

# Mapping citizen engagement in the process of social innovation

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## 1. Introduction

Over the last decade there has been a proliferation of methods and approaches to citizen engagement. From idea banks and competitions to co-creation workshops and online petitions, governments, public services and businesses are increasingly keen to garner insights and information from citizens, service users and customers.

The idea of citizen engagement itself is a broad concept and often lacks critical examination. It tends to be universally thought of as a 'good thing' - Sherry Arnstein suggests that "the idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you".<sup>1</sup> But as several researchers have highlighted, this means it often escapes careful analysis. For example, Sarah White notes that "the status of participation as a 'Hurrah' word, bringing a warm glow to its users and hearers, blocks its detailed examination."<sup>2</sup>

Citizen engagement is bound up with notions of involvement and participation, and is often used synonymously with these terms. There are a few observations that we can make to unpack this concept in the abstract. For example, citizen engagement or participation must be voluntary – it can be made more attractive but it cannot be coerced. And it clearly involves some form of action by citizens, though this can take diverse forms from volunteering to signing a petition to making a donation or taking part in a demonstration. But whether we talk about engagement, involvement or participation, these terms are always used to refer to engagement *in* something; it makes little sense to talk about them outside of some specific context.

There are two contexts where citizen engagement is most frequently discussed: engagement of individuals in the various structures and institutions of democracy (often termed 'public participation'; and engagement in activities related to the community and other informal associations ('civil' or 'social' participation).<sup>3</sup> In the context of public participation, citizen engagement is thought to strengthen the legitimacy and accountability of democratic institutions; this is particularly important in an era of steady decline in participation in formal political channels such as voting and party membership.<sup>4</sup> Involving citizens in decision making is also thought to contribute to greater social cohesion in terms of increased trust and social capital. And citizen participation is important for informational reasons: involving citizens in policy design provides relevant information about local needs and conditions and so can result in public services that are more effective, efficient and benefit from public support.

In the context of social or civil participation, engagement activities tend to be valued for their positive impact on communities – through increasing social capital, shared ties and trust, and on individuals themselves – through increasing capabilities, confidence and being connected to others, which is a key determinant of well-being. There is also a strong link back to public participation since it is argued that citizen involvement in informal associational and voluntary life has an

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<sup>1</sup> S Arnstein, 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol. 35:4, 1969, pp. 216-224, p. 216

<sup>2</sup> S White, 'Depoliticising development: the uses and abuses of participation', *Development in Practice*, vol.6:1, 1996, pp. 6-15

<sup>3</sup> See for example the NCVO's distinction between civic participation and civil participation in V Jochum, B Pratten and K Wilding, *Civil renewal and active citizenship: A guide to the debate*, NCVO, London, 2005

<sup>4</sup> Power Inquiry, *Power to the People. The report of Power: an independent inquiry into Britain*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York, 2006

educative quality, acting as a ‘school of democracy’ as Alexis de Tocqueville put it, which helps prepare people to play a full role in democratic institutions.<sup>5</sup>

Our specific interest here is in citizen engagement in the context of social innovation. We define social innovations as new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and/or better use of assets and resources.<sup>6</sup> Examples include microfinance, fair trade, new models of eldercare, preventative interventions in health and criminal justice, holistic early years’ care, co-production and online platforms which enable sharing, mass collaboration and peer-to-peer learning.

What does citizen engagement mean in the context of these disparate types of activity we categorise as social innovation? All of these activities are dependent on many people participating and getting involved in various ways, for example by fundraising, volunteering, and actually delivering services and projects. But this very broad interpretation of citizen engagement is not the particular focus of this paper. When we talk about citizen engagement in social innovation what we are really interested in is understanding the ways in which more diverse voices and actors, that go perhaps beyond the usual suspects, can be brought into the process of developing new solutions to social challenges. Increasingly, this concept of engaging citizens is seen as an integral part of developing social innovations. Why might this be so? We can suggest four key reasons.

1. The aim of all social innovation is to develop solutions that meet social needs more effectively than existing solutions. And in order to develop solutions it is first important to identify the challenges and problems that need addressing. In some cases, where it is citizens themselves who develop an innovation, needs and challenges will already be well understood. But often those driving an innovation process are civil servants, public policy makers and non-profit leaders who do not experience these problems and challenges first hand. Citizens themselves are best placed to articulate these challenges. They have information about themselves that no centralised bureaucracy can ever have, namely, knowledge of specificity - specificity of time, of place, of events and experiences, and of needs and desires. And so social innovators must recognise that “citizens are experts in their own lives and nobody – nobody – else can claim that role.”<sup>7</sup> The tacit knowledge that citizens hold is therefore critical to the innovation process.
  
2. Citizens can themselves be the *source* of innovative ideas. As Christian Bason argues, citizens can be “sources of inspiration and a driving force for public sector innovation”.<sup>8</sup> This applies to innovation beyond a public sector context more generally. Indeed, the idea of users as key drivers of innovation is well documented in the academic literature on innovation. Eric von Hippel, who popularised the concept of ‘lead users’, has long argued that users are well placed to generate new ideas.<sup>9</sup> He argues that information about users’ needs and preferences is ‘sticky’ - it is costly to transfer information to a specific locus in a form that is usable to the information seeker. Typically, information about needs resides

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<sup>5</sup> A de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2000

<sup>6</sup> The Young Foundation, *Social Innovation Overview*, A deliverable of the project: “The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe” (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research, 2012

<sup>7</sup> C Bason, *Leading Public Sector Innovation: co-creating for a better society*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2010, p. 151

<sup>8</sup> C Bason, *Leading Public Sector Innovation: co-creating for a better society*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2010, p. 27

<sup>9</sup> E von Hippel, *Democratizing Innovation*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2006

with users and information about solutions resides with producers, who often spend significant amounts of time and money trying to obtain complex information about needs. If knowledge of needs *and* tools for finding solutions can be co-located in the same place (i.e. the user), then the cost of transferring information is eliminated. This is why so many organisations are now providing users with the means to directly influence the ideation stage of innovation processes.<sup>10</sup>

3. Engaging citizens in social innovation yields divergent thinking because it enables contributions from varied and unexpected sources. As Christian Bason notes, involving more people in an innovation process means that a “greater variation of different ideas and suggestions are brought to the table, providing inspiration and giving...a wider palette of options to choose from before decision making and implementation.”<sup>11</sup> Frances Westley is another theorist who highlights the importance of involving citizens in the development of social innovation, noting that “if the generation of novelty is largely dependent on the recombination of elements, then as we exclude groups from contribution we also lose their viewpoints, their diversity, and the particular elements they have to offer the whole”.<sup>12</sup>
  
4. Citizen engagement is necessary because of the nature of challenges that social innovations aim to address. Many of these social challenges are ‘wicked’ or complex problems that defy linear, top-down policy responses. This is because complex problems, by definition, do not have a single ‘end’ or a ‘solution’. Consequently, there is greater importance attached to the process of managing complex problems than trying to resolve them per se. As Jeff Conklin explains, “you don’t so much ‘solve’ a wicked problem as you help stakeholders negotiate shared understanding and shared meaning about the problem and its possible solutions. The objective of the work is coherent action, not final solution.”<sup>13</sup> Addressing many of these complex challenges requires behaviour change: for example, in order to mitigate the effects of climate change, we will need to cut our energy use and conserve what is used through recycling and re-use; to overcome obesity we will need to change our diets and lifestyles. Solutions to wicked problems therefore cannot be delivered in the way that commercial products are delivered – they require the participation, co-operation and ‘buy in’ of users. Hence, as Frances Westley and colleagues note, in all social innovations that respond to complex problems, “our interventions are always interactions”.<sup>14</sup>

If citizen engagement is frequently necessary to the development of social innovations, this raises a number of key issues: what are the best ways of organising or orchestrating citizen engagement? What forms can citizen engagement take? How can we ensure fair access to engagement activities from diverse populations? How can citizen engagement be encouraged and supported? These are some of the issues we will endeavour to address in this work package.

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<sup>10</sup> E von Hippel, ‘Sticky Information and the Locus of Problem Solving: Implications for Innovation’, *Management Science*, vol.40:4, 1994, pp. 429-439

<sup>11</sup> C Bason, *Leading Public Sector Innovation:: co-creating for a better society*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2010, p.8-9

<sup>12</sup> F Westley, *The Social Innovation Dynamic*, Social Innovation Generation at the University of Waterloo, 2008 (NEED PG No)

<sup>13</sup> J Conklin, ‘Rethinking Wicked Problems’ [interview]. *NextD Journal*, vol. 10, pp. 1-30, NextDesign Leadership Institute, New York, 2007, <http://nextd.org>. Viewed on 14 August, 2012

<sup>14</sup> F Westley, B Zimmerman and MQ Patton, *Getting to Maybe: How the World is Changing*, Vintage Canada, Toronto, 2006, p. 10

### *The structure of this paper*

Over the course of this work package we will explore the theory and practice of citizen engagement in the process of social innovation. In particular, we will address the following questions:

- How can we map disparate methods of citizen engagement in the process of social innovation?
- What does engagement in the process of social innovation currently look like across Europe?
- What is the value of engagement in the social innovation process?
- What policies can best support citizen engagement?

This paper focuses on the first question. Our aim is to provide a simple conceptual framework for mapping the many methods for engaging citizens in the process of social innovation that we have come across in the course of our research. The emphasis is on developing a clear framework that can be used to plot further methods and examples rather than providing a detailed analysis of specific methods of engagement (this will follow in a further case study deliverable).

In the next section, we examine a number of existing typologies of engagement to help determine which elements and aspects we should consider in developing our own framework. Then, we outline our own framework and use this to map some of the most important and innovative methods for engaging citizens in the social innovation process. Finally, in an appendix, we provide a brief discussion of the many innovations in citizen engagement that are emerging in the context of participatory democracy.

## 2. Typologies of citizen engagement

In this paper, we aim to develop a framework for making sense of the breadth of ways that citizens can participate in the development of social innovations. Although there is little literature specifically related to social innovation that attempts a similar framework, there are many examples of different approaches to conceptualising, organising and categorising activities related to engagement more generally.

The following are just some of the dimensions along which citizen engagement tends to be analysed:

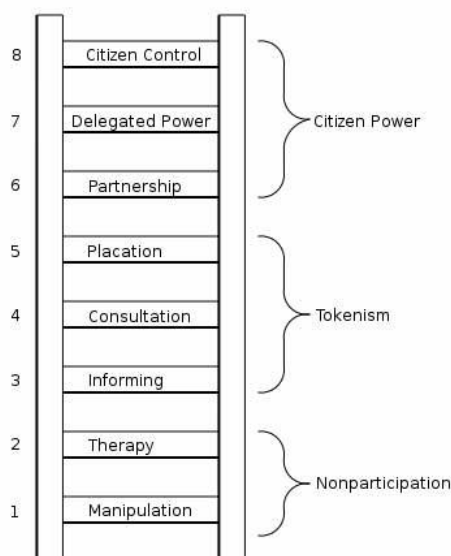
- The power transfer that characterises engagement
- The features of the engagement activity itself
- The communication flows that characterise engagement
- The purpose or goal of the engagement

In this chapter we review some of these different typologies to broaden our understanding of key issues related to engagement and to guide our thinking about the dimensions that will be most useful to include when developing our own framework.

### 2.1.1. Power transfer

Some frameworks differentiate between types of citizen engagement based on power dynamics. This is the lens used by Sherry Arnstein in her frequently cited 1969 paper which describes a ladder of participation.

**Figure 1 – Arnstein’s ladder of citizen participation**



Source: Arnstein, 1969



For Arnstein, participation is fundamentally about the transfer of power and hence “participation without redistribution of power is an empty and frustrating process for the powerless”.<sup>15</sup> At the bottom of her ladder are ‘manipulation’ and ‘therapy’ - activities that can immediately be discounted as ‘non-participation’ since they do not represent genuine attempts to engage citizens.<sup>16</sup> The next rungs concern informing and consulting. These activities Arnstein admits can be first steps towards legitimate citizen participation. But since for her the decisive factor is whether there is a redistribution of power going on, she largely dismisses these activities as ‘tokenism’ because under them, citizens still “lack the power to ensure that their views will be heeded by the powerful”.<sup>17</sup> ‘Placation’, which refers to the placing of poor or vulnerable individuals on boards of public bodies like the board of education or a housing authority, is just a higher form of tokenism because the influence that citizens gain by being represented on these bodies is minimal.<sup>18</sup> Only the final three levels of the ladder, partnership, delegated power and citizenship control are described in non-pejorative terms because they involve increasing degrees of decision-making power.

Arnstein’s paper is a reaction to the co-option of the concepts of engagement and participation by power holders who were claiming to open up decision making processes while in fact maintaining the status quo. It certainly provides a much needed reminder that engagement never happens in a neutral context and whenever citizens are invited to participate in any process, there will always be consequences for the distribution of control and power.

However, given our focus on the social innovation process, analysing citizen engagement according to power dynamics is problematic. This is because Arnstein’s framework suggests we place no value at all on citizen engagement activities that do not involve significant shifts in decision making power, even if these activities do contribute major insights into needs and problems, or the development of new solutions. Adopting a framework such as Arnstein’s would require us to dismiss the value of many forms of citizen engagement that provide highly relevant input into the development of social innovations. Andrea Cornwall makes an argument along these lines, giving the example of a participatory wellbeing assessment conducted in suburban London, which while “initially innocuous”, (and which, on Arnstein’s ladder, would only amount to ‘tokenism’) in fact produced mounting evidence of problems with primary care services that forced the authorities to concede that there was a problem and to begin to address it.<sup>19</sup> Forms of citizen engagement that involve individuals contributing ideas and information in various ways are a major source of value to the development of social innovations and any typology we develop to distinguish between different methods needs to acknowledge this.

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<sup>15</sup> S Arnstein, ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol. 35: 4, 1969, pp. 216-224, 216

<sup>16</sup> On the lowest rung of the ladder, manipulation concerns activities where participation is merely a rubber stamping exercise where there has been a “distortion of participation into a public relations exercise by power holders”. Next along is therapy which describes exercises where citizens may be engaged in various activities but the goal is to change their behaviour rather than bring about a real change in their circumstances. Arnstein gives the example of public housing programs where tenant groups are used as vehicles for promoting control-your-child or clean-up campaigns.

