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CASE STUDIES

CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT & DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION
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CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT & DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION CASE STUDIES

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The Citizen Engagement & Democratic Innovation programme has a diverse range of case studies to paint you a picture of what your project could look like. So read through and get some inspiration.

Find out more about pricing and how you can use SenseMaker® for your project in our Citizen Engagement & Democratic Innovation white paper.

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SERVICE EVALUATION
MALMÖ LIBRARIES

KEY THEMES

Service evaluation, citizen journalism, youth engagement

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

In order to improve their services, Malmö Municipality's libraries team wanted to explore what libraries mean to the residents of Malmö. They asked residents to describe an experience that represents how the library has made a difference in their lives.

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

In June 2020, the Malmö Municipality libraries team started to design a SenseMaker® framework. They wanted to include the perspective of young people so held a worldshop with around 30 to 40 people aged 13 to 19 to identify what key themes matter to them regarding libraries. Themes included whether their local library is welcoming, a place you can relax, be yourself, and whether you go there alone or with friends, etc. After their input was incorporated, the SenseMaker® launched in August 2020 and ended February 2021. Exceeding their goal, 197 stories were collected.
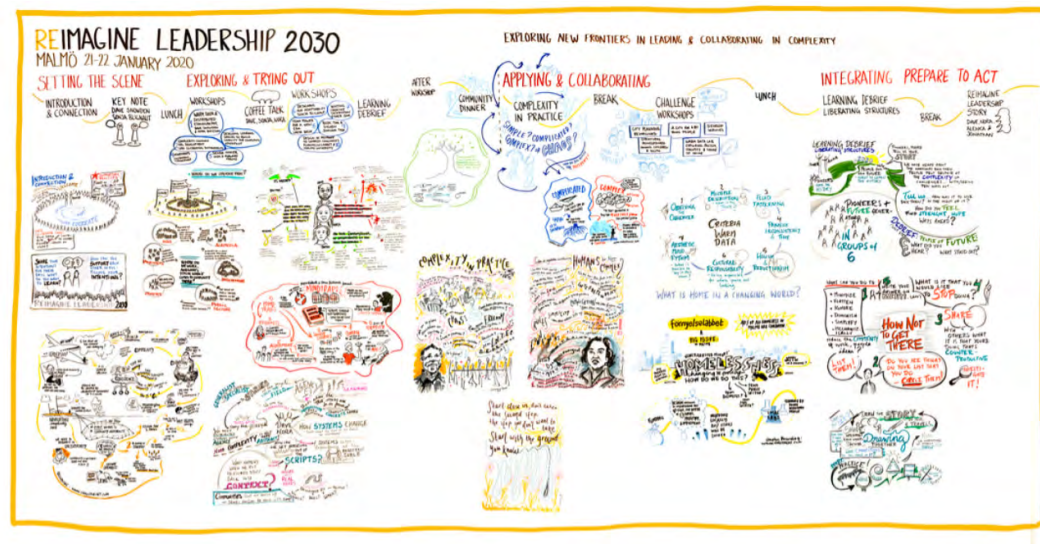
The Malmö Libraries SenseMaker® framework was disseminated in a variety of ways, including 5 reading ambassadors (young people involved in their local libraries) asking in the library about their experiences and filling in the SenseMaker® for them on a tablet. They also called their friends and filled it in for them over the phone. A key benefit of the citizen journalist approach is that it served as a way to collect stories from people they probably wouldn't have reached otherwise.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

The data is still being analysed, however, some initial findings suggest that libraries serve a variety of functions, some serve as community centres, while others are solitary places people go for quiet. Childhood visits appear to play a big role in people's attachment to the library.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT?

