

Just Words? How language gets in the way

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*So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years –
....Trying to use words, and every attempt
is a new start, a and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
for the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
one is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture
is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
with shabby equipment always deteriorating
in the general mass of imprecision of feeling*

East Coker; Four Quartets
TS Eliot

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1. Purpose

History is assumed to consist of hard events like wars and revolts. But such events don't just happen – they are caused by what goes on inside our minds – not just feelings of ambition; fear; greed; resentment; but the stories (theories) we use to make sense of events. And they are legitimised by the words we use. Words are very powerful - indeed have a life of their own – some more so than others. Once we stop thinking about the words we use, what exactly they mean and whether they fit our purpose, the words and metaphors (and the interests behind them) take over and reduce our powers of critical thinking.

One of the best essays on this topic is George Orwell's "*Politics and the English language*" http://mla.stanford.edu/Politics_&_English_language.pdf Written in 1947, it exposes the way certain clichés and rhetoric are calculated to kill thinking – for example how the use of the passive tense undermines the notion that it is people who take decisions and should be held accountable for them. Fifty years before Orwell, Ambrose Bierce was another (American) journalist whose pithy and tough definitions of everyday words, in his newspaper column, attracted sufficient attention to justify a book "*The Devil's Dictionary*" http://www.rosenoire.org/archives/Bierce_Ambrose_-_The_Devil's_Dictionary.pdf whose fame continues unto this day. A dentist, for example, he defined as "a magician who puts metal into your mouth and pulls coins out of your pocket". A robust scepticism about both business and politics infused his work – but it did not amount to a coherent statement about power.

This glossary looks at more than 100 words and phrases which occur frequently in the discourse of government, consultancy and big business which have this effect and offers some definitions which at least will get us thinking more critically about our vocabulary – if not actually taking political actions. Only in the latter stages of its drafting was I reminded of John Saul's *A Doubter's Companion – a dictionary of aggressive common sense*¹ issued in 1994 which talks of the "humanist tradition of using alphabetical order as a tool of social analysis and the dictionary as a quest for understanding, a weapon against *idée reçues* and the pretensions of power". Saul contrasts this approach with that "of the rationalists to the dictionary for whom it is a repository of truths and a tool to control communications".

This glossary of mine is written explicitly in the humanist tradition of struggle against power – and the glossary therefore forms part of a wider commentary on the effort various writers have made over the ages to challenge the pretensions of the powerful (and of the „thought police” who have operated on their behalf). And, of course, the role of satire², caricature and cartoons³, poetry⁴ and painting⁵ should not be forgotten! The role of films and TV series these days should also not be under-estimated⁶.

2. The search for the heart of the onion

I have been dabbling in power (and words) now for almost 50 years – inspired by the writings of such varied figures as Tony Crosland, RH Tawney http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/R._H._Tawney and EP Thompson (eg *Out of Apathy*) to select politics and economics as my university subjects in 1962. Coincidentally the year that Bernard Crick's important *In Defence of Politics* first appeared; then spending the period between 1968 and 1991 as first a local then powerful regional politician in Scotland; and the last 20 years advising government units in 8 central European and central Asian countries.

¹ Some examples of what I might call his definitional text can be found at <http://everything2.com/title/The+Doubter%2527s+Companion> – and an interview with him at <http://www.scotlondon.com/interviews/saul.html>

² not just the literary sort - see section 9

³ from Daumier to Feiffer and Steadman

⁴ Brecht

⁵ Goya, Kollwitz and Grosz are the most powerful example

⁶ From the "Yes, Minister" series in the UK in the 1970s to the "The Thick of it" of the 2000s

The social sciences were just beginning to flex their muscles in my student days and popular management texts also beginning to appear (we forget that Peter Drucker invented the genre only in the late 1950s). Books such as Marris and Rein's *Dilemmas of Social Reform* (1968); Donald Schoen's *Beyond the Stable State* (1971); and Hecllo and Wildavsky's *The Private Government of Public Money* (1974) impressed me enormously – not only for their application of social science to topics such as the fight against poverty; organisational structures and budgeting (respectively) but also for the clarity of their language. And the combination, between 1968 and 1985 of academic and political work gave me both the incentive and opportunity to explore what light that burgeoning academic literature could throw on the scope for government actions (and structures) for social improvement. Not least of my puzzlements was about the source and nature of power. And the story told by one of the architects of the British NHS (Aneurin Bevan) about his own search for power - from his own municipality through trade unions to the heights of the British Cabinet - used the powerful metaphor of the onion. As each layer peeled away, there did not appear to be a heart!

I always knew that the best way to understand a subject was to write about it. And therefore developed the habit of writing papers to help me as much as others make sense of the various path-breaking initiatives in which I was involved – particularly trying to make government more “inclusive” both in its style and policy impact. The audience for such writing was practitioners – rather than academics – and also, with my first little book *The Search for Democracy* (1976), community activists who needed some help in confronting the more sophisticated bureaucracy (and words) with which they were confronted after a major reorganisation. So the language had to be clear – but not superficial. This explains any idiosyncrasies in the voice I have developed.

And writing that first book made me aware about the varying motivations there are in writing books (eg pass examinations; make a reputation or money; advancing a new tendentious theory) and how few books seemed to be written to help the average person understand a subject or question. The Readers and Writers Cooperative which started in the early 1970s (now the highly successful “For Beginners” series) offers a comic-book approach. And how helpful the Dummies’ Guide series are! Even Rough Guides has muscled in on this approach.

This particular effort started, I suppose, way back in 1999 when I selected about 40 words for a glossary which accompanied a little book I wrote then (*In Transit – notes on good governance*) which tried to capture my understanding of what was then the fast-moving field of public administration. My definitions were jazzed up in order to provoke thought - eg performance measurement; “*judging an organisation by measuring what it produces, rather than whom it keeps happy or employed. Most usefully done on a comparative basis - over time: or among units performing similar work*”.

In 2008, the glossary I left behind in a major report - **Learning from experience; some reflections on how training can help develop administrative capacity** - was more outrageous.

- http://www.freewebs.com/publicadminreform/key%20papers/Discusion_Angl_last_last.pdf

But it has taken me some years to realise a more serious version could be a powerful tool for challenging the grip which neo-liberalism has on our minds!! Attempting this longer definition of key terms has been an excellent discipline.

