

Exploring how London can be a more Networked City

Note for [launch event on January 10 2017](#) , with updates. by David Wilcox Drew Mackie.

Introduction and summary

1. [The Way Ahead initiative](#), led by London Funders in partnership with London Voluntary Service Council and Greater London Volunteering, provides a major opportunity to reframe London's civil society - the social space for "doing good" lying between individual action, the market and public services. So how can we helping people do things that are Good for London?
1. Key ideas in The Way Ahead report are community-led change, greater collaboration - termed pragmatic co-production - and a London hub to guide and support development. The challenge lies in helping Londoners understand what that means in practice; engaging a wide range of stakeholders; making the most of existing resources in times of austerity; and implementing ideas using methods old and new.

This note outlines how adding dimensions of network thinking and digital technology could help address these challenges. It covers:

- [What we mean by civil society in London](#)
- [Models for cooperation and collaboration in the networked age](#) applied as ...
- [A local Living Lab](#) that simulates a London borough in workshops and online.
- [London as a more networked city](#) with a London Hub that is a network of networks.
- [A development process for the exploration](#)
- [Key ideas in The Way Ahead](#)
- [Reference material](#)

LVSC has provided some seed funding to scope development of these ideas. We are inviting people to join us in a network, and in task groups that can help develop specific projects and products, and seek additional funding. For example this might lead to:

1. A guide to cooperation and collaboration in the networked age
2. A kit that allows people to use the Living Lab for local co-design initiatives
3. A network of networks for London civil society, with a facilitating hub
4. A set of tech and other tools for the Lab and networks
5. An organisation to support these initiatives

Update

- [We ran a successful launch event on January 10](#), and are forming task groups.
- We have set up [a blog](#), a [mailing list](#) and a [Slack team](#)
- [There will be a further event on January 31](#) and February 22,
- [A development process is outlined below.](#)

London Civil Society

Civil society space is populated by charities, social enterprises, community groups, volunteers, coops and the networks that connect these - all aiming to meet social needs and/or improve opportunities for Londoners. They connect in various ways with public and private bodies - through funding, contracts, sponsorship and volunteering - but aim to have a separate identity. That identity is expressed variously as voluntary and community sector, third sector, non-profit sector ... and civil society. The terms are not interchangeable, but represent a set of overlapping approaches and organisational forms.

Civil society operates at several levels - from neighbours providing mutual support, through local community groups and charities, borough-level support organisations like councils for voluntary service, London networks around specific issues, and umbrella organisations like the London Voluntary Service Council and Greater London Volunteering.

Activities range from being helpful citizens, through volunteering, organising around projects and campaigns, to providing major support services for people in greatest need. While charities and other incorporated organisations are most visible, the vast majority of civil society activity in London is through unincorporated groups.

Change is already under way, and accelerating as public sector funding for civil society organisations moves from grants to competitive contracts; demand for their services and support is increasing; and the way that Londoners themselves find information, advice and ways of organising is changing. This is within the context of global, technology-driven change that will impact substantially on Londoners lives and their communities in the next decade. See this presentation by David Wood, chair of London Futurists, with Globalnet 21: [Priorities for steering the digital revolution](#).

The last attempt to reframe civil society was The Big Society, a Conservative 2010 manifesto commitment adopted by the coalition government. [Socialreporter blog posts here](#). Some elements can still be seen in the current government's localism agenda. The PM, Theresa May, [is now talking about the "shared society"](#) but it isn't yet clear what implications that may have for civil society.

The Big Lottery Fund has launched a report, events and online conversations on [The Future of Doing Good](#), but we believe most people outside civil society organisations - and many within - are confused about the various types of organisations operating, and just who's who. It is a time of uncertainty and anxiety - yet also a time when there are terrific stories to be told, and when funders are becoming more innovative in the ways in which they not only provide support, but also help beneficiaries tell those stories.

