

*Let's talk about public projects*¹

Projects in state development phases²

Stanisław Gasik

Introduction

What is the role of projects in the operation of countries and their government? How does this role evolve over time? An attempt to address this query should consider the existing state development models and their evolution.

What are the different types of nations and governments, and how do they undergo change? Philosophers and scholars have been exploring these questions since ancient times. Even Plato, in his writings, discussed how governments transition from aristocracy to tyranny. A state can be categorized as Weberian hierarchical-bureaucratic, managerial (New Public Management), or seen as a collection of autonomous entities (New Public Governance). In 1776, Adam Smith classified societies as agrarian and industrial, and in 1967 and 2019, Daniel Bell introduced the post-industrial phase. Consequently, a prevalent model of state development distinguishes three phases: agrarian, industrial, and post-industrial. Walter Rostow (1960) outlined his state development model consisting of five phases, ranging from traditional agrarian societies to the mass consumption phase. According to Spruyt (2002), one of the most significant dynamics lies in the transition from pre-modernist states to modernist ones.

These are just a few examples of state classifications and development models. An important culmination of discussions on state and governance development is the Evolutionary Governance Theory proposed by Van Assche et al. (2014), which offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for describing the stages of state development.

In this article, I would like to explore the role of projects in the different stages of the evolution of states.

¹ Editor's note: This article is the seventh in a series related to the management of public programs and projects, those organized, financed and managed by governments and public officials. The author, Dr. Stanisław Gasik, is the author of the book "[*Projects, Government, and Public Policy*](#)", recently published by CRC Press / Taylor and Francis Group. That book and these articles are based on Dr. Gasik's research into governmental project management around the world over the last decade. Stanisław is well-known and respected by PMWJ editors; we welcome and support his efforts to share knowledge that can help governments worldwide achieve their most important initiatives.

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Base model

So, I was confronted with the task of selecting one of the existing models as the theoretical basis for these analyses. It's widely acknowledged that all models are wrong (Box, 1976). Each model concentrates on the aspects of interest to the researcher while disregarding other facets of reality, rendering them incomplete. For instance, psychological behavioral models address human interactions with the environment but overlook cognitive processes. But Box's statement goes on to say that some models are useful.

Can any of the existing models of state development be beneficial in elucidating the role of projects in the operation of the state? In my quest for such a model, I gave heed to the categorization of state development phases put forth by Richard Rose (1976) and subsequently refined by other scholars like Premfors (1999) and Rolland and Roness (2009).

According to this model, countries go through three development phases:

- Protection of existence,
- Infrastructure development, and
- Ensuring the well-being of citizens.

This classification is crucial in terms of the participation of government and society in shaping and executing public policies.

Each successive phase carries out its tasks building upon the achievements of the preceding phases. Only a state that has secured its own existence can embark on the development of civic infrastructure. Ensuring the welfare of residents in a nation lacking advanced housing or transportation infrastructure would be challenging. Activities from previous phases are implemented also in the subsequent ones, but the ones that constitute the next phase take on essential significance.

In the subsequent sections, I elaborate on these developmental phases and the functions that projects fulfill within them.

Protection of existence phase

First, states must exist. A new national identity emerges or strengthens. The territory is delineated.

States come into existence peacefully or as a result of conflicts with neighboring nations or colonial empires. Local leaders negotiate the terms of separating the new state from existing rulers, and sometimes referendums are organized. When such peaceful means are not possible, uprisings for independence may break out.

To establish a new state, it must ensure the defense of its territory and implement the fundamental principles of governance. The new government takes full responsibility for defining and implementing essential policies to ensure the state's existence, thus creating executive power. Hierarchical power structures need to be established, and the country is typically divided into constituent provinces. An army is formed, and the

principles of citizen participation in defense structures are established. Internal security forces, such as the police, are created. The state must also have institutions responsible for administering justice, at least in terms of upholding these critical rules and laying the foundations for judicial power. The apparatus for coercion is organized, and the collection of taxes and other fundamental contributions to the state, such as those related to infrastructure development essential for the state's existence, are determined and put into practice.

For the state to progress to the next phase of development, all these institutions must operate with relative efficiency.

Infrastructure development phase

Following this consolidation, the state transitions to the phase of infrastructure development. During this stage, the primary objective of the state is to develop the infrastructure across all sectors essential for its efficient operation. Both the physical and organizational infrastructure are being developed, which weren't established during the initial phase since they weren't necessary for the state's survival.

The organizational infrastructure that develops in this phase includes institutions (organizations and processes) that were not essential during the first phase. A separate legislative government branch is formed. Within the executive power, specialized sectors are identified and placed under governance, such as the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Science, and all others necessary for the effective operation of the country. These ministries define and implement specific governance processes. Basic services are organized in the areas of health care and education, to name only the most important of them.

