

Preface: I've had the advantage of reading John's contribution, and was struck by how it started with "things one can see" and ended with things one can't – the elements of leadership needed to get to those 'things'. And to things we can't see too. Dave will recall he and I being outed as "process" types during a Mayor's Office retreat, not with unbounded admiration. Notwithstanding, I have always held that the right process doesn't guarantee the right outcome, but the wrong process almost always results in the reverse. So there is a place for process people in governing (well, sure, I'd believe that).

Problems facing Portland are more complex, they involve more diverse interests that are harder to reconcile, the old tools for doing so don't work as well as they used to, we haven't figured out the new ones yet. That's more or less my thesis.

Portland in the 1970's was still a small and provincial city struggling to emerge as the real thing. It already had emerging big city challenges – pollution, congestion, a school system slipping backwards, residential neighborhood instability, stores fleeing the downtown for a future defined by cars and shopping malls (the restaurants then weren't much to write home about either).

Greatness (well, medium greatness) was contemplated even amidst the abundant difficulties. It was thought possible, perversely, because Portland still had a *community* mentality. The Mayor could pull the right people into a room where ideas could be floated and culled and adopted and taken away to act on. Ad hoc citizens' task forces could be thrown together and thrown at a problem, at least at problems that were still small-town kinds of problems (how to economically retrofit older downtown hotels and rooming houses to meet a new fire code, for one example). We had neighborhood associations to intermediate neighborhood livability issues. While we tried to raise diversity/equity issues out of the Mayor's office, we didn't have great success (ask me about the first Gay Pride Parade).

We dealt with homelessness then by calling up Fred Rosenbaum to chair the Housing Authority and build or refurbish a bunch of small, dilapidated transient hotels (today the numbers of homeless have grown exponentially, the transient hotels are gone, and so is Fred.)

We thought we could deal with pretty much all issues in the same small-town way. It wasn't a bad set of tools, and it did make a start on some of these issues, at least in isolation (reprogramming the Mt. Hood freeway money into a bus mall and first light rail line). We were also lucky to occupy City Hall during an economically flush period locally and nationally, where the greater part (85%????) of a transit project could be paid for with federal funds. Of course we could have misused this largesse; many urban areas did. But by and large it was targeted effectively in the service of a pretty forward-looking transit system that might compete with the automobile, at least if everything went well (i.e., the cost of gasoline rose inexorably and intolerably high; sadly, it didn't).

One of those bigger-than-all-of-us systemic issues blew up in 1974, when the first Arab oil embargo created lines of memorable length into every gas station in the country; strong leadership in Salem sparked the creative odd/even rationing strategy in Oregon

that calmed the near-panic. But was followed in 1977 by the single worst water year in the (then) hundred-year hydrological record, exposing our regional vulnerability to an over-reliance on hydro power; and followed again by the second Arab oil embargo in 1979.

[Stay with me; I'm using an issue I know to illustrate a larger point about problems and process transforming from the 70's to today.]

From these events we took three important lessons to heart. First, we had to diversify our electricity supply, which led PGE and Pacific to build a fleet of coal and nuclear (and later, gas) power plants. Second, we realized early on that energy saved was the same as energy generated and used, only cheaper and with fewer environmental regrets. Third, we saw – perhaps opportunistically, but that turned out okay – that a transportation strategy grounded in transit was both energy efficient and supportive of the kind of urban design and functions we craved.

To undertake these successfully, however, we had to grow beyond our small town-ness.

We had to engage regionally with barons and czars of the electric utilities and aluminum plants that controlled the power and transmission systems, and insert ourselves into their dealings. To do energy conservation we had to transform it from a virtuous act, but that's all, into a hard-nosed energy option competing heads-up with new power plants.

We had to come up with ever more creative ways to fund capital intensive transit while resisting the impulse to freeway-build our way out of insistent congestion. And we had to build political support across the Portland metro area and with downstate legislators, including making use of Metro, our new, intermediating regional transportation and land use planning organization that Portland did not control, but that itself controlled many of the resources and authorities Portland needed.

