

So what does Web 2.0 offer the public sector? The most obvious applications relate to engaging citizens. Social media such as blogs, wikis and forums can help bridge the gulf between citizens and public institutions. Using them demonstrates that the public sector is committed to engaging with citizens in more effective ways. These tools can also help produce more positive relationships by supplementing one-way communication with dialogue, and impersonal pronouncements with more personal interaction. Social media also have internal applications. By making it easier for workers to find information and to find each other, they can improve collaboration and allow the public sector to tap more effectively into the knowledge and skills of its staff. Embracing such tools can help government organisations attract, retain and motivate the workers, managers and leaders they will require in the future. Many of these people will have grown up in a Web 2.0 world and will be uncomfortable, unwilling or even incapable of working effectively in the pre-Web 2.0 working environments that prevail in many public sector organisations.

Social Media and the Public Sector

There is plenty of evidence of innovative public sector organisations grasping the opportunities offered by Web 2.0 collaborative tools. Around the world politicians have used blogs to build a more personal relationship with citizens, for example, the UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband¹, the Hungarian Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany² and the Australian Leader of the Opposition Malcolm Turnbull³. Blogs have also been used in other ways. The UK's Department for International Development have set up a group blog⁴, written by relatively low-level, frontline staff as a way of giving citizens a real insight into the work of the department and the problems it is trying to tackle. The US county of Oakland County in Michigan has set up a website⁵ that combines forums and blogs as a way of encouraging dialogue with and between its citizens. Other social media tools are also being adopted quite widely. Many public sector organisations are using YouTube to take their message to the audience in the direct and personal way that video offers. For example, the California Franchise Board's has used a YouTube video to explain tax regulations⁶, while the UK local authority Swansea currently has 46 videos on the site, most of them showing events in the area, but some promoting the work of the council, e.g. a series on social services⁷. Others are exploiting the creative potential of this tool; for example, New Zealand's Ministry for the Environment ran a video competition for young people to promote the message of sustainability to young people⁸.

Web 2.0 tools such as Twitter, the micro-blogging platform where users post via SMS text message with entries limited to 140 characters, might seem to have less to offer the public sector, but there are still interesting examples of the public sector using this new channel. You can, for example, follow the daily activities of the UK Prime Minister⁹ as over five thousand people are currently doing. In the United States, over 60 politicians and agencies are using Twitter, including the Dept of Defence and NASA¹⁰. Social networking sites such as Facebook that have hundreds of millions of active users offer public sector institutions a new way of engaging with citizens. For example, the CIA has used a Facebook page to help recruit people for its National Clandestine Service¹¹. Many universities and schools use Facebook as a channel for communicating with students, while Canadian bodies such as the Public Health Agency use it to disseminate health information¹². The Ontario Government in Canada used Second Life to help

inform young people about career opportunities and to attract young people into the Ontario public service. In a twelve-week pilot, visitors to the island were able to spend a "day in the life" of employees in five different career tracks. Over the course of the pilot, over 9000 visitors spent an average of 20 minutes learning about life in the public service and provided very positive feedback¹³. Similarly, Sweden has opened a Virtual Embassy on Second Life¹⁴.

The above uses of social media mainly involve using these new channels to convey messages to citizens and interest them in what public sector leaders and institutions are trying to do. But Web 2.0 approaches have also been used to give citizens greater voice and influence in public sector decision-making, for example, through e-petitions. These initiatives make it dramatically easier for citizens to make their views known both to each other and to decision-makers. Probably the best-known example is the No 10 Downing Street e-petitions site¹⁵ where one petition (against road pricing) managed to secure nearly 1.7 million signatures during the 12 months that it was on the site. Web 2.0 approaches have also been used to modify traditional approaches to consultation. In 2007 the New Zealand government used a wiki – a document anyone can edit - to capture public views on what a new Police Act might look like¹⁶. Now a similar process is being used by Archives New Zealand in relation to its Digital Continuity Strategy¹⁷. Meanwhile in the UK the Department of Innovation Universities and Skills built widgets for one of their consultations¹⁸, enabling individuals and organisations to add the consultation questions (or a sub-set of them) to their own websites, so people can engage with them in a context of their choice. They also followed up an early consultation with an executive summary that allowed readers to post comments at any point in the text¹⁹. Other public sector institutions have created virtual communities such as New Zealand's Digital Strategy Forum²⁰ or its "Safe As" road safety forum to enable sustained interaction between citizens and policy-makers²¹.

