

Understanding Future Citizens

NLGN and PA Consulting Group

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What is 'Understanding Future Citizens'?

- A research project commissioned by the New Local Government Network (NLGN) – part of the Commission for Next Localism – and undertaken jointly by NLGN and PA.
- Research has drawn on trend analysis and a scenario planning approach to understand the nature of relationships already emerging and what that might look like in terms of dominant or pre-dominant forms of **relationships between the citizen and state** that might exist by 2015.
- Our objective is to provoke thought and help councils answer two fundamental questions:
 - how can local government develop **social networks**, create **social capital** and trust to **strengthen communities**?
 - what new **engagement techniques, intelligence** and **feedback** can drive **citizen-led services** and open debate on the future of the local state?

Why look at the citizen-state relationship now?

The relationship between citizen and the local state is certain to change over the coming years:

- Public spending cuts – 28% cut in Council grants, with further cuts likely to follow
- The 'Big Society' rhetoric – ministers want the public to step in and fill gaps left by the cuts

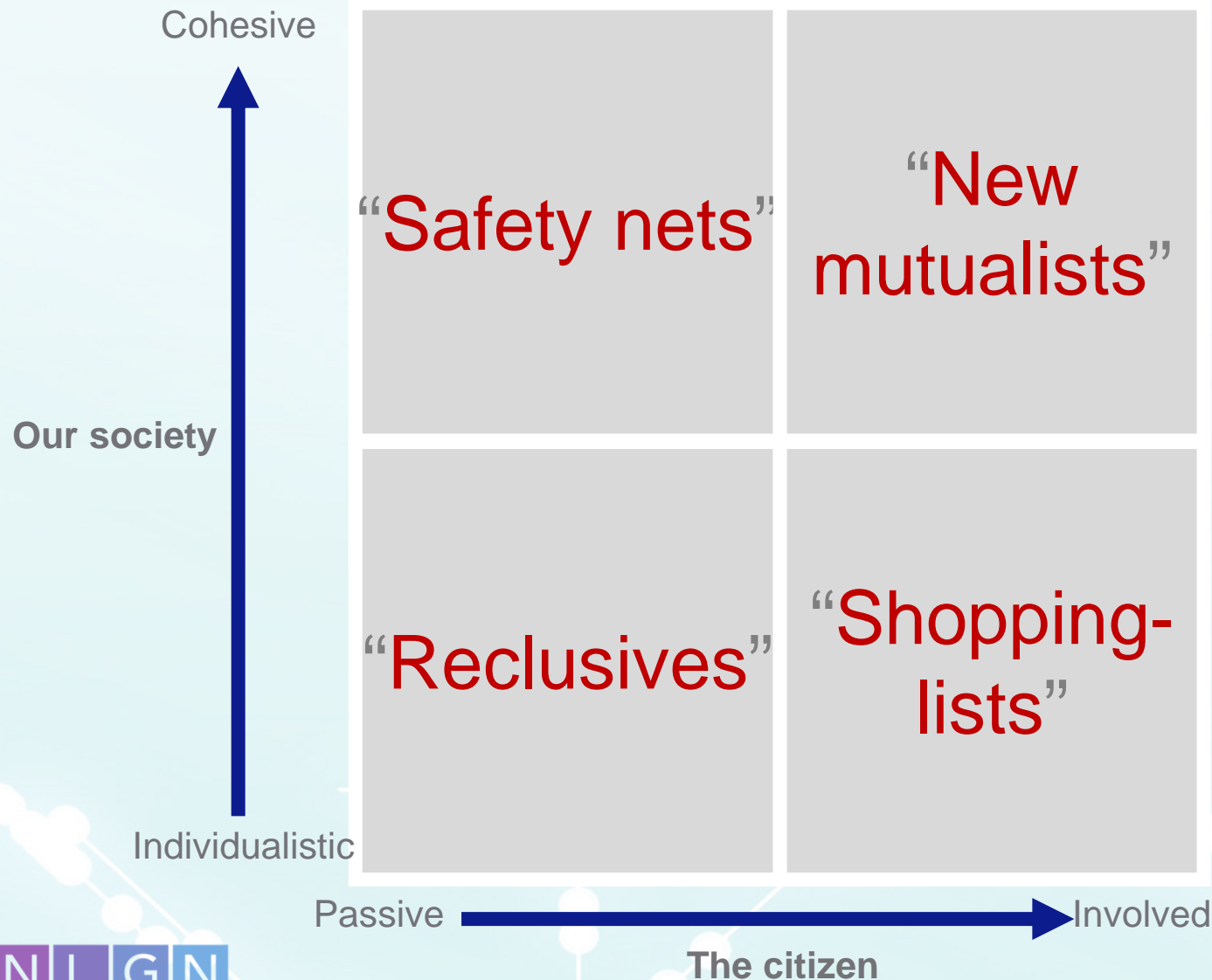
There is an emergence of demand-management innovation within local government:

- a 'something for something' approach to the welfare state
- the growth of 'co-production' between councils and citizens
- the localism agenda, encouraging participation by devolving control of services closer to citizens

What might the future look like?

- Our research established some key trends affecting the council-citizen relationship:
 - a long-term decline in what might very broadly be termed ‘social democratic’ **values**
 - a belief in ‘**fairness**’ – generally ,uniform standards, outcomes and support for those in ‘legitimate’ need – as a key driver for satisfaction
 - high expectations of **customer service** – and, once satisfied, a strong interest in local control, accountability and personalisation
 - tension between increasingly **online** service provision, the growth of social media and the slowly decreasing e-divide
- We also identified two critical uncertainties :
 - **Citizen engagement:** the public want a collaborative ‘adult-adult’ relationship with government, but to what degree are citizens open to a discussion about the state’s future role?
 - **Cohesion:** will society will become more cohesive or individualistic over the next decade?
- These trends, mapped against the extremes of the critical uncertainties, are the foundation of our scenario planning approach.

We identified four ways the state-citizen relationship could develop



What does this mean?

- Councils face an increasingly delicate balancing act over the coming years of austerity:
 - Cut too brutally and risk a society of reclusives
 - Cut too crudely and risk setting communities against each other
 - Cut too inconsistently and risk the public looking to the centre for salvation.
- In each case, the role of the council is more of a supporter and enabler of communities, less of a direct service provider.
- And so to answer the questions set.....
 - how can local government develop **social networks**, create **social capital** and trust to **strengthen communities**?
 - what new **engagement techniques**, **intelligence** and **feedback** can drive **citizen-led services** and open debate on the future of the local state?

Preparing for the future

- **Build a political constituency for localism** – consider a campaign designed to win hearts and minds for localism
- **Develop new roles for members** – local politicians need to lead the process of citizen and community engagement, becoming advocates not just representatives
- **Embrace social media** (cautiously) – the internet offers an important new way to enter into dialogue with citizens, but equality of access is critical
- **Invest in community solutions** – provide seed funding, transfer and providing IT infrastructure to community projects
- **Use data more effectively** – to understand customers, predict behaviour and create vital intelligence about how to target and design services.

One final thought.....how are you forging the new relationships necessary to survive in the future world?

PA Consulting Group

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Anticipating the Future Citizen

A provocation paper by NLGN and PA Consulting

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