

## *Beyond bricolage: social innovation as systematic, consistent and repeatable processes*

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### ABSTRACT

This paper provides empirical research demonstrating that there are clear, consistent and repeatable processes at play in social innovation, calling into question the currently hegemonic postmodernist concept of 'social bricolage' in social innovation literature. The paper applies a critical realist & systems analysis approach, utilising Checkland's (1981/2000) Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). The research project investigated 8 neighbourhood and community policing projects using a handbook called Locally identified Solutions & Practices (LISP). LISP was implemented in a range of different social contexts to construct context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) chains (after Pawson, 2013) in a two-step process to identify which social innovation mechanisms contributed to what outcomes in which contexts. The paper reports on empirically based evidence of social innovation processes that do not rely on the characteristics of the individual social entrepreneur or the serendipity of social bricolage 'freeplay' (Derrida, 1970). The paper makes the case that social innovation is more than 'bricolage' (Derrida, 1970; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010), not an eclectic mysterious craft of innovation that relies on the skills and characteristics of the social entrepreneur, but instead a systematic, consistent and repeatable process.

**Keywords:** Bricolage; Soft Systems; Community Policing; Social Innovation.

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## INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framing of this paper, and its consideration of the notion of bricolage in social innovation, is based on empirical evidence collected over a ten-year period as part of the author's doctoral studies. The context within which the empirical research was undertaken was neighbourhood based public safety, or problem-oriented policing, in UK communities between 2010 and 2019. The LISP Handbook was created to assist local social innovators. Including police and community support officers and warranted police officers, to implement a consistent set of practices over eight (in the PhD) and eventually 14 UK based projects at the time of writing. The purpose of the research was to understand how the practices were implemented and what practices lent themselves to (relative) success and failure. The research identified the dynamics of twenty-seven factors that contributed to the success of social innovation interventions, giving rise to the question whether social innovation really is primarily a practice of 'social bricolage', as claimed by the contemporary literature.

## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Bricolage*

In entrepreneurship research, bricolage has emerged in the past decade as one of the central concepts to understand an entrepreneurs' complex behavior and strategies in resource development and utilization (Kickul *et al.*, 2018). Servantie and Rispal (2018) claims that most social entrepreneurship literature uses this concept, likewise, Mair and Marti (2009) and Desa and Basu (2013) suggest that bricolage is an appropriate construct in social entrepreneurship. Whilst, Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) recognize 'social bricolage' as a distinct concept, extending the constructs of bricolage beyond an initial metaphor to define social bricolage as a set of six processes: (a) the making do, (b) the refusal to be constrained by limitations, (c) the improvisation, (d) the social value creation, (e) the stakeholder participation and (f) the persuasion of significant actors.

The bricolage concept relates to the decision-making processes of the agent (entrepreneur, social entrepreneur, innovator, or social innovator) in 'making do' by associating resources at hand to solve new problems and grasp new opportunities (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Baker and Nelson note that Levi-Strauss' concept of bricolage is eminently flexible in that he didn't offer any specific definition of the concept itself apart from 'making to with whatever is at hand'. Nevertheless, their grounded theory work did elicit some detail that "bricolage often draws on degraded, fallow, and otherwise undeveloped resources" (2005, p. 360). Levi-Strauss himself applied the

term more specifically to the "creation of mythical thought" (Johnson, 2012) and the concept requires both the bricoleur (the agent) and the bricolage (the activity) to be considered. If Derrida's (1970) critique is also to be considered, then neither the bricoleur nor the bricolage is entirely 'freeplay'.

This sets up the challenge for social innovation in general, and for the Police and Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and police officers specifically in this research and their challenges in grappling with how to go about the design of social innovation in different contexts in different neighbourhoods, with different personnel, but in a consistent and repeatable manner? This bricoleur/bricolage challenge may have arisen because of a post-modern turn in social entrepreneurship theorising (Steyaert & Dey 2010; Dey & Steyaert, 2018) where it seems that Hu is the only one publishing in this specific critical realist modality in entrepreneurship research (Hu, 2018, Hu *et al.*, 2019). This post-modern turn may be liberating theoretically, but throws the theorist back on the force of the individual heroic and maverick personality, placing social innovation beyond the skills and abilities of ordinary people.

Entrepreneurship and innovation research (and thereby their X-innovation neighbours) are closely associated with uncontrollable mavericks (Taylor & Labarre, 2006) or deviant (non-conformist) personality traits (Vries, 1977). Other authors have focussed on innovation in the public sector (Newman *et al.*, 2001; Mulgan & Albury, 2003; Albury, 2005), but few have explicitly considered innovation in social enterprises, except by separating social enterprises as organisations from social entrepreneurship as a process of innovation (Leadbeater, 2007). By separating the enterprise from the entrepreneur, Leadbeater allows innovation to be considered as an individual behaviour rather than an organisational process, such that innovation is promoted heroically by the talented individuals and only restrained by personal ethics rather than governance. Fewer authors have explicitly considered the ethics of innovation (Glor, 2002; Hanekamp, 2005; Fuglsang & Mattsson, 2009). Whereas in the private sector innovation can often be an end in itself, for Hartley, in public services, innovation is justifiable only where it increases public value in the quality, efficiency or fitness for purpose of governance or services (Hartley, 2005).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This research used two methods, both consistent with a critical realist epistemology, to first collect, sort and analyse real world data, and then to construct a relationship between the unique localities within which the data arose and the outcomes that were expected or observed. This was a unique combination of Checkland's Soft Systems Methodology to sort and present data across multiple cases in a systematic and

comparable manner, and Pawson's Context-Mechanism-Outcome chains to link different localities to different outcomes.

The different localities, and the police and community safety teams within them, in collaboration with community members, were tasked to attempt to implement the LISP Handbook within the limits of the resources available to them. The researcher collected naturally occurring data, conducted interviews with key stakeholders, and used a standard self-reporting proforma for the projects to report progress and evidence.

Having sorted and analysed the evidence using Soft Systems Methodology as an analytical process, the research sought to identify the mechanisms that function to facilitate the (relative) success or failure of each social innovation interventions. This was done by applying Pawson's Context-Mechanism-Outcome chain analysis. This method formed a dual process of sorting and comparing the data across the 8 case studies involved in the doctoral research, using SSM procedures, and then making sense of the data in critical realist terms using CMO logic chain analysis.

