

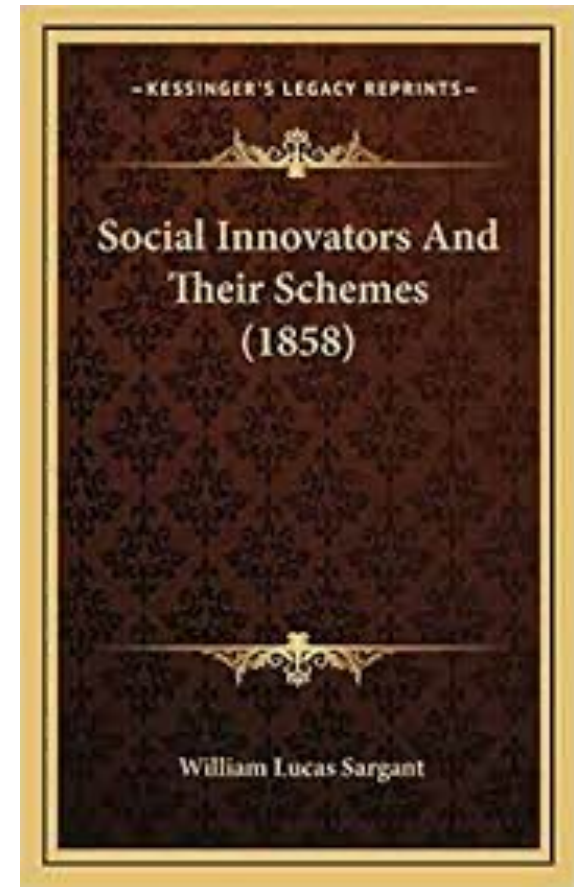
# Digital Social Innovation

**The next big thing  
will be a lot of small things.**

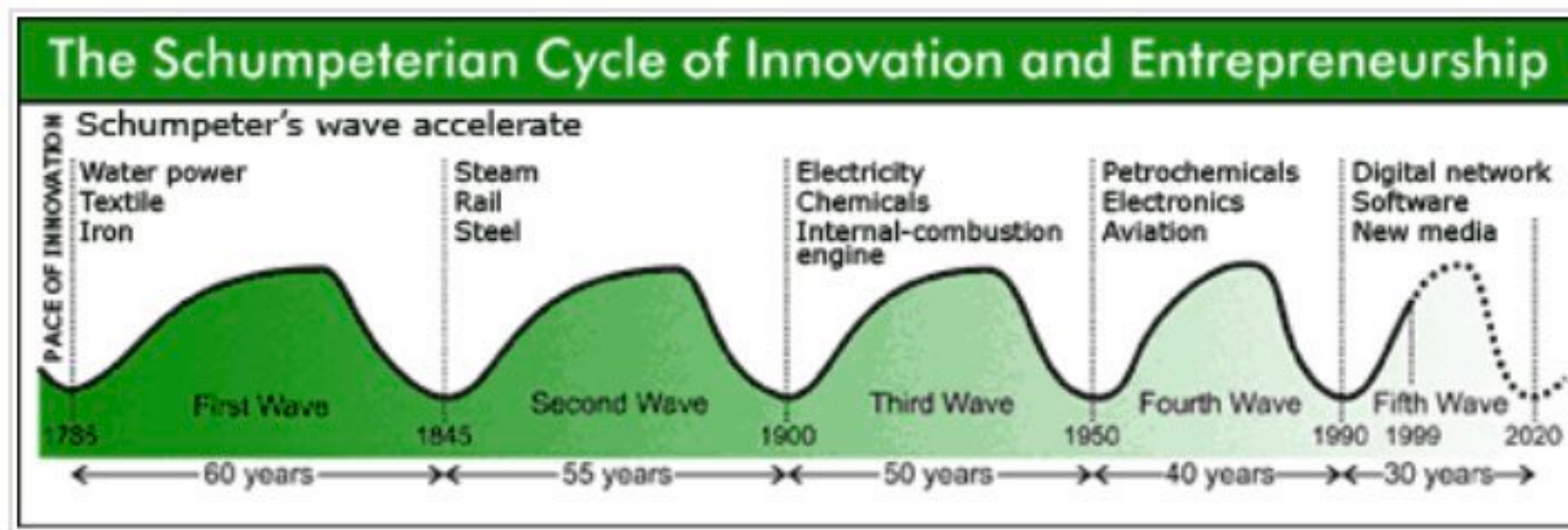


## Social Innovation (SI)

- The conceptualization of social innovation dates back to the Nineteenth Century, in France, when it was originally intended to criticise the naivety of early utopian-socialists who pointed out the social constraints of capitalist dynamics.
- In *Social Innovators and Their Schemes*, William Sargant (1858) explains SI emerges in periods of crisis, when generalised discontent produces a social turmoil and prefigures a transition from one to another organizational form.



- Following a first “subversive” phase (characterised by the fracture between emergent social needs of a vast majority of population and the scarcity of means to satisfy them) the concept of social innovation was adopted by sociology theories and associated with technological evolution.
- Since the early Twentieth Century, the concept of innovation entered the economy and market domain.



- After the II WW in the midst of the economic boom, technological innovation was reputed as the only driver of social development.
- But it in the '70s the concept became a label for the methodical quest for radical, collective actions alternative to institutional ones, led by the rediscovery of politics of everyday life and small-scale solutions





- A couple of decades later, the concept had become bound up with entrepreneurialism, increasingly embraced by governments, agencies and think tanks as a policy panacea for market failure and public sector reform.



- From 2009, the economic and financial crises, which unveiled the weaknesses of neoliberal systems and the fallacies of existing institutions, also affected the mainstream understanding of social innovation in search for emancipatory actions...

EMANCIPATORY POLITICS MUST ALWAYS DESTROY  
THE APPEARANCE OF A 'NATURAL ORDER', MUST  
REVEAL WHAT IS PRESENTED AS NECESSARY AND  
INEVITABLE TO BE A MERE CONTINGENCY, JUST  
AS IT MUST MAKE WHAT WAS PREVIOUSLY DEEMED  
TO BE IMPOSSIBLE SEEM ATTAINABLE.

MARK FISHER  
(1968-2017)



K  
T  
H





- Today, the definition of social innovation is not univocal, however, in general, it is described as “the creation and implementation of new solutions to social problems, with the benefits of these solutions shared beyond the confines of the innovators” (Tracey and Stott, 2017, p.52). It includes:

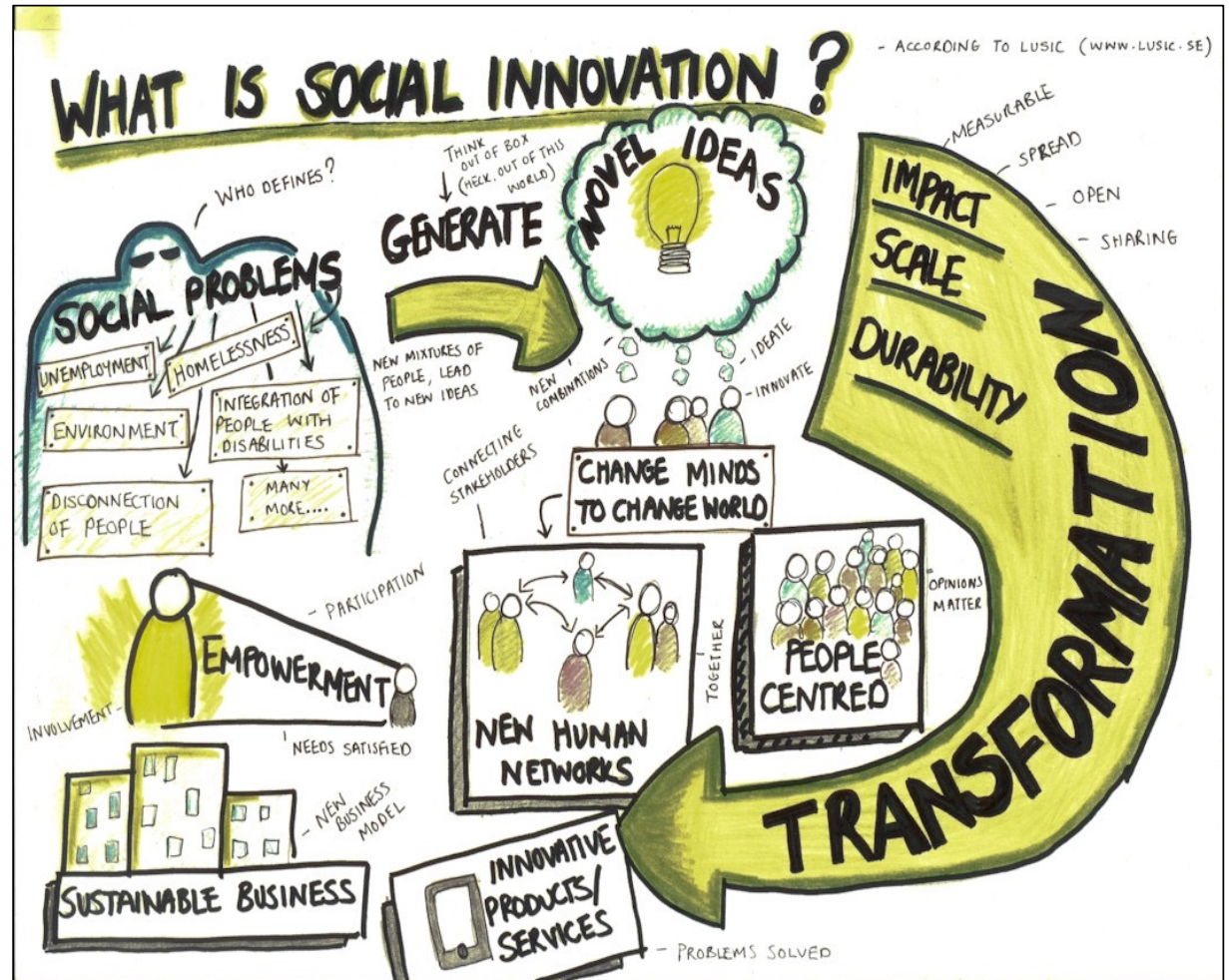
provision of new services or products (e.g. the opening of neighbourhood nurseries and neighbourhood gardens, programs that grant microcredit, technologies that help people with disabilities)

new organizational forms (e.g. the just in time models for social challenges)

