Applying Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory to Committee Governance - Translating theoretical propositions into methodological principles

Working Paper by Dr Mark J Lock

Abstract

Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory (AGST) needs to be translated into methodological principles with regards to the substantive interests of the researcher. One aim of this article is to translate AGST's theoretical propositions and principles into specific methodological points for the study of committees. In so doing another aim is reached, to expand the health research gaze from a narrow focus on epidemiology and health services to view the public administration processes (governance) as a critical part of the equation in achieving health equity for Australia's First Peoples. Although the translation of theory into methods has no bite unless it is also coupled with appropriate empirical methods. In the governance equation I take committees as a unit of analysis, as they are the key integrative structures for the structuration of health system reform, and use tools from the field of social network analysis. I take the inter-locked corporate directorate perspective, where committees are inter-locked by co-members and then constructed as a knowledge diffusion network. Currently, there are 585 committees and 1,440 people from 53 towns in a large region of Australia. This coupling of theory, methodology and empirical process offers new insights into how committees can enable and constrain minority voices in Western democratic processes.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In the Ethics of the Allocation of Health Resources, *palawa trowerna* academic Ian Anderson wrote that "moral values and resource allocation cannot be isolated from the social interactions through which these are realised" (Anderson 1997, p.192). He was writing about the enduring struggle of Australia's First Peoples to receive funding according to their level of health need, a need that they had voiced for over forty years but had been unable to effect the desired results. One way to secure greater health dollars is for more Aboriginal people to be involved the decision making points and pathways, but there is a gap between the principle and the reality of participation which needs thorough empirical investigation and theoretical elucidation. This working paper is one step in that direction.

When a Board of Directors (a governing committee) makes a decision, it is done so in the knowledge of a set of provisions explicitly written into the Constitution of an Organization. The organizational response – through the executive committee – directs the organization's practices to occur in accordance within Acts and Legislation and the organizations' services are provided within a particular social domain framework of Legislative provisions. The Board of Directors obtains formal advice through formal advisory committees of community members and professional clinicians/practitioners. A Board of Directors' operates through rules of governance, and organizational management in terms of administrative procedures. These aspects can be set-out in terms of Anthony Giddens Structuration Theory (AGST).

In the book, The Constitution of Society (designated as TCS), Giddens explains structuration in terms of how human interactions, in and through drawing-on various modalities, produce and reproduce social structures. Without wielding a methodological scalpel Giddens leaves it to the researcher to interpret structuration theory in the light of the subject of the research, in this case being an analysis of the policy principle of integration. The integration principle in Australian Aboriginal health policy is 'there should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels, their agencies and funded service providers to effectively coordinate services and programs' (National Indigenous Reform Agreement 2008, p.A-21). That definition echoes the perspective of Axelsson et al. (2006) who write of horizontal and vertical integration in terms inter- and intra-organizational linkages. Thomson et al. (2007) link their five key dimensions of collaboration to an integrative view of collaboration as a process through which multiple parties achieve group solutions. In Giddens' view the term integration involves the reciprocity of practices (of autonomy and dependence) between actors or collectivities (TCS: 28). Underlying each perspective of integration is the necessity for multiple parties to connect and inter-act in different forms.

Collectivities take different forms from societies to social movements to organizations to associations to networks to committees. Whatever the level of interaction unit the researcher is required to think in terms of the three domains of AGST: structures, modalities and interactions. I propose that committees are the units of interaction; that organizations contain the modalities for transmutations; and that Acts & Legislations are the structures (as rules and resources).

Methodologically, I use social network analysis for inter-locking corporate directorates in terms of inter-locked committees as a knowledge diffusion network. Hierarchical and linked document analysis (Acts, Legislation, Constitution, Terms of Reference, and policies, strategies and procedures, journal articles, minutes and reports) through the semantic software Leximancer. Rich description of the mechanics and machinations of committee processes is achieved by in-depth

interviews and thematic analysis through NVivo and Leximancer. The inter-organizational collaborative environment is assessed through Ann Marie Thomson collaboration survey (TMC) and the results analysed by confirmatory factor modelling. An assessment of service quality and effectiveness is achieved through analysis of service provider access statistics.

Integration is assessed from a variety of directions. Social network analysis visualization methods provide a way to 'see' the links between different committees. Demographic attributes of committee members, in combination with metrics of cohesion, allow an assessment of where Australia's First Peoples are located in the committee network. Leximancer allows an assessment of the integration (and diffusion) of key terms through different types of documents. Thematic analysis of interviews provide keys to understand the transformations involved in the conduct of committee processes. And analysis of service provider statistics in combination with cohesion metrics and Leximancer metrics is a way to assess integration through different levels of abstraction. In the following sections the alignment of AGST with committee governance, research design methodology and data analysis are indicated.

Committees

Committees – defined as formally constituted groups of people – are a key mechanism for citizen participation with the Australian State. Each and every committee is an instantiation of Western democratic ideology - that citizens should have a voice in the governance of the State (*vox populi vox dei*; government of the people, by the people, for the people). In the health sector, citizen participation is also linked to the Alma Ata Declaration of Primary Health Care – particularly principles about full participation decision making (VI), the right and duty to participation in planning and implementation processes (IV) and it refers to comprehensiveness, partnerships, social justice, and a wellbeing concept of health. Concepts that resonate with Australia's First Peoples particularly because of the past colonial exclusion of First Peoples with the Australian State, as Dr John Gardiner-Garden has characterised the first century and a half (1788 to 1938) of European-Indigenous relations in Australia as a 'period of dispossession, physical ill-treatment, social disruption, population decline, economic exploitation, codified discrimination, and cultural devastation' [ref].

Hidden within the paragraph above are a cornucopia of concepts – governance, race, colonialism, citizenship, democracy, power – all carried in and through inter-personal interactions. Thus it is relevant here to make the point that the enormous complexity of inter-personal interactions occurring within the various forms of participation are not to be reduced to only those interactions which occur through committees.

Nevertheless, I propose that committees are significant sites of structuration – the structure and restructuring of social relations through time and space in virtue of the duality of structure (Giddens 1984). As I make the case below in more detail, in summary here is that committees are significant because a) they are formally sanctioned mechanisms of the State, b) they are ubiquitous instantiations of Western democracy, c) they are taken as routine structures of governance, and d) they are where collaboration between different stakeholders occurs.

Now to the point of why study committees? I answer this with reference to some noticeable points with the discourse of committees in Australia. Committees, wherever they are written about, usually in the chapters of books (ref), mentioned in journal articles (ref), prominently in the media releases of ministers (congressmen, senators), and most often in government reports (ref).

They are always framed as a single structural determinant in a positivist tradition – a problem of reification and emergent properties. It is the 'high level' committee of 'prominent' people who will lead reform: P + C(p) > R. However, it is also quite apparent that after many pronouncements about powerful committees leading reform processes for Australia's First Peoples, that change is at best incremental (ref to changes).

Subsequently, the promise of achieving social justice through participation in health policy processes appears to be a hollow one. Citizens who sit on committees and provide their voice do not see it reflected in policy outcomes, they rightfully ask "where is my voice" (any quotes). An example of this is when Yawuru man Mick Dodson said:

> "The statistics of infant and perinatal mortality are our babies and children who die in our arms...The statistics of shortened life expectancy are our mothers and fathers, uncles, aunties and elders who live diminished lives and die before their gifts of knowledge and experience are passed on. We die silently under these statistics..." Professor Mick Dodson. Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's Social Justice Report, 2005

The analysis of why change is incremental takes a number of forms which I point to in the literature but I do not discuss here: political will, institutionalised racism, health and wellbeing programs, resources, federalism, service access and provision and service management (refs). Time and again activists will say that there needs to be greater participation by Aboriginal people and this is policy doctrine. For example, one such 'belief' statement is that 'a lack of involvement of Indigenous people in policy and decision-making processes' (Shannon & Longbottom, 2004, p. 12) contributes to continuing poor health outcomes. However, there is no empirically established evidence base to support this case – what, precisely, is meant by the terms: lack, involvement, policy, and decision making processes? Furthermore, Shannon et al. (2004), make this assertion without citing relevant research literature which an acute reader may want to interrogate in order to pass judgement on the veracity of the proposition. For example, upon the removal of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (2004) it was said that this resulted in the 'removal of Aboriginal voice' yet I demonstrated that, within health policy process, that Aboriginal people were integral to an informal network of influential people (ref). In other words, this network of people relied upon, and could not function without, the voice of their Aboriginal friends (ref). But therein is also the difference between a political argument and an empirical methodology.