### *Soft Systems Methodology and 'wicked' social issues*

A 'wicked issue' (Camillus, 2008, p.98) is a social problem in which various stakeholders can barely agree on what the definition of the problem should be, let alone on what the solution is. Social issues and problems are intrinsically wicked issues (Webber & Rittel, 1973) or messy problems (Mitroff & Mason, 1980), and it is very dangerous for them to be treated as though they are 'tame' (Lach *et al.*, 2005) or 'benign'. Real world social problems have no definitive formulation and no point at which they are definitely solved. Furthermore, solutions are not true or false – there is no test for a solution, and every solution contributes to a further social problem. Wicked problems are unique, in that they are symptomatic of other problems; they do not have simple causes and have numerous possible explanations, which in turn frames different policy responses. The people acting to intervene in the problem are not allowed, by virtue of public censure, to fail in their attempts to solve wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973).

Soft System Methodology (SSM) was devised specifically as a means of systematically and systemically analysing wicked problems. Soft systems thinking is a way of describing and analysing the real world, or a part of it, so as to understand and change the way in which (that part of) the real world operates (Checkland, 1981). The process of thinking about and describing the real world in parts is understood as 'general systems theory' (von Bertalanffy, 1950). Conventional systems thinking assumes that the parts of the system of interest are clearly defined and separate, and that the system that has a clear purpose and well-defined goals is useful for designing

solutions that achieve those goals. A soft system is characterised where there is no agreement about the precise objectives of the system. The process has qualitative rather than quantitative objectives, there is acknowledgement that there is no single solution, but a range of equally valid alternative solutions, and a need for involvement of all those affected by the system (Kirk, 1995), allowing the analyst to account for wicked issues.

### *Context Mechanism Outcomes*

Pawson (2013), in his review of hundreds of innovations and evaluations in the public sector, concludes that there is a consistent set of ingredients or critical factors (in his terminology, hidden mechanisms) that create successful interventions, and crucially support the mainstreaming and scaling of such interventions into organisational and cultural change.

The cases explored below are not really interventions themselves, but ways of going about designing and delivering socially innovative practices and solutions that are more robust and resilient. The idea being that it shifts the centre evidence-based social innovation from 'what works' to 'how do we make it work better?'. This is also what Pawson and Tilley (1997) refer to as 'cumulative evaluation', building on their meta-study evaluation, rejecting the Guba and Lincoln (1989, p. 49) assertion that all situations are unique and that problems or solutions cannot be generalised from one context to another, whilst at the same time also rejecting the notion that different contexts can be stripped of their value and outcomes passed down to mere numbers and statistical relationships. Pawson and Tilley (*ibid.*) draw comparisons across a wide range of different interventions and projects to identify regularities, and therefore to propose context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) relationships. Building on Pawson and Tilley's fine work, this study looks across several different interventions, in different neighbourhoods, regarding different crime types and developing different solutions, but (at least in theory) applies the same *means* of developing the interventions. To reiterate, the unit of investigation in this paper is not the contents or results of the cases explored below, but the approach to developing the interventions themselves: the systematic, consistent, and repeatable processes of social innovation at work. Developing CMO relationships across a range of pilot interventions help to understand what makes the LISP Handbook work, and under what circumstances.

### *Locally Identified Solutions and Practices (LISP) Handbook*

The research deployed the LISP Handbook. This is essentially a published guide to developing 'locally identified solutions and practices' (Curtis & Bowkett, 2014, p. 4), to address the wicked issue conditions that lead to high levels of chronic crime that affects the public. It was particularly designed (during the research undertake in 2010-

13) for use in areas where there are hotspots of crime (real and perceived) and anti-social behaviour, which have been problematic for a sustained period. Each of the eight steps represents a collection of techniques, strategies and approaches drawn from social innovation, community development and community based therapy literature and practice, to help the social innovators (in this case, the PCSOs, and/or a community policing team) [1] explain why a social innovation design process is needed, [2] find what resources and assets are already available in the locality to work with, [3] establish who could be involved in that process, and their networks of influence and capability, [4] make sure the social innovators and the community understand the different aspects of, and perspectives on the problem(s), [5] pulling together a function and purposive working group, [6] only then develop a range of proposed interventions and plan, in order to [7] take actions that include immediate solutions and ongoing practices, whilst knowing how to [8] escalate the plan to the right level to get action.

The processes and activities that are described in the LISP Handbook and communicated to the social innovators through a training process, were an approach to intensive community engagement designed to tackle some of the observed weaknesses and limitations of community development and neighbourhood policing from the USA (and operated in the UK in the 21<sup>st</sup> century). Much of what the LISP Handbook sought to address in neighbourhood policing is the 'where, whom and how' of community engagement in order to create interventions that tackle crime and improve the legitimacy of the police. Legislation has placed a duty on the police to engage with and involve the community in police governance but leaves open the modalities of that involvement. There is a danger that the most vulnerable locations are left out of that involvement and innovation process and that the processes of engagement are ill-designed, or ill-executed, and result in vulnerable communities being excluded from the processes. Finally, the processes of problem solving can also be technocratic and exclude those most affected by the problems.

The intent to engage meaningfully with the public seems to be clear in UK policy, but the purpose of that engagement is not clear. The chief police officer<sup>1</sup> 'has to receive (and provide) information from the public'. But the policy does not state what the chief officer should do with that information. In a local document<sup>2</sup>, the Police force investigated here committed to "...listen to every complaint, look at individual circumstances, and respond to it in a fair and reasonable way". Firstly, the notion of

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<sup>1</sup> UK Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Looking after East Northamptonshire: [https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/200217/crime\\_safety\\_and\\_emergencies/43/safer\\_community\\_teams](https://www.east-northamptonshire.gov.uk/info/200217/crime_safety_and_emergencies/43/safer_community_teams) [Accessed 9th Oct. 2015, p. 2].

the 'public' only having a complaint is flawed, but also operationally 'listening to and dealing with every' seems to be a wasted use of resources, if there is no clear plan as to what to do with the results. A local document on community engagement does hint at a purpose – on page 3 the police say, "We work on the principle that 'prevention is better than cure' but also commit to deal with every complaint regardless of its veracity or relative importance". In community development terms, it seems an unusual method for communities to 'hold their local police to account' when only those with a complaint are listened to. No assessment is made of the extent to which the complainant is cognisant of policing activities or performance, and no attempt is required to ensure that hard to reach or hard to hear communities are also able to communicate their complaints, thoughts or experiences. This would be especially important in vulnerable localities.

