

Rethinking e-participation: smash down the silos and move to ‘open participation’

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1. Introduction

Most e-participation research and practice over the last ten years has focused on the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for citizen involvement in political decisions and public policy making at both local and national levels. For example in the European context, a common definition of e-participation relates “mainly to inputs to policy- and decision-making for political or public-policy purposes, both within formal systems and informally” (Millard et al 2009). This paper will argue strongly that, however useful this rather narrow view of e-participation has been in the past, it is no longer tenable either in terms of practice or theory. The world has moved on, and this is particularly the case at local and regional level where significant progress is being made and diverse experiences are having impact around the world.

E-participation should no longer be conceived as a silo, a rather separate add-on to existing organisations and processes. Instead successful e-participation at local and regional level needs to be firmly embedded within, and part of, wider governance changes across the whole gamut of public sector activities, processes and structures. Although new ICT is not the cause of these changes, it is certainly a key enabler and driver of them. Particularly Web 2.0 and social media applications are creating an architecture of participation which enables users not only to be passive consumers of content and services but also active contributors and designers in their own right. This means that users and other legitimate stakeholders are invited more openly into a participative and empowering relationship with government in terms of:

- service design and delivery
- the workings and arrangements of the public sector and public governance more widely
- community building
- dispute and conflict resolution
- planning and land use issues
- broader public policy and decision making as part of the overall democratic process.

E-participation should no longer be seen as a silo because an increasing amount of good practice demonstrates it is most successful when applied in a joined-up manner across some or all of the above areas and government functions (education, health, transport, law and order, care, environment, etc.), and when intimately integrated with and complementary to non-digital participative methods. Indeed, the experience presented in this paper shows this is happening mainly at local and regional level which means that these levels of government are, and are likely to remain, e-participation leaders. E-participation working well is a seamless part of a government’s broader policy of openness, transparency and collaboration. It is a continuous part of a citizen’s experience of the public sector, built into the fabric of all aspects of the way in which he or she interacts with the authority. It is a natural and fundamental way in which the government conducts all its business, whether in what is traditionally termed either the back- or front-office so that this distinction becomes misleading – all is now ‘front-office’ in the sense all is now open and visible. ‘E-participation’ thus touches the lives of citizens in a comprehensive way; it is the same as ‘participation’ but with a new and perhaps transformatory dimension.

In section 2 of this paper, striking examples from San Francisco, London and Aveiro in Portugal are presented which exemplify some or all of the above claims. Section 3 looks at the new types of actor roles and relationships resulting from these new types of practice, whilst section 4 attempts to draw out lessons and recommendations for local and regional governments more generally.

2. Integrated citizen interaction cutting across domains and tools

2.1. San Francisco, USA

San Francisco is probably the global e-participation leader, at least at sub-national level, given the range and impact of its activities and success using ICT. Three major and interrelated initiatives are presented which demonstrate leading-edge e-participation practices.

1. ‘SF Twitter 311’

“More than 50 SF agencies and officials use Twitter for citizen engagement and empowerment and government marketing, not including political accounts.”¹ For example, the former Mayor had 1.3 million followers. In an effort to improve the ‘311 service’ (i.e. non-emergency telephone information and complaint service) and simultaneously lower costs, the City of San Francisco launched ‘SF 311’ on Twitter in June 2009. This allows residents to access 311 services online in addition to by telephone, and is now the dominant channel for this service.² Twitter 311 offers a number of advantages over the phone service which benefit both City officials and residents. For example, fewer 311 staff members are able to respond to more requests than they previously could by phone alone. When residents submit requests through Twitter, they can also attach pictures of problems they need addressed, clarifying why the issue requires resolution. After a Twitter request has been made, 311 staff can easily provide follow-up, allowing residents to track resolution of the problem.

