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STUDYING AID: SOME METHODS

Des Gasper

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1 INVESTIGATING IDEAS, IDEOLOGIES AND PRACTICES

This paper presents some methods for trying to make sense of international aid and of its study.¹ Some of the methods may be deemed ethnographic; the others are important partners to them, but rather different. In the course of discussing questions of aid policy and practice—such as: Should international development aid exist at all? How should aid be conducted? Should humanitarian relief be provided in conflict situations when it can provide the resource-base for those engaged in aggression?—one comes to the analysis of concepts, ideas and ideologies. In trying to make sense of the issues and debates one often uses ‘stakeholder analysis’, the systematic rather than casual identification of different groups who are involved (interest groups or ideology groups); and then follows this by trying to document, clarify, understand and compare their views and proposals on each of the component issues: ‘ideology-mapping’.² Compared to hasty characterization, ideology-mapping usually generates considerable added value. Often it forces one to revise the initial delineation and labelling of groups.

What methods can one use to ‘clarify, understand and compare their views and proposals’, short of taking Master’s programs in logic, linguistics, and literary criticism? I have followed the example and advice of authors such as Michael Scriven (1976), Stephen Toulmin (e.g. 1979), William Connolly (1983), Raymond Apthorpe (e.g. 1986), and Frank Fischer (1980, 1995) who offer methods or insights that can be grasped and helpfully applied by the non-specialist; and have tried to adapt and integrate their approaches.

Section 2 looks at ethnographies of aid, and in particular at Porter, Allen & Thompson’s *Development in Practice*. We see that we need more than general methods in order to investigate particular cases. To adequately study aid we have to study its languages and how they are used: to do informed ethnography of, for example, the working of financial and economic cost-benefit analysis, evaluation and ‘logical frameworks’. For examining its policy discourses we need methods for investigating concepts and arguments and for reflecting on moral and political assumptions.

¹ A revised version of a paper presented to a PhD researchers training workshop, organized by Roskilde University in Denmark, November 2001. I thank Jeremy Gould for organizing the workshop and commenting on the draft paper.

² See e.g. Gasper (1988), and Bose (1991) for a study of the viewpoints of interest groups in the ‘aid industry’ in Britain.

Section 3 looks at methods for specifying and presenting program designs, including the famous ‘logical framework approach’. To illustrate, it examines the assumptions behind emergency relief aid; and raises the question of under what conditions the open probing of assumptions is politically feasible. It also indicates briefly how the upper reaches of program design lead us into political ethics and the analysis of ethical argumentation.

Section 4 presents a framework for analysing texts. The framework adapts and extends ideas from Scriven and Toulmin, to promote and integrate the investigation of meanings and of logic, including methods for the summary presentation, assessment and possible replacement of a text. In Annexes 1 and 2 we analyse two texts in detail: an attempt by a multi-national organization to politely propound a global view of the causes and remedies for corruption; and second, an attack by an international business magazine on debt relief for poor nations. Finally, the epilogue notes how the various methods fit within the wider universe of research methods.

Why concentrate on methods, in a discussion of research on aid? There are no methods unique to the study of aid. Why not concentrate on the substance of aid, its politics, its procedures, its organizational cultures, its interpersonal dynamics, its successes and failures? One reply might be: because aid is so enormously diverse across eras, funders, recipients, sectors, in scale and style and modalities. Contrast balance-of-payments support (e.g. White 1999) with the funding of fellowships to study in the North (e.g. George 1997) with emergency relief (e.g. Apthorpe et al. 1995; de Waal 1997) with broad-scale funding of Northern NGOs (e.g. de Ruijter et al. 2001-02) with sending an economic policy adviser (e.g. Klitgaard 1991). Is this too vast a universe to discuss as if it had shared features? But there are indeed some important common, if not invariable, themes and issues. Furthermore, methods too are enormously diverse.

So a stronger reply is that to discuss methods is *not* to avoid the substance of aid. What are appropriate methods depend on the substance of the subject matter, as well as on the purposes and circumstances of the research; and the nature of that substance can only be grasped more effectively through systematic use of appropriate methods. The exploratory process of developing an adequate fit between topic, purposes and methods is the heart of research. The discussion below of methods tries to make connections to topics in aid, and to provide pointers that can help processes of exploration.

Why focus specifically on methods for the analysis of concepts, texts and style? My aim is to not repeat what others have written already on the ethnography of aid, but to complement them. We often have to analyse texts and seek to interpret and re-interpret these, because parts of the aid world are not easily accessed: thoughts and real intentions, suppliers and consultants, leaders, the very strong, the very weak, the corrupt. The aid world is heavy too on formal declarations and documents, trying to find consensus or compromise across widely different perspectives and interest groups, trying to bridge ideals, interests and action, trying to justify and sustain forms of cross-national expenditure that are marginal and at risk in nation-state budgeting. The abundant speeches and documents are legitimate foci, for they are not unconsidered and solitary remarks. It is however too easy to declare that a particular text is an expression of some hegemonic mega-discourse; such claims have to be backed, or modified, by methods for systematic examination of actual discourse (see e.g. Gasper and Apthorpe 1996, Gasper 1996). Finally, ethnographies too are texts: we can become more self-aware of how they, and we, work. We must look also at the accounts presented in non-academic ethnographies: newspapers, television, travelogues and other reportage. Much of it is shallow, yet dangerously influential.

2 ETHNOGRAPHIES OF AID: ON DISTANCES, (NON-) RELATIONSHIPS, AND CHOICES

Ethnographies of aid can go deeper than the bland and abstracting gaze typical amongst economists and administrators and sometimes also amongst sociological theorists and philosophers. Let us begin by looking at three illustrations from aid in conflict-driven emergencies.³

(1) *On feeling too busy, too knowledgeable and too worthy to need to learn about, and work with, intended beneficiaries*

Harrell-Bond (1986) studied the programs for Ugandan refugees in Southern Sudan in 1980-85 undertaken by the UN High Commission for Refugees and foreign NGOs. Thousands of refugees were interviewed, inside and outside the official settlements, as well as members of the indigenous population. Refugees helped determine the data to be collected and discussed its implications. Harrell-Bond argued that official assistance programs, which placed refugees in controlled rural settlements, largely failed in Sudan as in most other countries to integrate them into

³ The following three extracts are from Gasper (1994a).

the host country or make them self-reliant. Comparative evidence was drawn from those refugees (in fact the majority) who stayed outside official settlements, and from countries where refugees were allowed to manage the use of aid themselves.

She argued that refugee needs have been outweighed in mainstream programs by the preoccupations of donors and host governments with control and security, and by misplaced presumptions of the incompetence and untrustworthiness of refugees and local officials. The study found that refugees often had valuable skills and represented a pool of potential creativity, capable of responding to the stresses and opportunities in their new situation. This potential was stifled or inhibited by aid officials who considered themselves too busy, too knowledgeable and too worthy to need research on refugees' situations and activities, or even to consult with the people they were supposed to be assisting. Harrell-Bond concluded that attempts to control, made from a position of ignorance and mistrust, produced severe negative effects for the refugees, in terms of both frustration (which in turn affects physical and mental health) and dependency.

(2) On living in 'the official world' and 'the real world' – which is which?

A short story by Leonard Frank (perhaps an apt pseudonym [like 'Marcus Linear', author of an expose of FAO, *Zapping The Third World*])... A UN project identification team visits the North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan. The team includes professionals from six countries; none have previously met. None of them has been there before, but many previous missions have, leaving reports. The team has four weeks to identify a project for around thirty million dollars. Some team members are under extreme stress, caught between the demands of their actual job and their formal profession; others are committed to just one or the other - to 'the official world' or to 'the real world' (but perhaps with disagreements over which is which). A project is duly designed, on time, and with an eye to meeting the desires of donor and recipient agencies and to providing defences against critics.

This second case is further along the relief-development continuum than the first example, for it concerns planning of support in the 1980s for long-term Afghan refugees in Pakistan. But the theme is similar: the separate world of aid professionals and their sometimes extreme psychological and political remoteness from those for whom they prescribe. Some of them ask: Is 'the real world' that of the proposed beneficiaries, which is typically more diverse and dynamic than grasped by aid organizations, or is it that of the power-holders in the organizations, with their appetite frequently for simplified generalized stories? Is 'the official world'—meaning the one we pretend is true and treat as important—the realm of simplistic generalization, rather than the world depicted in aid ethnographies? Or is it instead that ethnography-depicted world itself, which everyone formally declares to be so important but which in 'the real world' of power carries little weight?

