# NS6
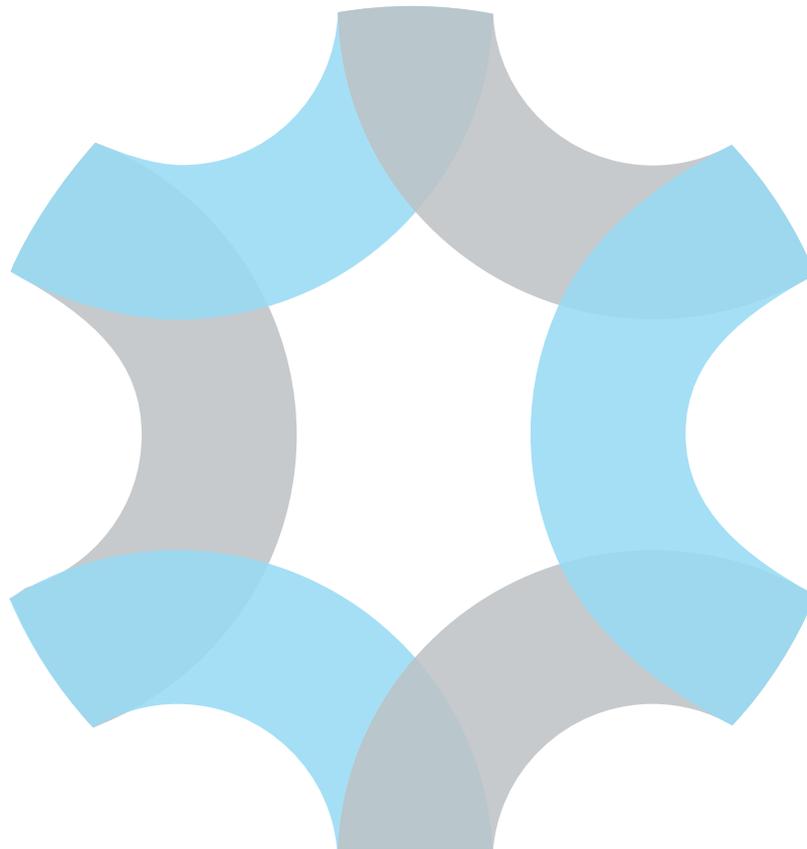## A New Synthesis of Public Administration

# Preparing Government to Serve Beyond the Predictable
## The New Synthesis Project

## Singapore Roundtable Report
### Singapore, September 21 and 22, 2010

Edited by the Honourable Jocelyne Bourgon, P.C., O.C.

www.ns6newsynthesis.com

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT LEADER

The *New Synthesis Project* is dedicated to supporting practitioners, both elected and professional, who are called upon to face the challenge of serving in the 21st century. The project is supported by a collaborative international research network – the NS6 – that draws on the collective knowledge and experience of senior public officials, researchers and scholars from six countries and 26 organizations.

Over the course of 2010, the NS6 Network will be exploring the frontiers of public administration.

The network aims to develop a new synthesis of public administration that will integrate past principles of enduring value into the new reality of practice. Contemporary governance entails dealing with an increasing number of complex issues. It means serving in an expanded public space where an expanded range of possibilities are open to government. Above all, it entails a different relationship with citizens as value creators. The active contribution of citizens is essential to achieving an increasing number of public policy results.

The roundtables have become focal points for the research process and opportunities to explore and refine the elements of the New Synthesis framework. At the first roundtable in the Netherlands on March 24-26, participants learned more about emergent phenomena; discussed the role of government to build the resilience of society; and explored how public institutions that contribute to stability and predictability may also be used to encourage exploration, experimentation and innovation.

The journey of exploration continued in Ottawa on May 4-5, 2010. The roundtable focussed on the core business of government: achieving public results. Informed by powerful presentations and case studies, delegates explored what new capacities and transformations are necessary to achieve better civic and societal results. Most public results exceed the capacity of any one agency working alone—they require the active contribution of multiple sectors and multiple agents. Moreover, government must pursue public policy results in a manner that builds social capital, civic spirit and the collective capacity to achieve better public results over time.

The next stop on the journey of exploration was in Rio de Janeiro on July 13 -14, 2010. This roundtable focussed on the use of government authority and collective power to achieve public results. An increasing number of public results are beyond the reach of government acting alone. Through their voices and actions, diverse actors in society give shape to a collective expression of interest that informs the use of state authority and resources, which, in turn, can be used to leverage the collective ideas and power of others to achieve public results. Based on current research, experience and practice in modern governance, this roundtable explored the ramifications of using state authority and resources to leverage collective power, how this can best be done and the implications for governance, public organiza-tions and public servants.

The fourth roundtable, in Singapore, on September 21-22, 2010 focussed on preparing government to serve beyond the predictable. Governments serve in an increasingly unpredictable context: they face complex issues, the outcomes of which are uncertain. As a result, they need to improve

their ability to anticipate emerging trends, risks and opportunities and to initiate proactive interventions. They also need to build their capacity, and the capacity of society, to innovate and adapt to increase the likelihood of favourable outcomes. This roundtable began the integration of findings from the previous events.

The roundtable discussions have been a rewarding and humbling experience because of the wealth of knowledge and experience that participants are bringing to the table. The knowledge from each roundtable is informing the discussions at the following one. This is a promising sign that the research process is well on its way towards a robust and tested set of ideas that may contribute to preparing public servants to serve in the 21st century.

The Honourable Jocelyne Bourgon, O.C.
President of Public Governance International,
President Emeritus of the Canada School of Public Service,
and NS6 Project Leader

# A MESSAGE FROM THE HOST OF THE ROUNDTABLE

One major challenge of governments is to prepare for a future in which we can expect to be surprised, time after time. We recognize that the global operating environment is increasing in complexity and the pace of change is accelerating. As the issues governments face become multi-dimensional, achieving societal outcomes increasingly requires not only a competent government at the centre, but also involvement of other stakeholders of society and citizens, as well as collaboration across the global community.

At the Singapore Civil Service College, we bring together public service officers from different backgrounds, including academics, experts and foreign counterparts from across the world to dialogue, exchange views, sense-make and build shared perspectives. Our programmes and services are practitioner-focused, structured with access to top public sector leadership and ground management, and aimed to build commitment to and deepen strategic capacity in governance, leadership, public administration and management. In this context, it has been our privilege to have hosted the fourth New Synthesis roundtable, "Preparing Governments to Serve Beyond the Predictable", the first of two integration roundtables on 21-22 September 2010.

It is testimony to the deep expertise that each delegate brings to each roundtable and the strong camaraderie that has developed over the past several months that we covered such substantive ground at the Singapore roundtable. Over the two days, delegates explored and deliberated over issues as wide-ranging and cutting-edge as: different models, contexts and challenges of foresight work, and how it could be better used to improve decisions and outcomes; the role of governments in enabling social innovation both systemic and organic; the possibilities offered by co-production, experimentation and infocommunications technology; and the importance of building not only the anticipative capacity of governments for the long term, but the adaptive capacity of communities to ride through short-term shocks as well. Amidst these intense discussions, we managed to experiment with various methodologies such as the use of a "live case" learning journey to NorthLight School and graphic documentation to support the roundtable process.

Our future problems are indeed going to be much more complex, but we are most encouraged and indeed emboldened by the richness of the ideas for policy design and implementation, as well as the possibilities of outcomes that have emerged from the NS6 research work. We would like to thank Madame Jocelyne Bourgon for leading this invaluable project, our partners in the NS6 Network, and each and every delegate for their very generous support and contribution, Mr Brian Johnson for helping with the note-taking, and last but not least Dr Peter Milley for his patient guidance and support throughout the project.

We are also grateful for the contribution and support from our partner agencies and their individuals: Ms Ang Bee Lian, Chief Executive of the National Council of Social Service, Singapore, Mrs Lim Yen Ching, Principal of NorthLight School, Dr K U Menon, Senior Consultant, Public Communications and Consultancy, Ministry of Information, Communication and Arts, Singapore, and Mr James Kang, Assistant Chief Executive, InfoComm Development Authority of Singapore.

We trust that you will find this report interesting and useful.

<div align="right">
Yee Ping Yi,
New Synthesis Singapore Country Co-ordinator
Deputy Chief Executive, Civil Service College, and
Senior Director (Special Duties) Strategic Policy Office,
Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office
</div>

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This roundtable report would not have been possible without the involvement of many individuals. The following people contributed to the Singapore Round-table, 21-22 September, and ultimately made this report possible.

## The Co-Chairs

- Yee Ping Yi
- Jocelyne Bourgon

## The Roundtable Delegates

- Michael Bichard
- Tiago Falcão
- Merel de Groot
- Karen Lau
- Evert Lindquist
- Lucas Lombaers
- Donald Low
- Irene Lucas
- Aaron Maniam
- Paula Montagner
- Gordon Owen
- Sue Richards
- Tan Li San
- Martijn van der Steen
- Jean-Pierre Voyer
- John Wanna

## The Presenters/ Speakers

- Gareth Alston
- Lim Yen Ching
- James Kang
- Sirpa Kekkonen
- Ang Bee Lian
- K U Menon
- Martin Stewart-Weeks

## The Rapporteurs

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- Brian Johnson
- Peter Milley

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- Lena Leong
- Lim Chiew Ling
- James Low
- Stephanie Tan

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- Henri Kuschkowitz
- Amanda Saffioti
- Jacqueline Stesco

# THE NS6 PROJECT

The *New Synthesis Project* is dedicated to advancing the study and practice of public administration. It is supported by a collaborative network from six countries – Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Netherlands, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

The Project is exploring what *is* different about serving in the 21st century; what is new and what is of enduring value; how does this transform the role of government going forward? What new systems, skills and capacities will governments need to live up to citizens' expectations and face the challenges of their time?