Models for communities, cooperation, collaboration

Communities as social ecosystems

In working with community interests at local level - and in developing the Living Lab - we have found it useful to think of communities as social ecosystems with these main components:

- **People** with different interests, motivations, experience, and disposition and skills. Some will have a wide network of relationships, some less; some will share ideas openly, others not.
- **Groups and organisations** that may or may not have a culture of sharing, good or poor internal communications, hierarchical or networked structures.
- **Networks** that define the relationships between people and organisations.
- **Content** in different formats and media: ranging from books and essays to blog posts and tweets; highly structured or snippets; formal or informal.
- **Types of exchange** which may be conversational or formal; stories or documents.
- **Social spaces** where people meet or just bump into each other - churches and mosques, supermarkets, pubs and school gates, community centres and sports venues.
- **Online platforms** for sharing: big systems like Google, Facebook and Twitter that provide the platform for much exchange; closed systems within organisations; self-hosted systems.
- **Tools**: social media and other tools that allow us to share content on platforms as well as face-to-face conversations, phone calls, paper-based communications, radio, TV.
- **Resources** in the community - which may be places, funds, repositories of knowledge and expertise, for example.
- **Activities** using resources, undertaken by people and organisations, that may become projects.

More here about [Building local communities using Maps, Apps and Storytelling](#)

The social ecosystem model allows discussion of cooperation and collaboration between various interests, and is more flexible than the more widely-known ladder or spectrum of participation. See [The Guide to Effective Participation 1994](#) and the [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#). These models focus on the relationships between power and resource-holders like public bodies, and citizens. The balance of power is reflected in levels or stances - inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower - with different methods ascribed to each level. The assumption is that the power-holders manage the process.

		INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION				
		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on drafts and proposals.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

The ladder or spectrum model is useful in discussions of how far a power holder may wish to enable citizen and other community-level interests, but isn't helpful in thinking about how citizens may self-organise to develop groups and campaigns, or how various interests may form alliances around campaigns or projects.

[The Way Ahead report on pragmatic coproduction](#) uses a continuum model with “Communities drive identification of their needs” at one end to “Communities advocate and influence for themselves” at the other, with acknowledgement that communities are not homogeneous. This leaves the way open for further discussion of what may be involved at different stages along the continuum.

Models from personal knowledge mastery and learning

Harold Jarche, a specialist in personal knowledge mastery, argues that in future we will continue to have kinship-based tribes, hierarchical institutions and markets, but networks will dominate as organisational forms. See [principles and models for the network era](#) with this reference to David Ronfeldt's [TIMN](#) (Tribes-Institutions-Markets-Networks) Theory. Diagram below.