"This project has allowed us to hear the stories and understand the experiences behind the statistics. It's been eye-opening to see these stories form patterns that are both familiar and new to us. It has deepened our understanding of the role that the library plays in people's lives - people who together make up a small part of Malmö as a city. Their experiences can become our rationale for doing something different or better." - Ina Andersson

[1] Image Credit: CITY OF MALMÖ - Voluntary Local Review - Case Study

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PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

MY MALMÖ

KEY THEMES

Horizon scanning, youth engagement, citizen journalism, priority setting, future planning

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

As part of the My Malmö neighbourhood project, citizens were asked 'What do you see as the biggest challenge or opportunity facing Malmö in the future? Please tell us about an experience that has influenced your thoughts?' Other questions included what matters to you in living here and how can the experience of living here be improved.

This project was designed to bring to light the everyday yet important conversations and experiences that happen in the city, to help better understand and address the biggest issues and opportunities facing the future of Malmö. The goal was to start meaningful conversations, create useful material that can be used to encourage people to explore and understand key issues in their city, and to create new ways of addressing these issues together.

[1] Image Credit: SenseMaker Brochure

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

My Malmö was administered by collaborating with a youth organisation who worked with the Cynefin Centre to design a SenseMaker® framework, and to train and coordinate 40 young people on work placement to collect SenseMaker® stories from across the city.

Designing the SenseMaker® framework with 40 young people from Tjejer I Förening took place during a 2 day workshop. The youth also prepared to be citizen journalists and refined their interviewing skills.

In its first year, the biggest challenges and opportunities facing the future of the city were explored. Citizens explored social, economic and environmental issues, as well as equality and inclusion. In its second year, the questions were further developed. The citizens of Malmö clearly wanted to share their stories because over 5,000 stories were collected within the first 2 months.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

My Malmö revealed five key themes: collaboration, involvement, segregation, insecurity and unfairness. So far it has triggered a dialogue in the city about which data we use to 'plan' the city. The dominant perspective in Malmö, as in Sweden, when it comes to city planning, is still characterized by 'social engineering'. A view that has made Sweden world leading when it comes to gathering statistics. However, they plan our city for the people, not so much in collaboration with the people.

But by using SenseMaker®, the Malmö municipality explored an alternative way of understanding the citizens it serves, from 'the natives point of view' so to speak. Now they will consider taking the next step to further integrate this methodology into their day to day work. The citizens' stories were also used by the local planning department of the municipal government to inform their long term plan for the city.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT?

My Malmö has demonstrated SenseMaker®'s ability to engage local citizens and residents with horizon scanning, and innovative and more inclusive methods of engaging citizens in policy and planning.

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THE PEOPLE'S PLATFORM BY THE FUTURE GENERATIONS COMMISSIONER FOR WALES

KEY THEMES

Civic engagement, horizon scanning, future planning (immediate and long term), priority setting, developing resilience

¹ Image Credit: The Future Generations Report 2020

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

In order to better understand and tackle these questions, the Future Generations Commissioner of Wales asked citizens "What's the biggest challenge facing the immediate future of Wales and the biggest challenge facing the longer term future (25 years +)?" This helped set priorities for the Future Generations Commissioner of Wales' term in office. Six key priority areas emerged: Transport, Skills for the Future, Social Prescribing, Housing Stock, Planning, Adverse Childhood Experiences.

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

The People's Platform (powered by SenseMaker®) was used for horizon scanning, planning and citizen involvement in priority setting, and to crowdsource potential actions and interventions, as well as acting as a barometer on perceived responsibility of different actors such as businesses, communities, governments and public services. A series of workshops have been held with organisations across Wales to co-produce the approach.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

Insights and recommendations from the People's Platform have been integrated into the Future Generations Report. This extensive report details input from citizens on the six priority areas. It sets out a vision and set of recommendations of what Welsh people would like to see in each area, and adds practical and real life insights.

Organisations and public bodies can access the data set and filter the stories by location, theme and well-being goal which enables them to better understand the communities they serve. The narratives collected via SenseMaker® were used to collect and curate a national bank of ideas and lived experiences.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT?

