THE ECOLOGY OF INNOVATION

By Kerry McCarthy
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RSA Projects

CITIZEN
POWER
PETERBOROUGH

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The Sustainable Citizenship project aims to make environmental innovation commonplace among citizens and communities, and contribute to Peterborough's reputation as a centre for environmental sustainability.

PREFACE

There is a gap between the kind of society we say we want to live in, and the kind of society we do live in, based on our current ways of thinking and doing things. This is what Matthew Taylor has called the 'social aspiration gap'. This is the argument at the heart of the Royal Society of Arts' (RSA) contemporary mission. The RSA contends that to overcome this gap, we — the citizens — need to become more innovative and resilient but also more engaged, resourceful and pro-social in our communities and society at large. Only by doing this will we be better placed to tackle some of the most seemingly intractable social challenges facing us today, including the need for more environmentally sustainable lifestyles.

The RSA's commitment to 'enhanced citizenship'[1] and the potentially transformative impact of citizen-led change on social and environmental outcomes, chimes with the wider policy context. The Coalition government has put the 'Big Society' at the heart of their vision for the country. This is a vision of devolved power from Whitehall to communities and neighbourhoods, with the public invited to take on a more significant role in service planning and provision, and the encouragement of social innovation to meet challenges and change. For the government, the budget deficit provides an added imperative for increased citizen involvement. When facing £6.2 billion worth of public spending cuts (£780 million of which will be from the Department for Communities and Local Government budget), places which have capable and innovative citizens are more likely to adapt to new conditions of instability, uncertainty and reduced provision.

In 2009, Peterborough City Council and the Arts Council approached the RSA about the possibility of designing and implementing a city-wide programme of civic renewal. This was an opportunity to put some of our ideas about citizenship, power and community into action and provide much needed learning on what the Big Society could look like in practice. The emergent project — *Citizen Power Peterborough* — comprises a series of interventions that promote attachment, participation and innovation amongst residents of the city. One intervention aims to create the conditions in which Peterborough's citizens can contribute to the city's burgeoning reputation for environmental innovation. The *Sustainable Citizenship* project — as it has been named — aims to make environmental innovation commonplace among citizens and communities, and contribute to Peterborough's reputation as a centre for environmental sustainability.

There are many places that would benefit from 'enhanced citizenship' and environmental innovation, so why is Peterborough a good location for this work? Peterborough has a strong reputation for green and environmental industry and action. It already has 'Environment City' status (designated by a group of environmental NGOs) along with Leicester, Leeds and Middlesbrough, but has an aspiration to become the Environment Capital of the UK. It is also home to a diverse cluster of environmental technology businesses which create everything from more fuel-efficient vehicles to sustainable building materials.

Alongside commercial and public sector activity, Peterborough has dynamic charitable and community initiatives, notably those created by Peterborough Environment City Trust, such as this year's *Forest for Peterborough* project. Rooting the city's identity as a champion of the natural environment is an issue about which residents feel strongly: a recent Place survey shows that 63% of local residents agree that they can personally help to limit the effects of climate change.

1   Taylor, M. 2010 **The Fellowship's the thing**
    http://www.matthewtaylorsblog.com/thersa/the-fellowships-the-thing/

In addition many citizens are highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic individuals, with some leading their own environmental projects and initiatives such as Eco Art Projects and The Green Backyard; both of which exemplify sustainability in food production.

One of the aims of the *Sustainable Citizenship* project is to build on existing best practice and help grow Peterborough's aspiration to become the Environment Capital of the UK. In recognising that the solution to environmental sustainability is something that everyone can contribute to, we are taking a behavioural approach to growing the Environment Capital, and are looking for solutions that make pro-environmental lifestyles the easy, default (and even fun) choice. Helping people choose to cycle rather than drive, to turn unnecessary lights off and to prioritise eating local and in-season food is often talked of in abstract terms as 'behaviour change'. But this project is not about the abstract or high level, but about developing and testing concrete ideas that are likely to be successful in Peterborough.

At a governmental level, the behaviour change agenda has sometimes become detached from the public participation agenda. Policy makers' approach to insights from behavioural or neuro-economics can give the impression that people should be influenced without being engaged; through the 'nudges'[II] that have caught some policy-makers' imaginations. This approach would be inconsistent with the *Citizen Power* programme, which has *active* citizenship and public engagement at its core. Instead, our approach to making green behaviour easy is still informed by a deep understanding of human behaviour, but applied in a way that takes public participation and the need to engage with people, seriously. Rather than just consulting residents, which continues to be the norm for local public agencies, the RSA through the *Sustainable Citizenship* project, will help residents to devise and implement their own ideas for projects that encourage pro-environmental behaviour in Peterborough.

This highlights an important point – that fostering social innovation is a key ingredient to the project. Social innovation can help communities and individuals tackle some of the most pressing challenges we are facing, which existing structures have found difficult to address[III]. This paper has been commissioned to inform and strengthen the delivery of the project, and outlines a set of principles derived from similar work which are key to creating an environment in which innovation becomes commonplace.

Jamie Young and Emma Norris

II   Thaler, R. and Sunstein, C., 2008 **Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness**

III   Murray, R., Mulgan, G. and Caulier-Grice, J., **How to Innovate: The tools for social innovation**

THE ECOLOGY OF INNOVATION

Have you ever thought:
"I should volunteer in my community", "get more involved at my children's' school", "pass my skills onto someone", "take action on something I feel strongly about it" or "make that great idea I had happen"?

