

Some reflections on “good governance” from inside the institutional development machine

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¹ The author belongs to a small group of individuals who have been able able and willing to take up long-term assignments – opting for transition and accession countries which still have some sovereignty

PART I – in which the purpose is stated; and some distinctions are made

1. Purpose and Overview

1.1 Purpose of Note

Once upon a time institutions grew – now we design them – and people like myself are well paid to participate in “institutional development” in exotic places all over the world. But does anyone really care whether the thousands of millions of euros spent on this activity achieve anything more than good PR and keeping the companies which employ us in business? The EC recently published a review of their development policies and programmes² – which, curiously, makes no mention of the system of procurement it uses to select the thousands of contractors, independent consultants and others³ who are used to deliver technical assistance in this field.

This is a gigantic “black hole” for a document which purports to describe what the EC has done in recent years to make its very large development budget more effective. The literature on aid effectiveness is vast – and continues to develop - but normally focuses on what is now called poverty reduction and has only recently started to deal with “governance” issues. This paper is concerned with how donors design programmes and allocates resources to help improve systems of public administration in former communist states in east European, central Asian and Caucasus states.

Programmes of institutional development succeed (or not) partly on context, partly on the basis of the design (coherence and relevance), resourcing and personnel of the projects which survive the various hurdles placed before bidders for the projects which form these programmes⁴. Some of these hurdles are formal and transparent – others are informal and opaque. Part III of this note identifies some of these issues which are specific to the EC system of technical assistance.

But the note goes further than mere procedural issues – however important these are to the integrity of a system. Part II suggests that – despite (or perhaps because of) all the recent rhetoric about “good governance” - international donors have no credible theories for helping set and sustain countries in these regions on positive trajectories to administrative effectiveness. Section ? raises the neglected issue of the interaction between “beneficiary” and “expert” and sketches a tentative typology of relationships.

1.2 A view from the field

I am not aware of any profile of the people who have been serving as “experts” in the various EC programmes of TA on administrative reform in the last decade or so. I can only speak for myself. Before I (accidentally) started my input to these programmes of administrative reform in both Central Europe (the 1990s) and Central Asia (1999-2007) - usually as a resident Team Leader and always as a free-lance consultant with one of the myriad companies the system uses – I had been a politician and lecturer. Other experts have been in various types of business. None of us were given any special briefing or training for the work of a consultant in transition countries.

As a “mercenary”⁵ one’s initial experiences are with

- the general incoherence of the Terms of Reference (ToR) whose outputs contractors are expected to deliver;
- the questionable value which short projects can make to institutional change; and
- the cynicism one often encounters from “beneficiaries” in a system which seems to value disbursement over all else.

Gradually one also notices the lack of institutional memory which seems to come with a competitive procurement system. And the focus simply on “obeying orders” – ie strict obedience to

² Review of the Development policies and programmes of the European Community – memorandum prepared by the EC (September 2007)

³ Eg older civil servants in twinning programmes

⁴ Of course the relationship with the beneficiary is also critical but is not the subject of this paper

⁵ See author’s paper presented on this subject to 14th NISPACee Conference in 2006

the bible of the ToR rather than listening to the client and following opportunities which open up. The questioning of the competence and integrity of “beneficiaries” – which is the discourse of the anti-corruption industry which has developed in the past decade – is a useful diversion for faults which lie closer to home.

I had initially thought that the problems were most evident in CIS countries where I spent most of the last decade – but my return to Central Europe has demonstrated that these are systemic issues for the entire EC system. One expert can, of course, have only a very partial view – particularly if he chooses, as the author has, the more isolated role of long-term assignments. Our profession is an isolated one – no annual conferences bring us together. It is unfortunate that the EC management system⁶ prevents it from appreciating that its independent experts are, potentially, a valuable source of feedback about the effectiveness and integrity of its systems. But we do talk to one another – check out our impressions – have our views confirmed or otherwise⁷ – at least those of us who care more than just banking the cash. But, equally, I have to accept that few other experts have “gone native” to the extent I have – leaving, in 1990, my country and living a nomadic existence since then. Home has been the temporarily rented house or flat. The “anthropological” perspective which I – perhaps inevitably - try to bring to my work is not much valued in the days of the logframe⁸.

2. Varying contexts – and some vignettes

2.1 Accession context

These introductory comments may seem to lack generosity if not veracity when we look at the way in which ten countries which were, up to 1989, denied participation in the processes of the market and of democracy have managed to change their institutions and process and be admitted to the European Union. Surely that shows the success of the various programmes of technical assistance? However, one can equally argue that it was the incentive of membership which was the overriding factor in these changes⁹ – rather than the impact of EC projects.

And some distinctions need to be made – between programmes of legal development, programmes of institutional development and those concerned, finally, to try to ensure that state bodies actually serve the people and earn their trust. The emphasis in the early years of these ten countries was in establishing the legal framework and institutions of parliaments and civil services, of banking systems and stock exchanges. Pre-accession countries have then focussed on the legal framework of the *acquis*. It is not all difficult to draft laws and set up institutions. The difficulty is getting them to operate in the public interest.

A recent project in a new member state was to help develop a training capacity to assist the implementation and enforcement of the *acquis*¹⁰. Despite an emphasis by the EU for more than a decade on implementation, understanding of what this involves does not seem to have gone beyond the need for “implementing agencies” and “twinning partners”. Part II of this paper tries to deal with this issue.

2.2 CIS context

This is most evident in countries where membership of the EU is not available to act as an incentive for reform. In 2003 my job in one CIS country was to take a Civil Service Law which had been

⁶ This subject requires another paper! Suffice it here to say that the public administration system used by the European Commission seems to be based on a hierarchical model which has still to absorb the lessons from the management literature of 25 years ago. And that the planning systems it has imposed on new member states have serious consequences for the effectiveness of their administrative systems

⁷ See annex 1 for summary of literature known to me

⁸ See Lucy Earle’s paper “Lost in the matrix; the Logframe and the local picture” – given at INTRAC’s 5th Conference on Evaluation in 2003 for an interesting comparison of the rational and anthropological approaches to consultancy

⁹ The corollary is that when the pressures for reform disappear, so the reform will break down. Some of this seems to be the case in Poland – where the carefully constructed processes of meritocratic civil service recruitment were undermined by the transfer of the Civil Service Agency to the PM Office

¹⁰ Which is the body of European Community law

passed in 2001 and draft a strategy for its implementation. A phrase I found myself using again and again in an increasingly public way¹¹ was “Laws do not implement themselves” – since no one had been given the responsibility or resources to apply the measures. Indeed few seemed to understand what the law was for. It was clearly an alien implant. Part of my work was helping to create a network for change. Eventually in late 2006, a new Civil Service Commission started the process of a more merit-based system of appointments.

My next assignment – in another CIS country - focussed on local government and, again, the basic legal framework and institutions of local government had been in place for some years. But they lacked not only financial resources but political understanding and social support. The form but not the substance was there. Other donors – with a longer and stronger presence than my 2 year EU project– had been focussing on developing the legal framework, on the one hand, and encouraging grass-roots initiatives on the other. During my inception stage (which saw a revolution which forced the President to leave the country), I had to think fast about the distinctive contribution which a short project could actually make. The answer was inspired by the little boy in Hans Andersen’s story who dared to say that the Emperor had no clothes ie that what purported to be local government was nothing of the sort but still local administration. And that merely passing more laws (eg on local government finance) would not alter anything since these would lie unimplemented as had the others. For more than a year we worked with people in local government to develop a roadmap to try to understand what exactly was blocking progress – and what sorts of tools would allow progress to be made.

