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Revised 2

The Chadwick Lecture
Europe's malady – Yossarian's Dilemma

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For Chris Birt
an enthusiast and an inspiration

Europe's malady – Yossarian's dilemma

I am an outsider. My experience is as a policy-maker and as one who has worked to implement policy, but not in the health sector. In these remarks I want to develop some thoughts about the nature of some of the questions facing economic policy through the foreseeable future; and the importance of public health and environmental issues within this mix. I will argue that a successful resolution of these economic questions and environmental and public health issues will require citizens to change their lifestyles; that a renewed emphasis on the decentralisation of economic policy would contribute both to the resolution of the different questions and the change in lifestyles; and that experience gained in implementing European Regional Policy suggests some of the ways in which decentralisation might be managed.

As a preface to my remarks, let me emphasise two rather obvious points.

- It is not the announcement of policy which brings results, it is its implementation. From this it follows that the implementation of policy, its delivery, is as important to its success as is its design.
- For the successful delivery of policy, the politician normally relies on the support of a succession of actors who are outside his direct control. This, in turn, raises the question, "How can the politician best seek the support of these other actors."

You will be accustomed to the importance of these circumstances in the delivery of health policy. In other policy areas, however, the key role of other actors may be less well understood. Foreign policy, for example, is uniquely delivered by a group of professionals directly controlled by the Foreign Secretary. Economic policy, also, in the past could be directly controlled by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, although this has now changed.

For example, the Chancellor may set as his policy objective the creation of jobs but he cannot achieve it himself, he cannot achieve it from the centre. Like a gardener with a large greenhouse, he can control the economic environment and make sure it is favourable, he may even devise through fiscal measures, some of the instruments, or tools, to be used in the greenhouse. But the success or failure of his job creation policy depends on a wide range and large number of economic actors, who are not under his control – some of whom are institutions and some, of course, businessmen. These other actors make up his delivery system and he is critically dependent on their commitment to his cause.

In the health sector, as I say, you are familiar with the idea of a delivery system linking central government, regions and hospitals. European Regional Policy – which has operated in the United Kingdom since 1989, which accounts for a third of the European Union budget and which aims at a balanced economic development across the twenty-seven members – has a delivery system for the United Kingdom which unites Brussels, London, regions and local authorities. Given that delivery systems are essential for the successful implementation of policy, it is worth asking what are their essential properties? how can policy makers best work with them?

For example, can politicians in the health or economic sectors use their delivery systems to pass orders, as if it they were in the military ? Can they bully health or economic actors to do what they want, threatening punishments of one sort or another ? Can the Secretary of State for Health and the Chancellor avoid this decentralised delivery system altogether, by taking powers to the centre and operating through their own professionals, as the Foreign Secretary is able to do ? The answer to each of these questions is clearly “No.” Instead, ministers in the health and economic sectors – and in others – must recognise that the centre is just one part, or one link, that all parts of the delivery system are equal in importance, that each part is interdependent, that each part is autonomous. The skills necessary to deliver policy in such circumstances are those which flow from a recognition of the equality of the individual links, with consensus-building as being one of the most important.

I Inter-connected issues, Yossarian’s dilemma

In a few minutes I will give you an account of Edwin Chadwick by one of his friends and colleagues.

You already know he was one of the founding fathers, or grandfathers, of the science and art of public health, a utilitarian wanting the greatest happiness for the greatest number, who campaigned for infrastructure investment which would increase the well-being of ordinary people, using for their benefit some of the economic gains of their age.

Alongside him, perhaps even more important in your genealogy, are William Duncan and John Snow, medical doctors rather than lawyers, originators and discoverers rather than campaigners, who, seeing the link between poor housing and sanitation and diseases like cholera, smallpox and typhus, worked to improve housing and sanitary provision. Snow died in 1848, aged 45, Duncan in 1863, aged 58.

And, of course, way back in the first half of the seventeenth century, you have in your lineage John Graunt who, in 1662, published his statistical pamphlet *Natural and Political Observations, mentioned in a Following Index, and made upon the Bills of Mortality*. The *Following Index* he referred to was, in fact, his subtitle, which staked out the ground for the study of Public Health and reads, *With Reference to the Government, Religion, Trade, Growth, Ayre, Diseases, and the several Changes of the said City* [London].

