

Dear Senior Fellows and Friends,

On Saturday morning, January 16th, members of this network held an experimental webconference that linked 19 Americans in Virginia, New Orleans, and Boston with 6 like-minded Italians at the University of Ferrara and in Dublin, Ireland, for a couple of hours.

The purpose was to introduce you to ground-breaking volunteer training and coordination done in Italy following the Abruzzo earthquake on April 6th last year. According to Elena Rapisardi, our presenter, Abruzzo was the first earthquake in the Web 2.0 era in Italy. “Lots of students were messaging in L’Aquila at the time. People were connected, and then they weren’t there. People died.” A practice conducted later in the year, involving shifts of volunteers who arrived for a week at a time, leveraged the new possibilities enabled by easy availability of free and low-cost social media. A number of lessons were learned and have begun being presented. Management Concepts executive Barbara Beach, with excellent technical assistance from Larry Walters, Stephen Martin and Drew Guman, partnered with us to create a novel experience that would enable us all to learn about this local emergency preparedness project. The value of experimentation and practice during calmer times cannot be overstated.

Everyone recognized the interrelated topics that came up on the call. One challenge was the randomness of knowledge transfer between outgoing and incoming volunteer workers. An [InSTEDD](#) platform was developed – and then it was necessary to convince people to adopt it, and that worked imperfectly, as will always be the case when human beings are involved. Our speaker also mentioned [Ushahidi](#) as a way of collecting information from people; please go look at these sites. One necessity is to write, not talk, what one has learned, even though writing takes more work, so that critical information can be captured and shared over time and space.

What we think of as the “digital divide” here came up, although under a different name; a big constraint on the use of Web 2.0 tools can be the unfamiliarity of a subpopulation with the Internet itself. Also, surfing the Web is not the same as Web knowledge when you’re looking for volunteers to help with communications. Also, if worker productivity is critical, then the focus must be on outcomes rather than on outputs. And, innovation requires momentum; starting and stopping make it much more difficult. Better to do at least one small thing each day. There were comments about the need for “public employee 2.0” and opening the organization, making it more transparent. There’s the issue of control – there has to be some. Everyone can’t do anything they please; it simply won’t work (this was reminiscent of last year’s [OpenGov dialogue](#), which got out of hand when a group of malcontents bombarded it). Further, she asserted that even Facebook could be used for proactive collaboration, and that it is crucial to allow the public to make decisions on how to cope with risk. The latter point was also made by Peter Koht last fall, as he presented on the [City of Santa Cruz’s budget crisis solution](#).

Elena Rapisardi, a consultant in Web content coordination and community management who was presenting her work for a second time – following an in-person presentation at the [NYC Web 2.0 Expo](#) on November 19th – learned from Giuseppe Zamberletti, who managed emergencies resulting from earthquakes in 1976 and 1980 as a Government Commissioner in charge of coordinating relief. He and she set up ispro.it, a collaboration network for mayors, and she and Sabina Di Franco have worked on this together. The Mayor is the core of civil protection at the local level. Ms. Rapisardi has made her slides and transcript available at <http://www.slideshare.net/elenis/building-civil-protection-20-updated>. We are continuing to talk via Skype, and it is my hope that we can create further opportunity to talk with her interesting and accomplished colleagues:

Giorgio Poletti – Professor, [University of Ferrara](#)

Sabina Di Franco – Geologist, emergency manager, web expert at [Formez](#)
National Research Centre in Rome

Antonella Ongaro – Lawyer, civil protection volunteer belonging to a
municipality group of the Province of [Padova](#)

Silvio Francescon – Architect, civil protection volunteer; responsible for the
volunteers in a district of the province of Padova

Roberto Pizzicannella - [CNIPA](#), National Centre for Innovation in
Public Administration (who participated from Dublin)

A list of American participant affiliations follows:

Consultant, Advanced Research Program Analysis

Department of Defense /DTRA

Department of Education

Department of Transportation /FAA

Department of Treasury /Bureau of Engraving & Printing

General Services Administration

Cisco Advisory Fellow

Infragard New Orleans (participating from New Orleans)

MacNeil/Lehrer Productions (our photographer and new journalist, Kurtis Lee)

Management Concepts

Public Sector Consortium /The Glastonbury Company (participating from Boston)

Senior Executives Association

Storyteller /Librarian

Ellie Seamans, who e-mailed participants later in the day, said that “the issue of emotional maturity is key to people working together on constantly shifting dance floors.” The Italian experience reminds us that improvements in local emergency preparedness, or any other changes to the way government functions or relates to citizens, can’t be forced by the application of new technology – one reason why flexibility and resilience are included among the [leadership core competencies](#) recognized by the Office of Personnel Management.

Also, Fred Thompson forwarded a new Australian government report about “Getting on with Government 2.0.” available at <http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/gov20taskforcereport/index.html>. Three key points:

- Government 2.0 or the use of the new collaborative tools and approaches of Web 2.0 offers an unprecedented opportunity to achieve more open, accountable, responsive and efficient government. Though it involves new technology, Government 2.0 is really about a new approach to organising and governing.
- Leadership, and policy and governance changes are needed to shift public sector culture and practice to make government information more accessible and usable, make government more consultative, participatory and transparent, build a culture of online innovation within Government, and to promote collaboration across agencies.
- Government 2.0 will not be easy for it directly challenges some aspects of established policy and practice within government. Yet the changes to culture, practice and policy we envisage will ultimately advance the traditions of modern democratic government. Hence, there is a requirement for co-ordinated leadership, policy and culture change.

See the “people stuff”? Near the end of the webconference, there was some discussion about slow government adoption of Web 2.0. The thing that’s really different about Web 2.0 is that it enables and sets an expectation for **two-way communication**. Mastery implies relationships that are enhanced by emotional intelligence. Clay Shirky, New York University, writes in [Here Comes Everybody](#) that this change has as many ramifications as did the invention of the printing press and movable type. A permanent shift is occurring, and I think we should be paying attention. That governments “figure it out” is really important – because their people are adopting Web 2.0 social media tools at warp speed. Barriers to entry are falling in some sectors and “mass amateurization” and other trends are changing the game, remaking industries or driving cherished institutions out of business. Public expectations of government are changing.

Here are a few sources that will help, if you decide to pursue this topic:

- Current example of “crowdsourcing” in government: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/partner4solutions>
- The National Academy for Public Administration’s Collaboration Project: <http://www.collaborationproject.org/display/home/Home>
- Executive Branch employees collaborative workspace: [MAX Federal Community](#)
- P.K. Kannan’s framework for government’s use of Web 2.0, at http://www.businessofgovernment.org/main/publications/bog/chang_fall08.pdf

- Contact with university professors and federal/state/local government people who may be doing social media research through ASPA: <http://www.aspanet.org/>
- Last but not least, conversation with others around the world who are thinking about how to improve government: [GovLoop](#)

Finally, if you are in contact with emergency management professionals who would like to know more about Civil Protection 2.0, please ask me to introduce them to Elena Rapisardi.

Best wishes in the coming year,

Kitty Wooley
U.S. Department of Education

Mind is not a recipient to be filled, but a fire to be excited. Plutarco, I^o century AD

Students are not turkeys. They are to be engaged, not stuffed. Carol Willett, GAO Chief Learning Officer, retired January 2010