Taking an empirical standpoint in policy analysis

It is time for empirical methodologists to make a stand. Policy concepts – such as collaboration, integration, participation, partnerships, engagement – need an empirical basis. The equation P + C(p) > R hides many complex and inter-related factors. Australian society is diverse with varying types policy domains (health, education, welfare etc.), organisations (from corporations to not-for-profit, from associations to cooperatives), levels of government (local, state and territory, and national), hundreds of Aboriginal nations, thousands of interest groups and dozens of political parties. Therefore, it is impossible to state cause and effect relationships in this governance miasma (Figure 1) – an Aboriginal voice on one committee does not easily diffuse into obvious, direct and measureable effect in health outcomes.

Figure 1: Australian Aboriginal Health Governance Miasma
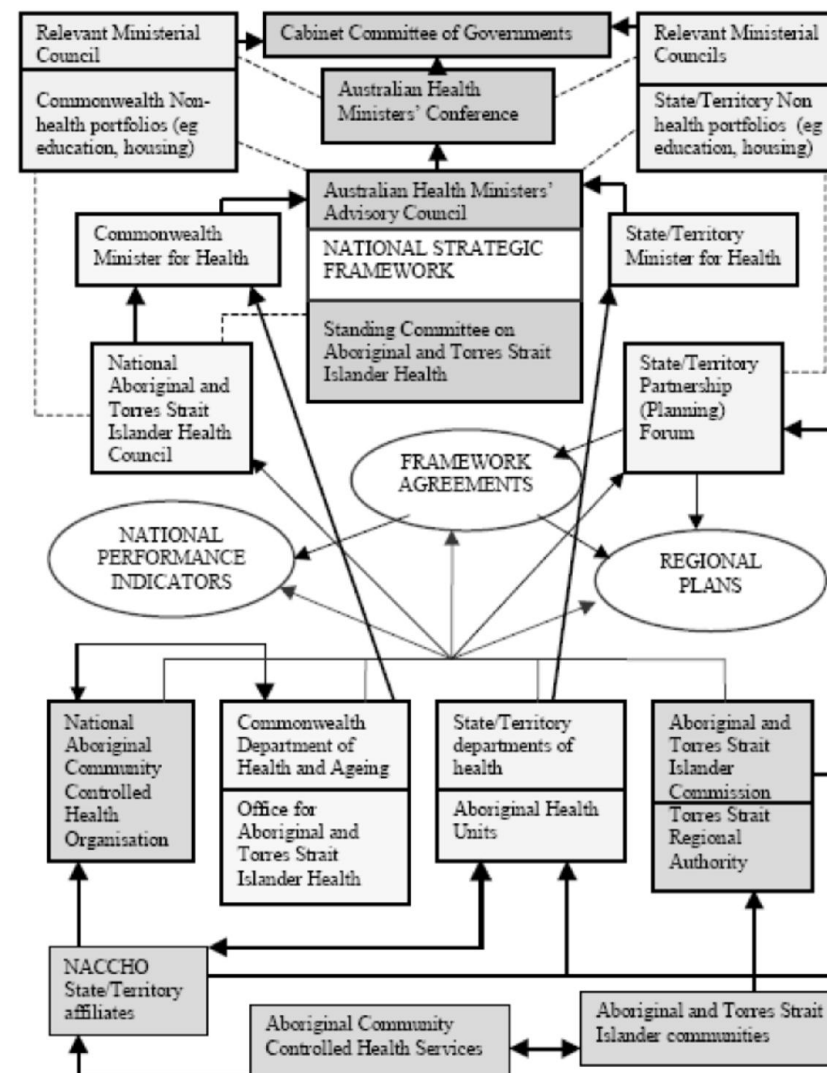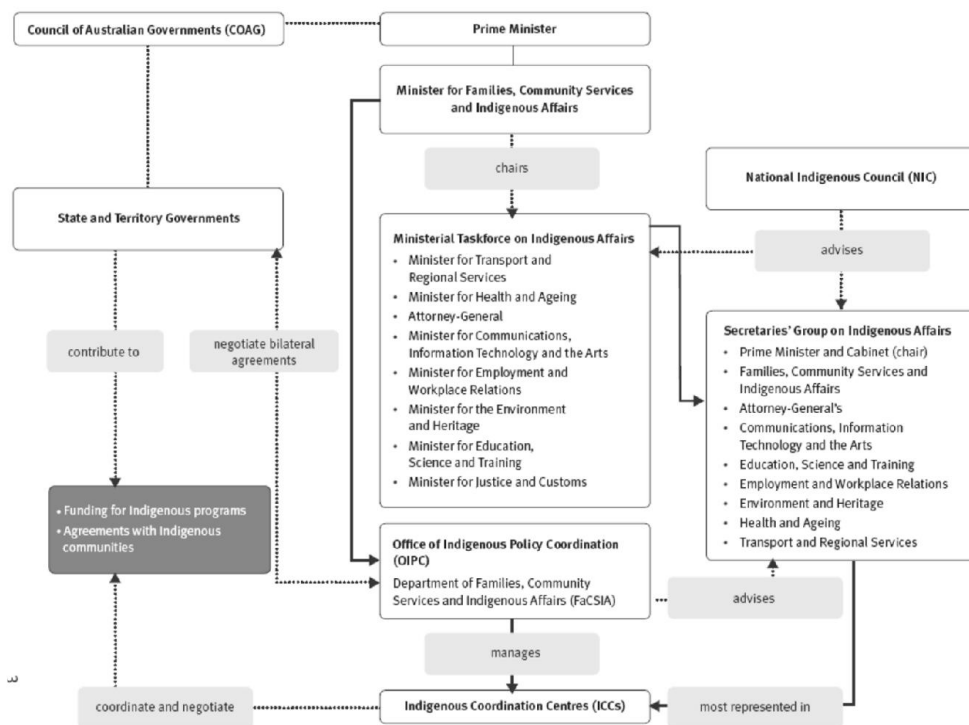
Therefore, is it any surprise that when a citizen expresses a view which enters the governance miasma (Figure 1), that view is moderated beyond its original expression? It is not a surprise because Australian citizens have a low level of understanding about government (ref). And perhaps an unrealistic expectation of the power of one committee to enforce change throughout a complex system of containing multiple decision points of influence? There are multiple stakeholders, points of influence, diverse interests, information and communication technology, social media, numerous issues and diverse cultures, which point to challenges for how governments can design citizen participation process so that voice is demonstrably seen and heard in decision making processes. It is also an empirical challenge of health policy analysts.
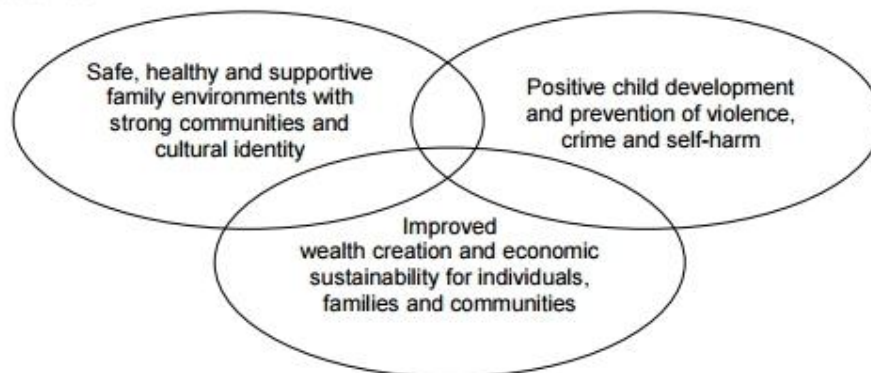
Governance and committees

Governance has gained prominence in Australian Aboriginal Affairs policy (Hunt et al. 2008) giving rise to the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute. However, it first came to my attention in a statistical report called 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage' (OID, 2011) whereas in previous reports it had not been mentioned (four previous reports in the period 2003-2009). The OID report defined governance as 'the evolving processes, relationships, institutions and structures by which a group of people, community or society organise themselves collectively to achieve the things that matter to them' (SCRGSP 2011: 11.3). I point-out that the use of the term 'institution' in the OID report refers to an organization, but the view taken in this paper accords with that of Giddens (1984) and Ostrom's (An agenda for the study of institutions, 1986).