3. New words and phrases can cause amnesia!

We should be on our alert whenever we spot a new phrase entering government discourse. New words and phrases put a particular spin on an issue and often carry the hidden implication that a new problem has just arisen.. At first I was amused at the way, for example, the vocabulary for “poverty” changed over time – inequality, disadvantage, deprivation, social malaise, marginalisation, social exclusion, social injustice etc. Jules Feiffer had a nice cartoon about it in which he has a poor kid repeat the various words which had been used to describe his condition and then said ruefully, “at least my vocabulary is improving”!

But I now realise that three powerful forces propelled these verbal gymnastics – first the need of governments to avoid admission of failure – better to imply a new condition had arisen! But the new vocabulary kills institutional memory and prevents us from exploring why previous solutions have failed

Professional interests tend also to arise around each new definition – and create a second, powerful interest favouring new vocabulary. Mystification is one of several methods used by professionals to protect their power and income.

And the last decade or so has seen a third reason for us to pay more attention to the language we use - governments have fallen even further into the hands of spin doctors and corporate interests⁷ and a powerful new verbal smokescreen has arisen to try to conceal this. “Evidence-based policy-making” is typical – first the arrogant implication that no policy-making until that point had been based on evidence; and the invented phrase concealing the fact that policy is increasingly being crafted without evidence in order to meet corporate interests! “There is no better lie than a big one!”

4. Critiquing the professionals.....

The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas.

JM Keynes (General Theory 1935) http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/John_Maynard_Keynes

In the 1970s, a South American priest Ivan Illich attacked professionals and to the mystification of their processes and language - with his various books which eloquently argued against the damage done to learning by formal schooling methods (*Deschooling Society*); and to health by doctors and hospitals (*Medical Nemesis*).

Stanislaw Andreski was one of the few academics who dared attack the pretensions of the social sciences – in his *Social Sciences as Sorcery* (1973 - now out of print). The importance of demystifying complex language was continued by C Wright Mills in the 1950s and 1960s who once famously summarised a 250 pages book written in tortuous syntax by the sociologist Talcott Parsons in 12 pages!

Alaister Mant extended the attack to contemporary leadership (*Leaders we Deserve* 1983 – also out of print) – puncturing somewhat the mythology about business leaders which was being spread in the popular management books which were beginning to sell like hot potatoes. Henry Mintzberg – a Canadian management academic – is about the only one who has written simply about what managers actually do (and attacked MBAs) and, in so doing, has stripped management literature of most of its pretensions.

⁷ See section 6

By reducing management exhortations to 99 self-contradictory proverbs Hood's *Administrative Argument* (1991 and also, mysteriously, out of print) showed us how shallow management ideologies are.

In 1992 John Ralston Saul gave us a powerful but idiosyncratic critique of technical expertise in *Voltaire's Bastards – the dictatorship of reason in the west*.

By showing the parallels with religious doctrine, Susan George did the same for the economic belief systems which sustained the World Bank (*Faith and Credit – the World Bank's secular empire* (1994). It was easier for people like Huycinski to take the scalpel to management gurus in *Management Gurus – what makes them and how to become one* (1993) since they are only peripherally of academia. And a once worthy venture – the European Union – has, sadly, developed such powerful interests of its own that it too is part of this significant obfuscation with its use of such phrases as “subsidiarity”.

This text is still a draft – suggestions on both definitions and words to include would be much appreciated

Ronald G Young; Carpathian mountains
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5. GLOSSARY

“I don't know what you mean by ‘glory,’ ” Alice said.
Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. “Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant ‘there's a nice knock-down argument for you!’ ”
“But ‘glory’ doesn't mean ‘a nice knock-down argument’,” Alice objected.
“When *I* use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.”
“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.”
“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that's all.”
Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. “They've a temper, some of them—particulaly verbs, they're the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs—however, *I* can manage the whole lot! Impenetrability! That's what *I* say!”

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

Adversarial systems; the more political parties have in common (UK and US) the more they pretend to be poles apart and fight an aggressive, winner-take-all, no-holds-barred contest which leaves no room for civilised discourse; nor policy consensus. Bad policy-making is normally the result (see book references at end of Annex)

Agent; an intermediary who performs actions on behalf of another. A huge theoretical literature was built around this concept in the 1980s – to try to demonstrate the way in which public servants developed interests separate from that of the public – and to justify privatisation and the separation of public budget-holders from those who supplied public services. Pity that there are so few of these

academics now bothering to develop a literature about the (actual rather than theoretical) self-serving and downright immoral behaviour of many of those who now own and manage the privatised bodies and “arms’ length” agencies!

Agencies; pretend companies – with Chief Executives and others with hugely inflated salaries and pension rights.

Agnostic; someone who doubts

Ambition; *Our system obliges us to elevate to office precisely those persons who have the ego-besotted effrontery to ask us to do so; it is rather like being compelled to cede the steering wheel to the drunkard in the back seat loudly proclaiming that he knows how to get us there in half the time. More to the point, since our perpetual electoral cycle is now largely a matter of product recognition, advertising, and marketing strategies, we must be content often to vote for persons willing to lie to us with some regularity or, if not that, at least to speak to us evasively and insincerely. In a better, purer world—the world that cannot be—ambition would be an absolute disqualification for political authority (David Hart).*

Assumptions; the things other people make – which cause problems. Parsed – “I think; you assume; (s)he fucks up”. Project management techniques do require us to list assumptions and identify and manage risks – but in the field of technical Assistance these are just boxes to tick. In any project, the best approach is to list the worst things which could happen, assume they will occur and plan how to minimise their frequency and effects.

Audit; something both overdone and underdone – overdone in volume and underdone in results. A process more feared at the bottom than at the top as frequent recent scandals (Enron; global banking scandals have demonstrated). See also “Law”

Benchmark; a technical-sounding term which gives one’s discourse a scientific aura.

Bottleneck; what prevents an organisation from achieving its best performance – always located at the top!

Bureaucracy; literally “rule by the office” (and the strictly defined powers which surround it – as distinct from rule by whim). See “rule of law”. The adjective (bureaucratic) has now become a term of abuse.

Capacity; something which other people lack

Capacity development; something which consultants recommend and which generally boils down to some training programmes. In fact capacity is developed by a combination of practice and positive feedback.

Change; something which was difficult to start in public organisations in the 1970s and is now difficult to stop.

Change agent; in the beginning a brave person – now a spiv.

Citizen; a displaced person in the modern polis – replaced by the customer who has to have money and spend it before any rights can be exercised. For an excellent article which explores the significance and implications of the various terms and roles see - <http://www.bdp.org.ar/facultad/catedras/cp/tecadm/Mintzberg%20gerenciando.pdf>

Civil servant; someone who used to be able to stand up to Ministers.

Client; someone receiving a (complex) service from a professional – usually with the protection of a professional code.