Internal uses of social media by the public sector are harder to track, but here too there is evidence of public sector agencies embracing Web 2.0. Somewhat surprisingly, the U.S. intelligence agencies have been leaders in this area – first, by creating Intellipedia²², a set of three wikis where intelligence officers from 16 agencies could share and discuss information; then by developing A-Space, a common collaborative workspace for all analysts from the United States Intelligence Community, providing forums, blogs, wikis, search (classified and public Internet sources), web-based email, and collaboration tools²³. A similar example is New Zealand's "e-initiatives" wiki which replaces an older static reporting approach to tracking progress of e-government, and provides an environment for public servants to share e-government experiences. This wiki has done a great job in pooling information (it covers over 530 projects from 93 government organisations), but information is rarely updated and agencies are clearly reticent to share failures as well as successes. Interestingly, these criticisms of the project were made on a blog by a public official and of course provoked a discussion as to how to avoid such problems in the future²⁴.

These examples highlight the potential of social networking in the public sector. This can occur on commercial sites such as Facebook where up to nearly 15,000 people joined the UK Civil Service Facebook group, which is only open to people with a .gov.uk email address. Similarly, over 400 museum professionals around the world share ideas and experiences via a Facebook group²⁵. It can also take the form of networking via

specially created tools such as New Zealand's Principals Electronic Network, which is an online community where school leaders can discuss issues and share experiences in a secure environment created the Ministry of Education²⁶. Web 2.0 tools can also improve information flows within public sector organisations. For example, the New Zealand State Services Commission has a couple of blogs (In Development²⁷ and Research e-Labs²⁸) that are viewable by anyone but are primarily intended to share ideas within government. Conversely, the UK's Department of Innovation Universities and Skills is using customised Netvibes pages as dashboards to keep policymakers in touch with references on blogs or elsewhere on the Internet to the department and the issues it is responsible for²⁹.

These tools are all about encouraging information sharing and collaboration across organisational boundaries and empowering individuals, thus motivating them to deliver their full potential. Instead of instructions coming down from the top, Web 2.0 tools enable people to link directly with each other, to become engaged more fully in their organization's goals and operations, and to make the contribution (and get the recognition from peers) that they crave. Increased employee engagement leads to improved service levels, which in turn leads to increased confidence in Government.

Web 2.0 Values and the Public Sector

The above examples show that the public sector is already getting value from Web 2.0 tools. What is exciting about Web 2.0, however, is not so much particular sites or tools, but the way in which those sites highlight different values and a different approach to getting things done. So what would happen if the public sector truly embraced those values? As suggested earlier, defining these values is not easy, but most people would seem them as including:

- inclusiveness through peer-to-peer collaboration (as opposed to command and control);
- transparency or openness (as opposed to tight information filtering); and
- empowered participants (as opposed to passive consumers).

These values (none of which are alien to Government 1.0) do highlight potential directions for change in government. The duties and responsibilities of the public sector have tended to produce hierarchical and stove-piped organisations, and there is certainly scope for exploring how horizontal, user-led collaboration might release previously untapped expertise or enthusiasm. Similarly, while there are good reasons why the public sector has traditionally been concerned to control the release of even non-personal information, the opportunities of a connected world justify taking a new look at the possibility of radically more open government. Finally, while the notion of democracy implies active citizenship, dependency is an all-too-common consequence of the bureaucratic state. The promise of Web 2.0 is that we might be able to use connectivity to refashion the state in a way that empowers citizens and puts them more in control.