### 3. FINDINGS

#### *The pilot projects*

Over a period of three years starting in 2011, PCSOs in a UK Police force (having received training and follow-up support from the LISP Handbook) were asked to find opportunities to experiment with this alternative approach to neighbourhood policing. They had the support of their Chief Constable, but their Sergeants and Inspectors were not necessarily aware or supportive to the PCSOs in going about this work. One reason for these pilots being run without direct and specific support from middle leaders was to establish what could be done without significant structural changes to policing patterns, and to identify the conditions under which supportive middle leadership emerged.

Eight pilot projects were investigated in detail to allow for a in depth understanding of the mechanisms that lead to the perceived success, or failure, of the socially innovative intervention strategies. The LISP Handbook represents the framework by which social problems are considered, researched and subsequent solutions or interventions are developed. The projects described below are some examples of where the social innovation process has been applied and social innovations developed ready for implementation.

The following descriptions form part of the Soft Systems Method data analysis process. Space prevents all of the data being presented, but this section provides an overview of the cases and the different types of data included in the analysis.

#### *Case 1: Ethnic minority burglaries*

This case study started in a locality within an English town, assigned to two PCSOs (Wimsey and Bunter<sup>3</sup>) at the heart of their community, but soon extended to a specific ethnic community within a wider East Midlands area, as the unique crime type revolved around their community's faith and beliefs. The incident shifting from a 'community of geography' to a 'community of experience'. The partnership between the two PCSOs who had been allocated to the estate for several years, had a good working relationship with the wider community in this neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is a mixed suburb, urban extension of the west of the town, built around older villages into what is effectively a sixties council housing estate with significant, but incomplete, private ownership through right-to-buy. It is a significantly Asian community, with 10% of the population reporting as Asian and 13.7% of the population stating that they were Muslim in 2011<sup>4</sup>, compared to a 4.2% overall Muslim population in the town. Forty percent of the population have no formal qualifications but just short of 40% of the working population are in full time work.

The presenting problem situation for the PCSOs was a spate of burglaries of jewellery from private residences in the neighbourhood. In the space of one month (July 2012), there were 36 serious acquisitive crime (SAC) reports, two thefts from vehicles, 9 burglaries, and 2 robberies. This became 51 burglaries by September and the same in November 2012. The PCSOs in the neighbourhood identified at the start of the LISP initiative in 2013 that the community affected by the burglaries were predominantly Bangladeshi, and that the burglaries were occurring during the Haj pilgrimage period. The PCSOs were anticipating in 2013 that there would be a repeat pattern, further eroding the relationships within the neighbourhood.

As well as meeting the screening criteria the rationale for PCSOs Wimsey and Bunter was clear:

Tensions rose in the Asian Communities due to what they believed was a lack of response from the police. The majority of the tensions occurred within the Bangladeshi Community in the [...] area of [...]. In 2013 a trigger plan was recommended in order to prepare for a possible increase in Asian Burglaries for the autumn. Trigger plan including providing General reassurance and advice to the [...] Asian community. (LISP Proforma, 2014).

The LISP pilot reporting proforma (Figure 1) reported a significant drop in burglaries across all types of crime. Burglaries peaked at 4 in the neighbourhood in 2012, and 55 in the same year across the whole of the town and dropped to 1 in the neighbourhood and 22 across the whole town. Serious acquisitive crime showed the highest number

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<sup>3</sup> pseudonyms

<sup>4</sup><http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=7&b=6275190&c=NN5+7BZ&e=13&g=6452153&i=1001x1012x1013x1003x1004&j=6309090&m=1&p=-1&q=1&r=0&s=1453121622672&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2477> [Accessed 15 Aug 2017]



of 266 incidents in 2012: up from 131 in 2009 and dropping to a new low of 44 in 2014. It is not clear whether these figures are averages per month or total figures. The official crime data suggested that they are close to the average number of incidents per month.

On the other hand, low numbers of incidents are reported in the Crime Impact Survey (May 2014) by selecting a much smaller area in which the PCSOs were operating in order to claim "In 2011 there were 2 [cases of burglaries where gold jewellery was taken], in 2012 there were 4, in 2013 and in 2014 there was 1 per year. Between 2012 and 2014 there has been a 75% decrease in "Asian Gold" burglaries within the [neighbourhood]". The Police analyst was, however, able to conclude that "This is a much bigger improvement when compared to the rest of the town which has seen a 60% decrease in "Asian Gold" burglaries.")<sup>5</sup>. One might wish to conclude from this that the LISP Intensive Community Engagement techniques are 15% more effective than standard policing, but random effects, small data samples and other confounding factors would prevent such bold claims.

Fig. 1: Extract from LISP Proforma on outcomes of pilot



Source: Curtis (2021, p. 182).

<sup>5</sup> Northamptonshire Police (2014) Crime Impact Statement Asian Gold LISP 22nd May 2014. Unpublished report.

## Case 2: Sheltered Housing

The second neighbourhood is essentially, a geographical cluster of Sheltered Housing, where vulnerable people live. This includes the elderly, hard of hearing or deaf, people with learning difficulties or mental health problems. Some of these residents are house bound or suffer with dementia/ Alzheimer's. Some of these people have fallen victim to burglaries.

The neighbourhood statistics for the ward, however, give no clue as to the specifics of this case because they operate at too large a scale. The wider neighbourhood does score<sup>6</sup> poorly on education, crime health and living environment deprivation. Full time work is predominant but significantly above average proportion in 'elementary occupations'<sup>7</sup> with 27% of the population with no formal education.

The neighbourhood in question comprises a square of 24 detached buildings with approximately 64 residents, distributed around a small central roundabout, with a community centre and a mix of single person dwellings and small flatted accommodation. The boundaries of the haven are porous in that there are no gates on the road, and there are extensive gaps in the perimeter hedgerows. It is surrounded by post-war housing, much of the same style as that of concern in the Asian Gold case. The properties are owned and operated by an arms-length management organisation that manages over 12,000 other homes on behalf of the local housing authority. In the Community Safety Partnership vulnerability report of the time<sup>8</sup>, this ward is mentioned several times as being vulnerable to domestic abuse, hate crimes, and serious acquisitive crime (which includes burglary of homes).

