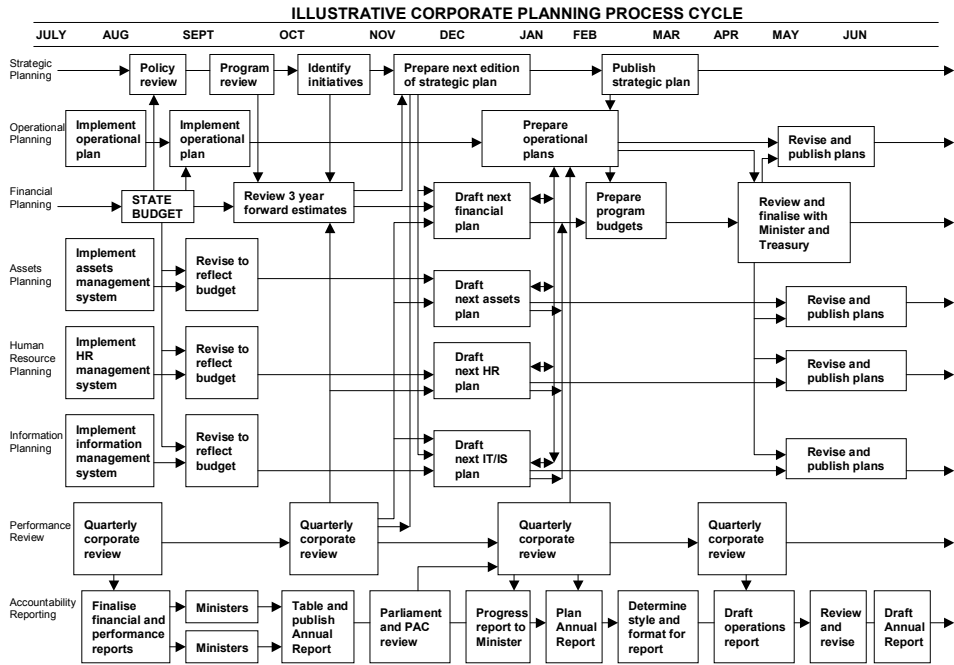
Similarly, programs are really important in public administration because for most of us in the public sector they are the institutional link between policy and outcomes. They are the engine or work horse of public administration and policy. We tend therefore to assume that if our business plan (drawing down from the corporate plan) is implemented through our programs, that we have 'caused' something to happen, hopefully linked to our output performance measures. This is the simple causal chain in the way we tend to think about public administration and policy.

Figure 1 displays the logic of a program as typically presented in the mainstream literature. The assumption is that program interventions cause outcomes to occur and therefore the key role of the policy analyst is to understand the relations between variables and manage the program through to implementation and review.

The logic of programs is paralleled in the logic of departments and their internal workings. For example, planning is a key instrument in departments as shown in Figure 2 and is the typical planning logic of a department within which a program operates.

Figure 1 Theory of the program

ILLUSTRATIVE CORPORATE PLANNING PROCESS CYCLE

| JULY | AUG | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN |

**Figure 2 Public policy as rationality**

If you work in a government department (and indeed in many private and community sector organisations) you will probably have a diagram like this, possibly even on your wall/ workspace partition at work. Such diagrams look like an up-to-date knowledge systems approach (systems theory has been revived so Talcott Parsons will soon be back on the reading list) but it is just not real. In 20 years no one has been able to show me a system that operates remotely like this. It might look like a good 'aspirational system' but it doesn't *cause* anything to happen.

When I ask if people can point to any yearly planning cycle that sequentially rolled out like Figure 2 the usual responses are:

- The person who designed the system has left and no one understands it any more.
- The government/secretary changed and there is now a new system.
- The consultants will shortly have the system working.
- It was only ever a draft.

What really happens in the public sector is that we adopt, or at least conform to, the ontologies of the day and the views of knowledge embedded within them even when they do not reflect reality. When new ideas and instruments emerge they struggle for a place in the policy sun and sometimes they slowly challenge the dominant ontologies — akin to the idea of paradigm shifts in the physical sciences outlined by Kuhn (1962).

