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## Introduction

Pursuant to Vincent Rock's directions, this paper deals with the institutional context of public decision making in a particular state and metropolitan area -- Minnesota and the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The outline follows the one suggested in his letter of December 12, 1973.

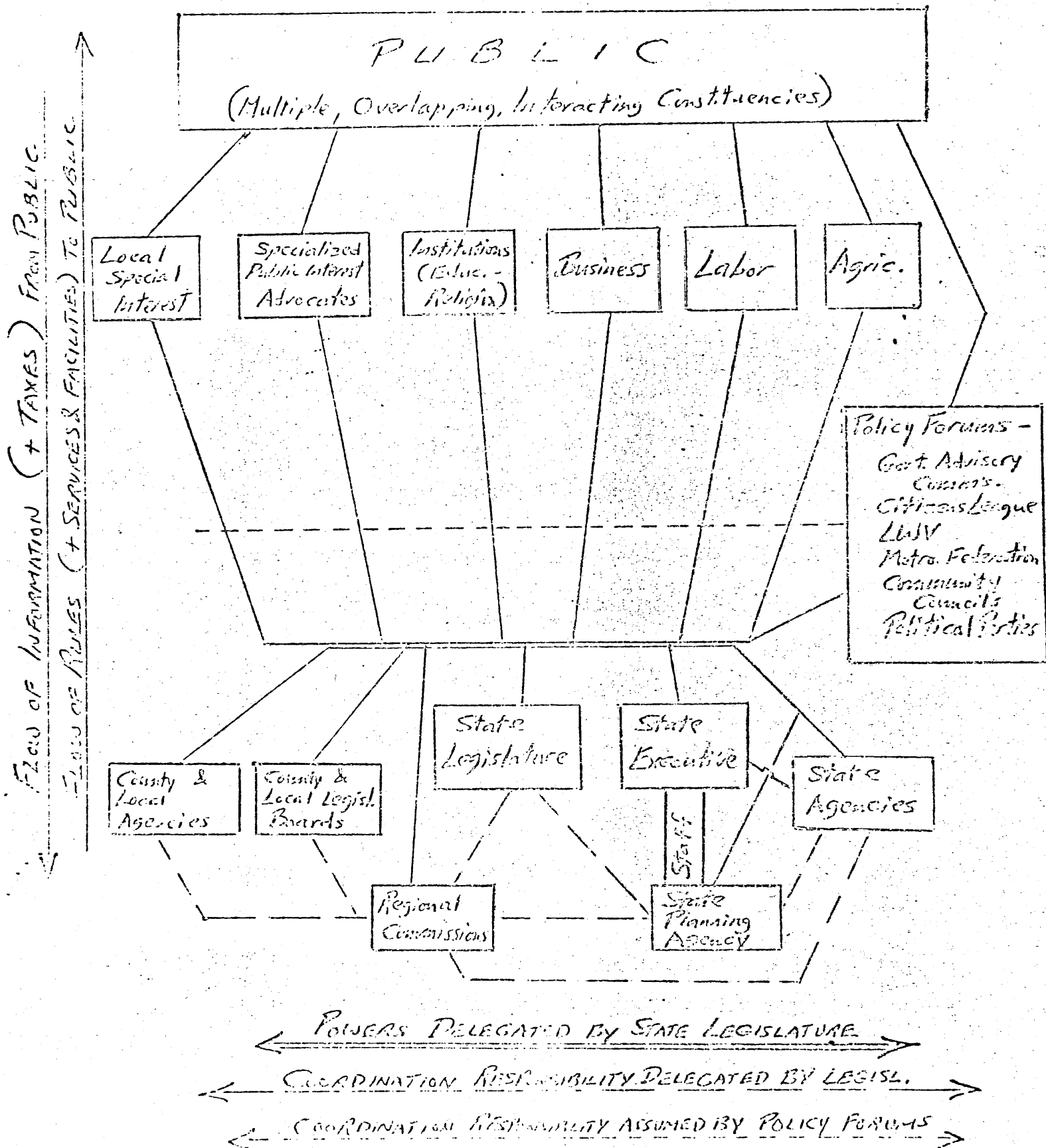
It is a premise of the paper that the University is as much a part of the problem as it is a part of the solution. Hence an effort to strengthen the system through more effective use of the social and behavioral sciences, or other sciences, must include an effort to strengthen the University's performance within the system.

