

Future-Ready Society Conference

Citizen Participation and Collective Intelligence

Is 'Citizen Social Science' Possible?

Collective Mapping of Needs and Community-led Solutions

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Justin Lee
Head, Policy Lab
Institute of Policy Studies

Content

- 1. Presentation** – if social science is not values-free, will collective effort here add up?
- 2. Showcase** – previous examples of collective mapping.
- 3. Hands-On Experience** – try it out yourself (& compete with other groups).
- 4. Possibilities and Potential** – if we did this properly, what might we achieve?
- 5. Dialogue** – what do our panelists think?
- 6. Q&A** – what do you think? want to try some of this together?
- 7. Announce Winners** – which group has won what?

1. PRESENTATION

What is Collective Intelligence?

- Enabled by technology; but a socio-technical system (therefore *social design* just as important as *technological affordances*).
- Mobilise **mass contribution** from multiple types of participants with diverse views and vantage points (crowdsourcing, open collaboration).
- Participants contribute with varying degrees of freedom and independence; and can abuse that freedom if no governance system with rules or norms are in place.
- Yet somehow, creates **coherent accumulation** of knowledge.
- This adds up to a kind of collective capability that surpasses the abilities of its individual constituents (a ‘Supermind’).

What is Properly ‘Collective’ Intelligence?

What makes something merely ‘participatory’ compared to something that more legitimately claims to be ‘collective’?

Example: ‘participatory research’ vs ‘open collaboration’

- Selected vs Mass Participation.
- Permissions vs Permissionless Participation.
- Relative freedom and independence of participants.
- Did it achieve levels of comprehensiveness, robustness and coherence that expert-led or a simply participatory approach could not?

Examples of CI

- Open Source Software Development
- Wikipedia
- Crowdsourcing the Constitution (Iceland & Mexico City).
- Citizen Science



Citizen Science

- Factual basis of the knowledge is less contested.
- Typically involves basic actions like documentation, e.g. census of animals, collect weather data, map out the stars.
- When data collection is too challenging for one team of scientists.

Citizen Social Science?

- Participedia – easier because it crowdsources case studies and approaches.
- Social Science is inextricably values-laden: what counts as a social problem? What are desired outcomes?
- Also: qualitative forms of analysis that deal with meanings & experiences that do not aggregate in any straightforward manner.
- Applied research like assessing social needs and determining gaps in policy or service provision; and evaluation research have value judgements embedded - They have **technical** aspects, but also **normative** components you cannot escape from.

Example: needs assessment & gap analysis

- You may have defined a problem, but the understanding is incomplete until you adequately define what the ideal is.
- When we don't have a normative benchmark, we cannot determine what the shortfall is, or how close we are to reaching our desired goals.
- Such analytic work is closer to 'applied ethics' than 'science'.

Example: PWDs should have
'Viable' or 'Desirable' Jobs?

What counts as a 'Good Death'?
What counts as 'Proper Inclusion'?

Who can contribute to knowledge legitimately?

We tend to rely on Systems, Leaders & Experts

- Experts in policy (Policymakers)
- Experts in research (Academics)
- Experts in practice (Professionals)

And regard Clients, Caregivers, Citizens as merely Data

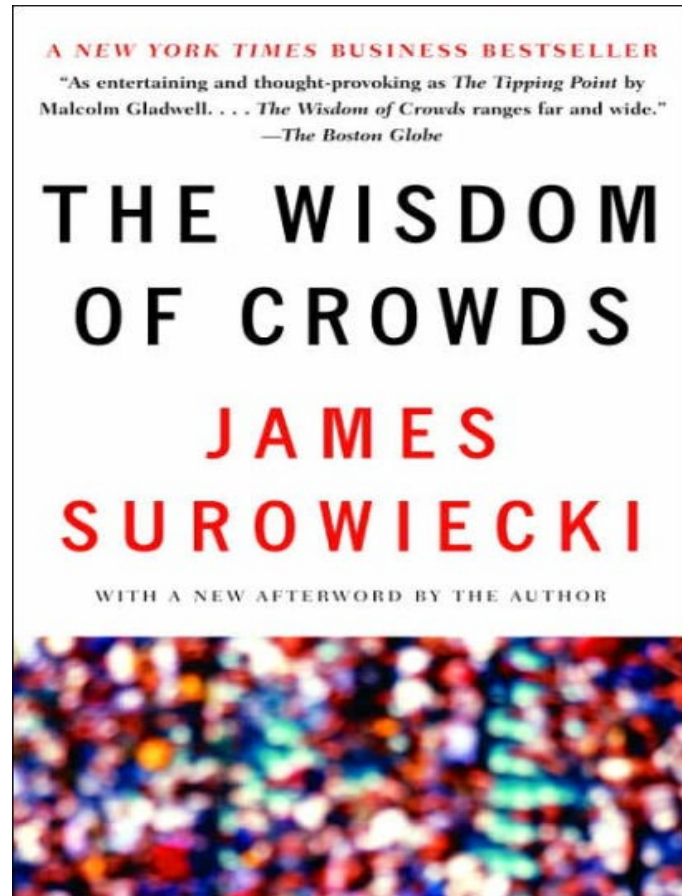
- But are they experts of their own lives?
- And can / should any group have monopoly over knowledge about social issues?