We can see this underway at the moment. Language is often a good gauge of what constitutes usable knowledge and in Figure 3 I have mapped the use of language in mainstream public policy discourse (using in this case press releases, Hansard records and public speeches by Australian politicians). I have just focused on the difference between science words and craft words. Science words include, for example: economic growth; hard evidence/logical/ certainty/productivity/facts and so on. Craft words include, for example, words such as judgment/feelings/consultation/partnership/ community/iteration.
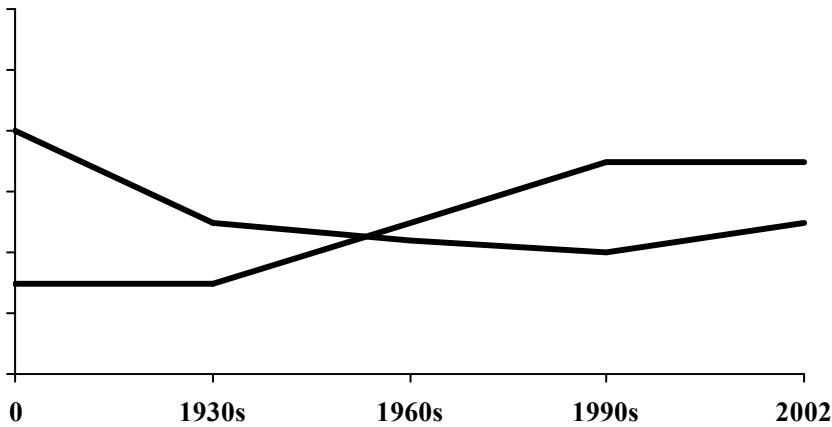
Figure 3   Public policy language based on science or craft

What we are witnessing is the re-emergence of facts, ideas and values from areas of public policy debate which have been dormant or marginalised for over 20 years. The rapid development of social capital knowledge and the 'interdependence of the four capitals' in understanding cause and effect (Adams 2001) has helped the re-emergence of craft words as has both the focus on environmental sustainability (Elkington 2001) and the discovery of networks in economic innovation theory (Florida 2002).

The point is that language is not neutral, it flows with the ontologies of the day and reinforces them. Changing language can reflect a challenge to dominant ontologies. What is interesting in public administration, however, is whether there is a firm fit between the ontologies and the instruments of public policy.

There are many signs (such as the declining levels of trust in current political processes) of such a legitimacy problem emerging and this can be illustrated by looking at how the creed of expertise is dealing with the resurgent social capital literature.

Social capital ideas are now back in the policy mix. Since most of our dominant institutions have been deeply engulfed in reasoning about economic capital they continue to struggle with social capital. For example, the recent Productivity Commission report (July 2003) on social capital acknowledges that social capital is 'real'. This is despite a history of the Productivity Comission dancing around the edges of the idea, ignoring it or considering it yet another 'externality' of competition and productivity.

The Productivity Commission's conclusions illustrate what happens when economic reasoning meets social capital reasoning. First, a belated acknowledgement that individuals and markets alone will not suffice (written of course in economic language): 'Social capital has several characteristics that may cause it to be underprovided or maldistributed, if left to private efforts alone' (2003:67). In other words there were a few unfortunate externalities associated with microeconomic reform. So we had better take a second look. As the commission (2003:68) argues:

> There would be benefits of integrating social capital analysis into mainstream policy analysis…[to]…ensure that government policies, programs and regulations do not unnecessarily or unintentionally erode social capital and that beneficial side-effects on social capital are taken into account …and ways of harnessing existing stocks of social capital to deliver programs more effectively.

The functional and managerial expertise remains, however, with the focus on 'harnessing' the beneficial 'side effects' of social capital. Another part of the production process to be appropriated.