The examples given earlier may not seem radical, but even apparently trivial changes can contribute to moving the public sector in new directions. A YouTube video or a blog by a minister may seem little different from a speech or a press statement; a NetVibes

dashboard may seem just an update of the traditional press cuttings service; but even these initiatives contain the seeds of change. At a minimum, they do so by communicating to citizens who are more comfortable with visual media or cannot easily find the traditional printed documents of government or who find the immediacy of these methods to be more authentic than the traditional means of government communications. Adopting social media is a recognition that the public sector needs to go to where the people are rather than expect them to come to it. Furthermore, all these tools are inherently two-way (or indeed multi-way). If you put your message on YouTube, you can turn off comments, but you cannot prevent parodies or other forms of feedback. You may not originally have intended to start a dialogue, but if you want to have an impact, you are likely to find it increasingly difficult not to get drawn into a conversation. Similarly, trawling the Internet for comments on blogs and in discussion groups is not like scanning the newspapers – it opens decision-makers up to new voices, saying different things in different tones. The fact that the UK Prime Minister twitters does not change the world, but it is a step towards a different relationship between the leader and the led.

Government 2.0

So embracing social media will change government at the margin, but what would happen if government leaders embraced Web 2.0 more profoundly? Let's explore this issue in three stages: first, by considering collaboration – how public sector organisations might change the way they collaborate internally, with each other and with the public; then by looking at the scope for transparency and much greater citizen feedback; and finally by considering the fundamental issue of empowerment, that is to say, giving citizens more control.

Clay Shirky's book **Here Comes Everybody** is all about collaboration in a connected world. He highlights how the web has transformed our ability to form groups and argues that in many contexts self-organising groups can outperform traditional organisations. Wikipedia and the Linux operating system are the most obvious examples of this kind of group activity, but the outputs do not have to be so striking. More representative examples of self-organisation in action are groups like the photographers on Flickr who are exploring and expanding the art/science of high dynamic range photography or the handful of Tarkovsky fans who have jointly written a book on the great Russian film director, enabled a film about him to be released world-wide and sustained numerous other events and publications about him around the world. These self-organising groups are united by a shared interest; and what motivates their members is a combination of the desire to contribute and the wish for recognition in a community of peers. Unlike conventional organisations that need to incentivise behaviour (through extrinsic rewards or punishment) and devote a considerable amount of resource to managing co-ordination through the rigorous definition of roles and responsibilities, these groups have a volunteer ethos and let everyone contribute what they can with any privileged roles assigned on either a consensus or a transparent meritocratic basis.

Against this background, public sector organisations appear as the most organised of organisations; even more than in the private sector, control and rigorous processes for accountability are key features of the public sector. This suggests public sector organisations will find it hardest to move towards Web 2.0-style collaboration, but it also

implies that they have the most to gain from it. Tight definitions of roles and responsibilities are good at delivering consistent processes and predictable results, but this comes at a price. Each individual, team and organisation is only allowed to contribute in limited, pre-set ways, resulting in many potential sources of value being lost and having a draining impact on motivation. Furthermore, strongly hierarchical organisations are less good at innovating and, because they are less agile, have more difficulty dealing with sudden changes in circumstances. The image of a “machine bureaucracy” was to some extent the ideal of the twentieth century, but it is already clear that it is not a good model for the 21st century – both because citizens will not support it and because it is likely to be unable to meet the complex challenges we face. It is also less necessary, since many of the humdrum functions of government (e.g. delivery of routine services) are becoming e-enabled, allowing citizens and businesses to handle their transactions with government much more quickly and from any place at any time. This frees up time to focus public resources on the most complex and intractable public policy challenges. It also opens up the opportunity for elected leaders and public servants to combine their experience and knowledge with the experience and interest of others in the community in ways that were previously not possible.

[still a big gap here – we need ideas about what embracing a new approach to collaboration in the public sector would actually mean]

So the public sector has much to gain from more open forms of network-enabled collaboration. It will clearly want to retain strong elements of control, but there is huge scope for creating value by enabling peer-to-peer collaboration. In the central government context this might mean creating platforms that bring together the individuals working on a particular topic in different teams and departments and allow them to share information and ideas. Or it could mean connecting up similarly-tasked staff in different organisations. In fact, there are already some real-life examples of this kind of development. The UK site RightsNet is a platform for all those offering welfare advice to UK citizens – it’s a place where people can discuss issues, raise questions and share resources such as leaflets and factsheets, regardless of whether they work for a central government department, a local authority, a charity or a private sector organisation³⁰. The Spanish region of Catalonia took a similar step in 2005 when it made available a set of Web 2.0 tools (wikis, blogs, forums and other social networking tools) to all professional groups (lawyers, youth workers, doctors etc) that interact with the authority³¹. This has encouraged much more cross-organisational contact between different groups. It has worked best where groups met face-to-face as well as online, but this self-organised collaboration is playing a significant role in breaking down organisational barriers.