Four Forms Behind the Organization and Evolution of All Societies – TIMN

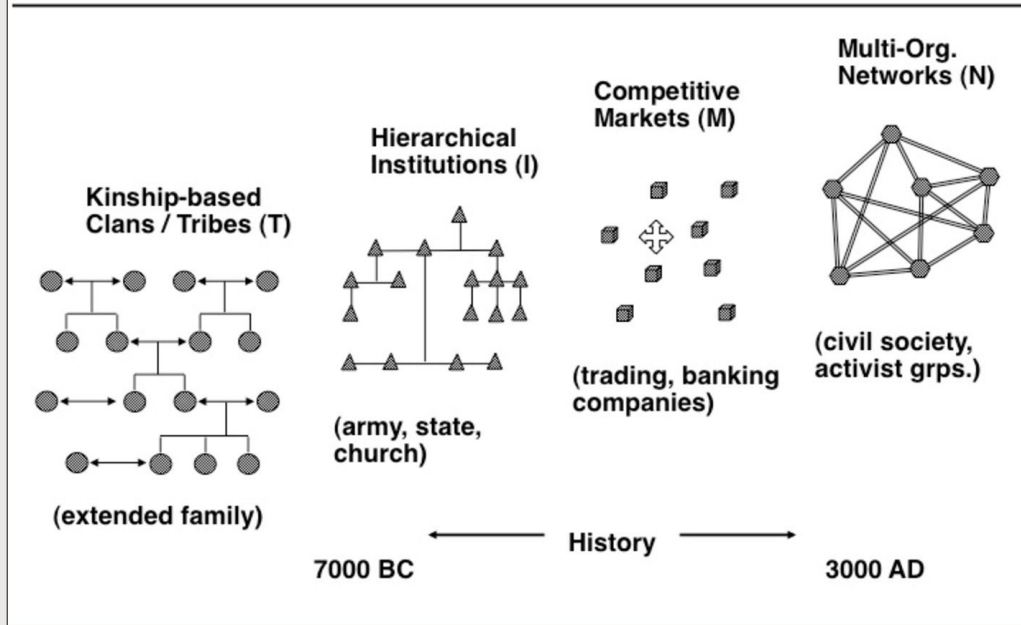
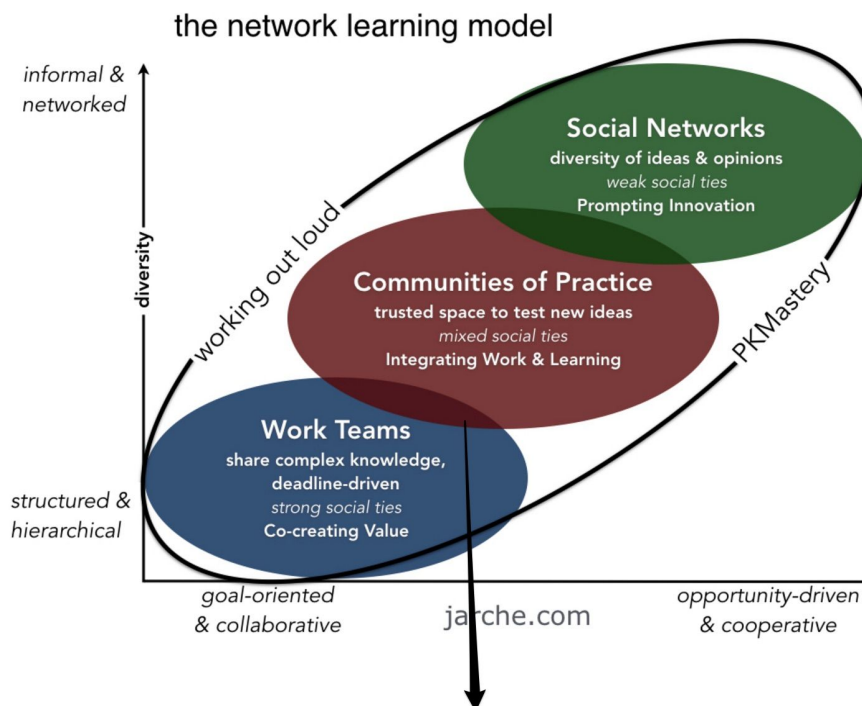


Image: [David Ronfeldt](#)