This work is dedicated to *public administration practitioners* who are called upon to make decisions and take actions in an era that is more difficult and demanding than ever. The purpose is to provide them with a *narrative* supported by *powerful examples* that will help them face the challenges of serving in the 21st century.

While the task is daunting, a range of important new ideas and concepts exists that are relevant to the role of government in the future. Some of them can be found within fields traditionally associated with public administration, such as political science, law, administrative and management sciences, and organizational behaviour. However, many new ideas about complexity, networks, resilience, adaptive systems and collective intelligence from other domains are opening up promising new avenues.

While the goals of the *New Synthesis Project* may be ambitious, the partner countries and their research associates are united in the belief that the potential value of the project is well worth the effort.
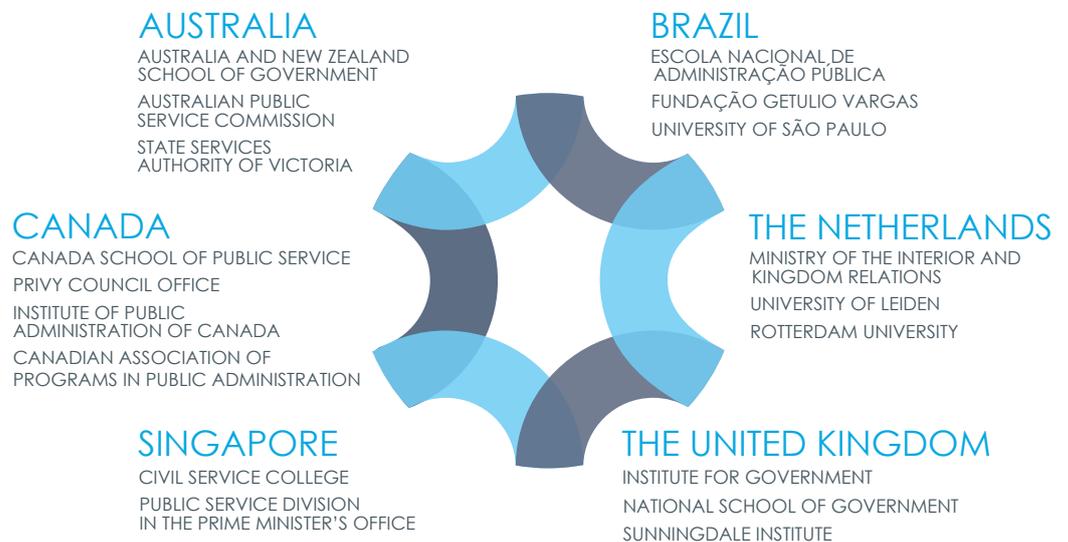
# THE NS6 NETWORK

In an effort to bridge the gap between academics and practitioners, the *New Synthesis Project* draws on the collective knowledge and experience of senior public officials, researchers and scholars through a collaborative network of 24 organizations from six countries, known as the NS6 Network.

The NS6 Network was created by a group of volunteers from the world of practice and academe who were willing to dedicate time and effort to develop a strong narrative supported by powerful examples to help public administration practitioners face the challenges of serving in the 21st century.

While the institutions and individuals forming the Network hail from different countries, different political systems and different historical, economic and cultural contexts, all share the view that public administration as a practice and discipline is not yet aligned with the challenges of serving in the 21st century. They also share a common understanding of the importance of the role of public institutions for society to prosper and adapt in the context of our global economy, networked society and fragile biosphere.

## The NS6 Network

### AUSTRALIA
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

STATE SERVICES AUTHORITY OF VICTORIA

### BRAZIL
ESCOLA NACIONAL DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO PÚBLICA

FUNDAÇÃO GETULIO VARGAS

UNIVERSITY OF SÃO PAULO

### CANADA
CANADA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OF CANADA

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

### THE NETHERLANDS
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR AND KINGDOM RELATIONS

UNIVERSITY OF LEIDEN

ROTTERDAM UNIVERSITY

### SINGAPORE
CIVIL SERVICE COLLEGE

PUBLIC SERVICE DIVISION IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

### THE UNITED KINGDOM
INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNMENT

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

SUNNINGDALE INSTITUTE

A project led by JOCELYNE BOURGON with the support of

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA     CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATION (CIGI)

CISCO SYSTEMS     UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO     PGI (PUBLIC GOVERNANCE INTERNATIONAL)

# THE INTERNATIONAL ROUNDTABLE SERIES

Throughout 2010, the focus of the partners in the NS6 network is on deepening, enriching and continuing to debate the "new synthesis". This will be pursued through three main strategies:

- A program of research, including case studies;

- A series of international roundtables; and

- Ongoing dialogue and deliberation.

The roundtables are a place for the full expression of international collaboration. They are designed to give substantive and practical shape to a new synthesis of public administration.

Five of the participating countries will host one of these events, with The Netherlands having had the honour and challenge of hosting the first one.

Through the roundtables, renowned experts and leading senior practitioners from different parts of the world come together in a "safe space" that fosters free exchange and co-creation. Their central task is to explore, debate, and validate the main themes, propositions and ideas in a "new synthesis" of public administration. In doing so, they are expected to draw on their own expertise and experiences, and on the research findings and case studies that have been developed in the NS6 project. Ultimately, the goal is for roundtable participants to give substantive, practical shape to an up-to-date frame of reference for public administrators in the 21st century.

The roundtables will be a disciplined journey of discovery and co-creation. They have been sequenced thematically so the knowledge stemming from them is cumulative. A report, such as this one, is being produced from each event and made available in time for participants to prepare for the next one. As a result, they examine in a systematic way the key issues and questions that are central to the *New Synthesis Project*.

# SCHEDULE OF ROUNDTABLES

| Subject | Location | Date |
|---------|----------|------|
| **An Expanded Public Space: Emergence and Resilience** | The Hague | March 24-26, 2010 |
| **Achieving Public Results: Societal and Civic** | Ottawa | May 4-5, 2010 |
| **Governance in the 21st Century: A Collective Enterprise** | Rio de Janeiro | July 13-14, 2010 |
| **Serving Beyond the Predictable** | Singapore | September 21-22, 2010 |
| **A Public Sector Reform and Renewal Agenda for the 21st Century** | London | November 16-18, 2010 |

# FOCUS OF THE SINGAPORE ROUNDTABLE

The *New Synthesis Project* is supported by an international collaborative research network (NS6) dedicated to exploring the new frontiers of public administration. In addition to ongoing research, the NS6 is holding a series of roundtables to explore its findings.

The fourth in a series of five international roundtables took place on September 21-22, 2010, in Singapore. This roundtable focussed on preparing government "to serve beyond the predictable". Governments serve in an increasingly unpredictable context: they face complex issues, the outcomes of which are uncertain. As a result, they need to improve their ability to anticipate emerging trends, risks and opportunities and to initiate proactive interventions. They also need to build their capacity and the capacity of society to innovate and adapt to increase the likelihood of favourable outcomes.

Building on the findings from the past three roundtables, this roundtable was the first attempt to begin integrating the results by providing a practitioners' focus to the discussions. The objectives were to gain greater clarity on:

1. How governments can:

    • Improve this anticipative capacity in order to initiate practice actions that might mitigate risks or improve the likelihood of more favourable outcomes, and

    • Build the capacity of society to innovate, prosper and adapt to emerging issues, unforeseen events and changing circumstances.

2. The practical implications for government, public organizations and public servants in terms of undertaking this work.

# IN SUMMARY

1. On exploration and anticipation: The presentations and discussion focused on how governments can build a culture of and on-going support for "looking ahead". This requires a process of engagement with decision-makers and with citizens. The process of engagement is itself an important result. Foresight activities will have greater acceptance if they are connected to decision-making. Framing issues from a futures perspective and building a strong narrative is important. Continuous scanning is preferable to one-time events. Foresight activities must avoid the dangers of group think. They need a multi-faceted perspective, engage multiple networks and pursue a diversity of ideas and encourage dissenting voices.

2. On social innovation and co-production: The discussion focused on how governments can create an enabling environment for social innovation and co-production. Social innovation can be messy and yet orderly. It entails relationships, connections, and working across borders and requires taking risks and accepting variability. As an enabler, government must focus on results and impact rather than process and inputs, assess performance as the ability to collaborate, to innovate, and to understand a diversity of perspectives. Enabling is about allowing ideas to flourish and creating an environment where it is possible to fail safely.

3. On experimentation: The discussion focused on how governments can use experimentation to improve public policy results and decision-making. There are many approaches to experimentation ranging from quantitative, evidence-based analysis to qualitative analysis. Most experiments require a blended approach. Promoting a greater use of experimentation in government will require a culture change. It also requires structural change and a move away from a silo mentality.

4. On the enabling role of information and communications technologies: The discussion explored how modern information and communications technologies are changing the operating landscape for governments. Technology is not only enabling but it is accelerating and reframing issues. Social networks and social media are causing a shift in the balance of knowledge between government and citizens. Government must move from providing "government-to-you" to creating "government-with-you", from being the custodian and gatekeeper of public data to connector and sharer of data to encourage the creation of innovative solutions. Increasingly governments must tap the wisdom of others so "Networks know more than we do – some of the smartest people do not work for government".

