

Online Deliberation in the Government of Canada: Organizing the Back Office

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1 Introduction

A number of increasingly complex metaphors have inspired governments over the last decade of Internet presence. Starting with the static single-window, followed by the front door, a more welcoming metaphor, the emerging metaphor at the end of the first decade of the millennium, may well become the sand-box. With new Web applications known as Web 2.0, information can be gathered and remixed in new ways by users themselves. The public space is open for citizens and stakeholders who want 'in'. Online deliberation and groupware such as: discussion forums, chats, webinars, surveys, and collaboration and social networking tools are being deployed in the Government of Canada. There is more to online deliberation, however, than online applications: citizens cannot expect to become partners in the governance process without new public management frameworks. New consultation, communication, correspondence, and program management models are needed to ensure that public administrations are adapted to the network age.

As the role of government in western economies shifts from direct service provision to increased regulation in a wider variety of social-economic domains, a more direct and open engagement of external opinions and resources from citizens and experts is needed in specific phases of decision-making. In parallel, outside of government, a practice of online deliberation

is growing. Nongovernmental organizations, some directly connected to political parties or with clearly aligned ideologies, others striving to be neutral, are all contributing to deliberation in the public sphere. Some argue that just like the mass media is becoming fragmented, public discussion is affected by the fact that the Web is splintered. But new Web 2.0 tools provide integration mechanisms that help harness the collective intelligence of civil society.

Citizens expect government to enter the sphere. The Internet provides them with a direct channel to government, an option preferred over relying solely on intermediaries. Citizens need to know that their efforts will influence an outcome. Evidence shows that involvement of public servants is essential to the success of a consultation both internally—among project planning teams—and publicly—when engaging Canadians directly. Citizens wish to see government representatives acknowledge their comments, pose questions, and aid in the orientation of the discussion, either directly, or by forwarding their comments to the moderator.

Building on the history of public deliberation and citizen participation in Canada, this paper describes how the government of Canada organizes the back office to sustain an efficient culture of deliberation. It also draws from the experience of public servants in other Western democracies. The focus is on the work units, where content is generated, and relationships are nurtured so that sound policies are developed. The system dynamics enabled by the Internet allows public servants to take full advantage of connections with citizens and stakeholders. Without the proper processes in government, the many hopes generated by the Internet to renew democratic processes are at stake.

2 Systems Dynamics Enhance a Tradition of Consultation and Participation

With the Internet linking millions of personal computers, modern culture has taken a new focus on connections rather than computations. The Internet enhances multiple overlapping networks and allegiances. The multiplication of groups—ad hoc or issue-specific—is felt in government policy and service delivery. The Canadian federal government taps into the knowledge and resources of the market and civil society. Policy webs are created and lead to the design of more relevant programs and services. Networks of individuals, small groups, and teams at all levels of the organization, as well as interorganizational networks have been added to the bureaucratic mix. This evolution was felt at the dawn of the Internet Age, when White and Green Papers—the classic tools for input gathering on policy develop-

ment—became more frequent. The Mulroney Government's Green Plan or Finance Minister Paul Martin's public consultations on Budget measures are two examples. The Department of Finance, for one, published reports on the Internet for outreach purposes at the very onset of the Web in 1994. During the following ten years, departments conducted a number of online consultations, gathering significant expertise. In 2002, for example, over 28,000 Canadians participated in the twenty-minute online workbook and worked through scenarios for the future of health care (Canadian Policy Research Networks 2005). In 2004, the revision of the Treasury Board Government Communication Policy led to a permanent Consulting with Canadians portal, along with a suite of procedures for consultation and citizen engagement online and off-line.

Simultaneously, there has been a growing trend of decentralization of power from the federal government to the provinces. The federal government has had increased difficulty creating new national programs. Many analysts feel that a tangible democratic deficit has been created at the federal level. Citizens are looking for new ways to define democracy. The policy making process allows many opportunities. The problem identification phase at the beginning of the policy process, for example, gives nongovernmental organizations and interested citizens a unique opportunity to mobilize interest in the implementation phase. Community capacity building and education is considerable.

Networks affect government-to-citizen and citizen-to-government relationships at all levels of the bureaucracy. Responding to this increase, policy analysts and program managers, with the help of increasing ranks of information management professionals, are using networks to increase their expertise and the efficiency of their program delivery. Web 2.0 confirms the more active user role for citizens and has an impact of back-office domains of government such as regulation, cross-agency collaboration, and program management.

