Reforming the State

Ronald G Young

April 2018

Preface

Smuggler
Watch him when he opens
His bulging words – justice
Fraternity, freedom, internationalism, peace,
peace, peace.
Make it your custom
to pay no heed
to his frank look, his visa, his stamps
and signatures.
Make it your duty
to spread out their contents
in a clear light

Nobody with such language
Has nothing to declare

Norman MacCaig

"Change" is one of these words that had me salivating 60 years ago. According to poet Philip Larkin, "*Sexual intercourse began in 1963…*" – at roughly the same time my generation began to chafe under the restrictions of "tradition" - so well described in David Kynaston's <u>Austerity Britain</u> and <u>Modernity Britain 1957-1962</u>. The notion of "modernization" (as set out in a famous series of "What's wrong with Britain" books published by the Penguin Press) became highly seductive for some of us in the early 1960s ….
Coincidentally 1963 was the year Harold Wilson delivered his famous speech about the "<u>white heat of technology</u>" to an electrified Labour Party Conference, presaging one of the key themes of the 1964-70 Labour Government.

The need for reform of our institutions (and the power structures they sustained) became a dominant theme in my life when, in 1968, I found myself representing the east end of a shipbuilding town. As a polytechnic Lecturer at the time, I eagerly absorbed the writing which was coming from American progressive academics (such as <u>Warren Bennis</u> and <u>Amitai Etzioni</u>) about the new possibilities offered by the social sciences - listening spellbound on the family radio to the 1970 Reith Lectures on "<u>Change and Industrial Society</u>" by Donald Schon – subsequently issued as the book "Beyond the Stable State" (1970). In it, he coined the phrase "<u>Dynamic conservatism</u>" and went on to talk about <u>government as a learning system</u> and to ask <u>what can we know about social change</u>.
From that moment I was hooked on the importance of organisations (particularly public) and of institutional reform……In those days there was little talk of management (!) - only a few Peter Drucker books…..Toffler's <u>Future Shock</u> came the very next year (1971) by which time I had started to proselytize the "need for change" in papers which bore such titles as "*Radical Reform of municipal management*" and "*From corporate planning to community action*"…..One of these early

papers picked up on the theme of "post-bureaucracy" and anticipated that future systems of public management would look very different from those previously known…..

Since the late-60s, I've been involved in various forms of "development" efforts – first "community development" and "urban/regional" development in Scotland (with a touch of organisational development) then, since 1990, "institutional" and "capacity" development in various countries of Central Europe and Asia.

These days, however with many others, I question the very concept of development….Indeed the title I gave a little (autobiographical) book in 1995 was …. PUZZLING DEVELOPMENT (A few years later a collection of essays was called In Transit – notes on good governance

For 17 years I straddled the worlds of teaching and politics - lacking the patience and discipline to keep my nose to the intellectual grindstone – choosing rather to be a "reflective doer"…..and chasing different types of butterfly which would variously take the shape of things such as social injustice, organisational malaise……..But the academic side of things suffered…students complained….and I found myself for five years, from 1985, a full-time politician - occupying a strategic reform role but also developing my networking skills in Europe. This paid off when the Berlin Wall fell and I started to work as a consultant in the newly independent countries – basically learning new skills (and fields of knowledge)….

I have made a good living from words – both spoken and written – although the balance between the two changed significantly after 1990. In the 70s and 80s it was **the spoken word** which earned my modest keep (as a social science teacher) - although the papers, journal articles and even a small book I wrote from my experience as a political manager also helped develop a wider reputation. From the 1990s, the **written report** was the lynchpin of *the project management system* which lay at the heart of my work universe as a well-paid consultant in the EC programmes of Technical Assistance to ex-communist countries.

My job was to transfer experiences – and perhaps lessons – from government systems and agencies of Western Europe to those in Central and Eastern Europe and central Asia. Fortunately I had a bit of preparation for the role – being a member in the last half of the 80s of various European working groups working on issues of urban change.

My work in "transition countries" during the 90s and noughties was a real eye-opener - giving me a vantage point to identify the various patterns in systems of local government and Civil services. Suddenly I was seeing similarities in the powerful influence of informal processes in Austrian and Dutch systems – let alone Italian and Romanian!

Even so, switching roles and developing new skills wasn't easy – and it took me almost a decade before I was able to produce the coherence of In Transit – notes on Good Governance (1999) and essays such as - transfer of government functions; A Road Map for Local Government; and Training that works! How do we build training systems which actually improve the performance of state bodies?. This material forms the "Lessons from Experience" section of my website - Mapping the Common Ground

Perhaps the only claims I can make for the reader's attention are that I have -
- at various times played the roles of teacher, reformist politician and international consultant

- therefore occupied, from an early age, a strange position on the edge of a lot of boundaries (of classes, groups, disciplines, professions and nations) – making me deeply aware of the very different ways people look at the world
- for the past 60 years been a great reader
- surfed the net for the past 20 years for relevant writing
- kept a record of the most important of those readings
- for almost 50 years attempted to articulate my uncertainties in short papers and posts using clear language

Because I'm a bit of a geek, I've long followed the discussion about Public Admin Reform and PMR…..trying to make sense of it all – initially for myself….but also for those I was working with….For the past 40 years I have been driven to draft and publish – after every "project" or intervention - a reflective piece…..

In recent years I have been trying to make sense of all this experience - which culminated last spring with a draft of almost 200 pages bearing the title Crafting Effective Public Management. That book's core consisted of (i) surveys of the literature of admin reform 1975-2000; (ii) my critical assessment of the approach and tools used by international bodies and consultants in the challenge of institutional development in "transition countries"; and (iii) my blogposts on admin reform ….

But, somehow, I could never complete the book to my satisfaction – and, on one of the interminable rereads, realised what was wrong. I had been aping the academic literature too much and failing to insert myself into the story. Of course we are not supposed to do that – but the result is reified rubbish…..The story I tried to tell at the end of each project, on the other hand, had been an honest attempt to describe how a group of change agents had tried to change an organisational systems for the better – and the lessons which I at least as Team Leader had drawn from that experience. Incorporating them into a book at the very least makes for a more interesting read!!
Its sections are chronological and try to do justice to the shape and significance of the various projects. It also includes my sceptic's glossary; and the recent series of posts which used a dozen questions to try to capture the best writing on public management. As a result, it's currently heading for the 300 page mark! Its present title No Man's Land reflects the reminder which the summer interview gave me of the importance of what Hirschmann called "intellectual trespassing" to creative thinking….Too many academics are trapped in their disciplinary silos….

The pages that follow are a taster for the book itself – whose recent draft can be accessed at the link……..They constitute for the most part posts from my blog www.nomadron.blogspot.com – mainly from the past year or so which try to answer some questions about the performance of the state and to identify some of the more thoughtful literature……
The text contains many hyperlinks to allow further reading.

Ronald G Young
April 2018

Introduction

*Two issues have dominated my life – for the first 20 years what we in Scotland initially called (in the 70s) "multiple deprivation" but which has subsequently become better known as "social injustice" and "**inequality**"*, *Straddling then the worlds of politics and academia, I helped [shape a social strategy](#) which is still at the heart of the Scottish Government's work*

In the 1990s , however, I changed both continents and roles – and found myself dealing, as a consultant, with the question of how new public management and governance systems could be built in ex-communist countries which might give ordinary ordinary citizens in ex-communist countries a more effective "voice" – against the "powers that be"….. who rapidly were revealed to be …….the reinvented apparachtniki…..

Until recently I saw these two strands of my life as very separate - but a conversation with a friend has made me realize that there is a profound cultural link between the 2 fields of work. I start by describing the culture of West of Scotland public agencies as I experienced them in the late 1960s and 1970s; then describe the 2 key organisational innovations some of us introduced to one of the UK's largest public bodies in the mid 70s.

Readers will forgive me for going into some detail since these innovations have been neglected in subsequent social history…..

In the early days people sometimes asked what, as a western consultant, I could bring to the task of crafting state bodies in such countries. **They didn't realise that, in many respects, Scotland was, until the 80s and 90s, culturally and institutionally, more socialist than countries such as Hungary**. The scale of municipal power was particularly comprehensive in Scotland where the local council still owned three quarters of the housing stock, 90% of education and most of the local services - including buses. Only health and social security escaped its control: these were handled by Central Government. Local government simply could not cope with such massive responsibilities (although such a view was rejected at the time).

This was particularly evident in the **larger housing estates** in the West of Scotland which had been built for low-income "slum" dwellers in the immediate post-war period -

- there were few services in these areas
- employment was insecure
- schools in such areas had poor educational achievement and were not attractive to teachers/headmasters
- local government officials were not trained in management : and treated their staff in a dictatorial way
- who in turn treated the public with disdain

The contemptuous treatment given by local council services seemed to squash whatever initiative people from such areas had. They learned to accept second-class services. Behind this lay working and **other conditions so familiar to people in Central Europe**

- the culture was one of waiting for orders from above. There were few small businesses since the Scots middle class have tended to go into the professions rather than setting up one's own business
- work was in large industrial plants
- for whose products there was declining demand
- rising or insecure unemployment
- monopolistic provision of local public services

- and hence underfunding of services - queues and insensitive provision
- hostility to initiatives, particularly those from outside the official system.
- elements of a "one-party state" (the Labour party has controlled most of local government in Scotland for several decades).

As a young councillor in the late 60s, I made an immediate impact by the way I mobilised tenants about the patronizing way they were being treated by the local municipality, I was lucky because, Labour having lost local power to a group of "liberals", I had the freedom to flay "the system" with all my energies. In a sense I was giving the national liberals a taste of their own medicine since they were just beginning to invent a new form of "pavement politics".....The community groups I worked with were very effective in their various projects concerned with adult education and youth, for example and one of the most powerful lessons I learned was how much many professionals in the system disliked such initiative.
But it was still a bit of a shock to realise how suspicious my own Labour colleagues were of the people they were supposed to support! Instead they echoed the reservations and criticisms of the officials. One of the things I was learning was the subtle and often implicit ways those with power made sure they kept control – whether in the formality of language used or in the layout of meetings.

I drew on this experience when, in 1977 I wrote a major article about community development – which was reproduced in a book of Readings about the subject in the early 80s
In 1974 I found myself in a lead role as new structures were set up for Europe's largest regional authority; -

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At the end of Strathclyde Region's first year of existence in 1976, a major weekend seminar of all the councillors and the new Directors was held to review the experience of the new systems of decision-making. The exhilarating experience a few of us had had of working together across the boundaries of political and professional roles first to set up the new Departments and second on the deprivation strategy was something we wanted to keep. And other councillors wanted that involvement too.

Our answer was "**member-officer groups**" . These were working groups of about 15 people (equal number of officials and councillors) given the responsibility to investigate a service or problem area - and to produce, within 12-18 months, an analysis and recommendations for action. Initially social service topics were selected - youth services, mental handicap, pre-school services and the elderly - since the inspiration, on the officer side, was very much from one of the senior Social Work officials.
The council's organisational structure was also treated in this way in the late 1970s (the extent of external assistance sought was that every member of the group was given a copy of a Peter Drucker book as text!) - and a group on Community Development helped pave the way for the first local authority Committee for Community Development. And eventually, in the mid-1980s, even more traditional departments such as Education succumbed to this spirit of inquiry!

The member-officer groups broke from the conventions of municipal decision-making in various ways -
- officials and members were treated as equals
- noone was assumed to have a monopoly of truth : by virtue of ideological or professional status
- the officers nominated to the groups were generally not from Headquarters - but from the field
- evidence was invited from staff and the outside world, in many cases from clients themselves
- it represented a political statement that certain issues had been neglected in the past

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- the process invited external bodies (eg voluntary organisations) to give evidence
- the reports were written in frank terms : and concerned more with how existing resources were being used than with demands for more money.
- the reports were seen as the start of a process - rather than the end - with monitoring groups established once decisions had been made.

The achievements of the groups can be measured in such terms as -
- the acceptance, and implementation, of most of the reports : after all, the composition and the openness of the process generates its own momentum of understanding and commitment !
- the subsequent career development of many of their chairmen
- the value given to critical inquiry - instead of traditional party-bickering and over-simplification.
- the quality of relations between the councillors : and with the officials

With this new way of working, we had done two things. First discovered a mechanism for continuing the momentum of innovation which was the feature of the Council's first years. Now more people had the chance to apply their energies and skills in the search for improvement.
We had, however, done more - we had stumbled on far more fruitful ways of structuring local government than the traditional one (the Committee system) which focuses on one "Service" - eg Education which defines the world in terms of the client group: of one professional group and is producer-led. And whose deliberations are very sterile - as the various actors play their allotted roles (expert, leader, oppositionist, fool etc).

As politicians representing people who lived in families and communities, we knew that the agendas of the Committees we spent our time in were not really dealing with the concerns of the public: were too narrowly conceived; and frustrated creative exchange. For this, we needed structures which had an "area-focus" and "problem focus". We were in fact developing them –
-       in the neighbourhood structures which allowed officers, residents and councillors to take a comprehensive view of the needs of their area and the operation of local services:
-       and in the member-officer groups.

But they were running in parallel with the traditional system.
The structures we developed gave those involved (not least the officials) a great deal of satisfaction. The challenge, however, was to make those with the conventional positions of power (the Chairmen and Directors) feel comfortable with the challenges raised by the new structures. We were aware that our basic messages to professional staff about -
- the need to work across the boundaries of departments
- the need for consultative structures in the designated priority areas
- the capacity of people in these areas

represented a fundamental challenge to everything professional staff stood for. This was expressed eloquently in an article in the early 1980s - "Insisting on a more co-ordinated approach from local government to the problems of these areas, trying to open up the processes of decision-making and to apply "positive discrimination" in favour of specific (poorer) areas challenge fundamental organising beliefs about urban government - viz the belief that services should be applied uniformly, be organised on a departmental basis; and hierarchically"

What we were doing was in fact running two separate systems - a traditional one and a more innovative one which defied traditional lines of authority. The latter was more challenging - but, paradoxically, left with the younger officials and politicians to handle. And, during the Eighties, more "alternative" systems were developed - such as 6 Divisional Deprivation Groups which to whom the Policy sub-Committee passed the responsibility for managing the urban programme budget in their area.

For 20 years – long before "cultural change" became fashionable - I was therefore in the middle of efforts to change organisational cultures. That helped me not only to see the world from other people's standpoints but also to learn new skills of networking.

It was for this reason that the Head of Europe's WHO's Health Prevention Division commissioned me in 1990 to represent her on missions to the Health Ministries of the newly-liberated countries of Central and Eastern Europe (inc Russia).

So, when the EC started its programme of Technical Assistance (PHARE), I was one of its earliest and most experienced consultants – indeed, for the paranoic Poles, <u>too</u> experienced (all candidates were faulted for one of 2 reasons – knowing too little about Poland or knowing too much – or rather too many of the wrong people – after my work for WHO I was seen as falling into the second category!).

Ralf Dahrendorf was a famous German sociologist/statesman who wrote in 1990 an extended public letter first published under the title "Reflections on the Revolution in Europe" and then expanded as [Reflections on the Revolution of our Time](#). In it he made the comment that it would take one or two years to create new institutions of political democracy in the recently liberated countries of central Europe; maybe five to 10 years to reform the economy and make a market economy; and 15 to 20 years to create the rule of law. But it would take maybe two generations to create a functioning civil society there. A former adviser to Vaslev Havel, [Jiri Pehe, referred a few years ago to that prediction](#) and suggested that

> "*what we see now is that we have completed the first two stages, the transformation of the institutions, of the framework of political democracy on the institutional level, there is a functioning market economy, which of course has certain problems, **but when you take a look at the third area, the rule of the law, there is still a long way to go, and civil society is still weak and in many ways not very efficient**.*"

He then went on to make the useful distinction between "democracy understood as institutions and democracy understood as culture"

> "*It's been much easier to create a democratic regime, a democratic system as a set of institutions and procedures and mechanism, than to create democracy as a kind of culture – that is, an environment in which people are actually democrats*".

These are salutary comments for those with too mechanistic an approach to institution-building. Notwithstanding the tons of books on organisational cultures and cultural change, political cultures cannot be engineered. Above all, they will not be reformed from a project approach based on using bodyshops, cowboy companies, short-term funding from the EC Structural Funds and [the logframe](#). The European Commission made a decision in 1997 which shocked me to the core – that EC technical assistance to central European and Balkan countries would no longer be governed by "developmental" objectives but rather by their ability to meet the formal legal requirement of the Acquis Commaunitaire (AC)…….ie of EU membership

In the mid 90s, the Head of the European Delegation to Romania ([Karen Fogg 1993-98) used to give every visiting consultant](#) a summary of Robert Putnam's [Making Democracy Work – civic traditions in modern Italy](#) (1993). This suggested that the "[amoral familism](#)" of southern Italian Regions (well caught in a [1958 book of Edward Banfield's](#)) effectively placed them 300 years behind the northern regions.

Romania, for its part, had some 200 years under the Ottoman and the Phanariot thumbs - but then had 50 years of autonomy during which it developed all the indications of modernity (if plunging latterly into Fascism). The subsequent experience of Romanian communism, however, created a society in which, paradoxically, deep distrust became the norm – with villagers forcibly moved to urban areas to drive industrialisation; the medical profession enrolled to check that women were not using contraceptives or abortion; and Securitate spies numbering one in every three citizens. The institutions of the Romanian state collapsed at Xmas 1989 and were subsequently held together simply by the informal pre-existing networks – not least those of the old Communist party and of the Securitate. Tom Gallagher's "Theft of a Nation" superbly documented the process in 2005.

These were the days when a body of literature called "path dependency" was raising important questions about how free we are to shake off cultural values…. Authors such as de Hofstede; Ronald Inglehart; Frans Trompenaars; and Richard Lewis (in his When Cultures Collide) were telling us how such values affect our everyday behaviour.

Sorin Ionitsa's booklet on Poor Policy Making in Weak States (2006) captured brilliantly the profound influence of the different layers of cultural values on political and administrative behavior in Romania which continue to this day. His focus was on Romania but the explanations he offers for the poor governance in that country has resonance for many other countries and therefore warrant reproduction -

- "The focus of the political parties is on winning and retaining power to the exclusion of any interest in policy – or implementation process"
- "Political figures fail to recognise and build on the programmes of previous regimes – and simply don't understand the need for "trade-offs" in government. There is a (technocratic/academic) belief that perfect solutions exist; and that failure to achieve them is due to incompetence or bad intent".
- "Policymaking is centred on the drafting and passing of legislation. "A policy is good or legitimate when it follows the letter of the law – and vice versa. Judgments in terms of social costs and benefits are very rare".

"This legalistic view leaves little room for feasibility assessments in terms of social outcomes, collecting feedback or making a study of implementation mechanisms. What little memory exists regarding past policy experiences is never made explicit (in the form of books, working papers, public lectures, university courses, etc): it survives as a tacit knowledge of public servants who happened to be involved in the process at some point or other. And as central government agencies are notably numerous and unstable – i.e. appearing, changing their structure and falling into oblivion every few years - institutional memory is not something that can be perpetuated"

The booklet adds other "pre-modern" aspects of the civil service – such as unwillingness to share information and experiences across various organisational boundaries. And refers to the existence of a "dual system" of poorly paid lower and middle level people in frustrating jobs headed by younger, Western-educated elite which talks the language of reform but treats its position as a temporary placement on the way to better things.

"Entrenched bureaucracies have learned from experience that they can always prevail in the long run by paying lip service to reforms while resisting them in a tacit way. They do not like coherent strategies, transparent regulations and written laws – they prefer the status quo, and daily instructions received by

phone from above. This was how the communist regime worked; and after its collapse the old chain of command fell apart, though a deep contempt for law and transparency of action remained a 'constant' in involved persons' daily activities.

Such an institutional culture is self-perpetuating in the civil service, the political class and in society at large". "A change of generations is not going to alter the rules of the game as long as recruitment and socialization follow the same old pattern: graduates from universities with low standards are hired through clientelistic mechanisms; performance when on the job is not measured; tenure and promotion are gained via power struggles.

"In general, the average Romanian minister has little understanding of the difficulty and complexity of the tasks he or she faces, or he/she simply judges them impossible to accomplish. Thus they focus less on getting things done, and more on developing supportive networks, because having collaborators one can trust with absolute loyalty is the obsession of all local politicians - and this is the reason why they avoid formal institutional cooperation or independent expertise. In other words, policymaking is reduced to nothing more than politics by other means. And when politics becomes very personalized or personality-based, fragmented and pre-modern, turf wars becomes the rule all across the public sector."

Ionitsa's booklet was, of course, written more than a decade ago but I see nothing to suggest that much has changed in Romania in the intervening period. Since 2007, of course, it has been Romanian experts who have been employed as consultants but they have essentially been singing from the same song-sheet as western consultants

In Part III I use the phrase "impervious regimes" to cover the mixture of autocracies, kleptocracies and incipient democracies with which I have become all too familiar in the last 27 years; have faulted the toolkits and Guides which the European Commission offers consultants; and proposed some ideas for a different, more incremental and "learning" approach.

I'm glad to say that just such a new approach began to surface a few years ago – known variously as "doing development differently", or the iterative or political analysis…….it was presaged almost 10 years ago by the World Bank's Governance Reforms under real world conditions written around the sorts of questions we consultants deal with on a daily basis - one paper in particular (by Matthew Andrews which starts part 2 of the book) weaves a very good theory around 3 words – acceptance, authority and ability. I enthused about the approach in a 2010 post

But there is a strange apartheid in consultancy and scholastic circles between those engaged in "development", on the one hand, and those in "organisational reform" in the developed world, on the other…..The newer EU member states are now assumed to be fully-fledged systems (apart from a bit of tinkering still needed in their judicial systems – oh…. and Hungary and Poland have gone back on some fundamental elements of liberal democracy…..!). But they all remain sovereign states – subject only to their own laws plus those enshrined in EC Directives…. Structural Funds grant billions of euros to the new member states which are managed by each country's local consultants who use the "best practice" tools - which anyone with any familiarity with "path dependency" or "cultural" or even anthropological theory would be able to tell them are totally inappropriate to local conditions…..

But the local consultants are working to a highly rationalistic managerial framework imposed on them by the European Commission; are, for the most part, young and trained to western thought. They know that the brief projects on which they work have little sustainability but – heh – look at the hundreds of millions of euros which will continue to roll in as far as the eye can see…..!!!

Someone in central Europe needs to be brave enough to shout out that "the Emperor has no clothes!!" To challenge the apartheid in scholastic circles….and to draw to attention the relevance of Ionitsa's 10- year old booklet and Governance Reforms under real world conditions

PART I

Some Issues about how the academics treat PA

The Continental Divide in Public Admin Studies

"Public administration reform" efforts are analysed in very different ways in "developed" and "developing" countries respectively….I would go so far indeed as to suggest there was **a state of apartheid between two bodies of literature** which are perhaps best exemplified by using the words "managerial" and "economic" for the literature which has come in the last 25 years from the OECD (using largely the [concepts of New Public Management](#)) whereas the UNDP and The World Bank use the language of "capacity development" and "politics" ([the WB in the last decade certainly](#)) in the advisory documents they have produced for what we used to call the "developing" world (mainly Africa).

In fact four (if not five) bodies of literature should be distinguished - which can be grouped to a certain extent by a mixture of language and culture. I offer this table with some trepidation – it's what I call "impressionistic" and raises more questions than it answers -

The Different Types of commentary on state reform efforts

Source	Culture	Occupational bias of writers	overviews which give a good sense of status of reform
Anglo-saxon;	adversarial	Academic Eg Chris Pollitt; Chris Hood, Mark Moore, Colin Talbot, Stephen Osborne	[The New Public Governance?;](#) Stephen Osborne (2010) [International Public Administration Reform – implications for Russia](#) Nick Manning and Neil Parison (World Bank 2004)
West European;	consensual	Lawyers, sociologists Eg Thoenig; Wollman	[State and Local Government Reforms in France and Germany](#) (2006) [Public and Social Services in Europe](#) ed Wollman, Kopric and Marcou (2016)
Africa and Asia	clientilist	Foreign consultants Eg Tom Carothers, Matt Andrews	[Governance Reform under Real-World Conditions – citizens, stakeholders and Voice (](#)World Bank 2008) [People, Politics and Change - building communications strategy for governance reform](#) (World Bank 2011)
Central and East European	clientilist	Local consultants	[Public Administration in the Balkans – overview](#) (SIGMA 2004) [Poor Policy Making in Weak States;](#) Sorin Ionita (2006) [Administrative Capacity in the new EU Member States – the Limits of Innovation?](#) Tony Verheijen (World Bank 2007) [The Sustainability of Civil Service Reforms in ECE](#); Meyer-Sayling (OECD 2009) [Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood: Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties](#) (2009) [A House of Cards? Building the rule of law in ECE](#); Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2010)

South European?	clientilist	Local consultants	Where are the greek and Italian scholars?

People in Central Europe wanting to get a sense of how a system of government might actually be changed for the better are best advised to go to the theories of change which have been developed in the literature on international development eg the World Bank's 2008 [Governance Reform under Real-World Conditions – citizens, stakeholders and Voice](#) and its [People, Politics and Change - building communications strategy for governance reform](#) (2011). The paper by Matthew Andrews which starts part 2 of the first book weaves an interesting theory around 3 words – "acceptance", "authority" and "ability".

Is there **acceptance** of the need for change and reform?
- of the specific reform idea?
- of the monetary costs for reform?
- of the social costs for reformers?

within the incentive fabric of the organization (not just with individuals)?

Is there **authority**:
- does legislation allow people to challenge the status quo and initiate reform?
- do formal organizational structures and rules allow reformers to do what is needed?
- do informal organizational norms allow reformers to do what needs to be done?

Is there **ability**: are there enough people, with appropriate skills,
- to conceptualize and implement the reform?
- is technology sufficient?
- are there appropriate information sources to help conceptualize, plan, implement, and institutionalize the reform?

My previous post had quoted extensively from Sorin Ionita's [Poor Policy Making in Weak States](#). Ionitsa had clearly read Matt Andrew's work since he writes about Romania that

*"constraints on improving of policy management are to be found firstly in **low** (political) **acceptance** (of the legitimacy of new approaches and transparency); secondly, in **low authority** (meaning that nobody, for example, knows who exactly is in charge of prioritization across sectors) and only thirdly in low technical **ability** in institutions"*

A diagram in that World Bank paper shows that each of these three elements plays a different role at what are four stages - namely conceptualisation, initiation, transition and institutionalisation. However the short para headed "Individual champions matter less than networks" – was the one that hit a nerve for me.

*"The individual who connects nodes is the key to the network but is often not the one who has the technical idea or who is called the reform champion. His or her skill lies in the ability to bridge relational boundaries and to bring people together. **Development is fostered in the presence of robust networks with skilled connectors acting at their heart.**"*

My mind was taken back more than 30 years when, as the guy in charge of Strathclyde Region's strategy to combat deprivation but, using my combined political and academic roles, established an

"urban change network" to bring together once a month a diverse collection of officials and councillors of different municipalities in the West of Scotland, academics and NGO people to explore how we could extend our understanding of what we were dealing with – and how our policies might make more impact. Notes were written up and circulated……and fed into a process of a more official evaluation of a deprivation strategy which had been formulated 5 years earlier.
The central core of that review (in 1981) consisted of 5 huge Community Conferences and produced a little red book called "Social Strategy for the 80s" which was of the first things a newly-elected Council approved in 1982. It was, for me, a powerful example of "embedding" change.

It is a truism in the training world that it is almost impossible to get senior executives on training courses since they think they have nothing to learn – and this is particularly true of the political class. **Not only do politicians (generally) think they have nothing to learn but they have managed very successfully to ensure that noone ever carries out critical assessments of their world.** They commission or preside over countless inquiries into all the other systems of society – but rarely does their world come under proper scrutiny. Elections are assumed to give legitimacy to anything. Media exposure is assumed to keep politicians on their toes – but a combination of economics, patterns of media ownership and journalistic laziness has meant an end to investigative journalism and its replacement with cheap attacks on politicians which simply breeds public cynicism and indifference. And public cynicism and indifference is the oxygen in which "impervious power" thrives!

The last of the assessments for central europe I have in my files is Mungiu-Pippidi's A House of Cards? Building the rule of law in ECE; from 2010 (!!) and most of the papers in that box of my table talks of the need to force the politicians in this part of the world to grow up and stop behaving like petulant schoolboys and girls. Manning and Ionitsa both emphasise the need for transparency and external pressures. Verheijen talks of the establishment of structures bringing politicians, officials, academics etc together to develop a consensus. But Ionitsa puts it most succinctly –
 "If a strong requirement is present – and the first openings must be made at the political level – the supply can be generated fairly rapidly, especially in ex-communist countries, with their well-educated manpower. But if the demand is lacking, then the supply will be irrelevant".

