



# Design, Policy and Government

Professor Sir Geoff Mulgan

# Design?

Herbert Simon : *‘the intellectual activity that produces material artifacts is no different fundamentally from the one that prescribes remedies for a sick patient or the one that devises a new sales plan for a company or a social welfare policy for a state .... in large part, the proper study of mankind is the science of design, not only as the professional component of a technical education but as a core discipline for every educated person’.*

*‘All fields that create designs...engineering, medicine, business, architecture, and painting are concerned not with the necessary but with the contingent – not with how things are but with how they might be – in short, with design.’*

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So how does government need to be  
designed or redesigned?

Top down



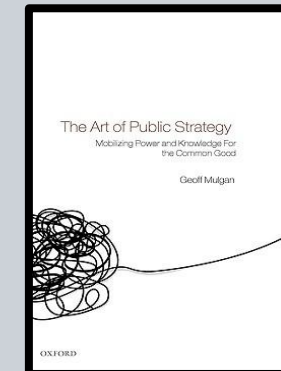
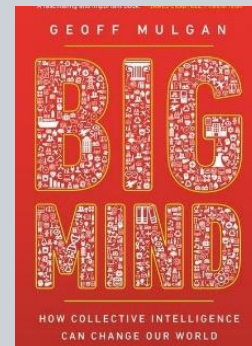
...bottom up



...in between



...and writing books





**ANOTHER WORLD  
IS POSSIBLE**

**GEOFF MULGAN**

**WHEN  
SCIENCE  
MEETS  
POWER**

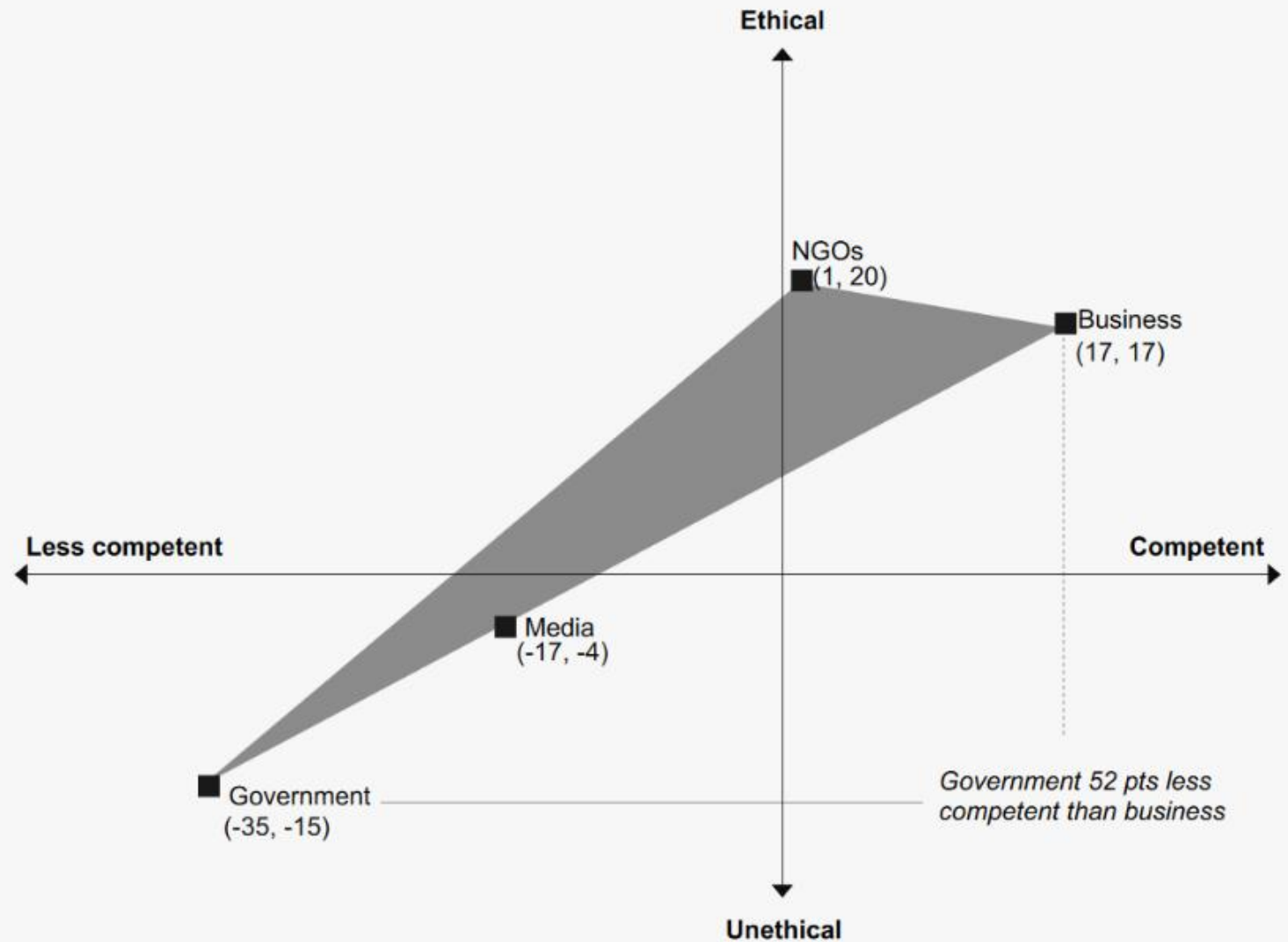
Geoff Mulgan

# Institutions Out of Balance: Government Seen as Far Less Competent and Ethical than Business

(Competence score, net ethical score)

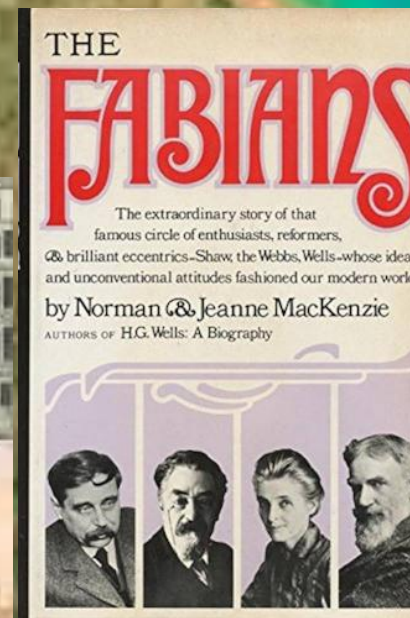
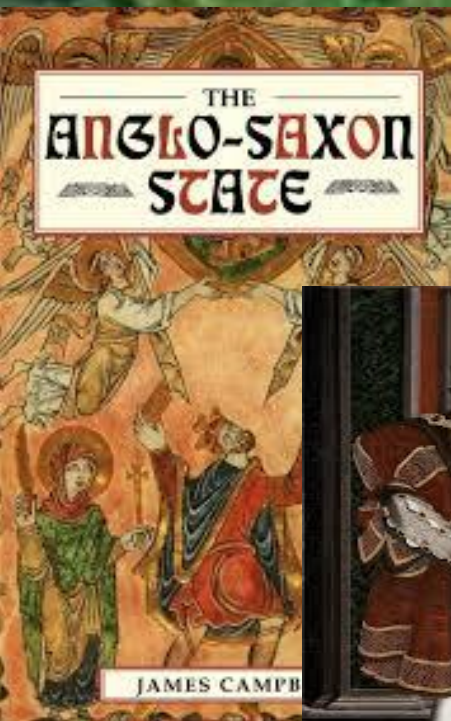
GLOBAL 25 Excludes China, S. Korea, Thailand

2024 Edelman Trust Barometer. The ethical scores are averages of nets based on [INS]\_PER\_DIM/1-4. Media and NGOs were only asked of half the sample. The competence score is a net based on TRU\_3D\_[INS]/1. Media and NGOs were only asked of half the sample. General population, 25-mkt avg. Data not collected in China and Thailand; Due to a translation inconsistency in S. Korea, it has been excluded from this analysis. For full details regarding how this data was calculated and plotted, please see the Technical Appendix.



