Innovations in Governance:
Ethics and Accountability in the Public Sector

Setting the Context

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It is often said that public office is a public trust. Yet we know that corruption is a pervasive problem in many countries, and sometimes so deeply entrenched that it defines the whole character of public life. That makes the safeguarding of public values often a precarious undertaking, and one that requires constant vigilance.

This panel is about forms of vigilance, the never-ending work of enabling the promise of good governance to be realized. Preserving public values is like tending a garden: it requires constant attention—planting, cultivating, nurturing, weeding, and so on. The challenge is to bring natural forces under control and have them serve human ends. Hence, the importance of studying promising innovations. Why did things go wrong in the past? What has worked for others? Can we find models to replicate and transport to other places? Finding answers to these questions is crucial to enhancing the moral competence of public leaders.

The most common understanding of corruption is that it is the misuse of public power for personal gain. Typically, this involves violation of the duties of public office. The personal gain may be private (e.g., self-enrichment) or professional (e.g., trading official acts for campaign contributions). Violation of official duties can also occur for allegedly altruistic reasons, as when a police officer lies in court in order to convict a "bad guy."

A somewhat broader understanding is that corruption is the misuse of public power at public expense. This is broader because it recognizes the variety of ways in which groups, not just individuals, can undermine public values. These groups include any collective body with a strong influence on public decision making, which acts to favor its own interests over the common good. Corporations, voluntary associations, as well as government agencies may take on such behavior.

Among the promising innovations that have captured attention in recent years are various forms of transparency. "Transparency" has become something of a buzzword and a cliché, so we need to be careful. We should not assume we necessarily understand what it

means in specific contexts or what its connection is to accountability and the promotion of public value.

Mechanisms of transparency facilitate the public release or disclosure of information, usually with the aim of improving the quality of decision making. But, whether the availability of information in a specific case makes a practical difference depends, in part, on whether it reaches the right parties and whether those parties are able to mobilize to act on the information obtained. The U.S. Congress has various disclosure requirements, and as a result, much information is available. That doesn't mean the information reaches parties that are able to take effective action against the misuse of power.

Transparency works by exposure, and can shame individuals into good behavior. But, what is the basis of this shame? What value or ideal is at stake? Here there are two common arguments about corruption that we should consider: it is an impediment to economic growth, and it is an impediment to democracy. It would be comforting if we knew that either of these propositions was uniformly true. Unfortunately, neither claim is entirely persuasive. Some countries have impressive rates of economic growth even with widespread corruption, and some democratic countries are no less corrupt than some autocracies (just as some autocracies are much less corrupt than some democracies).

Perhaps a third idea, independent of the other two, should be considered: corruption undermines the aspiration to create an orderly, fair, and decent society. This has to do with the quality of relationships among citizens, rather than more direct economic or political goals.

Transparency is also of interest because it illustrates the maxim that institutions can be better than people. Or, perhaps we should say: when people operate within certain institutions, their better nature is nurtured. Institutions vary in the degree to which they rely on personal integrity and a sense of professionalism. When exposure is the mechanism, for example, integrity is less important. What is crucial is facilitating ways of monitoring other people's conduct. Thus, creating a system of checks—and sometimes balances—involves not transforming human beings but redesigning the environment within which they operate. The idea is that, since corruption typically depends on secrecy, if people are in a position to review each other's work, it is more likely people will promote public values. And, that is what we are trying to achieve.

The three panelists address this set of issues in different ways and at different levels of specificity.

Stephanie Hirsch is director of SomerStat, for Somerville, Massachusetts. SomerStat is a system of accountability that aims to make city government more responsive to people's concerns, by maintaining high standards of service while controlling costs. I should note that SomerStat is based on CitiStat, an Ash Institute award winner in 2004. CitiStat, in turn, was

based on CompStat, also an award winner, in 1996. It is of interest not just in itself but also because of this replication.

Aruna Roy is one of the cofounders of MKSS in India, which translates roughly as "Organization for the Empowerment of Workers and Peasants." In the work of MKSS, transparency and accountability are components of more ambitious efforts at democratic development and the empowerment of rural people. Combating corruption is an integral component of constructing an alternative model of grassroots democracy. With MKSS, the release of information is often followed by confrontation, because of the divergence between official accounts and the local population's knowledge. This is not just a matter of collective verification but of asserting political power. Sometimes, indeed, confrontation is necessary to get the information in the first place. For example, documents will not be released unless there is a sit-in protest. Thus, MKSS' efforts at achieving transparency and accountability often involve an escalation of tactics.

Frederick Sumaye is a former prime minister of Tanzania, and will talk about a different kind of escalation. When institutional reform isn't effective by itself in addressing the problem of corruption, perhaps because corruption is too deeply entrenched, then more drastic actions may be necessary. Fred Sumaye's story is an example of such drastic action, involving dismissal of a democratically elected, but corrupt, city council. Although only a one-time event, there were many requests at the time for replication in other cities and towns in Tanzania. And, in this context, we could think about the current situation in Bangladesh, where two democratically elected but deeply corrupt political parties were displaced, at least for a time, by a technocratic government backed by the military.