Curiously, however, only a tiny number of people[1] seem to have tried to make sense of the efforts at "good governance" in central and east Europe and Asia, Certainly those who write about administrative efforts in central europe and the Balkans do so from a commitment to the neo-liberal values which underpin New Public Management (NPM)[2]

A few years ago, Tom Carrothers - one of the Carnegie Foundation's best writers - produced a paper which echoes the concerns I have been articulating since the mid 90s of the assumptions international agencies have been bringing to their well-endowed programmes.
Carrothers gives us eight injunctions –
• recognise that governance deficiencies are primarily political

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[1] Tony Verheijen's Administrative Capacity in the new EU Member States – the Limits of Innovation (2006) and Nick Manning's International Public Administration Reform – implications for the Russian Federation (2006) were two - and in 2009 a collection of papers was published about Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood: Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties
[2] http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/21366/12/12_chapter2.pdf

• give attention to the demand for governance, not just the supply
• go local
• strive for best fit – rather than best practice
• take informal institutions into account
• mainstream governance (ie don't just run it as an add-on)
• don't ignore the international dimensions
• reform thyself

In 2007 and 2011 I presented my critique[3] to a network of Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe (NISPAcee) but have been disappointed by the way the members of the network have simply aped "best practice" nonsense from the west….

> *Leaders are supposed to be promoters of their protégés; and clan-based loyalties take precedence over public duties for salaried public officials. Such behaviour can be found not only in the central government but also in local administration, the political opposition, academia and social life in general, i.e. so it permeates most of the country's elites. Classic studies of Mezzogiorno in Italy call this complex of attitudes "amoral familism": when extended kin-based associations form close networks of interests and develop a particularistic ethics centered solely upon the group's survival. This central objective of perpetuity and enrichment of the in-group supersedes any other general value or norm the society may have, which then become non-applicable to such a group's members. At best, they may be only used temporarily, as instruments for advancing the family's goals – as happens sometimes with the anti-corruption measures.*

> *Since Romanian society, like others in the Balkans, still holds onto such pre-modern traits, its members are neither very keen to compete openly nor are they accustomed to the pro-growth dynamics of modernity. Social transactions are regarded as a zero-sum game; a group's gain must have been brought about at the expense of others. This may be a rational attitude for traditional, static societies, where resources are limited and the only questions of public interest have to do with redistribution.*

The authors are part of an increasing number of people who want, like me, to "do development differently" – a few years back it was called…. political analysis……. From Political Economy to Political Analysis (2014) is an excellent overview of the thinking process

Although I would express the ideas a bit more simply -
- Fixing on an issue widely seen as problematic
- Getting people to admit that it can't be solved by the usual top-down approach
- Getting wide "buy-in" to this
- Bringing people together from all sectors which are touched by the issue
- Starting from an analysis of where we find ourselves (reminds me of a philosophical colleague known for his phrase "We are where we are"!)
- Avoiding polarisation
- Working patiently to seek a feasible and acceptable solution

Fairly simple steps - which, however, conflict with prevailing political cultures – and not just in Central Europe!!

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[3] http://www.mappingthecommonground.com/the-long-game

Further Reading

Organ culture in cEE http://193.231.19.17/kozgazdaszforum.ro/admin/upload/3_2014_6_cikk2.pdf
Is corruption understood differently in different cultures? Anthropology meets political science;
Bo Rothstein and David Torsello (2013)
http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/digitalAssets/1443/1443545_2013_5_rothstein_torsello.pdf
http://www.tlu.ee/stss/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/kollmorgen.pdf
http://consirt.osu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CONSIRT-Working-Papers-Series-7-Sarracino-Mikucka.pdf
https://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/The%20Nature%20of%20Policy%20Change%20and%20Implementation.pdf
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tools-and-methods-series-concept-paper-n%C2%B01-public-sector-reform-introduction_en
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tools-and-methods-series-reference-document-no-4-analysing-and-addressing-governance-sector_en
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tools-and-methods-series-reference-document-no-6-toolkit-capacity-development-2010_en
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tools-and-methods-series-reference-document-no-8-engaging-and-supporting-parliaments-worldwide_en
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tools-and-methods-series-reference-document-no-9-support-justice-reform-acp-countries_en
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/tools-and-methods-series-concept-paper-n%C2%B02-supporting-anti-corruption-reform-partner-countries_en
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/mn-bb-16-005-en-n.pdf no 23

Close Encounters of the…bureaucratic kind

This year marks 50 years for me of "close encounters" with "state structures" (or more emotively – "bureaucracy"). Except that I am a political "scientist" - trained in the 1960s in the Weberian tradition – and therefore tend to think "the exercise of rational-legal authority" when I hear that pejorative term.

Weber – like most classical philosophers and sociologists – was intrigued a hundred years ago by the source of social obedience. Why do people obey the rulers? And he produced the most satisfactory answer – with a famous three-fold classification – traditional, charismatic and rational-legal authority…..

By 1945 the world had had its fill of charismatic authority and settled amicably in the 1950s, for the most part, for "rational-legal" authority – although, by the 1960s, clever people such as JK Galbraith started to mock it and such as Ivan Illich and Paole Freire to critique it.

Toffler's "Future Shock" (1970) was probably the first real warning shot that the old certainties were gone – and organizational change has become non-stop since then.

I've operated at the community, municipal, Regional and national levels of public management – in some ten countries in Europe and Central Asia and have tried, over this half-century, to keep track of the more important of the texts with which we have been deluged (in the English language) about the efforts of administrative reform.

I do realize that I am a bit naïve in the faith I still pin on the written word – in my continual search for the holy grail. After all, it was as long ago as 1975 – when I wrote my own first little book -

when I first realized that few writers of books are seriously in the business of helping the public understand an issue – the motive is generally to make a reputation or sell a particular world view….

Still I persist in believing that the next book on the reading list will help the scales fall from my eyes! So it's taken me a long time to develop this little table about patterns of writing about admin reform……

Communicating administrative reform

Source	Numbers Active in the field	Who they write for	In what format	With what "Tone"
Academics	Too many!	One another – and students	Academic journal articles; and books	Aloof, qualified and opaque
Journalists	Fair number	The public – and professionals	PR handouts generally; more rarely an article	Breathless; More rarely critical
Politicians	A few	The electorate	PR handouts; more rarely a pamphlet	Critical of past; optimistic of the future
Think-Tankers	A lot	Opinion-makers	Booklets; and PR material	Ditto
Consultants	Even more!	Senior civil servants	Confidential reports; very rarely booklets and even a few books	Celebrating their "product"
Senior civil servants	Few	One another; OECD wonks	Descriptive papers and reports	Ditto
Global organs (eg World Bank, ADB, WHO	More than we think	A global network inc Cabinet Offices, Ministers, think-tanks; journalists;	well-researched, well-produced reports and websites	Omniscient, dry
Mugwumps – sitting on fences	Very few	The poor middle-ranking official who is expected to achieve the required change	Toolkits; manuals; roadmaps; notebooks	Open, humorous

The fads and fashions of organizational "reform" include "reengineering", "transformation"……even "revolution" and we no longer know who to believe or trust – let alone obey…..
Sometimes I try to make sense of this avalanche of material eg the early part of the In Transit – notes on good governance (1999) tries to explain and summarise the key development from the 70s for young Central European reformers – or The Long Game – not the log-frame (2011) where I tried to give a sense of the various organisational models with which consultants were trying to entice central European policy-makers.

How the attack on the State Harms us all

We're all ambivalent about "the State"….We slag it off with pejorative terms…and often profess to anarchistic and libertarian tendencies….In my formative period in the early 70s I was very taken with the concept of [The Local State](#) whose corporatist tentacles we saw strangling everything in Scotland. Cynthia Cockburn's 1977 book on the subject and the products of the [national CDP Project](#) were the most powerful expression of this critique – although Newcastle sociologists such as John Davies and Norman Dennis had led the way with their books on "The Evangelical Bureaucrat" and "Public Participation and Planner's Blight".

Local planners had status in those days – I actually taught them for quite a few years – using texts such as [Critical Reading in Planning Theory](#)

I was an active social democrat, consciously using the levers of (local) state power open to me to push the boundaries of opportunity for people [I saw as marginalized and disenfranchised](#)

That period of my life lasted from 1974-90 and is captured in [From Multiple Deprivation to Social Exclusion](#)

Since then, my focus has been more single-mindedly on *the development of institutional capacity in the state bodies* of ex-communist countries. The World Bank reflected the prevailing opinion of the early 90s in asserting that the state should simply be allowed to crumble….. and only came to is senses (partly due to Japanese pressure) with its 1997 Report – [the State in a Changing World](#)

By the time of my exodus from Britain in 1991, the country had already had a full decade of Thatcher – and of privatisation. I confess that part of me felt that a bit of a shake-up had been necessary…..but it was George Monbiot's T[he Captive State](#) (2000) – 3 years after New Labour's stunning victory - which alerted me to the full scale of the corporate capture of our institutions and elites regardless of political affiliation …And why did this capture take place? Simply because of a set of insidious ideas about freedom which I felt as I grew up and have seen weld itself into the almost irresistible force we now call "neoliberalism"……..But it is a word we should be very careful of using….partly because it is not easy to explain but mainly because it carries that implication of being beyond human resistance….

The sociologists talk of "reification" when our use of abstract nouns gives away such power – abstracting us as human agents out of the picture. [Don't Think of an Elephant – know your values and frame the debate](#) is apparently quite a famous book published in 2004 by American psychologist George Lakoff - which gives a wonderful insight into how words and phrases can gain this sort of power – and can be used deliberately in the sorts of campaigns which are now being waged all around us…

Amidst all the causes which vie for our attention, it has become clear to me that the central one must be for the **integrity of the State** – whether local or national….I know all the counter-arguments – I am still a huge fan of community power and social enterprise. And the state's increasingly militaristic profile threatens to undermine what's left of our trust. But those profiled in "[Dismembered – how the attack on the State harms us all](#)" are the millions who work in public services which are our lifeblood – not just the teachers and health workers but all the others on whom we depend, even the much maligned inspectorates - all suffering from cutbacks, monstrous organizational upheavals and structures….

I am amazed that more books like this one have not been forthcoming…

Coincidentally, I have also been reading the confessions of a few political scientists who argue that it lost its way in the 70s and, for decades, has not been dealing with real issues. I do remember Gerry Stoker saying this to the American professional body in 2010 and am delighted that more have now joined him in a quest for relevance

And I'm looking forward to the publication in a few weeks of The Next Public Administration – debates and dilemmas; by Guy Peters (and Jon Pierre) who is one of the best political scientists of his generation.

For too long, "the State" has been the focus of irrelevant academic scribbling….at last there are some stirrings of change!

We need to talk about…… "The State"

We need to talk about….the State. Or at least about the "machinery of government" about whose operations I am most familiar – in local and regional government in Scotland from 1968-90 and then in local and national systems of government in some 10 countries of central Europe and central Asia from 1991-2012.

Terminology is admittedly confusing….my first love, for example, was "public administration" since, at one fell swoop in 1968 I became both a Lecturer (officially in Economics) and a locally-elected reformist politician. From the start, I saw a lot wrong with how "public services" impacted on people in the West of Scotland – and I strongly associated with the national reform efforts which got underway from 1966, targeting both local and national systems of government and administration.

Major reforms of the "Civil Service" and of English and Scottish systems of local government were duly enacted – and I duly found myself in a powerful position from the mid 1970s to 1990 to influence strategic change in Europe's largest Regional authority

But, by the late 70s, national debate focused on "**state overload**" and on "**ungovernability**" and the discourse of private sector management was beginning to take over government.

The 80s may have seen a debate in UK left-wing circles about both the nature of "the local state" and the nature and power of "The State" generally but it was privatization which was driving the agenda by then. "Public Administration" quickly became "public management" and then "New Public Management"….

Indeed by the 90s the debate was about the respective roles of state, market and society. Come 1997 and even the World Bank recognized that the undermining of the role of the State had gone too far. But it has taken a long time for voices such as Ha-Joon Chang and Marianna Mazzucato to get leverage……and the space to be given for talk about a positive role for the "public sector".

In the meantime talk of "platform capitalism", the P2P "commons" and automation confuses most of us… and the last remnants of European social democratic parties have, with a couple of exceptions, totally collapsed. **So do we simply give up on the idea of constructing a State which has some chance of working for the average Joe and Jill?**

Because I'm a bit of a geek, I've long followed the discussion about Public Admin Reform and PMR…..trying to make sense of it all – initially for myself….but also for those I was working with….For the past 40 years I have been driven to draft and publish – after every "project" or

intervention - a reflective piece…..the more interesting of which are collected in a draft which currently bears the title [No Man's Land – journeys across disputed borders](#)

A British book about "[the attack on the state](#)" provoked me into identifying some questions about this huge literature which academics hog to themselves - but which need to be put out in the public domain. I found myself putting the questions in a table and drafting answers in the style required by the fascinating series such as "A Very Short Introduction" or "A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably priced book about….",

The State (at both local and national levels) is a constellation of diverse **interests** and power – to which we can give (rather arbitrarily) such terms as "public", "professional", "party", "commercial" or "security". But, the questions begin…..

- In what sense can we say that something called the state exists?
- What can realistically be said about the interests which find expression in "the state"?
- How does each particular public service (**eg health, education**) work?
- How satisfied are citizens with the outcomes of state activities?
- Why is the state such a contested idea?
- Where can we find out about the efficiency and effectiveness of public services?
- Where can we find rigorous assessments of how well the "machinery of government" works?
- What Lessons have people drawn from all the "reform" experience?
- How do countries compare internationally in the performance of their public services ?
- Has privatisation lived up to its hype?
- what alternatives are there to state and private provision
- why do governments still spend mega bucks on consultants?
- do Think Tanks have anything useful to contribute to the debate?
- whose voices are worth listening to?
- What challenges does the State face?
- If we want to improve the way a public service operates, are there any "golden rules"?

Miniatures and Matrices

I've been reflecting a lot this year on my working experience of organizational change - now equally divided between the UK (the first 25 years) and central Europe and central Asia (the last 25 years). I do so in a coat of many colours – scholar, community activist, politician, consultant, straddler of various worlds (not least academic disciplines), writer and….blogger.

I have always been a fan of tables, axes and matrices – by which I mean the reduction of ideas and text to the simple format of a 2x2 or 6x3 (or whatever) table. It forces you to whittle text down to the bare essentials. Perhaps that's why I love these Central Asian and Russian miniatures so much

So I put the questions posed in the previous post (now 15 in number) into such a table with just 2 columns for responses – "how I felt each question has been dealt within the literature" and "where the clearest answers can be found". Of course, the literature is predominantly anglo-saxon – although the experience covered is global.

This proved to be an extraordinarily useful discipline – leading to quite a bit of adjustment to the original questions. It's a long table – so I'll make a start with the first five questions -
- How does each particular public service (**eg health, education**) work?
- What can realistically be said about the interests which find expression in "the state"?
- How satisfied are citizens with the outcomes of state activities?
- Why is the state such a contested idea?
- Where can we find out about the efficiency and effectiveness of public services?

Basic Question	How extensively has it been explored	Some Good answers
1. How does each particular public service (**eg health, education**) work? How does it define and deal with challenges?	Each country has its own legal and cultural histories which affect the shape and funding of services. Globalisation and Europeanisation have posed state bodies with profound challenges since the 1980s – with functions transferring from state to private and third sector sectors (and, in some cases, back again) and an increasing emphasis on mixed provision and "partnerships" Thousands of books give analytical treatment of each of our public services – some with a focus on policy, some on management. Measurement and comparison of performance – at both national and international level - have become dominant themes Less emphasis since 2010 on Capacity building and strategic thinking – seen as luxuries for services under	Public and Social Services in Europe ed Wollman, Kopric and Marcou (2016) The New Public Governance – emerging perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance; ed Stephen Osborne (2010) What are Public Services Good At?; Demmke (2008) Parliaments and Think Tanks occasionally report

	severe pressure because of cuts and austerity…	on strategic work
2. What can realistically be said about the **interests** which find expression in "the state"?	The 1970s and 80s saw an active debate in political science and sociology about the nature of The State (national and local) – and the public, professional, political, commercial and other interests one could find represented there. As the state has "hollowed out" in the past 30 years – with privatisation and "contracting out" - political scientists became more interested in identifying the narratives which justified the remaining structures (see 8 and 9 below). It has been left to journalists such as Jones and Monbiot to look at the issue of interests – particularly commercial and ideational – of the new constellation of the state.	The State of Power 2016 (TNI) The Establishment – and how they get away with it; Owen Jones (2014) Democracy Incorporated – managed democracy and the spectre of inverted totalitarianism; Sheldon Wolin (2008) The Captive State; George Monbiot (2000)
3. How **satisfied are citizens** with the outcomes of state activities?	Despite the constant political and media attacks on public services, the general level of satisfaction of the British public remains high – particularly for local institutions Government at a Glance 2017 (OECD)	Opinion polls – Gallup, European Union Parliamentary Select Committee on PA eg this 2008 report on citizen entitlements
4. Why is the state such a **contested idea**?	In the 1970s a new school of thinking called "public choice theory" developed a very strong critique not so much of the public sector but of the motives of those who managed it. The argument was not a pragmatic one about performance – but rather that politicians and bureaucrats had private interests which they always put ahead of any notion of public interest; and that private sector provision (through competition) would therefore always be superior to that of public provision. Although it was initially treated with derision, it was the basic logic behind Margaret Thatcher's push for privatisation which became global after the fall of the Berlin Wall	Reinventing Government (by Osborne and Ted Graeber) popularised the new approach in 1992 Public Choice Primer (IEA 2012) is the clearest justification of this powerful school of thinking
5. Where can we find **reliable analyses of the efficiency and effectiveness** of public services?	In the UK a powerful National Audit Office (with more than 600 staff) investigate Departments of State (inc Hospitals). It is overseen by Parliament's most powerful Select Committee - the Public Accounts Select Committee. For 25 years local authority budgets in England and Wales were overseen by an Audit Commission which was, very curiously, abolished Attack on public spending "waste" has long been a favourite subject for the media – with quite a few books devoted to the subject.	National Audit Office Public Accounts Select Committee Global league tables for health and education sectors The Blunders of our Governments (2013) The most accessible and comprehensive treatment

The State of the State

It's strange that "Public Bureaucracy" seems to be of so little interest to the public - since one state alone (eg the UK) can spend no less than 800 billion pounds a year to give its citizens services….A few pages back I actually identified 8 very distinct groups of people (academics, consultants, think tankers, journalists etc) who write about public services – from a variety of standpoints - using a variety of styles (or tones) and formats of writing. We could call them "the commentariat".

It has to be said that little of their material is easy to read – it has too much jargon; it takes 10 pages to say what could be said in 1. Those who write the material do not write for the general public – they write for one another in academia and global institutions. On the few occasions they write snappily, they are selling stuff to governments.

The media do give a lot of coverage to various scandals in particularly the welfare and health services - but rarely give us an article which sheds any real light on what is being done with these hundreds of billions of euros….We are treated, instead, as morons who respond, in Pavlovian style, to slogans.

I am, of course, being unfair to journalists. They write what they are allowed to by newspaper and journal editors and owners – who generally have their own agenda. And who wants to read about the dilemmas of running public services or arguing about their "functions" being "transferred"? Just looking at these words makes one's eyes glaze over!!

It seems that only journals like "The New Yorker" who can get away with articles such as The Lie Factory – about the origins, for example, of the consultancy industry.

And yet there is clearly a public thirst for well-written material about serious and difficult topics.

Take a book I am just finishing - journalist Owen Jones' The Establishment – and how they get away with it (Penguin 2014) can boast sales approaching 250,000. For only 9 euros I got one of the best critiques of British society of the past decade……

I remember being in New York in 1992 and finding a copy of Reinventing Government (by Osborne and Ted Graeber) in one of its famous bookstores - which went on to become the world's bestseller on government (with the exception perhaps of Machiavelli's The Prince?). I simply don't understand why someone can't do that again with all that's happened in the past 25 years….

In 2015 Penguin Books made an effort in this direction with a couple of titles …..Michael Barber's How to Run a Government so that Citizens Benefit and Taxpayers don't go Crazy (2015) and The Fourth Revolution – the global race to reinvent the state; by John Micklethwait and Adrian Woolridge (2015). I've refused so far to buy the second since it is so obviously a right-wing tome – and the first suffers for me in too obviously being the special pleading of someone who was Tony Bliar's Head of Delivery in the British Cabinet and has now reinvented himself as a Deliverology Guru.

Over my lifetime, I've read/dipped into thousands of books about managing public services and organisations generally. About a dozen have made a lasting impression on me – I'll reveal them in a future post…Let me, for the moment, continue some of the questions I think we should be asking about the state – and our public services -

Question	How has "the commentariat" dealt with the question?	Recommended Reading
6. Has **privatisation** lived up to its hype?	There is now quite a strong backlash against the performance of privatised facilities – particularly in the field of water and communal services – with the Germans in particular **mounting strong campaigns to return them to public ownership….** A lot of such services remain monopolies – occupying the worst of all worlds since privatisation creates "transaction costs" (both in the initial sale process and subsequent regulatory bodies) and boosts executive salaries and shareholders' profits – thereby adding significant additional costs. The only advantage is an artificial one – in the removal of the investment cap.	Reclaiming Public Services; TNI (2017) Our Public Water Future (2015 Public services international research unit) Private Island – why Britain now belongs to someone else; James Meek (2014)
7. What are the realistic **alternatives to state and private** provision of Public Services?	A hundred years ago, a lot of public services (even in the education and health field) were charitable. That changed in the 40s – but the 80s saw the welfare state being challenged throughout Europe. In the UK, government started to fund social enterprises working with disadvantaged groups – new Labour strengthened that work. The 2010 Coalition government started to encourage mutual structures for public services	Social Enterprise – a new phenomenon? (2014) The Three Sector Solution; (2016) Becoming a Public Service Mutual (Oxford 2013)
8. Where can we find rigorous assessments of how **well the "machinery of the state" works**?	The process of changing the way the British "machinery of government" started in the 1970s and has been never-ending. Although the emphasis during the **Conservative period from 1979-97** was transfer of functions to the private sector, a lot of regulatory bodies were set up to control what became private monopolies – in fields such as rail and, in England, water. And, in an effort to mimic real markets, the health service was also the subject of a major division between purchasers and suppliers. Such innovations were eagerly marketed by international consultants – and copied globally **New Labour** was in power between 1997 and 2010. Its **Modernising Government** programme was developed with a strong emphasis on sticks and carrots – eg naming and shaming. Curiously, there are far more books describing the intentions and activities of specific programmes of change than assessments of the actual impact on organisations. A Government that worked better and cost Less?; Hood and Dixon (2015) is one of the few attempts to assess the effects of the British changes of the past 40 years. This OECD paper looks at the earlier period	The two clearest and most exhaustive UK books analysing in detail the reasons for and the shape and consequences of the large number of change programmes between 1970 and 2005 were written by someone who was both an academic and practitioner - **Chris Foster** author (with F Plowden) of "**The State Under Stress – can the hollow state be good**?" (1996); and British Government in Crisis (2005) Transforming British Government – roles and relationships ed R Rhodes (2000) is a good if outdated collection An International Comparison of UK Public

	Perhaps most interesting is the Government at a Glance project developed by the OECD	Administration (National Audit Office 2008)
9. **What Lessons have people drawn** from all this experience of changing the way public services are structured and delivered?	We have now almost 50 years of efforts to reform systems of delivering public services - and the last 20 years has seen a huge and global literature on the lessons…… Academics contribute the bulk of the publicly available material on the subject – with Think Tankers and staff of global institutions (World Bank; OECD; EC) the rest. Consultants' material is private and rarely surfaces – apart from their marketing stuff. Michael Barber was Head of New Labour's Delivery Unit in the early 2000s and has now become a "deliverology" consultant to governments around the world. He shares his advice here - How to Run a Government so that Citizens Benefit and Taxpayers don't go Crazy (2015) Chris Pollitt and Rod Rhodes are 2 of the top political scientists studying the changes in the structure of the state who can actually write well (!) - see Rethinking policy and politics – reflections on contemporary debates in policy studies). Their basic message seems to be that a lot of civil servant positions were disposed of; new jargon was learned; management positions strengthened – but "stuff" (ie crises) continued to happen! The Fourth Revolution – the global race to reinvent the state; John Micklewaithe and Adrian Woolridge (Penguin 2015) is a rare journalistic entry into the field (to compare with Toynbee and Walker; and Barber).	Although the OECD work is funded by the tax receipts of member bodies, their published material is generally behind a paywall. International Public Administration Reform by Nick Manning and Neil Parison (World Bank 2004) had some good case studies of the early wave of efforts. Two of the best collections of overviews are - Public and Social Services in Europe ed Wollman, Kopric and Marcou (2016) AND The New Public Governance – emerging perspectives on the theory and practice of public governance; ed Stephen Osborne (2010)
10. Is anyone **defending the state** these days?	We have become very sceptical these days of writing which strikes too positive a tone. "Where's the beef?" our inner voice is always asking – ie what interests is this writer pushing? Paul du Gay is a rare academic who has been prepared over the years to speak up for the much-maligned "bureaucrat" and his is the opening chapter of a 2003 collection of very useful articles The Toynbee and Walker book is another rare defence….this time from journalists	Dismembered – the ideological attack on the state; by Polly Toynbee and D Walker (Guardian Books 2017) "**The Values of Bureaucracy**"; ed P du Gay (2003) - googling the title should give you a complete download)

Why are Academics Blind-siding us?

Why is it that reviewing this literature leaves me feeling that tens of thousands of academics have been wasting their lives - and the time of their students and of others hoping to get some enlightenment from the writing on the subject?

"New public management", "governance", "public value", "new public governance" – the terms, strategies and debates are endless – and little wonder since <u>the discussion is rarely about a concrete organization</u> but, rather, about the system (of thousands of organisations) which makes up the entire public sector.

In the 1990s "the management of change" became a huge new subject in management literature – chapter 6 of my book <u>In Transit – notes on good governance</u> (1999) discussed the literature on management in both sectors - and the earliest book quoted is from 1987.

In the private sector, change was handled according to the perceptions of each Chief Executive and his team. **But not so in the public sector – where reform was determined at the highest political level and its shape uniformly laid down.**
Academics were slow to get involved – effectively as historians and classifiers…..at a very high level of abstraction….as will be seen from my summary of chapter 4 of <u>In Transit – notes on good governance</u>

Question	How it's dealt with by the commentariat	Typical Products
11. How do states **compare in quality of public services?**	"Benchmarking" national policy systems has become an important activity of bodies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) - until 2000 <u>The Commonwealth Fund</u> is now the main source for a global assessment of Health systems. The <u>OECD does a global education survey</u>. Occasionally efforts are made to benchmark entire systems of public admin "<u>Peer Review</u>" is also a widespread activity within the EC eg this recent one on <u>the Polish educational system</u> <u>Government at a Glance 2017</u> (OECD)	<u>Health systems overview article</u> <u>An International Comparison of UK Public Administration</u> (National Audit Office 2008)
12. Why do governments still **continue to pay consultants** vast sums of money?	Private consultants now run a global industry dispensing advice to governments which is worth at least 50 billion euros a year. Statistics are not easy to find – but the UK alone spends 1.3 billion pounds a year - see <u>Use of consultants and temporary staff</u> (NAO 2016) – which is actually about half of the figure ten years ago! Some will argue that this is a small sum to pay for good, independent advice to help ensure that public services are kept up to date. The trouble is that no one really knows whether it is good advice. It is a highly secretive industry – with reports seen only by senior civil servants and the odd Minister. Management consultancy in the private sector has been the	Michael Barber <u>How to Run a Government so that Citizens Benefit and Taxpayers don't go Crazy</u> (2015) Ed Straw's <u>Stand and Deliver – a design for successful government</u> (2014) John Seddon's <u>Systems Thinking in the Public Sector – the failure of the</u>

	subject of at least two highly critical studies (Hucynszki; Micklewait and Woolridge) – which suggest a world of senior executives subject to fads and fashions and given to imposing their will on the work force in an autocratic way. This is even more likely to happen in public bureaucracies which have the additional problem of a political layer on top.	Reform regime and a manifesto for a better way (2008)
13. Role of **Think-Tanks**?	A few Think Tanks have a reasonable track record in this field – generally those who draw on retired civil servants for their insights… eg The Institute of Government The Demos Think Tank was a favourite with New Labour in its early years of the ambitious Modernising Government programme. The Centre for Public Impact is a new body which promises great things from its use of Big Data –We will see…..	Policy-making in the Real World (Institute of Government 2011) Professionalising the Civil Service (Demos 2017) eg The Public Impact Gap (2017)
14. What **challenges and choices** does the state face in the future?	The focus of these questions has been organisational – there are a couple of important elephants in the room namely finance and technology which are dealt with in other bodies of literature	Governance in the Twenty First Century (OECD 2001) is one of the rare books which tries to deal with future challenges
15. What are the best Toolkits, manuals, roadmaps etc for **people to use who want to engage in reform efforts**?	Change Here! Managing change to improve local services (Audit Commission 2001) Supporting small steps – a rough guide for developmental professionals (Manning; OECD 2015) A Governance Practitioner's Notebook – alternative ideas and approaches (Whaites et al OECD 2015) OECD Public Governance Reports – Slovakia (2015) I am not a fan of deliverology but….. Michael Barber's How to Run a Government so that Citizens Benefit and Taxpayers don't go Crazy (2015) To Serve and to Preserve; improving public administration in a competitive world (Asian Development Bank 2000)	The Essential Public Manager; by Chris Pollitt (2003) is, by far and away, the best book to help the intelligent citizen make sense of this field Although I'm no fan of the World Bank, 2 titles (from the Development field!) offer the best insights - People, Politics and Change - building communications strategy for governance reform (World Bank 2011) Governance Reform under Real-World Conditions – citizens, stakeholders and Voice (World Bank 2008)

Those who went before…..