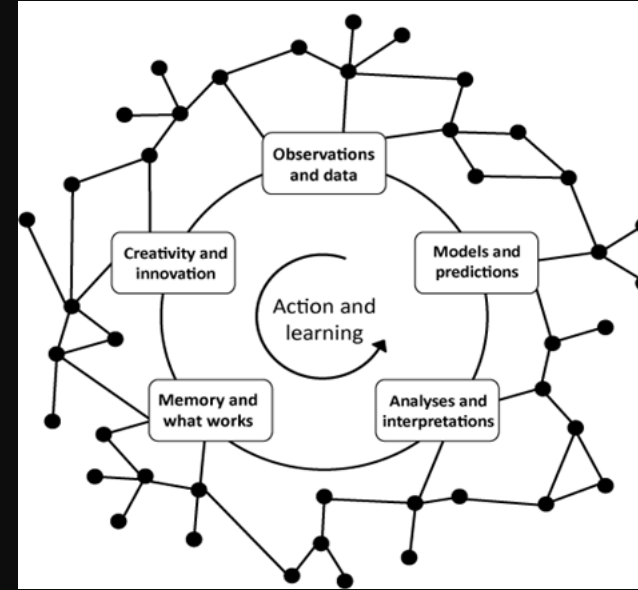


The UK state has accumulated layers of structure over the centuries ... with change usually driven by crisis, failures of competence and trust.

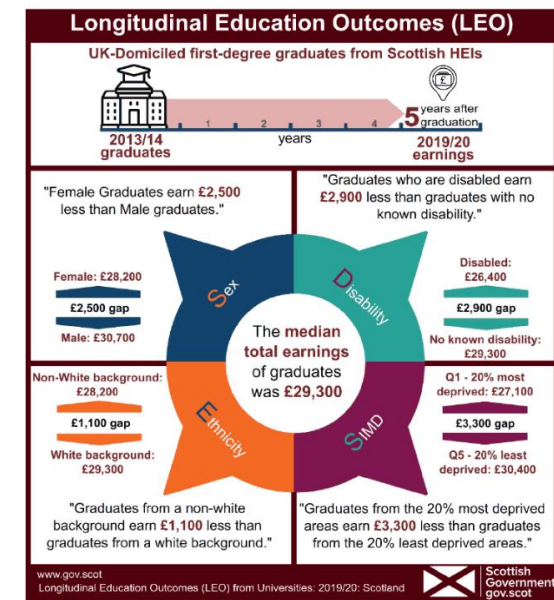
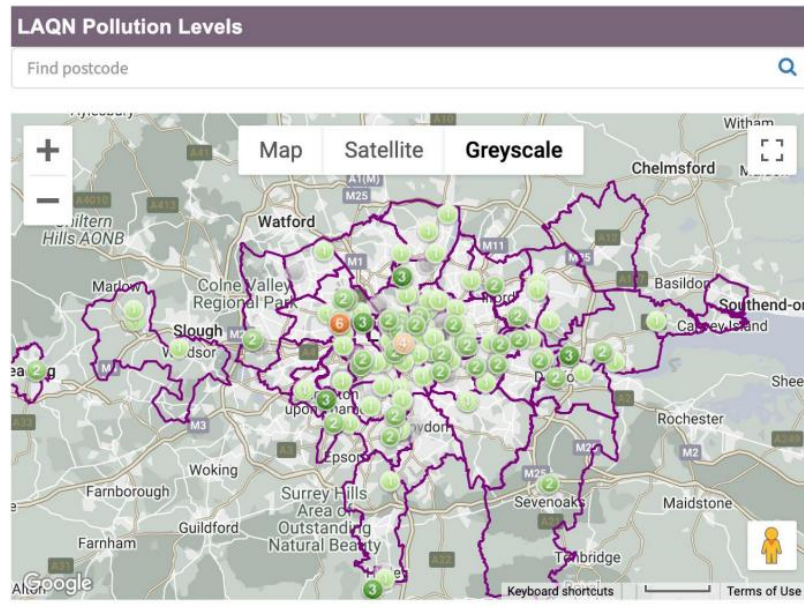


# 1. Shared intelligence as central

Government increasingly depends on the orchestration of intelligence: data, evidence, tacit knowledge, citizen knowledge, the organisation of which should sit at the heart of every government, department and agency.







European Union, Copernicus Sentinel-2 imagery of the Alpine glaciers in 2022

Allegheny County Department of Human Services

## Allegheny County Analytics

Home Topics Visualizations Publications Datasets Videos

Children, Youth and Families Innovation and Reform Type of Report Publications

### Developing Predictive Risk Models to Support Child Maltreatment Hotline Screening Decisions

By DHS - May 1, 2019 6112 0

**DEVELOPING PREDICTIVE RISK MODELS to Support Child Maltreatment Hotline Screening Decisions**

UPDATED APRIL 2019



# Future NHS app?

## Navigating jobs and skills?

singpass

Individuals


Discover what  
you can do with  
Singpass

### Open Jobs

Combining real time data with human know-how to empower your employment. For job-seekers, advisers and employers to connect.

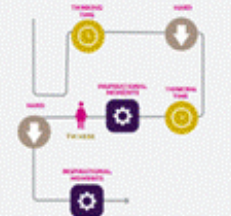
**My search wizard**

Answer questions to let the tool know you and tailor its career suggestions to suit you. Input 'type of job' you want, the 'working lifestyle' you need, the 'prior' subjects studied, your 'role' and 'qualification', and your 'passion'.



### My career journey


Understand how to get the right job with a personalised career action plan broken down. See when to make bigger decisions (GCSEs, apprenticeship, university, career change) and when you have space for experimenting and reflecting. Be nudged and supported to make you take your next action and move further along your journey.



### My suggested occupations


Based on 'search wizard' results, the tool will suggest different occupations and industries, and compare likely outcomes - earnings, satisfaction rating, future growth and how strongly your skills match.

Occupation	Industry	Salary	Future growth	Skills match
Business Development	Business	£25,000	High	High
Marketing	Marketing	£20,000	Medium	Medium
Customer Service	Customer Service	£15,000	Low	Low
Human Resources	Human Resources	£22,000	Medium	Medium
Finance	Finance	£28,000	High	High
Healthcare	Healthcare	£24,000	High	High




### My real time suggestions

If it's a job or education, read your location and see where your real opportunities are right now in real time! See location, cost of commute and expected salary.



### Map my skills

See your skill set and understand how and when to gain new skills to get that better job. See new different occupations with similar skill sets to study, and be inspired by where your skills could take you.



### My daily mix

How will job adverts and employers suggested to you daily. Tailor these to your desired occupation, lifestyle or dream location - click through to connect to the job advert - and let the future become real!



### Future jobs 2030

How will job adverts and employers suggested to you daily. Tailor these to your desired occupation, lifestyle or dream location - click through to connect to the job advert - and let the future become real!



### Case studies

**Tin, 52, Sales consultant.**  
**Problem:** He is at risk of becoming unemployed with due to advancing technology.  
**Solution:** Input skills to see what jobs require similar skills and where he could go to study to get those jobs. See his job adverts and choose knowing your job will be safe in 2030.

**Sarah, 34, Single Mother of 3, personal trainer.**  
**Problem:** juggling busy home life and financial stress. Dreams of an online sports coaching offer.  
**Solution:** Input your skills and dream workplace into the search wizard, and plot your new career journey. See what skills you need and where to study them to land that dream job!

**Billy, 16, Student.**  
**Problem:** stressed studying for GCSEs and has no idea what job he wants.  
**Solution:** Input passions, subjects and dream job lifestyle to have occupations suggested to you. Explore job through video and see what professionals have said about it's really like. Pick and plot your journey to get there.



