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Making sense of complex policy worlds using interpretive methods

Title of the paper

Failure of policy or of policy actors? Using the Logics of Critical Explanation approach to understand barriers to change in Australian remote Indigenous Policy.

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Abstract

For some time, Australian governments have unsuccessfully experimented with more participatory approaches. Subsequent evaluations have concluded that more effort needs to be made to improve the capacity of public servants to work in the new ways asked of them. However, new approaches are not implemented on a blank canvas, but on well established, but not so well understood, policy worlds. I suggest that understanding the complexities of the existing policy world provides important insights into the ongoing resistance to attempts to introduce new traditions. This in turn provides insights into the capacities needed in policy actors asked to implement them.

Keywords: Indigenous, policy, new governance, engagement, problematisation, interpretive methods

Introduction

One of the few things that everyone can agree on with respect to Indigenous policy is that Indigenous wellbeing in Australia, and particularly in remote Australia, has resisted repeated government experiments aimed at improvement. Outcomes remain poor and are, if anything, deteriorating in a number of areas (see for example PM&C (2014a, 5), PM&C (2015, 1), PM&C (2016, 5-6)). Taking as a starting point the Commonwealth's involvement in Indigenous policy following the 1967 referendum, critics have characterised the history of Indigenous policy as one of a series of "failed policy experiments" – from "self-determination" (sometimes termed the "Coombs experiment"; see various commentators including Rowse (2012, 176) and Austin-Broos (2011, 65)), through the Aboriginal and

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Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) (a so-called "bold experiment" (Pratt and Bennett 2004)) to the failure of "whole-of-government" Indigenous administration (Sullivan 2011, 33).

These failed experiments have been much studied and analysed (see for example KPMG 2007, Morgan Disney & Associates 2006b, SGS Economics and Planning 2007, McCausland 2005, Martin 2006, Gray and Sanders 2006, Strakosch 2015). The government response has been to continue to incrementally test different policy approaches, with a steady shift in emphasis away from the more usual rational-technical approaches towards so-called "new governance" approaches, such as collaboration, deliberation, experimentalism, localism, flexibility and adaptability, and non-coerciveness (van der Heijden 2013, 4). As Brunner suggests, the convergence of thinking around the importance of these approaches to addressing complex problems means they are 'a response to widespread social conditions, not just another passing fantasy' (Brunner 2010, 303).

However, governments have struggled with allowing the flexibility for the devolved accountability and decision making required (KPMG 2007, Morgan Disney & Associates 2006b, 2007, SGS Economics and Planning 2007, Morgan Disney & Associates 2006a) as well as in accommodating 'authentic otherness' (Austin-Broos 2011, Dillon 2007, Hunter 2009, Kowal 2010, 189, O'Malley 1998, Cowlishaw 1999, 2003, 2004, Kowal 2008). Governments are also having difficulty managing the tension between contextualised policy development and the predominant 'theory of change' that focusses on transplantation of best practice regardless of context (Bevir 2010, May 1981, Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews 2013). Nonetheless, recent research is increasingly reinforcing that new approaches are required in remote Australia.

Despite a well-documented resistance to internal scrutiny, governments appear to recognize that at least part of the problem in implementing new governance approaches lies with the way that they work (Sullivan 2005, 17). All recent evaluations of remote Indigenous initiatives have identified failings in the reliance on top-down centralized approaches, the lack of effective engagement early in the process, and the lack of community and government capacity for genuine engagement and collaboration (Phillips-Brown, Reddel, and Gleeson 2012, 256-259). Governments recognise that policy actors are struggling to adjust to more devolved ways of working. A recent report suggests that, despite the requirements to work differently, 'there is little evidence to date that program managers, primarily based in Canberra, are changing the operational parameters of their programs' (p331). As well, the report claims that building the capacity of the Australian Public Service requires "a paradigm shift in the value placed on investing in structured training, recognising and valuing skills and experience working in the Indigenous affairs arena, including on-the-ground experience, and ongoing assessment of how we are faring" (p350). However, in response to these findings, governments have largely concentrated on developing community governance capacity and on cross-cultural capability development for staff. They continue to give insufficient attention to the broader capacities of policy actors to 'transition to a new way of working' (PM&C 2014, 27).

