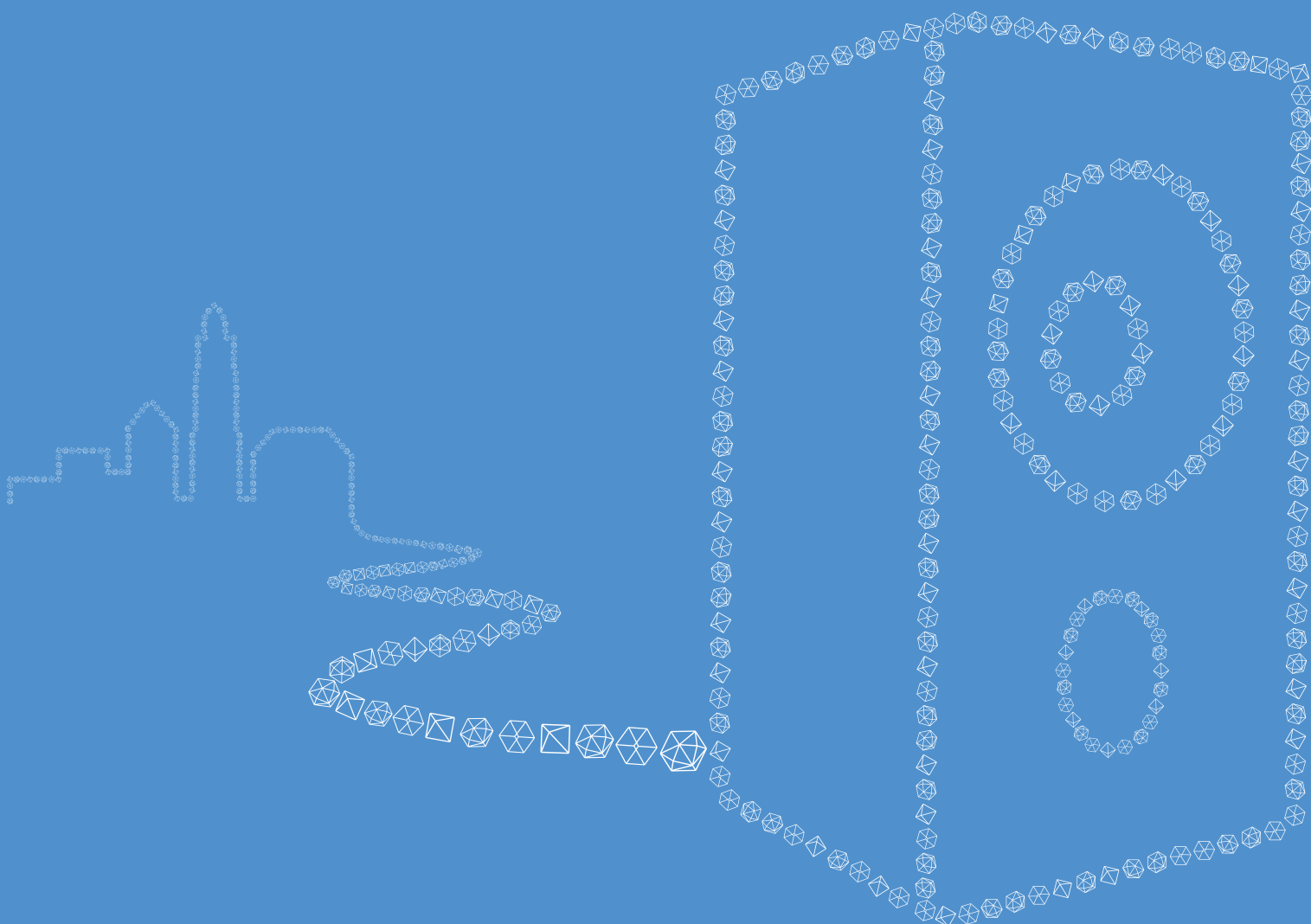


Amplified Leicester

Impact on social capital and cohesion

Thilo Boeck and Sue Thomas, De Montfort University



Executive summary

“A great experience to realise that so many can get together through varying mediums to influence and change things. Amazing. Certainly changed my life.”

Ian Davies, Amplified Participant

This report has been compiled for NESTA as part of the Amplified Leicester programme.

Amplified Leicester is a city-wide experiment designed to grow the innovation capacity of Leicester across the city's disparate and diverse communities, and to share new skills which are fast becoming essential in 21st century workplaces and communities. The project was inspired by the potential of this unusual city to nurture a unique creative environment, and it was enhanced by the extensive use of social media for communication and collaboration.

The Amplified Leicester project is an exemplar of the ways in which transdisciplinary academic research can impact on the wider community. It grew from the triangulation of three areas of research: difference, amplification, and transliteracy, and had the benefit of a dedicated social researcher who tracked and analysed the outcomes.

Contents

1.	Introduction	4
1.1	Conceptual background	4
1.2	The project	4
1.3	Key social research findings	5
1.4	The model	7
2.	Conceptual background	9
2.1	Leicester	9
2.2	Difference	9
2.3	The amplified individual	10
2.4	Transliteracy	12
3	Programme	13
3.1	Sessions	14
4.	Social research	16
4.1	Social capital	16
5.	Findings	18
5.1	Social capital and group processes	18
5.2	Cohesion and Amplification	24
6.	The Model	30
7.	The Future	32
<hr/>		
Appendix A:	Participants	34
Appendix B:	About Us	37
Acknowledgements		41

NESTA is the UK's foremost independent expert on how innovation can solve some of the country's major economic and social challenges. Its work is enabled by an endowment, funded by the National Lottery, and it operates at no cost to the government or taxpayer.

NESTA is a world leader in its field and carries out its work through a blend of experimental programmes, analytical research and investment in early-stage companies. www.nesta.org.uk

1. Introduction

1.1 Conceptual background

Amplified Leicester comes from a triangulation of three areas of research: **difference**, **amplification**, and **transliteracy**, and was inspired by the potential of Leicester to nurture a unique creative environment. It used social media as its primary medium for communication and collaboration.

In *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies*, Scott E. Page argues that diverse groups yield superior outcomes compared to homogenous groups. Page's research demonstrated that groups displaying a range of perspectives and skill levels outperform like-minded experts. He points out that: *"Progress depends as much on our collective differences as it does on our individual IQ scores."*

Our understanding of the Amplified Individual is based on research conducted by the Institute for the Future, Palo Alto, California, which suggests that amplified individuals share four important characteristics: they are highly social; highly collective; highly improvisational; and highly augmented. The result is an amplified skill set of ten characteristics, outlined in this report.

The concept of transliteracy was developed by Professor Sue Thomas and the Transliteracy Research Group at the IOCT, De Montfort University. It is an open source concept currently defined as "the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks". Transliteracy research indicates a change of perspective away from battles over print versus digital and a move instead towards a unifying ecology not just of media, but of all literacies relevant to reading, writing, interaction and culture, both past and present.

1.2 The project

Amplified Leicester was established in 2009 with funding from The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). This report focuses on the first year of the project from May 2009-April 2010 and examines its impact from a social research perspective.

The project offered a small group of participants from across the city the chance to:

- Explore diversity and innovation.
- Build a network across diverse communities.
- Create, share and develop new ideas.
- Use social media like Facebook and Twitter as an amplifier.

The objectives of the funding were to:

- Develop a transferable model for amplifying a diverse city's grassroots innovation capacity through connecting diverse communities through key individuals.
- Provide practical examples of how collaborative technologies can be exploited in a city context.

Participants would learn how to:

- Benefit from Leicester's huge diversity of people and cultures.
- Generate lots of new ideas quickly.
- Think like a futurist and see the bigger picture.
- Organise and collaborate better.
- Be persuasive in different social situations.
- Share and develop creative ideas.
- Manage the stream of information that bombards us every day.
- Choose the best people to collaborate with.
- Make the most of different kinds of resources – social, economic, creative.

Every fortnight for six months they attended inspiring lectures and workshops and in between meetings they worked together via Twitter, Facebook and other social media applications.

1.3 Key social research findings

Thilo Boeck analysed the impact of the project on the participants' amplification, social capital and the contribution to social cohesion. He used a range of methods including establishing a baseline, gathering participants' own observations and reflections, questionnaires and qualitative enquiry. The significance of his results is discussed in detail in the main report, but key findings were as follows:

Social capital and group processes

- The project involved managing platforms of 'common ground' built on deep diversity.
- Finding common ground involves nurturing different spaces where people can express and explore the diversity of the group within a trusting environment.
- The majority of participants found that the face-to-face group work acted as a catalyst for online interaction.
- The barriers that some of the participants had to overcome when encountering a diverse group included feelings of vulnerability, exposure and lack of confidence.

Social capital and access to new resources

- Most of the participants consider themselves to be a mixture of an 'offline and online' person.

