ESCALATING COMPLEXITY

Why does our current approach to societal problems result in run away complexity, disengaged citizens and the rising costs of getting anything done.

Government and public service institutions are called on to respond to societal needs. Political candidates create their campaigns around these issues.

The response to societal needs often results in new laws, regulations or programs. These laws often serve the needs of special interests or attempt to resolve the immediate problem.

These “new” initiatives are frequently additive and create bureaucratic processes, which create barriers for internal civil servants as well as the public.

The more additive and complex the system becomes the greater the disengagement by both public sector employees and the public.

As the general public disengages the demands of special interest groups and stakeholders become a stronger force in shaping government policy and thus the law making process.
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When government is perceived as responding to the needs of special interests and has not taken a systemic, integrated approach the public’s interest goes down.

In serving special interests, we increase the number of disconnected new laws and regulations, which further escalates the complexity.

People deal with the complexity by withdrawing completely, inventing ways to circumvent the system, or demanding reform and re-invention, which often adds to the complexity.
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Diagram:

- Complexity
  - Government Barriers
    - Bureaucratic Process
  - Add New Laws
    - Initiatives Regulations
      - Programs
  - Social Issues Need for
    - Government Attention and
      - Need to Fulfill Promises
  - Stakeholders Special
    - Interest Groups
  - Public Engagement in Government

R1: Stakeholders Special Interest Groups
R2: Serving Special Interest Needs