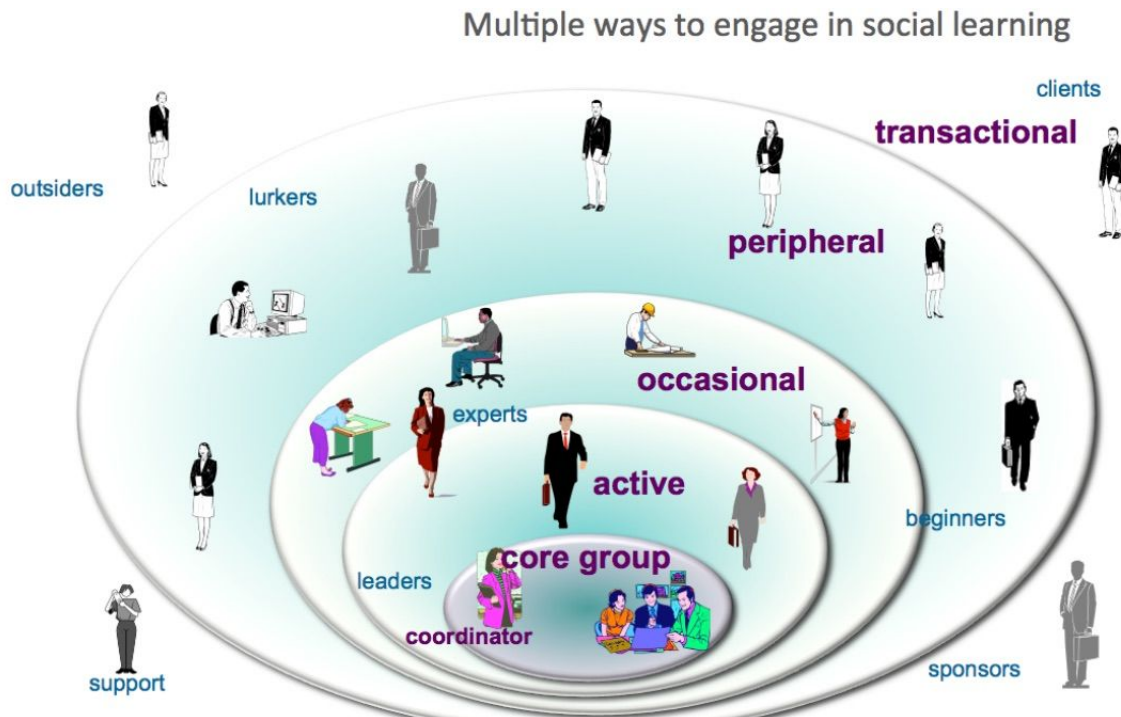
Harold Jarche then suggests considering learning - and forms of organising - on two axes that help us distinguish the roles of:

- Work teams, where we need to work together purposefully on clear goals, with strong social ties
- Communities of practice, where we can share and test ideas
- Social networks, where there may be a diversity of ideas and opinions



Harold will be in London January 31 leading a discussion on how we can apply these models in reframing civil society.

It is also worth exploring in more detail the nature of Communities of Practice - see this [introduction by Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner](#) - and different [levels of participation that people may engage in](#).



We need a much more detailed exploration of these and other models. At this stage they are illustrative - aiming to show that in order to understand and apply ideas of cooperation, collaboration and co-production we need to think about multiple interests and many faceted relationships.

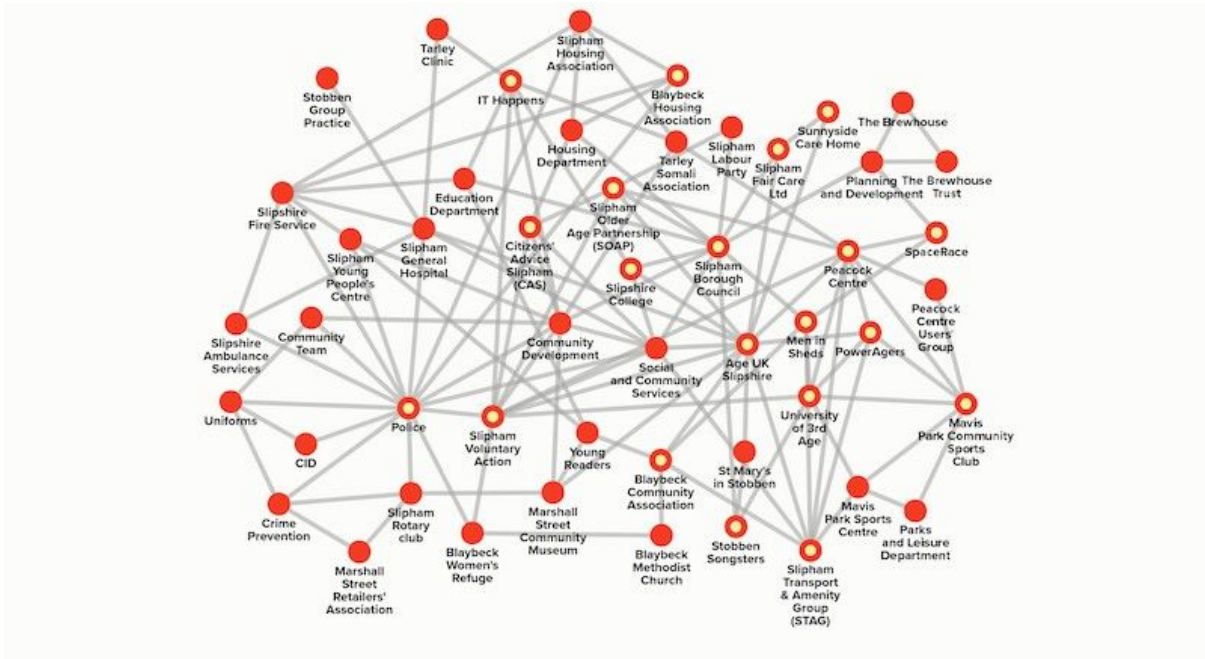
Also crucial are the role of facilitators in developing communities of practice and other types of networks, and that of connectors and brokers across networks.