The OID report noted two aspects of governance – the corporate governance of organisations, and that of how governments manage Aboriginal affairs – or government governance. The OID report stated that 'effective governance and leadership, and recognition of culture, play essential parts in the social and economic development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and influence virtually all indicators in the framework' (OID Report 2014, p.5.1). The figure (figure 2) below is the current 'indicator framework' for reporting in Australian Aboriginal affairs.

Figure 2.1.2 **Multi-level indicator framework**

Priority outcomes

Safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity

Positive child development and prevention of violence, crime and self-harm

Improved wealth creation and economic sustainability for individuals, families and communities

COAG targets and headline indicators

COAG targets		**Headline indicators**	
4.1	Life expectancy	4.7	Post-secondary education — participation and attainment
4.2	Young child mortality	4.8	Disability and chronic disease
4.3	Early childhood education	4.9	Household and individual income
4.4	Reading, writing and numeracy	4.10	Substantiated child abuse and neglect
4.5	Year 12 attainment	4.11	Family and community violence
4.6	Employment	4.12	Imprisonment and juvenile detention

Strategic areas for action

Governance, leadership and culture	Early child development	Education and training	Healthy lives	Economic participation	Home environment	Safe and supportive communities
5.1 Valuing Indigenous Australians and their cultures	6.1 Antenatal care	7.1 Year 1 to 10 attendance	8.1 Access to primary health care	9.1 Employment by full time/part time status, sector and occupation	10.1 Overcrowding in housing	11.1 Alcohol consumption and harm
5.2 Participation in decision making	6.2 Health behaviours during pregnancy	7.2 Teacher quality	8.2 Potentially preventable hospitalisations	9.2 Indigenous owned or controlled land and business	10.2 Rates of disease associated with poor environmental health	11.2 Drug and other substance use and harm
5.3 Engagement with services	6.3 Teenage birth rate	7.3 School engagement	8.3 Potentially avoidable deaths	9.3 Home ownership	10.3 Access to clean water and functional sewerage and electricity services	11.3 Juvenile diversions
5.4 Case studies in governance	6.4 Birthweight	7.4 Transition from school to work	8.4 Tobacco consumption and harm	9.4 Income support		11.4 Repeat offending
5.5 Indigenous language revitalisation and maintenance	6.5 Early childhood hospitalisations		8.5 Obesity and nutrition			11.5 Community functioning
5.6 Indigenous cultural studies	6.6 Injury and preventable disease		8.6 Oral health			
5.7 Participation in community activities	6.7 Ear health		8.7 Mental health			
5.8 Access to traditional lands and waters	6.8 Basic skills for life and learning		8.8 Suicide and self-harm			

Figure 2: Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Reporting Framework

An empirical gap in governance research

However, the OID report also noted that there were no numerical indicators of governance, signalling a clear gap in research to which this study is targeted. There is only one research study on governance of Aboriginal organisations (corporate governance) and my own research is the first directed to government governance. The particular angle with which to access government governance is to look at committees, but by no means in an ordinary fashion.

I noted in my doctoral dissertation that the decisions taken by committees appeared to be the formal validation of informal networking. But how to add mathematical meat to the rhetorical power of networks? A single committee does not operate in a vacuum, although that too is how health policy literature is framed in Australia. My way is to begin with the unit of analysis – a committee – and to ask where An Aboriginal person speaks on that committee, what happens to their voice afterwards?

In order to answer this question it is necessary to understand the chain of linkages between one committee and the next, as sub-committees report to over sight committees. As shown in Figure 3 below, Australia has a hierarchical authority design for committees.

As a start I look at the linear or formal reporting relationship from bottom to top (see side figures). There were no Aboriginal members in these executive level groups. The Aboriginal Steering Committees are in effect *sub-sub-sub-sub* committees to COAG. Clearly these linear and hierarchical processes structure-out Aboriginal voice, which is important, because where you stand on an issue depends on where you *sit*, and if you don't have a seat then you don't have any standing. But that is a linear, hierarchical view and one embraced by Aboriginal advisors who endorse high-level advisory councils or committees convened by executive ministers.
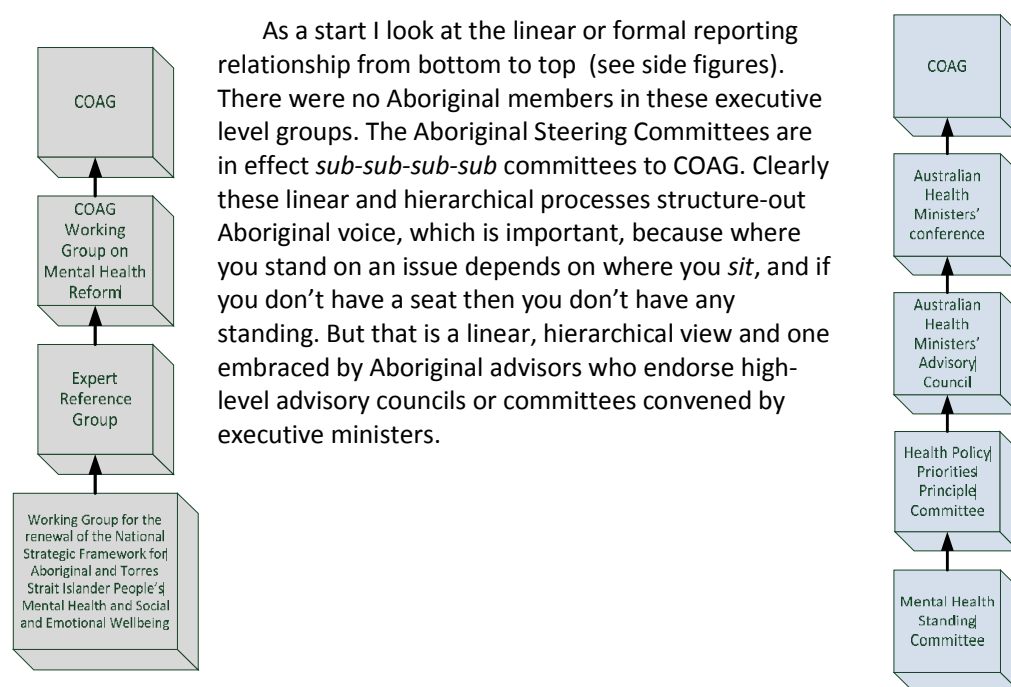
Figure 3 – Linearity and hierarchy in formal committee structures

It is also necessary to examine each committees' governance 'bubble' – the reason for the committee, its terms of reference, minutes and actions, resources and membership composition. Further, committees are usually attached to organisations which have their own governance 'umbrella' – the various constitutions, charters, policies, processes and procedures which define the operation of that organisation as a whole. Organisations

operate within a particular, and larger, social policy 'framework' (policies, strategies, programs; administration and funding) and overarching institutional context of Acts and Legislation.

The bubbles, umbrellas, frameworks and institutions (committee, organisation, social policy, institution) can be examined for Aboriginal voice, but in not ordinary manner. Examination must expand from a single focus on one person or committee or organisation, to one of inter-connections whose whole is more than the sum of its parts. The members of a committee often sit-on more than one committee and in so doing are the connectors between different committees, in effect linking many committees together into a knowledge diffusion network. The analyst's task then falls to ascertaining the boundaries of that network and employing an analytic lens for understanding its implications, such as that provided through AGST.

End of section 1

Structuration ontology

The ontological appeal of Anthony Giddens Structuration Theory (AGST) lies in the definition of structuration as 'the structuring of social relations across time and space in virtue of the duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984:376). The notion of re-structuring the Aboriginal health sector is a common theme in policy literature in terms of 'reforms' which has been called 'innovation without change' (1994) and as 'Indigenous change propels inertia' (Langton) and as 'an experiment' (Weaver). The result is to change the way the system operates or, in other words, to structure social relations.

In contemporary Australia the committee is a significant site for social relations, where different people come together in the name of various relationship development to participate and engage, consult and discuss, and collaborate and integrate. This reflects a cultural principle tied to oral traditions – the need to have conversations or "yarn-ups". AGST gives the highest regard to social relations as the keystone for the constitution of society. And Emirbayer, in Manifesto for a Relational Sociology, notes that 'values are constituted in an inter-active space' (ref).

