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MISTRA URBAN FUTURES

LONDON
24 APRIL 2018

Crowdsourcing the City

Outcome Report

CATAPULT Future Cities

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES

living space project

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THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

Crowdsourcing the City

In the urban world, emerging tools, platforms, and strategies for harnessing the power of the 'crowd' are introducing new forms of collaboration and new ways of supporting local initiatives for communities and city leaders alike. In practice, crowdfunding and crowdsourcing have existed for centuries. Today, digital tools and the wide reach of online platforms leverage a new scale for gathering and applying the ideas, sentiments, expertise, and finances of local stakeholders in cities.

Not unlike other opportunities and innovations uncovered in this age of digital platforms, 'crowd urbanism' has ushered in a new way of looking at the systems that shape cities - as well as new sets of challenges for all parties involved. At this important juncture in the urbanizing world, these tools respond to increasing demand for enabling participation in urban and community development, placemaking initiatives, and social sustainability projects.

On 24 April 2018, **NewCities** and **Mistra Urban Futures** partnered to explore these opportunities and challenges with an international group of policymakers, municipal leaders, planners and designers, alongside leading actors in crowdfunding and crowdsourcing.The event convened 150 experts across disciplines and sectors for a ground-breaking gathering of knowledge, trends, and insightful perspectives from different experiences of crowd urbanism around the world.

The inaugural *Crowdsourcing the City* event revealed important insights on the potential of crowd urbanism, summarized in the pages that follow. The event pointed to important questions and new areas to explore as we expand our understanding of the power of the 'crowd' in shaping the future of our cities.

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The State of Crowd Urbanism

Crowd Urbanism can be understood through the communities, urban spaces, buildings, and initiatives being shaped by the application of crowdfunding and crowdsourcing tools to urban change and development. Diverse approaches to empowering the crowd have begun to take root, with each experience offering useful insights.

Where civic crowdfunding can identify needs and gather both resident's ideas and the funds needed to get initiatives off the ground, crowdsourcing also involves various forms of engagement, including social labour and network building, among others,which may support community involvement, social impact and sustainability. Importantly, as Jean-Louis Missika, the City of Paris' Deputy Mayor for Urbanism pointed out, engaging the crowd is not just a question of numbers, but of diversity and empowering unheard voices and organizations.

Through city-scale experiences in crowd urbanism - from participatory budgeting to crowdfunded local project ideas, to equity crowdfunding for impact-driven real-estate, it was clear that cities have much to gain from tapping into the expertise, knowledge, and networks of their residents. Civic crowdfunding, for example, was an important thread in the discussion - not to fill gaps in municipal budgets, but to create opportunities for collaboration and allow people to directly support projects that go over and above what they can expect from their tax dollars.

Chris Gourlay, founder of Spacehive, a leading civic crowdfunding platform in the UK, noted the importance of using crowdfunding as a gathering space for support from diverse actors and sources of funding - well-suited to dovetail public and private sector investment behind local initiatives.

As city governments begin to leverage these tools through 'matched crowdfunding' and deploying their own platforms, we must look further ahead to the shape of urban democracy in fast changing cities. Above all, crowd urbanism can help the realization of projects born directly from community needs and ideas that otherwise may not have come through top-down processes.

Since 2014 the City of Paris has invited citizens, companies and organisations to take part in the reinvention of the urban fabric, through annual projects in different sites within the city. In the first year, more than 300 proposals were received; in 2017 about 1,000 proposals emerged from this open call-to-ideas from citizens, local organizations, and designers. "Our experience is that people feel an ownership", Missika explained. "Each year we learn more about how to transform individual ideas into collective projects."

Democratising Local Development

As cities around the world continue to grow, crowd urbanism may offer an effective tool for supplementing debate and consultation on the future of neighbourhood-level change. NextHamburg, by example, is a German crowdsourcing platform for ideas about Hamburg's future, serving both as a source for inspiration and discussion. More than 1,000 ideas have been received and a 'citizens' vision' for the city has been published **online** - able to be a live document, revisited and reworked in the years ahead.

Similar experiences were reported from Madrid (with 400,000 residents registered on its platform) and from Moscow, as well as cities in the Russian Far East, where urban project ideas and support for new policies are sourced for public review, and exchanged for inspiration between cities.

The panel on crowd urbanism and democracy discussed the challenges of perceived 'promises' made throughout crowdsourcing processes. New digital tools for participation make it possible for more voices to be heard – but what voices become the loudest? And within tools leveraging crowdfunding, for example, how does the voice of a $5 pledge have equal say as that of a $5000 donation?