- Those at extreme ends of the offline and online spectrum found it more difficult to create a common social media forum.
- Social media as a resource:
 - Participants gained new social media skills and strengthened existing skills.
 - The project enabled many participants to tap into the social capital resources available within the group and outside the group through the use of social media.
 - Individual participants clustered around different social media applications which in turn strengthened the formation of sub-groups.
- Diversity as a resource:
 - Overall, participants felt that the diversity was an asset but also found it difficult to exactly talk about what the benefits of diversity are.
 - Many people created new links and enhanced their networks through the diversity of the group.

Cohesion and Amplification

- Individuals developed new skills that enabled them to thrive in an increasingly complex and collaborative work culture.
- Participants identified substantial improvements in their amplification. Some of the strongest shifts were observed in fluency, multi-capitalism, cooperation radar, signal/noise management and longbroadening.
- For some participants amplification was about the 'process of amplification' and others refer to the outcome of 'being amplified'.
- Amplification can be used not only within a social media context but also in face-to-face interactions.
- The process of amplification has much to offer in terms of enhancing social capital and contributing to community cohesion.
- Participants agreed that social media can contribute to collective action and contribute to change.
- In terms of contributing to social cohesiveness in Leicester, participants have started to amplify existing communities by using social media in innovative ways.
- It is important to allow people and groups to adapt different social media applications for their own needs and to have the space to explore and experiment with these.

Significance

In terms of enhancing social cohesion we have seen that whilst social media is an important tool, it is the process of amplification which will really contribute to social cohesion. As such, **amplification is not about making a noise about the city but enhancing the capabilities of individuals and groups to cope with the complexities of modern life.**

These processes need to be nurtured by engaging people who are at the centre of network clusters and are also amplified and dynamic community (neighbourhood) organisers. Thus there seems to be a

need to create platforms of meaningful communication in order to nurture cooperation within which amplification becomes part of a dynamic process. These platforms should have two components:

1. They **should offer the space and opportunity to engage in new networks, either face-to-face or via social media**, especially with people who are involved in the city.
2. Our experience has shown that social media help to expand new networks and transmit new skills within and across different neighbourhoods and communities. **It might therefore be advisable to train a new generation of amplified 'social media organisers'** who will support the establishment of social media neighbourhood groups which are connected with other neighbourhoods and share good practice.

1.4 The model

Amplified Leicester was an experiment which has proved much more powerful than originally anticipated. Local agencies and companies are approaching us to find out how they can amplify their own communities and workplaces, and we are planning more academic research to interrogate the impact of the project and identify further lines of enquiry.

The model is currently rather fluid and it is important that it remains so for a while in order that it can be developed with imagination and appropriateness. This is essential if it is to be tried in communities which may be very different from the City of Leicester.

So in that spirit of openness and flexibility, we offer the following open source model for development.

Our model is in two stages. The first stage is analysed in this report and archived at <http://amplifiedcity.typepad.com/leicester>.

At the time of writing, planning for the second is underway. Follow our progress at www.amplifiedleicester.com and on Twitter via @AmplifiedLeic and #ampleic.

Stage 1: Cocoon – The Consciously Amplified Group

Create a **trusted collaborative space where deep diversity flourishes, ideas flow, and social media connects**.

Features of the Cocoon stage include a closed group covering a highly diverse range of education, IT skills, employment, culture, and ethnicity; a commitment to working within a shared space for an agreed period of time; fearless openness to encounters with big ideas; a focus on social media tools and concepts; personalised tech support where necessary; and a conscious awareness of transliteracy and amplification.

Stage 2: Emergence – From the Amplified Group to the Amplified City

Provide a **PUBLIC trusted collaborative space where deep diversity flourishes, ideas flow, and social media connect**.

Our experience has indicated that there is a case for the appointment of trained 'social media community organisers' who are skilled in transliteracy and amplification techniques. Ideally, these workers will have been drawn from participants who have been through the Cocoon stage and can use online and offline platforms to establish areas of common ground across and between existing diverse networks.

Amplified Leicester continues to influence the way people in Leicester view the potential of social media to amplify individuals and organisations. Its wide-ranging perspective is seen as an essential element for a city looking ahead and the ethos of Amplified Leicester can be found in a number of projects in development at the time of writing.

We are keen to encourage others to develop this work and look forward to hearing from communities and organisations interested in trying out the model and adapting it to their needs. Please contact us at the addresses below:

- Professor Sue Thomas, Faculty of Humanities, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BU T: +44 (0)116 2078266 E:sue.thomas@dmu.ac.uk
- Thilo Boeck, Centre for Social Action, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BU T: +44 (0)116 257 7879 E:tgboeck@dmu.ac.uk

www.amplifiedleicester.com

“Social media are there to connect with people, but meeting them face-to-face, amplifying your networks in that way is also important. This has just opened a whole new kind of world.”

Female participant

2. Conceptual Background

“The project has provided a way to amplify this wonderfully diverse city, bringing real benefits to both the community and businesses. Amplified Leicester mirrored the communities and cultures of Leicester so we could build an understanding and anticipate the diverse needs of our city.”

Laura Horton, Amplified Participant

Amplified Leicester comes from a triangulation of three areas of research: difference, amplification, and transliteracy, and was inspired by the potential of Leicester to nurture a unique creative environment. It used social media as its primary medium for communication and collaboration.

2.1 Leicester

For centuries, Leicester has been one of the most diverse cities in Europe. The Belgae settled there around 100BC and were later followed by the Romans, Danes and Normans. Today, the population is a little under 300,000 of whom 40 per cent are from an ethnic minority background. There are about 240 faith groups across 14 different faiths in the city. Sixteen per cent of people in Leicester prefer to speak Gujarati, 3 per cent Punjabi, and 2 per cent Urdu. Eighty-one per cent prefer to speak English. Our project identified a group of people with the ability to cross community divides and brought them together to create a new social network with the declared intention of capitalising on their difference for social and commercial benefit. The project sought to identify and build upon synergies between difference, amplification and transliteracy.

2.2 Difference

A group that thinks in diverse ways will address a problem from many angles.

Charles Leadbeater, The Difference Dividend

An early inspiration for this project was Charles Leadbeater's *The Difference Dividend: Why immigration is vital to innovation*.¹ This work led us to Scott E. Page's *The Difference: how the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools and societies*.² It appears that what makes collectives truly successful is the diversity of the group. Groups which include a variety of people with varying knowledge, including those who are not necessarily highly skilled or 'expert', for example, tend to be more innovative and make better predictions than groups of experts that are restricted only to the most renowned and traditionally intelligent.

Complex problems require transdisciplinary approaches

We are facing complex problems such as global warming or global epidemics that require knowledge from combinations of traditional disciplines. Researchers and problem solvers are already working together in order to solve such problems. Rich transdisciplinary programs are being created that allow people to study and work with specialists across a range of fields instead of being limited to one traditional field. In order to innovate and grow, organisations will not only have to ensure that the workforce contains a variety of multidisciplinary teams, they will also have to hire employees with diverse backgrounds and cognitive skills in areas such as abstract reasoning, problem solving, communication, and collaboration. Navigating the thin line between the creative chaos that helps make an organisation innovative, and order that ultimately ensures things get done, is what this dilemma is about.

Diversity makes groups intelligent

James Surowiecki, author of *The Wisdom of Crowds*, argues that what makes crowds smart is diversity. When you bring diverse sets of people with diverse lenses and points of view together, each person in the crowd brings a little information. If all the opinions are combined, all the erroneous information is randomised and cancels itself out. In *The Difference* Scott E. Page agrees that diverse groups yield superior outcomes compared to homogenous groups. Page's research demonstrated that groups displaying a range of perspectives and skill levels outperform like-minded experts. He points out that: *"Progress depends as much on our collective differences as it does on our individual IQ scores."*

Innovation will require skills in managing deep diversity

As global markets grow, it is increasingly difficult to develop products which suit the needs of a whole different category of consumers. This requires deep understanding of local needs and market dynamics as well as reliance on local innovation talent.

Diversity can only add to the skills and characteristics found in the amplified individual.

2.3 The amplified individual

*"New technologies of cooperation are combining to create a generation of amplified individuals—workplace superheroes. In some cases they will compete with traditional organisational models; in others they will amplify capabilities of organisations where they already work."*³

Our understanding of the amplified individual is based on research conducted by the Institute for the Future, Palo Alto, California. It states that amplified individuals share **four important characteristics**:

First, they are **highly social**. They use tagging software, wikis, social networks, and other human intelligence aggregators to supplement their individual knowledge and to understand what their

individual contributions mean in the context of the organisation, giving meaning to even the most menial tasks.

Amplified individuals are **highly collective**, taking advantage of online collaboration software, mobile communications tools, and immersive virtual environments to engage globally distributed team members with highly specialised and complementary capacities.

Amplified individuals are also **highly improvisational**, capable of banding together to form effective networks and infrastructures, both social and professional.

Finally, amplified individuals are **highly augmented**. They employ visualisation tools, attention filters, e-displays, and ambient presence systems to enhance their cognitive abilities and coordination skills, thus enabling them to quickly access and process massive amounts of information.

