

Title: IDD Guest seminar podcast: Responsibility and Its Avoidance: Essays in Public Management and Governance

Speaker: Dr Donald Curtis, University of Birmingham

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So this is the theme. This is the book, I'll tell you a little bit more about it at the far end. I didn't intend to advertise this, but on the other hand I'm quite pleased to see it out, although it is self-published. It's self-published principally because it doesn't really fit into any genre, it's got a lot of anthropology in it but it's not an anthropology text, it's, I advertise myself at the beginning of it by saying that I'm some kind of a hybrid between an anthropologist, a 60's sociologist and a citizen and these three different self-characterisations occur every now and then through the text.

It's a series of papers which were written really as reflections on, because there tends to be an element of reflection on current happenings, was current over the last 10 to 15 years is not so current, but I was pleased to be able to put them together. And then I approached publishers, I approached Professors of Governance and they all said 'oh, that's interesting, but who will buy it?' and the answer is I haven't a clue, but on the other hand I wanted to get it bound and out and I think there is a theme which is worth pursuing, certainly it's worth my pursuing it.

So at the end of writing a book I began to think now what's actually the main theme? And in it I think there is this responsibility paradox. So a good society involves rules for peaceful coexistence, for fair dealing like in the market, for sustainable livelihoods and other good things, but only exist if shared. Including processes for deciding the undecided are the matters to resolve. Individuals, groups and complex organisations and those corporations and Governments become as well. But once established, incentives change. All sets of rules are onerous, with costs and complications that [0:02:27] to avoid. We become complacent, we ignore, we pass the buck. We token comply with outright cheek and we bury in complexity. And then when things go wrong we blame and it is usually the weakest who cop it.

So the solution which I came to was as a citizen, constant, specific, vigilant, but that's [0:02:27 – who it's costing] and although quite a lot of us will spend time on-line or what else, signing up to Friends of the Earth, etc. etc. it is costly and we've then to put it right. The moral hazard thing of passing the buck is something I put down as an economics and it was quite, it became quite into the currency politically when we were in the Banking crisis. Assume another has the responsibility then you are free from constraints, even the primary obligation to hold others to account. So moral hazard has a sort of double hazard to it, in terms of citizen, in terms of being active in the public interest.

So the case of Aid, this is a question that's actually been with me for a long time. IDD in the days when I was here was extensively involved and I know current still are, but we were extensively involved in the design and the implementation of Aid projects. We spent a lot of time as consultants and this thought came to me then and I got a number of papers which were produced around that time which illustrated the theme. Does the fact that an Aid donor such as UK Aid take responsibility for defining the moral purpose of Aid as well as its goals, objectives and method, allow the recipient to avoid such responsibility? With the consequences of poor ownership of policy, poor fit with feasible futures and accountability running in the wrong direction. In a sense or running back to DFID, because DFID has to give account to us as tax payers etc. etc. and the accountability doesn't run as easily back to supposed beneficiaries of Aid.

I want to emphasise poor fit with feasible futures. Several of the project in which I was involved as a Team Leader or a Project Director or as a Consultant, some of the things that we were expected to deliver were not deliverable. Didn't even fit with the obvious constraints and one of the most memorable, which I shall mention at this stage, was a project in Bangladesh, in the Ministry of Finance and I was in charge of a section of the project. A huge, multi-million pound project, I was in charge of a section of a project which was supposed to be about training and changing the curriculum of a training academy, turning that training academy into a free standing, cost recovery institution and training a carder of people who were called, what were they called? They were para-accountants, para-accountants and when I took up my responsibility for this section of the project I went to see the head of the Bangladesh Government in terms of audit and controller general. I said 'how about these para-accountants, what are they going to do about them?' and he said 'what are they?' He had no notion of what para-accountants were and there certainly wasn't a carder of them. They didn't exist and so that's an interesting situation, in a project where in terms of the current fashion of DFID management, the company which we were subcontracted to, one of the big international companies had offered DFID to be paid by results. So they had all these milestones and so on which we had to achieve. So there were milestones on the road to para-accountability, or para-accountants and there weren't such people. So there are questions of fit. Now how this project had been received and taken on by the Government of Bangladesh, certainly had some responsibility for it, was an interesting question. It doesn't fit. Whoever had written the project plan had not actually taken into account the fact that this wasn't the way in which this thing could work. So that's fit.