There may now be hundreds of thousands of academics and consultants in this field but, when I started to challenge the local bureaucracy in Scotland in the late 60s there was a mere handful of <mark>writers challenging public bureaucracy –</mark> basically in the UK and the US.

In the US they were following (or part of) Johnston's Anti-Poverty programme and included people such as Peter Marris and Martin Rein whose [Dilemmas of Social Reform](#) (1967) was one of the first narratives to make an impact – <mark>although Illich (Deschooling Society 1971) and Freire (Pedagogy 1968).</mark>

In the UK it was those associated with the 1964-66 Fulton Royal Commission on the Civil Service; with the Redcliffe-Maud and Wheatley Royal Commissions on Local Government; and. those such as Kay Carmichael who, as a member of the Kilbrandon Committee, was the inspiration for the Scottish Social Work system set up in 1969.

In the 70s, people like John Stewart of INLOGOV inspired a new vision of local government…and my ex-tutor John MacIntosh with a focus on devolution; ….even the conservative politician Michael Heseltine had a vision of a new metropolitan politics<mark>…..Colin Ward (Tony Gibson)</mark>

It was people like this that set the ball of organizational change rolling in the public sector…. tracked by such British academics as Chris Hood, Chris Pollitt and Rod Rhodes – and which have supplied a living first for thousands of European academics who started to follow the various reforms of the 1970s in the civil service and local government; and then the privatization and "agencification" of the 1980s. Consultants then got on the bandwagon when british administrative reform took off globally in the 1990s.

The result has been thousands of books on public management reform – but, for me, there are only a handful of names whose writing makes the effort worthwhile. They are the 2 Chris's – Chris Hood and Chris Pollitt; Guy Peters; and Rod Rhodes. With Chris Pollitt way out in front……Here's a brief selection of his most recent writing -

> There have been many failures in the history of public management reform – even in what might be thought of as the best-equipped countries. Six of the most common seems to have been:
>
> • **Prescription before diagnosis**. No good doctor would ever do this, but politicians, civil servants and management consultants do it frequently. A proper diagnosis means much more than just having a general impression of inefficiency or ineffectiveness (or whatever). It means a thorough analysis of what mechanisms, processes and attitudes are producing the undesirable features of the status quo and an identification of how these mechanisms can be altered or replaced. Such an analysis constitutes a model of the problem. This kind of modelling is probably far more useful to practical reformers than the highly abstract discussions of alternative models of governance with which some academics have been more concerned (e.g. Osborne, 2010).   [For a full exposition of this realist approach to programme logic, see Pawson, 2013. For an explanation of why very general models of governance, are of limited value in practical analysis see Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011, pp11-25 and 208-221]
>
> • **Failure to build a sufficient coalition for reform, so that the reform is seen as just the project of a small elite.** This is particularly dangerous in countries where governments change rapidly, as in some parts of the CEE. Once a government falls or an elite is ousted, the reform has no roots and dies.
>
> • **Launching reforms without ensuring sufficient implementation capacity**. For example, it is very risky to launch a programme of contracting out public services unless and until there exists a cadre of civil servants who are trained and skilled in contract design, negotiation and monitoring. Equally, it is dangerous to impose

a sophisticated performance management regime upon an organization which has little or no previous experience of performance measurement.   And it is also hazardous to run down the government's in-house IT capacity 6 and rely too much on external expertise (Dunleavy et al, 2006). In each of these cases in-house capacity can be improved, but not overnight.

• **Haste and lack of sustained application**. Most major management reforms take years fully to be implemented. Laws must be passed, regulations rewritten, staff re-trained, new organizational structures set up, appointments made, new procedures run and refined, and so on. This extended implementation may seem frustrating to politicians who want action (or at least announcements) now, but without proper preparation reforms will more likely fail. Endless reforms or 'continuous revolution' is not a recipe for a well-functioning administration

• **Over-reliance on external experts rather than experienced locals**. As management reform has become an international business, international bodies such as the OECD or the major management consultancies have become major players. A fashion has developed in some countries to 'call in the external experts', as both a badge of legitimacy and a quick way of accessing international 'best practice' Equally, there is perhaps a tendency to ignore local, less clearly articulated knowledge and experience. Yet the locals usually know much more about contextual factors than the visiting (and temporary) experts. .

• **Ignoring local cultural factors**. For example, a reform that will work in a relatively high trust and low corruption culture such as, say, Denmark's, is far less likely to succeed in a low trust/higher corruption environment such as prevails in, say, some parts of the Italian public sector. In the EU there are quite large cultural variations between different countries and sectors……………

I would suggest a number of 'lessons' which could be drawn from the foregoing analysis:
1. *Big models, such as NPM or 'good governance' or 'partnership working', often do not take one very far.* **The art of reform lies in their adaptation (often very extensive) to fit local contexts.** *And anyway, these models are seldom entirely well-defined or consistent in themselves. Applying the big models or even standardized techniques (benchmarking, business process re-engineering, lean) in a formulaic, tick-box manner can be highly counterproductive*
2. *As many scholars and some practitioners have been observing for decades, there is no 'one best way'. The whole exercise of reform should begin with a careful diagnosis of the local situation, not with the proclamation of a model (or technique) which is to be applied, top down. 'No prescription without careful diagnosis' is not a bad motto for reformers.*
3. *Another, related point is that task differences really do matter. A market-type mechanism may work quite well when applied to refuse collection but not when applied to hospital care. Sectoral and task differences are important, and reformers should be wary of situations where their advisory team lacks substantial expertise in the particular tasks and activities that are the targets for reform.*
4. *Public Management Reform (PMR) is always political as well as managerial/organizational. Any prescription or diagnosis which does not take into account the 'way politics works around here' is inadequate and incomplete. Some kernel of active support from among the political elite is usually indispensable.*
5. *PMR is usually saturated with vested interests, including those of the consultants/advisors, and the existing public service staff. To conceptualise it as a purely technical exercise would be naïve.*
6. *Successful PMR is frequently an iterative exercise, over considerable periods of time. Reformers must adapt and also take advantage of 'windows of opportunity'. This implies a locally knowledgable presence over time, not a one-shot 'quick fix' by visiting consultants.*
7. *It does work sometimes! But, as indicated at the outset, humility is not a bad starting point.*

What If???

I realize that the commentary so far leaves the impression of inevitability…. The last section paid tribute to some of the people who, in the 1960s, most clearly articulated the demand for a major shake-up of Britain's public institutions – the "modernization" agenda which initially brought us huge local authorities and merged Ministries with well-paid managers operating with performance targets.

"Scale" and "management" were key words – and I readily confess to being one of the cheerleaders for this. The small municipalities I knew were "parochial" and lacked any strategic sense but – of course – they could easily have developed it……

Were the changes inevitable?
I have a feeling that quite a few of the early voices who argued for "reform" might now have major reservations about where their institutional critique has taken us all – although it was a global discontent which was being channeled in those days…..

However not all voices sang from the same hymn sheet……**The main complaint may then have been that of "amateurism" but it was by no means accepted that "managerialism" was the answer**. 1968, after all, had been an expression of people power. And the writings of Paolo Freire and Ivan Illich – let alone British activists Colin Ward and Tony Gibson; and sociologists such as Jon Davies and Norman Dennis – were, in the 70s, celebrating citizen voices against bureaucratic power.
The therapist Carl Rogers was at the height of his global influence. And voices such as Alain Touraine's were also giving hope in France…..

DISTRUST (Aucoin) greater political control

The managerialism which started to infect the public sector from the 70s expressed hierarchical values which sat badly with the egalitarian spirit which had been released the previous decade….
But, somehow, all that energy and optimism seemed to evaporate fairly quickly – certainly in the British "winter of discontent" and Thatcher rule of the 80s. What started as a simple expression of the need for some (private) "managerial discipline" in the public sector was quickly absorbed into a wider and more malevolent agenda of privatization and contracting out…..And, somehow, in the UK at any rate, progressive forces just rolled over…. Our constitutional system, as Lord Hailsham once starkly put it, is an "elective dictatorship".
The core European systems were, however, different – with legal and constitutional safeguards, PR systems and coalition governments – although the EC technocracy has been chipping away at much of this.

Just why and how the British adopted what came to be called New Public Management is a story which is usually told in a fatalistic way – as if there were no human agency involved. The story is superbly told here - as the fatal combination of Ministerial frustration with civil service "dynamic conservatism" with a theory (enshrined in Public Choice economics) for that inertia…. **A politico-organisational problem was redefined as an economic one and, heh presto, NPM went global**

In the approach to the New Labour victory of 1997, there was a brief period when elements of the party seemed to remember that centralist "Morrisonian" bureaucracy had not been the only option – that British socialism had in the 1930s been open to things such as cooperatives and "guild socialism". For just a year or so there was (thanks to people such as Paul Hirst and Will Hutton) talk of "stakeholding". But the bitter memories of the party infighting in the early 80s over the left-wing's alternative economic strategy were perhaps too close to make that a serious option – and the window quickly closed…..Thatcher's spirit of "dog eat dog" lived on – despite the talk of "Joined Up Government" (JUG), words like "trust" and "cooperation" were suspect to New Labour ears. Holistic Governance made a brief appearance at the start of the New Labour reign in 1997 but was quickly shown the door a few years later.…

"What if?,,,,,"
The trouble with the massive literature on public management reform (which touches the separate literatures of political science, public administration, development, organizational sociology, management….even philosophy) is that it is so compllcated that only a handful of experts can hope to understand it all – and few of them can or want to explain it to us in simple terms.
I've hinted in this post at what I regard as a couple of junctures when it might have been possible to stop the momentum….
I know the notion of counterfactual history is treated with some disdain but the victors do sometimes lose and we ignore the discussion about "junctures" at our peril.
The UNDP recently published a good summary of what it called the three types of public management we have seen in the past half century.
There are different ways of describing the final column but this one gives a sense of how we have been moving..

	Old Public Admin	New Public Management	New Public Service
Theoretical foundation	Political theory	Economic theory	Democratic theory
Model of behaviour	Public interest	self-interest	Citizen interest
Concept of public interest	Political, enshrined in law	Aggregation of individual interests	Dialogue about shared values
To whom civil servants responsive	Client	customer	citizen
Role of government	rowing	steering	Serving, negotiating
Mechanism for achieving policy	programme	incentives	Building coalitions

Approach to accountability	hierarchic	market	Public servants within law, professional ethics, values
Admin discretion	limited	wide	Constrained
Assumed organisational structure	Top down	decentralised	collaborative
Assumed motivation of officials	Conditions of service	Entrepreneurial, drive to reduce scope of government	Public service, desire to contribute

The regulation state http://regulation.huji.ac.il/papers/jp39.pdf 2011

Plain Speech; and the 21st Century Public Manager

Readers will have noticed my growing impatience with the opacity of the "academic turn" to the writings of those who purported to be explaining what has been happening to our public services in the past 30-40 years – about the only writer I exempted was Chris Pollitt whose The Essential Public Manager (2003) is, by far and away, the best book to help the intelligent citizen make sense of this field. It's friendly; brings in individuals to play roles illustrating contemporary debates;; clearly summarises different schools of thought on the key issues; and leaves the reader with guidance for further reading….

Most authors in this field, however, are writing for other academics (to impress them), for students (to give them copy for passing exams); or for potential customers in senior government positions (to persuade them to offer a contract) – they are never writing for citizens.

As a result, they develop some very bad habits in writing – which is why this new book should be in their family's Xmas stocking this year. It offers priceless advice, including -

1. **Bait the hook**
"When you go fishing, you bait the hook with what the fish likes, not with what you like." An obvious principle, easily lost sight of. **Putting yourself in the audience's shoes governs everything from the shape of your argument to the choice of vocabulary. Ask what they do and don't know about the subject, and what they need to; not what you know about it**.
Ask what they are likely to find funny, rather than what you do. What are the shared references that will bring them on board? Where do you need to pitch your language? How much attention are they likely to be paying?
This is what Aristotle, talking about rhetoric, called ethos, or the question of how your audience sees you. And the best way for them to see you is either as one of them, or someone on their side. As the speech theorist Kenneth Burke wrote – another line I never tire of quoting – "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, identifying your ways with his."

2. **Be clear**
A lot of style guides, with good reason, tell their readers to write Plain English. There's even a Plain English Campaign that does its nut, year-round and vocationally, about examples of baffling officialese, pompous lawyer-speak and soul-shrivelling business jargon.

Plain English (the simplest word that does the job; straightforward sentences; nice active verbs etc) is far from the only style you should have at your command. But if you depart from it, you should have a reason, be it aesthetic or professional. The plainer the language, the easier the reader finds it; and the easier the reader finds it, the more likely they'll take in what you're saying and continue reading. Surveys of the average reading age of British adults routinely put it between nine and 13. Trim your style accordingly.

Steven Pinker talks about "classic style" (he borrows the notion from the literary critics Francis-Noël Thomas and Mark Turner). This, as he sees it, is a variation on Plain English that compliments the reader's intelligence and talks to him or her as an equal. He gives a cute example. "The early bird gets the worm" is plain style, he says. "The second mouse gets the cheese" is classic. I half-buy the distinction; though much of what Pinker credits to the classic style is exactly what's asked of any good instance of the plain. And the examples he offers convey quite different thoughts, and (a bit unfairly) attribute a cliche to the plain style and a good joke to the classic.

3. Prefer right-branching sentences
Standard-issue sentences, in English, have subject-verb-object order: dog (subject) bites (verb) man (object). There are any number of elaborations on this, but the spine of your sentence, no matter how many limbs it grows, consists of those three things.
If you have a huge series of modifying clauses before you reach the subject of the sentence, the reader's brain is working harder; likewise, if you have a vast parenthesis between subject and verb or even verb and object. The reader's brain has registered the subject (dog) and it is waiting for a verb so it can make sense of the sentence. Meanwhile, you're distracting it by cramming ever more material into its working memory. "*My dog, which I got last week because I've always wanted a dog and I heard from Fred – you know, Fred who works in the chip shop and had that injury last year three days after coming home from his holidays – that he was getting rid of his because his hours had changed and he couldn't walk it as much as it wanted (very thoughtful, is Fred), bit me ...*"

4. Read it aloud
Reading something aloud is a good way of stress-testing it: you'll notice very abruptly if your sentences are tangled up: that overfilling-the-working-memory thing can be heard in your voice. The American speechwriter Peggy Noonan advises that once you have a draft, "Stand up and speak it aloud. **Where you falter, alter**."

I was about to write to Chris Pollitt to encourage him to produce a new edition of his book (which is 14 years old) but, magically, came across The Twenty First Century Public Manager (2017) – a rare book which, like Pollitt's, looks at the complex world facing an individual public manager these days and the skills and outlook they need to help it survive.

Which took me in turn to The Twenty First Century Public Servant - a short report which came out in 2014……and reminded me of a book which has been lying on my shelves for all too long – Public Value – theory and practice ed John Benington and Mark Moore (2011) which is put in context by a very useful article Appraising public value
In fact, the concept of "public value" was first produced by Moore in 1995 in Creating Public Value – strategic management in government. This celebrated the role of strategic leaders in the public sector and tried to explore how, in a climate which required strong verification of performance, the public sector might be able better to demonstrate its legitimacy…. Here is how one british agency understood the challenge in 2007 and a short summary of the debate there has been about the concept. As you can imagine there's at least one dissertation on the subject….. '

I can't say I'm greatly convinced that all the "sound and fury" has produced anything all that substantial…but, if I can keep my eyes open long enough, I will go back to the 2011 book by Benington and Moore (which does include chapters by interesting characters such as Colin Crouch and Gerry Stoker) and let my readers know…..

The debate continues to this day - with a [well-written 2016 symposium here](#) about the issue
The craft of Dutch city managers
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14719037.2017.1383783?needAccess=true

Crafting effective public management – why are practitioners so shy?

If you want to understand a subject, would you rather choose something written from a theoretical standpoint – or from a practitioner's? Most people, I suspect, would tend to say the latter….and yet, in reality, we land up with the former. Who, for example, trusts political memoirs? For an **understanding of politics** we look to academics – or at least to those few who write clearly and coherently. And I have to say they tend to be found in history departments rather than departments of politics (or of social sciences such as economics, geography). Although there are honourable exceptions such as David Runciman, Mark Blyth and [Danny Dorling](#))

Management literature is slightly different – despite its pretensions, it is hardly a social "science", offering an inter-disciplinary approach. Which means a highly selective one which use case-studies to weave plausible narratives and "theories" (ie tell stories). And that's before we encounter the large number of autobiographies by - and hagiographies about - the business elite.

Tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of books have been produced in recent decades about efforts to **reform state structures** globally. When I started my own reform efforts in the early 1970s we had only Peter Drucker (and perhaps Machiavelli) to guide us – there were literally no books available on the question of managing government bodies…..Now we are swamped by the literature. For every thousand academics writing about public management reform, there will be at most one with practical experience. I actually know of only a handful of consultants who have written about their craft – [Michael Barber](#), [John Seddon](#) and [Ed Straw](#) – all of whom are strongly selling their

particular version of the truth. Why such shyness?.....Are we consultants just too busy? Or perhaps too overwhelmed by the complexity of everyday events to feel able to offer theories? Or perhaps lacking the necessary discipline in writing and language???

Crafting Effective Public Administration – reflections from central europe (2018) is my attempt to meet this huge gap in the literature. It's been almost a decade in the making and opens with an account of the circumstances which led me to develop this strange passion for organizational interventions.....It then moves to an overview of the writing about reforming government systems before outlining how reform got underway in the UK and US from 1965-1995. The follows some 60 pages of "Notes on key readings" which can be skimmed or skipped for a first reading…
"State Building in "impervious regimes" 1995-2015" is the paper I presented to a NISPAcee Conference at the Black Sea in 2011. "Back to the Balkans - Why are the new EU member states so impervious to public concerns?" are some more recent thoughts I had on training and Structural Funds in the Lower Danube area.
It is in fact one of two texts I'm writing on the subject - the next one summarises my various reform efforts of the past 50 years and tries to draw the lessons from them....

Bringing the State "back in"?? – a story about Academic Tribes

I am conscious that I had left the first – and most difficult - of the questions unanswered namely - **what do we really mean when we talk about "the state"?**
I was actually in a good position to give a coherent answer – for 50 years my focus has been on the workings of local and central government from my position as both a lecturer on public management issues (17 years); local and regional politician actually managing programmes and local state personnel (22 years); and, finally, a similar number of years as an international consultant to some 10 national governments.
But, despite all this, I felt inadequate to the task – and didn't even try to answer the question….I just left it hanging…..

Let me try to explain why………
When I started in academia and local politics (both in 1968), **things were simple – at least in my teaching role. Public administration was basically legalistic – the first books with a managerial bent only started to appear in the early 70s** (Peter Drucker was the only management book easily available then!!). But American material from President Johnson's 1964 War on Poverty programme had started to trickle over from the Atlantic – particularly Dilemmas of Social Reform (1967) – coinciding with the student revolutions of 1968.
"Participation" became all the rage – even the British government felt obliged to start its own (small) community development project.

I lapped all of this up – not least because, with the help of the Rowntree Foundation, I was managing a community action project whose work fed into the ambitious social strategy some of us developed a few years later for Europe's largest Regional authority…..Here is an early paper which expresses how I was in those days trying to make sense of what I saw as a huge "democratic deficit" in the

Local State. In this I was assisted by the extensive political science literature on [the structure of power in US cities](#) which had started in the mid 50s

Urban sociologists [and a few geographers](#) suddenly found the city a site worthy of their critical attention. Land-use was changing dramatically as heavy industry collapsed – to the detriment of the people in areas which, for a time, were called "traditional industrial regions". The academics started to explore embarrassing concepts such as industrial ownership; to talk of the "ruling class" and "workers"; and to focus on how "the local state" treated the poor….

But the language many of these young academics used was Marxist; the concepts pretty tortuous; and so interest in the locality fairly quickly faded….

Bob Jessop is probably the best-known writer on the State – producing [The Capitalist State - Marxist theories and methods](#) in 1982; and [State Theory – putting capitalist states in their place](#) in 1990. Both are difficult to read – his [conclusion to the second book](#) and this article on [State Theory – past, present and future](#) are probably the best things to look at to get a sense of his contribution – particularly the last and most recent which can be seen as a flier for his [latest book of the same title](#).

In 1985 an interesting article mapped the thinking about "the state" in the period from the end of the war to the late 70s – at least from the American perspective (little Marxist text was mentioned). The article was by a political scientist (with a political sociology bent) but the title she chose, **Bringing the state back in,** was rather curious since this was precisely the period when Margaret Thatcher was making privatisation fashionable (and soon global) and the phrase "[The Washington Consensus](#)" was just about to be coined.

It was indeed only in 1997 that the World Bank rowed back from its apparent mission of **sinking the State** - and published its apologia in [The State in a Changing World](#). So all I can imagine is that Skopcol was allowing the state "back into" some academic debate…..in the real world it was being evicted and replaced by commercial entities….

This didn't stop Bob Jessop from reprising the title in 2001 - but taking it in **a completely different approach** – with his sub-title "[revisions, rejections and redirections](#)" giving a good sense of the drift of his (largely incoherent) analysis. This seemed to focus almost entirely on disputes between European Marxist sociologists – and certainly ignored the corpus of work which political scientists on both sides of the Atlantic were doing on, for example, the state and "[Varieties of Capitalism](#) . This [succinct 2007 article by Vivien Schmidt](#) showed the sort of analysis which the Marxists had missed….. In the meantime a famous American sociologist had been developing this very useful [Reading Guide to theories of the state](#)

You can see how different all this is from **the questions I was exploring last autumn – questions, of course, which don't seem to be of any interest to the sociologists nor even (strangely!) to the academic political scientists** – although there are a few exceptions such as [Matt Flinders](#).

The questions I posed last autumn have been of interest mainly to a (declining?) tribe of **public management theorists**… people such as Chris Hood and Chris Pollitt, a political sociologist (Guy Peters) and, to a lesser extent, political scientists such as [Rod Rhodes](#). Rhodes achieved quasi-guru status in his particular tribe by virtue of his development first of the ["Hollowing-Out" thesis of modern government](#); and then of his anthropological approach to political science – best expressed

in his 2010 book with Mark Bevir - [The State as Cultural Practice](#) which basically seems to tell us that "it's all in our minds"!!

This is not the first time I have here accused academics of confusing us all (and themselves) with their failure to talk across disciplinary borders – here is a hint about how the State is treated by the various academic disciplines…..

Discipline	Core assumption	Most Famous exponents (not necessarily typical!)
Sociology	Struggle for power	Durkheim, Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, C Wright Mills, Robert Merton, Herbert Simon, Peter Berger, A Etzioni, Ralf Dahrendorf, Z Bauman, Michael Burawoy
Economics	Rational choice	Adam Smith, Schumpeter, Keynes, P Samuelson, M Friedmann, J Stiglitz, P Krugman
Political science	Rational choice (at least since the 1970s)	Robert Dahl, Gabriel Almond, David Easton, S Wolin, Peter Hall, James Q Wilson, David Held, Bo Rothstein, Francis Fukuyama
geography	??	Mackinder, David Harvey, Nigel Thrift, Danny Dorling
Public management	Mixed	Woodrow Wilson, Chris Hood, Chris Pollitt, Guy Peters, G Bouckaert,
anthropology	shared meaning	B Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Claude Levi-Strauss, Margaret Mead, Mary Douglas, Chris Shore, David Graeber
Political economy	draws upon economics, political science, law, history, sociology et al to explain how political factors determine economic outcomes.	JK Galbraith, Susan Strange, Mark Blyth, Wolfgang Streeck, Geoffrey Hodgson, Yanis Varoufakis,

AJ Roberts Strategies for Governing
Different types of state

What can be said about the state of the State??

So far I have argued that the 5-6 academic disciplines we have come to rely on to make sense of the world have made a pig's breakfast of the job when it comes to the issue of **the role of the State** in the contemporary world

Libertarian and anarchistic readers, I grant you, are not interested in questions such as the shape, strength, role or future of the State – they just want to get it off their backs.
But most of us still look to government for various types of protection – if not for things such as health and the education of our children.
And this is a blog of someone who, a bit like Candide, has been trying to understand the role of government (and the shape and meaning of the State) for some 50 years – as a thoroughly practical question – admittedly well-versed in what was initially the small body literature on "public administration" which, after the 1990s, became a tsunami about "public management".
But trying to have a conversation about this not so much with academics as with real people – whether officials, political colleagues or, latterly, beneficiaries in eastern European countries…..

It's in that open and inquiring spirit that I write for those who actually want to explore the question "How can the State realistically perform better for the average citizen?"

28 years ago, after all, "the State" imploded in central Europe – and **the key question people were actually asking in those countries then was the shape it needed to take for its new function under capitalism**….. Noone had been prepared for this moment – what little discussion had taken place about reshaping core institutions of the state in the 70s and 80s were academic and had actually been the other way around – about how the transition from capitalism to socialism would be managed! Not that this deterred tens of thousands of advisers from descending on central European capitals in the early 90s and dispensing their advice (full disclosure - I was one of them!)

We basically could be divided into two groups – the "missionaries" whose mission was to sell the snake-oil of privatisation and the idea of "the minimal state"; and the "mercenaries" who focused rather on the mechanics of building up the new institutions required of a "liberal democracy" (see my paper Missionaries and mercenaries).
More to the point, in 1999 I wrote a book which was effectively a calling card for the officials with whom I would be working in Central Asian where I worked until 2007 - In Transit – notes on good governance (1999) I find it stands up pretty well to the test of time……..

Twenty years later, **it's not unreasonable to ask how that debate panned out** – not just in central Europe -a full 10 of these years have been years of austerity for people in Western Europe whose governments engaged in major cutbacks of state programmes and activities; have increasingly divested themselves of responsibilities (in favour of the private sector) – and/or automated their activities in various forms of E-government….

Let's take 1997 as a starting point – this was the year when the World Bank published The State in a Changing World - a more measured discussion of what the state was good for than had been possible under the full-scale Washington Consensus of the previous decade…..
- That report looked at the contrast between **the scope** of state activities and **their effectiveness** (or results). It argued that states needed to concentrate on those activities which only they can carry out – it called this the "capabilities" approach…….

- That, of course, is a very technical approach. It says nothing about intentions – ie the extent to which those "in charge" are seriously interested in the pursuit of "**the public good**"….
- But lots of analysts will tell us that such a pursuit is doomed to failure – Rabbie Burns put it well when he wrote "The best-laid plans o' men gang aft a-glay" - best translated as "life is one long F***Up" !!

One of my favourite writers - AO Hirschmann – actually devoted a book ("The Rhetoric of Reaction") to examining three arguments conservative writers use for dismissing the hopes of social reformers:
- the **perversity thesis** holds that any purposive action to improve some feature of the political, social, or economic order only serves to exacerbate the condition one wishes to remedy.
- The **futility thesis** argues that attempts at social transformation will be unavailing, that they will simply fail to "make a dent."
- the **jeopardy thesis** argues that the cost of the proposed change or reform is too high as it endangers some previous, precious accomplishment.

And indeed…..we ignore these arguments at our peril….Social reformers all too often allow their hopes to masquerade as serious arguments….
Most of us (at least of my generation) would like to return to the days, if not of trains running on time, of what we saw as trustworthy (if not totally reliable) state services….We have become aware of the illusion and downright perversity of the talk of "choice".

Sadly, however, Pandora's box can't be closed or – as a friend and colleague used to put it "We are where we are"……
- IT, social media and surveillance are hard (and ever more developing) realities…..
- Public debt has soared simply because governments considered that banks were too big to fail and "socialised" their losses
- demographic and economic (let alone technological) trends put even more strain on public budgets

Of course, each country has been and remains very different in public expectations of the State.
- The public in **Northern European** countries still trust the State and its various custodians and public servants – although the "third sector" has always been important in countries such as Germany (eg health insurance).
- **Southern European countries** such as Italy are completely different – with family and informal networks being the dominant influence. Spain still has a residue of an anarchist streak – particularly in the Basque and Catalonia regions – and therefore a strong cooperative sector.
- **Central and Eastern European** countries suffer from the worst of all worlds – with public services such as education and health chronically underfunded and the private sector taking up the slack for all but the poorest groups; and no cooperative or voluntary sector worth talking about. Even the church in Romania is funded by taxation!!

It was a single book – Dismembered; how the attack on the state harms us all – which started me off on these musings. Noone really likes the state – it is an easy but of jokes and has an increasingly malevolent side in the surveillance state. But it cannot be left simply to subside….Either it has an important function – which would need to be properly articulated for these times and supported. Or

it has passed its sell-by date – in which case we need to take more seriously the various mutual or P2P alternatives which are mooted from time to time….

A Resource about "the State"

The Modern State; Christopher Pierson (1996); for the moment, the only book I would inflict on readers. It's so clearly written!!

