

The Government and the Private Sector - a Shotgun Wedding or an Inevitable Relationship?

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Key words: government, private sector, cooperation, distribution of tasks

SUMMARY

Governmental institutions and private surveying-, mapping and GIS companies are working with each other all over the world. Their cooperation, in many cases, is difficult and worsened by mutual distrust, or, at least, natural wariness.

Within the cooperation, the typical distribution of the tasks nowadays is: the government, according to its professional considerations and legally valid technical requirements, acquires and finances professional activities and products; appropriate private sector representatives compete and win the work, prepare and deliver the product; in the last stage, the government supervises and quality- controls it, and (following the completion of required corrections by the supplier) accepts the product. Many times, the issue is more complicated, but is based, more or less, on the above formula.

Not in all cases however. Sometimes, the private surveyor is the client and the governmental agency supplies the service. In most of these reverse cases, the service is a quality control, confirmation, data supply, legislation, etc., carried out by a governmental supplier whilst being in monopolistic position. Practically, there is no way to overrule or correct the "product" (except by applying to court). It is not too surprising, that many times private surveyors are anxious about this situation. Who knows better? Who is more competent? And why?

Each code of ethics calls the supplier to deliver high quality product to the client - within a reasonable time period. The consistent self-reducing trend of the governments makes for a governmental supplier difficult to respect the code. Where can a government find accessible potential to assist? In the private sector!

More and more, formerly statutory tasks (like supervising, contribution to legislation, R&D of national infrastructures, confident advising as to internal management procedures, etc.) are acquired from the private sector by the government, conducting more- and more sophisticated, quality-based bidding methods. A global re-distribution of tasks seems to have occurred, raising new kinds of problems and doubts, but hopefully leading to a more balanced relationship between the government and the private sector, and resulting in a high quality production and co-production.

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1. THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

A respected national surveying and mapping agency celebrated its impressive jubilee a few years ago. A prominent representative of the private surveyors was also invited as a speaker. His speech did not lack in irony, and included a bilious citation: "The state is not the solution. The state is the problem."

Nice phrase! It surely makes the public smile or laugh – but is it true at all?

On one hand, one can hardly find a country which does not operate a governmental agency, responsible for geodesy, surveying, mapping and GIS affairs. On the other hand, it is hard to find a country nowadays, if any, where the government completes all the tasks – or even most of them - by itself. In fact, private surveyors and governmental agencies cooperate with each other all over the world.

Are they enjoying it? Sometimes yes, sometimes not, presumably. But the distance between private sector specialists and government employees is gradually reduced.

We live our professional life in the era of "life long learning". A good professional necessarily changes his workplace more frequently than in the past. From time to time, outstanding experts from the private sector are invited to fill senior positions in the government. And more and more frequently it happens that government employees change their position to a new career in the private sector.

2. HOW THE COOPERATION WORKS?

The typical distribution of the tasks nowadays is: the government, according to its professional considerations and legally valid technical requirements, orders and finances professional activities and products; appropriate private sector representatives compete and win the work, prepare and deliver the product; in the last stage, the government supervises and quality- controls it, and (following the completion of required corrections by the supplier) accepts the product. Many times, the issue is more complicated, but is based, more or less, on the above formula, which has evolved during decades or centuries, and is still dominant – but not exclusively any more.

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position. Practically, there is no way to overrule or correct the "product" (except by applying to court).

Progressive governments try to improve their services continuously. Their code of ethics also calls to supply high quality service to the client - within a reasonable time period. One of the barriers to their success is the consistent self-reducing trend of the governments itself. As the result of it, these governments have to complete their tasks with permanently reducing personnel.

It is not too surprising, that many times private surveyors are anxious about this situation. So are government employees. (The difference is that they try to conceal their discontent.)

3. WHY THE COOPERATION IS NECESSARY AND ADVANTAGEOUS?

Governments need experienced professional knowledge and manpower. Where can a government find accessible potential to assist? In the private sector!

The standard formula for improving a service is to open it to a free competition. For acquiring the "best" of the private sector, more and more sophisticated bids have to be run, based on exactly settled system of quality requirements.

Working with clever private suppliers is more than obtaining additional labour force. When cooperating, you also mix different kind of knowledge, professional experience, opinions and ideas. Economic considerations, which would be so important (but many times are missing) in governmental activity, can be positively inspired by the cooperation.

The establishment and maintenance of national size infrastructures serve as a good example of fruitful cooperation. In such projects the time demanded for completion is too long and financial investment - comparing with the expected profit - is too high for private enterprise. The state is able to finance the work. But the work to be done is huge, and the government can not carry it out without essential involvement of the private sector.

4. RE-DISTRIBUTION OF THE TASKS

The re-distribution of the tasks between the government and the private sector seems to be inevitable.

The main change is expected in one direction: more and more prominent private sector representatives will become involved and integrated, in an established manner, even in formerly pure governmental, statutory activity.

Let us to list a number of real examples of the Israeli professional practice:

- The **new professional regulations and standards** (to be published in the next year) have been elaborated by the Survey with the involvement of prominent representatives of private surveyors.

- **Conceptual R&D of 3DCadastre** has been completed by private experts of various disciplines [Forrai and Kirschner, 2003; Shoshani et al, 2004]. So were the practical tests [Grinstein, 2003].
- **Supervising surveyors** have operated in Israel since 2004. They supervise cadastral mutation plans made by their colleagues, following the delegation of power by the director general of the Survey of Israel [Forrai and Kirschner, 2006].
- **Quality control modules** are placed at private surveyor's disposal by the Survey, via Internet, for advancing preliminary professional control.

The author is convinced that the above examples definitely represent a new trend of cooperation.

5. SUMMARY

Our professional practice is continuously developed by governmental and private surveyors. We have one economical-social reality, and we have only one profession... The governmental and the private sectors have their joint responsibility to save and strengthen surveyor's professional prestige and social reputation. They can not afford the luxury of acting without cooperation... and our professional associations have a unique position for contributing to their smooth, effective and high quality co-production.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Dr. Joseph Forrai was awarded M.Sc.(1974) and D.Sc.(1980) degrees at Technical University of Budapest, Hungary. Dr. Forrai was Lecturer and Senior Lecturer at TUBudapest, Tel Aviv University, Israel Institute of Technology (Technion) and Bar Ilan University (Tel Aviv) since 1976. Appointments at the Survey of Israel: Chief of Research Division (1987-1992); Head of Photogrammetry Department (1989-1993); Deputy Director General (1993-1994), Chief Scientist (1995-2003), Deputy Director General for cadastre (since 2003). Professional and research background (partial): crustal movement detection; photogrammetric data acquisition (national GIS topographic data base); permanent GPS station network; GPS support for geodynamics; improvement of national cadastral practice. Memberships of the Israeli Society of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (president between 1995-2001); Association of Licensed Surveyors in Israel (responsible for FIG relations); Israeli Cartographic Society.

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