Moves in this direction certainly raise challenges for public sector organisations; no one would deny that due process and accountability need to remain core values for all public sector activities. For leaders and managers, therefore, difficult choices will have to be made as moves towards more open collaboration are explored. Nonetheless, given the opportunities of modern communication technologies, the emphasis should be on sharing more information within and between organisations and on encouraging informal comments and contributions across teams and organisations as well as inside them. A less-siloed public sector would have better internal feedback mechanisms, be more open to new ideas and be better able to deal with change; but it would also be

harder to manage. Creating a new balance between command and control and frontline empowerment is likely to be a long and difficult process, but it is hard to deny that it needs to be explored.

The second Web 2.0 value that could drive change in government is transparency. This offers a range of benefits. Some of these relate to efficiency as information about performance and about the availability of public sector resources becomes more freely available. An obvious starting point here is travel-related information and many cities are exploring innovative ways of making such information easily and conveniently available to citizens to save people time but also to get better use from public assets such as roads, buses and trains. Technological advances should make it easier and easier to make all kinds of information of this kind available. Getting an engaged tone when trying to book an appointment with a local doctor is a common experience in many countries; why not make available information on how many calls were received when, so giving the most effective encouragement to people to ring at less busy times? Why not share the information on how long passport renewals take at different times of the year, so more people are likely to pick a good time to renew? In principle, greater transparency can contribute both to citizen convenience and to efficiency in relation to almost any administrative process that is affected by marked peaks and troughs in demand or ability to supply.

The other benefit of transparency in this type of context is the added impetus it gives to attempts to improve performance. Publication of information on how long each stage of an administrative process took would give a strong incentive to tackle bottlenecks and deal with large differences in performance between different administrative offices. Of course, moving in this direction will be an uncomfortable process and the raw data may sometimes be misleading or unfair, but the answer there must surely be to explain the data and seek to justify any performance that looks bad but actually is not. The reality of all organisations is that there are many things that could and perhaps should be fixed but which do not get tackled because they are difficult to do or just never become a priority. Transparency can help give added urgency to issues that are really impacting citizens and help drive real change. A dramatic example of this is the city of Seoul in South Korea, which used the ability of the web to provide transparency as a major part of a campaign to eliminate corruption in government.

These efficiency gains are important benefits of transparency, but the greatest benefit of moving in this direction is the contribution it can make to a better relationship and greater trust between citizens and public institutions. Much of people's cynicism about public sector processes and decisions reflects a lack of understanding about how these things work. When the traffic lights at the end of the road are out of action for three weeks causing large traffic jams, the natural reaction is to assume that those in charge have not given much thought to the impact of not repairing the traffic lights more quickly; but probably they had. Maybe there was a good reason why it took three weeks, or maybe getting it repaired in one week would have cost ten times as much and overall the decision to go for the cheaper option was a reasonable one. This is a relatively trivial example, but the point is that in a connected world makes much more information of this kind available need not be either expensive or difficult and it can clearly have a huge impact on how citizens feel about public sector organisations and public sector decision-makers.

Here transparency naturally leads into dialogue and that process helps the public sector better understand what citizens want, but it also helps citizens get a better understanding of the constraints and choices that public sector leaders face. One example of a local authority engaging in this type of exercise is the London borough of Redbridge who held a ten-week dialogue with residents about the authority's capital programme funding. The Redbridge Conversation asked residents to tell the council about the improvements they wanted to see in the borough and how to pay for them. All the options were put online: more than one hundred pages with details of the council's capital investment and funding options and links to background reports. Citizens were given free access in schools, internet cafes and libraries to maximise online participation and the council also staged face-to-face events around the borough to highlight the consultation and take the questionnaire to the people (with a blog recording the highlights of each event). 'You Choose' allowed residents to select investment and funding options, and balance the budget online. Moderated forums and an "Ask Angela" service enabled residents to discuss options and ask questions. Over 3,200 people completed You Choose online (plus another paper 1,900 returns). The aim of the initiative was not direct democracy, but to open up the council's budget process to citizens and enable them to engage in a dialogue with the council about what should happen. Ultimately the decisions were still made by the councillors, but on a basis of their better understanding what residents wanted and residents better understanding the difficult choices the councillors faced.