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Table 2   Embedded knowledge in the four capitals — examples

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Capital	Key Ideas	Things Valued
Social capital/social reasoning	Trust; reciprocity; bonding; bridging; linking; mutuality; identity; belongingness; networks; diversity	Community; inclusion; wellbeing
Economic capital/ economic capital reasoning	Productivity; demand; supply; price; choice; incentives; contracts; externalities; GDP; capital flows	Competition; prosperity; growth
Human capital/ human capital reasoning	Education; learning; skills; qualifications; labour flows	People; character; potential
Natural capital/ natural capital reasoning	Sustainability; environment; balanced growth; culture; intergenerational equity	Nature; the world; futures

Now that all four capitals — economic, social, human and natural — are on the international table (Adams 2002) it is an appropriate time to consider whether the usable knowledge (in Figure 3) in public policy could also be framed around the interdependence of the capitals. In Table 2 I have noted some of the key concepts embedded in each of the four capitals.

Within each of the four capitals the key ideas are both descriptive as well as analytical (used as a reference point to understand policy) and normative (used to define what is good and proper in public policy).

The key observation here is that the proposition of the interdependence of the four capitals suggests that a key role for policy workers is first to understand how the types of facts/values/ideas enmeshed in each of the capitals are constructed by the participants in a policy community to reach views about meaning and action.

Such thinking is unlikely to be on the radar screen of functional and managerial expertise precisely because the idea of the interdependence of the four capitals suggests a much broader array of usable knowledge than that provided through the creed of expertise.

Usable knowledge for public policy

In the first section I illustrated how public administration instruments are structured to value expert, ordered, rational knowledge. In this section I want to illustrate how there are many other types of usable knowledge which may not be compatible with the creed of expertise in public administration.

In Table 3 I have identified the main types of information that could be relevant to a policy decision. I have identified categories of people (knowledge domains) rather than simply the type of information produced because it is the act of production and interpretation which begins the shift from information or data to knowledge.

In each of the categories, the people involved, their histories and institutional relations tend to vary. This also applies to the types of information relevant to policy — both in terms of epistemology (how it is constructed) and ontology (the views of the world). Indeed, the simple observation here is that if one accepts that knowledge is socially constructed (Berger and Luckman 1966), then expert knowledge is just one of many forms of usable and constructed knowledge. However, it is the propensity of the creed of expertise to appropriate other forms that makes it distinctive.

Table 3 Main types of information

Knowledge domain	Knowledge mandate	Institutional sites — examples
Public	Populist values and attitudes; votes	• Voting • Opinion polls • Social Action
Political	Democratic representational	• Political party • Parliament
Opinion leaders	Clustered representation mobilisation of bias; charisma; institutional mandate (eg church leaders)	• Media; lobbying
Interest groups	Constituency representation advocacy	• Peak organisations • Round tables
Media	Expositional/affectual mobilisation of bias	• Print, television, radio, Web
Expert	Rationality of functional expertise; rationality of managerial expertise	• Departments, programs, briefings, reports, cabinet
Local	Situational/tacit and sticky knowledge	• Places and spaces

With many of the other categories of people, histories and narratives are an important part of the process of constructing knowledge, and iterating information over time to create and reshape meanings. That is, knowledge has a temporal aspect to it — unlike the episodic and truncated nature of expert knowledge. Instruments of the creed of expertise such as market research appropriate community knowledge by reducing it to a series of episodic sample surveys or focus groups and then reproduce it as objective reality based on numbers. But such numbers are devoid of people and any sense of the intensity of interests or stage of developing meanings about an issue.

Alternatively, in some organisations that view knowledge as a process of construction between multiple stakeholders, then a planning process that looks like Figure 4 may develop. In these 'network' organisations it is much less likely that mainstream tools (such as those supporting the rationality in Figure 2) will work. Spatial and temporal reference points have changed. In these organisations strategic planning and management practices are much more likely to use ideas and tools drawn, for example, from network theory (Considine 2001), complexity theory, public value theory (Kelly and Muers 2002) and ideas such as double loop learning (Argyris 1999) and the 'fifth discipline' (Senge *et al.* 1999).