This project demonstrates SenseMaker® could be used as a template to engage citizens in priority setting and for engaging citizens in policy evaluation, and to collect stories of lived experience which could be a valuable resource to public bodies and future generations. This case study also demonstrates the capacity for SenseMaker® to be used to prompt citizens to imagine a better future for generations to come, and to crowd source particle steps to take in order to get there.

Find out more
Future Generations Report
Future Generations Website
A Journey to Involvement

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
VALLEY STORIES

KEY THEMES

Citizen Engagement, Community Development, area planning, community led, priority setting, citizen journalism,

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

Valley Stories asks 'If there was a new family moving to your area, what would you tell them about where you live?" More specifically, the key questions were what's going well, what's not going so well, what matters most and what to do about it.
The project aims to encourage people to explore and understand key issues in their community, and to create new ways of addressing these issues together.

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

The Taskforce for the Valleys is an initiative set up by the Welsh Government to support community-led transformation in the Valleys. To participate, people could get involved as an individual or a community group like a school, or sports centre. With SenseMaker®, people recorded their day-to-day experiences of learning and working within their community, including their needs and hopes. These insights informed local and strategic planning, and resource allocation.

Citizens could also become a 'citizen journalist' and interview others in their local area about what it's like to take part in sports and activities, or about what living in a community means today. Young people used this opportunity to gather stories from friends, neighbours and community leaders, and engage them in making positive changes where they live.

Valley Stories focused on community development, by holding an intergenerational workshop called 'Our Community Matters'. The event was attended by over 35 locals who discussed what matters to people in Ferndale and surrounding areas, and how local people, services and the Valleys Task Force plan could best address these issues. In this workshop, participants read stories collected via SenseMaker® and were encouraged to contribute their own. Then they split the stories into two categories: 'we want to see more like this' and 'we want less like that'. Using the stories in this way ensured that even those who didn't attend had their voices heard, and provided a local evidence base for identifying assets, ideas and issues.

After splitting the stories into categories, groups picked out the main issues and strengths coming out from the stories. Based upon the stories and their own experiences of living and working in the community, people came up with solutions to create more positive experiences and less negative ones, taking into consideration the five ways of working (prevention, collaboration, long-term, integration and involvement).

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

Data from both SenseMaker® and the workshop revealed many key insights about what it means to live in the Valleys, including what they see as the key challenges and what they need to solve them. Seven key themes were identified: community spirit; community activities; transport; health safety and crime; education, employment and housing; landscape; and communication and councils.

The data from the Valley Stories project was reported in local workshops and conferences. The data was also used by many local groups and charities and funders to inform applications and funding distribution.

By engaging and empowering citizens, and listening to their stories, we can discover what is going well and what can be improved in different communities and link these insights to legislative policy and ensure resources are allocated where they are needed most.

What is the potential for future use and development?
This project demonstrates Asset Based Community Development and the power of citizens to work with public services in order to better understand their community. A unique aspect of this project was the intergenerational workshop.

Find out more
Valley Stories report
Valley Stories website
Ferndale Our Community Matters (intergenerational workshop)

