

Making the Case *for* Government and the Revenues it Needs to do its Job Well

An essential task in difficult times

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**Public Works: the Dēmos Center
for the Public Sector**

www.publicworkspartners.net

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**America is at a cross-roads:
Public Challenges and Public Will**

Public Works: the Dēmos Center for the Public Sector

**Public support for a
government dedicated
to the common good
and empowered to
address the challenges
and opportunities of
the 21st Century.**



The Work of Public Works

Research

- Government
- The Economy
- Budgets & Taxes

In the Field

- Policy Shops
- Advocates
- Coalitions
- Electeds & Managers
- Unions

This is not about:

- “Liking” the government as it is, or telling people “government is good”
- Making excuses for government when it does not work
- “Big” government or “small” government

This is about:

- Recognizing the unique role of government in society
- Aspiring to create the government we need & deserve
- Public systems and structures that are essential to quality of life

What We are Trying to Understand

Polling:
Looking for Visible
Attitudes



Our Research:
Looking for Hidden
Reasoning



a little theory

cultural models

media

frames

knowledge

stories

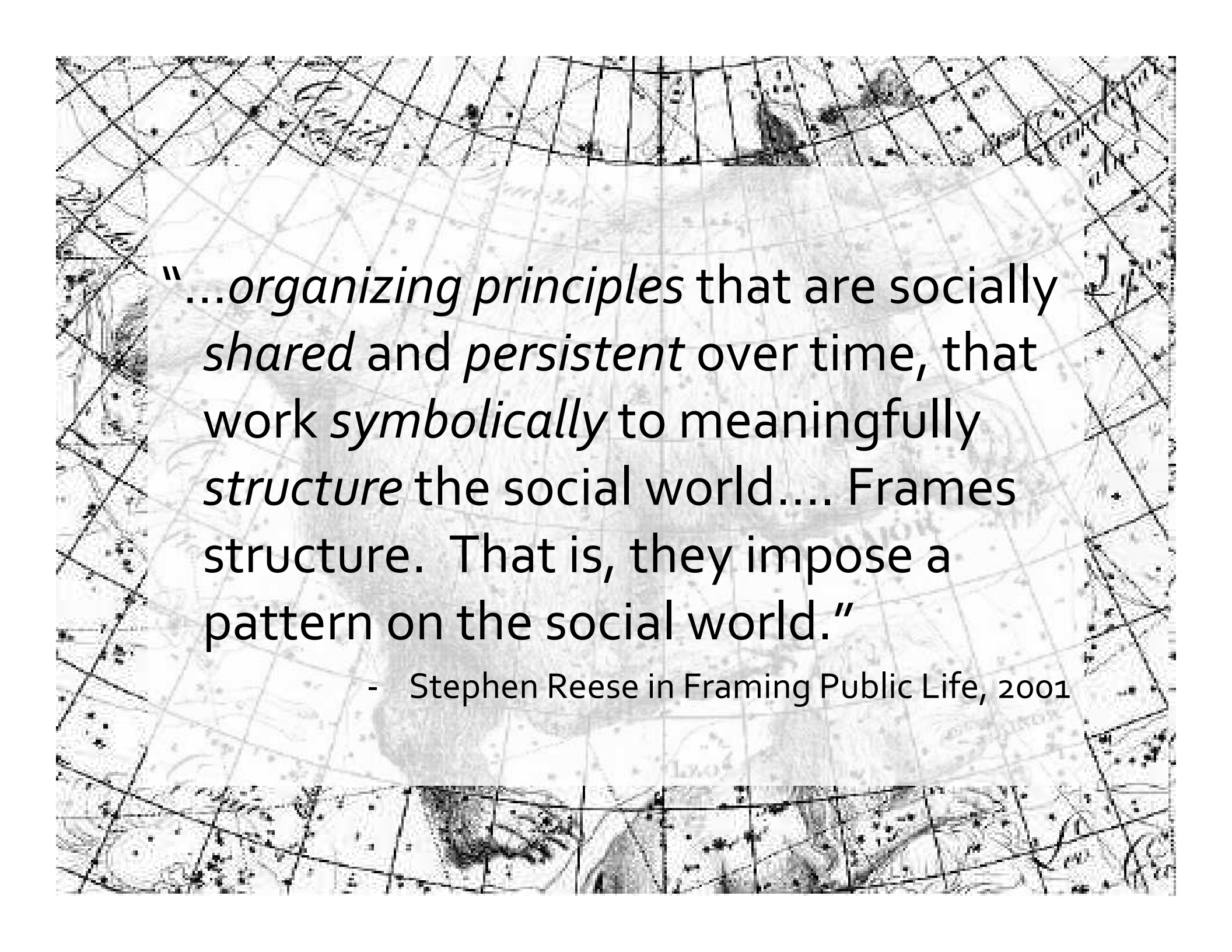
We are not blank

experience

slates

myths

stereotypes



“...*organizing principles* that are socially *shared* and *persistent* over time, that work *symbolically* to meaningfully *structure* the social world.... Frames structure. That is, they impose a pattern on the social world.”