<sup>17</sup> S Arnstein, ‘A Ladder of Citizen Participation’, *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, vol. 35:4, 1969, pp. 216-224, p. 217

<sup>18</sup> Placation is tokenistic because while in theory citizens are given some influence, typically these bodies only “allow citizens to advise or plan ad infinitum but retain for power holders the right to judge the legitimacy or feasibility of the advice”.

<sup>19</sup> A Cornwall, ‘Unpacking ‘Participation’: models, meanings and practices’, *Community Development Journal*, vol. 43:3, 2008 pp. 269–283

### 2.1.2. Features of activity

Other frameworks organise citizen engagement based on certain features of the activity itself. For example, David Beetham and colleagues, writing about power and participation in the UK, suggest a typology that includes the following dimensions:

- Whether the activity is undertaken by individuals or groups
- Whether it is unstructured or structured through an existing organisation or channel
- Whether it is time-bound or one off, or ongoing through time
- Whether it is reactive or proactive<sup>20</sup>

These features help us to think about various pragmatic aspects of the engagement activity – who might do it, how and how frequently – which is helpful in terms of classifying and categorising different kinds of engagement activities. But these features are useful as an additional lens to our understanding of engagement in social innovation rather than as the central dimension on which to base a typology.

### 2.1.3. The nature of communication

A number of frameworks focus on the nature of the communication that happens in different types of engagement. In their typology of citizen engagement in the public sphere, Gene Rowe and Lynn Frewer identify three categories of activity: public communication, public consultation and public participation.<sup>21</sup>

- In *public communication*, information is conveyed from sponsors to the public. In this type of engagement, information flow is one way and “there is no involvement of the public per se in the sense that public feedback is not required or specifically sought”.<sup>22</sup> An example might be the provision of public records and websites.
- *Public consultation* involves information flowing from members of the public to sponsors, in a process initiated by the sponsor. This type of engagement does not involve formal dialogue between citizens and decision makers. Examples include public opinion surveys and comments on draft legislation.
- Finally, *public participation* involves information exchange between members of the public and sponsors. In this form of engagement, “rather than simple, raw opinions being conveyed to the sponsors, the act of dialogue and negotiation serves to transform opinions

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<sup>20</sup> D Beetham, A Blick, H Margetts and S Weir, *Power and Participation in Modern Britain*, Democratic Audit., London, 2008

<sup>21</sup> A very similar framework to Rowe and Frewer is also adopted by the OECD in their 2001 publication *Citizens as Partners - Information, Consultation and Public Participation in Policy-Making*, OECD, Paris 2001, p. 23

<sup>22</sup> G Rowe and L Frewer, ‘A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms’, *Science, Technology & Human Values*, vol.30:2, 2005, pp. 251-290, p. 255

in the members of both parties (sponsors and public participants)".<sup>23</sup> Examples of public participation would include practices such as consensus conferences and citizen juries.

Since the first category, public communication, does not actually involve citizens in any meaningful way, we would hesitate to define this as citizen engagement at all. However, the distinction between citizens providing information to decision makers (public consultation) and citizens entering into dialogue (public participation) is instructive. This is a theme that appears in many discussions of how to distinguish between different forms of citizen engagement. For example Stephen Coleman and Jay Blumler distinguish between aggregative and deliberative engagement exercises.<sup>24</sup> Aggregative exercises involve the collection of already fixed positions (for example, petitions and quantitative surveys) whereas deliberative exercises involve a meaningful exchange of views. Coleman and Blumler argue that deliberative exercises tend to be preferable in matters of public policy where there are typically no 'correct' answers but rather legitimate differences of values and preferences.

Similarly, Simon Burall and Jonathan Carr-West draw a distinction between 'extractive engagement' and 'discursive engagement'. Extractive engagement is characterised by one way channels where state actors attempt to extract relevant information from citizens. Burall and Carr-West think of extractive engagement in pejorative terms, and recommend that state actors move from these 'basic, superficial' forms of engagement towards "more meaningful discursive conversations, in which local people are partners in a two way dialogue".<sup>25</sup>

Citizen engagement in social innovation is likely to involve both extractive forms of interaction – where citizens provide information and ideas to innovators – and discursive forms - where citizens and innovators enter into dialogue together. Given the importance of gathering relevant information to the development of successful innovations, we should be wary of viewing extractive forms of engagement in a pejorative way. On the contrary, these are a major source of value to innovation processes. So while the distinction between extractive/aggregative and discursive/deliberative types of engagement is another useful lens we might apply in the context of social innovation, it is not likely to provide the basis for a typology.

#### 2.1.4. Purpose or goal

Lastly, many frameworks focus on distinguishing between different purposes for which engagement is undertaken. A commonly cited example is the typology developed by the International Association for Public Participation which defines categories of participation based on the goal of public participation from the point of view of the state.<sup>26</sup> This is laid out as a spectrum of participation that moves from inform to consult, to involve, to collaborate, to empower.

<sup>23</sup> G Rowe and L Frewer, 'A Typology of Public Engagement Mechanisms', *Science, Technology & Human Values*, vol.30:2, 2005, pp. 251-290, p. 255-256

<sup>24</sup> S Coleman and J Blumler, 'The Wisdom of Which Crowd? On the Pathology of a Listening Government', *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 82:3, pp. 355–364

<sup>25</sup> S Burall and J Carr-West, *Citizen Power in Recession- the case for public engagement in local government*, Involve, Eastleigh, 2009, p.11

<sup>26</sup> International Association for Public Participation, 'IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation' <http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/spectrum.pdf> Viewed on 1 August, 2012

**Figure 2 - Spectrum of Public Participation**

	<b>Inform</b>	<b>Consult</b>	<b>Involve</b>	<b>Collaborate</b>	<b>Empower</b>
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.

Source: International Association for Public Participation (2007): Spectrum of public participation

Although in practice, many of these activities might overlap (for example ‘involving’ the public in a decision making activity will almost certainly entail ‘informing’ participants so that they can fully engage in the process), focusing on the goal of engagement in this spectrum provides a simple way of categorising different classes of activity.

Sarah White is another researcher who organises different types of engagement based on the purposes for which it is entered into. However, unlike the IAP2 Spectrum above, her typology looks at the interests of both power holders who design and implement a programme (‘top-down’) and the interests of participants themselves – how they see their participation and what they expect to get out of it (‘bottom-up’). She develops a spectrum of ‘nominal’ through to ‘transformative’ forms of participation which highlights that “participation can take on multiple forms and serve many different interests”.<sup>27</sup>

**Figure 3 – Interests in Participation**

<b>Form</b>	<b>What ‘participation’ means to the implementing agency (top-down)</b>	<b>What ‘participation’ means for those on the receiving end (bottom-up)</b>	<b>Function - What ‘participation’ is for</b>
Nominal	Legitimation – to show they are doing something	Inclusion – to retain some access to potential benefits	Display
Instrumental	Efficiency – to limit funders’ input, draw on community contributions and make projects more cost-effective	Cost – of time spent on project related labour and other activities	As a means to achieving cost-effectiveness and local facilities

<sup>27</sup> S White, ‘Depoliticising development: the uses and abuses of participation’ in D, Eade (ed.) *Development, NGOs and Civil Society: Selected essays from Development in Practice*, Oxfam, Oxford, 2000, p.143,

Representative	Sustainability – to avoid creating dependency	Leverage – to influence the shape the project takes and its management	To give people a voice in determining their own development
Transformative	Empowerment – to enable people to make their own decisions, work out what to do and take action	Empowerment - to be able to decide and act for themselves	Both as a means and an end, a continuing dynamic

Source: Adapted from Sarah White, 1996, pp. 7 –9 by Andrea Cornwall

White’s typology is useful for thinking through the purposes for which people use participation. However, as a practical tool it is perhaps less useful since it requires that we make quite complex judgements about the intentions of both participants and power holders, which might not always be obvious.

### *Towards a typology*

There is little existing literature looking at citizen engagement from the perspective of social innovation. For this reason we have reviewed a number of frameworks from other discourses – namely public participation and development – to inform thinking about our own typology. Although none of these typologies are in themselves adequate for framing a discussion about engagement in the social innovation process, they do yield a number of insights that we can put to use in devising our own framework.

However, including every relevant dimension for distinguishing between types of citizen engagement is unlikely to aid clear thinking or provide a useful organising device. Since our main aim in developing a typology is to create a simple way of mapping disparate methods of citizen engagement in social innovation, we will have to be selective. Our review suggests that one of the clearest ways of distinguishing between various methods or forms of engagement is to explain the purpose of the engagement, namely, to clarify what the engagement seeks to achieve.

### 3. Our typology of citizen engagement in the process of social innovation

As already mentioned, our specific lens on citizen engagement in this paper is the role that it plays in the social innovation process. Our aim is to develop a typology that enables us to map methods of citizen engagement in a way that is clear and practical. In this chapter we describe the social innovation process and propose a typology for organising different methods of citizen engagement in relation to this process.

#### 3.1.1. The process of social innovation

The term ‘social innovation’ covers such a broad and diverse set of organisations and activities that it is difficult to talk of a single ‘process’ of social innovation; rather, social innovations are designed, developed and scaled in myriad ways. And, the process of social innovation will vary hugely depending on whether the innovation in question is developed primarily by a not for profit organisation, a business or within the ambit of the state. Partly because of this diversity and variation, there has been little systematic analysis of how innovations in the social field are designed, diffused and supported. Much research focuses on individual case studies from which it is difficult to extrapolate broader processes or stages of social innovation. As we discuss elsewhere, much of the literature on the process of social innovation focuses either on the early stage of ideation and creativity or on the later stage of diffusion and scaling.<sup>28</sup> This overlooks the important stage of implementation where new ideas become useful and where they have to secure their financial sustainability.

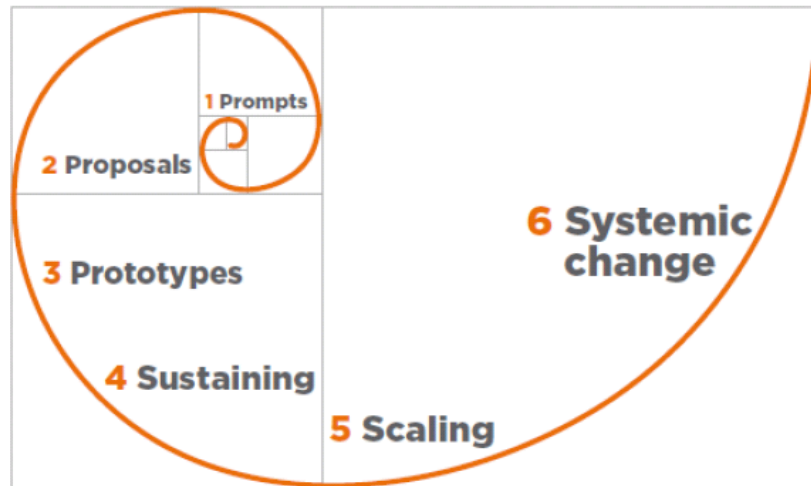
In previous publications we have referred to a six stage process of social innovation.<sup>29</sup> These stages are:

1. Prompts – which highlight the need for social innovation
2. Proposals – where ideas are developed
3. Prototyping – where ideas get tested in practice
4. Sustaining – when the idea becomes everyday practice
5. Scaling – growing and spreading social innovations
6. Systemic change – involves re-designing and introducing entire systems and will usually involve all sectors over time

#### Figure 4 - The process of social innovation

<sup>28</sup> The Young Foundation, *Social Innovation Overview*, A deliverable of the project: “The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe” (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research, 2012

<sup>29</sup> The Young Foundation, *Social Innovation Overview*, A deliverable of the project: “The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe” (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research, 2012



Source: Young Foundation 2010

Of course in reality, many of these stages overlap and may be undertaken in a different order. Many ventures start with a practice or prototype and only fully flesh out the demand in terms of needs much later. Often, implementation, action and practice precipitate new ideas, which in turn lead to further improvements and innovations. And feedback loops exist between every stage, which makes the process iterative rather than linear. In addition, social innovations do not necessarily go through all six stages. In some cases, social innovations remain small in scale and locally based, rather than attempting growth and scale, and very few social innovations effect or reach the stage of systemic change. In other cases, especially online, social innovations can skip out stages entirely, quickly going from prototyping to scaling and only then exploring business models and revenue streams.

It is also important to note that what constitutes a 'stage' in the process of social innovation is fairly contentious. Indeed, others conceptualise the process of social innovation in a very different way. Frances Westley, for example, describes how social innovations move from inception to maturity through four stages of release, reorganisation, exploitation and conservation: "once an idea or organization reaches the maturity (conservation) stage it needs to release resources for novelty or change and reengage in exploration in order to retain its resilience. The release and reorganization phase is often termed the "back loop" where non-routine change is introduced. The exploitation and conservation phases are often termed the "front loop" where change is slow, incremental and more deliberate."<sup>30</sup> Westley's depiction of these four stages as an infinity loop also helps stress the fact that the process is not linear.

Acknowledging some of the issues outlined above, one approach to a typology would be to organise different citizen engagement methods according to the different stages of the social innovation process. However, for a number of reasons, we do not think this represents the best approach.

First, there are many methods which can be used at multiple (or even all) stages of the process. A qualitative research method such as mapping user experience of a service, for example, could be used at the beginning of the social innovation process (what we've previously termed 'prompts') to understand and identify the social needs of citizens. It could also be used at the prototyping stage to gain deeper insights into the ways in which citizens interact and experience the pilot or

<sup>30</sup> F Westley, *The Social Innovation Dynamic*, Social Innovation Generation at the University of Waterloo, 2008, p.3

prototype project. Similarly, an online feedback system that helps innovators better understand citizen opinion could be relevant at the earliest stages, when innovators need to frame a problem, at the prototyping phase to assess how well a programme or project has been received, or at the scaling phase when it is important to understand the extent of a problem in new locations. Or take the example of a workshop process to co-design solutions with users. We typically think of this method being used to develop an initial proposal for a social innovation. But it could just as easily be used to gather ideas for how to scale-up an existing social innovation. Organising methods according to stages of the process would therefore create either a very limited picture of the ways that different methods can be used, or involve much repetition.