Structuration theory is applied to questions in accounting research (Englund, Gerdin, & Burns, 2011), information systems research (Poole & DeSanctis, 2002), management research (Pozzebon, 2004), integrated care (Esslinger, 2009), and knowledge management (Timbrell, Delaney, Chan, Yue, & Gable, 2005) and in Australian health system redesign (Bourke et al). Jones and Karsten (2003) indicate that applying AGST means identifying all components of system, describing the relationships between them, and describing how they work together.

The relational notion of agency and structure

Giddens stands to re-configure the hard-edged dualisms of agency and structure. Agency refers to how we decide to shape our relationships with other people, that we have a degree of autonomy in our actions (such as self-determination, or control) which means that we have the 'power to do otherwise'. Structure refers to the rules and resources used to govern the scope of our agency - our actions are shaped by larger forces of society – be it organisational, cultural, social, political or religious in nature. In the sociological literature the positioning of agency and structure as fixed categories should, through ST, be reconceptualised as 'instantiations of each other' (Pozzebon, 2004:251).

Therefore, the so called 'larger forces' of society should not be taken as dictating or determining human activities. For example, the use of the phrase 'the government' implies an object with physical shape and inherent psychosocial properties, a phenomenon sociologist call 'reification'. Instead for Giddens 'structure is what gives form and shape to social life, but it is not itself that form and shape, structure only exists in and through the activities of human agents' [TCS:]. Therefore, the 'government' exists only as rules and resources as instantiated in and through human interactions. He also departed from the idea of agency as something just 'contained' within the individual, rather that our values are constituted in an interactive space – the interaction creates meaning and understanding, as opposed to them being pre-constituted in our minds and waiting for inert transference (Emirbayer).

As such, in AGST the traditional agency (individuals) and structure (society) divide is reconceptualised as a mutually interacting duality. We understand the notion of 'mutual' in Australia given its liberal use in policy discourse to propose that on the one hand the State has an 'obligation' to provide social services to citizens who, on the other hand, need to accept 'responsibility' for individual decisions that have a flow-on effect for the State (Goodin, 2002). The interacting duality refers to how our daily interactions fold up and roll into those larger social rules, then simultaneously how the larger social rules play-out in our daily interactions. Consider the case that in each and every act of communication we draw-on the structure of language and, at the very same moment, we re-create the rules of language. My concern is to understand how, in our interactions in committees, we draw-on and reproduce social structure. In particular, it is of concern to realise that as fragmentation (hence the need for integration) is asserted as a key issue in the Aboriginal health sector, then it must also be instantiated in and through the very committee processes which seek to promote integration.

A dialectic of fragmentation/integration

Structuration thinking brings a perception that in our very interactions we draw-on and reproduce the structure (as rules and resources) for fragmentation and integration. In understanding the structure for fragmentation and integration the seminal work of Ann Marie Thomson 'Collaboration: Meaning and Measurement' is instructive (Thomson, 2001). Underlying the Thomson model of collaboration (TMC) is the reality of competing political traditions of classic liberalism and civic republicanism (Perry and Thomson reference). On the one hand (liberalism) organisations are 'in it for themselves' whilst on the other hand organisations work together for 'the common good'. The Australian State can be constructed in similar terms.

The very way the Australian State is structured ensures a degree of fragmentation (separation) through the federation Australian Government, six states and two territories each with their own parliament, and the hundreds of local government's or councils. Thus the institution of federation is created and re-created through the tensions for local autonomy simultaneously allowing for larger cooperative decision making. Additionally, Western democratic ideology allows for plurality of thinking, innovation in practice, and diversity of expression. Therefore, it follows that fragmentation and integration are inherent in Western socio-political systems. The challenge is that, whilst allowing for democratic rights and freedoms, to govern in such a way as to promote integrative practices that addresses the substantive concerns of a society.

One of the ways that Western democracies have responded to citizen concerns is through the establishment of integrative processes and structures - in particular of committees. A key part of this analysis is to understand how, in and through committees, our interactions draw-on and reproduce the rules and resources for fragmentation and integration. Committees are one of those taken-for-granted social democratic processes that citizens participate in on a regular basis. How could they be, in and of themselves, spaces for constituting both fragmentation and integration?

The remainder of this paper is set to describe the core concepts of AGST in relation to their relevance for the examination of committees. My schematic of the relationship between the core elements of AGST is shown in figure 4 (below).
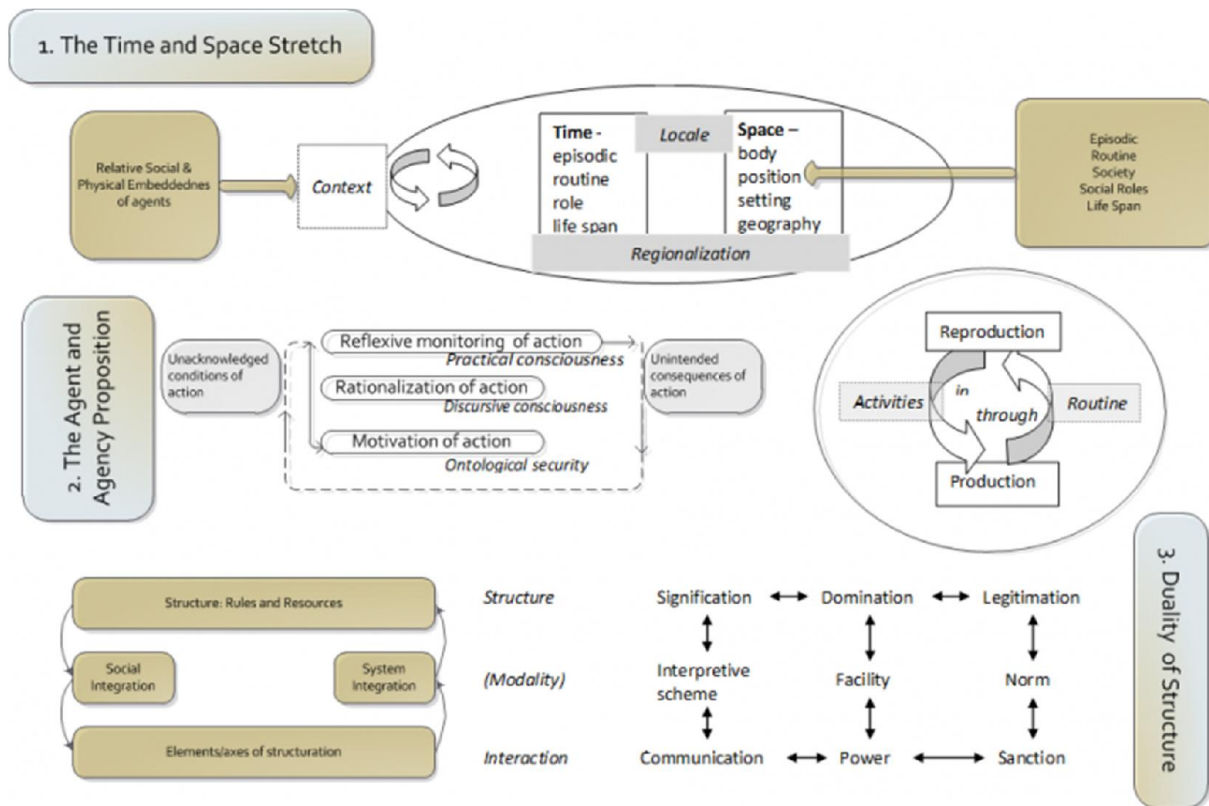

Figure 4: Schematic of concepts of Anthony Giddens' Structuration Theory

Translating theory into research design principles

This analysis forms part of Giddens' project as 'an attempt to formulate a framework for understanding society in terms of social structure and human agency and interaction' (TCS: xxi). That is, in and through committees, agents simultaneously make and re-make the social structure to produce and reproduce fragmentation and integration. The challenge in these research design principles is to bring into visibility the points where empirical methodology could be established. And how to code the information correctly. Giddens provides a ten-point summary of the aspects of structuration which impinge 'most generally' on problems of empirical research (TCS: 281).