(3) On accepting unexpected routes to help, and tolerating Type II errors (giving resources to those who do not need or deserve them) in order to avoid bigger Type I errors (failing to get resources to those who need them).

Shawcross's study of the US\$ 1 billion-plus international relief efforts for Cambodians in 1979-83 and the ethical dilemmas in emergency aid ... recorded for example how the Cambodian government, still fighting a civil war against the Khmer Rouge and others, resisted and obstructed technical assistance to improve the inflow of food, ignored monitoring and reporting requirements, and gave most of the food to government officials, soldiers, and others who were not in greatest need — yet how this reduced the pressure for the government to extract supplies from rural areas. Many lines of international food supply emerged: including to border camps controlled by the Thai Army, Khmer Rouge or other Cambodian opposition groups, who diverted much of the supplies; and to Cambodians arriving at the border, who could distribute it back inside the country, free of any conventional aid monitoring and probably subject to significant diversion. Shawcross concluded that, amidst the diversions, obstructions and confusions, food and relief still reached huge numbers of people in severe need; and that conditionality to ensure that no supplies reached unintended destinations would have meant that far less reached desired destinations.

That these three examples are all from humanitarian relief is no coincidence. The urgency of life-and-death choices generates greater attention and more intense reflection. But we have some valuable studies of non-emergency assistance too, such as by Ferguson (1990), Klitgaard (1991), Crewe and Harrison (1998). The main themes appear the same: the prevalence of unforeseen lines of influence and of unexpected effects; the excessive faith of much of the personnel of the development and relief apparatus in whatever are their current doctrines and procedures; and the enormous gap between many or most development or relief personnel and those who are officially supposed to benefit from their activities; Apthorpe (1980) wrote thus of 'Distant Encounters of the Third Kind'.

Let us consider an extended example of these themes, the book *Development in Practice—Paved with Good Intentions* by Doug Porter, Bryant Allen and Gaye Thompson (1991).⁴

The Magarini Project In Kenya

In the mid-1970s, Australia sought to improve its national profile in Africa, and its aid agency looked for a flagship project to demonstrate Australian expertise in dryland farming. The Magarini settlement scheme in Kenya was the outcome. Porter, Allen and Thompson give an engrossing analysis of this major project, from 1973 through 1989, drawing on their own involvements, extensive interviews and access to official files and documents. They interweave this story with a cumulative critique of

⁴ The following subsection is based on Gasper (1994b).

conventional project approaches to aid.

In Porter et al.'s account, Kenya's government, with its power bases in the land-scarce highlands, was keen on settlement schemes near the coast. In 1975 an area inland from Malindi was chosen, as a supposed *tabula rasa* to be developed. The Kenyan government intended to remove existing 'squatters', register and subdivide land, and then resettle both locals and upcountry settlers on it, leaving them with certificates of occupation plus large debts for land purchase. Some research could have shown that the Giriama people had *de facto* gained the area before, and then again after, fierce conflicts with the British; and that numerous colonial schemes had failed on these marginal lands of highly variable rainfall. Further, Australia has little success in semi-arid tropical agriculture, as opposed to on temperate drylands. But, unable to understand Giriama shifting cultivation, interventionist consultants designed and pursued a completely new farming system, with labour shortages supposed to be overcome by mechanized land clearance and tractor-hire. Section 3 analyses 'professional over-optimism in action' (p. 62), with local knowledge ignored, chronic problems that were apparent from the exploratory phase glossed over, and serious damage resulting to a fragile environment.

The project was soon in trouble, both in allocating lands and supporting their use; but was protected by Kenyan government pressure, Australia's foreign policy and wish to keep face, the managing consultants' vigour, and hopes for improved organization. Section 4 attacks the notion that clearer thinking about objectives, by 'logical framework analysis' or the like, could have resolved the differences in objectives between donor, recipient government, other beneficiary groups (including the consultants, the largely non-Giriama Kenyan project staff and their established clients), and marginal Giriama. When extension of the project was opposed in 1983 in Canberra, a re-design (not subsequently implemented) proposed an increase in settlement density in this marginal environment. Porter et al. show in detail how, with the aid of unrealistic but convenient assumptions on growth and stability of yields, and on labour requirements and opportunity costs, plus feeble sensitivity analysis, an impressive economic rate of return was then estimated, and approved.

Later stages of the project turned to 'participation', as a palliative and to cover Australian withdrawal. A team of NGOs was given certain responsibilities, including that of building local capacity to sustain the project later. Finding how local priorities diverged widely from those of the project (and were notably less economic), they distanced themselves from their official role. By 1988, none of the fundamental

agronomic, economic and community problems of the project had been resolved. The Australian government ended its support to the public-sector components, but continued funding NGO work.

The authors see the conventional project approach, and its tools (like logical-frameworks and cost-benefit analysis, as used at Magarini), as attempts to reduce uncertainty along lines imitated from engineering: delimiting an area for action, and trying to control and predict what happens there. They elaborate the now standard critique that this approach is ill-fitted to little-understood rural environments. On the basis of relatively slight knowledge of highly complex, variable and evolving systems, a project concept is prematurely fixed, as it was in Magarini; the later 'appraisal', 'review' and 'evaluation' rarely seriously change it. Instead, consultants' talk of integrated systems analysis and cost-benefit can serve to obfuscate, to blind 'developers' to their ignorance, insulate them from local views, and ritually reassure them in their commitments. Porter et al. find strong similarities in the activities of development planners, especially economists, and Giriama diviners. The planners however are more divorced from those whom they affect, and less willing to accept a plurality of approaches. The risks of their salvational schemes fall on local populations whose previous lives and own varied ways of facing complexity and uncertainty were disparaged, if ever noticed, by the developers.

'Development in Practice' is one of a still too rare genre, a detailed case-study of planning and implementation that is informed by hands-on experience and yet constantly refers to wider theory, comparing theory and case. [Much of the work on evaluation of aid] centres on national-level correlations between aid and economic growth (taken as the key measure of performance), seems to seek a single answer, and is thus probably over-generalized. As Paul Streeten (1984) suggests, we need a triangulation of theoretical, macro- and project-studies, to give more understanding inside the 'black box' of macro-level correlations. One reason though for the rarity of rich case histories is the difficulty in presenting intricate events clearly and concisely to outsiders. 'Development in Practice', despite restricting itself to selected issues, and sometimes leaving significant gaps (for example, over selection of settlers), is a dense study. Yet while the trio of authors have not distilled their experience and learning as clearly or elegantly as, for example, Lisa Peattie (1987) does in a comparable work, the book offers some important rewards. It reflects an unusually close collaboration of a development economist, a geographer and a social anthropologist.

Magarini lies in perhaps the biggest aid project graveyard, rural development in Africa. Few cases would better support a fundamental rejection of aid, not least because most of those involved are described as well-meaning and concerned. The path was ‘paved with good intentions’. Is Magarini an extreme case? In certain ways, yes, involving for example a novice donor and the politically marginal Giriama; and something has been learnt since the 1970s. But the book’s themes have wide relevance. Porter et al. lightly sketch some standard recommendations: more consultation, flexibility, decentralization, and empowering of local people to make their own choices; and note, very briefly, the many counter-forces. Their emphasis though is not programmatic but on giving us a case to ponder. The book’s value lies not in novel theorization or recommendation; rather in the combined application of several bodies of analysis—cultural and agricultural, historical and economic, and more—into an insightful and sobering account of an important project. While the depth of detail may mean it is most read by students, it deserves a wide audience.

Development in Practice illustrates how the ethnography of aid has to cover a great span of types of people, including ‘developers’ as well as those (to be) ‘developed’. It must cover not only the ethnography of diviners and the consultancy industry, but in addition the ethnography of financial and economic cost-benefit analysis (see e.g. Colvin 1985; Gasper 1987 or 1989), evaluation (e.g. Morris 1993; Quarles van Ufford 1993), logical frameworks (e.g. Gasper 1997, 2000a; Nakabayashi 2000; cf. Mosse et al. 1998), and so on, including the rituals of reassurance and legitimation which they often provide. And it must attend to history, both the history over the several years of a particular aid intervention and the history of situations and processes which long antedate it. Aid work has too often operated with a ‘funders know, recipients listen’ script, where uncertainty has been suppressed, as the felt enemy of optimism, and little interest has been felt in investigating the past.

