

# Co-designing with young people IRL (in real life)





**How co-design builds  
agency and fosters  
community-led  
participation.**

# Overview

1. **Why** we need new ways to engage young people
2. **How** to increase the agency of young people through co-design
3. **Benefits** for young people, institutions and communities

**We put young people at  
the centre of complex  
problems to design the  
future.**

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# YLab model



We employ young people with **diverse lived experience**



We give them a **leg up** with **learning and development**



We **connect them with clients** to solve complex problems

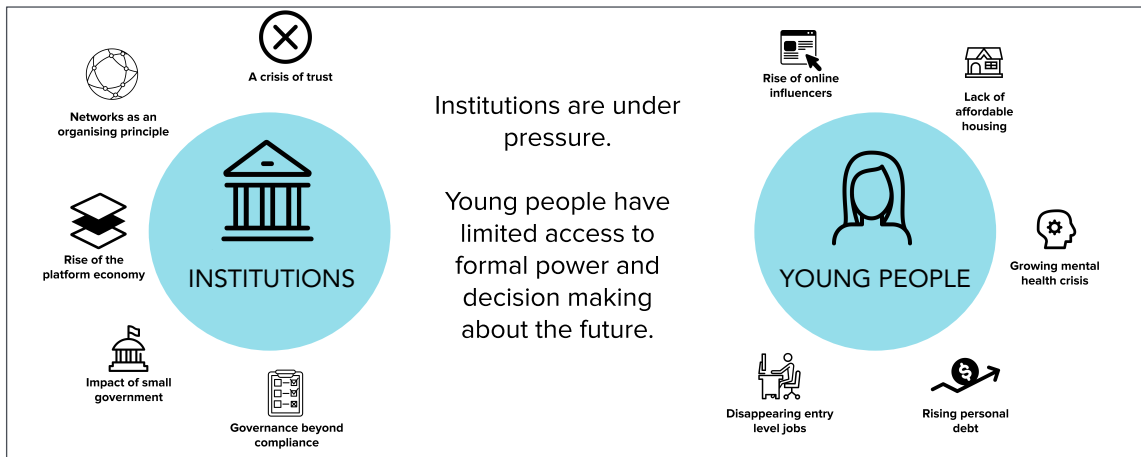


We do it all using **systems thinking** and **co-design**

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City of Parramatta's partnership with YLab was part of a long term commitment of council to empower and collaborate with young people who live, work and play in the area. This partnership involved giving ownership of 2018 Youth Week activities to young people, and organisations working alongside them.

# The challenge



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Taking a step back, let's take systems level view of why new ways to engage young people are needed.

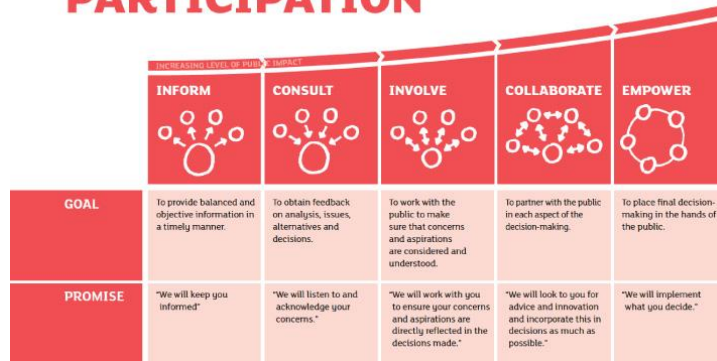
- Challenges facing institutions
- Challenges facing young people
- Local context of City of Parramatta and young people who live, work and play in the area such as higher unemployment.

Tackling these challenges requires increasing youth agency and ownership to unleash the insights, fresh ideas and capabilities of young people into problem solving.

# What is Participation?

Source: Sustaining Community, <https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2017/02/14/spectrum-of-public-participation/>