Twitter and Twitter 311 have together now become an important tool for interaction between the City and residents. Much more than simply registering complaints, Twitter is now used for receiving and commenting on suggestions and helping to build a vibrant citizen community. A new phase starting in 2012 is using the data generated as empirical evidence for service and policy development across all City functions. Indeed, since 2008 the data collected with local information covers 855,906 cases, derived from both Twitter 311 and telephone 311 services.³ Experiments are now being made to feed these data into the decision-making process complementing the traditional outreach methods, like town hall meetings.

2. Improve SF’

“ImproveSF, is a fun way to submit your great ideas, help others improve their great ideas, and ultimately determine the best ideas for your community. Too often, great community ideas are lost because residents don't know how or don't feel comfortable getting involved. ImproveSF empowers people to improve their community, all from the convenience of their own home.”⁴ Using social media platform ‘Mindmixer’, ImproveSF was launched in early 2012 with two main strands. First, the City authorities launch ideas for civic improvements and elicit feedback from residents. Second, residents can themselves make suggestions for consideration by their peers. In both cases, gamification is an

¹ <http://sf.govfresh.com/best-in-sf-government-social-media> accessed 11 April 2012.

² Interviews with Shannon Spanhake, Deputy Chief Innovation Officer, City of San Francisco, and Adriel Hampton, community and social media activist, April 2012.

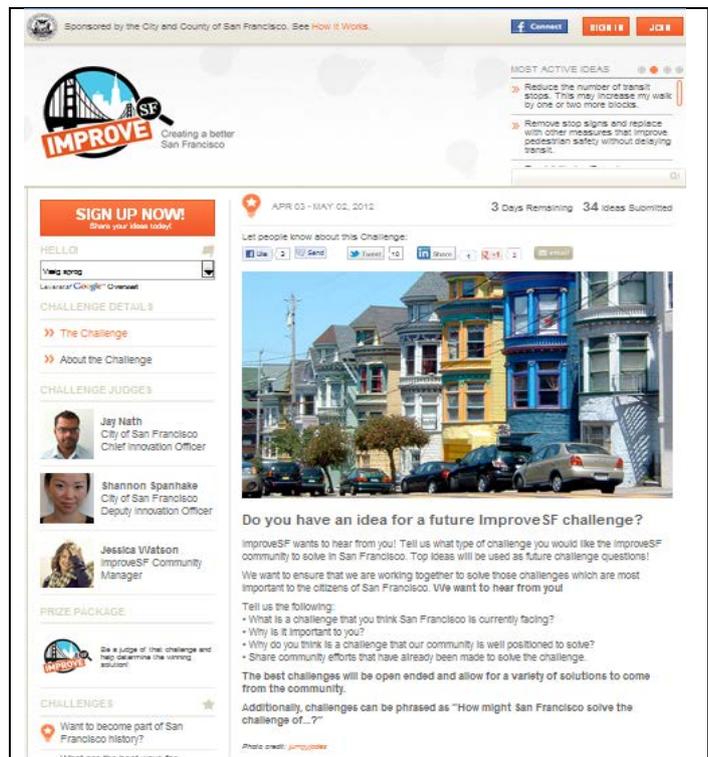
³ <https://data.sfgov.org> accessed 30 April 2012.

⁴ <http://improvesf.com/faq> accessed 30 April 2012.

important incentive, i.e. the more a citizen participates, which might include voting on suggestions put forward, the more points can be earned for “cool” rewards.⁵

These rewards are rarely anonymous cash but typically offer incentives that support the ethos behind ImproveSF, such as “lunch and walk with the Mayor”, “ride on a vintage muni vehicle”, “Mayor Lee voicemail greeting”, etc., and this is very successful⁶.

For example, in early April 2012, the issue of whether the MTA (Municipal Transport Authority) proposal to reduce the number of bus-stops and save money should be implemented, Over 90 comments were received over a few weeks, resulting in “a great conversation”, including a tweet from Tim O’Reilly. Two benefits arise from this, i.e. citizens opposed to a possible reduction now appreciate the hard decisions MTA needs to make, whilst the MTA Board responsible for the decision has access to a whole new demographic compared to just traditional town hall meetings.