2.3 Making change stick

My point is that the last 15 years has been the easy part for these countries – getting the legal and institutional “shells” in place. Predictably – when those schooled in the ways of the old system have taken the positions of power – the new systems and organisations have not produced the anticipated results¹². And the situation is even worse in CIS countries – where donors, generally, are out of their depth on issues of administrative reform.

¹¹ I have several times anguished as a consultant over the question of how public my advocacy of change could be in transition countries. Perhaps because of my previous political career, I have been too careful about letting old demons loose.

¹² So a new set of programmes and experts have been put in place – the anti-corruption brigade! I require some convincing about this

PART II – in which some concerns are expressed about the substance of “good governance”

3. Does the “Good Governance” agenda of the international community make sense?

3.1 A useful analytical framework

In a previous paper¹³ I suggested that one could identify three different approaches in the west after 1989 to the reconstruction of post-soviet states – the liberal, neo-liberal and the pragmatic. The first was in fact limited to its political side only – the construction of electoral and political systems. Neo-liberalism was in ascendancy in donor countries and international bodies and had only one answer to the question of the shape of the state itself – as lean and minimal as possible. State systems and those who served in them were, it was argued, incapable of reform. That the process of privatization poses immense and sophisticated demands on civil servants was conveniently put to one side. The niceties of these processes could be ignored in the need simply to get power out of state hands. Western consultants associated with this strategy now, of course, have to live with the fact that the power often remained in the same hands. The people had just transmogrified from apparachtnik to business-man.

In a sadly out of print and much neglected book, Hood and Jackson suggested striking metaphors (or stereotypes) we use in our thinking about public administration organisations –

Table 1; metaphors for organisations

	1. Military Stereotype	2. Business Stereotype	3. Religious Stereotype
Slogan	Run it like the army	Run it like a business	Run it like a monastic order
Work force	Limited career	Hired and fired	Service for life
Motivation	Fear of punishment Hope of honours	Fear of dismissal Hope for money	Fear of damnation Hope for salvation
Control	Audit of war	Impersonal	Faith; social acceptance
Objective setting	Orders of day	Profit	Worked out at length in discussion and reflection
Belief	Obedience to leadership brings efficiency	Incentives to reduce waste and search for innovations	Lifetime internal commitment limits rash selfish ideas

The military metaphor is as good a summary of the culture of CIS systems as we will find! The religious stereotype makes a good metaphor for the classic civil service which the liberal consultants would have us create – and the business stereotype for the NPM principles of the neo-liberals. I would like to propose a fourth metaphor for our work in countries such as CIS – that of the bazaar.

	4 Trading metaphor
Slogan	Run it like a bazaar
Work force	Buys its position
Motivation	Fear; mafia hope; green card to USA
Control	Peer
Objective setting	Negotiation
Belief	Win some, lose some

¹³ “Mercenaries, missionaries or witchdoctors – critical thoughts on administrative reform in transition countries” - paper presented to 14th NISPACee Conference in 2006

3.2 Good governance

International bodies have changed their tune about the state – even if their arrogance remains. Physical and financial tsunamis have demonstrated the need for a smart and robust – if not strong – state. Typically, their experts have swung from one extreme to the other. Having expected little of the state – they now expect too much. Their anti-poverty strategies read like Soviet 10 year plans. Merilee Grindle has been one of the few to challenge this latest job-creation wheeze.

“Getting good governance calls for improvements that touch virtually all aspects of the public sector—from institutions that set the rules of the game for economic and political interaction, to decision-making structures that determine priorities among public problems and allocate resources to respond to them, to organizations that manage administrative systems and deliver goods and services to citizens, to human resources that staff government bureaucracies, to the interface of officials and citizens in political and bureaucratic arenas...Not surprisingly, advocating good governance raises a host of questions about what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, and how it needs to be done. Recently, the idea of “good enough governance” questioned the length of the good governance agenda. This concept suggested that not all governance deficits need to be (or can be) tackled at once and that institution and capacity building are products of time; governance achievements can also be reversed. Good enough governance means that interventions thought to contribute to the ends of economic and political development need to be questioned, prioritized, and made relevant to the conditions of individual countries. They need to be assessed in light of historical evidence, sequence, and timing, and they should be selected carefully in terms of their contributions to particular ends such as poverty reduction and democracy. Good enough governance directs attention to considerations of the *minimal* conditions of governance necessary to allow political and economic development to occur”.

The book of critical essays edited by Carothers (2006) on the experience rule of law is another rare example of an accessible critique in this vein.

3.3 The toolkit of change

The following basic mechanisms have been used to try to create in transition countries a system of public administration which is responsive to public need –

- *Judicial reform*; to embed properly the principle of the rule of law
- *Budgetary reform*; to ensure the integrity and transparency of public resources
- *Civil service laws, structures and training institutions* – to encourage professionalism and less politicization of staff of state bodies
- *Impact assessment* – to try to move the transition systems away from a legalistic approach and force policy-makers to carry out consultations and assess the financial and other effects of draft legislation
- *Functional Review* – to try to remove those functions of state bodies which are no longer necessary or are best handled by another sector or body.
- *Institutional twinning* – to help build the capacity of those state bodies whose performance is crucial to the implementation of AC
- *Development of local government and NGOs* – to try to ensure that a redistribution of power takes place
- *Anti-corruption strategies* – which incorporate elements of most of the above
- EFQM

My critique of these tools – particularly the 3rd, 4th and 5th - is that their rationalistic basis brings them into immediate conflict with local realities which subverts therefore all too easily their good intentions.

4. Get the basics right

A 2004 SIGMA overview of PA in the Balkans – written ironically precisely at the time the procurement (rather than development) philosophy won the day in Brussels¹⁴. “Too often”, it says “PAR strategies in the region are designed by (external) technocrats with a limited mandate. Public Administration reforms are not sufficiently considered as political interventions which need to be sustained by a coalition of interests which includes business, civil society and public sector workers”. The paper then goes on to make the following very useful injunctions -

- Get the administrative basics right – before getting into the complexity of NPM-type measures
- Focus on establishing regularity
- Tackle systems - not agencies
- Develop the young; constrain the old¹⁵
- Be serious about local ownership
- Avoid having a project focus force governments into unrealistic expectations
- Address the governance system as a whole – eg parliament and admin justice

Crisis management – and financial and moral corruption – are some of the presenting features of all centralised systems. How does one change such cultures? Where are there examples of highly centralised societies developing systems of staff involvement in the improvement of services. Japan is one obvious example – famous now for the way management engage staff in a continuous dialogue about how to improve what their services and products offer the customer. But this is a relatively recent phenomenon – brought on by the combination of the shock of Second World War defeat and the import under General MacArthur’s regime of a little-known American management guru, Edward Demming whose statistically based approach to “quality management” so transformed Japanese – and, ultimately and ironically, - American industry. Before then, organisational structures had the same features of subservience as CIS countries.

This raises the conundrum – is it people who change systems? Or systems which change people?

Answers tend to run on ideological grounds - individualists tend to say the former; social democrats the latter. And both are right! Change begins with a single step, an inspiring story, a champion. But, unless the actions “resonate” with society, they will be dismissed as mavericks, “ahead of their time”.