Christopher Cabaldon, Mayor of West Sacramento, California, raised caution to the discussion by pointing out that even though a programme may have progressive ambitions for open policy participation, this does not ensure that the outcome is as progressive – referring to the local referendum on gay marriage.

While panelists held varying views on what weight should be given to the 'wisdom of the crowd', all shared the consensus that by leveraging technology and reaching unengaged residents through crowdsourcing, these tools hold a lot of promise

for shaping community development. A **Nesta study of matched crowdfunding** found significant diversity in age, gender and income of those who pledge to support projects, and also found that people often offer non financial support such as volunteering and campaigning alongside their financial contributions.

Experiences do vary, however, and while digital platforms for engaging the crowd have brought new voices forward, cities must ensure their digital inclusion agenda is robust enough to include disadvantaged communities on or offline.

Crowdsourcing our Built Environment

Crowd urbanism directly feeds greater bottom-up, community-centred planning in a city's built environment. While top-down approaches may suit certain scenarios, tools of crowd urbanism offer a move away from select few experts deciding how places should look and function. Beyond consultation, interactive crowdsourcing and crowdfunding offer an opportunity for those who use public spaces to have a real say and sense of ownership of local outcomes.

Several participants also highlighted the 'back-end' value of crowd platforms, providing yet more data and insight for understanding what communities are being reached, and what ideas they support, as well as developing evidence of what people want and need to genuinely test radical new alternatives, amenities, and developments. As communities see the realization and impact of public projects brought to life by the crowd, this process may also spark wider feedback loops and bring new and meaningful community-input and ideas to councils, planners, and designers in these processes.

David Maddox, Executive Director of The Nature of Cities, pointed to the fact that New York's Central Park - through a private conservancy - is, in effect, 'crowdfunded' by wealthier residents living in the nearby neighbourhoods. Without any broader system of redistribution, however, this has not meant that the funds the City 'saved' on Central Park have been used for other parks in less well served city districts. As these implications and distributions of crowdfunded civic projects become clearer from a big picture view of the built environment, mechanisms of crowd urbanism, or in some cases crowdbuilding, must be well understood and designed to compliment wider masterplan strategies if they are to succeed.

Social Impact of Crowd Urbanism

Beyond the physical and fiscal possibilities of crowd urbanism, several experiences point to the importance of understanding the social impact of these efforts. David Simon, Director of Mistra Urban Futures, highlighted the issues of scale, durability and sustainability as well as fairness and justice – perspectives that need to be discussed in a wider crowdsourcing framework. Does the crowd always choose the path of sustainability and equitable growth?

Robert Bjarnason, co-founder of Citizens Foundation in Reykjavik, advocated the benefit of crowdsourcing policy-making through open source software for participatory processes. "We are looking at ways to bring citizens more influence", explained Bjarnason, noting that in 2017 a platform crowdsourced the priorities and ideas behind Reykjavik's new education policy, encouraging new forms of participation in the process.

Insights from projects undertaken in the Balkans, the UK, countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, and in the United States have found a place-based focus to be one key ingredient for maximising the social impact of crowd urbanism. Enhancing the **'place'-factor** of community spaces with the support of the crowd ensures not only that projects meet a real need, but that the benefits reach a wider group of stakeholders. Engaging the crowd with a focus on creating successful places and amenities "supports local economies, good community, and inclusion", as Katharine Czarnecki observed through the 'crowd granting' model used in Michigan.

In cities lacking necessary infrastructure or services, crowdfunding presents certain important uses, but not without risk. Crowdfunding should never replace funding and structures of services like healthcare and education, but can potentially catalyze investments, offering sophisticated stakeholder convergence around investments that have a strong social yield.

Maria Adebowale-Schwarte of the Living Space Project noted that "one of the reasons why crowdfunding works so well is because it represents an alternative to big state solutions, especially in places with lower trust in government". Liza Cirolia, a researcher with the African Centre for Cities, suggested that crowdfunding in an urban context can help give a boost to social enterprises, embedding itself within

locally-existing initiatives. Done in concert with national and municipal government programs, tools of crowdfunding and crowdsourcing resources could help both initiate or scale community projects.

Adding Value to Local Development

We have seen from existing experiences that engaging communities in the processes of conceptualizing local initiatives can add immense value to their outcomes, and can gather important data and insights that make communities more visible in the process. Incorporating local energy from communities that take matters in their own hands can also bring an added success factor in the delivery and longevity of development projects.

Ethan Kent of PPS, championing the global placemaking movement, suggested that the biggest obstacles to great public spaces are things that crowd urbanism can help solve. "Placemaking builds capacity and challenges communities to become the expert and to help push systemic change".