You also know that if Snow, Duncan and Chadwick were your founding grandfathers, then Charles-Edward Winslow and Richard Doll are your fathers, the latter a supreme example of brilliance, technique and tenacity. William Beveridge, who, even if he’s not in your family, was a campaigner like Chadwick and in a closely associated field, provides a link with political economy.

They pass down to you a study which is both a science and an art, most especially the art of communication.

And then we come to you, facing a task of altogether greater proportions. In Chadwick we see the beginning of public health as policy and one of the points I want to make this evening is that this part of your portfolio is undergoing, perhaps, a revolutionary change. That, with public health concerns being central to many of the big issues facing European society, your

discipline will gain added importance in the making of policy and its delivery. I will elaborate in the course of these remarks on these points but for the moment let me say:

- Your founding grandfathers and fathers fought to advance public health and well-being. So do you, but you also have to fight to defend your inheritance.
- Your grandfathers fought when economic conditions were in their favour. You operate in an economic climate which everyone is convinced is fragile. Chadwick worked in a climate which was conducive to investment. You do not.
- Your grandfathers fought in Great Britain. So do you, but you also have to fight in the European Union and at world level.
- They were doing things for people, laying, if you like, things before them like gifts (better housing, purer water, sewerage systems, and, in Beveridge's case, unemployment insurance). So are you, but you also do things to people by making them change their way of living. You are fighting for the hearts and minds of all citizens, in a way your ancestors did not have to. And this is a very different, and difficult, task.

In Europe, we face a number of interconnected problems which threaten us with accelerated decline, problems which can still only be seen by using our foresight.

- Britain and the European Union are slipping into economic decline – for decline of the Roman Empire, read decline of the European Union. New competitors emerge, old ones do not give way, we are squeezed.
- We compete for our income in globalising markets against businesses which do not carry a Beveridgean financial burden. Their costs are lower, they can undercut our prices, they win our orders.
- Our population is becoming old and there are worries that the young, especially in Britain, are becoming less healthy. As our work force shrinks in proportion to our population, our Beveridgean inheritance becomes more expensive to finance as each working taxpayer, whether individual or business, is called on to support more retired people, more sick people, more unemployed, and so on.
- The planet is heating up, the deserts are spreading, the seas are rising.

There is, we are told, no way out, no way back. All we can hope for is a slow decline rather than a sudden drop.

These elements combine to create riddles. And, as in fairy tales, we can maintain happiness only by answering them correctly. Some we know how to answer and may have made a beginning. But, sometimes, the answer to one riddle conflicts with another. Sometimes, solutions require a big change in our attitudes. Sometimes existing policies seem downright unhelpful and yet not readily open to change. The riddles become more difficult to solve. I will mention three or four and you will see that public health is at the heart of each one.

- How can we counter the problem posed by having a smaller population of working age ?
 - The short-term answer is to make it possible for more people to work and to work for longer – women as well as men, old as well as young. And that means keeping people healthier.

- The long-term solution would be to increase population growth, to have more children. Women, then, are the key, as economic actors and as mothers. We must arrange things so that women can pursue their careers, run their own businesses, be fulfilled in whatever they want to do – and have children.
 - This should be possible but we seem to be two or three laps behind, closed in a bubble where talk of business women or women working is treated as part of a debate about political correctness rather than about a vital part of our economic organisation. Will we be able to realise this quickly enough to change our attitudes and put in place policies which will help women to fulfil this role ? Watch this space.
- Next, how can we keep people healthier, so that they are able to work for longer ?
 - Answer, improve the standards of preventive medicine, turn people on to healthy-living, work to improve the social conditions which, for many, undermine their health.
 - Part of this problem is that we depend too heavily on a diet laden with saturated-fats and deficient in vegetables, causing disease and putting up costs. We need to change our habits.
 - But the structure of prices gives the opposite signal to the one we need, encouraging people in the wrong diet. To change the price structure, we need to change the demand pattern, to change habits.
 - And, behind food prices are trade policies which increase the transport of feedstuffs, foodstuffs, and many other stuffs, so that the carbon print of our dinner plate becomes ever greater. We might call the problem “Strawberries in January.” How can you persuade sufficient people to change their habits so that the price structure will change ? Watch this space.
- How can we protect the environment from the effects of global warming ?
 - Answer ? change production and consumption patterns so as to reduce our carbon footprint, reduce atmospheric pollution.
 - But we can’t alone combat global warming; can we then set an example which others may follow ? This is what European prime ministers decided to do in March, when they agreed to cut the Union’s harmful emissions by 20 per cent by 2020. It’s a gamble.
 - Reducing emissions will increase costs for business; if they are not competitive, they cannot maintain markets; if they lose markets we hasten our decline. Everything will depend on whether we can persuade other nations, our competitors, to do the same. Will they ? Will the gamble succeed ? Watch this space.
- And finally, how can we pay our Beveridge bill, which will get bigger ?
 - We must, therefore, maintain our share of markets, we must help our businesses fight off new competition coming from globalisation. We must earn more, which means producing more, which means a bigger carbon footprint.