3. Open city data: ‘hackathons’ and ‘unhackathons’

“In 2011 the term “hackathon” became common and many cities all over the world opened datasets for developers to build applications around.”⁷ In 2011, San Francisco got over 200 apps for free, about 10% of which were useful in filling the gap in what the City could do itself. Like ImproveSF, in most cases no money prizes are awarded, and this is unique amongst global cities. Instead the City helps to turn winners into celebrities and to promote them, for example by assisting them to pitch to Twitter, Facebook, or other investors, or helping to match them with suitable partners or customers. Having the City as an ally and trusted supporter is preferable to most entrepreneurs in San Francisco than some money in the bank. However the ‘hackathon’ approach has been criticised as being solutions looking for a problem. So in February 2012 the City launched ‘Hackathon 2.0’ which starts with specific problems looking for a solution, and also involves not just coders but also designers and companies, civic groups, etc., which need a specific problem to be solved. This is known as an ‘unhackathon’: “Calling all designers, software engineers, business strategists and other clever problem solvers who love big challenges....Join the City of San Francisco, California College of the Arts and Mix & Stir Studio for 24 hours of intensive fun while inventing design-driven technology solutions to real world problems. We provide the challenges and interesting data; you collaborate with other smart creative people to find the solutions.”⁸

These three high impact examples clearly reflect the specific San Francisco culture based on a strong sense of community and a relatively large number of citizens and ICT activists, forming a dynamic

⁵ <http://www.improvesf.com/how-it-works> accessed 30 April 2012.

⁶ <http://sf.mindmixer.com/rewards> accessed 30 April 2012.

⁷ <http://shannoninsf.blogspot.com/> accessed 30 April 2012.

⁸ <http://mixandstirstudio.com/unhack/> accessed 30 April 2012.

ecosystem supporting a strong bottom-up innovative milieu. Although San Francisco may be quite special in this regard, many elements do typify most medium-sized and large cities today, as well as smaller municipalities in more advanced countries. The real driver is instead the open-minded and collaborative attitude of the City authorities.

2.2. The London Borough of Lewisham, UK

The objectives of the 'Love Clean Streets' initiative, from January 2010 to January 2012 in the London Borough of Lewisham, are: to become a social-networking hub for London and help deliver an environment worthy of a world class city for the 2012 Olympics and beyond; to empower residents, council staff, partners and politicians to engage in their local environment by uploading photos and other information via smart phones or other devices and to participate in debates with peers and civil servants; to provide a robust way for local authorities to process the information and deal with it, while easily keeping the public informed of progress; and to link with and share existing data through a public API.⁹



Investment in the initiative has been £176,362, although other minor investments have not yet been calculated in. This compares with benefits recorded so far: 87% reduction in time taken to process a case; 70% reduction in report handling costs (telephone handling per case costs on average £5.10, compared to £4.10 for web forum and smart mobile with photo £1.50); 21% reduction in environmental casework; 30% increase in resident satisfaction; more than fourfold decrease of land at unacceptable standard; 73% reduction in graffiti; graffiti removal time reduced from average of 2.78 days to less than 0.5 days; fly-tip removal time reduced from average of 2.5 days to less than 1.0 day; elimination in staff overtime to collect missing rubbish bins from £300,000 in 2006 to £0 today; saving of £17,500 by replacing physical inspection with mobile application; increased trade waste income of £20,000, etc.¹⁰

These and other cost savings and benefits are the result of:

- significant channel shifts, i.e. reducing the use of more traditional channels like face-to-face, and voice telephony with a move to cheaper and more effective smart and other mobile phones
- re-engineered work processes, i.e. council maintenance staff empowered to organize their own work schedules based on self management of data received and their new e-skills, rather than cumbersome back-office processing unaware of realities on the street
- improved staff productivity and improved targeting by analysing data received for real time action and well as longer-term planning and policy development
- much increased citizen empowerment both in terms of a faster more reactive service as well as engagement in designing environmental initiatives and policy
- government identity: from opaque and non-responsive to open and reliable.