The key point is that transparency is the basis for conversation. In a world where sharing information digitally is ridiculously easy, public agencies should aim to make as much information as possible available and then enable citizens to give feedback on this information and to see the feedback of others. Transparency about what others are saying to a public sector organisation is important; both because other citizens can qualify the comments of others (agreeing or disagreeing with them), but because this enables discussion among citizens and so a clearer picture of what on reflection citizens really think. We need to move towards a world where the relevant background information, the thinking, and the options about every public sector decision and action is easily accessible for the citizen. Furthermore, we need to aim for a world where in every interaction with the public sector the citizen has the option of giving feedback. Building a transparent, feedback-driven public sector will not be easy and there is no doubt much to learn about how to provide information and feedback opportunities in ways that citizens will be keen to take up, but if we want citizens that support and engage with public sector institutions, this is the direction we need to go in.

Finally, Web 2.0 is about active participants and people doing things for themselves; in the public sector context this suggests a new emphasis on empowering employees, citizens and communities. The traditional e-government agenda of online services can make public sector transactions more convenient and less time-consuming for citizens, but more radical change would involve enabling citizens to co-produce public services. A good starting point is the UK's Fix-my-Street website, which enables people to highlight problems on their street (such as abandoned cars, potholes, broken street lights, litter etc); the information (which often includes a photo) is passed on automatically to the relevant local authority, and citizens (or the local authority) can update the entry when the problem is fixed. So far over 25,000 problems have been reported with new reports currently running at just below 600 a week (with over 25%

later being reported as fixed). The site contains some information on the extent to which different councils are fixing problems, but potentially it could form the basis of much greater citizen involvement in determining the priority given to different types of problems and the resources set aside to deal with them. Almost any kind of government program that involves inspection and identification of problems would be a candidate for the kind of citizen participation encouraged by FixMyStreet. This is one way citizens can contribute, but there are many other ways in which public sector organisations could tap into the willingness of citizens to contribute. MySociety is again good source of examples; when it wanted to match the video recordings of House of Commons debates to the Hansard record of those debates, it created a simple tool that lets volunteers do just that. Similarly, when it wanted to build up the database for its GroupsNearYou site, it created a simple game to allow volunteers to vet descriptions of possible groups and pinpoint their location on a Google Map (so far over 2000 of 5000 potential groups have been sorted or mapped).

[need other examples and more concrete thoughts on what empowering citizens via co-production might involve and mean]

Empowerment also means directly handing over control to citizens. One form this can take is client-held budgets as in the UK In Control project. This is an approach that has been used in various local authorities to allow social care clients to purchase directly the support they believe they need. This turns the traditional model on its head. Usually, in social care if someone is eligible for local authority funding, social workers devise a care plan that allocates the individual to services that are paid for and are commissioned by the local authority. It is rare for the individual to have much of a say in how services are designed, but self-directed services put the person at the centre of the action. Professionals help an individual assess their eligibility, and the person is then given an approximate budget so they can design services that make sense for them. Once the plan is approved by the authority, the money flows to the individual and on to the service providers of their choice. As the writer and thinker Charlie Leadbeater has argued, this approach could be extended beyond social care to many other groups. Personal budgets should be available to expectant mothers to commission their own maternity services, and to families caring for someone with a long-term health condition that includes significant social care, such as Alzheimer's or diabetes. Self-directed services could also work for people with mental health conditions, for the rehabilitation of ex-offenders and drug dependents, and for job seekers who need tailored programmes to move off incapacity benefit.