Second, mapping methods onto stages suggests a linearity which doesn't always happen in practice. It also suggests that there is always a definitive beginning and end to social innovation processes, with the citizen being engaged at the beginning of the process to develop an entirely new product or service. In reality, however, citizens are often engaged in a process of modifying, adapting and reforming existing services rather than innovating new services as such.

We argue that a better approach is to organise methods of engagement in terms of the *kind of input* they provide to an innovation process, regardless of the stage at which they are used.

One commentator who suggests an approach along these lines is Christian Bason, Director of cross-departmental innovation unit MindLab. MindLab, which sits across the Danish Ministries of Economic and Business Affairs, Taxation and Employment, specialises in the use of ethnography and design methods to engage citizens in the development of public sector innovation. Bason distinguishes between two basic purposes of citizen engagement in relation to innovation. These are “involving citizens as informants, helping to understand what the present (or past) situation is” and “involving citizens as co-creators of a new future.”<sup>31</sup> He also distinguishes between forms of engagement that involve small (say, between 4 and 50) and large (many hundreds, or potentially limitless) numbers of citizens.

Bason's framework is specifically designed to inform a discussion about public sector innovation rather than social innovation more generally. It is true that many methods of citizen engagement are either driven or explicitly used by the public sector more than other sectors (and this is reflected in the examples in the next chapter). This is partly because the public sector has the greatest mandate and obligation to involve citizens in its activities – since it is through citizens that it derives its legitimacy (through the democratic process) and its resources (through taxation). And it is also the case that the public sector is tasked with delivering some of the most complex types of service, which means it has an urgent need to work with citizens to understand their needs and draw their experience into the process of finding new solutions and approaches.

However, as we have argued elsewhere, the public sector is by no means the only sector active in social innovation.<sup>32</sup> Organisations in the non-profit and private sectors, as well as informal groups of citizens are all drivers of social innovation. Furthermore, even where one particular sector, such as government, is consciously driving the process of developing a new solution to a social challenge, this does not mean it will also drive all forms of citizen engagement that input to this process. The specialist expertise required to engage citizens sits across all sectors. For example, much knowledge about how best to work with people to better understand needs and problems

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<sup>31</sup> C Bason, *Leading Public Sector Innovation: co-creating for a better society*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2010, p. 161

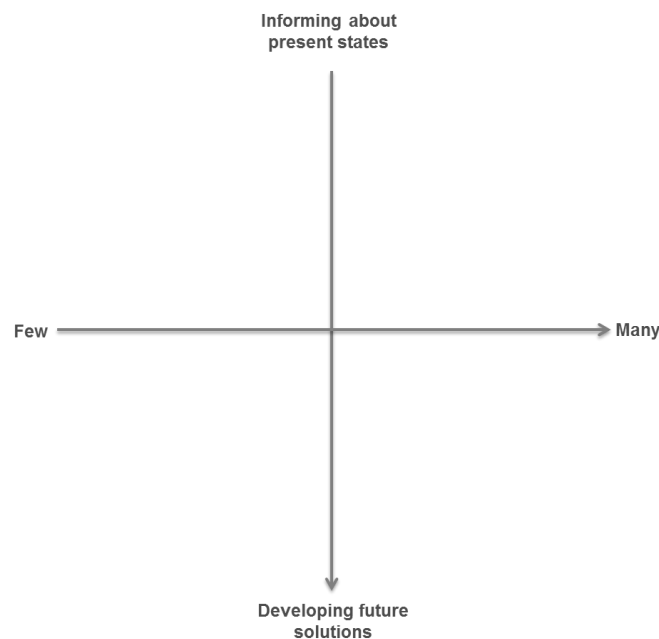
<sup>32</sup> See Chapter 4 of J Caulier-Grice, A Davies, R Patrick, and W Norman, 'Defining Social Innovation'. A deliverable of the project: "The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe" (TEPSIE), European Commission – 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research.



sits in specialist research and design consultancies that may be private sector companies (e.g. ThinkPublic). And many methods for bringing citizens together to deliberate and exchange ideas are facilitated by third sector organisations. Likewise, informal collaborations between citizens outside any institutional context can make a major contribution to methods for engagement (this is the case with many online platforms). So while Bason’s framework provides the key input for our typology below, we use it in a broader context to organise citizen engagement activity beyond just the public sector.

### 3.1.2. A typology for citizen engagement in the process of social innovation

**Figure 5 – Forms of citizen involvement in social innovation processes**



Source: Adapted from C Bason, 2010

#### *Explaining the axes*

**Informing about present states** refers to all the ways that citizens can provide information about their current experiences. This information is an essential input throughout the development of a social innovation. It is necessary in the first instance for the initial diagnosis of problems and for framing questions in the right way so that root causes rather than symptoms can be addressed. And it is especially important following the development of an innovation in the testing and implementation stages to understand how well a prototype is working in practice, or how an established product or service might need to be improved. Methods here might involve engaging citizens in different ways to find out how they experience a particular need, how they overcome specific issues and to understand how well or how poorly a current service or product is working. The nature of the interaction in these forms of activity is often extractive since it is primarily about citizens providing information about their experiences to whoever is driving the innovation process.

**Developing future solutions** refers to all kinds of engagement activity whereby citizens can contribute and shape new ideas. These might be ideas that provide the seed for a new innovation, or ideas for how to improve an existing service or model. It includes some methods by which citizens are themselves the source of fully formed new ideas and others where they act as partners with innovators in shaping ideas together. Citizen engagement in developing new solutions is a valuable input to the innovation process first because it yields opportunities for accessing more ideas, from more divergent sources. And second, when ideas come from citizens themselves rather than being parachuted in from the outside, they are more likely to represent responses to genuine needs, and in turn to receive wide acceptance. This helps avoid the phenomenon Charlie Leadbeater identifies where “in the name of doing things *for* people, traditional and hierarchical organisations end up doing things *to* people”.<sup>33</sup> Methods in this category can involve both extractive and discursive forms of interaction between citizens and decision makers. For example, methods to gather raw ideas from large numbers of citizens are an archetypal extractive or aggregative activity often involving very little if any dialogue. But methods which involve smaller numbers of citizens working intensively with innovators to help develop solutions over a period of time will be highly discursive and deliberative.

The distinction between **many and few** citizens enables us to identify the scale at which different engagement activities operate. Different scales will also impact the kind of input that citizen engagement makes to innovation processes. Methods of engagement that involve many people offering information about their experiences are useful for identifying underlying patterns and trends. Others that can be performed with only a small number of citizens will yield rich, highly contextualised information. Similarly, in the realm of developing solutions, engaging with large numbers of citizens can uncover many ideas from diverse sources. In other cases, it will be more appropriate to work with only a few citizens more intensively to develop solutions in detail.

Considerations of scale are also related to the form that engagement methods take. Engagement that takes place online is well suited to interacting with large numbers of citizens where the marginal cost of each additional user is near zero. Some offline methods can be used with large numbers (see the examples below of deliberative polls and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town meetings) but typically offline methods are better suited to discussions between smaller numbers of citizens.

Taken together, these axes create four quadrants which we can use to organise different methods of citizen engagement in social innovation. This yields a very pragmatic typology, which suggests that we can analyse any potential method for citizen engagement by asking two questions: first, what kind of input is it providing to the innovation process? Does it involve citizens giving data in some form (opinions, feedback etc.) about their current experiences? Or is it about citizens providing ideas that form the basis of future solutions? And second, at what kind of scale can this method operate? Is it one that can engage large numbers of citizens or is it designed to be used with a smaller group?

In the next chapter we put this typology to work in mapping a number of methods of citizen engagement.

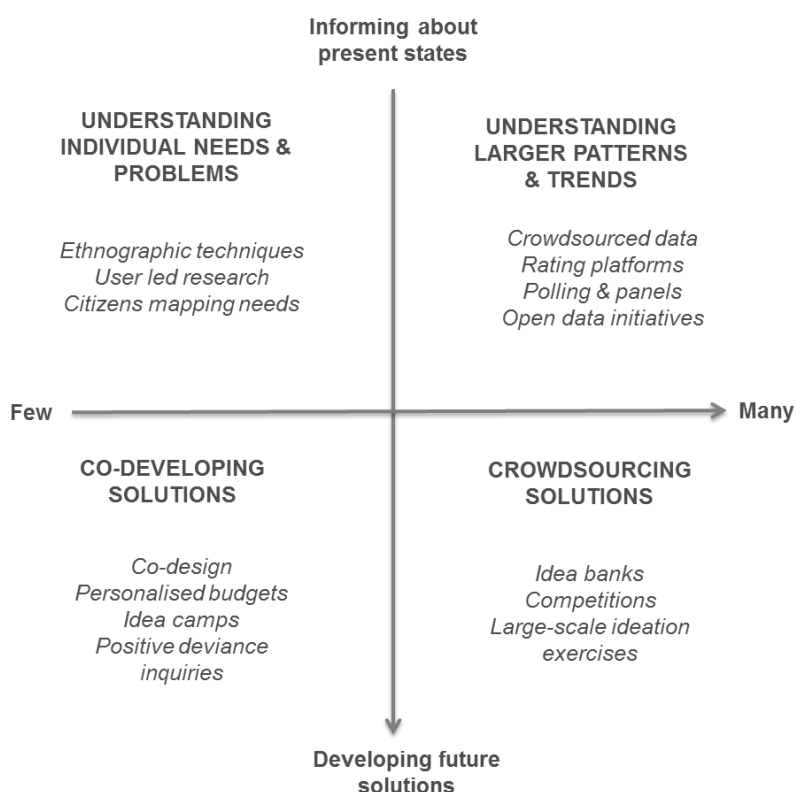
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<sup>33</sup> C Leadbeater, ‘The Art of With, An Essay for Cornerhouse’, Manchester, 2009, p.2

## 4. Four quadrants of citizen engagement in social innovation

In this chapter, we explore the four quadrants of our typology in more detail, using them to map a number of examples of citizen engagement activity.

Figure 6 – Mapping citizen engagement activities in the social innovation process



There are a number of points of clarification it is worth making at the outset of this mapping exercise. First, employing the various methods we discuss here is no guarantee of innovation; involving citizens is not the same thing as arriving at an innovation. Rather, these methods suggest ways in which citizen engagement frequently acts as a necessary (though not sufficient) contribution to an innovation process overall; that is, citizen engagement may be part of an innovation process but it is not the same as the innovation process.

Second, although we have chosen to organise the different methods according to the type of input they provide and the scale at which they can be undertaken rather than the extent to which they involve a shift in decision making power, we do not suppose that these methods operate in a power vacuum. Who is able to participate in these methods and the impact that their engagement has on decision makers is a highly contested space. ‘Citizens’ themselves are also not a uniform mass – there will be radically different views and priorities expressed when they are invited to participate. As Sarah White suggests, participatory activities therefore tend to be the site of conflict, and indeed, “the absence of conflict in many supposedly ‘participatory’ programmes is

something that should raise our suspicions".<sup>34</sup> While the lens of power is an important one to think about with regards to citizen engagement, and is something we will need to explore throughout this work package, it is not the focus we apply to this particular framework.

Third, a number of the innovative methods for citizen engagement that we highlight below are either based online or have a strong online component. Technological change has undoubtedly played a major role in the changing character of engagement practices. The availability of cheap, online platforms for engagement has the potential to enable many more citizens to participate, and to engage a different demographic. We might hypothesise for example that inviting citizens to help make sense of publicly available data will stimulate participation from a very different demographic than traditional government consultation exercises. The lower costs associated with online compared to face to face forms of interaction can also make involving citizens a possibility in a much wider range of projects. However, the use of technology does not solve the problems inherent in trying to involve diverse citizens in getting a rich and contextualized understanding of their lives. We recognise that as well as opportunities, online forms present a number of unresolved questions: who is excluded by online forms of engagement? Is it really true to say that by using online methods we can reach beyond the usual suspects, or do we find the same limited pool of participants as in offline forms? And how does an online format affect the quality of engagement that takes place? Although these are not questions we can answer as part of this mapping exercise, they are issues that we will need to revisit throughout this work package, particularly when we come to discussing the value of citizen engagement for social innovation and the best policies for supporting it.

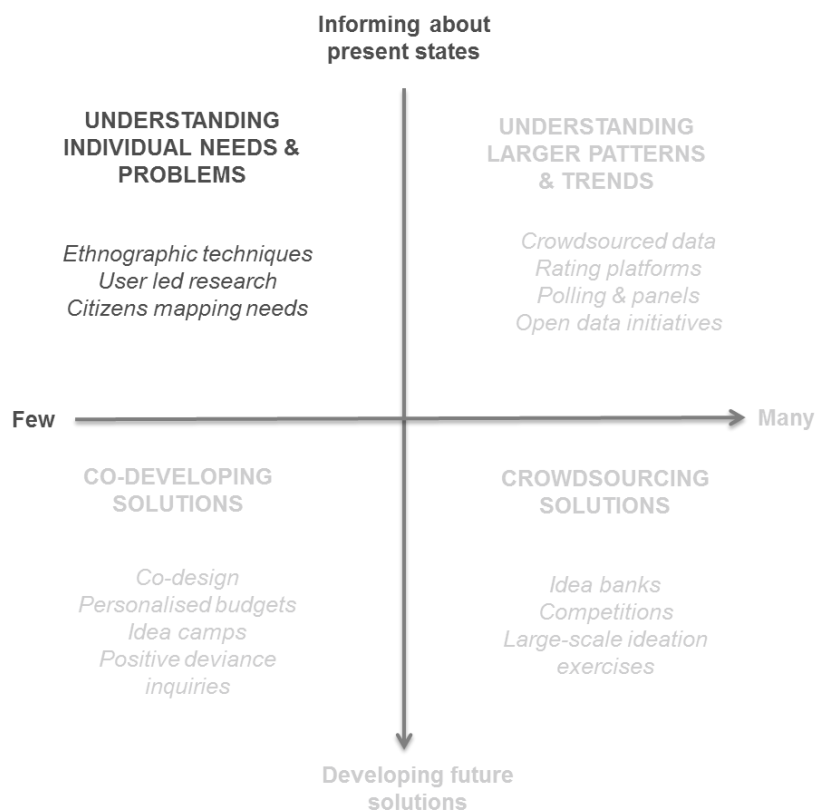
Fourth and finally, the methods and specific examples we have chosen to highlight here are intended to be illustrative only. There are endless variations on the categories of methods we have identified for involving citizens in social innovation and so our aim here is not to provide a comprehensive list, but rather to highlight some of the more innovative or interesting examples that we have come across. Our mapping is also based on ideal types; in reality, the extent to which an activity involves citizens developing solutions or providing information depends on how it is practiced.