5. On adaptive capacity: The discussion explored the capabilities needed to operate in unforeseen circumstances and volatile environments. Strong adaptive capacity requires strong institutional, organizational and innovative capacity; these capacities form part of a dynamic system. Building and earning trust is crucial to being able to take necessary decisions in periods of uncertainty. Open communications are an important component of building trust. Decisive leadership and multi-sectoral/multi-disciplinary approaches are also important.

In helping communities to adapt after shocks and traumas, it was noted that people who participate in their own recovery, recover better. This approach comes with its own challenges, including slower decision-making, difficulties in achieving consensus and capability gaps. However, it leads to better results better tailored to local needs. It also results in stronger, more resilient communities.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Singapore Roundtable brought together senior policy makers, practitioners, researchers and scholars to discuss the theme of Preparing Government to "Serve Beyond the Predictable" (see Annex A for names and affiliations of participants).

The meeting was co-chaired by Yee Ping Yi, NS6 Coordinator for Singapore, and Jocelyne Bourgon.

The event was organized as follows:

- Participants were given background materials to review in advance.

- The first morning was dedicated to looking at how governments explore and anticipate, while the afternoon focussed on social innovation and co-production. This was followed by a learning journey.

- The second morning was dedicated to how governments use experimentation to improve public policy and decision-making and the impact and enabling role of information and communications technologies in modern governance. The afternoon looked at the adaptive capacity of governments and communities.

- All participants engaged in a moderated, lively and frank conversation governed by Chatham House Rules.

- The conversation continued over lunch and dinner in a less structured format.

# 2. OPENING AND CONTEXT SETTING

In opening the fourth NS6 roundtable, Yee Ping Yi, welcomed delegates and guests to Singapore and thanked those who made the event possible.

Lionel Yeo, Deputy Secretary (Development), Public Service Division and Dean of the Civil Service College, Singapore, extended his welcome to the roundtable participants. He noted that good governance is central to the sustainability of societies. While large countries might be able to afford bouts of bad governance, for small countries, such as Singapore, good governance is vital to their survival. In order to advance good governance, one of the key roles of the Singapore Civil Service College is to create opportunities to exchange views and experiences with others in order to gain new insights and build relationships across borders. This includes participating in activities such as the *New Synthesis project*, as well as providing training to foreign officials.

He noted that in the changing world landscape, governments constantly need to explore, experiment, adapt, and work with others to build the resilience of their societies. This means working harder and smarter to stay at the leading edge. He was encouraged by the breadth of experience that the NS6 Network brought together. He thanked the network coordinators, project team and presenters for their efforts and wished participants an enriching experience.

Yee Ping Yi, Co-chair and NS6 Coordinator for Singapore, outlined the round-table objectives, programme and guidelines. The roundtable would be the first to focus on "how" as opposed to "what" questions and would be practitioner-focused. The programme had a five-prong focus:

- Exploration and anticipation;

- Social innovation and co-production;

- Experimentation;

- The enabling role of information and communications technologies; and

- Adaptive capacity.

Donald Low, Head of the Centre for Public Economics, Singapore Civil Service College, provided participants with an overview of Singapore's approach to governance. This approach is related to Singapore's unique circumstances as a small state with limited natural resources, and situated in a politically volatile region. Singapore is dependent on the resourcefulness and inventiveness of its people for survival. Good governance promotes this resourcefulness and is a strategic imperative and source of competitive advantage.

Singapore's development did not conform to conventional approaches. It embraced export-led industrialization against the economic orthodoxy of import substitution, welcomed foreign investment and practiced unilateral free trade. Although there is a strong preference for markets, the government plays an activist role in investing heavily in education, ensuring stable macroeco-nomic conditions and encouraging savings. It also invests heavily in research and development and skills upgrading. In social policy, it aims to promote social equity without damaging economic incentives and without discourag-ing self-reliance. Large social transfers and entitlement programs are avoided in preference to subsidies to investment goods such as education, healthcare and housing. A low income tax regime encourages work and keeps business costs low.

Singapore's governance approach may be broadly summarised by these principles:

- Leadership is key;

- Reward for work, work for reward;

- A stake for everyone, opportunities for all; and

- Anticipate change, stay relevant.

In addition, in a 2007 speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong referred to the Singapore governance model as "paranoid" government. Some of the other characteristics of Singapore's governance model include:

- Strong, durable, credible institutions underpin sound policies and enable the market to function efficiently;

- A pragmatic, non-ideological, adaptive approach is important; and

- Good policy design is critical to promote growth and ensure that markets work.

Jocelyne Bourgon, the Project Leader, thanked the Singapore team for organizing the event and participants for attending. She provided an overview and update on the *New Synthesis Project* to help those who were joining the discussion for the first time. She indicated the focus of this roundtable was shifting from expanding the scope to consolidating the findings. It was also shifting from pursuing what is different about serving in the 21st century to determining how to build the capacity to serve in the context of increasing complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability.

The *New Synthesis Project* is about serving in the 21st century. It is about exploring the "new frontiers" of public administration – what is new, what is changing and what is of enduring value. The Project is supported by a network: the NS6. It is a six-country collaborative effort pursuing a common research program and conducting a series of five international roundtables to bring senior practitioners, thought leaders and academics together for dialogue and deliberation. It is an innovative approach to the study of public administration.

The *New Synthesis Project* starts from the proposition there are substantial differences about serving in the 21st century compared to previous times. Three important differences include:

- Increasing complexity and uncertainty: Governments are dealing with an increasing number of complex issues. Complex issues tend to be multi-dimensional and intertwined. They are characterized by high degrees of uncertainty and are prone to cascading failures. They require a holistic approach and the active contribution of many actors from multiple sectors.

- Altered relationships between the State and citizens: An increasing number of public issues are beyond the reach of government working alone. Achieving public results is increasingly a collective enterprise that involves multiple actors and the active participation of citizens as value creators. It is technology enabled. It requires the achievement of both public results and civic results.

- An expanded public space: The role of government is expanding from service provider to enabler of collective action and steward when the collective interest demands it. The role of citizens is expanding from taxpayer and service user to value creator. Society transforms the role of government and government transforms society in a dynamic process of co-evolution.

The *New Synthesis Project* is not a model or a prescription. It does not propose a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, it is about developing an enabling framework that allows governments to think through the breadth of choices available to them. Choices are context, mission and circumstance specific.

The case studies produced for the Roundtables to date have all illustrated aspects of the framework. For example, the Australia bushfires case study showed that government must work at multiple scales, at different speeds and at all levels. The Singapore prison system case study demonstrated the difference between agency results and societal results. It also showed the importance of leadership and community participation and the contribution of civic results to the achievement of societal results. The Bolsa Familia case study showed how trust trumps distrust and how the path to better results was pursued by empowering families to make decisions they were best positioned to make.

The work to date has revealed a shift to better results when public policy is defined as a public result, when public policy results are viewed as a collective enterprise, when public organizations are used as platforms for collaboration and when the role of government is not only defined by rules but by its capacity to co-evolve with society in the pursuit of the collective interest.

Capacity building is the focus of the Singapore and London roundtables. Governments and public organizations need strong institutional and organizational capacity.

- Public institutions build trust and give form to the collective values that have evolved over time. They give shape to collective aspirations and help forge and define the public purpose.

- Public organizations transform public purpose into concrete actions. They are the instruments through which governments achieve public results.

Institutional and organizational capacity are necessary but insufficient to meet the challenges "of serving in the 21st century" in an environment characterized by complexity and uncertainty. Governments also need innovative and adaptive capacity. Their role extends to building to innovative and adaptive capacity of society.

- *Innovative capacity* is needed to explore and anticipate the future to make better policy decisions. It is also needed to derive new solutions to public issues as they emerge. Anticipation, experimentation and innovation are crucial to achieving better public results.

- *Adaptive capacity* is needed to adapt and prosper in the face of unforeseen crises and shocks.

The focus of the Singapore roundtable is on how to build innovative and adaptive capacity. The next roundtable, in London, will be about how to build institutional and organizational capacity. The challenge will be to pull it all together to build an enabling framework to support practitioners to work in a dynamic system of public governance, where government, society and citizens co-evolve together.

# 3. EXPLORATION AND ANTICIPATION

Foresight activities must be adapted to the particular situation of each country. There is not a one-size-fits-all model. For comparative purposes, this session looked at the unique approaches used in government in Finland, the United Kingdom and Singapore to build anticipative capacity. The Finnish approach successfully engages parliamentarians. The U.K. approach is grounded in science and evidence-based research. The Singapore approach is about enhancing government's capacity to anticipate and prepare for the future and relies on sophisticated scanning techniques.

Finland's approach was presented by Sirpa Kekkonen, Counsellor and Head of Government Programme Monitoring in the Prime Minister's Office. Finland is a western country, with a high standard of living, a high adaptation of technology, ample natural resources and a rapidly aging population. It has a stable parliamentary democracy with multi-party governments and a strong focus

on consensus building.  It is a welfare state that invests heavily in innovation, research and development and education, and is ranked highly in terms of international competitiveness and overall quality of life.