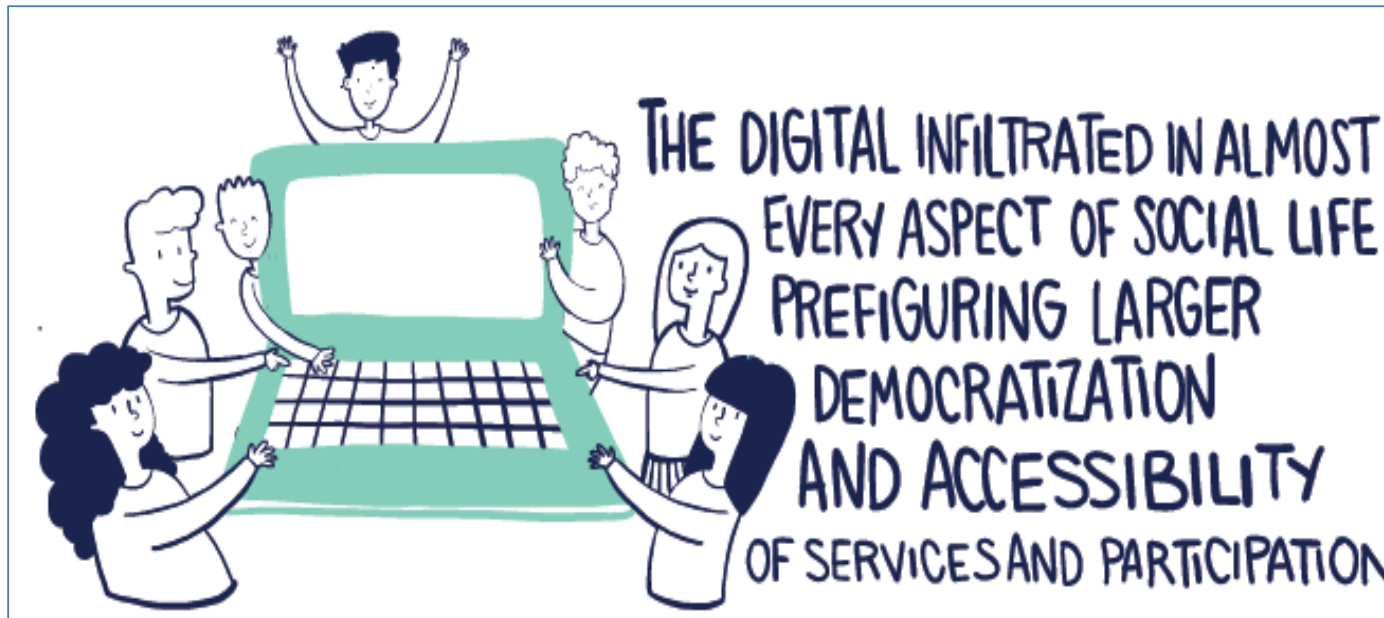
new rules and regulations (e.g. the application of zero-carbon policies or the incentives for energy communities)

new practices (e.g. the creation of restorative justice and community courts, the opening of a fair trade node in the global network or a time-bank)

- Overall, characterising traits of social innovation have been identified in the **novelty** of both the outcome, the methods and the process, the possibility for **scaling up** of innovation (supported by the convergent interests of different actors) and the continuous **adaptation** to the context of application



## Digital Social Innovation

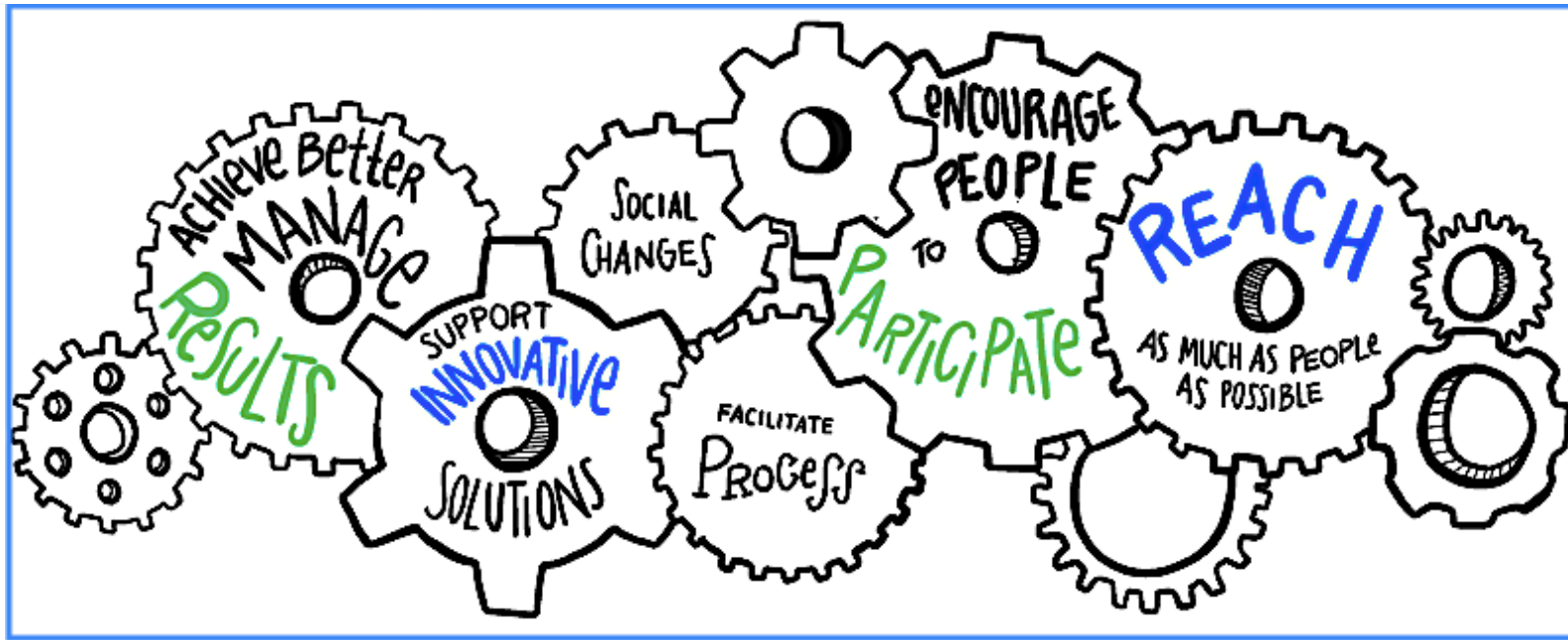




A form of social innovation endowed with the operational capacity of digital technologies that can tackle many of the current socio-political challenges (e.g. sharing open-source solutions and material, reducing different forms of pollutions, narrowing the democratic gap, promoting social inclusion, valuing diversity and cohesion, etc.) (Bria, 2014, Rodrigo, p.64; Ozman and Gossart, 2020).

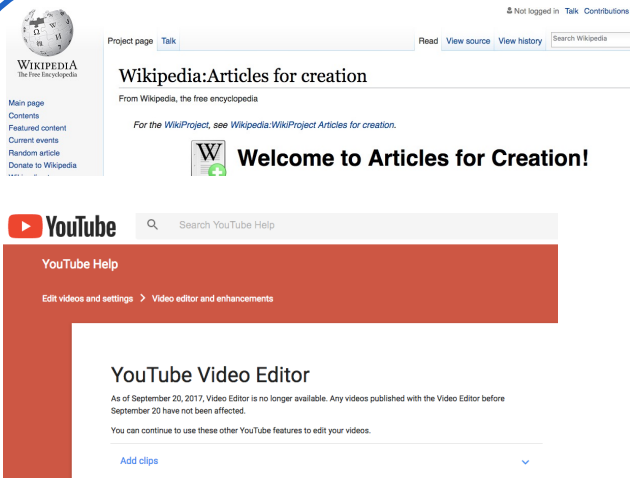


*DSI includes innovation initiatives which **would have not existed without the digitally connected devices in general and internet in particular; and that change the forms and functioning of society specifically in or through the digital***

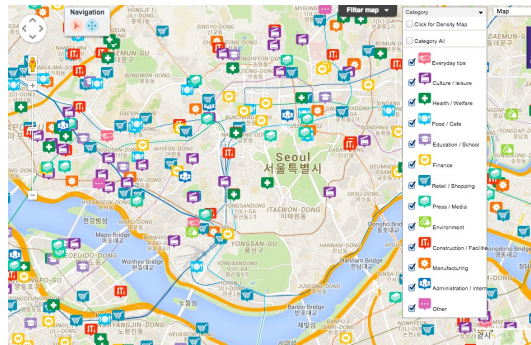


\* co-create new products, services or processes that may reconfigure social relationships