Sure, we can do Participatory Research...

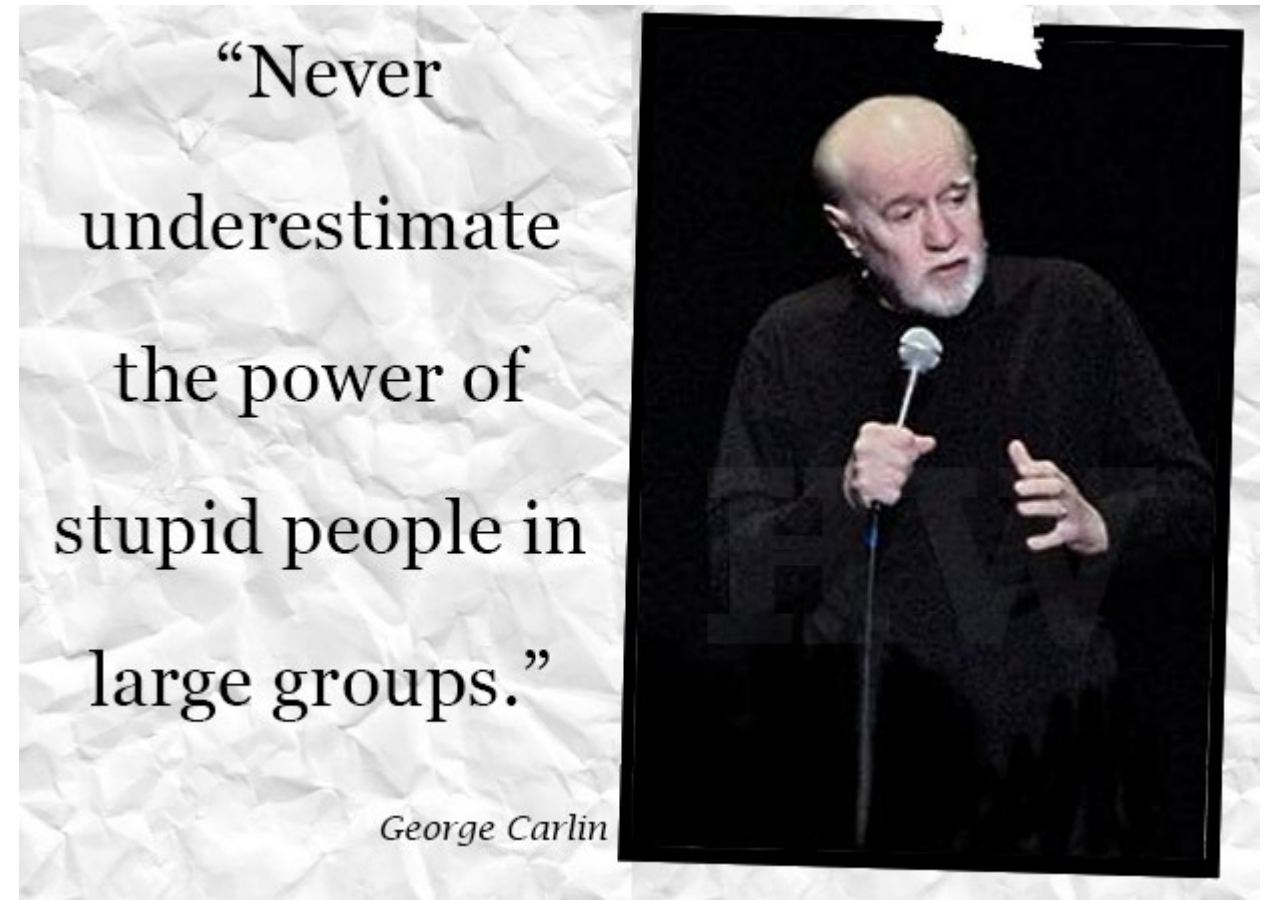


But what if we attempt Open Collaboration to try and harness Collective Intelligence?