A significant number of people have to be discontent – and persuaded that there is an alternative. The wider system has to be ready for change – and, in the meantime, the narrow and upward accountabilities of the administrative system can be – and is so often – malevolent, encouraging people to behave in perverse ways.

Formal and informal systems are a well-recognised fact of organizational life¹⁶. Whatever new formal systems say, powerful informal systems tend to ensure the maintenance of unreformed systems – until, that is, and unless there is a determined move to change. What do I mean by “determined move”? -

- Ensuring, by communications, leadership and training, that **people understand** what the reform is trying to achieve – and why it is needed
- Development and enforce detailed **instruments**
- Networking in order to **mobilise support** for the relevant changes
- building and empowering relevant **institutions** to be responsible for the reform – and help drive it forward

Administrative reform is an intervention in a social system – or rather set of interlocking systems. Like an organism, it will quickly be rejected or absorbed unless it can relate to elements in these larger systems. We are these days advised always to carry out “stakeholder analyses” – to track who will be

¹⁴ see also Santiso (2004)

¹⁵ although I have reservations about the “ageism” of this. Young people from the region educated in Western Europe have a shocking arrogance (perhaps because they have no local role models – perhaps because of the nature of the social science they have been taught) which means they are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. And their instant elevation to promoted posts on their return from Western Europe creates problems since they have no work experience.

¹⁶ In 1970, Donald Schon coined the phrase “dynamic conservatism” in Beyond the Stable State to describe the strength of these forces in an organisation.

affected by the changes and how the indifferent or potentially hostile can be brought on side or neutralised¹⁷. This is sound advice – and such an exercise may sometimes suggest that certain aspects of reform should be delayed. A paper¹⁸ on the Russian experience of civil service reform is one of the few to try to offer an explanation of how the combination of specific internal and external factors has constrained the reform process in that particular country eg variable political leadership and support; variable administrative leadership and capacity; political and social instability; minimal civil society; the preponderance of old apparatchniks; cultural factors; and ‘windows of opportunity’

5. Building windows of opportunity

“Cultural factors” is a general term which includes the role of the extended family¹⁹ which undercuts competitive hiring practices. And it is well known that in such societies, public positions which give access to lucrative revenue flows are bought at huge sums of money²⁰. Such practices hardly give promising preconditions²¹ for introducing a competitive system of meritocratic recruitment to the civil service! Civil Service Reform in CIS countries needs

- widespread acceptance that change is needed
- spurred on by an event
- some workable propositions
- an action plan
- a lead structure
- with skilled change agents

The point about such windows is that they have to be prepared for – and recognised when they arrive!! The public administration reforms of Poland and Hungary were, arguably, as effective they were because of the extent of preparation by reformers²² during the 1980s – in isolation from the power structure.

The international community has had it lucky so far – EU accession was a powerful incentive to central European governments and societies to make changes in their ways of doing things. In non-accession countries the picture for friendly and effective state bodies is less rosy. So what does one do? Limit oneself in countries with a context hostile to reform to funding NGOs and giving the odd scholarship? Keep one’s powder dry and put one’s hope in the future generation?

In places where the EU incentive does not realistically exist, **competition** of two sorts seems to offer some footing for PAR

- to be investment-friendly regimes; and
- to have the image of making most progress within the particular Region (particularly to attract TA and develop the new Neighbourhood mechanism²³ in eg Caucasus).

But such competition is rather a blunt incentive compared with that of accession. Attention needs to be paid to the details of each local context.

¹⁷ see the useful discussion in Lovell’s paper on “Gaining Support” by which uses the dimensions of “agreement to change” and “trust” to distinguish allies, adversaries, bedfellows, opponents and fence sitters

¹⁸ “Hard cases and improving governance; Putin and civil service reform” by Pat Grey (2004)

¹⁹ see the paper “The role of Clans in post-independence state-building in Central Asia” by Janna Khagai (2004 ECPR conference paper available at www.essex.ac.uk/ECPR/events/jointsessions/)

²⁰ an extended article on the Uzbek system by Dmitry Pashkun of the National University of Uzbekistan quotes prices of \$2 million for the position of regional governor is published in the spring 2004 issue of NISPAcee News – at www.nispa.sk

²¹ The “strategies and sequencing” section of the very useful World Bank website on Administrative and Civil Service reform contains a fuller discussion of this, developing a typology with the twin axes of capability and motivation. This can be found in – www.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice

²² See unique account written in the book by insider Regulski of the almost 20 years of preparation and change which went into the construction of the Polish local government system (available on the LGI Budapest website).

²³ Nov 2007 Communication – NMS advisers being taken away from where they are needed!

Laws, regulations and other policy tools will work if there are enough people who want them to succeed.

And such people do exist. They can be found in -

- **Parliaments** – even in tame and fixed parliaments, there are individual respected MPs impatient for reform
- **Street-level bureaucrats** and their **national Associations**; many officials are frustrated with the legal overload, lack of funding and preparation for laws. Professional associations – which presumably the Acquis Commaunitaire has helped develop – are an important force for testing the feasibility of draft policy measures if the consultations required by impact assessments are carried out seriously.
- **Ministries of Finance**; have an interest in policy coherence.
- **NGOs**; those which actually do represent specific social interests also have a high motivation to solve problems
- **Local Government Associations**; municipalities have great potential for change. They have legitimacy – although generally they are starved of resources. But if the councillors can develop strong links with local people and establish good national links – eg with an effective Association of municipalities – this can have a very positive effect.
- **Audit Bodies**; as government audit extends beyond the question of whether the spending of state bodies has been legally sanctioned, it moves into the critical area of “value for money”. This, however, takes considerable time...
- **Younger generation** – particularly in academia, policy shops and the media

The question is how they can become a catalytic force for change – and what is the legitimate role in this of donors? To begin to answer such an enormous question takes us into a wider literature than is normally read by consultants in the PAR field – those of history, development and policy development.

PART III – in which some concerns are raised about the design and implementation process

6. Project Design

6.1 Project versus programmes

The **project approach** to Technical Assistance is often contrasted with a “programmatic” approach. The former is short-term and can be justified for some types of intervention but would seem irrelevant for fields such as public administration which require elements of cultural change.

Bilateral programmes carried out by countries such as Sweden and the UK seem to offer a coherence and sustainability I have not seen in the EU TA system. Even US Aid has produced, for example, a powerful model for its work in the local government field – by awarding 5 year contracts for the organisation by the Urban Institute of its work in this field. Their offices in CIS countries are an influential powerhouse of draft laws and manuals which have a major and lasting impact. By contrast the EU projects in civil service and local government reform have little follow-up when their 2 and 3 year terms expires²⁴.

The EU has apparently²⁵ introduced a new system which promises more continuity – but, in the meantime, the scale of the organisational upheaval involved by the restructuring (and new staff from new member states) has meant a reduction of experienced staff. And its projects in countries such as Bulgaria and Romania are down to 12 months²⁶. As a project generally takes 2 months to mobilise and agree its direction, this is clearly a regressive step.

6.2 Deciding priorities and programmes

This is the sexy stage to which senior management devote their attention. They imagine that the rest (ie project design and procurement) is “mere” implementation and can be left to juniors to manage with the assistance of the Manuals and templates on Project Cycle Management. But the devil – as they should know – lies in the detail! At the best of times, one has the sense that no one is really in charge of the technical assistance programmes. Accountability is not a term which EU systems seem to understand – a series of computerised templates seem to be in charge. And, of course, these have not been the best of times for EU staff with major restructuring of developmental assistance having moved staff around and brought so many new people in.