Government at a Glance 2017; A recent and very handy analysis of the scope and impact of public services. Only for the 35 member states of OECD (so the Baltic States, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia are included – but not Bulgaria or Romania)

Governance for Health (2012 WHO) A good overview of health indicators and coverage

Governance in the 21st century (2001 OECD) An interesting discussion of trends

Globalisation and the State (2000); a good overview article

The State in a Changing World (World Bank 1997) – the report that indicated the powerful World Bank had had to eat some its scathing words about the role of the state

The Sociology of the State; Bertrand Badie and Pierre Birnbaum (1983). A good non-Anglo-saxon view of the subject

PART II

Theory and Practice

A 1999 paper which presented Western representations of their reform experience to "the Easterners"

   - and

A 2012 paper which questioned the mythologies of the power systems

When, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in late 1989 the EC started its programme of Technical Assistance (PHARE), I was one of its earliest and most experienced consultants – first to the CzechoSlovak Republic – working with their new local government system and   then other assignments in Romania (municipal development 1 year), Hungary (regional development 2 years) and Slovakia (1 year) quickly followed.

At one stage, I found myself doing the following doodle -
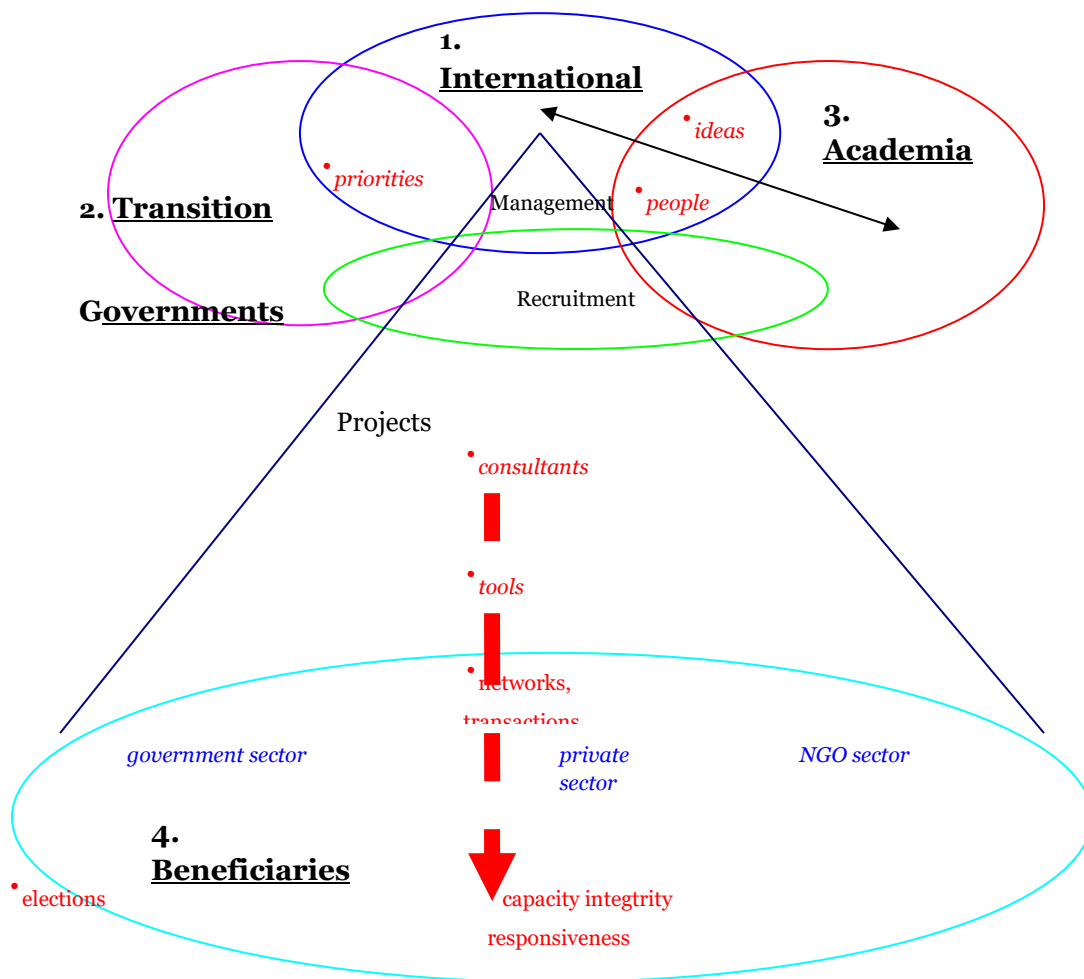
In 1999 I had the time to write a book which attempted to summarise, for a central European and Asian audience, the huge organisational changes in the public sector which had been (and still were) taking place in the UK between 1968 and 1998. ….In Transit – notes on good governance which has chapters on –

- transitology
- administrative reform 1975-2000
- a European Region's first effort at social inclusion
- the literature of managing change
- policy analysis
- the third sector

Almost 20 years on, the text may now be of more historical than substantive significance ……but still, for me at any rate, reverbates. Here is its introduction…….

The book is about the search for effectiveness and equity in government in a new era of immense change and growing expectations. It is aimed at -
- *those both inside and outside the machinery of government - both local and national - who, however reluctantly, have realised that they need to get involved in the minutiae of administrative change*
- *people in both West and central Europe.*

A lot has been written in the past decade about development endeavours at various levels - but there are several problems about such literature -
- *it is written generally by <u>academics</u> who have not themselves had the responsibility of making things happen: who have rarely, for example, been involved in the early, messy stages of taking initiatives they believed in, or in working with people who feel threatened and confused.*
- *its very volume and diversity (let alone language and accessibility) makes it <u>impossible for busy policy-makers and advisers to read</u> : a guide is needed.*
- *such texts are (obviously) <u>not sensitive to the Central European context </u>- let alone the changing nature of politics in places like Belgium and Scotland.*

*The analysis and argument of this book very much build on my **practical experience as a "change-agent" in Scotland during 1970-1990**, trying to "reinvent" the machinery of local government and to construct effective development policies and structures to deal with economic collapse.*
*The actual text **reflects a dialogue with a particular Central European audience between 1994 and 1998**: the focus - and content - being shaped by the questions and issues which seemed to be at the forefront of the minds of the people I was working with in such programmes as*
- *the development of Local Government in Romania, the Czech and Slovak Republics*
- *the establishment of 2 Regional Development Agencies - and 2 Development Funds - in North East Hungary:*
- *Administrative Decentralisation in Slovakia:*

*And t**he Annotated Bibliographi**es give some of the key points from books I have found useful in my own search for better policy-making. It's a salutary experience to write a book on reforming government in a far-away land - far away from the crises, confrontations and hype which seem to pass these days for government in developed countries. Without these, you have the time and space to read; to begin to make some connections between other experiences of reform and your own. And to rediscover the importance of having some "theoretical" frameworks to help make such links.*

Living and conversing with those undergoing the "transitional" experiences here equally makes you look at things in a different way and be more sensitive to the meanings hidden in words. Slowly I realised that my emerging thoughts were equally relevant for those in West European now trying to make sense of the various nostrums to which the public sector has been subject in the past two decades.

The book asks whether our policy framework for "transition" (inasmuch as one exists) adequately reflects new thinking about the respective roles of government, the market and of social development processes which has been developing during the decade in our own countries. It also suggests that, both in West and Central Europe, these important debates are hampered by their compartmentalisation. And, further, that one of the (many) problems of the "technical assistance" given by Western Europeans during the 90s to the countries of Central Europe has been the fuzziness of the basic concepts of reform - such as "democracy", "market" and "civil society", let alone "transition" - used by us in our work.

This has had at least three causes -

- *the experts have been practitioners in the practice of specialised aspects of their own national system - with little background in comparative European studies.*
- *Few of us had any understanding of the (Central European) context into which we were thrown. We have, after all, been professional specialists and project managers rather than experts in systems change. We have therefore too easily assumed that the meaning of the basic concepts behind our work were clear, relevant and shared.*
- *Few have, as practical people, been deeply involved in the debates which have been raging in the West about the role of government, of the market and of the "third" or "voluntary" sector - let alone to the specialised literatures (and sub-literatures) on development or "transitology"(Holmes)!*

Central European *readers will generally share three sentiments -*

- *frustration with the pace of change in your country and with your feeling of individual powerlessness*
- *an acceptance that things only improve when enough ordinary people get together and act*
- *a feeling, however, that the exhortations (and texts) you get from foreigners about "taking initiatives" are too simplistic for the incredible difficulties people face at a local level - often in basic survival issues.*

A lot of that material on such things as communicating; planning and working together can, actually, with suitable adjustments, assist people here who want to speed up the process of social improvement. Some of these are mentioned in the reading list at the end - and you should take encouragement from the fact that the West has produced this sort of material only very recently (particularly in the field of social action). We are not as advanced as you think!

This book does not replicate that material - but is rather written on the assumption that people are more inclined to take action if they feel that their understanding of what is happening and the realistic options for change is reasonably credible

2. MOTIVES for REFORM
Motives for administrative reform vary immensely; the mechanisms selected need to be appropriate to the purpose. It is therefore important to clarify these different concerns – to discuss them and to design strategy on the basis of consciously-selected objectives.

*2.1 **to reduce public spending** (or number of civil servants)*
*This has been recognised to be simplistic (and the head-counting somewhat specious since, whether people were called civil servants or not, their salary came from the public budget). The issue is **rather reallocation of spending**. This requires **political willingness** to take decisions about priorities and willingness to stick with them; and **administrative capacity** to implement them.*

*2.2 **to give citizens better services and treatment;***
eg reduce red-tape, ie the number of forms or offices they have to deal with for an application ; increased information on rights and services.

*2.3 **to increase public confidence***
Trust is the lifeblood of a healthy society and economy. Its absence makes social and economic transactions difficult. Investment and the social fabric suffer as a result. Public servants who supply the continuity (or institutional memory) and need to be seen to have integrity and an ethic of service. This is particularly true for foreign investment.

*2.4 **to ensure effective implementation of international obligations and standards***

Access to the European Union, for example, requires that laws are properly prepared and implemented - this means such things as prior co-ordination between Ministries, social partners and Parliament; assessing the impact of these laws; and ensuring that those with new responsibilities for enforcing the law are ready for the task - in terms of institutions, skills and resources.

2.5 **to ensure cost-effective use of limited resources**
We have become increasingly aware that there are real choices for governments about the role of the State in ensuring an acceptable level of public infrastructure and services. The disadvantages of government being both policy-maker and supplier have become increasingly recognised – as have the benefits of pluralistic provision.
Exactly how the delivery of services is organised will depend on such factors as - the degree of competition ; ease of output measurement ; administrative capacity to engage in contract management ; the scale of transaction costs ; and political attitudes.

2.6 **to activate the energies and ideas of the officials**
Senior civil servants are highly educated; they have ideas and ideals are often themselves frustrated by the way the system works. The priority they have to give to the task of policy advice and legal drafting (particularly in Central Europe) means that they have little time to manage the delivery of services for which they have nominal responsibility (particular the structures and staff). And in Central Europe they lack the experience and skills of man management.

These six motives may seem obvious – but they have rather different organisational implications. Some suggest a tightening of central control; others a loosening. For example while the last two motives – although very different – do appear to lead in the same policy direction – of breaking Ministries into Agencies - the mechanisms are rather different. One emphasises structural change; the other, managerial style

3. **DIFFERENT APPROACHES**
Most reform efforts start with a determination to "get the bureaucracy under control" - in terms of resources, staffing or influence.
There are, however, very different approaches and starting points to this question -
- Some people assume that it is a matter of **better laws and regulations** since that is what bureaucrats need to authorise and prioritise their activities
- others assume that **financial information and appraisal** is the key – that once the costs of activities are known, the information will speak for itself
- others again will argue that it is all a **question of management (and personnel) structures and skills** – to have, for example, a system which encourage bureaucrats to take more responsibility for decisions and their consequences, within, of course, clear policy guidelines
- the more courageous suggest that one needs to begin with the government agenda – and the **process by which policy priorities are set and implemented**. Once that is clear, other things follow.

The approach selected will be largely determined by two factors in particular-

(i)   **organisational cultures**
The administrative systems of countries have traditions which constrain policy-makers' freedom of action. Anglo-Saxon practices - whether that of the powerful Prime Minister or the US "checks and balances" model do not easily transplant to the formal legalistic Central Europe model.

(ii)   **the extent of support from key actors in the system.**
No much has been written about this crucial aspect - one writer (Lovell) divides people into allies, bed-fellows, fence-sitters, opponents and adversaries. Who falls into what category will depend, to an extent, on the methods chosen.

4 THE FERMENT of CHANGE

The life-cycle, pragmatism and attention-span of Ministers and local government leaders cause them generally to adopt what might be called a "_blunderbuss" approach to change_ : that is they assume that desirable change is achieved by a mixture of the following approaches -

- existing programmes being given more money
- policy change : issuing new policy guidelines - ending previous policies and programmes
- creating new agencies
- making new appointments

Once such resources, guidelines or agencies have been set running, politicians will move quickly on to the other issues that are queuing up for their attention.

Of course, they will wish some sort of guarantee that the actual policies and people selected will actually enable the resources and structures used to achieve the desired state. But that is seen as a simple implementation issue. Politicians tend to think in simple "command" terms: and therefore find it difficult to realise that the departments might be structured in a way that denies them the relevant information, support, understanding and/or authority to achieve desired outcomes.

Increasingly, however, people have realised that large "hierarchic" organisations - such as Ministries - have serious deficiencies which can undermine good policies eg

- their multiplicity of levels seriously interfere with, indeed pervert, information and communications flows - particularly from the consumer or client.
- they discourage co-operation and initiative - and therefore good staff. And inertia, apathy and cynicism are not the preconditions for effective, let alone creative, work!
- they are structured around historical missions (such as the provision of education, law and order etc) whose achievement now requires different skills and inter-agency work.

To move, however, to serious administrative reform is to challenge the powerful interests of bureaucracy itself - on which political leaders depend for advice and implementation.

This seemed to require an eccentric mixture of policy conviction, single-mindedness and political security which few leaders possess.
Whatever the appearance of unity and coherence at election time, a Government is a collection of individually ambitious politicians whose career path demands making friends and clients rather than the upsetting of established interests which any real organisational reform demands.

The machinery of government consists of a powerful set of "baronies" (Ministries/ Departments), each with their own (and client) interests to protect or favour. And Governments can - and do - always blame other people for "failure": and distract the public with new games - and faces.
What one might call the "constituency of reform" seemed, therefore, simply too small for major reforms even to be worth attempting. For politicians, the name of the game is reputation and survival.

Increasingly in the last two decades leaders have known that something was wrong - although the nature of the problem and solution eluded them.
To some it was poor quality advice - or management. To others it was lack of inter-Ministerial co-operation: or over-centralisation.

So a variety of reforms got underway from the late 1960s; and were accelerated when it was clear later in the 1970s that no new resources were available for government spending and, indeed, that there would have to be significant cutbacks.

Some leaders got their fingers burned in the 1960s during the first wave of over-optimistic attempts in America and Britain to apply management techniques from business to the affairs of government.

But the mood of caution has now changed. Encouraged by the examples set by countries such as Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Finland, government reform has become all the rage throughout the world in the past ten years. Initially this involved governments selling off industries such as Steel, Gas and Telecommunications.

The reform of government has, however, now spread deep into the thinking about how the basic system of government and of social services should be managed - and what that means for the role of government.

In the 90s the talk was of the "**ENABLING**" state - of government no longer trying itself to produce things and to run services but rather focusing on strategic purposes and trying to achieve them by giving independent public agencies - national and local - budgets and guidelines in contractual form. Then relying on a mixture of independent regulation, audit, quasi-market forces and arm-twisting to keep them on target.

Now no self-respecting politician - left or right - wants to be left behind from something that is variously seen as the "march of managerialism" or the "march of the market".

And the changed climate gives more courage to challenge staff interests and traditions of public service - although Germany and France are having their problems currently!

The inevitability of global change, the OECD or the European Union can, however, always be blamed!

The current ferment in and about the machinery of government reflects the enormous advances in the thinking about management and organisational structures over the past 15 years as we have moved away from mass production methods further into a "Post-industrial" era.

Technical change has killed off the slow-moving dinosaurs, given consumers new choices and powers: and small, lean structures a competitive advantage.

The very speed and scale of the change, however, pose issues for the political system which need to be confronted -
- do political leaders really understand the reasons for the changes in the machinery of government? Are they clear about the "limits of managerialism" - in other words about the defining features of public services "which seldom face market competition, rarely sell their services, cannot usually decide on their own to enter markets, are not dependent on making a profit and have multiple goals other than efficiency" (Goldsmith)
- do they have the determination and skills to manage a change programme in a coherent way : dealing with the resistance they will encounter ?
- as activities are delegated and decentralised (if not passed to the market), how will this affect the role of the politician ?

All of this requires new management skills in the public service: and strategic skills in our politicians.

Central Europe faces two particular challenges which has been well expressed by Balcerowitz - "The state has only limited resources of time, administrative capacity and money: and, secondly, the capacity of the state to deal with different problems varies, mainly because of varying informational requirements. State resources in transition economies are much more limited; while the fundamental tasks of systematic transformation and monetary stabilisation are far greater than in any developed market economy".

. What, I asked in 1999, does the Western experience of administrative reform tell central europeans about the trajectories and possibilities of internal reform?

.1 Cautionary remarks

Every country – like every individual – is different. Each country has its very specific history, social structure and cultural norms. Attempts simply to transplant foreign experience are generally doomed to failure[4]. This is emphasised in a good Chinese exposition of their traditions in a challengingly entitled paper - *Western System versus Chinese system*[5].

Despite paying lip service to this (and the need for local ownership", western agencies and consultancies continue to use the fatuous language of "best practice".

Of course we can, should and do learn from the success and failure of others. When I was a regional politician in Scotland in the 1980s, I was keen to learn the lessons from the American "war on poverty" and made my first trip to the USA in 1987 with a Fellowship to see how the Allegheny area of Pennsylvania had coped with the massive decline of the steel industry which we were then experiencing – and some of the lessons were picked up in how we progressed from our work on community enterprise to explore the possibilities of community banking. At this time a whole literature about "learning policy lessons across boundaries of time and space" was developing – and later picked up by the New Labour Government[6].

> More than 30 years' experience is available about other countries' attempts to make their systems more effective. Is possible to identify clear patterns and practical lessons from such rich, varied and complex experience? This section has to compress 40 years of personal experience of (and of reading about) organisational reform into a short space – and this is perhaps why it adopts a politico-historical approach which is not often found in the literature.

.2 Why did the nut suddenly crack? The ideology of Western administrative reform since the 1970s

A breakdown in confidence

The role and power of the State increased very significantly in Western European countries after the Second World War. Three main factors contributed to this -

- a determination to avoid the serious economic depression of the 1930s
- the demonstrable effectiveness with which victorious Governments had wielded new economic and strategic powers for the conduct of the war
- Keynes' intellectual legitimisation for a more interventionist role for Government.

For more than 20 years - as the European and American economies, and their companies, expanded - it seemed that a magic formula for economic prosperity had been discovered in the concept of the "Mixed Economy".

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[4] See "Institution-Building in central and east Europe" by S. Eriksonin <u>Review of Central and East European Law</u> (2007) for an interesting discussion of policy influence and its constraints in this field
http://www.difi.no/filearchive/rceel_publisert_versjon_-2-_vra5a.pdf

[5] http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cpi/documents/briefings/briefing-61-chinese-western-system.pdf

[6] http://people.exeter.ac.uk/ojames/psr_3.pdf/ and also http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/2056/1/WRAP_Stone_wp6901.pdf

The various revolutions of 1968 were the first signs that something was wrong - that people felt an important part of themselves excluded and alienated by the remote decision-making of Governments and large Corporations alike. And that they were increasingly unhappy with the decisions being taken on their behalf. It was, however, the oil-crisis of 1973 which started the intense questioning of both the scale and results of government spending the turmoil in thinking and practice about the operation of the machinery of Government which OECD countries have experienced in the past 30 years.

A time of experimentation and confusion
Box 1 lists the various efforts which EU countries have made to improve the operation and machinery of government over the past 30 plus years -

Box 1; Some examples of administrative reform

- trying to strengthen the "policy analysis" capacity of government (making it more aware of options)
- developing the managerial skills of the civil service
- reforming and restructuring local government
- "regionalising" certain central government functions
- trying to strengthen the supervision ("watchdog") powers of Parliament over the Executive
- "zero budgeting" and other types of budgetary reform
- merging Ministries to get better coordination
- creating accountable units of activity : with clear tasks, responsibilities and performance indices (OECD 1995)
- developing systems of performance review of government programmes
- "contracting-out" public services after competitive bidding to private companies : for a limited period of time
- "hiving off" Ministry functions to agencies
- increasing the accountability of senior civil servants : limited term contracts.
- establishing Regional Development Agencies
- establishing "citizen contracts"
- establishing quasi-markets
- introducing performance management

Those undertaking the changes have been practical people: and practical people get impatient of anything that smacks of theory. With hindsight, however, it can be seen that these various solutions were attempted "solutions" to three differently defined problems -

- **managerial problems** : which identifies as the main problem the skills and behaviour of the paid, permanent staff of the Public Service and therefore puts the emphasis on new techniques and structures (eg budgetary information on an output basis : more open appointments procedures : coordination devices) and on the need for stronger managerial skills and delegated responsibilities.
- **political** problems: which targets weaknesses in the quality and influence of politicians and the public in policy-making: apparently unable to control an all-too powerful bureaucracy. The role of politicians is very much to make the system of government accountable. The British Select Committees and US Investigative Committees are examples of such efforts at greater accountability. Local government reorganisation also comes into this category. The power of politicians does of course vary in different systems. In the West, reformist politicians in central and local government felt relatively weak in the face of the power of civil servant and professional bureaucracies, business

and trade unions. Increasing the influence of politicians at national, local and regional level has therefore been one approach to the problem of bureaucratic power. There is a view that British politicians had by 2010 been too successful in asserting their power. In some ex-Communist countries the situation has been very different - with the politician being the pinnacle of a tightly-controlled hierarchy of power: in other words part of the bureaucracy which has to be challenged!

- **Lack of coordination between both management and political systems – and wider parts of the 'governance" system**. The world was becoming less deferential in the 1970s – that's when we first started to hear the language of "stakeholders" – people who insisted on their voices being heard. And "governance" was the term invented to indicate the search for new ways of these various groups (both within and external to the formal system of government) to communicate and consult with one another to achieve more consensual policy-making and robust policies.

Table 1 is one prepared by me in the 1970s to try to make sense of the various (and contradictory) fashions and "fix-its" to which local government in Britain was then being subjected. The first column lists these three different perception; the second how they displayed themselves (symptoms); the third how the sort of solutions technocrats came up with – and the final column indicates how those of a more political bent were disposed to deal with the problem.

Table 1; Symptoms and responses to three different explanations of government problems

Definition of Problem	Symptoms	Technocratic Solutions	Political Solutions
1. MANAGEMENT Weakness • Over-hierarchical structures • Inadequate skills	• Delay • Lack of creativity	• Management information systems • Training • Delegation • MBO	• Limited-term contracts for senior officials
2. Problems in POLITICAL Process • Adversary process • Internal structures • Rewards/support	• Low polls • Crisis management • Petty arguments • Recruitment problems	• Training for politicians • Office support • Performance review committees	• Mixed policy task-forces • Investigative Parliamentary Committees
3, POOR COORDINATION • **Political/official** • **Interdepartmental** • **Political/community**	• Passing the buck • Inter-organisational disputes • Foul-ups • Public distrust	• Corporate planning • Departmental mergers • Liaison structure and posts • Working parties • Public consultation • Public relations	• Political executives • All-purpose municipal councils • Neighbourhood committees

Political impotence
The UK has been the trailblazer on administrative reform over the last 40 years[7]. But, despite the confident note struck by the hundreds of documents which have poured over the period (during the Blair years from its Cabinet Office), the task of making government "more business-like" or more

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[7] a useful short paper by a civil servant which takes the story to 2000 is at
http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/rsUK.pdf

effective has been a frustrating one for the reformer – particularly in the first decade or so[8] - for reasons set out in the next box.

Box 2; why reform was so difficult in the 1970s

- the electoral cycle encourages short-term thinking
- there did not seem to be a definable "product" or measure of performance for government against which progress (or lack of it) can be tested.
- and even if there were, politicians need to build and maintain coalitions of support : and not give hostages to fortune. They therefore prefer to keep their options open and use the language of rhetoric rather than precision!
- The machinery of government consists of a powerful set of "baronies" (Ministries/Departments), each with their own interests
- the permanent experts have advantages of status, security, professional networks and time which effectively give them more power than politicians who often simply "present" what they are given.
- a Government is a collection of individually ambitious politicians whose career path has rewarded skills of survival rather than those of achieving specific changes
- the democratic rhetoric of accountability makes it difficult for the politician to resist interference in administrative detail, even when they have nominally decentralised and delegated.
- politicians can blame other people : hardly the best climate for strategy work

These forces were so powerful that, during the 1970s, writers on policy analysis seemed near to giving up on the possibility of government systems ever being able to effect coherent change - in the absence of national emergencies. This was reflected in such terms as state overload" and "disjointed incrementalism"[9]: and in the growth of a new literature on the problems of "Implementation" which recognised the power of the "street-level" bureaucrats - both negatively, to block change, and positively to help inform and smooth change by being more involved in the policy-making[10].

Neo-liberals and public choice theorists give a convincing theory

In the meantime, however, what was felt to be the failure of the reforms of the 1970s supplied the opportunity for neo-liberalism in the UK. Ideas of market failure - which had provided a role for government intervention - were replaced by ideas about government failure. The Economist journal expressed the difference in its own inimitable way - "*The instinct of social democrats has been invariably to send for Government. You defined a problem. You called in the social scientists to propose a programme to solve it. You called on the Government to finance the programme: and the desired outcome would result. What the neo-liberals began to say was the exact opposite of this. There probably wasn't a problem: if there was, social scientists probably misunderstood it: it was probably insoluble: and, in any case, government efforts to solve it would probably make it worse*"

The very concept of rational government acting dispassionately in the public interest was attacked by neo-liberals on three grounds –

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[8] and in 2002 the New Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair famously talked "the scars on his back from dealing with the civil service"

[9] in the language of Charles Lindblom

[10] One of my Professors – Lewis Gunn – wrote a famous article in 1978 entitled "*Why is Implementation so difficult*" which identified conditions for "perfect implementation" - which I used in one of my recent EU projects which was charged to help assist "compliance" with EU legislation.

"Vote-maximising politicians, as the public choice theorists demonstrated (Buchanan and Tullock 1962) will produce policies that do not necessarily serve the public interest, while utility-maximising bureaucrats (Niskanen 1971) have their own private agenda for the production of public policies. The growth of the welfare state had brought with it an army of professional groups, who supplied the services. These were teachers, doctors, dentists, planners etc. They existed in bureaucratic organisations which were sheltered from the winds and gales of competitive forces. Provided free of charge at the point of consumption, there will always be an excess demand ; at the same time it is in the interest of monopolised professional providers to over-supply welfare services. Public expenditure on welfare services, in the absence of market testing, exceeds its optimum".

"The problems don't end there. Professional groups decide upon the level, mix and quality of services according to their definition and assessment of need, without reference to users' perceptions or assessments of what is required. The result is that not only is public expenditure on welfare services too high; it is also of the wrong type"." And finally the issue of efficiency; in the absence of the profit motive and the disciplinary powers of competitive markets, slack and wasteful practices can arise and usually do. Within bureaucracies, incentives seldom exist to ensure that budgets are spent efficiently and effectively. Often there is no clear sense of purpose or direction."[11]

And thus was born NPM

New Public Management (NPM) was not a coherent theory – rather a tag put on a collection of measures brought in from the business world. Fundamental concepts of public administration - eg hierarchy, equity and uniformity - were unceremoniously dumped.

Box 3 How the new business thinking affected the UK

- government structures were broken up - either by "hiving off" into independent units or by a sharp distinction being made between contractor and provider. Two thirds of Civil servants are now in free-standing agencies whose Chief Executives have been openly appointed.
- direct hierarchical supervision were replaced by contractual relationships
- recruitment, grading and pay rigidities were broken apart in the search for greater productivity.
- considerations of equity, impartiality and justice were replaced by those of consumer choice
- decisions uniform universal provision gives way to user charges and choice among competing providers
- accountability only through elected bodies was bypassed by Citizen charters, ombudsman and control through non-elected quangos"

It seemed, however, that in the worship of the private sector, the public sector had to start at the beginning of the learning curve – and succumb to all the simplistic assumptions of the early part of capitalism ie belief in scale. Ferlie et al[12] sketched out Four different marks of NPM -

NPM 1   **FORDIST MODEL**
       - increased attention to financial control : strong concern with value-for-money and efficiency gains : getting more for less : growth of more elaborate cost and information systems
       - a stronger general management spine : management by hierarchy : a "command and control" model of working : clear target-setting and monitoring of performance : a shift of power to senior management

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[11] Peter Jackson Privatisation and Deregulation : the Issues (1993)
[12] in The New Public Management in Action (Oxford 1996)

- an extension of audit, both financial and professional : an insistence on more transparent methods for the review of performance : more standard setting and bench-marking.

- greater stress on provider responsiveness to consumers : a greater role for non-public sector providers : more market-mindedness

- deregulation of the labour market and increasing the pace of work : erosion of nationally-agreed pay and conditions : move to highly paid and individually agreed rewards packages at senior level combined with more short-term contracts. Higher turnover

- a reduction of the self-regulatory power of the professions : a shift in power from professionals to managers : drawing in of some professional to management

- new forms of corporate governance: marginalisation of elected local politicians and trade unionists : moves to a board of directors model : shift of power to apex of organisation.

This is a reasonable description of British trends in the 1980s.