3 The People

Skill sets are evolving in the public service. A new mix of conceptual and emotional intelligence is required in the work units of the information age. Public servants must be able to translate concepts from one discipline to the next, working horizontally, in multidisciplinary teams. They trade data and terminologies so that they can be translated into meaningful intelligence across organizations. They must also have the ability to establish and maintain effective relationships. They lead groups and serve as facilitators and negotiators.

Six main profiles participate in the culture of online deliberation at the working level in the Government of Canada's back office. Network Conveners, Educators, Moderators, and increasingly Subject Matter Experts are in direct contact with the stakeholders at one point or the other. Issue Managers and Content Managers work more in the background.

The Network Convener

In the network of networks, the systems view is prevailing. Public servants are drawn beyond their roles of gatekeeper or benefactor. What matters is not only their organization but also the concerns of the whole network. The term Network Convener (Svensen and Laberge 2005) best describes this reality. The Data Liberation Initiative is an exemplary group of Statistics Canada users advising the department on the use of statistical data. A list-serve is used to seek feedback from users, answer questions, and foster discussions. It has allowed statisticians to improve major products and programs like the Census. The Persons with Disabilities Online cluster, which engages in ongoing discussions with users and continuously garners their feedback, is another example.

The Network Convener develops a sensitivity and nurtures a group zeitgeist. This is particularly important in virtual networks. Network Conveners are responsible for that deep sense of connection that transcends the commitment of physical communities. It comes with holding the space, the belief that the space where people share their values will generate high outcomes. Persistence is key, but with holding the space also comes the ability to let go: when natural leaders emerge, the Network Convener sometimes works him/herself out of the job of leader.

The job also has a very down-to-earth side. Network Conveners are the stewards of transparent, accountable decision-making. Community building involves creating rules of engagement and conducting traditional administrative tasks of collecting data and planning events. Network Conveners stay close to their networks: they know 'who's who' and what is on everyone's mind. This detailed work helps them with one of their most delicate functions: to define who is in the network. Health Canada's Office of Public Involvement and Consumer Affairs has a number of public servants who perform this role. Broader information sources are now available through content syndication and social networking. Ongoing relationships and communications can be fostered on the basis of shared competencies and expertise. Niche competencies are much easier to identify and nurture. Active listening is one of the Network Convener's most complex skills. By acknowledging and naming issues, they set the ground for deliberation that feels authentic. Efficient naming brings on creative deliberation so that naming can take precedence over blaming.

Often, consultations and deliberations are run within a short timeframe. There is little time for initial guesswork and history. The Network Convener must rely on the solid background processes provided by the Issue Manager.

The Issue Manager

Issue Managers often work in the background, tracking such things as stakeholders' websites and newsletters. Although they might not be in direct conversation with stakeholders, they often know stakeholders most intimately. Some are like historians: they have a passion for the struggles and challenges of stakeholders, and they track the long-term record of a topic. They track their areas of interest, the lists of meetings they attended, and record their comments. Blogs and other self-publishing tools enhance their work. They provide Issue Managers with their favourite material: clearly delineated points of view and verbatim quotes. These are particularly useful to senior executives and elected officials to understand stakeholders' positions and motivations.

In departments focused on social affairs like Social Development Canada, Issue Managers are a dedicated community resource comprised of skilled and invaluable researchers and analysts. Issue Managers can provide guidance to the policy branch on the specific needs of one community. They also help frame the issues, advising on what specific information a community needs to understand. Finally they can help implement the consultation results: in some consultations, findings can be very rich and detailed, particularly when questions are very specific, and many stakeholders are involved.

Issue Managers are increasingly found in new horizontal networks emerging within the bureaucracy. These internal networks support the scope and complexity of interdepartmental coordination. In Australia, in the Queensland Department of Employment and Training, a network of official contacts has been recruited across government to provide responses to questions that young people have emailed to the site. This role has expanded to include providing reports on outcomes achieved as a result of issues raised by young people; information within departments about the opportunities to incorporate online consultation processes; and advice on proposed site developments (Oakes 2004).

Wikis like the CIA's Intellopedia allow analysts from different agencies to produce joint reports and augment the quality of the issue management. These horizontal networks enhance the need for standardized information management practices, such as tracking information and comparing and reporting on outcome calls for enterprise processes. Content management becomes a cornerstone of an efficient deliberation practice.

