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## Organizational Innovation and Public Management

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The themes of this chapter concerning innovation have a schizoid quality. Thus, the development of public agencies is much influenced by the willingness to adopt valuable changes in the right time and place. Rogers (1983, p. 11) defines innovation as "an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or another unit of adoption." Nonetheless, that willingness is often hard to achieve. To this effect, Rogers cites Benjamin Franklin (1781), who claimed that

to get the bad customs of a country changed and new ones, though better, introduced, it is necessary first to remove the prejudices of the people, enlighten their ignorance, and convince them that their interests will be promoted by the proposed changes; and this is not the work of a day.

No one discussion can hope to reconcile the required welter of prescription and proscription but a start will be made here! In sum, attention in turn goes to:

- the base-line features of a useful "innovation" concept;
- the often-fuzzy conceptual sense of what will be called Innovation 1, as contrasted with Innovation 2;
- the derivative but ill-placed rooting of innovation in the bureaucratic model, and in its associated concepts of authority and control;
- the good fit of an elaborated concept—here called "Innovation 2"—to horizontal versus vertical features of structure and associated policies as well as procedures;
- some structural forms exhibiting good fit to Innovation 2; and

The foci below of both essence and detail often will target the public sector, but much the same argument implies in all sectors of management.

### CHALLENGES TO A USEFUL CONCEPT

Most writing on the topic assumes that innovation is by definition good, and also that more innovation is better for organizations and society (Kimberly, 1981). Consequently, managers and politicians are usually urged to increase innovation in any possible way. However, others urge that the same innovation may be desirable for one adopter in one situation but undesirable for another in a different situation (Rogers, 1983); and also that many innovations become harmful only with the passage of time (Abrahamson, 1991; Kimberly and de Pourville, 1993). Hence, a useful concept of "innovation" must draw forceful attention to often-substantial time lines (e.g., Hobby, 1985; Rogers, Dearing, and Chang, 1991).

This chapter seeks to encompass other useful conceptual territory and hence the summary introduction of several other features in a serviceable concept of authority. Basically, we argue that the evolution of a creative idea into a practical organizational change should be seen as an *innovative process*. An ideal type of a good innovative process is characterized by high motivation of individuals, groups, and organizations to acquire new information and to increase sources of knowledge about a relevant problem in order to stabilize turbulent social systems; and such an ideal process also involves openness and practical methods that can help turn a promising idea into an ongoing productive change (e.g., Kimberly and de Pourville, 1993). Individuals in organizations often find that bureaucracies stifle transformation.

The failure of many promising reforms to gain escape velocity also implies that useful concepts of "innovation" must help deal with bureaucratic features (e.g., Kimberly and de Pourville, 1993). Hence, the common charge that public management is frequently incompatible with innovation.

In addition, "innovation" is culturally loaded. For example, Rogers (1983) illustrates how a lack of adaptiveness to clients' needs caused the failure of a two-year water-boiling campaign conducted in a Peruvian village. This campaign was aimed at reducing the number of illnesses and diseases among the population. From the viewpoint of the public health agency, the task was simple. However, the results were very poor due to misinterpretation of crucial cultural aspects. The villagers' local traditions linked hot foods with illness. According to the village norms, water-boiling was used only to help the sick and less capable.

Finally, innovation requires both scientific *ahasi* as well as less-programmable progress involving diffusion, resulting in an associated "take-off" velocity (e.g., Rogers et al., 1991). The AIDS epidemic provides one clear as well as tragic example of how scientific advances got built into the attitudes and behaviors of relevant publics.

### TWO CONCEPTS OF INNOVATION

To simplify in the service of essential meaning, the historic emphasis on innovation in public agencies does not successfully cope with challenges like those just elaborated. Here, two major concepts of innovation can usefully be distinguished, and they take adherents—both aware and unreflective adherents—to very different places. Worse still, the dominant variant—Innovation 1, conventionally—takes analysis to places that are increasingly out of sorts with environmental pressures acting on all managements—pretty much in all sectors, and worldwide.