The Living Lab and networked city exploration are two routes into an exploration of how to apply new models in reframing civil society.

A Living Lab

The Living Lab is a representation of a local community - in this instance the fictional London Borough of Slipham. It is being developed as a workshop format, and also online, with the range of characters, organisations and other elements that comprise the social ecology outlined earlier.

Workshop participants take on roles and address challenges facing the citizens and community of Slipham, using a range of digital and other methods. At the heart of Slipham is a network map of relationships that may be enhanced during game play.



Here's [an example of a Slipham workshop, developed with The Centre for Ageing Better.](#)

This scenario for Connecting Slipham could be the basis to test in practice some of the ideas outlined in London as a more networked city.

Slipham residents have set up an action group because they are dissatisfied with the information and advice available to people with the greatest need for support and new opportunities in life. They have noticed that budgets are under extreme pressure and they think there might be better ways of operating and opportunities to reach more people and do things better. These include older people, those with disabilities, young families, and unemployed young people.

Although there are lots of pamphlets and posters from different organisations in the library, people find it confusing and inadequate. Some of the information is online, but may be out of date and on a wide range of web sites. Local community and voluntary organisations are short-staffed, and can't provide adequate sign-posting. Often they don't know what other organisations are doing.

The council's health and wellbeing strategy emphasises the importance of social connections to combat isolation and improve mutual support among citizens as

services are cut, and promotes the idea of community connectors and social prescribing. However, it isn't clear who is responsible for coordinating action.

Most members of the group have some personal technical skills, and use online services for shopping, entertainment and communication with friends and family. Others work in companies or social enterprises where self-organising teams and personal responsibility for research and learning are encouraged. Why is Slipham civil society so behind the curve?

The group finds examples in other boroughs of systems that could meet many of their needs, and cooperative approaches that would make the most of the skills of residents, businesses, and forward-looking groups (examples). They see that London Funders, together with two umbrella organisations, have mounted an enquiry called The Way Ahead aiming to redesign civil society.

The five task groups set up by The Way Ahead look as if they are addressing some of the issues facing Slipham residents.

The Slipham Cooperative Action Group decide that they will develop plans at three levels:

- *Exploring how much citizens can do for themselves using a mix of new and old methods of communications - building personal networks, finding good connectors in Slipham, and using their phones and other devices*
- *Researching what's happening elsewhere, and exploring how they or local groups might adopt new approaches and systems*
- *Asking The Way Ahead team whether they would like to adopt Slipham as a testbed*

The group's first move has been to develop a system of face-to-face, print, phone and online communication that is open, accessible and inclusive. They have contacted <http://www.interests.me/> to see how that could give them a public face, and demonstrate some immediate improvements in local information.

While SCAG think they can make a good start as volunteers, they will also explore how to make their initiative sustainable in the longer term, and impact positively on local organisations.

We have designed a Living Lab session with characters, organisations, maps, and methods to play through possible solutions. The Lab could be developed as a kit for local co-design/co-production initiatives, and accompanied by a guide to cooperation and collaboration in the networked age.