The PCSO involved in this case, 'Vera', had been working on this issue for a period of time before the social innovation project was initiated. There had been a spate of burglaries and an area deemed as vulnerable, and the police officers had implemented the 'Trafford model super-cocooning' tactic which involves meeting with the victim but also informing the 45 nearest houses that the burglaries had occurred and providing target hardening advice. Vera identified that the recipients of the super-cocooning visits were not responding as expected:

[...] the information we were providing, in black and white ...they were not acknowledging... and also the way the paper was folded in, it gets mixed up in your

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/NeighbourhoodProfile.do?a=7&b=6275190&c=NN5+7EE&g=6452156&i=1001x1012x1013&j=6309089&m=1&p=2&q=1&r=0&s=1465219891625&enc=1&tab=g> [Accessed 6 June 2016].

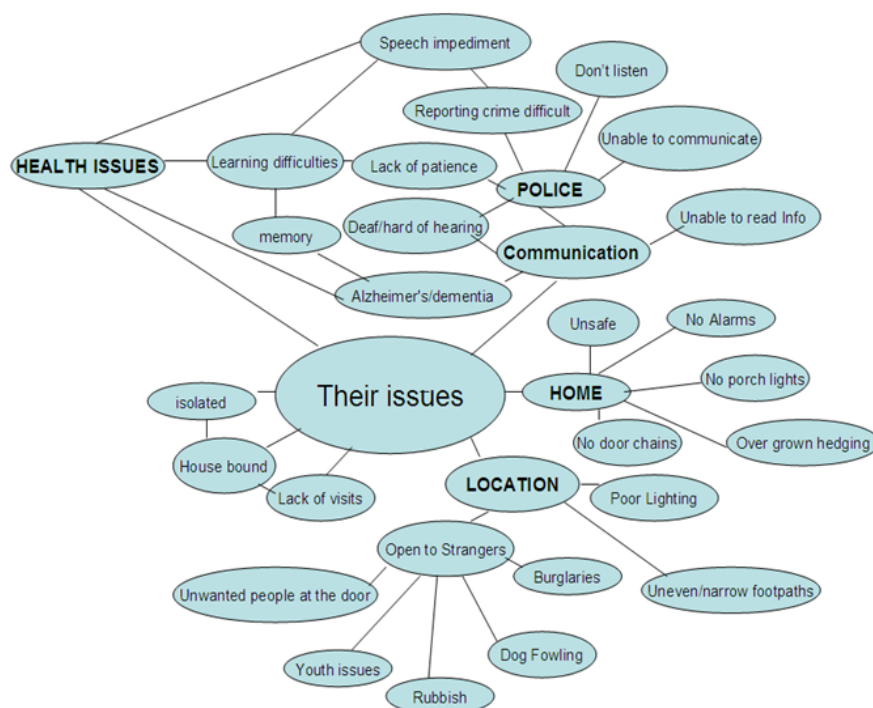
<sup>7</sup> Percentage of population in elementary occupations: ward 24.7%, Northampton 14.9%, national 11.1% <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/NeighbourhoodSummary.do?a=7&b=6275190&c=NN5+7EE&g=6452156&i=1001x1012x1013&j=6309089&m=1&p=9&q=1&r=0&s=1465219903812&enc=1&tab=1&inWales=false> [Accessed 6 Jun. 2016].

<sup>8</sup> Anon (2011) Northampton Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment 2011/12 NCSPP\_Strategic\_Assessment\_2011\_12.pdf.

average... leaflet drop, so it wasn't easily identified that it was something that needed to be looked at. (Vera<sup>9</sup> Timestamp 5:07)

In a progress seminar in May 2014, Vera presented the two following diagrams (Figure 2 and Figure 3) highlighting the significantly different worldviews of the police compared to the residents. This exercise in perspective taking was unique amongst the pilots and led to the use of a long list of interventions. What was innovative here was not the individual interventions, but the complex mix tailored to the specific situation, in sharp contrast to the centralised, standardised letter which assumes the reader is a standard English reader, that they are the home-owner and that they have means and resources to implement the care and repair recommendations the letter stated as the solution.

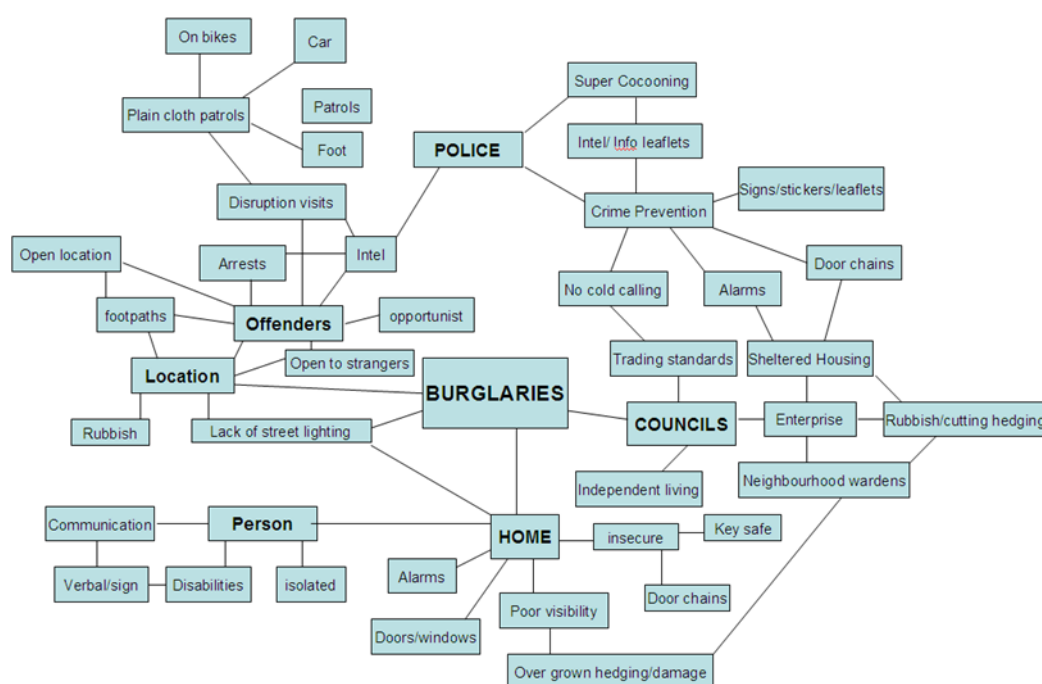
Fig. 2: Issues mentioned by residents of the sheltered housing



Source : Curtis (2021, p. 199).