So what do I need to explore? First of all what Aid is and this is where I sort of reach up into the sky. What kind of social interaction does Aid represent? Then I need to explain why I think that responsibility and avoidance are deeply embedded, recurrent patterns in the composition of society and in the conduct of affairs. And what is the significance in the Aid process of the fact that Aid has not only got to be designed, it's also got to be delivered. We get into quite a complex thing and this isn't a context which perhaps we don't need to look at, but society being an imperfect – and in the book I come back

to this idea of institutions aren't perfect, institutions never work entirely the way they are designed to work and so on. So society is this imperfect kind of framework and it's important I think to see Aid in this context.

So what is Aid? It's easier to say what Aid is not. It is not bureaucratic allocation in respect of an entitlement, although some Aid advocates like to see it as a human rights initiative. There are no actual entitlements. An entitlement being a good that can be claimed as of right. It's not a market of exchange, although it's often assessed in terms of value for money, the better question being value for who perhaps, but it is not that kind of, it doesn't fit within conventional economic frameworks. And it's not a membership due, as within a club of patients, it's not like what DFID or what the British Government has to pay to the EU as a current member of the club, which it is, we're not going to be in the future. So it's a gift and if it is a gift what does a gift represent? Is it altruism? Is it a helpful humanitarian gesture? Sometimes yes. An attempt to create a relationship as friend? In a past paper I rediscovered I'd called this anticipatory obligation. Yeah, we will return to that. Or is it a symbolic domination, as some of the current writers in broader Europe and others have indicated? So a gift does not fit with either of the contradictory grand enlightenment schemes that seek to govern our World. That it's not a matter of market rationality and it doesn't fit within administrative planning rationality. Market rationality bringing everything back to exchange in terms of competition. Administrative planning rationality is seeking some sort of order which can be imposed upon the universe that it's looking at. Andrew has just been talking about Tanzania current development plan. That will be written in terms of planning rationality, some sort of logical deployment of resources real or fictional.

Now in the real World markets fail and plans fail and the real World is imperfect, which as I say, it's one of my recurrent themes in here, chapters dealing with what is the consequence of imperfection? It's uncertain, full of contradictions. It is complex which is surprising it happens to cause reality, part of which we don't understand. And in this context it came to me, one of my Professors in Kent many, many years ago, John Davis, he summarised for me Marcel Mauss, the anthropologist, his summary was that to give is to create a relationship, but not to give is war. There is no neutrality in relationships. And that I find rather fascinating and here I have a little thing which I call the social calculus, I'm not sure if calculus is the right word for it at all because it's not really a calculation. The social calculus must chart the highs and lows of human interaction, the straight and crooked paths to person or group for national survival or advantage. We must identify the different cultures. The known ways of dealing in trade through operating with partners, recognising authority or dealing with difference or social change or for escape. We must posset models of survivable organisations for liveable society. Its engine is reciprocity in all its variations, like tit for tat, market exchange, balance or defuse or generalise reciprocity. And its obverse, the opposite, negative reciprocity. Here I'm dealing with is it [0:14:47 - Salim's] I'm not sure, I've left my notes over that side. So the social calculus is a difficult one because it can take us to all sorts of places. If you go beyond the market rationality or the administrative rationality you're into the world of human

relations and human relations are difficult, there are as many rejections as receptions and all sorts of weird interactions.