NPM 2   **DOWNSIZING AND DECENTRALISATION**
- move from management by hierarchy to management by contract : creation of more fragmented public sector organisations at local level

- split between small strategic core and large operational periphery : market testing and contracting out of non-strategic functions

- moves to flatter structures : staff reductions at higher and lower levels

- split between public funding and independent sector provision: emergence of separate purchaser and provider organisations

- attempt to move away from standardised forms of service to one characterised by more flexibility an variety.

This is the phase Britain moved into in the 1990s

NPM 3   **IN SEARCH OF EXCELLENCE**
(a) Bottom-up Form: radical decentralisation : emphasis on OD and learning organisation. The French reforms fall more into this category - as do the operations of the more progressive German, Dutch and British local authorities of the 1990s.

(b) Top-Down Form: managed culture change programmes: stress on charismatic forms of top-down leadership. Corporate training, logos etc.

NPM 4   **PUBLIC SERVICE ORIENTATION**
- concern with service quality
- reliance on user voice rather than customer exit as feedback. Concept of citizenship
- desire to shift power back from appointed to elected local bodies : scepticism about role of markets in local public services
- community development
- belief in continuing set of distinctive public service values and tasks : stress on participation and accountability as legitimate concerns of management in the public sector

The Scandinavian reforms fall into this category - and the counter-attack in Britain in the early 1990s[13] and the 2000s concept of public value[14]

But with different impacts
In 1995 Sylvia Trosa[15] looked at the very different approaches taken by Britain, France and Australia: the British and Australian changes being very much imposed on a resistant system by strong political

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[13] eg Stewart and Ranson - Management for the Public Domain : enabling the learning society (Macmillan 1994)

[14] first developed by Mark Moore in his 1995 book of that name, taken up briefly by the UK Cabinet Office in the late 2000s and usefully summarised by Colin Talbot at http://www.workfoundation.co.uk/Assets/Docs/measuring_PV_final2.pdf.

leaders - the British "revolution" in particular being based on a quite explicit critique of the possibilities of the system reforming itself by normal methods of persuasion. This contrasts very much with the French - and German - approaches: where there has been more apparent confidence in the public service system - and where modernisation was seen as a matter for incremental and internally driven change.

French thinking is still affected by the Rousseauist sense of the "General Will" - and is to be seen in their formalised system of national planning, in the operation of their highly professional ENA elite who occupy most of the key positions in both the public and private sector - and in their structure of territorial administration of the State. And their attempt over the past 15 years to decentralise that system has demonstrated that same centrally-driven and consensual approach.

Hood has given us an interesting classification of the scale of the move to New Public Management (NPM) on the basis of the political incumbency – although globalisation has made these political terms largely meaningless these days eg the New Labour government is widely seen as even more right-wing (save in the public spending of its latter years) than the Thatcher governments.

Table 2; Varied NPM take-up across the political spectrum

NPM emphasis	Political Left	Centre	Right
High NPM	Sweden	Australia Canada New Zealand	United Kingdom
Medium NPM	France	Austria Denmark Finland Italy Netherlands Portugal United States	France
Low NPM	Greece Spain	Germany Switzerland	Japan Turkey

From what is set out in section 4, China would probably find itself in the same box as New Zealand or the UK

.3 Making sense of it all
So far, I have tried to –

• emphasise how varied were the „explanations" we had in the 1970s about the sort of problems which created the need for „reform"

• show how differently therefore (despite the talk of New Public Management - NPM) reform programmes developed in different countries.

• explain how, in the 1970s, the new breed of policy analysts had almost given up on the hope of getting the bureaucracy to operate in the interests of the public – „disjointed incrementalism" was the best that could be hoped for.

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[15] Moderniser L'Administration (1995)

- how public choice theory came along to give an ideological explanation for reform failure – and also justification for what came to be called NPM but which was simply the (simplistic) treatment of government as a business.
- Although the extreme version of NPM is discredited, the love affair with (generally outdated and discarded) management practices continues with the current emphasis on performance management and measurement.

I personally was fighting bureaucracy in the 1970s and 1980s with a different (and simpler) theory – what I called the „pincer approach" - a combination of community action from below and strategic management led by politicians and explained in paper 50 of my website – *Organisational Learning and Political Amnesia*[16]. I was intrigued in 2006 to see that, almost a decade after the strenuous efforts of New Labour to modernise government, the Cabinet Office produced an expanded version of such a theory as their "model of public service reform"[17]. It had four (rather than two) forces - top-down performance management, user pressure from below and market incentives and staff capacity from the sides.

The role of OECD and World Bank
The power of neo-liberal thinking within The World Bank has been well known. What is not so well known is the role of the OECD in pushing the New Public Management agenda[18]. Unlike the World Bank, the OECD performs a very useful networking role in bringing senior civil servants and other together to share their experience and learn from one another. The briefing papers and Final Reports it produces are very clearly presented and probably the most accessible (if not only) material national civil servants read on this topic. An OECD Conference in 1999 produced a whole range of fascinating papers on the process of change (which generally academics can't follow) – and they returned to this subject with a rather more abstract paper on *Managing Change in OECD governments – an introductory framework*[19] in 2008.

What the academics have made of it all
Not a great deal of NPM is the short answer – at least not those (including such well-known names as Christopher Hood[20], Guy Peters[21], Chris Pollitt[22] and Herbert Wolman[23]) who have elected to keep away from The World Bank's "filthy lucre". A huge academic industry has duly grown around administrative reform in the past few decades - a lot of it very theoretical. University developments have encouraged academics to do consultancy work and, provided this does not get out of hand, this has given the academic a better understanding of practical realities. The academic role generally we

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[16] http://www.freewebs.com/publicadminreform/key%20papers/Lessons%20from%20SRC%20experience.pdf

[17] http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100125070726/http://cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/sj_report.pdf

[18] http://www.carleton.ca/cgpm/Projects/reform/Inversions%20without%20End.pdf

[19] http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/18/42142231.pdf

[20] whose The Art of the State – culture, rhetoric and public management (Oxford 2000) reduced the writing to four schools of thinking – hierarchist, individualist, egalitarian and fatalist.

[21] whose The Future of Governing ; four emerging models (Kansas Univ Press 1996) was a breath of fresh air at the time

[22] Public Management reform - a Comparative Analysis (first edition Oxford 2000) by Pollitt and Boueckert is still the basic text on the subject

[23] who has edited about the only study made of Evaluation in public sector reform – concepts and practice in international perspective (2003) http://books.google.com/books?id=e8bsrrWlaCwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_slider_thumb#v=onepage&q&f=false

might say is that of observer, classifier, pedant, tester of hypotheses and, in some cases, evaluator. In this field, what the best of them (mentioned above) have done is to -
- map the developments,
- note some of the rhetorical aspects
- develop (as we have seen above) different typologies
- set up some test and explore results of reform programmes

NPM is, of course, not the only game in town – and there has been a strong reaction against a lot of it in the past decade[24]. Peters suggests that administrative reform can be reduced to four schools of thinking - often confused in practice. They are - "market models" (A); "the Participatory State" (B); "Flexible Government" (C); and "Deregulated Government" (D).

Table 3; Peters' Four models of government

	A	B	C	D
Principal diagnosis	Monopoly	Hierarchy	Permanence	Internal Regulation
Structure	Decentralisation	Flatter Organisations	"Virtual Organisations"	No particular recommendation
Management	Pay for performance	TQM; teams	Managing temporary personnel	Greater managerial freedom
Policymaking	Internal markets Market incentives	Consultation Negotiation	Experimentation	Entrepreneurial government
Public interest	Low cost	Involvement	Low cost Coordination	Creativity Activism

After reviewing the nature and policies of each model, he identifies **four basic questions** and looks at how each model tries to deal with them -

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[24] the strongest attacks have probably been from Dreschler whose article The Rise and Demise of NPM can be found at www.freewebs.com/publicadminreform/key%20papers/Dreschler%20on%20Rise%20and%20Demise%20of%20NPM.doc. Gerry Stoker is also a clear and critical commentator on the British scene.

Table 4; How each model tackles the four basic questions

Basic Question	A	B	C	D
Co-ordination	Invisible hand	Bottom up	Changing organisations	Managers' self interest
Error detection	Market signals	Political signals	Errors not institutionalised	Accept more error
Civil Service	Replaced with market	Reduce hierarchy	Temp employment	Eliminate regulations
Accountability	Thro' market	Thro' consumer complaints	Not clear	Through ex-post controls

Some consultant perspectives

The previous section mentioned a few of the best-known academic writers in this field. There is, finally, a small group of individuals who work or have worked in or with government as Consultants and who have published extensively about administrative reform drawing on that experience. Four in particular are worth mentioning - Christopher Foster[25] and Geoff Mulgan[26] covering the British experience – the former in a more distanced and theoretical way although he has the longer experience of the role of adviser; Nick Manning[27] and Tony Verheijen[28] as international advisers.

.4 Case-study of UK – permanent revolution!

The last thirty years has seen a large variety of mechanisms introduced to improve the system of public administration. There is, therefore, a very large "toolbox" now available for reformers. The "reforms" which have been attempted by OECD countries over the past 30 years have come in waves or fashions and are listed in box 8 – in chronological order. Basically there has been a process of learning – with "vanguard" countries such as Britain starting an activity, not getting much progress or impact with it and then either modifying it or moving to a different initiative. Slowly some success is generated – and others begin to follow, but with their own modifications in the light of lessons and their distinctive needs.

Box 5; the waves of reform in the UK

1960s – management systems
- strengthening the "**policy analysis**" capacity of government (to get more relevant and better policies)
- opening up the civil service to new talent
- developing the **managerial skills** of the civil service -
- merging Ministries in an attempt to get better **co-ordination**
- trying to strengthen the **supervision** ("watchdog") powers of Parliament or independent audit over the Executive

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[25] The State under Stress – can the hollow state be good government? Co-authored with F Plowden (1996) and British Government in Crisis (2005)

[26] He was Head of the Strategy Unit in Blair's Cabinet Office – and a prolific writer. See his Good and Bad Power –the ideals and betrayals of Government (2006) and a wider piece on policy-making http://www.opendemocracy.net/content/articles/PDF/1280.pdf

[27] Particularly the comparative papers he edited for the World bank's work on PAR commissioned by the Russian Federation in the early 2000s - http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/SD24.pdf

[28] who has focussed mainly on civil service systems – and has not been heard of recently - http://www.google.com/books?hl=ro&lr=&id=ZiHCCR1JxogC&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&dq=Tony+Verheijen&ots=cAgEVyX1n2&sig=ydY3b9m9DUlsTHV7dEgJUoQMbuc#v=onepage&q&f=false

1970s – Budgetary reform and decentralisation
- **budgetary reform** - concerned to ensure a focus less on inputs than on what results specific bits of public spending were supposed to be achieving ("outputs")
- creating **accountable units of activity** : with clear tasks, responsibilities and performance indices
- developing systems of **performance review** of government programmes
- creating larger units of local government (mergers) to allow **transfer of functions to local government**
- "regionalising" certain central government functions ("deconcentration")

1980s – privatizing; increasing accountability
- transferring state assets (such as electricity) to the private sector
- "contracting-out" public services after **competitive bidding** to private companies : for a limited period of time
- "hiving off" Ministry functions to **Agencies** – which focused on a narrow range of activities (eg issuing of passports) and operated with more financial and personnel freedom than state bodies
- More open recruitment
- deregulation

1990s – focus on consumer; and drive for quality
- establishing "**citizen contracts**" and service standards
- new forms of **audit and grant allocation** – to encourage good practice
- purchaser-provider split

2000s - **Modernising Government**
- targets (Performance Service Indicators)
- "best value" control of local government
- performance management

2010 – **Cutbacks – Big Society**

Initially the drive for change came from newly-elected politicians and their advisers – impatient with civil servants they saw living too much in the past. So the emphasis was on opening up the system to new people – and developing new skills. It was then realized that the new civil servants with their new approaches were still working in old centralized systems which crushed their initiatives – so the attention turned in the 1970s to budget reform, new management systems and decentralisation.

The strengthening of local government was a path most European countries followed in the **decade from 1975** – driven by a growing public dissatisfaction with bureaucracy. This produced real results. It has released new energy – and removed both a financial and administrative burden from many central systems[29].

The 1980s, however, saw political impatience with the pace of change. Four new approaches were introduced in many countries –

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[29] Although the UK has gone in the opposite direction and increased its control over local government – even if the more recent types of control are more benign eg league tables and competitions for best practice awards.

- An important range of state activities were seen as better handled by the private sector – and duly privatized. These included housing, electricity, gas and water; and parts of transport and postal systems[30]. And commercial systems such as transport were de-regulated.

And where the nature of the services made it impossible to privatize, they -
- Were managed on fixed-term contracts by private companies who won these contracts on competitive procurement; or
- Were managed by Agencies – which were state bodies given a large degree of commercial freedom
- had "quasi-market" regimes introduced which required clear statements of service outputs

It's important to emphasise that the source of change here was external – from newly-elected politicians like Margaret Thatcher who thought in a radical "out–of-the box" way. She forced through changes which were deeply unpopular within the "establishment". But she won – she broke the forces of inertia.
And the various initiatives required the development of detailed indices of performance and customer satisfaction – which have been used by public administration bodies in the latest wave of reforms.

A later wave puts the **emphasis on the citizen – as consumer**. By the 1990s, citizen expectations of services had risen enormously. They were beginning to make invidious comparisons between the ease of obtaining services in the private sector – shops and bank for example – and the difficulties and indignities with which they were met when they encountered public services.
One of the first – and very simple – ways of dealing with this was the British Citizen Charter scheme which got underway in the early 1990s

1999 Modernising Government

implementation

Then performance!!!

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[30] One of the unforeseen consequences of privatisation was a complex new regulatory system which had to be created to protect the consumer from the abuse of monopoly power.

After another 12 or so years – mainly of experience of work in Central Asia, I had the following to say -

Unknown Regions

The notion of impervious power

This section argues how much of an unknown for western experts the context is which they are supposed to be analysing let alone working in Neighbourhood countries. I have some problems with the terminology. Initially I used the term "kleptocracy" (since the basic feature of the states in most of these countries is legitimised theft) but feedback suggested that this was too general and emotional a term. "Autocracy" was too much of a cliché. "Sultanistic" had been suggested by Linz and Stepan in their definitive overview of transitions in 1995[31] as one of the systems into which totalitarian regimes could transmogrify - but had never caught on as a term. "Neo-patrimonialism" is used in some of the literature on corruption[32]; "neo-feudalism" popped up recently to describe the current Russian system – and "proliferating dynasties" was Richard Youngs' recent striking phrase Suddenly I found myself typing the phrase "impervious power" – and feel that this is a useful phrase which captures the essence of all of these regimes. Impervious to and careless of the penetration of any idea or person from the hoi poloi – stemming from the confidence with which it holds power and abuses it for its own ends.

The imperviousness of power leads to arrogance, mistakes on a gigantic scale and systemic corruption. How does one change such systems? Can it happen incrementally Where are there examples of „impervious power" morphing into more open systems? Germany and Japan in the aftermath of war – and Greece, Portugal and Spain in the 1970s under the attraction of EU accession. But what happens when neither is present???

"Neo-feudalism" in Russia[33]?

Corruption in Russia is a form of transactional grease in the absence of any generally accepted and legally codified alternative. Built under Vladimir Putin, Russia's "power vertical" provides a mechanism for the relatively simple conversion of power into money, and vice versa. At every level of the hierarchy a certain degree of bribery and clientalist parochialism is not only tolerated but presupposed in exchange for unconditional loyalty and a part of the take for one's superiors. The system is based on the economic freedom of its citizens, but cautious political restrictions on these freedoms generate the wealth of the biggest beneficiaries. There is a cascade of floors and ceilings to the restrictions on freedom, so it is a feudalism with more levels than the old kind. But it works fundamentally the same way: The weak pay tribute "up", and the strong provide protection "down."

The Putin phenomenon reflects the fact that Russian leaders of the 1990s preferred a mediocre officer with no noteworthy achievements to become the new President instead of, for example, experienced if imperfect men like Yevgeny Primakov and Yuri Luzhkov, both of whom were quite popular at that time. The rise of Putin, who barely progressed to the rank of lieutenant colonel in Soviet times and who later became famous only for his corrupt businesses in the St. Petersburg city hall, became typical of personnel choices in the 2000s. Inefficient bureaucrats by the hundreds recruited even less able people to occupy crucial positions in their ministries and committees, content in the knowledge that such mediocrities could not compete with or displace

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[31] Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation – southern europe, south america and post-communist europe ; byJuan Linz and Alfred Stepan

[32] see, for example, the useful Anti-corruption Approaches; a literature review (Norad 2009)

[33] http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=939

them. As a result, Russian governance suffers today less from a "power oligarchy" than from a dictatorship of incompetence.

On the one hand, Russia has built a system in which the execution of state powers has become a monopolistic business. It is controlled mainly by friends and colleagues of the system's creator, Vladimir Putin, and faithfully operated by the most dutiful and least talented newcomers. All big national business is associated with the federal authorities or controlled by them; local entrepreneurs still try to bargain with regional bureaucracy. All of the new fortunes made in the 2000s belong to Putin's friends and people who helped him build this "negative vertical." Therefore, in the coming years, competition inside the elite will diminish, the quality of governance will deteriorate further, and what is left of effective management will collapse. Yet to change these trends would nevertheless be a totally illogical step for the political class.

At the same time, a huge social group wants to join this system, not oppose it (in contrast to the final years of the Soviet Union). In a way, this is like wanting to join a Ponzi scheme at the bottom in hopes that one may not stay at the bottom, and that in any event one will be better off than those left outside the scheme altogether. As the de-professionalization of government advances (along with the "commercialization" of state services) competition among non-professionals will grow, since these have never been in short supply. Therefore, in the future a less internally competitive ruling elite will be able to co-opt any number of adherents.

The Russian elite has essentially "piratized" and privatized one of the world's richest countries. It is so grateful for this privilege that it may insist on Mr. Putin's return to the Kremlin in 2012 for 12 more dismal years. By then the young liberal cohorts on whom so many Western analysts pinned their hopes for change will have grown up. The mediocre among them will be part of the system. Most of the best of them, no doubt, will no longer reside in Russia.

Russia seemed to be undergoing some serious reform efforts in the early 2000s[34] - but it is now revealed as donor-deep only. Granted, the EC is no longer working in Russia – but a similar analysis could be conducted of most of the countries in the EC Neighbourhood Programme.

Central Asian governance – centralised, closed and corrupt

After 7 years of my life living and working in Central Asian and Caucasian countries, this is how I found myself describing their essence -

centralised in -
- **policy-making style**; new policy directions are signalled in Presidential Decrees developed in secret – with parliament and state bodies playing no real role in developing policies
- **management style and systems** in state bodies; where old Soviet one-man management still prevails, with crisis-management modes evident and no managerial delegation
- the **absence of conditions for the new local government system** to flourish properly

closed in that -
- There is **little acceptance of pluralist methods of thinking**; for example about the need for separation of power; and challenge to ideas and conventional wisdom
- **Recruitment to civil service** is done on the basis of (extended) family links
- Bright graduates now go either to the private or international sector (including TA)
- Elections are often fixed; It is **difficult for independent**-minded reformers **to stand for election**
- **Censorship** is widespread – whether formal or informal through media being owned and controlled by government and administration figures

corrupt in that significant numbers of –
- Key government and administrative **positions** are bought

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[34] „From Clientism to a „client-centred orientation"; the challenge of public administration reform in Russia" by William Tomson (OECD 2007) is a tough analysis http://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/505/1/ECO-WKP(2006)64.pdf

- public officials (are expected to) accept informal payments for **special favours**
- senior administrative figures have substantial and active economic interests"
- students can and do buy educational **qualifications**

proliferating dynasties and struggling transitions- the Neighbourhood countries
An important book appeared in 2009 which matches the concern I voice in this paper - about the failure of the EU to understand properly the context of neighbourhood countries and to adjust TA accordingly. The book has the marvellous title of <u>Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood – Struggling transitions and proliferating dynasties</u>[35] with chapters on Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan[36], Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Egypt, Algeria, Morocco.
Hopefully its lessons have been absorbed by EC managers responsible for project design in these countries. But it will be sheer accident if more than a handful of experts actually working in these countries will be aware of the book. How do we put up with a system which allows such n negligence? It is utterly unprofessional!

A case-study of a Member country
Easily the most useful paper for those trying to understand lack of governance capacity in many countries we deal with is one written by Sorin Ionita[37]. His focus is on Romania but the explanations he offers for the poor governance in that country has resonance for many other countries -
The focus of the political parties in that country on winning and retaining power to the exclusion of any interest in policy – or implementation process
The failure of political figures to recognise and build on the programmes of previous regimes
Lack of understanding of the need for „trade-offs" in government; the (technocratic/academic) belief that perfect solutions exist; and that failure to achieve them is due to incompetence or bad intent.
The belief that policymaking is something being centered mainly in the drafting and passing of legislation. "*A policy is good or legitimate when it follows the letter of the law – and vice versa. Judgments in terms of social costs and benefits are very rare. This legalistic view leaves little room for feasibility assessments in terms of social outcomes, collecting feedback or making a study of implementation mechanisms. What little memory exists regarding past policy experiences is never made explicit (in the form of books, working papers, public lectures, university courses, etc): it survives as a tacit knowledge had by public servants who happened to be involved in the process at some point or other. And as central government agencies are notably numerous and unstable – i.e. appearing, changing their structure and falling into oblivion every few years - institutional memory is not something that can be perpetuated*"

Ionita adds other "pre-modern" aspects of the civil service – such as unwillingness to share information and experiences across various organisational boundaries. And the existence of a „dual system" of poorly paid lower and middle level people in frustrating jobs headed by younger,

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[35] http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1513213&http://scholar.google.ro/scholar?q=Democracies+Plight+in+the+European+Neighbourhood+%E2%80%93+Struggling&hl=ro&btnG=C%C4%83uta%C5%A3i
[36] Azeri and kazakh systems http://www.forschungsstelle.uni-bremen.de/images/stories/pdf/ap/fsoap107.pdf

[37] Poor policy-making and how to improve it in states with weak institutions (CEU 2006)
http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002838/01/ionita_f3.pdf

Western-educated elite which talks the language of reform but treats its position as a temporary placement on the way to better things[38]. He also adds a useful historical perspective.

"*Entrenched bureaucracies have learned from experience that they can always prevail in the long run by paying lip service to reforms while resisting them in a tacit way. They do not like coherent strategies, transparent regulations and written laws – they prefer the status quo, and daily instructions received by phone from above. This was how the communist regime worked; and after its collapse the old chain of command fell apart, though a deep contempt for law and transparency of action remained a 'constant' in involved persons' daily activities. Such an institutional culture is self-perpetuating in the civil service, the political class and in society at large. A change of generations is not going to alter the rules of the game as long as recruitment and socialization follow the same old pattern: graduates from universities with low standards are hired through clientelistic mechanisms; performance when on the job is not measured; tenure and promotion are gained via power struggles.*

In general, the average Romanian minister has little understanding of the difficulty and complexity of the tasks he or she faces, or he/she simply judges them impossible to accomplish. Thus they focus less on getting things done, and more on developing supportive networks, because having collaborators one can trust with absolute loyalty is the obsession of all local politicians - and this is the reason why they avoid formal institutional cooperation or independent expertise. In other words, policymaking is reduced to nothing more than politics by other means. And when politics becomes very personalized or personality-based, fragmented and pre-modern, turf wars becomes the rule all across the public sector."

In January 2011 *Transition Online* started a series giving some rare detail on the sources of finance of political parties in central europe . They quoted an example of the benefit one contributor received in Romania from a 40,000 payment. I suspect the figures are considerable underestimates – the benefits of political favour in Romania (and Bulgaria) are so great that I doubt whether a 40,000 euros contribution is going to get you very much! The next box is the result of my own, brief research -

Box Case study in anti-corruption and transparency

A recent Minister of Finance came under strong attack for his dishonesty and hypocrisy in concealing eleven sources of income he had. As Minister, he was on the Board of several state companies – and apparently received 96,000 euros a year for attending their Board meetings which he forgot to declare.

The financial asset declaration forms are now compulsory – and available on the internet. A few weeks after the story hit the headlines, the form of a 30 year-old State Secretary in the same Ministry who had been working in the Ministry for more than a year, his form (dated 10 June 2009) told us that he was working in the municipality of Bucharest! However his brief CV (on the EIB website since he was appointed in Feb 2009 to its Board) tells us that he finished the municipal job exactly one year earlier than he completed and signed his declaration - in June **2008**!

His declaration form also tells us that his net **annual** earnings were 50,000 rons (about 1250 euros - perhaps he made a mistake and this is actually monthly?) – although he also admits to owning 25,000 sq metres of land in Bucharest and another 25,000 sq metres of land in Calarasi). Of course he is now a State Secretary – actually earning 9,600 euros amonth! He obviously hasn't been using his Rolex, Breitweiler and other 2 watches (which he values in total at 14,000 euros) and does not therefore realise that it is now mid-September 2010. Rip van Winkle rather than Midas!

Just imagine yourself in such a situation - your boss has been sacked and is being p-ublicly pilloried for having failed to declare external earnings. The first question of a normal person would be "Is my own declaration form in order?" But no, people like this young State Secretary enjoy such patronage (with no experience - he became a State Secretary at the age of 26 after an extended education!) and protection and seem so

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[38] I have strong doubts about the wisdom of the British „fast-track" system which has alienated pub,ic servants in Romania (Young Professional scheme) and was (in 2011) about to be wished upon Bulgaria.

contemptuous of these forms that he doesn't even bother to update his form which understates his income by a factor of 40![39] His out-of-date form does, however, declare some of the additional revenues he earned as a committee member of various state funds

These assets, earnings and concealments reveal systemic immorality which, in Romania's case, seems to be shaped and sustained by the role of its political parties which grabbed significant amounts of property in 1990 and which now determine the career path of young characters such as this State Secretary (nationally and internationally) and take in return a significant part of his earnings. Tom Gallagher[40] is a useful source for more information.

Government proposals to cut pensions caused serious public protests and demonstrations in Romania – and led to the Constitutional Court ruling that this was unconstitutional – perhaps not surprising given the [incredible pensions and other benefits which the judges and other members of the political class enjoy][41]. In one case an ex-judge is known to have a monthly pension of 8,000 euros and generals (of which Romania has an extraordinary number) can expect about 5,000 euros a month. This in a country whose average monthly wage is 150 euros. And a 25% cut in public service wages has gone through – making life even harder for teachers and others. If this is not kleptocracy, what is?

What do we know about the process of changing impervious power?

Incentives for administrative reform
The international community had it lucky for the first 15 years after the fall of the wall – EU accession was a powerful incentive to central European governments and societies to introduce systemic change in their judicial and administrative systems. In non-accession countries the possibilities for user-friendly and effective state bodies are 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 EU's Neighbourhood mechanism in eg Caucasus).

But such competition is rather a blunt incentive compared with that of accession. The imperviousness of power leads to arrogance, mistakes on a gigantic scale and systemic corruption. How does one change such systems? Can it happen incrementally

Where are there examples of „impervious power" morphing into more open systems? 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

[39] It could be useful for civil society and the media to take more interest in these forms
[40] http://www.opendemocracy.net/tom-gallagher/romania-and-europe-entrapped-decade
[41] a recent scandal has shown that Romanian trade union leaders' noses are also in the trough

Denning 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. And, in the immediate post-war years, Germany too developed its sytem of industrial co-determination and strong local government.

But, apart from such post-war scenarios, there are few examples of countries emerging from impervious power to create and operate service-oriented (and as distinct from self-serving) system of public administration. Greece, Spain and Portugal were all quoted in the early 1990s as the models for the transition countries[42] – but (a) they too had the huge pressure of EU accession and (b) their reputatations are now somewhat tarnished.

What can the international community offer?
It was a great tragedy that the neo-liberal agenda of the 1990s discouraged any serious thoughts then about the process of „state-building"[43] – and that this phrase became contaminated in the following decade by its use by occupying forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Fukiyama has put the matter very succinctly in 2007 –

"The post–Cold War era began under the intellectual dominance of economists, who pushed strongly for liberalization and a minimal state. Ten years later, many economists have concluded that some of the most important variables affecting development are not economic but institutional and political in nature. There was an entire missing dimension of stateness—that of state-building—and hence of development studies that had been ignored amid all the talk about state scope. Many economists found themselves blowing the dust off halfcentury-old books on public administration, or else reinventing the wheel with regard to anticorruption strategies. Michael Woolcock and Lant Pritchett talk about the problem of "getting to Denmark," where "Denmark" stands generically for a developed country with well-functioning state institutions.

We know what "Denmark" looks like, and something about how the actual Denmark came to be historically. But to what extent is that knowledge transferable to countries as far away historically and culturally from Denmark as Moldova?
Unfortunately, the problem of how to get to Denmark is one that probably cannot be solved for quite a few countries. The obstacle is not a cognitive one: We know by and large how they differ from Denmark, and what a Denmark-like solution would be; the problem is that we do not have the political means of arriving there because there is insufficient local demand for reform. Well-meaning developed countries have tried a variety of strategies for stimulating such local demand, from loan conditionality to outright military occupation. The record, however, if we look at it honestly, is not an impressive one, and in many cases our interventions have actually made things worse."[44]

International bodies may changed their tune about the role of the state since the simplistic thinking of the – but their arrogance remains. Physical and financial tsunamis have demonstrated the need for an effective – if not strong – states. Typically, 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[45] this.