Coalition; a government composed of political parties which have normally fought one another in an election; which have not gained sufficient seats to form a majority government; and which cooperate with other parties to avoid facing the electorate again. Seen by some as highly civilised (encouraging consensual qualities) and by other as highly undemocratic (smoke-filled rooms)

Collateral damage; accidental shootings of innocent citizens.

Commodification; to put a market value on services which were previously offered voluntarily and offering them for sale on the market in order to make a profit.

Communications; the first thing which people blame when things go wrong – parsed “I communicate; you misunderstand; he/they don’t listen”.

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

Consultant; a con-man who operates like a sultan! An outsider who knows almost nothing about an organisation who is brought in to give the air of objectivity to outrageous changes the bosses have already agreed amongst themselves.

Consultation; the skill of bouncing other people to agree with what you have already decided.

Contract out; as in “put out a contract out on” – to wipe out.

Control; to ensure that people do what the elites want. This used to be done by fear – but a range of clever carrots and sticks are now used – as well as words and language itself. Control used to be “ex-ante” (detailed instructions before the event) but is increasingly “ex-post” – through audit, monitoring and evaluation.

Coordination; the lack of which is the most annoying thing for the rationalist in organisations

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

Customer; the person who has supplanted the citizen and is responsible for environmental destruction et al

Decentralisation; creating local people who can be made scapegoats for deterioration in service.

Deliberative democracy; In contrast to the traditional theory of democracy, in which voting is central, deliberative democracy theorists argue that legitimate lawmaking can arise only through public deliberation – generally through the presentation of evidence and then dissection of this in discussion – see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliberative_democracy

Democracy; a system which allows citizens to select, at periodical intervals, from a small group of self-selected and perpetuating elites

Development; a good thing.

environment; what’s around me which I can use and abuse for my benefit.

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

Efficiency; a positive ratio between output and input

Empower; a classic word of the new century which suggests that power can be benignly given – when in reality it has to be taken.

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

Evidence-based policy-making; a phrase which represents the hubristic peak of the generation of UK social scientism which captured the UK civil service in the late 1990s at the time its political masters succumbed to corporate interests and therefore were practising less rather than more evidence-based policy-making!

Evaluation; job-creation for surplus academics. An important part of the policy-making process which has been debased by it being sub-contracted to a huge industry of consultants who produce large reports which are never read by policy-makers.

Focus group; a supposedly representative group of voters who will give us a clue about what we should be doing.

Governance; an academic term to describe the obvious – namely that governments lacked the power to do things on their own and required to work in partnership with private and others. Found useful by the World Bank – which is not allowed to engage in political activity – to conceal the fact that they were engaged on a highly ideological mission to privatise the world and to “hollow-out” government.
<http://classwebs.spea.indiana.edu/kenricha/Oxford/Archives/Oxford%202006/Courses/Governance/Articles/Stoker%20-%20Governance.pdf>

Good governance; a package of “ideal practices” of liberal-democratic government which international organisations drew up in the 1990s and stupidly imagined could be developed by a combination of moral and financial exhortations by autocracies and kleptocracies. It forms the basis of the UNDP Millennium Goals. A few voices of common sense have suggested a more appropriate strategy would be that of “good-enough governance” (http://relooney.fatcow.com/00_New_1805.pdf)

Greed; something which is killing humanity and the planet – and is epitomised by ownership of an aggressive SUV; its assumed that increasing petrol prices will drive these monsters off our street – but a touch of ridicule would also help!

Groupthink; blinkered thinking which overcomes the leadership of an organisation when its culture has become too arrogant, centralised and incestuous: and when it is too protected from critical messages from and about the external world

Holistic; a magical quality - creating harmony – which some people imagine can be created in government by appropriate mechanisms of coordination. Others argue that the job will be done naturally by a mixture of decentralisation and the market.

Hubris; something which politicians and policy experts suffer from – ie a belief that their latest wheeze will solve problems which have eluded the combined skills and insights of their predecessors

Human Resource management (HRM); treating staff and workers like dirt

Humility; something which politicians and policy experts have too little of

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

Impact assessment; the proper (a) identification of the groups which will be affected by a policy change and (b) measurement of the economic impact of the change on those groups. Clearly, very demanding! See “systems approach”

Implementation; the act of trying to bring an intended state of affairs to fruition. The word used in the Slavic language perhaps is more powerful – execution! In the 1970s political science developed an important body of literature which showed the various ways in which the good intentions of laws were undermined. The classic book by Wildavsky and Pressman had the marvellous sub-title – “*How Great Expectations in Washington Are Dashed in Oakland; Or, Why It's Amazing that Federal Programs Work at All*”.

Input; the resources which are put into an activity

Integrity; something which NPM has cleaned out from public life. The strategy that came after anti-corruption when we needed to hide the fact that corruption was actually increasing.

Joined-up government; New Labour’s euphemism for Stalinism.

Law; “the spider's webs which, if anything small falls into them ensnare it, but large things break through and escape”. [Solon](#)

Leader; the head of an organisation or movement whose attributed qualities seem to range from the saintly to the diabolical. Modern leaders are supposed to exercise moral authority rather than the exercise or threat of force – but few understand what this even means.

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

Legislators; the most despised group in any society (see “parliamentary power”).

Lobbyists; people who make the laws

Logframe; the bible for the Technical Assistance world which - with a list of activities, assumptions, objectives, outputs and risks - conquers the complexity and uncertainty of the world and removes the bother of creativity. For a critique see Lucy Earle’s 2003 paper on my website - <http://publicadminreform.webs.com/key%20papers/Lost%20in%20the%20matrix%20-%20Earle%20and%20logframe.pdf>

Manage; to make a mess of.

Market; a place or system governed by rules which sets prices through the interaction of buyers and sellers. Under severely restrictive assumptions it can produce what economists call “optimum” results. The most important of these assumptions are – scale (large numbers of sellers; perfect information; and absence of social costs). In the real world, few of these conditions exist. See also “quasi-market”

Minister; etymologically “one who acts on the authority of another” – ie the ruler. In some countries they last some time (longer often than many civil servants); in others (eg UK) they last barely a year!

Mentor; someone whose experience has given them a high reputation – whose advice can be used to guide others. Sometime adopted as a formal role in organisations.

Modernise; to restructure something which just required some oiling of the wheels.

Monitor; a school prefect.