The anticipation functions in the Finnish public sector consist of:

- Government Foresight work: One substantial and broad futures report is produced per term and is made ready before parliamentary elections (Finland's electoral system is based on fixed terms). This work began in the 1990s in response to an economic crisis.  While the first reports had an economic focus, their focus has been expanding to include other issues such as aging and climate change.

- Sectoral futures reviews: These are undertaken by individual ministries before parliamentary elections. They aspire to look out a decade or more, but, in practice,  emphasis is often placed on the next 4-year government term.

- Government situation awareness activities: These focus on physical threats and security. Reports are produced on a regular basis.

- Situation awareness activities of ministries: These systematically performed in the areas of business and employment and are undertaken less systematically in other ministries.

- Futures research: This is performed to provide background data for the government's foresight work.

- Parliamentary Committee for the Future: The Committee for the Future debates and deliberates over parliamentary documents referred to it and makes submissions to other committees on futures-related matters.  The Committee conducts research associated with futures studies, including futures research methodologies. The Committee also functions as a parliamentary body that conducts assessments of technological development and the effects on society of technology. The Committee provides for a dialogue between the Government and Parliament about long-term policy issues. In particular, it issues a formal parliamentary response to the Government Foresight report. This response is made ready before parliamentary elections.

Some of the areas for possible improvement in the future include:

- Widening anticipation practices by broadening and linking the continuous scanning process that is used in some ministries and producing foresight reports with greater frequency;

- Making better use of public debate by involving civil society in the foresight work of government, including in the co-production of options for the future, and using public opinion surveys and social media as sources of data;

- Improving linkages between anticipation activities and decision-making processes in Cabinet;

- Strengthening and expanding the foresight work across government;

- Encouraging experimentation to test the validity of various policy options.

On how to improve the link between foresight work and decision-making, it was

noted that major exercise is underway to develop recommendations for the incoming government after the next election. It will explore how to strengthen horizontal coordination and build on progress to date in linking foresight work with parliamentarians and Cabinet.

The UK Foresight Programme was presented by Garth Alston, Project Leader, International Dimensions of Climate Change, Government Office for Science, United Kingdom. Created in 1994, the programme helps government to think systematically about future issues by combining the latest scientific evidence with futures analysis. The Foresight Programme reports to the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor and the Cabinet Office. The aim of the Programme is to help government to think systematically about future issues by:

• Understanding what alternative futures are possible;

• Challenging presumptions; and

• Building a robust approach to future's work.

The U.K. Foresight Programme is a rolling programme (three projects at a time) that looks 50 to 100 years in the future. Each project takes 18 to 24 months to complete. Projects must not duplicate other work going on in government. They must focus on a significant issue that touches on some aspect of science and technology, take a long-term view and have action-oriented outcomes. They must have a cross-sectoral reach and have buy-in from key stakeholders.

Projects involve multiple networks including stakeholder groups, science and engineering experts, and international contributors. Various techniques such as scenario development, technology road mapping, influence diagrams and systems mapping are employed. Typical project outputs include an analysis of recent developments, visions of possible futures, recommendations for action and the creation of networks of people interested in taking the findings forward.

Ten main projects have been undertaken since 1994, including projects on obesity, flooding and mental health. Current projects include global food and farming futures, international dimensions of climate change, global environmental migration and computer trading in financial markets.

In addition to the undertaking foresight projects, the U.K. programme launched a Foresight Horizon Scanning Centre in 2005 to serve as a centre of excellence for strategic futures thinking in government. The centre encourages longer term thinking and evidence-based analysis throughout government. It advises government departments on the use of horizon scanning, provides training and supports departments in creating their own futures capability. The centre also conducts futures projects that look 5 to 15 years out. It also oversees Sigma Scan, an online, searchable set of research papers that look 50 years into the future and cover the public policy spectrum.

Potential areas for improvements identified in the UK system include a strengthening of the relationship between foresight work and decision-makers, and a stronger buy-in by senior managers across the public sector.

Singapore's approach was outlined by Aaron Maniam, Head, Centre of Strategic Futures and Deputy Director, Strategic Policy Office Organization, Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office. As a small country, Singapore has always been acutely aware of its inherent vulnerability. Singapore's development, since its inception, has therefore been closely tied to long-term strategic planning

and decision-making. Over the years, Singapore has continually adapted its strategic planning approach to match the increasingly volatile and unpredictable regional and global context.

Scenario planning has played a key part in Singapore's strategic planning process since the 1980s. National and global-level scenario planning exercises are run every few years and focussed scenario studies on specific topics (e.g. climate change and new media scenarios) are conducted regularly. While valuable for exploring "what if" scenarios, this approach was too limited because it could not help with addressing short range and potentially game changing shocks (such as the Asian financial crisis or SARS).

In 2004, the Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning programme (RAHS) was created to complement scenario planning. RAHS is a computer-based platform designed to help analysts detect and investigate emerging strategic threats and opportunities, by canvassing a wide range of sources for weak signals of potential future shocks.

In 2009, the Centre for Strategic Futures (CSF) was established, built on the combined strengths of both scenario planning and RAHS. The CSF encourages experimentation and discovery. Individuals and teams are encouraged to learn by experimenting in a "safe to fail" environment. A toolkit has been developed to provide strategic planners with processes and methodologies to assist them to develop new insights into complex problems. Since no agency has a monopoly on ideas, the CSF also cultivates networks capable of generating strategic conversations and harnessing divergent viewpoints across government, with non-government stakeholders and the media.

A number of areas for further improvement was noted, including: the need to identify and retain good strategic planners; the need to improve capacity to deal with cognitive bias; and the need to ensure that foresight work remains rigorously relevant to policy-makers.

## Group Discussion

- Forecasting activities include scanning for long-term trends and canvassing for weak signals and unexpected shocks. Each activity requires different capacities and skills.

- Futures work is done in many places, not necessarily in futures organizations. The challenge is to find it, connect it and make sense of it. There is no shortage of knowledge, but there is a shortage of capacity to integrate and make sense of knowledge about the future.

- It is not possible for a small group of policy-makers, a single agency, or even a single government, to possess all the information needed to deal with complex problems. Foresight activities need to be broad in scope. They must bring together a broad range of talent, a diverse array of ideas and multifaceted perspectives, including dissenting voices to avoid the risks of group think. There is a need to harness the insights of actors across government and outside government, including the private sector, civil society and citizens.

- Foresight activities must look at many scenarios including the probable, the possible, the plausible and the preferable. Foresight activities are not linear exercises.

- There is a need to create awareness and public support for foresight activities. Public support tends to be at its peak at time of crises and at its lowest before hand. Involving citizens in the process of futures thinking is a key part of sustaining support. The process of engagement is itself an important result.

- Foresight activities must enjoy political support. This means they need to be integrated into the political decision-making process and be relevant to policy-makers. Building support for foresight activities with decision-makers includes promoting a culture of looking ahead (creating a continuous scanning process, rather than treating it as a one-off event) and framing issues from a futures perspective (some issues like climate change and aging can only be framed in that way).

- The readiness of governments to deal with foresight products could be a challenge. Frequent transitions in political systems add a layer of complications to the linkage between foresight work and decision-making.

- Anticipation activities will have greater support from decision-makers if they lead to better results and connect to issues of the day. A strong narrative that facilitates decision-making can be as important as the background research. It is also important to cater to different decision makers' perspectives, priorities and frames of reference in crafting futures narratives. Involving them in the process is useful; the process is as important as the product.

- Building support for foresight activities is also a matter of timing. When there is no strong political demand for such activity, the public sector should carry on its work in order to be prepared to advise when the need arises.

- It is neither viable nor desirable to plan exhaustively for every contingency. What can be done is to probe, sense patterns, and be willing to act with incomplete and imperfect information.

# 4. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND CO-PRODUCTION

This session examined the theme of social innovation, which was defined as innovations focussed on public results through social means, the theme of co-production. It examined how to encourage innovation inside and outside government and how governments can create an enabling environment for innovation. It examined the inhibitors of social innovation and co-production and how they might be reduced. It explored how to engage in co-production with citizens and other actors and how this can improve public results.

The Brazilian Innovation Award programme was presented by Paula Montagner, Director, Brazilian National School of Public Administration, Brazil. The awards programme is designed to promote and disseminate social innovations and recognize teams who carry out their activities creatively to achieve better public results. It is a non-monetary award. The programme has been in place for 15 years and has given over 300 awards. The current focus is on the delivery of services to citizens.

Three award recipient cases were discussed.

- The Social Security Boat (*Prevbarcos*): This programme uses vessels to assist riverside communities in the Amazon region to access social benefits. This has allowed services to be provided locally without the need to set up new agencies in municipalities with small or dispersed populations.

- The National Rural Female Workers' Documentation Programme: Documentation is a basic condition for access to many government programmes. This programme aims to provide individual documentation to citizens residing in the country's rural areas. The programme uses mobile units capable of issuing documents on the spot, allowing individuals who were previously excluded to access benefits to which they are entitled.

- The Path to School Programme (*Caminho da Escola*): Through this programme, the Brazilian government provides supplementary financial support for school transportation, ensuring the children living in rural areas can attend school. It has contributed to the standardization of rural school transportation, the renewal of vehicles compliant with rigid technical specifications and access to schooling for underprivileged children.

All of these examples have in common improved service delivery to populations dispersed over large geographic areas, and deal with the challenges of:

- Coordinating actions horizontally among agencies of the same level of government and vertically among different levels of government and between government and social groups;

- Delivering national policy at the local level in ways that meet unique local conditions and needs;

- Innovation and risk-taking among public servants who break new grounds to provide services to the public.