And then thought:
"What possible difference could I make", "I don't have time", "I need to take on extra shifts at work", "my family need me", "I should spend the time looking for a new job", "where would I start", "who would help me", "would I have to use my own money", "the council wouldn't let me do it", "it's only an idea, I don't know how to turn it into a proper plan", "how do I find out if it's already happening" or "when I tried before everyone else knew each other — I felt like an outsider"?

1   2020 Public Services Trust (2010) **From social security to social productivity: a vision for 2020 Public Services** London: 2020 Public Services Trust

2   Citizenship survey 2008/09 in Ipsos MORI (2010) **Do the public really want to join the Government of Britain** London: Ipsos MORI.

3   Ipsos MORI (2010) **Do the public really want to join the Government of Britain** London: Ipsos MORI.

4   J Skidmore P, Bound K and Lownsbrough H (2006) **Community Participation: Who benefits?** York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

5   Skidmore P, Bound K and Lownsbrough H (2006) **Community Participation: Who benefits?** York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Also, Ipsos MORI (2010) **Do the public really want to join the Government of Britain** London: Ipsos MORI.

6   Coote A (2010) **Ten Big Questions about the Big Society: and ten ways to make the best of it** London: New Economics Foundation. Also, Skidmore P, Bound K and Lownsbrough H (2006) **Community Participation: Who benefits?** York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

INTRODUCTION

The *Sustainable Citizenship* project is one strand of the RSA's *Citizen Power* programme in Peterborough; a strategic partnership between Peterborough City Council, the Arts Council and the RSA to explore and revive notions of place and identity at a local level and investigate ways of strengthening civic society in Peterborough. The *Sustainable Citizenship* project contributes towards Peterborough's existing environmental activity by cultivating a broader civic commitment to environmental activism that spreads throughout the city. Through a number of activities and interventions, the project will encourage, test and support local people's ideas that make "green" behaviour easier. Community led innovation is therefore at the centre of the *Sustainable Citizenship* project.

The nature of the social and environmental challenges facing our society means we need more community involvement as well as infrastructural change. Habits and lifestyles contribute to many of these challenges and communities can be particularly effective in supporting behaviour change in those around them. The emerging emphasis on the power of civic society to tackle social and environmental problems is further reflected in the government's Big Society agenda. Community involvement is also central to developing more effective and responsive public services[1]. The role for communities is not just about increased dialogue between policy makers, service providers and the people they serve; it is also about communities taking action to design and deliver their own responses.

There is still much to learn about working effectively with communities; how to achieve broader participation, involving more people and different interests, and how to spread innovative practice and deeper participation at the local level, so more people are supported to lead new responses to social and environmental challenges. In order to continually improve the support that communities need to act means engaging with two issues. First, the blocks and motivations people need to get more involved. Second, not all people have the same opportunities or capacity to get involved in their communities.

Research shows that people are particularly motivated to volunteer by wanting to improve things, to help people and to act on causes important to them.[2] For many people time is the biggest barrier to getting involved, even in relatively low commitment processes, such as local public consultation processes.[3] Other obstacles include a lack of opportunity related to a lack of knowledge of how to get involved or because the same people are always invited to take part. Limited access due to geography and transport issues can also play a role.[4] Participation is also influenced by the extent to which people identify with an issue or community, and believe that their views will be listened to.[5] Individual people live very different lives, have different responsibilities to and for others, spend different amounts of time working, and have different levels of energy, health, confidence and self belief about their ability to contribute. Those in stronger economic and social positions, and who are already networked into opportunities, will have a head start towards deeper and more empowered participation.[6]

More is being asked of communities, and more power and responsibility is being devolved to them. In this context, better understanding the capacity, motivation and opportunity needed to support people to act, is more important than simply calling for action. The *Sustainable Citizenship* project will contribute new understanding by working with local partners to support communities to grow a greener Peterborough.

The next section shows why this kind of work is worth investing in, discussing in more detail the value of community led innovation.

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY LED INNOVATION

The case for innovation has been well made.[7] We face unprecedented challenges from climate change, long term health conditions and an ageing society, which generate costs public services can no longer afford. These long term, complex problems will have a wide impact on communities in ways that are difficult to predict[8]. Solutions devised and delivered by central authorities are unlikely to work; they are not based on enough local knowledge, nor are they flexible enough to respond to what is happening in a specific local context.

Communities are an integral part of the social economy, which is recognised as increasingly significant in finding solutions to challenges. Murray[9] defines the social economy as all areas which are not aimed at private profitability, for example the state, philanthropy, social enterprises, social networks, households and informal associations. In this economy, citizens are active. To be effective they need resources, skills, support and connections in a way which traditional 'top down' models of working on social and environmental challenges do not provide to communities. Radical new ways of working collaboratively at a local level are needed; not just to come up with new ideas, but also to better access and work with the value that exists within communities.[10]

The Government recognises the importance of a new role for communities. The Big Society, with support for community initiatives through a Big Society Bank and 'neighbourhood army' of community organisers conveys a clear desire to tap into the social economy. Communities are also prominent in Government agendas on localism and approaches to public service reform.[11] Debates on localism recognise that simply shifting control from central to local government will not achieve the game changing responses required to tackle social, environmental and spending challenges. The context calls for significant, not tokenistic, engagement with communities, to better understand their needs and to hear regular feedback on how services should evolve.[12] The Total Place initiative demonstrates how working with communities, to really understand what they want and can contribute, is key to developing better services while making cost savings.[13]

In addition to Government policy, different 'methods' for social innovation[14] are being tested[15] and many involve new forms of collaboration between state, citizens and a range of formal and informal groups, including communities. These collaborations reflect how communities, self-defined by identity, place or interest, are at the heart of successful innovation.

But why is this investment in doing things differently worth it? And what is the potential to be derived from working with communities in new and more empowering ways?