Time-space stretch

Proposition: 'the structuration of institutions can be understood in terms of how it comes about that social activities become 'stretched' across wide spans of time-space' (TCS: xxi). **Institutions** refers to the more enduring features of social life – as reproduced practices across space and time, as chronically reproduced rules and resources (TCS: 375). Operational concepts: context, positioning, reflexivity, locale (setting), regions and

regionalization. Grounding question: what factors relating to time-space stretch of the dialectic of fragmentation and integration may be found in committees?

The **context** concept refers to the social and physical embeddedness of agents relative to one another – 'the 'strips' of time-space in which gatherings take place' (Giddens, 1984:71). This includes the physical environment of interaction, the number of committee members, repetition of meetings (routinization), the topic of the committee and the agenda items.

Giddens sees that the **positioning** of the actor in social encounters is fundamental to social life, in terms of time-space paths and relationally. Relevant committee level information: geographic location (postcode), the community (name), the socio-economic index for areas (SEIFA), traditional country (name); actor level information: name, sex, employee and job position, education and experience, committee position. Relevance: 'social positions are constituted structurally as specific intersections of signification, domination and legitimation which relates to the typification of agents' (TCS:83).

The sociological concept of **roles** is relevant as Jones and Karsten (2003) suggest to 'Account for the roles of the human actors in the social system – their positions relative to one another and the expectations and contextual demands on their actions' (Jones & Karsten, 2003). Different theoretical traditions would make note of an agents age, gender, culture and profession [role reference]. There are many examples in the literature of the different interests of for example, health professionals (D'Amour, Goulet, Labadie, Martín-Rodriguez, & Pineault, 2008) and organisations (Duckett, 1984) and different cultures (Lloyd, Wise, Weeramanthri, & Nugus, 2009).

The **reflexive** monitoring of activity is a chronic feature of everyday action and involves the conduct not just of the individual but also of others. Those factors that are part of 'knowledgeability' of a person, and often goes to the credibility of the actor being a formal committee member in the first place. Actors are bounded by the authority of their role/positions – as Ministers, directors, project officers, community, education and so on. [The Structural interest perspective, the advocacy coalition framework]. Committee membership is predicated on committee members meeting criteria (which I term their 'identity') such as: gender, age, cultural, education, experience, employing organisation, publication record, research record, community record etc. Relevance: 'we engage in social practices, sometimes intentionally, sometimes reflexively, and sometimes unconsciously, to produce and reproduce structures at any given point in time' (TCS: 2). In circumstances of interaction the reflexive monitoring of action incorporates the monitoring of the setting of such interaction (TCS: 4).

A **locale** is 'A physical region involved as part of the setting of interaction, having definite boundaries which help to concentrate interaction in one way or another (Giddens, 1984 #1203:375). Each 'venue' is a 'locale' within which are various demarcated 'zones' or regions where different rules of interaction come into play. Committee venues can be office buildings, at Aboriginal sites of significance, different geographical locations, to cabinet rooms and parliaments, different administrative regions (Hunter New England LHD – Pinterest Map). For example the mapping of consultation points for the Constitutional report (see figure 5, below). The rationale behind the Community Cabinets where more

direct citizen engagement occurs in community settings compared to formal offices in Canberra (Mccann, 2012). Information is available on websites, newsletters, committee reports, annual reports and project reports. Relevance: Locales are 'settings of interaction…which are used by social actors to sustain meaning in communicative acts' (TCS:xxv).
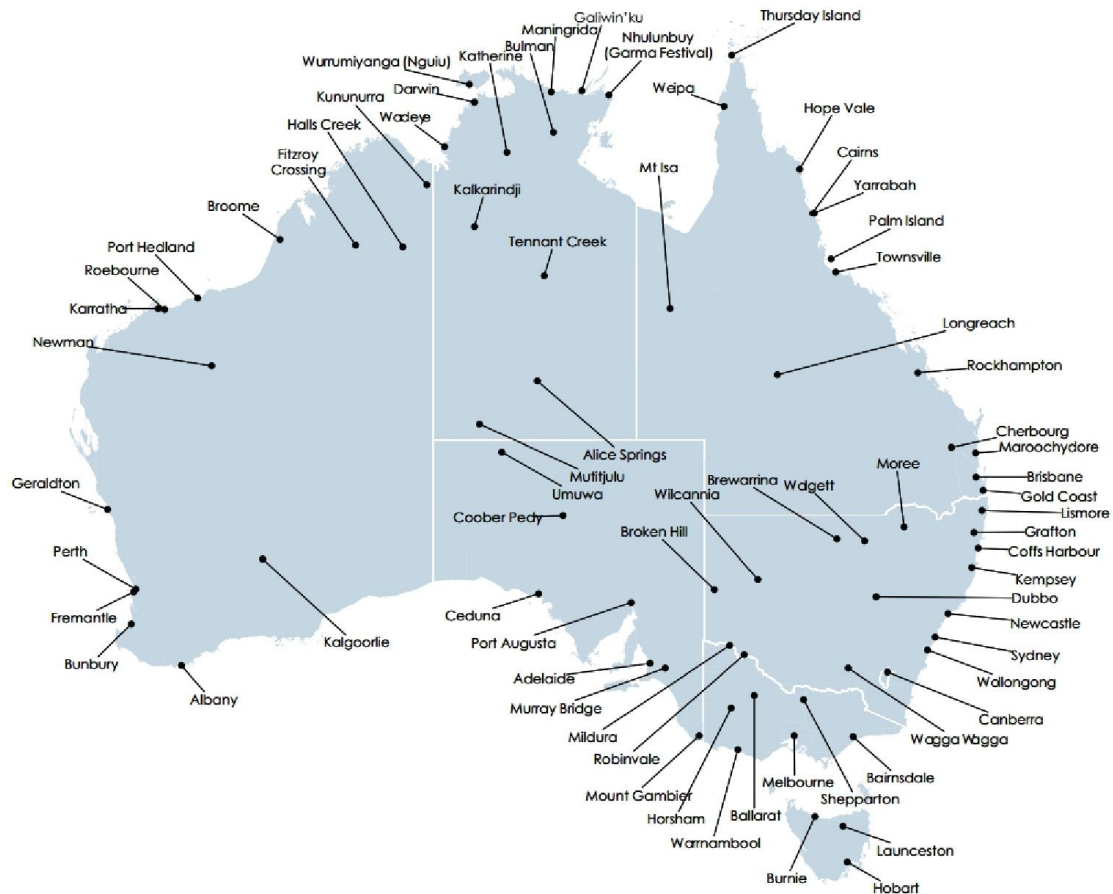
Figure 5 – Consultation sites for the Constitutional Recognition Expert Panel

The **regionalization** concept refers to the 'temporal, spatial or time-space differentiation of regions either within or between locales' (Giddens, 1984:376) or the 'zoning of time-space' in relation to routinized social practices' (Giddens, 1984: 119). Regionalization occurs in modes of form (form of the boundaries), span (extensions of time and space), character (home, workshop, office), duration (unspecified in TCS, perhaps night/day, day of week, time of year, time of day, time of life) (TCS:121). Such characteristics play an important role in committee deliberations – issues raised can relate to these characteristics – the National Mental Health Commission meets 'six times a year in communities across Australia'. Relevance: Goes to the sustaining of meaning in communicative acts; the socially and historically fluctuating lines between enclosure and disclosure, confinement and display (TCS:xxvi).

Closing remark. Committees are formally constituted with rules and resources, occurring serially in different locales, diverse settings, multitude of contexts, plurality of actors and

various regions. This diversity needs to be accounted for in assessment of voice integration and diffusion through committees.

Praxis and power

Proposition: the stratification model of the social agent 'involves treating the reflexive monitoring, rationalization and motivation of action as embedded sets of processes' (TCS: 3). Operating concepts: agency, reflexivity, conduct, rationalization and security. Grounding question: How do actors rationalize the committee – and their – processes?

The **agency concept**. Giddens sees 'all actors as knowledgeable, socially competent, and having reflexivity – humans have the capacity to understand what they do while they do it' (Giddens, 1984:xxiii). Giddens casts agency in terms of an actor's capability of doing things, a praxiological perspective, which implies power because of the transformative capacity to intervene and alter social patterns (TCS:9). The reason for a committee is to make a change (vision, mission) and the reasons for participation on committee is to contribute to that change (profile information). The most direct way is to ask committee members to gives reasons for their presence on the committee, and explain how they work with other committee members to get their voice heard. Relevance: 'Structuration theory is based on the proposition that structure is always both enabling and constraining, in virtue of the inherent relation between structure and agency (and agency and power)' (TCS:169). A committee can be seen as a power container (TCS:136).