It was noted that innovation is key to change and adaptation. Civil service teams must be trusted to promote innovative solutions to the problems they encounter in practice.

Michael Bichard, Senior Fellow of the Institute for Government and Chair of the United Kingdom Design Council, spoke about how empowerment and innovation might be encouraged in the public sector. The experience of implementing the Total Place initiative in the U.K. was used as an illustration. Through 13 pilot projects, the initiative encouraged local agencies to look beyond their location and consider how a "whole area" approach to public services might lead to better services at less cost. The pilot projects revealed several barriers to innovation, including:

- A lack of active collaboration across government systems, such that policies were developed in departmental silos with little willingness to work across boundaries;

- Public agencies managing for compliance (i.e., meeting targets) rather than managing for value and results;

- An obsession with organizational structures rather than a focus on transforming policy decisions into services of high public value;

- Public organizations tending to be inherently risk averse, which was reinforced by the use of targets as instruments of compliance and a focus on process not outcomes;

- Innovation being smothered with controls and reporting requirements;

- Public sector organizations not knowing as much about their clients as they think they did;

- Government not being skilled at developing genuine partnerships with civil society and the voluntary sector and government viewing voluntary agencies merely as delivery agencies;

- Government being poor at proactive interventions to prevent undesirable outcomes and to promote more desirable outcomes—it has not found a way to make the whole system invest in prevention and promotion when it is timely to do so.

A way forward is to give people greater freedom of voice, choice, actions and decisions. The current focus on budget deficits and the drive for greater efficiency may be conducive to more social innovation and may create an opportunity to explore various forms of co-production, particularly if the focus is on public results as well as on public finances.

The "Many Helping Hands" approach to the delivery of social services in Singapore was introduced by Ang Bee Lian, Chief Executive, National Council of Social Service, Singapore.

The Singapore social services model is a collaborative partnership between government and community. Among the key characteristics of the programme, government provides one-for-one funding to Voluntary Welfare Organizations (VWOs) to deliver social services. This has expanded the social safety net by involving a network of community groups to administer assistance. It has created the foundation for shared responsibility where government, people and the private sector work together.

The "Many Helping Hands" approach has empowered community agencies to exercise flexibility and initiative. By involving many stakeholders (social service agencies, government, corporations, individuals and foundations) the program contributes to building social capital.

Some key success factors have been identified for the "Many Helping Hands" approach.

- Shared ownership: from the start this provides the impetus for more open dialogue, collaboration and creativity.

- A clear delineation of roles: The government sets the direction and provides funding; the National Council of Social Service acts as facilitator, enabler, convenor and aggregator; the VWOs serve as service providers and ground initiators; citizens and service providers are "prosumers" (both producer and consumer).

- Building sustainability: Relying on community support for co-funding contributes to flexible and responsive design and delivery that reflects what is required by citizens. It also contributes to sustainability.

Looking ahead, the changing social landscape has created a challenge to grow the VWO sector in scale and scope to provide services to cope with a higher level of demand. To achieve scalability, there have been calls for changes to the one-for-one funding formula. There is a risk that VWOs will lose their moral authority and inventiveness as they face greater reporting requirements and performance targets that come with service contracts and increased dependence on government funding. Government needs to understand that they are managing relationships not contracts. A balance will have to be struck between accountability and trust. There is a need to take a risk-management rather than a risk-avoidance approach. This will require keeping in check the desire for increased regulatory control that could undermine social innovation.

A number of lessons have been learned in the Singapore context.

- Mutual appreciation for each others' roles: NGOs are not an extension of the government. They are the "ears to the ground". They need space and options to highlight critical social problems and gaps. Government is more than a source of fund. It has a role as facilitator and in setting broad direction, ensuring shared accountability.

- Participatory policy-making: Government needs to build a collaborative partnership to tap the knowledge of those who are closest to the service recipient and to co-create delivery systems that draw from their wisdom and inventiveness.

- Power sharing: Power sharing, mutual risk-taking, and tolerance for experiments is key.

- Empowering citizens: Government has a responsibility to facilitate citizen participation and engagement to enable change and build resilience.

- Resisting the temptation to do more of the same: Social issues are multi-dimensional. They require greater coordination and collaboration among multiple agents and actors. Program funding must take into account of the increased co-ordination and co-production costs.

By focussing on results, governments have a better chance to maintain continuous dialogue to improve influence service quality; to engage, enable and influence and facilitate social innovation.

## Group Discussion

The following key points emerged from the group discussion:

- Social innovations are innovations in both their ends and means. The benefits of social innovations accrue to society as a whole. They respond to social needs and enhance society's capacity to act.

- Some social innovations can be transformative; others are incremental improvements made by recombining elements that existed before.

- Social innovations are rarely either wholly top-down or bottom-up.

- Social innovation can be messy, yet orderly. It is about relationships and

connections; working across borders to achieve results; networks not structures; about people not programs; and shared accountability out and down rather than in and up. Social innovation requires trial and error and a willingness to accept "good enough" rather than the search for "perfect" yet elusive solutions. It accepts variability and recognizes that "one size does not fit all".

- Co-production may increase social capital, self-responsibility, self-reliance and well-being. It is enabled by social networks which are fundamental to building societal resilience.

- Social innovation and co-production are needed because there will never be enough financial resources to meet all the needs through traditional approaches.

- There are many barriers to social innovation and co-production, including a lack of cooperation across boundaries, managing for compliance, focussing on structure, risk aversion, and a focus on micro-management. The talk about public sector reform has not been matched by actions. Good rhetoric was not translated into action.

- Civil society and the voluntary sector face their own barriers, including unpredictable funding, the difficulty of retaining good people, and the fear of becoming a quasi-state organization.

- Government can do much to encourage social innovation and co-production. It can assess performance on the ability to collaborate and innovate, work at multiple scales and according to different timelines to allow the opportunity for ideas to succeed. It can create an environment that encourages learning, safely failing and failing fast. It also must focus on results not outputs and inputs.

- The current fiscal challenges faced by many governments could also become an enabler, as long as a focus remains on public results in addition to those associated with public finances.

- There are many examples of innovations that are successful on a small scale but are not successfully scaled up or spread out. Scale and spread are not the same things. To support successful innovations, government can take an idea and make it bigger (i.e., scale it up) or it can take an idea and encourage lots of those ideas to grow in many places (i.e., spread it around). Spread can be achieved through viral networks and can be supported by making training and tools available to an eco-system of solutions, organizations and entrepreneurs.

# 5. LEARNING JOURNEY

The NorthLight School is an example of experimentation and of social innovation. Participants were welcomed by the principal, Lim Yen Ching.

NorthLight School was started in 2007 by the Ministry of Education to try a different approach and curriculum to help students who repeatedly failed the national Primary School Leaving Examination and were at risk of leaving the

school system at a very early age. In three years, the growth and motivation of Northlight's students, and the results of the Northlight experiment, have surpassed all expectations. The school has attracted strong support and participation from the community. Its innovative strategies and non-conformist approaches have been replicated in many primary schools throughout the country and internationally.

## Group Discussion

Northlight School is an example of innovation that involves government, education professionals, students, families and communities working together to address a pressing social need. It illustrates the importance of anticipation, experimentation and social innovation in confronting public issues and building resilience in people, communities and society.

It demonstrates how public sector agencies can facilitate innovation, and how government can support experiments while making them the more broadly available in the system.

Given the risk of failure, it illustrates the importance of strong leadership at the school and of active community involvement. It was an interesting "meshing of a messy coalition of interests" that was driven by a passion to help students and their families, with little awareness of the systemic implications at the start. But it has become an interesting laboratory for "spreading" (rather than scaling up) a social innovation by teaching others who can then replicate successes in their own classrooms and schools.

# 6. EXPERIMENTATION

This session explored how government can use experimentation to improve public policy decisions. It explored how governments can pursue an approach to public policy that emphasizes multiple, small-scale experiments and how they can be scaled up and out when successful. It looked at how experiments help enable learning and build the collective capacity to achieve better public results.

Jean-Pierre Voyer, Chief Executive Officer of the Social Research Demonstration Corporation, Canada, launched the discussion. It was noted that experimentation can be used as a powerful tool to improve policy-making. Experimentation allows policy-makers to measure and identify the likely outcomes of a new programme within a controlled scale. It is not just about "trying things out". It helps to evaluate results using rigorous research and evaluation methods. The systematic use of experimentation based on rigorous evaluation can contribute to better public results. It can improve the anticipative capacity of governments and building the adaptive capacity of communities through collective learning.

Four main kinds of experimentation were noted, ranging from pilot projects, demonstration projects, random control trials and social experiments. In each case, rigorous analysis and evaluation is needed that measures and assesses the quantitative and qualitative differences that a new program or intervention would make. This requires knowledge and insights about what would have

happened in the absence of the new initiatives. A powerful way to gain this knowledge is through random control trials using a treatment group and a control group.

There are many reasons for governments to engage in experimentation, including:

- Putting ideas to the test (identifying barriers, estimating take-up rates, measuring intended and unintended outcomes, measuring impact and obtaining cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit results);

- Innovation is needed to address emerging complex problems and experimentation plays an important role in the innovation process;

- Spreading innovation (allowing people to see new approaches in action);

- Promoting collaboration among levels of government or different stakeholders;

- Injecting greater accountability (from accountability for following procedures to achieving results);

- Killing bad ideas (slowing momentum for the adoption of ideas that are proven not to work even though they enjoy popular support or are based on ideological preferences).