When community organisations are well connected into their communities they have more detailed and locally specific knowledge; knowledge about needs and how they can be met, but also about local assets and resources. Local knowledge can identify and fill very specific gaps in provision that might be missed or be unappealing to larger scale providers.[16] Local community organisations can be better at generating new ideas from different sources, by accessing people that are not usually reached. They are able to motivate those around them by building on existing networks and established, trusting relationships.

7   Harris M and Albury D (2009) **The Innovation Imperative** London: NESTA. Also, Bunt L and Harris M (2010) **Mass Localism: a way to help small communities solve big social challenges** London: NESTA

8   Anderson, E, Burrall, S and Fennell E (2010) **Talking for a Change: a distributed dialogue approach to complex issues** London: Involve

9   Murray R (2009) **Danger and Opportunity: crisis and the new social economy** London: NESTA

10   Boyle D (2009) **Localism: Unravelling the Supplicant State** London: new economics foundation. Also, Bunt L and Harris M (2010) **Mass Localism: a way to help small communities solve big social challenges** London: NESTA

11   See Cabinet Office (2010) **Building the Big Society** and Carr West J (2010) **People, Places. Power: how localism and strategic planning can work together** London: LGIU

12   2020 Public Services Trust at the RSA (2010) **Delivering a Localist Future: a route map for change** London: RSA. Also, Boyle D (2009) **Localism: Unravelling the Supplicant State** London: new economics foundation

13   London Leadership Centre for Local Government (2010) **Total Place: a practitioner's guide to doing things differently** London: LGA

14   See for example www.socialinnovator.info

15   See for example Social Innovation Lab for Kent (SILK); NESTA's Public Services Innovation Lab; the Young Foundation; Social Innovation Exchange (SIX) and Participle.

16   NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA (based on evidence from the Brook Lyndhurst Big Green Challenge evaluation for NESTA).

17 NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA. Also, Coote A (2010) **Ten Big Questions about the Big Society: and ten ways to make the best of it** London: New Economics Foundation and Bunt L and Harris M (2010) **Mass Localism: a way to help small communities solve big social challenges** London: NESTA

18 Launched in October 2007, the Big Green Challenge was an innovation competition to stimulate and support Community led responses to climate change with a £1 million prize fund. The challenge to entrants was to develop and implement sustainable ideas for reducing CO_2 emissions in their communities. For more information see www.nesta.org.uk/areas_of_work/public_services_lab/environment/big_green_challenge

19 NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA (based on evidence from the Brook Lyndhurst Big Green Challenge evaluation for NESTA).

20 Coote A (2010) **Ten Big Questions about the Big Society: and ten ways to make the best of it** London: new economics foundation

21 The eight community led initiatives involved in the Eden Forum: Beacon Community Regeneration Partnership; Bovey Climate Action; Community Power Cornwall; Mendip Power Group; South Wheatley Environmental Trust; Stroud Community Agriculture; Tamar Grow Local and Transition Town Totnes.

22 Eden Forum (2009) **Community Resilience — Lessons from the South West** St Austell: The Eden Project.

23 Murray R (2009) **Danger and Opportunity: crisis and the new social economy** London: NESTA

24 Dolan P; Hallsworth, M; Halpern, D; King D and Vlaev (2010) **MINDSPACE influencing behaviour through public policy** London: Cabinet Office and Institute for Government

25 Ormerod P (2010) **N squared — Public policy and the power of networks** London: The RSA

26 Grist M (2010) **Steer: mastering our behaviour through instinct, environment and reason** London: RSA. Also, Dolan P; Hallsworth, M; Halpern, D; King D and Vlaev (2010) **MINDSPACE influencing behaviour through public policy** London: Cabinet Office and Institute for Government

If empowered to do so, community organisations can be adept at responding to social needs holistically, perceiving the needs of the community in the round.[17] This compares positively to government programmes that are often restricted by funding a narrower policy focus.

By harnessing this value community groups have shown their potential to have really significant impact on the challenges facing society. The ten finalist community projects in NESTA's Big Green Challenge[18] designed and delivered ways to reduce CO_2 emissions and exceeded many UK targets and national campaign goals. The projects had other benefits for their communities, including increased social capital and community owned assets to support financial sustainability.[19]

However, the value derived from community led activity is not only about effecting a positive impact on specific social or environmental problems. If people feel they have control and the ability to address a problem, they can experience improvements in physical and mental health and improved social networks from working together, as well as improvements to their security, sense of belonging and happiness.[20] For these positive effects to be shared across a community, people with lower capacity to get involved must also be supported.

Community initiatives can also improve community resilience. The Eden Project ran a forum exploring routes to a resilient future for communities. Eight community groups from South West England were identified as having innovative models for enhancing resilience in their local communities. Two initiatives focused on food security, three primarily on energy and three more generally on resilience and low carbon communities[21]. Beyond the specific focus of the projects, the groups worked in ways known to be important for building community resilience. Examples include opportunities for building social networks and capital, through community based events and activities. Learning between local organisations and schools was facilitated and people were engaged in visioning activities, such as developing 'energy descent plans', to give a sense that positive intervention in the future is possible.[22]

What makes communities particularly effective at tackling the challenges we face while also building individual and community resilience? The answer may lie in the key features of a social economy, which are inherent in how many community groups actually operate. Murray describes the key features to be: the intensive use of distributed networks to sustain and manage relationships, blurred boundaries between production and consumption, an emphasis on collaboration and repeated interactions and a strong role for values and mission, the important role for distributed systems (such as communities) in the development of the green economy and a low carbon future. [23]

Exploring the role for communities to effect social innovation also leads to the topic of "behaviour change". Fields such as behavioural economics have changed the way that many policy makers think about human behaviour, and researchers' insights[24] have provided new instruments for the policy tool-kit. One such insight has been to highlight the powerful effect that an individual's social networks and social norms have on their behaviour[25], which makes interventions that focus on the community level particularly effective at encouraging and supporting behaviour change.