Correspondingly, aid ethnography must use a variety of types of method, and much triangulation, and encourage learning from cases of relative success too, not only chronicle the failures which are hardly surprising in most low-income environments. Robert Klitgaard’s *Tropical Gangsters* (1991) and Norman Uphoff’s *Learning from Gal Oya* (1996) provide fine examples.

Crewe and Harrison’s (1998) valuable attempt to synthesize the ethnography of aid draws as major conclusion a need to understand aid’s typical oversimplifications, over-generalizations, and over-selfconfidence: its recurrent simplistic and universal

scenarios that supposedly adequately explain failure and offer salvation—such as that failure was due to ‘tradition’, whereas success was due to acceptance of new technology and response to economic incentives. They argue that these simple stories reflect the appetite of remote bureaucracies for nostrums by which they can standardize their pronouncements about vastly varied (and variable) countries and sectors. As methodological responses, Crewe and Harrison propose: a need to study human behaviour in relation to contexts and ideologies (p. 166); a need for conceptual refinement, to get beyond crude binary contrasts and essentialisms, including some which are used by anthropologists (their Ch. 8 makes a sustained attack on essentialism); and ‘a need to reflect on moral and political assumptions’ (p.vii).

Sections 3 to 5 below match this agenda. By what methods can we reflect on moral and political assumptions, investigate concepts, and investigate cases in their particularity rather than force them into fixed simple plot-lines?

3 INVESTIGATING OBJECTIVES AND LOGIC–LOGFRAMES AND PROGRAM DESIGN

Elucidating program theory is important for the ethnography of aid.⁵ It helps us to identify assumptions, to have a framework for asking questions about what happened, and to identify what was unexpected. Just as an ethnographer of farmers has to immerse herself in the specifics of farming and farming life for the particular locale she has chosen to study, ethnographers of aid must master aid’s languages and its preoccupations, and preferably do fieldwork within the aid world as well as at its fringes and interfaces.

The ‘logical framework’ (logframe) approach (LFA) is enormously widely used in aid programs, and has hardly changed in its main ideas over 30 years, despite a variety of new labels (Objectives Oriented Project Planning, Project Cycle Management, Results-Based Management, etc.). It centres on a matrix (‘logframe’) which starts with a ‘narrative summary’ column: a story is told, in the form of a simple means-ends chain. Inputs are meant to lead to Activities, then to Outputs, to Purpose (or Immediate Objective), to Goal (or Higher Objective). This is meant to show that aid is goal-oriented, not just a display of solidarity or a transfer because of

⁵ For brevity I will say program rather than project/program/policy; ‘program’ is the intermediate level, with some of the character of each of the other two.

donor duty and recipient rights. For the story to have any depth, the characters and the intended goal(s) must be situated in context—the context of ideas and of other causal influences. One needs to draw out the program design’s assumptions about factors within the program and about factors outside, to see its full intended storyline. One can then use that as a point of comparison for describing and understanding the actual events. One should look at: actual effects, both intended and unintended; the actual levels and impacts of other influential factors; and at how far the actors perceived and reacted to divergences from their plans and expectations, including how far—if at all—they learnt from experience and then modified their theories.

While there are problems with the restricted type of format provided by the logframe approach, e.g. the narrow range of types of causal influence it can envisage, it can encourage attention to at least some important aspects. Let us take first a concrete example, from relief aid. We can then look at a general formulation of how some elements of LFA could be used for deepening one’s understanding of aid programs.

An example from relief in conflict-driven emergencies

Consider a hierarchy of objectives for two sister sub-projects to provide food and security to displaced people at camps during a civil war.⁶ The sub-projects have the same Immediate Objective and Higher Objective. The assumptions mentioned at each level in figure 3.1 are those required to move to the indicated level from the level below.

FIGURE 3.1
‘Vertical logic’ analysis of relief operations during a civil war

Levels of objectives	Feeding sub-project	Security sub-project	Related assumptions
HIGHER OBJECTIVE	Increase in overall safety and nutrition (of wider populace, and over longer-term)		Camp inmates are not: de-skilled/further traumatized / trained in hate and violence / organized for new atrocities.
IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE / PURPOSE	Fed and safe people (at/in camps)		Food and protection go to those in need. People accept the type of food. Camp guardians don’t molest inmates.
OUTPUTS	Food received at camps	Food and people protected from outside forces	Government and other forces don’t steal the food or still effect violence
ACTIVITIES	Food distribution activity	Protection activities	Sufficient transport, motivation, etc.
INPUTS	Food, staff, vehicles	Soldiers, equipment	Agencies receive timely authorization & funding

⁶ This example is adapted from Gasper (1999b, 1999c).

The stance that many relief agencies take is ‘mission-bounded responsibility’ (Gasper, 1999b). They consider that their mission is to provide resources to those in desperate need, and they hold themselves responsible only for whatever they control. This stance brings a preoccupation with the Output level (e.g. the delivery of food) or at best the Purpose level (e.g. consumption of food by the needy). But, as in the huge relief effort after the Rwanda genocide of 1994 to the camps controlled by executors of the genocide, success in delivering food to camps may furnish resources for certain groups to maintain activities of war, thus causing further war. This danger can be noted in the logframe’s assumptions column. With fulfilment of the Purpose level shown above, some healthy secure people in camps may be preparing for return to genocide, using resources provided to the camps. Advance support to the potential victims of this aggression might be the most cost-effective route to improved overall safety and nutrition, the Higher Objective. But agencies become preoccupied with lower levels in the performance hierarchy. At these levels they have more control and so are less unwilling to be judged by results; and their *raison d’etre* is not put into question by comparison with alternatives.

Provided assumptions analysis is done seriously and well, the specification and checking of program logic (‘program theory’) can valuably force attention to such issues, choices and a search for alternatives. One can do this also at a grander scale than programs and projects, for example by examining the assumptions behind each link in the following big stories about aid:

Scenario 1

Exogenous Problems Are Solved Or Reduced By Aid

Exogenous factors → disasters → relief aid → restores normality → development aid
→ socio-economic development → fewer disasters.

versus

Scenario 2

Aid Is Part Of The Problem (see e.g. de Waal 1997)

Aid → maldevelopment → conflicts → relief aid → dependency & state decline →
permanent crisis (more disasters, more conflicts, more institutional decline).

A proposal to Sida

Wuyts et al. carried out an evaluation of Sweden's strategy for its development assistance to Mozambique in the years 1996 to 2001. In their report (2001) they proposed to the Swedish aid agency Sida that a donor country strategy has great potential value if it really is used for strategic thinking. By this they refer to the thinking involved in making defensible log-frame narratives which are explicit about the posited links from activities to intermediate objectives to higher objectives, and are conscious and open about their assumptions. In their words,

our answer in this report is 'Yes, the country strategy process can be a useful instrument for constructing development cooperation in Mozambique that is coherent and, more importantly, relevant to Sida's action plans and to the needs of Mozambicans'. For it to be so however, requires adjustments to institutional practices and culture that will allow Sida to:

- Be explicit about the assumptions that underlie the relationship posited between objectives and alternative ways of reaching them;
- Recognise internally how the politics of partnership constrain or shape the construction of possible or practical alternatives (p. 2).

The current practice in Sida was reported to be very far from this ideal of openly stating, documenting and debating disagreements (Wuyts et al. 2001: 33, 41, 54-60, 90, 94-5). Sida tolerates conflicts and ambiguity rather than actively seeking to build consensus. This raises issues concerning the contextual assumptions behind the proposed procedures, which go beyond the scope of this paper. One would need to investigate what are the socio-political conditions required for Wuyts et al.'s vision of the use of LFA for open discussion of program logic and program assumptions as a central part of aid agencies' country development strategies; and how common those conditions are or can be.

What does a 'logical framework' help us to see and what not?

Let us examine further what this sort of examination of 'program logic' can do, and what it might omit. The table below shows the structure of an argument on behalf of accepting a logical framework (LF) design as sufficient for allocating resources to the program. (We will later discuss this type of tabular format itself, in section 4.)