## IAP2 SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION



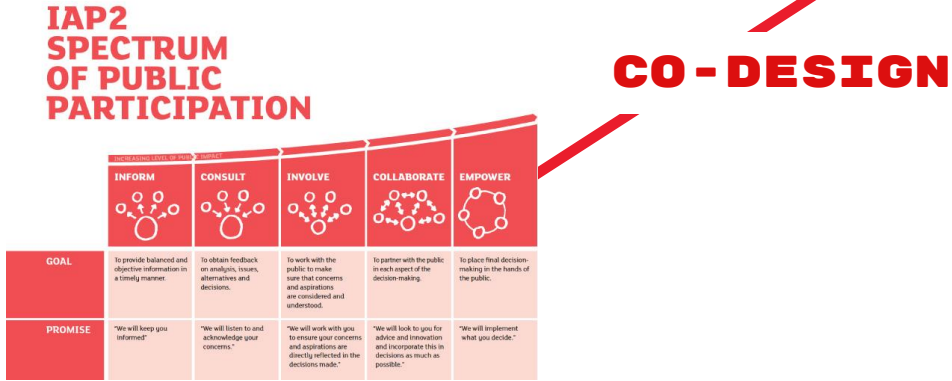
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Explore the difference between youth participation and youth agency by introducing the IAP2 spectrum of public participation.



# Beyond empowerment..

Source: Sustaining Community, <https://sustainingcommunitywordpress.com/2017/02/14/spectrum-of-public-participation/>



(c) International Association for Public Participation [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org) (Source: [Place Speak](#))



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A new stage beyond empower is ‘co-design’ which not only includes placing the final decision making in the hands of the public but involves them to co-lead the entire process from start to finish.

The ‘co-design youth week project’ built on the existing work of the CPD team to involve and collaborate with young people through various opportunities. They could see how these partnerships were already improving the quality of their outputs and outcomes and wanted to experiment with handing over ownership of Youth Week to young people.

# What is co-design?



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YLab co-design process for creating system change:

- Helps to address power dynamics in groups e.g. starting in ‘philosopher phase’ to identify and unpack assumptions
- Enables unlikely collectives to work together through democratic processes and methods e.g. each of the phases values different archetypes (‘movement builder’ may create space for activism, whereas ‘magician’ may create space for entrepreneurial solutions)
- Includes co-design AND co-delivery
- This is a non linear process
- Three things we’ll cover in this presentation: Admiring the problem, building solutions and scaling for impact

# Admiring the problem.

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Think of a system you've used in your life that's been designed without your input e.g. school.

What didn't work and why?

How might your experience have been different if you were able to have input as both a co-creator and service-user?



Valuing lived experience is key to addressing the problem (school design in the previous example) because those who are entangled in a system and who wrestle with the problem every day have unique access to its rules, patterns and behaviours.

But valuing lived experience involves more than consulting with young people, in order to create a sense of agency effectively, young people need to co-lead the process of design and delivery with you.



# Benefits of valuing lived experience

Source: Baljeet Sandhu (2017) – *The Value of Lived Experience in Social Change*

## For experts by experience:

- **Connection** to community
- Develop / improve / enhance professional skills & abilities through **meaningful activities**
- **Equality and dignity**, self-determination, value and respect
- The right to participate in decisions that affect their lives as **valued citizens within society**.

## For LGAs and social sector:

- Bring **policy issues to life** by illustrating real life challenges
- **Help set priorities, identify issues and outline solutions**, which might not occur to or be valued by those *without* a lived experience
- Improve **equal opportunities and representation** of people from diverse backgrounds and talents
- **Reflect the needs of communities** and benefit the communities they purport to serve.

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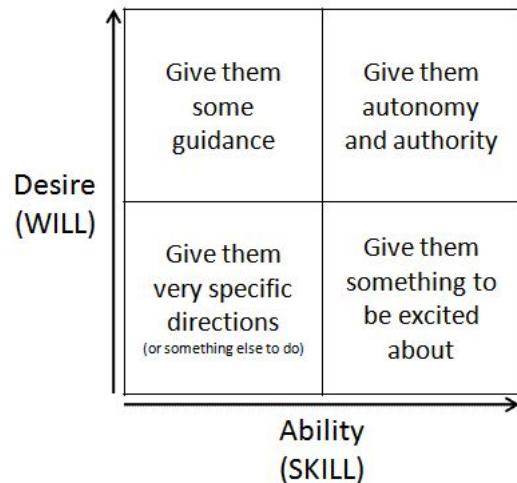
Alongside improving the quality of what's being produced and the likelihood of it being implemented or used, there are evidenced benefits for the individuals involved in the co-design process along with the institutions working alongside them.



# Challenges of valuing lived experience

Source: Dan Spira – <https://danspira.com/2010/04/11/skill-will-matrix-revisited-taking-the-employee%E2%80%99s-point-of-view/>

- Securing support for a new way of doing things 🙌
- Can take longer 🕒 (but saves time in the long run)
- Can cost more upfront 💸 (but overall outcomes cost less)
- Requires capacity to support with learning and coaching 👩🏫
- Recruitment can be tricky 📣
- Authentic facilitation is tough 🤝



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Yes, there are challenges, the good news is there are also ways you can design for lived experience to manage challenges e.g.

