

Lost in Beijing – a glimpse into the loneliness of the long-distance consultant

Purpose of paper

The combined Technical Assistance and Foreign Aid budgets of OECD member governments amounted to more than 100 billion dollars a year - according to OECD figures released in 2006¹. Foreign aid per se has attracted a lot of debate – its scale and structure. There are many books, reports, academic studies, websites and blogs about it – from the usual suspects². A considerable part of this budget goes to Consultancy companies and individual consultants – exactly how much we don't know. But we do know³ that consultants have cost the British Government more than 100 million pounds annually in recent years – poking around in its own operations. So clearly the consultancy industry is a pretty big one – and yet how little is written about it. Except, that is, for the occasional newspaper headline about costs or waste. “Client confidentiality” is the obvious reason for this. But every so often, however, the veil lifts – when, for example, the UK National Audit Office started in the mid 2000s to look at how consultants were used by Departments⁴.

I have spent the last 20 years of my life as a free-lance “expert” in administrative reform – heading up long-term (2-3 years) projects in various countries of central Europe and Central Asia – funded mainly by the European Union.

I have been very lucky with my projects. In another paper⁵ I have described the “accidental” process which lands a European “expert” in a foreign country to carry out a project of technical assistance. It is therefore not altogether surprising that, after 18 years in the industry, I found it necessary to write a resignation letter only a week after I had arrived in a country. That country was China. On my return home a month or so later, I tried to make sense of my feeling of alienation – and I am now putting this in the public domain in the interests of transparency. Look upon it as a case study. Anyone reading this paper who is actually heading for China will almost certainly find the Briefing paper I have written – *Making Sense of China* - very useful. Particularly the easily accessed reading references it contains.

The Project

The project was designed to assist a new mega Ministry (of Human Resources and Social Services) “mainstream the rule of law and modern EU public administration concepts into its administrative reform process, acting both at policy development level and policy implementation (at the local level) and on the basis of the following considerations:

- Openness, accountability, effectiveness, coherence, participation as essential features of sound government management.
- a law-based regulating framework - and modern and professional civil service.
- The experience of the EU in Public Administration Reform (or PAR) processes and Government Management being made available as reference for China's Public Administration Reform”.

Two EU experts headed a team which was envisaged as part of a larger reform Unit inside the Ministry – which would link to 5-6 pilot Provinces.

The precise expectations (activities) of the project were described in the following terms in the project's Terms of Reference -

1

2

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⁵ “Mercenaries, Missionaries or witch doctors?” - available on my website

EU Support 2011-2014

CEPA II intends to support the GoC in its efforts to mainstream the rule of law and modern EU public administration concepts into its administrative reform process, acting both at policy development level and policy implementation (at the local level) and on the basis of the following considerations:

- Openness, accountability, effectiveness, coherence, participation are essential features of sound government management.
- The public administration system not only requires a law-based regulating framework, but also a modern and professional civil service.
- The experience of the EU in Public Administration Reform (or PAR) processes and Government Management is made available as reference for China's Public Administration Reform.

Results to be achieved by the Consultant

The CEPA II project will support the PAR process at two levels:

- policy/legislative research and development at central government level (central administrations),
- policy enforcement at local government level (including administrations and public sector units),

across four inter-linked areas of intervention (thematic areas). The envisaged results of the project, to be achieved through the support of Technical Assistance (TA), are described hereafter by thematic area.

Thematic Area I - Support to PAR and Service Oriented Management

Expected Result: *Improved efficiency, accountability and responsiveness of public administrations/public sector units in managing and delivering services to citizens, so as to promote equal access to public services for all. The focus will be on the following (but not exclusively on):*

- Enhancement of policy implementation and enforcement mechanisms relevant to the reform of the public administrative system (PAR), public institution reform, and the integration of rule of law and sound government management principles in the process;
- Developing capacities for optimisation of structures, functions and processes. This may include capacity building, including on performance assessment and management, for those in the departments concerned with the administrative reform of MoHRSS (and provincial departments) and the integration of their functions within the new Ministry.
- Reform of public institutions, including the promulgation and implementation of provisional regulations of personnel management in public institutions, enforcement of contract-based management system and post management system, including building a database of laws and regulations accessible by the public institutions.
- Accessibility of public services by citizens in the context of decentralisation. This component should also contribute to strengthening administrations' capacity to deliver services in the framework of the new urban-rural management schemes.
- Improving intra- and inter-agency coordination and communication mechanisms, including 'readiness' to respond to citizens' needs, e.g. in case of emergencies.
- Communication, reporting and feedback mechanisms between administrations, public sector units, citizens and social groups.
- Awareness of PAR, service orientation, rule of law and sound government management principles related to public administration;
- Methodologies for policy research and policy advice (i.e. evidence-based), development of training capacities relevant to the scope of this component.