- Stephen Reese in *Framing Public Life*, 2001

**IF GOVERNMENT IS
THE ANSWER, IT WAS
A STUPID QUESTION**

01/03/2010

The Challenge

- Dominant and Resilient images consistently misdirect thinking.
- Concrete images of the systems and structures of government are missing.
- Consumerist thinking narrows understanding and responsibility.

The Good News

- The “idea” of government is not lost
- Responsible citizenship is still valued
- A desire for collective action, respecting consensus, and problem-solving
- Stewardship and planning for the future – roles for government

A black and white photograph of water droplets on a dark surface, with the word "GOVERNMENT" overlaid in large, semi-transparent letters. The droplets are of various sizes and are scattered across the frame, with some larger droplets on the left side and smaller ones on the right. The background is dark and textured, possibly a glass or plastic surface. The word "GOVERNMENT" is centered horizontally and vertically, rendered in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are light gray, allowing the background texture to be visible through them.

GOVERNMENT





**GOV
PORK
& WASTE**

HURRY UP
AND SIGN THE
CHECK I'M
getting
Hungry.

!

*Pappalardo
Call for more cartoons*



Just Politics



"Bi-Partisan"
Steve Benezue



Mission and Purpose

Mission & Purpose



VALUES

- Common Good
- Quality of Life
- Community Wellbeing
- Public Purpose

ROLE

- Protector
- Manager & Planner
- Steward
- Consensus-Builder

Values Matter

- We reason first from deeply held values.
- Values help answer: “Why does this matter to me/us?”
- We need to start with **Values**, not with the policy and program details

Why does this matter?

“Every child should have access to immunizations but too many families in our community are not bringing their children in to our clinics. This is why we are proposing a new agency rule requiring more clinic hours . . .”

Speak to Values First

“The health of the whole community is **protected** when we ensure that our children are immunized. One of the ways we do this is through **our public health agencies** that provide free and low cost **immunizations for all children**. We need extended clinic hours to keep up with growing demands.”

Mindless Bureaucracy



Systems and Structures

Systems & Structures



- Concrete and vivid images
- The public systems we have created
- How they work
- Why they are important

Government as our Public Structures

The main advantages that make America so successful come from the **Public Structures** it has created. These Public Structures include the *physical* structures (highways, airports, and communications grids) and the *organizational* structures (the postal system, courts) we need to get things done, and the *social* support systems that help to ensure the health and well-being of our communities. It is our **well-functioning and supported** Public Structures that are essential for overall success.

Consumer Stance



Government
as Vending Machine

Our Government



Citizen Stance

Citizen Thinking



- Interdependence
- Working together
- Problem-solving
- Everyone has a role to play
- “Our” Government
- The Common Interest

Dominant Stories



Just Politics



Bureaucracy



Vending Machine

...can't solve anything . . . not my responsibility

New Stories



Mission & Purpose



Systems & Structures



Citizen-Thinking

... our tool for solutions & the common good ...



**Talking
about the
Need for
Revenue**





“Legitimacy and a steady source of revenue provide the twin foundations of any enduring government.”

- Marjorie E. Kornhauser – “Legitimacy and the Right of Revolution: The Role of Tax Protests and Anti-Tax Rhetoric in America”