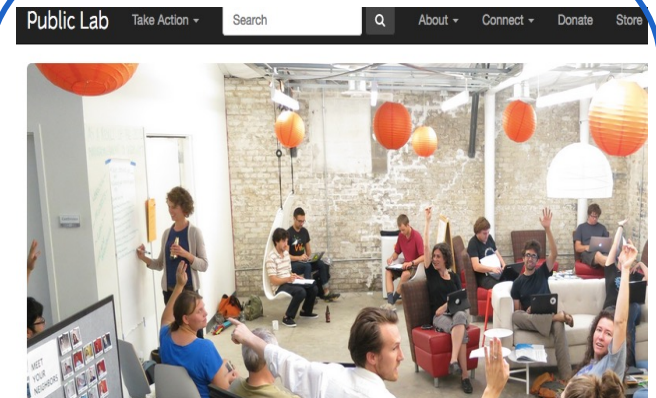
\* increase access possibilities and reinvent social technologies (i.e. the processes that make society as it is, and make it working as it works)



1. collaborative contents (e.g. Wikipedia), multiple content aggregators (e.g. Flickr, YouTube and Twitter), big-data analysis applications (e.g. data mining software; or cluster and social networks mining)



3. Social mapping: map creation, data management and storage, peer-to-peer and information sharing and improving maps functionalities



2. networked system of sensing devices, social media and mobile communication networks for data-processing, collaborative peer-production



Sistemi economici mondiali

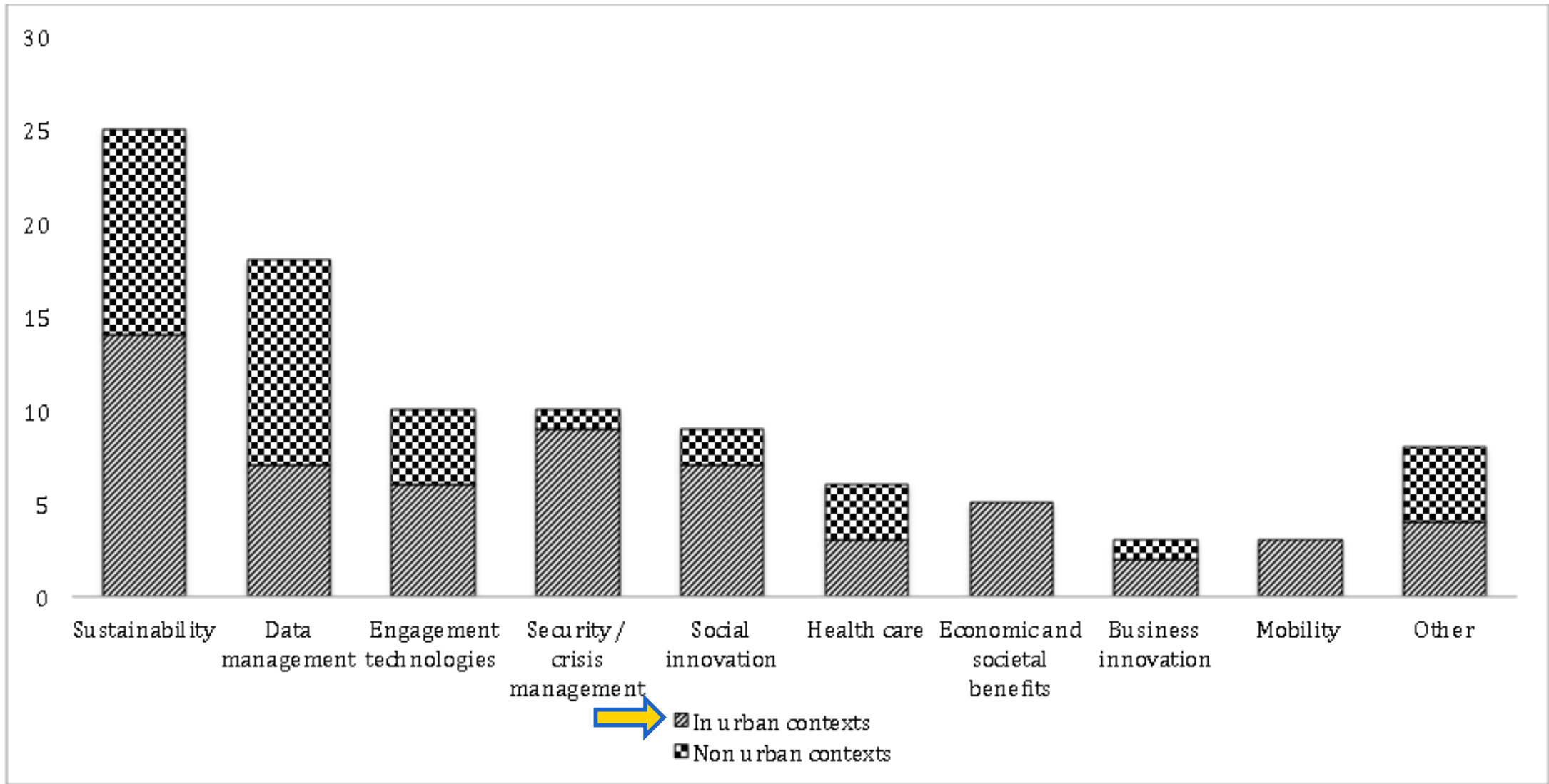
## DSI in the city



IN THE CITY  
NEW POSSIBILITIES  
FOR COLLABORATION  
OPENED BY DIGITAL  
TOOLS, PAVED THE  
WAY FOR INNOVATIVE  
GOVERNANCE  
OVER TRADITIONAL  
GOVERNMENT FORMS

THE NEW GOVERNANCE MODEL IS CHARACTERIZED  
BY DISTRIBUTED TECHNOLOGICAL AGENCY IN  
DEMAND-DRIVEN PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES.





*DSI in EU-funded projects*



Public administration, CSOs, private companies harvest data, information, proposals, preferences from citizens in problem-solving and decision-making



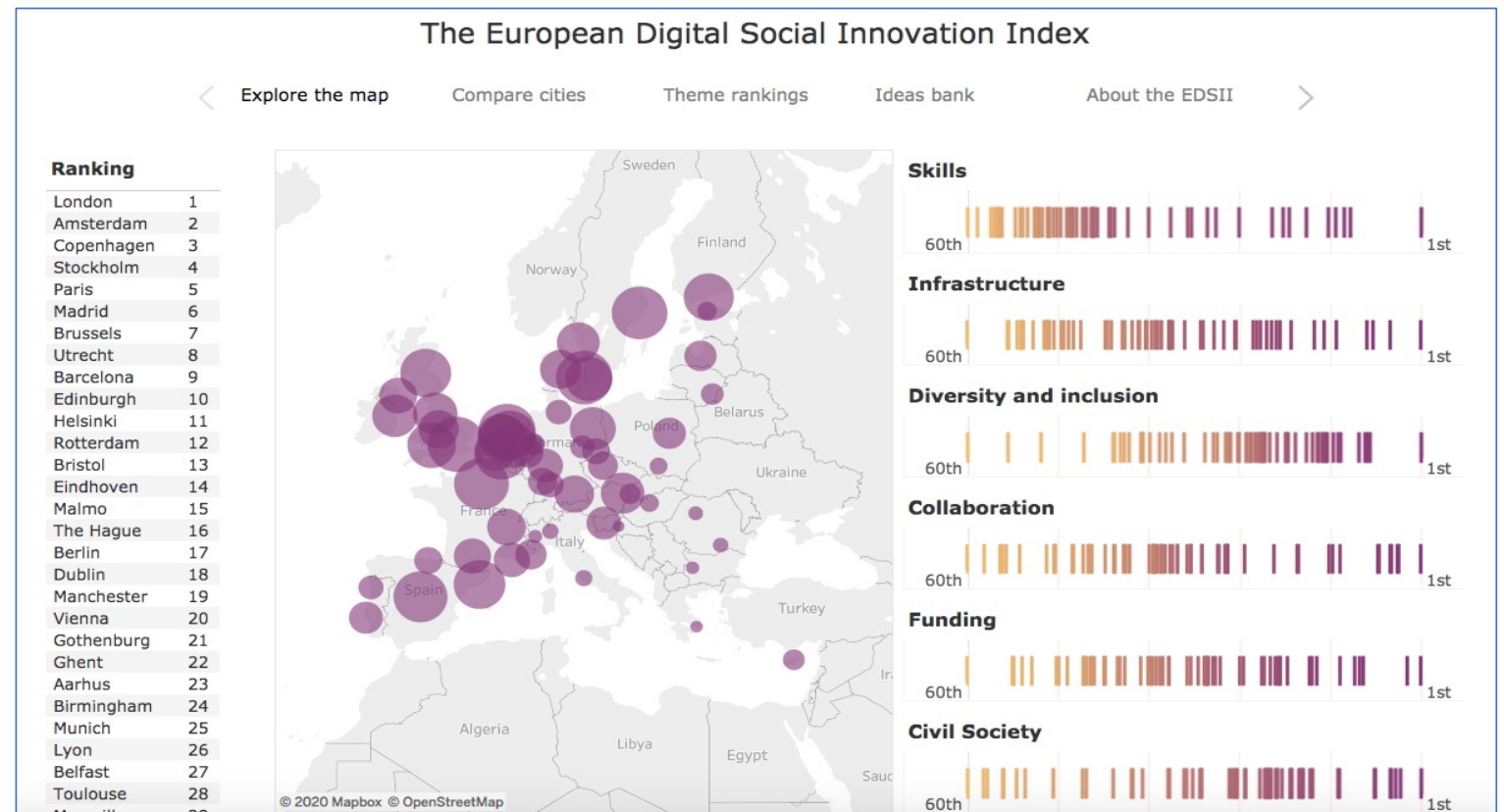
*via on-line platforms and personal technology tools*



to achieve common goals, such as making cities smart, sustainable and inclusive

## The city as a background for DSI (*Innovation Management and Regional Studies*):

- conditions that allow these initiatives to emerge and to bring successful production processes;
- economic impacts they generate on interested territories