Thematic Area II – Enhancement of the Civil Service and HR System

Expected Result: *Sound HR and civil servants policies are defined, capacities to enforce policies are strengthened and staff performance (leaders, managers, employees) in public administrations and public sector units is improved as measured by assessment frameworks. The focus will be on the following (but not exclusively on):*

- Development and enactment of regulations implementing the 2006 Civil Service Law
- Enhancing professionalisation of the civil service.
- Human Resources Development and management policies (development, implementation and enforcement) in public administrations, public sector units and private sector bodies responsible for delivering of public services. This may include strategies on recruitment, post classification, selection and appointment, awarding, exit mechanism and other personnel management issues.
- Improving staff performance assessment schemes (at all levels, i.e. leaders, managers, employees) and introduction of transparent and participatory assessment procedures;
- Improving service management and communication with the public (transparency in procedures, client-friendly services, service orientation).
- Advancement of training systems and resources (academic programmes, on-the job training programmes, distance learning);

Thematic Area III - Development of Quality Management (QCM) and Performance Assessment Frameworks

Expected Result: *QCM and participatory Performance Assessment frameworks developed and tested in selected pilot provinces. The focus will be on the following (but not exclusively on):*

- Modelling and pilot-testing of suitable participatory and transparent quality control and management plans in public administrations and public sector units (suitable to the Chinese needs) based on research-evidence.
- Assessment/Review of local public performance in delivering services for local communities, thereby contributing to accountability and responsiveness in public management, increased public trust in local government and proximity of citizens to government. This may include: development and dissemination of frameworks for consultation of users, assessment of their needs and satisfaction towards public administrations and services in local pilots (with assistance by the PTF)⁶
- Building awareness and ownership of schemes within implementing agency, partner agencies and pilots.

Thematic Area IV – EU-China dialogue on government management

Expected Result: *Sustainable EU-China dialogue mechanisms are established between Chinese and European stakeholders at different levels on matters related to public administration and management and lessons learnt are integrated in the work of the beneficiary organisations. In particular, the focus will be on the following:*

- Establishment of sustainable dialogue mechanisms between Chinese and European stakeholders at different levels on matters related to governance in public administration reform.
- Dissemination and multiplication of the results and the resources developed under the projects.

This component underpins all other thematic areas and will consolidate all aspects of the project strategy.

Cross-cutting issues:

All four thematic areas offer entry points to mainstream cross-cutting issues in the project:

Accountability, transparency, equity, equality, social justice and participation are key elements of modern public management. The Consultant will ensure that these are integrated in all capacity building activities (performance assessment, civil service reform, training and awareness on citizens-orientation, establishment of consultation mechanism in pilot provinces, government relations with civil society groups).

Lost in translation

I identified 17 issues which brought me to submit my resignation. Some of these issues had to do with project design - policy aspects of which, of course, can be challenged during the Inception stage (and a 4 year-project presumably offers higher chances of such revisions). Some were personal (relating to the impact of Beijing). Some had to do with the contractual culture and project management with which the EC (and contracting companies) operates. I hope this analysis will help us all learn the lessons which are in there somewhere. It is, of course, never easy to be objective about a decision to withdraw from a project. One tends to err between 2 extremes – blaming oneself or blaming others.

1. **Policy vacuum;** We made a mistake in going in just before the Chinese New Year⁷ – no Project Director was named in the 6 weeks during which I was present and we could manage only 2 (very unsatisfactory) briefing meetings with Training Centres which were not actually our beneficiaries⁸.
2. **Unrealistic new demand;** a few days before the team arrived the European Delegation suddenly drafted an Addendum to the contract– requiring us to draft and deliver an Initial Action Plan within 4 weeks.
3. **Culture shock;** I was overwhelmed by the monstrosity which is Beijing (easy for youngsters to be captivated by it - but at my age being trapped like a sardine in the metro is not a pleasant experience – nor the sheer soullessness of the endless huge building blocks and luxurious hotels).
4. **Bureaucracy of contractor;** The contractor was one of the largest in the business – and German. Briefings about their financial and procurement systems occupied about 4 days in total in their home and Beijing offices. What they represented as a

⁶ These assessment frameworks are not to be intended as a tool for control and punishment/reward but rather as a flexible tool to monitor and improve management and services to the public.