- But wait a moment. To fight off new competition, businesses need to keep down costs. Yet, with social provision costing more, governments will need a higher tax yield which means a bigger burden on business.
- Answer ? Cut the costs of social provision and increase the value gained for each £ spent. And, perhaps, cutting costs will mean fewer resources for public health – perhaps for work on the public health effects of poverty, or the public health problems of old people.
- But people are not stupid. They see the speed with which billions can be set aside for other government policies which seem less justified, even irrelevant to them. They think they see the government saying one thing and doing another. Can we keep citizens onside ? Can the European Union and Britain keep businesses competitive in these circumstances ? Watch this space.

And to come to the citizens for a moment. A brake on progress is often applied by the very people you seek to help. The people living the lives you are trying to lengthen resist your advice. They prefer to carry on regardless. Pigou, the Cambridge professor of economics in the first half of the Twentieth Century, referred to our “defective telescopic faculty” when it came to seeing the future. We are taking things a stage further. We not only cannot see the future, but, when we can, we don’t believe it. We put our defective telescopic faculty to our blind eye.

These riddles combine to threaten our economic performance. The difficulties are probably surmountable but the critical aspect is the time it will take to find answers, fashion our policy response. We know we have to move fast, yet we stand rooted to the spot.

You will remember Captain Yossarian, Captain John Yossarian, bombardier, 256 Squadron, US Air Force, serving in the Mediterranean theatre in the Second World War. He had decided to live for ever and carefully ticked off the required number of missions he must fly before he could return to the United States. But, as he and his colleagues approached the magic number, his commanders raised it; thus extending his tour of duty. Given that sooner or later, anti-aircraft guns would, as he put it, knock him sprawling into infinite sleep, he felt his commanders had joined the group of people who were out to kill him. He discovered that his only way out was to be diagnosed as being mentally disturbed by the conflict – to be diagnosed as “crazy”. But, when he tried to arrange this with the unit doctor, he came up against his government’s Catch 22 policy. In those severe combat conditions, to suggest to your unit’s doctor that you were crazy was, in fact, proof that you were sane. And if you were sane, you could carry on flying missions.

Eventually, Yossarian was offered a way out by his commanders. And it is this that I have called Yossarian’s dilemma. They offered him the chance to return home, decorated as a hero even, on condition that he never mentioned Catch 22. He was placed in the dilemma that his own safety would be bought by him becoming a recruiting-attraction, helping the military to sign more young people into the forces where they, too, would be trapped by Catch 22 until they were killed.

Are there echoes of Yossarian's dilemma in our position ? Some. As I have said, to counter the effect of our falling working population, we need more people to work and to work for longer – but increasing the number of people in work may lower the birth rate. To defend our way of life, even if we reduce social provision, we need to increase our economic activity – but this advances our environmental catastrophe. To try to avoid the catastrophe, we could voluntarily allow our levels of wealth to decline – but, even if people were to accept it, it would not bring a solution because other nations would not follow suit. Like Yossarian, who escaped his dilemma by deserting his squadron, we are damned if we do and dead if we don't. Finding solutions will only be possible if we can change people's attitudes on a number of sensitive issues – it will require imagination and a rare unanimity of purpose between all layers of policy delivery.

Before we move on, let me note that the problems I have mentioned are themselves interdependent and that public attitudes and changed lifestyles will be common elements in their solution. We will return to this. But before doing so, I want to go back to the beginning and pay my respects to Edwin Chadwick. This will give us an opportunity to amplify some of the points I made at the outset of these remarks.

II The real Edwin Chadwick, by a friend

Palgrave's Dictionary of Political Economy is a useful, though rarely sparkling, work. It appeared first in 1894 and for want of anything better, it was there I went looking for Chadwick. And, nestling between "Ceva, Giovanni, born in the province of Milan", and "Chaffer, now a verb, was originally a noun," there, in the first of the three volumes, on page 252, I found a gem.