We aim to work with organisations and individuals in one or more London boroughs to:

- Contribute anonymised profiles to the cast of characters and organisations in Slipham, reflecting the reality in their communities
- Run workshops, using the Lab format, to address real challenges
- Follow through with support in building processes of cooperation, collaboration and co-production

Making London a more networked city

Our exploration recognises the importance and potential of the ideas in *The Way Ahead* - particularly that London civil society should be reframed around ideas of cooperation, collaboration and co-production:

“Co-production is where Londoners work with those in power, and each other, in a way in which all voices are heard equally in developing a shared understanding of need and in crafting solutions to make London a better place.”

At local level co-production should be driven by the needs and interests of citizens and their communities - not just by existing organisations. New and strengthened forms of cooperation and collaboration are needed.

At London level these processes should be guided and supported by a Hub, which “could be made up of a network of organisations or be a formally constituted body.”

We can take these ideas forward by adding additional assumptions about a future digital, networked age:

- Commercial and public services will increasingly be delivered online, and the use of personal devices like smartphones will continue to rise (stats). For those with the necessary skills this will become a default expectation for access to information and services, communication with friends and family, and informal organising. For others it will increase their reliance on intermediaries who can make necessary connections. In one instance people will be living in an increasingly networked world, in the other dependant on connectors and brokers who can help bridge online and offline worlds.
- At local level the role of sense-makers, brokers, and connectors will be increasingly important in the processes of Pragmatic Co-production advocated in *The Way Ahead* - articulating needs, identifying opportunities, shaping solutions. They will need to be skilled in both traditional and digital age community-building skills. See [Connecting Citizens, Building Communities](#) for a longer rationale.
- The models of social ecologies, and learning and action networks, outlined earlier are more useful in reframing civil society than traditional models based on citizen-participation and various forms of alliance between groups and organisations.

None of this is intended to suggest that digital methods and online working will replace other methods of communication, or make everything networked. Indeed a fundamental requirement for cooperation, collaboration and coproduction is the development of trust - which generally involves meeting face-to-face over a period of time. The building blocks are conversations, stories and doing things together. That’s something we emulate in the Living Lab.

What we do need to understand is how digital will disrupt organisational structures in civil society just as it has in other areas, and how digital methods and systems can fundamentally change and enhance co-production processes, and offer new forms of organising.

Our exploration will address these and other similar issues:

- What sort of **future changes** are likely to impact on London's communities - particularly those that are digitally and network-driven? Who may benefit, who may be disadvantaged?
- What **models** are useful in making sense of these changes, and addressing challenges?
- What **processes and methods** will be important in developing cooperation, collaboration and co-production in a more networked future?
- What **roles and skills** will be important?
- What **examples** are there of innovative approaches to reframing civil society?
- What is involved in **network facilitation and leadership**?
- How can we use the **Living Lab and other creative methods** to explore reframing civil society?
- **Who may be interested** in these ideas - and how do we develop a network to take them forward?
- What might a **London Hub** look like as a network of networks?

We will address these and other issues at an event on January 31 in London, with Harold Jarche.

Development process for Networked City

We have three key events:

- January 10: Meeting at Newspeak House. The initial plan - [blogged here](#) - was to discuss development of the Living Lab, but we will now make it the launch of the wider exploration and network. [Update posts here](#) and [here](#).
- January 31: we will hear from Harold Jarche in person about the models described here, and take forward the Living Lab and networked city ideas. [Details](#).
- February 22: an event at City Hall when we can bring together the results of the networked city exploration, and Living Lab development

We will organise informal meetups, and will be working online and through one-to-one connections to develop ideas and the network.

Our online tools - subject to discussion on January 10 - will include:

- Sliphm online, using [Interests.me](#)
- A Slack team - [now here](#)
- An email system - [now here](#)
- A blog - [now here](#) - and wiki
- Any other tools network members wish to use

Outputs and possible outcomes

These will depend in part on getting additional resources, the degree of collaboration with The Way Ahead, responses from potential core network members, and views of LVSC. They could include:

- **A body of content** from the exploration, produced initially on a blog and wiki, and then in the form of report or books. Depending on levels of interest, we would aim to identify some key contributors, and also crowdsource content. This could become a guide to cooperation and collaboration in the networked age
- **One or more Living Lab sessions**, and the outline of **a kit** that could be used locally. This could help people translate the high-level ideas of a networked city and co-production to local plans.
- **A network** of people interested in the key ideas of the Lab and the networked city. This could develop into a community of practice around co-production in the digital, networked age.
- **Plans for a networked hub.**
- **One or more funding bids** to develop the Living Lab, guide, network (s) and other projects.