[1] Image Credit: Valley Stories Website - Stories from the Valleys

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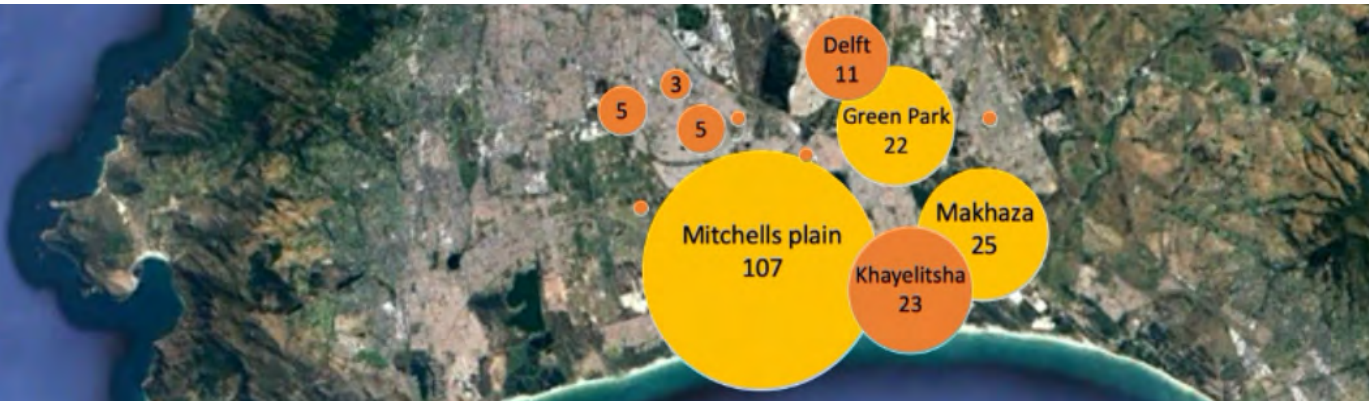
COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING IN CAPE TOWN

KEY THEMES

Grassroots, knowledge co-creation, capacity building, climate adaptation, activism, citizen science, collective analysis and sensemaking, learning as empowerment

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

Using SenseMaker®, academic researchers collaborated with a community organization to capture lived experiences of water-related issues of people living in informal settlements and townships in Cape Town. In order to create a picture of the social perspectives and opinions of water users in these communities, they focussed on three key issues: billing, water management devices, and sanitation issues related to broken/blocked sewage pipes.

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

In order to build a case and lobby city officials for better water governance in informal settlements and townships in Cape Town, a community based organisation collaborated with academics to capture lived experience of water management issues.

Members of the community based organisation acted as citizen scientists. Together academics and citizen scientists co-designed the SenseMaker® framework in a four-day workshop. The guiding research problem was set by the citizen scientists, who also collected data by conducting field research in their communities.

¹ Image Credit: ACDI Website

In a second workshop, citizen scientists presented the stories they had collected through short role plays to highlight the main issues, in addition to visualisations of quantitative data. They worked together with the academics to analyse and make sense of the data and identify patterns from the stories. On the final day of this workshop, the citizen scientists presented the findings to the representatives from the local authority's water department. The citizen scientists also organised 'story return' sessions in the neighbourhoods in which the stories had been collected. In addition to sharing the quantitative data, they acted out the stories to bring them to life in a way that is easily understood by citizens of all education levels.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

Members of the community based organisation were previously ignored by city officials. However, gaining the status of citizen scientists gave them more legitimacy, developed their advocacy skills and brought them into city-wide policy and planning activities.

The skills learned and the relationships built will contribute to the success of the community based organisation's ongoing campaigning for better water governance in Cape Town.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT?

SenseMaker® enabled the co-production of knowledge and supported community empowerment. This type of inclusive multi-level governance is critical to the success of building capacity for adaptation responses.

Engaging the local community can help them to feel a sense of ownership of longer-term interventions. Knowledge co-creation within the local community is key to building capacity to adapt to the challenges of climate change. Co-producing knowledge empowers communities to voice their perspectives with greater confidence and legitimacy.

This project highlights the importance of shifting from top-down transferral of knowledge to co-creating knowledge within a specific context and engaging communities who ultimately have the most in-depth knowledge about their own context.

Find out more
Project Website
Workshops & project report
Academic paper

POLICY & LEGISLATION EVALUATION

MEASURING THE MOUNTAIN

KEY THEMES

Social care, Wales, policy evaluation, citizens jury, deliberation, grassroots

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

Measuring the Mountain was launched in order to understand more about Welsh citizens' experience of social care and to evaluate the impact of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. Participants were asked 'What are the experiences of Welsh citizens in relation to social care?'