The session highlighted that by employing crowd tools, value has been added to urban projects in the form of: providing a successful proof-of-concept given the initial support base, the mitigation of risk, an amplified project scope from aggregated supporters and private sector match-funding, in-kind and organizational energy volunteered by community stakeholders, and the future 'product development' value informed by gathered sentiments. At the same time, we must ensure that the value-add is not relied on wholeheartedly by the city - that crowd urbanism tools should never replace the duty of municipalities to make responsible decisions with taxpayers' money.

Expanding the Conversation on Crowd Urbanism

While much of the conversation focused on the European or North American urban contexts, it was clear that there is no one-size-fits all approach and there is an agreed upon need for specificity in ongoing discussions. Given the wide spectrum of regions and countries demonstrating distinct traditions and contexts, digital

approaches to crowd urbanism must first understand and potentially build upon pre-existing systems for supporting and empowering local stakeholders.

Civic crowdfunding and other emerging tools have shown clear overlap with the aims of other strategies for small-scale investment, rotating credit schemes, and other peer-to-peer financing strategies. Other longstanding systems of hybrid taxation and resource distribution, such as the Zakat of the Islamic faith, have already begun to incorporate digital tools, for example, and may stand to enhance the application of crowd urbanism as a community development strategy.

Digital platforms for crowd urbanism also hold potential in challenging contexts, such as those areas rebuilding both institutionally and physically following the devastation of war or other disasters. While the further development of crowd urbanism tools and adaptation to contexts as complex as post-conflict areas require deep consideration, such platforms and funding models offer a new approach to transparency, neutrality, and democracy within international aid and diaspora involvement in redevelopment.

Another point raised was the need for ongoing discussions to distinguish between crowdsourcing and crowdfunding, the potentials and challenges of both, as well as the best practice models for deploying either tool in specific contexts. Crowdsourcing can involve various forms of engagement, including social labour, network building, and the like - creating a habit of community engagement and thus the potential for a greater social impact. Experience to date also demonstrates that some of the most sustainable development activities have involved low financial commitment and high levels of community engagement.

A final point from the session spoke to need for due diligence in considering and deploying crowdfunding tools. As determined throughout the day, crowdfunding is not a sinecure nor a magic bullet and must be properly understood, the costs and benefits (e.g. high transaction costs) weighed and alternatives considered. Cities, especially those in more complex regions must not just simply follow the current trend, due diligence is essential.

As new tools and platforms develop in cities around the world, we look forward to reconvening the community and furthering the discussion to ensure the crowd urbanism has the greatest positive effect on our global urban development strategies.

Program

9-9.10am
Welcome Remarks

John Rossant, Chairman, NewCities
Sebastien Turbot, Executive Director, NewCities
David Simon, Director, Mistra Urban Futures

9.10-9.15am
The View from London

The Greater London Authority will introduce the motivations behind the Mayor's commitment to Crowdfund London as a tool for collaborative regeneration.

Jules Pipe, Deputy Mayor, Planning, Regeneration and Skills, Greater London Authority

9.15-10am
The State of Crowd Urbanism

Growing numbers of civic placemaking and repurposing projects are being launched via crowdsourcing and crowdfunding platforms. While the full potential has yet to be seen, this emerging, innovative process has already begun to transform the way urban change and community development occurs. What approaches to crowd urbanism have been tried? How may this inform regeneration and local development strategies of the future?

Speakers:
   Chris Gourlay, CEO, Spacehive
   Jean-Louis Missika, Deputy Mayor for Urbanism, City of Paris
   Eve Picker, Founder and CEO, Small Change

Moderated by:
   Dan Hill, Head of Arup Digital Studio

10.30-11.40am
Democratising Local Development

Due to the technocratic nature of the planning and building sector, decision-making has traditionally been a limited, top-down process. Crowd urbanism is part of a wider trend of the digitalisation and democratisation of local development processes. Can crowd urbanism tools foster trust in local development and contribute to more accessible decision-making? How can these emerging tools offer more effective debate and consultation on the future of our urban spaces?

Presentations:
   Crowdfunding Community Projects: The Peckham Lido
      Chris Romer-Lee, Director, Studio Octopi

   Unlocking Creative Potentials: Participation to Co-design
      Julian Petrin, Founder, NextHamburg

Speakers:
   Christopher Cabaldon, Mayor, West Sacramento
   Miguel Arana Catania, Director of Citizen Participation, Madrid City Council
   Helen Goulden, CEO, The Young Foundation
   Maksim Isaev, Head of Digital Production, Svobodniy and Moscow, Strelka KB

Moderated by:
   Martin Barry, Chairman, reSITE

11.40-12.45pm
Crowdsourcing Our Built Environment

The promise of crowd urbanism reveals important questions for the traditional design and planning of civic projects, including the evolution of new roles for councils, planners, and designers in participatory processes. How can the diverse citizen and user perspectives enhance shared spaces in cities and deliver better placemaking projects? Could civic crowdfunding be a viable supplement to fill in the gaps of larger scale development plans?