Neo-liberalism; one of the deadliest ideologies – some costs

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

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

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

OECD; the club of the rich nations - an apparently neutral body which was in fact one of the most important proselytisers of NPM

Open government; an apparent contradiction in terms – “governing” classically involves haggling, compromising, striking deals which will never look good in the cold light of public scrutiny. And even the publication of raw data can prove embarrassing to governments. But Freedom of Information Acts are being passed throughout the world – initially reactive rather than proactive and generally protective of “sensitive” information. Just a pity that this coincides with the run-down of investigative journalism - although a combination of citizen activists with new technology could ultimately prove a powerful combination. <http://www.foia.blogspot.com/>

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

Output; the immediate way in which the faithful implementation of a policy can be measured.

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

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

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

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

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

Political party; the last bastion of scoundrels

Politician; someone elected by voters who is, in theory, accountable to them but in fact does what his party and its leadership tells him – since this is the only way to survive let alone climb the greasy pole to advancement. Rebels become mavericks.

Politics, A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage (Bierce – Devil’s Dictionary)

Populism; movements which take democracy too far.

Post-modern; distrust of explanations. “The refusal to describe humanity’s progress as a rational process whose principles can be mastered – as though historical progress were one more step on the way to heaven” (from intro to *Postmodern Public Administration* by HD Millar and C Fox)

Priorities; “Gouverner”, as the French say “c’est choisir”. State bodies and services can never do equal justice to all the laws they are required to implement. Many new member states continue to churn out strategic documents which are checklists of good intentions – which brings the law into disrepute.

Progress; cars travelling slower in cities than 100 years ago;

Project management; a nice idea! The religion of the new generation which operates from hand to mouth on external funding. See also “assumptions” and “logframe”.

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

Public management; something more clever than public administration – which therefore warrants higher rewards and excuses shady behaviour.

Quality management; a fashionable term of the 1990s of which we now hear little.

Quasi-market; a pretend market. In the misguided attempt to introduce business systems into public services, governments have tried to get everyone to compete against one another. Naturally this requires a lot of paperwork and bureaucrats (disguised under the term “transaction costs”) – which is, curiously, what the reforms were supposed to get away from! See also “side-effects”.

Rationality; how many people remember the incredible debate in academic circles in the 1960s and 1970s about rationality, bureaucracy and politics – and whether it was ever possible to have significant policy changes as distinct from incremental fudge (“disjointed incrementalism” as Lindblom called it)? Now we seem to have the opposite problem. Sadly, few academics seem to be discussing it.

Reengineer; to take apart and build in a different way. A new term in the public sector for an interest that goes back to the zero-budgeting of the 1960s. Why is it I always think of Stalin’s epithet for Soviet writers “Engineers of the human soul” when I hear the re-engineering word?

Reform; to divert attention from core questions by altering organisational boundaries and responsibilities

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

Regulatory reform; “reforming regulations that raise unnecessary obstacles to competition, innovation and growth, while ensuring that regulations efficiently serve important social objectives” (OECD)

Rule of law; the principle that no-one is above the law. See also “Law”.

Sceptic; an aggressive agnostic – a quality which is greatly missed these days

Scrutiny; a political form of audit which became popular in the UK recently to give local politicians something to do after local government had been stripped of most of its functions.

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

Side-effects; unanticipated and negative impacts of policy interventions – generally more powerful than the positive. Can lead to a fatalistic view of policy-making (see Hood)

Social capital; a term brought into the currency of think-tanks and government by the combined efforts of Robert Putnam and the World Bank http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_capital. Most of us understand it by the simpler trust ‘trust’.

Society; what used to bear the responsibility for public services and is now being asked again to take them over (see “Big Society”)

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

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

Strategic; what I consider important

Strategic management; a proactive style of management

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

Subsidiarity; a term used by the Catholic hierarchy which is now part of EU rhetoric – can be used to legitimise the further stripping of state functions. Its origin lies apparently in Thomas Aquinas and the justification for government action only where private initiative is insufficient or lacking.

Sustainable; a word which, by being placed in front of development, has lost its meaning

Systems approach; an approach to management which appreciates the complexity of the environments in which interventions take place and invites teams to invent their own solutions based on a systematic definition of the problem facing the customer.

<http://www.thesystemsthinkingreview.co.uk/index.php?pg=18&backto=1&utwksstoryid=257>

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

Teamwork; a word to beware! Generally used by those in power to get their way while seeming democratic. While true that decisions taken as a result of joint discussion can be often better (and more robust) than those imposed, a lot depends on the manner in which the discussion is held - whether it is structured in a way designed to elicit problems and ideas or, rather, to sanction a dominant view (see groupthink). See Belbin for details of teams roles and structures

Think-tank; the shock-troops of neo-liberalism. Apparently neutral bodies (funded, however, by big business) which marketed the products for the transformation of the rational-legal state into a state of neo-liberal governance.

Tools of government; the various ways government tries to make you do what they think is good for you. Laws do not implement themselves. Their implementation requires a commitment to change

which cannot be taken for granted in societies whose populations are struggling to survive and whose new rulers – many uncertain of how long they will survive in office – are subject to temptations of short-term personal gains. In such contexts, is it realistic to expect policy-makers and civil servants to have an overriding concern for future public benefit? To explore that question requires us to look at the wider issue of motivation. The table sets out seven different motivations which can be found in people – and some of the policy tools which would be relevant for such motivations. Legalism, for example, assumes that people know about laws and will obey them – regardless of the pull of extended family ties (eg for recruitment). Training and functional review assumes that people simply need to understand in order to take the relevant action. Other tools assume that man is basically a calculating machine. And so on....In 2008 the British National Audit Office commissioned a study on sanctions and rewards in the public sector – the only such government review I know - http://www.nao.org.uk/publications/0708/sanctions_and_rewards.aspx. However, as Colin Talbot points out in his new book on theories of Performance, the assessment is based on discredited rationalistic theory of behaviour

Motives and tools in the change process

Motivating Factor	Example of tool	Particular mechanism
1. Understanding	Training Campaigns Counting and comparing – league tables	Rational persuasion Appeal to common sense Questioning when one’s body compares badly
2. Commitment	Leadership Consultation and cooperation Training	Legitimisation; inspiration Shared vision Pride (in behaving professionally)
3. Personal Benefit	Pay increase and bonus Promotion (including political office) Good publicity Winning an award	Monetary calculation ambition Reputation; Psychological Status
4. Personal Cost	Named as poor performer Demotion Report cards	Psychological (Shame) Monetary pride
5. Obligation	Law Action plan Family ties	Courts Managerial authority Social pressure
6. Peer influence	Peer review Bribery Quality circles	Pressure from colleagues
7. Social influence	Opinion surveys	Feedback from public about service quality

Source; an earlier version of this originally appeared in Young (EU Tacis 2005)

Governments trying to improve the performance of state bodies have also made increasing use of “league tables”. This involves audit bodies, for example, collecting and publishing comparative information about the performance of individual schools and hospitals in an attempt to persuade senior managers to address the problems of poor performance (1.3 in table). This can also act as a market-type force - bringing the force of public opinion against the organisation (4.3 in table).