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[42] Linz and Stepan
[43] a good overview is http://publishing.eur.nl/ir/darenet/asset/17084/GSDRC_paper.pdf

[44] http://www.internationalbudget.org/pdf/Civil_Society_and_Improved_Governance_in_Developing_Countries.pdf
[45] full article at http://relooney.fatcow.com/00_New_1805.pdf

Box ; Good enough governance

> "*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 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[46] –

- *Judicial reform;* to embed properly the principle of the rule of law[47]

- *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[48]

- *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[49].

- *Institutional twinning* – to help build the capacity of those state bodies whose performance is crucial to the implementation of the Acquis Communautaire[50]

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[46] The Governance and Social Development Resource Centre has recently published an interesting overview of „Current trends in governance support"- at http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/HD755.pdf

[47] see http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Rule_of_Law_Temptations.pdf

[48] the history, experience and problems of this are well set out by Andrea Renda in vaious publications such as IA in the EU – state of the art and the art of the state (2006) http://www.ceps.eu/files/book/1291.pdf ; and http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/8/35/45447552.pdf. See also Radaelli http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/ceg/research/riacp/documents/RadaelliEvidenceandpoliticalcontrol.pdf

[49] a rare set of guidelines was given in 2001 by Manning et al http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2005/06/22/000090341_20050622142938/Rendered/PDF/32699.pdf

[50] for a rare insight into the origin of twinning see Tulmets paper quoted at reference 17

- *Development of local government and NGOs* – to try to ensure that a redistribution of power takes place
- *Anti*-corruption strategies[51] – which incorporate elements of the first three of the above
- *Performance measurement and management eg EFQM*
- *report-cards[52]* -

The problem with many of these tools – particularly the 3rd, 4th and 5th - is that <u>their rationalistic basis brings them into immediate conflict with local realities</u> which subverts therefore all too easily their good intentions even if the project had
- beneficiaries with both clout and commitment and
- experts with the relevant skills
- the necessary flexibility.

Fair and transparent recruitment procedures strike at the heart of a Minister's patronage power. Asking questions about the necessity of Ministry functions is like asking turkeys to vote for an early Christmas! It is part of the toolkit of a politician not to reveal or commit too much – not least because most politicians are flying by the seats of their pants
Too many of the tools of those involved in administrative reform are anti-political (and therefore anti-democratic) in their "rationalism". What many technocrats attribute to politics or parties is simply human behaviour! Human behaviour needs to be factored into change efforts!
The contrast between the two ways of thinking is nicely caught in the following diagram.

Diagram 1; rational and political approaches to change

	Functional- rational dimension	Political dimension
Main unit of analysis	The organisation as an entity with certain functional requirements; focus on task-and-work system	Subgroups with self-interest, in shifting coalitions; focus on power-and-loyalty systems
What driving forces are emphasised?	A sense of norms and coherence, intrinsic motivation	Sanctions & rewards, extrinsic incentives
Which image of man is assumed?	Employees concerned with the organisation's interests	Individuals concerned with self-interests
How does change happen?	Through participative reasoning and joint learning, finding the best technical solution	Through internal conflict and external pressure, coalition building, finding the powerful agents who can force positive and negative capacity change
What will change efforts focus on?	Internal systems, structures, skills, technology, communication	Change incentives, fire foes and hire friends, build client and performance pressure.
"Emotional tone" of the analysis	Naïve	Cynical

from Teskey (DFiD 2005)

Impact assessment, for example, is a resurrected form of cost-benefit analysis which was memorably castigated by Peter Self in the 1970s as „Nonsense on stilts"[53]. The research on Impact Assessment by Renda and others shows what an uphill battle it has had in member states and the

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[51] the sociologists and anthropologists have given us a useful critique of the role of anti-corruption work - see, for example, http://www.kus.uu.se/pdf/activities/20040329-30/integritywarriors.pdf

[52] consumer feedback on public services - one of the tools summarised in a useful meniu published by the World Bank in 2005 http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/civilservice/ACSRCourse2007/Session%208/IncreasingGovEffectiveness.pdf
[53] http://john-adams.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2007/11/londons-third-airport.pdf

European Commission – suggesting that it is somewhat naive to expect it to work in transition countries!

How much research – or reflection?
The Court of Auditors' 2007 Report (which provoked the Backbone strategy) was concerned with procurement procedures. It is questions about the substance which are overdue – not so much the „how" as the „what". This section therefore tries to identify relevant critical writing.
With one major exception, there seems to have little reflection over the past 20 years about the nature of and results from the various tools being used in TA programmes[54]. That exception is anti-corruption work – where there has been a huge amount of writing and a fair amount of breast-beating.
Of course lots of case-studies of administrative reform have been published (not least from the NISPAcee Annual Conferences). Most, however, are descriptions of isolated initiatives - unrelated to larger issue of how the capacity of state institutions and local government can realistically be developed in neighbourhood countries.

Administrative Capacity
In 2004 SIGMA published a **critical overview of PAR in the Balkans**[55]. "*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 went 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 old[56]
- 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

It is a pity this paper did not receive wider circulation and discussion. They are all too rare! It would be useful to have an update commissioned in true consultative fashion – drawing on the experience this time on more people on the ground. For example, Craciun gave us recently a useful assessments of the cumulative impact (or lack of it) of **EC Technical Assistance on Romania**[57].

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[54] although The World Bank's published a major evaluation in 2008 – Public Sector Reform; What works and why?
http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTOED/EXTPUBSECREF/0,,menuPK:4664077~pagePK:64829575~piPK:64829612~theSitePK:4663904,00.html
[55] http://www.sigmaweb.org/dataoecd/45/2/34862245.pdf
[56] 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.
[57] http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002856/01/craciun_f2j.pdf

Ionitsa is one of several who has gone so far as to suggest that the resources involved in Technical Assistance actually strenghtens the forces of pre-modernity in the country.[58]

A paper[59] 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' (see section 11.1 below). In 2006 Manning and others, knowing that context, and after an analysis of the lessons of global reforms[60], gave the following advice to the Russian Federation -

- Bear in mind the need for realism and managed expectations
- Start with the basics; focus on fundamental civil service reform
- Create traction (?); through developing the capacity of central agencies
- Seize opportunities by forging partnerships with regional governments, cities etc and encourage pilot reform schemes and experiments at agency or sub-national level
- Create opportunities through judicial use of functional reviews – and stimulate external pressure on the Executive (eg through freedom of information legislation and Ombudsman bodies)

But note that, although these analyses are tring to understand the dynamics of change, they give little attention to the tools being used – rather look at context and stratagems.

In 2006 the World Bank produced a report - **Administrative capacity in the New Member States – the limits of innovation?**[61] – by Tony Verheijen which did look at both – although somewhat superficially. The conclusions were sobering – with many of the early reforms failing to stick – and the report noting the need for

"*the development of a common understanding among politicians that a well functioning civil service is a public good rather than an extension party politics, and the development of a set of principles politicians commit to abide by when addressing civil service staffing issues. Without a commitment by politicians to accept the notion of the civil service as a public good, little progress can be made on this issue. If a common direction does not emerge organically as it did in the Baltic States, a formal process in which politicians and senior officials engage with the academic and business communities on the design of a common vision for the development of the public management system should be put in place*". The reports tried to identify the features which allowes the Baltic states to make more progress. „*The Latvian and Lithuanian reforms were built around a relatively small group of reform-minded officials who managed to gain and retain the trust of politicians regardless of their political orientation. This type of professional, non-partisan elite appears to have been missing in most other states, where expertise was and is politicized (and thus deemed insufficiently trustworthy by opposing political factions), is not*

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[58] The new, post '89 elites, who speak the language of modernity when put in an official setting, can still be discretionary and clannish in private. Indeed, such a disconnection between official, Westernized discourse abroad and actual behavior at home in all things that really matter has a long history in Romania. 19th century boyars sent their sons to French and German universities and adopted Western customs in order to be able to preserve their power of patronage in new circumstances – anticipating the idea of the Sicilian writer di Lampedusa that "everything has to change in order to stay the same" (page 15 of http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00002838/01/ionita_f3.pdf.

[59] "Hard cases and improving governance; Putin and civil service reform" by Pat Grey (2004)

[60] International Public Administration Reform – implications for the Russian Federation (World Bank 2004) http://books.google.com/books?id=iyH3MA48kQAC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

[61] http://books.google.com/books?id=ZiHCCR1JxogC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

available or is not available to government. Technical capacity and consensus thus appear to be strongly intertwined in most of the states concerned, and Latvia and Lithuania have been an exception to this rule, although there is no a clear explanation for this".

Civil Service reform
The **recent SIGMA paper on the undermining of civil service agences** in some of the new EU member states[62] took me back to a couple of papers published almost a decade ago Polidano's 2001 „Why Civil Service Reforms Fail" and Geoffrey Shepherd's 2003 „Why is Civil Service Reform going so badly?". And Francis Cardona's **Can Civil Service Reforms Last? The European Union's 5th Enlargement and Future Policy Orientation** (March 2010) squarely faces up to the problems – making various suggestions , two of which are useful to excerpt -

The internalisation of European principles of public administration should be promoted
The link between professionalism and effective membership of the European Union was not fully internalised by candidate countries. The organisation of international and national networks of politicians and practitioners, international organisations, and non-governmental actors is increasingly needed. These networks should aim to develop operational frameworks fostering reflection, exchanges and proposals on ways and means of creating state institutions that are resilient and reliable enugh to implement EU policies and legislation serving European citizens. The internalisation of European principles of public administration should primarily aim to better institutionalise co-operation between current and future EU Member States. Advantage should be taken of the possibilities provided by article 197 of the consolidated text of the Lisbon Treaty. The new approach made possible by article 197 should also be reflected in the design of technical assistance projects.

.6 Technical assistance projects should promote realistic expectations
The EC should more resolutely take into account the political dimension of reform and foster realistic expectations with regard to the time required to develop and implement highly politically loaded reforms and to develop adequate political instruments to support them. In this context and in the interest of the sustainability of reforms, more attention should be paid to the joint use by the Commission and countries of diagnosis instruments, and in particular of well structured policy dialogues that help foster local political willingness for, and ownership of reform and allow for reform implications to be sufficiently understood, internalised and managed by the countries themselves. Technical assistance designers should be aware of the limited absorption capacity of many of the small-sized current applicants and candidate countries. Furthermore, changing mentalities requires both considerable time and the implementation in *acquis* enforcement bodies of interim solutions such as the promotion of rule-driven behaviour as a democratic value over efficiency as a managerial value[63].

Decentralisation
A 2001 paper by Patrick Heller which looked at the frequently quoted **examples of decentralisation** in Kerala (India), South Africa and Porto Alegre emphasised how unique and strong were the

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[62] http://www.rcpar.org/mediaupload/publications/2009/20100311_SIGMA_sustainability_of_CSR_in_CEE.pdf
[63] http://www.rcpar.org/mediaupload/publications/2010/20100311_SIGMA_can_reforms_last.pdf

pressures for reform there [64]. Decentralisation which comes without that pressure (for example from the recommendations of international bodies and their officials) will be skin deep only – and capable of easy reversal.

Rule of Law
Tom Carothers (US Aid) is a rare voice of logic, clarity, experience and balance in the world of international aid. In 2007, the Journal of Democracy carried an excellent paper by him[65] which looked at some of the global thinking about the institutional development process which affects the Technical Cooperation field. He took exception with the argument that democracy should take second place to the establishment of the rule of law. In 2009 Carothers produced another paper which looked at the experience and discussion of the past decade **with rule-of-law projects**[66]. His paper points out the ambiguity of that term - which finds support from a variety of ideological and professional positions and therefore leads to confused implementation if not state capture. Fukiyama also had a good paper on the subject in 2010[67]

Anti Corruption
There is so a huge literature on the <u>Anti-Corruption work of the past 2 decades</u> – most of it despairing. And quite a few literature reviews of which the most recent is the 2009 Norad one which said that "the literature notes that Parliament, in its capacity as lawmaker but also as a political oversight watchdog and accountability mechanism, has been largely neglected in Rule of Law and anti-corruption efforts"[68]. The title of another <u>Corruption and Anti-corruption – do donors have the right approach</u>?[69] reflects the despair many feel about these efforts[70].

Training
Tens of millions of euros have been spent in the EC on the development of national and local training capacities for public officials in transition countries – accession, neighbourhood and others. Thousands of trainers have supposedly been trained – and almost as many training modules developed. Hundreds of millions of euros have been spent by the EC to underwrite the actual training.

In which transition countries, after all this effort, can we actually point to a robust Institute of Public Administration which is actually helping the state system perform? Lithuania and Poland are often quoted as such bodies – but where else are there financially viable training centres able to draw on experienced trainers whose courses offer the trainees and the state bodies from which

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[64] http://abahlali.org/files/Heller%202001%20Moving%20othe%20State%20The%20Politics%20of%20Democratic%20Decentralization%20in%20Kerala%20South%20Africa%20and%20Porto%20Alegre.pdf

[65] http://yimd.org/documents/T/the_sequencing_fallacy-_how_democracies_emerge.pdf

[66] http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/Rule_of_Law_Temptations.pdf

[67] http://apps.americanbar.org/rol/perspectives_10/transitions_to_the_rule_of_law_by_francis_fukuyama.pdf

[68] <u>Anti-corruption Approaches; a literature review</u> (Norad 2009)

[69] http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/CMI_corruptionanticorruptioneffortsaid.pdf

[70] 2 recent useful papers on the situation in ex-communist countries are "Anti-corruption – what do we know? Research ion preventing corruption in the ex-communist world" by Diane Schmidt in <u>Political Studies</u> 2007 http://www.esri.salford.ac.uk/esri/resources/uploads/File/Conferences/CorruptionMarch07/schmidt%20-%20Paper.pdf and The politics of scandal: Political time horizons, organisational life cycles, and anti-corruption agencies in the 'new' EU member states by Agnes Batory (CEU 2010)

http://soc.kuleuven.be/io/egpa/org/2010Toul/Papers/Agnes_Batory_EGPA%202010.pdf

they come interactive skills which actually makes a measurable impact on the performance both of the official and of their state bodies?

A combination of factors has made this a distant prospect in too many countries –
- Trained trainers escaping to the private sector
- Traditional lectures rather than interactive learning being offered
- Bosses being cynical about the contribution of training
- State bodies lacking the strategic dimension to allow them to develop change strategies with training as an integral element of that chance
- Lack of funding for state training centres
- Confusion about the role of state funding; unrealistic expectation about financial viability
- Confusion about how to carry out needs assessment
- Unrealistic expectations about E-learning
- Lack of an appropriate model for a training system which unites supply and demand elements in a way which ensures relevance.

How these problems might be overcome is an issue I have developed in a separate paper[71].

Implications for the Institution-building agenda

.1 Play the long game – not the logframe
In an extended public letter he wrote in 1990 and published under the title <u>Reflections on the Revolution in Europe</u>[72], Ralf Dahrendorf' made the prescient comment that it would take one or two years to create new institutions of political democracy in the recently liberated countries of CEEC, maybe five to 10 years to reform the economy and make a market economy, and 15 to 20 years to create the rule of law. And it would take maybe two generations to create a functioning civil society there.

A former adviser to Vaslev Havel, Jiri Pehe, referred recently to that prediction and suggested that "*what we see now is that we have completed the first two stages, the transformation of the institutions, of the framework of political democracy on the institutional level, there is a functioning market economy, which of course has certain problems, but when you take a look at the third area, the rule of the law, there is still a long way to go, and civil society is still weak and in many ways not very efficient.*"[73]

He then went on to make the useful distinction between „*democracy understood as institutions and democracy understood as culture. It's been much easier to create a democratic regime, a democratic system as a set of institutions and procedures and mechanism, than to create democracy as a kind of culture – that is, an environment in which people are actually democrats*".

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[71] available on my website - http://www.freewebs.com/publicadminreform/

[72] http://books.google.com/books?id=obx2BX91FQUC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

[73] Is Europe's democratic Revolution Over? http://www.tol.org/client/article/22386-is-europes-democratic-revolution-over.html

These are salutory comments for those with too mechanistic an approach to institution-building. Notwithstanding the tons of books on organisational cultures and cultural change, political cultures cannot be engineered. Above all, they will not be reformed from a project approach based on using bodyshops, cowboy companies and the logframe. My 2006 paper referred to the classic critique of the logframe[74] – and I will return to this point in the conclusion to this paper.

.2 Take a capacity development perspective

I found it interesting that the Court of Auditors latched on to capacity development (giving appropriate references) in its critical 2007 review of Technical Assistance whereas the EC response was a bit sniffy about that perspective –although it has published one Guidance note on the subject[75] – as did the newly-established OECD committee on the subject in 2006. Those who work as consultants in institution building are trained in other subjects and often find themselves reinventing the wheel of capacity development (I certainly did) – so this is an example of where the contractors and EC could be doing more to ensure their consultants are actually up to scratch. Surprisingly, it has been the OECD and the World Bank which (momentarily) talked the most sense. The OECD in 1999 when it commissioned a whole set of studies to explore the HOW of administrative reform and change; and Nick Manning and others a year or so later when, in their work for the Russian Federation, they actually used the language of *„windows of opportunity".*[76] *And perhaps the most useful recent assessment is the World Bank's* <u>Governance Reforms under real world conditions</u> [77] which is written around the sorts of questions we consultants deal with on a daily basis -

1.	How do we build broad coalitions of influentials in favour of change? What do we do about powerful vested interests?

2.	How do we help reformers transform indifferent, or even hostile, public opinion into support for reform objectives?

3.	How do we instigate citizen demand for good governance and accountability to sustain governance reform?

The paper by Matthew Andrews which starts part 2 of the book weaves an interesting theory around 3 words – „acceptance", „authority" and „ability"[78].

Box ; Some preconditions

Is there *acceptance* of the need for change and reform?
- of the specific reform idea?
- of the monetary costs for reform?
- of the social costs for reformers?

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[74] Lucy Earle's 2002 „Lost in the Matrix; the logframe and the local picture"
http://publicadminreform.webs.com/key%20papers/Lost%20in%20the%20matrix%20-%20Earle%20and%20logframe.pdf
[75] http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multimedia/publications/publications/manuals-tools/t106_en.htm
[76]
http://books.google.com/books?id=iyH3MA48kQAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false
[77] http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVACC/Resources/GovReform_ebook.pdf
[78] In the 1980s, we British reformers talked about "generating understanding and commitment" and of the three basic tests for new proposals – Feasibility, legitimacy and support. "Does it work?" "Does it fall within our powers? And "will it be accepted?" Twenty years later the discourse had returned to the problems of implementation.

- within the incentive fabric of the organization (not just with individuals)?

Is there *authority*:
- does legislation allow people to challenge the status quo and initiate reform?
- do formal organizational structures and rules allow reformers to do what is needed?
- do informal organizational norms allow reformers to do what needs to be done?

Is there *ability*: are there enough people, with appropriate skills,
- to conceptualize and implement the reform?
- is technology sufficient?
- are there appropriate information sources to help conceptualize, plan, implement, and institutionalize the reform?

It is Ionita's view that *„constraints on improving of policy management are to be found firstly in terms of low acceptance (of the legitimacy of new, objective criteria and transparency); secondly, in terms of low authority (meaning that nobody knows who exactly is in charge of prioritization across sectors, for example) and only thirdly in terms of low technical ability in institutions"*

A diagram in that World Bank paper shows that each of these three elements plays a different role at the 4 stages of conceptualisation, initiation, transition and institutionalisation and that it is the space of overlapping circles that the opportunity for change occurs. However the short para headed „Individual champions matter less than networks" – was the one that hit nerves. *„The individual who connects nodes is the key to the network but is often not the one who has the technical idea or who is called the reform champion. His or her skill lies in the ability to bridge relational boundaries and to bring people together. Development is fostered in the presence of robust networks with skilled connectors acting at their heart."* My mind was taken back almost 30 years when, as the guy in charge of Strathclyde Region's strategy to combat deprivation but using my academic role, I established what I called the urban change network and brought together once a month a diverse collection of officials and councillors of different municipalities in the West of Scotland, academics and NGO people to explore how we could extend our understanding of what we were dealing with – and how our policies might make more impact. It was, I think, the single most effective thing I ever did.

Box ; 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 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 life[79]. 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"? -

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[79] In 1970, Donald Schon coined the phrase "dynamic conservatism" in <u>Beyond the Stable State</u> to describe the strength of these forces in an organisation.

- Ensuring, by communications, leadership and training, that **people understand** what the reform is trying to achieve – and why it is needed and in their interests
- Development and enforce detailed i**nstruments**
- 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 affected by the changes and how the indifferent or potentially hostile can be brought on side or neutralised[80].

The elephant in the room – the rotten political class

The abstract of this paper was entitled „The Two Elephants in the room" when it was first submitted to NISPAcee since I wanted to focus on two groups who are rarely mentioned in the literature of institution building and yet play impportant roles – politicians and consultants.

It is a truism in the training world that it is almost impossible to get senior executives on training courses since they think they have nothing to learn – and this is particularly true of the political class. Not only do politicians (generally) think they have nothing to learn but they have managed very successfully to ensure that noone ever carries out critical assessments of their world. They commission or preside over countless inquiries into all the other systems of society – but rarely does their world come under proper scrutiny[81]. Elections are assumed to give legitimacy to anything. Media exposure is assumed to keep politicians on their toes – but a combination of economics, patterns of media ownership and journalistic laziness has meant an end to investigative journalism and its replacement with cheap attacks on politicians which simply breeds public cynicism and indifference. And public cynicism and indifference is the oxygen in which „impervious power" thrives!

The one common thread in those assessments which have faced honestly the crumbling of reform in the region (Cardona; Ionitsa; Manning;Verheijen) is the need to force the politicians to grow up and stop behaving like petulant schoolboys and girls. Manning and Ionitsa both emphasise the need for transparency and external pressures. Cardona and Verheijen talk of the establishment of structures bringing politicians, officials, academics etc together to develop a consensus. As Ionitsa puts it succinctly – „*If a strong requirement is present – and the first openings must be made at the political level – the supply can be generated fairly rapidly, especially in ex-communist countries, with their well-educated manpower. But if the demand is lacking, then the supply will be irrelevant*".

Need to break down the intellectual silos

I have made several references in this paper to the absence of dialogue between groups and I was therefore pleased to see a comment in the recent paper from the OECD's Network on Governance's Anti-corruption Task Team report on <u>Integrity and State Building</u> that „*As a result of interviews*

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[80] Roger Lovell has a useful paper on "Gaining Support" which uses the dimensions of "agreement to change" and "trust" to distinguish allies, adversaries, bedfellows, opponents and fence sitters

[81] Britain's Chris Mullin was a very rare example of someone prepared in the two sets of diaries he has published about his life as a parliamentarian and junuir Minister to reveal how pointless these roles had been.

with senior members of ten donor agencies, it became apparent that those engaged in anti-corruption activities and those involved in the issues of statebuilding and fragile states had little knowledge of each other's approaches and strategies".

Departmental silos are one of the recurring themes in the literature of public administration and reform – but it is often academia which lies behind this problem with its overspecialisation.

For example, „Fragile states" and „Statebuilding" are two new phrases which have grown up only in the last few years – and „capacity development" has now become a more high-profile activity.

There are too many specialised groups working on building effective institutions in the difficult contexts I focussed on in section 9 - and too few actually sharing their experiences. We need a road map – and more dialogue!

Inconclusion

"I have long given up on the quest to find the one universal tool kit that will unite us all under a perfect methodology… as they will only ever be as good as the users that rely on them. What is sorely missing in the development machine is a solid grounding in ethics, empathy, integrity and humility"[82].

The need for some humility

This paper has tried to explore *the nature of the knowledge and skill base which a consultant operating in the very specific context of Neighbourhood Countries needs to be effective.* This, in turn, requires us to face up to the following sorts of questions –

- What were the forces which helped reform the state system of the various EU member countries?
- what do we actually know about the results of institution-building (IB) in regimes characterised by Impervious Power?
- Does it not simply give a new arrogant and kleptocratic elite a better vocabulary?
- *Does the "windows of opportunity" theory not suggest a totally different approach* to IB?

But in what sense can we actually say the British or French state systems, for example, have actually reformed in the past 40 years – let alone in a "better" direction?? Of course the rhetoric of reform is in place – which it certainly wasn't 40 years ago.

I vividly remember the writing of organisational analysts such as Charles Lindblom in the 1970s who invented phrases such as "*disjointed incrementalism*" to demonstrate the impossibility of modern public oganisations being able to change radically. Suddenly in the late 1980s, the language changed and everything seemed possible – "Total Quality Management" was a typical phrase. Thatcher has a lot to answer for – in creating the illusion that private management (concepts and people) had the answer.

But, after several waves of major public sector reforms in the last two decades, a lot of British people, for example, would certainly say that things have gone backward – or, with more nuancing, that any improvements are down to technological and financial rather than managerial developments.

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[82] Blog comment on http://aidontheedge.info/2011/02/10/whose-paradigm-counts

And "managerial" covers elements of both macro structures (like Agencies) and management hierarchy and behaviour - which has certainly got worse as the ethic of public service has disappeared.

But who is best placed to make such judgements? Using what criteria? Do we rely on public surveys? But survey work is so profoundly influenced by the sorts of questions asked – and interpretations. Politicians, managers and professionals all have their vested interest in the stance they take – although the older "coalface" professional is perhaps in the best position to judge.

We have a lot of comparative indicators these days about both individual public services (France regularly tops the league tables for health; Finland for education) and governance systems. But they don't seem to have much link with the experiences of ordinary people. A combination of education and media exposure has made the European public lose its traditional deference to those with authority. And increasingly those in public positions are exposed for lacking the basic

character (let alone competence) for the job. And managerialism (and the salaries which go to the top echelons) seems to be at the root of the problem.

I therefore return to the questions I posed in my 2006 paper to the NISPAcee Conference (see box 1 of this paper) and specifically how can those of us who come from such countries dare to give advise to those struggling in "transition" countries? And perhaps some of these countries have themselves reached the position to which older member of the EUs are still in transition? Many of these countries, after all, bought in the mid 1990s a strong version of neo-liberalism (everything for sale) when their taxation systems collapsed and their elites realised what a great legitimisation for their corruption the new Western Weltanschaung gave them! The greed of the financial system has now brought the welfare systems of the older EU member states close to collapse.

Shaky foundations of TA
I have suggested that Technical Assistance based on project management and competitive tendering is fatally flawed – assuming that a series of "products" procured randomly by competitive company bidding can develop the sort of trust, networking and knowledge on which lasting change depends. *I have also raised the question of why we seem to expect tools which we have not found easy to implement to work in more difficult circumstances.*

At this point I want to suggest that part of the problem has to do with the unwillingness and/or inability of those involved in the game to admit how much of a power game it is. The very language of Technical Assistance assumes certainty of knowledge (inputs-outputs) and relationships of power – of superiority ("experts") and inferiority ("beneficiaries"). What happens when we start from different assumptions? For example that -
• Technical Assistance built on projects (and the project management philosophy which enshrines that) may be OK for constructing buildings but is not appropriate for assisting in the development of public institutions[83]
• Institutions grow – and noone really understands that process

[83] Essentially the argument in the classic critique against the logframe Lucy Earle's 2002 „Lost in the Matrix; the logframe and the local picture" http://publicadminreform.webs.com/key%20papers/Lost%20in%20the%20matrix%20-%20Earle%20and%20logframe.pdf

- Administrative reform has little basis in scientific evidence[84]. The discipline of public administration from which it springs is promiscuous in its multi-disciplinary borrowing.

Such criticism has been made of Technical Assistance in the development field – but has not yet made the crossing to those who work in the (bureaucratically separate) world of institution-building in post-communist countries. Once one accepts the world of uncertainty in which we are working, it is not enough to talk about more flexibility in the first few months to adjust project details. This is just the old machine metaphor[85] at work again – one last twist of the spanner and hey presto, it's working!

The table below is taken from 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.

Table ; 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)

Sadly, few younger consultants[86] in the field of admin reform (particularly NPM ones) are familiar with the development literature . The unease some of us 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!

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[84] See the 99 contradictory proverbs underlying it which Hood and Jackson identified in their (out of print) 1999 book
[85] see Gareth Morgan's Images of Organisation for more
[86] 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.

A false model of change?

The Washington consensus was an ideological offensive which was offensively simplistic – and was fairly quickly buried but the arrogance behind it is alive and well. It is time for the soi-disants „experts" to develop some humility. And this humility is doubly due – in the light of work done in the management field by the likes of Russell Ackoff and Margaret Wheatley[87] and in the development community on the implications of complexity theory reflected in UK's Overseas Development Institute.[88]

They could do worse than study Robert Quinn's book <u>Changing the World</u>[89] which is an excellent antidote for those who are still fixated on the expert model of change – those who imagine it can be achieved by "telling", "forcing" or by participation. Quinn exposes the last for what it normally is (despite the best intentions of those in power) – a form of manipulation – and effectively encourages us, through examples, to have more faith in people. As the blurb says – "the idea that inner change makes outer change possible has always been part of spiritual and psychological teachings. But not an idea that's generally addressed in leadership and management trening". Quinn looks at how leaders such as Gandhi and Luther King have mobilised people for major change – and suggests that, by using certain principles, "change agents" are capable of helping ordinary people to achieve transformative change. These principles include; „Look within – be aware of your hypocrisy"; "Embody a vision of the common good"; "Disturb the system"; "Don't try to micro-manage – be aware of systems"; „Entice through moral power".