Changing our collective behaviour is important for addressing the many problems we face which stem from our habits and conscious lifestyle choices; environmental sustainability, obesity and some long term health conditions are all examples.[26] But many of the more traditional ways of influencing behaviours have limited capacity to do this.

27   Ipsos Mori. 2009. **The big energy shift: a report from Citizens' Forum**. London: Ipsos Mori

28   Dolan P; Hallsworth, M; Halpern, D; King D and Vlaev (2010) **MINDSPACE influencing behaviour through public policy** London: Cabinet Office and Institute for Government

29   See for example Dolan P; Hallsworth, M; Halpern, D; King D and Vlaev (2010) **MINDSPACE influencing behaviour through public policy** London: Cabinet Office and Institute for Government and NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA (based on evidence from the Brook Lyndhurst Big Green Challenge evaluation for NESTA).

30   NESTA (2009) **People Powered Responses to Climate Change: Mapping the Big Green Challenge** London: NESTA

31   Grist M (2010) St**eer: mastering our behaviour through instinct, environment and reason** London: RSA

32   Thaler, R and Sunstein, C (2008) **Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth and happiness** London: Penguin

33   Grist M (2010) St**eer: mastering our behaviour through instinct, environment and reason** London: RSA

Sometimes government, and other national organisations can complicate messages or leave a sense of having been preached at. National social marketing campaigns are a good example of this. Or they can use covert approaches, for example, profiling people through the waste they dispose of. Such approaches are likely to have a lower impact on changing behaviour than the influence of trusted peers and being empowered to take action.[27]

Communities can play a central role in influencing behaviour change. The role and choice of the messenger is critical. Information communicated to people will have more influence if the messenger is a trusted authority on the subject, and seen as 'one of us'. It also seems intuitive that those around us will know how to best present information to make it relevant.[28]

One helpful typology of approaches for supporting behaviour change is the 4 Es framework, developed by Defra to inform government's efforts to change behaviours. This framework includes actions to:

- **enable** behaviour change; tackle the realities of practical and structural barriers in peoples' lives;
- **encourage** behaviour change, for example through incentives;
- **engage** with people to identify ways forward, which they find acceptable, and
- actions which **exemplify**, modelling the behaviour change being sought.[29]

There is solid evidence of how community led approaches can also make use of this range of actions to support change towards more pro-environmental behaviours. Nearly 80% of community groups applying to NESTA's Big Green Challenge competition recognised that changing behaviour and lifestyle was important to reducing carbon emissions. Most of the groups took a proactive approach, focusing on enabling or engaging people in the process of change. Examples of enabling activities included the installation of community micro-generation, formation of Energy Service Companies, waste collection services, provision of cycle lanes, bike loan schemes, advice centres and help with grant forms. Engaging activities included one-to-one conversations, social networking, community meetings, community action and campaigns and holding social events. There were also examples encouraging change through positive incentives and social rewards, for example competitions with prizes, smart meter readings and training with qualifications. Some local projects exemplified the change they were trying to create in others. For example eco-refurbishment of village halls; demonstration of energy saved over a short time or by a single street and web sites detailing community successes.[30]

The RSA's *Social Brain* project is also contributing to the field of behaviour change[31]. The human brain's operation can be simply represented as having two modes of operation; a controlled mode and an automatic mode. The recent *Steer* report offers a typology of behaviour change approaches, including the well-known use of 'choice architecture' to create 'nudges' which operate under the automatic mode to guide people's behaviour.[32] Extending this concept, the RSA's approach of 'steer' is a 'reflexive holistic model' which affects both controlled and automatic levels of the brain, so people become aware of the role for changing their environment and more conscious changes to behaviour. The latest findings from the project show how sharing simple guides to support people in their understanding of their behaviour can enable them to make positive changes.[33]

While this is a development on the approach of 'nudging' people (sometimes covertly) towards particular choices, care will still need to be taken in how it is practically applied in work with communities. It has been recognised that if not handled carefully, "talking about behaviour change is a sure fire way of making sure it doesn't happen".[34] People are often motivated to get involved by their passion for an issue or to help those around them,[35] not by explicitly wanting to change behaviour. *Sustainable Citizenship* should be sensitive to this, perhaps introducing behaviour change as another tool for working towards the goals that actually motivate people to lead community action.

We have known for some time that participating in the design and governance of services can benefit the minority of people that take part. There are many obstacles to broad participation, but for the minority it can lead to better engagement in the democratic process and improvements to social capital.[36] However, communities can add most value when they get more deeply involved; by owning not just contributing to an agenda, by working in equal partnerships or leading their own initiatives with devolved power, resource and support.[37]

We are still learning how to devolve power to communities to enable them to innovate. But there are some lessons that can be applied from experience to date, while learning continues to develop and be shared. New learning needs to go beyond describing processes, to share the tacit knowledge and experience gained from doing. This should be disseminated, in an accessible and relevant way to people working at a very local level, to communities and those providing them with practical support; not only to local and national policy makers.

For those in positions of power, at a local or national level, learning should include how to support broader participation from across communities. Also, how to support deeper involvement by those who are already motivated to participate, so they go on to develop and lead their own initiatives. More insight is needed on how local packages of support for community action can be designed and delivered in conjunction *with* communities.

This learning is important if the role for communities currently being trumpeted in policy is to become credible in practice. The next section of this paper explores support for community led innovation in more detail.