What if EVERYONE contributes?



VS



Technology has enabled decentralised, often permissionless collaborations

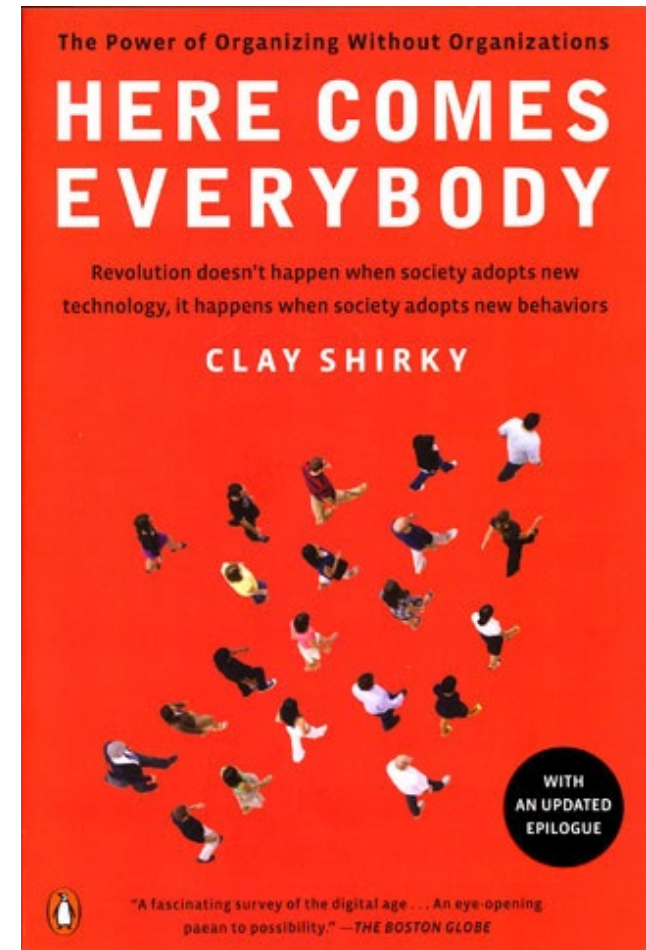
- Technology has made it “easier for groups to self-assemble and for individuals to contribute to group effort without requiring formal management (and its attendant overhead)”
- “These tools have radically altered the old limits on the size, sophisticated and scope of unsupervised effort” (Shirky 2008: 21)

Flickr

“gather, then share” → “share, then gather”

Wikipedia

“filter, then publish” → “publish, then filter”



2. SHOWCASE

Seed of Idea – Spelling Mistakes



How to Break Down Analytic Moves so Everyone Can Contribute?

End of Life Example

Client Needs	Existing Services & Resources	Gap	Cause of Gap	Potential Solution
Need to be identified as facing end of life issues				
Need for public to be aware and accept viability of EOL options	Public education campaigns by Lien Foundation			
Understandable information & effective referral				
Effective/affordable pain and symptom management	Palliative care system in Singapore: hospitals, hospices			
Die under conditions & place of own choosing				
Psychosocial well-being, community integration & social usefulness				
Life closure & Last Wishes				

Resource directory



End of Life Example

Client Needs	Existing Services & Resources	Gap	Cause of Gap	Potential Solution
Need for public to be aware and accept viability of EOL options	Public education campaigns by Lien Foundation	SHC survey shows public awareness still low	Cultural stigma	Arts-based approaches
Effective/affordable pain and symptom management	Palliative care system in Singapore: hospitals, hospices	Ranked 19 th in terms of availability, cost and quality	Cost is high because insurance covers hospitals but not hospice care	Health insurance to cover palliative care at home
<div style="background-color: #333; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; border-radius: 10px;"> Form a meaningful narrative by looking across: Helps make sense of previously disjointed info </div>				

End of Life Example

Client Needs	Existing Services & Resources	Gap	Cause of Gap	Potential Solution
Need to be identified as facing end of life issues	Entry to specialised end-of-life care is through the medical system, but this neglects 'dwindling deaths' that are more chronic in nature			
Need for public to be aware and accept viability of EOL options	Awareness and acceptance of palliative care is low; likely due to cultural stigma			
Understandable information & effective referral	Main source of information is through hospitals, but this touch point alone is unable to inform and refer all families			
Effective/affordable pain and symptom management	Not perfect, but improving under MOH efforts			
Die under conditions & place of own choosing	Generally, individuals prefer to die at home may be too costly for some; also some demand for physician assisted suicide			
Psychosocial well-being, community integration & social usefulness	Important but neglected area, and most services focus only on recreational or diversionary activities that lack social meaning			
Life closure & Last Wishes	Some services exist, useful but not critical			