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

Transparency; an EU buzz-word – meaning exposing the outside world to the tortuous procedures and language of the European Commission. The reaction to the coverage which Wikileaks gave to the leaked US Embassy cables shows how skindeep is the commitment to transparency.

Trust; something which economists and their models don't have and which, therefore, is assumed by them not to exist within organisations. As economic thinking has invaded public organisations, everyone has been assumed to be a "rent-seeker" – and a huge (and self-fulfilling) edifice of checks and controls have been erected

Whistle-blower; someone without authority who blows a whistle – and brings everyone down on them for the chaos they cause.

Invitation

Feedback on definitions would be much appreciated – as well as further reading and references

6. Search for a good analysis of the British system

Conventional politics appears to have become irretrievably part of the malaise rather than offering any hope for a cure. But political activity outwith the mainstream is stifled by a bought media
Craig Murray

Mass democracies face a potential crisis because of the scale of discontent surrounding the political process. Discontent comes in two main forms: disengagement from politics and frustrated activism. If the twentieth century saw the establishment of mass democracy the scale of discontent surrounding the political process in these democracies runs the risk of making these systems unsustainable in the twenty first century.

Gerry Stoker

6.1 Why is it important to have a systematic, up-to-date and plausible statement about how (well) our governance arrangements (or architecture) work?

First as a check (or benchmark) for the myriad initiatives which governments have inflicted at large cost on an increasingly confused public and public servants. This is widely accepted as a major problem – the new British Prime Minister of 2010, for example, had promised not to inflict any more changes on the health service – and yet, within a few weeks, he was making plans to introduce one of the biggest organisational upheavals ever seen.

But a second, even more powerful reason why a critical study is needed is that the British public no longer feels that it is worth engaging in democratic politics. “They are all the same – promising one thing, doing another – looking after themselves”. Colin Hay has been one of the few academics to look at this issue - http://books.google.com/books?id=gfJmfEGV-bgC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

In the 1970s some academics helped pave the way for the neo-liberal revolution by demonstrating in addition (in the new field of implementation studies <http://pactu.edu.np/contents/njpg/dec2009/3-narendra-paudel-a-critical-account-of-policy-implementation-theories.pdf>) that the machinery of bureaucracy made it very difficult to implement political decisions; the popular phrase was “the overloaded state”.

Margaret Thatcher completed the hollowing out of democracy by her infamous slogan – There is no alternative (TINA)

6.2 The Best Analysis of British Government and Politics capacity (BABGP) Awards

Questions about the capacity of government in general and the political system in particular have moved on to the public agenda in recent years.

<http://www.soton.ac.uk/ccd/events/SuppMat/Revitalising/revitalising-politics-position-paper.pdf>

British government is one of the most studied in the world. For a relatively small country, its combination of history, empire, flexible constitution, liberal politics and (global) language has given its outpourings about the nature and effects of its various political and administrative structures and processes a global impact. And yet I am struck with the *absence of realistic and critical studies of the efficacy of the British governance arrangements* at this point in the 21st Century. I have thought long and hard – and can produce only four analyses which might be read with benefit by the concerned and perplexed in that country. Two are 10 years old – the other two 5 years old.

We have, of course, countless academic studies of the operation of the British Parliament, of political parties, of voting systems, of local government, of devolved arrangements, of the civil service, of public management (whether Ministries, core executive, agencies), of the Prime Minister’s Office, of the European dimension etc – and a fair number of these are reasonably up-to-date. But most of it is written for undergraduates – or for other academic specialists who focus on one small part of the complex jigsaw. There is so very little which actually tries to integrate all this and give a convincing answer to the increasing number of citizens who feel (like Craig Murray recently) that there is no longer any point in voting; that politicians are either corrupt or hopelessly boxed in by global finance and corporate interests.

I used the epithet “realistic” above in order to distinguish the older studies which painted a rather ideal picture of the formalities of the system (what the 19th century Walter Bagehot called the “dignified” parts) from the more rounded studies of the “hidden” (Bagehot), informal processes which were encouraged by the seminal 1970s book about the British budget process – *The Private government of public money* by the outsiders Hecllo and Wildavsky.

6.3 Why so few nominations from universities

A “Critical” study or analysis is a more complex term – since the word can mean “carping” to the man in the street or textual deconstruction to an academic. When I use the phrase critical study (as Humpty Dumpty might have said) I mean one which tries not only to describe a system but to assess how well it works (begging the obvious question Of whom?!)

Despite the knowledge which academics in political science, sociology or public management can bring to the subject, several major factors seem to conspire to prevent social scientists from making any critical contribution to our understanding of the health of the governance system. First is the strength of academic specialisation - which has discouraged and continues to discourage the sort of inter-disciplinary approach needed to explore the question of the capacity of a governance system. <http://burawoy.berkeley.edu/PS/Open%20the%20Social%20Sciences.pdf>

Then there is the aloofness of the academic tradition which makes it difficult for specialists to engage in critiques which might be seen as too political. Not, however, that this prevented people like Peter Self from lambasting the nonsenses of market thinking in government in the 1980s. And a recent Conference of American Political Scientists took some time out to confront some home-truths -

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/09/07/polisci>

Stoker said it was important for the discipline to grapple with the criticism that it has become irrelevant, but he also said that there were "tricky issues" that made it difficult for scholars to become more relevant without sacrificing key values.

"Truth and evidence and reasoning are not in the forefront of political decision making," he said, and yet political scientists revere those things. In the political sphere, "we are competing with ideology, pragmatism, interests," he said. Further, the policy world operates in "a very time-specific" way with "a window of opportunity" in which to influence key people. The traditional time frames for scholarly publishing, he said, simply don't work when it comes to policy. Many scholars produce great work "two years late," he said. And Stoker also said that the discipline doesn't reward relevance. A young scholar is more likely to be promoted for "the novelty of methodological contribution" than for "research that actually has an impact."