Wuyts et al. in effect propose that specifying the first three columns for a program allows us to then run the various logic-checks implied in the fourth column:

FIGURE 3.2

The logical structure, and gaps, of a 'logical framework'

<i>Claim</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>Warrant</i>	<i>Rebuttal</i>
I PROPOSE THAT	GIVEN THAT	AND SINCE THE RULE / PRINCIPLE THAT	UNLESS
This activity is worth doing	Here is a means-ends chain, from controllable policy inputs through to attractive policy goal(s)	These policy goals are public priorities [This might be put as data, if one is simply pointing to e.g. the National Plan or constitution]	The outcome is not desirable: The goals are not justified public priorities
	And a set of realistic assumptions about the levels and influence of other factors in the environment	[and: My reliable background theoretical assumptions about categories and about causal linkages, including about the influence of other factors]	The outcome will not be attained: The cause-effect logic is wrong - e.g. because The assumptions about the levels of other relevant factors are wrong or The theoretical assumptions are wrong <i>Other considerations</i> The cost is too high E.g. because there are major undesirable side-effects. There are better alternatives

- Does the program really contribute to what are specified as the priority goals ?
- Are the implied linkages well-established or plausible, especially given the likely configuration of other important influences ?
- Are there major undesirable side-effects ?
- Are there superior alternative paths to the specified priority goals ?

The exercise is extremely useful. In many cases the logic-checks show that a program design is not adequate and challenge us to construct something better. However, some major qualifiers apply.

First, an LF matrix itself only presents the Claim and Data above. It does not present any reasons for the Goal, which is taken as self-evidently justified or as derived from a separate exercise. And it does not itself present or examine the *theoretical* assumptions, nor the questions of unintended effects, alternative routes to the goal, and competing goals. So unless there is a special impetus to investigate those issues, in practice a real danger exists that a logframe can function instead as a public-

relations declaration of logic, a badge of respectability, rather than as a real frame-for-work to check and improve logic.

The work on more elaborate types of ‘program theory’ by evaluation methodologists such as Rossi, Chen, Patton and Leeuw goes further, to identify and discuss the relevance of the theoretical assumptions made. For a good illustration see Leeuw et al. (1999), which teases out the logical structure of World Bank anti-corruption programs in Uganda and Tanzania and then assesses their plausibility, by reference to the implied theories about social capital, the reach and influence of public media, and so on. Leeuw (2000) surveys variants of program theory.

Second, the LF matrix drastically simplifies in some other ways. The LF is too simple a method for deciding resource allocation, except for small and well-understood types of projects, for it does not precisely compare inputs and outputs in the way that markets and economic cost-benefit analysis do. For other projects its appropriate role is in planning and in early stages of screening of project concepts and sketch designs. Further, its analysis of values is very simple, ‘goal-centred’: it not only ignores side-effects but also often ignores process values—values about *how* things are done, for example whether in a participatory way or not (Hoksbergen 1986).

Third, Wuyts et al.’s proposal, and the previous two figures, concern only the so-called ‘vertical logic’ aspect of log-frames: the means-ends chain (‘narrative summary’) and the assumptions required for the links in this chain to work. In practice however, the most prominent parts of log-frames have been columns for specifying performance indicators, targets, and sources for collecting corresponding data. These dominate the centre of LF matrices and illogically separate the means-ends chain from what should be the associated analysis of assumptions, especially assumptions about factors external to the program.

LFA has primarily been a tool for planning and monitoring performance under a grand assumption that conditions are largely understood and/or controllable. It has thus been a part of control-oriented management; as seen for example in Porter et al.’s fine case study which we referred to earlier. Assumptions analysis was marginalized both diagrammatically and in practice (Gasper 1997). In the real worlds of development and relief the grand assumption is wrong, and the productive and liberating potential of LFA lies instead in work on vertical logic, especially the analysis and monitoring of assumptions. In the last few years some agencies, notably the German GTZ

(Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit), have moved somewhat in this direction, by reducing the performance indicators columns to one, and adding a column for indicators of whether the assumptions are fulfilled; and a few other agencies now go further (Gasper 2001a). Examining and understanding past (donor) control-oriented practice, and researching and improving these sorts of moves beyond it, are important topics in the study of aid.

Linking Program Theory to the Investigation of Values and Ethical Argumentation

Aid discourse is policy discourse. Fischer (1980, 1995) distinguishes four levels in policy discourse, and we can usefully compare and connect his hierarchy with the 'logical framework' hierarchy:

LOG-FRAME LEVELS	FISCHER LEVELS
	4 - Higher principles
	3 - Predominant social ideals
Goal	2 - Policy goals
Purpose	1 - Program objective
Output	
Activities / Input	

For each of his levels Fischer states a set of corresponding key questions.

Level 1 – ‘Technical verification of program objectives’

Q1 - Are a program’s objectives valid in terms of higher policy goals?

Q2, Q3: What are a program/project’s effects?

(Q2: Is the program effective in terms of reaching stated objectives? Q3: Are there important unintended effects?)

Q4: Are there better routes to the specified goals?

Level 2 – ‘Situational validation of policy goals’.

Which goals are relevant in a particular situation and why? Which take precedence? (E.g. when is distributive equity to be considered, and when not?)

Level 3 – ‘Vindication of policy choice’. Are the policy goals appropriate in view of consensual or predominant ideals in the given society?

Level 4 – ‘Choice of social order’. Are the society's predominating ideals justifiable, when compared with alternatives and assessed by all available considerations?

Different types of methods are called for at each level.

Much evaluation stays only at level 1's question 2 (were stated objectives fulfilled?), and perhaps only deserves the name monitoring. Some gets further, to thinking about questions 3 (how significant were unintended effects?) and 4 (was the program efficient relative to alternatives?). Log-frame analysis covers level 1's questions 1 and 2, rather than questions 3 and 4. It is often unaware of its own ‘framing’, the issue of which effects and which alternatives get considered. It also drastically simplifies life by insisting that programs have only one goal, so that it avoids difficult comparisons, as encountered at level 2. Ethical (and legal) argumentation takes us on to levels 2, 3 and 4.

Fischer (1980) discusses how the different levels employ different types of method. His textbook ‘Evaluating Public Policy’ provides extensive case-studies covering all the levels. Hoppe (1993) on Dutch ethnicity policy gives a helpful example of analysis at levels 2, 3 and 4. Hoppe simplifies the framework, to contrast just two main levels of policy discourse. I suggest that worthwhile insights will be gained from applying the approach to debates and cases in development aid.

So the top levels of a logframe matrix bring us into policy ethics. We saw that this is true even for a refugee food relief project. In such a case, policy choices will often be experienced as painful professional dilemmas: to whom should food be given? what sorts of deal with warlords are justifiable? when should the relief agency pull out? Accounts of the tensions, choices and sense-making devices in these situations provoke intense thought. One important and readable example is Slim (1997a), which reflects on four cases; he calls them ‘scenarios’. In Fig. 3.3 (from Gasper 1999b) I try to order and comment on the devices he presents, with reference to his scenarios. The non-italicized text refers to Slim's discussion of the cases, while the italicized text presents other possible stances.

The middle column shows cases where people try to evaluate options and choices according to the actual or expected balance of costs and benefits. In ethics this focus on results is called consequentialism (Approach A). If we try (as in most project planning) to make such judgements for each individual action, this is ‘act consequentialism’. If we consider that such case-by-case assessment is too difficult, and

FIGURE 3.3

Relief in conflict-driven emergencies: hard choices for relief donors

SOME PROBLEMS AND APPROACHES	Approach A Decide on providing relief aid according to the balance of effects	Approach B: Delimit own sphere of responsibility
<i>The problem of diversion of relief resources to the conduct of war, and the resulting problems of unintended negative effects</i>	<p>Slim on scenario 2 (Burundi 1996):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - he weights the uncertainties the about benefits from donor disengagement so heavily that in practice one will continue to supply regardless of the effects. <p><i>For Slim's scenarios 1 and 2:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>disengage or stay out, on grounds of unsatisfactory net effects; or:</i> - <i>apply Red Cross principles of neutrality and prevention: continue if can achieve them, disengage if not.</i> <p>Slim on scenario 4 ('Ethics of Contributing to a War Economy'):- use 'fieldcraft' to ensure positive net effects; withdraw if one cannot.</p>	<p>Slim on scenario 1 (Rwandese refugee camps 1994-96):</p> <p>continue supplying, on the grounds that one's mission is to supply relief resources to those in need and that one is not responsible for what they or others then in reality do with the resources.</p>
<i>The problem of other undesirable behaviour by recipient authorities</i>	<p>Slim on scenario 3 (Ethiopia 1985):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize <i>both</i> help to the needy and protests against the authorities, with if necessary each done by a different agency. <p><i>For Slim's scenario 3 - withdraw if protest is ineffectual.</i></p>	<p><i>For scenario 3: - an extreme Red Cross type response; carry on supplying regardless of the net effects.</i></p> <p><i>For scenario 3: - a purist human rights stance: 'whistle-blow' regardless of its net effects.</i></p>

too prone to manipulation (as in much project planning; Gasper 1987), and instead adopt a fixed general rule of action which we think gives the best balance of results in the long-run, then our stance is 'rule consequentialism'. If we follow a rule of action because we think it is morally right in itself—e.g. to give help to those in suffering—regardless of the overall results produced after others too have acted and reacted—the stance is called 'deontological'. A particular variant appears in the third column (Approach B): we see cases where evaluation is done not according to the balance of effects, but instead according to a proposed rule of duty. Other ethical approaches are typically needed to complement and adequately apply (or waive) consequentialism and deontology:- casuistry, which here means the analysis of what is relevant in a particular context; and ethics of care and character.