In his paper on the failure of aid policy, Mosse suggests that the managerial view of policy blinds policy actors to 'the social and political lives of their ideas' (Mosse 2004, 667). This paper draws on his suggestion that the mindsets of policy actors are critical in how they approach policy challenges. In an area which is plagued by a debate over whether the problem is policy failure or implementation failure, this paper uses interpretive methods to

look at both, and delve into the murky depths of real policy worlds. It seeks to analyse what is holding policy actors back from implementing new ways of working. In contrast to most other approaches, the primary focus is on the informal institutions in the Australian public sector and is grounded in the lived experience of policy actors working on a recent whole of government approach in remote Indigenous Australia, through in depth interview conducted with 19 elite policy actors involved in the development and implementation of the policy initiative.

To do this, the paper recognises that new approaches are not implemented on a blank canvas. In the context of the case study adopted for this paper, this requires unpacking the Indigenous policy regime 'to delve into the complex, mediated and ambiguous realities within which policies are developed and implemented', as noted in the call for papers. It seeks to understand the totality of the "policy world" within which policy actors were asked to transition to new ways of working, drawing on Shore, Wright, and Però (2011) who saw policies as having complex social lives and agency, both shaped by interactions with actors and agents as well as shaping them (3). The approach adopted is that of Glynos and Howarth (2007) who see policies enacted within a policy regime as well as within an established system of social and political practices. As such, policy worlds are at heart radically contingent and open up ambiguous spaces in which actors compete for influence.

The premise is that there are inherent tensions between the new ways of working and established bureaucratic norms. This paper suggests that the way that policy actors use the discretion available to them in engaging with the tensions between the old and new ways of working – the factors that "make it all too hard" – is a critical missing link in the implementation of new ways of working. Therefore, finding ways for policy actors to

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productively engage with these tensions provides an important mechanism to embed new governance approaches within the public sector.

Firstly, the paper explains the case study used, a recent initiative in remote Indigenous Australia aimed, in large part, at introducing new ways of working. The paper then explains the conceptual framework used, before looking at how the framework allows us to understand resistance to new ways of engaging. Finally, the paper looks at how the analysis can provide insights into resistance to change in the Australian remote Indigenous "policy world".

The case study – a commitment to a new way of working

The case study used in this paper is the development and implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery (NPARSD). The NPARSD was signed by the first Ministers of the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australian and South Australian governments in January 2009. At the heart of the NPARSD was a commitment to change the way governments engage and do business with remote Indigenous communities (Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services 2011). This was to be achieved through new governance approaches to service delivery including a place based approach, improved stakeholder engagement, and policy learning. The aim was to see 29 remote communities enjoying 'the same standard of services as non-Indigenous communities of similar size, location and need' (COAG 2009).

The NPARSD was much lauded as a strategy for which the policy settings were "right" (Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services 2009). However, as noted in the NPARSD evaluation report, implementation energies were often directed to activities such as rigid adherence to plans, overemphasis on monitoring and reporting and risk aversion leading

to an emphasis on managerial and incremental change (PM&C 2014b). Thus, after four years of concerted whole of government effort, the consensus was that, apart from delivering increased investment to the 29 communities, and improving inter- and intra-governmental relations, other gains were nebulous (PM&C 2014b). This paper takes the failure of government to effectively implement new governance approaches, despite their significant efforts to introduce them, as its starting point.

The evaluation of the NPARSD highlighted the importance of leadership within the bureaucracy (PM&C 2014b, 40) and suggested that further investment in developing the capacity of government staff for whole-of-government work and for community development is required (41, 44). In particular, the evaluation found problems with the capacity to sustain engagement between government and community, in part attributable to the inability to secure community ownership of the initiative (p44). It suggested that there was a significant tension between a service enhancement focus and a capacity-building focus, with the need to deliver generally triumphing (42):

> *A critical challenge is how to ensure that governments' natural inclination to focus on service delivery issues does not hinder its capacity for deeper and more sustained engagement with Indigenous communities, or divert its attention from community capacity-building. Greater success in engaging and building Indigenous communities will require government officers in remote areas to learn new ways of working, embracing community development methodologies.* (49)

Interestingly, a number of studies on the NPARSD focus on tensions between the more usual bureaucratic processes of consultation, top down program management, and one-size-fits-all "solutions" and the new ways of working. Firstly, a tension between 'the impatience for short

term results' and the need to take the time for development approaches was identified (Edwards 2011, 12). Policy entrepreneurs found it difficult to move at the slower speeds the Indigenous community was comfortable with, as this conflicted with 'the focus of "getting things done"'. Thus local decision making was in tension with the 'drive for rapid progress' (Walden 2016, 317). This was further exacerbated by Ministerial impatience and 'a media that simplifies complex policy problems' (Stewart and Jarvie 2015, 122).

