The Queen’s Policy Review joins the fray

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The time is right – 2010 feels like it could be an auspicious year. A good time to launch a new publication. Maybe it’s the fact that only a few months ago, the world’s attention focused on a gathering of epic proportions – thirty thousand gathered in Copenhagen to discuss, of all things, the state of the environment. Never mind that it was widely considered to be a flop; it happened and it dominated the news for two weeks. An international exercise of such overwhelming proportions that it would have been unwarranted a century ago, unimaginable fifty years ago, and inconceivable even at the turn of the Millennium. And yet, here we are.

Perhaps it’s the fact that multilateral organizations of all stripes are striving to open up to an increasingly engaged public – the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization for example are all feeling the pressure to open up their process to an increasingly informed audience. To accept as legitimate different points of view,
different potential political economies, different takes on life; to work with outsiders in order to achieve common goals. 2010 feels like it could be an auspicious year.

Maybe it’s the fact that here in Canada, a couple of catch words keep coming up – collaborative, cooperative and network governance; dealing with wicked problems; building a shared understanding and a common purpose; managing the transition to Strategic Public Management…

There is a sense that we are witnessing a subtle shift that will overtake the way we collectively decide, and at all imaginable scales: in neighbourhoods, cities, watersheds, regions, countries and even as a planet. Collective decision-making as a planet. Let me just repeat that: collective decision-making, as a planet. Incredible. 2010 feels like it could be an auspicious year.

In the words of Steurer and Martinuzzi (2004), we are in the midst of a transition from "grand planning schemes to adaptive strategy processes, from authorities to competencies, from pure hierarchies to a combination of hierarchies and networks, from control to monitoring evaluation and feedback, and from knowing to learning.” In this great transition from knowing to learning, there are no teachers. There are no savants with all the right answers: there is no right answer. What we do have, and should be thankful for, is a legion of engaged and informed world citizens, people who dedicate their time to learning, investigating, and communicating the results of their endeavours: us. Students. Building spider webs between ivory towers and government silos, patiently waiting for those juicy jobs to land onto our laps.

In a world in transition, a world desperately seeking alternative sources of input and ways to make it matter, this is where we fit in. Learning, thinking, investigating and communicating. Thus it is my great pleasure and with great pride that I introduce to you the Queen’s Policy Review. We exist to capture that transition, to disseminate all that hard work, to make it matter, to influence the public debate; we exist to publish graduate student papers “in recognition of their contribution to the field of public policy”. The time is right. 2010 feels like it could be an auspicious year. And the rest is up to us.