<sup>9</sup> Personally Conducted Interview: Vera Voice 010\_BressinghamGardens\_10032015 10th Mar. 2015.

Fig. 3: How the Police saw the Spencer Haven problem



Source : Curtis (2021, p. 199).

The empathetic perspective-taking of the PCSO Vera enabled a mix of twenty-six complex and interrelated interventions to be deployed. Each intervention was not unique on its own, but the interrelationships meant that they would have a cumulative effect. Many of the strategies required co-production of the solution and were of a complex and interwoven nature important for tackling marginalisation (Molnár & Havas, 2019).

### Case 3: Anti-social behaviour

This locality is a small neighbourhood in an East Midlands town in the UK and centres on an ancient church and graveyard. Within a few hundred metres is a sex shop, a pharmacy that supplies methadone to many of the town's drug users, a homeless shelter, a massage parlour, a pawn shop, three workingmen's clubs, a night club, two pubs and a children's nursery. It is a perfect storm of anti-social behaviour and street drinking. Further, it is one of those hotspots of crime that has been frustrating the local police force for years, distracting PCSOs and police officers alike from tackling serious acquisitive crime. Dozens of strategies have been used over the years, from high visibility patrols to designated public place orders to prevent public drinking, all with little visible effect. The neighbourhood is just around the corner from the police station and magistrates court, both with very high police visibility.

There are about 2-3% more people in the ward that report bad health than the national average, and 13% more people working in 'elementary occupations' with 23%

of population with no formal qualifications in the 2011 census. In the census, the majority of the population reported as being white British, but the most significant minority were 'White, Other White' most likely to be of eastern European origin. The next largest minority are 'Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; African', the majority 'not living in a couple' in mostly privately rented accommodation.

The monthly rates of reported crime had already dropped markedly around the time of the project, and the remainder rates suggest an on-going steady state in terms of crimes reported. Despite initial progress in connecting two different community associations together to clear vulnerable under-used land for use by a children's nursery, this project failed insofar as it was closed down for a critical mass of community-based action to take hold and for crime rates to remain low. The PSCOs thought that a critical mass of community engagement had been reached, and the senior leaders were under pressure to redeploy scarce resources to other parts of the town due to short-term concerns. Failure of the project to gain ground or achieve lasting effect is a good case study to consider, as it tests the veracity of the mechanisms of implementing social innovation reported below, in particular the necessity of a stable team of social innovators.

In September 2013, the local police published a Priority Area Problem Analysis (PA) report presenting data analysis based on crimes recorded on the Police Crime Recording System between May 2012 and April 2013.

Fig. 4: Hotspot analysis of all crime in PA3 (Parker, 2013a, p. 3) original indistinct



Source: Curtis (2021, p. 218).

The PA goes on to analyse in more detail the various categories of crime, identifying the LISP pilot area again with respect to non-domestic violence (Figure 4), targeting a local homeless shelter as the source or centre of this violence. The same shelter comes up again as a drugs intelligence hotspot (Parker 2013a, p. 28) and an Anti-social

Behaviour (ASB) hotspot (Parker 2013a, p. 30) but identifying the soup kitchen that had been operating in a nearby street as the source of this, even though it notes later that it is not a high-scoring 'repeat street' for ASB, whereas 25% of ASB repeat calls come from the specific area dealt with by this case analysis (the first time location is singled out).

The report also provides suggestions for actions by the police based on the desktop data analysis. This provides an insight into the thinking of the analysts at the time, and the approach to problem solving within the local police at the time: "Turning intelligence into positive frontline action to either detect more crime or generate better quality actionable intelligence is required to have a more beneficial impact upon drugs in PA3".

Police were beginning to get to grips with the location of crime for the first time through hotspot analysis, and had extensive (if inconsistent and not collected in a rigorous manner) data on the perceptions of the citizens with regard to police priorities, but the data about where the crime hotspots were was not being connected to any information or data about the vulnerability of the localities to crime, or in enough resolution to provide a detailed appreciation of the issues at a street level. This is where the LISP investigations begin to fill in the missing detail regarding the nature of the problem. The problem-solving suggestions in the PA report are still rudimentary and generic, suggesting more "Cohesive community interaction and engagement", "liaising and organising meetings", as well as more policing activity (in the context of austerity politics and significant budget cuts to Policing resources) in the form of "prevention and enforcement ideas".

The project struggled for resources, the sergeant noting "I'm conscious, because of the [sigh] change in demographic of the police, because I have lost both of my, I've lost NII, she's on the town centre now and I've lost TII". This constant churn of staff and a severe cut in street level resourcing was both the prompt for the research project, and a constant problem in this research and subsequent projects.

#### *Case 4: New migrants and public disorder*

The designation of this locality as a Designated Public Places Order (DPPO) as a response to complaints of street drinking by groups identified as new migrants to the UK from Eastern Europe, and associated anti-social behaviour required significant additional policing resources to be deployed, particularly because PCSOs are not on shift during the late evenings and weekends, necessitating that uniformed police officers were deployed from the patrol activities from the town centre.

DPPOs help local authorities deal with the problems of alcohol related anti-social behaviour in public places. This order is not a total ban on drinking alcohol in public

places but makes it an offence to carry on drinking when asked to stop by a constable or authorised officer. The operation was a result of a Joint Action Group populated by Councillors, Community Safety Manager, Licensing Manager from the Borough Council, the local Police, the National Health Service, Chair of the Pubwatch Community Association, local Taxi-drivers Association and the local Trade and Commerce, thereby exercising control over the disenfranchised new migrant communities with no consultation or engagement.