#### Innovation 1

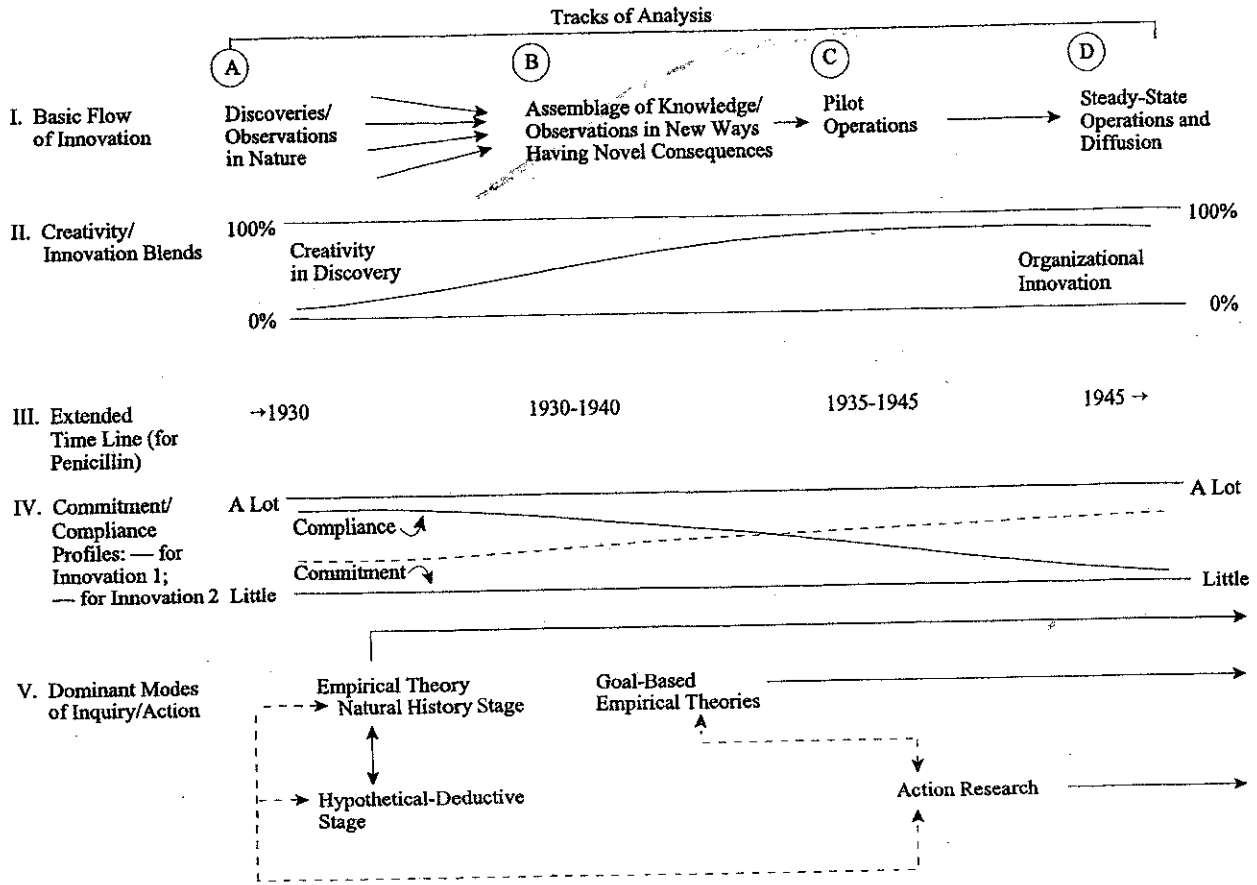
Early concepts were restrained and restraining, but only at great cost. "Innovation" was loosely viewed (e.g., as in Webster as) "a new idea, method, or device," and its conceptual circumscription was only broadly distinguished from such terms as "creativity," even by Rogers (1983, p. 11). The latter term (as by Webster) was viewed as "having the quality of something created rather than initiated." Moreover, the common implication was that Innovation 1 was substantially a good thing in itself. "More innovation," consequently, was a goal to be pursued.

This formal looseness was tethered for most observers by a more or less implicit but nonetheless firm nexus of constraints, however, with the point applying differently in business as opposed to public sectors. Managerially useful innovation was *the* goal in business and, by implication, this implied that anything contributing to better command-and-control or compliance was "good," even though that excluded most useful interventions. Indeed, in extreme forms, innovation was more or less restricted structurally to large "staff" units—often centralized, following prescriptions associated with the bureaucratic model (e.g., Golembiewski, 1967). There, "thinking" often is sharply separated from "doing," (e.g., Henning, 1997). Many observers of the public sector, in addition, had all but lost hope. Almost by definition, observers like Light (1997) propose, government agencies inherently have to be oriented toward regularity and predictability, and innovation has to take what little is left over. Here, a "should" is employed to legitimate an unattractive "is"—the innovation deficit commonly proposed to be characteristic of public agencies.