## The System

The broad system of public policy- and decision-making is diagrammed in an abbreviated form in Figure 1.

The conceptual structure of the system consists of four components. The public is an agglomeration of multiple, overlapping, and interacting constituencies. It is usually in a state of flux; yet the outlines of a number of interest groups are visible persistently. Some of those groups identify with particular localities that have been institutionalized -- most commonly by virtue of city charters or special districts for purposes such as sewerage or school financing. Other special interest groups are concerned with advocacy in particular areas of public interest (for example, natural environment or consumer protection), or more traditional institutional and economic affairs. Each of these groups has leadership in close touch with its constituency. Third, there are the constitutionally established legislative and executive arms of state government, the various local governments and administrative agencies, the Regional Commissions, and the State Planning Agency.

Figure 1. Schematic diagram of selected structural relationships of various centers of public action in Minnesota and the flow of information, control, delegated powers, and delegated responsibilities between the centers.



A fourth element in the structure is the array of organizations which provide policy forums. Those groups draw their membership from a wide range of public constituencies, and they tend to deal with issues or problems which cut across two or more of the major, persistent special interest groups. Those problems commonly fall under the headings of environmental quality, consumer protection, transportation, housing, human relations, income maintenance, or governmental organization; and they nearly always concern, in some multi-disciplinary way, the allocation of scarce resources.

These groups could be supplemented eventually by a small, high level brain-trust which would seek to identify embryonic or emerging major future problems and outline alternative questions, choices, and actions which the state's officials and their constituencies must face. Currently, an official but temporary Commission on Minnesota's Future is at work. The Citizens League has recommended a permanent, state-funded Governmental Policy Institute. In the framework of Figure 1 the Commission on the Future currently fits with other government advisory commissions in the cluster of Policy Forums. The Governmental Policy Institute probably would fit there also.

The flows within this structure are indicated along bottom and left margins of Figure 1. Information about the condition of the community and needs for public action flows from the public, either directly or through special interest organizations, to government, and tax revenues flow in the same direction. The legal rules of the society, together with public services and facilities, flow in the opposite direction. Most of the information and legal rules move by official document and word-of-mouth, but a significant part is abstracted in the mass media.

Meanwhile, the legislature has delegated certain powers to local governments and state agencies. And it has more recently delegated certain responsibilities for planning and coordination to the State Planning Agency and eleven multi-county Regional Commissions.

In another part of the structure, the policy forum groups consolidate information from many different sources, and reorganize it around multi-disciplinary problems with which they are concerned, and transmit it to both government and public. The proposed Governmental Policy Institute would function in a similar way. But it would emphasize the longer-term future, seek problems and issues not yet generally perceived, and have a more direct and influential line of communication to both the state legislature and executive.

The University does not appear as an entity in the diagram, except implicitly as one of the institutions with special constituencies. Of course, hundreds of faculty from many academic units participate in different groups which are in the diagram, especially in the policy forum organizations.

#### Knowledge Generation and Retrieval

The system generates a very large quantity of knowledge. Probably the largest part of it comes from personal experience, observation, and synthesis. Much also comes from organized observation networks, accumulates in data banks, and flows through information systems, most of them not automated, and most of them not integrated or comparable with one another.

There are many organized centers of data retrieval, synthesis, and analysis. They appear in varying degrees in each of the organizations shown in Figure 1. The higher educational institutions, especially the University, are unusual because they have formal units which study public policy issues and actions

but appear not to be organized in terms of the structure which exists to use the resulting information.

When one looks more carefully at the role of the University, however, it appears to be considerably more integrated with the system. Figure 2 shows a somewhat more elaborate list of the centers of public action which are diagrammed in Figure 1. It appears that virtually all of the special interest groups and government agencies have counterparts or close communicants in the academic structure of the University. Except for occasional temporary personal problems, the communication between University and community counterparts probably is at least adequate. Those agencies and interest groups reflect constituencies within the general public; and it has been possible for the constituencies to urge official academic recognition of their problems and, also, for the academics concerned with the problem to support official governmental recognition of it.