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

The project took a 2 phase approach. In phase 1, SenseMaker® was used to collect a breadth of experiences from people receiving care or carers. The key themes identified in SenseMaker® were used to inform the topics for deliberation in the Citizens' Jury, which was part of phase 2.

SenseMaker® was used as a sortition tool to randomly select the citizens' jury members. Of those who completed the SenseMaker®, 14 people who represent the population of Wales on key demographic characteristics were chosen by lot to be part of the citizens' jury.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

Both the SenseMaker® phase of the project and the Citizens' Jury indicate several areas that require further research either through gathering more stories and continuing with public involvement approaches, or through exploring the perspective of social care providers and staff. There were: people and wellbeing; co-production/working together; time-wasting; prevention, information and carers; and percetpions of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. These are outlined in the Measuring the Mountain Final Report.

The report also outlines a series of next steps for both individuals who need care and support and carers, and those that relate to other parts of social care. Measuring the Mountain produced a list of 17 specific recommendations that social care staff can implement, for example, 'Where someone requires a range of support that is inter-related, work with that person to identify ways this support could usefully be streamlined.'

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT?

This case study demonstrates the capacity/ability for SenseMaker® to help decision makers reach out to citizens and gather their input in order to evaluate policies. It demonstrates a way to scale user / citizen engagement without the burden of analysing qualitative data.

SenseMaker® could be used to evaluate programmes or new policy changes and track the impact that these changes have on service users, professionals and services.

Find out more
Measuring the Mountain reports

CITIZENS TAKE OVER EUROPE

KEY THEMES

Democracy, democratic innovation, governance evaluation

¹ Image Credit: CITIZENS TAKE OVER EUROPE Website

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

On the 9th May 2021, the European Union will launch its Conference on the Future of Europe. Its aim is to draft solutions and proposals for the major challenges the EU faces by directly involving citizens.

In order to advocate for a citizen centred approach to fundamentally rethinking how European democracy works, Citizens Take Over Europe asked people from all over Europe 'what does European citizenship mean to you, if anything at all?'

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

Citizens Take Over Europe have used SenseMaker® for their internal organisation. They are a consortium of civil society organisations, citizens and residents from across Europe, with the aim of promoting a forward-looking and citizens-centered European democracy.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

This project is ongoing, so nothing to report just yet.

Find out more
Citizens Take Over Europe
Citizens Take Over Europe's SenseMaker® Collector

LiFT Leadership for Transition

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EXTINCTION REBELLION UK: SYSTEMS REALIGNMENT PROJECT

KEY THEMES

Organisational development, organisational culture, activism, aligning systems with values, community-led, horizontal organising, self-organising

This project focused on organisational development in the context of a social movement organisation, Extinction Rebellion UK (XRUK). XRUK uses horizontal organising methods partly inspired by holacracy, and it is the first social movement organisation to do so.

XRUK was founded at the end of 2018 and grew so quickly that its core organisational systems struggled to keep up. It was a challenge to maintain a healthy working culture, onboard new rebels, and communicate between teams, in addition to safeguarding issues. Burnout and conflict have proved serious problems for XRUK, especially when compounded by the sense of urgency given the subject matter of working to mitigate the climate and ecological emergency.

As part of a wider project team, The Cynefin Centre wanted to help XRUK give people in the movement a platform to directly share their experiences. There are diverse voices of thousands of people in the movement, and the team wanted to include as many of them as possible. The team wanted to help XRUK to both understand their own vision and purpose from a diversity of viewpoints, whilst also securing more followers to drive their organisational resilience and strength.

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

XRUK's systems were out of sync with their principles and values. They wanted to act more in line with the principles and values they professed. In order to analyse XRUK's systems, and so the used Miki Kashtan's organisational systems framework which includes decision making, resource flow, information flow, feedback loops, conflict engagement, and the team added encompassing vision, mission and purpose. Although many organisations talk about their values, this project was about helping actions to reflect them.

