



# Breakthrough Cities

How cities can mobilise creativity and knowledge to tackle compelling social challenges

Rushanara Ali, Prague 2009

# The Young Foundation – Its origins

## Michael Young – a pioneer in addressing social problems

- shaped UK welfare state
- writer of many best-selling books
- creator of over 60 organisations
- pioneer of innovations – distance learning, patient led health, consumerism, neighbourhood governance, active ageing.



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE  
THE THIRD AGE TRUST



school for  
social  
entrepreneurs



which?

NHS  
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# The Young Foundation

## Who we are and what we do



Re-launched as Young Foundation in 2005/6, from merger of two charities

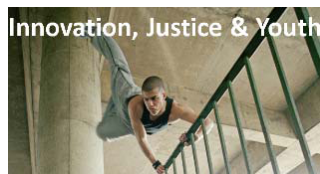
Now 65-70 staff plus associates. Primarily UK, but staff in New York and Paris; new sister organisations in Portugal, Australia and New Zealand



Research and action research – on daily life, mapping value, unmet needs, social innovation



Creating new enterprises – education, health, law, refugees - initiatives ranging from youth leadership to new models of healthcare



Local innovation – with cities, governments (50+ places), on neighbourhood, well-being.



A hub for over 25 organisations involved with social innovation.

# Introducing *Breakthrough Cities*

Most of the big challenges we face globally are to be found in cities. So will their solutions. That is why social innovation in cities should be at the top of the global agenda.

- An ageing population, increased unemployment, natural catastrophes,
- Crime, safety and security, Migration and immigration, segregation, poverty, housing, climate change related issues
- Connectivity – including effective public transport and electronic motorways
- Social challenges are likely to be exacerbated by global economic recession.

Europe's cities need entrepreneurship and innovation to secure their long-term economic, cultural and social prosperity

*Breakthrough Cities* proposes a set of tools cities can use to stimulate the creativity and social innovation they need by drawing on insights from different disciplines, networks and external innovators and advisers

Our aim is to create a network of people who are active innovators in their cities and open to the approach of sharing and blending ideas

*The Urban Ideas Bakery* is a method for putting these ideas into practice

# Defining social innovation and creativity in cities

**Social Innovation = New ideas, institutions or ways of working that aim to meet social needs or tackle social problems**

- Social innovations can take the form of a new service, initiative or organisation, or a radically new approach to the organisation and delivery of services.
- Both approaches have the potential to spread throughout a profession or sector, such as education or healthcare, or geographically from one place to another.
- Social innovators can be found across disciplines, professions and sectors; methods currently being used globally to generate and grow social innovation come from many fields – public policy, design, technology, business, community organising, the professions and social entrepreneurship.
- Social innovation involves MORE than creativity – a socially innovative city needs to generate ideas in response to changing needs, AND to turn those ideas into action
- Cities have to be creative about all aspects of city life – transport, housing, energy, waste, health – NOT just culture

# The field of social innovation and social design ...



Slow Food Foundation  
for Biodiversity



**KAFKA**  
BRIGADE



WIKIPEDIA



**Sustainable  
Everyday  
Project**



The Open University



# People and organisations involved in social innovation

- **Organisations**

e.g. [The Young Foundation \(London\)](#); [Centre for Social Innovation \(Toronto\)](#); [Australian Centre for Social Innovation \(ACSI\)](#); [Lien Centre for Social Innovation \(Singapore\)](#); [NESTA \(UK\)](#); [Mindlab \(Denmark\)](#); [The Hope Institute \(S.Korea\)](#); [Kennisland \(Amsterdam\)](#); [TESE \(Portugal\)](#); [SITRA and STAKES \(Finland\)](#)

- **Research Institutes**

e.g. [Stanford Centre for Social Innovation](#); [Design and Innovation for Sustainability research unit, Politecnico di Milano](#)

- **Social Enterprises**

e.g. [Mondragon group of cooperatives \(Spain\)](#); [BRAC \(Bangladesh\)](#); [Grameen Bank \(Bangladesh\)](#); [Sitawi \(Brazil\)](#); [Schools for social entrepreneurs \(UK\)](#); [Skoll, Ashoka \(US\)](#)

- **Networks** of people and organisations who are active in social innovation

e.g. [Social Innovation Exchange \(SIX\)](#); [Innovation Networks for Communities \(US\)](#)

- **Individuals** who champion social innovation

e.g. [Michael Young](#); [Muhammad Yunus](#); [Fazle Hasan Abed](#)

# What kind of process might stimulate social innovation in a city?

The Young Foundation's work on social innovation methods has identified 6 stages common to innovations – although these are not always linear:



# How can outside input help stimulate creativity and social innovation?

- Innovation is a process of combination – combining different ideas, insights, people to come up with new recipes and methods. The process of combination is more likely to be creative if the people involved think in different ways and bring diverse skills and outlooks
- Openness to ‘outside’ influence and knowledge is a key feature of creative cities and regions e.g. Silicon Valley; ‘Third Italy’
- An ‘outsider’ can have more freedom from institutional pressures/constraints, offer new perspectives, challenge tradition, spot opportunities for new connections in a city

## ***Advice for aspiring innovators***

‘Be open; be flexible. You need passion and to enjoy what you do and get networking. Get out there and learn from other people. If you are open to new ideas, you’ll be more Creative’. (*Madle Lippus, New World Community, Estonia*)

## **BUT**

- Need for sensitivity to culture, history and context
- Methods need to be tailored to the city, its history, politics, culture, challenges
- Success of external engagement depends on relationships, power structures and dynamics