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[87] See Ackoff's <u>Little Book of F Laws</u> (2006); and Wheatley's <u>Management Science and Complexity Theory</u> (2001)
[88] http://aidontheedge.info/2011/06/06/new-odi-working-paper-on-taking-responsibility-for-complexity/ and <u>Exploring the Science of complexity – ideas and implications for development</u> (2008) http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/583.pdf
[89] http://business.unr.edu/faculty/simmonsb/badm720/actchange.pdf

PART III

?????

I wrote the following summary 25 years ago……about a question which exercised some of us then - the difference between managing services in the public sector – and managing them in the private sector? People who have tried to answer this question have focused on such things as –

- on administrative and management practices – and the inferior performance we generally experience in the public sector
- on the institutional and legal environment which seems to explain this.
- More rarely, on the political and ideological question of what activities belong in the public sector[90].

One set of authors[91], for example, suggested the following distinctive features for public administration bodies -
- accountability to politicians
- difficulty in establishing goals and priorities
- rarity of competition
- relationship between provision, demand, need and revenue
- processing people
- professionalism and line management
- the legal framework.

But, when you think about it, these features (apart from the first) are true of very many large private companies – where competition can be minimal or "fixed" (ie manipulated).

The definitive book on the subject[92] points out that MacDonald's – the burger makers - is a bureaucracy par excellence – a uniform product produced in a uniform way.

So what makes a government bureaucracy behave so differently and be seen so differently?
Three reasons - according to Wilson. Government agencies –
- can't lawfully retain monies earned;
- can't allocate resources according to the preferences of its managers;
- must serve goals not of the organisation's choosing, particularly relating to probity and equity.

They therefore become constraint-oriented rather than task-oriented. He goes on to suggest that agencies differ managerially depending on whether their activities and outputs can be observed; and divides them into four categories (production; procedural; craft; and coping agencies).

In the 1980s the term "public management" began to appear – replacing that of "public administration". Behind that lay[93] a view that private management systems, practices and skills were needed to shake up the system and make it more relevant to the needs of the citizen (more "customer-friendly" in the business language which has become increasingly used).

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[90] The economic literature refers to "public goods" or "natural monopoly".
[91] Handbook of Public Services Management Pollitt C and Harrison S (Blackwell 1992)
[92] Wilson JQ Bureaucracy - what Government Agencies do and why they do it (Basic Books 1989)
[93] Public Management in the Central and Eastern European Transition – concepts and cases by G Wright and J Nemec (NISPace 2002)

A new way of looking at how to operate public services was enshrined in something called "New Public Management" which swept the world [94] but which has, in the last few years, received a rather more critical appraisal[95]. Hood96 spells out in more detail the different elements of NPM –

No.	Doctrine	Meaning	Typical Justification
1	Hands-on professional management of Public Organisations	Visible management at the top; free to manage	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility
2.	Explicit standards and measures of performance	Goals and targets defined and measured as indicators of success	Accountability means clearly stated aims
3.	Greater emphasis on output controls	Resource allocation and rewards linked to performance	Need to stress results rather than procedures
4.	Shift to disaggregation of units	Unbundle public sector into units organised by products with devolved budgets	Make units manageable; split provision and production; use contracts
5.	Greater competition	Move to term contracts and tendering procedures	Rivalry as the key to lower costs and better standards
6	Stress on private sector styles of management practice	Move away from military-style ethic to more flexible hiring, pay rules, etc	Need to apply "proven" private sector management tools
7.	Stress on greater discipline and parsimony	Cut direct costs; raise labour discipline	Need to check resource demands; do more with less

The texts on the "new public management" (NPM) are generally unsatisfactory. They consist generally of breathless reviews of the various changes which have taken place in the organisation of public services (particularly Anglo-Saxon) - contrasting the badness of the old with the vigour of the new. Sometimes, but rarely, an attempt is made to assess the impact on the consumer of the reforms. Even more rarely does anyone try to explore whether and why certain services are "non-marketable" and therefore need to remain "public. McKevitt[97] identifies three distinctive features to core "public services" -
- differential information between providers and suppliers
- the provision of socially important and interdependent services

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[94] D Osborne popularised the new approach in Reinventing Government) A good overview of the concepts and practical issues can be found in The State under Stress - can the Hollow State be Good Government? by Foster C and Plowden (Open University Press 1996)

[95] Mark Moore's Creating Public Value – strategic management in government – apart from being one of the most practically helpful books for public managers – contains in its introduction a very good overview of the literature (Harvard 1995)

[96] In The Art of the State (OUP 1998)

[97] McKevitt D Managing Core Public Services (Blackwell 1998)

- the concept of professionalism as a relation of trust and agency between providers and clients.

McKevitt also notes the three very different reasons (sovereignty, natural monopoly and social welfare) for the functions remaining in the public sector.

How much is really new?
In all the excitement of new rhetoric, it is all too easy to imagine that we are confronting these issues for the first time: in fact argument about how to run government and public services goes back many centuries and the present debates are in some ways a replay, in different language, of those debates. Whilst the technology and skills have certainly presented us with new opportunities, perhaps a touch of humility or sense of history might help us in these frenetic times?

1988 saw the publication of a particularly interesting and strangely neglected book[98] which took such a perspective and managed to produce 99 different "solutions" which had been advanced at one time or another to the issue of improving administrative performance.

If ever we needed a lesson in the need for a measure of scepticism toward the enthusiastic marketing of the latest management fashion, we have it in the brief list of these 99 solutions - many of which happily contradict one another. Sometimes the need for continuity in staffing is stressed: sometimes the need for turnover. Sometimes openness; sometimes secrecy.

Hood and Jackson suggest that we tend to use three general "stereotypes" in our thinking about organisations -

	Military Stereotype	**Business Stereotype**	**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

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.[98] <u>Administrative Argument</u> by Hood and Jackson (now out of print)

Getting Government Reform taken seriously

We are increasingly angry these days with politicians, bureaucrats and government – and have developed an appetite for accounts and explanations of why our democratic systems seem to be failing. The Blunders of our Governments; and The Triumph of the Political Class are just two examples of books which try to satisfy that appetite.

The trouble is that **the academics** and **journalists** who produce this literature are outsiders – so it is difficult for them to give a real sense of what scope for manoeuvre senior policy-makers realistically have. **Political Memoirs** should help us here but never do since they are either self-congratulatory or defensive – with the Diaries of people such as Chris Mullen, Alan Clark and Tony Benn being exceptional simple because they were outside the magic circle of real power.

Two rare and brave attempts by politicians to pull aside the curtain of power in a systematic and objective way are How to be an MP; by Paul Flynn and How to be a Minister – a 21st Century Guide; by John Hutton
Various problems make it exceedingly rare for British senior civil servants to publish memoirs.

This leaves the important category of **consultants** and **think-tankers** to turn to – with Michael Barber's How to Run a Government so that Citizens Benefit and Taxpayers don't go Crazy (2015) and Ed Straw's Stand and Deliver – a design for successful government (2014) being recent examples. John Seddon's Systems Thinking in the Public Sector – the failure of the Reform regime and a manifesto for a better way (2008) and Chris Foster's British Government in Crisis (2005) are older examples.

Barber's should be the most interesting since he has made such a name for himself with his "deliverology" but I find it difficult to take him seriously when he doesn't include any of the other authors in his index. Straw's is an angry book which fails even to include an index – let alone mention of Seddon's or Foster's books. The Unspoken Constitution was a short spoof published in 2009 by .Democratic Audit which probably tells us as much about the British system of power as anyone….And, however, entertaining "In the Thick of it"; and the British and American versions of "House of Cards", they hardly give a rounded account of policy-making in the 2 countries.

Curiously, those wanting to get a real understanding of how systems of government might actually be changed for the better are best served by going to the theories of change which have been developed in the literature on international development eg the World Bank's 2008 Governance Reform under Real-World Conditions – citizens, stakeholders and Voice and its People, Politics and Change - building communications strategy for governance reform (2011) - in particular the fold-out diagram at the very end of the 2008 book

Further Reading
Canadian examples are here and here
Good Governance criteria; also interesting diagram
"governance" discourse in India

16 June 2017

Stand and Deliver – a new design for successful government ??

I have been reading these past 2 days an important tract which appeared last year and which pillories the state of British government - Stand and Deliver. It suggests that the performance of the British government system is so poor as to require a total overhaul and indeed formal "Treaty". The BBC gives good coverage to the author in this piece

> His more radical ideas are based around bringing in new feedback systems into the working of governments. He likens government at present to a gardener planting seeds, telling people what the garden will look like but then never actually checking whether or not they have grown as planned (instead spending lots of time checking on the sharpness of a spade or the water efficiency of a hose). That is in contrast to the private sector, which checks on the outcomes of spending continually.
>
> A similar discipline needs to come into government, he says.
> There has been progress with the National Audit Office, the Office for National Statistics and select committees, he says, but he wants them all brought under the umbrella of the second chamber (the House of Lords at the moment) becoming a "Resulture" able to score policies and kill off those ones which are not working.

I call this a "tract" since it is not the normal "run of the mill" academic, political or technocratic treatise. Its author is thoroughly familiar with the political and technocratic worlds (less so the academic) and is very angry with what he has experienced……
So it is a very individual take on the British system of government – despite his consultancy experience in other countries and his emphasis on the need for "benchmarking", only the Swiss system really seems to rate for him (and the Canadian experience of health reform).

My first reaction as I read the opening pages was to try to remember when I had last read such a diatribe……

- Simon Jenkins' "Accountable to None – the Tory Nationalisation of Britain" (1996) and Thatcher and Sons (2006) were both powerful exposes of the excesses of the 1979-2006 governments;
- Christopher Foster's British Government in Crisis (2005) was more measured and brought his particular rich blend of academia and consultancy.
- It took a search of the latter's book to remind me of the title and author of the famous expose of civil service waste which had first attracted Margaret Thatcher's attention - Leslie Chapman's Your Disobedient Servant (1979).
- And 2005 saw the launching of the Power Inquiry into the discontents about British government……

Oddly, however, none of these books appear in Straw's three page and rather idiosyncratic bibliography (nor a clutch of recent books on government "failure").

The book itself promises to give an "organisational" rather than political take on the subject – which suited me perfectly as this has been my perspective since I first went into "government" (local) in 196.8 – absorbing the more radical challenge to hierarchies and power…..

Faced in turn with the challenge in 1975 of becoming one of the senior figures on the new Strathclyde Region, I used my position to develop more open and inclusive policy-making processes – extending to junior officials and councillors, community activists.
With a huge Labour majority we could afford to be generous to any opposition! And, even under Thatcher, the Scottish Office Ministers were conciliatory – "partnership" was the name of the game we helped develop and was most evident in the <u>success of the "Glasgow" revival.</u>
Straddling the worlds of academia and politics, I was able to initiate some important networks to try to effect social change

It was this experience of cooperating with a variety of actors in different agencies I took with me when I opted in 1990 to go into consultancy work in central Europe – to help develop the different sort of government capacity they needed there……then, for 8 years in Central Asia. I was lucky in being allowed to operate there to take advantage of "windows of opportunity" and not be hogbound with the stupid procurement rules…but I became highly critical of the EC development programme as you will see in this 2011 paper <u>The Long Game – not the Logframe</u>

Throughout this entire 45 year-period, I have been keeping up with the literature on change and public management – so am intrigued by this book of Ed Straw's which promises to bring an organisational perspective to the frustrations we all have with government systems…….
It was published more than a year ago; has a dedicated website but, from my google search, seems to have gone down like a lead balloon.

I have chosen the following questions to use in my assessment of the book -
- "resonating" with the times?
- a "convincing" argument?
- demonstrated "feasibility"?
- opposition identified?
- sources of support?

21 m.ay 2015

"*Stand and Deliver*" is an angry book - which reflects the public's loss of trust in the political system.....

It has attracted surprisingly few reviews so let me start with the BBC coverage which, as you would expect, is simply a summary of the book's blurb they were given –

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The thrust of Ed Straw's book is that the current system of government is too adversarial, fails to include any feedback on whether policies have succeeded, gives little choice to voters and suffers from a civil service which hampers politicians' attempts to get things done. "Between elections, the places where power resides are the news media running their various agendas, good and bad, political and business - large companies and industries with expert preferential lobbyists and party funders, dealing with a political and civil service class mostly ignorant of their business," he says.

He says governments "limp on with a mixture of muddle, error, howlers and the occasional success" and politicians "rarely work out before getting power that it's bust". He says he has come to the conclusion that the civil service cannot be reformed on its own, because reform would involve transferring more power to the government, which would "make it worse because they have too much power already".

So his solution is a revamp of the whole system of government.
The better-known reforms that he wants to see include proportional representation and state funding of political parties - with a ban on large donations - to promote competition among parties and make sure that individuals or interests cannot buy influence.
Swiss-style referendums would be held on a more regular basis, while governments would be limited to four-year terms and prime ministers not allowed to serve more than eight years (to stop the "autocracy cap" where a leader with pretty much unchecked power becomes autocratic and "wants to stay for ever because you can't imagine life without that power").

His more radical ideas are based around bringing in new feedback systems into the working of governments. He likens government at present to a gardener planting seeds, telling people what the garden will look like but then never actually checking whether or not they have grown as planned (instead spending lots of time checking on the sharpness of a spade or the water efficiency of a hose).That is in contrast to the private sector, which checks on the outcomes of spending continually.

A similar discipline needs to come into government, he says. There has been progress with the National Audit Office, the Office for National Statistics and select committees, he says, but he wants them all brought under the umbrella of the second chamber (the House of Lords at the moment) becoming a "Resulture" able to score policies and kill off those ones which are not working.

The civil service would be radically revamped with it retaining a smaller administrative role, but in other areas there would no longer be a permanent civil service. Instead specialists with knowledge of, say, the railways, would be brought in to contract, manage and regulate that industry.

Ed Straw says that his application of organisational theory onto how the UK government works is unique. He has also strong views on the Labour Party's structure. He says a lot of Labour's problems could have been avoided if they had a better process for challenging or replacing a leader, saying the Conservative system is

much more efficient. It would have allowed Mr Blair to be removed before the 2005 election, for Gordon Brown to have gone within a year of taking office and John Smith to have led Labour in 1992 rather than Neil Kinnock, he says. But whatever the changes within parties, he says that successive governments have shown that nothing much will change without the wider reforms he is suggesting.

Apparently this is because his is an "an organizational perspective" (page 10) But what exactly does he mean by this?
He seems to mean the "contestability" brought by competition between commercial companies (when it is allowed to exist) thereby **raising a couple of critical questions** - the first being the hoary question which occupied some of us in the 1980s – the extent to which it was possible to apply the same management principles in public and commercial organisations. One the Professors on my MSc programme wrote one of the classic articles on this – with a strong warning about the scale of the difference between the two contexts and their measures ("profit" and "public interest")

The second question is - Has the contestability factor not been at the heart of New Public Management (NPM) which the UK has had for the past 20-odd years?
Ed Straw has been a senior partner in the Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) Management Consultancy for many years – and <u>gave evidence</u> to the British Parliament's Select Committee on Public Administration in 2005 which included strong support, for example, for the privatization of the Prison Service…and talked loosely about the need for further "politicization" of the Civil Service. In the name of "accountability"…..

His Demos pamphlet of the same year – <u>The Dead Generalist</u> (2005) – spelled out in more detail what he meant. Apparently he wants more contestability…..but his book is not happy with NPM – on page 36 he says simply that "*the developers of NPM omitted some essential components of the original conception".*
On the same page he refers to the

"countless diagrams attempting to represent the unified field theory of public sector reform developed in central units like the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit and Delivery Unit from international management consultancies…..some are worth reading and some so limited as to be aberrant".

And that's it! He divulges no more – except to tell us to read Norman Dixon's "<u>On the Psychology of Military Incompetence</u>" (1976), Peter Drucker, Charles Handy, Michael Porter, Peter Senge and 3 others I have only vaguely heard of….So what are the essential components of the NPM model which the British designers missed? We're not told….
After at least ten years musing and writing on such matters, I would have expected more……

footnote; the subtlety of the book's main title may be lost on some of my foreign readers - it is the demand that came from the highway robbermen of the past when stopping stage-coaches - "deliver your valuables……" But "delivery" (implementation) is also the bit of policy-making which governments (let alone consultants) <u>have been identifying for decades</u> as the key weakness of the government process

28 May 2015

You have nothing to lose but your Chain.....-link Fences

The last few posts may have appeared to have had different themes but, I realise, were linked to the basic difficulty we seem these days in establishing common ground about the state of our societies/systems – or agreeing actionable programmes of change.

I mentioned the failure of Ed Straw's book to mention – let alone begin to analyse – the important contributions which have come from other consultants/academics about the sad state of the machinery of British government. Everyone – left/right; Ministers/civil servants; Think Tanks/consultants/ economists/ sociologists/ political scientists – has their own narrative – and all talk past one another.....and the citizen…
Almost no one tries to establish a common denominator about this – let alone alliances.

I appreciate that this is perhaps more of an Anglo-American thing than European – where there is broader acceptance of the need for negotiation and coalition.
But the academic specialisation which Scialabba was talking about – plus the niche marketing which the various experts (their institutions and publishers) are compelled to take part in in order to make any impact in the modern Tower of Babel we all now inhabit - has also affected the "consensual" aspect of European society….We are confused and cynical…..

A couple of books which were delivered just a few hours ago make the point - <u>Governing Britain: Power, Politics and the Prime Minister</u> was published in 2013 by a well-known British academic (Patrick Diamond) and is the detailed story of how New Labour tried to modernise the machinery of government over its 13 years. <u>Who Governs Britain</u>? is a short book published this year by one of the doyens of British political science (Anthony King) and explores the question whether "our system of government is fit for purpose".
Both books have copious indexes and bibliographies which I immediately checked for mention of the books of practical men such as Ed Straw or John Seddon. What do I find?

- No mention of these two – although Chris Foster (with an academic background) does rate 2 entries in Diamond's book.
- Michael Barber (Tony Blair's Education guru and the inventor of "deliverology") is the only significant change-agent to get real space in Diamond's book.
- The important Power Inquiry of 2005-2010 oddly gets no mention in King's book and only 2 references in Diamond's index.
- Democratic Audit's satirical <u>The Unspoken Constitution</u> (2009) which gives us a very pointed critique of the concentration of irresponsible power of the British system is, of course, totally ignored.

What conclusion do I draw from this? Simply that academics reference only one another (within their own narrow discipline) – and disdain to mention the outputs of mere practitioners (if they even bother to read them).
And practitioners (civil servants/politicians) don't have the temperament or patience to read and distill what the academics write.
Consultants, journalists and Think-Tankers, however, are the sort of intermediaries who should be capable of selection and summary - but have their own interests, disdain most writing (Think-Tankers being an exception) and bring instead their particular brand of snake oil…….

One of the (few) heartening sections of Naughton's book about the Internet is his chapter on the "media eco-system" in which he produces several case-studies of the upstaging of the mainstream media by bloggers who had more specialized knowledge than the journalists.
There are an increasing number of (older) bloggers who have the time and inclination to challenge what the power elites are doing – but they have to network more – and sharpen their message.

Perhaps my contribution is to try to identify those who are working in my field(s)….and try to get more of them working together and developing a higher profile???
Coincidentally, another book in the packet which arrived this afternoon offers an approach which might help pull ourselves out of our confusion – Ben Ramalingham's Aid on the Edge of Chaos which applies systems theory to a range of complex problems faced in most parts of the world.

Saturday, May 30, 2015

How to Run a Government

Michael Barber's 2015 book How to Run a Government has what to a Brit is a rather off-putting American sub-title – "so that citizens benefit and taxpayers don't go crazy"
But, for at least 5 years, he was Blair's right-hand man in the Cabinet Office trying to "deliver" better performance of carefully selected targets mainly in the educational and health sectors and has, for the past decade, used this experience to build a global reputation as a "delivery" or "implementation" guru in various parts of the world – not least Canada and the Punjab. And he is one of a small (if growing) number of people who has been able to both straddle the worlds of government and consultancy and write coherently……..
So I didn't hesitate to buy the book from Bucharest's Anthony Frost Bookshop – even although it failed my "standing on the shoulders of giants" test (ie its - short – reading list failed to mention some important texts from other practitioner/academic/consultants such as Christopher Foster and John Seddon let alone such writers as Chris Hood and Pollitt; Robert Quinn and the entire literature of change management)

But I'm at page 170 and thoroughly enjoying it – despite the occasional over-indulgent self-referencing….. Hardly surprising that he's made a fair number of enemies in his time but his

straightforward language and description of the various techniques and working methods he's found useful in the last 20 years of advising political leaders in various parts of the world I find both useful and refreshing.

In 1999 I pulled together my own scribbles about reform efforts – for a new audience I was then facing in central Asia - In Transit – some notes on good governance. This was just as New Labour's Modernising Government effort (which lasted until 2010) was getting underway. I followed these with great interest although the ex-communist context in which I was working was a very different one – see my "The Long Game – not the logframe" (2012) for its assessment of the chances of Technical Assistance programmes making any sort of dent in what I called (variously) the kleptocracy or "impervious regimes" of most ex-communist countries.

There are surprisingly few reviews for a book which has been out for some 18 months which says a lot to me about academics, consultants and journalists…..

8 November 2016

video
http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/events/how-run-government-so-citizens-benefit-and-taxpayers-dont-go-crazy
http://followersoftheapocalyp.se/any-data-will-do-a-review-of-michael-barbers-how-to-run-a-government/

A Good Review
The opening of the final chapter, which essentially retells the Old Testament story of Joseph in Egypt using the language of modern public policy, was perhaps the moment where the absurdity of the edifice won out and tears of laughter ran down my face.
Pharaoh's dream as interpreted by Joseph – what we would now call a Treasury Forecast – suggested that […] boom and bust had not yet ended.
[…] draw a trajectory for gathered corn, which will result in a store of at least 140% of the baseline. Then strengthen the delivery chain.
[…] He built a data system and started counting the grain (or had someone like Tony O'Connor count it for him). Barber, chapter 7.
You get the idea.

Barber's conception of "delivery" describes the frictionless movement of an idea between the head of a politician and the headache of a junior public servant – but the book spends as much, if not more time in ensuring that information – of a sort – is returned and aggregated to keep said politician engaged in their project. For an avowed attempt to define a science, Barber's standards of data are low – he argues that even poor quality data is better than no data. A scientist would proceed with more care.

Structured as a manual, and cutely decorated with 57 key "rules" (largely kept under 140 characters), the text itself has a self-conscious and self-effacing wit that the TED-style "appeals to anecdote" largely undermine. Neither realpolitik nor history has the clarity required to illustrate the clean lines of deliverology – many of the stories and asides undermine themselves in their completion.

I've written a lot about Barber and deliverology. I was scathing about the many flaws in "Avalanche is Coming", oddly moved by the honesty of "Instruction to Deliver". "How to run a government" sits in between the two: some of the content of the latter presented in the style of the former (though much better referenced).

As a system of government, deliverology has on the surface an apolitical appeal. It comes across as the art of getting stuff done in the public sector – perhaps a way for a latter-day Jim Hacker to best Sir Humphrey. However, like Sir Michael's own career, (from the CBfT delivery of his much-vaunted literacy hour onwards) much of this entails going outside the public sector entirely.

It is an expression of our current political consensus to the extent that this is hardly worthy of remark. It is a description of the big data, small government, permanent austerity neo-liberal consensus. As a myth, it defined and shaped the reality of public service long before it was expressed in this form.
It is a world-view that contains no possibility of genuine dissent. Even the idea of the "red team" – taken from military planning techniques (and Barber's obvious delight with efficient military delivery is deeply disquieting given his Quaker upbringing.) is as a licensed cynic – a court jester improving rather than vetting an unstoppable plan.

So what can we learn about the myth and the flawed reality of public service delivery-as-a-"science"? Three select quotes give us a path in to the darker side of the deliverology mindset:
"More for less trumps investment for reform" (rule 50)
"Trust and Altruism is popular but doesn't work (other than in unusual circumstances)" (rule 15)
"I am not recommending the content here to blatant autocracies or "extractive regimes" interested purely in enriching themselves, though of course I can't be sure that some of them won't read the words." (Introduction)

Efficiency, as I am sure Sir Michael would agree, is not the same as efficacy. And "more with less" does not mean the current offer plus more, it means a shift in spending and a shift in delivery. [Writing today in the FT](£), he repeats his contrast between the Blairite "investment for reform", and the austerer coalition demand for better results at lest cost". Not only is this economically illiterate (currently the national deficit is roughly the same as it was in '97, growth in GDP quarter by quarter is slightly higher…), it also betrays a presumption towards smaller government and privatisation that reveal his Blairite, or indeed Thatcherite, roots.

Trust and Altruism refers to any governance regime with a preference for professional expertise over managerial oversight, and it is telling that despite a clear argument to the contrary (presented around schools in Finland) such methods are presumed never to work. Mere expertise has no answer to measurement and prescription – and again for reforming purposes we are directed to other agenda based around market narratives, making Barber possibly the only writer in history to marry the biblical story of the patriarch Joseph with the ideas of the patriarchal Sir Michael Joseph.

Finally, the point about autocracies seems like a disclaimer but hides something more problematic – delivery by control and measurement is (historically) the management methodology of the autocrat.
Barber's career and ideas illustrate the gradual drift of the centre-ground of British politics to the authoritarian right. You should read this book, but you should read it as a cautionary tale of how far down the road of managerial public service we have come, and as a spur to consider how and where we can turn in another direction.

http://www.cpsrenewal.ca/2016/02/impossible-conversations-how-to-run.html

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I have mixed feelings about this book. On the one hand, it's genuinely useful. As much as we might like to, most of us public servants don't spend our days up in the theory clouds; we have deliverables, deadlines, and performance expectations. Once in a blue moon, we might have a few days to grapple with and devise solutions for a complicated issue that wasn't even on the radar a few weeks before. Barber's book is practical in that way: it deals with the nitty gritty of policy and program delivery, and provides simple, road-tested conceptual tools that can help you think through those tough situations. I've already found myself referring to his

approach in meetings and referring to some of his charts while writing up some documents - the same can't be said of, say, the Evgeny Morozov book, much as I appreciated it.

Another reason I enjoyed the book is that it serves as an effective wake-up call for the public service to get its own house in order. Barber humorously describes the silly things us bureaucrats do all the time, from the point of view of a politician or staffer - think of our attachment to the status quo, our tendency to claim that something can't be done, our proclivity to engage in ridiculous turf wars, our stalling tactics, etc. If we agree that these kinds of behaviours are pervasive and counter-productive, we won't be able to rely on 'deliverology' to save us, given that there wouldn't be delivery units for most of the things the government does. So if the Government of Canada as a whole is going to become the kind of modern, high-performing, data-literate organization that Barber is envisioning, then bureaucrats will have to deal with some of our own purely internal performance issues in a more ambitious fashion (all within the framework of our delegated authorities, yada yada yada). Better diagnosing the nature of the silliness, and the possible solutions the bureaucracy could reasonably implement on an internal basis, is a topic for another day.

There's also a lot I didn't like about this book. My main irritant is that Barber is a poor social scientist. He usually conforms to a 'logic model' vision of government, where, for any given policy problem (e.g., low literacy rates) you just need to find the one right lever to pull (i.e., forcing teachers to teach one new literacy class a week in elementary school). Um.. hold on a minute. For most policy issues, there's a lot more going on under the hood - I dunno, maybe persistent social exclusion driven by economic inequality, systemic discrimination, or uncontrollable economic forces over which governments have little to no control? (Pick your poison.) So yes, I was somewhat disturbed by Barber's tendency to make sweeping statements about complicated situations, without much in the way of caveats. So you might want to listen to Barber to decide on how to 'run a government', but take his opinions on what the actual policy responses should be with a massive grain of salt. (Don't get even me started on his frequent claims that 'the markets vs. governments debate is over' - the guy's a pro-market social liberal with light redistributive tendencies. Which is fine; just don't try to make a drive-by 'end of history' argument which passes that off as being the only viable political/policy approach out there.)

Argh, there's a ton of other things that annoyed me about this book, but I want to keep this review 'lengthy', as opposed to 'unreasonably lengthy', so I will leave it at that - I won't even address Barber's constant humble-bragging and lack of critical self-reflection, or the unsatisfactory way in which Barber discussed the risks of over-relying on metrics (I'll leave Prez to do the explaining, from way back in 2004). Another topic I would have liked to explore is that ultimately, Barber really only addresses a small sliver of what policy implementation actually involves (a lot of the times it seems to comes down to tracking bureaucrats in order to scare them into coming up with new solutions, but he doesn't often tell you what the actual solutions were), but I'm a slow writer, and a man has to have evening hobbies that go beyond reviewing books.
   John Kenney

I liked the book and agree with Nick that Barber's focus on delivery is refreshing. Here are a few things on my mind in relation to how it might be applied, particularly at the federal level:

One of the things that makes the "science of delivery" different than, say, federal public administration via the Management, Resources and Results Structure (MRRS) and the Management Accountability Framework, is that deliverology focuses government on strategy and priorities. The point is not to "deliverology" everything. In theory at least, it requires a government to make deliberate choices, understand where it's going and how it'll know if it's making progress getting there, and if not, learning and adapting as needed. It's hardcore when it comes to assessing whether or not the government has the capacity to deliver on what it sets out to do. While some of that may sound like the good intentions of the MRRS or "integrated planning", deliverology takes it to a new, concentrated level with political engagement and leadership.