#### Innovation 2

Where you stand typically determines what you see and how you construct your worlds. Hence Innovation 2 in Figure 9.1 attempts to enlarge the concept of innovation so as to see more and further—to provide a more elaborated view of required managerial insights and applications which, broadly, deal with such

**Figure 9.1**  
**Perspectives on Innovation 2: Some Selective Stages of the Full Process**



In effect, Figure 9.1 contrasts Innovation 2 with Innovation 1 along five tracks. Brief descriptions must suffice here to sketch the synthesis that Figure 9.1 summarizes for several realms of theory and experience contributing to a more revealing sketch of "innovation." In introductory preview, Figure 9.1 presents two kinds of condensed information: five basic tracks of analysis, with each distinguished by five suggested stages of the processes encompassed by Innovation 2. Each track is introduced briefly below, along with some sense of how the selective stages impact major features of each track of analysis.

**Basic Flow**

Track I in Figure 9.1 basically views innovation in organizational or collective terms. Hence, Innovation 2 has a transpersonal bias, with the basic implication that ways-and-means of increasing innovation have to include serious attention to supportive structures as well as to associated policies, procedures, and patterns of individual and group interaction. Details can be found at many places in the discussion below, such as that associated with Figures 9.2 and 9.3.

**Creativity/Innovation Blends**

Track II sketches a significant distinction concerning a crucial shift—from individual creativities to organizational innovations required in Innovation 2. For example, consider the medical treatment of high levels of stomach acid. Many discoveries—most by individuals or very small teams—revealed that, among numerous other particulars:

- hydrochloric acid is significant in converting food to energy;
- this acid is formed by combinations of hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) and chlorine (Cl);
- for complex reasons, with uncomfortable and even fatal consequences, HCl levels can become "too high";
- critical in this process are the relatively specific H<sub>2</sub> sites ("receptors") where Cl atoms bond to form HCl molecules.

Typically, at Stage B the consequences of "too much" HCl were treated, but after centuries of such accumulating discoveries/observations, several research groups upped the ante. In Stage B, the issue became, how to "cap" the H<sub>2</sub> receptors so as to inhibit HCl formation in the first place.

This sketches the essentials of the "H<sub>2</sub> receptor antagonist," and a family of very powerful and socially useful drugs like Tagamet.

Distinguishing Tracks I and II in Innovation 2 also can be useful in highlighting pervasive organizational features. Thus, along Track I, the movement C → D can be hugely consequential; and "real innovation" should be aware of such interactions. For the H<sub>2</sub> receptor antagonist approach to medicating gastrointestinal disturbances, the laboratory and pilot operations could produce with relative ease small quantities of the active materials; but the large volumes required for Stage

on processes featuring high pressure and a volatile catalyst. These challenged "full innovation" to include those with a broad range of specialties, such as those who could amass capital. To simplify, Innovation 2 required the linking of a long chain of specialties in such a way that what needed doing later was not exacerbated by what was done earlier. Innovation 2 helps remind us of such theoretical and practical contingencies—backwards as well as forward, as it were. Without such developments, diffusion of the innovation would have been impossible, and "full innovation" would not have occurred.

### Time Line

Relatedly, extensive time frames are encompassed by Innovation 2, which is not surprising, given the discussion above. Figure 9.1 uses the development of penicillin as an example, with the relevant details being underappreciated, if well-known (e.g., Hobby, 1985).

### Shift Toward Commitment from Compliance

The first three tracks in Figure 9.4, relatedly, imply that Innovation 2 provides a context which encourages an increasingly dominant emphasis on commitment versus coercion, and arguably requires it. Innovation 1 leans more toward coercion or narrow control. Indeed, Innovation 1 often defines innovation in terms of its contribution to direct management control or coercion.

