

**Social Innovation Conference,
Remarks to Closing Session
Lisbon May 29th 2008**

1. Researching We Think – open organisations, mass collaboration – Wikipedia, Linux, open source, mass online games, virtual worlds –

New ways to organise ourselves without a traditional organisation.

Platforms and tools for mass collaboration.

Core attracts a mass of contributors who can connect and collaborate, participate and share.

Motto: you are what you share, what you share determines what you can create.

2. Then listening to social entrepreneurs – Bunker Roy Barefoot College in India. Listening to a very similar story – a mass collaboration and participation, self help, peer to peer. Turning people into participants and contributors.
3. Then look at really innovative cities – cities that innovative in all aspects of their lives – health, transport, housing, education – not just in business or culture. Wider sense of social creativity – creative ways of being a city not just cultural creativity. Curitiba, Portland. Very similar story - civic collaboration, platforms of mass participation.
4. So at the core of all three a highly social model of creativity, what propels it, what its about, how it happens.
5. That what been talking about over these two days. Understanding what it is. Four main ingredients.
6. First, there has to be a promise or animating purpose. Comes from crisis, or values. Propels people to take risks, do things differently. Same old approaches will not do.

Establishing the need for a different approach: changing minds, campaigning, research. Very difficult often, requires political conflict and challenge.

Web vital because it allows new kinds of social campaigning, mobilisation.

7. Second, there has to be the right kind of capacity, to act in response to the purpose/need and to learn in the process.

Capacity in many different forms.

Put in place a core, to which others can contribute, on which they can build: unfinished, open to adaptation.

Generate ideas – from cross pollination, combination, public and private.

To mobilise resources – money (new forms of finance), people and skills, support.

To elicit a mass of contributions, tools for people to enact what they are doing in everyday life: soap, SMS. Co-creation.

Difficult because:

Capacity and resources often trapped in old systems or not available.

Unlearning very difficult, not just resources that are trapped but minds as well.

Not just tackling vested interests but vested cultures, outlooks, traditions, occupations.

Especially true of government: hierarchical, bureaucratic, formal and yet no one takes responsibility and action; chaotic yet stagnant. Deeply ingrained conservative tendencies in the state.

8. Third, have to embed and diffuse.

Innovation is stillborn if it does not become incorporated into people's lives. They can take it up.

The Simputer as an example of a great idea that did not embed.

Costs of newness for people.

Software of cultural change is as important, more important, than hard ware. Behaviour or infrastructure.

Biggest challenge – diffusion at scale.

Incentives matter: does it really make sense to people.

Peer to peer emulation and role models.

Viral distributed models not top down, instruction.

Is it attractive: private sector better at building markets and brands. Good at reaching mass markets.

Government chaotic but stagnant. Private sector, dynamic but soulless. Treat people like transactions, wallets to be emptied, when often what they want is relationships, support.

Social innovation is something do with people, they do themselves, rather than doing it for or to people. Co-creation : they enact it.

9. Fourth, it has to change society and to do that it has to change relationships and the way they channel power, knowledge, resources. Trite but true.

Historically big social movements and innovations have done this: campaigns for rights of workers, women, disability.

Most social innovation changes relationships.

Professional to amateur/user.

Peer to peer – new forms of organisation.

Politician to citizen – OW and Second Life

Rich and poor, powerful and not.

Geoff's opening challenges health, education, care, crime and prison, ageing. Changing relationships are key to all – teachers to pupils, pupils to pupils; doctors and patients, patients and one another; people and care. Open up new possibilities for relationships that are kept latent or suppressed.

Relationships also central to innovation of course, especially social innovation: change relationships tends to open up new perspectives, new sources of ideas and knowledge – eg disability and personal budgets.

And relationships are central to Geoff's idea that we need to invest in social growth, quality of life. Vital component to that – sense of well being – comes from quality of relationships. Relationships and participation, activity, self realisation through relationships, make us really happy, shopping – which not against – offers more transitory pleasures.

Think about the relationships economy – private and public, social and commercial vital. Relationships that sustain us, generate ideas, provide us with sense of recognition for who we are, provide access to resources and power.

10. We think therefore...

We make, learn, act, invest, campaign, act, govern.