Social experimentation has developed over the last forty years as a major form of research activity. It is in widespread use in some states of the USA, is of growing interest in continental Europe, and has seen a major burst in activity internationally in the past five years in relation to development economics. In Canada, there have been nine large demonstration projects carried out in the last fifteen years. One of these is the Canadian "Self-Sufficiency Project".

This project was conducted in the 1990s to determine the impact of earning supplements on participation in the labour market. The programme targeted long-term single parent welfare recipients. The 9,000 participants in the study were equally divided into an experimental group and a control group. Those in the experimental group received earning supplements for up to three years on the condition that they left welfare for full time work (this scheme represented the "new" policy intervention being tested). The results of the study indicated that those in the experimental group returned to the workforce much sooner than those in the control group; however, over the long-term, both groups had similar labour force participation outcomes. The results of the study later influenced the design of work-welfare schemes in Canada and in some other countries.

In terms of improving the uptake of experimentation in the public sector, governments can focus on creating a culture and appetite for evidence-based policy and dedicating funds for experimentation. Public service knowledge brokers play a key role in ensuring the transfer of knowledge from the research community to decision-makers. Public service management schools could also play a role in preparing public servants.

Timeliness in experimentation is also an issue. Rigorous experiments take time, often exceeding the length of political mandates. It is therefore necessary to anticipate emerging issues sufficiently in advance of needs to allow for experimentation to take place and to inform public policy decisions at the appropriate time. Another possible solution to the issue of timing is to find experimentation

methods that can be done with equal rigour but more rapidly.

Irene Lucas, Acting Permanent Secretary, Department of Communities and Local Government, United Kingdom, guided the discussion to explore the potential for experimentation and innovation in the U.K. context.

The new coalition government in the U.K. has signalled the need for a shift of power from Westminster to the people. It supports decentralisation and democratic engagement and balancing top-down government with enhanced powers to local councils, communities, neighbourhoods and individuals.

The emerging U.K. approach will explore a rebalancing between top-down prescription and voluntary collaboration. The private and public sector in places have been challenged to become Local Enterprise Partnerships. This may lead to devolution of power to localities.

Nationally, it will require a focus on innovation, a greater focus on collaboration and a whole system approach. At the local level, it will require refocusing on the needs of citizens, moving away from providing funding in discrete silos with centrally imposed conditions to pooled funding and community-based budgets.

The concept of "innovation days" as a way to address wicked issues at the community level was noted. The concept was recently used to bring together all interested parties to develop community-based solutions to the issue of aging and the high cost of care.

With regard to the learning and challenges for the central government, the following was noted:

- Open source policy development is a promising way forward—"none of us is as clever as all of us";

- There is a need to create a culture and environment that encourages experimentation;

- The importance of a whole system approach to policy development and to give shape to practical solutions; and

- This in turn will require a different set of skills and expertise.

## Group Discussion

A number of points emerged from the group discussion.

- Experimentation builds the capacity for on-going improvement.

- There are many forms of experimentation; but each values evidence, whether quantitative analysis or qualitative.

- The issue about the use of quantitative versus qualitative data has been an on-going debate for many years. Both sources of evidence are needed. And both need to be analyzed rigourously. Experimentation requires a mix and blending of many tools for different purposes. One approach can be used to provide statistically valid knowledge about probable outcomes.

Another can be used to pick up situational factors, such as the informed judgement of frontline workers and innovative leadership at the local levels that also influence outcomes.

- Experimentation can provide a reality check against mental biases and preferences. Evidence-based research contributes to accountability to citizens.

- Demands for accountability and performance measurement will not go away; however, experimentation and innovation are encouraged by focussing on accountability for results of increasing public value rather than a narrow definition of accountability for process and reporting requirements.

- There is a need to distinguish between:

  - Control systems to ensure compliance;

  - Information system for making better decisions and improving results; and

  - Public accountability for the overall performance of a country over time and compared to others.

- Experimentation and innovation require significant changes for government (e.g. outcome budgeting, performance management and the role of the centre of government). It requires a cultural shift. How government responds to reasonable mistakes and failed attempts is a powerful indicator of the culture.

- Prototyping can provide a quick and reasonably cost-effective way to explore what works. It can help "to fail fast, safely and smartly."

- Innovation days can be a powerful tool to explore and seek solutions to problems left. It is also important to listen and learn from conversations that are already happening.

- Context matters. In some countries, the potential for social experiments is limited as it would run counter to a principle of "equal treatment", while in other countries it would be widely accepted.

# 7. ENABLING ROLE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICT)

This session looked at the impact and role of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in modern governance. It explored how ICTs (e.g. Web 2.0, social networking) can change the operating landscape for governments. It looked at how ICT can support anticipation, experimentation, innovation, smart intervention and adaptation.

Martin Stewart-Weeks, Director, Public Sector Practice in Asia-Pacific, CISCO Systems Internet Business Solutions Group, launched the discussion. Technology not only enables but it also accelerates and reframes many issues. Technology is critical to conversations about any issue because connectedness is a conversation about peoples' lives not about technology.

Three network operating models have been mapped out by P. Baran: a centralized model well known to government that features a "hub and spoke" arrangement; a decentralized model with multiples hubs and spokes; and a distributed networking model that is characteristic of the way the Internet is organized. A distributed network model is the most resilient model because even if nodes are taken out the network survives.

The emergence of a more connected world has changed the way organizations operate, enabling distributed operating models that are less dependent on central command and control.

The public sector will also have to adapt to this model. We have grown used to the centre taking decisions, even when the knowledge, expertise and experience required to inform decisions are at the edge. It is appropriate to speak of "government of, and with, the edge".

The 21st century will be about divergent thinking, creating new choices, developing new solutions through integrative thinking, and balancing opposites. This will increasingly depend on both small and large scale participatory systems. ICTs provide a means to pool diverse knowledge. It allows for the development of tools that are simple to use and that draw people in. Web 2.0 technologies and applications are creating new forms of social interaction among people. As more people move into these relationships and participate on these platforms, government will need to move toward more open, collaborative, cooperative arrangements where there is open consultation, open data, shared knowledge, mutual acknowledgement of expertise, and mutual respect for shared values.

Government 2.0 is about collaboration; users building value by using each others' contributions. It is based on the assumption that it is easy to connect people, knowledge and ideas when and where they are needed. It represents a dispersion of power, authority and control. It connects communities, networks, organizations and institutions; it is about "systemic serendipity".

Several examples illustrate the potential of the transformation underway, including Patient Opinion, NATO's Policy Jam, Opinion Space 2.0, Where Does MY Money Go, Peer to Patent and Planetary Skin.

A number of implications were noted.

- "Institutions exist to sustain the problems they were set up to solve". Institutions must be part of the solution to problems, but they cannot be the whole solution.

- The power of social networking tools to amplify knowledge and connections is available only if organizations and managers are prepared to open up their organization and to share. Trust must be given then earned – it does not work the other way around.

- Being a gateway is not the same as being a connector. Gatekeepers often control knowledge and access to knowledge. Distributed knowledge reassembles and reconnects itself in unpredictable and powerful ways. Connectors contribute to the recombination of knowledge.

In summary, "networks know more than we do – some of the smartest people don't work for us."

James Kang, Assistant Chief Executive, InfoComm Development Authority of Singapore, spoke about the enabling role of ICTs in "preparing government to serve beyond the predictable".

As a small nation state, it places a major focus on long-term planning to reduce the risks of costly mistakes. This has helped Singapore to quickly respond and adapt to emerging challenges. However, the world environment is becoming more complex, unpredictable and uncertain. Increasingly, issues are dynamic and multi-faceted. Government faces an increasing number of complex issues, "wicked" problems and "wild cards". To prosper in this context, government and society must future-sense, innovate when it cannot rely on the past, re-invent itself, and become resilient.

Citizens no longer accept that government knows best. Moving forward, the model will increasingly be shifting from a "government-to-you" to a "government-with-you" approach. This will require a number of changes:

- From being the sole custodian of public data to one that is willing to share data to encourage the creation of innovative applications;

- Moving from "collecting" data to "making sense" of collected data;

- Becoming citizen-centric by encouraging and involving citizens in shaping and co-creating public policies and public services;

- Leveraging the collective wisdom of citizenry via social media platforms (crowd sourcing);

- Adopting relevant, state of the art technologies like cloud computing, social media and networks and smart mobile technologies to build agility and capability;

- Being prepared to experiment, pursue a "search and discover" approach and act even when the outcome is uncertain and in the absence of complete information.

## Group Discussion

A number of key points emerged from the group discussion.

- For many years, the technology sector has over-promised and under-delivered. The technology sector has finally caught up to its own rhetoric. Now it is becoming "game-changing".

- Social networking and social media are causing a "disruptive shift" in the balance of knowledge between government and citizens.

- In distributed networks, authority is created by contribution not status. You earn power and influence as a valuable contributor.

- Increasingly governments will have to tap into the wisdom of others because the knowledge and capabilities they need reside elsewhere.

- Government agencies hold vast amounts of data that could be tapped by others to create new public goods and services.

- Networks can help solve the problems they create (e.g. the problem of too much data has led to the creation of sifting tools).

