ENGAGING MINDS, EXCHANGING IDEAS

Community Forum 2018:
Here Comes Everybody, and All Can Contribute!

Tuesday, 19 June 2018
Auditorium, Shaw Foundation Alumni House

OPEN COLLABORATION TO UNDERSTAND SOCIAL NEEDS IN SINGAPORE

WIKI.SOCIALCOLLAB.SG

Dr Justin Lee
Research Fellow
Institute of Policy Studies

Context

- Knowledge of social needs mapped out by administrative jurisdictions of government agencies or specialist organisations
  - Common to have bilateral meetings between government agencies to 'avoid duplications' or have clear 'role delineations'

→**Fragmented understanding and dependent on capabilities of individual organisational**

Motivation for Open Collaboration

- Can technology-enabled networks to crowdsource information create more robust understanding compared to individual efforts of specialist agencies?

- What is Open Collaboration?
  - Wikipedia: for encyclopaedic writing
  - Open source movement: for software development

wiki.socialcollab.sg

- Backbone organisations:
  - Policy think tank, technology partner, centre for social innovation
- Voluntary organisations and community participation:
  - Social Causes: e.g. Disability Community Network & its sub-groups, End-of-Life group
  - Community Assets: e.g. Community Artists? Youth Workers? Service Learning Offices? Practice Researchers?

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

A wiki site to consolidate social *needs*; map out community *assets;* determine service and policy *gaps*; and indicate possible *solutions*

http://wiki.socialcollab.sg/

Progress:

- First informal call to action July 2016, teams formed
- Migration to new platform

WHO IS CURRENTLY INVOLVED?

Social Cause	Partners
Disability	DPA, Able, Extraordinary Horizons etc
End of Life	Palliative care community
Youth at Risk	Students Care Service? Trybe? CARE? etc.
Mental Health	AIC? Caritas? SAMH? IMH? etc?

Community Assets	Possible Partners
Service Learning or Community Service Offices	SUSS? SMU? NYP? etc
Community Arts	

Backbone	Existing Partners
Knowledge Architecture & IT	IPS, A*Star/Trampolene
Marketing & Partnerships	Lien Centre for Social Innovation

Subpages led by:
Hearing Impairment – Extraordinary Horizons
Arts & Disability - VSA

Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy
National University of Singapore

iPS Institute of Policy Studies
CELEBRATING 30 YEARS 1988-2018

Engaging Minds, Exchanging Ideas
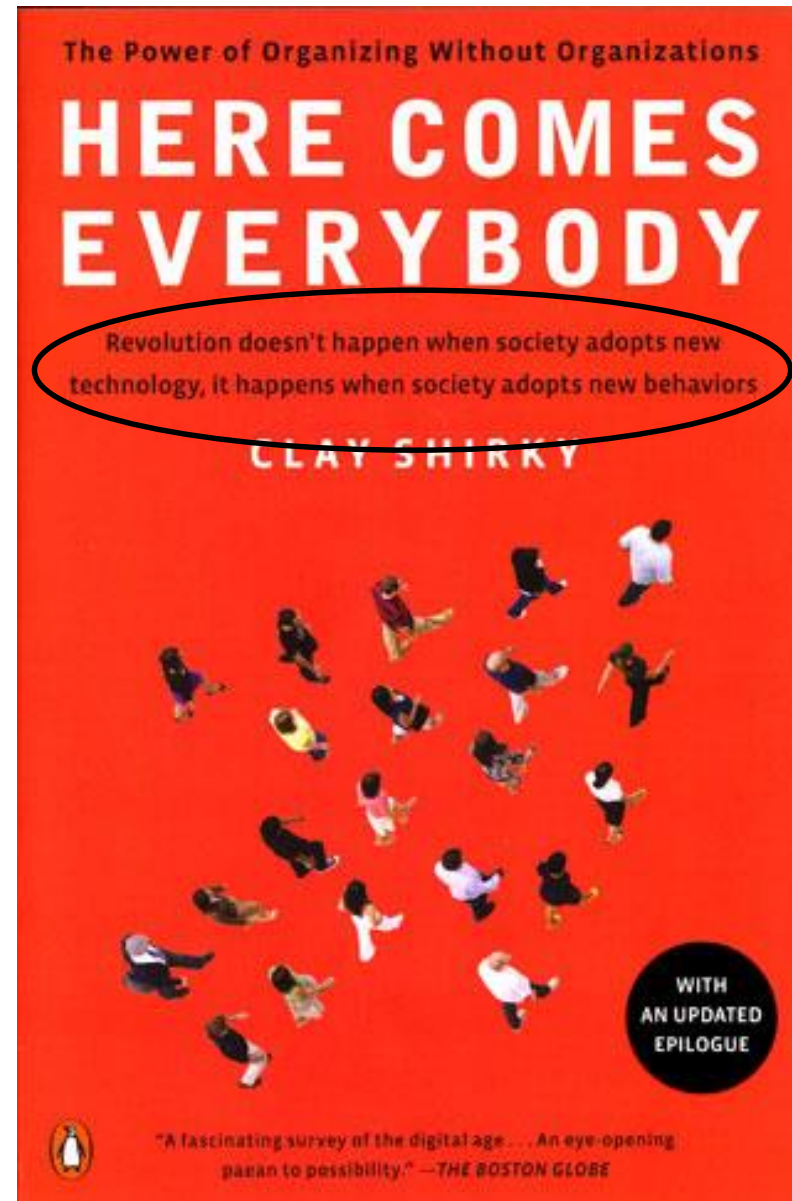
Case Study: Disability