"If you want to be relevant as a discipline," he said, "you have to recruit people who want to be relevant." And in this respect, he said, American political science departments are not doing well. He described his experiences teaching at Harvard University, where he was tremendously impressed with the 20 seniors in his seminar on comparative politics. One day he asked how many were planning to go to graduate school in political science and was "stunned" to find out that the students -- many of them idealistic about changing the world -- had to a person ruled that out in favor of law school. Their view was that "to be relevant, you have to have a law degree." In Sweden, Rothstein said, this would be viewed as a terrible thing. "No such persons" like those Harvard seniors he taught "would dream of going to law school," which they would see as "boring and technical." But while American universities tell those who want to change the world to go to law school, they attract other kinds of students to grad school. "I was not at all impressed by the graduate students" at Harvard, he said. "They wanted to stay away from anything relevant."

Political scientists are too focused on developing theories about government, ignoring the huge impact -- a life-and-death impact, he noted -- that government has. Tens of thousands of people die each year because they can't get safe water or health care from corrupt governments, but political scientists prefer to theorize about the governments rather than thinking about how to change them with the goal of getting them to provide their people with water and health care.

As an example, Rothstein cited a session he attended on "[clientelism](#)" in Africa, a form of corruption that is widespread and damaging. Rothstein said he asked the presenters about comparisons to countries that have moved past clientelism, and that they had no answers. "The discipline is organized" such that African area studies scholars will simply compare various forms of the practice and "never ask how you can get out of clientelism," since that would require looking outside their region and focusing on solutions, he said.

"The discipline is organized to avoid interesting comparisons of issues," rather than "on actual people." If a dominant factor in thinking about clientelism was wanting to get rid of it, research projects wouldn't just compare the strategies by which clientelism-dominated countries function, he said.

Colin Leys' *Market-driven Politics* and Alysson Pollok' *NHS PLC* (2004) are powerful critiques of the effect of commodification on some public services

http://books.google.com/books?id=VMM8g0CcdEC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (2003). And I have already mentioned Colin Hay and Gerald Stoker. Rod Rhodes is a more typical example

<http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0pv7z35s;jsessionid=A8F58303AC474E1672E0C9B262BCA0B0#page-3> – a leading public administration academic who invented the phrase “hollowed-out executive” to describe the loss of government functions in the last 30 years - but who chose to keep his critique incestuous both in the language and outlets he used. He played a major role in developing the “network” understanding of government – but then allowed anthropological and phenomenological assumptions to overwhelm him.

The blandishments of consultancy are a potential counter pressure to this tradition – which gets a small minority of academics too engaged with peripheral issues which so excite civil servants and Ministers. A final factor explaining the lack of academic contribution to the understanding of the nature of our current democratic system is the contempt in which academics who write for (and become popular with) the wider public are held in the academic community - and the damage which is therefore done to one's academic career if one chooses that path. I remember how the charismatic historian AJP Taylor was treated. And it's interesting that Zygmunt Baumann, for example, began to write his books only after he retired. Major developments in public management have, of course, encouraged academics like Norman Flynn to present and assess them for a wider public

http://books.google.com/books?id=Bp5DMkb3ijEC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

And the same has happened in the field of constitutional theory – eg Anthony King's *The British Constitution*

http://books.google.com/books?id=HEC6Ivq2JK8C&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false (2007). But the first is a bit long on descriptions and the second on historical figures. And both are very partial pictures of the governance system.

Consistent with the post-modernist mood, Gerry Stoker places the problem firmly within our own minds -

propensity to disappoint is inherent feature of governance even in democratic societies. I think that a substantial part of the discontent with politics is because the discourse and practice of collective decision-making sits very uncomfortably alongside the discourse and practice of individual choice, self-expression and market-based fulfilment of needs and wants. As a result too many citizens fail appreciate these inherent characteristics of the political process in democratic settings. Making decisions through markets relies on individuals choosing what suits them. The political processes that are essential to steer government struggle to deliver against the lionization of individual choice in our societies. Democracy means that you can be involved in the decision but what the decision is not necessarily your choice yet you are expected to accept the decision. As a form of collective decision-making politics is, even in a democracy, a centralized form of decision-making compared to market-based alternatives.

6.4 What journalists have offered

Some Journalists have made an honourable effort over the decades to give the wider public some critical overviews – starting with Anthony Sampson who famously tried to track the operations of the system over 4 decades finishing his last, angriest version only months before his death in 2004.

Andrew Marr had a book in the mid 1990s on the failure and future of British democracy. So did Simon Jenkins (*Accountable to None* – 1996). But it was a campaigning (rather than mainstream) journalist who produced in 2001 the most revealing and critical study *Captive State - the corporate takeover of Britain* which gave us the real detail, for example, behind Gordon Brown's horrendous Private Financial Initiative (PFI) and it is therefore Monbiot's book which is my first recommendation – despite being now 10 years old and concentrating its attention on only part of the picture (the political-business interface). Part of the critique, of course, of our governance arrangements is how

the corporate ownership of the media has muzzled the critical journalistic voice – Will Hutton is very eloquent about that in his latest book.

6.5 And politicians

Some politicians, of course, do produce books which advance our understanding of the whole process. I speak not of Tony Blair – and that whole self-justifying political autobiographical genre - but the writings of people such as RHS Crossman (on whose notes on Bagehot I grew up); John McIntosh (who was my tutor); Leo Abse (whose Private Member was a marvellous psychological study of politicians); David Marquand; and, of course, the monumental diaries of Tony Benn . And New Labour had some honourable people in its ranks – who accepted that their critical or maverick approach denied them office eg Paul Flynn. Chris Mullin has also given us 2 studies of politics and government in action. But, over 50 years, not a single title which deserves the epithet “critical”. Tony Wright is an academic who for more than a decade operated quietly as Chairman of the prestigious Select Committee on Public Administration and helped produce a raft of critical reports on various aspects of governance operations. How retired from parliament, he has become a Professor (of Politics) and I look to him for some of the missing critique. Pity he can’t get together with George Monbiot to produce an expanded and updated version of the GB book!!

6.6 The shadow world

So far I’ve discussed academics, journalists and politicians. But what about the shadowy world of political advisers, Think Tanks and NGOs? As we might expect from such a concentration of putative brainpower, three of my 4 recommendations come from this stable. *Political Power and democratic control – the democratic audit of the United Kingdom*

http://books.google.com/books?id=8I1pqOchGWEC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false was commissioned by the Rowntree Trust and produced in 1999 - by Stuart Weir and David Beetham. Weir followed it up in 2009 with a short spoof constitution of the UK. These focus very much on the centralisation of power.

http://www.democraticaudit.eu/download/Unspoken_constitution.pdf

My third nominee for useful study of government capacity is ubiquitous (advisor) Chris Foster’s *British Government in Crisis* (2005)

http://books.google.com/books?id=8BAeXj5NBssC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false which extends the analysis to the administrative aspects which Flynn describes but which (as befits someone who was a senior Price Waterhouse employee) fails to mention the interstices with the business world.