6.3 Drafting the ToR

In the EU, the definition of project required results and activities (Terms of reference) is either contracted out (with subsequent lack of ownership) by the EC and its delegated systems or performed within Ministry of Finance Contracting units (CFCU) of new member states by young staff with a fatal combination of poor drafting skills and no experience of managing projects. This leads to poorly designed projects whose ToR have to be significantly amended – particularly when, as they often do, their implementation is delayed. I have had to rewrite the ToR quite significantly in all four of my most recent projects. What does this say about the management systems of these respective bodies? Why is so little attention given to this critical task?

²⁴ An exception, for some reason, is Kazakhstan civil service reform.

²⁵ I use this word since (a) no one thinks fit to tell those of us who work at the frontline about such things – and (b) I see no difference in the type or structure of projects I’m being offered

²⁶ Apparently because these projects are the fag-end of the TA programmes no longer available to member states

7. The procurement process

7.1 Who gets to bid?

The first stage of the procurement process is an open advertisement which invites companies to “express interest” in a specific tender. Those who submit an expression of interest are then assessed for their experience and “capacity”. Generally, about 6-7 contractors survive this assessment and are invited to tender for a contract. A few of these companies are very professional – knowing the field, quality controlling their bids and experts and winning many contracts on the basis of their reputation²⁷. But most of the companies involved act as “body-shops” only - with a small office with young administrative staff and a large data-base of expert CVs whom they do not know personally. As they lack a reputation for effective work, they can win only on the basis of malpractice or luck²⁸. It is at this stage that the “cowboy” companies whose malpractices are recorded should be excluded – but rarely are. Contractors are invited to bid on the basis of their experience and capacity. “Capacity” is apparently defined in this EC system as the number of staff employed by these body-shops in the previous 3 years. This is a static, bureaucratic and irrelevant definition. *Capacity to perform a contract has virtually nothing to do with such commercial features of a company – but rather with the characteristics of the expert team it assembles!* Once a contract has been awarded, the project team which the winning contractor has offered basically does everything. The contractor’s role is limited to paying invoices on time; and ensuring quality control of reports and work.

7.2 Experts – where do they come from?

A key question therefore is how competent are the experts used in the system – and how do companies select them? To what extent do they screen them?

The very term “expert” is a clue. Who in their right mind would allow themselves to be called that²⁹? An expert is someone supposed to have technical knowledge of a specific sort – an academic or specialist. But this does not qualify such a person (with experience generally of only one national system) to work as an adviser in a foreign country – let alone one which is still creating the systems and mind-sets of capitalism and democracy. It may work, of course, if that country has accepted that it will follow the dictates of the system from which the expert comes (as was the case for accession countries from the late 1990s) – but, even there, the experts’ insensitivity to the local context often leads to inappropriate advice and/or hostility and resentment. And the scale of technical assistance to the Balkan countries – most of which can be designated as “protectorates” – has tended to confirm the arrogance which is an occupational risk of those whose expertise lies in their knowledge rather than their process skills.

During the 1990s, when new economic, electoral, financial and parliamentary systems were being constructed from scratch, it was reasonable to insist that foreign experts with the knowledge of those systems were needed to take the lead in transition countries. And as accession countries neared the point of accession, it was reasonable to insist that civil servants from the matching EU Ministries should come and tell the transition Ministries how to work the *Acquis Commaunitaire*. But the task of making these systems actually work and achieve public benefit in the conditions which operate in CIS countries requires a very different approach.

7.3 and their selection; and professional conduct

One would have thought that companies would be very careful who they included in their bids. But - over a period of 17 years and involved in about 40 bids - I have been interviewed only once.

Companies will develop a respect and preference for particular individuals – but the exigencies of contracts are such that preferred candidates are rarely available when contracts come up – so, all too often, they approach people they don’t know.

²⁷ Although, as I argue later, evaluation panels are not allowed to score companies or experts on the basis of this factor, it is well known that beneficiaries and desk officers have “favourites”!

²⁸ It is, of course, eminently sensible to argue that public admin systems based on “fatalist” assumptions have as reasonable a chance of “success” as those based on rationality – see Hood’s *The Art of the State*

²⁹ “someone who has stopped learning” was a definition offered by ?

It is significant that experts are bound by no code of conduct.

7.4 The growth of multi-country consortia

Most bids for EU projects are made by “consortia” of 4 independent companies from different member states³⁰. Generally they are in competition with one another – but are forced to pretend by this system that they are cooperating.

One company is the lead member – and that is the only one that matters. The others are sleeping partners who add absolutely nothing to the project – and can often subtract from the value³¹.

8. Evaluating the bids from contractors invited to tender

8.1 The formal process

8.1.1 composition and preparation of the panel

The rules on this are set in great detail in the Bible of procurement – but can be circumvented by those in the decentralised systems eg by ensuring that representatives of European Delegations outnumber the beneficiary³², having no translations of bids and inviting the beneficiary only at the last moment. And in new member states still using Phare, the beneficiaries can and do reciprocate with their own games.

8.1.2 formal assessment rules

A points system is used at the second stage of the procurement to evaluate bids for projects which marks for –

- Project methodology
- Staff experience
- Financial bid

The first is often written by junior personnel back in Western Europe specially trained in this arcane skill in a contracting company³³ – the first the Team Leader sees it is when he arrives in the country to start the project. And, in any event, it can be thrown into the bin since the Team Leader has to write an inception report which takes proper account of the situation. Nonetheless this methodology often scores 40% of the points awarded by evaluation panels to the competitive bids.

“Key experts” are then assessed – but only in relation to the particular qualities which have been specified. And these are about the location and length of the experts’ experience – never for the quality of their team management, initiative, commitment or professional outputs. To seek references indeed is off-limits in a competitive recruitment process! And yet these, surely, are precisely the features of a potential team we need to know about in the selection of personnel for a project. The private sector would never allow itself to be hamstrung by such nonsense.

8.2 The informal process

I have become increasingly concerned about the irregularities in the awarding of these contracts and by the behaviour of too many of the companies which bid for and manage these contracts. By definition, the environment in which programmes of administrative reform run is irregular if not systemically corrupt. Why else would the programmes and reform be so desperately needed? But

³⁰ Check whether this is requirement

³¹ Relations between partners is, in my limited experience, becoming increasingly frosty and has caused major problems in 2 of my projects

³² again a significant choice of word – a “beneficiary” is someone with a right to expect a benefit, gift or charity. A “beneficiary” - the hidden discourse goes – should be grateful and ask no questions. It is significant that few think of using the term “client”

³³ Although I readily admit that the more established companies take this more seriously. It is the “cowboys” who often contract-out the drafting of their bids.

there is a lot of money in these contracts – and the more the European Commission decentralises the awarding of these contracts to European Delegations and to the Contracting units of Ministries of Finance, the greater the risk (and it appears the reality) of corruption in the award of contracts. In the last 18 months, for example, I have been involved in 4 separate bids – 2 of which were cancelled because of such irregularities. And, in the course of many of my projects, it became clear that payments had been promised to the local beneficiary. When the promises are honoured, the project goes smoothly – when thieves fall out, the going gets rough!

