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Cross Sector Collaboration and Politics

1. Introduction

> a. This morning I am going to sketch out for you two ideas.

>> i. The first is the basic difference between public and private sectors

>> ii. The second is the open invitation to influence the work of the city government

2. Let's talk first about the basic difference in sectors:

> a. People have said that the private sector is profit driven

> b. The non-profit sector is mission driven

> c. And, the public sector is value driven

> d. These differences are descriptive and are not meant to be judgmental, and clearly there are overlaps.

3. But, what do we mean when we way the public sector is value driven?

> a. We mean that there are a range of political values that underpin democratic governments that must be embodied in the work of our governments—whether at federal, state, or local levels.

> b. I want to stress that these are political values not individual values like trust, loyalty, respect, and they are held in common.

4. Go to slide one listing political values [see appendix A]

5. Describe each value

> a. Representation, efficiency, social equity, and individual rights

6. Once you understand that each value is essential to a democratic government, you will understand why building a democratic government is a lot harder than people think.

> a. Having an election is symbolic of democracy, but without engaging values like equity and individual rights, the task has just started.

7. Two comments about these values:

    a. First, we cherish each, but in different proportions depending upon your political philosophy.

    b. You cannot have each one optimally at the same time.

8. And in light of the values, we now we come to the definition of politics

    a. Politics is about dealing with public issues for which there are no correct answers. I want to stress this. The need for politics is predicated upon

        i. The need for collective versus individual action,

        ii. Problems where after all the facts are known, we can still disagree on what we ought to do.

        iii. E.g. should a community subsidize downtown revitalization if the financial support needed requires a cutback in service to the suburban areas?

9. While politics focuses on choices between conflicting values when there are no correct answers, there is another concept I think is important to grasp in order to appreciate the phenomenon we call politics.

    a. It grows from the notion that what local governments fundamentally are trying to do is to "build, maintain, and preserve community."

        i. Community building is a key concept in local politics

        ii. The greater number of people who are invested in the community, and who feel obligated to "give something back" to their community, the stronger it is.

            1. Think about this: Everyone is walking around with a metaphorical cup that contains the quality of their life. Imagine that when the cup fills, they are likely to want to give something back to their community for helping to fill the cup. If people associate their community with the quality of their life, what would be the consequence of a political

decision that would help fill some people's cup if at the same time it

empties others?

2. This is why it can take so long to make political decisions. We are

looking—often in vain--for solutions that will solve problems but will not

empty cups. On the one hand, there are the value conflicts to work

through—which is not easy. And also, there is the matter of the cups.

10. Political values that separate public from private and non-profit spheres is the first point I want

to make. Now, let's move to the second idea—the open invitation to get involved.

a. I think it has become harder to make decisions politically and then to successfully carry

them out. The way I conceptualize this is to say: "It is becoming more difficult to

connect 'what to do with how to do it.'" Another way of saying this is that it is

becoming more difficult to connect what is "politically acceptable" with what is

"administratively feasible." I will say that again. It is becoming more difficult to connect

what is "politically acceptable with what is administratively feasible."

i. I came across a great example the other day in class. I had invited the head of

KPERS—Kansas Public Employee Retirement System—to talk about public

pensions to my HR class. He related that during the legislative session that just

ended, he went nearly crazy trying to inform the legislators about the

administrative implications of their divergent proposals which had been

ideologically driven. Not only was there fundamental disagreement on what to

do; each proposal raised had a technical/financial component that lurked in the

background and that was difficult to bring to the foreground.

b. Slide 2 of the gap [See Appendix B]

c. This is the way I visually depict what I have just said.

i. You can see my contention that over time, we have not become much more

capable of doing politics. That's the relatively flat line on the bottom. On the

other hand, we are much better at doing administration than we were in the

past.

ii. Politically, our body politic has become more diverse, and at the same

time, our politics are more focused than ever on issues of identity—who we are

and what we want to become. The politics of identity defy the definition of

politics as the art of the possible. We see every day in political expressions that

Identity politics leaves little room for compromise.

iii. While we seem stalemated politically, no more skilled doing politics today than

yesterday, administratively, the picture is very different. Today we have much

better administrative tools than we had in the past that enable us to do things

like: make more accurate revenue projections, do all kinds of "what if" scenarios

with the budget, connect budgetary and hr data, establish performance

measures, utilize gps and gis in ways not imaginable only 10 years ago, and so

on. In the KPERS case, we are more capable than in the past of making

sophisticated actuarial projections.

iv. This gap between political and administrative capabilities over time is what I

refer to as the growing gap between what is politically acceptable and

administratively feasible. For effective public policy to be made and

implemented, the gap must be bridged. Bridge building exemplars exist among

us: Bob Kipp as a CM of KCMO and more recently Dennis Hays across the river

in the United government. These kinds of people are able to live in the worlds

of politics and administration and maintain credibility in each. Their goal—

whether they know it or not--is connecting the two arenas—translating political

thinking into problems that can be solved administratively and transforming

technical work into values choices.