The UK has been an e-participation and e-government leader for many years, with successive governments fully committed to using ICT to engage citizens, civil groups and businesses in service design and broader planning and decision-making. Given the current squeeze on local as well as national government budgets, widespread experimentation is taking place to build viable and sustainable business models which benefit both government and citizens in new win-win arrangements.

⁹ <http://lovecleanstreets.org/help/about> accessed 30 April 2012.

¹⁰ Communications from the London Borough of Lewisham to the author as part of a research project.

2.3. The city of Aveiro, Portugal

In 2008, the City Council of Aveiro, with about 50,000 inhabitants, applied for funding to the National Strategic Reference Framework for the *Parque da Sustentabilidade (Sustainable Park)* project aimed at establishing a greenway crossing an important and extensive area of the city centre. The initiative involved 15 local and national partners and a budget of nearly €14 m. As soon as the news became public, mainly through the media, citizens rose against the fact that no public participation process had been promoted to discuss, or at least inform, the community about the proposals' aims, even though legislation foresees that procedure. The project's potential harmful consequences to the local environment, recreation and road traffic, and not least to the daily lives of residents, prompted a civic movement to form: *Contra o Alboi cortado ao meio (Against cutting the Alboi in half)*.

Several activities were organised by the movement in order to sensitise people to the problem and obtain technical support from planners, architects and engineers to counteract the proposal. Many local meetings were held and a questionnaire circulated to residents, with more than 90% of the 300 responses rejecting the proposal. Several appeals were also made to the City Council to promote active dialogue with citizens, but the few meetings held between the movement's representatives and the Mayor revealed that there was no intention to amend any proposal. It was within this context that social media began to have an important role, functioning as a link between the Alboi neighbourhood residents, the movement itself and all interested citizens willing to oppose the proposal. A blog was set up¹¹ together with a Facebook page¹² with approximately 2,500 friends where the movement could disseminate information and citizens were able to share opinions.

The complementary relationship between traditional meetings and poster campaigns (see illustration to the right), on the one hand, and digital media on the other, was critical and fully exploited. The integrated use of different media helped to sensitise people to the issues at stake, enlarge the impact



of the activities and citizen voice, induce civic engagement and promote a favourable environment to alter the project's implementation. In October 2011, one year after setting up the movement, the ruling party lost its majority on the City Council which then embraced the movement's counter proposals.

In Portugal public participation in local issues has traditionally been quite limited and at best reactive. The response of the City Council in this case was negative throughout most of the process, not open to any changes and with no will to discuss issues with the community. There is an overall perception by elected officials that civic movements of this kind have no democratic legitimacy. In their view, these movements do not represent a truly active citizenship but instead hide a political agenda aiming to defy the Mayor and other elected representatives, and questioning the Council's planning and technical expertise. In fact, during a press conference in November 2011, the Mayor stated that "arguments are being made in the name of an organisation that legally has no support (...), those responsible should

¹¹ <http://contraalboicortadoaomeio.blogs.sapo.pt/> accessed 30 April 2012.

¹² <https://www.facebook.com/Alboicortadoaomeio> accessed 30 April 2012.

instead be concerned with legalising the movement (...), thus there is no reason whatsoever to change political decisions, which should follow their natural path.” (Mota and Santinha 2012).

This case also illustrates the capacity of social media to transform opinions and ideas into real initiatives. The traditional public debates, TV and radio programmes, posters, marches and the publication of articles in newspapers, have been galvanised and given renewed and vital force by complementary campaigns on Facebook and through blogs. Critical also has been the key role of a core group of committed individuals acting both through traditional channels as well as using digital media, and integrating the two for a successful outcome. In Aveiro at least, the political landscape has been transformed and the mindsets of politicians, civil servants and citizens have been challenged and changed.