Presentations:
   Civic Crowdfunding at Scale: The Madeira Terrace
      Nick Hibberd, Executive Director, Economy, Environment & Culture, Brighton and Hove City Council

   Putting Residents at the Heart of Building Design
      Benjamin Delaux, President, HABX

Speakers:
   Neil Bennett, Lead Partner, Strategic Infrastructure and Urban Design, Farrells
   David Maddox, Founder and Executive Director, The Nature of Cities
   Cat Priddey, Community Engagement Lead, Hammersmith & Fulham Council
   Nicky Wightman, Director of Global Occupier Trends, Savills

Moderated by:
   Ben Rogers, Director, Centre for London

1.45-1.55pm
Lessons from Crowdfund London: Delivering Community-led Regeneration

James Parkinson, Programme Manager, Regeneration, Greater London Authority

1.55–3pm
Social Impact of Crowd Urbanism

Civic crowdfunding projects demonstrate a wide range of benefits and social impacts in local communities. Beyond physical outcomes, new partnerships are created between citizens, businesses and local government, while sense of place, civic pride, and social cohesion are fostered. What can we learn from communities' experiences so far? How might crowd urbanism help digitise approaches for sensing community needs in order to increase the social impact of projects?

Presentations:

Crowdsourcing Reykjavik – Influencing the Big Picture

Robert Bjarnason, President & Co-Founder, Citizens Foundation

Crowdfunding Place-Based Development Strategies

Marjolein Steffens, Alderwoman, Haarlemmermeer, Netherlands

Speakers:

Maria Adebowale-Schwarte, Director, Living Space Project

Liza Cirolia, Senior Researcher, African Centre for Cities

Katharine Czarnecki, Senior Vice President, Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Marina Petrovic, Innovation Specialist, UNDP Alternative Finance Unit

Moderated by:

David Simon, Director, Mistra Urban Futures

3–4.05pm
Adding Value to Local Projects

Today, development in our cities is informed by a plethora of data, new types of investment, and a return to valuing vibrant, people-centred urban spaces. While smarter networks are extolled as essential providers of the underlying data that shapes cities, citizens themselves are truly invaluable in providing feedback on their experience. How can engaging the crowd contribute to revitalisation, sustainability, and development strategies? What opportunities can come from greater community 'buy-in'?

Presentations:

Citizen-led Innovations in Seoul

Kihyun Kim, Director of International Relations, Seoul Metropolitan Government

Delivering Urban Projects in the Age of Civic Crowdfunding

Aster van Tilburg, Senior Government Advisor, Voor je Buurt

Speakers:

Peter Head, Founder and CEO, Ecological Sequestration Trust

Ethan Kent, Senior Vice President, Project for Public Spaces

Arbian Mazniku, Deputy Mayor, City of Tirana

Caroline Raes, Programme Manager, Africa, 100 Resilient Cities

Moderated by:

Peter Baeck, Head of Collaborative Economy

4.20–4.30pm
Empowering Development Stakeholders: The Future of Planning, Digital Tools and APIs

Euan Mills, Urban Futures Team Lead, Future Cities Catapult

4.30–5.30pm
Breakout Discussion: Looking Towards the Future of Crowdsourced Cities

Crowdfunding for Cities in Emerging Economies: Experiences in civic crowdfunding and digitally-enabled crowdsourcing reveal the advantages in empowering the 'crowd', but also pave the way for altogether new urban development strategies. What could mainstreaming civic crowdfunding mean for governance and the development sector alike? How can crowdfunding and other innovations in finance and technology enhance the impact of local development? And how might crowdfunding ensure effective and inclusive outcomes at scale?

Q&A and Feedback with Crowdfunding Platforms: Participants are invited to use this opportunity to gain in-depth understandings of different models through Q&A and discussion with crowdfunding and crowdsourcing platfoms.

Decide Madrid: Crowdsourcing and participatory budgeting platform - *Spain*

Growfunding: Crowdfunding for social innovation – *Belgium*

La Ruche: Platform for 'proximity-based' participatory financing of local projects - *Canada*

Small Change: Equity crowdfunding for social impact in real estate - *USA*

Spacehive: Partnership models for civic crowdfunding - *UK*