<https://digitalsocial.eu/what-is-dsi>



**SISCO**DE

decode

SI drive

DIGITAL  
SOCIAL INNOVATION

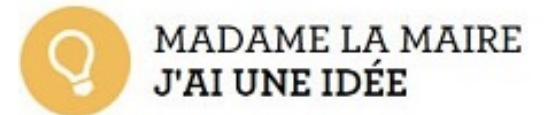
transformative  
social innovation  
theory



Hack the City



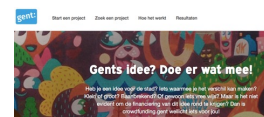
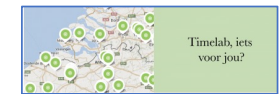
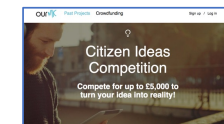
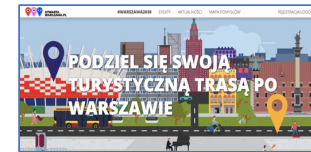
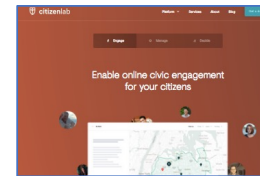
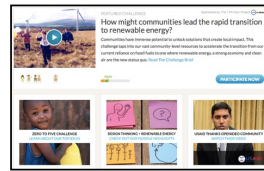
ourMK



Private companies and businesses

CSOs, NGOs, local associations

Public administrations



Data collection

Information gathering

Consultation

Fund raising

E-government

Idea suggestions

Engagement



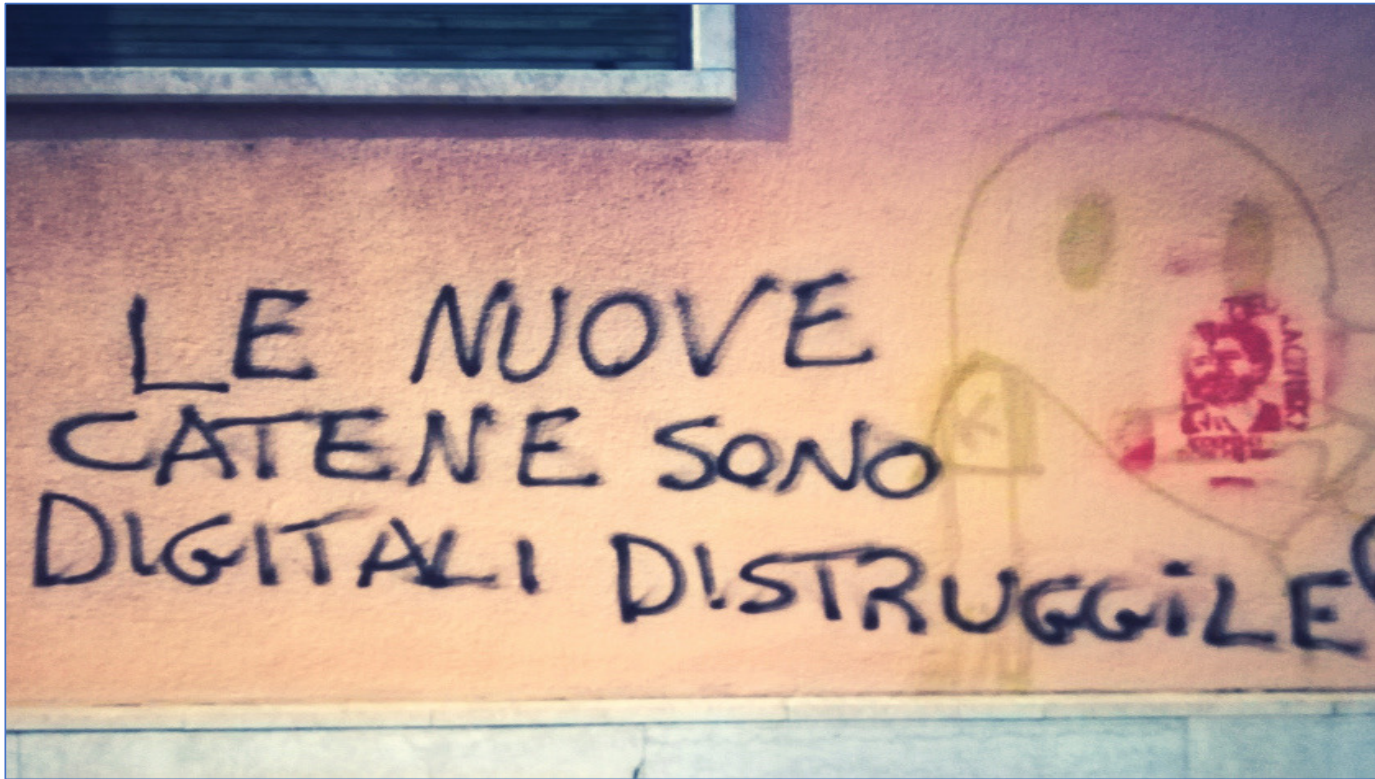






CRITICAL STUDIES OF INTERNET  
AND SOCIETY ARE ATTACHING  
ATTENTION TO THE ACTUAL  
POSSIBILITIES, INTRINSIC LIMITS  
AND EXTERNAL OBSTACLES THAT  
REQUIRE US TO RECONSIDER  
THE PROMISES OF TECHNOLOGICAL  
CITIZENRY

**Behind the background** (*Critical Geography*): the relationship between DSI and the multiple urban (social, political and cultural) spaces and spatialities



[New chains are digital.  
Destroy them.]

**Digital space** refers to “the instantiation of digital networks as internet exchanges, data centres, fibre optic cables and their landing sites, as well as [to] the contentious economic, social, political, and historical contexts of their geographies” (Ash, et al. 2018) and to the “spatialities of algorithms themselves, i.e. the geographies of their coding, circulation, and appropriation” (Ash, 2009).

**Digital spatialities** generated by the digital revolution spring from the encounter of society with space mediated by the digital tools and processes (Sutko, et al. 2010; Ash, 2009; Gairola and Roth 2019) (i.e. code/spaces, hybrid spaces, digiplace, net- locality, augmented reality, mediated spatiality etc).

## 1. Representation

- DSI processes underly specific *narratives* (e.g. the collective intelligence or enabling-technology...), *imaginaries* (e.g. the punk-internet activism or the EU Next Generation Internet), and *visions* (e.g. the smart city, the people friendly city, the resilient city ...).
- These representations, vehiculated by digital tools, shape urban spaces.



[Destroy the smart city]

DSI imaginaries  
& urban imaginaries

DSI approaches		
<i>Functionalist</i>	<i>Reformist</i>	<i>Revolutionary</i>
Top down Business-driven Centralised  Proprietary Efficient Market-led Made by a few for the market Held by companies Participation	Mixed forms Government-driven Central control, decentralised management Owned by institutions Inclusive Socially concerned Made by the public for the many Held by the public Collaboration	Grassroots People-driven Decentralised  Open Engaging Politically engaged Made by the many for the many Shared Empowerment
<i>Hyperconnected</i>	<i>Receptive</i>	<i>Do-It-Yourself</i>
Urban-technology imaginaries		

## 2. Reproduction

- transformations of the coded set of procedures that make the city working → how the social production of space is mediated through the social construction of technologies
- DSI = social technologies that embody collective mentality to mediate and produce the physical and social space



### 3. Power

- gainers and losers in the digital revolution → new geometries of power with their own spatial logics manifest in the city
- socio-political underpinning of digital governance : empowerment / disempowerment, privileges / exclusions ...



# CROWDSOURCING · URBAN · SUSTAINABILITY · GOVERNANCE

PROJECT BY CHIARA CERTOMÀ

VERONICA VALE by MINDSTORMS

## 1 TECHNOLOGICAL READINESS

DO YOU THINK GENT IS A TECHNOLOGICALLY READY CITY?

**GENT IS A PEOPLE ORIENTED CITY**

WHERE **FACE TO FACE** RELATIONSHIPS ARE MORE RELEVANT TO CREATE **CONNECTION**

TECHNOLOGY IS A **TOOL**

To:

- IMPROVE PEOPLE
- REACH
- CONNECT
- ENGAGE
- RELATE
- RELATION
- RELATIONSHIP
- RELATIONSHIP
- RELATIONSHIP

## GENT OF THE FUTURE

IN GENT THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING DYNAMICS, BUT ALSO SOME **LIMITS**...

... BUT DESPITE THIS GENT IS A VERY **PROGRESSIVE** CITY.

CONSEQUENCE OF PARTICIPATION: THERE IS NOT A REAL COLLECTIVE FEELING

## 2 PARTICIPATION

POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EFFECT OF DIGITAL TOOLS IN THIS KIND OF PROCESS

**CREATE AWARENESS**

**ENCOURAGE SOCIAL COHESION**

COLLECT IDEAS

DIFFERENT LAYERS OF INTERACTION

DIALOGUE WITH PHYSICAL SPACE OF THE CITY

CONSEQUENCE COULD BE:

INCREASE FAKE NEWS

OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND PRIVACY OF **DATA!**

THERE IS NO *human factor*

## 3 STEPS TO ENCOURAGE CITIZEN'S PARTICIPATION

- MORE INFORMATION
- GIVE THEM THE SPACE TO DO ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
- HELP THEM TO BECOME SUSTAINABLE BY THEMSELVES

THE MAIN PROBLEM IS THE:

FRAUD, NTA, ON

OF PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

TOO MANY PROPOSALS... FOR THE SAME SPACE!

