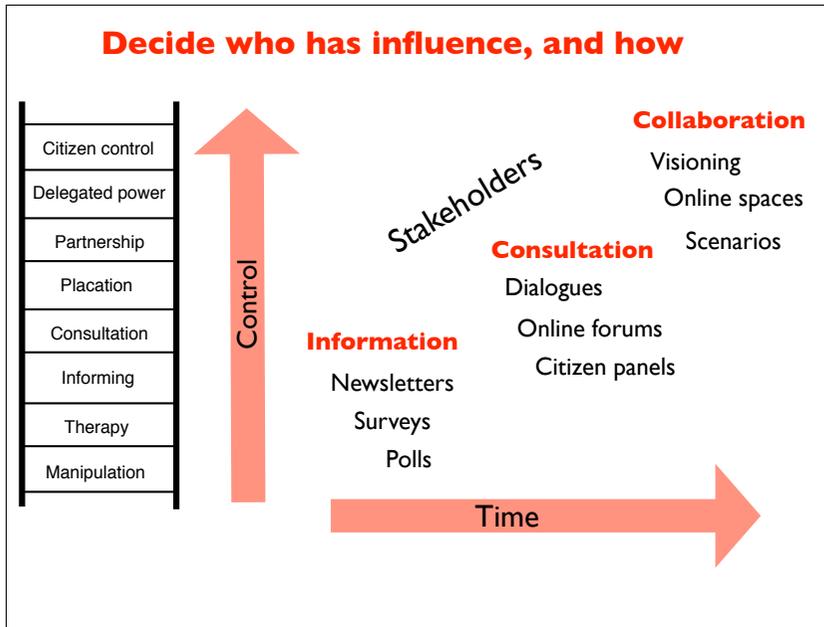




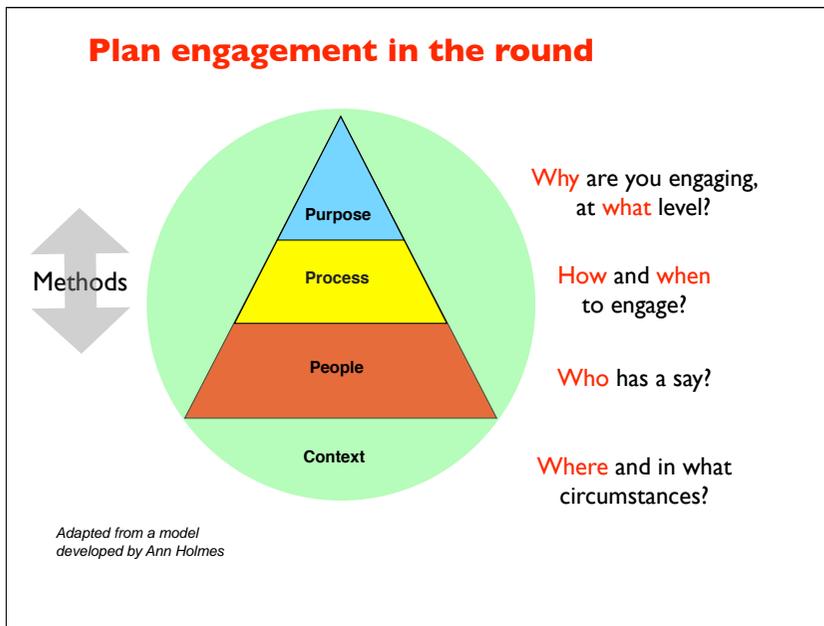
Public agencies want to engage stakeholders to deliver improved services and projects ... but have to overcome the cynicism of participants. This presentation and more by David Wilcox at <http://partnerships.typepad.com/civic/>. [david@partnerships.org.uk](mailto:david@partnerships.org.uk)



When faced with the need to engage different interests, the temptation may be to jump straight to methods. But how do you choose? It will be necessary to plan how to engage a range of stakeholders, over time, using different methods.