Much of what these theories and ideas have in common is the importance of judgment and valuation to help make sense of complexity. It is also about policy as interaction, narrative and argumentation from which things called goals and policy sometimes emerge. Goals don't shape policy — policy shapes goals.

Within the categories in Table 3 the dominant contemporary frame is that of functional and managerial expertise which is then filtered through the political sieve (parliaments/ministers/cabinets and so on which in principle attempts formally — through representative democracy — to interpret for action the 'usable' meanings of all other categories).
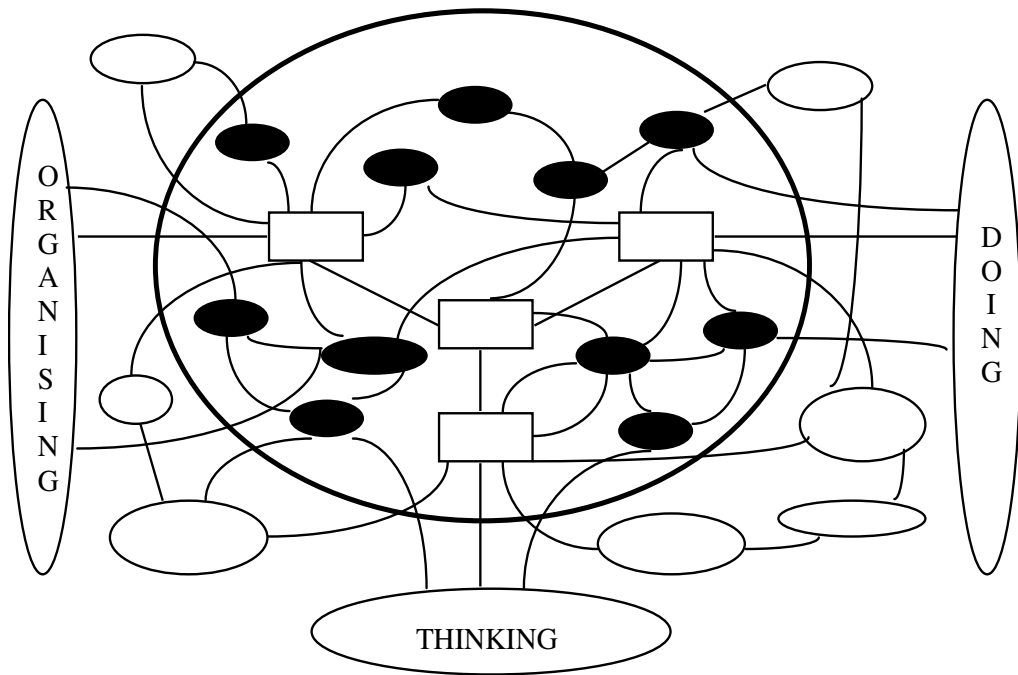
Figure 4   Network organisations

The question is therefore just how much the appropriation of one knowledge frame (such as community knowledge) is affected or distorted by being appropriated through another frame (ie centrist forms of functional and managerial expertise). One way to test this is to explore the terrain of other knowledge frames.

A community knowledge frame

One of the many effects of the rationalist creed of expertise (and its appropriation of other types of information) has been the overemphasis on the individual at the expense of collective entities such as communities. Indeed in Margaret Thatcher's famous quip there may be no such thing as 'society'. Then again there may well be facts, values, ideas and emotions that transcend individuals and have some collective existence defined by that existence (eg identity with a group or place).

Communities are always tricky in public policy because unlike individuals the nature of agency is much more complex with communities (Adams and Hess 2001). For example, one can readily understand the nature of individuals as actors making public and private choices, whether in a supermarket or at the ballot box. It is much harder to grasp and make practical the idea of communities as co-producers of outcomes with government. In other words to view communities as entities which can and should co-produce policy casts a whole different light on how community information would be 'accessed'.

The current approach from the creed of expertise is to pour in programs to communities and sit back with our fingers crossed. So while we know we have over 300 subprograms — all with impeccable program guidelines and performance indicators — delivered into many communities, we do not know what it all means in terms of future wellbeing and prosperity. This is a result of thinking like a program, not thinking like a place. It is a result of believing that the cumulative impact of the rationality of programs will overcome the fuzziness of community.