Secondly, the focus 'on results, on getting things done, and on being in control' was also in tension with co-production of public value (Stewart and Jarvie 2015, 122). As noted by one Aboriginal community member 'most public servants don't want to change … they want simplicity … they want control…' (cited in Stewart and Jarvie 2015, 121). Stewart and Jarvie went further and suggested that policy entrepreneurs 'had difficulty focusing and conceptualizing what they are to "do" where there is limited control' (122). Walden suggested that 'facilitating and enabling participatory processes does not come naturally to bureaucracies and government agencies which are geared to hierarchical decision making processes, that support and allow their work to progress in predictable ways' (2016, 298).

Finally, Stewart and Jarvie hint at the importance of the way policy entrepreneurs navigate these tensions in their finding that: 'The interviews made it clear that agency positions, together with the beliefs and bias of officials, shaped both their preparedness to "work differently" in the first place, and their attitudes to evidence and evaluation from the field' (2015, 123-4).

This paper develops the idea that a key element of the "capacity development" called for in recent evaluations is the ability to work productively through the inherent tensions between

new ways of working and established bureaucratic norms. Drawing on 19 interviews with elite policy actors involved in the development and implementation of the NPASRD, it uses interpretive methods to understand how these tensions arose, and how policy actors engaged with these inherent tensions. In so doing, it seeks to identify barriers and opportunities for more productive implementation of public sector reforms.

The Logics of Critical Explanation conceptual framework

As previously noted, this paper starts from the premise that new policies are not imposed on a blank canvas - they are imposed onto a pre-existing complex policy world, which mediates what is achievable through reform. Glynos and Howarth (2007) suggest that understanding the ontological assumptions, norms and narratives that sustain policy practices provides important insights into policy practice and legitimation. Drawing on their Logics of Critical Explanation (LCE) conceptual framework, this paper argues that logics supportive of new governance approaches are a critical element of the 'enabling environment' required for reform. Without supportive logics, policy entrepreneurs will exercise their discretion by reverting to the status quo, rather than productively navigating the tensions between old and new ways of working.

The LCE approach analyses policy regimes through three inter-related explanatory "logics" – social logics, political logics and fantasmatic logics. Glynos and Howarth define the logic of something to be 'those aspects which make it tick' (2007, 135); or more specifically, 'the purposes, rules and ontological presuppositions that render a practice or regime possible, intelligible, and vulnerable' (Glynos, Howarth, Norval, Speed 2009, 11). These three logics tell us about the 'norms, roles and narratives, as well as ontological presuppositions that,

together, render practices possible, intelligible and vulnerable to contestation' (Glynos, Klimecki, and Willmott 2015, 395). Further, Glynos and Howarth suggest the three logics correspond to three dimensions to social reality – social, political, and ideological/ethical – which they suggest are the basis for 'practices or regimes of practices' (2007, 15).

Social logics, or "the way we do things around here", are the established bureaucratic traditions and norms that are challenged by new governance approaches. Political logics underpin the way that these norms being created, contested or defended, or transformed. Identifying political logics is important as their rationale is seldom examined, with the result that more wide-ranging alternatives not often not explored. Finally, fantasmatic logics are the discourses which sustain both policy worlds and policy action by reconciling inherent contradictions and incompleteness in ways that allow policy entrepreneurs to feel "comfortable". One way of thinking of this is that these discourses deal with the cognitive dissonance experienced by policy entrepreneurs in the complex and often contradictory intercultural field of Indigenous affairs.

The LCE method sheds light on the bureaucratic field that the policy was implemented within. The underlying premise is that social worlds are radically contingent – in other words that, in theory, they could have been different and so can be differently constituted, despite the fact that they are seemingly stable and fixed. Thus policy actors are operating within a system of meaningful practices, but there are gaps that become more apparent at certain times, including when adaptation to new ways of working is required. LCE provides a systematic way to analyse why and how policy actors react during those moments, and how acting differently can be facilitated, or how maintaining the previous practices can be preferred. In that sense it explicates both the existing social structure around new

governance approaches, as well as how policy actors have understood and engaged with conflicts between established and new ways of working.