According to the Institute for the Future, an amplified skill set emerges from groups with these features. *“As networked amplification becomes the norm, individuals are developing new super-individual skills that enable them to thrive in an increasingly complex and collaborative work culture.”* These include:

Mobbability: the ability to work in large groups, and to organize and collaborate with many people simultaneously.

Influency: knowing how to be persuasive in multiple social contexts and media spaces, and demonstrating awareness that each context and space requires a different persuasive strategy and technique.

High Ping Quotient: responsiveness to other people’s requests for engagement; propensity to reach out to others in a network.

Protovation: fearless innovation in rapid, iterative cycles.

Open Authorship: ease with creating content for immediate public consumption and modification.

Emergensight: the ability to prepare for and handle surprising results and complexity.

Multi-capitalism: fluency in working with different capitals (e.g. natural, intellectual, social, financial, virtual).

Longbroadening: thinking in terms of higher-level systems, massively multiple cycles, and the very big picture.

Signal/Noise Management: filtering meaningful information, patterns, and commonalities from the massively multiple streams of data and advice.

Cooperation Radar: the ability to sense, almost intuitively, who would make the best collaborators on a particular task.

Many of the qualities of the amplified individual have a direct relationship to transliteracy.

2.4 Transliteracy

Transliteracy provides a unifying perspective on what it means to be literate in the 21st century. It is defined as “the ability to read, write and interact across a range of platforms, tools and media from signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV, radio and film, to digital social networks”.

The word ‘transliteracy’ is derived from the verb ‘to transliterate’, meaning to write or print a letter or word using the closest corresponding letters of a different alphabet or language. This of course is nothing new, but transliteracy extends the act of transliteration and applies it to the increasingly wide range of communication platforms and tools at our disposal. From early signing and orality through handwriting, print, TV and film to networked digital media, the concept of transliteracy calls for a change of perspective away from the battles over print versus digital, and a move instead towards a unifying ecology not just of media, but of all literacies relevant to reading, writing, interaction and culture, both past and present.

Professor Sue Thomas introduced the concept in the *Institute of Creative Technologies* in 2005 where she founded the Transliteracy Research Group. Since then it has been taken up and explored by a broad range of academics and practitioners, from information scientists to literary theorists, artists, gamers and writers, and has attracted special attention from new media writers and publishers, librarians and general careers advisors who see it as indispensable in the modern workplace.⁴

A transliterate space might be described as a state of mind, experienced individually or as a group, which values an openness to working with unfamiliar modes of communication, language and culture, where difference is common, where collaborative experiment is integral, and where confusion and failure can be accommodated without threat. Users who are supported in their entry to this uncertain and fluid environment often find it highly liberating and creative. The aim of Amplified Leicester was to create a transliterate space in which participants can safely explore difference and amplification.

Clearly, the three lines of thought from which Amplified Leicester is forged came from very different backgrounds. Scott E. Page is a political scientist, Charles Leadbeater is a management consultant. The Institute for the Future is a future forecasting thinktank for major corporate clients. Transliteracy was developed largely from a humanities and creative technologies perspective. The social research contribution from Thilo Boeck is informed by theories of social justice and cohesion. Together, they make for a challenging and complex approach which nevertheless appeared to be rewarding.

“A fantastic opportunity to participate in a diverse group of people to hopefully achieve lasting positive amplification of our city.”

Gary McCarthy, Amplified Participant

3. Programme

“It has broadened my horizons both in the virtual world and in real life.”

Sarah Eaton

Amplified Leicester began as a one-year city-wide experiment funded by NESTA to:

- Explore diversity and innovation.
- Build a network across diverse communities.
- Create, share and develop new ideas.
- Use social media like Facebook and Twitter as an amplifier.

Our objectives were to:

- Develop a transferable model for amplifying a diverse city’s grassroots innovation capacity through connecting diverse communities through key individuals.
- Provide practical examples of how collaborative technologies can be exploited in a city context.

Participation in the project was free of charge and by written application. We sought people who considered themselves to be:

- Open-minded, enthusiastic and curious.
- Interested in working and sharing ideas with other people.
- Willing to try new activities and technologies.
- Able to take part in the whole programme.
- Able to access the internet regularly.
- A resident of/working in the city of Leicester.
- Proficient in English. Over the age of 18.
- No formal qualifications needed.

The application period ran from July-September 2009 and a variety of individuals submitted full application forms. The programme demanded a high level of commitment, including a promise to attend all of the fortnightly sessions across a six-month period. Selection was by a panel consisting of representatives from the team and the Advisory Group and 30 places were offered.

“A great opportunity to change direction, get out of the usual rut and meet interesting and influential people.”

Tony Walker, Amplified Participant

3.1 Sessions

“I learned that you often know more than you think – you just don’t know it.”

Farhana Shaikh

The group met fortnightly from early October 2009 to late March 2010. Initial meetings were at the Curve Theatre and then moved to the new Phoenix Square Digital Media Centre when it opened in November.

Each meeting was three hours long followed by lunch, and each session focused on one of the characteristics of the Amplified Individual. Most involved a practical workshop followed by a guest speaker. Over the six months, local technologist Sean Clark explained social media to social mapping; Peter Ford, Head of Commercial Design at DMU, led a highly energetic workshop about rapid innovation techniques; Professor Andy Miah discussed mashing up computing and biology; CEO of Sleepydog and Visiting Professor of the IOCT at DMU Toby Moores, shared his Cool Curve creative thinking technique; Chris Meade, Director of if:book, and Toni Lebusque showed digital ways to tell short stories online; Keith Perch, Editor of the Leicester Mercury gave an insight into writing for news-based social media; Chief Scientist at BT, JP Rangaswami, spoke about preventing path pollution whilst moving from analogue to digital, physical to virtual, and atom to bit; Howard Rheingold shared his vision with us via many conversations; Andrea Saveri put us in a global context; David Wilcox helped develop our potential beyond the project and Duncan Wilson of Arup got everyone thinking like a futurist and explored drivers of change.

The hothouse atmosphere continued online between sessions, via Twitter, Facebook, Googlegroups, and on the project blog. As they got to know each other, participants began meeting outside the formal times to network and discuss further projects. In several cases they discovered new ways to use their existing skills.

“I could share my knowledge with others inside and outside the project”.

Sarah Eaton

Participants were offered the chance to bid for funding to develop miniprojects which fulfilled one of the project objectives – to provide practical examples of how collaborative technologies can be exploited in a city context. Three projects came out of this process:

Guerilla QR Codes: This project utilises the technology of QR codes to link mobile phone users easily and quickly both from and to sources of rich media content specific to their location or environment. Key objectives are to expand the usage and engagement of citizens of Leicester in this form of technology. (Mike Wilkinson and Sarah Eaton)

The Leicester Family: A social media project exploring realities of family life in the city. The project uses crowdsourcing to collate material from poems to photos that explore this theme and features a selection of entries in an online page flip book. It's the first in a series of projects to be collected together under the banner Leicester Through The Decades. www.leicesterfamily.org (Farhana Shaikh)

#leicesteronthemap: A simple experiment to try to demonstrate the global connectedness of Leicester. Members of the public asked their friends, families and contacts around the world to take a photo of themselves holding a #leicesteronthemap or #leicester hashtag and these pictures were plotted on a world map. (Ben Ravilious)

4. Social Research

4.1 Social capital

‘It’s not what you know, it’s who you know’ – this common saying sums up much of the conventional wisdom regarding social capital.⁵ Most definitions revolve around the notion of social networks, the reciprocities that arise from them, and the value of these for achieving personal and mutual goals.⁶ Originating with people forming connections and networks based on the principles of trust, mutual reciprocity and norms of action, social capital is created from the complexity of social relations and their impact on the lives of the people in them.⁷ People engage with others through a variety of associations forming many different types of networks; sometimes each of these networks has different sets of norms, trust and reciprocity.⁸ Thus there can be significant differences between the types of networks people have, not only in quantity but also in quality. Where people look out from affects what they are able to see and how they interpret their own lives; therefore, social capital is crucial in giving people more opportunities, choice and power and, conversely, the absence of social capital can have an equally important negative impact on people’s lives.⁹

A social justice perspective¹⁰ stresses that a just society is about people having certain capabilities: it is about what people are actually able to do and to be – e.g. the amplification and enhancement of social capital through new media.

The capability perspective differs from various concepts of ‘equality of opportunities’ which have been championed for a long time. In a very basic sense, a person’s capability to achieve does indeed stand for the opportunity to pursue his or her objectives.

During Amplified Leicester we explored two essential dimensions inherent in the concept of social capital:

1. The ‘Resource’ dimension which explores and defines the kind of resources people gain.
2. The ‘Glue’ dimension which deals with participation and all aspects aiming at strengthening social relations, interactions and ties. Within this, we have looked at aspects of social cohesion. Cohesion is about people learning to live together and understanding what makes us all different as well as what unites us. It is about reaching out to people of all backgrounds – especially relevant for a city like Leicester. A cohesive city is one where trust and reciprocity exist between people at a neighbourhood level and between different communities; where people perceive themselves to be included, ‘to belong’ within the city. A better understanding of and dealing with diversity will help to lessen the tensions that ignorance brings so that communities can live with a feeling of trust and a sense of control over the affairs that effect them.