This ward is an area in which 41% of the population are unskilled labour<sup>10</sup>, with 22% of the population having no formal qualifications. The 2016 deprivation indices indicate that out of over 32,000 wards in the UK, this ward is in the lowest 5,000, and in crime terms ranks within the bottom 400 wards (372 out of 32,844). The living environment index also ranks this ward in the bottom 1,500 in the UK. Although the population are generally economically active in terms of age, the percentage accessing Jobseekers allowance were double the town rate in August 2010. A total of 36% of the households in the area are one-person households, in high density 'houses of multiple occupancy'. The police officers involved reported that these are predominantly rooms to let within the Victorian tenement housing and converted factories. Only 9% of the housing in the town is local authority owned, so there is a strong likelihood that this housing is all privately owned-to-let.

In conceptualising the problem, PCSO 'Nikita' focussed immediately on the language barriers implicit in the street drinking problem. 'Nikita' demonstrated an awareness of the problem being more widespread than the immediate locale, noting similar behaviour in neighbouring streets. She also noted "Initial engagement and education of persons caught in DPPO area has not yielded a reduction in self-generated police incidents. Prolific offenders are taking no notice." (LISP Proforma May 2013).

In a year, PCSO Nikita had developed the scope and detail of her LISP pilot with evidence of more rich-picture based problem analysis from a wider range of stakeholders (LISP Proforma July 2014), with a few more active stakeholders, including widening their scope to landlords and employers of the street drinkers. This is an important strategic shift, as the analysis moves away from the direct symptomatic behaviour to seeking to intervene in the conditions that give rise to the behaviour (their living conditions) and patterns of cultural expectations exacerbated by the short-term employment and living arrangements. Although the connections with the employers were at a low level (they accepted to brief their workers and provide

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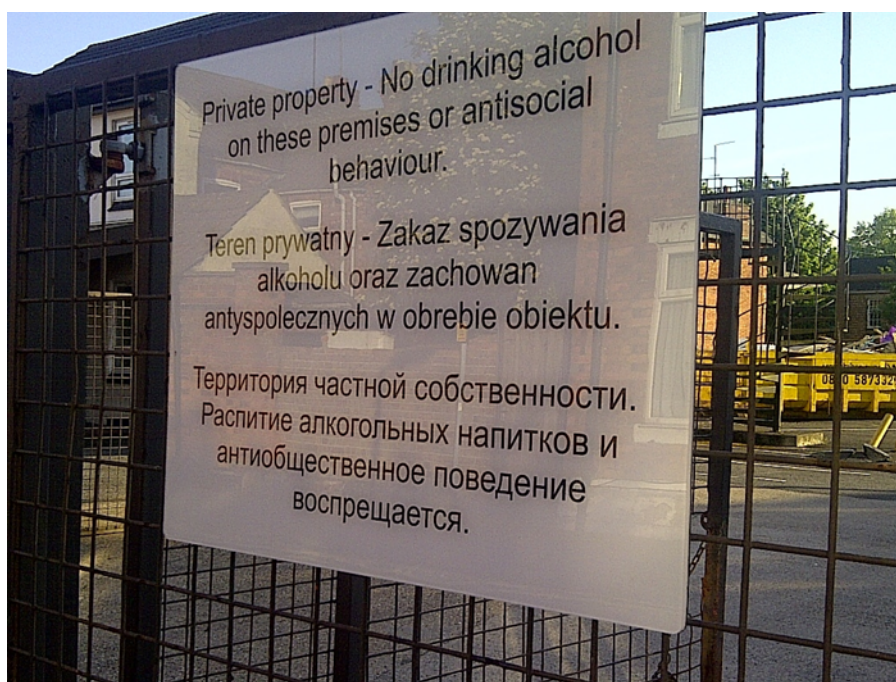
<sup>10</sup><http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/NeighbourhoodSummary.do?width=1366&a=7&r=1&i=1001&m=0&s=1478873165366&enc=1&profileSearchText=NN16+8JS&searchProfiles=> [Accessed 11 Nov 2016].



posters) Nikita had indicated in an un-recorded conversation that her aim to change the employers' recruitment policy to reduce the number of single, male and short-term workers, and also change the letting policies of the landlords to lengthen the minimum stay of the residents, thereby increasing their investment in civic behaviours. In the meantime, more focussed enforcement action was taken against the shops supplying the alcohol, with the participation of other public-sector partners. This resulted in one shop's owner losing their operating licence and a range of other statutory enforcement measures being instigated. Although PCSO Nikita reported that there are no 'community groups' to get involved, she was clearly thinking of individuals, rather than a community of organisations. Nevertheless, she reported beginning to have meetings with employers, landlords and owners of non-residential property, which are a different type of community, of organisations rather than individuals.

Figure 5 provides an indication of an underlying problem that came up in a number of different projects in this research (and in the 14 subsequent projects that were undertaken after this research) which was the presence of certain groups within the neighbourhoods which were seen as 'part of the problem' rather than a part of the solution. In this project, new migrants from eastern Europe were a part of the street drinking culture but the police really struggled to conceptualise them as potential stakeholders.

Fig. 5: Anti-drinking sign in different languages



Source: Curtis (2021, p. 251).



PSCO 'Nikita' reported "I have no stakeholders wiling (sic) to take part in a working group at the moment due to on-going personal issues. At some point I will re-evaluate this issue but for now it is purely a police based working group". Hidden communities, who were not deemed to be part of civil society seemed to be missed regularly. In other projects undertaken to implement LISP, sex workers, illegal and new immigrants, those thieving from charity shops, local drug barons and youth knife gangs were all stakeholders in systems of crime that were rarely identified as being part of the solution, instead an excluded other, part of the problem.

### *Summary*

This paper has reported on four of the eight projects in substantial detail. Firstly, providing a naturalistic rich description of the case with evidence from a wide range of sources, from street observations and internet based demographic data (some of which has been selected in the summaries above), and then structuring this analysis using a Soft Systems Methodology. The review of each case study covers the implementation phases of the LISP, based on the LISP proforma submitted by the lead PCSO in each situation, supported by post-hoc interview data from the PCSOs and colleagues.

The projects described above were evaluated using a standard Mode 1 soft systems framework aimed at producing conceptual models of each of the problem situations, based on CATWOE<sup>11</sup> analyses and rich pictures<sup>12</sup> developed by those involved in the LISP problem situation. These are then taken forward to a Mode 2 SSM analysis where the systems analyst considers the events (practices) and ideas (theories) which unfold over time. The final task for each case study was to establish whether the known mechanisms within policing community engagement literature, and Pawson's own policy intervention mechanisms, were being triggered in each of the projects. Each case yielded possible new mechanisms that have to be in place, that had not already been covered by the known police or Pawson mechanisms.