Here I wish simply to emphasise the illumination obtained from closely describing ethical choices in aid through the examination of real cases and practices. For further examples see Moore (ed. 1998), Quarles van Ufford & Giri (eds. 2003), and

Gasper (1999a, 2003). It is also fruitful to reflect on the varied types of example and case that authors provide and why they do so (Gasper 2000c). For instance what Benner calls 'constitutive narratives' can help to convey and inculcate values, while 'learning narratives' help to strengthen skills. Different types of case help in the fulfilment of different purposes.

4 INVESTIGATING MEANINGS AND STRUCTURES IN ARGUMENTATION

A Feasible Framework for Textual Analysis.

The following framework helps us in going further in the investigation of 'program logic' and of values, and in linking the two. It helps us to clarify and test positions and to think creatively about improving them or finding alternatives, through checking assumptions and counter-arguments. It involves two tables for analysis. The first is for understanding more clearly the components and meanings of what you or someone else says. The second is for then seeing the structure of the argument, how and how well the components fit together. Only if we clarify meanings, as in the first part, are we ready to assess logic, in the second part. The method is explained using worked examples from Southern African policy debates in Gasper (2000b). Its first part adapts the method of argument analysis provided in evaluation specialist Michael Scriven's Reasoning (1976). The second part adapts the Toulmin format for presenting argument structure (Gasper and George 1998).

When proof-reading our own work we nearly always miss some errors. Similarly, ordinary reading usually misses many significant aspects in a text. So in the first part of the method one looks closely, line-by-line and word-by-word, at a selected key passage. One places the text in the first column of a table and divides it into sections, to examine each in detail. This helps one to both get close to a position, carefully looking at all its parts, and to keep one's distance and think about it in a detached way. We are thus better able to freshly and thoughtfully characterize and assess the text.

In the second column one identifies and comments on key words and phrases, including the major images and metaphors. For example, some people say 'New Public Management' (NPM) was in fact largely old private management, and often different from what successful modern private sector companies try for. Bringing business

practices into public administration has been tried since the late 19th century; and many NPM components, like performance-related pay, were widespread even long before then. Sometimes long pedigree is seen as a virtue, but NPM presented itself as ‘New’ in order to avoid calling attention to the mixed record of previous attempts on the same lines, and to why they had declined (Hood and Jackson 1991).

Another useful guideline is to identify language that hints at praise or criticism and thus gives a pointer towards the conclusions of the piece. Sometimes it is worth having a third column in which one takes the key words and phrases and rewords them more neutrally or with an opposite evaluative load. This helps to clarify the conclusions which the actual choice of words led towards; and to suggest possible counter-arguments, other ways of viewing the same situation, against which the text should be compared when one judges it overall.

In the final column one then identifies the main conclusions and assumptions of the text, both the stated ones and those unstated or hinted at. So overall the first table could look like this:

Figure 4.1

A simple framework for examining a text: Part 1 – analysis

THE TEXT	COMMENTS ON MEANINGS	A REWORDING OF KEY COMPONENTS	MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE TEXT
Section 1			
Section 2			
.....			

Different versions of the table are possible, by giving different numbers of and headings to the later columns, according to one’s choice of focus. The example below combines the third and fourth columns, for it is more concerned with examining the illogic of the given text than with identifying and fitting together a set of premises required to make it logical.

Example: the Commonwealth Secretariat on corruption in government

Corruption, in varying degrees, is a reality in all areas of government. While perceptions of its nature and extent vary, it provides a strong impetus for reform on two levels. First, concern exists in some countries that independence left a residue of endemic corruption. Fundamental reform was seen as necessary to change the value base and the procedures that sustained this state of affairs. By contrast, other countries have more recent concerns regarding the growing number of public sector scandals, which could be related to the fast pace of change. In both situations, the response of government has been to introduce widespread reform programs with the broad aim of reversing any perception that corruption is a 'low risk – high reward' activity.⁷

Figure 4.2. (see below) illustrates the painstaking, line-by-line, examination of a text. Policy talk from inter-governmental organizations like the Commonwealth Secretariat is nearly always constrained by various diplomatic norms. These include: to avoid clear and open criticism of member states; to mention a large number and wide variety of member states when talking about successes and innovations; to adopt a generalized style which tries to be applicable to all, or at least large groups, of member states at the same time; and to avoid admission of or emphasis on disagreements, within or between member states. Given these 'fog factors', which are common in aid discourse, close textual examination can become essential. The sort of detailed analysis illustrated in Figure 4.2 is only relevant and feasible though for texts which one considers potentially highly significant.

In analysing the text one could also give attention to its use of metaphorical language, with physical images in the background: consider the terms 'residue', 'endemic', 'base' and 'fundament'. The term 'corruption' itself has a biological origin, referring to decay.

Annex 1 gives further advice on analysis of such a text, in response to the examination by my students of many passages from this Commonwealth Secretariat document.

[SA / SC / SS = stated assumption / conclusion / suggestion; UA / UC / US = unstated but implied assumption / etc.]

⁷ *From Problem to Solution: Commonwealth Strategies for Reform*, Commonwealth Secretariat (1995: 12).

FIGURE 4.2

Analysis table for Commonwealth secretariat text

TEXT	COMMENTS ON MEANINGS	POSSIBLE REFORMULATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, ASSUMPTIONS
Corruption, in varying degrees, is a reality	'is a reality' implies 'despite what some people say or think or wish'	SA: <i>Corruption exists, to some degree, in all areas of government</i>
in all areas of government	'all': so nobody can say this discussion does not concern them; 'government' - and other sectors too!	US / possible UC = this is not a matter of an uncorrupt North telling a corrupt South to get healed.
While perceptions of its nature and extent vary,	Can be bureaucratic code for: People fundamentally disagree about it	UA: <i>People fundamentally disagree about these issues, ..</i>
it provides a strong impetus for reform on two levels.	'it provides' = corruption provides !	... (instead, reactions to corruption provide reform impetus) and/or <i>many agree about the need to act against it.</i>
First, concern exists in some countries that independence left a residue of endemic corruption.	Politely indirect phrasing, ambiguous in two ways: 1 - 'Concern exists in some countries [about a residue]'; not 'Concern exists that independence in some countries left a residue'. So is the concern in some countries only, or is the endemic corruption in some countries only? 2 - 'independence left a residue': does this mean 'colonialism left', or 'independence brought'?	So the sentence can be read in two ways, which accomodates and veils the fundamental disagreements. EITHER: A- Concern exists in some countries that colonialism <i>left</i> a corrupt system. [With a hint that this concern does not exist in some other countries [e.g. the ex-colonizer?] ... OR: B - Concern exists in some countries [e.g. ex-colonizer?] that independence <i>brought</i> corruption.
Fundamental reform was seen as necessary to change the value base and the procedures that sustained this state of affairs.	'Fundamental reform': nothing is seen as holy and unchangeable. 'was seen': by whom? - this can be a way of stating an opinion without tying oneself to it.	Theory / set of assumptions: (a) corruption is sustained by 1. a value base, and 2. procedures; (b) to change corruption requires changing these; (c) changing them requires fundamental reform [even to change procedures]. SC: <i>Basic change was needed - UC:so being a bit rough/tough is justified.</i>
By contrast, other countries have more recent concerns regarding the growing number of public sector scandals, which could be related to the fast pace of change.	'related to the fast pace of change' suggests that: 1. fast change is recent; 2. causes in these countries are less deep, and may not call for fundamental reform, action on value bases, etc.	UA: Even though corruption is everywhere, it goes less deep in some (rich?) countries, which have however been affected by accelerated change (= new policies that have been rushed through despite - or because of - offering great space for corruption ?)
In both situations, the response of government has been to introduce widespread reform programs with the broad aim of reversing any perception that corruption is a 'low risk - high reward' activity.	'government' sounds less ephemeral, more eternal and universal, and perhaps more separate from corruption, than does 'governments'. <i>This</i> type of reform language ('broad aim of reversing any perception [&c.]') suggests gradualist reform. Despite talk for some countries of changing value bases, the policy is to change risks and rewards - not a direct attack on value bases and on ideas that corruption is not wrong, only risky.	<i>A universal style of anti-corruption program has spread world-wide (partly because promoted by organizations like us): it aims [a more direct formulation] to reduce the rewards from corruption and increase the risks that corrupt persons face of being caught and punished.</i> So: Is the policy response for some countries divorced from the diagnosis? Who are the main forces behind 1. the analysis, and 2. the response ?