The needs of these groups are met to some extent by multi-disciplinary university centers which are attempting to organize and adapt teaching and research talent in new directions, in cooperation with community agencies and public groups. At Minnesota the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs could point to recently-established, continuing efforts in government information system development, urban transportation, and youth development, and to one-time efforts in state land use planning, higher education planning, regional planning for human services, and certain environmental management problems. But the efforts have been incomplete and somewhat desultory in relation to the needs indicated in Figure 2.

#### Action to Strengthen Problem-Solving

In general, there is a need for the University to relate its work to both the general units of government and the policy forum groups in the public as well

Figure 2. A somewhat elaborated list of the centers of public action shown in Figure 1, with some of their organizational counterparts within the state University. The general policy groups, which must rectify conflicting data and models, consolidate specialized information, and compromise among advocates, have no counterpart units in the University. On the other hand, even if the table were absolutely complete, many departments of the University would be missing from it.

<u>Public or Government Group</u>	<u>Public University Counterpart</u>
MAJOR ECONOMIC INTEREST GROUPS	
Agriculture	Agriculture
Business	Business
Labor	Industrial Relations
MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS	
Churches	Social Work, Counseling*
Education	Education
Health	Health Sciences
Law-Police	Law, Criminal Justice
Welfare	Social Work
AD HOC LOCAL GROUPS	
SPECIALIZED ADVOCATE GROUPS	
Environment	Environmental Council
Consumer	Marketing, Consumer Education
Social Justice	Ethnic Studies, Women's Studies
STATE AGENCIES	
Agriculture	Agriculture
Corrections	Criminal Justice Studies
Health	Public Health
Highways	Civil Engineering, Transportation
Natural Resources	Forestry, Biology, Ent-Fish-Wildlife
Pollution Control	Public Health, Biology, Engineering
Welfare	Social Work
Planning Agency	
REGIONAL COMMISSIONS	
MUNICIPAL COUNCILS	
COUNTY BOARDS	
STATE LEGISLATURE	
STATE EXECUTIVE	
POLICY FORUMS	

as it has related in the past to major special interest groups and specialized government agencies.

More specifically, an important role could be played by a University (or Higher Education) Policy Research Review Board.

The board could be comprised of faculty and public officials highly respected for their competence and breadth.

Their responsibilities might be described as follows.

(1) Periodically inventory University research completed; group the studies according to categories of public problems or issues; synthesize the results in terms of those problems and issues.

(2) Identify and attempt to rectify conflicting assumptions and inconsistencies among the different studies.

(3) Identify needs and suggest steps to expand or improve the observation networks or data systems on which the studies are based, and relay the information to state and local agencies.

(4) Identify gaps in research (and related teaching) needed if the University is to contribute significantly to the understanding and resolution of state and regional problems, and relay the information to the faculty.

(5) Produce reports summarizing the research findings as they pertain to public policy problems: (a) recognized by state and local government currently; (b) recognized by the Policy Research Review Board as a result of its synthesis of recent research; (c) identified by the state Commission on the Future or the state Governmental Policy Institute.

Faculty members of the Policy Research Review Board would contribute to the board's work on the basis of their knowledge of the substance and methods of research. They would have modest staff support to make the initial inventory,



obtain supplemental information about research projects, and prepare reports. But the faculty would not work on an overload basis; instead their work for the Board would be recognized as a significant part of their faculty responsibility. Public officials on the board would represent both state and local governments. They would be paid for attending meetings; and they would contribute to the work of the Board from their understanding of the problems, issues, and information needs.

In short, the Board could help to assure that all faculty who are researching and teaching about processes and problems found in their wider community, are utilizing the immediate opportunities to meet their teaching and data needs. It would also help the general purpose units of government, and the faculty itself, to synthesize, apply, and improve the results of multi-disciplinary research.

As a result, both the University and the public decision process would be strengthened.