The Content Manager

The proper naming of issues all stems from a shared body of knowledge and sound information management practices. Information is a public good, and citizens should have ownership of it. Sorting through and learning how to manage the flow of government information is a challenge for public servants as much as it is for the general public. Information management professionals are growing through the ranks of the public service to tap into the information resources and tailor them to a specific group. Content Managers, information brokers, and content aggregators are children of the network age and did not exist ten years ago in government. They are most commonly located in departments that do active market research or close to policy centers in scientific departments. They are slowly spreading through the various policy and service delivery work units. In the international policy website of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Content Managers participate in the content governance.

With Web 2.0 applications, Content Managers become gardeners. Tools that promote folksonomies—user-generated taxonomies for categorizing Web content—add a very popular layer on structured information architecture. The content grows by consensus. In the Government of Ontario, tag clouds are carefully gardened to care for inconsistencies created by multiple users (i.e., search terms). Content Managers develop a deep understanding of their knowledge base in order to identify the best content. The Canadian Government's Business and Consumer website, Strategis, is an example of how information can be packaged for public education of specific audiences.

The role of Content Managers will grow as syndication allows end-users to reach content via any particular path. Each piece of content stands on its own and may require careful attention. Content Managers act as the natural librarians in the organization, mapping pockets of knowledge. They are also the bridge between expert terminologies, able to translate the jargon of one set of experts so that a different set of experts can use the information in their endeavours. They help set the stage for the new stars of deliberation and government information: the Subject Matter Experts.

The Subject Matter Expert

The legitimacy of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) is increasingly questioned in the networked world because of the amount of information that is shaped to serve particular interests. The multiplication of sources of information is creating confusion. In Canada and abroad, citizens want neutral sources, and they turn to government experts to provide them. They identify government resources as the most credible (EKOS 2003). The Canadian Health Network is an example of a trusted knowledge base to which many Canadi-

ans turn. The department of Natural Resources Canada has created a massive architecture to support access to three layers of information: raw data; instructions to access a first level of general information; and highly specialized knowledge.

Networked technologies and processes help to showcase the knowledge of SMEs: webcasting, webinars, video streaming, metadata to access data summaries, and fact sheets. An increasing number of policy experts and scientists are brought into to the deliberation space for information or opinions. At Health Canada, the Office of Consumer and Public Involvement, recruits SME coworkers across the country to participate briefly on specific subjects and answer technical questions only. At Industry Canada and Canadian Heritage, SMEs have strong experience and master the legal consequences of specific topics such as legal copyright.

SMEs, however, are often difficult to locate. Names circulate in policy shops and word of mouth prevails until the right expert is found. They must be involved without having enough time to distill their material and sift through the specialized jargon. Web 2.0 applications allow self-appointed experts to chip in and contribute, with collaborative filtering acting as the vigilance mechanism. Social discovery tools such as Twitter and Friendfeed pull in the niche experts who often prefer recognition and visibility from their peers to monetary compensation.

For public servants conscious of their neutrality, this is not always a comfortable setting. This feeling is not limited to countries that follow the Whitehall model. In Finland, although public servants are expected to be active in the dialogue as SMEs, there is uncertainty about how freely they may answer or comment and to what degree their statements should be approved by their superiors (Latvanen 2004). In the online world in general, it is much easier to forget one's identity as SME, because the context is more informal than face-to-face. One's personal opinions are more likely to surface. In addition to feeling uncertain or uncomfortable with how involved they should be, public servants are also concerned about the amount of time they can spend on the exercise. New intermediaries are needed.

The Educator

The Educator has been brought to the front lines as an intermediary to deliver the expertise to the public and serve as gatekeepers to scientific experts. With masses of information available through networked government, education is an important facet of the public sector value model (Accenture 2005). Continuous learning is a corollary result from the network environment. It is embedded in Canada's Service Delivery for Canadians Framework, as well as the new Communication Policy.

Outreach and education plays an important role in the engagement continuum, often at the onset or in the implementation phase of a policy. The online environment can be a rich medium for learning and outreach because it allows participants to experience issues at their pace, with a variety of learning mechanisms. Health Canada (2005) recently concluded an e-consultation on 'Measures to help ensure Canadians' continued access to an adequate supply of safe and affordable drugs' that employed two online workbooks and more than twenty questions to help Canadians provide specific answers.