Chadwick had died four years before, aged 90, as old as the Century, since he had been born in 1800 "of a Lancashire family of the middle class, and with immediate ancestors gifted with little riches but with much earnestness of purpose" The entry is written by someone who knew him, a former colleague, and reads more like an obituary from today's *Guardian* than a dictionary note. It tells us that Edwin "had to work out his own way to fortune."

By the age of 32 he is already embarked on the career which brings us together today, and which we don't need to detail since the task has been admirably discharged by previous Chadwick lecturers.

But it may be interesting to spend a little more time in the company of F.Hendriks, author of his entry in *Palgrave*. From him we learn that Edwin had to work his way through legal training by moonlighting as a journalist and that his first work was as a ghost-writer, not to a 20-year-old footballer but to 80-year-old Jeremy Bentham, whom he had met as a result of some of his articles. When Bentham died, ten years later, Chadwick opted for a practical career.

Now, I was reading up on Chadwick because I wanted to tell you that Chadwick's reforming career was easier than yours; that he was working at a time when good ideas made their own way; that he could be a reformer without being a campaigner. For him, I wanted to say, doors swung open. You, however, need more than good ideas and good science to open doors. You need tenacity to battle indifference and the headwinds of business lobbies, who scoff at the science of global warming and poor diet, just as they did at Richard Doll over cigarette

smoking. And, with political and research donations, always strategically placed, they confuse debate and undermine political will.

These business lobbies, for all their protests to the contrary, aim to slow, or even thwart, progress. Their job is to defend profits, even at the expense of public health. And they are silently helped by the unavoidable fact of political life that there are no votes to be won in solving problems before they arise. Business people want to solve problems early, a problem avoided is a profit defended. Politicians use their foresight, of which they have plenty, in a different way. You, in the world of public health, are familiar with the same phenomenon: prevention is much less glamorous than cure.

So I wanted to be able to tell you it was easier for Chadwick. It must have been, I thought, because in his day environmental squalor and its health consequences were so visible, so omni-present. Who could resist him when every day the unregulated activity of industry and the unbridled growth of cities and towns worsened living conditions ? when Liverpool housed a quarter of its population in cellars ? when working class settlements like Bolton, Preston, Wigan, Rochdale were shanty towns ? when population densities were extreme and 60 per cent of working class deaths were under five years of age ? when the life expectancy of professional people in Manchester and their families was 38 years ? No wonder Chadwick's 1842 *Report on the sanitary condition of the labouring population of Great Britain* was such a success. The cause of Public Health must have been plain sailing.

I wanted to say it was easy for Chadwick but Hendriks points out that it was not so. Commenting on some of Chadwick's quarrels with colleagues, he gives us a picture of Chadwick the man, a personality to go with Chadwick's photograph. He says:

“It was not perhaps to be expected that a man of the enthusiastic and optimistic type of Chadwick could steer clear of conflict with his colleagues. Nor can it be said with truth that there existed no well-founded cause of complaint on their part, for Chadwick was egoistic and dogmatic even when not positively domineering, and was gifted with a readiness of pen and a volubility of tongue which often wearied out his opponents. But as great public benefits often accrued from his contentions, the private evil to his colleagues does not count for much. Socially, as we and many of his survivors can vouch, Chadwick was a most interesting and valued acquaintance. The fact is that the necessity for speedy action to remedy evils glaring and grievous was so obvious that the urging of them on in a nation wedded as we are to a long retention of old forms and ways and systems, was a positive public good; and, in the case of Chadwick, the man was equal to the work. Sometimes, indeed, on occasions when he had to stir up apathy or Laissez-faire into reform, he was in the habit of profusely spicing his statements with statistics which would not bear the test of strict actuarial investigation, and which were incorrect in respect of the collocation with results, or of their comparative percentages.”

We can see from his remarks that the climate of political opinion in which Chadwick worked was probably not much different from that facing you today. His political leaders were convinced of the need for change, like yours – although his, like yours, may have sometimes hesitated at the crucial financial test of putting theory into practice.

“Evils glaring and grievous” might have been clear to Chadwick and his colleagues, and to you today, but they were not so “glaring” that they stirred up apathy, nor so “grievous” that they impressed the Laissez-faire lobby, or as we might call them today, the de-regulators and the hunters after Red Tape. And, as for Hendriks’s other point, you know from your experience that Britain is still “a nation wedded to a long retention of old forms.”