3. New types of actor and actor roles

There are currently three drivers leading to the blurring and changing of roles in and around public sector activity. First the financial and economic crisis resulting in fewer resources to undertake ever increasing demands from citizens and society. Second, the increasing clamour for more bottom-up, participative forms of democracy, especially at a local level, whilst more traditional representative democracy where citizens only participate during elections is increasingly inadequate to meet societal challenges. Third, and one of the main tools to address the first two, is the increasing use of sophisticated ICT in the public sector as well as across the whole of society. This enables, for example as mentioned above, users not only to be passive consumers of content and services but also active contributors and designers in their own right. This means that users and other legitimate stakeholders are invited more openly into a participative and empowering relationship with government.

Further, the distinctions between professional, politician, practitioner, civil servant, expert, consumer and citizen, are blurring dramatically. These roles are still important but the (power) relationships between them are changing and any given individual is increasingly taking two or more of them. In relation to government, this means that many stakeholders can and are becoming involved in areas of competence previously the preserve of the public sector or specific agencies alone. The public sector is becoming, instead of always the sole actor, just one player in a new form of ‘open-source governance’ in which it may often only play the role of arbiter, coordinator, funder, and regulator for the activities of others in delivering public value.

Indeed government, particularly at local and regional level as the examples in section 2 illustrate, needs to envisage itself as least partially as convener, facilitator, enabler, partner, participant, etc. It is likely to continue to be the main funder, but also needs to retain responsibility for overall quality standards, for example in public services, whether or not it itself designs and delivers them. Government will also remain the only legitimising organisation with democratic accountability to act fully in the interests of the whole of society, or if things go wrong.

These developments are largely beneficial, but they also give rise to threats and challenges, for example:

- loss of control and blurred accountability (by whom to whom?)
- privacy and data security
- digital elite formation – new digital divides?
- information overload – or is this more a filter failure?
- crowding out other perhaps more relevant channels.

4. Recommendations for local governments

4.1. Government as an open participation and collaboration platform

A critical new role for government therefore is to act as an open participation and collaboration platform, both physically and digitally. It needs to pro-actively collaborate with companies including SMEs, civil society organisations, communities, groups, people and hackers. Resources government should provide itself, or elicit from other stakeholders, include data, applications, knowledge, content and service building blocks. It should encourage their use through discussion fora, blogs, consultation, support and advice, brokerage, good practices, arbitration, etc. It should provide standardised modules for basic functionalities which are cross institutional so that users do not have to contend with unnecessary differences, but which can easily be used, re-used and combined in new ways to address specific needs. Governments thus need to increasingly crowdsource content, services and policies. Complex societal problems can no longer be solved by the state alone (the visible hand), or by the market alone (the invisible hand); now also all and any partnerships and groups (many hands) are needed. Using ICT, groups can easily and freely form, cooperate, act and dissolve: the platforms are free and the costs are essentially zero.

Citizens, communities, civil groups, as well as businesses, are themselves changing from passive consumers to active producers. For example, citizens share more and more with each other and tend to consult other citizens, rather than the government for advice – they increasingly use the ‘social signal’ to organise and improve their lives. Government thus needs to recognise the value of crowdsourcing: there is always more relevant talent outside any organisation (including government) than inside. The challenge is to recognise this fact, find it, and exploit it. But this is not necessarily easy as successful crowdsourcing also depends on a sufficient scale and representativeness of participation to get valuable results.

4.2. Share open data and other resources

A critical new resource to fuel such changes is public data, made available in machine readable linked datasets which can also be searched and manipulated using standard tools. To date there are still only a limited number of governments which have substantially embarked down this path, and even fewer local and regional governments where the benefits are likely to be greatest. US cities and Federal government, the UK, Australia and France, as well as a handful of others, are leading the way.¹³ The economic as well as social case for open public data is by now well established with good evidence from many US cities (including San Francisco) and the UK. Also recently, a European Commission (2011) study confidently predicted that open data across Europe will increase direct business activity by up to €40 billion per year (0.3% of total GDP), whilst indirect business activity will push this to €200 billion per year (1.7% of total GDP). Companies and SME start-ups in some countries are exploiting such data to expand business and create jobs, whilst a few governments are using such data to encourage innovation camps, ‘hackathons’, and other competitions to create apps, services and policies for government.