Alberta's Department of Agriculture has brought educators into call centers and uses them as an efficient alternative to outreach and in-person public education programs, which helps reduce the number of people in the field (Richard 2003). The French term *vulgarisateur*, meaning 'populariser', describes this growing function.

The function of Educator can be brought to the front line for outreach purposes in the early stages of policy development. When the deliberation phase starts, however, the dynamic changes. Citizens have learned enough and now want to be heard. They need to speak directly to the senior policy executive who acts as a spokesperson, a role similar to the Educator. In many stakeholder consultations, the senior policy executive must be prepared to take on this role. The more the decision-makers are able to speak clearly and explain the policy, the better that message gets through. A recent history of budget cuts in the policy centers has challenged this capacity in the Government of Canada. Often the senior executives end up at a public meeting without enough briefing on the subject matter and cannot properly fulfill the Educator's role. If, at the same time, the Subject Matter Experts are too specialized, an opportunity for real dialogue is missed.

With Web 2.0 structure, discussions can be integrated alongside content and can happen right at the place in the site where people need them. This facilitates outreach. Multi-directional flows create a rich form of public involvement but they require a lot of maintenance. As the information flows move to the highest levels of public involvement, another intermediary is required: the Moderator.

The Moderator

Networks allow new and interesting forms of computer-assisted moderation. Popular sites Slashdot, Plastic, and Kuro5hin have all developed karma points systems in which contributions are peer-ranked, giving users an opportunity to build up a reputation as a knowledgeable, trustworthy source of information and also allowing users to quickly identify and filter out poorly-ranked comments and contributions.

Multi-stakeholder communications, however, whether online or face-to-face, require a live human intermediary to orchestrate the voices. There is considerable debate about the role of moderators. Some argue moderators skew results by forcing common ground and influencing opinions. A great deal of trust is placed in the judgment of the moderator. Not all government moderators have had success. There is persistent fear that governments will restrict freedom of discussion. Moderators of the Downing Street website (<http://www.number-10.gov.uk>) were criticized for their interpretation of the rules of engagement (Wright 2005). But experience shows the moderator has a positive role in promoting the levels of discussion and bringing in users from outside (Trénel 2005).

In general, the stronger the authentication process is at the onset, the weaker the moderation needs to be, but in collaboration projects that have a strong expert community, moderation, and quality assurance is left to participants. The vigilance of the crowd for example, protects Wikipedia or projects like Peer to Patent. Debates continue over whether the discussion should happen on neutral ground with an independent facilitator or whether a public servant can moderate. Participants are caught between the need to trust judgment and the need to ensure that the discussion is well connected within the machinery of government.

Using clear rules and objectives developed by the public service, some departments have had positive experiences with external moderators, who were considered more neutral. Public servants themselves often prefer to limit their role in a deliberation to sponsors or content providers only. An example of this was a recent online consultation on sustainable development in Scotland, where public servants developed and signed off all the background information but did not make any further contribution once the consultation started.¹ In Scotland Yard, the Metropolitan Police, the police authority and the police service each hosted consultations on their websites but deliberately chose an outside organization to run their public consultations. This approach was used in the interest of transparency and to avoid being accused of guiding the way.² When conversation should be focused on wide citizen-to-citizen interaction, external moderation might be best.

Co-moderation between a public servant and a trusted representative of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) is a formula that has proven very successful. The public servant's knowledge and mandate is bridged with the NGO representative's ability to speak freely, without the risk of being mistaken for the voice of the entire public service. Status of Women Canada, in

¹ Interview with Ann Macintosh, Director of the International Teledemocracy Centre, June 8, 2004.

² Interview with Jane Wilkin, Consultation Officer with Scotland Yard, July 12, 2004.

the Beijing +5 consultation that led to Canada's contribution to a United Nations document at the U.N. General Assembly Special Session in June 2000, used a co-moderation model. One moderator was from Status of Women Canada. The other was from an NGO.

In the Government of Canada, online discussions on very specific policy issues are sometimes conducted with stakeholder groups of various sizes. A Subject Matter Expert who is dedicated to the exercise often moderates these discussions. He/she is empowered to: create the discussion agenda and framework; help market the consultation through his/her contacts; stimulate discussion; and provide rapid response in vetting comments (Darragh 2003).

There are also a number of moderating functions that happen in the background. In the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, where online collaboration is used intensively in Treaty Negotiations, project moderators take on an important record management role. This is a new responsibility: skimming through the discussion threads material, cleaning them up (i.e. sorting and organizing the comments), and making sure that it is recorded and searchable. Methodical process modeling from start to finish is essential so that keywords and quick summaries are available. The job also involves editorial judgment.