- **Securing support / buy in for the project:** Start with something small to build trust, enable people to experience and to learn what works best for your context
- **Time:** Implementing a co-design process and principles is likely to take longer but you'll save time building solutions which most benefit the community
- **Money:** Can cost more upfront - but you get more for the resourcing you spend by being intentional in the way you leverage additional community benefits e.g. setting learning goals and plans with young people upfront, and coaching them to demonstrate these to secure other opportunities such as employment, personal skills, confidence, community connection
- **Coaching:** Equipping young people who are experts by experience can be complex but there are tools to help design coaching and support plans for the cohort e.g. the skill / will matrix etc.
- **Recruitment:** Recruitment can be tricky but taking the time to build meaningful relationships with organisations and trusting young people to lead recruitment helps.
- **Authentic facilitation:** Ensuring interactions aren't tokenistic but also finding the balance in co-design e.g. deciding which parts of the project are designed as a collective and which parts are trusted to smaller groups or people to keep momentum going

# Building solutions.

Taking what you've learnt to inform the solutions that you build.



Solopreneurs (people who create and build solutions on their own) or groups which are too like-minded can sometimes fall victim to the [Dunning Kruger Effect](#), which is when a problem is perceived to be simpler to solve than it actually is. Bringing together the unlike-minded can help minimise the risk and ensure informed solutions are delivered to the community.



# Parramatta Youth Week



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## Council team

- Intreprenuers
- Holding space for all perspectives from council leadership to local young people
- Communication across council departments

## Young people

- 15 – 18
- Young people with diverse lived experiences



## Council leadership

- Providing support to council team
- Approvals

## YLab

- Co-design partner
- Strengthening capabilities of young people and staff alike
- Young people with relevant lived experience

## Collaborating organisations

- Co-design partners
- Auspicing for youth week projects
- Lived experiences of working alongside people and across community challenges

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What collective impact looks like in real life - the challenges and limitations

- People have different expectations and approaches (unlike-minded)
- People find it hard to sit in the ambiguity of the co-design process
- You have to be clear about any non negotiable constraints or else people will take solutions to the sky

The role that you have to play

- Bringing together the unlike-minded - bring the bridge
- Agile and adaptive mindset - the design process is non linear
- If you are super attached to your idea of outcomes and success you're going to be disappointed - the outcomes will 100% not be what you expected
- Flexibility and patience - Young people and organisations will dip in and out
- See the process as an opportunity for growth and development

# Scaling for impact.

Part 1 scaling for impact: Scaling for impact is the co-deliver part of the co-design process where young people are supported to **deliver** the solution.

Part 2 scaling for impact : If what you think success looks like is definitely not where you'll end up - how to measure success?

## Principles for engaging young people

### **Diversity**

Multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral and intergenerational teams

### **Dynamism**

Entrepreneurial, iterative, and lean way of working

### **Deliberation**

Apply data and empathy to understand problems and opportunities

### **Digital**

Combine engagement methods that are traditional and new, and digital and face2face

### **Development**

Transfer capabilities and knowledge to organisational staff as well as young people

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One way to measure success without predetermined outcomes is to evaluate project activities based on principles determined by the collective. This is an example of some principles we use at YLab.

# Co-design also prepares young people for the future of work



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Source: Foundation for Young Australians, <https://www.fya.org.au/our-research/>

1. Facilitation
2. Digital communications
3. Teamwork
4. Research & reporting
5. Critical thinking
6. Content production
7. Project management
8. Creative thinking
9. Presentation
10. Partnership development

**Enterprise skills** are transferable skills that enable young people to engage with a complex world and navigate the challenges they will inherit. For example...

Problem Solving	Communication
Digital Literacy	Teamwork
Presentation	Critical Thinking
Financial Literacy	Creativity



Increasing youth agency through co-design also prepares young people for the future of work:

- On the left are the top 10 capabilities YLab Associates (young people employed through YLab) and young participants in social change projects such as 'co-design youth week' develop.
- On the right are 'enterprise skills' the top skills employers are looking for ([FYA new work order research](#))

**Thank you**

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Check out the next session for a deep dive into how City of Parramatta delivered their 12 month youth week project - what worked, what didn't, the outcomes and what happened next!