> Example: The Expert Reference Group on Mental Health Reform' Terms of Reference state that 'to provide advice to the Working Group [on mental health reform] 'on a set of ambitious and achievable national, whole of life, outcomes based indicators and targets for mental health that will be understood by the community and drive systemic change' [ref].

A **reflexive concept**. Giddens notes the specifically reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive ordering of social practices (Giddens, 1984:3). Reflexivity operates at three levels being discursive (verbal expression of reasoning or explanation), practical (knowing how get-on in life, tacit knowledge) and the unconscious (TCS:7). Inter-personal interviews with semi-structured questions pitched to obtain discursive reflections about how a committee operates, and why it operates as it does. Relevance: discursiveness is "What actors are able to say, or to give verbal expression to, about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action; awareness which has a discursive form" (Giddens, 1984, p. 374).

It is through **conduct** – the flow of activities of actors (praxis) – in institutional terms (see TCS:) the unit of analysis is a collective, in this case being a committee and its decisions which are often noted in minutes and evidenced through activities. The conduct of a committee can be traced through minutes, noted as actions on websites, newsletters and in reports.

The **rationalization of action** concept means that actors maintain a continuing 'theoretical understanding' of the grounds of their activity (Giddens, 1984 #1203:5). Then it

is necessary to conduct in-depth interviews which are then analysed to detect markers of discursive knowledgeability. However, it is often noted that there are individual level reasons for being involved in committees is to 'make a difference' [ref] as well as the committee-level reason, in the case of the National Mental Health Commission it is 'advising, collaborating, reporting' [ref – annual report]. At the individual level, relevant questions would go the committee members' rationalization of their role (man, women, profession, organisation, etc). It would also serve to see how the individual's positioning aligns with the vision of the collective (committee).

An **ontological security concept**. Giddens described ontological security as the "Confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity" (Giddens, 1984, p. 375). Ontological security is referred to as the need to establish 'the sense of trust that comes from being able to reduce anxiety in social situations' (Turner, 1991, p. 532). The concept of trust is one of the most investigated concepts in sociological literature [ref], often cited as one of the foundations of successful collaboratives (Thomson), and is noted as one of the key drivers in the formation of committees to 'work towards a sense of trust' [ref]. Thus, it is necessary to note those committees with an explicit drive to 'build trust', to apply relevant survey questions to establish the degree of trust [ref] and to ask interview questions on different facets of trust [ref].

Closing remark. Praxis and power are the reason for committees through which members want to push for reforms such as integration to reduce inequalities. This means to exercise power (such as authority) and to promote activities (allocate resources) which requires reflexively knowing how to get things done through committees.

Structure as rules and resources

Proposition: Structure is referred to as 'rules and resources, recursively implicated in the reproduction of social systems' (TCS:377). The phrase 'social system' implies mediation between agents through the use of rules and resources'. Operational concepts: recursive, rules, resources, structural sets, structural principles and structural properties. Grounding question: how do committees draw-on and reproduce the rules and resources related to fragmentation and integration?

The **recursive** concept refers to actions that have consequences which, in turn, feedback on our actions. Giddens uses the phrase 'in and through' to refer to recursion, such as 'in' the use of language we draw-on rules and resources, but also at the very same moment or 'through' language we re-create those very rules and resources. For example, the ideal of independence is evident (recursive) in terms of democracy, in levels of government (federalism), in the framing of social policy, in the operation of organisations, and within committees. The analytical material is of the terms of reference (which can be seen as constitutions, bills/acts and mission/vision statements). Comparative and contrasting terms of reference should reveal markers of recursion (in text).

The **rules** concept refers to generalisable procedures that actors understand and use in various circumstances (Turner 1991). How is the formula [$a_n = n^2 + n-1$] the most germane

conceptualization of 'rule' in relation to 'structure'? (TCS: 20). All committees follow routine procedures, but underlying the multitude of committee procedures, is there the type of rule to signify 'the reproduction of institutionalized practices, that is, practices most deeply sedimented in time-space'? (TCS:22). Methodologically, this type of rule may be ascertained by comparative analysis of interview transcripts with terms of reference (discursive formulation). Relevance: Rules have structuring qualities in the 'forming, sustaining, termination and reforming of encounters' (TCS:23), and are used to make/justify decisions for the allocation of resources.

The **resources** concept where a range of resources are used to enable and constrain conduct. Giddens proposes that structures of domination are constituted by allocative resources (material features of the environment, means of material production and reproduction and produced goods) and authoritative resources (organization of social time-space, production and reproduction of the body and organization of life chances) (TCS:258). Resources are transformational in character and inherently bound-up with signification (codes) and legitimation (norms) (TCS:33). Methodologically, this involves the social network analytics of centrality (degree, betweenness and eigenvector) in concert with the demographic and positional characteristics of the committee members. Relevance: many references in Australian health policy about resource allocation in Aboriginal health.

A **structural (rule/resource) set** is a distinct clustering 'of transformation/mediation relations implied in the designation of structural principles. Structural sets are formed by the mutual convertibility of the rules and resources implicated in social reproduction' (TCS:186). Structures can be analytically distinguished within each of the three dimensions of structuration, signification, legitimation and domination, or across these' (TCS:186). The following figure is the structural set of the transmutation of relations for private property in modern capitalism (TCS:186):

private property : money : capital : labour contract : profit

How are the structural principles of Australian society instantiated in and through committees? How do committee processes produce and reproduce those structural principles? How are concepts such as fragmentation and integration played-out and reproduced through committees?

The **structural principles** concept. Giddens defined them as, "Principles of organization of societal totalities; factors involved in the overall institutional alignment of a society or type of society" (Giddens, 1984, p. 376). Any committee which operates in Australia does so based on the most fundamental principles of Western democracies such as 'by a belief in elected Government; by a commitment to the rule of law, to equal rights for all before the law; and by a belief in freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of association. Our society is also tolerant of a range of religious, political, social and cultural beliefs and values in the context of the fundamental principles of our democracy.' [ref]. Committees are instances of Western democracies such as through decision making processes, freedom of speech, freedom of association and through principles such as equity and justice.

Relevance: if a democratic principle is 'commitment to fair treatment' transformed into the health system value of 'equitable access based on need' transformed into citizen engagement through the practice of committee processes is an institutional property of Australian society. What is the transformative relationship for equity? This can be instantiated through the composition or 'balance' of a committee, that can reflect positive discrimination for gender (greater representation of women) and culture (greater representation of Aboriginal people), and methodologically these can be indentified in the demographic attributes of committee members. The formal decision process should also be noted, whether it be consensus decision making or otherwise, and the number of members required for a quorum. The extent to which these principles matter depends on the type of committee be it commonwealth ministers to the local health committee, and the role of the committee be it executive, advisory and financial. Finally, the operation of a committee is often defined in terms of its umbrella organisation because the ToR will align the committees activities to the agenda of the organisation often noted as a vision statement and aligned aims and objectives.

In speaking of the **structural properties** of social systems Giddens means their institutionalized features, giving 'solidity' across time and space (TCS: 24). Structure is seen in terms three dimensions: signification (meaning), domination (control) and legitimation (norms). How are these dimensions evident in committee governance? Understanding how these inter-related propositions interact and thus how social interactions becomes 'stretched' across space and time, Giddens sees as best investigated as a problem of the connection of social with system integration (below).

Closing remark: Rules and resources are both the medium and the outcome of the conduct they recursively organise. Committee governance occurs within a 'bubble' of rules and resource constraints, nested within organisational 'umbrellas' of operating rules and resources relevant to the 'framing' of a social policy domain which has a gamut of 'institutionalised' Acts and Legislation. Agents draw-on and reproduce the rules and resources, but have the capability to re-configure transformation relations. But how do all of the agents and all of the committees inflect a pattern or systemness?