⁷ The Chinese had actually warned us that April would be a better starting date – but the tender was awarded to our company in late August and the contract signed in November so this fitted neither EC contractual requirements nor consultants' needs (did they expect us just to hang about unpaid for 6 months?)

⁸ Even after 6 weeks, it was not clear where the project offices would be

support system was in fact a costly burden our project. In all my previous projects I have had one person (PD) to deal with at the contractors' - not the legions in this company⁹. My task in projects has been to make sure that we had day-to-day credibility with the beneficiary and contracting authority - and it was the contractor's job to ensure that the official (quarterly) reporting to the EU was satisfactory. I wrote the text - but they supplied the tables. I am used to running the show - but do expect the contractors to deal with the budget.

5. **Missing position in team structure**; When I saw the ToR I had not properly appreciated how much time and energy would be needed to bring in and support so-called "Experts" for missions and conferences (1,200 man-days of EU and local experts); 50 EU MS civil servants and 8 conferences). This makes the project office a bit of a travel bureau - with only 2 Key experts and a weak support team to help. In all my previous large projects, I have had one local full-time key expert as part of the core team - who has been the essential link with the local context for the team - finding local experts, for example, or working with the local support staff to organise training and conferences. Perhaps, once the project task force (PTF) is appointed, one of them will be able to play this role - but the TAT is supposed to help the PTF, rather than they help us!
6. **Insufficient trawl for support staff**; the contractor was supposed to have identified, before our arrival, suitable candidates for the 3 office positions - but we were presented with only 1 (poor) candidate for the accounting and admin roles and, effectively, only one serious candidate for the main position¹⁰. I have always had a good office manager who has been able to handle procurement and financial reporting with minimal control from me. The office accountant will work under the finance people in the contractor's Beijing office - and I therefore left them to take the final decision on the accountant to them - with a clear message that I doubted the capacity of the only person we had been offered (and who was appointed).
7. **Can 2 Key Experts know the European scene?** The scope of the project is wide and ambitious - to share European practice with the Chinese. During the bid process, I had strongly shared my unease that our team did not really have relevance experience of performance management issues (the focus of Thematic Area 3) - and indeed both of us questioned the ideological thrust of PM and NPM (see point 12). When I got to Beijing and began to think more closely about the tasks and expectations, my own lack of recent practical experience in EU member states began to worry me. It is 20 years since I have worked in a member state! Everything I know is 3rd hand (through the writings of academics). Of course no Key Expert can be expected to have practical knowledge of the working of the administrative systems of key member states - let alone those of all 27. But that, again, is part of the systemic problem. People like me - who try to keep up with the reading - tend to become uncertain and confused¹¹; others with a limited awareness of models and analyses have the self-confidence to survive in impossible situations! These are 2 extremes - but it's difficult to find people with the appropriate balance.
8. **Absence of material from previous project**; KE2 and I were keen to brief ourselves on the reality which is the public administration system. Although the Team Leader of CEPAI was positive when we approached him, we could find no significant papers from that project to help us in our familiarisation process. OECD and other papers suffered from being out of date and too general.

⁹ The contractor's intranet system added to the burden. Every day we would receive so many messages (half irrelevant - and were expected to upload our papers and communications to the system

¹⁰ That in a context of a surplus of graduates in the job market! Perhaps the tightness of the contractors budget was a factor

¹¹ The field of PA has been suffering an identity crisis for about 30 years - and a paper by Dreschler summarised on my blog recently and available on my website is an excellent treatment of the issues <http://publicadminreform.webs.com/key%2Opapers/Dreschler%20on%20Rise%20and%20Demise%20of%20NPM.doc> Little wonder those of us open to such discussions feel uncertain.

