

The Governance of (Regulatory) Policy Assessment - background notes

The hole in the centre (Harold Wilson)

Heath and the Central Policy Review Staff (CPRS), 1970. Wilson and the Number 10 Policy Unit, 1974.

“Unlike secretaries of state, a prime minister does not have a formal department. The machinery of government to support them is small in terms of staff numbers, compared to many government departments. Indeed, during Wilson’s first premiership (1964-70) he recognised the issue of ‘the hole in the centre’, as did his successor Edward Heath (1970-74).”

Heath intended the CPRS “to act as a ‘Think Tank’ of sorts”. ... Wilson intended for his Unit to act as a new source of politically aligned policy analysis on short to medium term issues. This would complement and counterbalance the politically impartial policy advice provided by the Civil Service”. [Note (a) different specifications and (b) the implicit introduction of ‘competition’ (‘counterbalancing’) in the Wilsonian formulation.]

Under Thatcher, 1979: “The Unit would have the task of assisting the Prime Minister in ‘developing and maintaining the strategic policies of the Government, with a view to achieving its long-term objectives.” [Note though that her most successful endeavour in this area (the Stepping Stones strategy document), was achieved without the aid of a dedicated policy unit – it had only two authors].

“As ever, the geography of power had a part to play in the influence of central units. The Policy Unit provided short to medium term policy analysis to the Prime Minister from within No.10. Whereas the CPRS offered longer-term policy advice to the Prime Minister and ministers from next door in the Cabinet Office.” [Note: not exactly a large degree of separation].

See: [Filling ‘the hole in the centre’: The No.10 Policy Unit – 50 years on – History of government](#)

Better regulation history

Mandelkern (2001)

*“Better regulation ... must address the **whole** life cycle of policy (inception, design, legislation, implementation and review) across all fields of public policy. A piecemeal approach risks being ineffective – an overall strategic approach is essential.”* [Emphases added.]

A fuller sequence: Inception -> design (what in Australia is sometimes referred to as ‘policy development’) -> ex ante review (e.g. the RPC) -> legislation -> implementation -> ex post review (learning from both failures and successes). This clearly entails a division of labour.

Questions: How should this be organised? What characteristics should the network topology of government exhibit? How is the division of labour to be co-ordinated?

Oliver Williamson on business structures (Markets and Hierarchies, 1975).

Markets: Myriad channels of information processing running in parallel, leading to actions.

Hierarchies: Single channel processing (information up, instructions down; both subject to adjustments in interpretation and summarization along the up and down pathways).

Chandler, 1966: “The inherent weakness in the centralised, functionally departmentalised operating company ... became critical only when the administrative load on the senior

executives increased to such an extent that they were unable to handle their entrepreneurial responsibilities efficiently. This situation arose when the operations of the enterprise became too complex and the problems of coordination, appraisal, and policy formulation too intricate for a small number of top officers to handle both long-run, entrepreneurial and short-run operational administrative activities.”

Williamson: “Continued expansion also eventually overcomes the capacity of the office of the chief executive to provide strategic planning and maintain effective control ... The usual means for augmenting this capacity has been to bring the heads of the functional divisions into the peak coordination process. The natural posture for these functional executives to take is one of advocacy in representing the interests of their respective operating units.”

“This change in the composition of the strategic decision-making unit produces a shift away from the preferences characteristic of the office of the chief executive, which tend to be enterprise-wide in scope, in favour of partisan interests, more closely associated with the functional divisions. A persistent and collective pressure to provide more and better services [from the functional divisions] is apt to develop; an expansionary bias in favor of staff expenditures easily obtains.”