WE MUST BE ABLE TO **INTEGRATE** DIFFERENT IDEAS

## THE ACTORS PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES

TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE

READY A VERY SPECIFIC GROUP OF PEOPLE:

TECHNICAL SKILLS, COMMUNITY, KNOWLEDGE, TIME, ENERGY

THANKS TO DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES WE CAN ENGAGE PEOPLE WHO OTHERWISE WE DON'T EASILY REACH

THE GOAL IS TO INTEGRATE **ONLINE AND OFF LINE CHANNEL**

**FUTURE**

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE? WE CAN ONLY SEE A PART OF WHAT'S GOING ON...

THERE IS A MUCH DEEPER SIDE THAT WE SHU IGNORE! CERTAINLY TECHNOLOGIES WILL PLAY A **BIG ROLE** IN THE FUTURE BUT WE MUST BE ABLE TO

EDUCATE PEOPLE ABOUT THE **CORRECT USE** OF TECHNOLOGIES

- AND - **CONTAMINATE CHANNELS**

## 3 GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE NEED TO BE:

**FLEXIBLE**

**MULTIDISCIPLINARY**

**TRANSPARENT**

BUT AT THE SAME TIME WE NEED TO **CHANGE THE CITIZEN'S MINDSET**

"THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT JUST A **BIG BAG OF MONEY**"

A NEW FRAMEWORK IN WHICH STATE & CITIZENS WORK TOGETHER ON THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

GOAL IS A NEW VISION OF GOVERNMENT AS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT, LOCAL INDUSTRY, LOCAL ACADEMY, CIVIC SOCIETY

**QUADRUPLE HELIX**

## SUSTAINABILITY

EVERYTHING IS RELATED TO SUSTAINABILITY

GENT OF FUTURE IS A **SUSTAINABLE CITY**

BUT THERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS:

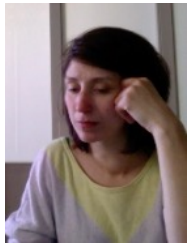
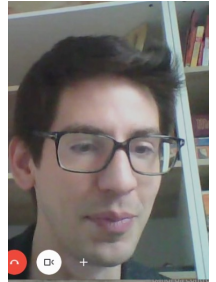
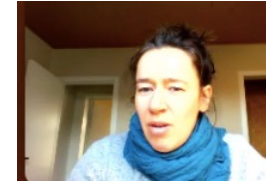
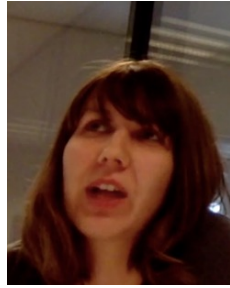
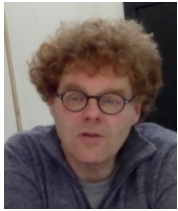
**TOURISTIC APPROACH AT THE CITY'S CENTER**

TOURISTS ARE A **GROUP OF INTEREST**

DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE PARTIES INVOLVED IS A **CONFLICT OF POWER**

SOLUTION: **CREATE A KIND OF OPERATING SYSTEM** TO GUARANTEE A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALL SIDES AND THEIR NEEDS IN THE SOCIETY.

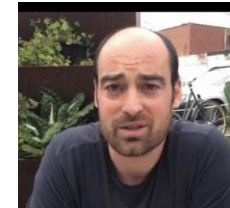
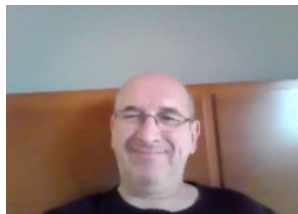
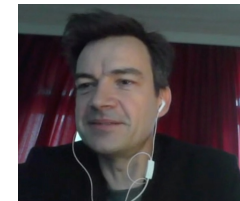
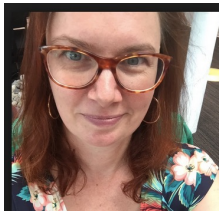
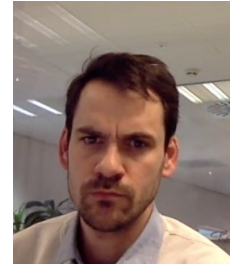
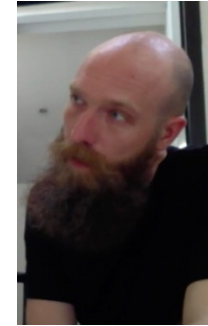




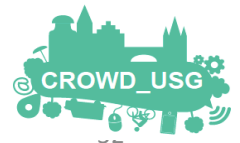
WHY GHENT? PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS?

TECHNOLOGY? GOVERNANCE?

Sustainability, technology & participation



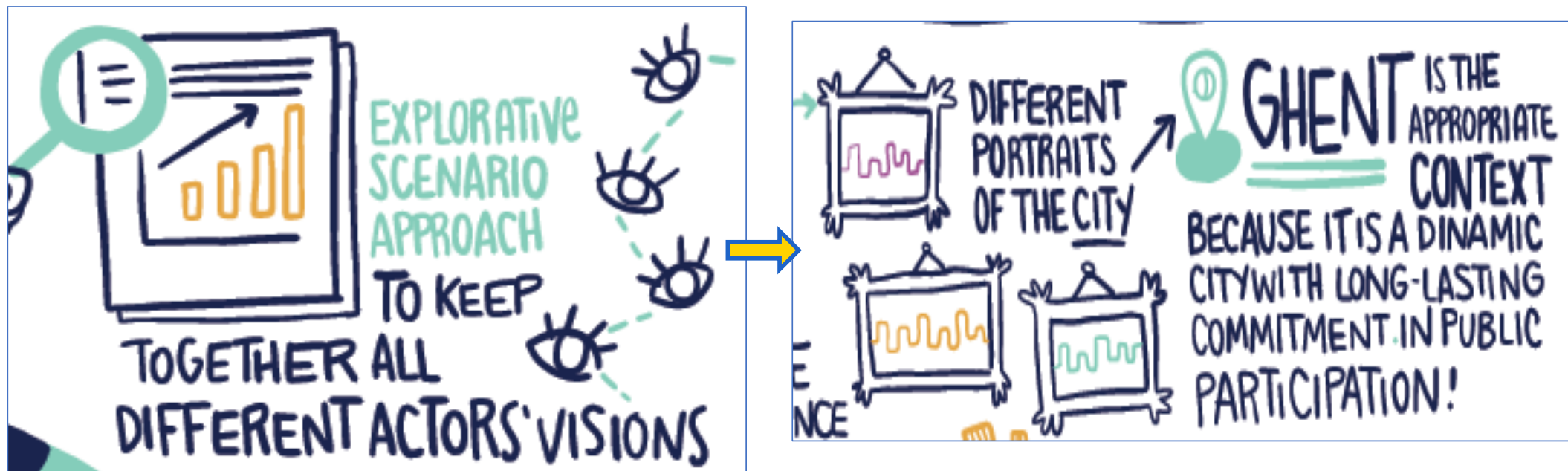
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VIJwjPb-JJ8>



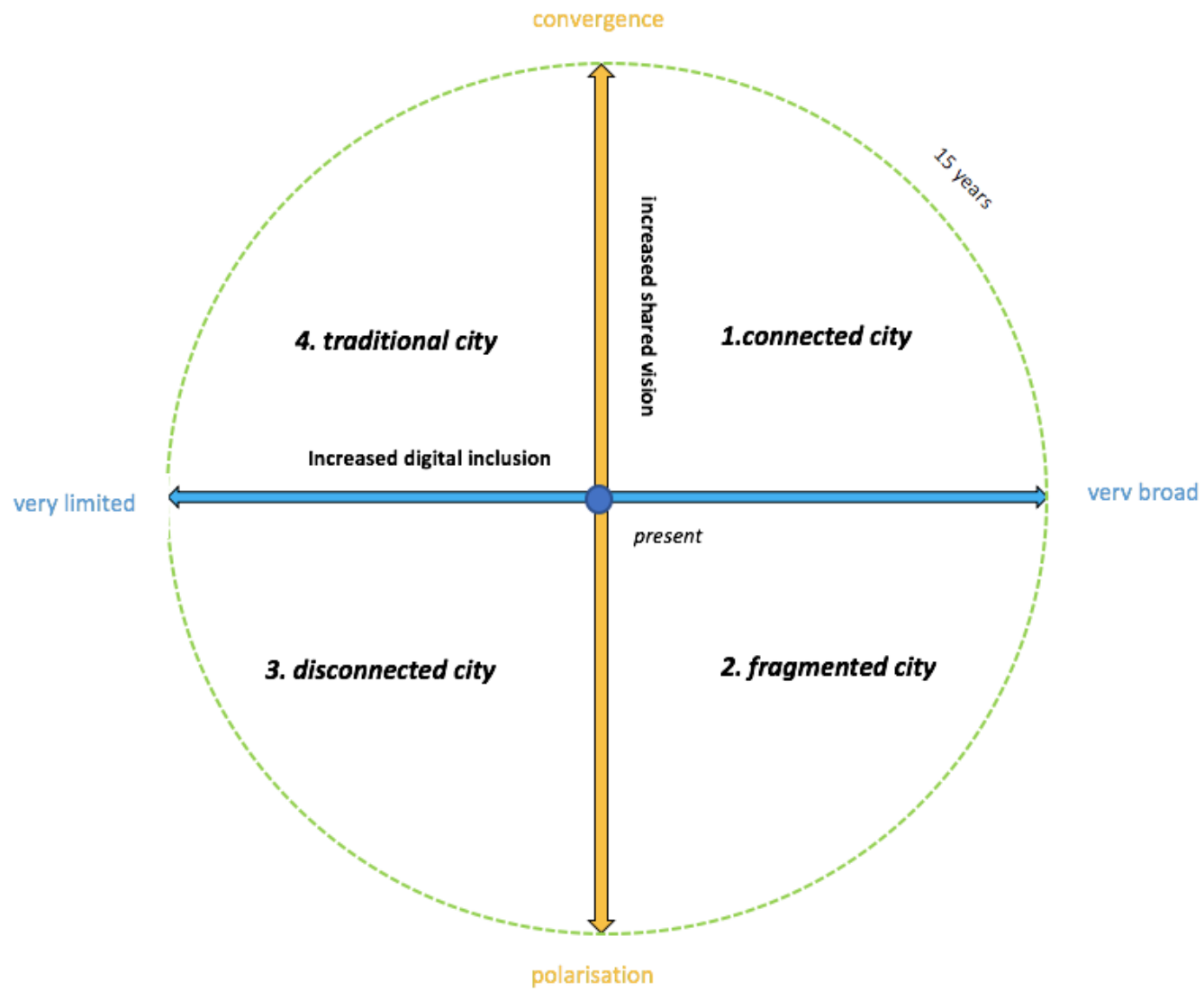


What scenarios can emerge from different choices related to the adoption of DSI processes in urban governance?