Kenneth Winston is a Lecturer in Ethics at the Harvard Kennedy School, teaching practical and professional ethics. He created the Kennedy School's course on ethics for Mid-Career students, which has been offered since 1986. In recent years, he has helped to build the school's capacity in comparative and international ethics, developing new cases and teaching in overseas venues, especially in Asia. As of January 1, 2008, he is Faculty Chair of the Kennedy School's Singapore Program. Dr. Winston has written extensively on case teaching, professional ethics, and legal theory. He holds degrees in Philosophy from Harvard College and Columbia University. He has been a Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies, a senior research fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and a John Dewey Senior Fellow.

Ethics and Accountability in the Public Sector

The Next Step for Stat Programs: Using Real-Time Data for Municipal Management

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Somerville, Massachusetts, has built on the successful "Stat" management model and is pioneering a method of city management that relies on real-time data to manage all aspects of operations. Each initiative, SomerStat program, 311 call center, resident notification system, resident feedback forums, and the activity-based budget allow the city to use data to rationalize operations, and to help improve service delivery and to implement innovation in even the tightest of fiscal times. Somerville has borrowed from the best innovators in the municipal and private sectors to implement a model of municipal management that uses real-time data analysis for virtually all policy and operational decisions.

SomerStat is based on Baltimore's (Maryland) successful and much-replicated CitiStat model. SomerStat holds weekly, biweekly, and monthly Stat meetings with 15 City departments. Like Baltimore, SomerStat launched a 311 call center. However, SomerStat also borrows from private sector models of real-time data management. By drawing from best practices in both sectors, and by taking advantage of the flexibility that the city's relatively small population (77,000) allows, Somerville has been able to intensify its reliance on data for decision making.

Somerville uses data in the following, integrated ways:

Real-Time Data Mining: Since the inception of SomerStat, the Mayor's Office has mandated that all data used in the city be centrally accessible in the SomerStat Office. These include more than 50 data sources, including enterprise-wide systems, stand-alone tracking systems, and mainframe legacy systems. The SomerStat staff use these data to drill down and to investigate specific operational and policy issues, and to link data across departments.

311 Center: The 24-hour 311 call center captures all resident questions and work requests by phone or online. These are fed into daily staff meetings, and weekly or monthly SomerStat meetings.

Resident Notification System: 311 has allowed residents to easily contact the City and real-time data monitoring allows the City to know very quickly if something has gone wrong somewhere in Somerville. The City has also implemented a phone and e-mail notification system that, within minutes, communicates back to residents when something happens that affects them.

Resident Feedback Forums or "ResiStat" Groups: SomerStat runs bimonthly meetings for 18 neighborhood and special sub-populations groups, including non-native English speakers, young adults, and parents. At the meetings, groups share SomerStat data and solicit problem-solving ideas.

Activity-Based Budget: Somerville is in its third year of managing the budget on an activity basis. Budgeted and actual City spending get allocated to functional areas of departments and then to outputs and performance metrics of those functional areas. This exercise allows the City to look at the net cost implication of all decisions and to share this with the public.

Because of the increasing automation of transactions in all sectors, stores of administrative data, if regularly studied, provide insight into any organization's operations. Relatively few businesses or governmental entities, though, use all of the data available to make decisions. By consolidating data into a central data warehouse, developing systems to solicit additional data, and analyzing and discussing data continuously with all stakeholders, Somerville has pioneered the use of real-time data for daily decision making.

Stephanie Hirsch came to Somerville, Massachusetts, from the Boston Police Department (BPD), where she supported command staff with analysis of operations and crime data. Prior to work at the BPD, Ms. Hirsch worked with the University of Chicago and the City of New York to use administrative data to develop performance-based contracts and monitoring tools for child welfare providers. Hirsch has a master's in Business Adminis-tration from Harvard Business School, and a bachelor's degree from Swarthmore College.

Ethics and Accountability in the Public Sector
The Role of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS)

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What was the problem?
The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) is a peasant and workers non-party people's organization, which empowers people to access their democratic and civil rights. It is based in Rajsamand District, Rajasthan, in northwestern India. The MKSS also works on a number of laborer and farmer issues, and addresses problems arising from the lack of access to basic services and the poor delivery of government programs at the village level. This lack of

access to schooling, wages, livelihood, work, medicine, and a host of other facilities affect—for people living on the margins—the basic right to life itself.

What was the innovation?

The people asked to see records maintained in the offices relating to expenditure of their village council on payment of wages, infrastructure, and services. When denied these rights, the MKSS accessed some records and disclosed the details to a concerned group of villagers in December, 1994. When the information was revealed, chaos broke out, as people were appalled at the fabrication of facts and demanded accountability. This gave birth to a process of public audit where records were read out in front of thousands of villagers, who testified about the veracity of these documents. This process, called a "Public Hearing," later evolved into a systemic tool officially called a "Social Audit," now a part of the formal monitoring system. This process established the facts, and a prima-facie case was presented to government for further action.