- Performing the functions of a Council by using a Network
  - "We hadn't had all the groups we've wanted, we've simply had all the groups we could afford" (Clay Shirky, 2008)

Disability Council	Disability Network
Hierarchical - Chain of Command	Network - Affiliated but Autonomous Organisations
Legitimacy of official positions	Persuasion of peers
Centralised decision-making	Decentralised decision-making
Constitution, Terms of Reference, Bylaws	Objectives, Guiding Principles & Rules
Need Board to redefine	Constantly refined by members
Representative Democracy	Direct Democracy

	CENTRALLY LED	OPEN COLLABORATION
Quality of knowledge	-'Snapshot' and static -Complete in itself, but Fragmented	-'Live', constantly updated -Coherent accumulation: seek clarity instead of arbitrary completion
Ownership	Proprietary	Public
Growth	Incremental gain	Exponential growth
Ethos	-Best agency to do the work (do for others) -Turf issues ('avoid duplication', 'role delineation') -Defensiveness: need to seem authoritative	-All can contribute (community helps one another) -Democratized -Humility: transparency about ignorance
Governance	Hierarchy -approval required -logic of central planning	Network -distributed collaborations -logic of coordination

Ethos of Open Collaboration

- Winner takes all → All can contribute

- "I do this for you" → "We can do this for ourselves"

- Public administration, bureaucracy & managerialism → Collaborative governance, distributed networks

The Power of Organizing Without Organizations

HERE COMES EVERYBODY

Revolution doesn't happen when society adopts new technology, it happens when society adopts new behaviors

CLAY SHIRKY

WITH AN UPDATED EPILOGUE

"A fascinating survey of the digital age... An eye-opening paean to possibility." —THE BOSTON GLOBE

Participant Testimonials

- "The fragmentation of knowledge is a huge problem for VWOs, social enterprises and researchers…while there is a lot of willingness to do good, it takes a lot of effort just to find out what the needs are. You have to start building networks, talk to various people and organisations, and even after all that work, the information is not shared…if everything comes to a centralized platform, all the energy, time and manpower can be channelled to solutions instead"

- "It's because we believe in it in the first place, that why we are here"

Some Achievements

- Community Forum and Networks

- Wikithon

- Republic Polytechnic students have populated youth-at-risk pages as part of their coursework

Forward Plans

- Engaging journalists
- Locality based needs

Our Journey & its Challenges

- Not just a research problem, but also a knowledge management problem
  - Knowledge architecture to allow "contributability" & coherence
  - Determining sound editorial policies & process
  - Access and editorial rights (controlled or open?)

- Sustaining energy & commitment
  - Contributing to the commons at your organisation's own expense
  - New modus operandi of engagement

What we learned about conditions for success

1. **Analytic framework**: From needs assessment framework to knowledge architecture

2. **Tech platform**: From adhoc to professional tech support

3. **Participation & buy-in**: From unstructured contributions to designed networks and facilitated dialogues

Conclusion

- Innovations in the design of social structures, roles and norms of interactions (*truly social* social innovation)

- Using a network to do the job of bureaucracies

- Mobilisation of civil society and social movements without the overheads

"You're late. Let's do this!"

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