A collective investigation in Ghent









...to investigate DSI for urban governance "behind the background"

# 1. Meaning and forms of digital participation in social innovation initiatives

1.



2. Participation is a value-laden but content-free word:



3. The issues of technology fetishism and contested digital participation signal how difficult is to engage for the public good via the promotion digital technology-based processes; and call for a more attentive consideration of the trivial but often ignored truth that **technology *per se* is never (politically) neutral.**

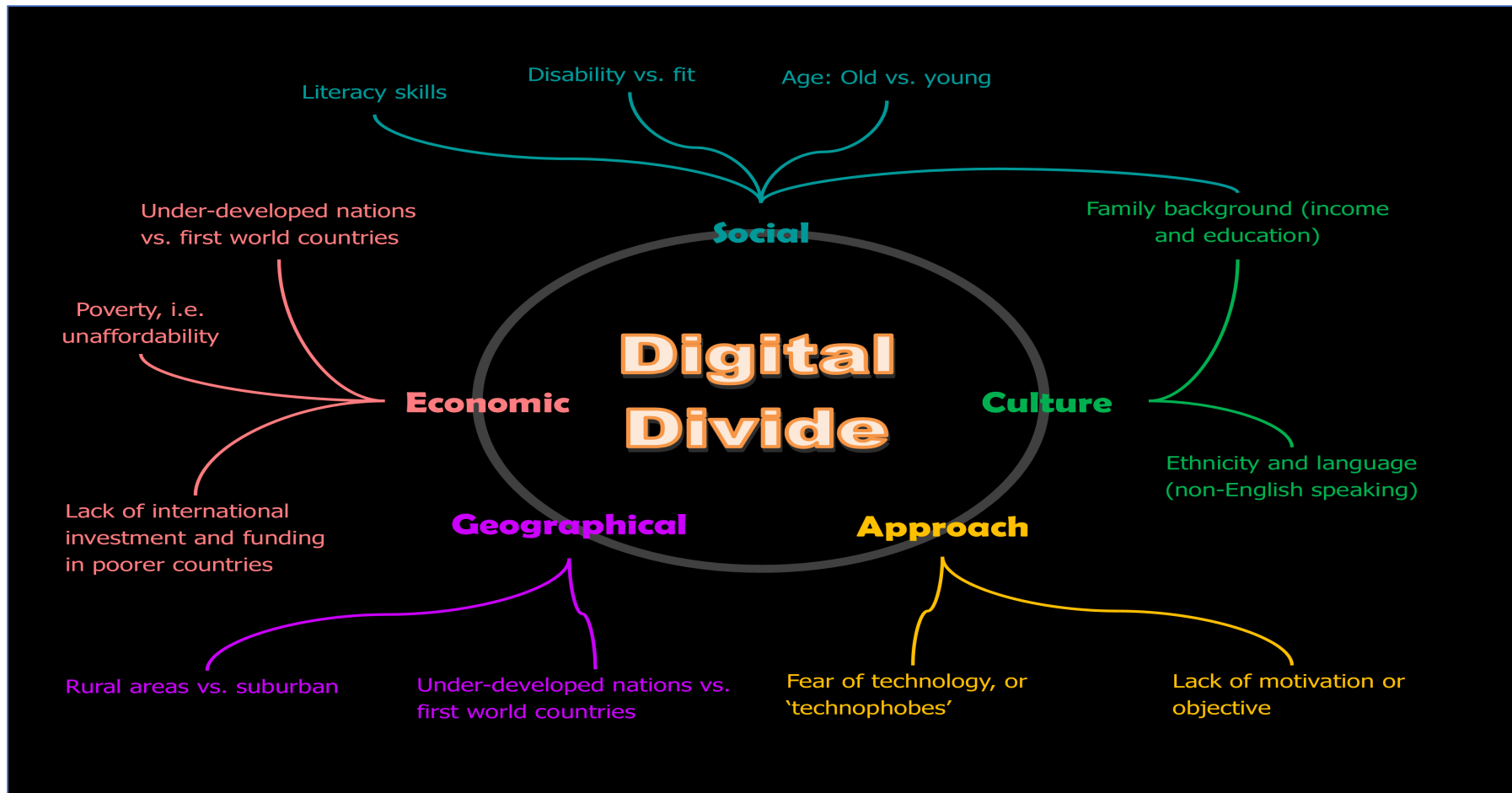
## COMPARATIVE CHART FOR PARTICIPATORY METHODS

Method	Objectives	Topic*				Participants	Time		€
		Knowledge	Maturity	Complexity	Controversial		Event	Total	
Charrette	Generate consensus among diverse groups of people and form an action plan.	+/-	+/-	-	+/-	Average citizens or stakeholders. Others give input.	1-5 days	2-3 months	3
Citizens Jury	A decision that is representative of average citizens who have been well informed on the issue. Aims	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	12-24 randomly selected citizens. Experts, stakeholders & politicians give input.	3 days	4-5 months	4
Consensus Conference	Consensus and a decision on a controversial topic.	+	+/-	+	+	10-30 randomly selected citizens. Others give input. weekends	3 weekends	7-12 months	4
Delphi	Expose all opinions & options regarding a complex issue.	-	-	+	+/-	Experts	Variable	Variable	1-3
Expert Panel	Synthesise a variety of inputs on a specialised topic and produce recommendations.	-	-	+	+/-	Experts	Variable	Variable	2
Focus Group	Expose different groups' opinions on an issue and why these are held (reasoning).	+/-	-	m	+/-	Stakeholders and/or citizens	2 hours – 1 day	1 month	1
PAME	Evaluating and learning	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	All stakeholders	Variable	Variable	Var
Planning Cells	Citizens learn about and choose between multiple options regarding an urgent & important issue. Develop action plan.	+/-	-	m	-	25 average citizens. Experts & stakeholders present positions.	5 days	5 months	4
Scenarios	Planning and preparedness for uncertain future. Vision-building.	-	-	+	+/-	Anyone	2-5 days	6 months	1-3
World Café	Generating and sharing ideas	+/-	-	-	+/-	Anyone	4 hours – 1 day	1 month	1

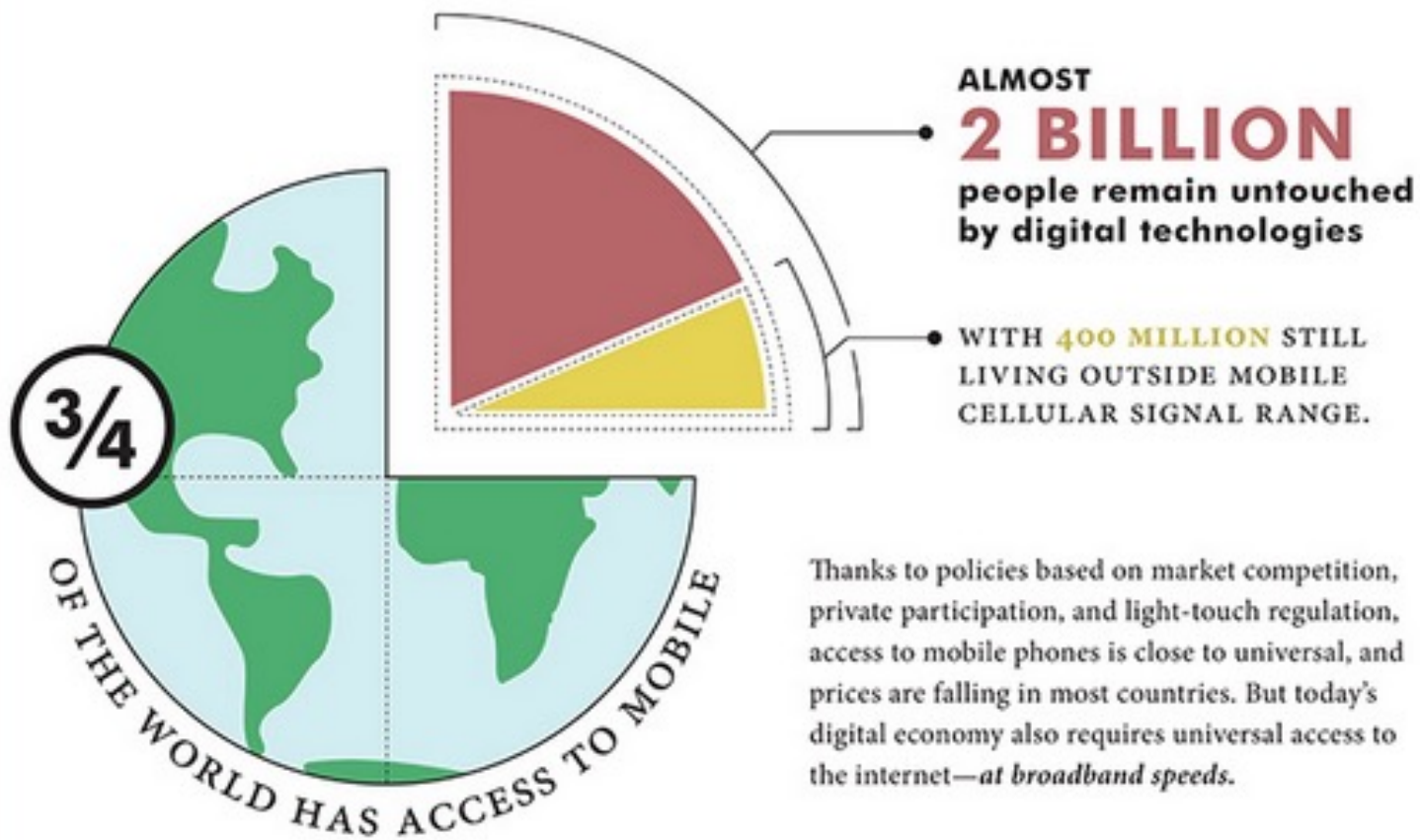
**Legend: Explanation of chart symbols:**