Keeping these perspectives in mind, we suggest this framework as a useful organising device for thinking about the range of ways that citizens can contribute to the development of social innovations.

#### **4.1. Understanding individual needs and problems**

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<sup>34</sup> S White, 'Depoliticising development: the uses and abuses of participation' in D, Eade (ed.) *Development, NGOs and Civil Society: Selected essays from Development in Practice*, Oxfam, Oxford, 2000p. 155



The first quadrant in our typology concerns the various methods by which individual citizens provide innovators with a deeper understanding of their needs. These methods offer opportunities for obtaining the “intimate knowledge that is difficult, if not impossible, to acquire without the involvement of users themselves”.<sup>35</sup> Because these methods tend to be time intensive and qualitative in nature, they are typically undertaken with only small numbers of citizens. And since these methods tend to involve multiple two-way interaction and discussion, they are best conducted offline. We include in this quadrant both methods where citizens are engaged in a more passive way, for example by participating in a research process, and also methods which see citizens play a much more active role in identifying and highlighting their own needs.

#### 4.1.1. Ethnographic research techniques

Ethnographic research consists in observing people in their ordinary environments rather than in a formal research setting. It involves an attempt to “see the world as other people experience it, not as our mental maps might have constructed it”.<sup>36</sup> As such, it provides an opportunity for researchers to see behaviour patterns and problems in a real context.<sup>37</sup> Some of the most common methods in the toolbox of ethnographic techniques include:

<sup>35</sup> P Bradwell and S Marr, *Making the most of collaboration: an international survey of public service co-design*, Demos in association with PWC’s Public Sector Research Centre, London, 2008, p.30

<sup>36</sup> C Bason, *Leading Public Sector Innovation: co-creating for a better society*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2010, p. 178

<sup>37</sup> Of course, a frequent concern about ethnographic approaches is that ‘observer effects’ will bias and possibly invalidate research findings. A recent paper from Torin Monahan and Jill Fisher provides an interesting discussion of these issues, arguing first that ‘observer effects’ (broadly conceived) tend to be unavoidable in knowledge production regardless of the field or method and second that even if participants end up performing to some

- *Participant observation* – this involves spending time with individuals to observe their routines and, where possible, participating in these activities. It offers opportunities to spot moments where problems occur, which may yield very different information to that which people report in the context of a formal focus group or interview. Observations are captured by the researcher using video, audio or written notes.
- *Contextual interviews* – these take place in the setting where an individual lives or works and tend to address broad themes through conversation rather than answering a specific set of pre-determined questions. In the context of public services, both observation and contextual interviews are often used to generate maps of user journeys through a service.
- *Cultural probes* – these are designed to encourage people to record aspects of their daily routine independently from an external researcher, using tools such as cameras, video recorders or journals. They yield rich information about individual's own experiences and perspectives. Since they are carried out by participants themselves, they are particularly useful for accessing environments that are difficult to observe directly.

#### **Cultural probes to understand needs of older people, Italy, Norway & Netherlands**

The Presence project was a European Commission funded study exploring how older people interface with technology, in particular related to their communication and mobility needs. Small groups of older people in Italy, Norway and the Netherlands were selected to participate and were given a pack of materials developed by the research team. These included postcards asking open-ended questions, disposable cameras with requests for photos in specific circumstances, and maps of local area along with stickers that participants could use to record their emotional state in different areas.<sup>38</sup>

#### 4.1.2. User-led research

User-led research describes research processes which are actively controlled, directed and managed by service users. It has its roots in dissatisfaction with traditional research approaches which many users have found to be disempowering. In user-led research, citizens are involved not just as the subjects of research, but they help shape the research questions and agenda themselves. Practices vary but user-led research can involve citizen input to all stages in a research process including design, recruitment, data collection, analysis and dissemination. The focus in this methodology is not only on generating new knowledge; there is also emphasis placed on the skills and confidence that users gain by engaging in the research process itself.

#### **User-led research in mental health, UK**

User led research in the UK has particularly been used in relation to mental health services. For example, the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health instigated a user-led monitoring programme whereby mental health service users with severe and enduring health problems created, developed and carried out a major piece of research exploring what mental health users think about living in the community, of their services and of their experiences in hospital. Questions were developed and interviews undertaken by service users

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extent, these performances can in themselves reveal profound truths about social and/or cultural phenomena. See J Monahan and J Fisher, 'Benefits of 'observer effects': lessons from the field', *Qualitative Research*, vol. 10:3, pp. 357-376

<sup>38</sup> [http://www.hookerandkitchen.com/presence/presence\\_step01/presence\\_window\\_01.html](http://www.hookerandkitchen.com/presence/presence_step01/presence_window_01.html) Viewed 14 August, 2012

themselves; interviewers reported that participants visibly relaxed when they found out that the interviewer had themselves been through ‘the system’ and so understood their situation.<sup>39</sup>

#### **Groundswell peer-research, UK**

Groundswell is a UK charity which works with homeless and vulnerable people to enable them to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services, and play a fuller role in their community. Groundswell specialises in peer led research which sees people who have been affected by homelessness take a leading role in research to better understand the complexity of the issue. They describe their recent report on strategies for moving out of homelessness called Escape Plan as “a research project by people who have experienced homelessness, especially for currently homeless people.”<sup>40</sup> This is in contrast to traditional research into this issue, where people experiencing homelessness, as subjects of the research and the ones who are most affected by outcomes tend to find themselves marginalised in the research process.

#### 4.1.3. Citizens mapping their own needs

A number of methods have emerged from organisations working in rural development in Africa and Asia which see local citizens playing a more participatory role in information gathering processes. One of the best known is Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA – now sometimes referred to as Participatory Learning and Action) which Robert Chambers describes as “a family of approaches, behaviours and methods for enabling people to do their own appraisal, analysis and planning”.<sup>41</sup> When practiced well, these approaches enable poor and marginalised people to conduct their own analysis, express their values and priorities and provide new insights into dimensions of poverty.

PRA projects frequently use visual and verbal rather than written methods since they are often undertaken in communities with low literacy. A common technique is visual mapping whereby citizens work in small groups to develop maps on different themes – for example, historical maps which describe changes in the community or personal maps which describe an individual’s community, livelihood, belief or environment. Venn diagrams are also used to map the relationships as well as physical aspects of a community. Another technique in PRA is the transect walk, whereby local people act as guides taking researchers through their village or town.<sup>42</sup> The idea is to get an understanding of a whole area and what happens at the periphery of a community where more marginal populations live and work. Transect walks are also a good way of verifying information that comes out of mapping exercises.

<sup>39</sup> D Rose *User voices: The perspectives of mental health services users on community and hospital care*, Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, London, 2001

<sup>40</sup> Groundswell, *The Escape Plan: A Participatory Research Study, Creating an evidence base of the critical success factors that have enabled people to successfully move on from homelessness*, Groundswell UK, London, 2011, p.5

<sup>41</sup> R Chambers, *Participatory Workshops: A Sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities*, Earthscan, London, 2007, p.7

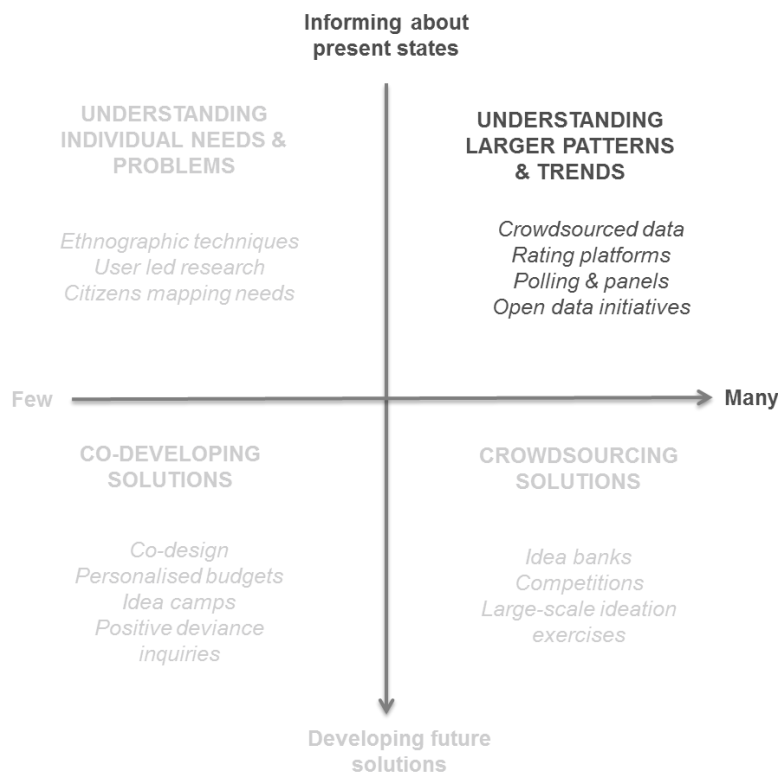
<sup>42</sup> K S Freudenberg, *Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): A manual for CRS Field Workers and Partners*, Catholic Relief Service, Maryland, 2011

### Participatory Rural Appraisal, Bangladesh

The Women’s Development Project (WDP) was a project of CARE Bangladesh that worked in hundreds of villages to improve the health and economic well-being of women and their families. CARE Bangladesh trained 15 women in each village as volunteer community health workers to provide advice and training to their neighbours. These volunteers participated in intensive residential training sessions which covered family planning, environmental and personal sanitation, nutrition, and breastfeeding and weaning practices. This was followed by monthly community health education sessions, initially facilitated by CARE staff before volunteers took on responsibility for sharing information with a small group of neighbours (e.g., five to fifteen households).<sup>43</sup>

Participatory methods were used in several aspects of the project. For example, visual mapping was used as a means to further involve the volunteers in evaluating their own achievements and planning future work. The women were asked to draw maps of their villages using sticks and flour to show all the houses and landmarks as well as the number of people living in each household. In addition, the maps indicated who had installed and used latrines, which couples had adopted family planning, houses where children were treated for night blindness, etc. This enabled volunteers to see where they should focus and better target their household visits. The mapping exercise was also empowering because volunteers could immediately see the impacts of their work.

## 4.2. Understanding larger patterns and trends



<sup>43</sup> MK Shah, S Degnan Kambou & B Monahan (eds.) *Embracing Participation in Development: Worldwide experience from CARE’s Reproductive Health Programs with a step by-step field guide to participatory tools and techniques*, CARE, Atlanta, 1999



Citizen engagement in this second quadrant is concerned with all the ways in which large groups of people contribute information, feedback and opinions that help to uncover needs and problems. These methods are important in the innovation process for understanding the scale of a problem, and identifying larger patterns of need. As such they are an essential complement to more qualitative forms of activity that help to develop a rich understanding of individual needs.

Activities here include quantitative surveys, market research, opinion polls and consultation exercises, and can take place at multiple levels – for example, a national opinion poll through to a local residents’ survey. As well as helping to initially frame problems, these activities are important for assessing how well a new service or product has been received by citizens and for scoping opportunities for scaling. Traditionally these types of activity have taken a reactive form with citizens responding to specific calls for information by a particular institution. However, the emergence of online platforms has enabled much more proactive, continuous forms of contributing insight and information, many of which have their roots in citizen rather than government or other institution-led initiatives.

#### 4.2.1. Crowdsourcing data platforms

Recent years have seen a proliferation of online platforms that provide a simple, low-cost way for large groups of citizens to contribute data on their experiences. These platforms have been used to document a huge range of social and environmental issues. In the civic sphere, FixMyStreet invites users to report potholes, broken street lights and other issues they observe in their neighbourhood. The German platform Wheelmap asks citizens to contribute data on the wheelchair accessibility of public locations such as cafes and restaurants in their city. And in Greece, the municipality of Kifisia has developed a platform to enable citizens to report problems with waste and debris.<sup>44</sup> There are also many examples of platforms that enable citizens to upload crime information, such as StreetViolence.org which invites victims of crime to map incidents, alert the community and post appeals for witnesses.

Crowdsourcing data initiatives are particularly useful for understanding the relationship between space and social issues. For example, a project from the London School of Economics uses a mobile app to get citizens to report regularly on their mental health in different locations, helping to build up a body of understanding of how wellbeing is affected by the local environment – air pollution, noise, green spaces etc. Another initiative, from US company Asthmapolis, uses a sensor added to participant inhalers to track when and where they are used in order to build up an accurate picture of where there are particular issues with air quality in a city.<sup>45</sup>

Online data platforms can also be used to build up a body of evidence about emerging crisis situations. Ushahidi – which means ‘testimony’ in Swahili – was originally developed to allow citizens to submit incidents of violence following post-election violence in Kenya in 2008 via SMS.<sup>46</sup> The Ushahidi platform has since been replicated to support numerous citizen data-collection projects. One of the most recent is Women Under Siege which calls on people to document incidents of sexual violence as the current political crisis unfolds.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> <http://kifissiakathariotita.kifissia.gov.gr/?p=405> Viewed 21 August, 2012

<sup>45</sup> <http://asthmapolis.com/> Viewed 21 August, 2012

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.ushahidi.com/> Viewed 21 August, 2012

<sup>47</sup> <https://womenundersiegeyria.crowdmap.com/page/index/1> Viewed 21 August, 2012

### FixMyStreet, Portugal

Launched in September 2009, 'Fix my Street' ('A Minha Rua') was inspired by the UK portal of the same name, developed by MySociety. It is a collaborative initiative whereby government asks local people to help identify specific public service issues. Any citizen can use the central online portal to report a local problem concerning a public area, such as lighting issues, gardens maintenance, abandoned vehicles or graffiti. Problems are reported in writing, or by submitting a photo, or both, which is then forwarded to the respective municipality. The municipality in question follows up with the citizen on the process to be carried out and the eventual solution. 'Fix My Street' is now operational in more than 90 municipalities and 30 urban counties in Portugal, and the platform has been copied in numerous countries including Greece, the Netherlands and Germany.<sup>48</sup>

### Wheelmap, Germany

Wheelmap is an application built using OpenStreetMap that asks people to tag public places according to their wheelchair accessibility.<sup>49</sup> Participants use a simple traffic light system (green for accessible, orange for partly accessible and red for inaccessible) to mark up locations in a city. There is clear guidance for how to make these assessments which take into account the size and number of steps as well as the availability of wheelchair accessible toilets. Wheelmap is an initiative of Sozialhelden ('Social Heroes'), a German non-profit association. The idea was developed in Berlin by wheelchair user Raul Krathausen who was frustrated that though there were hundreds of sites detailing the quality of service, food and prices in restaurants, there were none giving details of accessibility. As well as helping people who use wheelchairs to plan their travel more efficiently, the site also makes transparent areas of poor accessibility and so can play an important part in highlighting this issue and applying pressure on city governments and private businesses to increase their efforts to enable equal access.