Specifying structure and logic, on the basis of the investigation of meanings

The second part of the method builds on the results from the first. In a second table we lay out for *each important* identified conclusion (whether stated or unstated) the basis on which it is proposed: the asserted or assumed data and principles, as identified in the first table.

FIGURE 4.3

A simple framework for examining a text: part 2 – synthesis

I Claim [this conclusion]	Given this Data (empirical facts)	and this Principle (or principles = theoretical and/or value statements)	Unless (/except when) one or more of these counter-arguments applies
Conclusion 1	Data 1.1, (1.2, ...)	Principle 1.1, (1.2, ...)	Rebuttal 1.1, (1.2, 1.3, ...)
Conclusion 2	Data 2.1, (2.2, ...)	Principle 2.1, (2.2, ...)	Rebuttal 2.1, (2.2, 2.3, ...)
...

The possible counterarguments (rebuttals) in the final column can either be direct doubts about the identified data and principle(s), or other doubts or exceptions concerning the claim. We illustrated the use of such a synthesis table earlier, in Figure 3.2. By proceeding step by step, following up every clue, we typically find a surprising number of interesting connections, assumptions and possible counterarguments.

The overall procedure nearly always provides interesting new insights about what was said and how, and a helpful basis for evaluating and, if necessary, changing it. Identifying a metaphor, rewording a proposition, finding an alternative image, locating an assumption, formulating counterarguments – all of these foster richer thinking, further options, better communication and improved learning. This applies even for the text above on corruption (see Figure 4.4), although on the surface it appeared only to describe a number of viewpoints rather than to advocate any.

FIGURE 4.4

Towards a synthesis table for the Commonwealth secretariat text

I CLAIM	GIVEN THIS DATA	AND THIS PRINCIPLE / WARRANT	UNLESS (/EXCEPT WHEN) ONE OR MORE OF THESE COUNTER-ARGUMENTS APPLIES
1. UC: [Listen! Because] This discussion of corruption is not a matter of an uncorrupt North telling a corrupt South to get healed.	Corruption exists, to some degree, in all areas of government		The North does in fact dominate the discussion, considers itself hardly corrupt, and feels outrage at situations in the South.
2. People do not agree about corruption's causes and extent ...	Some think corruption in the South is due to colonialism, some think it is due to independence		
3 but they do agree about the need to act against it.	See the worldwide adoption of measures to change the perceived benefits-risks calculations of those tempted to become corrupt		People are forced to adopt standard measures, by international financiers
4. Even so, corruption in the South is deeper.	Corruption in the North is only due to excessive speed of change	Defeating corruption in the South requires fundamental changes in values and procedures.	Corruption in the South is more easily found and countered. Corruption in the North is more sophisticated, more able to operate within the (letter of the) law, and harder to detect and counteract.
5. SC: Basic change is needed in the South - UC: so one is justified to be a bit rough/tough.		Theory / set of assumptions that: (a) corruption is sustained by 1. a value base, and 2. weak procedures; (b) to change corruption requires changing these; (c) changing them requires fundamental reform.	Crude methods will be counterproductive.
6. UC: Policies on and for corruption in the South are questionable.	The policies are largely the same as those in the North, namely: change the perceived benefits-risks calculations.	Yet corruption in the South is deeper and requires fundamental changes in values and procedures [= Claim and Warrant in line 4]	'Economic man' theorizing is universally adequate; and/or fundamental changes in values are impossible ...

[SA / SC / SS = stated assumption / conclusion / suggestion; UA / UC / US = unstated assumption / etc.]

To learn to apply the method one must experiment with using it. Annex 2 provides an exercise and a further worked example.

5 EPILOGUE: THE RANGE OF METHODS

I have argued that students of development aid – and the same applies for many other areas of policy and practice – should add three important sets of methods to their armoury. One set, the methods of ethnographic observation (see e.g. Cresswell, 1998), are relatively well-known within development studies yet surprisingly little taught and mastered. They have been placed too far behind the worthy but often unreliable collection and processing of survey data (see e.g. Ward, 1983) and the statistical manipulation of already manipulated and unreliable official data; also too far behind the invaluable but limited family of rapid participatory methods. For applying ethnography to study aid, I stressed that one must master the languages of aid, including of program design and program evaluation. The second set of methods introduced in the paper was thus for identifying and examining the logic of program design: notably the ‘logical framework approach’, with some reference on to more sophisticated siblings and successors. The third set of methods can be seen as an important partner to the first two, and indeed as basic for all research (see Booth et al., 1995): methods for the systematic examination, evaluation and generation of arguments and more generally for the investigation of texts. These give us ways to probe the materials generated by ethnography, to intelligently apply and critique the program languages of aid, and to critically explore the world of texts that are publicly available and which are major instruments of rule, in ways both open and concealed.

Mouton (2001) gives an extended comparative overview of types of research method. I have merged two of his tables and his numerical listing, to give a single summary conspectus (Figure 5.1). I have also simplified them for ease of presentation, by using an either-or set of boxes, rather than dimensions of variation. We can then see how the sorts of method discussed in this paper fit as parts of the wider array. Types we touched on are highlighted in bold; roughly speaking, we have worked our way down the table.

Studying aid can involve most or all of the types, not least the types of program evaluation study which Mouton lists as numbers 8-10. Section 2 of this paper referred to types 1 & 2: ethnographic case studies, often from participant observation, illustrated by the Magarini example. The implementation process studies blend into type 16, historical study of programs. We have concentrated though on other methods which often receive less attention but are extremely important for investigating the worlds of aid. In section 3, we looked at the study of program design, including through critique and intelligent

use of the ‘logical framework approach’. This linked us from type 8, implementation/process studies, to types 18-21, methodological, conceptual, model-building, and philosophical (ethical) analyses, although we did not engage with any of these in detail. The ethical analyses arise especially for higher levels of objectives.

FIGURE 5.1

Mouton’s map of types of research (design)

	EMPIRICAL	(Largely) NON-EMPIRICAL
PRIMARY DATA	<p><i>High control:</i> 6. Laboratory experiments</p> <p><i>High medium control:</i> 7. Field experiments</p> <p>Program evaluation research: 8. implementation/process studies 9. (quasi-)experimental outcome studies 10. naturalistic & empowerment evaluation</p> <p><i>Low medium control:</i> 4. Surveys 5. Comparative studies</p> <p>Low control: Ethnographic designs: 1. participant observation 2. case studies 3. Participatory (action) research</p>	18. Methodological studies
MIX	<p>Low medium control: 15. Discourse analysis, conversational analysis 17. Life history</p>	<p>19. Conceptual studies 20. Theory and model-building 21. Philosophical analyses</p>
EXISTING / SECONDARY DATA	<p><i>High medium (statistical) control:</i> 11. Modelling and computer simulation studies</p> <p><i>Medium (statistical) control:</i> 12. Secondary data analysis</p> <p>Low control: 13. Content analysis 14. Textual studies & hermeneutics 16. Historical studies, narrative studies</p>	22. Literature reviews (of theoretical and methodological work)

This paper itself has been a methodological study. In section 4 we considered types 13-14: analysis of written texts, as the type of secondary data which is so central in aid. We touched on aspects of content analysis (the close examination of text components) and of discourse analysis (seeing how the components link together in structures and systems of meaning). I encourage students of aid to delve further into all these areas.

ANNEX 1

ADVICE ON ANALYSING THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT TEXT ON CORRUPTION

From an Institute of Social Studies course on Working with Texts:

COMMENTS ON ESSAY ANSWERS on extracts from Commonwealth Secretariat (CS), London, 1995, *From Problem to Solution: Commonwealth Strategies for Reform*.