Physical infrastructure is undergoing development. Homes are constructed to provide people with places to live. Enterprises are being founded to produce essential goods for citizens' livelihoods. Water supply and sewage systems are being established, along with energy transmission lines to provide power where needed. Communication infrastructure, including roads, railways, and airports, is being built. If the country possesses natural resources, the mining industry is organized. A communication network is being established, and the trade network is expanding.

During this phase, the components of the state's operation established in the first phase of development are also enhanced.

Ensuring the well-being phase

Through the development of essential infrastructure, the state operates efficiently and ensures its citizens receive basic services.

In the third phase, the primary focus shifts toward the well-being of citizens. The state aims to involve as many citizens as possible in utilizing the produced goods. Mechanisms for economically safeguarding citizens are established. Efforts are made to reduce or significantly limit poverty through the redistribution of material resources.

Social welfare institutions are established to provide for the less fortunate and those excluded from full social participation for various reasons.

The role of the healthcare system expands beyond emergency intervention (such as treating diseases and accidents) to promote long and healthy lives for citizens. Institutions that cater to the cultural needs of residents, including museums, cinemas, theaters, and musical venues, are developed. Scientific progress is prioritized, with countries allocating appropriate funds for research. Tourism becomes more accessible to the masses. Mass organizations dedicated to physical fitness and sports are established. The state dedicates more attention and resources to the protection of nature and the environment.

The next phase: Services tailoring

The Rose's model concludes with these three phases. However, it was developed almost fifty years ago. Technological progress in recent decades has led to greater access to goods, increased work efficiency, and facilitated interpersonal communication. The internet enables all citizens to establish contacts easily, and countries have more goods. Simultaneously, the enhanced efficiency of state institutions allows them to allocate more resources to ensure the well-being of their citizens.

The advent of new communication possibilities has made it simpler for citizens' associations to form. Citizens and their associations can now more effectively communicate their needs to state institutions. Collectively, these phenomena enable the implementation of more specialized social services. For example, particularly gifted children receive specialized education. Rare diseases are treated in a specialized manner. Cultural events are organized for local groups. Material assistance is tailored for specific disadvantaged persons. Services are tailored to meet the requirements of specific social groups and even individual citizens³.

I call this phase of state development: Services Tailoring.

The following figure schematically shows an expanded Rose's model of state development phases.

³ The same phenomenon is observed in the private sector, which provides more and more individual services and production is adapted to the needs of individual customers.

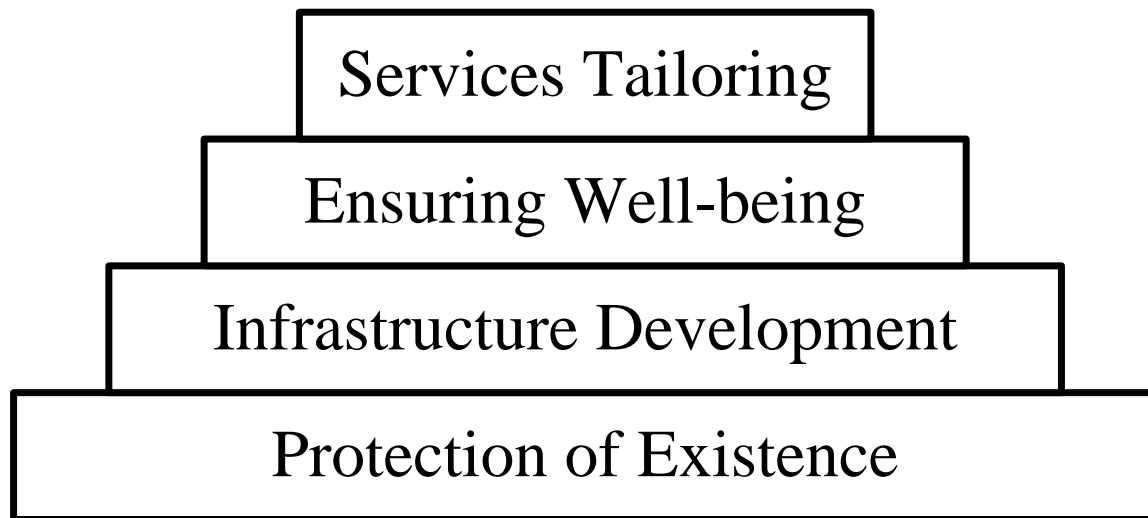


Figure. The hierarchy of state development phases

Projects and development phases

Now that we have outlined the model, let's look at the role of projects in each phase of development.

