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Innovation, governments and the public sector – a quick guide to sources

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I've worked for a couple of decades on how governments and public sectors can be more strategic, more open, and better at innovation and adaptation. I've had the good fortune to work both on the theory (at institutions including the LSE and Harvard) and on the practice, with governments (and sometimes political parties) in countries as diverse as Brazil and Singapore, Australia and France, China and the USA, as well as in the UK. Here are some links to papers and books in which I have tried to set down some conclusions.

Books

My book-length study of strategy in government is – _The Art of Public Strategy, (Oxford University Press)_. This drew on my experience with UK and other governments, and continues to be used by quite a few people working in the centre of governments. It sets out ideas - and practical examples - on many topics, including: how governments can be organised horizontally as well as vertically; how to handle risk; how to encourage resilience; how to manage implementation; and how to cultivate leadership.

My book on morality and government – _Good and Bad Power: the ideals and betrayals of government_ (Penguin) – showed how ideas of good government have evolved over the last three millennia. Another book on the moral, political and economic dilemmas of a highly networked world, and how governments can act systemically, may also be of interest – _Connexity_ (Harvard Business Press).

Papers

For an overview of the field of public innovation, this paper brings together a lot of materials produced over the last decade, showing how governments can be more effective at generating, testing and implementing new ideas. More focused papers include one I recently wrote on innovations in public finance – and how the tools of finance could be adapted to better suit 21st century needs, for example with more life cycle budgeting to handle prevention and investment effects; more granularity; finance for innovation; linking finance to outcomes; and transparency.   A recent

think piece on government operating systems and how they may be transformed by technology was prepared for an event with the UK Cabinet Office and leading tech firms in early 2015. A few years ago I wrote a think piece on the idea and practice of 'relational government'. This has been published in several forms, including one with responses and critiques from IPPR. The original paper was prompted by work for the Singapore government. It addresses how governments can become more human in their styles of operation, while also acknowledging the lessons learned over decades of experiment to achieve this.

A paper on rewiring the centre of government made recommendations on how to structure the centres of government. Other related variants were developed for the European Commission (many of its recommendations were implemented) and for the UK government (not implemented so far).

My paper on collaborative government grew from designing better systems for collaboration across jurisdictions and tiers of government at city level. Other papers cover the meaning and practice of systemic innovation. An essay on the future of welfare has just been published by Policy Network/IB Tauris. This looks at the future evolution of welfare in terms of what risks will be addressed; the design of welfare operating systems; and the underlying ethos of welfare.

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Nesta has published lots of material to guide governments and policy-makers over the years, including:

- i-teams (with Bloomberg) a study on innovation teams around the world, and the support and coordination of labs and teams around the world (including the LabNotes newsletter).

- A very wide collection of skills materials which are being used by public sectors around the world (there's a whole section on our website, including links to guides on designing prizes, establishing public sector labs or how to scale innovations).

- A lot of continuing work on data, new types of statistics and open data, summarised in this note.

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