Another form of empowerment is participatory budgeting (PB) where communities rather than individuals decide how public money is spent. The first PB was implemented in 1989 in Porto Alegre and it is estimated that there are now well over 1,200 PBs worldwide. A good example is participatory budgeting process of Belo Horizonte, the capital of the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, with a population of just under 2.5 million, of whom 1.7 million are electors. Every two years a series of assemblies are held enabling citizens to allocate budgetary resources and scrutinise public spending. During the first round of the process, the administration distributes a form to neighbourhood representatives to be filled in with citizens' requests for public works. The representatives in turn call community meetings to establish what the priority public work is for their area. The feasibility of each demand is then technically assessed by the

administration. The administration presents each sub-district with a budget, which is proportional to a sub-district's population size and inversely proportional to its quality of life index. The sub-district forums pre-select a maximum of 25 public works for each district, and tours are organised during which the sub-district delegates visit the sites of these works to gain a better understanding of them. The District Forum is the last deliberative stage of the PB, where the city administration indicates the estimated costs of each of the 25 pre-selected works. Based on these indications and on what the sub-district delegates consider to be priorities, they choose a maximum of 14 works. During this forum the sub-district delegates also elect the district delegates that will follow-up and oversee the execution of the public works. The final stage is the Municipal Meeting of Budgetary Priorities, where the elected delegates present to the mayor the public works selected by the PB to be executed by the administration.

In 2006, alongside the regular PB process, the city administration launched a system of Digital Participatory Budgeting (e-PB). Independent of the budget of US\$43 million allocated for the traditional PB, a fund of US\$11 million was allocated to the new initiative. The e-PB consists of a scheme where citizens who were registered as electors in Belo Horizonte, independent of their place of residency in the city, vote exclusively online for one out of four public works for each of the nine districts of the city. The initiative had three main goals: to modernise the participatory budgeting process through the use of ICTs; to increase citizens' participation in the process; and to broaden the scope of public works that are submitted to voting (for a Brazilian language site on the project see <http://opdigital.pbh.gov.br/>). Traditionally, the level of public participation in PB processes had been very low, composed in general of citizens of an advanced age and of lower socio-economic background; in the previous four years only 1.46% of the population participated in the second round of the process. The internet was seen as a way of making it easier for citizens to take part, reducing the time and cost of participation; the traditional PB required citizens to attend meetings at a certain time and place, whereas with the e-PB citizens were free to vote online within a period of 42 days.

For the e-PB, four public works per district were subject to online voting with the aim of selecting one work per district. Citizens over 16 years old were able to vote through an e-voting platform on the city's website. In general, the works selected for online voting were much larger than the public works put forward by the traditional PB process. As an example, in the medium-sized district of Barreiro, four choices were offered to voters: to build a new public sports complex; to build a new library; to renew one of the area's main streets; or to regenerate the district's commercial centre. Each project was priced at 1.2 million US Dollars and the sports complex won the vote. This is not a process to be taken lightly, since the other three projects did not go ahead. The e-PB was heavily promoted and the website provided detailed information on the proposed works that were to be selected. Further information could be obtained by email and a designated address was set up to respond to queries. The online platform of the e-PB offered possibilities for multilateral interactivity and, consequently, facilitated deliberative action. Participation was opened to all citizens, with a discussion forum including nine different threads, one for each district. Even though active participation in the forum was low, reaching a total of 1,210 posts, all posts could be seen without logging in by all of those who accessed the link to the forums, and the number of readers was significantly higher than the number of posts. The total number of votes was 503,266 with a total number of

172,938 voters. The difference between the number of voters and number of votes is accounted for by the fact that voters were allowed to vote nine times as long as they voted for only one work per district. These numbers therefore correspond to a participation level of around 10 per cent of electors, nearly seven times more participants than the traditional participatory budgeting (and using a budget nearly seven times smaller).

Empowerment can also mean encouraging community self-help. An interesting example of this is Participle's Active Circle Project in the London borough of Southwark. Instead of asking "What can public services do to improve quality of life and well-being for older people?", the focus of this project is how a locality can mobilise public, private, voluntary and community resources to help all older people define and create quality of life and well-being for themselves?. This requires radical change in the way resources are defined (beyond the formal social care system) and the way services and systems are configured (away from a near exclusive focus on care and towards building relationships and participation). Based on two months of user research with older people and their families, Participle are setting up a co-operative social enterprise which will help people build social relationships and provide services to each other, some on a paid-for basis, others on a voluntarily-based. The cooperative will also source some services externally.