### Dominant Modes of Inquiry/Action

Finally, Innovation 2 helps highlight the kinds of inquiry/action likely to be dominant at different stages during the full flow of Innovation 2. This is a useful reminder, since public administration has been seriously troubled (for example) in its own development by a failure to be clear as to what mode of inquiry/action needed attention, as well as why and how. The three modes used in Figure 9.1 can be briefly described in these terms:

- *Empirical theory*, which typically will be amalgamated into growing increasingly comprehensive "patches" of middle-range theories concerned with relationships between conceptual domains A, B, C... under conditions 1, 2... N. At advanced stages, networks of theoretical relations are sufficiently comprehensive to support hypothetico-deductive inquiries to test the reach-and-grasp of these "patches." This testing can lead to a confutation of 2 or more "patches" or, more likely will result in a rejection of one or more of them.
- *Goal-based empirical theories*, which seek to specify the causal relationships associated with separate sets of values or goal-bases; and
- *Action theories*, which seek to define desired or desirable conditions at specific work settings, and also to realize those conditions for local populations, given participation and consensus-building, when empirical theories or goal-based, empirical theories are

Innovation 1 is tethered very far short of completeness by its gentle rooting in only a weak form of empirical theory. Much historical mischief has been caused by neglect of specific attention to goal-based, empirical inquiry. Directly, every organization theory is of this variety and, consequently, the number of organization theories is limited in principle only by our wit-and-will in developing alternative goal-bases reflecting different normative ends, as well as by an ability to specify the conditions or relationships in nature that approach those ends. In contrast, traditional management thought emphasized *an* organization theory, and this feigned universality had the general effect of poorly serving Innovation 2. Later discussion will highlight more specific effects.

In addition, the fixation on *an* organization theory also demotivated action theories. These have major attractions because, in general, they often can be extended into contributions to goal-based, empirical theories as well as to empirical theory, or fragments thereof (e.g., Golembiewski, Hillis, and Kagano, 1974).

### Bureaucratic Rooting of Innovation 1

To become a bit more specific, the theory and experience with innovation was limited by the common linkage of Innovation 1 with the bureaucratic model. Figure 9.2 helps make the point, even as it relies on extensive analysis in other sources (Golembiewski, 1987, 1995a, 1995b). The focus is elemental, but broadly representative of most structures in nature: A, B, and C are the three activities or functions to be structured, with only two conditions: (1) that the need for each is approximately equal; and (2) that A+B+C yields some product or service.

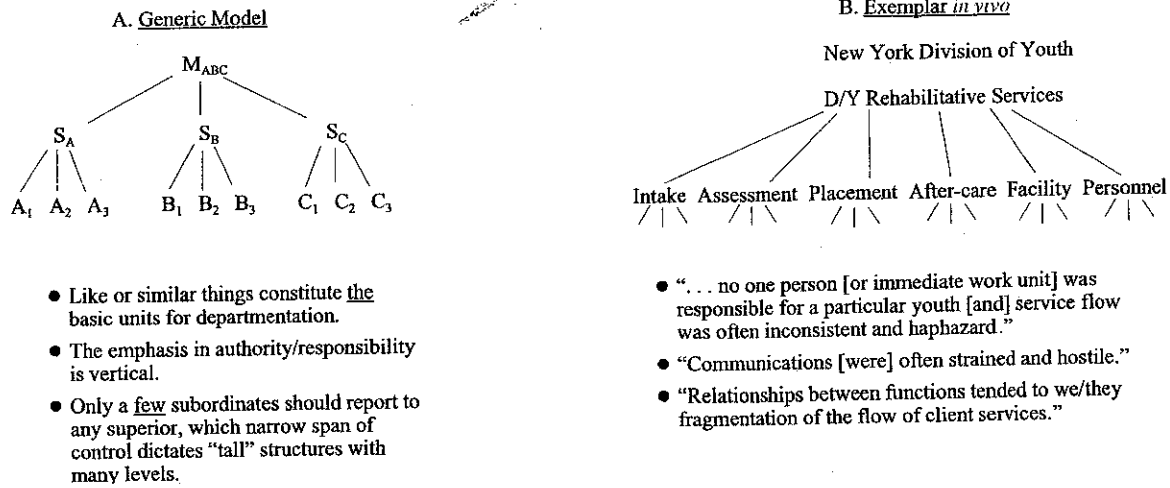
From the bird's-eye view, the bureaucratic model implies a commonly fragmented structure. At the top, both generic and *in vivo* versions of the bureaucratic model suggest the towering and separate "smoke stacks" so commonly excoriated nowadays. These vertical pathways induce long, upward-oriented chains of communication, and foster the induction of self-interests that complicate innovation, if they do not stifle it. Available evidence comes early (e.g., Golembiewski, 1967) and it is also accumulating at a very great rate in today's literature (e.g., Ashkenas, Ulrich, Jick, and Kerr, 1995). See also the samples of typical bureaucratic effects in Figure 9.2B.