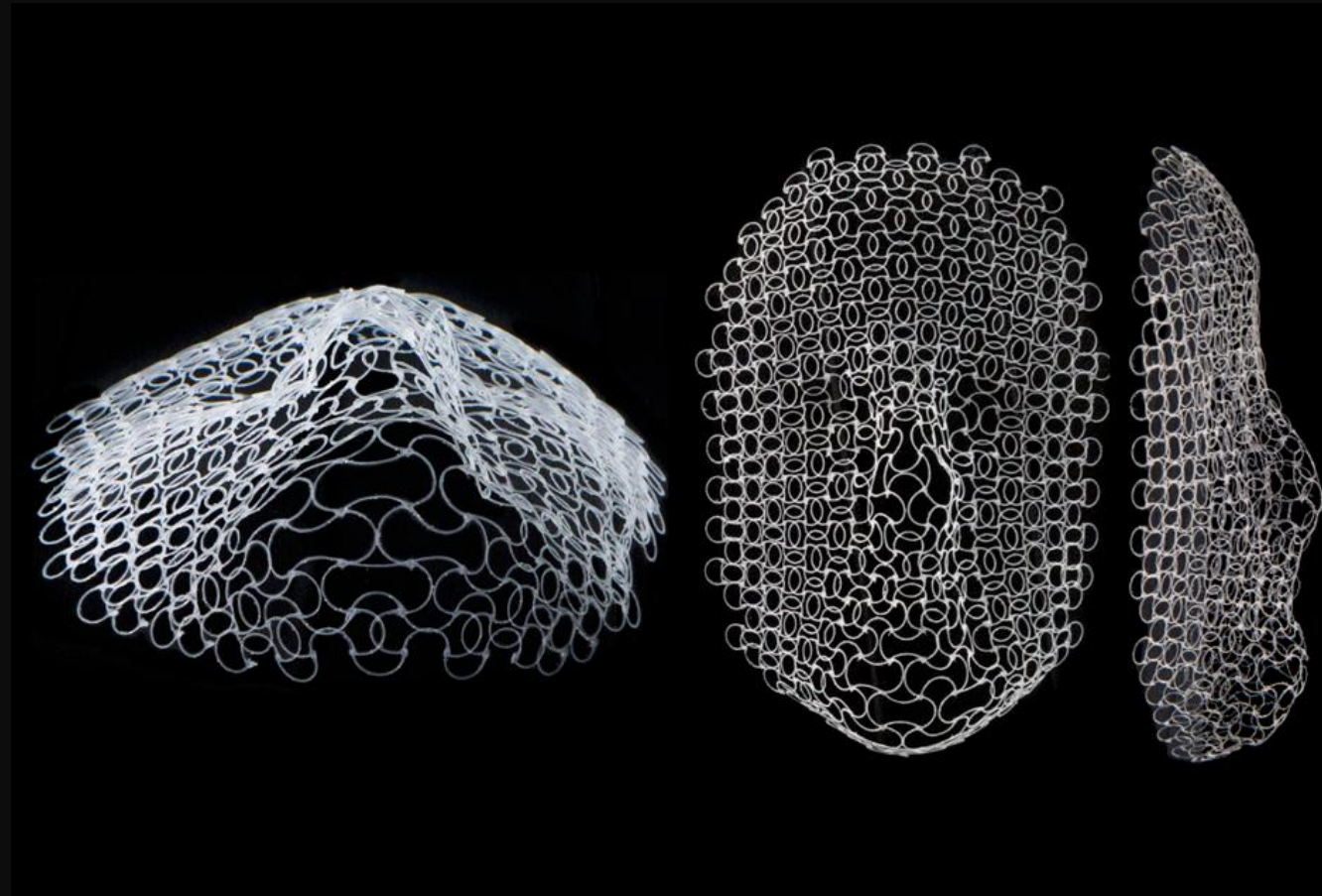
## 2. Acting as a mesh

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Most of government now has to be run as a mesh: linking multiple tiers of government as well as partnerships with business and civil society.

This points to very different organising methods to traditional administrative hierarchy. Systems; weaving; collaboration...

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People &  
Processes

Crosscutting strategy  
Development, performance management

Prime Minister/Mayor

Early identification  
of clashes & trade-offs  
for political resolution

Joint appointments of  
Directors, deputy Mayors and officials

Joint budgets

Joint targets

Dept A

Dept B

Dept C

Dept D

Dept E

Shared knowledge management and shared data

Shared back office and procurement & 'double keys'

Govt as platform – modular tools

Shared front end – customer service, one-stop shops

Partnerships,  
special  
purpose  
vehicles

Flash teams for emergencies, data, innovation, delivery teams





**Te Kawa Mataaho**  
Public Service Commission

[Public Service system](#) / [Leaders](#) / [Public Service system leaders](#) / [System Leads](#)

# Kaiārahi rāngai

## System Leads

**System leads** are appointed under the Public Service Act 2020. System leads are mandated to lead across the Public Service in relation to a particular area or function. They do this by creating a common vision for the future, setting standards and frameworks for agencies to operate within, co-ordinating and supporting best practice and looking for opportunities to work better together.

System Leads are appointed by the Public Service Commissioner to lead and coordinate best practice in a particular subject matter across the whole or part of the State services.

➤ [Public Service Act 2020](#)

System leaders are responsible to their appropriate Minister for achieving agreed outcomes. All of the System Leads have work programmes that have been endorsed by the Government.

➤ [Improving property, procurement, digital, data and information security across the Public Service](#)

### 3. Innovation and experiment

Still a striking mismatch between innovation in science and business – well funded, organised, supported – and often disorganised public innovation, despite the many labs, teams and programmes.



**EE** Edward Elgar  
PUBLISHING

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Home - Advanced Introduction to Public Sector Innovation



*Paperback*

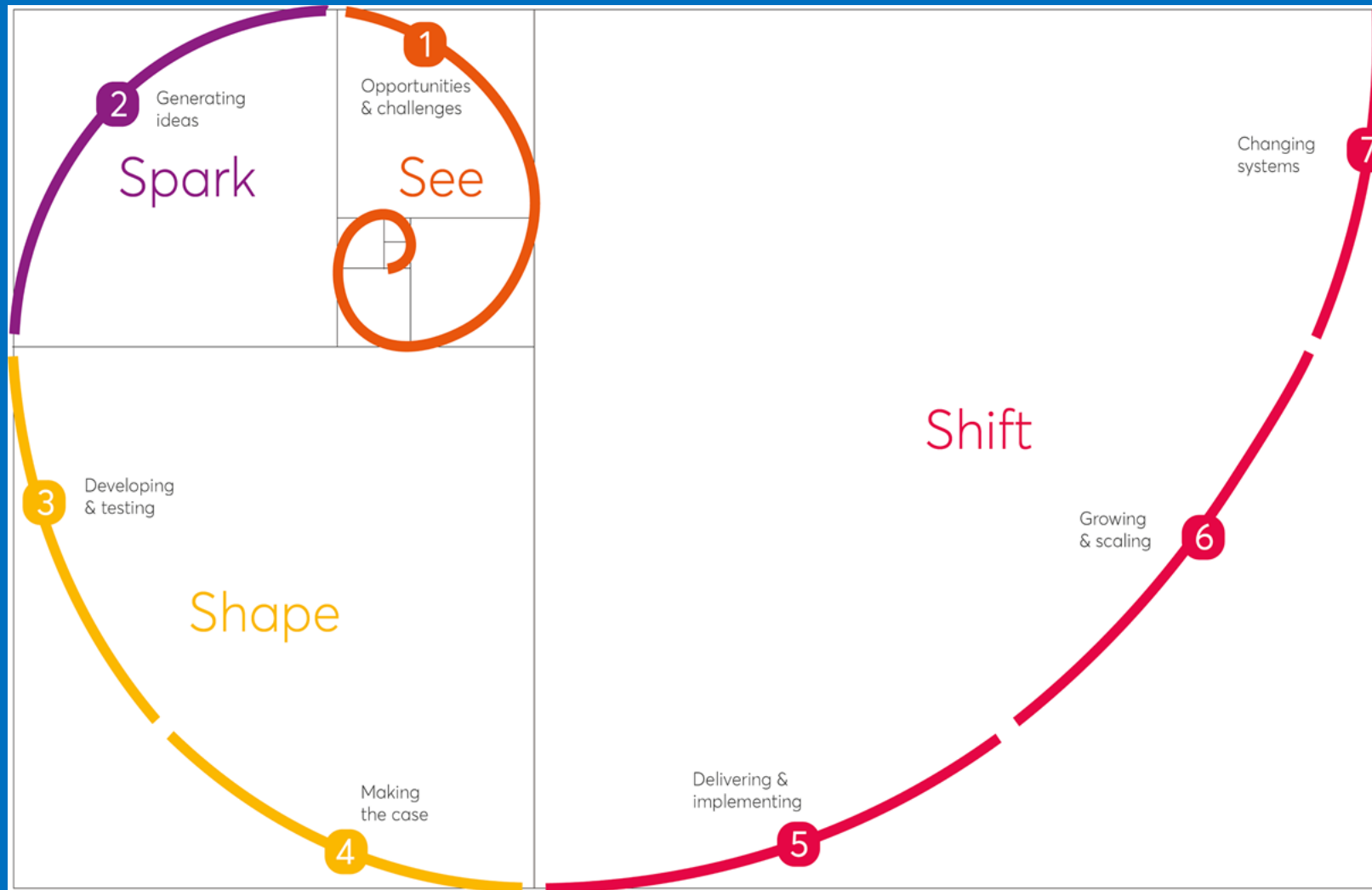
**Advanced Introduction to Public Sector Innovation**

Elgar Advanced Introductions series

Geoff Mulgan, University College London, UK

Publication Date: April 2026 | ISBN: 978 1 03536 357 5 | Extent: c 144 pp

*“The country needs ... bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it: If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something. ...” FDR*



$\wedge$	Inversion
$\int$	Integration
$\times$	Extension
$\partial$	Differentiation
$+$	Addition
$-$	Subtraction
$t$	Translation
$g$	Grafting
$\infty$	Exaggeration

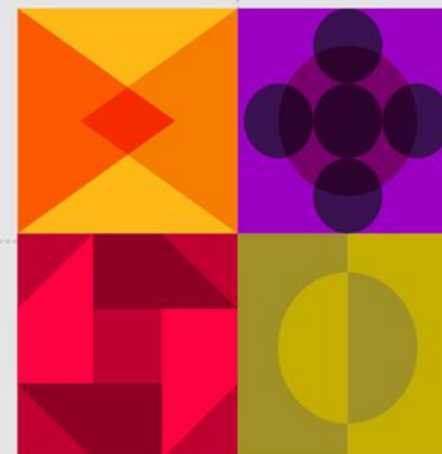


accelerator  
labs



### understand problems

Generate contextualised insights, facts and information on the dynamics of a situation.



