The future of local democracy
Public participation and democratic innovation

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COSLA & Improvement Service Annual Conference 2017
The purpose of WWS is to use evidence to inform public service reform and transform public services for all of Scotland’s communities to flourish.
4 axis of innovation in local governance

Democratic Innovation

Social Innovation

Public Service Innovation

Methodological Innovation
In participatory democracy...

“...citizens govern themselves directly, not necessarily at every level and in every instance, but frequently enough and in particular when basic policies are being decided and when significant power is being deployed. This is carried out through institutions designed to facilitate ongoing civic participation in agenda-setting, deliberation, legislation, and policy implementation...”

Benjamin R. Barber, Strong democracy, 1984
Why public participation?
(Involve 2005)

• Addressing **complex problems** drawing on untapped knowledge, experience and perspectives

• Making **better policies** and ensuring effective implementation

• Improving public **service design and delivery**

• Building **legitimacy and trust** in public institutions

• Developing **citizens’ skills, confidence and ambition**

• Enabling **active citizens and communities**
Participation in local decision-making in Scotland
deficits and aspirations
(Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2015 + Ipsos Mori 2014)

35% of Scottish citizens feel part of how decisions affecting their community are made

77% would get more involved in their community if it was easier to participate in decisions that affect it

80% said that people should be involved in deciding how money is spent on local services

96% said that people should be involved in making decisions about how local services are planned and run
A ‘silent crisis’ of local democracy?
(Bort et al 2012)

• Scotland has the largest average population per basic unit of local government of any developed country (Keating 2005)

• Average population per LAA:
  – Finland=15,960; France=1770; Germany=7,080; Spain=5.680; EU average=5,630
  – Scotland=163,200

• Alongside England, Scotland has some of the lowest voter turnout at local elections in the EU

• Ratio Elected Members/ Citizens represented:
  – Finland=1/500; France 1/125; Germany:1/400; Spain 1/700; UK=1/2860
  – Scotland = 1/4270
2014 COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy:

• “50 years of centralisation has not tackled the biggest problems that Scotland faces
• For a country with Scotland’s wealth and strength, the level of inequality is intolerable, and has huge social and financial costs
• There is a link between the absence of strong local democracy and the prevalence of inequalities
• It is communities that empower governments at all levels, not governments that empower people”
Policy and research context for public participation and democratic innovation

- Local Governance Review (> Local Democracy Bill?)
- Review of Community Councils (2017-2018)
- Places, people and planning – Position Statement 2017
- Open Government Partnership
- Re-launch of the National Standards for Community Engagement (2016)
- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- Participatory Budgeting national programme (2014-2018)
- COSLA Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy (2014)
- Parliamentary Local Government Committee (2013, 2014)
- National Planning Framework 3
- Christie Commission on Future Delivery of Public Services 2011
International trends in participation

http://participedia.net
Evolving role of citizens: 2 stories can be told

**Story of decline**

- Declining...
  - Voter **turnout** in elections
  - **Trust** in & **legitimacy** of traditional institutions of public life (e.g. government, media, parties, unions, community associations, etc)
  - **Social capital**: community ‘ethos’ & networks

(Dalton 2005; Putnam 2001)

**Story of progress**

- What’s happening is that citizens are becoming:
  - better educated, more knowledgeable and critical;
  - less deferential to traditional authority and elite-driven / hierarchical forms of governance;
  - dismissive of conventional channels and engaged in alternative mechanisms of political expression;

- The **myth of public apathy**

(Norris 2002; Castells 2012; Eliasoph 1998)
Debunking the myth of apathy: Civic participation in Scotland

• Record-breaking participation in the independence referendum
• A growing, vibrant civil society / third sector: social enterprises, development trusts, housing associations, transition towns, charities, etc
• Civic participation on the rise:
  – 55% in 2009
  – 61% in 2013
  – 69% in 2015

(Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2013 and 2015)
But is all participation good?

• Paradox of growing participation and growing inequalities (Walker, McQuarrie & Lee 2015)
  – proliferation of traditional consultation and de-politicised forms of participation

• Inequalities in health, income, wealth, education... stemming from inequalities of power and influence?

unless corrective measures are taken “participation of all varieties will be skewed in favour of those with higher socioeconomic status and formal education”

(Ryfe & Stalsburg 2012)
In the last 12 months, have you participated in a local forum to discuss policy or community issues?
Stay standing if at that forum there was a reasonable...

- gender balance
- mix of personal and professional backgrounds
- range of perspectives and opinions
- age range (i.e. 3 generations)
- income range
- sense that most participants felt included and influential
- sense that most participants enjoyed it
- sense that their participation would have a clear impact
Key challenges in organising public participation processes

- Inclusion and diversity
- Quality of dialogue and deliberation
- Impact: clear link to decision making
What Works in public participation?
3 components of ‘what works’ in public participation

- Multi-channel
- Inclusive & deliberative
- Empowered & consequential
Multi-channel

• Developing a variety of channels for participation:
  – online, face to face, combined
  – light-touch vs. intensive
  – ‘crowdsourcing’: tapping into ‘the wisdom of the crowds’ (Surowiecki 2005)
  – Open Government (Noveck 2015)

• Examples
  – Better Reykjavik
  – Decide Madrid / Madrid Listens / Laboratories for Citizen Innovation
Inclusive AND deliberative

• **Inclusion and diversity** are crucial for meaningful, legitimate and effective participation
  – demographics AND perspectives
  – lowering barriers to participation

• **Deliberative engagement** is about:
  – assessing evidence
  – hearing & scrutinising different views
  – then, making informed decisions