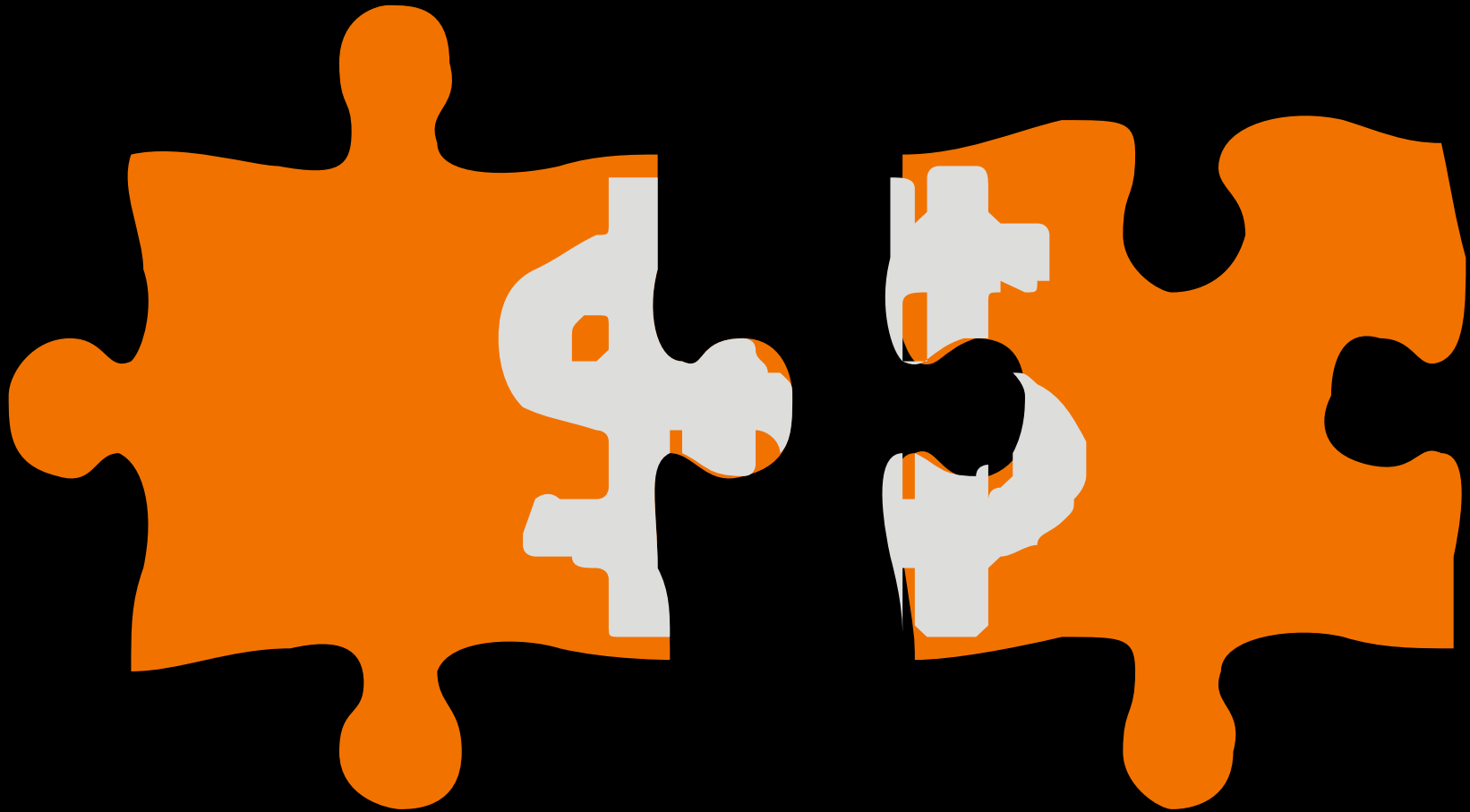
Government Legitimacy and Anti-Tax Rhetoric

- Tax Revolts and their overheated rhetoric transform government from “we the people” into “them,” the “other” – the taker of our money.
- Getting back to Government as “us” - as our tool for getting things done is essential to winning on taxes.

Dominant
images of
Government
have a direct
influence on
attitudes about
Taxes







Taxes have become
disconnected from their **purposes.**



stoplight

power lines

traffic sign

street sign

street light

phone lines

CUT TAXES
NOT
DEFENSE

WELFARE
NO

ZERO
TAXES

NO
TURN
ON
RED

power
for
traffic
light

road

sidewalk



Reclaiming the “T” Word

Connect Taxes to Purposes

The public structures that underpin our communities – such as schools, roads, clinics, police and fire protection, and health inspections – all depend on a system of budgets and taxes that supports them adequately now and into the future. Taxes are an essential part of the equation; how they are raised and the level of resources they provide will affect our quality of life now and for years to come.

Tap into Shared Values

We all benefit from the improved community well-being and economic opportunity made possible by a good education system, public safety, and clean air and water – all of which are supported by our tax dollars. **Taxes represent our collective investment in the common good.**

An Eye to the Future

On Tax Day, millions of Americans will do what generations before have done – **invest in our country's future.** Just as our parents and grandparents paid taxes to build the schools, transportation systems, health clinics and parks we benefit from today, our tax payments this year will help to **create the quality of life we pass along** to future generations.

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