## 4. ANALYSIS

### *Unique contexts/localities*

Eight real world research projects (**Table 1**) were developed where systematic, consistent and repeatable processes of social innovation were applied (using the

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<sup>11</sup> An SMM mnemonic that stands for Customer, Actor, Transformation, Worldview, Owner, and Environment.

<sup>12</sup> An SSM specific diagramming technique.

Locally identified Solutions and Practices (LISP) Handbook and training), to differing degrees, to structure intensive engagement by a UK Police force across eight different localities. All of these contexts were demographically different and have different 'target' crime types. The only thing that links them together is that the police officers and PCSOs who were part of the LISP training process and that some attempt at implementing LISP was considered or used.

Table 1. The LISP projects

Case No.	Location	Origin	Priority Area	Crime	Confidence	Stable team	Mgt involved	LISP Quality
1	Spencer/Asian Gold	Pilot	yes	down	up	yes	yes	Gold
2	Spencer Haven	Pilot	yes	down	up	yes	yes	Gold
3	Holy Sepulchre	Pilot	no	steady	steady	no	no	Silver
4	All Saints Kettering	Pilot	yes	steady	steady	no	no	Silver
5	Daventry Skatepark	Pilot	no	low	up	yes	no	Gold
6	Towcester	Self generated	no	down	up	no	yes	Bronze
7	Daventry no LISP	N/A	no	steady	steady	yes	no	None
8	Wellingborough no LISP	N/A	no	up	down	no	no	None

Source: Curtis (2021, p. 158).

According to the LISP protocol, each proposed LISP process is initiated by a screening process, to establish whether the locality is an area of significant demographic deprivation or vulnerability and that there was a pattern of long-term, chronic crime. The Priority Area process implemented by the Police force reinforced this screening process, such that three of the projects were clearly localities that were similar in that regard. All of the localities were vulnerable and suffered chronic patterns of crime, albeit in most cases the LISP was initiated because of short-term crime data, i.e. a symptom of a wider problem. These unique localities were investigated and described in detail using the SSM reporting protocol and categorises according to three context statements. Each locality that would host the LISP process would be a (C1) **vulnerable locality or area of significant multiple social deprivation**, as well as experiencing (C2) **long-term chronic crime patterns**, extending over 5 years or more, ignoring peaks and troughs in cyclical and seasonal crime patterns, as well as experiencing (C3) **complex, publicly contested crime types** including anti-social behaviour, and serious acquisitive crime.

Different stakeholders may have different opinions regarding the causes of the problem; or significant amounts of the problem are not under the direct influence or control of the Police. Implicit throughout the research was the notion that the crime types had to be 'sufficiently public' to be conducive to the community-based intervention process. Clearly there are 'private' crimes that would not be appropriate contexts for a LISP process, including domestic violence, person-to-person abuse or negligence or even inter-neighbour disputes, or crime types hidden from public view, such as drug or human trafficking. A much later initiative using LISP, in a different Police force, was considering community responses to the cultures that propagate Female Genital Mutilation, but the project did not proceed.

## *Mechanisms*

Pawson (2013) identifies (in his terminology) 'hidden mechanisms' that create successful socially innovative interventions, and crucially support the mainstreaming and scaling of such interventions into organisational and cultural change. Having analysed the projects in turn, including existing evidence from policing literature on 'what works' and 'what is promising', the research proposed a set of twenty-seven possible mechanisms, which connect the contexts (the unique localities) to predetermined social outcomes. Merely following the 8 steps of the LISP process still relies on the skills, experience and confidence of the practitioner, in these cases the PCSOs, and represents bricolage in action.

The practitioners would utilise the resources they had available to them without questioning the limitations of their contexts. In Case 1, the gold burglaries project, the practitioners failed to identify that their means of community engagement excluded women and young people (by holding a public meeting) which links to the mechanism (below) in-depth understanding of people and places (and mechanism) not described in detail here regarding sensitivity towards hidden communities'. This was also the situation in Case 3 where the PCSOs were not aware of a children's day care centre immediately adjacent to the crime hotspot. Once the staff there had been connected to the nearby homeless centre (a factor in the street drinking), significant new interventions were identified that could replace and add to the resources and strategies the PCSOs would otherwise have gathered together – specifically time to conduct more patrols through the crime hotspot. The process of LISP helped them to identify 'highly connected and highly capable' individuals within the community who were prepared to be that visible safety and reassurance resource, replacing the limited police resource. It was identified that these factors were implemented at different points and with differing amounts of effort by those involved, giving rise to the idea that mechanisms are not triggered smoothly or equally. Making accommodations for set-backs was an important mechanism in this respect, because Cases 3 and 4 did not achieve a thoroughly implemented set of interventions, because the senior officers involved deemed that the projects had succeed (enough for them to claim success) and withdrew the socially innovative PCSOs before critical mass could be achieved to sustain the interventions beyond reliance on the police for constant action.

The detailed consideration of the cases, mapping all of the possible mechanisms against the outcomes achieved allowed the logic of the relationships between action and outcome to be abstracted and tested.

## *Social Outcomes*

Desirable outcomes of neighbourhood policing would be incredibly diverse. Pawson's approach to outcomes is to derive them from 'regularities', patterns of behaviour that he identifies from the policy interventions he is studying. Each of the LISP pilots established (or were supposed to) their own expected outcomes for each project. None of the pilots robustly measured whether the planned outcomes were achieved. All that the detailed analyses do is observe whether the wider crime rates were improving or not, but not posit whether the actions within the LISP were designed to achieve those improved outcomes.

Throughout the interviews, the PCSOs, and in some cases the Sergeants identified that reducing crime was not the only desirable outcome. Thus, the outcomes, for the police are more complex than merely reducing reported crime rates. Further, the desired outcomes of the residents and users of a given neighbourhood would equally be complex – perception and fear of crime is not connected directly to actual crime rates, so improved feelings of safety and confidence may be as important as actual crime rates. Nevertheless, these are both important measures of police performance.

The **effectiveness** of a Police force, based on the 'Peelian principles' is assessed in relation to how it carries out its responsibilities including cutting crime, protecting the vulnerable, tackling anti-social behaviour, and dealing with emergencies and other calls for service. Its **efficiency** is assessed in relation to how it provides value for money, and its **legitimacy** is assessed in relation to whether the force operates fairly, ethically and within the law.