Objections to Government 2.0

Many public sector leaders will have doubts about moving in the direction of Government 2.0, and it is true that there are risks as well as benefits. Anything that involves innovation is a voyage of discovery – in the previous section we have tried to highlight what we see as the key components of Government 2.0, but there is a lot to learn about the best ways for public sector organizations to move in these directions; and our understanding of the directions themselves is likely to be enriched, refined and adjusted in the course of exploring them. Nonetheless it is worth at this point considering some of the main arguments against Government 2.0.

One response will be to argue that all this talk of embracing Web 2.0 values is a distraction from the real issue of improving public services. It may be interesting to speculate about moving away from command and control, but the fact is that some things just need to be better managed! On this view what the public sector really needs is better performance management, more efficient and more customer-oriented processes, policy-making that is more evidence-based and more outcome-focused leadership. Nothing that we have said, however, is intended to suggest that any of these things are unnecessary or unimportant. There is plenty of scope for action in all these areas, but the point of talking about Government 2.0 is to highlight other possibilities and issues that also need to be addressed. Furthermore, while the values we have highlighted – collaboration, transparency and empowerment – are not exclusively about efficiency and effectiveness, each of them can also contribute to this agenda. The new collaborative tools that we discussed can motivate staff and help public sector organizations tap previously untouched sources of value. Transparency can help incentivize action on performance, while the feedback it generates can help ensure resources are targeted on what citizens are really concerned about. Finally, empowerment can mean citizens do more for themselves and a move away from a

dependency culture can help tackle the problem of never-ending demand for certain public services.

A different kind of objection to the ideas we have discussed is that moving in these directions will actually have undesirable impacts. For example, if we open up public sector processes to citizen input, public sector organizations will be flooded with low quality input. Not only will a lot of resources be needed to deal with this input, but when most of it is ignored (because it is contradictory or un-thought-out), citizens will actually feel even more disillusion and alienated than they were before. This objection raises valid issues, but this simply highlights the challenges of building a public sector that engages with citizens and is open to dialogue with them. What deliberative tools should we be creating that draw citizens into the complexities of public policy challenges? How can we encourage dialogue between citizens, so that the input to public sector institutions is not just causal input from scattered individuals but the reflexed-upon opinion of a group?

The objection that connectivity-enabled changes to government only help those who are already in privileged positions merits a similar response. We do need to ensure that less wealthy, less education and less connected groups get the chance to make their views known, but encouraging debate is surely a step towards rather than away from this objective? Furthermore, the digital and the non-digital worlds are connected – a racist remark that generates a lot of anger in the blogosphere can spill over into conventional media and have an impact on the person who made it. An e-petition about the siting of a new shopping complex may succeed (or fail) in its aims because a local newspaper runs a readers poll that supports (or undermines) the claims of the online petitioners. There are groups in our societies who are marginalized and un-listened to with our existing systems and we do need to make sure that Government 2.0 does not worsen their situation, but there is no inherent reason why it should (and there are some groups not particularly well served by the current system (e.g. stay-at-home parents, carers and old people) who will definitely have more scope to ensure that their views are taken into account).

A related objection is that Government 2.0 will bring the wisdom of the mob rather than the wisdom of the crowd. Sites like Rate-my-cop and Rate-my-teacher can reverse traditional power relationships, but this reversal is open to abuse, and good but unpopular police officers or teachers may face unfair and inappropriate criticism, orchestrated by people deliberately trying to undermine them. Similarly, the UK anti-road pricing petition that we mentioned earlier is not an unambiguous advertisement for Government 2.0. The petition channeled a lot of very real anger against what was seen as the government's war on the motorist, but its stark "No" was hardly a contribution to a rational debate on how much (and how best) to raise revenue from road users. Again, there is no simple answer to this kind of objection; we need to look at individual cases on their merits and adjust our approach to deliver appropriate outcomes. So maybe we don't want Rate-my-cop sites, but we do see a role for rate-my-teacher sites if they are set up in the right way and with the right rules and constraints. Or maybe we should let an e-petition bring an issue to the fore, but only as a trigger for political debate rather than as the end of it?