In the book I find four rationalities and their inversion and in this, over the years, I came to be influenced by two Professors. One is Eleanor Ostrom and her famous work, which eventually got her a Nobel Prize in Economics, was governing the commons. She worked out that whereas classical economics had rather seen anything which has got a common buffety aspect to it has been so ungovernable that it's got to be privatised. And through our time in development large tracks of Africa were privatised under this head, great chunks of Latin America were privatised because common property was ungovernable and it took Ostrom to come along and say 'well actually, under certain circumstances it not only can be governed but it is governed, but you have to have institutions through which it can be governed' and then she goes into display the logic of the decision making processes and the powers that must rest with people so that they can decide to govern something in common. One of those powers being that they must be able to control each other to prevent free riding. So that's the logical basis of what I find in responsibility and its avoidance. But then along comes another Professor, Mary Douglas who is an anthropologist. Anthropology is quite a disputed area of discussion of private choice or public choice. And she looks at institutions as bodies of, as cultural entities which are perfectly capable of being completely irrational from the perspective of any individual, but do all sorts of things to reinforce themselves and to control deviance or supposed deviance of people who break the mould. And I find myself increasingly putting these two quite contrasted perspectives, but also focusing around these different kinds of rationality.

So we have hierarchical rationality which is the dominant mode of Governments everywhere, leading to a language and a way of looking at the World which puts things into rank order, even things which were quite difficult to put into rank order, based upon was the element of precedent, there's the instruments of regulations, modes of business of targeting and setting targets for achievement of this, that and the other thing and monitoring from a central position. For people to join a hierarchy what I've put here is – I'm not sure if it's quite the right term – but the gift of compliance, somebody voluntary signs up to an employment contract in the public service, which means that they will primarily comply with what the system is. It requires subordination. If there were members of the Indian Civil Service here I would point out the ways in which they demonstrate rank ordering and the management of rank ordering and who to call Sir. But it goes through all sorts of things. And the risk in the hierarchical rationality is that power corrupts and you get the known forms of deviance in Governments that power can do arbitrary, not arbitrary, but things which are not necessarily in the interest of the organisation as a whole, or they can carry the whole organisation in a different direction.

Group rationality, this is the we together philosophy, the gift of mutuality that you're going to say what's significant aspect of my life chances means I'm going to get on with these people and I will allow that to have priority over personal interest, although I would like to see a compatibility with my personal

interest and the group interest. The risk is sectarianism or when it gets to groups becoming nations xenophobia. The individualist rationality, the can we deal philosophy. A gift is a gift of friendship and 'friendship' in inverted commas because it is a friendship of convenience. It requires actually distrust or an ability to move into a distrust frame of mind and the risk is a risk of cheating.

And then the great, I found the enlightening thing about putting together Ostrom and Douglas is that a fourth box emerges which is the box of the alienated, the people for whom the World is against us, the order which is there is not giving us the results that we would look for, we were employed in industry and now we're in the rust belt. The gift is the gift of devotion if you can find someone to be devoted to. We look for a charismatic saviour requiring blind faith and the risk is that actually you go down a route which doesn't produce the goods that you are looking for. The risk is the risk of war. So the inversion.

And then in the book somewhere there is this table coordination, failure, risk and blame, because things turn to blame. Authority shapes information and interprets events to its own advantage. Control failure leads to tighter controls. Risk must be absorbed by the subjects, particularly the poor and powerless. Blame is preferably allocated to the foreigner. We have this running through contemporary politics in my view. Failure leads to – and this is the group – failure leads to redouble efforts rather than adapting the rules of the game. Persistent misfortune leads to purging of supposed deviants. For groups or communities threats coming from beyond their boundaries. Individuals or Governments are to blame. And then the business, business failure is bad luck in the dealing World, you win some, you lose some. To protect against bad luck I must have friends. The friend who fails me becomes my enemy. Government interference is to blame for market failures. And the last one is the alienated, the isolated or the alienated. All is for the worst in the worst of all possible World, as Voltaire said. Everything is against us, but a special one with a message of redemption will take us to a promised land. Ooh, sorry, that's all a bit rhetorical.