*Topic	+	m = medium	-
<b>Knowledge</b>	A lot of common knowledge exists.		There is little common knowledge.
<b>Maturity</b>	Most people have already formed opinions on the subject.		The subject is new; people are still forming their opinions.
<b>Complexity</b>	Highly complex or technical		Not very complex or technical
<b>Controversial</b>	Highly controversial		Not very controversial

Note: +/- means that the method can address subjects with either + or -.

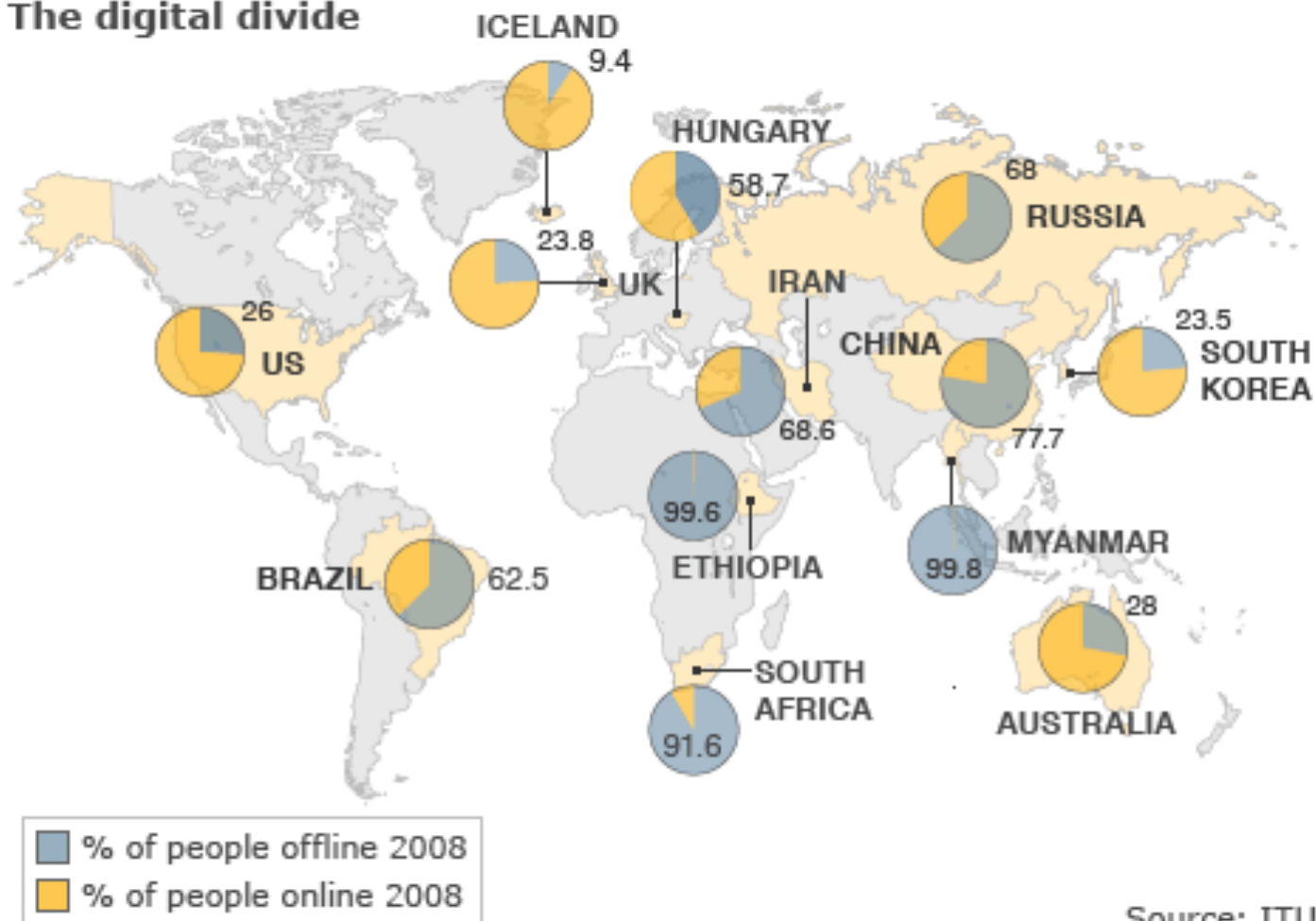


Graph: <https://medium.com/@ShwetaBarupal/digital-divide-a-critical-analysis-7156333237f7>



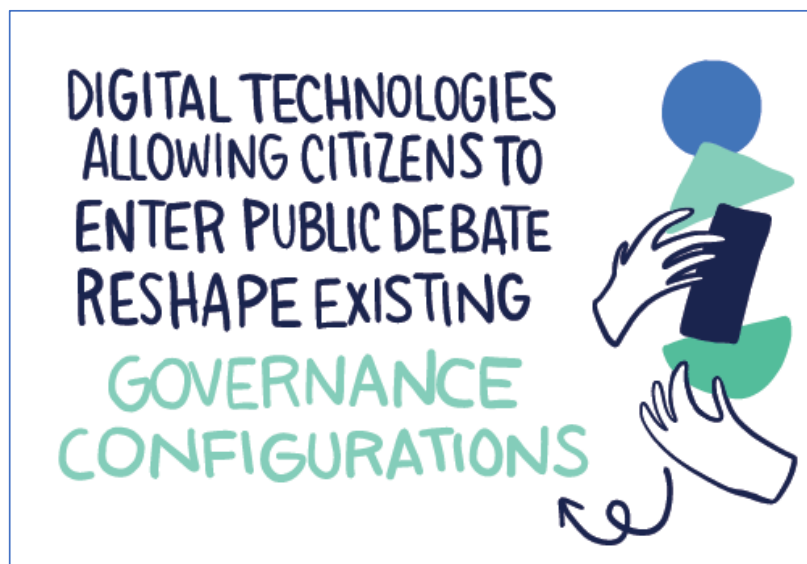
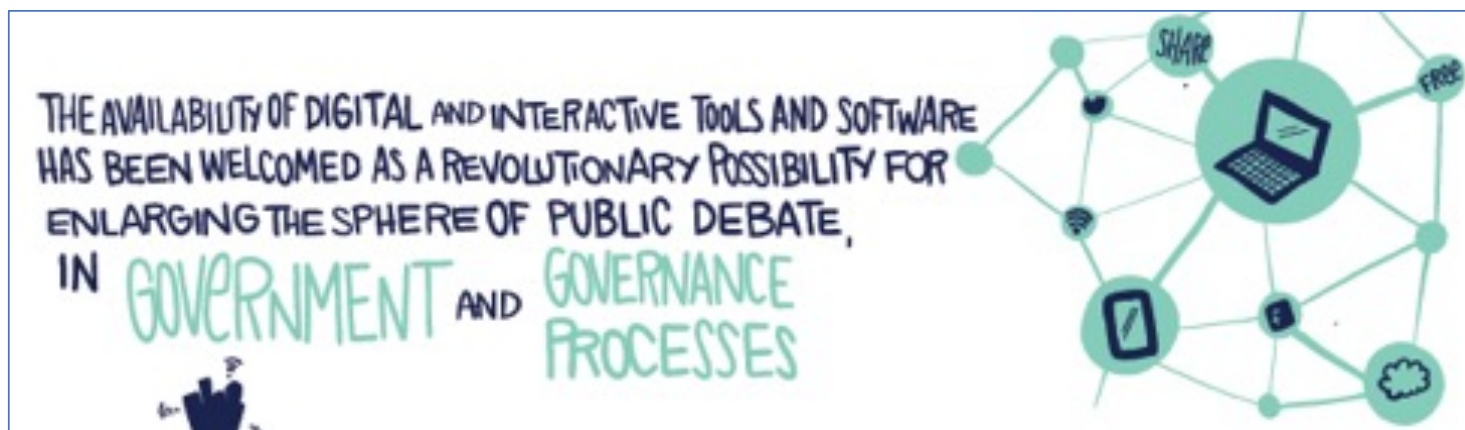