We used different methods to engage participants, such as:

Establish a Baseline: At the start of the project, participants were asked to write or use photography to reflect on their current social capital by creating and submitting 'time capsule' envelopes to the researcher. These were analysed and returned to them at the end of the project.

Participants' own observations and reflections: Gathered from social network sites and other relevant material generated by the participants.

Questionnaires: We used different types of questionnaires exploring levels of amplification and usage of technologies.

Qualitative enquiry: We held discussion groups or interviews with the participants to explore their priorities. We also looked at videos from the different sessions, followed the Twitter, Facebook and Googlegroup activities of the participants, and reflected as a team.

5. Findings

5.1 Social Capital and group processes (cohesion in the micro cosmos)

Key Findings

- The project involved managing platforms of 'common ground' built on deep diversity.
- Finding common ground involves nurturing different spaces where people can express and explore the diversity of the group within a trusting environment.
- The majority of participants found that the face-to-face group work acted as a catalyst for online interaction.
- The barriers that some of the participants had to overcome when encountering a diverse group included feelings of vulnerability, exposure and lack of confidence.

Significance

Amplified Leicester was an experimental environment designed to capitalise on difference. One outcome was an enhanced sense of social cohesion which arose from the careful facilitation of group processes and management of the deep diversity of the group in all its complexities. It is not enough just to create a space where a diverse group of people come together. Within this it has to be recognised that trust needs to be facilitated and nurtured, and it would be unrealistic to assume that people would easily share all their information and resources. The challenge within this is to stimulate different trusting relationships through social media and a project like Amplified Leicester has proven to be a good platform for this. It might also allow for new sets of perceptions and practices being forged. Therefore it is important to explore a 'common ground' with people where social capital can be enhanced.

Analysis

In the following section we will explore 'diversity' and 'trust' which are fundamental aspects required to enhance social capital and nurture community cohesion within a microcosm such as the Amplified Leicester group.

Diversity

For decades, diversity in many global organisations has been largely a political and social imperative. As such 'diversity' was usually referred to around the gender, race, ethnicity, class and sexuality. Our participants included other dimensions broadening it to include age, skills, disciplines, and backgrounds, personal dispositions and thinking styles; and much more.

Our participants have a range of appreciations of what 'diversity' means, from more traditional views to broader understandings as highlighted in the following account by a female participant:

"My street. Man in his eighties survivor of Siberian labour camps in World War 2. Africans working night shift in the hospital, transient tenants hot bedding, young female students, my family, one

child with special needs, luxury flats 2 doors down from the ramshackle bed sits, one lad off to Oxford University, his mum a single parent just like I was a few years back. A retired man angry at how things have changed all the years he has lived here, a school dinner lady and her teenage lads, the bail hostel with the confused, chaotic and just plain off their face residents, the single men in council flats, the Somali family with children of all ages, the drug dealer. The church still conducting its service in Latin. The garage fixing dubious cars at dubious times of day."

Peoples' expectations of taking part in a project which is intended to build on the diversity of its participants was quite varied. Some people just wanted 'to go with the flow' and were intrigued to find out what the diversity was about with no preconceived perceptions. Some had a more work-orientated approach and saw the project as an opportunity to meet new people and expand their work-orientated network. It was also noticeable that some people got time off from work to attend because there were certain implicit expectations of their line managers that, through the project, they could tap into the diversity of Leicester people and build new networks.

It was interesting to see how some of these expectations differed from the non-standard 'design' of the project. It shows that in terms of a traditional university project we have to take into account that people come with some very different agendas and might not always understand or share the more academic and experimental nature of a university project. However it has to be noted that there was a common feeling that the diversity of the participants was an asset and people enjoyed the positive and experimental nature of it.

"Positive, great platform for diversity, with no profile how people would judge us..." (Female participant)

Some participants highlighted that feelings of vulnerability, exposure and lack of confidence were amongst the barriers they had to overcome when encountering a diverse group such as Amplified Leicester. The following account of one of the participants also highlights that professional backgrounds might be perceived as quite intimidating for people who do not come from a business background.

"I suppose when we came here for the first session, or the first few even maybe, I wondered, where do I fit in? And people assume that you want to fit in and I'm sort of thinking, you know, there's all these quite professional people, quite a lot of them anyway I think here, and where do I fit in with this. I don't think I'm in a silo but I have felt quite, I think maybe I felt a bit vulnerable in a way." (Female participant)

Overall people felt that in order to overcome some of the barriers it was important to find a 'common ground'.

"...you look for common ground, that's a natural thing to do." (Female participant)

This common ground was not necessarily about the skills and experiences participants shared about social media. Indeed, many felt that these social media skills should be one of the mediums to bring the diverse group together.

"There certainly wasn't a common technical ground and that was one of my concerns. One of the things I hoped to see, and I still hope to see it within the projects that we chose, is how people collaborate in a technical environment. We've agreed that that hasn't taken place and it's been rather scattered." (Male participant)

Fears about the project focused mainly on the process of being together, about trust and diversity, about time, or simply about understanding new media. Time, especially, was mentioned by many participants – is it too much investment, will it be too time consuming, can I dedicate the time? Another fear was that the diversity of the group could hamper the group process rather than support it.

“So my fear is that the diversity will lead to any existing differences being amplified.” (Male participant)

Overall participants agreed that we require skills at managing deep diversity but also creating platforms of common ground. However as a group it was not always clear what this common ground was and what it meant to have a common identity or a shared vision. Whilst part of the diversity of the project was about people coming together and interacting it has to be noted that this group had already been selected for its openness to diversity (it was advertised as such).

Participants felt very strongly that the ‘common ground’ might be expressed through the project as a whole and that it doesn’t need to be ‘a blend of everybody together’ and ‘everybody getting on together’. They rather identified that it was more about finding different spaces where people can express and explore the diversity of the group. People tended to reject the notion that within the group there were different silos which tended not to interact.

“To my mind a silo is a group of people or possibly an individual who actively avoids speaking to someone else and I can’t see any examples of that. There might be lack of mixing, or opportunity for more mixing, and there might be some people who only kind of casually say hello to each other in the group, but I don’t think there’s any silos.” (Male participant)

Managing ‘deep diversity’

There was no agreement between the participants as to whether a diverse group should be managed in order to create a common ground and a spirit of collaboration or if it was better to leave the group to its own devices. Generally people felt that spaces of group interaction were important. They also felt that it was important to create spaces that stimulate debate and interaction where people have the opportunity to get involved and share ideas.

Some felt that a group of 30 people is too big to be a team and that an optimum team would be between eight and 12 participants.

Trust

Trust is one way of dealing with the difficulties created in an increasingly complex society which is marked by the uncertainty of interpersonal interactions. The emotional investment of such interpersonal interactions put the individual at risk and thus the act of trusting places the self at risk.¹¹ It can be said that trust changes our lives in dramatic ways by allowing us to explore new directions which increase the complexity in our lives.¹² Therefore, trust entails a willingness to take risks in a social context based on a sense of confidence that others will respond as expected and will act in mutually supportive ways, or at least that others do not intend them harm.¹³

There are different perceptions and meanings attached to trust and participants sometimes trust or don’t trust people because of certain stereotypes or perceptions they have about people especially because of the diversity of the group:

“I think, it is all about diversity and coping with diversity, you can almost feel, I don’t know if that is the right word to use, but you can almost feel where the trust isn’t that good, because of their cultural attitude... I don’t think it is their personality, I think it is a cultural thing...” (Female participant)

Within a group process, trust is about taking risks in a social context. Some participants felt that at the beginning they were cautious and didn’t trust many people but because of the positive environment they felt that this changed rapidly. For others this process was slower. Encouragingly 85 per cent of the participants reported that the trust between members was average to high. Only 15 per cent said that it was low.

Participants highlighted different aspects of trust. The first step in building trust was about getting to know each other but also there was a need to know the different skill sets within the group. For several

people the group size did not help the process of building trust. They would have preferred smaller groups to be able to get to know each other better.

"...there is a social sort of script that people follow isn't there? We don't really say where we worked to start with until we have built up some sort of trust in each other, we don't sort of tell each other where we live, but we drop hints along the way, but we never actually commit to anything until that trust develops." (Male participant):

The mini projects did seem to challenge and test some of these trusting relationships. This is reflected in the following comment:

"People have reached out to each other so in that way while we are in the group and we are kind of building that bridge, trust is high, but then when it's about, when it actually comes to it, about doing a project and doing it together.... trust wasn't as high" (Female participant)

Some of this lack of trust, whilst working on the projects, was seen as stemming from a lack of communication between group members, especially when establishing how much money they wanted to bid. Some people perceived a certain lack of willingness to be open about this and therefore interpreted it as lack of trust between the group members.