The EC (and other donors such as the World Bank) are certainly investing considerable money in anti-corruption programmes. The question is whether such procedures and programmes help – or hinder? And perhaps, in targeting the “beneficiary” countries, they are blaming the victim since there are three separate and linked elements in a corruption system –

- The person who pays
- The person who receives
- The environment of rewards, rules and sanctions which govern the procurement system

And donors control two of these systems!

9. Building Trust and confidence

“I don’t care what you know. I want to know how much you care!” A Romanian colleague in 1992

So, at last, the project has started – and, because of the complexity of the procedures, generally a full 2 years since it was conceived! If the original beneficiary is still there, he will be very impatient to start but has to go through yet another process (Inception) when the new team assesses the context it finds itself in - and the appropriateness of the project’s methodology.

In many cases, however, the beneficiary is new to his position and does not quite understand the purpose of the project. His motivation – and the process skills of the project’s Team Leader - are 2 crucial ingredients for a successful project. Outsiders have to earn trust and confidence. But too many of them think that comes with their “expert” label – and that the beneficiaries should be grateful for their presence and for the equipment and study-visits they bring! And an 18-month project hardly gives the time to build relationships!

The diagram takes these 2 dimensions to develop a typology of roles.

The vertical axis indicates the attitude of the beneficiary to reform (and also to the input of the foreigner) – positive at the top, negative at the bottom.

The horizontal axis indicates the expertise of the “expert”, on the left a subject specialist (with little experience of real consultancy which requires one to understand the needs of the customer and the local context); on the right the rarer consultant type.

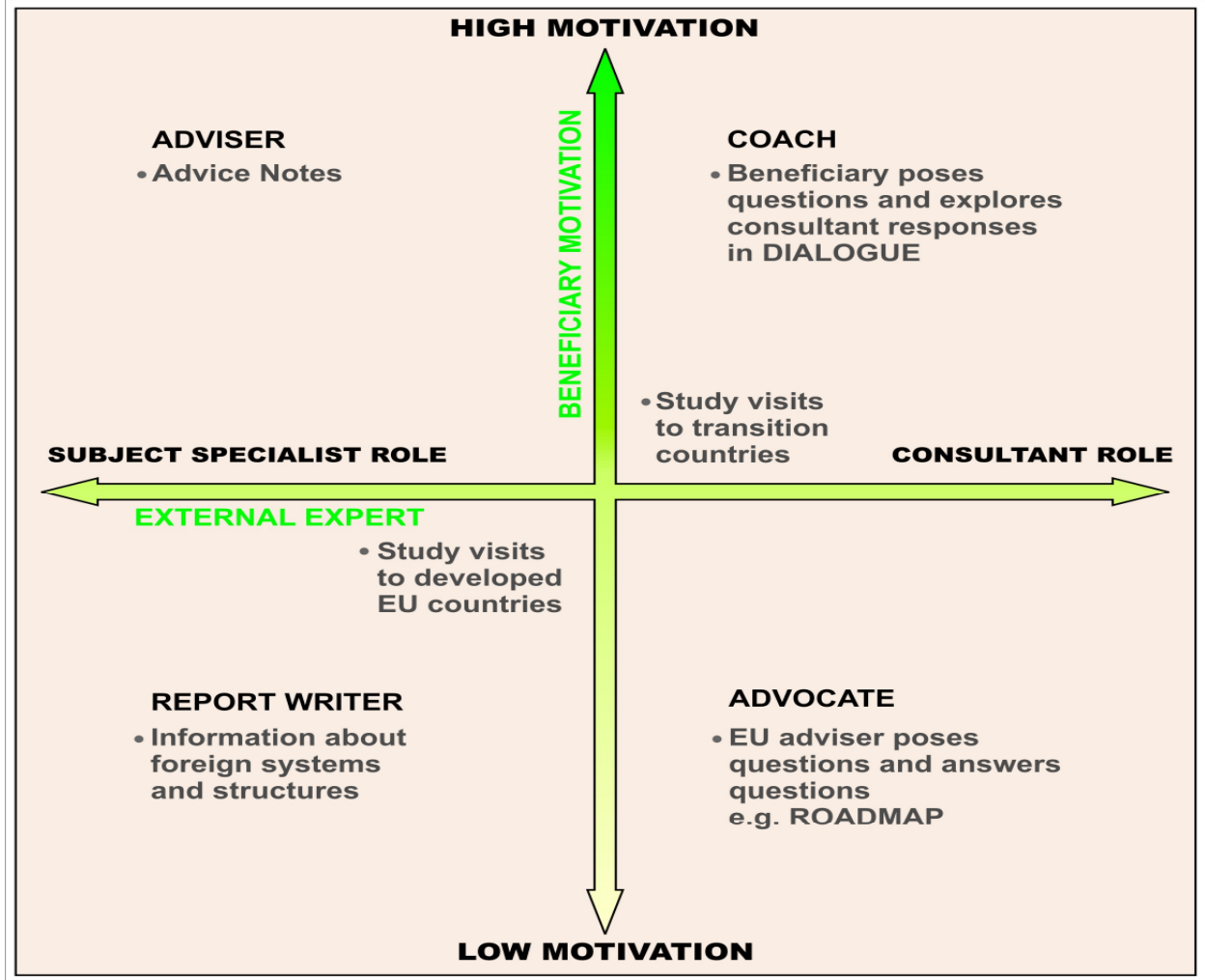
This gives four types of relationships –

- the outsider who has knowledge only of his own system and little curiosity - meets the disinterested beneficiary. The only outputs are reports on how systems and institutions work in the expert’s country. This is hardly even a relationship!
- the outsider who has the curiosity, capacity and time to try to create a map to help guide people’s steps and increase the motivation for change. The onus in this relationship is still on the outsider - One might call this the advocate role.
- the outsider who has gained the respect of the beneficiary – and is actually asked for his advice (as distinct from facts)

- the **coach**; who is allowed to observe the beneficiary in his working environment and to give feedback on stratagems.

How often, I have to ask, do you see the coach role?

Diagram One



Of course more than individuals are involved. When politicised, personalised and paranoid cultures come into contact with consultants from a rationalistic system, it is a dialogue of the deaf.

10. What does the monitoring and evaluation system contribute?

According to Eurocracia, such problems as I have mentioned cannot exist for long – since the project cycle management system they have put in place would have the problems identified and dealt with at various points along the line. Procurement procedures are tough – and spot and deal with aberrations. The paper has recognised such a system – although naturally it gets somewhat overwhelmed when disbursement is set too high.

An extensive monitoring and evaluation system is in place – although to what effect is another matter. For my 7 CIS years I was monitored regularly – every 3-4 months – but the quality of these monitors seemed to deteriorate as time went on. They knew so little about the subject – and EU staff seemed as angry as me about the irrelevance of their comments. And, of course, the system focuses only on projects – not on the system. Most fatally of all, who suffers from poor ratings? The answer is no one! Few seem to pay any attention.

This is a sad – because the criteria the monitors are required to pay attention to are important – efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability,

And an audit system apparently exists too – although its presence is rarely felt by people like myself in the field³⁴.

Apparently some reviews of the system have been carried out – but those of us involved in the field learn of these only by accident – and many years later³⁵.