Toward the bottom of an organization—that is, from the worm's-eye view of the bird—similar dysfunctions force themselves on the observer. The focus on like or similar activities in organizing makes difficult even such mundane contributors to workplace innovation as job rotation or cross-training, whose value is urged by most observers including (for example) the National Performance Review. For details, consult many convenient sources (e.g., Golembiewski, 1995a, esp. pp. 248–269).

### Structure Congenial to Innovation 2

No entirely satisfactory way exists to demonstrate how and why...

**Figure 9.2**  
**Bureaucratic Model: Generic Form and an *in vivo* Exemplar**



- Like or similar things constitute the basic units for departmentation.
- The emphasis in authority/responsibility is vertical.
- Only a few subordinates should report to any superior, which narrow span of control dictates "tall" structures with many levels.

- "... no one person [or immediate work unit] was responsible for a particular youth [and] service flow was often inconsistent and haphazard."
- "Communications [were] often strained and hostile."
- "Relationships between functions tended to we/they fragmentation of the flow of client services."

Note: Quotes from Carew et al., 1977, pp. 327–329.

is possible. The focus here is narrow, if hopefully revealing: on the post-bureaucratic structure which can be called the divisional model at higher levels of organization, and on the flow of work or autonomous team model at lower levels of organization. Figure 9.3 provides some useful detail about this single but increasingly diffused post-bureaucratic structural alternative. As in the case of Figure 9.2, substantial evidentiary support exists in convenient sources (Golembiewski, 1987, 1995a, 1995b).

At higher levels of management, the divisional model can be organized around product or territory, among other possibilities, but the basic intent is the same. That is, Figure 9.3 structures bring together under one authority—here,  $M_{ABC}$  who might be an individual or group—all or many of the activities necessary to make reasonable decisions about a total flow of work, here  $A+B+C$ . Not all activities need be included at the S-level: For example, some activities may be reserved for  $M_{abc}$  for reasons such as their usefulness for managerial control, the insufficient maturation of S-level managers, or activities like institutional lobbying that are conveniently centralized.

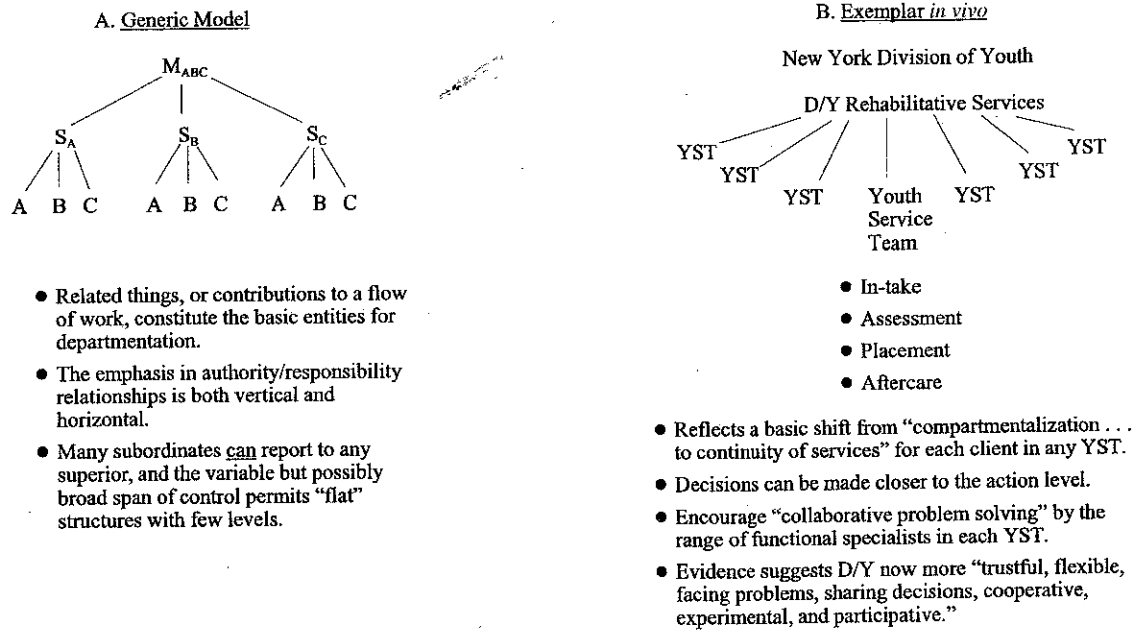
Whatever such details, three points usefully circumscribe major features of Figure 9.3 structural models. First, such models commonly assign clear responsibility for performance at the S-level, which serves to encourage all required activities to develop loyalties in a specific integrative S-unit. Among many other features, this reduces jurisdictional conflicts and encourages problem solving to improve performance within each S-unit.

