

A worthwhile idea is a delicate thing. Yet it has to run a gauntlet of checks, changes, and approvals to reach fruition in some form. Such is the cosmic order of idea implementation in the public sphere. Consider the full sweep of limiting factors as a cosmogram in the tradition of Renaissance esotericists Robert Fludd, Jacob Böhme, and Athanasius Kircher. There are limits imposed on the mind (or microcosm) and the external world (macrocosm).

Codified Rules. Procedural rules grant gatekeeping powers and an idea may be shut out of decision-making forums. Even if allowed on the agenda, most ideas are only considered briefly before being judged. The state's rhythms (election-, reporting-, budget-, meeting cycles, and so forth) limit the times an idea will get a fair hearing. Institutional boundaries restrict idea flow. The opinions of higher ranking authorities are given more weight in approvals. The closer to the furnace of politics a decision is made, the more likely short-term political considerations will singe an idea's long-term viability.

Unwritten Rules. Ideas tend to get a fuller airing within informal conversations, such as impromptu hall-way bilaterals and coffee-break chats. These forums are bound by informal rules, norms, and rituals. A failure to abide by these cultural constraints will result in social sanctions, up to and including being "frozen out" of the ongoing conversation amongst powerful decision-makers. Having the social graces to navigate this networking netherworld is required to build a motivated coalition around an idea.

Discretionary Authority. Those with rank have overwhelming sway over the fate of an idea. It is expected that any decision is made with reasoned judgement. Yet discretion gives authorities license to summarily dismiss an idea with scant consideration. Studies of bias show that bad moods can discourage decision-makers from giving an idea a fair hearing. The more veto points there are, the more likely an idea will get "zapped" with little recourse.