My final nomination is another product of a british Foundation – Rowntree again. *Power to the People* (2006) <http://www.powerinquiry.org/> was the result of an independent inquiry (which in true british tradition invited evidence and organised dialogues) and can therefore reasonably be seen as a mainstream diagnosis and set of prescriptions. I would fault it only because of its basic assumption that if the system is made more transparent, representative, decentralised and accountable, everything will be OK

6.7 The questions remain

After all this scribbling, then we are left with a central question – is the British problem one of centralisation and overreach? A failure of the political class? Civil service incompetence? Corporate takeover? Or, as Stoker argues, misunderstanding? At one or time or another in the past 5 decades each has been proposed as the key problem. Little wonder that I am sympathetic to systems approaches or to constraints on initiatives!

So far, so parochial! A key question I would like some help on is the extent to which this concern is a British/Anglo-saxon phenomenon – or a wider European issue.

Perry Anderson’s *The New Old World* (2009) is one of the few books which give us intellectual and political insights into our neighbours.

7. Floating in words, metaphors and language

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

But they have seem to have worked in vain – since, in 2007, the Local Government Association felt it necessary to recommend that 100 words be banned (not the same thing as book burning!!) <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=7701430>. And two years later it had expanded the list to 200 words - <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7949077.stm>. Some of the words have me baffled (I have not lived in the UK for 20 years!) but I find this is a quite excellent initiative. I have a feeling that it may not – in the aftermath of a General election and massive public cuts – have been taken seriously enough. The offensive words included -

Advocate, Agencies, Ambassador, Area based, Area focused, Autonomous, Baseline, Beacon, Benchmarking, Best Practice, Blue sky thinking, Bottom-Up, Can do culture, Capabilities, Capacity, Capacity building, Cascading, Cautiously welcome, Challenge, Champion, Citizen empowerment, Client, Cohesive communities, Cohesiveness, Collaboration, Commissioning, Community engagement, Compact, Conditionality, Consensual, Contestability, Contextual, Core developments, Core Message, Core principles, Core Value, Coterminosity, Coterminous, Cross-cutting, Cross-fertilisation, Customer, Democratic legitimacy, Democratic mandate, Dialogue, Double devolution, Downstream, Early Win, Embedded, Empowerment, Enabler, Engagement, Engaging users, Enhance, Evidence Base, Exemplar, External challenge, Facilitate, Fast-Track, Flex, Flexibilities and Freedoms, Framework, Fulcrum, Functionality, Funding streams, Gateway review, Going forward, Good practice, Governance, Guidelines, Holistic, Holistic governance, Horizon scanning, Improvement levers, Incentivising, Income streams, Indicators, Initiative, Innovative capacity, Inspectorates (a bit unfair!), Interdepartmental surely not?), Interface, Iteration, Joined up, Joint working, level playing field, Lever (unfair on Kurt Lewin!), Leverage, Localities, Lowlights (??), Mainstreaming, Management capacity, Meaningful consultation (as distinct from meaningless?), Meaningful dialogue (ditto?), Mechanisms, menu of Options, Multi-agency, Multidisciplinary, Municipalities (why?), Network model, Normalising, Outcomes, Output, Outsourced, Overarching, Paradigm, Parameter, Participatory, Partnership working, Partnerships, Pathfinder, Peer challenge, Performance Network, Place shaping, Pooled budgets, Pooled resources, Pooled risk, Populace, Potentialities, Practitioners (what’s wrong with that?), Preventative services, Prioritization, Priority, Proactive (damn!), Process driven, Procure, Procurement, Promulgate, Proportionality, Protocol, Quick win (damn again), Rationalisation, Revenue Streams, Risk based, Robust, Scaled-back, Scoping, Sector wise, Seedbed, Self-aggrandizement (why not?), service users, Shared priority, Signpost, Social contracts ,Social exclusion, spatial, Stakeholder, Step change, Strategic (come off it!), Strategic priorities, Streamlined, Sub-regional, Subsidiarity (hallelujah); Sustainable (right on!), sustainable communities, Symposium, Synergies, Systematics, Taxonomy, Tested for Soundness, Thematic, Thinking outside of the box, Third sector, Toolkit, Top-down (?), Trajectory, Tranche, Transactional, Transformational, Transparency, Upstream, Upward trend, Utilise, Value-added, Vision, Visionary,

And what about coach, mentor, drivers, human resource management, social capital, tsar ???? Anyway – a brilliant initiative (if you will forgive the term)

And in 2009 a UK Parliamentary Committee actually invited people to submit examples of confusing language which they then reported about in a report entitled *Bad Language!*

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmpubadm/17/17.pdf>

I suppose if post-modernists have done anything, they have made us more aware of language. After all, they spend their time deconstructing texts! And they have been active in the field of public administration – *Postmodern Public Administration* (2007) is one taken at random -

http://books.google.com/books?id=yDyMc0ic4VIC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false The trouble is that they play so many word games amongst themselves that what they produce is generally incomprehensible to the outsider. Despite their critiques and claims, therefore, I do not consider them helpful companions.

Before the post-modernists came along, M Edelman's book *The Symbolic Use of Politics* was published in 1964 but then ignored – not least by myself.

http://books.google.com/books?id=h163WQZ_Ma8C&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

I have never found Chomsky an easy companion – but clearly books like his *Language and politics* (1988) are highly relevant to this theme - http://books.google.com/books?id=11CwP-RNExkC&printsec=frontcover&hl=ro&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

One of the most insightful texts for me, however, is Gareth Morgan's *Images of Organisation* - a fascinating treatment of the writing about organisations which demonstrates that many of our ideas about them are metaphorical : he suggests the literature uses eight "images" viz organisations as "political systems", as "instruments of domination", as "cultures", as "machines", as "organisms", as "brains", as "psychic prisons", as "flux and transformation" and as "instruments of domination".

8. The role of international agencies in creating La Pensee Unique

The World Bank is not allowed to engage in political activity and promulgated various words (governance; social capital) to conceal the fact that they were engaged on a highly ideological mission to privatise the world and to “hollow-out” government. The **OECD** has perhaps been an even more effective proselytiser through the way it brings practitioners together with researchers and issues publications selling NPM.

