The Bush Mechanic and Citizenship

BMARP4: Link 4 in the Bush Mechanic Action Research Program

NB: This report is in outline only – this aspect of broadening the bush mechanic concept needs substantial further research which is beyond the scope of the present exercise.

Paul Wildman drawn from discussions with Bob Dick and Richard Mochelle 08-2005
paul@kalgrove.com
No 7 18-01-07 comm. 17-07-05
2100 words
File: Bushie Citizen

Mutual Aid

Mutual Aid in seeking eudemonia (one finds Artifice)

In the Aristotelian and Hellenistic senses the human being is born for mutual aid. Yet we find little of this recognised in governance today. Seneca (1.5.2). **QQ on anger. QQ on mutual-aid**

> Whether or not it is according to nature will become evident, if we examine the human being. What is gentler than the human being, when he is in a right state of mind? But what is crueler than anger? What is more loving to others than the human being? What more hostile than anger? The human being is born for mutual aid, whereas anger is for destruction; the one wants to join together, the other to rend asunder, the one to help, the other to harm, the one to come to the aid of even strangers, the other to attack even those nearest and dearest; the one is ready to spend himself of the well-being of others, the other to plunge into danger, so long as it can drag others along. [Seneca (De Ira - 1.5.2) Nussbaum (1994:412)]

For the Aristotelian and Stoic alike, in seeking eudemonia the focus is on active practical wisdom manifest for instance through Artifice, in the exemplar project/lifestyle which, in turn, emphasises itself through virtuous life of balance, health and mutual aid and thus reduction or elimination of uncertainty associated with a certain turning inward and exclusion of dependency on externals esp. wealth and status, on getting clear about the pattern of ones target and reliably hitting it. This can miss the point that some great goods in life and nature are not susceptible to such domestication and at time some great values require us not to care for life and limb above every other thing. Nussbaum (1994:481).

Mutual Aid Anarchism

There is no one simple political philosophy which I think strikes a good balance between rights and responsibilities. There is one however that presents as of note in this regard this is mutual aid anarchism. It minimises constraints. The only permissible constraints on any person are those which prevent the placing of constraints on any other person.

For this to be sustainable it can also be extended to avoid constraints on people not yet born. That's important, I think.

(To be clear, I'm not talking about the popular stereotype of anarchism. The anarchists I'm talking about don't throw bombs. Being blown up is a severe constraint.)

Unfortunately I don't think anarchism can work in a nation state. I suspect it suits only very small societies in which everyone can know everyone else. So the interlinking and interface of teams or small communities of bush mechanics is the crucial issue to address in this regard. To date it has been attempted in Chile [Beer (1974) and Holland] and the Netherlands re. sociocracy [Endenberg (1998)], and much further research is required.

For a modern society I don't think one can imagine a system which would balance rights and responsibilities appropriately. Even if one could, it is most challenging to imagine how we would get there from here without a major 'displacement event' i.e. socio-economic/ecology disaster and by then, given the interlinked and globalised nature of society today, it may well be too late...

However, I believe we can identify some important scale issues. Perhaps we can take these into account as we grope towards possible answers.

Human Scale 'Ecologies'

I offer these tentatively. They may not be universally true.

We are a small tribe species (families of 5+-2 people, villages of 5+-2 families or 35-50 people and tribes of 5+-2 villages or up to 350/400 people → an upper human scale traditional size of a 'human settlement unit' (HSU) of around 500 people). This has been the experience genetic and memetic of the human species for 99.9% of its existence.

To my knowledge, all mammalian social species are organised into village type groups which don't grow beyond a particular size. When they approach that size they subdivide into two groups. For humans I understand that there is some debate about that size. My own guess is about 50. Other estimates I've heard range up to 150, and I believe there is some evidence to support that. So we can split the difference at 100. Even here optimum tribal size is around 500.

Clearly we've built social systems larger than 50, or 150.

Clearly they work - sometimes. They do so, I imagine, by using bureaucracy to override our genetic disposition with indoctrinated beliefs. (I don't claim the indoctrination is deliberate or conscious).

From Ecologies to 'Econologies'

If we wish to carry these forward for our children's future we need mutual aid ways of aggregating, synergising and co-ordinating these ecologies. Consequently we need mutual aid methods of community economic development in particular i.e. 'econologies' that are fractal in that they can support localised mutual aid yet integrate with larger scale regional and global economies and contexts.

The place of power

Power is largely invisible downwards.

For the most part, I think that those who have power don't always realise how much they use it to benefit themselves. It's so easy to 'pull rank' that in time we do so without thought.

I think we have memetic and genetic hardwired tendencies towards this mild authoritarianism. We tend towards obedience upwards and control downwards.
That creates the source of iniquity, I believe.

Those with influence will resist its loss

Those with the most to lose from equal responsibilities and rights are those whose rights are considerable. We can expect many of them to resist this loss. They tend to be those with the most influence.