#### 4.2.2. Rating platforms

A further method by which citizens can contribute information about needs and opinions is by using various rating platforms. The practice of reviewing and rating experiences that has become dominant in retail and travel (for example, Yelp and Tripadvisor) is being adopted in the context of public services.<sup>50</sup> These rating platforms are often initiated by citizens themselves rather than the institutions providing services. For example, I Want Great Care is a site where patients can share their experience of particular medical professionals such as general practitioners and dentists.<sup>51</sup> The site was set up independently from the UK's National Health Service, but it reports that many healthcare providers such as hospital trusts are using aggregated data gathered from the site to gain an overall picture of patient experience. A similar UK based site, Patient Opinion, provides a platform for citizens to submit stories about their healthcare experiences, and a mechanism for responses to be made by institutions.<sup>52</sup> Patient Opinion recently received funding from the Department of Health to become the first official site to accept patients' and carers' stories on social care services such as nursing homes, residential care homes and home care providers.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Germany: Mark-a-Spot: <http://www.mark-a-spot.org/>, Netherlands: Verbeterdebuurt: <http://www.verbeterdebuurt.nl/>, Greece: fixMyGreece, <http://fixmygreece.com/> (do these need date viewed?)

<sup>49</sup> <http://blog.wheelmap.org/> Viewed 30 August 2012

<sup>50</sup> [www.yelp.com/](http://www.yelp.com/); [www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com/) Viewed on 21 August, 2012

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.iwantgreatcare.org/> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.patientopinion.org.uk/> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.patientopinion.org.uk/info/newsitem23patientopinonsettolaunchsocialcare> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

Rating platforms have also been established to enable citizens to provide feedback on education, for example RateMyTeachers<sup>54</sup> and RateMyProfessors.<sup>55</sup>

#### **Education rating platforms, International, Poland**

RateMyTeachers.com invites pupils to comment on and rate their experience of teaching professionals, opening up scrutiny of their performance to many more actors.<sup>56</sup> All comments are reviewed and approved by volunteer moderators to ensure they are consistent with the site's rules which stipulate the types of comments that are acceptable. The platform was launched in the US in 2001 and has since expanded to the UK, Canada, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, making it the most comprehensive educational review site on the web.

A similar platform was recently launched in Poland.<sup>57</sup> It enables students to rate their university professors according to several criteria including fairness, friendliness, clarity and usefulness of content. The platform currently includes over 18,000 ratings of academics.

#### **4.2.3. Polling and panels**

Polling of various kinds provides a way for large groups of citizens to make their views known. One example which is frequently used at a local level by public authorities is Citizen Panels. These are large, demographically representative groups of citizens who can be called on regularly to assess public preferences and opinions. Participants are generated through random sampling, using electoral records or address records. In the London Borough of Camden, the CamdenTalks citizen panel features 2000 local residents aged between 18 and 94.<sup>58</sup> Participants take part in two major surveys a year (either online or via post) and may be invited to other smaller exercises such as workshops and user testing. Since participants usually stay on the panel for two to three years, it provides opportunities for tracking opinion over time. Citizen panels provide a great test bed for new policy or service changes, as well as a means to understand public opinion on specific issues.

Another interesting variation on conventional polls to understand public opinion is the practice of deliberative polling. This is designed to uncover citizen opinion in a deeper and more contextual way than most polling exercises by providing space and resources for ideas to be discussed and debated. Deliberative polling initiatives bring together large groups (usually somewhere between 300 and 800 participants), randomly selected to be a representative sample of the population. The participants are given the opportunity to explore critical arguments through face to face discussions with peers and subject experts over several days. They are polled on their views before and following the exercise; this frequently shows significant shifts in views which serves to highlight the impact of informed discourse on public opinion. Television companies are often involved to bring the exercise to a wider audience.

<sup>54</sup> <http://uk.ratemyteachers.com/> Viewed on 21 August , 2012

<sup>55</sup> <http://www.ratemyprofessors.com/> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.ratemyteachers.com/> Viewed 14 August, 2012

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.ocen.pl/>, Viewed 14 August, 2012

<sup>58</sup> <http://camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/council-and-democracy/having-your-say/camdentalks/join-camden-talks.en> Viewed on 21 August , 2012

### Deliberative polls – US and Europe

A major deliberative poll exercise was held in California in 2011 to discuss the future of the state, involving 412 residents over two days. This was the first ever State-wide poll and it sought to uncover citizen views on four issues: the state-wide initiative process, legislative representation, local government and tax and fiscal policy.<sup>59</sup>

Deliberative polling has also been undertaken at the supra-national level. In 2007, ‘Tomorrow’s Europe’ brought together a random sample of 362 citizens from all EU member states to the European Parliament building in Brussels, where they spent a weekend deliberating about a variety of social, economic, and foreign policy issues affecting Europe.<sup>60</sup>

#### 4.2.4. Open data initiatives

Another way that citizens participate in understanding large patterns and trends is by helping to make sense of existing data. The opening up of data banks by institutions in recent years has enabled many more people to access data, combine it with other sources and present it in interesting ways that can reveal new perspectives and hidden problems. The US pioneered this movement with its data.gov website launched in May 2009, closely followed by the UK in early 2010. In 2011 there followed a spate of similar national government data websites across Europe including Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, and France.<sup>61</sup> There are also examples of city data portals, such as ParisData which features a growing collection of datasets about the capital, or NYC Open Data which makes data generated by public agencies fully available and open to the public.<sup>62</sup>

At the European level, public datasets are currently distributed across many different data catalogues, portals and websites in different languages and implemented using different technologies. PublicData.eu has been developed by the Open Knowledge Foundation to provide a single point of access to open, freely reusable datasets from several national, regional and local public bodies across Europe.<sup>63</sup> And at the end of 2011 the Commission demonstrated strong support for open data initiatives, announcing that it would pioneer open data policies and practices that it would like to see adopted by EU Member states, opening up its documents and datasets from across hundreds of institutions. In her speech, Vice President Neelie Kroes argued that “the best way to get value from data is to give it away”.<sup>64</sup>

The shift towards making data publicly available is not limited to the public sector; a growing number of third sector donor organisations are starting to publish data in common formats such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard. The Development Data Challenge runs events that bring together developers and development experts to work with publicly available data to create ways of displaying and combining these sources that give insights into the current

<sup>59</sup> <http://participedia.net/cases/california-whats-next-california-deliberative-poll-torrance-california> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.peopleandparticipation.net/display/CaseStudies/Tomorrow's+Europe,+the+first+EU-wide+Deliberative+Poll> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

<sup>61</sup> <http://data.overheid.nl/>, <http://www.dati.gov.it/>, <http://datos.gob.es/datos/>, <http://www.data.gouv.fr/> Viewed on 30 August, 2012

<sup>62</sup> <http://opendata.paris.fr/opendata/jsp/site/Portal.jsp>; <http://www.nyc.gov/html/data/about.html> Viewed on 30 August, 2012

<sup>63</sup> <http://publicdata.eu/> Viewed 4 September 2012,

<sup>64</sup> <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/872&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en> Viewed on 30 August, 2012

state of development projects.<sup>65</sup> At the most recent event held in London, one team combined data on online media coverage with humanitarian aid data sourced from the UN's financial tracking service to explore visually the relationship between levels of media coverage and funding for major disasters and emergencies.<sup>66</sup> Another team used previously unpublished data from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) to map settlements in South Sudan's Central Equatoria state and their distance from water sources.<sup>67</sup> The next event is planned for Helsinki later this year. The project is a good example of how different sectors play important roles in enabling citizen engagement. The role of governments and international institutions in providing access to the raw data sets they hold is crucial. However, when it comes to encouraging citizens to use this data to add value, tell interesting stories and highlight problems, there are key roles for the third and private sectors – for example, both The Open Knowledge Foundation and The Guardian Media group are key sponsors of the Development Data Challenge.

#### **10.000scholen.nl, the Netherlands**

10.000scholen.nl is a platform to allow easy comparison between schools in the Netherlands.<sup>68</sup> It was started by Mateo Mol and Jan Douwe Kooistra schools when they discovered that lots of information was not easily and publicly accessible. The platform re-uses data on education and schools from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. It compiles very detailed information on primary and secondary schools that receive money from the government including data on school quality, class sizes and composition, and teachers.

#### **OpenCorporates, worldwide**

OpenCorporates is a website founded by Chris Taggart and Rob McKinnon which imports and shares data on corporate entities.<sup>69</sup> Since its launch, it has grown to become the world's largest open database of company data, listing over 40 million companies in more than 50 jurisdictions. Its aim is to create an entry for every legal corporate entity in the world. Since many corporate entities are not limited to a single country, OpenCorporates brings together relevant information in a single, accessible place where it is freely available to be re-used and combined with other data. In addition, OpenCorporates matches other public data to the respective companies from health and safety violations to government spending data.

### **4.3. Crowdsourcing solutions**

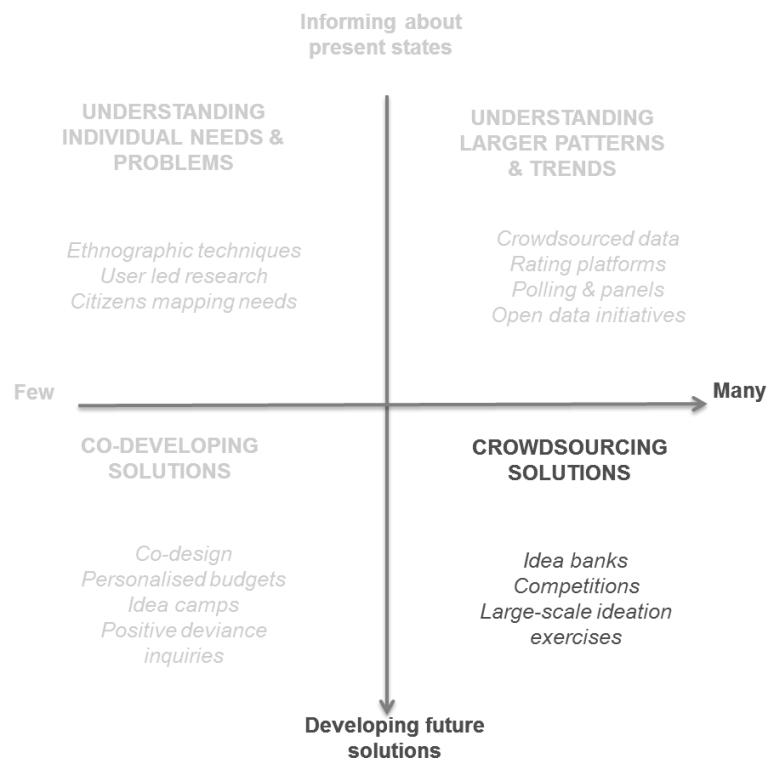
<sup>65</sup> <http://developmentdatachallenge.org/> Viewed 30 August, 2012

<sup>66</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/aug/29/development-data-challenge-projects-code-hackday> Viewed 30 August, 2012

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/aug/29/development-data-challenge-projects-code-hackday> Viewed 30 August, 2012

<sup>68</sup> <http://10000scholen.nl/> Viewed 4 September 2012,

<sup>69</sup> <http://opencorporates.com/> Viewed 4 September 2012



The third quadrant in our typology concerns all the ways in which many citizens can develop and contribute new ideas that form the basis of new social innovations, or improvements to innovations. We have seen significant growth in the activities relevant to this quadrant. In part, this reflects the emergence of open innovation thinking in the private sector. Two core ideas underlie this approach; first, that “the more diverse the perspectives that are brought to bear on a problem, the greater the variety of potential solutions”,<sup>70</sup> and second, that looking to ‘users’ (those with first hand experience of the issue) for new ideas to solve problems is an efficient approach. This is because, as Eric von Hippel and others have suggested, information about needs and preferences is ‘sticky’ which means it is expensive to transfer from users to others – if users are the ones developing solutions then this cost of transfer is eliminated.<sup>71</sup>

The emergence of many more platforms to capture citizen ideas is also a product of technologies which significantly lower the barriers for creating and contributing to such platforms. There are some older examples of offline platforms for collecting citizen ideas, such as Michael Young’s 1968 National Suggestions Centre (later the National Innovations Centre) which gathered thousands of ideas from members of the public. But this form of engagement has become much more widespread in the last decade, with online idea banks, competitions and challenges proliferating at local and national levels.

Although online mechanisms open up many opportunities for engagement, they are not always the best way of accessing a large number of citizens’ ideas. When it is important that the citizens involved represent a population as accurately as possible, it may be more appropriate to use an offline method where online access and familiarity with ICT tools does not present a barrier. Here,

<sup>70</sup> C Bason, *Leading public sector innovation: co-creating for a better society*, Policy Press, Bristol 2010, p. 124

<sup>71</sup> E von Hippel, ‘Sticky Information and the Locus of Problem Solving: Implications for Innovation’, *Management Science*, vol.40:4, 1994, pp. 429-439. See TEPsIE deliverable 1.3 for more discussion of open innovation.

methods for working with large numbers of citizens face to face such as Planning for Real and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meetings can be an effective means of gathering ideas.

