

## 5. Conclusions

*The aim of this report has been to illustrate how public value is changing and how government is involved in value-led transformation. It furthers the current conversation on systemic transformation in the public sector. This work has tried to explore the nexus between futures, public value and civic engagement while avoiding the details of the complex world of governance and the countless public governance models.*

Thinking about the future, public value and citizen involvement are crucial at this stage of the transformation of public governance institutions. Amid the uncertainty around complex problems and the government's role in solving them, the public sector needs to start thinking about, and using, the future in a more effective and a more collaborative way. This means creating more nuanced ways to frame problems, develop alternative futures for the former and start discussing the elusive nature of public value and how it is changing.

The shifting landscape of civic purpose requires us to start to think about uncertainty and develop in a more systematic way. Future uncertainty is forcing us to think about planning and visions for our living environments in a different way. If we cannot delineate long-term visions for our living environments, because they will invariably be proven obsolete, how can we act strategically in a tactical setting? The current report argues that this could be done within a public value framework. It discusses the kind of value cities are interested in delivering, what kind of alternative futures might exist and what trade-offs are acceptable.

As the role of government changes and citizens become increasingly engaged in peer-to-peer initiatives (where citizens exchange products and services among each other), local resilience (i.e., creating local, contextual solutions to problems) needs to be collective and actions cumulative. The report shows that participatory citizenship is needed to guard against the disintegrative forces of declining involvement. Moreover, we need to challenge the type of public value cities should be producing for their residents.

In particular, decision makers face three questions:

- How can we proceed on a course of action? How do we start defining new types of values that are still emerging?
- How can citizens be involved in a productive participatory process to deal with the uncertainty together and align potential action?
- How can we keep the adaption going, even in fast-changing environments?

The case studies covered in this report contain a lot of valuable information about the emerging municipal practices regarding the issues outlined above:

- ***Citizen Assemblies and Citizen Reference Panels in Canada***

The case provides a detailed outline on how participatory, deliberative processes can be put in to practice to examine complex problems. It is not only informative in terms of the sortation process by which semi-representative panels are assembled guaranteeing legitimacy to the discussions and diversity in the groups, but also the overall process of facilitating discussions in these panels. It examines how to make people talk about values, their trade-offs, and elevating their understanding about what the government does and what its limits are. The process becomes the outcome.

- ***The Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics in Boston***

The case makes clear that there is an alternative to writing long-term plans, vision documents or posing grand challenges when addressing future uncertainty. MONUM unearths and reacts to citizens needs as they arise in a 'quick and dirty' way, managing uncertainty with real-time implementation. The approach is based on the idea that what citizens value is the most important thing and, once that is made clear, the unit can act fast. Tactics rather than strategy becomes the focus – managing the city in a “just-in-time” way. Systems change emerges through iterative choices; whether it guarantees the best solutions for the city or its residents in the long-term remains to be seen. Yet, it is another way to

embrace uncertainty, because it continuously re-imagines the value perspective and avoids time-bound agreements.

- ***Hope Care System in Namyangju***

The case shows that complex problems in government blind-spots (where issues fall in between local-regional-state remit or just in-between silos) positive change is possible through incorporating citizen action into the system and co-producing outcomes beyond what government alone is capable of. Thus, the residents of Namyangju are producing welfare to people in complex financial and personal situations that leave them outside the bounds of state intervention. The case exemplified the new form of local resilience – contextual and personalised services to people by peers in a local environment. Peer-to-peer production is vital to the process of systems change. This is especially true amid this new environment where people face increasingly complex problems but cannot rely on traditional service providers (i.e. in the context of welfare – family, state). This is because their issues do not fit traditional bounds of intervention. New solutions have to emerge and the quickest way to test them is to work alongside citizens themselves.

- ***Collaborative Innovation in Gothenburg Region***

The crux of the case study can be summed up as follows: cities are not islands. While it is important to focus on them, they exist in contexts, conditions and as part of a network of resource and information flows that include the regions, nations and larger geographies that surround them. To focus on the local, regional or state government without concern for its milieu is perilous; akin to thinking that the head tells us all we need to know about the body. How can we cross the existing administrative bounds to meet citizens' needs? The Gothenburg region's experience shows it is possible to transfer some authority to a higher level and address problems at their right scale collectively. Yet, this requires a lot of trust from partners still living their day-to-day in legacy systems. As such, the collaborative model is bound by "lowest common denominator" agreements first and then expanding out if and when the case is proven. Of course exceptional circumstances can arise – e.g. refugee crisis – in which a window of opportunity opens whereby different opportunities can be explored in a flexible manner. For cities to reap the benefits of collaboration, they should start thinking about what scale their problems belong to and what kind of structures need to be set up in response.