11. Institutional Memory and Results

A basic question in my field of public administration reform is what is there to show for all the EC expenditure? “Sustainability” is the mantra – and all projects are ranked by this criterion. Of course a new body may have been created; a website set up; training materials left behind; new perspectives gained by a few people. But go in a year later and ask to see the material and people will scratch their heads. All the ToR talk about the importance of synergy, but just try to reach out to work positively with other projects and see the results! *Competition is the name of the game.*

Volume after volume of reports are produced by EU projects and disappear into the vaults of European Delegations and CFCUs. Just try to track down something which sounds interesting! *Obsolescence is the name of the game!*

Not only is there no system of sharing information or papers which have been written in similar contexts – but it is positively discouraged by the contractual nature of the procurement system.

Reinventing of the wheel is the name of the game.

Compare the lack of sharing of EU products with accessibility of peer controlled work of World Bank and UNDP. The EU has no experts in the various specialist fields (eg public administration reform) attempting any sort of quality control in the field. No wonder cowboys can succeed.

12. The argument so far

My argument has been that too many programmes and projects are designed out of context in a high-handed manner (counter to basic principles of organisational consultancy) by highly trained people in highly bureaucratic organisations who have little direct experience of the messy nature of real change. What they produce are the typical products of rationalist mentality – which no amount of tinkering can make more effective.

I suggest that this presents those of us who have got involved in these programmes of advising governments in these countries with a real moral challenge. After all, we are daring to advise these countries construct effective organisations – we are employed by organisations supposed to have the expertise in how to put systems together to ensure that appropriate intervention strategies emerge to deal with the organisational and social problems of these countries. We are supposed to have the knowledge and skills to help develop appropriate knowledge and skills in others! But how many of us can give positive answers to the following 5 questions? -

- Do the organisations which pay us practice what they and we preach on the ground about good organisational principles?
- Does the knowledge and experience we have as individual consultants actually help us identify and implement interventions which fit the context in which we are working?
- Do we have the skills to make that happen?
- What are the bodies which employ consultants doing to explore such questions – and to deal with the deficiencies which I dare to suggest would be revealed?
- Do any of us have a clue about how to turn kleptocratic regimes into systems that recognise the meaning of public service?³⁶

³⁴

³⁵In 2005 I was invited (for the first and only time) and happily took part in a 2 hour small group discussion with someone appointed by Tacis to review its programmes. Indeed it was that session which inspired me to write the critical paper which I presented in Slovenia in 2006.

During the 1990s, when new economic, electoral, financial and parliamentary systems were being constructed from scratch, it was reasonable to insist that foreign experts with the knowledge of those systems were needed to take the lead in transition countries. And as accession countries neared the point of accession, it was reasonable to insist that civil servants from the matching EU Ministries should come and tell the transition Ministries how to work the *Acquis Commaunitaire*. But the task of making these systems actually work and achieve public benefit in the conditions which operate in CIS countries requires a very different approach.

13. Three levels of possible action

This is quite a litany of concerns. What am I suggesting should be done about them? Is this a question of a few “tweaks” – or is something more fundamental required?

In 2005, when I took part in the roundtable on the Tacis programme, I was surprised to find myself recognising a feature of the EU system which had until then escaped me – its “accidental nature”. Yes – one can identify these deficiencies committed by various individuals as projects are designed; bids and teams put together and then evaluated; and relationships negotiated within teams and between them and beneficiaries. But, equally, the system gives the possibility (every now and again!) of committed, empathic people working together and creating something relevant!

Contrast that with the hierarchic nature of the World Bank system – where only a few “gurus” set the agenda in public admin reform and screen what eventually appears on their websites. To invite the EU to have similar centralised control and peer review is to run the risk of the “original” being constrained and ridiculed by the canonical verities of the day.

And yet, at other times, when I have become aware of how the various bilateral systems of technical system work – such as the Danish, German, Swedish and British – I have regretted the lack of continuity of the EU system and wondered whether it should not perhaps give way to these more effective systems³⁷. Bilateral aid is more driven by acts of faith.

The most offensive aspect of the EU system for me has been the lack of respect for learning –

- little attempt being made to capitalise on the richness and diversity of the EU project experience³⁸
- little or no effort being made to use the vast network of individual consultants who work for the EU throughout the world.

So – what is to be done? There are at least three groups of actors whom I invite to take up these issues-

- The EU system – EC, Parliament and audit
- Companies
- Individual consultants

13.1 Action by the EU

The EU is, of course, a vast system which has a lot on its collective mind. And is, like any other system, hardly inclined to change a new system on the basis of a few dissonant voices from the field! The internet search I have done, however, suggests that the time is overdue³⁹ for a serious Parliamentary debate on the effectiveness of the EC development policy.

The following are some of the positions a proper debate could open up -

³⁶ Anti-corruption strategies have, of course, become very fashionable in the international community – but seem to me a good example of a mechanism which serves the interests of donors (jobs) and beneficiary countries who have such strategies wished upon them. For the latter it gives the pretence of action and also fits with the traditional culture of rhetorical exhortation.

³⁷ Again, those of us who work in the field tend to miss out on the debates in other fields eg development theory – “Reforming the international aid architecture – options and ways forward” ODI Working Paper 278 2006

³⁸ One exception was when I was invited to join a European delegation E-learning group on decentralisation. Sadly this experience just proved how trivial such technical systems are!

³⁹

a. Steady as you go!

Section 3 of the paper referred to the recent restructuring of the European system of technical assistance. RELEX adopted its new structure only 2 years ago. CFCUs in 2 countries have had only one year of experience. Perhaps the new systems and the new people – as they gain experience – will deal with the problems.

b. Check the extent of the problem

The first step is for the EU to recognise that problems exist. From the 2007 EC Review referred to at the beginning of the paper, it is clear that no such recognition exists. Mine is, of course, but one view. Other consultants are not as foolhardy as me to put their thoughts down for the record. A proper survey is needed

- of people like myself working in the field.
- of beneficiaries

It is one of the indications of the poor management philosophy of the EC that – in all the survey work conducted by the EC – it fails to conduct surveys of the thousands of the contract staff it uses.

c. Create a learning system

The other, easy step would be for the EC to set up a process of real organisation learning – using the incredible range of experience which its programmes of technical assistance covers. The options are many –

- conferences
- fellowships (to allow field experience to be refined and shared)
-

d. Create centres of excellence

But perhaps what we can look at most closely for public admin is the Urban Institute model – whereby admin reform centres are established in each transition country – with (say) a 5 year contract and an evaluation panel with proper international experts.

e. Ensure that companies are more properly screened

The present measurement of “experience and capacity” is not serious. One could suggest that the EC should carry out a more rigorous and centralised screening of companies before they are allowed to tender – perhaps even an accreditation system! Given the momentous consequences for companies of exclusion and inclusion, however, this would require a serious bureaucracy which would quickly become highly contentious. The present system can be and is supported since it meets the classic principles of “free entry to the market”. But it does require better regulation.

Another suggestion is that the complex monitoring system might be used to flag up poor contractor’s performance – and that consistent poor ratings could lead to threat of exclusion. This, however, requires a quality of monitoring which is not currently available. Furthermore, the monitoring system is itself the subject of competitive tendering by companies and conflicts of interest could quickly be adduced.

f. Leave the field to bilateral work

13.2 Action by companies

There are several things which contractors should do but which they will not in the absence of incentives or instructions.

a. screen experts – and keep them up-to-date on standards and systems

b. develop and observe a code of conduct

remember that ABU has been “quality-controlled”!!

c. publish

This seems almost

13.3 Action by consultants

a. blacklist companies

b. activate and use networks

NISPAcee

14. In-conclusion

The table below is taken from the latest book of one of the most interesting writers in the development field one of whose early books was titled, memorably, “Putting the Last First”. As you would expect from such a title, his approach is highly critical of external technical experts and of the way even participatory efforts are dominated by them. Sadly, few younger consultants⁴⁰ in the field of admin reform (particularly NPM ones!) are familiar with the development literature (Tribe and Summer). The table maps out four different philosophies of development.