34 Gillian Norton quoted in Dolan P; Hallsworth, M; Halpern, D; King D and Vlaev (2010) **MINDSPACE influencing behaviour through public policy** London: Cabinet Office and Institute for Government

35 Citizenship survey 2008/09 in Ipsos MORI (2010) **Do the public really want to join the Government of Britain** London: Ipsos MORI.

36 Skidmore P, Bound K and Lownsbrough H (2006) **Community Participation: Who benefits?** York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

37 Boyle D (2009) **Localism: Unravelling the Supplicant State** London: new economics foundation. Also, Boyle, D; Slay, J and Stephens, L (2010) **Public Services Inside Out: putting co-production into practice** London: new economics foundation and NESTA and Bunt L and Harris M (2010) **Mass Localism: a way to help small communities solve big social challenges** London: NESTA

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY LED INNOVATION

This paper argues that supporting communities to take action is as important as calling for action, and that a particular kind of support is required to stimulate and grow community led innovation. We know that purpose, people and context are important when using new technologies to tackle social problems, but the technical processes and tools are often the least important consideration.[38] The same is true with innovation 'methods'; running a particular process does not automatically uncover lots of new thinking from new sources, or identify the ideas that will best meet needs and can be sustained.

Based on practical learning from other projects, this paper describes five guiding principles for supporting community led innovation, regardless of the innovation method or process. It is not intended to be a definitive list. The principles provide a starting point; knowledge which can be applied to the *Sustainable Citizenship* project and which develop through the practical experience in Peterborough.

Five principles of community led innovation

1. Know what you're trying to achieve
2. Encourage ideas, enable participation
3. Test and iterate
4. Support development
5. Focus on longevity from the beginning

1. Know what you're trying to achieve

Knowing what you are trying to achieve is important if resources (including time, energy and effort from communities) put into a programme for stimulating and supporting community led innovation are to be made the most of. This means having clarity on the problem to be tackled, on the kind of impact being aimed for and on the type of involvement being encouraged.

For the problem being tackled it is important to identify in clear, specific terms the outcomes being sought, or the problem to be solved. Moving beyond a general problem or vision is important to focus activity and drive towards a shared goal, over which there is collective ownership.[39] This is how multiple local efforts have a stronger combined value. This is not the same as telling people what approach they should take to tackle a challenge – people must be free to act creatively, tailoring activity to their own strengths. For example during the creative workshops proposed as part of *Sustainable Citizenship*, in which people are brought together to develop innovative solutions, this means having a clearly defined sense of the problem to be solved, within the overarching vision of supporting Peterborough to become the Environmental Capital of the UK.

When working with communities it is also important to know and be clear about whether the aim is to support incremental or transformative change. To stimulate radically different approaches to tackling a problem, to achieve transformation, means including new insights, perspectives and people in disruptive activity that will challenge the usual way of thinking and acting.[40] This is not the same as including the usual people in trying to think differently about a problem. Nor is it just about getting new people to work within a broadly similar structure and remit.

38   Gibson A; Courtney N; Sample Ward A; Wilcox D and Holtham C (2009) **Social by Social: a practical guide to using new technologies to deliver social impact** London: NESTA

39   Bunt L and Harris M (2010) **Mass Localism: a way to help small communities solve big social challenges** London: NESTA

40   Gillinson, S; Horne, M and Baeck; P (2010) **Radical efficiency: different, better, lower cost public services** London: NESTA. Also, http://www.charlesleadbeater.net/home.aspx

Radical innovation is not always about brand new ideas; it can be about accelerating development and putting simple, existing activities together in new ways to make big leaps in the value created. The Sustainable South Bronx project has been described as an example of "when planting a garden is a radical innovation."[41] Their Green Roofs initiative, developing rooftop gardens, has environmental, social and economic benefits. A patented method of rooftop gardening for organic vegetables provides food for local residents, with any surplus being sold to local shops and restaurants. The gardens also insulate buildings, having a positive impact on energy consumption and bills, and help to improve air quality. They can be installed and maintained by members of the local community, contributing to "a new generation of green collar workers".[42]

It is also important to know what kind of involvement is being asked of communities, to manage expectations and provide relevant support. Wilcox[43] describes five levels of participation and emphasises that a key issue when managing a participation process is to know what stance you are taking and why. The five levels involve increasing amounts of responsibility and control being devolved to the community. *Sustainable Citizenship*, like all of *Citizen Power's* projects is situated towards the upper levels defined by Wilcox (see below), but is also committed to increasing the breadth of people involved in developing and helping to test new ideas. This suggests that creating opportunities for different levels of participation will be important, as only a limited percentage of Peterborough's citizens will be motivated or able to get involved in leading their own initiatives.

Wilcox's levels of participation

1. Informing people about what you have decided to do
2. Consulting people about options and taking into account the feedback you get
3. Deciding together by encouraging others to provide additional options, and join in deciding the best way forward
4. Acting together by forming partnerships to jointly design and deliver approaches
5. Supporting independent community initiatives, helping others do what they want

One option is to make available information on a range of relatively light commitment options for getting more people involved in environmentally sustainable behaviour. The DoNation[44] is a new social enterprise that aims to inspire, empower and motivate people to make simple steps towards more sustainable lifestyles. The DoNation provides a new form of sponsorship, replacing cash with action – specifically environmental actions. By using the viral nature of sponsorship and the peer-to-peer learning power inherent in social networks, The DoNation aims to get proactive environmental ideas to audiences that traditional environmental campaigns really struggle to engage. It also has the benefit of providing an appealing money-free form of sponsorship, with a friend-to-friend aspect so sponsors are potentially more motivated to 'do actions' because of their desire to support their friend. This approach is supported by evidence that making public commitments and our strong instinct for reciprocity are influential in supporting behaviour change.[45]

When defining the objectives of a programme to support community led innovation it is useful to understand what is already happening; what communities are already doing which can be supported and built on, while at the same time not limiting the potential for developments in new directions and involving new participants.