Social capital and access to new resources

"As an experiment, for me it has been an eye opener in terms of what it has tried to do, bringing people together and trying to explore the numerous social media available which people can exploit in different settings." (Male participant)

Key findings

- Most of the participants consider themselves to be a mixture of an 'offline and online' person.
- Those at extreme ends of the offline and online spectrum found it more difficult to create a common social media forum.
- Social media as a resource:
 - Participants gained new social media skills and strengthened existing skills.
 - The project enabled many participants to tap into the social capital resources available within the group and outside the group through the use of social media.
 - Individual participants clustered around different social media applications which strengthened the formation of sub groups.
- Diversity as a resource:
 - Overall participants felt that the diversity was an asset but also found it difficult to exactly talk about what the benefits of diversity are.
 - Many people created new links and enhanced their networks through the diversity of the group.

Significance

This project set out to construct a transliterate space featuring different types of online and offline media. Our findings show that those who benefit most are those who are open to both online and offline interactions, thus creating a fluidity of interactions and exchange of resources.

Whilst diversity and meeting new people was clearly a highlight for many participants it has to be acknowledged that this initial excitement must be translated into meaningful initiatives.

Analysis

It is interesting to observe that most of our participants (70 per cent) consider themselves to be a mixture of 'offline and online' person and a quarter of the participants consider to be a mostly 'online' person. The majority (65 per cent) of participants found the group work most useful. None of the participants found only the online interaction as being the most useful and 35 per cent finding a mixture of online and group work as being the most useful processes.

A mid-project evaluation showed that an amplified skill set – in terms of the usage of social media and other applications – has emerged within the group. We asked the participants to rate if their technical skills have improved since they joined Amplified Leicester and rate their skills from 0=none to 4=very high.

The strongest improvements were seen in the use of Facebook, Twitter, Googlegroups and Googledocs. The usage of Flickr, video recording, video uploading and Delicious had not been dealt with at the time of the interim evaluation and as such only small changes are being observed. Some of the salient differences have been highlighted in green.

Table 1: Facebook percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	18	5
1	5	9
2	36	18
3	18	27
4	23	41
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Google docs percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	73	18
1	9	32
2	0	9
3	9	23
4	9	18
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 3: Twitter percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	46	18
1	23	18
2	9	18
3	9	14
4	14	32
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 4: Flickr percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	75	50
1	15	25
2	5	15
3	0	0
4	5	10
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 5: Googlegroup percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	64	14
1	14	27
2	9	18
3	4	18
4	9	23
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 6: Delicious percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	75.0	70.0
1	10.0	15.0
2	10.0	10.0
3	0.00	0.00
4	5.0	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 7: Videorec percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	45.0	35.0
1	15.0	10.0
2	10.0	10.0
3	10.0	15.0
4	20.0	30.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 8: Videoup percentage

Scale	Before	Now
0	48	43
1	19	9
2	14	9
3	14	29
4	5	10
Total	100.0	100.0

There were different experiences in the use of social media and the benefits people got out of the project. The individual interviews showed the complexity of these experiences. For some people the use of social media was very new and it was interesting to see how the project was able to challenge some of the negative preconceptions as voiced in the following account by a male participant:

“One thing that’s been interesting for me... is the acceptance of new social media. I think that’s been very interesting for me to see from the outset, that actually it has a credence which I didn’t think it ever had. When I first came to the group I kind of saw new social media as something done by the bored, you know, the sort of less intellectually stimulated, but I’ve changed my view I have to say. I think we’re all at different levels of understanding of the impact and ramifications of this new media. I find it very interesting.” (Male participant)

For other participants the major challenge at the start of the project was to gain confidence, not only to use social media but also to interact with new people and feel that one can contribute something to the different discussions. In terms of the enhancement of social capital this is considered to be an important step because it creates new horizons and new, potentially resourceful networks:

“It has been brilliant, it’s the confidence to think about using the new media that is coming along, it is the confidence to interact with people you wouldn’t even have thought of interacting with before, it is the ability now to go to meetings with various people and they wouldn’t have taken me before, but they can take me now and say, ‘well hang on, this guy has got some good ideas’, because I’ve

been able to communicate those ideas to them. Amplified Leicester has given me a lot and I think it will give me a lot more in the coming months.” (Male participant)

Many people had already been using social media but the project gave them new insights into how to improve their skills and enhance their networks. This highlights the fact that the project enabled many participants to tap into the social capital resources available both within the group and outside it through the use of social media. Overall, participants felt that the diversity of the group was an asset but also found it difficult to exactly talk about what the benefits of diversity are.

5.2 Cohesion and Amplification

“...gaining confidence, and also the ability to think on your feet, the ability to think that ‘okay I’m in a group of people, not just in Amplified Leicester but on the outside, I can go up to a group of people and say, I’ve listened to what you are saying and I might just have a solution to that problem, or at least give you an idea towards a solution, but, don’t just ignore me, but take on board what I am saying’. I... I have found a way of communicating that in such a way that they say, ‘okay you might have something there, let me go away and look at it’” (Male participant)

Key findings

- Participants have been developing new skills that enabled them to thrive in an increasingly complex and collaborative work culture.
- Participants identified substantial improvements in their amplification. Some of the strongest shifts were observed in fluency, multi-capitalism, cooperation radar, signal/noise management and longboarding.
- For some participants amplification was about the ‘process of amplification’ and others refer to the outcome of ‘being amplified’.
- Amplification can be used not only within a social media context but also in face-to-face interactions.
- The process of ‘amplification’ has much to offer in terms of enhancing social capital and contributing to community cohesion.
- Participants agreed that social media can contribute to collective action and contribute to change.
- In terms of contributing to the cohesiveness in Leicester, participants have started to inform existing communities and amplify them by using social media in innovative ways.
- It is important to allow people and groups to adapt different social media applications for their own needs and have the space to explore and experiment with these.

Significance

In terms of enhancing social cohesion we have seen that whilst social media is an important tool, it is the process of amplification which will really contribute to social cohesion. As such, **amplification is not about making a noise about the city but enhancing the capabilities of individuals and groups to cope with the complexities of modern life.**

These processes need to be nurtured by engaging people who are at the centre of network clusters and are also amplified and dynamic community (neighbourhood) organisers. Thus there seems to be a need to create platforms of meaningful communication in order to nurture cooperation within which amplification becomes part of a dynamic process. These platforms should have two components:

1. They **should offer the space and opportunity to engage in new networks, either face-to-face or via social media**, especially with people who are involved in the city.
2. Our experience has shown that social media help to expand new networks and transmit new skills within and across different neighbourhoods and communities. **It might therefore be advisable to train a new generation of amplified 'social media organisers'** who will support the establishment of social media neighbourhood groups which are connected with other neighbourhoods and share good practice.

Analysis

Improvements in amplification

We have observed that as networked amplification became the norm, individuals have been developing new skills that enabled them to thrive in an increasingly complex and collaborative work culture. Participants identified substantial improvements in their amplification. Some of the strongest shifts were observed in fluency, multi-capitalism, cooperation radar, signal/noise management and longbroadening (highlighted in green).

- Fluency – knowing how to be persuasive in multiple social contexts and media spaces, and demonstrating awareness that each context and space requires a different persuasive strategy and technique.

Influency	Valid Percent	Now
1	23.8	14.3
2	14.3	9.5
3	38.1	33.3
4	23.8	42.9
Total	100.0	100.0

- Multi-capitalism – fluency in working with different capitals (e.g. natural, intellectual, social, financial, virtual).

Multi cap	Before	Now
1	23.8	
2	28.6	19.0
3	33.3	57.1
4	14.3	23.8
Total	100.0	100.0

- Cooperation Radar – the ability to sense, almost intuitively, who would make the best collaborators on a particular task.

Coop radar	Before	Now
1	14.3	9.5
2	9.5	4.8
3	57.1	38.1
4	19.0	47.6
Total	100.0	100.0

- Signal/Noise Management – filtering meaningful information, patterns, and commonalities from the massively multiple streams of data and advice.

Signal-noise	Before	Now
1	19.0	4.8
2	33.3	14.3
3	28.6	52.4
4	19.0	28.6
Total	100.0	100.0

- Longbroadening – thinking in terms of higher-level systems, massively multiple cycles, and the very big picture.

Longbroadening	Before	Now
1	20.0	5.0
2	35.0	20.0
3	25.0	35.0
4	20.0	40.0
Total	100.0	100.0

There have been also some significant (but lesser) shifts within mobbability and ping quotient.

- Mobbability – the ability to work in large groups, and to organize and collaborate with many people simultaneously.

Mobbability	Before	Now
1	19.0	
2	23.8	19.0
3	23.8	38.1
4	33.3	42.9
Total	100.0	100.0

- Ping Quotient – responsiveness to other people’s requests for engagement; propensity to reach out to others in a network.