## The digital divide



Source: ITU 2010

## 2. Governing DSI



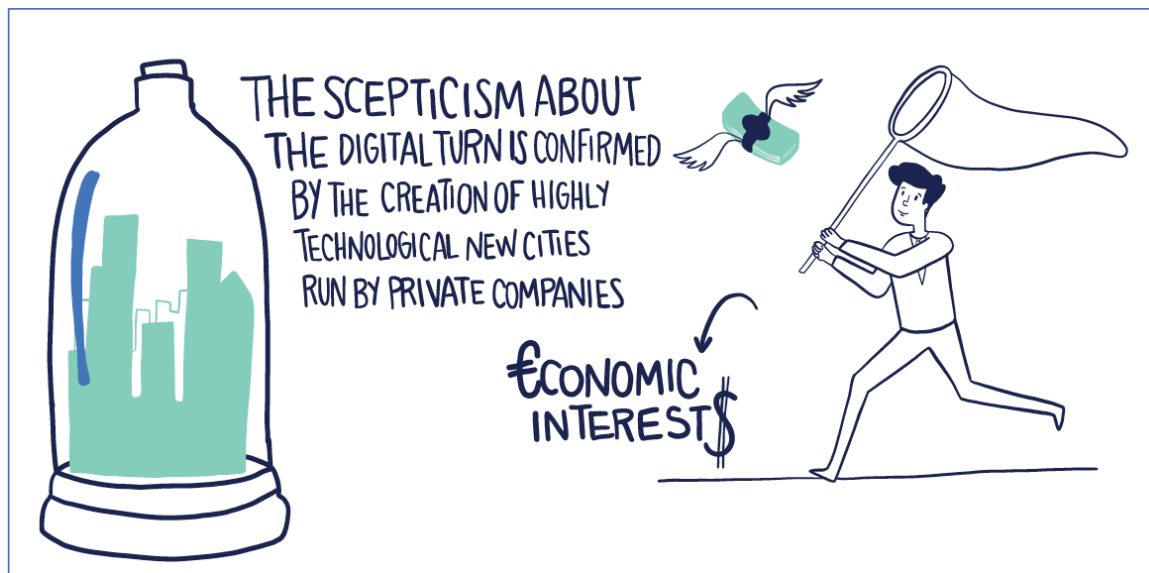
Data are the new oil to extract from the mass: putting the issue in term of privacy in a world society of exposure does not allow people to grasp the core of the problem. Data privacy is in fact a matter of social justice, not of information disclosure.



<https://www.raiplay.it/video/2020/03/speciale-tg1-ad78f734-b4af-443b-ad3f-08bf9194b9fb.html>

### 3. Disentangling the imbroglio of the alleged neutrality of the digital

1.



e.g monopolist appropriation, control of infrastructure and power imbalances, opinion polarisation and manipulation, (cyber)control censorship, limitation of freedom and social dissensus pigeonholing, trust and legitimacy

2.

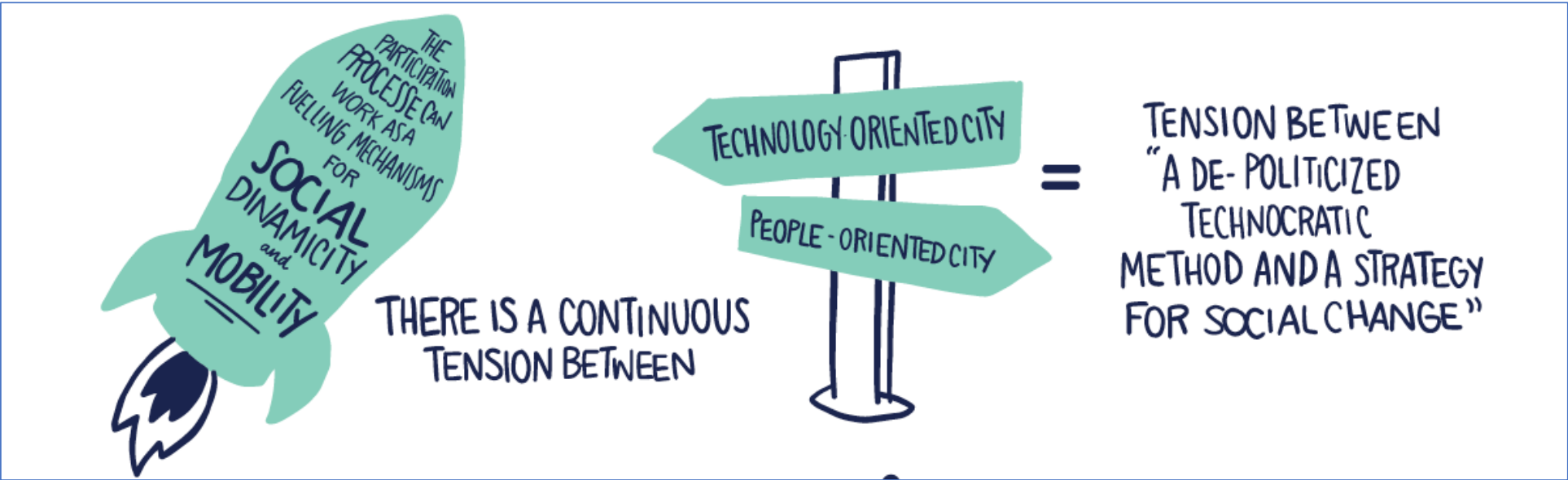
Digital inequalities, however, do not only refer to differentiated access possibilities. Most of the people, especially in the Global North have some possibilities of access to digital devices and to internet connectivity, but the quality of the contents (information, processes, services, personal connection...) they can reach is very low. As in the food sector, already existing social, economic, political, educational, cultural disparities make most of the people only able to get junk digital contents.

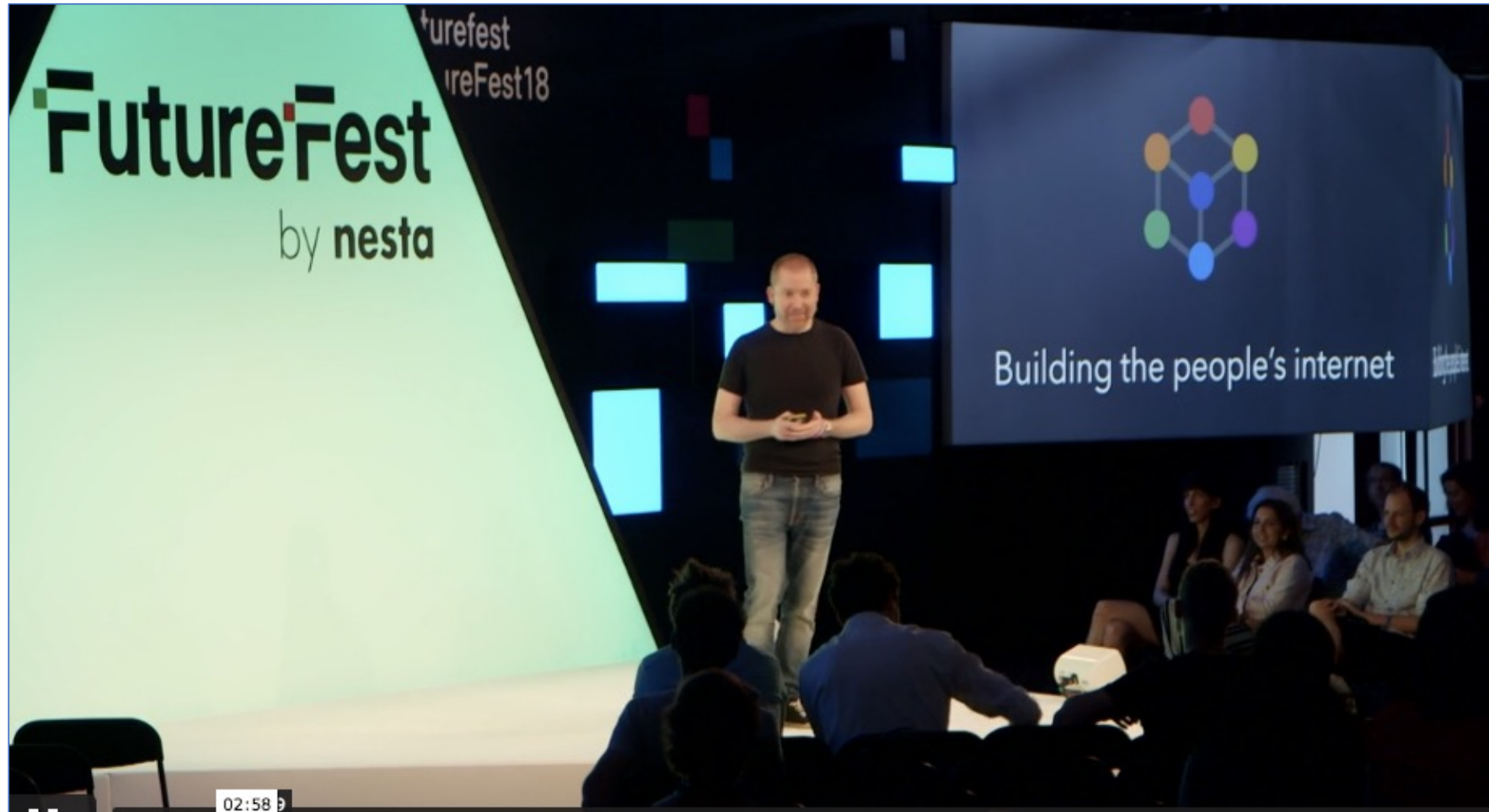
3. The digital dimension is the new battleground where the struggle for a more equal, democratic and inclusive society is fought

THE MAIN ISSUE AT THE STAKE  
IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IS  
**EMPOWERMENT\***



[\* THE HANDING OVER THE POWER TO  
THOSE WHO ARE NOT IN POWER.]





VIDEO <https://vimeo.com/285079002>