This is supported by our tendency (as group or individual) to take credit for our achievements while blaming our failures on the situation. We tend to think that we have earned the benefits that come our way. If we have influence we think it is because we are better equipped to make decisions than are others.

Power related issues

There are other issues which may be more specific to this time. The Bush Mechanic approach at least can allow these to be surfaced or in some instances even bypassed. I'll mention some of them briefly ...

Political spin

I suspect that politicians have much improved their skill at persuading us to their point of view using political 'spin'.

Nation State lensing

Here the Nation State is barely if ever problematised in discussions of the Gaia's future or collective health or assistance for the starving or violence. Yet everywhere we see the Nation State behind most of the macro violence we see today. Its as if the NS was a lens as in spectacles we wore when proposing solutions problems i.e. they remained unproblematised and in many ways invisible yet were the lens we use to determine 'appropriate' responses to these today's and our children's most challenging issues.

From Nation State Citizen to Global Citizen

Once we recognise the importance of this lensing process we see the importance of challenging the automatic identity branding of children as Australians or Americans or whatever with out their agreement or choice. Even children can later in life choose their religion yet we cannot choose our national identity and if it does change it remains a Nation State based one. A mutual aid bushie approach is more to argue that such identity branding must be volitional and have genuine alternatives e.g. being able to have dual identity (1) Global Citizenship and (2) NGO citizenship (3) Nation State (as elective).

Money buys influence

With increased marketing of ideas, those with more resources are able to buy more influence.

Increased cynicism

We are becoming more cynical about politics. We no longer react strongly against dishonesty or self-serving behaviour. (I can think of counter-examples so this may not be true.)

Bureaucratic mindset

Bureaucratic structures have worked well for perhaps 10,000 years. Now they don't work as well. However, in 10,000 years the beliefs which support bureaucracy have become an accepted part of our assumptions and behaviour and education.

Adversarial institutions

At least in the English-speaking world we also make use of adversarial processes in many of our institutions. These encourage decision making which doesn't attempt to consider the needs of everyone.

Precedent

The above are operationalised with the mind set of punitive not praising i.e. pinching folk for what we did wrong yesterday and not rewarding us for what we will do right tomorrow. This retrospective nature of humanity makes futures a difficult and dangerous political field to be involved in.

Thinking and Doing

Separated since antiquity (at least 2500yrsBCE) with the former being prime. This endorses the notion of adversarial institutions based on adversarial either or thinking e.g. guilty/innocent, black/white, thinking/doing.

The Global Citizen and the Bush Mechanic

(1) The Exemplar Project

Concrete practical mutual aid active wisdom in action so to speak - a vital part of a citizens role.

(2) The Social Holon

Mutual Aid is in effect an active practical wisdom expression for the Social Holon where Exemplar Projects are designed via mutual dialogue and aid to be a positive part of the social holon.

(3) Global Problematique - Links to Bush Mechanic Principle 4 (BMP4)

Bush Mechanic Principle no 3 relates to the articulation of the Exemplar Project to the Global Problematique through the vehicle of lifelong learning. The Global Prolematique implies a decline in support for the nation state and increase in awareness of aspects of the global problematique and the desire to relate ones efforts to addressing these aspects in particular regard. For example the state of the future report indicates some 15 aspects of the global problematique that need addressing over the next 35 years. www.stateofthefuture.org and http://www.acunu.org/ .

(4) Life Long Learning

Here the above are combined in an intergenerational form of Kids and Adults Learning through participating in multi generational exemplar projects to aid ones fellow citizen.

Conclusion – the Bush Mechanic as Exemplar Citizen linked through Exemplar Projects - transforming Government into Governance

I don't think I'd frame the issue in terms of the relationship between government and citizen. That may have helped to put us in our present position. Rather I would put the issue in terms of 'government comprised of citizens' and 'citizens as governance'. As the Bush Mechanic is a citizen we see the importance for mutual aid and lateral citizen co-operation and synergy giving citizen on citizen interaction, challenge and discourse giving us governance rather than top down control from government. In this sense the Bush Mechanic can be seen as an exemplar mutual aid type citizen, and the 'bushies' exemplar project as examples of the out-workings of 'active mutual-aid practical wisdom'.

I'd rather see it as about the relationship between citizen and citizen. The government would do better, to my mind, to support this type of governance relationship based on active practical wisdom. Thus government would be transformed into governance.

References

http://www.sociocratie.nl/ global site for sociocracy centres around the world

Beer, S. (1974) *Designing Freedom*. London: John Wiley & Sons. 100.

Endenburg, G. (1998) *Sociocracy: The organisation of decision-making with 'no objection' as the principle of sociocracy*. Delft, Netherlands: Eburon. 264.

Endenburg, G. (1998) *Sociocracy: As social design. * A rationale for a new social design for society * What's wrong with democracy? * The design in operation in a business * The business enterprise as society*, ed. Delft, Netherlands: Eburon. 216pgs.

Nussbaum, M. (1994) *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press. 560pgs.