Now responsibility and avoidance, this is the conundrum which I find running through these things. To exercise social responsibility requires coordination with others to avoid conflicts and to address interests that are common or public. So we sign up to rules of fair dealing, with temptations of acting for personal advantage or others' disadvantage. Of cooperation, the temptations of free riding. Of compliance to hierarchical order, with the temptation to work to rule, tokenism or fraud.

I noticed outside that the University Lecturers are being invited to go on strike at the moment. Good.

Now we bring it Aid delivery and the point here that however Aid is conceived it then has to be delivered and in the delivery there are various persons or agents who have different kinds of responsibility. Some fit within a hierarchy. There is a donor side, there's a recipient side and there's a contractor in the

middle. When I put this together I suddenly realised that I had actually written this in the paper, a 2002 paper I think and I can give you the title of it if any of you like to do archive or research, but it provides a model of relationships that I discovered around me in delivering projects here and there. I had a project in Bangladesh, I had a project in South Africa at this time, I think it was the South African one got written up around this. So you find these different persons, the individual with the individual motives, a political leader, the policy grouping at that stage I think it was a time when Claire Short was Minister for Overseas Development and several members of our group as IDD as then was, had been drawn into various discussions in London about the changing focus of DFID and how it would work.

Once the policy grouping had done its work what we then have is hierarchical line delivery. However Aid is conceived it has to be turned into deliverable projects and programmes and budget support regimes and things, which are conceived at a central place and driven down and then somebody half way down the pile or in the country office becomes responsible for creating some kind of relationship with the recipients. So the head of mission will talk to a recipient, policy, personally or a Secretary to Government in Bangladesh and a Consultant gets appointed to the Consultant team and then again it moves into line delivery. So the Minister responsible, this question of responsibility and avoidance, so the Minister who is responsible for political choice, advocacy within the political arena, Claire Short was very energetic in this respect. Making the requisite compromises with other interest in Government. Choosing the delivery mechanism, constrained actually at that stage by EU procurement regulations and probably still is. If there was evidence of avoidance it would be in tokenism, obscurantism, double speech or bringing in other sorts of objectives like Aid has also got to support the Military. Commitment is courage, inspiration, acting beyond the justifying ideology. The policy process grouping can allow for policy formulation processes to be relatively that is selectively open and inclusive. Now Claire Short, as I've just mentioned, Aid at that stage was taking on the MDGs as a new, relatively new thing coming out of the World Bank and other places. That group think you could criticise because it didn't actually get to that how to do question for the MDG delivery. The policy is then passed to DFID to get on with it and that moves into delivery of bureaucracy, plan a rational delivery process, get hierarchical precedence, budget, allocations for acquiring the compliance of various people. Compliance is irksome requiring subordination. Subordination is met with tokenism, work to rule, comply with the letter, avoid the spirit, meet the measure not the intention. But beyond the call of duty commitment, willingness to whistle-blow when things are not going as they're supposed to do. There are these complexities in there.

And then there's the contractor, at that stage was me. Contracts come in three kinds, the spot contract as of the market, the classical as from the hierarchy and the relational as between collaborating partners. Just jumping forward a bit we have this partnership word all over the place now, still quite prominent within the discourse I believe, but the evidence of actual partnerships, which would imply some kind of equality is not there. So the contractor within the delivery system was bound by the classical contract,

specified log-frame type goal, objectives, outcomes and inputs, performance reporting and monitoring against deliverables and outcomes, upwards generally, accountability to donor as principle. Is there learning from experience? Well, over the years I could point to articles in our trade which highlight the importance of having learning projects and learning processes and always there is the difficulty in achieving this. So avoidance in this case takes the usual thing. Total incompletion, meet the measure avoid the purpose, personal commitment giving beyond the contract.

On that Bangladeshi project which I quit because I was not prepared to go on with it anymore. The person who succeeded me, I met him a couple of years afterwards and I said 'how did you overcome the problem that what we were supposed to deliver was not actually something that could be delivered?' and he said 'oh, we managed to fudge it somehow, we produced seven figures that we put down in the right boxes' and that was the end of it. They got paid and the project rolled onto another project, but that was actually for another reason.