This paper focusses on one aspect of the new governance approaches included in the NPARSD – the requirement for substantive engagement with stakeholders early in the policy process. The term 'deep engagement' is used to reflect these practices of engagement at the problem definition and solution definition stages. Deep engagement is an integral part of participatory planning or community development approaches and is said to be 'strategically efficacious in policy areas that involve behavioral change at both societal and individual levels' (Holmes 2011, 24). As well, this level of engagement is generally acknowledged as important for addressing "wicked" or complex problems (Hunt 2013, 6, Head and Alford 2015).

Legitimation for resistance to deep engagement

Deep engagement requires different ways of working, many of which are in conflict with established social logics or bureaucratic norms. Three important requirements identified in the literature are allowing sufficient time (Hunt 2013, 11, 13, MacLean et al. 2013, see also Wilks 2015, ix), reconceptualising Indigenous citizens as valuable players in the policy process (Holmes 2011, 22, Mason, McGlashan, and Leonard 2010) and changing the usual conceptions of accountability to acknowledge 'partnerships and complexity' (Bellefontain 2011, 1) .

While these requirements are well known and understood within the public sector, sufficient time is seldom allowed for in initiatives working with remote Indigenous communities.

Stewart and Jarvie (2015, 122) point to the tension with allowing sufficient time vs 'getting things done'. Moving at a pace dictated by community needs is in conflict with the social logic of "action orientation", or the practice of wanting to deliver results, to "tick the boxes". It includes a focus on performance, results and responsiveness to Ministerial direction. The tension was well recognized by policy actors:

> *I think that the flexibility that was basically given to the ROC [Regional Operations Centre] managers, I think that was really overshadowed by the push to get them done. Cos there wasn't time, even with people who got theirs done really early on … there wasn't a lot of depth around the outcomes and engagement in a more strategic way. I guess actions was the thing – LIPs were seen as a wish list.* (INT17)[1]

This manifested in the implementation of the NPARSD through preferencing the deliverable rather than deep engagement:

> *yet the pressure to deliver those in such a short time rather than to a standard or a level, meant that the engagement in the original wasn't as good as what it should have been.* (INT14)

> *…it's hard to take the time to deeply appreciate this stuff – we talk about taking the time but often reality intervenes and it is very difficult to do it.* (INT12)

> *There's always this imperative to get the next project or the next project underway and completed and the reality is that the way that Aboriginal people work and being*

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[1] Quotes from the interviews with policy actors have been de-identified for confidentiality reasons.

involved in community decision making is quite often conducted over an extended

period of time. So, again, they may well be sort of good intentions to do all of this

work and to do it properly and engage all of the right people. But really,

governments struggle with it. (INT03)

To neutralize the challenge of the new social norm of "deep engagement", the political logic which this paper terms "upward accountability" came into play. Deep engagement requires accountability downward, or accountability by government to community members, compared to the more managerial accountability to Ministers and higher levels within the bureaucracy. In the implementation of the NPARSD, a lack of accountability to community members was attributed to the pull of "upward accountability":

And we've got a government expecting – or a department expecting that this is gonna

happen. The expectation is on the GBM [Government Business Manger] and the IEO

[Indigenous Engagement Officer] to make it happen along with all the other work

that you've got, without any form of consultation … So, there's just no rationale – no

rational thinking behind it. And that happened time and time and time and time

again. (INT07)

This is the role of political logics, to conceal tensions and neutralise challenges to existing practice. Accountability is not usually thought of as a political logic, but in the case of the NPARSD, the way it was used was to legitimise maintaining the status quo:

I just think – well, that's not what we told people we were gonna do. That's the guts

of – most of it is I think we're dishonest. We continue to be dishonest in a way that

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suits us. We want people to think that we're gonna do it all the right way, but we

know that we're not gonna do it the right way, which we go out and say to people,

"This is how we're going to do it. What's wrong with that?" Have enough time to be

able hear what they say and change it so that you can go, "Okay. Now, you'll be

happy with our approach because we've listened to the way you want it." (INT07)

Further, policy actors recognized that there was a large power differential in the consultation exercises they undertook:

The way in which government works, to be very frank, is that a lot of government

people believe that decisions that impact on Indigenous communities should be made

by government. It's as simple as that. They don't believe in a model of empowerment,

you know, of giving authority and control, because that's dangerous. You can't afford

to give them control – "they can't run their lives because they drink their lives away."