Systems and systemness

Proposition: Giddens' conceives of a social system as one of 'reproduced relationships between individuals and/or collectivities' (Giddens, 1981:169) and a system as 'the patterning of social relations across time-space, understood as reproduced practices' (TCS:377). In this sense, a committee structure is a system of reproduced relationships. Committee members meet routinely, share knowledge, make cooperative decisions, and commit to reproducing this system of operation for the next meeting and so forth. Furthermore a committee instantiates the notion of systemness – the repetitive and routinised nature of human conduct or 'The patterning of social relations across time-space, understood as reproduced practices' (Giddens, 1984, p. 377). The most obvious reproduced committee system is the Australian parliament, reconstituted every three years, yet operating in accordance with the rules and conventions of the Constitution (1901). Furthermore, that each and every committee is an instantiation of such systemness indicates a general 'structural principle'. Operational concepts: social, system, integration,

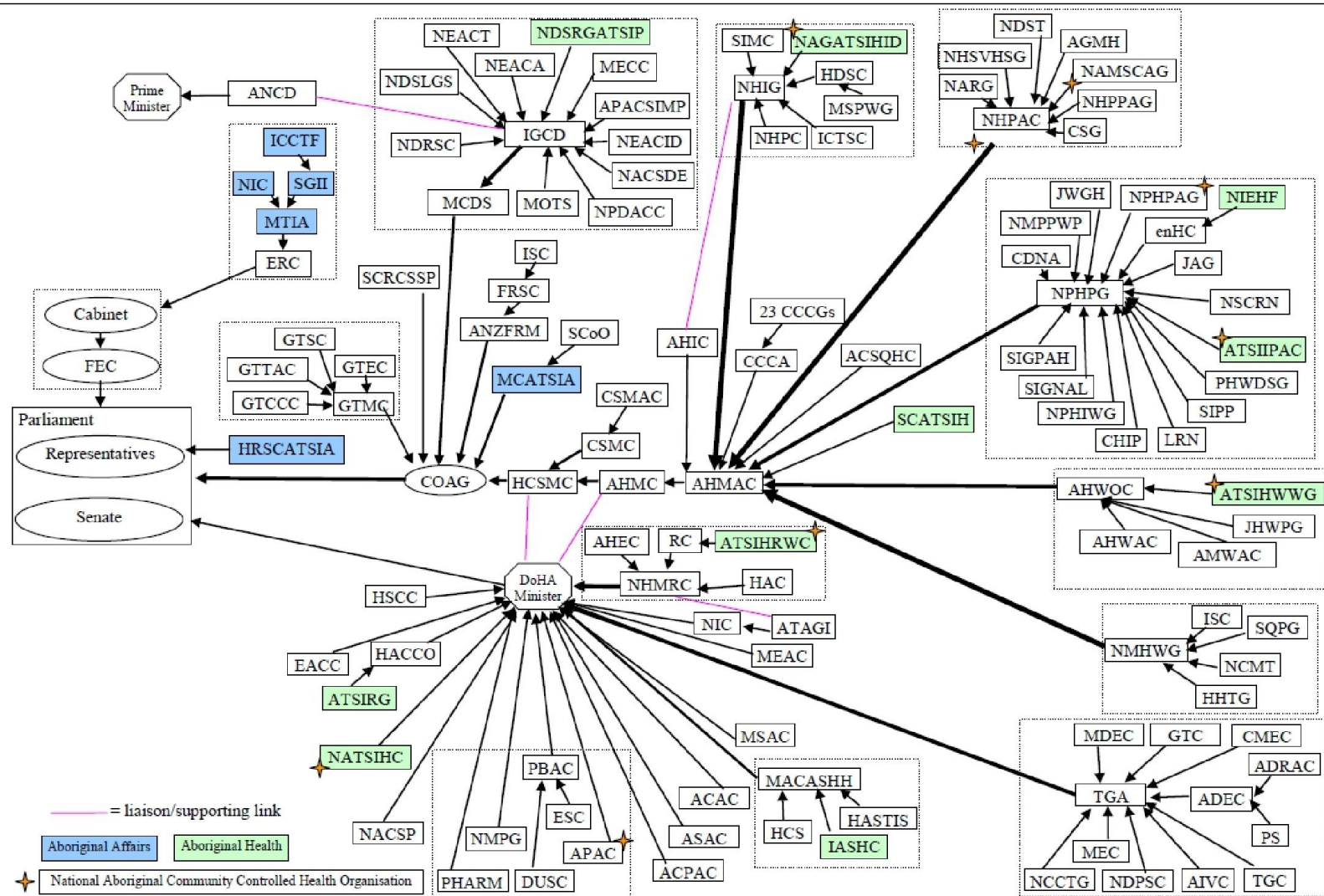production, reproduction and routine. Grounding question: what are the features of systemness of committees?

Social integration refers to systemness on the level of face-to-face interaction – many social systems consist of relations reproduced primarily by means of social integration (e.g. peasant villages) (Cohen, 2000 #1156:94; Giddens, 1984:28 #1203). Perhaps it can be observed that the 'culture' of an organization refers to a type of social integration. But it is also noted that geographical proximity (rural, remote and urban) refers to particular levels of social integration. Australia also certainly has ABS indicators for statistics areas, and there are also statistical indicators for different Indigenous groups, as well as the names of different tribal areas. It is often noted in the profile of committee members their credibility with relation to such locales and this is a valuable authority criteria for the voice of that person. All this information is collected and coded.

System integration refers to connections with those who are physically absent in time or space (the production of relations-at-a-distance) where actors also may relate in more indirect (email, telephone) ways to those separated by physical distance and/or intervals of time (Cohen, 2000 #1156:94;Giddens, 1984 #1203:28). In terms of collectivities, the forms of system integration may refer to the inter-locks between committees, with the nature of inter-locks being highly varied (the chair of one committee is the member of another committee); in the transfer of minutes (the minutes from one committee are noted at another committee); from the connection between a committee and its parent organization (the employee of an organization will be a member of a committee, acting as a representative and a conduit of knowledge); from a committee member to a professional association.

A social system is one of 'reproduced relationships between individuals and/or collectivities' (Giddens, 1981:169). Committees are collectivities whose members form a purpose and agenda, make cooperative decisions, commit to activities and actions, and resolve to meet routinely. These aspects can be gathered from websites, organization reports and newsletters. Committees are **routinized** which instantiates the notion of systemness – the repetitive and routinized nature of human conduct. It is important to note the frequency of committee meetings, furthermore there is a requirement (Corporations Act) to report on the frequency of attendance of Directors at Board meetings, and this frequency can be coded into a social network analysis value.

Some Boards' Directors inter-lock other committees, therefore systemness can also mean how one point (one committee) is part of a larger system of committees. In the Australian public health system there is a distinct pattern in the system of committees, where there is an 'over-arching' (super-ordinate) committee with often several sub-ordinate committees. This can be coded in terms of degrees of separation. For example see figure 6, below where Aboriginal health committees are often located many degrees away from decision making committees. The substantive concern is that the degree of separation is related to the proximity of influence – the closer an ego is to an alter means that ego can exert an inter-personal effect on alters' decisions.

Figure 1: National Health Committees in the Australian Health System – Based on Reporting Relationships and Highlighting Aboriginal Specific Committees

= liaison/supporting link

Aboriginal Affairs   Aboriginal Health

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

The **production and reproduction** concept. Each and every agent in a committee, in and through their praxis, contributes to the production and reproduction of systemic relations and structural patterns. Giddens states that 'Power…is generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination. The resources which constitute structures of domination are… allocative and authoritative' (TCS: 258) and that 'authoritative resources are at least as important in providing 'levers' of social change as are material resources' (TCS: 260).

The chairperson is a 'role' acted through every committee (produced and reproduced) moderating the flow of conduct (systemic relations) through authoritative embodiment of rule/resource sets (structural patterns). That each committee member performs a 'role', and every committee is predicated on a set of roles, refers to an enduring cycle of reproduced relations (figure 1). Therefore, it is necessary to identify the formal role of each committee member (chairperson, treasurer, secretary, etc.). Jones and Karsten (2003) note to 'undertake critical inquiry into the power dynamics underlying the structuration process and possible relations of dominance among different class actors'.