9. **Socialisation expectations;** During the November visit to the contractor's, jocular reference was made to the amount (and type) of socialising the Chinese would expect from the Team Leader. I indicated that this was not really my scene. The absence of a Chinese PD meant that we never got a chance to test this - but I got increasingly uncomfortable with the prospect of this role. The Chinese project uses a Task Force structure which seems now to be a general model whereby the TL advises a local Project Director and task force – which, in principle, involves a very close daily relationship.
10. **Unrealistic project design;** I had initially wondered why the Chinese wanted us – they have been implementing various types of admin reform for 20 years; have made it clear that there are aspects of the “Western” model they will never accept (eg balance of powers); and that they will go their own way. All very admirable traits! They are operating on a scale none of us can possibly understand; and with a sort of tight party control which is also beyond our comprehension¹². And yet we were expected to draft a baseline study at the start of the project – and then to help draw up and implement a “Master Plan” in 6 pilot regions. I just felt increasingly helpless at how unrealistic this was¹³ – particularly when I began to understand how some of their “public” services apparently work¹⁴.
11. **The role of non-key experts;** the project will need to find non-key experts (local and national) amounting to 300 man-days each of the 4 years - and about 50 EU MS civil servants for the Fora. The CVs so far submitted by the contractor for international experts do not really cover the requirements – perhaps because the contractor has been able to get nationals on board who are happy to have the chance to explore China for 300 euros a day (inc airfare to Beijing) and therefore able to operate within an impossible budget. The sort of people I wd have wanted (eg Colin Talbot) wd not have been able to accept such a budget. Team Leaders like me who have spent the past 20 years in the field tend to have a fairly limited sense of what's available on the market (particularly if we are to cover Europe!). There is a risk that these short missions will not add much value and indeed will be a burden to the project. One thought I've had since coming back home is that a matrix approach could be useful for the international experts – one international expert covering both a pilot Region and a subject specialism and for them therefore to have inputs at both regional and national level. This would give a greater continuity – ie assuming 600 man-days (over 4 years) for international experts and 600 for local experts, this means the project could offer 6 EU experts 100 man-days each over 4 years – ie about 30 man-days each of the main years . The question is how you find experts with such a profile and willingness.
12. **The EC contract culture;** I have been very lucky with my projects in the past 10 years – with conditions requiring and giving me a flexibility which is not at all normal for EC projects. For example, just as I finished my Inception Report in Kyrgyzstan, the Tulip revolution took place and my Minister disappeared. Azerbaijan and Bulgaria alike provided challenges which required high reaction skills and made detailed scheduling of activities redundant. But the EC project management system has become a lot tighter in the last decade and it is clear that this sort of flexibility is now almost impossible. I have come to feel that the contract culture is inconsistent with good consultancy¹⁵ – with the emphasis increasingly on ticking of boxes. Certainly, when I feel locked into a tight administrative system, I am de-motivated.

¹² See separate paper on the way the present system of performance management seems to work in China.

¹³ And look at the language of the expected results - *Improved efficiency, accountability and responsiveness of public administrations/public sector units in managing and delivering services to citizens, so as to promote equal access to public services for all*

¹⁴ See, for example, the brief description at Annex 2 of the scale of payments and bribery in the operation of their hospitals from someone living in Beijing. This taken from <http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/evanosnos/?xrail#ixzz0jL2AZqPP>

¹⁵ For a important critique, for example, of the logframe see Lucy Earle's **Lost in the matrix** – at <http://publicadminreform.webs.com/key%2Opapers/Lost%20in%20the%20matrix%20-%20Earle%20and%20logframe.pdf>.

13. **Rule of Law**; Some ideological issue bubbled beneath the surface to make me vaguely unhappy with both the Chinese context and the project design. One of the issues which made me hesitate in the summer about accepting this nomination was what I was continuing to read about the Chinese record on human rights; lawyers who defended ordinary citizens whose homes had been taken from them by corrupt municipalities were thrown into prison¹⁶. Protesting citizens (of which there many) were beaten and penalised by police. Clearly the party is trying to deal with this. While in Beijing, we saw a statistic that 100,000 officials had been convicted for corruption in 2009! Of course, the ToR recognised this and one of the project activities include further support both for Rule of Law activities (eg brochures and training) and for the consultation processes which the Chinese have been trying to develop in the past 5 years or so. So we have to be realistic – the project cannot be expected to have any real impact in this field! And I have never belonged to the school which pushes a democracy model¹⁷. The claims the West makes in this field are pretty empty – and the various mechanisms Chinese leaders use to retain power and legitimacy have a strong claim for democracy.
14. **NPM**; And the focus of the project on performance management smells of New Public Management (NPM) which may fit the current craze of the Chinese for all things market but of which I have always been a critic and which is now out-dated and increasingly maligned in the West as a whole¹⁸. If one is to believe the comment on the blog referred to in footnote 11, the Chinese have in fact been taking the US as its model for its health reform and the recent Obama health care debate has apparently made its leaders look with more sympathy at the European model¹⁹. If true, this would give the project some relevance.
15. **Chinese Motivation for training and study visits**; all costs of workshops and air travel for study visits are borne, under the ToR, by the Chinese. This - and the present anti-corruption climate - has resulted in a dramatic decline in take-up of study visits. Workshops will also be difficult to motivate.
- 16. Discipline and Fordism**
Experiencing the Chinese system is awe-inspiring. Everything has been designed to deal with large-scale processing of people - and strong discipline and pride is evident. The subway stations are good examples – each has 4 huge separate entrances each managed by about 12 smartly-dressed staff. One advertisement on the TV screens inside the carriages actually has 3 of the staff bearing walking proudly as if they were airline staff! And the speed with which a new ticketing system was introduced (to cut out ticket touts) for the 50 million passengers using trains during the Chinese New Year was most impressive. What do we have to teach them? We envy them²⁰!
17. **Burnout?** only now does this factor occur to me – and yet, in a sense, it is so obvious. I have been Team Leader of 8 projects in the past 20 years. Do people in Brussels realise what this involves in going into new terrain again and again –