### seek solutions

Find novel approaches or tested solutions from elsewhere. Or incentivise innovators to create new ways of tackling the problem.

Monitor the implementation of initiatives by involving citizens in generating data, and share knowledge to improve the ability of others.

### learn and adapt

Make decisions with, or informed by, collaborative input from a wide range of people and/or relevant experts.

### decide and act



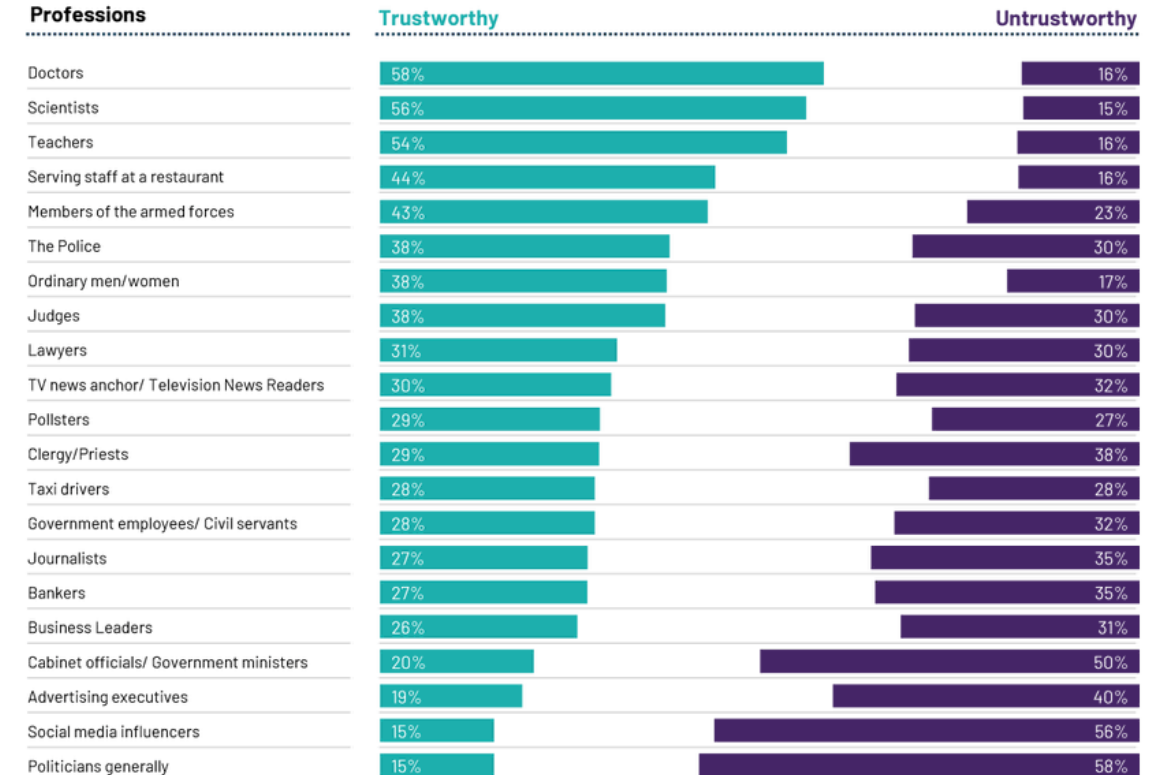
## 4. Trust & engaging the public

The public need ways to engage – to provide feedback, input and share in decisions. 69% of those who feel they have a say in government actions trust national governments, compared to 22% of those who feel they do not have a say.

So reforming engagement – and exploring innovations in democracy – are not an optional add-on, but decisive for restoring trust.

### Global Trustworthiness Ranking 2024

30-country average



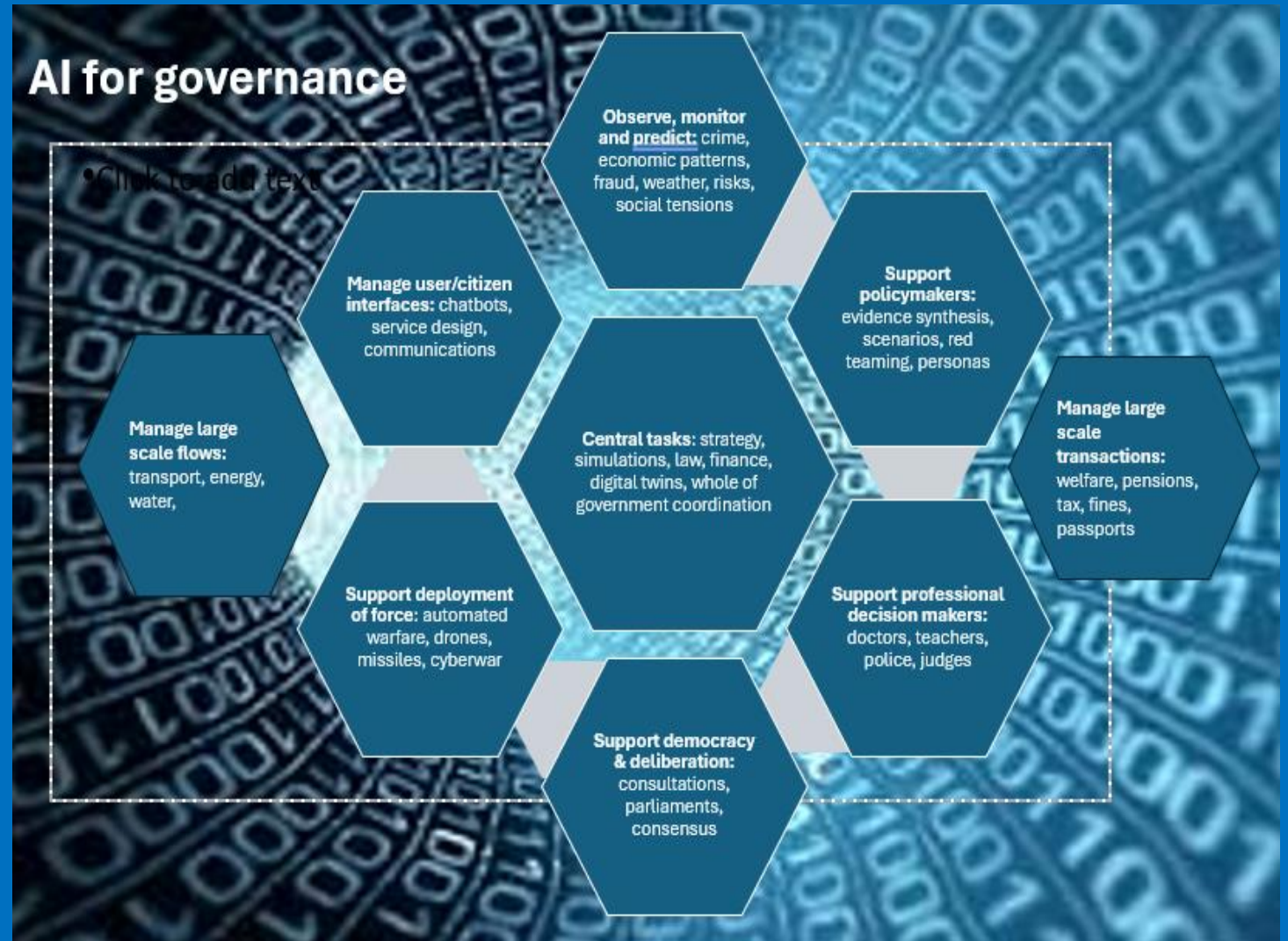
Source: 2024 Ipsos Global Trustworthiness Index. Base: 23,530 online adults under the age of 75 across 32 countries, interviewed 24 May – 7 June 2024.

## 5. Using AI wisely

AI has the potential to change almost every aspect of government and there are some impressive initiatives.

But better results require:

- Experiment and fast learning
- New models of procurement
- Evidence and shared data
- Design of new combinations of AI and collective intelligence





- Data: the municipality receiving the referral, date of receipt, notifier (e.g., school, health institution, family member, or police), type of concern registered, and whether the referral is considered severe (e.g., cases of violent or sexual abuse, parental drug abuse, abusive parenting, or inadequate care). This set also contains detailed data from CPS on past referrals, removals, and preventive services for the referred child's municipality. Additionally, it provides information about parents and siblings, like their ages, number of siblings, living arrangements, household size, and household mobility history.

