

lived on a council estate doing in the Houses of Parliament talking to people I'd seen on TV.

I was also introduced to various departments who kindly offered to give me an hour or so explaining how “big IT” happened. What I saw shook me but then I hadn't really seen “big IT” in the commercial world having mainly built companies or worked for moderate sized groups. The first, and most obvious thing, I noted was the lack of engineering skills despite the scale of these engineering projects. I would be introduced to engineer after engineer that in effect turned out to be a glorified project manager. The answer to everything seemed to be “outsource it”, a mantra that had been encouraged by hordes of management consultants. I tried to explain how this would inevitably lead to cost overruns because some components would be novel but usually got an answer blaming poor specification. It seemed that no matter how many times a project failed, the answer was “better specification” or “better outsourcing”. This was dogma run wild. I became increasingly aware that these groups were not only dependent upon the vendors but many lacked the skills necessary to challenge the quotations given.

There was no concept of maps and no effective mechanism of communication, learning or sharing. Everything was isolated. Duplication was rife. Before anyone goes on about how bad Government is, let me be clear that this pales into insignificance compared to the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of the private sector. I might have seen the same system rebuilt a hundred times in Government but in the commercial world, I've seen 350 separate teams