Ping quotient	Valid Percent	Now
1	14.3	
2	19.0	14.3
3	38.1	47.6
4	28.6	38.1
Total	100.0	100.0

- Emergensight – the ability to prepare for and handle surprising results and complexity had the least significant shift.

Emergensite	Before	Now
1	15.0	10.0
2	35.0	20.0
3	30.0	45.0
4	20.0	25.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Amplification and cohesion

However, what ‘amplification’ meant varied from participant to participant. For some participants it was about the ‘process’ of amplification and using the social media skills in a more effective and enhanced way:

“...to me amplifying doesn’t just mean getting louder and getting bigger, it means using everything that is available around you to make that process bigger.” (Male participant)

Mostly participants would refer to the outcome of being amplified and used the term not only within a social media context but also in face-to-face interactions. Thus they referred to having more connections, promoting oneself or a business and especially engaging with other people, connecting with diverse groups and having influence to change things. We would argue that this interpretation has much to offer in terms of enhancing social capital and contributing to community cohesion. This is summarised in the following accounts of two male participants:

"I think there's still this issue about what's defined as amplified. To a certain extent if you're trying to promote yourself or have more influence in the world, whether you use social media technologies or a telephone or face-to-face, it doesn't really matter, it's the results that matter. Maybe some people might be more amplified face-to-face because they've made new connections but they might not have really clicked on the social media." (Male participant)

"Amplification for me is making noise, it's to amplify something, to really talk about something, to engage with other people so they are aware of what's happening. That was my understanding of it and certainly with the title Amplified Leicester I thought it was a social group of people, a diverse mix of people from the community, coming together to Amplify Leicester, to amplify the city and work together." (Male participant)

A female participant who works with schools, young people and children has used some of the skills and tools learned through the project in developing new media skills within her work environment and also started to make new links with other organisations. In terms of community cohesion in Leicester it has contributed not only to her personal awareness but also for the work with the young people:

"There's some contacts that I've made where there are services that they can offer within schools so I've made links there as well which I've used. And just a general awareness of Leicester itself really, there's all sorts of things that I wasn't perhaps aware of that I thought oh that's really useful and if I'm working on projects I've thought about links there as well." (Female participant)

Participants also mentioned that a better awareness of what is happening in the city is important to contribute to cohesion in terms of the flow of information and contacting new people, but also to inform existing communities and amplify them. People used social media in different ways for this, and adapted different applications for their own needs. Some participants found Twitter to be a good way to expand and diversify networks as expressed in the following account:

"So I've used Facebook to have a group for us to talk about various things and to see who is interested in taking it from just having a website and actually interacting with other writers... but I never really got the hang of Twitter before, until I did Amplified Leicester and then it was like, Oh! Yeh! There are other people that you can follow, and then they dish out information and then you can use that information to give it to your network if you like, so it is almost, if you like, a new way of getting information and learning about the things that I am interested in really." (Female participant)

Other people highlight that there is an important interaction between social media and face-to-face meetings which then develop the networks further. For many participants this reflected their notion of amplification in terms of face-to-face interaction which leads to **influency** and **cooperation** through the use of social media:

"So yes, social media are there to connect with people, but meeting them face-to-face, amplifying your networks in that way is also important. I have met people on social networking sites then we've all been to a festival and then we meet people there. This has just opened a whole new kind of world. Of doing, of working, not necessarily with people but just having that support network." (Female participant)

Influence through amplification

Overall participants agreed that social media can contribute to collective action and contribute to change. It was highlighted that it also depends on the individual who accesses the information. Only a quarter of the participants had never used social media to influence their community, neighbourhood, country or business. About three-quarters of participants use social media in different ways to influence different areas of their lives :

"I use the web and social media in almost all cases (influencing community, neighbourhood, country and business)."

"I blog, post video blogs and encourage colleagues to collaborate with me."

"I use social media to comment on things that affect or interest me and my family and community. The quasi-social media fabricated by some organisations ... create false images. I hope that people challenge these."

6. The Model

We were tasked with developing a “transferable model for amplifying a diverse city’s grassroots innovation capacity through connecting diverse communities through key individuals”. Essential ingredients of the process included:

- Selecting a broad range of participants from different backgrounds who are prepared to commit to the whole programme.
- Building trust by working together intensively in a private environment.
- Developing understanding and practical experience of both amplification and transliteracy.
- Providing high-quality speakers and workshops.
- Giving personalised technical support.
- Using a mixture of online/offline media.

The result has been the creation of a two-stage model as follows:

Stage 1: Cocoon – The Consciously Amplified Group

Create a **trusted collaborative space** where **deep diversity flourishes, ideas flow, and social media connects**.

Features of the Cocoon stage include: a closed group covering a highly diverse range of education, IT skills, employment, culture, and ethnicity; a commitment to working within a shared space for an agreed period of time; fearless openness to encounters with big ideas; a focus on social media tools and concepts: personalised tech support where necessary, and a conscious awareness of transliteracy and amplification.

Stage 2: Emergence – From the Amplified Group to the Amplified City

Provide a **PUBLIC trusted collaborative space** where **deep diversity flourishes, ideas flow, and social media connects**.

Our experience has indicated that there is a case for the appointment of trained ‘social media community organisers’ who are skilled in transliteracy and amplification techniques and ideally have been drawn from participants who have been through the Cocoon stage. These workers could use online and offline platforms to establish areas of common ground across and between existing diverse networks. Features of the Emergence stage, we predict, include: seeding of the project ethos by Amplified Individuals from Stage 1 into the public community; provision of two public meeting places – regular face-to-face talks

from interesting and important thinkers and practitioners alongside an online community; project partnerships within the city; and continued growth of the group through marketing, dissemination and the growing 'contagion' of amplification. Some funding is needed to ensure efficient coordination and support of the community. At this time it is vital that the community takes responsibility for itself and leads by the group rather than the more directed experience of the Cocoon.

A key element of the process is subjectivity. The model is currently rather fluid and it is important that it remains so for a while in order that it can be developed with imagination and appropriateness. This is essential if it is to be tried in communities which may be very different from the City of Leicester. The shaping of each of the elements is highly dependent upon context – the time, the place, and the cultures involved. In that spirit of openness and flexibility, we offer the model for open source development, and propose that cities and communities who wish to experiment with the model might approach it in the following way:

- **Trusted collaborative space:** what does trust mean within your particular culture and community? Where is it most threatened and vulnerable? Where does it thrive? Pay attention to these local details when selecting participants and designing the programme. Make sure you build in early commitment from the participants – drop-ins or substitute colleagues attending 'on behalf of their organisation' will not work. This is about the individual, not the organisation. And regular face-to-face meetings are vital – in this project, attendance is about being physically there, not just logging on to the website.
- **Deep diversity:** what does this mean in your community? Think very broadly about what difference means in your local cultures. For example, we found that the gap between the business focus and the community focus was often larger than the gap between ages or ethnic groups. It seems that the quality of the mental and physical spaces provided were vital to stimulating debate and interaction.
- **Flow of ideas:** ensure that your meeting place is private, flexible, and congenial. Include downtime for socialising and networking. Use different kinds of media to capture as many ideas as possible.
- **Connect with social media:** Face-to-face meetings were vital to this project, but so was social media. However, this is not always easy. Ten years ago one could choose a single community platform as a meeting place but today everyone has one or more preferred platforms, often for different activities – Facebook, Twitter, Googlegroups, Linked In etc. – but it is important that everyone is involved in dynamic online conversations and also that they are receiving important housekeeping messages. Be aware that this could take some managing. In our case, most activity was around the #ampleic Twitter tag, but this could evolve at any time.

7. The Future

“A great opportunity to learn from experts and peers, to see the benefits and barriers of new tools and to use them in a team.”

Ross Grant

Amplified Leicester was an experiment with uncertain outcomes, but the result has proved much more powerful than originally anticipated. Local agencies and companies are approaching us to find out how they can amplify their own communities and workplaces, and we are planning more academic research to interrogate the impact of the project and identify further lines of enquiry.

We believe the project is an exemplar of the ways in which transdisciplinary academic research can impact on the wider community. It grew from the triangulation of three areas of research: difference, amplification, and transliteracy, and had the benefit of a dedicated social researcher who tracked and analysed the outcomes.

The project continues to influence the way people in Leicester view the potential of social media to amplify individuals and organisations. Its wide-ranging perspective is seen as an essential element for a city looking ahead and the ethos of Amplified Leicester can be found in a number of projects in development at the time of writing.

On 15 April 2010 Amplified Leicester went public with a showcase event featuring work by many of the participants and a keynote talk by Andrea Saveri designed to place our work in a global context. A public online community is now open at www.amplifiedleicester.com and the group is meeting regularly at Phoenix Square Digital Media Centre.

We are keen to encourage others to develop this work and look forward to hearing from communities and organisations interested in trying out the model and adapting it to their needs. Please contact us at the addresses below.