In terms of **power** as a value, from a relational view the idea of values are not pre-constituted substances but by-products of actors' engagement with one another (Emirbayer, 1997:309). The concept of power is a concept of relationship – power 'emerges out of the very way in which figurations of relationships (of a cultural, social structural, and psychological nature) are patterned and operate' (Emirbayer, 1997:291). For Giddens, the resources 'are media through which power is exercised, as a routine element of the instantiation of conduct in social reproduction' (Giddens, 1984:15-16). Committees allocate resources, so membership of committees is a way to alter resource allocation.

The **routine** concept, whatever is done habitually, is a basic element of day-to-day social activity (Giddens, 1984 #1203: xxiii), where 'day-to-day' encapsulates exactly the routinized character which social life has as it stretches across time-space. This routinization is the material grounding of the recursive nature of social life (Giddens). Committees are an ordinary and routine part of Western democracies that there is a high degree of mutual knowledge and practical consciousness contributing to their production and reproduction. Committees are routine in the sense of their frequency, in their staging elements (discussion according to agenda, order of agenda items, decision making rules) and their products (medial releases, pronouncements, and statements of intent, minutes and communiqués).

Concluding remarks. Any single committee is inter-locked to another committee through a common member into a knowledge diffusion system. The routine outputs of committees diffuse through the committee system. The knowledge production process of committees are normative and hierarchical. The outputs of committees, such as activities, are ways to produce and reproduce structures of domination.

Duality of structure

The duality of structure proposes that 'social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution' (Giddens, 1984 #1203). Social structure is therefore seen as being drawn on by human agents in their actions, while the actions of humans in social contexts serve to produce, and reproduce, the social structure (Jones & Karsten, 2003). What are the features of the duality of structure in a committee?

The **duality** concept refers to how social structure and human interaction subdivided into three dimensions and linked by three modalities (Flynn, 2001 #1220). 'Structure consists of a continuous sequence of actions, is continuously produced and reproduced by the actors involved and is based on their beliefs and actions. Modality is a bridge between action and structure, and actors draw on modalities, such as stocks of knowledge and skills to allocate resources, using these together with appropriate actions to produce and reproduce structure (Flynn, 2001 #1220).'

> When I utter a sentence I draw upon various syntactical rules (sedimented in my practical consciousness of the language) in order to do so. These structural features of the language are the medium whereby I generate the utterance. But in producing a syntactically correct utterance I simultaneously contribute to the reproduction of the language as a whole. ...The relation between moment and totality for social theory... [involves] a dialectic of presence and absence which ties the most minor or trivial forms of social action to structural properties of the overall society, and to the coalescence of institutions over long stretches of historical time. (TCS: 24).

Example statement: 'The communication of meaning, the operation of power relations, and the enactment of normative sanctions occur simultaneously and in an integrated fashion in social practices and interaction. Actors draw upon what Giddens refers to as modalities in the production of social interaction. These modalities are interpretative schemes used in the communication of meaning, facilities used in the exercise of power relations, and norms applied to the sanction of social behavior. The modalities are not only the factors of social production but also its media and output. Guiding interaction are structural properties, the shared or redundant knowledge of how one interacts within that social system. These structural properties are called signification, domination, and legitimation.'

Patterns of social interaction over time and space are regulated and reproduced through legal institutions dominated by normative rules, through symbolic orders dominated by interpretive rules, and through political and economic institutions dominated by the power of allocative and authoritative resources. Questions: Signification – what informs our understanding of a committee's role? Domination – what authority do different committees possess? Legitimation – what defines appropriate activity and what sanctions are used to control activity?

One way to assess duality may be through how the decisions of a committee domino (**ramify**) throughout a system. The question what are the consensus decisions of a committee, indicates where resources are directed, as noted in minutes, recorded in annual reports, or mentioned in media releases, newspaper articles, and through social media. For example, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed the 'Roadmap for national mental health reform 2012-2022' which 'outlines the directions government will

take over the next ten years', then framed the 'new governance and accountability arrangements' and the establishment of the Working Group on Mental Health Reform'.[1] Thus it is necessary to identify the sequences of impacts as a result of committee decisions.

End of document

---

[1] See http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mental-roadmap

Bibliography

Anderson, I. 1997. The Ethics of the Allocation of Health Resources. Race Matters: Indigenous Australians and 'Our' Society. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press.

Boucaut, R. (2001). Understanding workplace bullying: a practical application of Giddens' Structuration Theory. International Education Journal, 2(4), 65–73.

Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (1999). National Health Priority Areas Report Mental health 1998. AIHW Cat. No. PHE 13. Canberra. Retrieved from https://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=6442467062

Council of Australian Governments. (2012). The Roadmap for National Mental Health Reform 2012-2022. Canberra. Retrieved from http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/Mental+Health+and+Wellbeing-1

D'Amour, D., Goulet, L., Labadie, J.-F., Martín-Rodriguez, L. S., & Pineault, R. (2008). A model and typology of collaboration between professionals in healthcare organizations. BMC health services research, 8, 188. doi:10.1186/1472-6963-8-188

Department of Helath and Ageing. (2007). National Mental Health Report 2007: Summary of Twelve Years of Reform in Australia's Mental Health Services under the National Mental Health Strategy 1993-2005. Canberra.

Duckett, S. (1984). Structural Interests and Australian Health Policy. Social Science and Medicine.

Emirbayer, M. (1997). Manifesto for a Relational Sociology. American Journal of Sociology, 16(2), 85–317. doi:10.1086/231209

Englund, H., Gerdin, J., & Burns, J. (2011). 25 Years of Giddens in accounting research: Achievements, limitations and the future. Accounting, Organizations and Society, 36(8), 494–513. doi:10.1016/j.aos.2011.10.001

Esslinger, A. S. (2009). Structuration theory: open the black box of integrated care, 9(Suppl).

Giddens, A. (1981). Agency, Institution, and Time-Space Analysis. Advances in Social Theory and Methodology. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

Giddens, A. (1984). The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Goodin, R. E. (2002). Structures of Mutual Obligation. Journal of Social Policy, 31(4), 578–596. doi:10.1017/S004727940200675X

Jones, M., & Karsten, H. (2003). Review: Structuration theory and information systems research. Judge Institute Working Papers (Vol. 11). Cambridge: UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE. Retrieved from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=424062

Lloyd, J., Wise, M., Weeramanthri, T., & Nugus, P. (2009). The influence of professional values on the implementation of Aboriginal health policy. Journal of health services research & policy, 14(1), 6–12. doi:10.1258/jhsrp.2008.008002

Mccann, J. (2012). Community cabinets in Australia, (January 2008).

National Mental Health Commission. (2012). A Contributing Life: the 2012 National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. Sydney. Retrieved from http://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/our-report-card.aspx

Poole, M. S., & DeSanctis, G. (2002). Structuration Theory in Information Systems Research: Methods and Controversies. Prepared for The Handbook for Information Systems Research (Vol. 2004). Retrieved from http:???

Pozzebon, M. (2004). The Influence of a Structurationist View on Strategic Management Research. Journal of Management Studies, 41(2), 247–272. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6486.2004.00431.x

Puron-Cid, G. (2013). Interdisciplinary application of structuration theory for e-government: A case study of an IT-enabled budget reform. Government Information Quarterly, 30, S46–S58. doi:10.1016/j.giq.2012.07.010

Scheytt, T., Soin, K., & Metz, T. (2003). Exploring notions of control across cultures: a narrative approach. European Accounting Review, 12(3), 515–547. doi:10.1080/0963818032000103015

Sil, R. (2000). The Foundations of Eclecticism: The Epistemological Status of Agency, Culture, and Structure in Social Theory. Journal of Theoretical Politics, 12(3), 353–387. doi:10.1177/0951692800012003005

Sydow, J., & Windeler, A. (1998). Organizing and Evaluating Interfirm Networks: A Structurationist Perspective on Network Processes and Effectiveness. Organization Science, 9(3), 265–284. doi:10.1287/orsc.9.3.265

Thomson, A. M. (2001). Collaboration: Meaning and Measurement. Indiana University, Bloomington.

Timbrell, G., Delaney, P., Chan, T., Yue, A., & Gable, G. (2005). A Structurationist Review of Knowledge Management Theories. ICIS 2005 Proceedings. Retrieved from http://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2005/2

Varvasovszky, Z., & Brugha, R. (2000). How To Do (Or Not To Do)...A Stakeholder Analysis. Health Policy and Planning.