So personal commitment, giving beyond the contract, I would like to come back to that because I really felt that actually this was one of the things I appreciated, thank you and enjoy and felt that if we were doing any good it was actually because we were able to construct beyond what we were told to construct.

So the recipient agency, this is the answer to my, well there's positive, the questions that would answer my question about whether the fact that DFID does all this hard work on policy means that Government of Bangladesh or the South African Government or whoever it is doesn't. So how do we anticipate that a recipient agency is likely to respond to an Aid package delivered through such a process you know at some point? As a recipient being involved in the moral process of defining purpose and objectives and methods? Well, at some sorts of levels there has been an on-going debated, the MDGs and the sustainable development objectives we have succeeded them, in both cases there have been World Conferences involving developing countries in shaping and determining these. The Paris Declaration was emphatic with what they were trying to do was to get buy in to ownership by developing countries of the projects of Aid that was being offered. But there is a problem of language here because lots of things are intended and disguised in language, but is actually a little bit like the Henry Ford choice about your colour of your car, that you can have any colour you like as long as it's black. And in that case expect what's in it for us and again, in project experience in Bangladesh at that stage we've got clear instances where senior Bangladesh Officers were saying 'oh they want this, it's supposed to be good for the Civil Service and so on, am I going to get a trip to London?' And so even at that very sort of minimal level, it's not always, they're far from all like that and you can actually get something else about it, but it's difficult and in some ways the more that the likes of DFID lay it on the line, or in the case that Andrew was just talking about, about a plan for Tanzania, if it is ODI that has actually –

With the DFID money.

With DFID money, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah and in Bangladesh there's some extremely clever academic institutions, the Bangladesh response to property requirements was to give the Bangladesh, what's it called, the Institute of – it's a research institute – gave them the responsibility for writing the plan and it had all the right phrases including a thing which said that it was very important for advancing gender and equality that the Civil Service provided creches so that women could leave their children in creches. Now any lady Civil Servants in Bangladesh can employ people to support her children and it was something that was written out of somebody else's agenda, could not be conceived of as a priority in that context and it wasn't the reason why there were rather few women in the Civil Service.

So my next question is then does the process respect the uniqueness of circumstance and allow for the adaptation or change of direction in implementation? So if a project or programme or budget support thing, budget support was just coming in when I was last involved in this in 2004 or 2005 and it was supposed to have addressed the [0:38:25] but what I've read about it is that actually it doesn't run into the same kinds of problem. Uniqueness of circumstance, every country is unique in some sort of respect and if there is not this kind of respect for uniqueness of circumstance, if not expect total compliance, take the benefits, avoid the costs.

And then my third question is who assesses the outcomes? I've had several experiences of being the project evaluator, always there was a counterpart and some of the people I worked with were extremely good and extremely interesting. I remember a wonderful man in Bangladesh who had been the Head of one of the Bangladesh rural development academies, two of which are acknowledged Worldwide as actually quite interesting institutions that had gone their own way. He'd been the Head of this thing, he was put in as my counterpart in evaluating a project of some sort and we had a whale of a time because the World Bank had just sent a large team of agricultural experts to explain why the Bangladesh agricultural policy was not working terribly well and there were all these large white men in shorts going around Bangladesh and my friend, whose name I've forgotten now, had some real chuckles because he knew the inside stories of many of these things. But he was there as my counterpart, my report was going to DFID and then it would go to the Bangladesh Government if DFID approved, etc. etc.