You know, or whatever. (INT09)

As noted above, deep engagement requires a reconceptualization of citizens as 'resources of value to … the system rather than mere beneficiaries of it' (Holmes 2011, 22). Participants felt this was an issue in the implementation of the NPARSD:

I mean policy to me, from afar, seems to be formed by people who … who have done

the study and then have looked at whatever studies have been done and then they

formulate policy on the studies that have been done by people who have [been]

studying or whatever. There doesn't seem to be high regard for … the people on the

ground, what happens out on community, in an urban setting, whatever. Where do we

get – where do we take that experience and learn from it, if not in making policy? But it seems to me that the policy is always done on kind of research rather than reality. (INT07)

Entering into a shared partnership is in conflict with the social logic of "command and control", or the practice of keeping a tight rein on process – at both the policy and implementation level. This includes top-down approaches, centralized decision making (rather than devolution) and so-called "one size fits all" approaches. Within the implementation of the NPARSD it manifested through preferencing expert over local knowledge:

I don't think they had deep engagement but they seemed to nail it really well and I'd say that whoever worked on developing the [local plan] had a pretty good understanding of what was needed and so yes to a degree it reflected what people saw as key issues. Because later on when I sat down and went through the [local plan] with people on a number of occasions, people were saying these are the things that need to change. So I think they partially nailed it probably by accident. (INT04)

This was despite recognition that it is counterproductive:

… it is painful but there is no point rushing to do something that isn't going to work, because we've done that so many times. That's the thing that governments – you'd actually think it would already know what to do but it doesn't! If you really did know what to do you would have done it already. (INT13)

As well the requirement to share power is in conflict with the social logic of risk aversion, or the practice of avoiding, rather than managing, risk, particularly when it comes to different ways of working. It manifested through the reluctance to delegate to the local level:

> *I would have thought that goes back to the cultural gap in the sense that – "who's right?" – we think there's a problem, they don't think it's a problem – how do you determine it? You know, I'll tell you how the nation determines it – it's either a problem or it's not – from their perspective. But in philosophical terms, there's no guarantee that you are right and that the people in the community aren't.* (INT12)

This is where the political logic of capacity deficit came into play. A core principle of current Indigenous policy is remedialism (Kowal 2008, Rowse 2012, Sullivan 2011), which leads to a mindset that the local context, being dysfunctional, is not a relevant consideration for policy development. This in turn justifies intervention:

> *So, there's a lot about welfare and well-being and policing and health and that sort of thing, nutrition, fixing people.* (INT06)

> *Well, because it's just – yeah – I would say it's a form of institutionalised racism, to be honest, and the expectation is you're gonna conform with the mainstream. That's the expectation and that's the demand. So how do you have deep engagement around that if that's your premise?* (INT03)

Finally, changing conceptions of accountability are in direct conflict with the social logic of "command and control", which as noted above is the practice of keeping a tight rein on

process – at both the policy and implementation level. One of the consequences of this tension was consulting with outcomes pre-determined by governments:

> *RSD was an attempt to put runs on the board, to do it in a methodical, evidence based fashion. It was about improving services and infrastructure from the <u>government's</u> point of view.* (INT04)

> *… most of the things in them were things happening anyway, that's not a very useful place based thing. I don't think it's a place based initiative to say "Oh, let's just gather up all the things we are doing anyway and just call that a place based plan". I'm not saying that that's all the LIPs were but there were elements of that.* (INT13)

As well, the need to recognise partnerships is in conflict with the social logic of action orientation, or the practice of wanting to deliver results, to "tick the boxes". The tension manifested through a focus on outputs rather than process:

> *Maybe it's part of the momentum thing where people just wanted to get on with it. There was certainly a lot of pressure on public servants to show some progress and get LIPs signed you know and I think my recollection is that the signing of the … LIP that I went to was kind of – I got the sense that Canberra … [was] very keen to tick a box that one had been done.* (INT05)

To legitimise maintaining existing accountabilities, the political logic of evidence came into play. In the implementation of the NPARSD, "evidence based" policy was taken to mean policy informed by "expert" evidence, so that local knowledge was sidelined at the expense

of mainstream and ideological conceptions of "evidence". Despite a strong commitment to evidence based policy, policy actors recognized the contestability of "evidence", particularly in a cross cultural space. This resulted in privileging of expert knowledge over evidence emerging from practice on "the ground":

> *There doesn't seem to be high regard for ... the people on the ground, what happens out on community, in an urban setting, whatever. Where do we get – where do we take that experience and learn from it, if not in making policy? But it seems to me that the policy is always done on kind of research rather than reality. 'Cause research in doing – people who research, like you're doing now, you'll go out and you can talk to people and you can get on the ground stuff and you can put that in whatever you want to put it into, or you can sit in your office and you can research all the books that have been written on all of this sort of stuff, come up with the evidence-based stuff because it's going to those books, none of which may have come out of people being on the ground.* (INT07)

Thus the political logic of "expert evidence" is used to justify existing power differentials, when the main input that so-called "partners" can provide (local knowledge) is devalued.