    1. I can describe these two arenas in other ways as well—ways that may be more familiar to you.

        a. The world of politics at its core is about passion, dreams, and stories.

            i. Passion engages us in politics

            ii. Dreams capture the vision of what we want our community to become

            iii. And stories/anecdotes are important because articulating the passion and dreams to diverse audiences requires more than a focus on the technical world of facts.

            iv. But the content of these stories separates the good from the great political actors. It is said that politicians tell us what we want to hear. Statesmen tell us what we can become.

        b. Now to the arena of administration, and its core which is

            i. Data, plans, and reports—passion/dreams and stories; data, plans and reports

            ii. We want passion from our administrators, but passion cannot substitute for accurate data, plans, and reports.

        c. So, the world of politics and administration are described by more than what is political acceptable and administratively feasible; each arena contains its own constellation of logic—way of thinking and approaching problems.

v. As the gap grows, reflecting the differences between the worlds of politics and administration, the bridge building function increases in importance, and opportunities open for non-governmental actors to become more influential IF they are seen as assets in this bridge building role. Note that the shape of the space between the gaps implies an invitation.

vi. Let me give you a personal example of third party influence and bridge building.

    1. When I was the mayor of Lawrence, we had completed a new and major parks and recreation master plan. But, we had no money to fund it. We had talked about a sales tax increase—which the city could do by statute. The problem was that the county and school districts both had capital agendas as well as ours. The county needed an expanded jail and health services building, and the school district had finally built enough political support for creation of a second high school.

        a. How could we fund all of these priorities?

        b. I called a meeting, and who I involved is indicative of the open invitation I have been speaking of. I did not invite other governmental actors. I had lunch with the ED of the chamber of commerce, and the person who had guided me politically in my first campaign.

            i. The ED was very public minded, and a creative, big picture thinker. He also was politically astute. My former campaign manager new the ins and outs of politics in Lawrence and the state, and was also well regarded in the community as was the chamber ED.

            ii. As we had lunch, I posed the question: "How do the

three jurisdictions sequence our requests for funding to

the voters?" Each request would require a public vote.

iii. We talked and talked becoming more and more

discouraged, when finally the ED said, "We don't

sequence the votes, we do them all at once, and here is

how we do it. Instead of the city asking for a sales tax,

the county requests a one cent sales tax that would be

divided among the county and the cities within the

county.

1. The city uses its share to fund the parks and rec

master plan and also to reduce the property tax

the same amount that it will cost the school

district to build the second high school.

2. So, for a once cent increase in the sales tax, we

get the p&r rec plan funded, the jail and health

building constructed, and we get a second high school.

c. Note that no government official was involved other than me

and my role was to convene the meeting. The solution came

from a trusted other.

d. Now, what we did next was significant.

i. The chamber ED said he would talk with the

superintendent; my other friend said he would talk with

the county administrator; and I said I would talk with

the city administrator but only after I had heard that the

others would be supportive. This sequence was

important because we knew the doubter would be the city manager, and we wanted our ducks in order before we approached him; we were trying to connect the arenas of politics and administration.

2. A long story short, the sales tax passed convincingly and the campaign was "3 for 1"—which of course someone else thought of.

11. What to learn from the gap discussion

a. The open invitation has been sensed by many, and there is no shortage of initiatives. I suspect that the ones that succeed will have two characteristics

i. They will already have thought out and perhaps advanced with sensitivity the task of connecting political acceptability and administrative feasibility.

1. This also may mean understanding the logic of politics and the logic of administration.

ii. And, they will have brought more than themselves to the table. With the open invitation, those who can come to the table as part of a coalition of interests will fulfill a coordinating/convening function.

12. Summary

a. None of this is easy primarily because we are trying to deal with problems for which there are no correct answers and also because faith in our governing institutions to connect what is political acceptable and administratively feasible is declining. On the other hand, these conditions open the door to non-profits and other civic minded groups who can skillfully understand the importance of community building, the notion of the cups, and come with realistic understanding that whatever one proposes, there will be values issues that others will raise in opposition.

Appendix A

Values

- **RESPONSIVENESS** =

    – Representation/Participation +

    – Efficiency/Professionalism +

    – Social Equity +

    – Individual Rights

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POLITICAL VALUES

Frequently, when we think of values, qualities like honesty, reliability, love and sincerity come to mind. These are values--deep-seated beliefs that lead to judgments about right and wrong--but they have to do with individuals and how we lead our lives individually.