The San Francisco examples in section 2 also show the potential to use public data supplemented by citizen data through e-participation initiatives to improve the design and delivery of services as well as local policy and decision-making. Indeed, San Francisco sees two next steps for the future of open data. First, mixing public data with commercial, civil society and citizen input data, and second pooling and sharing with other cities, like Chicago, Boston and New York – i.e. data sharing for developing shared content, services and policies between cities. These aggregated city-to-city data sets could in principle also be opened up to companies, civil groups as well as individual citizens.¹⁴

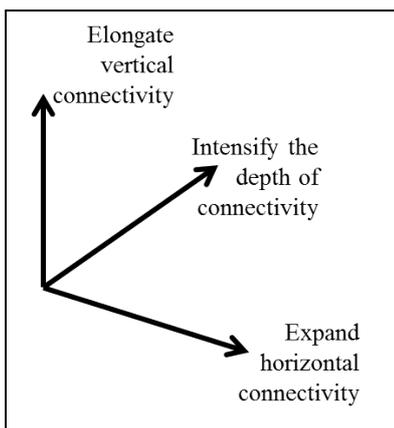
¹³ Most of these countries provide open data via participation and collaboration platforms: US: www.data.gov ; UK: data.gov.uk; Australia: data.gov.au; France: www.data.gouv.fr; accessed 30 April 2012.

¹⁴ Interview with Shannon Spanhake, Deputy Chief Innovation Officer, City of San Francisco, April 2012.

San Francisco also points to the need in future, not just for ‘big data’ drawing on citizen inputs and facilitating data analytics, for example to develop and simulate public policies and better target services, but also a more qualitative approach including ethnographic surveys. A need is thus foreseen for both big quantitative data crunching to provide explicit codified evidence for public sector activities, on the one hand, as well as more qualitative survey data to contextualise these ‘big data’ to provide the necessary implicit and uncoded evidence.

4.3. The key to successful participation: cognitive dissonance and personal as well as group conversations

According to Mainwaring (2011) one of the keys to successful change through participation, which social media can facilitate, is surfacing the cognitive dissonance citizens have about the world. For, example providing citizens with timely and accurate information about situations or conditions in their daily lives from different perspectives, plus easy tools for social interaction and action. Cognitive dissonance is a discomfort caused by holding conflicting cognitions (e.g. ideas, beliefs, values, emotional reactions) simultaneously. In such a state of dissonance, people may feel surprise or anger, but also are typically driven to action to reduce it depending how strong and important it is. Shifting people towards cognitive dissonance, which can trigger participation for positive change, can be assisted by maximising three dimensions of connectivity that social media has the potential to accomplish:



1. Elongate vertical connectivity: refers to the number of tools used to share news and information and disseminate knowledge. Given that people increasingly use multiple platforms of social media, seamlessly crossing from one to the other as they travel through the day, any message relating to the issue needing support must be made available on as many sources as possible.
2. Expand horizontal connectivity: in order to animate a sufficient constituency, engagement must reach into a very wide audience. Social media is the perfect tool for this as it has the ability to reach out into exponential proportions to enormous numbers of people. This is the capacity of social media to create ‘density’ of connections – “if unity is the effect, density is the cause.”

3. Intensify the depth of connectivity: this is the 3-d effect of connectivity by which activists seek to deepen the impact of their messaging using social media. This involves learning how to produce and disseminate information that creates the sensation among people that the issue at hand is credible, authentic, and deeply meaningful to them. If the goal of social activism is to inspire others to reflect on their deeply held beliefs, reject them, and subscribe to a new worldview, they must be persuaded both rationally and emotionally, as well as openly.

According to Mainwaring (2011), the power of social media properly and honestly applied is its ability to connect people and allow them to show how they care about what happens in the world, to express their empathy for each other, and to exercise their innate need to be human.

