



# We, the Lunatics, Control the Asylum

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## A Declaration of Victory!

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**“With all these profound changes – the Google-isation of the world’s information, the creation of on-line networks bigger than whole populations, the ability of new technology to harness the wisdom of crowds and the rise of user-generated content – we are seeing the democratisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. ... People... are the masters now.”** \_

*Rt Hon. George Osborne MP “Politics and Media in the Internet Age” November 06*



## Bottom-up, not Top-down

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**“If we really want to deliver better public services, the best way to do that is bottom up. Change is driven by better feedback, open information and more ways in which citizens can make their voices heard about what matters to them. The challenge is for all public bodies to think about how they can respond to the challenges described here... If 30,000 parents were meeting in a park or football stadium to share information and tips about parenting, government would take notice. That they are doing it online simply means we have to find different ways to take their efforts just as seriously.”**

*Cabinet Office Minister Hilary Armstrong, June 2007 (urging the facilitation of bottom-up use of public sector data)*



## How We Did It

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- Our faith in institutions plunged from 1983 to 2000 - in the police by 45%, the church by 42%, the legal profession by 62%, and in Parliament by 72%. Henley Centre for Forecasting, 2000
- “As consumers, people... feel they enjoy quite a transparent relationship where ...they get what they pay for and they know what to do when they don't. However,...they feel powerless to do the same in their civic life... They [are]... keen to be able to judge politicians and what a politician promises” BBC, 2002
- We have shifted away from formal to informal, “pressure politics – such as signing petitions, supporting consumer boycotts, joining campaign groups... interest in “political issues” is high” Power Inquiry, 2006
- Ombudsmen and other regulatory complaints mechanisms have heightened our awareness of our rights and given us a voice.
- Web 2.0 enables us to share data to control our experiences. The media are concerned only with “news”, what is immediate, significant, topical. Only the PR-skilled, lucky or very persistent individuals get their message into the news.



# The Brains Behind Us

Community

Knowledge

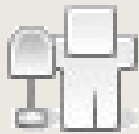
Policy



del.icio.us



WIKIPEDIA  
The Free Encyclopedia



bbc.co.uk



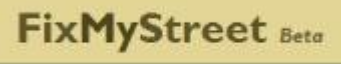
WORDPRESS



the food chain



Bloglines





# Synaptic Pathways of P2P Politics

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- **Single issue pressure campaigns and catalytic charities**  
[http://www.foodchain.org.uk/news/want\\_to\\_help\\_support\\_](http://www.foodchain.org.uk/news/want_to_help_support_)  
; <http://www.oxfam.org/en/>
- **Blogosphere (and RSS, tagging)**
- **Vote swapping**  
[www.tacticalvoter.net](http://www.tacticalvoter.net)
- **Vigilantes**  
<http://www.moveon.org/>
- **Aggregators**  
<http://www.epolitix.com/EN/MPWebsites/>
- **Porous government**  
<http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/> ; <http://www.direct.gov.uk>
- **Locally devolved government**  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk>



## Benefits of Connecting Like Crazy

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- More efficiently match people's real, rather than perceived issues with champions who can give them political leverage;
- Reduce the cost, and increase the success rate, of handling public enquiries;
- Improve the participation of citizens in shaping public policy and services – provided site is simple to use and encourages defining problems, measurement and addressing root causes rather than leaping to solutions (the danger of petitions);
- Improve the data available to all stakeholders about the state of public processes;
- Improve the engagement, transparency, accessibility, timeliness in public consultations.



## Related Themes of Web 2.0

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### **Bottom-up**

- Users determine what they want, not institutions or suppliers
- Features reflect actual consumer behaviour, not tech-driven

### **Disruptive**

- Travel, music, retailing, bookmaking, games, telephony, TV

### **Rapid evolution**

- Facebook's UK audience grew 523% to 3.2m in H1 2007. Friendster had 20m+ users in '03, but <1m by '07. *The Times*
- Driven by user contribution and collaboration, requests, complaints, comments on and off-site (e.g. from blogs), transactional data, focus groups, surveys, polls and beta tests.

### **“The Long Tail” (Chris Anderson)**

- Sharing data about what else users have bought/thought brings what would otherwise be niche into the mainstream.



# Hype or Reality?

## Top 10 UK Sites by Visitors

**Ranked by U.K. Unique Visitors  
 July 2007 vs. June 2007 Total U.K., Age 15+ – Home and Work Locations\*  
 Source: comScore World Metrix**

Property	Total Unique Visitors (000)		
	June 2007	July 2007	% Change
<b>Total UK Internet Audience</b>	<b>31,669</b>	<b>31,791</b>	0%
<b>Google Sites</b>	27,718	28,151	2%
Microsoft Sites	26,760	26,947	1%
eBay	22,052	22,079	0%
Yahoo! Sites	20,706	20,760	0%
<b>BBC Sites</b>	18,865	18,921	0%
Ask Network	14,135	14,598	3%
Time Warner Network	13,857	14,934	8%
Fox Interactive Media	13,200	13,215	0%
Amazon Sites	12,542	12,472	-1%
<b>Wikipedia Sites</b>	12,213	11,699	-4%



# Hype or Reality?

## 10 Fastest Gaining UK Sites by Visitors

**Ranked by U.K. Unique Visitors  
July 2007 vs. June 2007 Total U.K., Age 15+ – Home and Work Locations\***  
Source: comScore World Metrix

Property	Total Unique Visitors (000)		
	June 2007	July 2007	% Change
<b>Total UK Internet Audience</b>	<b>31,669</b>	<b>31,791</b>	0%
ODEON.CO.UK	1,752	2,618	49%
Lastminute.com Sites	3,978	5,172	30%
<b>FACEBOOK.COM</b>	6,012	7,604	26%
Cheapflights Sites	2,293	2,801	22%
Disney Online	2,624	3,190	22%
First Choice Holidays PLC	3,016	3,592	19%
Play.com Sites	4,006	4,753	19%
NEXT Group	3,273	3,851	18%
Dixons Stores Group	4,040	4,712	17%
<b>WordPress</b>	2,342	2,716	16%



## Keeping the Shrinks at Bay...

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- Consultation processes lack consistency, accessibility, transparency, timeliness and business engagement; do not consider all regulatory options; nor allow adequate time for response *Better Regulation Taskforce, 2005*
- Private sector says it is able to “make more constructive input when alternatives are being considered.” *Arculus D., Salomon E. “Routes to Better Regulation”, 2005*
- Informal campaigns and catalysts may lack accountability (reputation?) in contrast with civil servants and ministers.
- Necessarily non-linear, untidy process needs a champion to capture, rationalise, unify and focus on effective change.
- Threats to “Net Neutrality”, innovation and competition from corporate content owners asserting infringement of their intellectual property rights, and attempts to regulate digital rights management, and internet broadcast content.