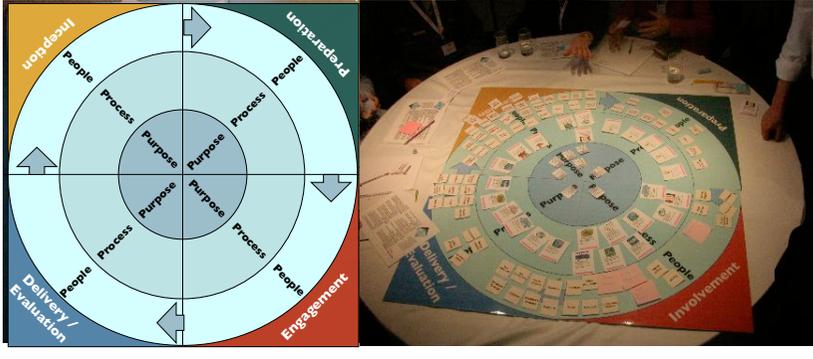
Sherry Arnstein's ladder of participation (1969) - highlights level of control. We can simplify that and use it to categorise methods - whether online or off. Different interests may seek - or be offered - different degrees of influence.



Methods are only part of the mix. This triangle, developed by my wife Ann Holmes, emphasises that you should start with the purpose, then consider who will have a say, and finally think about process - the methods and stages. Everything is influenced by context. More at <http://rainbow-plus.com/>

## Use the engagement game

Four teams work through engagement stages, with cards for **people** and **methods**, after defining the **context** and **purpose**



Theory is fine - but how do you put it into practice? The Department for Constitutional Affairs has funded Drew Mackie and David Wilcox to create a game for planning engagement processes, based on the the “triangle” model. It means key stakeholders can join in the planning process. More about games at <http://usefulgames.co.uk/main/>

## But there are still problems....

Just ticking the box

Getting beyond “usual suspects”

Doubts about delivery

Lack of trust

**Technology can help, if not always in the ways we expect**

Many participation processes – how ever well planned – face problems. Technology offers additional tools – but it also provides a way of changing the “official” style and culture by building trust through openness and reach.

## Approach 2 - change style, not just the tools

Formal, official



Informal, personal

Methods  
Guidelines  
Assessments  
Evaluation  
Coordination  
Multi-agency working  
Frameworks

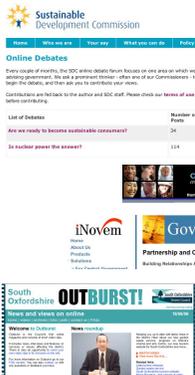
Conversations  
Stories  
Authenticity  
Trust  
Openness  
Honesty  
Relationships

.... if agencies don't, people will themselves

Engagement is about relationships, and those depend on trust. This is developed through openness, honesty and authenticity, built on day-to-day conversation and stories. New technologies can help by creating a more open approach – and scope for personal publishing. This will only happen if used in conjunction with other methods – because online participants will be in a minority.

## The changing landscape

Official  
Controlled



Intermediary  
Contained



Personal  
Connected



Can public agencies develop places of trust, dialogue and collaboration ... or will people prefer to create their own?

Online tools and culture are changing the engagement landscape. Agencies must continue to develop online consultation and collaboration ... but inevitably their methods will reflect their culture. Intermediaries can offer trusted spaces – some national, some local. But if people want their own voice they can now publish their own text, audio and video using commercial or nonprofit tools. The ability to tag and aggregate items means individual voices can have global impact. It isn't either-or. We need all the tools.

## Suggestions

- Choose methods last: Purpose, People, Context - then Process
- Map methods to Inform, Consult, Collaborate. Mix online and offline.
- Develop key relationships early
- Use openness and reach to build trust
- Integrate personal media - blogs, video

In summary: think first about what you are trying to achieve, who that will involve, how much influence they will have, and the context in which you are doing this. Then choose methods, depending whether you aim to inform, consult or collaborate. Consider involving key interests early in planning engagement. Use the strengths of technology to build trust – openness, reach, flexibility. Look at what’s happening in the mainstream, where people are using personal technology to create online identity and voices.