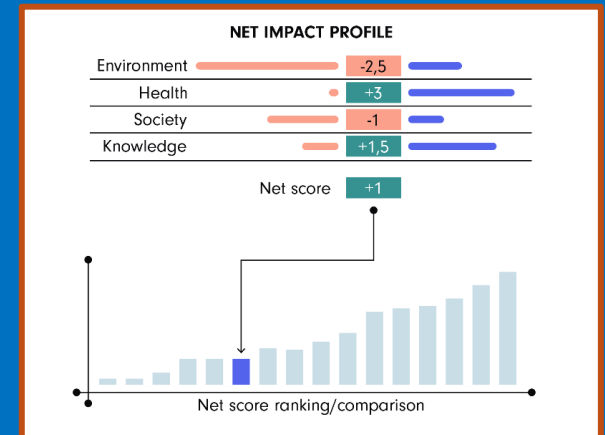
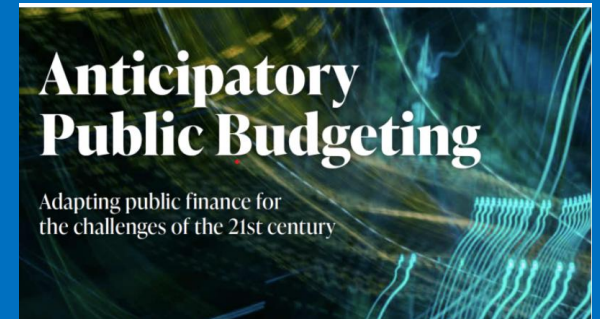
# 6. New Designs for Money

Finance often misaligned with timescales, purposes, impacts.

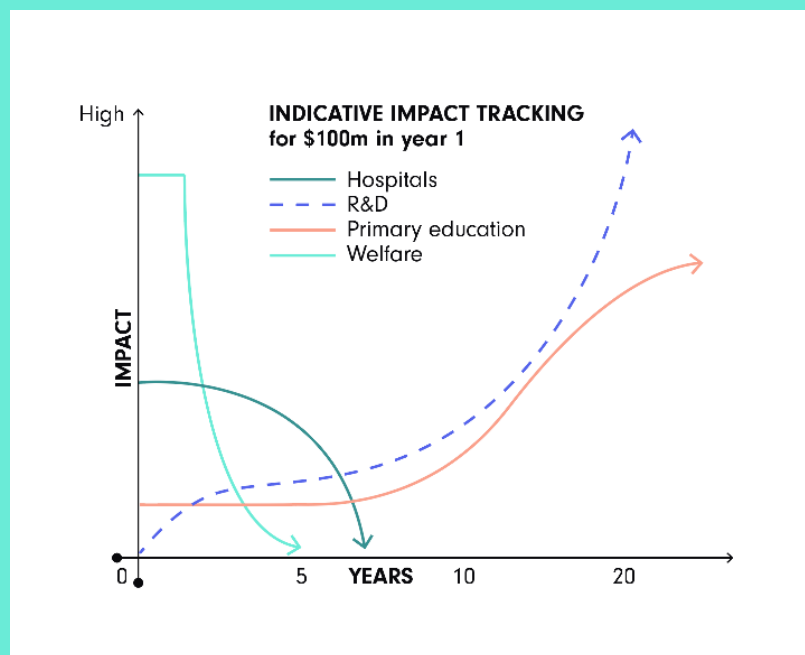
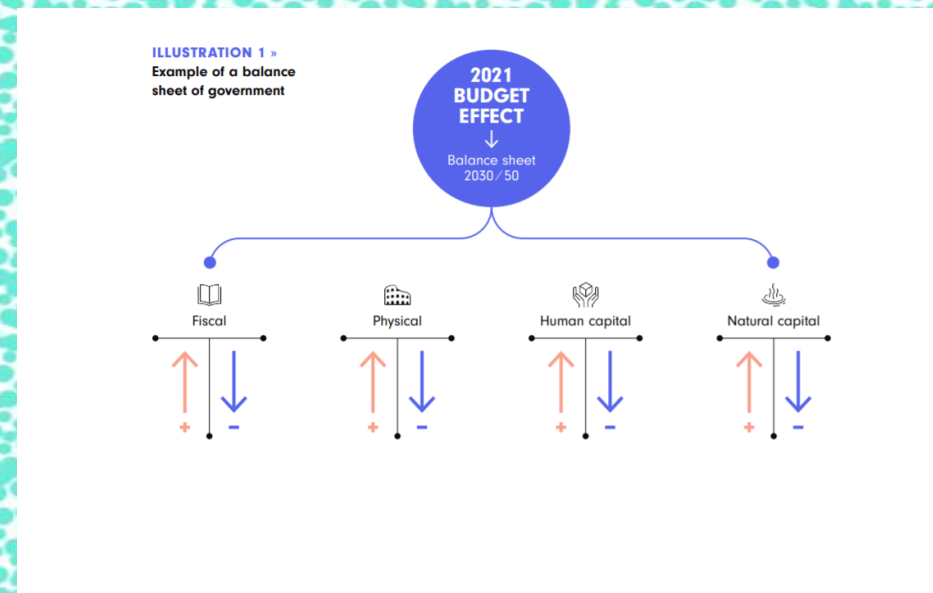
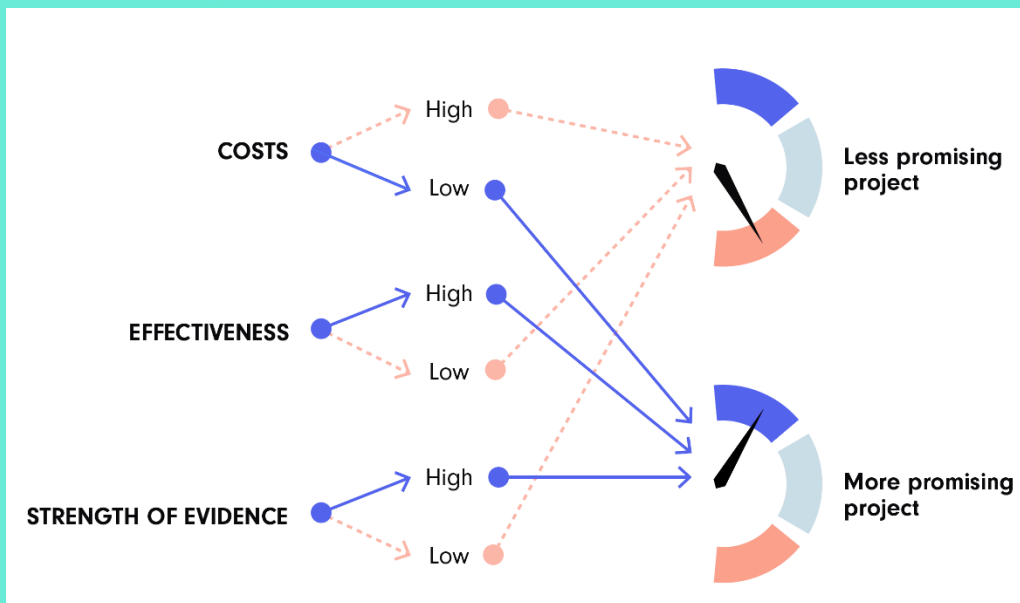
Many **innovations** to build on:

- Public pound multiplier
- Well-being budgets
- Whole of government accounts
- Phenomenon-based budgeting
- Social and development impact bonds
- Impact assessment in investment
- Budget transparency and open data

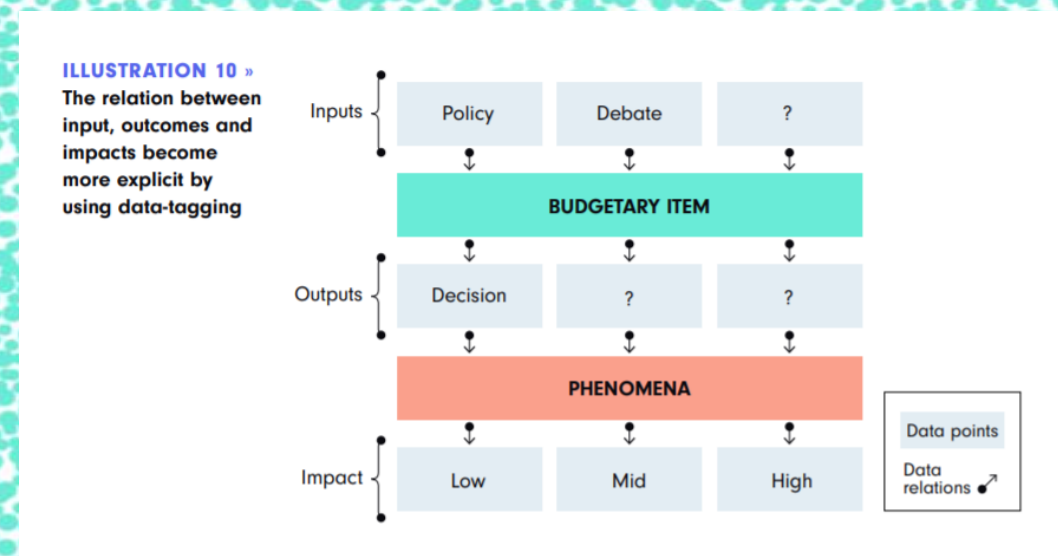
But new operating models needed!