• **Examples of ’mini-publics’**:  
  – Tackling health inequalities in Glasgow  
  – Community policing in Peterhead  
  – Wind farm development in Coldstream, Aberfeldy & Helensburgh
  – North Marr Rural Partnership
Empowered and consequential

• Participation thrives when important issues and resources are at a stake, and citizens feel their contribution can actually make a difference

• Example:
  – Participatory Budgeting, from Porto Alegre (Brazil) to 2,700 localities around the world
Participatory Budgeting around the world

Thousands of PB processes have taken place around the world since the 2001 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre
Review of 1st Generation Participatory Budgeting in Scotland

with Chris Harkins and Katie Moore
(Glasgow Centre for Population Health)
£1.75 million invested in 1st Generation PB in Scotland

58 PB processes funded over 2009 to 2016

£28,400 average funding allocated per PB process

£750 to £200,000 PB process funding varied greatly

£9,300 average expenditure per PB project

Projects targeted thematically, demographically and geographically

179 PB projects funded diverse and vibrant range of funded projects

77% of PB processes funded by Scottish Government

57% of PB processes were located in South West of Scotland

7% of PB processes were located in rural areas

90% of PB processes were located in disadvantaged areas

One fifth of PB processes articulated aim of addressing inequalities

Please note: all data presented in this info-graphic are estimates only, and based on incomplete information. Please see the Review Findings section of this report for details of missing data.
## Scotland in transition?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1\textsuperscript{st} Generation PB (2009-2016) – experimenting</th>
<th>2\textsuperscript{nd} Generation PB (2016 onwards) – mainstreaming?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organic development of PB, predominantly small scale, driven by local champions and \textit{ad hoc} funding</td>
<td>Unprecedented policy, legislative, capacity building and investment framework from which to embed PB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Predominance of \textbf{community grant-making model}; PB as a community engagement tool; no need for substantial changes in the institutional system</td>
<td>Towards a variety of sustainable PB models, including \textbf{mainstream budgets and services}? Reorienting the relationship between citizens, politicians, civil society, and the state?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive impacts, but limited evaluation</td>
<td>Towards robust evaluation of short and long term outcomes? Stronger focus and impact on tackling inequalities – social justice agenda?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Limited focus and impact on tackling inequalities</td>
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*WHAT WORKS SCOTLAND*
upgrading local democracy in Scotland
Local Authorities who lead on democratic innovation ask themselves:

- Are we harnessing the power of combining online and face-to-face platforms for collective action?
- Are we creating opportunities that accommodate the variety of ways in which people may want to participate?
- Are we creating inclusive processes where everyone has an equal chance to participate and influence?
- Are we creating deliberative spaces where participants can learn, hear different views, and engage in dialogue to offer informed opinions and considered judgements?
- Are we fostering empowered processes, where people know that their participation can make a difference?
We have high standards for **processes**, but we must invest in new **institutions and infrastructure** for local democracy.
strengthening local democracy will require...

• democratic innovation
  – new approaches, processes and institutions that enable inclusive forms of decision-making through co-production and deliberation
  – so that communities can participate not only in service design and delivery but also in the decision-making processes that determine what services are to be delivered, how and by whom

• and facilitative leadership
21st Century Public Servant

Birmingham University
http://21stcenturypublicservant.wordpress.com/ Illustrations by Laura Brodrick
## 21st Century Politician

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional leader</th>
<th>Facilitative leader</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchies</td>
<td>Networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certainty (knows everything)</td>
<td>Openness (constant learning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads others</td>
<td>Helps others to lead themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good at talking</td>
<td>Good at listening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knows the direction</td>
<td>Knows how to help others to work out the direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commanding and controlling</td>
<td>Facilitating and mediating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds alliances to win policy battles</td>
<td>Builds alliances to find workable policies and solutions</td>
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Key challenges

• Reshaping mindsets and ways of working
  – Commitment to democratic innovation from officials, elected representatives, community groups and citizens
  – Facilitative leadership

• Inequalities of power and influence within communities
  – Local authorities have a key role in lowering barriers to participation and creating a level-playing field
  – Democratic innovations can clash with established relationships and dynamics in communities

• Investment in developing
  – capacity and skills: facilitation, process design, mediation, negotiation, brokering, etc
  – infrastructure (e.g. spaces, platforms; local democracy unit)

• Long-term commitment, ongoing learning and adaptation
Concluding

- Empowerment is not something that can be done to others, communities/citizens can only empower themselves.
- But Local Authorities can develop:
  - enabling conditions, governance structures, capacity, infrastructure and space for democratic innovation.
- Elected members as enablers of a more vibrant and effective local democracy:
  - Maximising opportunities from current legislation and policy frameworks.
  - Facilitating dialogue amongst stakeholders to foster innovation.
  - Adapting institutions and ways of working to respond to increasing civic aspirations and make a difference to people’s lives.
  - Mobilising resources to invest in democracy.
  - Managing synergies and tensions between representative and participatory democracy.
Everywhere there are waves of criticism and doubt as to whether democracy can meet pressing problems ... Wherever it has fallen, democracy had not become part of the bone and blood of the people in daily conduct of its life. Democratic forms were limited to Parliament, elections and combats between parties.

What is happening proves conclusively ... that unless democratic habits of thought and action are part of the fiber of a people, political democracy is insecure. It can not stand in isolation. It must be buttressed by the presence of democratic methods in all social relationships.

John Dewey

The Public and its problems (1937: 467)
Thank you!