Finally, the moderation functions are sometimes split. The National Dialogue on Foreign Policy lists a number of roles that were shared by many individuals, including public servants and volunteers. These roles included: animators, who incited discussions when online activity began to slow; moderators, who made the decisions of which posts could or could not be posted on the site; a cybrarian, who gathered information; and analysts who rolled data out of answers to open-ended questions (Jeffrey 2004).

Continuing Role Definition

In Canada and around the world, public servants have been brought into the online public space. The breadth and depth of the online consultation framework, still mostly uncharted territory, shows there are many new roles and processes emerging. The roles of Moderators, Network Conveners, Issue and Content Managers, Subject Matter Experts, and Educators are all key to supporting a culture of online deliberation in government. Roles will become clarified as experience is gathered. A greater understanding of the value-added role that public servants can play helps overcome many of the cultural barriers.

The institutionalization of public involvement also includes new structures. The Office of Consumer and Public Involvement within the Health Products and Food Branch at Health Canada, for example, created a Public Advisory Committee in 2002. A community of practice and Centre of Ex-

partise among interested departments have emerged to reinforce the use of consultation online and off-line in the ongoing processes of government. The new processes and structures are a test ground for the relationship skills of public servants. Codes of conduct are evolving such as the 10 principles for public sector social media.³

4 Structures and Processes

Online consultation brings a specific challenge: it is a multi-disciplinary function that links program managers, policy makers, information management professionals, communicators. This is sometimes a difficult mix. The lead responsibility for online consultation can change from one department of the other. Flexible combinations of skills are needed, within the public service or at arm's length.

The Editorial Board

An Editorial Board of senior public service officials and stakeholders can provide a sober, impartial frame. The Editorial Board tackles fundamental questions on content. The concept stands whether for small, focused deliberation or large-scale ones. The idea is to determine the issues and select the sources of information for deliberation. Membership is based on the type of consultation and should be composed at the minimum of the Network Convener, Subject Matter Expert, and Content and Issue Managers, and chaired by the senior executive responsible for the consultation. This model has proven to be successful at the Canadian Cultural Observatory, where the Editorial Board is comprised of members from the Observatory, plus members of the cultural professionals community; these members include heads of think tanks, private consultants, policy experts, and advocacy employees. The Network Convener can provide insight when selecting an Editorial Board.

A similar model is being tested at the Department of Foreign Affairs, where an ad hoc editorial committee composed of senior officials from the policy and the communications functions is the final authority on which policy documents are made available for public discussion on the Canadian Foreign Policy Strategic Policy website.

The Editorial Board exists to ensure the process for the selection of content is fair and not purely government-driven. Because essentially all areas in the editorial process exist in various shades of grey, a wide range of

³ See <http://psnetwork.org.nz/blog/2007/02/19/principles-public-sector-socialmedia/> (last accessed November 1, 2008).

knowledge and experience allows the board to come up with fair and representative solutions, creating an unbiased framework for deliberation.

Issue Framing

Under the leadership of the Editorial Board, a range of information products are selected or developed. Deliberation guides developed in teams outline a number of scenarios. This is where Subject Matter Experts, Content and Issue Managers, Network Conveners, and Educators get into the nitty-gritty of the issue at hand.

The naming and framing of an issue is where ‘bureaucratese’ stops: the issue must be presented according to the way the public identifies the problem. All discussions will be based on the way these issues were framed. The role of the Issue Manager is significant in this stage. It is enhanced by the folksonomy, which contributes key information about how the stakeholders access the information.

One of the challenges with multi-stakeholder online consultation is the lack of common grounds. Time devoted to convening networks, where members in turn explain their knowledge on issues, is a good investment. A common body of knowledge develops from acknowledging issues, while still framing democratically and being sensitive to all stakeholders involved.

Issue framing brings organizational challenges. Horizontal issues that span across many departments are difficult to address quickly. In this context, the relationships between public servants are essential: Issue Managers keep tabs on the language that matters; Network Conveners foster the circulation of this common language; and Content Managers know where the information to substantiate the issues lies.

Content Analysis

There is still considerable fear and mistrust in the policy shop about rolling out coherent reports from the mass of data generated by an online consultation. This issue becomes especially difficult when dealing with large amounts of qualitative data, such as the individual comments and postings from consultation participants. Public servants are concerned about the need to capture text-strings in a storable format and the lack of a database to collect comments and produce reports. Many consultation practitioners do not discover the pitfalls in their planning processes until it comes time to analyze the data they have collected during the online consultation.