Simultaneously, resistance from officials to parting with records led to a well articulated demand for comprehensive legislation toward transparency and accountability. This demand became a nationwide campaign—the National Campaign for People's Right to Information—to legislate a Right to Information Act, proscribing transparency and accountability as a democratic right under Article 19-1-A of the Indian Constitution. This demand, raised in 1994, was met, and resulted in the Indian Parliament passing the Right to Information Act in May 2005.

What were the obstacles?

The beginnings of this movement have grown into a broad based campaign with multiple challenges. Because of limited time, we will concentrate only on the social audit process and its challenges. Some of them were:

a) Recognizing and legitimizing the process of public audit.
b) Institutionalizing the informal platform of public hearings into the formal structure of the public social audit.
c) Creating conditions necessary for the people on the margins to speak out without fear.
d) Ensuring participation by all sectors of society.
e) Establishing standards, procedures, and necessary action in the formal structure.
f) And, extending the process to other areas.

What were the results?

This was a process, which organically sought to evolve systems and methods to ensure transparency and accountability, through people's participation and public vigilance. The

other aim was to address entrenched corrupt practices and break the nexus between the bureaucracy, the elected representatives, and vested interests in society. Two major breakthroughs have been the enactment of the Right to Information Act (2005) and the social audit as a statutory requirement under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005). The implementation of both acts is now a continuing challenge, where the use of social audit continues to play a major role in monitoring the implementation of the acts.

Aruna Roy is a social and political activist. She was born in Chennai in 1946, and worked in the Indian Administrative Service from 1968 to 1975. She resigned in order to devote her time to social work and social reform. She joined the Social Work and Research Center in Tilonia, Rajasthan, where she worked until 1983. Her husband Sanjit 'Bunker' Roy had set up this organization. In 1987, Ms. Roy moved to Devdungri, Rajsamand District, Rajasthan, and worked with Shanker Singh, Nikhil Dey, and many others to form the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, a grassroots peoples' organization devoted to participatory democratic struggle. Aruna Roy is also one of the founders of the movement for the Right to Information (RTI) in India, which has been credited with getting Right to Information laws passed in several States, including the Rajasthan Right to Information Act passed in the year 2000. The RTI movement and campaign also played a crucial role in the passage of strong national legislation for the Right to Information in the year 2005.

Ethics and Accountability in the Public Sector
Drastic Measures to Eliminate Corruption

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What was the problem?
Dar es Salaam had a city council that was not performing, not collecting revenues, and riddled with corruption. City Councilors routinely fought over what would bring in money. All the while, no one was collecting garbage, the roads were a mess, and the whole city was stinking with filth. Even though citizens wanted change, corruption prevented the fair turnover of officials via elections. Finally, since Dar es Salaam is a large economic and transportation inlet, tourists and business people who arrived in the airport or through the harbor had a very negative impression of the city.

What was the innovation?

After seeing that all other avenues had completely failed, Prime Minister Fred Sumaye gave the Council an ultimatum to change or else the federal government would dissolve the City Council. The City Council failed to comply, and things continued to deteriorate. Prime Minister Sumaye went to the President and explained the situation. In agreement, the President told Sumaye to write a cabinet paper expressing the general consensus that the government would take stern measures. The paper deliberately did not specify timetables in order to avoid administrative challenges. During the 2006–2007 budget speech, the Prime Minister announced dissolution of the City Council, and in its place, established a City Commission under an Executive Chairman. The Executive Chairman, who was appointed by government, had a mandate to run the affairs of the city to rectify the problems, end the corruption, and bring order to city responsibilities. The very moment that the Commission was announced, it came into being.

What were the obstacles?

    a) Although the government followed all the rules of procedure as laid down by the law, some people argued that the City Council was a democratically elected body, and the Prime Minister should not be able to dissolve it.

    b) There was also resistance from the ruling party, Prime Minister Sumaye's own party, because a majority of the city's representatives to the party were former members of the City Council, and there was a worry that the party's strong support would be diminished. In fact, the President actually requested Sumaye not to continue because of pressures received from party regional leaders. However, Sumaye told him that they could not turn back. He added that he would resign if this measure did not work.

    c) There was resistance from some members of Parliament: former City Councilors, and naturally, people who benefited from corruption.

    d) There was lack of continuity from earlier to subsequent administrators, as the Commission was given two years to clean up the city before power would be handed back to the elected body.

What were the results?

Before the City Council was dissolved, it was collecting between 800–900 million shillings per year. After these measures, the Commission collected more than 8 billion shillings, a ten-fold increase. Roads were built and the city was cleaned. It had transformed so much that the Executive Chairman and the city received a cleaner-city award from the UN-Habitat. Finally, schools were built, hospitals repaired, and the general public was pleased with the change. Even tourists noticed the difference.

Frederick Sumaye was the Prime Minister of Tanzania from 1995 to 2005, making him the longest serving leader in the East African nation's history. He obtained a Diploma in Agricultural Engineering from Egerton College in Kenya and went on to head the rural energy department at Centre for Agricultural Mechanisation and Rural Technology (CARMATEC) in Arusha, Tanzania. From 1987–1995, he served as the Minister for Agriculture of Tanzania. The former Prime Minister received his master's degree from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 2007.