¹⁶ 2011 still saw examples - <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/01/12/106671/death-in-china-crushing-dissent.html>

¹⁷ See *Beyond Liberal Democracy* by Daniel Bell

http://books.google.com/books?id=IO9fkUCNPzMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_slider_thumb#v=onepage&q=&f=false

¹⁸ See Rise and Demise of NPM (Deschler) available on my website at

<http://publicadminreform.webs.com/key%20papers/Dreschler%20on%20Rise%20and%20Demise%20of%20NPM.doc>

¹⁹ This takes us to Will Hutton's *The Writing on the wall – China and the rest in the 21st Century* which is a very coherent critique of the US model of capitalism (and its affect on UK) and a suggestion that China cannot sustain its model.

²⁰ And they approach they have to policy innovation is also interesting – they allow new ideas to emerge from either deliberate testing in specific pilots (the ticketing system seems to be one such example); or accept “fait accomplis” when public pressure explodes (some consultation examples)

another unknown country, another new flat, new team , new contractor, new EC structure, new beneficiary, new procedures and ways of doing things, having to prove one's credentials yet again, new challenges. Mercenaries²¹ grow old – what was once a delight becomes unbearable.

18. Summary;

I realise that a list of 17 points is too long to give any real explanation of why I felt after one week I could not go on. It is more like a manifesto! *Simplifying somewhat, I would say that the following factors combined to make me feel “out of place” -*

- *the enormity of Beijing (and the country) made me feel helpless at both an individual and professional level*
- *the absence of a Chinese Project Director (or key expert) with whom to start a conversation gave the negative elements an opportunity to fester*
- *duplicate contractor systems – my office manager normally deals with these technicalities. And what the contractor saw as delegation I saw as a “washing of hands”*
- *The absence of an experienced office manager/accountant and interpreter in the support staff made me feel vulnerable*
- *Perhaps too, after a year of leisure, I could not reacclimatise to the artificiality of office work and of EC project management*

19. Why such an easy acceptance of the decision?

With the benefit of hindsight, I am surprised that the contractors, Delegation and beneficiary so easily accepted a resignation which was going to pose such a headache for them all. Neither the Delegation nor the beneficiary spoke to me about it. Was this simply because the contractor's project manager told them (correctly) that my mind was made up? Was it perhaps an assumption that someone of my age and experience could not be persuaded – eg at least to wait until he had a Chinese project director to talk with and make things less abstract? The contractor had a very experienced and older professional in Beijing operating as Deputy Director of the office there; the company's reputation was on the line and yet he was not asked to talk with me. Of course a good professional should be able to seek people out and talk things through with them – but I felt so bad I was trying to avoid people. Perhaps contractors and Delegation need some advice in handling such situations? I have, after all, a very good record – and solid writing to my credit (see my website and blog). Do contractors and EC offices properly understand the stress referred to at point 15 above? In future cases, a short break is an obvious option. But I had had the sense that the contractor's budget was so tight that this was out of the question.