Further, and unsurprisingly, the strong commitment to (upward) accountability mitigated against a changed conception of accountability which preferenced (or even acknowledged) downward accountability:

> *I think the LIPs were victims to not having the infrastructure and cultural maps done, but got caught up in the quest to do something quickly. We weren't given time to*

engage in a meaningful way. And so they did have this LIP and they became lists of things that government was willing to do, including the things that state governments were willing to do but with no big effort. (INT11)

Thus, the political logic of accountability served to conceal the lack of devolution required in the new ways of working (Dillon and Westbury 2008, Sullivan 2011, Watson 2011).

Managing tensions

Understanding the social and political logics (summarized in Table 1) provides a deeper understanding of the many challenges to the existing social structure of the Indigenous policy regime posed by the commitment within the NPARSD. As a result, it becomes easier to understand how the political logics of accountability, capacity deficit and evidence are mobilized to neutralize the challenges to existing norms.

Table 1 – Points of tension for implementing 'deep engagement'

Requirement for deep engagement	Conflicting social logic	Manifestation	Political logic
Taking time	Action orientation	Deliverables	Accountability
Reconceptualising Indigenous citizens	Command and Control	Preferencing expert over local knowledge	Capacity deficit
	Risk aversion	Limited local autonomy (power sharing)	Capacity deficit
Changing conceptions of accountability	Command and Control	Consulting with pre-determined outcomes	Evidence
	Action orientation	Ticking boxes (outputs rather than process)	Accountability

Moments when the symbolic and "real" elements of social worlds are in conflict are termed "dislocations" in the Logic of Critical Explanation (LCE) conceptual framework. Glynos and

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Howarth suggest that dislocations are 'those occasions when a subject is called upon to confront the contingency of social relations more directly than at other times' (2007, 110). One way to analyse the responses to the "dislocations" caused by the new governance trends is to examine participant views on why a number of elements specified in the NPARSD did not occur. The element of most relevance to deep engagement is the failure to develop a cultural map to guide engagement.

The so-called cultural map was a Commonwealth government responsibility. It required governments to identify 'existing community networks and decision making processes as the basis for establishing legitimate Indigenous community governance structures and decision making processes' (COAG 2009, 19(e)(ii)). This requirement had been included to ensure that the right decision makers were involved in developing local plans and ensure that the priorities in services and infrastructure for the community that were included had been agreed by both the community and government.

Participants were asked why they thought this policy commitment, agreed by all first Ministers, did not happen. Two thirds suggested that the reason was pressure of time. That is, the milestone for the delivery of the local plans did not allow sufficient time to do the kind of work required to analyse community decision making and governance structures to design a workable arrangement which allowed these to feed into the planning process:

> *If you wanted to map it all out that would be a full time exercise and no-one had time*
>
> *to do that when they were busy just trying to do the [local plans] and things like that.*
>
> *That just wasn't a priority.* (INT02)

As a result, the local plan was developed without this work occurring, regardless of whether it was important:

> *But because we never showed any respect of going to them at any stage in the start – and that's no reflection on others – I don't know that everybody was aware that that's how business was done. But then you have to ask yourself – well, if we weren't aware of it and we're a government and we're out there trying to consult what are we thinking – why weren't we asking those questions at the very start of it?* (INT07)

> *[There] was [a] central … thing where we organised a three day local workshop, we employed local elders and they presented a three day workshop to all the service providers … What is the history [of the community], protocols [for the community], how you should work [with the community], what are the priorities [of the community]. That should have been done at the start of this. It was local people educating local service providers on how to work in [the community] and what the priorities were and if you did that at the start of those [local plans] … you just would have had such a solid base to develop them.* (INT02)