Portland's reliance on State authorities and resources enlarged as well, whether for transportation funding or land use management authority or support for schools.

And for better or worse, but mostly the latter, this wider interdependence was . . . is occurring at the same time that community linkages are getting weaker both within the city population and throughout state and national communities.

The urban-rural divide has always been with us, but to geographical and economic differences we have added widening and diverging cultural differences that are being imported from and exported back to growing national divisions. The Koch Brothers are targeting local transit funding measures (not supporting them). But Portland may not be able to create the densities to support transit anyway as single home neighborhoods NIMBY-ism successfully turns back efforts to encourage multi-family housing along transit corridors.

At least some media voices used to pull us back together; now they compete to drive us apart, and divert us from local politics to the prevailing national angst.

A deep recession in the early 1980's unnerved voters and made them less welcoming of risk and innovation, more receptive to hunkering down and protecting their separate interests and preferences. It also led to taxpayer rebellion (Measure 5), a foreshadowing

of today's ongoing response to the Great Recession that is still unfolding ominously around us, reinforcing the instincts of the '80's and '90's.

And we have "immigrants" to accommodate and acculturate – not referring to desperate Hondurans crossing the southern US border, but to (US) Americans relocating to Oregon who don't have the shared history and values that made post-war Oregon what it became. Commitment to community, and to small-d democracy. Environmental values, especially stewardship of land and waters¹. Funding education. Governance that had earned, and that enjoyed, the general confidence of the governed.

Governance in the past was not exactly a polity without flaws of course. Those leading citizens – our leaders, then -- gathering at the Arlington Club were all of one hue and mostly of one sex and avocation (John Russell's best efforts notwithstanding); they were, in a word, businessmen. They did not celebrate diversity, or even recognize it as a valuable input to civic life. We're better than that now, even though with diversity comes . . . well, diversity, of opinions and interests. Communities of color and of the poor used to be smaller and quieter; now they've learned to make noise and be heard.

There are more factional interests asserting more relatively narrow concerns within the city, while community-wide institutions (e.g., the City Club) have grown less influential and inclusive. That the Mayor can't assemble a few leading citizens and move policy is hardly all bad where it reflects a wider dispersal of power and representation. Maybe Charlie and Ted just aren't the mayors Neil and Vera were. But maybe they have to deal with something Neil and Vera didn't -- a community of atomized and diverse interests that can't easily be pulled together by a politician's skills.

And maybe Charlie and Ted, like the rest of us baby boomers, are applying old political and communications remedies that don't work on Gen-XYZ voters. Maybe we just have to have newer, younger, more attuned leaders. I don't think I believe this (look at the youthful Spanish and Greek leaders groping in the dark). But . . .

Certainly obstructing bad – or unrepresentative – projects and allocation of resources can be a positive. Having to work harder to get broad-enough community buy-in can be a price worth paying. But the jury's out on whether there's a new and better path forward for civic gains, or just a fracturing of interests within the city, the region, the state and the nation that slows everything down.

Progress may be less difficult when the rewards – soccer greatness, a new bridge for MAX – are relatively immediate and tangible, things we can see. But solutions may be *more* difficult for problems housing the homeless; and more so still for things we won't see play out for decades like decarbonizing the electricity supply and converting the single-occupancy auto fleet. In neither case do the rewards come back directly and immediately to those who have to make the choices; they are instead targeted, respectively, to (a) low income households and (b) the next generation, or the one after that.

¹ I remember particularly how difficult it was, in the early 80's, to recall voters to why statewide land use laws seemed a good idea as recently as the 1970's. The most difficult ones to reach were the newly-immigrated into Oregon.

The problems have become bigger and more complicated in ways that overmatch yesterday's tools . . . yesterday's tools aren't what they were . . . and the politics of diversity and division may be demanding something stronger than yesterday's tools – and leaders -- at their best.

If we can't find a new formula for "community," is our alternative a "strong man" as some European countries are choosing? Not a comforting thought.