Qn. (a): The course intended to give you a skill in identifying the location of authors, intended audiences, and the style in which texts are written, in order to situate texts in social situations. How would you situate the reading which you have chosen, in terms of who wrote for whom and in what way?

Authors - We do not have full information, but can note some points.

- The document is presented under the CS name, with no person(s) indicated as author(s), as a way of indicating authority and suggesting the presence of a consensus. (*)
- The CS is an inter-governmental organization, for multi-purpose cooperation amongst members of the Commonwealth (nearly all ex-British colonies, plus the ex-colonial power, and a few others), a mini United Nations. It is not controlled by any one country, though they do not have equal influence. Australia, Britain, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, and Singapore, for example, are all influential in the CS discussions on public sector reform, of which this document was part.
- The document is also distributed by CAPAM, a separate non-government professional organization, but they are not the 'owners' or producers of the document.
- The hundreds of people in an organization do not write a document together. Senior officials are referred to in an introduction, who had perhaps a special input or influence or responsibility: the Indian head of department and the Nigerian head of the organization. Some essays doubted LDC involvement, but may underestimate the extent of 'New Public Management' (NPM) views in LDCs and amongst LDC professionals.
- This document puts across mainly an NPM type vision (*; this has some overlaps with but is far from identical with 'new institutional economics', see e.g. a special issue of IDS Bulletin, 1998, on the World Development Report 1997). However at some points a different voice, expressing qualifications, enters, e.g. p.8, which suggests a different author for those parts.

Audience:

(Primarily LDC) governments and public sector organizations (*); also foreign donors. I think it is unlikely that DC governments (in their domestic roles) are a main intended audience. However in some cases, e.g. the discussion of corruption, DC governments might be targeted too (e.g. p.12 on the growing number of public sector scandals, clearly presented as a separate concern from any inherited system of corruption).

Style:

- A rather generalized, apolitical, diplomatic style, as the product of an inter-governmental body. Leading to generalized proposed solutions, for everywhere.
- Further, the generalized abstracted style (with its focus on ‘consumers’, ‘public service managers’ and ‘policy makers’) relies on large elements of shared political-administrative culture, within (what used to be called) the (British) Commonwealth.
- The document claims that it rests on wide consultation and represents a broad consensus. One of you asked: if there really is consensus already, why write the document?
- The evidence used and the views that are drawn on seem to be those from a circle of senior public service managers and policy makers.
- Consistent with (*) above, it has an advocacy style, advocating NPM to LDC governments. One of you argued that it remains silent on cases of NPM failure in LDCs.
- A view expressed by one or two of you was: Anglo-Saxon (claiming to start from empirical cases) academic style; also by an economist; predominant economic-type arguments. (Some information not available to you: the main drafting of the report was by a British public management advisor - Nick Manning, one of those mentioned - who shortly afterwards joined the World Bank, where he remains. However, several people are mentioned, from various countries.)

Qn. (b): Choose any continuous segment, which you find worth close examination and which contains an argument, i.e. it provides or suggests some conclusion and also provides or suggests some reasons for adopting that conclusion. The segment should be at least 80 words long. Please specify clearly which segment you choose (give the page number and reproduce the segment). Then analyze the segment, using the following steps: Distinguish components – Examine meanings of key words, and the significance of the choices of words – Identify conclusion(s), stated and unstated – Indicate the relationship of the other parts of the argument to the identified conclusion(s) -- Identify assumptions, unstated as well as stated – Identify possible counter-arguments.

The segment

- It is vital to analyse a continuous segment, as requested, and not to analyse only what seem initially to you to be the highlights from a section. In other words, first present and analyse all the text, never only sentence 1, half of sentence 3, and a bit of sentence 4. You can later focus on what appear to be key sections, but you cannot reliably identify what are the key sections until you look at the whole system, to see the textual context in which particular sections function. The purpose of the recommended step-by-step, and often word-by-word, procedure is to check, and go deeper than, our initial reactions. Usually we find new insights and new questions by this careful approach. We run great dangers by omitting sections: we lose the context and precise meaning.
- I was glad to see that in nearly all cases the methodical analysis generated some extra insights.

Choices of words

If you rephrase and summarize/paraphrase the text even before identifying and analysing its components, you will lose much nuance. You should only attempt to summarize and/or rephrase, if at all, *after* you have studied the original text in a systematic way and hence understood its various messages. Reflect on the author's choices of words, *before* you attempt to choose different words.

- 'Traditional' and 'pushed', for example, are likely (in this context) to be unfavourable terms, 'corruption' is sure to be negative, and 'pulled', 'accountability' and 'reform' are likely to be favourable; but the significance of many terms will vary according to the context. Thus while 'reform' tends to suggest improvement, of what is malfunctioning, for one of you 'reform' has deeper negative connotations, as part of the language of particular dominant groups who claim that certain changes are good for 'the country'/'society'/everybody but which in fact primarily suit themselves.
- Some language implies room to change, other language denies it. The concept of 'political will' suggests that space exists for choice and improvement. Some other phrases suggest that there is no alternative but to behave in the way that has happened.
- We can rephrase the original text in *various* different ways, e.g. to make it more neutral, or to intensify or dilute or reverse its message. Whichever way we choose, however, should give us some insights into the significance of the words chosen and the effects they have.

Arguments

- Not every sentence is well suited to analysis as an argument: e.g. some are purely descriptive, and some only function as part of an argument that spans several or many sentences.

- Many of the arguments in such a policy-related document have a prescriptive conclusion, i.e. a recommendation that something should be done; but, for example, some other arguments are predictive, that if we do A then B will result.

Unstated assumptions and conclusions

- These are key features of much discourse, but we must also be aware of the danger of over-interpretation. At the extreme this involves making assertions contradictory to sections of the text (and some of you did this); there can indeed be tensions within a text, between different sections, but they require subtle, modulated treatment, rather than a claim that the text reduces to a single simple, even crude, message. Texts are usually more like musical chords: there are some leading sounds but, as shown by electronic images of the sound frequencies activated at any one moment, also many subsidiary sounds.

ANNEX 2:

ANALYSIS OF A FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW TEXT ON DEBT RELIEF

Our second text is a much more ‘up-front’ piece than the one from the Commonwealth Secretariat:- an open attack on debt relief for poor countries, by the influential *Far Eastern Economic Review*. The *Review* is a long established and large circulation pro-private-business magazine based in Hong Kong.

EXERCISE: ANALYSE MEANINGS IN THE FOLLOWING TEXT

Proponents of [debt relief] charge that onerous debt repayments hold back poor nations, preventing them from adequately spending on social programs and investing in infrastructure and industry. Forgive the debt and all will be hunky-dory.

They fail to see that many poor countries ran up debt with the likes of the IMF and the World Bank—with nothing to show for it—because of economic mismanagement and outright thievery. In the poorest of countries today, it isn't the national debt so much that holds them back: it is the perception by potential investors that they have yet to be rehabilitated against the temptation to steal and to have learnt the basics of economic management.

All this reminds us of the addict who blames his pawnbroker for funding the habit that keeps him from straightening out his life [Far Eastern Economic Review, editorial, March 2001].

Below is one analysis of this text, to be read after you have attempted your own analysis. You can then go on to prepare a synthesis table.

The FEER editorial is an example of:

1. Reduction of opponents' positions, by assuming that all the opponents rely on one argument;
2. 'extension' then of that one argument (on 'extension' see R. Thouless *Straight and Crooked Thinking*, London: Pan, 1974, 17th printing): one takes up for assessment a more extreme position than what they in fact said;
3. as part of the assessment: a further simplification of one's opponents' position by ignoring some relevant cases in the field discussed, and considering only cases that suit one's standpoint better (so look only at 'many poor countries' and 'the poorest');
4. reduction of a social phenomenon to a medical analogy: talking about societies of millions of people as if they are sick individuals.

Its style is highly generalized, confident and sweeping, as if from a position of great superiority.

As we read it in detail, some of its details deserve attention.