Another but related development in social media from the commercial world but which has potential significance for participative governance is the recent move by Facebook (FB) to abandon its existing business model. “On 1 March 2012, FB rolled out the biggest change in several years. This isn’t just a change to the interface; it’s a fundamental change in their advertising strategy. This also changes how companies use FB to reach their target audience.” (Ramos, 2012) Up to now, FB tried to be an advertising platform accommodating companies’ e-commerce sites where customers were tempted with

games, widgets, photos, offers, etc., but this was slowly failing. FB noticed that people like to follow their favourite companies and interact with them by posting and receiving personal messages.

So, FB's new model builds on personal interaction through messaging. The lesson for governments in the non-commercial world is that it is easy to establish channels like Facebook which are basically push mechanisms for information or retrieval mechanisms for complaints and comments. This of course helps to improve government performance as far as it goes. What's missing, however, is dialogue, not so much between people themselves, but between individual citizens and government. This means structuring, tracking, tracing and personalising the input received by local officials at the right level in the government rather than by an anonymous agency or ministry. This requires time and effort, but potentially provides wins for citizens as well as for government. It moves government from one size fits all to segmentation and finally to personalisation. Current experiments in San Francisco and elsewhere are at an early stage but are likely to show the way in this important area.

Thus, although social media can, of course, be used for many trivial and even subversive purposes, it can also be used for good participative governance as the examples in section 2 illustrate. These are, however, just a few early examples, so there is a strong need to experiment and be innovative.

4.4. Empower the civil servant, especially those at the frontline

Equally important to empowering citizens is to empower public sector staff. Applications and processes should be developed which enable civil servants, many of whom are frontline professionals, to themselves participate in ensuring government is open and participative, for example by being equipped with the necessary skills, tools and mechanisms. Many civil servants see the real time performance and impact of public services and public policies on citizens, and would be able to generate appropriate data and other inputs which could improve lived service experience if they were given the data, tools and incentives to do so, for example by being enabled to participate in a professional capacity in citizens' social networks to offer advice and knowledge. Moreover, many civil servants also see a blurring of their personal and professional lives in terms of the tools they use, which could improve both through the two-way exchange of experience and skills. Sensible structures are needed to ensure that civil servants empowered in this way are also able to retain impartiality and a position of trust both from the government itself as well as from citizens.

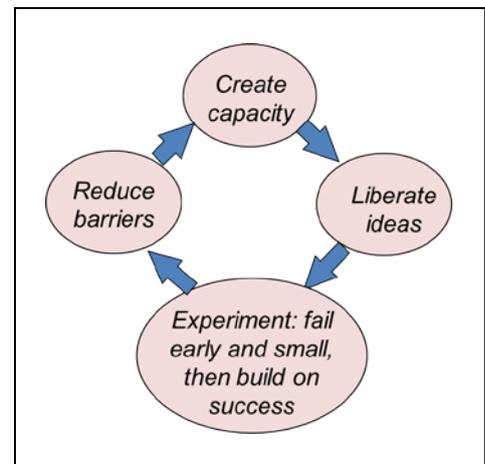
4.5. The need for new 'business models' and recognising the success of failure

The most widespread current 'business model' in governance, which maximises sustainability in organisational as well as financial terms, is a top-down centralised institutional approach. Although this is important for setting overall standards, accountability, mechanisms for resource sharing and legal frameworks, it largely fails to exploit the undoubted benefits of participation and collaboration at the local level where people experience their daily lives. The few examples presented in this paper indicate some tentative experiments on how this can be done, and illustrate a new type of business model for governance which:

- is mainly a bottom-up ad-hoc process which exploits existing and often under-used resources
- contextualises the implementation of ICT – starting from the needs of the citizen (perhaps mediated by people or organisations closest to them) rather than government
- enables leadership, ownership and accountability at the grassroots
- ushers in new (power) relationships between professionals and citizens
- builds widespread skills and competencies amongst the population
- because they start from the bottom, address not just the physical needs of citizens but also helps give them self-fulfilment and esteem
- re-uses and mashes existing public sector data and other resources

- typically involves much less finance, has much shorter development cycles, and includes a whole range of stakeholders, compared to traditional top-down initiatives.

