

My Experience of Re-organisations

I have been blogging for five years now about the costs of inequality in our social fabric. Now that cost is about to turn into hard cash. We are about to embark on something that will cost a thousand times more, lose underprivileged places their EU funding and replace it with a re-designed driving licence.

I notice that I have already responded at the gut level to the new state of affairs. I am scared, not just a bit twitchy but alarmingly so. So, what do I do when I'm scared? I become cautious and the first thing I do is cut my spending. I simply don't buy things. We shopped in Palermo this morning, and where, last year we might have spent €50, this year we spent less than €25. We look at each other with relieved expressions when a bill is manageable. Without even discussing it we have cut our eating out and found cheaper restaurants.

I remember last year thinking, 'this is a bit extravagant, but hey, we're on holiday!' This year, I'm thinking, 'Do we really need that?'

Perhaps it's not just me: let's propose that one thing that unites both Remainers and Leavers is feeling scared of an uncertain future. Apart from the politics, the cost of re-organising all of our arrangements - things like passports, driving licences, business documents, will be enormous. I have seen many re-organisations in multinational companies and the cost and disruption has always been huge, the results always disappointing. It seems we have to learn over and over again that there are reasons things are organised the way they are. And that these reasons have surfaced and been worked through over years. Even the Scottish referendum cost a pretty penny.

"The Scottish government said the final administrative cost – for count officers, electoral returning officers, postage costs and the Electoral Commission – was £15.85m, equivalent to £4.38 per head for the 3.62 million people who took part."

That's just part of the cost, it doesn't include all the marketing, canvassing, travel, press & TV etc. Even if we say that only 20 big issues will need substantial re-engineering, at 4.38 a time that's £87.60 per head, times 60 million or so. That's billions...money that can't be spent where it's needed. I hope you enjoy your new passport and driving licence and by the way it won't work as seamlessly as the old one and the best design feature, the circle of stars, will be missing...but hey!

Clearly these are fag-packet calculations but you get my point. And we want to keep many of the arrangements in place anyway. At least 10 dedicated call-centres with auto-direction voicemail are inevitable. Those we must substantially change will provide manna for lawyers, statisticians, bureaucrats and admin. They will require endless negotiations and fiddling with...a monstrous bureaucracy of sweet nothings.

If, like me, people hold onto what they have, consumer confidence will shrink and consumer

spending will die away. And the economy will shrink more, while the 46% of food we import will go up in price...while we are undertaking the largest national re-organisation of all time. I assure you they are unlikely to ask the underprivileged of Hull or Sunderland to do the work, but they may cut spending in these very out-of-the-way, hard to see places to fund it.

A classic Vicious Circle - rising prices, unprecedented - and unpredictable - expenses, less spending, more fear, less optimism. Which will grind on for five years for sure. I hope its worth it!

By contrast there was bullish crowing in the Mail this morning that the Footsie had recovered to pre-Brexit levels. But this is may be a false dawn; we are still running a national deficit. Here is last year's:

For all of 2015, it came to £96.2bn or 5.2% of annual GDP. Both figures were the highest since records began in 1948.

This bragging was just before Gove assassinated Boris. If you think the buffoons and ninnies on both sides who got us into this mess will be able to sort it out, perhaps its time to wake up.