Key ideas in The Way Ahead

The key ideas in The Way Ahead report are:

- Civil society is everyone interested in doing good
- Change should be driven by citizens and community-level interests, and should make the most of local assets
- The process of change should be one of co-production, involving shared understanding of needs and opportunities, cooperation and collaboration between key interests
- Data should be shared across all stakeholder groups
- The underpinning values are reduced inequality, opportunities for all, access to support, sense of pride in community, people in greater control of their lives and able to influence change for the better, people more able to help each other

More here:

- [The Way Ahead reference](#)
- [Online extracts from The Way Ahead](#)
- [Online version of Pragmatic Co-production](#)

At local level change will be achieved through more empowered communities, and at London level by a Hub providing guidance, resources and support.

There is little detail in the main report of how empowered communities will be achieved, or how the Hub will operate. However, an addition report - [available online here](#) - provides an explanation of Pragmatic Co-production, and explains that:

“Co-production is where Londoners work with those in power, and each other, in a way in which all voices are heard equally in developing a shared understanding of need and in crafting solutions to make London a better place.”

Pragmatic co-production should cover a continuum of activity that includes:

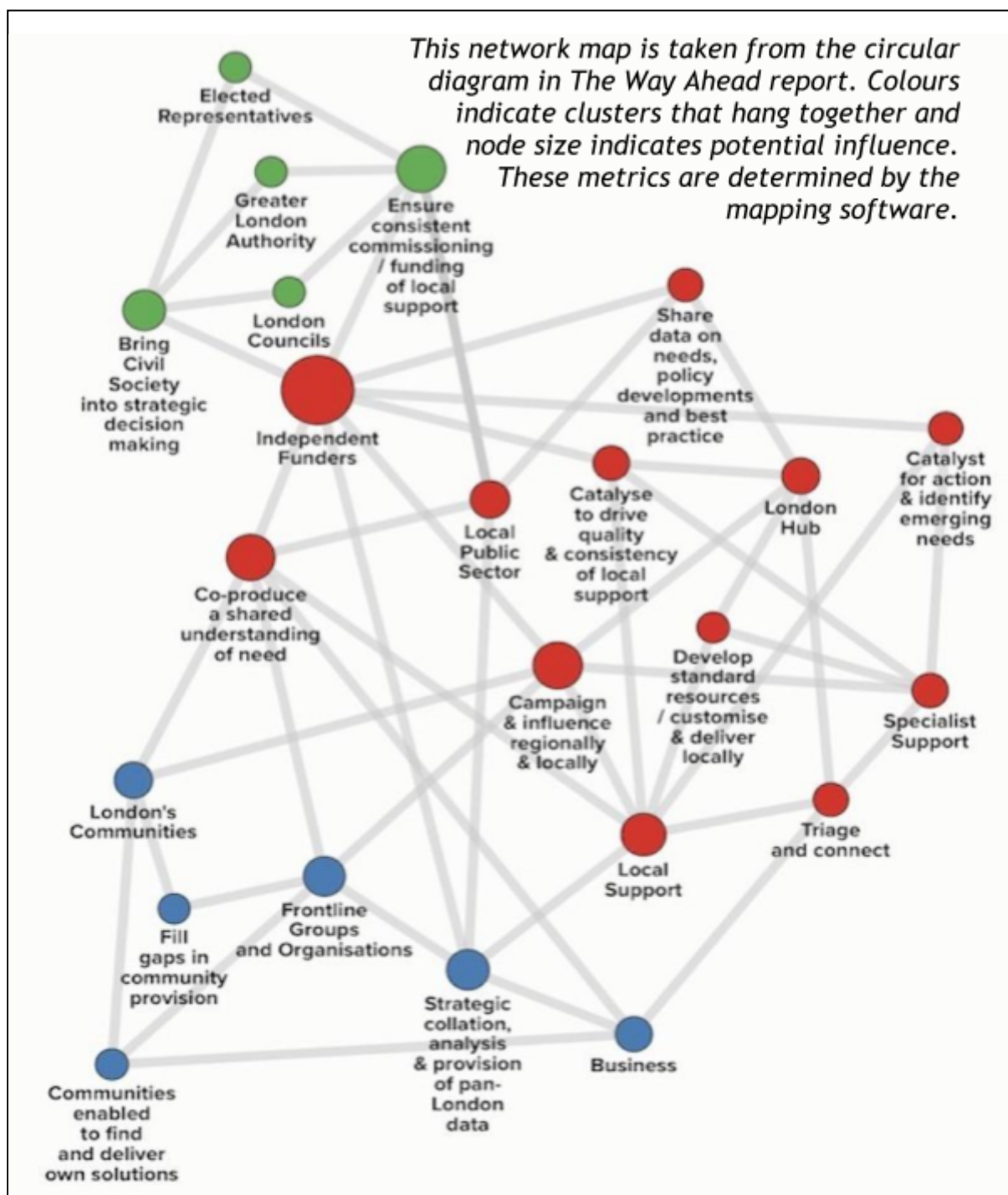
- communities identifying for themselves, with support if needed, what their needs are and what assets they possess
- funders, the public sector and civil society’s understanding of need being based on what communities identify for themselves
- communities being enabled to change their own lives for the better
- communities shaping solutions and responses to opportunities
- communities shaping services delivered by others, whether these be public sector or civil society services
- communities advocating and campaigning on their own behalf, with support if needed