In the Protection of existence phase, projects play a crucial role. The separation of the state itself is a project program. Wars, creating an army, establishing the structure of the state, and internal security forces, the most important institutions needed to ensure the state, are project activities. This meets the definition of **project-based** organization (e.g. Lindkvist, 2004; Miterev et al., 2017). However, since knowledge about project management usually appears in later phases of state development, it is difficult to expect it to be deliberately used in this phase.

In the Infrastructure development phase, projects obviously play a fundamental role. Creating each element of infrastructure – organizational or physical – is a project. In this phase, the state exploits the basic infrastructure defined in the first phase of development. Also, the infrastructure elements produced in this phase are operated. An organization that implements projects to develop its functions is called **project-driven** one (e.g., McCauley, 1993).

Activities characteristic for the ensuring well-being phase have the type of continuous operations. This is the form of social benefits services, health care, activities of cultural and sports institutions, or environmental protection. From a management perspective, this phase is **operation-based**.

In the Services tailoring phase, activities are becoming increasingly specialized. All of them require a customized approach. Such services need to be individually planned and then supervised. Finally, their effect must be evaluated. These features make it necessary to use project management processes and techniques for their implementation. Also, the implementation of infrastructure facilities in response to local demands has the character of projects. But at the same time, mass benefits are also

provided in the form of continuous operations. Because both of these types of activities are performed in parallel, the state in this phase is a **mixed** organization.

The following table shows the managerial characteristics of state development phases.

Table. Managerial characteristics of state development phases

Phase	Managerial characteristics
Protection of Existence	Project-based
Infrastructure Development	Project-driven
Ensuring the Well-being	Operation-based
Services Tailoring	Mixed

Model applications

This model allows for describing certain phenomena. At any given moment, different countries remain at different levels of development. Some protect their existence, others develop infrastructure and still others have reached the level of ensuring well-being or services tailoring.

Interphase transfer of project management knowledge

Countries in the Infrastructure Development phase usually do not have funds to develop scientific research, including that related to project management. Project management knowledge was developed in countries like the United Kingdom, the United States, and European Union countries – when they already exhibited the characteristics of the ensuring well-being phase. At the same time, other countries that are at a level no higher than infrastructure development need knowledge about efficient project management. They can obtain this knowledge thanks to its transfer from countries that are at a higher level of development, like ensuring well-being. This was one of the main reasons why I wrote the book *Projects, Government, and Public Policy* (Gasik, 2023) in which, among others, I described ways of effectively organizing Governmental Project Implementation Systems, which are very useful in the Infrastructure development phase. The only general model of project knowledge management (Gasik, 2011) should be supplemented with a government-level interphase transfer of knowledge.

Public administration science's focus on operations

The science of public administration and political science, like other fields of science, is developing intensively in the Ensuring well-being phase. In this phase, countries focus on the processes of ensuring prosperity, which are continuous operations. Therefore, the contemporary science of public administration pays more attention to ongoing operations (education, poverty reduction, culture, tax collection, etc.) than to projects. Evidence of this may be, for example, that in the *Journal of Public Policy* volumes from 2010 to 2018, only two out of 143 articles try to analyze project-related

phenomena. Other academic journals in the field of public administration also have minimal interest in project management.

Projectification of governments and societies

In the Services tailoring phase, many public administration activities again take on the character of projects. It should also be remembered that in each phase, work characteristic for previous phases is carried out, that is, in particular, missing general infrastructure is replenished. Together, this explains the progressive projectification of governments (e.g. Schoper et al., 2018) and entire societies (e.g. Wagner, 2022).

Summary

States develop according to the model proposed by Rose (1976). First, they need to ensure their existence, then build an infrastructure that allows them to function, so that later they can focus their attention on the welfare of their citizens. With the development of technology and the increase in the level of wealth of countries, this model needs to be supplemented to describe the current state of development of governments. The fourth phase of state development should be considered the one in which state benefits are tuned to the needs of individual citizens and small groups.

Projects play an essential role in most phases of state development. They are especially important in the phases of protection of existence and infrastructure development. Due to the different levels of development of countries, the inter-phase transfer of knowledge, in particular regarding project management, is of great importance for development. Extending the model to include the Services tailoring phase makes it possible to address the phenomenon of projectification of governments and societies, observed in recent times.

The demonstrated applications prove the validity of the extended Rose model described in this article.

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Dr. Stanisław Gasik, PMP is a project management expert. He graduated from the University of Warsaw, Poland, with M. Sc. in mathematics and Ph. D. in organization sciences (with a specialty in project management). Stanisław has over 30 years of experience in project management, consulting, teaching, and implementing PM organizational solutions. His professional and research interests include project knowledge management, portfolio management, and project management maturity. He is the author of the only holistic model of project knowledge management spanning from the individual to the global level.

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