20. Implications

20.1 for Next Team Leader

- Make sure (s)he needs the job!
- Make sure (s)he is more a manager than a professional (at least not a well-read professional)
- Test their prejudices about China

20.2 for project

- Reduce its scale! The personnel data base is a massive project – so are 6 pilot regions
- Make sure the TAT and PTF have one person at least who is a fluent interpreter

20.3 for contractor and EC Delegation

- Accept the need for flexibility

²¹ In 2007 I presented to the NISPAcee annual conference a paper entitled “Mercenaries, missionaries or medics? Is administrative reform in transition countries a business, a religion or a medicine”. This is available at - <http://publicadminreform.webs.com/key%20papers/Critique%20of%20TA%20for%20PAR.pdf>

- Ensure systems are in place to deal with such situations

20.4 For European Union

- Open a dialogue with the frustrated experienced field consultants

Ronald Young
31 March 2010
with new intro in jan 2011

ANNEX

Questions I posed to the Contractors and their experts in China in summer 2009

My understanding is very limited – no more than an intelligent reader. Two books I have had in my library for some time have been useful. Will Hutton's The Writing on the Wall (2007) is full of useful references; and Daniel A Bell's Beyond political liberalism – political thinking for an East Asian context (2006) draws on the author's long period of academic teaching in the country to construct (a) a defence of the Chinese way and (b) an argument about the ethnocentric nature of “western” thinking about democracy. It has also referred me other very insightful books which he and others have written to help outsiders understand better the nature of elite thinking in China.

The June 2009 ideological statement “Six Whys” seems simply a restatement of a long-expressed view that China will not allow itself to be contaminated by “Western” ideas of “rule of law” and pluralism.

A recent "Der Spiegel" article about the case of an elderly lawyer with a history of defending ordinary people who had fallen foul of the arbitrary state system also gave a powerful perspective both on the politicised nature of their legal system and how poorer people are treated by the state system! Censorship is endemic²²; voices of dissent is simply not countenanced; and corruption inevitable²³ and expected (given the strong economic role the state retains despite the spread of market and its values) - and heavily punished.

Authors in every major EU country have, for the past 15 years or so, been publishing attempts to throw light on what has been happening and might happen in this vast country. I can most easily access the books in English. Martin Jacques has just published yet another contribution in which he rehearses the usual arguments about the simplistic nature of western comments and expectations about democracy but then goes on to make the very interesting observation that -

“We should take care not to conflate democracy and the competence of the state. Notwithstanding the lack of democracy, the Chinese state is – and has for centuries – been a highly competent institution. Arguably, China is the home of statecraft. The state, for example, has proved remarkably able in masterminding China's economic transformation. The reasons for China's sophisticated statecraft lie deep in history: the fact that it enjoys more than two millennia of history, the early teachings of Confucius on the subject, and the sheer challenge of governing such a huge country. As a result, the Chinese state has a competence that far exceeds that of Western states, especially bearing in mind that China is still very much a developing country”.

An assignment in China would clearly be very stimulating – but I find arrogance of the political regime sitting uneasily with its Confucian past!

Some Core Questions

The questions I need to resolve in my mind about this assignment are at four different levels –

- **Context** – will I feel comfortable and feel able to contribute in a country which does not accept rule of law and suffers from so much censorship? I do, however, appreciate strong beneficiaries who know what they want from technical assistance – and are not just playing games.
- **Project** – see questions below
- **Living conditions** – I'm not fond of congested and polluted urban areas.
- **Contractor style** – contractors vary enormously in the role they play – from “hands-on” to almost complete delegation, if not abrogation. What is the contractor style?

technical questions

Let me pose some specific questions – and invite feedback.

- The Chinese have undertaken a massive amount of administrative change in the past 2 decades. This has been very much demand-driven – governed by their own assumptions about

²² For details see pages 127-137 of the paperback version of Hutton

²³ Both financial and moral – see the cases of blood banks referred to at page 131 of the Hutton book

what was appropriate. For example a major downsizing and re-centralisation in the mid 1990s. What precisely, therefore, can they want from a project such as this?

- **Theme one** (*about rule of law; accountability; service orientation*) seems (in the light of my previous comments) “**mission impossible**”. I don’t see real champions for these “western” themes. Do they exist?
- **Theme two** (*professionalization of civil service*) seems superfluous given the Confucian tradition and all the changes already made. What precisely is the nature of the (internal?) debate on this?
- **Theme three** (*quality management and performance assessment*) This is a path I am not keen on (see footnote 4) – although I recognise that these tools seem to fit the Chinese context more than the European! There are lots of lessons from what various European countries have undertaken in the last 2 decades – but many of them are negative. What exactly is the Chinese experience with performance assessment?