9. The importance of satire

Satire has long been a powerful weapon against the pretensions of power – Voltaire's *Candide* and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* are well-known literary examples. Ralph Steadman and Gerard Scarfe are modern caricaturists in the tradition of Hogarth; and the Liverpool poets (McGough) sustained the protestors of the 1960s. British people are not so familiar with the Bert Brecht's City poems or the savage anti-bourgeois paintings of Georg Grosz in the 1920s and 1930s.

A more recent powerful satirical essay “Democracy, Bernard? It must be stopped!” was penned by the author of the *Yes Minister* TV series and exposes the emptiness behind the rhetoric about democracy and government. It is available only on my website at -

http://www.freewebs.com/publicadminreform/key%20papers/Democracy%20Yes%20Minister_.pdf

In 1987 Management Professor Rosabeth Kanter produced “Ten Rules for Stifling Initiative” <http://nomadron.blogspot.com/2009/10/ten-rules-for-stifling-innovation.html> which I have often used to great effect in Central Asian training sessions.

1999 saw the appearance of *The Lugano Report; on preserving capitalism in the twenty-first Century* which purported to be a leaked report from shady big business but was in fact written by Susan George. Management guru Russell Ackoff's great collection of tongue-in-cheek laws of management – *Management F-Laws – how organisations really work* (2007)

<http://books.google.com/books?id=FCr2H97V4YwC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>

As the blurb put it – “They're truths about organizations that we might wish to deny or ignore - simple and more reliable guides to managers' everyday behaviour than the complex truths proposed by

scientists, economists and philosophers”. An added bonus is that British author, Sally Bibb, was asked to respond in the light of current organizational thinking. Hers is a voice from another generation, another gender and another continent. On every lefthand page is printed Ackoff and Addison's *f*-Law with their commentary. Opposite, you'll find Sally Bibb's reply. A short version (13 Sins of management) can be read here http://www.f-laws.com/pdf/A_Little_Book_of_F-LawsE.pdf. A typical rule is – “The more important the problem a manager asks consultants for help on, the less useful and more costly their solutions are likely to be”.

Robert Greene's *48 Laws of Power* may not be satire but it is a very salutary counter to the thousands of unctuous management texts which attribute benign motives to senior management.

A spoof on the British Constitution produced recently by Stuart Weir is another good example of the power of satire - http://www.democraticaudit.eu/download/Unspoken_constitution.pdf

10. The way forward

As I've worked on these words – and been reminded of various key texts which have, over the centuries, tried to puncture the pretensions and deceits of the powerful and the guardians of “knowledge” which sustained them – I have realised how rare this endeavour has been. Only the specialised cognoscenti have the knowledge and authority to undertake the effort – and they have too much to lose! Of course the discipline of economics, for example, is now subjected to a lot of criticism and adjustment (at least on its edges) - and post-modernists have cleverly dissected bodies of knowledge – but hardly in a reader-friendly language!

But we are overdue a text which will give the average interested citizen the incentive to understand just how weak are the intellectual justifications for so much of the behaviour of modern elites – and satire and ridicule will probably be important elements in such an expose.

In 1996 Harold Perkins gave us a highly critical account of *The Third Revolution - Professional Elites in the Modern World* – but, despite the occasional passion, its tone remains too academic for the purpose. Daniel Dorling's *Injustice – why social inequality persists* gives us not only a lot of useful material but, even more importantly, the suggestion that 5 belief sets sustain contemporary inequality – that elitism is efficient; greed is good; exclusion is necessary; prejudice is natural; and despair inevitable.

But where is the literary satire?

11. Further Reading

In addition to the texts quoted in the introduction above, I would add the following as useful companions in the search for understanding -

The Art of the State – culture, rhetoric and public management; Chris Hood (2000)

The Future of Governing - four emerging models; B Guy Peters (1999)

Market-driven politics – neo-liberal democracy and the public interest; Colin Leys (2003)

How Mumbo-jumbo conquered the world; Francis Wheen (2004)

<http://www.complete-review.com/reviews/sokala/wheenf.htm>

Books like *Great Planning Disasters* (Peter Hall 1982) and *Seeing Like a State - how certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed* (James Scott 1998) showed us how bad centralised decision-making could be – and Tony Travers (*Failure in British Government; the politics of the poll tax* 1994).

Christian Wolmar (*The Great Railway Disaster* 1996) and Allyson Pollock (*NHS plc*) showed us how wasteful the private end of the spectrum was. For the effect on transition countries see

<http://beyondthetransition.blogspot.com/2011/01/polish-railways-failure-of-deregulation.html>

Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of hope – reliving The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 1994); Robert Chambers (*Whose Reality Counts? – putting the first last* 1997); and Tony Gibson (*The Power in our Hands*

1996) are all important inspirations for those who believe in putting the ordinary citizen in the driving seat. Mintzberg's *The management of government* (2000) is one of the most thoughtful contributions to the question of how we should organise government.

<http://www.bdp.org.ar/facultad/catedras/cp/teadm/Mintzberg%20gerenciando.pdf>

12. No Comment

Historians like Arthur Schlesinger and theorists like Albert Hirschman have recorded that every thirty years or so, society shifts - essentially, from the public to the private and back again. The grass, after a while, always feels greener on the other side. The late 1940s to the late 1970s was a period of the public, the late '70s to now, the private. Now the conditions are right for another turn, to a new common life and the security and freedom it affords, but only if we make it happen by tackling a market that is too free and a state that is too remote

Compass Think Tank 2011

Decade	Themes of intellectual discussion	Key names
1930s	The managerial revolution End of capitalism	J Burnham J Strachey
1940s	Keynesism Meritocracy New world order	JM Keynes
1950s	End of ideology Revisionism Private affluence/public squalour	D. Bell A. Shonfield; Tony Crosland JK Galbraith
1960s	Worship of scale Modernisation of society Participation critique of professionals	Peter Berger Pateman; Ivan Illich
1970s	Costs of economic growth Collapse of welfare state Small is beautiful Change corporatism	EJ Mishan Buchanan E. Schumacher; L. Kohr S. Beer; A. Toffler; D. Schon Cawson
1980s	Deindustrialisation Privatisation Pursuit of excellence ecology decentralisation globalisation	Blackaby; Dyson Consultancies; World Bank Tom Peters James Lovelock OECD Stiglitz, Martin Wolf
1990s	End of history Flexibility and reengineering Reinvention of government; NPM Climate change The learning organisation Washington consensus	Fukayama OECD Scientific community Senge World Bank
2000s	Good governance Neo-liberalism and its limits Environmental collapse Migration Social integration	World bank; OECD Naomi Klein Scientific community ? ?
2010s	Migration The financial system Breakdown of society Injustice	everyone Stiglitz Dorling