Overall, the examples presented in section 2 are experimental and can just as easily ‘fail’ as often as large scale top-down government initiatives regularly do. But, being cheap and small they can be quickly corrected, and then scaled up if successful. As Clay Shirky (2008) recommended: “publish then filter, rather than filter then publish”, i.e. experiment with many approaches and only then select those that seem to work rather than deciding what works at the outset and investing all resources in one or two large scale initiatives. The lesson here can be summarised as “just do it, get it wrong, then learn, do it better and scale up”. Failure is good in fact, as long as it takes place early and small, and so it is directly used in a learning process to discover what works and what does not.



As mentioned earlier, these new types of (e-) participation seem to work best at sub-national levels, and particularly at city and city regional level. This is where the e-participation leaders clearly are. Indeed, the recent focus on ‘smart cities’, enabled largely by advanced ICT, shows how these geographic units are at the ‘sweet spot’ between centralised and de-centralised governance models. Cities are typically large enough to have real power and impact, but also small enough to be close to lives of real people where participation makes most sense and can have greatest impact..

This paper has also shown how and why it is important to rethink e-participation. Smash down the silos so that it joins-up across all governance activities, and move to ‘open participation’ on participation platforms where all stakeholders can collaborate both digitally and non-digitally.

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1: How does ICT provide innovative ways for citizen to interact, get involved and become empowered and how do these relate to more traditional approaches?



The best e-participation cuts across government silos and complements non-digital activism

San Francisco global leader:

- 'Twitter 311' City-citizen dialogue providing data for policy making
- 'Improve SF' using gamification and non-monetary rewards
- 'Hackathons & unhackathons' based on open data and other resources plus working with citizens, designers and entrepreneurs

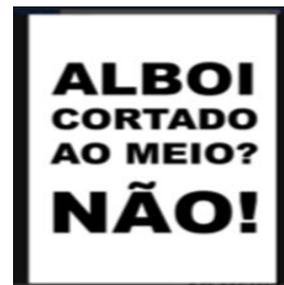


Lewisham's 'love clean streets': citizen participation in environmental improvement and maintenance:

- Changing citizen and Council behaviour
- Business case showing big benefits to both Council and citizens

Aveiro citizen's bottom-up revolt against unresponsive City Council:

- Core group of on-ground activities
- Digital and non-digital methods working together



2: How do different actors interact in an e-society and threats?

Blurring roles:

- Professional, politician, practitioner, civil servant, expert, consumer, citizen
- New power relationships
- Citizen access, rights AND responsibility

'Open-source governance':

- public sector no longer sole actor in public arena
- Moves to convener, facilitator, enabler, partner, participant, arbiter, coordinator
- BUT must continue responsibility for:
 - Quality standards
 - Resource sharing
 - Legal frameworks
 - Democratic accountability
 - And probably as main funder



“Stop! Wait! Government’s no longer the problem, it’s the solution!”

Threats and challenges:

- loss of control, who’s accountable?
- privacy and data security
- digital elite formation
- information overload or filter failure?
- crowding out other channels

3: What practical and achievable recommendations would you make to governments, particularly local authorities, about optimising the impact of e-participation in short & longer term?

Government as open participation & collaboration platform

- Both physical & digital
- Crowdsourcing from all actors

Empower the civil servant

- Equally important as empowering citizens
- Active, responsible, skilled

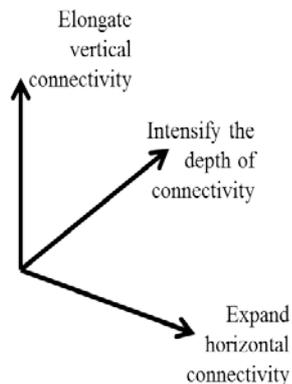


Share open data & other resources

- Resource building blocks
- Public, commercial, civil, citizen resources

Surface cognitive dissonance & have conversations

- 3 dimensions of connectivity
- Personal as well as group dialogue



New 'business models' & the success of failure

- Mainly bottom-up
- Experiment
- Failure is good
- But fail small & early
- ...and learn