So, despite conditions which appeared to Friedrich Engels in 1842 and 1843 as the provocation of England’s imminent social revolution, Chadwick could only advance through unrelenting campaigning, through “wearying out opponents,” and, if necessary, by “profusely spicing his statements.” You are Chadwick’s descendants, in discipline and in circumstance. It was not easy for Chadwick but I still maintain that the problems you face are, by their nature, more difficult to solve than his were.

III The evolution of Chadwick’s mission: the emergence of new problems

Hendriks pithily describes Chadwick’s agenda.

“National, social and sanitary subjects, such as the condition of labour, the housing, living and over-crowding of the population, and especially of the working classes, the improvement of the water supply of great cities, the interment of the dead in cemeteries removed from the immediate neighbourhood of the living, and other similar great questions.”

Our absolute position on all Chadwick’s fronts is immeasurably better than that which faced him – his problems no longer have the same intensity. Some may disagree with that statement, we shall see. There are certainly one or two important glosses to put on it, one or two elaborations to make.

When we say “our absolute position is immeasurably better” who do we mean by “our”. For Chadwick “ours” was Great Britain’s. For you “ours” is what ? The European Union ? The world ? The planet ? Or, depending on the issue under discussion, is it all of these ? As we consider the geographical extent of your mission, we discover it to be intimately connected with its scope, the areas of your concern.

Let’s apply Chadwick’s agenda to the European Union.

- Some EU Member States and regions still need to invest in the provision of water and sewerage infrastructure – that is, invest in initial provision, not renew. In the twelve recently joined Member States, for example, approximately € 30 billion of EU funds will be invested in water and sewerage over the next seven years to bring them up to EU standards. Actually the need is greater.
- In the past, the Union made no contribution to housing provision, but recently, under pressure from the Twelve-Recently-Joined, has agreed to do so, albeit with a cap on maximum expenditure.

These two points do not indicate the presence of Chadwickian squalor in the Union—thankfully – but they do indicate that his agenda is still relevant, that there remain problems and that it is urgent they be solved, that the skills of ‘drain doctors’ are still necessary.

One more statistic helps to bring home the burden that this represents for different parts of the Union.

- Harmonised EU data shows that in 2004 – the latest year available – the GDP per head of Greater Manchester was 116 per cent of the EU average of 27 Member States while for Merseyside it was 87,3 per cent.
- If we look at the Union of Twenty-Seven, we see that the regions which need to invest to overcome Chadwick-type problems are, as you would expect, poor or, even, extremely poor. Poland, for example, is at 51 per cent of the Union average, going as low as 36 per cent in some of its eastern regions. Parts of eastern Hungary are at 42 per cent. Romania and Bulgaria, as a whole are at 34 per cent, with some regions as low as 25 per cent of the Union average.

Whole Member States with an income which is less than half that of Merseyside. Some regions with less than a third of Merseyside’s income, which itself is three-quarters of that of Greater Manchester.

If, then, we widen “ours” to mean the European Union’s rather than Great Britain’s, we rediscover that some aspects of your mission today coincide with Chadwick’s. This becomes more true if we widen still further to think of “ours” as meaning “the world’s”. This is so self-evident, I do not need to go into it.

Britain, Europe, the world ... the next widening in the sense of “ours” brings us to the notion of “the planet’s”. Suddenly, we are carried into the debate about global warming. Is this an acceptable extension of the public-health agenda or a step too far ? For you to decide. Or is it ? I mentioned a few moments ago some of the issues facing policy-makers, saying there was a public health component in each one. It is inevitable your science and art will be an integral part of the policy response both in terms of design and delivery – and I imagine that you are happy that it should be so. It begins to appear that at least this has not changed since Chadwick’s day – a public health campaigner is inevitably an environmental campaigner.

Remember we are considering the statement that “Our position is immeasurably better than in Chadwick’s time.” We’ve talked about what we mean by “our”. The mention of global warming leads to another elaboration – what do we mean by “position” ? Events are pushing you towards what may be a revolutionary extension of the scope of your activities.