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

First, the system was mapped using interviews and existing documents to understand the context in which the team were working and the tensions within the movement. All of this information helped us design the SenseMaker® collector. The team also realised it's very important that we communicate clearly who we are, our aims and how people can be involved with the project.

Using SenseMaker, the team designed a collector that asked people to share a moment that characterises their experience of being part of XRUK. "Imagine you are talking to someone about your involvement with XRUK. Which particular moment would you share with them that characterises what it is like to be a part of the UK movement? Take a minute to remember that experience, then describe what happened below. It can be big or small, everyday or unique. You can share something positive, negative, neutral or a combination."

The SenseMaker collector was shared as widely as possible via the newsletter, organising platforms (e.g. Mattermost) and group chats. This allowed us to hear from a wide range of rebels from across the movement, and hear about what matters to them.

WORKSHOPS

The team held five exciting movement-wide workshops to digest the SenseMaker findings together, collect more perspectives and brainstorm ideas. These workshops were open to anyone in the movement and provided them with a time and space to analyse and discuss the narratives from interviews and rebel stories, along with demographic data, the emotional tone and other key triad signifiers.

The data from the SenseMaker was categorised into themes that would make sense for rebels: power and privilege, decision making, regeneration and wellbeing, information and resource flow, and collaboration.

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[1] Image Credit: The Alternative UK Website

Participants were asked "What does this pattern tell you? What confirms what you were already thinking? What surprises you? Are there any contradictions? Is anything missing? And "How can we create more of the positive stories and less of the negative stories?"

Within the theme of collaboration for example, participants were shown relevant stories and asked 'What makes it difficult for teams to cope with these challenges together?' Participants were also presented with perspectives from different teams that play different roles within the organisation. This helped participants broaden their perspective on some key challenges. Participants were encouraged to explore how their ideas could be scaled and embedded systemically, to discuss how their ideas could work together, and "what would enable us to do this together, as a collective? Rather than each individual changing, what systems/ structures/ supports would make it easier for everyone to behave in this way?" Then they categorised their ideas into short, medium and long term.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

A report presented emergent patterns coming from rebels' stories, with more emphasis on local group rebels. You can read the report here: SenseMaker® Report (see pages 9 & 10 for Key Messages). It provided complementary insights to those coming out of interviews and direct engagement. Next, the project brought different circles and rebels together to collaborate over shared change projects. There are four key change projects which emerged from the workshops:

- Purpose Alignment & Creating Structural Clarity: This project is clarifying the roles and purpose of the central teams, the regional and national teams, and the local groups. The centre needs to simplify itself in order to free-up energy and allow focus on movement building.
- Supporting Local Groups: Roles have been created to support local group development. This role is open to those who are active at local group level. They learn from successful local groups, facilitate the flow of learnings and best practises and offer inspirational coaching for struggling local groups. There are more resources and training for regional leaders in order to support local groups to thrive.
- Building a Network: In person meetings (covid restrictions permitting) now take place on a regular basis (e.g., every month) in order to bring the movement together. They function like a central forum like a town hall meeting; an informal space for rebels to get to know each other from across the movement thereby building a more resilient and connected network.
- Leadership & Collaboration: Different teams related to organisational functioning (i.e., the governance system, conflict, regenerative cultures and co-liberation teams) joined forces to combine their trainings and materials. They are also actively cultivating co-liberatory spaces in order to make spaces inclusive and attractive to a diversity of rebels.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT?

This work is especially relevant to social movements, and social change organisations. However, it will also be useful to anyone trying to organise in a decentralised way or/and for organisations trying to align their core systems with their principles and values, and anyone who wants to explore a variety of different HR functionalities.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOMEONE WHO IS LOOKING TO RUN A SIMILAR PROJECT BASED ON COMMUNITY ORGANISING FOR EXAMPLE?