- Information sharing and privacy can come into conflict. Information covered by Privacy legislation cannot be shared. Information sharing and security also come into conflict, as do information sharing and the need for secrecy. The latter bring up issues regarding access to information and transparency. But these issues should not be confused with the idea of making public data available as a public good. Government has large amounts of data in its possession that can be made public in order that citizens and other actors can use it to create public value. Moreover, government has funded data collection/creation that other actors have in their possession that could also benefit society by being made public.

- Government also needs to be aware that data and information can be problematically recombined, misconstrued and misused. In the Internet Age, good analysis and bad analysis, trustworthy information and misinformation can all "go viral". This is not new, it is just that the Internet can serve to accelerate and magnify the process. Monitoring and course correction will be constantly required.

- A whole of government approach is not necessarily the most productive one when discussing technology. It is preferable to look at specific issues and ask how technology can help. Different issues lead to different answers.

- E-government will not replace electoral democracy. However, there is a need to think about how technology transforms and may enrich democracy.

- Technology is creating the need for a new breed of professionals and different skill sets (e.g., ability to engage citizens, knowledge of IT, professional ethics and judgement).

- While the Internet and social networks provide a platform for disseminating information and getting feedback, public servants must also be aware of the pitfalls. They must be able to distinguish between genuine feedback and "noise", avoid being co-opted by vocal minorities, and reconcile real time responses and the longer timelines of deliberations.

- Modern communications technologies are part of the world we live in. Government must engage and use it to fulfill its mission.

# 8. ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

This session looked at the adaptive capacity of governments and communities. Shocks happen despite governments' attempts to prevent them. The role of government, therefore, extends to mitigating the impact, and building the adaptive capacity of the community and citizens to absorb shocks. This segment explored what infrastructures, systems, and capacities governments need to operate under unforeseen circumstances and volatile environments.

K U Menon, Senior Consultant, Public Communications and Consultancy, Ministry of Information, Communication and Arts, Singapore, launched the discussion by drawing from the lessons learned from Singapore's experience in managing the

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) crisis in 2003.

Small city states are especially vulnerable to pandemia. As a result, there is a tendency to be "paranoid" and too over-prepared. This tendency may prove to be a successful strategy. There are many unknowns and considerable uncertainty about what to do. It is preferable to manage the consequences of over-reaction rather than facing the aftermath of under-reaction.

Singapore had a number of advantages in managing the crisis. It is a small island with a fixed number of entry points. It is a city state with no rural population. It had learned from similar experience in Southern China and Hong Kong. It had a strong, stable government and a professional public service.

On the communication front, government must be active, honest, open and transparent. It must strike a middle ground between the risk of provoking fear and building trust. Singapore used every conceivable communications tool to explain the outbreak, respond to feedback, build trust and manage the country's external image. Earning trust was by far the most difficult challenge and is the consequence of credibility that is built on a track record of competent and trustworthy management by the government over time. The implicit trust in government lent it the moral authority it needed to take the actions necessary to contain the disease. While this allowed for swift and decisive action on the part of government, it had a short-lasting, but negative side effect of slowing down responses in civil society as people looked to government for direction and solutions—whereas everyone had a responsibility and role to play.

The lessons learned from the SARS crisis has contributed to the subsequent response to other situations, including H1N1 and avian flu. These lessons include:

- The need for decisive leadership and the involvement of the highest levels of government and all ministries and agencies;

- Transparency and honest communications to reach out to all;

- The importance of earning the trust and confidence of the population; and

- The need for a multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral approach with no artificial boundaries between disciplines.

In sum, infrastructures (such as networked government and peacetime simulation exercises), capability (such as use of scenario planning and, legislative tools, and learning best practices from others and from experience) and leadership at various levels enabled Singapore to ride through the SARS crisis. While crises are seldom the same, the SARS experience in Singapore reinforced the importance of building a society's adaptive capacity which requires strong institutional, organizational and innovative capacity as well as trust within government, and with citizens.

Karen Lau, Assistant Director, Public Policy and Organization Reviews, State Services Authority, Victoria, Australia, spoke about the experience of the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority.

The scale and urgency of the recovery task from the devastating bushfires that raged through the State of Victoria in 2009 called for agile and responsive approaches to the recovery effort. Within three days of the disaster, the Victoria Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority was established to oversee the

largest rebuilding and recovery program in the State's history. People from all sectors (political, public sector, civil society and citizenry) were brought together to lead the recovery and reconstruction effort. A flat organization was created that could make decisions rapidly and fix them if they proved wrong.

A recovery and reconstruction framework was established to address longer term challenges related to issues such as the logistics of distributing goods to those in need, managing the clean-up effort, providing housing and promoting community-led recovery.

From the start, it was recognized that people who participate in their own recovery, recover better. It was also recognized that different people and different communities would recover at different paces and in different ways. As a result, a participatory approach was used at the most local of levels. This brought its own challenges, including reluctance from some communities, slower decision-making, difficulties in achieving consensus and capability gaps. But the result was better solutions that were better tailored to local needs. It also resulted in stronger, more resilient communities.

The scale of the bushfires placed complex and unpredictable demands on public agencies. The complexity derived from:

- The need to operate across jurisdictions, portfolios, sectors and geographic areas;

- The scale of the devastation; and

- The high degree of individual and community grief and trauma.

Public agencies require agility to operate in unpredictable environments. The "agility cycle" developed by the SSA includes: a) scan for emerging trends/issues, b) work with communities to transform information into actionable solutions, c) respond to new problems with new approaches and d) help shape the future environment and build resistance for future shocks.

**The Agility Cycle**
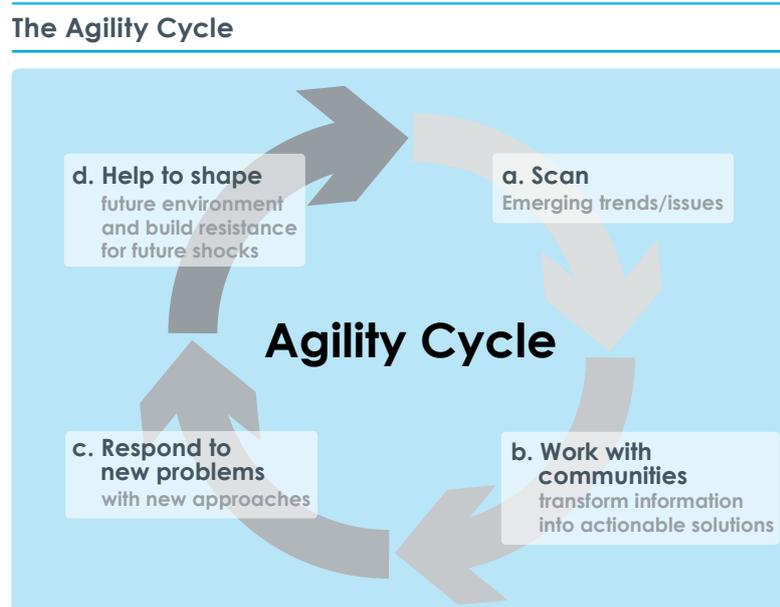


The enablers of agility are purpose and good will, an authorizing environment, leadership and sufficient funding.

# Group Discussion

Some key points emerged during the discussion.

- Strong adaptive capacity requires strong institutional, organizational and innovative capacity; it is all part of one dynamic system.

- Adaptive capacity requires long-term planning, such as the ability to scan and detect the signals of emerging trends, make sense of those signals and intervene proactively, even in the absence of perfect knowledge, as well as the ability to ride through short-term crisis.

- Having multiple frames of analysis is critical. An empirical frame provides data and insight into what is going on. A political frame provides insight on what to do and when to do it. A human resources frame provides information on the kinds of capabilities that are needed. A media frame is also important; in any crisis, the government has two crises to manage, the event itself and the media. A symbolic frame tells government what ceremonies, rituals and other symbolic acts will make a positive difference.

- Government operates in a world beyond structural solutions and in a world of connectivity and networks. Multiple agencies working together to achieve results is a defining characteristic of modern government.

- It is interesting to reflect on how the SARS crisis might be handled differently in today's ICT world. The use of social media (facebook and twitter) would be of greater importance in communicating with the public (who would, in fact, be communicating among themselves using these tools).

- Even though social media allows citizens to communicate with each other, they still want to hear from authority figures/experts. People want reliable information that they can trust.

- What is important is to use all the communications tools available. Social media tools can be used in conjunction with other communications tools. Social media is part of the world we live in, so government must learn to use them better.

- Social media has negative as well as positive potential. It can create crises (e.g. social movements have been launched against vaccinations that medical experts have deemed important and safe). "The wisdom of the crowd can become the ignorance of the mob." This has happened before, even in the absence of social media. However, it is harder to counter given the speed of social media tools.

- Adaptive capacity is not only needed for responding to sudden crises, it is also needed for dealing with impending crises that are building over a longer time horizon. The effects of global warming and increasing obesity are examples here.

- Governments often respond well in the face of a crisis (increasing the freedom to act, providing access to funds, etc.). "In exceptional circumstances, government can act exceptionally." But governments seem unable to "institutionalize" what they do in exceptional circumstances while recognizing the need for institutional continuity and stability.

- Crises will happen again. The key question is whether governments are

learning and whether this learning can be put to use when it is needed.

# 9. CLOSING DISCUSSION

Following a summary of the discussion by the rapporteurs, participants shared ideas about moving forward.

- It will be important to build a strong narrative to bring the New Synthesis together.

