

# participle

## **Who we are**

*participle* is a ground breaking social enterprise, designing the next generation of public services. We work in partnership with citizens, private, public and third sector organisations, innovating practical, affordable solutions to the big and seemingly intractable social issues of the 21st century.

We design public services that provide systemic solutions not only to the persistent problems of inequality, poverty and exclusion but also to the 'new' problems resulting from changing demographics, new lifestyles and global resource constraints.

We have a unique approach to problem solving based on:

- A distinctive point of view of the world, the nature of the problems and the elements that will be critical to sustainable solutions; these include mass participation, a preventative approach and distributed support systems
- A distinctive set of skills and multi-disciplinary way of working, bringing together designers and policy thinkers to work simultaneously from the perspective of the individual citizen and the system
- A proven ability to apply our skills and point of view to big systemic issues and develop solutions that work in practice

Our organisation builds on the track record of a small core team and expert network. In the UK we have raised £14 million over the last 5 years and delivered a series of demonstration projects. Early successes have included transforming a 'failing' school into one of the country's top 20 most improved schools; a prototype prison which would reduce recidivism within the existing financial envelope; preventative health services which harness the power of small social groups to deliver sustained behaviour change. Visit [www.hilarycottam.com](http://www.hilarycottam.com), [www.school-works.org](http://www.school-works.org) and [www.designcouncil.org.uk/RED](http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/RED)

## **The problems and opportunities that we address**

We will focus on the 'new' problems we refer to above. These include: chronic disease and long term health conditions, learning cultures beyond the school, new approaches to crime and security, new approaches to community collaboration and social isolation and new energy systems.

These issues cannot be solved through traditional approaches to service provision and delivery since they depend on understanding individual motivations, behaviour change and the direct engagement of the citizen with the service. Our focus is on harnessing this engagement to develop systemic solutions that work at scale.

# participle

*c/o NESTA, 1 Plough Place, London, EC4A 1DE  
tel: 020 7438 2654  
email: [nan@participle.net](mailto:nan@participle.net)*

## **How we do this**

We are a unique hybrid: we bring together systemic policy thinking and transformative ideas with a project methodology which enables us to harness the broader creativity and latent solutions visible on the ground to service users, front line workers and communities: we call this transformation design.

Most attempts at innovation and service improvement start within existing institutions and ask how they can be reformed. We start from the individual, unlocking a unique set of insights and motivations, which we then apply to the broad systemic problems we are seeking to answer.

Our hybrid approach also means we test and scale in a different way. We rapidly apply our thinking and insights to the development of 'prototypes'. Prototypes differ from pilots: they involve early service models developed in situ, which are then tested and improved in rapid cycles, again in situ. This approach reduces risk and tends to result in new services that work and can be scaled as well as important new policy insights.

Our hybrid approach and our person centred starting point enables us to work beyond existing service silos, efficiently harnessing a broader set of resources contributing to the development of affordable whole system solutions.

This approach differs from that of think tanks, consultancy and design agencies. Think tanks contribute to leading edge thinking but typically do not have a record in transferring thinking into action, nor do they understand how to motivate behaviour change and encourage people to become participants in the problem solving process. Consultancy models are highly embedded within current institutional frameworks and boundaries. Design agencies have an important understanding of service experience and interfaces, but rarely understand systems and tend to have weak policy thinking.

## **How we operate**

We engage in three closely linked types of work:

### **01. Projects**

Projects based on the application of transformation design to key public issues are our core activity. Project work provides 'proof of concept': you will be able to see and measure the difference we have made at the neighbourhood level, in cities, rural communities and nationally.

### **02. Transformative Ideas**

We produce world leading, rigorous new analysis and proposals to influence the development of policy. Our thinking both learns from and feeds our project work, and is informed by the research and knowledge in academic institutions and public service organisations. We cannot over-emphasise the importance and unique value of this link between thinking and doing: we will be helping to develop policy, which is truly evidence based and grounded in practice.

**participle**

*c/o NESTA, 1 Plough Place, London, EC4A 1DE  
tel: 020 7438 2654  
email: nan@participle.net*

### **03. Transformation Design**

Our work is underpinned by a simple, highly effective design led process which we call transformation design. Transformation design provides the tools and methodology for our inter-disciplinary team and partners, the framework for defining a project brief, tools for a creative problem solving process and the methods for rapidly prototyping solutions (as described above).

### **Funding and Investment**

*participle* supports its project work from two sources. Project sponsors from the public and private sector each provide funding at the £500k level. Location partners provide seed funding and play an essential role in rooting our projects in real locations. *participle* core costs are funded by investment from companies and individuals who are pioneers in their own fields and excited by the opportunity to radically transform public services in the UK and beyond.

### **Team Leadership**

*participle* is being set up by three directors; Hilary Cottam, award winning social entrepreneur with Colin Burns, former MD of IDEO London and Charles Leadbeater, internationally renowned thinker and innovator. They are working with a small inter-disciplinary team that includes David Albury, former advisor to PM Tony Blair and Jennie Winhall, design innovator. They are seeking a fourth, Financial Director to join them.



#### ***Hilary Cottam***

Social Entrepreneur, DAVOS Young Global Leader 2006, UK Designer of the Year 2005, former Director of RED at the Design Council, former executive with the World Bank



#### ***Charles Leadbeater***

Writer, speaker and adviser on innovation, entrepreneurship and the knowledge economy. DEMOS Associate, former RED Policy Associate



#### ***Colin Burns***

Independent Multi-Disciplinary Designer & Innovation Consultant, Former Director of IDEO London, Professor of Innovation at Dundee University, former RED Design Associate

**participle**

c/o NESTA, 1 Plough Place, London, EC4A 1DE  
tel: 020 7438 2654  
email: [nan@participle.net](mailto:nan@participle.net)