The team put a lot of work in up front to try to understand the system the best we could. This might not be as necessary for smaller organisations. Given XRUK's structure, trying to make one survey that made sense to everyone was difficult, but it was definitely worth it so everyone could participate and to gather a plethora of perspectives.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO DIFFERENTLY IN A COMMUNITY ORGANISING CONTEXT?

Given that a large part of XRUK is its local groups and that's who we wanted to engage, much of the project would still be the same. If it's an organisation in which people do not have clear, well defined roles, the initial design process might have to be more inclusive, even doing a workshop to get feedback on the design of the SenseMaker® before it's sent out.

WHAT WAS THE VALUE OF SENSEMAKER® AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF CYNEFIN, AS OPPOSED TO MORE TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO THIS TYPE OF WORK?

The key aspect is that people were allowed to tell their story, which can prompt different memories and different ways of thinking than simply asking "What do you think about XRUK?" SenseMaker® allowed a very diverse range of people from all across the movement, all across the country to come together, and to contribute to a rich, qualitative and quantitative data set.

In the workshops, they had the time to think and discuss with each other and form their thinking around these different systems/themes - most importantly based on the data. So they could draw on the collective wisdom of the movement when generating ideas rather than just their own personal experiences. This is quite an advancement given that social movements have not had this capacity to draw on collective wisdom so easily.

Find out more
Article in The Alternative
FAQs

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![Cynefin Centre - Making Sense of Complexity]

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN A CRISIS

LIVE LEARNING WELSH STORYBOOK

KEY THEMES

COVID-19, pandemic, live learning, Wales, social learning, legacy, crisis, recovery, journaling

WHAT'S THE BIG QUESTION?

What are the experiences of the people of Wales throughout the COVID-19 pandemic? This live learning storybook captures the voice of Welsh people through the onset and easing on several lockdowns. At the start of the pandemic, 10 organisations formed the Live Learning Partnership at the start of the pandemic co-led by The Institute of Welsh Affairs and the Wales Co-operative Centre. This

¹ Image Credit: Live Learning Welsh Storybook

deliberately cross-sector, collaborative project includes organisations spanning academia, business, policy and the third sector.

The idea of live learning emerged from the need to gather information and give people a chance to express their needs as the pandemic unfolded in order to aid the recovery effort. Hence, the recovery effort was combined with learning and journaling.

WHAT DID WE DO AND WHY?

We designed a continuous SenseMaker collector in order to capture stories from all across Wales about people's experiences about the pandemic. People could share as many stories as they liked and could share them in Welsh or English. Stories were collected from July 2020 to June 2021.

This project followed the guidance in our EU Field Guide: Managing complexity (and chaos) in times of crisis. A field guide for decision makers inspired by the Cynefin framework. We mapped the current state of the system by asking people with direct experience of the issue to share their stories.

WHAT DID THIS ACHIEVE?

We created the Live Learning Welsh Storybook. The book covers themes such as adjusting to working from home, schooling children at home, loneliness and the impact on mental health. Webinars were hosted in order to launch the programme and to share the findings and analysis.

This project was uniquely placed to capture history as it unfolded. The featured stories give an in-depth insight into the lives of people across Wales at this pivotal time.

WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE USE AND DEVELOPMENT?

This project serves as an example of how we can share and capture stories about an event as it is happening. This book will be used by the 10 organisations, and beyond, to influence their thinking and to help them understand people's needs in times of crisis.

Find out more
Live Learning Welsh Storybook
Live Learning Partnership
Project Information Sheet

CITIZENS ENGAGEMENT & DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION

CASE STUDIES

OTHER LINKS & CAPABILITIES

- [Citizens Enagement & Democratic Innovation Whitepaper](#)

- [Citizen Sensor Network Paper](#)

- [Vector Theory of Change Paper](#)

- [Live Learning Welsh Storybook](#)

- [Cynefin Company Citizen Engagement and Democratic Innovation Programme](#)

- [Download Managing Complexity (and Chaos) in Times of Crisis - A Field Guide for Decision Makers inspired by the Cynefin Framework](#)