#### 4.3.1. Idea banks

Idea banks have become particularly prevalent at the level of city governments. In an early example, the Seoul Metropolitan Government launched an ideas bank in 2006. It received over 140 proposals a day and 1,300 ideas were adopted wholesale including simple changes to transport such as lowering the handles on Metro trains for shorter passengers.<sup>72</sup> Many cities are now experimenting with these formats. For example, the European Union funded Open Cities project is currently running idea bank platforms in three cities, Amsterdam, Berlin and Paris.<sup>73</sup>

There are also some examples of national schemes, such as President Obama's call for ideas as part of the 'Government Reform for Competitiveness and Innovation Initiative'<sup>74</sup>. It asked citizens (and particularly Federal government employees) to submit ideas on two areas: what government could do to help increase trade, exports and overall competitiveness and what the biggest opportunities are for streamlining government processes to make them more efficient and effective. This scheme follows on from a similar call for ideas in 2009 which asked citizens to submit proposals for how federal government should become more open and transparent.

The use of idea banks at a supranational level is less common, but there are examples. In 2010, NATO and the European Union joined forces to ask people with interest or expertise in trans-Atlantic security issues to submit ideas on the future of Western security policy. The 2010 Online Security Jam saw 3,800 people log on from 124 countries over a five day period in February 2010.<sup>75</sup>

Some individual institutions have also started using idea banks as a mechanism for improving the services they offer. For example, Aalborg Hospital in the Jutland region of Denmark invited patients, relatives, doctors and nurses to submit their ideas for practical suggestions for improvements to an online database.<sup>76</sup> This has already resulted in a number of small innovations, for example the development of a 'Patient Book' which collects all relevant information patients require into one place and a single format.

#### **OurSocialInnovation, Germany**

OurSocialInnovation.org is a German ideas platform recently developed and piloted by the Centre for Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship at EBS Business School.<sup>77</sup> The platform invites individuals to submit short responses to a particular social challenge. The first challenge focused on getting young people reading in Germany and the most recent looks at changing the behaviour of German consumers to favour Fair trade goods; it is supported by Fairtrade Deutschland. Participants receive points for uploading ideas, as well as for ranking and commenting on existing ideas.

<sup>72</sup> J Caulier-Grice, R Murray and G Mulgan, *The Open Book of Social Innovation*, London, NESTA, 2010, p.39

<sup>73</sup> [http://opencities.net/crowdsourcing\\_challenge](http://opencities.net/crowdsourcing_challenge) Viewed on 29 August, 2012

<sup>74</sup> <http://governmentreform.ideascale.com/> Viewed on 29 August, 2012

<sup>75</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/06/world/europe/06nato.html> Viewed on 31 July, 2012

<sup>76</sup> [http://www.ideklinikken.dk/index.php?menu\\_id=27](http://www.ideklinikken.dk/index.php?menu_id=27) Viewed on 29 August, 2012

<sup>77</sup> <http://oursocialinnovation.org/web/guest> Viewed on 29 August, 2012

### City idea banks , USA

Idea banks have been established in a number of cities throughout the US in recent years. Run by the City of New York, ChangebyUs NYC is a platform for New Yorkers to submit ideas on how their city could be improved.<sup>78</sup> Current ideas featured include requests for more bike racks and extensions to the Subway line. Similarly, ImproveSF has been developed by the City and County of San Francisco to collect citizen ideas for ways to bring about change in the city.<sup>79</sup> There are specific challenges that users can respond to (organised by theme) as well as opportunities to post ideas ad hoc. Rewards are built in and users gain points for voting on, commenting on and prioritising ideas as well as submitting new ones.

### 4.3.2. Competitions

Competitions to source new ideas require citizens to submit a more worked out proposal and usually include a commitment from decision makers that a number of winning submissions will receive funding and other support to actually implement the idea. A good example is the recent challenge released by Nesta and the Cabinet Office in the UK calling for ideas related to Ageing Well and Waste Reduction.<sup>80</sup> After an initial call for submissions, 5 finalists will be awarded £10,000 to test out their ideas and the winner will be given £50,000 to implement it fully. Another is the Enterprise Challenge (TEC) in Singapore held in 2006, in which the government invited citizens to suggest ideas for improving public services, awarding grants to prototype the most promising suggestions.<sup>81</sup>

Some of the most fruitful idea competitions have resulted from government opening up data sets. This is the basis of the Apps for Democracy competition which invited citizens in Washington DC to use government data to build web applications that would improve civic life. The Apps for Democracy model has been replicated by many regions, for example Apps Voor Nederland<sup>82</sup> that challenges developers to make applications with open data provided by the Dutch government, and Apps for Democracy Finland<sup>83</sup>, which was a similar competition held in 2009.

Competitions have also been adopted by innovators in the non-profit sector. In 2010, the Rockefeller Foundation joined forces with GlobalGiving and open innovation broker InnoCentive to launch a competition to find solutions to tackle water related problems in developing countries.<sup>84</sup> More than 2,200 solvers participated, resulting in 325 solutions submitted to the InnoCentive platform. Four winning submissions received \$40,000 each from Rockefeller and GlobalGiving is now using crowdfunding to raise further funds for the implementation of the winning designs.

### Bold Ideas, Better Lives Challenge – Australia

In 2010, the Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI) ran a competition asking citizens to suggest solutions to pressing social challenges. The prize was \$1 million to be shared amongst the winning projects, alongside a commitment from TACSI to provide ongoing support in the form of matching mentors to

<sup>78</sup> <http://nyc.changeby.us/#start> Viewed on 15 August, 2012

<sup>79</sup> <http://www.improvesf.com/> Viewed on 15 August, 2012

<sup>80</sup> [http://www.nesta.org.uk/areas\\_of\\_work/challengeprizes/givingchallenges](http://www.nesta.org.uk/areas_of_work/challengeprizes/givingchallenges) Viewed on 20 July, 2012

<sup>81</sup> <http://was.nl.sg/wayback/20060523031105/http://www.tec.gov.sg/home1.htm>, Viewed on 14 August, 2012

<sup>82</sup> <http://www.appsvoornederland.nl/> Viewed on 14 August, 2012

<sup>83</sup> [http://www.mindtrek.org/2009/democracy\\_finland](http://www.mindtrek.org/2009/democracy_finland) Viewed on 14 August, 2012

<sup>84</sup> <http://www.innocentive.com/innocentive-globalgiving-and-rockefeller-foundation-advance-open-innovation-solutions-world%E2%80%99s-water> Viewed on 14 August, 2012



project needs and helping to build partnerships. The call for ideas was put out to multiple sources including community groups, industry associations and universities. 258 initial entries in the form of an online written submission and a 3 minute pitch in any format (video, presentation etc.) were then whittled down by a judging panel to a shortlist. Shortlisted projects were then asked to develop a full project plan for implementation including confirming potential partners and working out budgets. The final eight winning projects tackled a wide range of social issues from binge drinking to employment pathways for deaf students.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4.3.3. Large-scale ideation exercises

Online platforms are not the only means by which many citizens can contribute ideas and solutions to a social innovation process. There are also a number of methods which involve bringing large groups of citizens together in face to face meetings to discuss and develop solutions. This practice is well developed in urban planning and architecture, where involving citizens in the design of their built environment has been commonplace for some time.

For example, Planning for Real is a methodology by which citizens can help shape the outcomes of plans for built environments in which they live and work.<sup>86</sup> It was developed in the 1970s to involve community members who might be deterred by traditional planning consultation processes. The process revolves around a 3D model of the area or neighbourhood in question, which is usually made by the citizens taking part in the process to help establish a sense of ownership over the project. Participants use the model as the basis of a hands-on approach for thinking about plans for services and development in their area. They do this by playing cards on the model to generate ideas about what they would like to see in their community. There are around 300 'standard' cards that can be used to prompt thinking, which are colour coded according to themes such as housing, leisure, crime and safety, traffic etc. In addition to the standard cards, participants can also fill out blank cards with their own suggestions. In the next phase, the community comes together to prioritise the cards into three categories: 'Now', 'Soon' or 'Later' and this is used as the basis of an action plan for the area. The Planning for Real process is delivered and licenced by the Accord Group, a non-profit housing and social care organisation.

Another more recently developed method is the Future City Game, created by the British Council along with the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES) and Manchester's Centre of Urban Life (URBIS). This is an event that takes place over one or two days with the aim of generating ideas on how to improve quality of life in a city, or a specific area (the game has been used to discuss a single street)<sup>87</sup>. Players are city inhabitants, ideally from diverse backgrounds, representing various professions, genders and generations. A trained 'games master' leads the exercise, giving players a set of tools to help them work together and develop ideas. Players compete in teams to design, test and present their ideas. The games master leads teams through three stages in developing their ideas: envisioning, testing and presenting. At the end of the game, the ideas are presented to the local stakeholders, professionals, residents, and each other. Everyone involved votes on the

<sup>85</sup> Australian Centre for Social Innovation, *Bold Ideas Better Lives Challenge*, The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, Australia, 2010, <http://www.tacsi.org.au/assets/Projects/Challenge/TACSI-Challenge-Paper-01.pdf> Viewed 14 August, 2012

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.planningforreal.org.uk/> Viewed 14 August, 2012

<sup>87</sup> A game in 2009 in Warsaw was focused on one street, Samborska Street, in an area called Nowe Miasto, part of the historical core of the city. [http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/urban\\_co-design\\_tools/element/1103/the\\_future\\_city\\_game\\_in\\_warsaw\\_samborska\\_street](http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/urban_co-design_tools/element/1103/the_future_city_game_in_warsaw_samborska_street) Viewed 14 August, 2012

best ideas and thinks about how they can be taken forward in the city once the game has ended. To date, the Future City Game has been played across Europe, and particularly in Eastern Europe where there have been Games in cities in Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Latvia.<sup>88</sup>

Other large scale group methodologies come from the tradition of enhancing participatory democracy through greater engagement in local issues, for example 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meetings in the US.

#### **Future Cities Game – Estonia**

The Future City game methodology was recently used in Saue a city in northwestern Estonia.<sup>89</sup> Facilitated by Saue City Council and a non-profit organisation, Saue Open Youth Club, the event brought together representatives from across the city, including public officials, students, and professionals over two days to exchange ideas about the city’s future. Discussions focused on key problems such as a lack of community spaces. After a number of deliberation and brainstorming sessions, participants developed an idea to transform a neglected railway station into an ‘info-station’ that would offer a number of services including bike and skating hire, a café and an exhibition space for local artists.

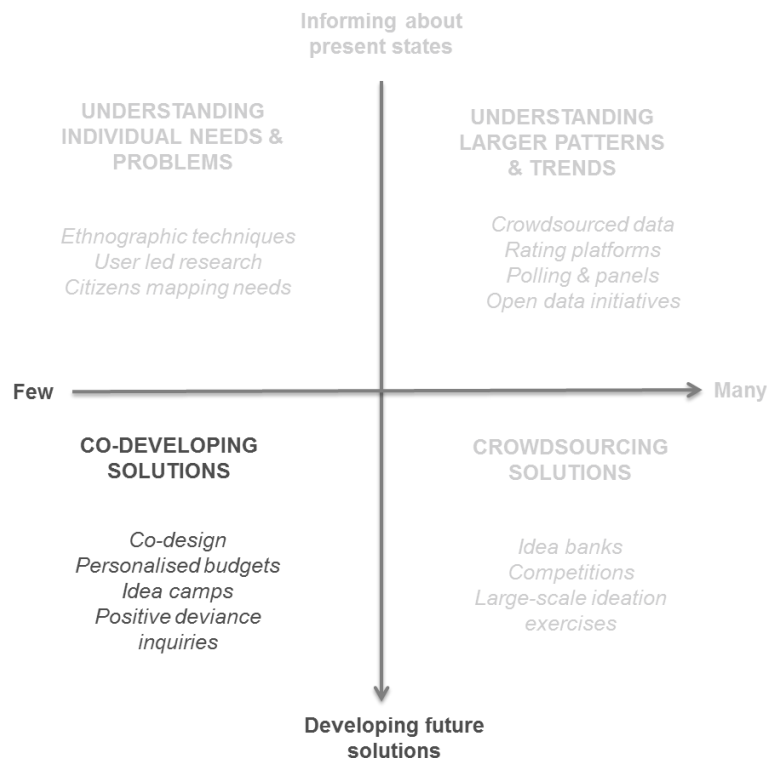
#### **21st Century Town Meetings – US**

21st Century Town meetings are large scale gatherings that use technology to enable many citizens (typically between 500 and 5,000) to deliberate together to develop solutions on local, regional or national issues. Participants work in small groups of 10-12, led by professional facilitators. They are given background materials to inform them about the issue at hand and topic experts are available to answer questions generated from table discussions. Ideas are recorded on laptops and data is collected and sent instantly to a group called the Theme team who read and synthesise the reports submitted by each table to identify the strongest emerging themes. Participants are equipped with voting keypads which they use to identify preferences amongst recommendations and make decisions about which topics to discuss further. These are expensive exercises to run and are typically only used where there is some concrete outcome expected. Public officials are closely involved in the process and use the outputs to inform decision making. The 21st Century Town meeting model has been used to help city leaders reach consensus on the development of the World Trade Center site in New York and to decide on rebuilding plans in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.

## **4.4. Co-developing solutions**

<sup>88</sup> See the list of Future City Game locations: [http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/urban\\_co-design\\_tools/future\\_city\\_game/past\\_fcgs](http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/urban_co-design_tools/future_city_game/past_fcgs) Viewed 14 August, 2012

<sup>89</sup> [http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/urban\\_co-design\\_tools/element/161/the\\_future\\_city\\_game\\_in\\_saue](http://creativecities.britishcouncil.org/urban_co-design_tools/element/161/the_future_city_game_in_saue) Viewed 14 August, 2012



The fourth quadrant in our typology concerns those methods where citizens take part in developing new solutions or proposals. These methods see citizens entering into an iterative process of developing and testing out ideas in practice. They involve some of the most intensive forms of engagement since they usually require deliberation and multiple interactions. This means that they are typically undertaken with much smaller groups of citizens than those that can be engaged via crowdsourcing initiatives. It also means that the methods here tend to take the form of face to face, offline interactions rather than online activities.