Simplified, but still Hard

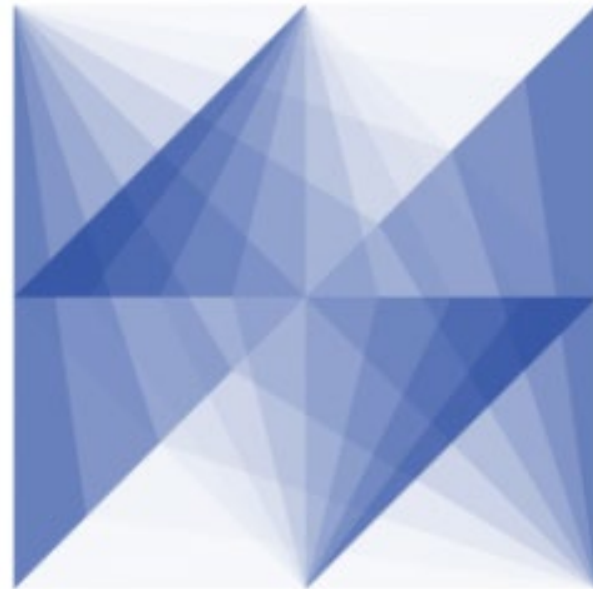
- Real worth comes from sense-making...but sense-making is analytic and interpretive work
- Can this really be done by the crowd?
- Can technology-enabled platforms to crowdsource information create more robust understanding of needs compared to the individual efforts of specialist agencies?

We tried it anyway because:

“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 centralised platform, all the energy, time and manpower can be channelled to solutions instead”

‘Centralised’ but ideally community owned and collectively managed

Our Answer to the Question: Who Should Contribute?



socialcollab.sg

ALL CAN CONTRIBUTE

- A dormant platform and idea that refuses to die.
- Can AI take over from CI (collective intelligence?)

Types of Pages

1. **Social Causes:** Disability, End of Life, Youth at Risk, Ex-Offenders etc.
2. **Asset Classes:** Community Arts, Social Enterprises, Worker Cooperatives, Tech for Good, Service Learning Offices etc.
3. **Locality:** Lengkok Bahru, North East District etc.

	CENTRALLY LED	OPEN COLLABORATION
Quality of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -‘Snapshot’ and static -Complete in itself, but fragmented when considered at large 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -‘Live’, constantly updated -Coherent accumulation: seek clarity instead of arbitrary completion
Ownership	Proprietary	Commons
Growth	Incremental gain	Exponential growth
Ethos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Best agency to do the work (do for others) -Competition, Turf issues (‘avoid duplication’, ‘role delineation’) -Defensiveness: need for legitimacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -All can contribute (community helps one another) -Collaborative, Democratized -Humility: transparency about ignorance
Governance	<p>Hierarchy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -approval required -logic of central planning 	<p>Network</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -distributed collaborations -logic of coordination

3. HANDS ON EXPERIENCE and COMPETITION

Collaborate to map out a social issue

Brings you here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1gnrys-WSSIJ6nRD3jctYzACwK4QQUG>



Insert your contact information in the google doc if you want to participate in the 'competition'

CI vs AI



4. POSSIBILITIES AND POTENTIAL

The Context

SSAs / Non-Profits

- Operate based on fragmented and incomplete information.
- May compete instead of collaborate with peers.
- Rely on all-too-familiar interventions.

Academia / Research

- Focus mainly on 1) understanding problems, or 2) evaluating existing solutions.
- Less on emerging new solutions or rendering them actionable – co-creating, translating, operationalising and testing (RDI).

The Context

Funders

- May have outsized influence without full appreciation of operating context, ground realities or research findings.
- Not always easy to give away money – beyond just governance, funders want solutions they are excited about.
- Incentivised to bet on strong organisations, not necessarily strong solutions.

Intermediaries / Networks

- Independent efforts may not lead to coherently accumulative shared knowledge base that others can contribute back to.
- Networks encouraging collaboration may focus too much on problems and not enough on actionable solutions.

The Context

Knowledge Architecture & Management

- Expanding inclusion and mass participation increases costs of administration and coordination.
- Diversity is strength but also poses challenge for coherence.
- Freedoms and permissionless systems can be abused.
- Community buy-in and self-organisation is not guaranteed.