## Anticipatory Public Budgeting



## 7. Cost and complexity reduction



A key challenge for any bureaucracy: how to reduce complexity and costs – regularly, and ruthlessly.

Taxes, processes, protocols, burdens on citizens and businesses – all tend to become more complex over time.





DEMOS

# DOGE DONE BETTER

THE CASE FOR  
PROGRESSIVE EFFICIENCY  
AND A STREAMLINED STATE

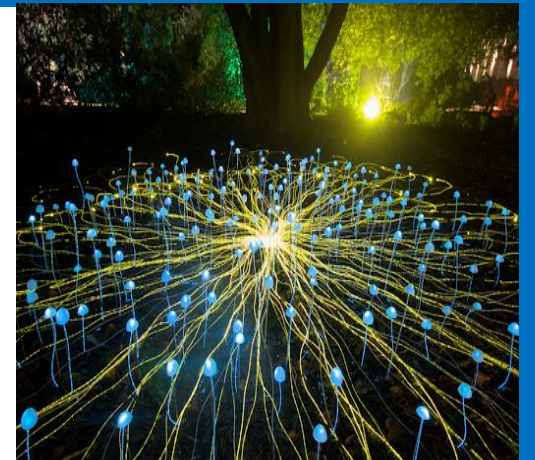
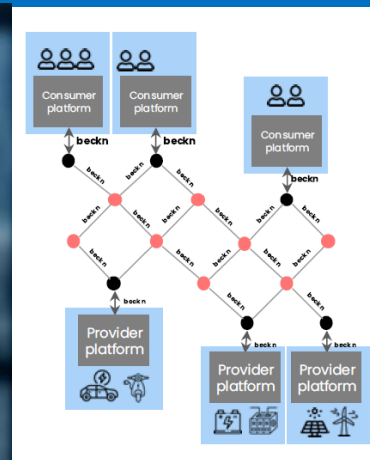
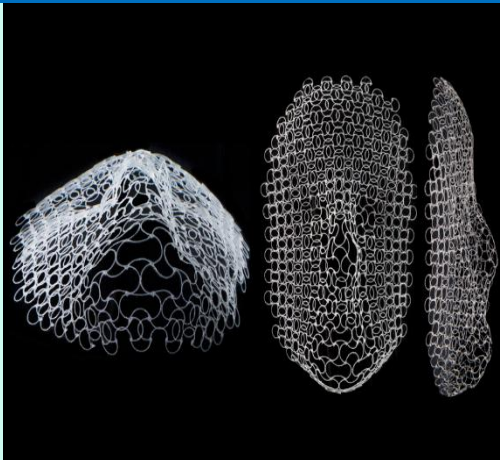
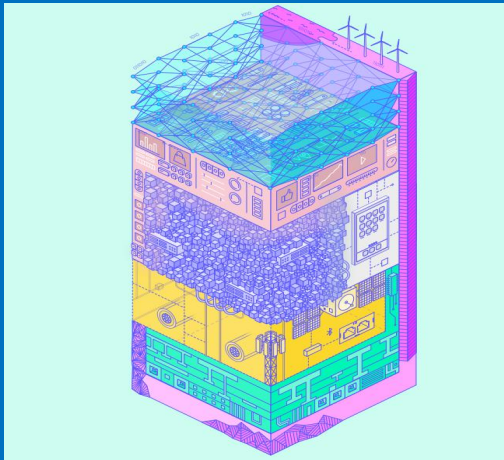
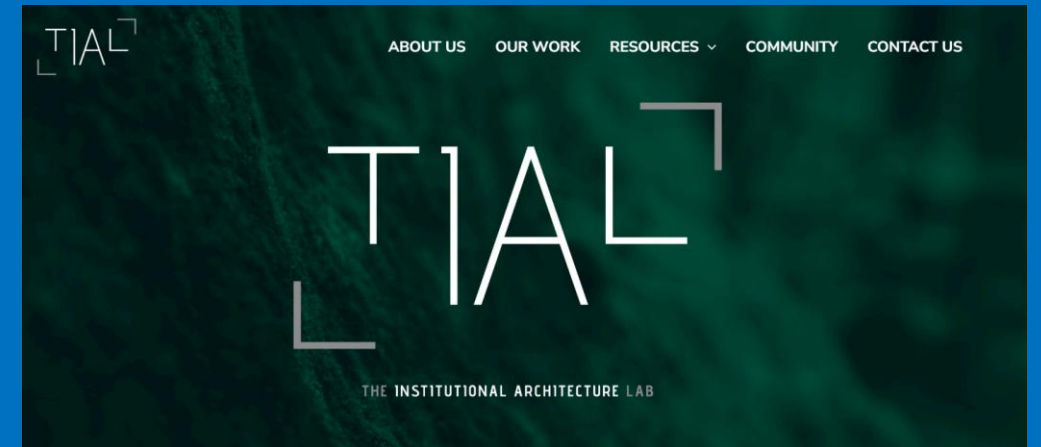






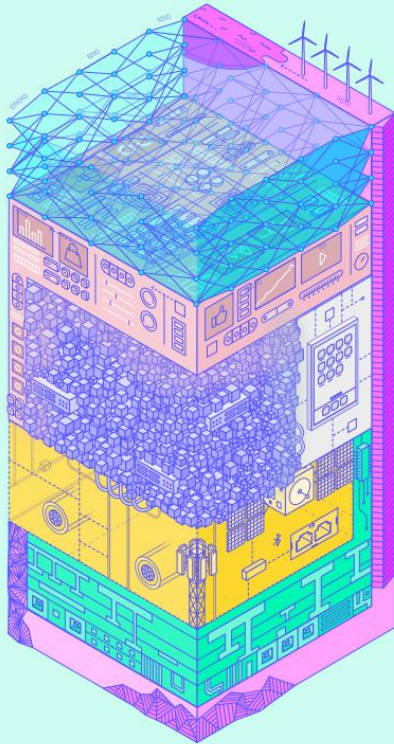
# 8. Designing New Public Institutions

Most public institutions look very similar to their equivalents 20 or 50 years ago – unlike business or civil society. What are the future equivalents of the BBC, NHS, Open University ....