Second, the model permits, even requires, substantial decentralization of S-units while also providing convenient comparisons of their relative performance. This suggests the loose-tight style of senior management which has attracted so much attention, even in popular sources (e.g., Peters and Waterman, 1982). In the case of the Division of Youth, for example, each Youth Service Team had such features, among many others:

- each YST was responsible for a specific cohort of clients;
- within policy limits, each YST was allowed—better still, tasked with a responsibility—to tailor the full range of activities to a specific cohort of clients;
- each YST could have its performance evaluated in terms of a meaningful bottom line; for example, the rate of rediversion of each YST's clients; and
- each YST's personnel consequently had a clear incentive to resolve issues and to perform in ways that would improve performance, as contrasted with blame-avoidance or jurisdictional conflicts.

Third, in various ways, but only for present purposes, Figure 9.3 structures can build into work continuous incentives for Innovation 2. For example, the full range of activities represented in each S-unit provide the information and motivation to innovate, perhaps whetted by the elemental that other S-units might get there first. Although they do not "fix" all managerial concerns, such structures

**Figure 9.3**  
**Post-Bureaucratic Divisional Model: Generic Form and an *in vivo* Exemplar**



Note: Quotes from Carew et al., 1977, pp. 335-337.

At low levels of organization, in addition, Figure 9.3 structures also have predominantly attractive features. For openness, see the sampler of effects in Figure 9.3B. For example, moreover, practices like cross-training and job rotation—often useful stimulants of employer satisfaction and motivation—are facilitated by Figure 9.3 structures. As contrasted with a Figure 9.2 structure, post-bureaucratic variants also have such advantages, among others detailed elsewhere (Golembiewski, 1995a).

- each S-unit can have its own rotation or cross-training effort, which reduces the costs of start-up to such workaday interventions;
- employees can participate in such a program without changing their S-locus;
- each S-unit head will have responsibility for such efforts, and will also reap any rewards/punishments; in contrast, bureaucratic structures can encourage heads of S-units to nominate their "losers" for such programs, on the ground that they might not get their "winners" back after training; and
- each S-unit can directly put any cross-training to work, so as to meet work fluctuations or to provide other flexibilities; this is not the case under the bureaucratic model, where activities A, B, and C are in different units.

Details could be added in large number, but to the same general point. In a revealing sense, Figure 9.3 structures are intended to reduce the "barriers" or "blockages" to cooperative activity (e.g., Ashkenas et al., 1995; Henning, 1997). Here, we can only illustrate aspects of this pervasive thrust toward "boundaryless organizations," whose very label suggests how their features relate to the purposes of variously facilitating Innovation 2. Broadly, also, Figure 9.2 structures deliberately restrict the information possessed by any S-unit, which has patent implications for continuous and long-term activities like those envisioned by Innovation 2. Figure 9.3 structures seem better adapted to Innovation 2 than bureaucratic variants, as a few particulars will suggest. For example, related post-bureaucratic variants provide for more scope for the "Basic Flow of Innovation" depicted in Figure 9.1. To suggest the point, bureaucratic models typically generate separate "line" and "staff" substructures, and these often fragment those who should be collaborative participants in full-fledged innovation (e.g., Henning, 1997). Relatedly then, Figure 9.3 structures also better serve Innovation 2's need for commitment versus compliance. Similarly, the integrative S-units provide useful laboratories for what Figure 9.1 calls "action research," while Figure 9.2 structures are more likely to encourage centralization of innovation activities, which implies direct limits on various aspects of Innovation 2. Put another way, Figure 9.3 structures will reinforce Innovation 2 in the development and comparison of local "good practices," while Figure 9.2 structure properties discourage innovation and induce major problems in the measurement of performance (e.g., Golembiewski, 1995b, pp. 197-218).