138 MARKETS AND HIERARCHIES

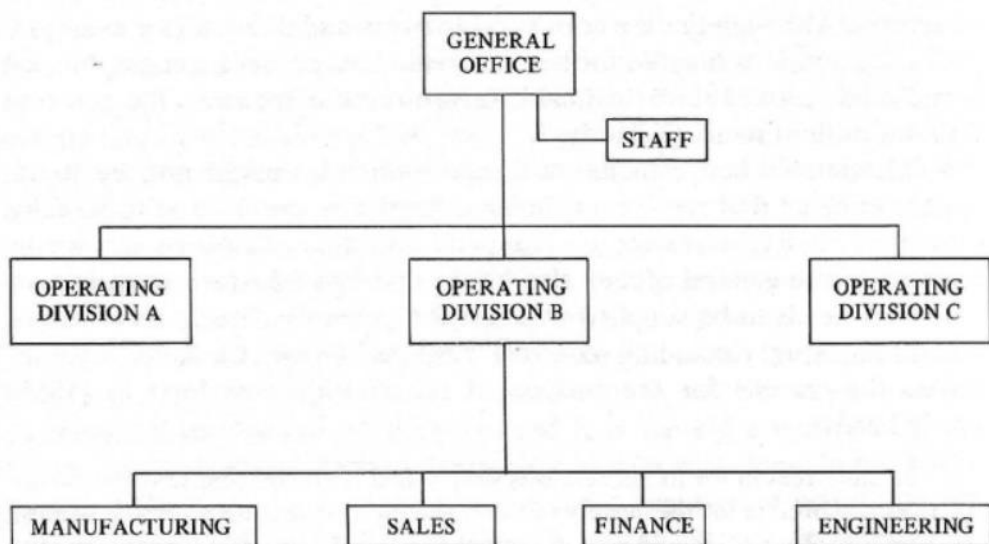


Figure 6. Multidivision Form

Neuroscience: A reminder

Note the ‘lateralisation’ at the top level in the above diagram.

“The concept of a system is fundamental in cognitive neuroscience. Though areas differ in the operations that they perform, they do not operate in isolation. To put it bluntly, no behavioural task depends on a single area of the brain. ... The fact that there are separate or ‘parallel’ pathways means that different operations are carried out simultaneously: we see at the same time as we hear. ... The overwhelming advantage [of this architecture/topology] is in the speed of processing.” (Richard Passingham, ‘Cognitive Neuroscience, A Short Introduction’.)

A Japanese comparator

Cabinet Intelligence and Research Office (CIRO)

CIRO's main function is to gather and analyze intelligence to support decision-making by the Cabinet, particularly the Prime Minister. It encompasses some aspects of strategy, but mostly focuses on intelligence, so a bit like GCHQ, Bletchley Park and parts of the CIA in that respect.

Nevertheless, the notions of separation from general, operational governance (unbundling), reporting directly to the top of government (without significant intermediation), and strong, back-office ring-fencing from media and lobbyists are relevant for an Office with a wider remit.

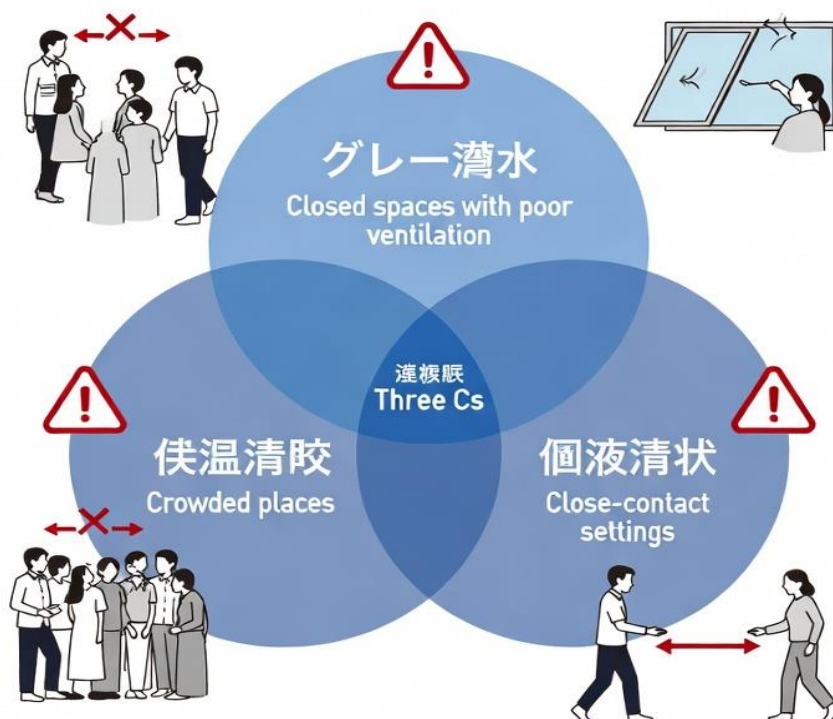
Covid: compare and contrast Japan's expert advice with the UK's 'Stay at home. Protect the NHS. Save Lives'.

愛勤榜 2020 / March / COVID-19



\ 第3付つの / Avoid the Three Cs!

The achalvess avoided a chosed ventilations, fcyn reoply with vest ayoupe cod urningttals,
Auptione irrfy ventilation, aventilation, and reaque Int srobility fklfs, converadery.



特間の確認を使える場にています

Improve ventilation, avoid crowded places, and refrain from close conversations.