The final objection to Government 2.0 is that it undermines the role of elected officials – doesn't empowering citizens dis-empower their representatives? The simple answer is not necessarily. There are certainly some who would argue that in a connected world there is more scope for greater use of referenda (in the way that Switzerland has done for some time), but no one is suggesting a massive move to direct democracy. The directions for change that we have highlighted are about increasing confidence in our democratic institutions, not about undermining them. There are expected to be many benefits to elected leaders through increased collaboration. It is anticipated that the greatest value of collaboration will come when an elected leader is involved by initiating the collaboration and/or by participating in the collaboration directly and/or by demonstrably "listening to" and using the results. Elected leaders could benefit by hearing the views of their constituents, getting useful suggestions for improved policy or implementation options, building consensus on approaches to complicated issues, getting a better understanding of issues to be managed in implementation, and/or understanding where opposition will come from in the future. Some elected officials are concerned that their role in helping constituents will be minimized ("disintermediated") through the introduction of e-services and therefore feel especially threatened by anything that could reduce their role in policy formulation. There is an opportunity for elected officials to position themselves as using 2.0 tools to more closely engage with their constituents, build a greater understanding of their priorities and interests (including service and policy priorities), and to use that knowledge to be more responsive to their constituents.

Conclusion

We have argued in this whitepaper that embracing both Web 2.0 tools and Web 2.0 values has much to offer the public sector. There are challenges and barriers, but we believe that it is a route that the public sector needs to go down for many reasons. Not only can it contribute to the efficiency agenda, but it can enable public sector organisations to deliver more innovation and become agile in the face of unpredictability. Most fundamentally, it can improve the relationship between citizens and the public institutions and between citizens and their representatives. In a democracy people need to have confidence in the way public affairs are organised and moving towards Government 2.0 is about grasping the opportunities to achieve that objective that connectivity provides.

¹ <https://blogs.fco.gov.uk/roller/miliband/>

² <http://www.kapcsolat.hu/blog/gyurcsany>

³ <http://www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/Pages/Headlines.aspx?SectionID=3>

⁴ <http://blogs.dfid.gov.uk/>

⁵ <http://community.oakgov.com/>

⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/FranchiseTaxBoard>

⁷ <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=9AnSO7liCsY>

⁸ <http://www.sustainability.govt.nz/upload-videos> For an example of an entry, see:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t45caU_W9xo

⁹ <http://twitter.com/DowningStreet>

¹⁰ <http://twitter.pbwiki.com/USGovernment>

¹¹ For a discussion see: <http://www.wired.com/techbiz/it/news/2007/01/72545>

¹² <http://www.new.facebook.com/pages/Public-Health-Agency-of-Canada/10860597051>

¹³ For more information see the YouTube video at: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=xRc8vQncFGo>

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- ¹⁴ http://www.sweden.se/templates/cs/Article____16345.aspx
- ¹⁵ <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/>
- ¹⁶ <http://www.policeact.govt.nz/wiki/pmwiki.php/Main/HomePage>
- ¹⁷ <http://continuum.archives.govt.nz/digital-continuity-strategy.html#wiki>
- ¹⁸ <http://interactive.dius.gov.uk/scienceandsociety/site/>
- ¹⁹ <http://interactive.dius.gov.uk/innovationnation/>
- ²⁰ <http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/Resources/Digital-Strategy-Forum/Discussion-Forum/>
- ²¹ <http://www.safeas.govt.nz/smf/>
- ²² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellipedia>
- ²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/US_intelligence_community_A-Space
- ²⁴ <http://blog.e.govt.nz/index.php/2008/11/06/sharing-lessons-learnt-on-government-ict-projects-and-the-use-of-web-20/>
- ²⁵ <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2435702276>
- ²⁶ One interesting issue is who should run such sites – for example, the UK has an official networking/discussion site for school governors (<http://www.governornet.co.uk/>), but there is also a similar governor-run site (<http://forums.ukgovernors.org.uk/>).
- ²⁷ <http://blog.e.govt.nz/>
- ²⁸ <http://research.elabs.govt.nz/>
- ²⁹ The DIUS approach is described in detail at sandbox.dius.gov.uk/resources/dashboards.pdf.
- ³⁰ <http://www.rightsnet.org.uk/>
- ³¹ <http://ecatalunya.gencat.net/portal/index.jsp>