Political values influence public policy development as opposed to the lives of the individuals who make policy. The primary political value in our culture is *responsiveness* of governmental officials to public wants and needs. The value of responsiveness is reflected in demands for *representation*, *efficiency*, *individual rights*, and *social equity*.

Representation. This is the deep-seated belief that government answers to the will of the people through elected representatives. The wishes of citizens should be represented in governing bodies. If a public policy is going to have an impact on a group of citizens, that group should have the opportunity to be heard.

Efficiency. Citizens expect government to be run prudently. This is achieved through cost-consciousness and rational, analytical decision making and through an emphasis on expertise and professionalism, planning and merit.

Social Equity. Frequently, citizens are treated as members of groups rather than individuals. Sometimes we classify people as veterans, disabled, African American, female and senior citizen rather than as Jose, Mary, Rita, and Jacob. As group members they expect treatment equal to members of other groups. And, they compare their treatment with that given to members of other groups. For example, people living in one neighborhood expect to receive a level of government service similar to that received in other neighborhoods; older neighborhoods might expect more service.

Individual Rights. Citizens are granted legal rights that protect them from arbitrary decisions by those who govern--both elected and appointed officials. These rights may be expressed in ordinances, statutes and laws, and the constitution. Property rights and civil rights fall into the broader value of individual rights.

Appendix B—The Gap between what is politically acceptable and administratively feasible

Hi

Learning

Low

Staff—administratively feasible

The Gap

Elected—politically acceptable

Then ⟷ Now

Time
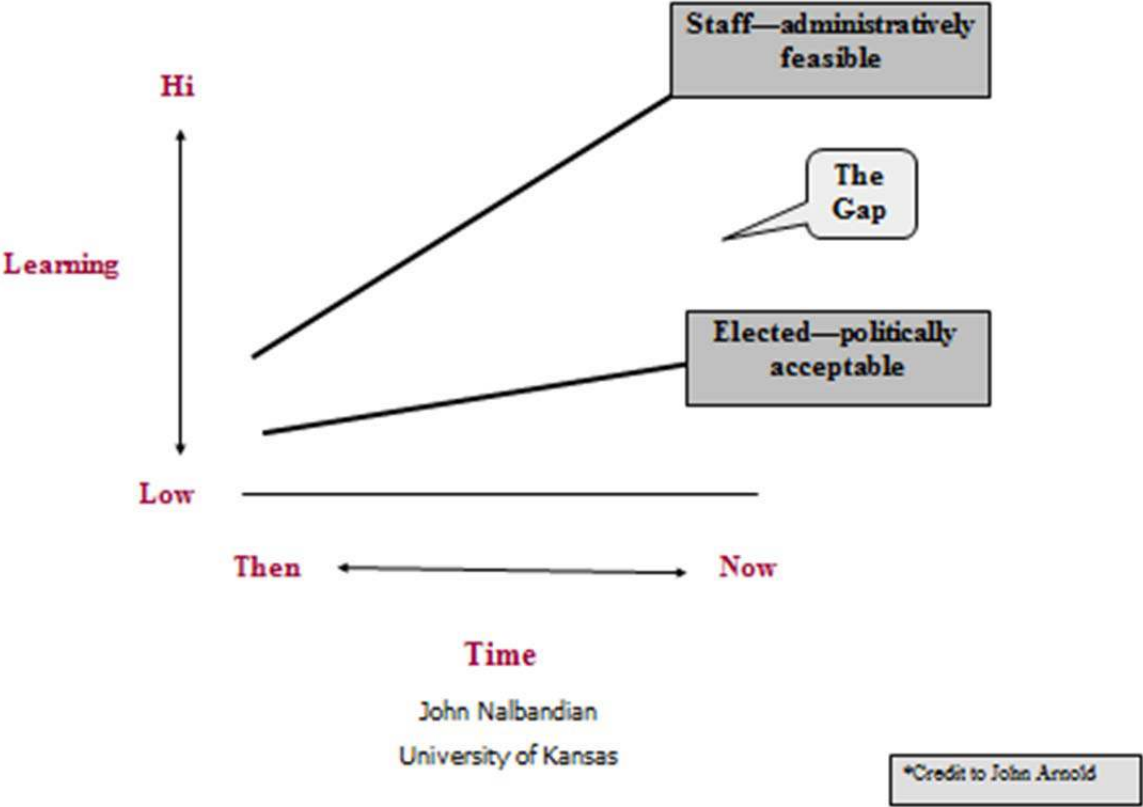
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*Credit to John Arnold