Experience shows that information management practices at the planning stage are well received, and citizens do not mind self-sorting the content. Emoticons are popular to categorize feelings. Participants seem to like choosing predetermined post types, categories, headings, and topics.

The review of threads posted in a particular forum is also an extremely resourceful way of finding out what is most useful in verbatim comments. For example, the level of interest surrounding a particular topic or issue can be determined by examining the number of comments posted per thread, the average word count per thread, the thread depth (threads per reply), and thread length (length of time between first and last contribution) (Whyte and MacIntosh 2002). The increasing use of tags provides key metadata about content.

Simple practices between the Subject Matter Expert and junior staff can help the process of summaries considerably. A common problem is knowing what information to include. Summaries may not represent the key elements well unless the policy Subject Matter Expert writes them. The policy Subject Matter Expert might create a first synthesis that can then be used as a guideline by the more junior staff that does the bulk of the analysis. A tight evaluation grid can also be developed; this method proved successful for Mortgages and Housing Ontario's Rent Reform Consultation in 2004 (Hendriks 2005).

Although summaries are useful to produce a report, the full submissions are also very important.

Stakeholder Management

In deliberation, momentum is key. For all the fears of network avalanches and Slashdot effects, many deliberation spaces remain ghost towns. Policy shops still commonly have very limited stakeholder lists with outdated information.

The growing practice of issue management is bringing to light new opportunities. The Office of Consumer Affairs and Public Involvement in Health Canada for example, has started a stakeholder management system to identify common ground among stakeholders and directorates alike. Many stakeholders might be willing to take action on issues related to the primary issue with which their organization is involved. Good stakeholder information allows consultation staff to identify lateral similarities and identify both existing and possible outside coalitions (Online Consultation Centre of Expertise 2004).

5 Strategic Considerations

A number of initiatives have set the ground for a culture of deliberation in the government of Canada. Not all deliberations are on the scale of new, large national policies. Information technology enables deliberation on many scales, including: local, very specific regulatory issues, or services for a targeted stakeholder group. Small-scale deliberation is blossoming in the

program corridors. The nature of these deliberations is multidisciplinary: they require public servants to act as bridges, set the tone, and feed the process of networking. The system must empower them to do so. But some roles do affect traditions. The clear line between neutral information and debate is blurred. 'Faceless bureaucrats' are being brought into this grey zone in order to do their job and gather the best evidence and advice for their respective ministers.

Networks allow policy experts and program managers to create an environment of continuous learning so that Canadians are fully engaged in shaping government. Public servants are walking a fine line: the more efficient they are in creating and nurturing online conversations, the closer they become to advocates. Risks that their neutrality will be challenged are increasing. Public servants can get caught in the noise just like anybody else on the Internet.

At the same time, many of these roles strengthen the traditions of the public service. In a context of a splintered web, the value of public service neutrality increases considerably. Public servants are the keepers of a solid body of information increasingly recognized as a key public resource. Authoritative information, an information sovereignty of sorts, is a key mechanism of government in the network age. But too many information professionals remain the underestimated intelligence agents in offices managed by an older, less technologically literate, population. Issue Managers and Content Managers must be empowered so that data on the Web is truly used as a public resource. Emerging issues identified by Issue Managers are key to a culture of deliberation. The high content value located by Content Managers can be integrated and reused across various applications. This is a first step towards a semantic Web where data can be shared and processed by automated tools as well as by people. Until the third-generation Web is in full bloom and content is gracefully aggregated on-the-fly, Content Managers will be needed to bring the right content for deliberation. Currently, however, they have not yet been able to mature into their full potential.

Many of these roles are not related to large-scale deliberations. Regulatory details of policies and the designs of new programs are not all major blocks of democratic renewal. They often affect only a small group of stakeholders. But online deliberation allows geographically dispersed people to be involved in the specific issue that matters to them, in their world. Tocqueville declares, 'One measures the health of society by the quality of functions performed by local citizens' (quoted in Wyman, Shulman, and Ham 1999). There must be, at the other end of the line, public servants who are ready to listen, interpret, and record this involvement. With Web 2.0 allowing users—citizens and public servants—to take a more active role, the simplicity, transparency, cohesiveness of government increases.

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