**Owls of Creative Evaluation**

Connected Communities Research Conference

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Capturing the value of engagement and consultation for the public sector, with the communities with which they work, is both critically important and rare. Constructive, practical and reliable evaluation of consultation is challenging. However, there is an increasing need to better demonstrate the return on investment of such approaches for purposes of transparency, suitability and effectiveness of chosen methods, as well as articulating impact better. Previously, evaluation approaches have followed traditional methods such as surveys, focus groups and interviews. While such approaches are structured and capture key evaluation data, their appeal and effectiveness can suffer from not providing an engaging experience for participants. Also, they risk turning good indicators into definitive targets, which then become unrepresentative under a ‘tyranny of measurements’. So we are exploring the use of evaluation through new frameworks of co-design and consultation. They are intended to capture the effects of impact in a format meaningful to research and communities making evaluation part of the collaborative process. Our evaluation framework is creative, innovative and engaging; and aims to be designed unobtrusively within our consultation tools. We have scoped sev­eral short and major projects in part­nership with public sectors, gaining an understanding of what difference and impact our partners wish to gain, informing our design of evaluation processes. Owls are a good indi­ca­tor of a healthy for­est and ecosys­tem. How­ever, the owls should only be mea­sured as an indi­ca­tor of a healthy for­est, rather than a tar­get to work towards. So, we hope to identify ‘Owls’, a set of indicators that is representative of the collective wellbeing. We offer these contributions to the field of evaluation as evidence of the value of non-traditional qualitative processes. We present the understanding and tools developed and conclude with the challenges encountered.

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