Deliverology strikes me as a convergent practice. It picks up at a point where a government has identified its priorities and what it intends to do to achieve them. In the context of complex public problems (aka "wicked problems"), new and emerging policy approaches are attempting to embed divergent and integrative thinking, user research and experimentation into the policy design process in advance of converging on solutions. If well-executed, deliverology could expose the (non)effectiveness of intended policy solutions earlier in the policy cycle and open up opportunities for creative problem-solving and experimentation. I like how it builds in (some) stakeholder engagement, rigourous (enough) performance measurement and monitoring, learning and iteration to rapidly improve and address delivery problems as they arise. It's an action-oriented and continuous learning approach. Arguably, governments need more of that assuming they're open to learning, acknowledging when things aren't going well and adapting their approach to hit the mark.

I'm intrigued by the application of deliverology at the federal level. The UK and Ontario are oft-cited examples of deliverology in action, and in both cases, they are arguably closer to where the rubber hits the road as far as delivering policy interventions directly to citizens go. I'm writing generally here and it will depend on the policy priorities and strategies in question. The government and implicated jurisdictions are open to challenge conventional assumptions of how stakeholder arrangements may work to deliver the public goods, at least in theory (possibly in practice?).

Deliverology is not a magic bullet. Barber doesn't present it as one so let's not get cult-ish about it. There's a lot of good stuff to learn and apply, but note that the same federal government that appears eager to apply its principles and practices has also been clear on the need to create the time and space for (super)forecasting, designing citizen-centred digital services, and experimenting with new policy instruments and approaches, including behavioural and data-driven insights, and engaging Canadians via crowdsourcing and open data initiatives. It remains to be seen how consistent and compatible those approaches are with deliverology, which, as Barber writes, "...is still in its infancy". He concludes the book with three rules on the future of delivery:

- *Big data and transparency are coming (prepare to make the most of them);*
- *Successful markets and effective government go together (avoid the false dichotomy); and,*
- *Public and social entrepreneurship will become increasingly important to delivering outcomes (encourage it).*

Deliverology is not a linear approach although it can sometimes come across as one. While Barber's focus is intentionally on delivery here, there's a continuous learning loop built into it that, if executed effectively, could yield insights that inform ongoing and future policy design and delivery approaches.

I've added "in theory", "if executed effectively" and "assuming that…" in a number of places above. I agree with Francis that Barber oversimplifies things a lot to demonstrate the lessons (or "rules") for government. I like many of them in principle (there I go again), but if and how deliverology is applied to influence complex systems and human behaviours both within the public service and beyond may depend on its openness to adapt where necessary to the policy contexts and needs of numerous implicated users and stakeholders at different times and scales.

   Kent Aitken

Er… well done, gentlemen. I'm getting to this joint review late, and Nick, Francis, and John have covered a lot of ground in spectacular fashion. I only have a handful of points to add.

One is to re-emphasize Nick's angle, which is that part of the reason this book was so interesting was the possibility that it's about to influence public administration in Canada - possibly in tangible, day-to-day ways for some public servants. That said, during the discussion I also cautioned that one bureaucrat's environmental scanning or forecasting may be another bureaucrat's tea-leaf-reading. I'm trying to resist reading too far into things until deliverology rears its head for real.

The second is to sum up what the core of the book, and the idea of deliverology, was for me: it's government knowing what it wants to do, and knowing for sure that those things are getting done. Which sounds pretty reasonable. Barber highlights in the book that holding administrators to account for results isn't about a blame game, it's actually about helping and clearing obstacles for initiatives that are challenging to implement. (Which, I suspect, is an ideal that some past "implementers" may not have felt at the time.)

Which leads into a related third point: I'm curious as to how bureaucratic writing and deliverology will mesh. Government officials can tend towards non-specific language like "commit to," "enhance," "support," "enable," and "facilitate" in their planning and reporting - which I don't think would cut it to a delivery unit: "Okay, but what did you really do?"

Lastly, which contrasts a little with the above reviews: as a public servant, I spend my time in the weeds of public administration. I think about the details, the working level, and the implementation. Barber's ideas are those of someone who has to take the 10,000 foot-high view, working with heads of state or their close circles. So where Francis and John (rightly) express concern with how these ideas work in complex, day-to-day realities, the book gave me some perspective on what delivery might look like to a country's senior officials - who are forced to look for the best ways to condense their information intake while making things happen.

Michael Barber served as the head of Tony Blair's delivery unit. He is the doyen of what is now called "deliverology". His book is a very useful compendium of all that he learnt in his time. He distils 57 lessons, perhaps too many to absorb easily. But there is a lot of common sense and practical wisdom. He believes in ministers setting a clear strategy with specific indicators or targets which you then monitor to see how you are doing against your key objectives. This may seem radical in politics but is how many organisations are run nowadays. It is why he was a breath of fresh air in Whitehall.

His approach is far better than just seeing Whitehall and the civil service as plotting to stop ministers doing things. From Yes Minister to the Chris Mullin diaries this picture of Whitehall has been mined for its comic potential. But it is largely nonsense. It has painted a picture of ministers as by and large hapless, hopeless, and powerless. This is bad for politics and is not even true. Politicians may not be able to change things in the short run as much as they or the media hope. But in the long run — and that may be only a few years — ministerial decisions make a very big difference indeed. And these need not even be the obvious big decisions taken at the top by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. You have to know what to do and if as a minister you can get over three high but not insuperable hurdles you can get a lot done. First, you need to get the Treasury on side or, failing that, Number 10 has to be massively supportive. Second, your colleagues have to be broadly willing to trust your judgment. Third, you have to stay out of too many media scrapes. Then the truth is that ministers in a British government can actually get a lot done. Blaming the civil service is usually an alibi for a badly thought through policy which had little chance of success anyway.

Of course, that does not mean that ministers will necessarily get things right and nor may their advisers. There is a lack of real policy expertise in Whitehall. Too many officials move around too quickly which means they are susceptible to the institution's conventional wisdom because they have not really had the time to master the evidence and become truly expert. So the same mistakes are repeated. And ministers face trade-offs which have been around for decades without really any idea of how these dilemmas had presented themselves in the past and what decisions were taken then and why.

There is a repertoire of options for managing and improving public services which have been developed over the past few decades. You can always improvise and innovate but there are some classic types of response. Barber has a particularly strong discussion of different key strategic approaches — trust and altruism, hierarchy and targets, choice and competition, devolution and transparency, privatisation and vouchers. With

so much political heat around these options it is quite a contrast to have such a low-key, almost managerial assessment. Trust and altruism score particularly badly in his assessment.

Once the policy or the strategy is formulated you then have to deliver it. This is where Michael Barber really gets going. Implementation is what truly interests him. I worked in the Number 10 Policy Unit 30 years ago and if I had my time again I would do more to follow up on implementation. We did try to spend a day a week out of London just seeing how things were going in the hospital or the business or the benefit office. Often Margaret Thatcher appreciated the notes we wrote for her afterwards with a bit of the salty reality to them. But instead it is easy to be seduced by the sweet smell of freshly baked policy and not focus on the tricky job of what happened afterwards. The final product is not the ministerial speech or the policy statement or even the legislation; the final outcome is when services and people's lives are better.

But there are gaps in Barber's account. A lot of politics is missing. His examples are mainly from the Blair government and he could surely tell us more about how things really happened. He tells a story of Blair gradually building up the experience to reform. He completely fails to acknowledge the deliberate decisions taken early on by that government to abolish grant-maintained schools and GP fund-holding. For me, sitting on the Opposition benches in the late Nineties and watching Blairite ministers destroy these initiatives was desperately frustrating when they could so easily have kept them and improved them. He could have been more frank about why the Blairites did that and how they came to realise their mistake and ended up with a policy agenda not that different from John Major's.

That would open up the question of where the strategy comes from and the costs of sticking to it as against adjusting it. Another frustration when one observed the Blairites from the Opposition benches was that problems were easily dismissed as mere implementation issues when sometimes it was that the strategy was fundamentally flawed. Was Gallipoli a failure of implementation? In the real world there is an endless interplay between the strategy and the evidence about what is working. It was clearly tempting for Blair's advisers at the centre to assume that the strategy must be right and the only problems were implementation — but that is the behaviour of First World War generals in their chateaux. How do you get important messages about the real world to them?

Then there are also questions of how you set up and monitor performance indicators. Two incidents when the Treasury brought in performance measurement and pay for its officials revealed this challenge. I was working in the monetary policy division and had to set out measures of my performance. In a way the objective was very simple then — low inflation. But holding me personally responsible for that did seem a trifle presumptuous. So you then look at what you can control and instead suggest prompt and accurate briefing for the Chancellor's monetary policy discussions. But that is a retreat into the minutiae of process. The life of public sector bodies is so complex and so constrained that it is very difficult to pitch the performance measures at the right level.

Then what do you do? One person in each Treasury division was to receive a performance-related bonus. In our division it went to Bill. We were all rather surprised by this and as a young Turk I was bold enough to challenge the senior officials on this peculiar decision. The reply — from the Treasury's senior management, who were always hauling the rest of the public sector over the coals for their performance — was that Bill was a decent chap, but he was never going to be promoted, so giving him a performance bonus was a suitable consolation prize. That is what happens when central initiatives collide with Whitehall culture.

Politics and public policy are complex and difficult and worthwhile because there are so many different measures of success and there are trade-offs between them. You cannot simply suspend the trade-offs just to focus on one thing called the strategy. Michael Barber comes close to recognising this in an excellent discussion of what he calls the responsibility of stewardship. This is not the same as inertia or refusal to change. To me it seems like a Burkean respect for the wisdom that lies within an organisation and a recognition that we are custodians who want to pass it on better than we found it. Sometimes the very people working

away in the middle of an organisation in the less glamorous jobs far removed from strategy are the ones who understand this responsibility best.

Role of delivery units
https://www2.gwu.edu/~ibi/minerva/Spring2015/Joelson_Vellozo.pdf

http://www.opml.co.uk/sites/default/files/The_role_of_the_centre_in_driving_government_priorities.pdf

Cardiff Public Value Business School
https://cardiff.cloud.panopto.eu/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=902722b7-2a15-4dca-937e-36aa76f755cb

https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/deliverology-science/

The role of the centre in driving government priorities – the experience if delivery units (2016)

http://cddrl.fsi.stanford.edu/download/file/218617

https://www.calfac.org/sites/main/files/Deliverology_Book_Reviews_for_web_0410.pdf

the problem of simplification https://eprints.qut.edu.au/93747/3/93747.pdf

http://followersoftheapocalyp.se/opened13-john-seddon-and-others-on-deliverology/

https://montrose42.wordpress.com/2011/07/31/professor-michael-barber-in-demand-but-does-deliverology-deliver/

http://defendthecsu.blogspot.ro/2009/12/barbers-deliverology.html

Does Deliverology Matter?

http://wonkhe.com/blogs/deliverology-in-out-and-around-the-university/

https://www.odi.org/comment/7703-jim-kims-science-delivery-role-politics

https://www.alsde.edu/sec/rd/Presentations/Deliverology%20MEGA.pdf

Indonesia example (WB)

http://www.cpsrenewal.ca/2016/02/impossible-conversations-how-to-run.html

https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/blog/20-things-about-delivery-michael-barber-and-3-stories-about-neglected-american-president-you

http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Voices/ArtofDelivery-web.pdf

[Deliverology 101 – a field guide for educational leaders](); Michael Barber (2011)

http://www4.ntu.ac.uk/nbs/document_uploads/99821.pdf

https://publications.iadb.org/bitstream/handle/11319/6674/Governing-to-Deliver-Reinventing-the-Center-of-Government-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf?sequence=1

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVANTICORR/Resources/3035863-1285601351606/NovemberGetNote.pdf

http://mckinseyonsociety.com/downloads/reports/Voices/ArtofDelivery-web.pdf

"We've spent half a century arguing over management methods. If there are solutions to our confusions over government, they lie in democratic not management processes"

JR Saul (1992)

Organisations - we love them and hate them….They have both their formal purposes and, thanks to their self-interests and complacency, their informal side and malfunctions. Most people spend their time quietly "serving" their organisation's interests – generally with some ambivalence if not contempt.

I'm one of the small number of people who've had (or been allowed to take) a license to be open and critical about the malfunctions of the organisations I've served – for the first 25 years as a strategic politician in the West of Scotland in first a typical municipality and then one of Europe's largest Regions; in the subsequent 25 years in post-communist countries – as a consultant in institutional development.

When I started to work in local government in the late 60s, there was no such subject as administrative reform. Now my bookshelves groan under the weight of books containing descriptions and assessments of the experience of what, in the 80s and 90s, was called "public administration reform" but is now called "good governance"

In the 1970s and early 1980s I lectured on public administration in the UK while at the same time being an active local and regional politician – and using that opportunity and experience to publish material in professional journals and books. An institutional base gives legitimacy and profile.

Since 1991 I have lived and worked in central Europe and Asia as a free-lance consultant – thereby losing a bit of visibility but gaining so much more in experience….

And the mix of academia, politics and individual consultancy has given me the freedom for almost 50 years to "do it my way" – to write and publish in a fairly carefree manner, even if most of is self-published these days.

This book reflects a life (and perhaps attitude) shaped by -
- working from an early age (26) with an unusually wide range of people (professionals, politicians, community activists – and a much smaller number of academics) who shared an aspiration to improve social conditions;
- having a job in a Polytechnic (and also a planning school) in the 1970s and first half of the 1980s which gave me the licence to talk and write about the issues relating to this work
- achieving a position of influence which helped develop a more inclusive style of government in the West of Scotland for 20 years
- reengineering myself as a consultant, working and living for 25 years in central Europe and Central Asia – in the pursuit of what the turgid academic literature has come to call "good governance" or "capacity development"
- all the while trying – through wide reading and writing - to try to make sense of what the masthead on my blog calls our "social endeavours", ie efforts to make the world a better place…

About the author

"Ronald Young lived the first 48 years of his life in the West of Scotland – 22 of them as an aspiring academic and innovative politician in local, then Regional, Government.
His next 22 years were spent as a consultant in central Europe and central Asia – generally leading small teams in institutional development or training projects.
Since 2012 he has divided his time tasting wines and paintings from a flat in Sofia, a flat in Bucharest and a house in the Carpathian mountains."

In such a manner is a life normally described – and how little of the hopes, pleasures and anguishes of life does it give away….so the following lines try to be more honest and revealing… ..

In 2008 I started a website which contains the major papers written over the years about attempts to reform various public organisations in the various roles I'm lucky enough to have played - politician; academic/trainer; consultant.

Most of the writing in my field is done by academics - and gives little help to individuals who are struggling to survive in or change public bureaucracies. Or else it is propoganda drafted by consultants and officials trying to talk up their reforms. And most of it covers work at a national level - whereas most of the worthwhile effort is at a more local level.
The restless search for the new dishonours the work we have done in the past. As Zeldin once said -
"To have a new vision of the future it is first necessary to have new vision of the past"

Since 2009 my blog - <u>Balkan and Carpathian Musings</u> - has tried to make sense of my organisational endeavours - to see if there are any lessons which can be passed on; to restore a bit of institutional memory and social history - particularly in the endeavour of what used to be known as "social justice".

"My generation believed that political activity could improve things - that belief is now dead and that cynicism threatens civilisation. I also read a lot and wanted to pass on the results of this to those who have neither the time nor inclination - as well as my love of painting, particularly the realist 20th century schools of Bulgaria and Belgium".

A new website – <u>Mapping the Common Ground</u> – is a library for articles and books he considers useful for those who – like Brecht – feel that "So ist die Welt – und muss nicht so sein"!

This book reflects a life (and perhaps attitude) shaped by the good fortune I've had -
- to work from an early age (26) with an unusually wide range of people (professionals, politicians, community activists – and a much smaller number of academics) who shared an aspiration to improve social conditions;
- To have had a job in a Polytechnic (and planning school) in the 1970s and first half of the 1980s which gave me the licence to talk and write about the issues relating to this work
- to have achieved a position of influence which helped develop a more inclusive style of government in the West of Scotland for 20 years
- to reengineer myself as a consultant, working and living for 25 years in central Europe and Central Asia – in the pursuit of what the turgid academic literature has come to call "good governance"

- all the while trying – through wide reading and writing - to try to make sense of what the masthead on my blog calls our "social endeavours", ie efforts to make the world a better place…

I've always had great difficulty answering the simple question "What do you do?" "Student" was easy but, after graduation, I had a quick succession of jobs in what could be called generally the "planning" field - and "planner" is as vague a term as "manager" and enjoyed a rather limited vogue. In 1968 I joined a polytechnic and was also elected to a town council – so "lecturer" was as good a description as what I did as any. Using my voice was what I was paid for – whether to transmit information or opinions. I read widely – so "reader" was also a pertinent word. I became heavily involved in community development – managing to straddle the worlds of community action and political bureaucracy (for 20 years I was the Secretary of ruling Labour groups in municipal and regional Councils and also a sponsor of community action) and figured in a book about "reticulists" (networkers) – but imagine putting that word in a passport application!

For a few years I was Director of a so-called "Research Unit" which was more like a Think Tank in its proselytising workshops and publications celebrating the new rationalism of corporate management and community development.

At age 43 my default activity became full-time (regional) politics – with a leader role but of a rather maverick nature who never aspired to the top job but was content to be at the interstices of bureaucracy, politics and academia. I remember my reception at an OECD function in central Sweden as someone with a proclivity to challenge.

All this paved the way for the "consultancy" which I have apparently practised for the past 20 years in Central Europe and Central Asia. But "consultant" is not only a vague but a (rightly) increasingly insulting term – so I was tempted for a period to enter the word "writer" on my Visa application forms since this was as good a description of what I actually did as any. At one stage indeed, my despairing Secretary in the Region had actually given me the nickname "Paperback writer". Except that this was seen by many border guards in central Asia as a threating activity! Robert Reich's "symbolic analyst" briefly tempted – but was perhaps too close to the term "spy"!

When I did the [Belbin test on team roles](#) to which I was subjecting my teams, I had expected to come out as a leader – but was not altogether surprised to discover that my stronger role was a "resource person" – someone who surfed information and knowledge widely and shared it. What some people saw as the utopian streak in my writing gave me the idea of using the term "poet" at the airport guiches – but I have a poor memory for verse.

This morning, as I looked around at the various artefacts in the house, a new label came to me – "collector"! I collect beautiful objects – not only books and paintings but pottery, pens, pencils, laquered cases, miniatures, carpets, Uzbek wall-hangings, Kyrgyz and Iranian table coverings, glassware, terrace cotta figurines, plates, Chinese screens, wooden carvings et al. Of very little - except sentimental - value I hasten to add! But, of course, I have these things simply because I have been an "explorer" – first of ideas (desperately searching for the holy grail) and then of countries – in the 1980s Western Europe, the 1990s central Europe – finally central Asia and

beyond.

Some 25 years ago, when I was going through some difficult times, my sister-in-law tried to help me by encouraging me to explore the various roles I had – father,son, husband, politician, writer, activist etc. I didn't understand what she was driving at. Now I do! Lecturer, reticulist, politician, maverick, leader, writer, explorer, consultant, resource person, collector – I have indeed played all these roles (and more too intimate for this blog!). Makes me wonder what tombstone I should have carved for myself in the marvellous Sapanta cemetery in Maramures where people are remembered humourously in verse and pictures for their work or way they died!!

And it was TS Eliot who wrote that

old men ought to be explorers

I believe in people coming together at a local level to work for the common benefit - principles enshrined in communitarianism (about which I do have some reservations). I spent a lot of time supporting the work of social enterprise in low-income communities. None of this went down all that well with the technocrats or even members) of my political party - and the national politicians to whose books I contributed (eg Gordon Brown) soon changed their tune when they had a taste of power.
But, above all, I am a passionate sceptic - or sceptical pluralist – which is the reason for my adding the terms which form the glossary at the end - Just Words?

This flickr account gives with more examples of art……also this one

LIST OF Author's PUBLICATIONS

Dispatches to the Next Generation March 2017

The Slaves' Chorus – the 2016 posts

In Praise of Doubt – a blogger's year (2015)

Bulgarian Realists – getting to know Bulgaria through its Art (2017 edition)
An unusual take on a country, the core of this book are 300 short notes on painters who caught my fancy in the decade I have known Bulgaria….

Crafting Effective Public Administration (2015);
This is a collection of short reflective notes about the efforts we have seen in the past 50 years to improve the machinery of government – with an emphasis on the role of the EU and its various programmes. They draw on (a) my pretty extensive reading of that extensive section of the literature on public administration reform which focusses on British experience (since 1970); but also on that of the various countries of central Europe and central Asia with which I have become familiar since 1991; and (b) my own experience as a political change-agent for 22 years and then consultant on administrative reform for the past 25 years
The book should be read alongside two long papers which I produced a few years ago -

•   "administrative reform with Chinese and European characters" (2010) starts with an outline of the 12 features of Chinese public service which impacted on me when I lived in Beijing for a couple of months, preparing for a longer project. The rest of the paper is a summary of the sort of lessons I felt I had learned up to 1999 about public administration reform

•   "The Long Game – not the logframe" was a caustic paper I presented to the 2011 NISPAcee Conference (building on an earlier paper to the 2007 Conference) in which I took apart the superficiality of the assumptions EC bureaucrats seemed to be making about the prospects of its Technical Assistance programmes making any sort of dent in what I called (variously) the kleptocracy or "impervious regimes" of most ex-communist countries.

With the exception of some 20 pages, they are, in effect, chatty notes on my everyday reading and thinking in a period – after 2009 - when I could be fairly relaxed. I had basically "hung up my boots". Although I was nominally Team Leader of an (EU Structural Fund) project in Bulgaria in 2010-12 and also involved in a bid for another (unsuccessful) project in the same country – my role was not a demanding one and gave me the time and opportunity to reflect.

The Independence Argument – home thoughts from abroad (2015)
How I tried to make sense of the 2 year debate which took place in Scotland about its referendum about independence.

Mapping Romania - notes on an unfinished journey (2014) My (cultural) introduction to a little-known country

Introducing the Romanian Realists of the 19th and early 20th Centuries (2014) a disorganised set of notes about a little-known painting tradition...

Just Words - a glossary and bibliography for the fight against the pretensions and perversities of power

A Draft Guide for the Perplexed; a short paper I wrote in 2001 to share my concerns about the direction in which Western society was going…..

The Long Game – not the log-frame (2011); an attack on the myopic and arrogant assumptions western development agencies have taken to the task of building effective institutions in transition countries….

Administrative Reform with Chinese Characteristics (2010) my guilty contribution to a failed mission…..

Training that works! How do we build training systems which actually improve the performance of state bodies (2009) - this paper extracts some lessons from the work I've done in the last decade - particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Bulgaria. Even altho I say it myself - it is one of the best papers on the subject

Learning from Experience – a Bulgarian project

Building Municipal Capacity (2007) - an interesting account of an intellectual journey

Roadmap for Local Government in Kyrgyzstan (2007) - this is a long doc (117 pages. I enjoyed pulling out this metaphor - and developing and using (in workshops) the diagram at pages 76-77

Building Local Government in a Hostile Climate (2006)

Overview of PAR in transition countries - This is the paper I drafted for the European Agency for Reconstruction after the staff retreat the EAR Director invited me to speak at in June 2006 in Skopje, Macedonia. The best papers are always written after the event!

Transfer of Functions - European experiences 1970-2000 I learned a lot as I drafted this paper for my Uzbek colleagues. I haven't seen this sort of typology before.

In Transit – notes on good governance (1999) The book I wrote almost two decades ago for young Central European reformers. I find it stands up pretty well to the test of time

Annotated Bibliography for change agents - For quite a few years I had the habit of keeping notes on the books I was reading. Perhaps they will be useful to others?

The Search for the Holy Grail – some reflections on 40 years of trying to make government and its systems work for people

It was in 2000 that I began to feel deep unease about the direction societies with which I was familiar seemed to be taking – increasing privilege, systemic corruption, centralization, ecological destruction, "consumerism", poverty, privatisation and a failure of European vision were the things I listed in a paper I circulated amongst friends in an effort to clarify where I should be putting my energies and resources when I found myself with more time. I itemized the people and organisations whose work I admired; regretted the lack of impact they were having; and then explored what channels we seemed to have for making more of an impact.
A decade later – after the bursting of the bubble – I returned to the subject and beefed up the paper – the results of which can be read at <u>Draft Guide for the Perplexed</u>
But full-time projects still required my attention during that period when I was also articulating an increasingly <u>sharp critique of the assumptions of the sort of development assistance</u> I was seeing

With more time at my disposal from 2009, I started a blog about my various experiences – generally inspired (or angered) by an article or book I had read relating to my disparate interests in what we might call the field of "social endeavour" - and developed the habit of excerpting and including relevant hyperlinks.

The higher people climb in their chosen professions, the more isolated they generally become from alternative ways of seeing the world….
I consider myself very lucky that, 25 years ago, I uprooted myself from my country and started to get good money from travelling around talking and writing about European systems of public management and governance. Initially the experience on which I drew was largely British – but the requirement to explain it to foreigners made me start to question aspects which, up until then, I had taken for granted……….and took me into wider aspects of European systems

it hit me suddenly that my blog is at least partly a tribute to those writers who have kept me company at one time or another on my journey of the past half century or more.
My earliest memory of what I might call "seminal" books are those of <u>Bertrand Russell</u> – and then the titles of the 1950s – Tony Crosland's revisionist "Future of Socialism" (1956); and two New Left counterblasts - <u>Conviction</u> (1959) and "<u>Out of Apathy</u>" (1960). University – particularly the political and economics streams I opted into from 1962 – was the profoundest influence on my mind. The key influence may have been Karl Popper's <u>The Open Society</u> – but there were others such as historian <u>EH Carr</u> and scholar of religion <u>Reinhold Niebuhr</u>….
A couple of years ago I listed the 50 or so books which have <u>made an impact on me here</u> – and <u>here</u>
In what I call the "restless search for the new", we would do well to pause every now and then and cast our minds back to such books and try to identify the "perennial wisdom" embodies therein….This takes us into the field of intellectual history – in which writers such as <u>Russell Jacoby</u>, Mark <u>Greif</u>, <u>George Scialabba</u>, <u>Peter Watson</u> – even <u>Clive James</u>……have made such a contribution..

I've been worrying away about the question of where someone with my resources should be putting their energy for almost two decades…I should therefore be able to track influences and changes in my thinking - which might also be of assistance to readers of an open mind?????
One book which greatly impressed me in this respect was Robert Chambers' <u>Ideas for Development</u> (2005) – by virtue of its putting side by side excerpts from his writing on key themes – but separated by decades to allow us to see how his thinking had devloped

The structure of this book can also, in some ways, be placed in the tradition of <u>commonplace books</u> – one reader's notes on items which have caught his attention since it became clear (from 2009) that this was no ordinary crisis

As an avid reader for more than half a century, I have become more and more aware of the shortcomings of most recently-published non-fiction books. Their bibliographies may look impressive and their chapter headings riveting - but the books increasingly suffer, in my view, from the following sorts of deficiencies –
- They are written by academics - who write for students and other academics
- and lack "hands-on" experience of other worlds
- the author's speciality indeed is a sub-discipline – eg financial economics
- the focus is a fashionable subject
- written with deadlines to meet commercial demands
- making claims to originality
- but failing to honour the google scholar adage of "standing on the shoulders of giants" (despite the extensive bibliographies accompanying them)

I now have a litmus test for any book which catches my eye – actually not one but three -
- Does it reveal in its preface/introduction and bibliography an intention to build on the best of what has been written before on the subject?
- Indeed does it clearly list and comment on what has been identified as the key reading and indicate why, despite such previous efforts, the author feels compelled to add to our reading burden??? And can you, the reader, identify any obvious gaps in that list?
- Can the author clearly demonstrate (eg in the introduction or opening chapter) that the book is the result of long thought and not just an inclination to jump on the latest bandwagon?

In autumn 2014 I was so fed up with the constant emphasis by reformist writers on the "novelty" of their particular interpretation - and their failure even to try to find common ground - that I set up a new website *<u>Mapping the Common Ground - ways of thinking about the crisis</u>*
Its purpose was to try to archive key books and articles which would help those wanting to get some guidance around the impossibly confusing literature on social and organisational change ……see, for example, <u>this section of the library</u>

My position is that **no one (but no one) can pretend to expertise on the matters covered here** –
- Knowledge has become too specialised and diverse
- The claims of social "scientists" to expertise have been thoroughly exposed in recent years

Those who still choose to venture into this field need, therefore, to be able to demonstrate -
- Breadth of reading – interdisciplinary and international
- awareness of the fragility of the language and concepts they use when trying to summarise the more interesting of the literature

Modernising Government – the way forward (OECD 2005
http://www.ntpu.edu.tw/~pa/course/syllabus/herman/96-2Modernising%20gov.pdf

inversions without end; Pal (2007)
http://www3.carleton.ca/cgpm/Projects/archived/reform/Inversions%20without%20End.pdf