Neighborhoods and bottom up, horizontal governments, to address our global issues

Howard Goldson

Most of the important issues addressed in the [MAHB blog series](#) are global in nature. Terrorism, population growth, spoilation of earth and its atmosphere etc. Such issues are incapable of being meaningfully addressed by national government (James Tully, Arturo Escobar among others). How then to address them?

This question becomes increasingly daunting in a world where nations refuse to cooperate on the basis of sovereignty and where those same nations fail to meet the needs of their populations; ignore the knowledge and voice of their citizens; thus failing to discover the issues that need to be addressed and to understand solutions that resonate with their people.

Our new century has made the many differences of particular societies glaringly present. Many now recognize that there are multiple social responses to the problems of human societal life. It has become increasingly clear that there is no one size fits all and that we see what Arturo Escobar calls a pluralverse. This accepted understanding however has not changed the quest of the global north that the entire world conform to

its model of socialization, economics and politics. Indeed, it is this very insistence of the global north that has contributed to the creation of the global problems we face today.

This new view of the world questions the old assumptions that constitutions and top/down, vertical national government could meet the needs and desires of a nation's, only recently recognized, diverse and plural population. This is more true for transnational issues that are not constrained by national borders.

I argue that only a bottom/up, horizontal form of governance that accommodates societal differences and negotiates, on equal footing, areas of conflict and areas that demand cooperation can meet the sustainability demands of our present day.

Using cities as a model I suggest we begin the governmental structure with neighborhoods, intimate by nature and whose residents often share particular social norms. A number of neighborhoods then are joined together based upon commonality to form the next level of government that I call a community. Lastly, I combine a group of communities into a yet larger political construct that I call a city.

I create a similar set of structures for rural populations using the same nomenclature. In rural areas each category will encompass a greater geography due to less dense population.

In my scheme neighborhoods identify issues that they believe need legislation. These issues may be neighborhood specific or affect other neighborhoods as well. Indeed an issue may be global. Such issue is communicated to the community of which the neighborhood is a part. Upon receipt, the community forwards the request for legislation to all the other neighborhoods in the city and also to its city. In its communication to the neighborhoods, it asks if there is interest in the joining in the request and also asks other neighborhoods to express any desires or concerns with respect to the issue that need further attention. The community on a continuing basis transmits the request and all comments it receives to a legislative body that is created and maintained by its city.

All the above communications utilize one of two helixes, one for urban areas and the other for rural areas. However the helixes are intertwined, like the human genome, with the result that there are many nodes shared world-wide. The communications of the communities and the cities are available throughout the globe. The idea is to create the possibility for a world-wide response to an issue and plural resolutions of common issues.

The city legislative body, after considering all comments and resolving all conflicts either decides that no legislation is desirable or drafts an appropriate law. The proposed law is then sent to all neighborhoods whose populations are intended to be subject to the law for approval by a super-majority. Such approval must also contain approval of all minorities.

It is anticipated that global issues, thus horizontally communicated, will stimulate all or most of the world's cities to adopt some legislation to address the major issues humanity is facing, although solutions may differ to reflect difference. It is also anticipated conflicts between cities will have been eliminated by negotiation between the many communities and city drafting boards who participated in the discussions along the helixes.

I appreciate that the directions bottom/up and horizontal are oppositions. I chose to relate the terms with care. I intend to raise the thought that governance should be a heterarchy meaning without any one dominating dimension.

In this blog I have only set forth an outline of my ideas. I have written a paper that sets forth my ideas in greater detail. If you are interested in reading my paper contact me. Howard Goldson, hwgoldson@gmail.com.