Table 2; Four approaches to development

Approach	1. Benevolent	2. Participatory	3. Rights-based	4. Obligation-based
Core concept	Doing good	Effectiveness	Rights of “have-nots”	Obligations of “haves”
Dominant mode	Technical	Social	political	Ethical
Relationships of donors to recipients	Blueprinted	Consultative	transformative	Reflective
Stakeholders seen as	Beneficiaries	Implementers	Citizens	Guides, teachers
accountability	Upward to aid agency	Upward with some downward	multiple	Personal
Procedures	Bureaucratic conformity	More acceptance of diversity	Negotiated, evolutionary	Learning
Organizational drivers	Pressure to disburse	Balance between disbursement and results	Pressure for results	Expectations of responsible use of discretion

Source: Ideas for Development: R. Chambers (2005) p 208)

The unease some of us (Coombes) have been increasingly feeling about PAR in transition countries is well explained in that table. The practice of technical assistance in reshaping state structures in transition countries is stuck at the first stage – although the rhetoric of “local ownership” of the past 5 years or so has moved the thinking to the second column. The challenge is now two-fold, to make that rhetoric more of a reality and then to move to try to ensure that citizens actually benefit from all the activity! I have a dreadful feeling, for example, that the whole process of Accession means that too much time has been spent on incestuous activities in and between state bodies – and that the citizen is forgotten except when the dangerous language of subsidiarity and transparency are used. George Orwell would have had a field day in the way such words are used as a substitute for thought!

Some parts of the EC do understand these issues – but the compartmentalisation which followed the restructuring of the recent Commission has meant that the thinking of the Development side of the EC stops at the door of RELEX which handles the short-term contracts which govern this work in transition countries.

I would ask that those of you who have read this far and are interested in pursuing such questions – and the others raised in this paper – to contact me at bakuron2003@yahoo.co.uk

⁴⁰ The older ones, of course, have considerable experience of Africa – which has a dual problem. They come with jaundiced eyes; and beneficiaries in transition countries do not take kindly to being compared with Africa.

About the author

Ronald Young spent the first thirty years of his adult life combating bureaucracy - first as a local, then Regional, Councillor in Scotland – for most of the time also holding an academic position in urban management.

At the age of 28 he became Chairman of a Social Work committee (in a shipbuilding town of 70,000) at the dawn of a more community-based approach to social problems –and was lucky to be elected by his colleagues to one of the leading positions in the new Strathclyde Region (which covered half of Scotland’s population).

With the help of a small number of like-minded politicians and officials, he used this position to bring in more open approaches to policy-making and to forge a strategy for social inclusion (as the jargon now calls it!) which was, in 1978, the first in Britain. Community development was an important plank in that – and in the late 1980s he headed Strathclyde Community Business which invested in and supported community-based enterprises in marginal areas. All of these innovative ideas have been taken up by the new Scottish government and Parliament of the past decade.

Having been active in the WHO Health Cities initiative, the European Head of WHO public health invited him in 1990 to visit all the capitals of the recently liberated countries of central and eastern Europe and assess the scope for establishing networks of public health.

This led to a new career as EU consultant in administrative reform in these countries – and he left the drizzle of Scotland in 1991 to take responsibility for projects initially in the field of local government and regional development in central Europe but, since 1997, in public administration reform generally and in Central Asia and Caucasus.

“My life since then has been nomadic – with the average stay in these countries being 2 years. And, perhaps more significantly, the focus of the work has remained at the broad, systemic level I had in Scotland. I have refused projects which would tie me too much in one sector and one organisation – and gone for the projects which held the promise of changing mentalities. Equally I have turned down all invitations to work on accession projects or go the protectorates of the Balkans – choosing always the countries which wanted to go their own way. Professional satisfaction demands that I work with clients who want and appreciate me – so the fewer other ex-pats around, the better!

“This has been a marvellous opportunity to take stock of what I had learned from my previous life of fighting bureaucracy as a local politician (about which I had written articles and a small book); and also of the relevance of my concepts to this new post-communist terrain. I have discovered how tenuous so-called “best practice” is – and how much snake-oil is peddled by dubious “experts”.

“New environments and translation are a constant intellectual challenge – and force one to think deeply about words and communications. (I can honestly say that my work has been translated into many languages! Azeri, Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian, Kyrgyz, Latvian, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Uzbek). I co-authored the first 3 books in the Azeri language on issues of administrative reform and have the luxury in most assignments of being able to do presentations about my concerns.

“And lack of newspapers and (generally) TV is a marvellous atmosphere for reading, thinking and writing – and Amazon has managed to deliver hundreds of books to places such Bucharest, Baku and Bishkek generally without difficulty. So scattered in various flats of EuroAsia are books, CDs and bikes of mine (but don’t try cycling in Baku!!)”.

Devil's Dictionary of terms for good management of state bodies

Ambrose Pierce was an American journalist in the latter part of the 19th Century whose pithy and tough definitions of everyday words, in his newspaper column, attracted sufficient attention to justify a book "The Devil's Dictionary" whose fame continues unto this day. A dentist, for example, he defined as "a magician who puts metal into your mouth and pulls coins out of your pocket".

The rhetoric – and practice - of both old and new public management (NPM) is crying out for a similar puncturing. It is interesting that the EU funds TA projects in making management systems more effective – since its own management systems are so antediluvian and the language it uses so opaque.

In 1979 some British citizens became so incensed with the incomprehensible language of official documents, letters and forms that they set up a campaign called "The Plain English Campaign". It was its activities in making annual awards for good and bad practice that shamed most organisations – public and private - into reshaping their external communications. Their website www.plainenglish.co.uk contains their short but very useful manual; a list of alternative words; and lists of all the organisations which have received their awards.

Words and language are what distinguish us from animals – but bureaucratic, political and commercial systems have powerful interests in keeping us passive and unquestioning and have developed a language for this purpose. One of the best attacks on this is George Orwell's "Politics and the English language". Written in 1947, it exposes the way certain clichés and rhetoric are calculated to kill objective thinking – for example how the use of the passive tense encourages fatalism and undermines the notion that it is people who take decisions and should be held accountable for them.

Joseph Conrad was even more brutal – "Life knows us not and we do not know life - we don't even know our own thoughts. Half the words we use have no meaning whatever and of the other half each man understands each word after the fashion of his own folly and conceit. Faith is a myth, and beliefs shift like mists on the shore; thoughts vanish; words, once pronounced, die; and the memory of yesterday is as shadowy as the hope of tomorrow"⁴¹.

The importance of demystifying complex language was continued by C Wright Mills in the 1950s and 1960s who once famously summarised a 250 pages book written in tortuous syntax by the sociologist Talcott Parsons to 12 pages! And a south American priest Ivan Illich continued the work with his various books which eloquently argued against the damage done to learning by formal schooling methods – and to health by doctors and hospitals.