# What makes a city fertile for social innovation and receptive to external input?

## Key conditions:

- Diversity and tolerance
- Recognition of crisis and challenge
- Dispersal of power / decision-making
- Strong leadership
- Open organisational cultures
- Networking and collaboration

## Engaging and leading social innovation: Lessons from social innovators

- Resistance from stakeholders should be expected
- Acknowledge and manage risk
- Get people outside their silos
- Demonstrate the potential for mutual reward
- Offer the prospect of clear solutions
- Encourage multiple perspective on any challenge
- Build networks, relationships and mutual respect across sectors
- Engage the media
- Expect and manage tensions

# Social innovation in cities – Global examples

## Challenge/Issue: Climate change

### Reducing emissions

E.g. Congestion charging (e.g. London, Milan, Stockholm); Car Free Days (Seoul); Promoting alternative forms of transport e.g. Bogota's CicloRuta

### Managing waste

E.g. Curitiba's 'recycling entrepreneurs'; Bangalore's Solid Waste Management Programme; Eco-Tickets Programme (Oswiecim, Poland)

## Challenge/Issue: Changing demographics

### Responding to an aging population

E.g. Supportmyparent.com (UK); Aquarius (Eindhoven, Netherlands)

## Challenge/Issue: Slowing economy

### Tackling unemployment

E.g. SYSLAB (Systems Laboratory for Innovation and employment (initiated in Bergen, Norway – now in S. and E. Europe); social enterprises, such as the Mondragon group of co-operatives (Spain), BRAC (Bangladesh), Grameen Bank (serving rural villages in Bangladesh)

## Challenge/Issue: Governance

### Distributed accountability and democratic innovation

E.g. participatory budgeting (Ontario, Canada; Port Alegre, Brazil); Citizen petitions (Germany; UK); Ideas and Imagination Banks (Seoul); Complaints Choirs (Finland; Birmingham, England) user generated feedback systems e.g. fixmystreet.com

# A snapshot of methods for encouraging social innovation in cities

| Method / technique  | Description   |
|---|---|
| <b>Consultancy (Traditional/multi-disciplinary)</b><br>E.g. PWC; Arup   | 'The practice of giving expert advice within a particular field' – consulting agencies deliver efficiencies, strategy and innovation  |
| <b>Peer review model for city plans</b><br>E.g. Liveable Cities; IDeA; BUSTRIP; PRESUD; EMAS Peer Review for Cities; Aalborg Commitment Peer Review | 'Critical friends providing independent assessment of progress towards benchmarks'  |
| <b>Thinkers in Residence</b><br>E.g. South Australia; plans for Manitoba  | Internationally renowned experts invited to a country to help explore and find original solutions to policy issues and challenges; provide strategic advice to govt., non-govt., business, industry, community organisations  |
| <b>Issue-focussed peer networking</b><br>E.g. Eurocities; C40   | Networks of major cities committed to close co-operation, in the interest of developing dialogue and solutions to common problems   |
| <b>World Cafés</b>  | Innovative methodology for hosting conversations about pressing problems.   |
| <b>Deliberation Methods</b><br>E.g. Adam Kahane's 'Solving Tough Problems: An open way of talking, listening and creating new realities'            | Kahane's techniques for conflict resolution/solving complex problems. Methods include four conversational modes – Downloading, Debating, Reflective Dialogue, Generative Dialogue – if we want to change the world, we need to recognise and navigate through all modes                       |
| <b>Design methods</b><br>E.g. Doors of perception; EMUDE; IDEO  | <b>Doors of Perception:</b> Organises an international conference, an event in India and a website, which together form a knowledge network aiming to set new agendas for design.   |
|   | <b>IDEO:</b> An innovation and design firm that uses a human-centred and design-based approach to help organisations in the business, govt., education, healthcare and social sectors innovate.   |
|   | <b>EMUDE:</b> Network of teams of researchers and students from European design schools, aimed at identifying cases where individuals and communities use existing resources in a sustainable way, pinpoint demand, and point to how to improve efficiency, accessibility and diffusion       |
| <b>Common Purpose</b>   | Educational programme which brings together leaders of all ages, backgrounds and sectors – e.g. health, education, arts, media, local govt., business and charities.  |
| <b>Buckminster World Game / Future Game</b>   | Original World Game developed by Buckminster; since adapted by YKON, Helsinki, to Future Game (a modern version). Game is about engaging people in discussions to come up with ideas and solutions that would otherwise be left to 'the experts'  |
| <b>British Council – Future City Game</b>   | A 2-day activity with the aim of generating the best idea to improve quality of life in cities.   |
| <b>Fishbowls</b>  | A technique used to increase participation and understanding of other people's perspective's on a particular issue.   |
| <b>Revolutionary Thinking</b>   | A method developed for groups to come to new understandings of what is possible. Involves 100 people in tables or circles of around 8 each with a convener. Involves a series of rapid circles involving all the participants to map out the parameters of the issue and potential solutions. |



## social innovation eXchange

- |                       |              |                                   |
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### Features



> **Summer School on Social Innovation - 28-30 of July, San Sebastian**  
The Young Foundation in partnership with MIK (from the Mondragon Group) is holding a Summer School bringing together the community of people and organisations involved in practical social innovation to share skills, methods and insights.



> **Vila das Canoas Community-based tourism**  
Lodging of tourists in the houses of inhabitants of Vila das Canoas shantytown and promotion of tourism activities in the neighborhoods

### In Residence

#### Josephine Green



Changing the Change - Social Design.

Recent entries:

- Inclusive Entrepreneurship in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, Ainhoa Unamuno

### SIX Blog

Recent posts and entries to SIX Blog:

- No longer needing to fake corporate loyalty.
- Resilience by design
- Changing the Change: Design for Society