Thinking like a place (eg a community) might well involve seeing relevant information as:

• the (diverse) experiences of people in their communities and the relative importance of history and narrative;

- how social, economic, human and natural capital interact;
- information about the drivers of long-term community sustainability (such as the rate of renewal of community assets);
- profiles of community engagement, its breadth and diversity;
- what communities consider as important outcomes and how they might change over time;
- long-term demographic trends and their drivers;
- intensity of feelings about ideas and issues and puzzles and solutions;
- the nature of bonding, bridging and linking;
- the nature of embedded community resources and whether and how they are activated and for whom;
- the extent to which identity and trust are clustered or distributed … and why;
- how communities and their constituent groupings deliberate about their many paradoxes and possible futures;
- whether and how people think about the future and intergenerational equity;
- the extent to which innovation and enterprise is present;
- people who can tell you 'what is really going on and who are the people pulling the strings';
- where power and influence lies and how it is mobilised.

In short, understanding the pulse of the community is not just about understanding the component parts. It is about understanding the recipe not just the ingredients. Community knowledge is often place based and this conjuncture between the temporal and spatial elements of knowledge generation is not something well understood in public policy. Yet increasing temporal and spatial ideas are becoming central to policy work. For example, there are important issues regarding intergenerational equity, sustainability or the 'new regionalism' and the 'associational econo-my' in the innovation and planning literatures (Cooke and Morgan 2000). The international rush back to community is focusing primarily on spatial communities (DEMOS 2003) as is much of the civic renewal thinking (Blunkett 2003).
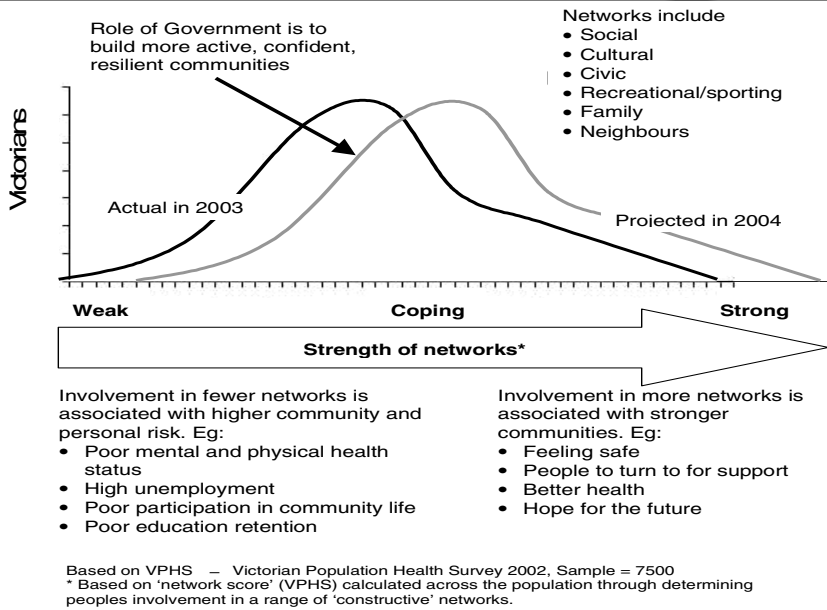
Taking the argument a little further and dipping into the social capital and innovation literatures, it is not hard to place at the centre of government's enterprise the importance of co-producing the conditions for supportive and innovative networks — for example, networks people can turn to in a crisis, or networks which could come up with the next 'breakthrough' in green power generation.

In Figure 5 the conjoining of the social capital literature and the place management literature creates a perspective on the role of government, which is orientated towards the development of supportive networks for (in this case) all Victorians but especially those facing uncertain futures (eg as a result of demographic changes/entrenched inequalities, and so on). In principle then a new department like the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) would have a mandate not around programs but around understanding and acting on the conditions under which more supportive networks might develop.