There are specific recommendations in the main report on:

- a “triage and connect” function to diagnose the issues faced by frontline volunteers, groups and organisations and match them to the right support
- communities, civil society support and funders acting as catalysts for action
- Sharing of data gleaned through co-producing a shared understanding of need, and information on policy developments and best practice.
- Campaigning by frontline volunteers, groups and organisations, civil society support and independent funders
- consistent commissioning and funding of civil society support

Working groups are now developing specific proposals around these issues. [Briefs for the groups are here](#). A diagram in The Way ahead - here redrawn as a network - shows recommended action for various stakeholders. [Original diagram here](#).



Reference

Civil society and future London

- [The Future of Doing Good in Britain](#) - Big Lottery Fund
- [Priorities for steering the digital revolution](#) Presentation by David Wood, London Futurists
- [Socialreporter blog posts on Big Society](#)
- [Theresa May unveils plans for “the shared society”](#)

Blog posts about this exploration and The Way Ahead

- [London as a #networkedcity gains support at first event. Now here's the plan](#)
- [Let's talk about #goodforlondon to make sense of civil society and a networked city](#)
- [Exploring #thewayahead for London as a networked and neighbourly city: January 10 event](#)
- [Help us co-design a Living Lab to show the way ahead for London's civil society](#)
- [Why The Way Ahead for London civil society needs better communications and engagement](#)

The Way Ahead

- [The Way Ahead reference](#)
- [Online extracts from The Way Ahead](#)
- [Online version of Pragmatic Co-production](#)
- [Briefs for TWA working groups](#)

Models

- [Building local communities using Maps, Apps and Storytelling](#)
- [The Guide to Effective Participation 1994](#)
- [IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation](#)
- [principles and models for the network era](#) - Harold Jarche
- [TIMN](#) (Tribes-Institutions-Markets-Networks) Theory
- [Connecting Citizens, Building Communities](#)
- [Introduction to Communities of Practice by Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner](#) - and different [levels of participation that people may engage in](#).

Living Lab

- [Living Lab workshop](#) - May event with the Centre for Ageing Better
- [Interests.me](#)

Networked City online - update

- A Slack team - [now here](#)
- An email system - [now here](#)
- A blog - [now here](#) - and wiki