SICSA FutureCities #3
Workshop Report:

The third workshop was held in Dundee and focused on the potential of bottom-up citizen led initiatives to support 'Future City' challenges, such as democracy, engagement, accessibility and with relevance to developments such as citizen science. There were 24 participants registered and attended the event, ranging from Professorial to PhD students, the majority being from SICSA at the Universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Strathclyde and Aberdeen. Disciplines of HCI, Computer Science, Psychology and Design were represented as well as external agencies such as NESTA, NESTA code fellows and SME's.

Context:

Cities become smarter as information is made available to systems in real-time, utilising data about events from the city's inhabitants, existing IT systems and readings from the physical environment.

This growing interest in city platforms and civic infrastructure from a bottom-up and citizen-led perspective is driven in part as a response to austerity, but also by individuals who acknowledge the value from new information. There is also a recognition that societal challenges may turn into opportunities for more sustainable economic and social wellbeing, democracy and growth.

However, understanding and achieving bottom up development is contingent on our ability to recognise and support the drivers and technologies that enable citizen-led initiatives. There are fundamental challenges such as opening up 'black box' solutions that currently lock out citizens and limit scope for innovation by small and medium enterprises. The Future Cities vision is tantalising, there are challenges, which may be best tackled from the bottom up in order to have the greatest impact on people.

Speakers and presentations:

Introduction Mel Woods and Dr Drew Hemment.

Session 1 'Engagement'

Dr Nick Taylor (Research Fellow, Dundee) ***'Public Artefacts for Engaging Citizens'***
Chris Martin (@sspog) ***'Digital making as a platform for education, empowerment and motivation'***

Session 2 'Data'

Tomas Diez (Barcelona FabLab, Smart Citizen Platform) ***'Smart Citizen Toolkit'***
Dr Sarah Gallacher (ICRI-Cities UCL) ***'Community Data Collection and Visualisation'***

Session 3 'Experience'

Dr Nick Hine (Computer Science, Dundee) ***'Personal Online Space in Smart Cities'***

Attendees proposed questions after sessions 1 and 2; they then went on to shape significant challenges in groups, which were presented back to the room. The overarching discussion revolved around citizen participation and 'success' of the FutureCities concept and the challenges that might stand in the way of that vision becoming reality.

The group defined challenges relevant to bottom up and top down developments listed below:

Session 1: Citizen Engagement Challenges

1) 'Lowering barriers and citizen engagement'
2) 'Findability and actionability'
3) 'Interfacing top down and bottom up'
4) 'Security, fraud and bad data'

Session 2: Data Challenges

1) 'Calibration, trust and data'
2) 'Data, ethics and reflecting back'
3) 'Scaling up'

It is clear that we require an interdisciplinary approach particularly with respect to bottom up initiatives, and that Art, Design, HCI, Mathematics and Computer Science, working hand in hand with cities, local and national gov, communities, business and third sector organization's are ideally placed to further scope and approach these questions.

The group discussed next steps for SICSA support and suggested a follow on workshop to further scope work in interdisciplinary teams for key questions identified from the themes above, and to develop these toward funding proposals, particularly H2020.

M. Woods August 2014