Your wider geographical scope and the emergence of new problems represents great change for your discipline. From being a national or local activity in the time of Chadwick and Duncan – and even as recently as the middle of the Twentieth Century – public health has become also European and even global. I have read that only 20 per cent of the decisions which affect public health in Great Britain are taken nationally and 50 per cent are taken at the level of the European Union with the remaining 30 per cent of decisions being taken in the global economy. You cannot now achieve your goals through an amalgam of local and national action, as Chadwick and Duncan were able to do. You have to also operate internationally.

As you seek at a local level to reduce death rates due to cardiovascular disease and cancer, as you seek to reduce diabetes and obesity, as you raise awareness to problems of skin cancer, where do you draw the boundary of public health competence? Where do you stop? The logic of your science pushes you further: beyond advice on healthy living, important though this is, you are pushed to challenge the nexus of policies and circumstance which leads to global warming, the policies which make unhealthy diet cheap and send the wrong price signal to consumers. You are pushed to offer input to trade policy discussions, on agricultural policies. And, as I say, these do not replace your traditional concerns, they are additional.

Your professional agenda is a rich and dense mixture.

IV The important contribution of a decentralised policy

In referring in the first part of these remarks to the problems which come together to create Yossarian's dilemma, I may have painted a bleak picture but I do not believe that the position we face as a European society is hopeless. I believe that, given the right approach – which is to operate at different levels, with different techniques – these challenges can be met. Indeed, some international elements of the possible solution, as I have said, may be in place. But now I want to come back to action in Britain.

Kevin Morgan, a professor at the School of City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University, and a very experienced and acute observer of the scene, has drawn attention to one element of a solution in the United Kingdom – namely the fact that the British government has committed itself to sustainable procurement, what Kevin calls “the greening of the realm.” One part of this greening applies, he says, to school food chains and may come to mean the “provision of fresh, locally-produced, nutritious food in schools, where children ought to be able to eat healthy food and learn about the links between food, diet and well-being.”

Kevin's nervousness is that, having launched the system from Westminster, and Whitehall having passed it out to cities and regions, there will be the feeling from the centre of “Job done, let's move on to the next thing.” He is afraid that Westminster and Whitehall will overestimate the organisational abilities of local authorities and underestimate the effects of cash shortages. That the organisation of sustainable school food chains will prove too difficult for local authorities, that the initiative will stall, that only the rhetoric will be left. The danger, he thinks, is that Whitehall will see the reform of school meals or the introduction of sustainable public procurement as an event, rather than a process. As something to be initiated only, not as something to be accompanied. Time will show.

When Kevin draws attention to the importance of organisation in delivering policy and, in particular, the importance of seeing delivery as a process which takes time, he strikes a chord with our experience in operating European Regional Policy. It is the paradox that a great deal of decision-making has moved to the world or European or national levels but that the necessary action is still local. It may be true that William Duncan, on his own, cannot do all that is necessary to improve the diet of children in Liverpool. But it is also true that without William Duncan, or his descendants, neither London nor the European Union can do much either. In this issue of organisation, we come, I think, to one important element in breaking free of Yossarian's dilemma.

The important point to accept is the equal importance in policy delivery of the national and international level, on one hand, and the local level on the other. They are both essential operators; they are inter-dependent; above all, they are equal. National is not more important than local. European is not more important than local. Nor is world. The highest level determines the goals and the parameters of policy, creates guidelines for action, the local level is responsible for making detailed investment decisions, being free to use its initiative – it should even be encouraged to do so – to decide which investments to make.

This is how European Regional Policy operates. Each level has its job to do and, for greatest efficiency, should forbear from interfering directly in the work of the other links in the delivery chain. In practice, because it is impossible for the local level to interfere in the work of central government, this insistence on non-interference means that the higher levels should not try to second guess actions to be taken at the local level.

Measured by its command over budgetary resources – 350 billion Euros between now and 2013 – European Regional Policy is one of the Union’s biggest, second only to the common agricultural policy. And, judged by its contribution to the competitiveness of regional and national economies, it is one of the most successful. It has three main planks.

- It allocates its €350 billion between Member States and regions so that the greatest intensity of public sector support goes to the worst off economies. In this way it supports economic cohesion.
- Next, it obliges Member States and regions to use these funds to increase competitiveness – in other words lays down the scope of actions. In this way it ensures that Regional Policy supports the Union’s efforts to stimulate growth and create jobs.
- And third, it is fully decentralised, decisions on how to invest the EU funds and the national public or private resources which accompany them, are taken by economic actors in the region or Member States themselves. Here in the North-West, until very recently this meant that decisions were taken here in Manchester, or in Liverpool for Merseyside, or in Whitehaven for West Cumbria.