41   Tim Kastelle **When planting a garden is a radical innovation** Innovation Leadership Network (2010) http://timkastelle.org/blog/2010/05/when-planting-a-garden-is-a-radical-innovation/ 21/07/2010

42   For more information on Sustainable South Bronx see www.ssbx.org

43   Wilcox D (2005) **The Guide to Effective Participation** Partnerships Online http://www.partnerships.org.uk/guide/frame.htm 24/07/2010

44   For more information on The DoNation visit www.thedonation.org.uk.

45   Dolan P; Hallsworth, M; Halpern, D; King D and Vlaev (2010) **MINDSPACE influencing behaviour through public policy** London: Cabinet Office and Institute for Government

2. Encourage ideas, enable participation

Successful innovation requires getting new perspectives on a challenge and potential solutions.[46] The best opportunity to broaden participation beyond people who are usually involved can be at the start of a programme to support community led innovation, the point when people are encouraged to come forward with their own ideas. How else do you encourage and enable a wide range of different people to get involved?

Making it as easy as possible to take part is important. This includes accepting informal group structures, such as friends working together; having a few, very easy to understand criteria and very simple instructions for submitting ideas. Outreach work is also important, physically going to spaces in the community that people already use, using familiar communication channels and working with trusted peers.[47] Communicating to people why their participation is valid and valuable, and how easy it is to get involved is also important to widen participation. NESTA's Big Green Challenge took this approach with success: a significant proportion of community groups applying to take part had no previous environmental focus and twenty per cent of applicants were from informal groups, not, for example, established charities or social enterprises.[48]

Encouragement is not about badgering or cajoling people into participation. It is about creating opportunities for those who want to get involved but who face practical or internal obstacles to submitting or developing ideas. It is about making things accessible, including information, networks and support. This includes using plain English and introducing new concepts in a simple and relevant way. For example avoiding academic and technical language when discussing behaviour change, innovation or environmental issues and making clear the practical relevance of these ideas to the issues that motivate people to get involved. Accessibility also means addressing the practical reality that ten million people in the UK have never used the internet; with a very significant minority of those who are offline being from society's most disadvantaged groups.[49] For projects like *Sustainable Citizenship* this means managing the risk that using technology, a collaborative website for example, reinforces opportunities to participate for those who are relatively more advantaged, while not reaching those who may already be more excluded from participation.

Volunteer e-Champions have enabled communities in rural North Cornwall to access public services online. Initial efforts to engage citizens focused on awareness-raising in the local press and were unsuccessful. The e-Champions project instead identified volunteer change agents who could communicate the benefits of online government services directly through their own, trusted networks. Volunteers were recruited from the region via an advertising campaign in the local press, concentrating on the remotest parts of the district, where citizens had least opportunity for face-to-face interaction with the local authority. Volunteers were selected who had good involvement in the local community and were encouraged to engage with their communities as they saw fit to provide an access point for people wishing to explore public services online.[50]

Even if people are actively online, there are risks from information overload or failure to directly connect with offline activities. An online strategy must be combined with an offline strategy for encouraging participation, including building on the communication channels already in use and the role for face-to-face contact.[51]

46 Harwood, R (2010) **How Open Changes Everything: partnering for innovation** http://www.slideshare.net/rolandharwood/partnering-for-innovationppt Also, Gillinson, S; Horne, M and Baeck; P (2010) **Radical efficiency: different, better, lower cost public services** London: NESTA.

47 Skidmore P, Bound K and Lownsbrough H (2006) **Community Participation: Who benefits?** York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

48 NESTA (2009) **People Powered Responses to Climate Change: Mapping the Big Green Challenge** London: NESTA

49 Lane Fox M (2010) **Manifesto for a Networked Nation** London: HM Government

50 From Goddard C (2010) Pers. Comm.

51 Gibson A; Courtney N; Sample Ward A; Wilcox D and Holtham C (2009) **Social by Social: a practical guide to using new technologies to deliver social impact** London: NESTA

People will have ideas for solving issues they feel passionate about, and the will to do something about them, but they need support to unlock their innovative and entrepreneurial potential

3. Test and iterate

Successfully encouraging lots of ideas from a wider section of the community can mean accepting less developed ideas, acknowledging that they may require several iterations until they are fully formed. Testing and iterating an idea several times can identify problems and provide learning on how to make an idea work most effectively in practice, before it is widely implemented.

At the very earliest stage, proof of concept testing explores the key assumptions at the core of an idea with the target group of users and funders. This process can involve scenarios and role play and be done on paper or through conversations. Rapid prototyping[52] — quick, small-scale, practical testing — involves putting an idea into action at low cost and with low exposure to risk. This process spots and explores problems, allowing for a better version to be developed or for failing ideas to be abandoned. Prototyping should also involve exposing ideas to potential users and funders.

This approach: proof of concept, co-design and then rapid prototyping, was recently used in NESTA's Age Unlimited Scotland programme.[53] The programme began by asking for ideas, from anyone in Scotland over the age of 50, on how to help people in their 70s and 80s become less socially isolated. All that was needed to apply was the seed of an idea. One hundred and fifteen applications were received from across Scotland. A number of applicants then took part in a workshop to develop ideas. The workshop explained, in an accessible and practical way, how ideas would be supported and developed. Following the workshop further support was provided to help communities strengthen their ideas. For example, by getting them to really explore and understand the needs of target users and purchaser and thinking through how they would develop a sustainable business model.