- Professor Sue Thomas, Faculty of Humanities, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BU T:+44 (0)116 2078266 E:sue.thomas@dmu.ac.uk
- Thilo Boeck, Centre for Social Action, De Montfort University, The Gateway, Leicester LE1 9BU T:+44 (0)116 257 7879 E:tgboeck@dmu.ac.uk

“It’s been great to meet so many people with different skills sets. Working in a group with people at different levels of ‘amplification’ has been challenging – but has given me a real insight into the potential of new media, both socially and in the workplace.”

Simon Parker

Appendix A: Participants

The website featured a list of participant bios which illustrated their very wide range of backgrounds.

Nancy Bennett: I am now retired but previous to that I was unemployed, did a computer course at Apex and then volunteered in the IT section. I did the Community Media Course with John Coster and helped to produce the first issue of Senior Eye.

Sharon Bown: I work part time as the Extended Services Co-ordinator for Countesthorpe Cluster of Schools, working across eight local schools in the area. This is my second term in post and I have previously worked within the National Health Service and also part-time within the Library Service.

Dennis Bradley: I am the Centre Support Officer at the Leicester Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Centre. This is my first experience of being involved in this capacity in the voluntary sector. My professional life has always been concentrated in the private sector. I have finally found a platform to show my passion about the rights of the LGBT community. For over 30 years I have been an out gay man. Born in the USA, I have lived in the UK since the late 1980s. By working with Amplified Leicester, I am sure to show the diversity of the LGBT community in the East Midlands.

Ian Davies: I work from home and help my partner care for her children. I study part-time on three courses at LAEC, the main one being Advanced Creative Writing. (Everything helps). I freelance at photography and writing, writing mostly poetry, although I do have a novel in progress. I volunteer with the BCA in Braunstone, working on the Alert community magazine. I also take photographs for the b-active sports unit and other b-inspired off-shoots. I also volunteer with the Braunstone Neighbourhood Management team, involving myself in many community activities.

Sarah Eaton: Mum to four children aged 1, 8, 9 and 12. Still in possession of my faculties. Volunteer board guide on <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com> a.k.a. Sarahsaver. Member of La Leche League Leicester and for them volunteer librarian at Cafe Mama, a weekly breastfeeding support meeting. Interested in many things. Being a stay-at-home mum hasn't rotted my brain, it's stimulated it!

Mel Gordon: Owner of Webwordwizards.com Digital Media Creation Agency – Web Design; Partner in Leics Techs – Systems & Network Administrator – IT Technician & Technologist; stpetersnm.com – Founder – Dealing with Neighbourhood Improvement; Former Chair of St Peters Neighbourhood Management Board.

Ross Grant: Keen to work with people from a broad range of experiences and backgrounds to make Leicester an even better place for everyone to work, learn, play, pray and live in. I want to be open minded about the people I meet, and hope they will be about me too. I hope Amplified Leicester will help realise some of the potential that technology offers to communities and individuals in a diverse urban city. (Recent Conservative parliamentary candidate).

Darren Hines: Currently, I co-chair the Leicester LINK, an organisation which is spread across the country whose remit is to scrutinise the health and social care services provided in their own communities, and through the Amplified Leicester Project I shall begin the growth of two other ideas which I hope will help our community grow locally and globally through a process of social media networking and business communication. One will be not-for-profit that will help local people with all aspects of their

lives, through disability, education or environment; and the other a profit-making venture in the field of product design.

Laura Horton: I am the Project Manager for the Regional Equality and Diversity Partnership based at the Leicestershire Centre for Integrated Living. REDP is a partnership of voluntary sector organisations working with the public and private sector, by providing training, research, information, advice and appropriate challenge. I am the proud Mum of two which keeps me extremely busy and through my children I have become an active member of the community from being a chair of governor at my son's old primary school, club welfare officer at the football club and just enjoying the art of communication standing around while waiting to play taxi!!

Ishi Khan-Jackson: Stand up comedienne (performing artist); Laughter (Life) Coach; Run a Comedy club.

Bill Knopp: I'm a Police Inspector in Leicestershire Constabulary. I have worked for the Police for 20 years since leaving University. I originally joined West Yorkshire Police and worked in rural Pennine communities. I joined Leicestershire in 1993 and have spent the majority of my service in the city centre, St Mathews, Spinney Hill, the Belgrave and Hinckley Road Areas. I am currently working in the Community Safety Bureau in Leicester. A big part of my job is looking at cohesion and forming new links with emerging and established communities.

Daniel Lamoon: Company director of From Dusk 2 Dawn magazine, sole trader video producer Lamoon Media; Editor FD2D; events organiser FD2D, oxjam, Loros; multimedia producer and director Lamoon Media; business mentor and adviser, City of Leicester College, University of Derby, DMU Alumni; creative and cultural crier FD2D.

Carol Leeming: Singer Songwriter: Composer: Musician: Poet: Playwright: Multi Media Artist: Director: Producer: Freelance Journalist and Visiting Lecturer. As a creative visionary and cultural activist, I have considerable experience and knowledge of working with the business, arts cultural sector and culturally diverse communities for over 15 years. Member of Arts Council England (East Midlands) General Council, Advisory Board Member Foot In Hand Dance Company. Director of Dare to Diva Productions which offers: Literature: Performing Arts: Media: Project Design: Events Management: Culturally Diverse Arts: & Consultancy. I have a cross arts, collaborative approach to arts and culture.

Joy Marsden: Business Trainer, Coach and Speaker; Specialising in Business start-ups; Volunteer as Business Champion sharing experiences and inspiring entrepreneurial spirit amongst young people within schools colleges and Universities within the East Midlands; Volunteer Make your Mark ambassador working closely with ethnic communities to help individuals overcome personal barriers to succeed in business.

Kenneth Mawomo: Editor: EWALIN (Enterprise Within Africa Local and International News Agency) Community Reporter: HAT (Here and There) News Committee member: Leicester City of Sanctuary.

Gary McCarthy: Managing Director, Eazytiger Ltd, New Media and Online Marketing Agency; Director, We Are Pets, Online pet supermarket; Member of Chamber of Commerce, Federation Of Small Business.

Nduka Onwuegbute: I am a writer, here in the City of Leicester. But am also involved in book promotions for the self-published trade. My aim is to encourage the latent writers amongst my friends and people I network with, to get their work into print, with more relative ease. My dream project would be to harness a pool of young writers to collaborate with the aim of publishing a few titles.

Katherine O'Driscoll: I am a fashion and sports business manager with extensive experience in retailing from the High Street to the mass market via visual communication and marketing methods creating a collective consciousness to direct demand in consumer behaviour. Whilst my market has been fashion and sports the psychology of demand in my industry has always been based on the consensus of the collective community. Alongside my corporate 'day job' I have operated my own consultancy business

KO inc which has allowed me to explore new ventures over the last six years from website development to bridalwear design.

Simon Parker: Inclusion and Diversity Manager, Leicester Libraries; Board member, Citizens' Eye Community News Agency; Broadcaster, Panj Pani Community Radio; Judge, national CILIP Libraries Change Lives Award; Carer.

Ben Ravilious: Director at Ultimateweb Ltd (ecommerce & website developers) Campaigns Manager, Leicester Civic Society; Keen photographer of Leicester.

Farhana Shaikh: primarily focuses her work on building and supporting content-rich sites for niche communities. An aspiring novelist, Farhana currently edits The Asian Writer, a literary magazine which supports and promotes writing from the Asian community. She works as a freelance editorial consultant and proofreader. She lives in Hamilton, Leicester with her family.

Neville Stork: I am the Borough Councillor for Loughborough Shelthorpe and a School Governor for Shelthorpe Primary School. I am also a non-exec Director for Charnwood Neighbourhood Homes Ltd. I am the Head of Environmental Sustainability for Leicester City Council and my main task is the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions from Leicester City. Sounds dull, but far from it; I work with the Islamic faith to show that the Qu'ran has a wealth of environmentalism in its pages, the Leicester Comedy Festival to bring out the positive aspects of good environmental behaviour, the Leicestershire County FA for the same thing and I am passionate about green roofs and walls. I am working very closely with the universities on zero carbon homes, non-carbon vehicles and using space-based technologies to track greenhouse gases in the city. I love the vibrancy and multi-culturalness of the city and long may it continue.

Tony Walker: I was a volunteer for 27a Access Artspace (and Brightsparks – mental health arts group) for 18 months until it closed this year. I am a former carer for my mum who passed away last September. I am studying Art at Leicester College. In my last job I worked for Loughborough College in the Sports department as a technician. Toughest thing I have done but learnt most from: working with single homeless people in Cardiff nearly 30 years ago.

Mike Wilkinson Director Goodman Wilkinson Associates Ltd – a training company; Director Primary Partnerships – A not-for profit organisation encouraging science in primary schools; Treasurer – the British Science Association.

“Amplified Leicester has re-awakened my desire to push the boundaries of communication and innovation in whole new direction.”