The diagram recasts the role of government along the lines of place and sets in train a series of more interesting issues about how best to organise for such a strategy that aims to co-produce supportive networks for social and economic and environmental progress. Such people and place based knowledge is not yet part of the mainstream of how governments think about policy knowledge. Figure 5 can be readily segmented for any particular place or population grouping with, for example, demographic projections; current and planned investments; socioeconomic profiles; and so on. Such accumulated information begins to build a picture of 'community' that enables more detailed understandings with communities of what the future could hold. It starts to build community knowledge. It begins to link the embedded social capital of community with whether and how government investments could or should impact on them.

Our analysis in Victoria suggests, for example, that despite many communities receiving literally hundreds of grants, some of the macro indicators (such as birth rates; economic activity; water quality/income/ renewal rate of volunteers and other community assets) are largely unaffected — or in serious decline. In short it could well be that many communities in their current configuration are unsustainable. But when we think in program

Role of Government is to build more active, confident, resilient communities

Networks include
• Social
• Cultural
• Civic
• Recreational/sporting
• Family
• Neighbours

Victorians

Actual in 2003

Projected in 2004

Weak   **Coping**   **Strong**

Strength of networks*

Involvement in fewer networks is associated with higher community and personal risk. Eg:
• Poor mental and physical health status
• High unemployment
• Poor participation in community life
• Poor education retention

Involvement in more networks is associated with stronger communities. Eg:
• Feeling safe
• People to turn to for support
• Better health
• Hope for the future

Based on VPHS — Victorian Population Health Survey 2002, Sample = 7500
* Based on 'network score' (VPHS) calculated across the population through determining peoples involvement in a range of 'constructive' networks.

Figure 5   Networks matter — adult Victorians with weak to strong networks

terms we rarely think about the future of communities — we think about the future of programs. In a similar vein we are all really good, for example, at thinking about our own superannuation, but rarely do we think about the superannuation of our communities.

We have heaps of indicators of economic wellbeing but have yet to come close to any simple composites around community wellbeing. Perhaps the Productivity Commission will take some interest now it has discovered social capital.

Understanding the nature of community knowledge has profound implications for the way in which we organise, plan, fund and deliver public services. In particular it implies that our case management writers might be right (Latham 1998; Mant 2002; Stewart Weeks 2003) and that the key unit of organisation for the public sector should move from programs to relatively small scale places for the planning and delivery of many services. It suggests, for example, that community outcomes managers might become critical roles in the future as will figuring out the skill set required for co-

production of community knowledge. Perhaps we should return to Weber and seriously engage with the idea of representative (in terms of the population profile) local bureaucrats taking a leadership role in supporting representative (in terms of democratically elected) politicians manage places in the birthplace of democracy (the electorate). Perhaps it also means a more serious rethink of our local institutions (particularly local councils and community agencies) and their capability to be the hub of local general purpose community knowledge. Or at least to broker the 'deliberative democracy' processes (Fischkin and Laslett 2003) increasingly being mooted as the mechanism to create public value.

But since we are still imbued with the cult of expertise the current strategies of endless episodic consultation paralleled by market research and a dose of community cabinets — and the mandatory place management pilots — is about what we can expect for a while. Rethinking the institutional settings and the policy analyst/public administrators tool kit is a little harder and requires institutional change

behaviour change and skills change (Hess and Adams 2002).

Conclusion

The ontology of the creed of expertise is that all information be processed and refined to the level of a few key objective bits of 'evidence-based' categories which can be rationally assembled to constitute modern knowledge. We see this, for example, in modern public administration instruments, especially the 'briefing note' and the 'Cabinet Submission' where information is carefully assembled to 'solve' an issue.

The assemblage process involves the appropriation of all types of information into a small number of 'options' which are progressively eliminated until the 'solution' is presented. The judgments to be made are rational management judgments not interpretive judgments. The information is there to be extracted and 'mined' rather than co-produced and iterated. The meanings are given not posed.