- The notion that it is a framework not a model and that choices will be context, circumstance and mission specific is an important message.

- It is also important to be clear that it is not about casting conventions aside. It is about preserving what is of enduring value, exploring what is new and what is changing in order to help those who are serving to have an impact in the 21st century.

- Increasing complexity is an important point of departure.

- The narrative must be practical to meet the needs of practitioners.

# 10. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Twenty six participants, scholars, and researchers from seven countries partici-pated in the Singapore Roundtable. The focus of the discussion was about how governments can build capacity to anticipate what might be in order to make better decisions and achieve better results. It was also about how to build innovative and adaptive capacity to respond to inevitable crises and shocks, unforeseen events and changing circumstances. It explored some of the practi-cal implications for public organizations and public servants.

This roundtable shifted the discussion from expanding the scope of the *New Synthesis project* to consolidating the findings. The focus also shifted from pursuing what is different about serving in the 21st century to determining how to build the capacity to serve in the 21st century.

The next roundtable, in London, will explore how the findings of the first four roundtables transform the role of public institutions and organizations.  It will focus on building institutional and organizational capacity.

# ANNEX

## ANNEX A: NAMES AND AFFILIATIONS OF INVITED SPEAKERS AND PARTICIPANTS

Gareth Alston, Project Leader, International Dimensions of Climate Change, Government Office for Science, United Kingdom

Michael Bichard, Founding Director, Institute for Government and Chair, United Kingdom Design Council, United Kingdom

Jocelyne Bourgon, President Emeritus, Canada School of Public Service, Canada

Lim Yen Ching, Principal, NorthLight School, Singapore

Tiago Falcão, Secretary for Management, Ministry of Planning Budget and Management, Brazil

Merel de Groot, Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Affairs, NS6 Co-coordinator for The Netherlands, The Netherlands

Brian Johnson, President, Gladeview Consulting Ltd., Canada

James Kang, Assistant Chief Executive, InfoComm Development Authority of Singapore

Sirpa Kekkonen, Counsellor, Head of Government Programme Monitoring, Policy-Analyst Unit, Prime Minister's Office, Finland

Andrew Kwok, Researcher, Centre for Governance and Leadership, Civil Service College, Singapore

Karen Lau, Assistant Director, Public Policy and Organization Reviews, State Services Authority, Victoria, Australia

Evert Lindquist, Director and Professor, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria and Chair in Applied Public Management Research, ANZOG Research Program, Crawford School of Economics and Government, Australian National University, Australia

Lena Leong, Senior Researcher, Centre for Governance and Leadership, Singapore

Ang Bee Lian, Chief Executive, National Council of Social Service, Singapore

Lim Chiew Ling, Senior Executive, Centre for Governance and Leadership, Singapore

Lucas Lombaers, Director, Labour Affairs Public Sector, Ministry of Interior and Public Affairs, The Netherlands

Donald Low, Head, Centre for Public Economics, Civil Service College, Singapore

James Low, Senior Researcher, Centre for Governance and Leadership, Singapore

Irene Lucas, Acting Permanent Secretary, Department of Communications and Local Government, United Kingdom

Aaron Maniam, Head, Centre of Strategic Futures and Deputy Director, Strategic Policy Office, Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore

K U Menon, Senior Consultant, Public Communications and Consultancy, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, Singapore

Paula Montagner, Director, Communications and Research, Brazilian National School of Public Administration, Brazil

Peter Milley, Senior Advisor, Canada School of Public Service and NS6 Research Director, Canada

Gordon Owen, Director General, Partnerships and Best Practices, Canada School of Public Service, and NS6 Coordinator for Canada, Canada

Sue Richards, Senior Fellow, Institute for Government, NS6 Coordinator for the UK, United Kingdom

Tan Li San, Director, Centre for Governance and Leadership, Civil Service College and Director, Strategic Policy Office, Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore

Martijn van der Steen, Associate Dean and Deputy Director, Netherlands School for Public Administration, The Netherlands

Martin Stewart-Weeks, Director, Public Sector Practice in Asia-Pacific, CISCO Systems Internet Business Solutions Group, Australia

Jean-Pierre Voyer, Chief Executive, Social Research Demonstration Corporation, Canada

John Wanna, Professor, Australian National University, Australia

Lionel Yeo, Deputy Secretary (Development), Public Service Division and Dean of the Civil Service College, Singapore

Yee Ping Yi, Senior Director (Special Studies), Strategic Policy Office, Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, Deputy Dean, Civil Service College and NS6 Coordinator for Singapore, Singapore

# ANNEX B: LIST OF PRE-READING MATERIALS, PRESENTATIONS AND CASE STUDIES

## Papers

Bessant, John, Hughes, Tim, and Richards, Sue, (2010) Beyond Light Bulbs and Pipelines: Leading and Nurturing Innovation in the Public Sector, National School of Government, Sunningdale Institute, United Kingdom

Bourgon, Jocelyne, with Peter Milley, (2010), The New Frontiers of Public Administration, Public Governance International, Ottawa, Canada

Centre for Strategic Futures, (2010), Strategic Planning in Singapore, Centre for Strategic Futures, Public Service Division, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore

Foresight Programme, (2009), Foresight Annual Review, Government Office for Science, United Kingdom

Government Foresight Network, (2010), Together and independently – the world and Finland in the 2010s, Prime Minister's Office Publications, Helsinki, Finland

Habegger, Beat, (2009), Horizon Scanning in Government, Centre for Security Studies, Zurich, Switzerland

Ho, Peter, (2010), e-Government: The next Quantum Leap, unpublished speech to the iGov Global Forum, Singapore

InfoComm Development Authority of Singapore, (2010), Realizing the iN2015 Vision, Info-communications Development Authority of Singapore, Singapore

King, David A. and Thomas, Sandy M., (2007), Taking Science Out of the Box – Foresight Recast, Science Magazine vol. 316, American Association for the Advancement of Science

King, David A. and Thomas, Sandy M., (2007), Big lessons for a healthy future, Nature, vol. 449, Nature Publishing Group

Klein, Gary, (2010), Looking for Trouble, Ethos, Centre for Governance and Leadership, Civil Service College, Singapore

Malone, Thomas W., Laubacher, Robert, and Dellarocas, Chrysanthos, (2009), Harnessing Crowds: Mapping the Genome of Collective Intelligence, MIT Centre for Collective Intelligence, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States of America

Menon, K U, (2010), SARS Revisited: Insights from Singapore, a case study on adaptive capacity, managing risk and innovation, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts, Singapore

Mulgan, Geoff, (2010), Accelerating Innovation, unpublished working paper, United Kingdom

Ang Bee Lian, National Council of Social Service, (2010), Singapore's Many Helping Hands Approach to Social Service, National Council on Social Service, Singapore

NS6 Project Leader's Team (2009) Literature Scan No. 2: Complexity theories: What are they and what do they tell us about public administration in the 21st Century? Ottawa, ON: unpublished working paper.

NS6 Project Leader's Team (2009) Literature Scan No. 3: Resilience: Key Concepts and Themes and Their Implications for Public Administration. Ottawa, ON: unpublished working paper.

NS6 Project Leader's Team (2010) Literature Scan No. 6: Applications of Complex Adaptive Systems Theories in Governance, Public Administration and Public Policy, Ottawa, ON: unpublished working paper.

Oliveira, Clarice, (2010), The Brazilian Innovation Award: Identifying government practices that contribute to the improvement of service delivery, Brazilian National School of Public Administration, Brazil

Shergold, Peter, (2009), Leadership at a Time of Crisis, Ethos, Centre for Governance and Leadership, Civil Service College, Singapore

Stewart-Weeks, Martin (2010), Governing at, and with, the edge: technology and the "new synthesis", unpublished working paper, Singapore

Teague, the Hon. Bernard, McLeod, Ronald, and Pascoe, Susan, (2010), 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission: Final Report Summary, Government Printer of the State of Victoria, Australia

Unknown author, (2010), Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority Donations Management System, VPS Innovation Case Study, State Government of Victoria, Australia

Victoria State Services Authority, (2010), Agile Government: Operating amidst complexity and uncertainty, Victoria State Services Authority, Melbourne, Australia

## Presentations

Alston, Gareth, (2010), The UK Foresight Programme, unpublished

Bourgon, Jocelyne, (2010), Introductory Remarks, unpublished

Low, Donald, (2010), Governance in Singapore, unpublished

Kang, James, (2010), Preparing Government to Serve Beyond the Predictable: Enabling Role of ICT, unpublished

Kekkonen, Sirpa, (2010), Anticipation and Policy-making: Finnish Experience, unpublished

Ang, Bee Lian, (2010), "Many Helping Hands" – Singapore's Approach to Social Service, unpublished

Lucas, Irene, (2010), Experimentation and Innovation: Preparing Governments to Serve Beyond the Predictable, unpublished

Maniam, Aaron, (2010), Futures Thinking for National Resilience, unpublished

Montagner, Paula, (2010), The Brazilian Innovation Award: Identifying government practices that contribute to the improvement of service delivery, unpublished

Stewart-Weeks, Martin, (2010), Government at, and with, the edge: technology and the "new synthesis", unpublished

Voyer, Jean-Pierre, (2010), Experimentation for Better Policy-Making, unpublished

## Case studies

Menon, K U, (2010), SARS Revisited: Insights from Singapore, unpublished

Lau, Karen, (2010), Case study presentation: Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, unpublished

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