### Template for Horizontal Reforming Suitable for Innovation 2

At times, it will be neither possible nor political to fundamentally change the bureaucratic structure at specific worksites, but it also will be convenient or even necessary to impose what may be called "normative templates" that provide horizontal crosswalks over the vertical fragmentation encouraged by the bureaucratic model. Such cases are prominent in the literature, in fact (e.g., Golembiewski and Kiepper, 1988). Here, consider only one such template, which details ways and means to generate horizontal forces in organizations to compensate for the fragmentation associated with the bureaucratic model.

Figure 9.4 provides one convenient approach to summarizing the substantial and growing theory and experience concerning how to compensate for the vertical fragmentation associated with bureaucratic variants. And extending this argument a reasonable next step also urges that the template in Figure 9.4 will also serve Innovation 2.

The horizontal or integrative thrust in Figure 9.4 is transparent in most or all of the components of its template, so this discussion resists any gilding of the lily. Note only here that the figure illustrates major themes in the growing if hardly complete normative consensus about the how and why of organizing work so as to minimize what was long ago called "vertical fragmentation" (Golembiewski, 1967), or today often gets labeled as "smokestack effects." The point is perhaps clearest in the several from → to generalizations concerning communication.

The case for the horizontal components in Figure 9.4 contributing to Innovation 2 will here be allowed to remain assertions—hopefully, reasonable assertions. That case has not been established by extensive research, but the rationale for such an interpretation of Innovation 2 seems quite direct.

#### Template for Post-Bureaucratic Interaction

Again, when basic structural change is not possible, another powerful normative overlay may be useful—regenerative interaction at work. The ideal case is when regenerative interaction reinforces post-bureaucratic forms (e.g., Golembiewski and Roundtree, 1999), but it often will be useful to approach the regenerative model of interaction even when structural change is not possible or convenient. In such cases, periodic booster shots will be necessary because bureaucratic structures have powerful effects which tend to be contrary to regenerative interaction over time (e.g., Golembiewski and Kiepper, 1988).

The distinctions between regenerative and degenerative interaction have been developed in detail (e.g., Golembiewski, 1993), and it is well known that high success rates characterize applications of learning designs to move degenerative → regenerative interaction (e.g., Golembiewski, 1998). So summary treatment is

Figure 9.4  
Components of a Template for Horizontal Thrusts at Work

#### A. Behaviors and Attitudes

- Cultures and values shift from a protection of narrow self-interests focused on skills/functions to enhanced performance on a total flow of work.
- From workers implementing detailed directives to employees making decisions within a context of missions/policies.
- From "one size fits all" to similar units developing in multiple ways in response to specific histories, mixes of personnel, and so on.
- From communication that is variably intense and even conflictive to communication that is continuous and focused on problem solving.
- From complicated and often-political reconciliations *between* basic units of organization to straightforward reconciliations *within* a basic unit.
- From competition to gain a great share of total resources to competition to reduce the costs of performance, as estimated by direct comparisons, market share, or return on investment.

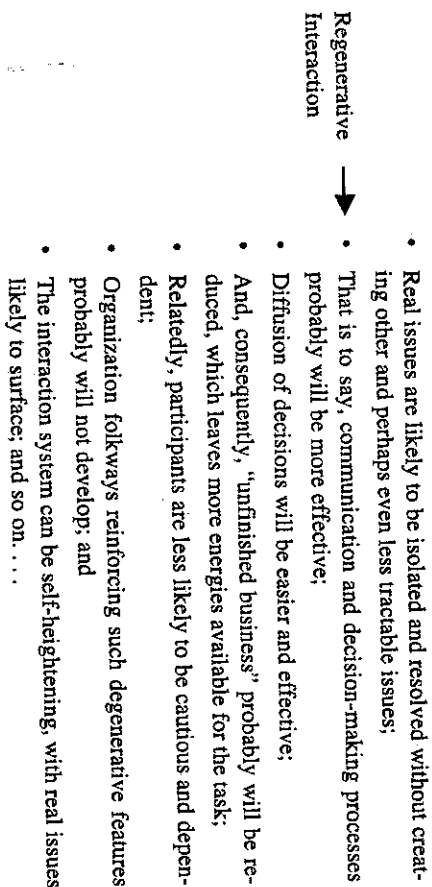
#### B. Policies and Procedures

- From vertical bias of narrow jobs to an integrative bias, such as via job enrichment, job rotation, cross-training, and so on.
- From multiple points of access/contact for both internal and external customers to a single point of access/contact, to "one-stop shopping."
- From loyalty and lifetime employment by *an* employer to learning how to learn and lifetime employability, probably by *many* employers.
- From conformity and compliance as criteria for reward to a growing emphasis on achievement of holistic results.