I had 20 years as a (Regional) politician in Scotland trying to challenge and change complacent government systems – and another (almost) 20 years as a nomadic adviser on EU-funded projects trying to build administrative capacity in ex-communist countries. Sometimes I feel that the only useful topics are those on "critical thinking"; communications; and project management!

I have selected about 50 words which occur frequently in the discourse of public management; and which are too often used to close down – rather than open up - discussion. If the definitions are a bit tough on the language used by the EU, then that is because its shameful jargon reflects a system of technocratic power which needs to be ridiculed.

RG Young August 2008 Sofia

⁴¹ Excerpt from a letter written to a friend (RC Graham) for which I have the Guardian to thank (review 4 December 2007)

A draft “Devil’s Dictionary” of terms for good management of state bodies

Accountability; the requirement that those in power explain – in a transparent, regular, structured and truthful way – what actions they have authorised and why. The corollary is that any failure of their explanations to satisfy will lead to sanctions – including dismissal.

Acquis transposition; the transferring of 80,000 pages of EU obligations into national legislation.

Agent; an intermediary who performs actions on behalf of another. A huge theoretical literature was built around this concept in the 1980s – to try to demonstrate the way in which public servants developed interests separate from that of the public – and to justify privatisation and the separation of public budget-holders from those who supplied public services. Pity that there are so few of these academics now bothering to develop a literature about the self-serving behaviour of many of those who now own and manage the privatised bodies!

application; the act of trying to bring an intended state of affairs to fruition. The word used in the Slavic language perhaps is more powerful – execution!

Bureaucracy; a giant mechanism operated by pygmies (Cynic’s Dictionary)

Coach; The private sector’s constant search for a positive image has led it to suggest that good managers are like sports coaches. This involves using people’s immediate experiences as a learning tool – and giving feedback. The uncomfortable logic, of course, of the metaphor is that coaches of losing teams are often quickly sacked. But the private sector is less ruthless!

Communications; the first thing which people blame when things go wrong.

Compliance; consistency with a defined outcome. Traditionally called “obedience”.

Consultation; the skill of bouncing other people to agree with what you have already decided. This is, in fact, one of the famous rungs of the famous Arnstein “ladder of consultation” which ranges from “informing” through to “joint production”.

Control (verb); to ensure that people do what senior management wants. This used to be done by fear – but a range of clever carrots and sticks are now used. Control used to be “ex-ante” (detailed instructions before the event) but is increasingly “ex-post” – through monitoring and evaluation.

Corruption; a fashionable thing to be against. A new anti-corruption industry of consultants has arisen which reformulates the public administration principles to which NPM (see below) is opposed, thereby generating maximum confusion.

Educationalist; someone who transfers knowledge in a classroom situation.

Effectiveness; the quality of combining resources in a harmonious way to achieve specified objectives

Efficiency; a positive ratio between output and input

Evaluation; the process of finding out who is to blame. The EU has a very traditional model of evaluation – carried out by outside experts which takes so long (and is so long and tortuous in language) that its results cannot be used in the design of new programmes. See “learning organisation” below.

Executive; those who propose policy and resource strategies and implement new legal requirements. The term therefore includes both those who form the government of the day – and senior administrators who advise them and manage the system of policy implementation.

Expert; Someone who has stopped learning - or someone who has made all the mistakes that can be made but in a very narrow field (Cynic's Dictionary)

Government; those who hold formal positions of legitimate power whose continuation depends on the outcome of periodic public elections. Other positions of legitimate power – such as the judiciary – are protected from both political and public control.

Impact; the measured effect of an activity on identified groups.

Implementation; the process of applying or “executing” a law. In the 1970s political science developed an important body of literature which showed the various ways in which the good intentions of laws were undermined. The classic book by Wildavsky and Pressman had the marvellous sub-title – “how How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All”.

Input; the resources which are put into an activity

Laws; “spider webs through which the big flies pass and the little ones get caught” (Cynic's Dictionary)

Learning organisation; something foreign to the EU since its understanding of organisations is trapped in the Weberian model. The last 15 years has seen management theory develop a view that the best way for organisations to keep up with social change is through valuing their own staff by delegation and strong ongoing feedback – not by commissioning external experts to conduct complex and irrelevant evaluations.

Manage; to make a mess of.

Mentor; someone admired by others – whose behaviour and advice has, as a consequence, a particular power.

New public management (NPM); the body of literature which has in the past 20 years replaced that of old public administration. It has borrowed its concepts entirely from private sector management and has encouraged governments throughout the world -

- to see the “citizen” as a “consumer” of services
- to reduce civil service skills to drafting of contracts; definition of policy targets; and regulation of for services which are managed at “arms-length” by the private sector, other state bodies or NGOs
- to set up reward systems and penalties to ensure targets are met

It slowly dawned on the NPM zealots that such an approach is positively Soviet in its inflexible emphasis on targets – and that the reward systems undermine teamwork and policy coordination which good policies require. There is now a backlash to NPM

Outcome; the wider societal impact which a policy seems to have.

Output; the immediate way in which the faithful implementation of a policy can be measured – eg spending of an agreed level of money.

Parliamentary power; when exercised negatively (in the critique and adjustment of incoherent government proposals), something to value very highly. When exercised positively (as legislative initiatives) something to treat as “pork-trough or barrel” politics.

Performance management; the system which sets targets and rewards and penalises accordingly.

Performance-orientation; a concern for the results of inputs and spending – generally in improved customer satisfaction.

Policy; a statement of the tools and resources which government is using to try to achieve an intended set of objectives.

Policy review; the critical assessment of the outcomes and outputs of a policy field. This can be carried out within government – or by academic bodies and think-tanks and commissioned by various bodies including government.

Priorities; “Gouverner”, as the French say “C’est choisir”. State bodies and services can never do equal justice to all the laws they are required to implement. Guidance has to be given by senior management to those legal requirements on which its staff should spend time, energy and resources. Many new member states continue to churn out strategic documents which are checklists of good intentions – with no such guidance.

Public administration; a phrase which reminds us that state bodies serve the public – not the state!!!

Public Relations; organised lying (thanks to Cynic’s Dictionary)

Regulation; as natural monopolies have been privatised, a vast system of public regulation has been set up to control the obvious consequences of private monopolies.

Services; what the outputs of government activities should give us – but rarely do.

social marketing; public programmes of research and promotion which try to change public behaviour eg safe sex; reduced smoking.

State; a bad thing – at least for worshippers of NPM

Strategy; a statement of how an organisation understands the environment in which it is working; what problems or opportunities it sees as priority to deal with – and how it proposes to do that.

Strategic management; a proactive style of management

street-level officials; a term used to describe those officials who are in close contact with the members of the public and have to exercise discretion and judgement in their behaviour (field; front-line). Its positive sense is that they often have a better sense of what the public needs than senior management. Its negative sense is that, distant from control, such officials can more easily engage in self-serving behaviour.

Subsidiarity; a term used by the Catholic hierarchy which is now part of EU rhetoric – can be used to legitimise the further stripping of state functions.

Targets; what those in power use to measure the performance of – and to blame - others

Tools of government; the various ways government tries to make you do what they think is good for you.

Training; “surgery of the mind”. A marvellous phrase an old political colleague of mine used to describe the mind-bending and propaganda which goes on in a lot of workshops.

Transparency; another EU buzz-word – meaning exposing the outside world to the tortuous procedures and language of the European Commission.