Form Evidence-Informed, Solutions-Focused Networks?

1. **Tap into collective intelligence** – for more complete and robust knowledge base (even as we leverage on experts).
2. **Create knowledge commons** – free to use but also facilitates mass contribution.
3. **Shift gears to solutioning** – so that we have more ideas to consider and can focus on cooking meaningful solutions that have a seed of systemic change.
4. **Broker (not just encourage) productive collaboration** – so that requisite expertise for solutions can be brought to bear.

Functions

1. Collective Mapping & Curating Solutions

- Collective mapping to identify and prioritise opportunity areas worthy of intervention.
- Curate a list of evidence-based interventions & innovative ideas (that may not have any evidence yet).

2. Partnership Brokering

- Broker partnerships for requisite and complementary skills / even collective impact.
- Navigate government and funding support.

3. Incubating & Testing Solutions

- Translation, operationalisation and refinement, feasibility studies.
- Co-design and innovation.

Functions	Activities / Approach	Possible Deliverables
Collective Mapping	<p>Populating an empty page, creating coherence & consensus is hard so...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Scan [Optional Wikithons (student paired with practitioner) or even ‘viral structure’] • Rapid <u>Individual</u> Expert Engagements + Facilitated <u>Collective</u> Dialogues through Roundtables; librarians support curation of this ‘collection’; academics and policymakers check veracity • ‘Messy’ live wiki but verified bi-annual report; documents diverse and minority positions if no consensus 	<p>Opportunity Areas and Asset Map (Landscape Reports)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disability, Ex-offenders, Climate Change etc. • Social Enterprises, Community Artists, Civic Tech, Service Learning Offices etc.
Curate Solutions	<p>Interesting solutions may be technical or hard to find, so knowledge brokers can help...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Stock of Evidence-Reviews - from Evidence Clearing Houses, What Works Centres or Knowledge Brokers • Trawl Solutions Hubs - for innovative ideas that have not yet been tested 	<p>Ideas Bank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept Papers • Policy Briefs
Partnership Brokering	<p>We are not fully aware of range of community assets we can work with & who might be interested to collaborate, so...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting those with requisite and complementary skills • Separate Communities of Practice, Community Interest Groups, Community Action Groups; and if the ‘whole system is in the room’, potentially Collective Impact 	<p>Solutions Series of Seminars</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Sessions – Invite only, smaller group • Info Sessions – open to more, solicit for interest
Incubation & Testing	<p>Even when keen, not confident about ability to implement well, so...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of specialist incubators to avail diversity of solutioning approaches (Arts, BI, CI, DT, Game Design, SIB etc) • Plug into existing innovation pathways (NCSS D4I, SGE Ideable, FRS etc) • Operationalisation, capability building and implementation support 	<p>Project Proposals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Proposals • Operations Manual / Playbook

Possible Process

First Year – COLLECTIVE MAPPING

- Pre-populate (Wikithons with students...practitioners as knowledge mentors)
- Community Network (Roundtables with SSAs/NPOs)
- Landscape Report

Second Year - SOLUTIONING

- Transit to 'Solutioning Mode'
- Community Interest Groups, Community Action Groups

Third Year – EXIT TO COMMUNITY

- Community Partner takes over facilitation while we support

5. DIALOGUE WITH PANELLISTS

Key Issues

1. Convening Networks, Working Together Collaboratively (NVPC Colabs)
2. Veracity of Information (NUS Library, Academia)
3. Doing Unmet Needs Reports, Pilots and Experiments (LCSI)
4. Tech Affordances and Social Design (Better.sg)

6. Q&A

7. Announcing the Winners

Alice in Wonderland

Dodo bird suggested a race with all the animals in Chapter 3:

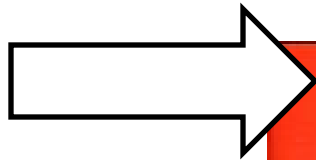
“The best way to explain it is to do it,” said the Dodo. First, the Dodo drew lines to make a racecourse. It was like a circle. All the animals stood along the course, here and there. There was no ‘One, two, three, go.’ They started running when they liked. They stopped when they liked. It was not easy to know when the race was over. They ran for half an hour.

The Dodo shouted “The race is over!”

“But who has won?”

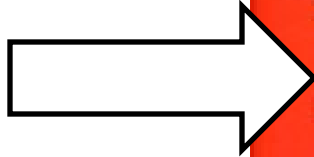


“Everybody has won and all must have prizes.”



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



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Ready?