This response is not surprising when taken in the context of existing social logics. Firstly, they help us to understand why conducting the cultural map was seen as a lesser priority than other outputs specified in the NPARSD. The social logic of command and control means that governments will preference their knowledge and consult on the narrower premise of discussion on pre-determined priorities. In such a circumstance, there is no need to identify decision makers seen as legitimate by the community, as they are not being asked to make

any substantive decisions. This is also consistent with the logic of risk aversion which avoids the sharing of power outside government. Participants recognized these tensions:

I mean the answer to your question is, I believe that there were a number of gaps either because of ignorance in terms of not appreciating the importance of why they were important deliverables of this initiative, and I think that there were a number of people who were stewarding the mapping exercise who had never ever, ever, worked or lived or served remote communities so they didn't understand the importance of governance, of decision making. I think there were a lot of issues around omission, ignorance and I think the third thing is there was no consideration of what is important. (INT09)

This approach is further legitimized through the political logics of capacity deficit and evidence. If local knowledge is not valued, and local people are seen as lacking the capacity to contribute meaningfully in any case, a superficial consultation approach is legitimized:

If you want sort of local ownership and local solutions, then you've really not only got to go and consult. You've actually got to allow people active involvement in the decision making process and to the best of my knowledge, I don't see any evidence of that … (INT03)

Conducting a superficial consultation, rather than a deep engagement, means that stakeholders with cultural authority are not essential to the process.

Further, the social logic of control was in conflict with taking the time to develop the cultural map. This was well recognized by participants, for example:

I think it was because governments, politically, had pressure to get runs on the board. They wanted to be able to get up in Parliament and say 'We are 40% through the Aboriginal housing program...' you know blah blah blah and it was something concrete they could talk about politically and of course the cultural mapping if it was done properly would have actually taken some time. So it was sort of an afterthought.

Interestingly, only a very small number of participants demonstrated any concern over the fact that there was little formal effort expended in ensuring the right decision makers were at the table. The majority of comments were along the lines of:

… it was sort of an afterthought… There will always be a tension between a development approach and deliverables, particularly in Australia. (INT04)

In other words, the social logic of control and a focus on deliverables was allowed to triumph over ensuring local knowledge and experience was reflected in the local plans. This position is legitimized by the political logic of upward accountability:

There's a capacity gap there – capability gap there I should say – I don't think the Commonwealth is capable of cultural mapping because they don't understand how to work in remote areas. And again, it goes to accountability – if the responsibility sits with the Commonwealth, who lack the ability to understand the cultural structures, or community structures that exist, and really the responsibility for that should have been with the community. Appropriately resourced, but delivered by the community. (INT14)

Interestingly, the political logic of upward accountability, along with the pull of the social logics outlined above, meant the normally strong pull to "tick boxes" was overridden in this case:

> *Well that's a really good example of them not really wanting to do that. I think that was a victim of two processes. One was – this was at the stage with the Rudd government where we as public servants were being pushed extremely hard to deliver, deliver, deliver. And get things moving, so that a lot of the things that people thought were hard didn't get done because we had to show we were doing things so the things that could be demonstrably counted took priority. But I think it is also interesting that the thing that obviously didn't get done is the thing that would have been most difficult because it would have required – almost as if we didn't have the capacity to do that level of cultural engagement, have that kind of dialogue.* (INT11)

Often, when asked why reform is not successful within the public sector, the response given is that it is 'too hard'. Understanding the social and political logics which are guiding the actions of policy actors provides insights beyond 'too hard' and the well-known and documented institutional barriers. It helps us to see where the inevitable tensions in implementing reforms are likely to be and that the way policy actors navigate those tensions is a critical element in successful implementation.

Pointing the way to overcoming resistance to change

In the interviews, participants were asked to identify one thing that they would like to change if they had a "magic wand". As it was a magic wand, that one thing could be unrealistic, so that they could nominate issues that they saw as important but did not necessarily think

would change. The participants were all senior policy actors, and as such had thought about the issues they saw as standing in the way of reform. The issues that they identified provide insights into how the inevitable tensions between existing and emerging logics can be more productively navigated. This paper will concentrate on two of those wishes – the need to move away from a deficit discourse, and the need to increase local decision making.