- 'onerous' means burdensome, heavy; 'crippling' would be a stronger term.
- The language about the IMF and World Bank, in this business magazine, is not friendly. (Both have, finally, accepted and cooperated in some debt relief.) The third sentence might be read to mean that the IMF and World Bank share responsibility for the problems. However the final sentence makes it clear that this implication is not accepted.
- The third sentence talks of poor countries, not developing countries; because poverty is an argument given for debt relief.
- The fourth sentence does not mean that if countries get good, honest economic management they should qualify for debt relief; instead that they would then not even need it since foreign funds would become readily available to them, once investors' perceptions changed. This claim may be wrong, but it is not a 'category-mistake': perceptions do influence outcomes.
- Some of you felt that the key claim 'it is not the national debt...' seemed downplayed as 'it isn't the national debt...'; but I think this is only an attempt to be conversational.
- The potential investors can be domestic as well as foreign. That they are not named, specific individuals does not mean that they are intangible, let alone non-existent.
- One of you argued that 'rehabilitated against the temptation to steal' implied that making countries suffer is seen as a justified ('cold turkey') strategy of reforming addicts.
- 'reminds us': some readers thought this was an appeal to an in-group of smart guys. This suggested interpretation *is* consistent with the tone of the editorial, but not sufficiently proven; 'us' is simply the counterpart term of 'we' for the author(s).

- The addiction metaphor may have some relevance: addictions often reflect unhealed emotional damage from childhood; similarly, emotional damage in cultures, produced by external domination, can exist and deserves examination.

I would suggest as the *main* asserted conclusions in the text:

- Corruption and mismanagement are the main problems in indebted countries, not debt. (This could be wrong, but it is not a circular argument to say: 1. corruption and mismanagement reign in debtor countries, 2. corruption and mismanagement cause poverty; because the data in #1 need not derive from the theory in #2.)
- Changes should come on the side of indebted countries, not as debt forgiveness by lenders.

Starting from these claims, one can then examine the roles of other components *in relation to them*.

THE TEXT	COMMENTS ON MEANINGS	UNSTATED ASSUMPTIONS & CONCLUSIONS	AN ALTERNATIVE POSITION
Proponents of [debt relief] charge that onerous debt repayments hold back poor nations, preventing them from adequately spending on social programs and investing in infrastructure and industry.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Doesn't say: 'Some proponents of debt relief give as one argument that, in some poor nations...' 2. 'charge', not 'argue' or 'suggest': the proponents accuse, vehemently but questionably; 3. 'hold back' sounds unfair (and close to 'keep backward'). 4. One 'spends', not 'invests', in social programs ! (This illustrates the FEER's business perspective.) 5. Three claims are made about proponents' views: a. 'hold back', b. by preventing adequate spending, c. on soc. progs. &c. One could accept the main claim #a, without accepting claims b & c: there might be adequate spending but with poor returns, due to brain drain caused by a low exchange rate due to the need to boost exports to repay debt. 	<p>UA: All proponents of debt relief argue this.</p> <p>UA: they would otherwise move forward</p> <p>UA: 'hold back' in terms of economic growth</p> <p>UA: All proponents hold all three parts of this claim.</p>	<p>Debt relief should (also) be done for other reasons than that it would help debtors to advance.</p> <p>Such reasons include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) the debt is 'invidious', arranged by and for the private benefit of different people than those who are now asked to repay; 2) lenders are co-responsible; 3) enough interest has already been paid.

<p>Forgive the debt and all will be hunky-dory.</p>	<p>'forgive': suggests debtors are sinners?; 'hunky-dory': after constructing a simplistic target it is now ridiculed as simplistic, immature. The sentence has a more extreme claim than the charge in the first sentence ('hold back' does not mean that debt is considered the only problem), but it is presented as if it were the same. This more extreme claim then becomes the main target for counterattack.</p>	<p>UA: The proponents of debt relief are simple-minded: they think that debt is the only or main problem.</p>	<p>Forgive the debt and the debtors will get the chance to do better – by using the forgiven repayments for net increases in social and infrastructural investment which would not be funded from private sources. Debtors' basic human rights should come first.</p>
<p>They fail to see that many poor countries ran up debt with the likes of the IMF and the World Bank—with nothing to show for it—because of economic mismanagement and outright thievery.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. not 'don't see'; 'fail to see' the truth; 2. 'countries' – in fact it was persons, often no longer in power now; 3. 'ran up debt' – like a profligate gambler; this also suggests that the borrowers led, and were not induced by others to take loans; 4. 'with the likes of' – suggests dislike for them, as lax; 5. 'nothing to show' – in terms of economic growth? An extreme claim, made as if true for all debtors. It concerns reasons for inability to repay. 6. 'mismanagement': by whom? Were the foreign institutions uninvolved in the past 25 years? 7. Powerful terms—'mismanagement' and 'thievery'—are used to publicly 'kill' one's opponents' credibility; 'outright thievery' means a. indisputable, b. redirection to private pockets not just to a different development purpose. 	<p>UC: So they need new spectacles. UA: Taking the loans and using them badly was the responsibility of the borrowers (= the present debtors: UA).</p>	<p>'Many' is not all poor countries; e.g. some suffered misfortune for other reasons.</p> <p>Lenders have a share of the responsibility, especially for having 1. induced countries to accept loans ('loan-pushing'), 2. continued to lend for political reasons to regimes which were known to misuse funds, and 3. given advice and pushed strategies (one after the other) which are now widely recognized as crude and mistaken.</p>
<p>In the poorest of countries today, it isn't the national debt so much that holds them back: it is the perception by potential investors that they have yet to be rehabilitated against the temptation to steal and to have learnt the</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having 'extended' the position of proponents of debt relief, the FEER next looks only at the poorest countries, and ignores those countries which now have honest and competent governments but are hindered by debt burdens left by their predecessors. 2. 'today': maybe earlier debtors could benefit from relief, but the remaining / present debtors are different. 3. 'so much': although it might hold them back a bit; 4. 'rehabilitated': a term which is 	<p>UA: The perception is largely correct. Investors don't steal, or twist economic policy. UC: The first changes must come in the indebted countries. UAs: these countries have the required room for manoeuvre. Even with their present national debt, the poorest countries would—despite their lack of social</p>	<p>Rebuttal: A) Without adequate social spending and physical and social infrastructure these countries have very little or no chance of attracting investment or repaying the debts, even if they have good and honest economic management. B) Corrupt countries receive investment if they have resources.</p>

basics of economic management.	<p>used for (drug) addicts (but not only them); 'temptation' – having spoken of addiction logically it should instead say</p> <p>5. 'habit', but 'temptation' adds a flavour of weakness and sin. The poorest countries (or major actors in them) are seen as addicted to stealing.</p> <p>6. 'the basics': something universal and beyond room for disagreement. So if you still do not know them then you have only yourself to blame...</p>	<p>spending and infrastructure—receive ample inflows of investment if they practiced honesty and the basics of economic management. And these investments would solve their problems.</p>	<p>Sufficient understanding and feasible paths to self-reliance are not, and were not, always available. To claim they are/were is part of 'blaming the victim'.</p>
<p>All this reminds us of the addict who blames his pawnbroker for funding the habit that keeps him from straightening out his life.</p>	<p>1. Again the metaphor of addiction; and 'habit' implies drug addiction.</p> <p>2. A concocted story (of which FEER is 'reminded'): which addicts do that?</p> <p>3. Message: pawnbrokers are neutral service-providers; the addict is crazy.</p> <p>4. What is the alleged 'habit' of poor(est) countries? – 'thievery' was said above; perhaps also mis-management. The habit is not borrowing, for that only 'funds the habit'. Gambling?</p> <p>5. Note two different stances on handling addicts:</p> <p>I) Addicts are irresponsible: one cannot follow their wishes because their reason is overridden by (self-) destructive urges; one has to (a) forcibly reform them for their own good or (b) just isolate them until maybe they change.</p> <p>II) Addicts are responsible: so it is OK to go on being the pawnbroker, funding their habit, for that is the addict's responsibility. Are they then really addicts: is stance II consistent?</p>	<p>S: Indebted countries (or their corrupt rulers) are addicted to stealing and mismanagement.</p> <p>UA: Investors do not contribute to those problems.</p> <p>UC: If you're an addict, we don't forgive your debts; you would just waste it. If you're not an addict, we don't need to forgive your debts. So any failure to either lend to the poorest countries or waive their debts is excusable. The problem is all their responsibility.</p>	<p>It is not permissible to both 1) use the abusive language of addiction and yet 2) deny there is real addiction when that would impose an obligation on one.</p> <p>It is often drug-dealers not pawnbrokers who 'fund the habit', by providing jobs for the addict to perform, at prices set by the dealer. Loan-'pushers' are also part of the problem and share the responsibility.</p>

Further exercise: Add a logic/synthesis table (of the type indicated in figures 3.2, 4.3 and 4.4).

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