Basically, for present purposes, degenerative interaction is poorly suited to Innovation 2, but regenerative interaction often does not exist in organizations and must be induced. Broadly, openness relates to "telling it like it is," and owning relates to the psychological acceptance of ideas, reactions, or emotions. To illustrate, a Valentine signed "Guess who" might be open about the sender's sentiments, but the sender clearly refuses to own those sentiments. Risk is the degree of objective threat in the environment, and trust estimates the sense of confidence in colleagues that things will work out. The degenerative profile is Low, Low, Low, and High, respectively. From multiple perspectives, degenerative interaction poorly serves Innovation 2. For example, degenerative interaction implies that inhibiting challenges to innovation will be raised, as well as that central issues and reactions will not be shared.

Figure 9.4 helps make the present point from a positive point of view. Directly

Figure 9.5  
Probable Consequences of Regenerative Interaction



interaction fits this profile: openness is high; owning is high; trust is high; and risk is low; and that profile tends to generate the attractive probable consequences illustrated in Figure 9.5.

To conclude, the senses in which this profile supports Innovation 2 can be sketched briefly. Thus, regenerative interaction raises the probability that real issues will be surfaced, as will valid and reliable data for dealing with them. References to Figure 9.5 will help make the point, at a face-valid level which could be supported in substantial detail (e.g., Golembiewski, 1995a, 1995b). In addition, regenerative interaction well suits the longish time lines associated with Innovation 2, as well as the commitment versus compliance ratio congenial to that model. Finally, on this short list, regenerative interaction seems an all-but-necessary precondition for extensive and telling attention to action theories, while longer-run effort focuses on the two types of empirical theories.

## REPRISE

And so this preliminary sketch is complete, for now, and all that remains is to restate the flow of the argument. Basically, Innovation 1 provides unsteady guidance, in the public sector as well as in other arenas. If Innovation 2 is to be acted upon with greater frequency, the argument continues, researchers and practitioners will have to distance themselves from the bureaucratic model. Fortunately, much theory and experience suggest a family of post-bureaucratic structures for organizing work, and both generic as well as *in vivo* illustrations provide substance which can be augmented by numerous convenient sources. If basic struc-

"templates" will provide useful guidance for approaching the sense of Innovation 2—one template deals with horizontally oriented behaviors and attitudes as well as policies/procedures that can minimize the vertical fragmentation associated with the bureaucratic model. The second template deals with a supportive system of interaction.

These two templates, among numerous other possibilities (e.g., Golembiewski, 1995a), can serve as a kind of shock-absorber of bureaucratic effects. Ideally, however, the horizontal thrust and regenerative interaction should complement basic structural change in any aggressive effort to exploit Innovation 2 as well as to elaborate concepts built upon it, or beyond it.

Finally, can we reasonably propose that the "chorus" can be adapted to include such "cacophonies"? Specifically, is it realistic to see a public sector movement toward flow-of-work structures and regenerative interaction? Certainly, most observers do not see it that way. Thus, Light (1997) has a dour view about replacing the bureaucratic policies and practices that have withstood numerous tides of reform in the public sector, and he sees little hope for any real "liberation" from that pattern in the future. And Peters (1996) seems only a bit less pessimistic in his review of four models for public sector reform.

Our view is more hopeful, and we will here merely state its major features and leave the heavy work to other sources (e.g., Golembiewski, 1995a, 1995b, 1996). We favor one available technology—cum-values for change which is widely applied in business and government, and with substantial and comparable success rates in both sectors—Organizational Development, or OD. Whether or not OD is the model for public sector change does not concern us here. OD designs are widely applicable, and are already on the record; and too many challenges exist to wait on a comprehensive demonstration of any one model's uniqueness—even if such a thing will be found, which we doubt.

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