Darren Hines

Appendix B: About Us

8.1 Authors

Sue Thomas divides her time between the Institute of Creative Technologies and the Faculty of Humanities at De Montfort University, where she is Professor of New Media. She has pioneered experimental social media for over 15 years and has an international reputation as an influential connector which began when she founded an early and pioneering web initiative, the trAce Online Writing Centre, in 1995. She has been building links between the university and regional small businesses since 2005 via her HEIF-funded NLab Network and CreativeCoffee Club. She comes from a Leicester immigrant family – her Dutch grandparents settled just outside the city in the village of Rearsby and established a rose-growing business in 1933. She is the author of several books, most recently *Hello World: Travels in Virtuality*, and is currently writing a history of nature metaphors in cyberspace. Her other areas of research are transliteracy, transdisciplinarity and social media. **www.suethomas.net** Twitter: **@suethomas**

Thilo Boeck is a senior research fellow based at the Centre for Social Action at De Montfort University, Leicester. Born in Germany, he grew up in Lima, Peru where he started his career as a practitioner in Youth and Community Development work. Using a sustainable development approach he initiated and managed a development project in Lima enabling people to use their skills and existing networks to set up community-led projects attracting investment into the community. In the UK he worked in several research projects exploring the impact of social policy on social exclusion/inclusion and social capital within national and international contexts. He has been the principal investigator on a participative research project funded by the Big Lottery Fund exploring the impact of youth volunteering on social capital. He has also been the academic lead in an innovative partnership project between the voluntary, statutory and academic sector (Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council, CVS Community Partnership, Voluntary Action Leicester and the Centre for Social Action at De Montfort University) around social capital and community cohesion involving local people in the whole research process. Twitter: **@tgboeck**

8.2 The Institute of Creative Technologies

The Institute of Creative Technologies (IOCT) is a unique research environment which sits at the intersection of science, technology, humanities and the arts. It comprises a network of Research Centres and Groups embedded in the Faculties of De Montfort University. Since its launch in September 2006 it has initiated over 100 interdisciplinary and collaborative projects, carried out by more than 90 researchers. The IOCT's research is either interdisciplinary (applying the methods from one discipline to another), multidisciplinary (teams from various disciplines combining to investigate a research question) or transdisciplinary (across and beyond all disciplines). We have two broad research themes: 'Quality of Life' and 'Cultural Horizons'. **www.ioct.dmu.ac.uk**

8.3 The Centre for Social Action

The Centre for Social Action is based at De Montfort University in the School of Applied Social Studies as part of the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. We are a Centre which undertakes research, training and consultancy in the field of public participation in health and social care. We have received funding from the ESRC, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Big Lottery fund as well as numerous commissions from local authorities and third sector organisations. Our key focus is on the realisation of people's human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We do this through a commitment to partnership working and to the active involvement of people in decisions concerning their communities, services and lives. The Centre for Social Action has a particular commitment to emancipatory and empowerment approaches to research and maximising the involvement of community members, young people and service users. Key areas of our work are:

- Youth participation.
- Person-centred services.
- Public and patient involvement in research.
- Social capital and community cohesion.

www.dmu.ac.uk/csa

Acknowledgements

Amplified Leicester grew out of the HEIF-funded NLab project at De Montfort University and was informed by research into transliteracy at DMU's Institute of Creative Technologies (IOCT). It was managed by the IOCT in partnership with the DMU Centre for Social Action and Phoenix Square Digital Media Centre. Other local partners were The Leicester Mercury, Citizens' Eye, and Harvey Ingram LLP.

The project was commissioned and supported by NESTA, an independent body with a mission to make the UK more innovative. www.nesta.org.uk. NESTA's Deborah Fox and Anne Carvel, along with James Boardwell and Frankie Roberto of Rattle, regularly attended our meetings and group sessions.

It was directed by Professor Sue Thomas supported by a project team comprising: Thilo Boeck, social researcher; Ravinder Kaur, project coordinator; and Ash Brown, technical assistant, along with administrators Lisa McNicoll and Bharti Mistry.

We would like to thank many people from diverse disciplines for their support and contributions to Amplified Leicester. Howard Rheingold provided thoughtful contributions to the planning and execution of the project. Andrea Saveri's keynote talk at the 2008 NLab Social Networks Conference sparked the idea. Conversations with Toby Moores helped develop it. Roland Harwood saw the potential. Professor Andrew Hugill's visionary leadership of the Institute of Creative Technologies allowed space to think about it. Jennie Fleming, Director of the Centre for Social Action, guided our understanding. Phoenix Square Digital Media Centre hosted our meetings and events. Leicester Mercury and Citizens' Eye helped share our news. James Boardwell and Frankie Roberto of Rattle Research acted as our learning partners, and Brian Condon, Josie Fraser, and Steve Lawson of Amplified reported on our showcase event.

The help of the **Advisory Group** was crucial in selecting and mentoring participants as well as advising and supporting the team during the project. They are: James Boardwell, Director, Rattle; Professor Stephen Brown, Professor of Learning Technologies and Director of Knowledge Media Design, DMU; Ted Cassidy MBE, Head of Regional Partnerships, DMU; Jerry Fishenden, Visiting Senior Fellow, LSE; Deborah Fox, Programme Manager, Innovation Programmes, NESTA; Professor Andrew Hugill, Director & Chair of Advisory Group, DMU IOCT; Andy Jones, Director, Phoenix Square Digital Media Centre; Lord Judd of Portsea, House of Lords; Dr Mark Lemon, Principal Lecturer, DMU IESD; Professor Heidi Macpherson, Dean, DMU Faculty of Humanities; Chris Meade, Director, Institute for the Future of the Book; Toby Moores, CEO, Sleepydog; Rakesh Parmar, Marketing Manager, Phoenix Square Digital Media Centre; Stephen Peak, Director of Corporate Development, DMU; Keith Perch, Editor, Leicester Mercury Publishing Group; Professor Monder Ram, Director, DMU Centre for Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship; Vijay Singh Riyait, CEO, iQubed & Sikh Geek; Frankie Roberto, Interaction/

Experience Designer, Rattle; Karen Rondeau, Head of Careers and Employability, DMU Student Services; Chris Shaw, Regional Manager, Unleashing Enterprise; John Stobart, Partner in Harvey Ingram LLP.

Everyone above provided hard work and critical friendship to help us realise the vision of Amplified Leicester, and we are grateful to all of them. But the project could not have happened without the participants, or, as they like to call themselves, ‘the ampleic guineapigs’:

Nancy Bennett	Darren Hines	Katherine O’Driscoll
Sharon Bown	Laura Horton	Nduka Onwuegbute
Dennis Bradley	Ishi Khan-Jackson	Simon Parker
Christine Brown	Fiona Kinsey	Ben Ravilious
Nivedita Choudhuri	Bill Knopp	Filomena Rodriguez
Ian Davies	Daniel Lamoon	Farhana Shaikh
Sarah Eaton	Carol Leeming	John Stobart
Mel Gordon	Joy Marsden	Neville Stork
Ross Grant	Kenneth Mawomo	Tony Walker
Rachel Hargrave	Gary McCarthy	Mike Wilkinson

Endnotes

1. Leadbeater, C. (2008) 'The Difference Dividend: Why immigration is vital to innovation.' London: NESTA.
2. Page, S.E. (2007) 'The Difference: how the power of diversity creates better groups, firms, schools and societies.' Princeton: Princeton University Press.
3. Institute for the Future (2007) 'The Future of Work: Perspectives.' Technology Horizons Program. Available at: <http://www.iftf.org>.
4. For more on transliteracy, visit <http://www.transliteracy.com>.
5. Woolcock, M. (2001) The place of social capital in understanding social and economic outcomes. 'Canadian Journal of Policy Research.' 2(1), pp.11-17.
6. Baron, S., Field, J. and Schuller, T. (2000) 'Social Capital: Critical Perspectives.' Oxford: Oxford University Press.
7. Boeck, T. and Fleming, J. (2002) Social Capital and the Nottingham Social Action Research Project.' Nottingham: Nottingham City Primary Care Trust, SARP.
8. Field, J. (2003) 'Social Capital.' London: Routledge.
9. Boeck, T., Fleming, J. and Kemshall, H. (2006) The Context of Risk Decisions: Does Social Capital Make a Difference? 'Qualitative Social Research.' 7(1).
10. Sen, A.K. (1995) 'Inequality re-examined.' Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; also Sen, A.K. (1999) 'Development as freedom.' Oxford: Oxford University Press.
11. Weber, L.R. and Carter, A. (1998) On constructing trust: temporality, self-disclosure, and perspective-taking. 'International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy.' 18(1), pp.7-26.
12. Solomon, R.C. and Flores, F. (2003) 'Building Trust. In Business, Politics, Relationships, and Life.' New York: Oxford University Press.
13. Misztal, B. (1996) 'Trust in Modern Societies: the search for the bases of social order.' Cambridge: Polity Press.

NESTA

1 Plough Place
London EC4A 1DE
research@nesta.org.uk

www.nesta.org.uk

Published: July 2010
AL/58