It is this aspect I want to stress.

These investment decisions are taken within the framework of strategic guidelines decided in Brussels by the European Commission and the Member States and aimed at increasing economic competitiveness. The guidelines for the next seven years make clear that improving public health may be an important part of a region’s competitiveness agenda.

The development programmes which will carry this development effort in Britain over the next years are now being written. Now is the time for public health professionals to discover the programme managers in each of the regions to explain what they could add to the process. It will be an uphill discussion, money is short, needs are great and previous practice means that other disciplines are in charge of the field. But, if, like me, you believe that more needs to be done to develop awareness of the link between economic development and improved public health, now is the time to begin the effort. A foundation has been laid in the guidelines which govern the process.

Brussels, which constantly seeks the decentralisation of policy delivery, readily accepts and lives by the important truth that each link in the delivery chain has its job to do. Indeed, it is part of the bedrock of European Regional Policy. But the truth needs also to be applied nationally and regionally. Policy is delivered by a chain of actors of equal importance, linked by a common purpose. Governance, or the delivery mechanism of policy, is a partnership of equals, a chain of responsibilities.

We have to ask ourselves whether the systems we have for delivering policy are as efficient as they might be. More than ever, the policy-making centre – whether it be London or Brussels or wherever – has to have in mind that, where it is part of a delivery chain, its efficiency in delivering policy depends critically on the performance of other actors.

For the chain of governance to work, a number of simple conditions must be fulfilled. Each link must know what it has to do and must be able to do it. Two requirements which are self-evidently clear. A third requirement is that each link must agree with the task being performed, there must be a consensus among the links of the chain. Also self-evident. If consensus doesn't exist, the force of the policy will be weakened as it moves from the centre to the local level. As I say, self-evident, but consensus, in my experience, is sometimes lacking. And the fourth requirement is that each link understands, and is sympathetic to, the contribution which each brings to the delivery process. It is especially important that the link which is responsible for the ultimate action should have the power to use its talents and knowledge to decide how the action should be carried out. Four simple conditions.

A strong consensus on what the policy is trying to achieve, and how, guarantees a high level of mutual confidence which, in turn, allows the simplification of delivery and the release of creativity. A climate of mutual confidence allows the William Duncans of today a fuller rein in using their unique knowledge of local conditions to effectively deliver nationally determined policies, or those implemented from the European level. This local creativity will be essential to our escape from Yossarian's dilemma.

You may think I'm glibly re-affirming the old slogan "Think global, act local". Maybe I am. I'm also trying to take things a stage further – to say that, if we want people to act locally, if we consider that their special knowledge can increase the efficiency of policy, if we want to release their creativity for the common good, then our system of policy delivery has to take this into account. We have to construct policy around the fact that it is at the local level, and only at the local level, where policy passes from theory to practice.

I'm also saying that if our objective is to convince people to change their life styles so that they reduce their carbon footprint, so that they buy in to healthy living, so that they can choose an optimal work-life balance, if we want to change hearts and minds, then we have to ensure that citizens understand the challenges which modern developments pose to their social system. And the best way to do this is to have a lively awareness of policy at the local level – to have, for example, a sufficient number of local public health officials at the point of policy delivery.

This decentralised way of working – and I can tell you that the working model of European Regional Policy is attracting attention in South America, in South-East Asia, in China, in Russia – can make an important contribution to the effort to break free of Yossarian's dilemma.

This, then, is my argument. The science and art of public health, which comes down to you through Duncan, Snow, Chadwick, Winslow, Doll is undergoing revolutionary change.

- The health challenges facing citizens today don't appear to them to have a causal connection with their day-to-day behaviour. They often do not have a local cause and cannot all be met by better local infrastructure provision.
 - The good health of citizens in Manchester and Liverpool today depends on the decisions of politicians in New York, in Brussels, and London as well as on their own actions.
 - The knowledge and foresight of the science and art of public health is vital in convincing world politicians of the need for change and in helping them to frame policy.
 - Yet, paradoxically, the skills of its practitioners remain vital at the local level, where policy becomes practice, where threats are, in fact, averted. There is a need in solving these urgent difficulties to have a sufficient number of local public health officials and to give them a free-enough rein.
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