On the basis of this work fifteen projects received a grant and non financial support to take their ideas further forward, including through a process of co-design with service users. The six winners were judged on their achievements in three areas: genuine innovation which does not duplicate what is already in the community, opportunity to save the public purse by offering services that are more cost-effective, and ability to be scaled and replicated across Scotland.[54]

The team involved in delivering that programme emphasise the need to work at the right pace for people involved, to be sensitive of the fact that community members were often working in their free time around employment and other commitments, and to identify the right incentive for citizens to engage. People will have ideas for solving issues they feel passionate about, and the will to do something about them, but they need support to unlock their innovative and entrepreneurial potential.[55]

The approach of testing and iterating needs to clearly set expectations that not all ideas will be supported to the same extent and necessarily lead to fully operational projects. The process involves letting less successful ideas go and is designed to identify when there are insurmountable obstacles to ideas succeeding. As well as setting clear expectations about the journey that ideas and participants will go on, it is important to manage each exit stage sensitively. The aim is to encourage ongoing or future participation by community members, even if their original idea does not continue through to the next stage of a particular process. These considerations must form part of the style and design of a programme for supporting community led innovation. For example through expectation setting, emphasising the value from all stages of participation, adding value within each stage of the process (to the idea itself and through the experience, networks and information available to participants) and at exit points signposting opportunities for different types of ongoing engagement on an issue.

52 Murray, R; Caulier-Grice, J and Mulgan, G (2010) **The Open Book of Social Innovation** London: The Young Foundation & NESTA

53 For information on the Age Unlimited project see http://www.nesta.org.uk/areas_of_work/public_services_lab/ageing/age_unlimited_scotland

54 For information on the six winning community led ventures in Age Unlimited Scotland see http://www.nesta.org.uk/news_events/press_releases/assets/features/third_age_entrepreneurs_win_nestas_age_unlimited_challenge

55 Based on telephone interview with Chris Sherwood, Programme Manager for NESTA's Age Unlimited programme

4. Support development

In addition to testing and developing the ideas, support is needed for community organisations and the individuals involved. Sustaining an innovation has been described as involving six key components:[56]

Key components for sustaining innovation

1. A business model
2. A governance model
3. Sources of finance
4. A network and communications model
5. A staffing model, including the role of volunteers
6. A development plan for operational systems

Support to develop does not just mean funding; it should include access to resources to develop each of these components. For example, business, financial and legal advice, support to develop organisational structures, IT, communications media, physical space and access to a network of community organisations for peer support.[57]

Support can come from existing capacity within a community and external sources. Recommendations from NESTA's Big Green Challenge highlighted that specific support and expert assistance might be usefully provided through brokering links between community groups and larger organisations, for example the Energy Savings Trust Green Communities Programme.[58]

The need for individual support has also been recognised.[59] This might include how to pitch ideas, use technology or the confidence building and knowledge sharing that can be provided from peer mentoring.

Staging support, increasing money and assistance as ideas develop has been found to be useful in supporting innovation[60] and complements the process of testing and iterative development. Resources can follow the ideas demonstrating greatest potential. A staged approach also provides opportunity for people to see what input is required for the next stage of development. Transparency as to the amount of work and commitment required is important for people's expectations to be managed and a workable timetable for action developed.

It is also important that support is structured and facilitative (not rigid and dictatorial). This enables communities to work flexibly, develop their own capacities and to genuinely improve their ideas through the process, and not regard support as something that has to be engaged with for the sake of it, for example to meet funding requirements.

5. Focus on longevity from the beginning

The final guiding principle for supporting community led innovation is to focus on longevity from the beginning. This includes building connections between the supply of, and demand for, new approaches, through the diffusion of good ideas. It also includes thinking about how those in positions of power can help develop a wider environment conducive to community led innovation.

Effective, creative partnerships often come about through serendipitous connections. Creating opportunities that increase the likelihood of such connections can be helpful, for example through the planned collaborative website in Peterborough.

56 Murray, R; Caulier-Grice, J and Mulgan, G (2010) **The Open Book of Social Innovation** London: The Young Foundation & NESTA

57 Coote A (2010) **Ten Big Questions about the Big Society: and ten ways to make the best of it** London: new economics foundation. Also, NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA (based on evidence from the Brook Lyndhurst Big Green Challenge evaluation for NESTA).

58 NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA (based on evidence from the Brook Lyndhurst Big Green Challenge evaluation for NESTA).

59 Coote A (2010) **Ten Big Questions about the Big Society: and ten ways to make the best of it** London: new economics foundation

60 Bunt L and Harris M (2010) **Mass Localism: a way to help small communities solve big social challenges** London: NESTA

There is a role for central and local government in supporting the sustainability of community led innovation. Developing independent income, not being reliant on grants, is central to longevity.