Who assesses, if donor driven expect limited policy commitment and actually just another little anecdote out of Bangladesh. At the end of one project, the previous project I'd been involved in for the Civil Service in Bangladesh and the Chief Governance Advisor in the DFID/Bangladesh had been given instructions from London that she was not to be involved in monitoring projects, she was to influence policy and this included policy for the Civil Service. She was in a bit of a dilemma because she had never actually managed to meet the head of the Civil Service, nor the Secretary to the Government for public administration. So I had to introduce her, through the project, but in fact the project did have priority and I at that stage knew something about the issues which this man as head of the Civil Service was

experiencing and we worked out the basis of a further project which would reflect his interests and then there was another story attached to that. But if donor driven expect limited policy commitment and that I think where we took it then.

Now I have to acknowledge that I'm far from up to date on these things. Ooh, that's a little bit alarming. Beware wolves dressed in sheep's clothing. Partner masquerade for subordinate, liberal meaning free for me and restricted for you, which of course is the basis of the new liberal agenda. If you move capital wherever you like labour stays fixed unless it's a useful commodity elsewhere and that is the way that relative advantage is achieved. So the basic requisites in place which I was down in ODI the other day and some DFID guy saying 'well you know, Aid has got better because the basic requisites are now in place in many countries'. It makes what I've just called a short time here, is a new liberal track and no doubt one can find others.

So throwing the gift isn't about slides about the Minister, the policy grouping, the line administration, the contractor. The bottom line is about commitment. Commitment in each case is about overcoming responsibility avoidance temptations and sticking to the social purpose. In each case it entails a willingness of individuals to give beyond their contractual obligation and that I think is the practical way in which the social formula finds its way into the situations that are supposedly defined either on commercial basis or on planning rationality basis.

So the gift is not explicable in terms of economic or administrative rationality and can be contradictory, a matter of corruption, but contains the possibility of being socially creative.

A contracted partner becomes an information sharing, value sharing, risk sharing friend. If you look at the way the relationships of Aid administration is talked about, if you look at the legal ramifications of Aid administration in which we got tied up at one point in Birmingham here, there is nothing about friendship. But as I was saying earlier actually in each of the projects I was involved in, or several of the projects I was involved in in different countries, at a personal level, in there you're supposedly a team leader or a project director or something, but actually what was rewarding and in a curious way what worked was friendship. And I was thinking when writing this I was thinking about walking around Dacha with my counterpart in the Civil Service training project, managing at the top we called it, my counterpart was a lovely man called Dr [0:46:04] and he was a terrible administrator, he was an economist. I don't think that necessarily means that he's going to be a bad administrator, but he was known for the chaos of his desk and for his relationships. An absolutely lovely man, totally honest with an ability to see it through the tangled jungle of how projects worked or how the Government of Bangladesh worked. And walking around the place with him he became a real source of information. And I'll just give you one little way in which what he said taught me something. I'd been talking to a newly appointed DFID Government Advisor in DFID Office in Bangladesh and he had been very ready with the thought that the houses in the [0:47:17 - Gunjan] area of the city which were

quite, there had been a classic or middle class area, OK and this advisor was completely convinced that a Civil Servant living in one of these houses must be corrupt otherwise how on earth could they afford to live in this expensive place and to pay the kinds of rents that were being extracted there. But [0:47:17] had told me beforehand as we walked around, he liked to walk around the city when we would go out for a meal together. He said 'well actually, what happens is this, these guys have probably inherited the house from their parents or what not, property developer comes along and says 'look, sell me your house, I will build twelve apartment block, I will give you two, one to live in and one to rent out and there will be no money involved at all'. So here was a piece of information which was not the kind of information which you would actually get unless you think about it and work out about it and have some knowledge of the – and I find that extremely valuable and in fact that kind of information about a particular sort of place is precisely what is missing in many contexts. A lot are based on spurious certainties, becomes an uncertainty sharing partnership. The new liberal paradigm is challenged. This is another of [0:49:19] comments. As the triviality of the Aid budget is confronted by the reality of debt servicing obligations and trans-national corporate profit extraction.

So I'd finish this by saying in an uncertain World both the donor and the recipient need friends, in the sense of information sharing and what not. A slightly different conclusion from the conclusion of [Salim] [0:49:51] and other, very eminent scholars, but this is from the world of practice.

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