Methods in this category are particularly valuable for generating successful social innovations because they bring citizens' experiences and judgement about what works right into the centre of the way solutions are designed. This recognises that most tough social issues are about human interaction and as such solutions cannot be parachuted in from the outside but must be developed and accepted by the relevant individuals and communities themselves.

There are numerous settings where this type of citizen engagement in developing social innovations can happen. Here we highlight just four of note: co-design processes, idea camps, personalised budgets and positive deviance inquiries.

#### 4.4.1. Co-design processes

Co-design is a term used in many different contexts, but is usefully defined by Deborah Szebeko and Lauren Tan as "a creative approach that supports and facilitates the democratic involvement of people in addressing social challenges".<sup>90</sup> Only explicitly discussed in relation to public services

<sup>90</sup> L Tan and D Szebeko, 'Co-designing for dementia: The Alzheimer 100 project', *Australasian Medical Journal*, vol.1:12, 2009, pp. 185-198

since the 2000s onwards, co-design has its roots in design and architecture movements in the 1960s and 1970s that emphasised the importance of involving more people in the creative process. It also takes inspiration from Victor Papanek's *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* which called on designers to move from designing for people's wants to their needs, which he explained entails moving from designing *for* people to designing *with* them.<sup>91</sup>

Co-design processes do not assume that problems are already well understood and so usually begin by devoting significant time to ethnographic methods (outlined in quadrant one of our typology) in order to understand what needs look like – for example, focused observations, mapping user journeys and other forms of visualisation which are used to help participants to identify key issues and develop ideas in response to them. This input is then brought to workshop settings where service users, management professionals and other stakeholders work together to develop responses. These workshops require specialist facilitation techniques and therefore co-design is frequently led by an intermediary agency that works with citizens and public sector authorities. Examples include the UK groups ThinkPublic and Participle and Danish organisation MindLab. Although many of the more high profile examples of co-design have come out of the UK and Scandinavia, a survey from Demos and PriceWaterhouseCoopers of 466 public service practitioners across the USA, Europe, Latin America and Asia Pacific found enthusiastic support for the practice and concluded that “co-design is an international movement”.<sup>92</sup>

#### **The 'Territoires en résidences' programme, France**

'Territoires en résidences' was a programme run by the 27e Région to trial new participatory approaches to public policy design.<sup>93</sup> As a spin-off of the Association of French Regions, the 27e Région works as an innovation lab for the 26 French Regional Councils to co-design new and more sustainable ways of living. The programme involved immersing small cross-disciplinary teams – comprised of designers, sociologists, digital innovators and researchers – in local projects or public facilities for several months. It was conceived as an alternative to classical consulting, studies or surveys, in order to enable local stakeholders to co-create ideas and prototype solutions.

The first 'residence' was launched in March 2009 in a high school that was about to be rebuilt in Champagne-Ardenne. It was focussed on proposing improvements to the architecture that would make the campus more open but the goal was also to inform policy makers about co-design methods. During 2009 and 2010, a dozen more residencies were run on various issues, such as nursing homes in Auvergne, data opening in Aquitaine, social networks in Brittany, rural transportation in Burgundy, and digital hubs in Provence Alpes Côte d'Azur. The 27e Région is now working to scale up the residencies as a means of continuously improving regional policies.<sup>94</sup>

#### **The Alzheimer 100 Project, UK**

Co-design approaches are particularly useful in social welfare, education and health settings which involve

<sup>91</sup> V Papanek, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change*, 3rd edition, Random House, New York, 2000

<sup>92</sup> P Bradwell and S Marr, *Making the most of collaboration: an international survey of public service co-design*, Demos in association with PWC's Public Sector Research Centre, London, 2008

<sup>93</sup> Viewed 04 September 2012, <http://territoiresenresidences.wordpress.com/>

<sup>94</sup> V Thoresen, S Vincent, F Jégou, *My college tomorrow: innovation labs to enable collective public action on education environments*, PERL Enabling Responsible Living Conference, 14-15 March 2011, Istanbul, 2011

problems that involve complex needs. In 2007, ThinkPublic worked with the Alzheimer Society on the Alzheimer 100 Project.<sup>95</sup> The agency recruited a community of under 65s and their carers to film and capture stories of everyday life with dementia. This content was then used at a workshop that brought together patients, carers, nurses, healthcare managers and other staff. The group voted on key challenges they wanted to address and worked in small groups to develop ideas for pilot programs. This included an idea for a Signpost service which would help people to navigate through disparate dementia services through use of a 'signposter' who could direct people to the relevant resources. This has now been piloted by ThinkPublic into a scheme called Dementia Advisors.<sup>96</sup>

#### 4.4.2. Idea camps

In recent years, there have been a spate of 'open space' events which involve citizens coming together (usually for a short period, often a weekend) to work on developing solutions and ideas with others who have similar interests but diverse skills. An early example is the BarCamp movement which has run hundreds of events around the world, mostly focused on web applications related to open source technologies, social software, and open data formats. BarCamps are self-organising which means that participants supply the content, shape the programme, and source the venue. They operate on the principle that there are no spectators, only participants. This concept has influenced the development of similar events with a social focus – for example Social Innovation Camp (SI Camp) brings together practitioners, designers and coders to create web-based solutions to social issues in areas such as health, education and the environment. In Denmark, the organisation Social+ hosts social innovation events which bring a number of entrepreneurs together to work on idea development.<sup>97</sup> The events are hosted on an island near Copenhagen and the group is challenged to come up with 100 ideas which they debate and refine until they reach a number of actionable ideas. Social+ is hosted by the non-profit Velux Foundation and Villum Foundation.

Although many of these idea camp events have been driven by citizens and civil society organisations with little connection to governments, there are emerging examples of governments adopting this method as a way of developing new solutions with citizens. For example, in 2011, in partnership with the Gray Area Foundation for the Arts, the City of San Francisco ran a 'Summer of Smart' initiative which brought together developers, designers, planners and community activists over a number of weekends to work on pilot projects related to urban problems and present them to the city's mayoral candidates.<sup>98</sup>

#### **Social Innovation Camps, worldwide**

SI Camps begin with an open call for ideas where citizens are invited to submit their idea for how a web based tool could be used to solve a social challenge. Judges then select a small number of project teams to attend the two-and-a-half weekend event. As well as quality ideas, organisers seek to select a diverse but complementary range of people to make sure that there is an appropriate mix of skills and knowledge.

<sup>95</sup> L Tan and D Szebeko, 'Co-designing for dementia: The Alzheimer 100 project', *Australasian Medical Journal*, vol.1:12, 2009, pp. 185-198

<sup>96</sup> [http://alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download\\_info.php?fileID=532](http://alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=532) Viewed on 23 July 2012

<sup>97</sup> <http://socialeopfindelser.dk/events/> Viewed on 31 August, 2012

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.summerofsmart.org/home/> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

At the weekend itself, participants must self-organise into teams around common ideas and answer the following questions:

- What is the social need you are addressing?
- What technology will you use?
- How will you sustain the tool you have created?
- How will you build a community of users?
- What will you do after SI Camp?

Participants are tasked with building a prototype of their idea by the end of the weekend. They then pitch this to the team of judges and prizes are awarded to projects that have shown the greatest potential over the weekend. After the event the SI Camp supports the projects which emerge – and which wish to continue – with mentoring and technical advice.

Originating in London in 2008, there have since been camps throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. At the most recent event held in Brno, Czech Republic, projects to emerge from the weekend included a mobile device to measure levels of air pollution and a tool to give the public, NGOs and media easy access to the past election promises of politicians.<sup>99</sup>

#### 4.4.3. Personalised budgets

Personalised budgets represent one way that citizens can get involved in developing solutions at the individual level. They are most relevant in a social care context although they have also been trialled in services related to substance misuse and special educational needs. Individuals are allocated personal budgets so that they can directly purchase the support they would like. The idea is to give control back to users, particularly those who have historically had little choice over the support they receive. Personalised budgets enable people to purchase products or services that might fall outside the remit of traditional care services. For example, it might be that what an individual really needs is help getting out and socialising. A personalised budget would allow them to pay for someone to accompany them out to an activity on a regular basis. As a practice, personalised budgets have taken off particularly in the UK, where there is a target of providing every service user with one by 2013.<sup>100</sup>

#### **Personalised budgets for mental health – Oregon, USA**

In the state of Oregon in the USA, personalised budgets are being implemented by the Empowerment Initiatives Brokerage, a non-profit that helps people with persistent mental health issues to live independently. Clients are given a budget of \$3,000 a year to spend on non-clinical services and are assigned a 'resource broker' to help them plan how to spend the money. Reported outcomes have been excellent with dramatic increases in employment amongst individuals who participated in the scheme.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> <http://sicamp.org/blog/2012/06/29/a-late-wrap-up-on-social-innovation-camp-brno/> Viewed 20 August, 2012

<sup>100</sup> J Slay, 'Co-production and personalisation: Two sides of the same coin or worlds apart?' in E Loeffler, D Taylor-Gooby, T Bovaird, F Hine-Hughes and L Wilkes (eds.), *Making Health and Social Care Personal and Local Moving from Mass Production to Co-Production*, Governance International, Birmingham, 2012

<sup>101</sup> Cabinet Office, *Power in People's Hands: Learning from the World's Best Public Services*, London, 2009

#### 4.4.4. Positive deviance inquiries

Positive deviance is a community driven approach to finding solutions to tough social problems. As one of the founders of this methodology, Jerry Sternin explains, it is based on three premises: one – solutions to seemingly intractable problems already exist; two – they have been discovered by members of the community itself, and three – these innovators (known as individual positive deviants) have succeeded even though they share the same constraints and barriers as others.<sup>102</sup> This methodology does not focus on external inputs necessary to solve a problem but instead invites the community to identify existing solutions from within its members. This is based on the conviction that “the real experts are the local problem owners”.<sup>103</sup> Once solutions have been identified, the community then has the responsibility to design and create activities and spaces that give everyone the opportunity to practice these discovered behaviours and strategies.

One of the first large scale applications of positive deviance was in Vietnam in the 1990s to address the problem of childhood malnutrition. Participants in the process discovered that some children from very poor families were kept well nourished because their parents had adopted a number of uncommon practices including feeding them nutritious foods (shrimps and crabs) that were not usually given to children, increased frequency in feeding and washing their children’s hands before meals. Local people then designed ways for these practices to be shared, such as taking malnourished children to a neighbour’s house where they could practice new recipes and learn about sanitation practices. The positive deviance methodology has since been used to tackle a huge range of social issues including hospital infections in Pittsburgh and female circumcision in Egypt.<sup>104</sup>

#### **Positive Deviance in prison and probation services – Denmark**

The Danish prison system is highly regarded internationally for its low rates of recidivism and high numbers of inmate re-socialisation. However, it remains a very tough environment for prison officers; work related stress and burn out has resulted in an average rate of absenteeism of over one month per year and average retirement age of just 48.<sup>105</sup> A team led by Lars Thuesen, a change practitioner in the Danish Prison and Probation service recently undertook a positive deviance inquiry with a select number of prison officers. These were trained up as internal positive deviance facilitators and tasked with finding solutions amongst their colleagues. The inquiry found that prison guards with low levels of absenteeism exhibited some interesting behaviours, for example: being socially active – involved in sports and volunteering – in their free time; not reading new inmate dossiers so that they could meet them for the first time without prejudice; and, a propensity to ask for help from colleagues in stressful situations. Prison guards then developed pilot programmes to test out ways to encourage others to replicate these behaviours.

## 4.5. Summary

We have used the dimensions of ‘informing about present states’ and ‘developing future solutions’, along a scale dimension (few to many citizens) to identify four distinct types of contribution that citizen engagement can provide to the process of developing social innovations:

- Understanding needs and problems

<sup>102</sup> J Sternin, R Pascale and M Sternin, *The Power of Positive Deviance: How Unlikely Innovators Solve the World’s Toughest Problems*, Harvard Business Press, Massachusetts, 2010

<sup>103</sup> L Thuesen, ‘Wicked Challenges’, *Oxford Leadership Journal*, vol. 1:4, 2010, pp. 1-6, p. 4

<sup>104</sup> <http://www.positivedeviance.org/projects/index.html> Viewed on 21 August, 2012

<sup>105</sup> L Thuesen, ‘Wicked Challenges’, *Oxford Leadership Journal*, vol. 1:4, 2010, pp. 1-6

- Understanding larger patterns and trends
- Crowdsourcing solutions
- Co-developing solutions

And we have used this framework to categorise various examples of methods for citizen engagement. This framework provides us with a useful schema to organise our thinking about citizen engagement in social innovation as we continue this research project.



## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that citizen engagement is a key part of the development of successful social innovations. Citizens are best placed to frame and articulate the nature of the social challenges they experience, so it is important that they are brought into any process of understanding needs. And when practiced effectively, citizen involvement in the innovation process enables ideas for new solutions to be derived from diverse and unexpected sources. Engaging citizens in the development of new solutions, in particular, testing solutions in real life settings with target users should help make those solutions more effective. Furthermore, working in partnership with citizens, drawing on and developing their assets and capabilities, helps support society's resilience and capacity to act.

We have also used this paper to propose a typology for mapping different methods of citizen engagement according to the type of input that they provide to the social innovation process. Being able to map methods of citizen engagement is a very first step in better understanding this concept and its relation to social innovation. But a simple framework for mapping methods of engagement does not imply that engagement practices are themselves simple to implement. Ensuring that the greatest number of people have the option to participate and that their views and input actually influence the development of a social innovation is a major challenge. Examination of citizen engagement in other contexts readily acknowledges this. Studies of participation in the political and civic context frequently note that participation tends to be as unequal in distribution as all other resources in society, indeed, "social exclusion, in all its manifestations, inhibits the participation of poor and disadvantaged communities and individuals".<sup>106</sup> There is little reason to think the challenge will be any less great for citizen participation in social innovation.