- ***Seoul 50+ Policy.***

The public sector will encounter new types of demand and new citizen needs (such as the automation of jobs impacting the socio-economic fabric of cities). The Seoul 50+ policy shows how a systematic perspective can be applied to respond to new types of demand. It shows how to build lasting and comprehensive solutions for a whole demographic group. It shows that these types of changes are always greeted with suspicion in the beginning and it takes leadership and political clout to move past that. Success is contingent on orchestrating multiple points of intervention that take into consideration their environment, but are also cumulative in nature. The case also addresses what the future of work will be and what types of new models can be tested. Therefore, work, in a post-automation world, will not only be about sustenance and security, but social value and fulfilment.

- ***City of Things in Antwerp***

This case is illustrative of the reality many governments face every day: high uncertainty and lack of capacity to explore tech solutions, they look to 'the outside'. They do not define the agenda themselves, but explore issues in partnership with outside technology

entrepreneurs. However, one cannot get away from developing expertise in-house; otherwise, it is difficult to ascertain the real public value or public value trade-offs connected to projects. Otherwise, outside interests and perspective can start to dominate the agenda. This might be the story in many cases in the field of smart city solutions, the field has become big business and sometimes ‘smart’ is preferred over ‘substance.’ At the same time, technological experimentation is crucial to cities to stay relevant in the future and in most cases they cannot do it alone. Feedback loops and value sandboxes (data ownership, privacy, efficiency etc) could complement technological change. The case also shows the power of narratives and story-telling (‘City of Things’) and their role in emphasising and reaching consensus when confronted with complex value questions.

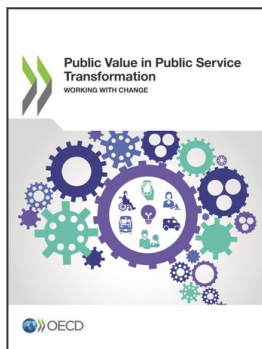
- ***Knowledge Action Programme on Water Governance in Amsterdam.***

Fundamental challenges are ahead to network-bound sectors – technology today makes it possible to remove oneself from the system and build local, decentralised systems. This, to some extent, has already happened in the field of energy and, some predict, water and waste management in 7-10 years. Within these decentralised and circular systems, the role of governing bodies changes; they are not only providers, but producers and resource creators, too. Furthermore, anyone in the system can become a producer/resource provider themselves. Thus, traditional bodies have to contend with new civic solutions that challenge their traditional authority and role. Public organisations need to invest in research and dialogue to explore the future in a productive way and to consider what this means to city governance in the long term and which value trade-offs are ahead. Yet, currently cities and their affiliates have little time to react, let alone research, which means emerging evidence does not inform processes in time. Hence, tracks to explore the future and use the information in everyday practice have to be created and created in ways that take into account the distributed nature of all the potential actors involved. Furthermore, the case shows the importance of experimentation in exploring an uncertain future, but also its limits: when the whole system is affected then the only experiments that can be truly informative are those that adopt the “whole systems approach”.

Overall, the case studies show that not all cities have the same needs or strategies when dealing with complex futures. Yet, in many ways systemic value debates connected to innovation and change are currently taking place. These can be both top-down and bottom-up, but when things become serious then some level of political buy-in is necessary. What seems to be common across the board is that when dealing with transformative change fragmented agendas pose a challenge to governments and silos and agencies dealing with specialised issues need to be addressed and overcome. The capacity to plan for innovation in local governments may be low, but there are ways to work more experimentally to increase the likelihood of desired effects. Yet overall, experimentation, testing and upscaling of innovation receives relatively less attention than the final outcomes in local level innovations. The same is true for public sector innovation at the national level.

In all cases, citizen participation was crucial but not easy. New methods and approaches were tested to deepen the conversations and unearth new needs. While very informative, the role of these approaches in traditional governance structures is not clear. New deliberation approaches require sharing of power with citizens and stakeholders, which is difficult for (city) governments. Sharing of power is much easier in areas of government blind spots or new emerging policy fields, while it is much more difficult in more traditional fields. Yet, user perspectives and civic action are crucial in ensuring that change is viewed as being legitimate.

The report also highlights the need for more research around some core issues. For example, the following questions need to be asked. How, in practice, could public value be used to frame challenges? How can public value be made into a productive rather than abstract concept? The more smart solutions become pervasive, the more this type of debate, analysis and evaluation is needed. Furthermore, the nexus between deliberative process and the future of government should be explored in more detail. This is very important when the rate of change is increasing. Tactics start to dominate strategy and many things lie outside of the control of government. Last but not least, as core city systems are at the brink of change, the report asks at what scale experimentation should be used to address uncertainty correctly and test problems at their best level.



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