

## De Bono Community Empowerment Day Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008, University of Salford

*“A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich”  
Prof. Robert Putnam*

### Summary of Event:

On Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2008 the University of Salford hosted two sessions with the aim of developing community Empowerment.

In the morning, academics and their community partners who work together to energise and empower citizens and communities in developing their own Smart City Futures, were invited to explore key issues leading to constructive change. **Working with a facilitator from The Edward de Bono Foundation UK**, the ambition of the morning session was to develop 5 specific issues worthy of consideration during the next year culminating in final conference at the Lowry in July 2009.

In the afternoon the de Bono Facilitator worked with a group of local school children, whose lives will bear the impact of the future decisions of the attendees of the morning session, to tease out their views on the relationship between the school, the local community and the university.

### Main Conclusions /Outcomes:

#### *Morning session with the community professionals:*

Participants were shown a short film made by young people in Salford involved in the \*Kandu Arts for Sustainable Development initiative showing the lives of local residents in East Salford. **Using de Bono thinking tools, guided by Nigel Newman**, the participants at the meeting were asked to form groups and consider the key issues raised by the film that summarised how they felt Universities could work better with them for mutual benefit and to give them confidence to be innovative in the context of knowledge economy developments. Amongst these, the ‘First Important **Priorities**’ explored, included:

- The need to improve effective **communication** between academics and communities in order to reveal important issues/problems worthy of creative joint working;
- How Universities could be used better as a creative **resource by citizens and communities**, i.e. thus supporting revenue generation in communities, by developing action learning and by developing more cost effective solutions to local problems;
- Help raise **aspirations and expectations**, particularly of young people

Participants were then asked to come up with what they believed to be the key questions for the future of city-region aligned to community empowerment. 15 such questions flowed easily from these discussions, and these were easily summarised into the following five overarching questions:

- **Improved Communication and Valuable Knowledge Sharing:** how can user friendly and highly enabling information systems be designed and implemented to drive constructive, active and consistent listening by all stakeholders so they truly understand each others problems and issues, with a view to empowering citizens/communities to lead and manage their own developments better and, further, can such systems be expanded into workable forums for discussion and improvement using methodologies developed to enable integration into processes we already have in place?
- **Critical Evaluation and Lessons Learnt:** how can universities and communities work together to learn from lessons of the past and critically evaluate each other, thereby developing improved ways of constructive future working?
- **A Co-ordinated and Co-creative Approach:** how can we use existing imagination and other strengths of universities and communities, bringing them together in a co-ordinated way, thus developing integrated approaches driving real improvement in local situations? *How can we share best practice between universities and communities nationally and around the world and could we create a legacy system following from 'Smart City Futures' that will lead to self sustained and a continuing improvement in co-creative working?*
- **The University as a Resource:** how and in what way can universities best go about using the resources at their disposal to constructively support a modern renaissance and local improvements for citizens and communities? This must include the need for revenue generation in order to enable necessary physical and virtual changes for improvement and the development of self empowering action learning for communities to give them even more confidence to be innovative.
- **Raising Aspirations and Expectations:** how can universities work with their communities to raise aspirations and expectations, particularly for young people and disadvantaged groups?

\*Kandu is a national voluntary sector organisation whose largest area of concern is re-engaging some of the most disaffected groups. The Kandu Arts for Sustainable Development initiative is based in the Whit Lane area of Salford and gets 'youths at risk' involved in sustainable living, and gives them the need to re-discover their own worth and purpose, all through the power of the arts, and particularly film-making.

*Afternoon session with a local school*

With the help of the de Bono facilitator, Nigel Newman, the school children were asked to use the 'Six Thinking Hats' approach to give their views on the university and how they would like to see the relationship with their school improved.

Focusing on the 'green hat' here are some of the ideas the pupils came up with:

- Local schools should be better integrated into university life in a quite natural way: pupils should come to the university for the day to learn more about subjects and get careers advice; there should be more activities for mutual benefit of School pupils and University staff/students; there should be taster sessions and night classes; pupils could attend the university for part of their diplomas; university mentors; an activity week for pupils; a building competition, e.g. build a boat
- Universities reaching out to local schools: academics and students could come and talk to classes; students could come and help with teaching in local schools
- Ideas for the university itself to encourage more young people to attend: practicals in science; zoo or aquarium, zoology department; drama studio; scholarships; more facilities for science; more fountains; chill-out zone; recording studio with celebrity guests; offer lower-level courses other than degrees; offer unusual subjects, e.g. Russian, Equestrian.
- Community and sustainability: How can we all work together to help clean up the area and form a neighbourhood watch; solar panels; community service instead of coursework; get the community more involved – how would they like to see their communities developing, i.e. Sustainable? Tidy? Clean?

### **Range of people attending:**

In the morning there was an approximate 50:50 split between academics and community representatives. In attendance were community representatives from Salford and Manchester who have hands-on experience of empowering communities, for example, a youth club manager, a community involvement manager, etc. The pupils from the local school ranged from ages 13-14, and the head mistress and three teachers also participated in the session.

### **Future Engagement / Impact:**

The five overarching questions will be taken forward into further discussions on what plans professionals, policy makers and citizens would like to see implemented for the future of the Manchester City-Region. These questions will then feed into the final conference in July 2009. On top of this, academics will build on the relationships formed at the community empowerment day and work together to address local issues. For example, a few of the community representatives were keen on the idea of setting up a local taskforce group with academics.