The task of the remaining deliverables in this work package will be to unpack this complexity in greater detail. A case study report will help build up a picture of the current state of citizen engagement methods in different parts of the world. The insights and best practice that emerge from this exercise will inform an analysis of the value of citizen engagement for social innovation. And the findings of each of these will be brought together into a final report that makes policy recommendations for how citizen engagement practices can be better supported.

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<sup>106</sup> D Beetham, A Blick, H Margetts and S Weir, *Power and Participation in Modern Britain*, Democratic Audit, London, 2008, p. 11

## Appendix: Citizen engagement in a political context – democratic innovations

Citizen engagement is a huge subject with applications in many contexts across business, non-profit and public sectors. In this paper, we have looked at citizen engagement specifically through the lens of its contribution to the development of social innovations. However, citizen engagement in a distinct political context has itself been a major site of activity for the development of social innovations in recent years.

These emerging innovations and the discourse that surrounds them will be an important area for us to track as we develop our understanding of citizen engagement over the course of this work package. Not least because there is clear overlap between democratic innovations and the methods for citizen engagement in the process of social innovation we have focused on in chapter 4 of this paper. Methods such as open data initiatives, deliberative polling, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town Meetings can all be understood through dual lenses – they are mechanisms for contributing data and ideas to a process of innovation, but they are also innovations in democratic participation in their own right.

There is also a close connection between citizen participation in democratic decision making and the aims of social innovation. A core part of our definition of social innovation is that it enhances society's capacity to act. Individual and collective assets and capabilities are developed, as more people have the opportunity to move from passive representative forms of democracy to participatory forms in which they are brought into the decision making processes of society. And as a result, society as a whole is better equipped to meet social challenges over the long term.

### *Re-assessing democracy*

As many researchers have documented, most industrial democracies are experiencing growing public disillusionment with their political institutions. Indeed “by almost any measure, public confidence in and trust and support for politicians, political parties and political institutions has eroded over the past generation”.<sup>107</sup> This has resulted in falling electoral turnout and a decline in membership of political parties and other mobilising organisations such as trade unions. This potentially creates a crisis of legitimacy; when fewer people vote and the profile of those voting narrows, governments are no longer effectively held to account by citizens, and their mandate to rule becomes questionable.

It is also frequently suggested that the model of representative democracy itself is no longer fit for purpose. For example, Archon Fung and Elin Okin Wright argue that “the institutional forms of liberal democracy developed in the nineteenth century – representative democracy plus technobureaucratic administration – seem increasingly ill suited to the novel problems we face in the

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<sup>107</sup> R Dalton, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 191

twenty-first century.”<sup>108</sup> The model of representative democracy assumes that public involvement is limited to the act of voting, allowing the experts to get on with the work of government.<sup>109</sup> However, in the context of both complex challenges and a more educated and less deferential society, the notion of expertise is evolving and many more people are required to provide input on a wide range of issues.

It is against this backdrop that governments are looking for ways to engage citizens that move beyond traditional forms of representative democracy. There is a growing and widespread interest in finding “new opportunities for citizen input and control”.<sup>110</sup> Several researchers have written about the emergence of new democratic initiatives. For example, Mark Warren talks about the emergence of ‘political experiments’ that have democratic potential, in that they “increase the chances that those potentially affected by collective decisions can influence those decisions”. Similarly, Archon Fung and Elin Olin Wright identify methods of ‘empowered participatory governance’ which are intended to “deepen the ways in which ordinary people can effectively participate in and influence policies which directly affect their lives”. And Graham Smith has described the last decade as a time of “quite exceptional democratic experimentation sponsored by public authorities”. He has written extensively about the development of “democratic innovations” which he defines as “institutions that have been specifically designed to increase and deepen citizen participation in the political decision making process”.<sup>111</sup>

The activities and new methods of political engagement that comprise these democratic innovations are diverse and numerous. However, we can organise them usefully into three categories of activity.<sup>112</sup>

(i) *Deliberative innovations*

Some democratic innovations are about developing new settings in which citizens can come together to deliberate over policy. These tend to be developed in response to the weakness of traditional consultation exercises that tend to engage only those who are already politically active and motivated. Many take the form of micro-forums that select citizens for participation by random sampling to ensure a diversity of perspectives and experiences. Examples include citizen juries, consensus conferences and deliberative polls and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Town meetings (both highlighted earlier in this paper). They are frequently run by independent (often third sector) organisations that specialise in careful facilitation and are perceived as impartial.

**Citizen juries**

Citizen juries consist of small panels (somewhere in the region of 10-20 participants) of non-specialists who are tasked with discussing an important area of public policy and delivering their verdict. They are given the

<sup>108</sup> A Fung and E Olin Wright, ‘Thinking about Empowered Participatory Governance’ in *Deepening Democracy: Institutional Innovations in Empowered Participatory Governance*, Volume IV in the Real Utopias Project, Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright (eds.), 2001

<sup>109</sup> See for example, *Involve, People and Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision making*, Involve, 2008

<sup>110</sup> R Dalton, *Democratic Challenges, Democratic Choices: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies: The Erosion of Political Support in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 204

<sup>111</sup> G Smith, *Democratic innovations: designing institutions for citizen participation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009

<sup>112</sup> These categories follow Graham Smith’s work in his book, *Democratic Innovations*, and also the paper *Power Beyond the Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World*, the Power Inquiry., London, 2005

opportunity to examine both written (through briefings) and verbal (through expert witnesses) forms of evidence that give different perspectives on the issue. Citizen juries usually last several days – typically four – but there is a significant amount of preparation required by organisers to select jurors and gather witnesses and briefing materials. The jury is usually supplemented with an oversight or advisory panel. While this panel does not take any part in facilitating the Citizen Jury, they will decide how to respond to the recommendations contained in the Jury verdict report. Hence citizen juries tend to be a mechanism for advising on decisions as opposed to making decisions.

The technique emerged both in Germany in the 1970s under the direction of sociologist Peter Diemel and separately in the United States at the Jefferson Center, which has trademarked the use of the term there. It can be used to deliberate about policy at local, regional or national levels. Although the numbers involved are small, partnership with media can extend their reach and impact – for example in 2005, BBC Radio worked with Newcastle University to run a Citizen Jury where witness interviews and deliberations were broadcast.

### **Consensus conferences**

Consensus conferences are similar to citizen juries in that they involve a small panel of citizens who are tasked with developing recommendations on an issue through questioning expert witnesses. However, this method is more self selecting since citizens are selected from a pool of volunteers who put themselves forward following calls for participants in the press. Consensus conferences are often used to debate complex and controversial issues of public interest and one or two preparatory events are usually held prior to the conference itself to inform participants about key aspects of the debate. They have been used by the Danish Board of Technology since the 1980s to get citizen perspectives on controversial science and technology developments that raise ethical concerns.

### *(ii) Co-governance innovations*

A further category of innovations in citizen participation go much further than deliberation by giving citizens significant influence in decision making. These are often on-going forms of interaction rather than one off events. Perhaps the most significant example of this category of co-governance innovation is participatory budgeting (PB). This is a process whereby citizens of a particular area are directly involved in making decisions on spending for a council or other service agency. The practice emerged in the 1980s in Porto Alegre, Brazil and has since been adopted in many cities and regions around the world, albeit in very different forms.<sup>113</sup> It has been particularly prevalent in Germany, where it has been used by districts of major cities such as Berlin and Cologne. Although the power delegated to citizens varies considerably depending on how PB initiatives are designed, participatory budgeting represents one of the most radical forms of citizen engagement.

Another significant initiative in this category is the Citizen Assembly. Like many of the deliberative methods discussed above, Citizen Assemblies bring together a large, randomly selected group of individuals to study the options available to the state on a major issue. However, this method is distinct from the deliberative examples because the assembly takes place over a much longer period (several months or a full year) and there is usually a clear connection to political decision

<sup>113</sup> Community Pride Initiative and Oxfam, *Breathing life into democracy: The power of participatory budgeting*, London, 2005

making. For example, in several cases of the Assembly in Canada, the recommendations that result have been put to a referendum with the legislature willing to accept the decision of the people.

### **Participatory budgeting**

Participatory budgeting (PB) emerged in Porto Alegre, Brazil in the late 1980s and quickly spread to many other municipalities across the country. The process starts with neighbourhood or regional assemblies which are open to all. At these assemblies, citizens review budget allocations and draw up a list of their priorities. They then elect delegates to represent them at Regional and then Municipal Budget Forums where the overall distribution of resources is decided. The implementation of PB has led to significant transfers of resources to poorer areas. There are therefore high incentives for citizens to participate; in the 1990s over 8% of the adult population in Porto Alegre had participated in a budget assembly in the past five years.<sup>114</sup>

While PB initiatives have developed in Europe, they have tended to be more limited in terms of scale and the level of control delegated to citizens. European experience with PB has also been much more top-down driven than the Brazilian experience.

### **Citizen Assemblies**

In 2004 a Citizen Assembly was created by the government of British Columbia. This was an independent, non partisan assembly of citizens who were tasked with examining the province's electoral system. It was agreed in advance that the recommendations of the Assembly would be put to a popular vote. The Assembly comprised 160 members, a man and woman from each of British Columbia's electoral districts, picked at random. The group spent 11 months studying electoral systems across the world, holding public hearings and accepting public submissions. Their final recommendation was for a new electoral system; this was put to a British Columbia referendum. Although the referendum was narrowly defeated, the Assembly in British Columbia has been described as "one of the most impressive experiments using a randomly selected group of citizens".<sup>115</sup> Similar Assemblies on electoral reform have been held in Ontario, Canada in 2007, and also in the Netherlands, although here there was not the same commitment from the government to putting the recommendations of the Assembly to the popular vote.<sup>116</sup>

### *(iii) E-governance*

A third category of innovations relates to efforts to use online tools to engage citizens in the political process. Some of this involves taking existing structures (such as consultations) and giving them an online presence so that they are easier to locate and comment on. However, the more interesting activity in this space has focused on ways to make it easier for citizens to shape the legislative agenda. In recent years a number of governments have initiated platforms for citizens to propose new ideas for legislation and policy. These use web platforms to provide a simple, low cost way for citizens to contribute ideas and express preferences, often in the form of petitions. The

<sup>114</sup> R Neaera Abers, 'Learning Democratic Practice: Distributing Government Resources through Popular Participation in Porto Alegre, Brazil' in *Cities for Citizens*, ed. M Douglass and J Friedmann (Wiley, Chichester and New York, 1998), p. 47-9

<sup>115</sup> G Smith, *Power Beyond the Ballot: 57 Democratic Innovations from Around the World*, The Power Inquiry, London, 2005

<sup>116</sup> L Maer, 'Citizen Assemblies', House of Commons Library, London, 2009

Estonian government developed an early initiative in this area – a public participation portal called ‘Today I Decide’ (known under the Estonian acronym ‘TOM’) which enables citizens to propose, discuss and vote on new legislation. The TOM model has been used to develop a generic tool for other administrations across the EU interested in implementing a similar scheme.<sup>117</sup>

Although these are an area of significant activity and investment, understanding of online spaces for democratic engagement is still nascent. As Graham Smith notes, “the jury remains out on the impact of ICT on democratic theory and practice”.<sup>118</sup> There are significant research questions that have not been addressed related to the reach and qualities of e-participation. In terms of reaching more diverse groups, it is not at all clear that online forms of participation do more than reinforce existing patterns of political participation, therefore replicating the marginalisation of hard to reach groups. And in relation to the quality of online engagement, there is still little research that addresses the question, “to what extent do virtual many-to-many deliberations differ from their face to face counterparts and under what conditions can mutual understanding and empathy be promoted in virtual space”<sup>119</sup>. This remains a rich area for further analysis and one that will be considered by the TEPSIE project in work package 8 looking at online networks and social innovation.

### E-petitions

A number of governments have established online platforms for citizens to suggest and vote on topics for debate. WeThePeople, launched by the Obama administration, gives citizens a way to create and sign petitions asking the government to take action on a specific issue.<sup>120</sup> Petitions must generate 25,000 signatures in thirty days in order to be reviewed by Administration officials. The UK government’s e-petition website allows anyone who can collect 100,000 signatories to propose that issue for debate by MPs in the House of Commons.<sup>121</sup> The German Bundestag has initiated a very similar scheme, and there are other examples at the municipal level, for example the City of Paris has recently re-launched an e-petition site that asks Parisians to collect signatories on city issues such as roads, the environment and waste management.<sup>122</sup> 18,000 signatories are needed to trigger a debate in the Council of Paris.

### Conclusion

Although the democratic innovations we have highlighted here hold real promise for re-energising public institutions, there is also good reason for caution when thinking about their impact. It is easy to overstate the appetite of citizens to participate. Mark Warren injects useful realism when he notes that “given the range of possible activities and satisfactions in today’s societies, we should not expect citizens to choose attentiveness to politics...over competing forms of engagement: family, friends, occupations, hobbies, recreation and entertainment.”<sup>123</sup> However, as Involve’s

<sup>117</sup> <http://tidplus.net/project/> Viewed on August 31, 2012

<sup>118</sup> G Smith, *Democratic innovations: designing institutions for citizen participation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 142

<sup>119</sup> G Smith, *Democratic innovations: designing institutions for citizen participation*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009

<sup>120</sup> <http://www.whitehouse.gov/petitions> Viewed on September 18, 2012

<sup>121</sup> <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/> Viewed on September 18, 2012

<sup>122</sup> <https://epetitionen.bundestag.de/>; <http://www.paris.fr/petition> Viewed on September 18, 2012

<sup>123</sup> M Warren, ‘Citizen Participation and Democratic Deficits: Considerations from the Perspective of Democratic Theory’ in J DeBardleben and J H Pammett (eds.) *Activating the Citizen: Dilemmas of Participation in Europe and Canada*, Palgrave MacMillan, London, 2009, p. 21

*People and Participation* report argues, while we should not assume high latent demand for participation in everything, it is fair to say that “there is demand from some sectors of society to influence those things which they do care about, which requires more appropriate and more effective participation”.<sup>124</sup> The innovative methods we have reviewed briefly here offer new tools for citizens to participate and as such do have the potential to contribute to a larger process of democratic renewal.

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<sup>124</sup> Involve, *People and Participation: How to put citizens at the heart of decision making*, Involve, 2008, p. 25

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