To increase take up, networking opportunities need to include potential purchasers, enablers and users of community projects. The benefits of doing this early on include developing potential champions for new ideas and practical examples of early adoption, which can encourage others to take on the idea. The Innovation Exchange runs Festivals of Ideas, recognising the need to develop a market for innovation, by bringing together those involved on both the supply and demand side of an issue. Festivals unite third sector innovators with commissioners and investors for one day of collaborative innovation. They develop new relationships, an accessible dataset of local innovation and a clear list of action points for their development and growth. Festivals can also be an invaluable strategic intervention, helping local areas and regions to learn to 'take the temperature of innovation' in a specific field and develop responses that improve the environment for innovation. The approach is also preceded by the research and intelligence-gathering needed to ensure the event brings together the right people in the right way and is followed by support to drive action, for example through the Next Practice Programme to support the most promising ideas.[61]

Diffusing good ideas and sharing learning is also important to sustaining the value created from community led innovation. Community projects need support and resource to help others take up similar initiatives. This can be a time intensive process for communities, to meet with other people and to document learning about new ways of doing things. The practical day to day running of a project can take up all available time. Thought must be given to how the collaborative website proposed as part of *Sustainable Citizenship* will be kept up to date, to avoid onerous data entry being required of communities, as well as how to facilitate the face to face networking and conversations identified as so important for sharing practice.[62]

Those in positions of power, for example within central and local government, have a role to play in sustaining community led innovation. For example by working to identify and remove the constraints that are beyond the power of communities. There is a limit to what communities will be able to achieve in addressing a social or environmental challenge. The role played by gatekeepers in positions of power will influence when that limit is reached. Involving key individuals and organisations, on relevant policy, funding and practice areas, should happen early on in a programme to support community led innovation.

Developing independent income, not being reliant on grants, is central to longevity. For groups with an environmental focus this can include support for community ownership of renewable energy; for example by helping groups to develop as social enterprises and better link with national programmes and the wider electricity system.[63] This is important because recent changes, such as the introduction of the Feed in Tariff and Renewable Heat Incentive, mean grant funding for community renewable energy will reduce and community groups tackling climate change will need to develop a more business like approach in order to secure the capital investment necessary to invest in community owned renewable energy. Support can also be provided to communities by signposting funding opportunities, brokering new sources of assistance from local business and making relevant information more accessible and easier to understand.[64] The recent decision to allow local councils to sell renewable electricity to the National Grid may also provide new opportunities for supporting community action on carbon reduction.

61 For information on the Festival of Ideas process see http://innovation-exchange.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/festivalofideasprocess.pdf

62 Eden Forum (2009) **Community Resilience — Lessons from the South West** St Austell: The Eden Project. Also, NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA

63 NESTA (2010) **Galvanising Community led Responses to Climate Change** London: NESTA

64 NESTA (2010) **Working with communities to tackle climate change: practical approaches for local government** London: NESTA.

COMMUNITY LED INNOVATION IN PETERBOROUGH

This paper has identified five guiding principles for supporting community led innovation, which recognise that simply calling for community action is not enough. Even though many new ideas may be generated, it is their development process, and how the wider environment develops alongside them, that will determine whether real and lasting progress on a social or environmental challenge is made. For those involved in developing programmes to support community led innovation this means knowing what is trying to be achieved, enabling and encouraging participation, testing and iterating ideas, supporting development and building longevity in from the beginning.

So how are these principles exemplified in the design of the *Sustainable Citizenship* project and how might they be more comprehensively integrated into its delivery? When first conceived the project had two main components: a website for local environmental innovators that would help news of local projects, personal experiences and other information flow more smoothly between them, and a series of creative workshops to help people devise effective pilot projects that could encourage pro-environmental behaviour. Though these components are broadly aligned with one or more of the five principles, this paper suggests changes that could strengthen the project.

The principle *Know what you're trying to achieve* for example, encourages the project to focus on a behavioural approach to addressing environmental problems, which needs to be made more explicit. Rather than awareness campaigns which target attitudinal change or campaigning for large-scale infrastructural change, encouraging new behaviours is core to the RSA's mission and an area in which the *Sustainable Citizenship* project could contribute to Peterborough's ambition to become the Environment Capital. Equally important, clarity on the level of participation sought, suggests that the project should create easy opportunities both for people who are new to environmental projects, and those with more time and dedication to spare.

The principle *Encourage ideas, enable participation* underlines the importance of working with existing community organisations and through established communications channels in Peterborough. It also informs the practical arrangements of the planned workshops, such as the accessibility of the venue, the time commitment required, even the wording of the invitations, to ensure that all who wish to attend are able to and that people's expectations are appropriately managed. Moreover it shows that workshops that aim to help residents understand what changes human behaviour must present knowledge in a way that is accessible to people from a wide range of backgrounds. This principle also cautions against thinking of the planned web-based innovation network as a universal communication medium, which will become a self-sufficient community. Instead the virtual side of this community could be complemented with regular informal meet-ups to strengthen the network and allow face-to-face as well as virtual information swaps.

The principle *Test and iterate* suggests that the project should be prepared to welcome ideas at their early stage, when they still have problems and details to be resolved. A key role for *Sustainable Citizenship* is to support ideas as they develop to the point where they could be tested. The format of the workshops which allow residents to develop and present ideas in exchange for financial and non-financial support should be designed to achieve this.

The principle *Support development* clearly shows the key role for the project in allocating seed-funding to allow ideas to be tested, covering the unavoidable costs of a small pilot of a new idea. It is also clear that while financial support is necessary, of no less importance is connecting people with ideas with local organisations that may be able to help in other ways. This may be existing community organisations who know key contacts, or it may be with a local business with expertise in a field required by the idea. The innovation network will play a key role in this.

Finally, the principle *Focus on longevity from the beginning* underlines the importance of an early focus on finding business models that could support the development and scalability of people's ideas. Putting people in contact with local entrepreneurs or other advisors with business acumen will allow resources to be devoted to those ideas with greater chance of creating impact. To allow successful idea development and generation, a structured programme of support will be available, drawing on the RSA's own networks with its Fellows and Peterborough City Council, but also on local organisations with valuable expertise such as marketing, business development and financial management.

Environmental innovation already abounds in some sectors of Peterborough. Through the *Sustainable Citizenship* project, we hope that we can support this innovation as it extends into Peterborough's community and voluntary sector. The five principles outlined in this report provide guidelines to help foster this growth, contributing towards an ecosystem of environmental innovation in Peterborough.