# Stack-based institutions

Mutual transparency,  
triggered hierarchy



Assembly/federated  
governance for meta-  
issues

Knowledge, data and intelligence

Capital, investment, returns

Infrastructure planning, implementation and operation

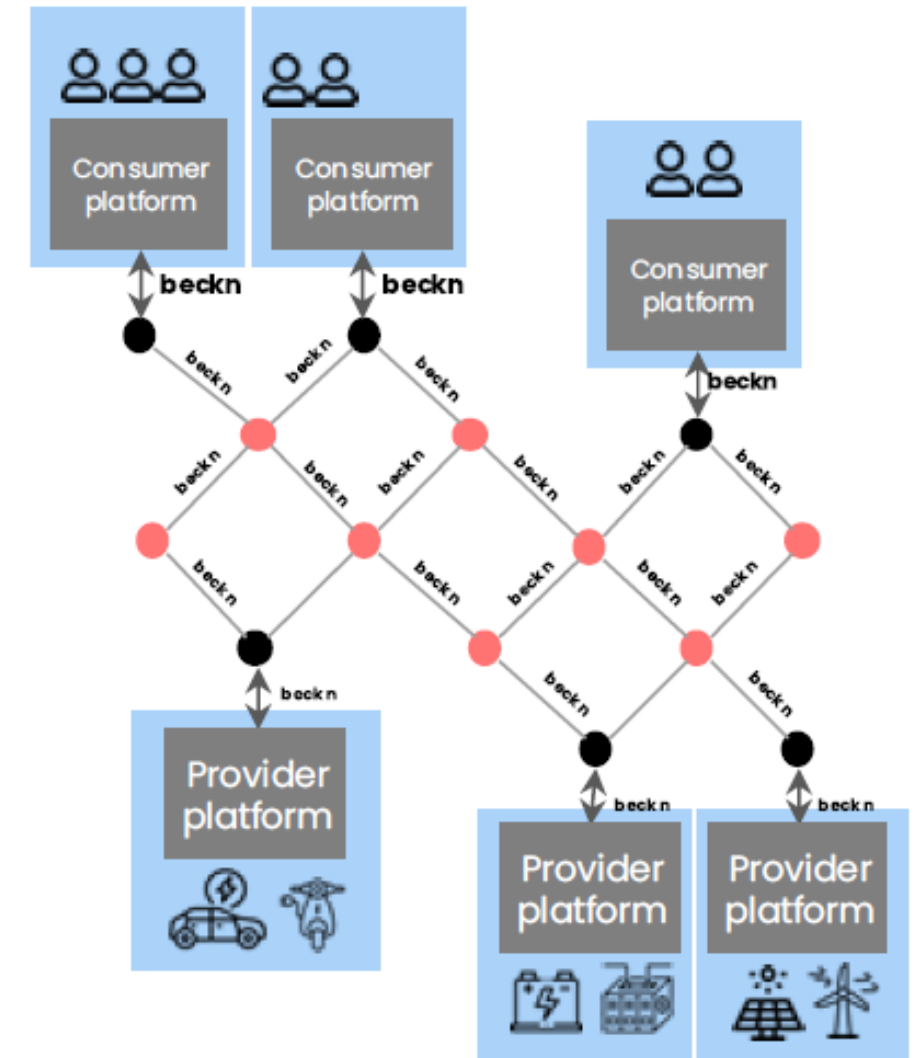
Design rules

Experiment

Rules of behaviour – waste, streets

# Protocol-based institutions

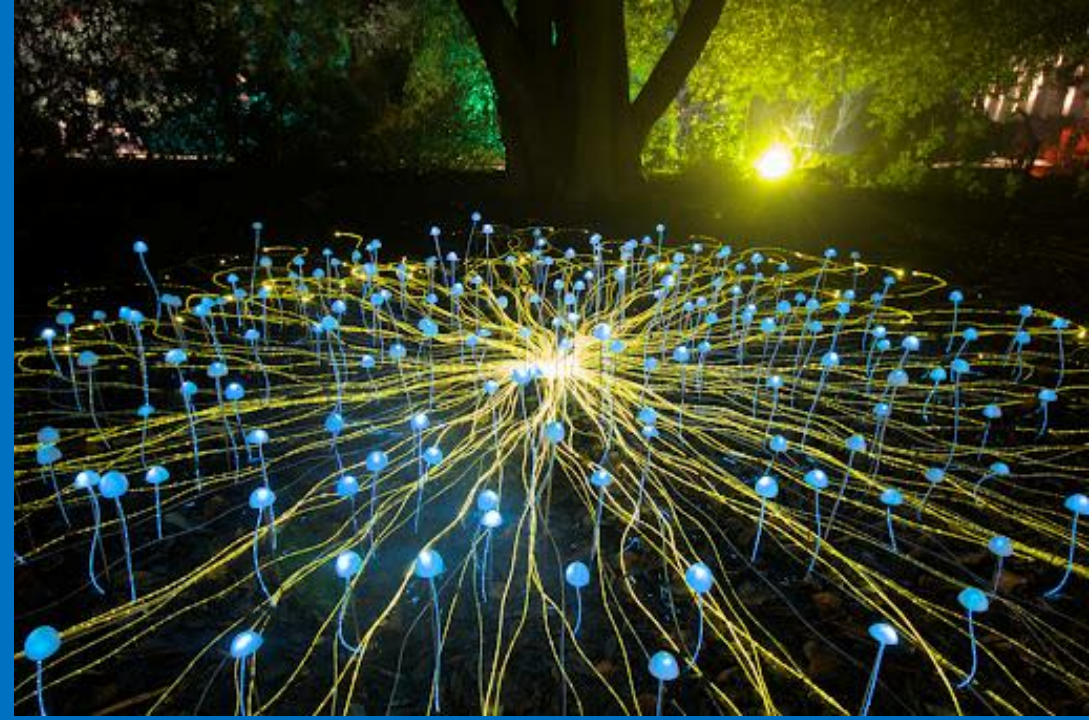
Like the Internet, new institutions set protocols and rules of interconnection and impose requirements for interoperability, sharing data, use of platforms and series of APIs ... supporting ecosystems of autonomous organisations: highly suitable for energy





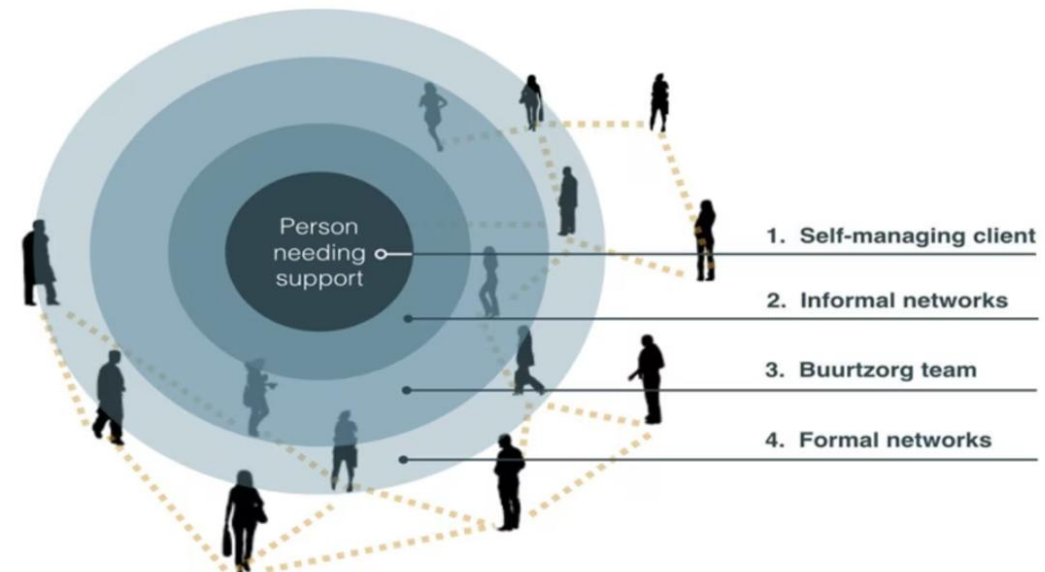
# Mycelium-like networked institutions

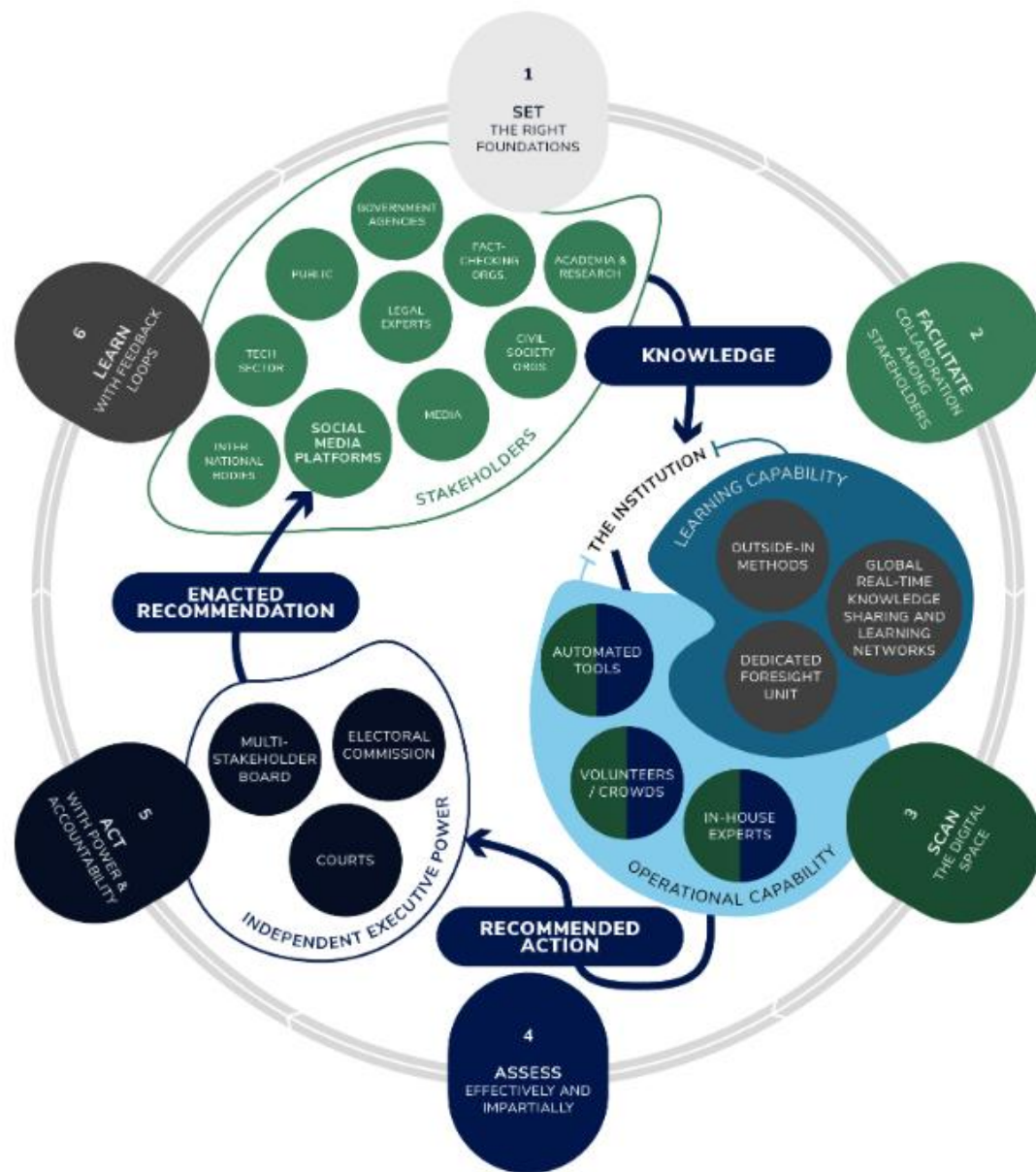
Multiple entities loosely coupled, providing mutual support, acting both above and below ground (ie with both formal and informal networks), highly flexible and resilient, cellular network: highly suitable for care but also relevant for research, technology adoption