Where non-expert information is presented it is usually categorised, for example, as 'stakeholder views' or 'likely media response' or 'market research on public attitudes'. In short it becomes objectified and 'analysed' by functional and managerial experts into the appropriate 'evidence' to inform policy choices. Language, the context of human interactions and the social construction of reality are not important to functional and managerial expertise, but to community knowledge they are the core.

The processes of the creed of expertise editorialises down to the 'key facts and issues'. In such an approach the focus is on problems to which there need to be relatively simple policy solutions. There is no place for perpetually twisted trajectories, puzzles or paradoxes — or feelings. Similarly, time and space (being by definition moving and contextual) are usually truncated and compressed.

The 'radical' alternative from the communitarians (Etzioni 1996; Tam 2001) is that 'authentic conversations' will both identify the epistemological rules of engagement and enable power sharing between the participants. Both approaches seem largely to ignore the nature of the state and its instruments, the former treating them as benign and the latter assuming you can just work around them with 'people power'.

We need to rethink the temporal and spatial dimensions of public administration. The ahistorical, atheoretical and episodic nature of contemporary public administration has resulted in a disjointed approach to policy knowledge where the rhetoric and the reality are a long way apart. Much of the distance is caused by the privileging of centralised programmatic functional expertise supported by centralised programmatic information interpreted by centralised program people and applied to others.

The social capital turn highlights some of the tensions when functional and managerial expertise trained on heavy doses of productivity and competition meet trust and reciprocity.

A much older stream of thinking in public administration casts the role of the administrator and the policy analyst as a craftsperson who navigated values and facts and meanings and interests. Indeed, Weber in his analysis of politics as a vocation identified three essential features for those in public life — a sense of responsibility towards others; passion for the public interest and a sense of judgment. C. Wright Mills (1959) also spoke of the intellectual craftsman [*sic*] using a sociological imagination which linked biography and history to guide understanding. More specifically in public administration writings Vickers spoke of the 'art of judgment' (Vickers 1968) and Redford of public administration as the craft of adjusting and deliberating (Redford 1969).

Most of the early writers on public policy — Heclo, Lasswell, Lindblom — were enthused by the prospect of a 'science' of public policy that could bring the rigour of positivism to the judgments of politics to create a new discipline. The promise of the policy sciences to understand and apply human knowledge has not been met — at least not in our theoretical frameworks — but in practice public policy and strategy have been successful in giving effect to democracy — so far.

The dominance of the creed of expertise has contributed to a much more mobile and transitory public sector where corporate knowledge flows out the door at an alarming rate (often to be bought back from consultants). The episodic nature of public administration means that in general there is a tendency to keep creating new rules of engagement and toolkits rather than learning from history. History is often

what happened a few weeks ago. Public administration is applied, practical and successful so theory is frowned upon and I have yet to see an output in a budget paper called 'thinking' or 'new idea'.

But new ideas are needed. If we adopt the logic of networks (network governance; networks to generate social capital; networks for economic innovation; networks for regional policy; and so on) then we should be thinking about the local institutions (because networks are often local and generally place and space based) that could form the bridge between the agency of networks and the institutional requirements of democracy — such as accountability, representativeness, general purpose focus, and so on. This leads to rethinking not just the role of local government in Australia but other traditional local institutions (such as community agencies and churches) as well as emergent new institutions (such as catchment management authorities). Such institutional arrangements and associated networks are invaluable sites of community knowledge — not to be 'tapped' but to be co-producers of community knowledge.

One of the effects of the creed of expertise is that increasingly (as we are observing) politicians will seek knowledge from elsewhere. The plethora of round tables, community cabinets, the rise of private offices and the general rush to consult with communities are in part a response to the knowledge failures of the creed of expertise and the desire by politicians to seek other sources of usable knowledge. Indeed, the fragmentation of modernity has thrown into sharp relief the risks of dependence on centralised expertise as the dominant knowledge frame and we now need to rethink what usable knowledge is and the capacity of our public administration ideas and instruments to reorientate towards the co-production of knowledge in new spatial and temporal frames.

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