Firstly, on the surface, the deficit discourse is not in conflict with new governance approaches. Policy makers clearly did not think so when they designed a purportedly community development policy framework (the NPARSD) under the umbrella of the deficit-based "Closing the Gap" policy. However, one participant pointed to the way the deficit discourse reinforces a number of logics. For example, it reinforces the political logic of capacity deficit:

> *And that I guess for me means that people immediately will make assumptions I guess about the balance of power around any sort of interaction with the community.* (INT17)

It also reinforces the political logic of expert evidence, by discounting local lived experience:

> *I think people would, on one level they would look more holisitically, I think because they wouldn't see just a big problem but what's there. And I think it would help reconciliation, it would have a big role in that, recognising the capabilities of locals, the opportunities they represent.* (INT17)

More generally, participants felt that changing the deficit discourse would naturally result in new ways of working that were more consistent with new governance approaches:

… and I think we'd see the opportunities more. (INT17)

These participants could see that the dominant overarching discourse reinforces political logics that are in conflict with new governance approaches. They could see that while this was the case, a lack of engagement with new ways of working would continue.

Secondly, participants wanted to see increased local decision making:

I've only one – opportunities for greater involvement of Indigenous people in the decisions that affect them. So increased indigenous decision making would be very important. (INT19)

Four participants identified this as the one thing they would like to change. Again, in theory, contextualised local solutions can occur without involvement of Indigenous people. However, these participants recognised that sharing decision making with local Indigenous stakeholders will lead to better outcomes:

… if we invested in the co-design and having Indigenous people engaged in articulating what their priorities and needs are, and then are engaged in the design and development of government responses to those needs, you'll get better return for investment because the services will be aligned to the needs of the people, they'll be designed and developed and delivered by people, and that's what the evidence says. (INT19)

They also recognised that this does not occur in practice:

> *… we've designed and developed the solution and decided here what the priorities and needs of Indigenous people are…* (INT19)

As noted above, valuing local knowledge is in conflict with strong political and social logics, especially capacity deficit and expert knowledge. Participants recognised the strength of these conflicts and suggested that promoting greater opportunities for Indigenous decision making has the potential to change the underlying logics to be more supportive of new governance approaches. In effect, they are suggesting that a political logic that values local knowledge can be nurtured through increasing policy actor exposure to positive results from shared decision making.

The other wishes, and the logics implicated, are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 – Magic wand wishes and the logics implicated

"Wish"	Logics implicated
Change the premise	
Change the deficit discourse	Capacity deficit and expert evidence
Change who controls resources	Accountability, command and control
Increase local decision making	Capacity deficit and expert evidence
Change mindsets	
Value community development skills	Capacity deficit and expert evidence
Promote respect, trust, understanding	Command and control, action orientation underpinned by capacity deficit
Put more effort into implementation	
Longer term approaches	Action orientation underpinned by upward accountability
Better understanding of key terms	Supportive policy frameworks
On the ground presence	Upward accountability
Trained up workforce	Service improvement

Conclusion

The wishes identified by participants are all linked to matters that have been suggested by many others in the past. However, examining them through the logics lens provides fresh insights.

The general view in the literature is that most of the policy capacity failings are 'institutional and organizational' and so could be addressed with sufficient will (Allan and Curtis 2005, 423). The literature generally suggests these can be overcome by providing guidance (Cantin 2010, 12, Jones 2011, 20) or by building a culture of 'collaboration' (Allan and Curtis 2005, 423, Cantin 2010, 13). That is, it suggests solutions that involve structural change or the creation of an "enabling environment" which is "safe" for the required experimentation to occur. Certainly within the Australian public sector, the need for an authorising environment for reform has received considerable interest (see for example NSW Public Service Commission 2013, ANAO 2009, IPAA 2014).

The analysis in this paper supports the premise that creating an enabling environment is critical, but not in the usual sense. This paper points to an important aspect of the enabling environment which is generally overlooked, the need to identify and document the political logics which underpin strong existing social logics that can undermine reform. Creating an enabling environment is then about creating and nurturing political logics that serve to support (or are consistent with) new governance, rather than legitimising the old ways of working. In particular, as identified above, nurturing a new political logic which values local knowledge to supplant that of capacity deficit will be critical. Further, as is increasingly being

identified in the literature, new logics of accountability will need to be developed (see for example Bellefontain 2011, 1, Stewart 2009, Hunter 2009, 56, Hunter 2007, 185).

The analysis suggests that while governments continue to introduce new social logics without changing the political and fantasmatic logics that support the existing, strongly held, social logics, they will continue to struggle. Many of the magic wand wishes outlined above picked up on this key element. Highlighting how institutional cultures and strongly held norms were complicit in the failure to embed new social logics shines light on a much neglected factor in policy failure.

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