## Buurtzorg Onion Model

Buurtzorg works inside out, empowering and adaptive, supportive and network creating.





# SAFEGUARDING ELECTIONS IN THE AGE OF AI AND SYNTHETIC CONTENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR ELECTORAL INTEGRITY INSTITUTIONS

ALEŠ ČAP  
SIR GEOFF MULGAN

WHITE PAPER #001

FEBRUARY 2025

TIAL

THE INSTITUTE FOR ELECTORAL INTEGRITY



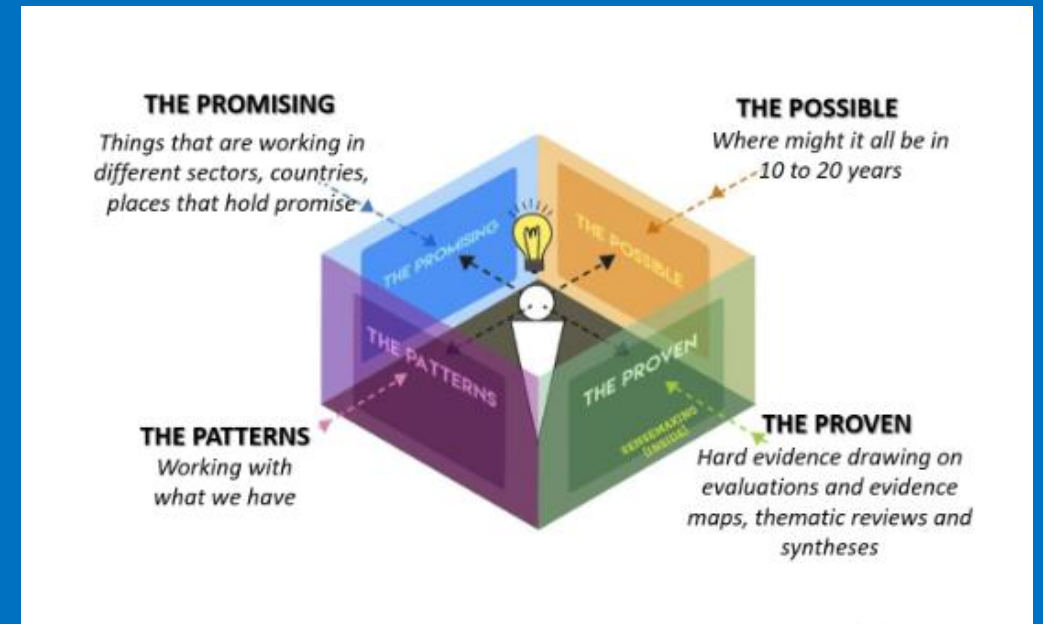
# 9. Designing New Spaces for policy



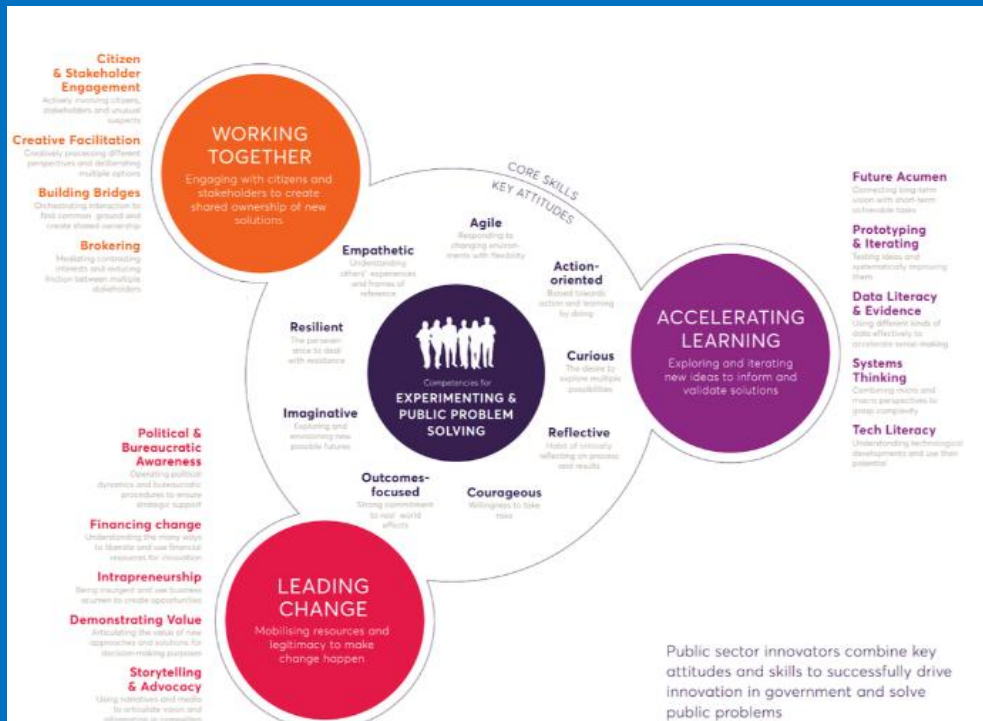
## Creating useful policy steering rooms

Mobilising the 4Ps for better decisions

GG Giulio Quaggiotto GM Geoff Mulgan



# 10. New skills and mindsets



20 <sup>th</sup> century	21 <sup>st</sup> century
Policy design as a separate science	Policy & implementation seen as an end-to-end process
Analytical and logical policy design	Problem solving as key – and understanding different kinds of problem
Law, economics as primary	Science, technology and digital
Managing	Mobilising and engaging – work in networks, meshes, weaves
Innovation as a private sector activity	Innovation as vital for public sector
Organisations/structures	Systems as a key unit of action
Finance as central function of governments	Intelligence function as central function of governments
Assumptions about behaviour	Drawing on empirical psychology
Primarily present-focused	Future orientation
Western theory and examples	Global theory, cases and ideas



# 11. Strength without weight as a design ethos





Government needs a repertoire of very different methods for very different tasks (like a hospital) – and should avoid the over-generalisation of fashions: top-down command and control, New Public Management, privatisation, missions, abundance ....–



# Nesta...

## DESIGN IN PUBLIC AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

### WHAT WORKS AND WHAT COULD WORK BETTER

Geoff Mulgan

January 2014

## **The radical's dilemma: an overview of the practice and prospects of Social and Public Labs – Version 1**

**Geoff Mulgan, February 2014**



How to organise centres of government
How to orchestrate intelligence in governments (data, evidence etc)
How to modernise public finance
How to support public innovation
How to organise ‘whole of government’ action
How to improve government skills (officials and politicians)
How to use AI in government
How to design a ‘relational state’
How to handle crises
How to reorganise procurement
How to reform democracy
How to shape strategy
How to modernise regulation
How to run efficiency drives
How to reignite imagination
How to design new public institutions
How to organise policy for science