Clearly, there is plenty of potential outcomes for the community stakeholders that could also be considered in this process. These could have been derived directly from the projects themselves, from the outcomes expected by each of the projects. Had the research been able to cover the whole lifecycle of all the projects, and all the projects had decided on and measures progress against a basket of outcomes measures, as the LISP requires, it would be possible to extend the CMO configuration exercise to cover non-police outcomes. Nevertheless, undertaking the exercise only with police-based outcomes still demonstrates the use of the concept.

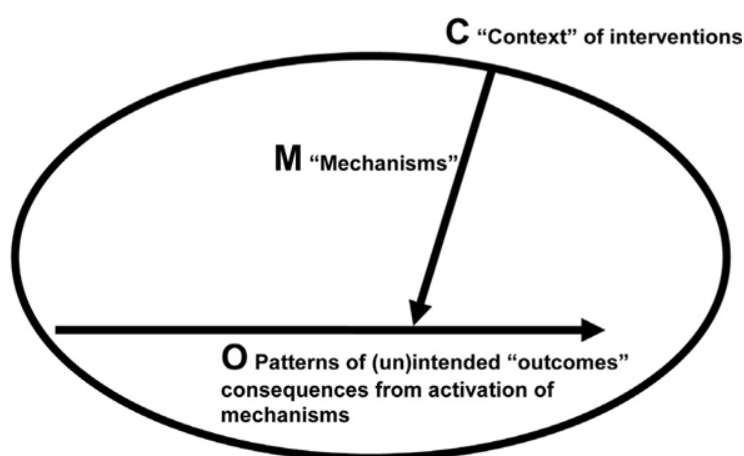
## *Testing the CMO chain*

Having identified the characteristics of the unique localities, and categorised them by social vulnerability through deprivation, chronic crime patterns and a sufficiently complex interaction between the community and the crime types, the outcomes that are desired (including police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) are matched to the localities, through the mechanisms. It is then possible to establish which of the

mechanisms across all the projects were most strongly or weakly enacted. It appears that not all the mechanisms are triggered to the same extent. The idea of a trigger suggests that it is a one-off instant 'hair trigger' moment that fires a mechanism, like a gun. But if the mechanisms have differently weighted 'triggers' (light or heavy), using the same weight of pressure on the trigger might mean that some mechanisms do not fire even when we want them to.

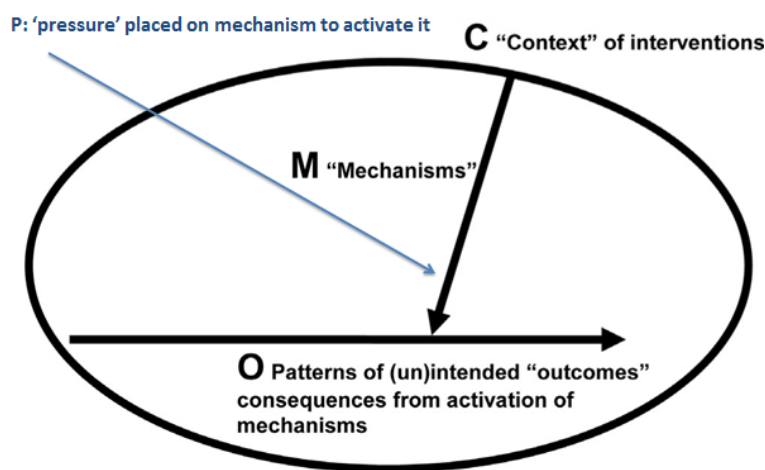
This idea of the 'pressure' that needs to be borne on a mechanism for it to be triggered can be used to modify the basic CMO model developed by Pawson (shown in Figure 6) into a more developed model (Figure 6).

Fig. 6: Pawson context-mechanism-outcome model



Source: Curtis (2021, p. 292).

Fig. 7: Pawson CMO model modified to show the role of 'pressure'



Source: Curtis (2021, p. 292).

An example of the context-mechanism-outcomes analytical process is given below. In all 12 key logic statements were developed in detail, out of a possible 243 configurations. **Table 2** shows the mechanisms tested. There are important caveats to

some of these most readily activated mechanisms. An in-depth understanding (M1) of a vulnerable locality (C1/3) will result in better performance (O2), if understanding gained is used focussed on identifying skills and assets to contribute to reduction in crime. It will only improve legitimacy and/or confidence in policing, if co-created with the stakeholders. Drawing on and utilising the skills and capabilities of the community stakeholders (Tacit Skills M10) would increase their assent towards interventions delivered by the police. Where those tacit skills are recognised, the stakeholders begin to appreciate the tacit skills that the police officers elicit.

There are a series of 'least active' mechanisms that represent those that have been the hardest to implement. Mechanism 1: the in-depth investigation into the problem, with the depth and breadth necessary was rarely done to the level necessary and was only significantly improved when case study was prioritised at a more senior level. The 'dose' (M3) was also problematic, because project leaders were being constantly abstracted<sup>13</sup> for additional tasks, so it required a very determined and dedicated sergeant/inspector team to defend the use of the staff time on LISP activities. Ultimately, a perfectly implemented LISP project ought to trigger all of these mechanisms equally across the lifetime of an intensive engagement process, but this process of identifying the least and most engaged mechanisms allows a few of the 243-possible context-mechanism-outcome configurations to be narrowed down to investigating just a few.

Table 2. 'Logic chain' between contexts-mechanisms-outcomes

Contexts		Mechanisms		Outcomes	
C1	deprivation	M1	In-depth understanding of people, place and problems	O1	Performance. /Efficiency
C2	chronic	M7	Highly connected individuals	O2	Effectiveness
C3	complex	M9	Attuned to community dynamics	O3	Legitimacy
		M10	Tacit skills		

Source: Curtis (2021, p. 297).

CMO statement **C1/3+M1>O1** states that an in-depth understanding (M1) of a vulnerable locality (C1/3) will result in reduced demand, lower crime rates, less enforcement activity (O1). In-depth understanding requires greater effort than in standard policing but may not automatically result in reduced demand. The officers involved would have to

<sup>13</sup> Policing term for removed for other duties.

either build on long-term existing knowledge or invest heavily in a priority vulnerable area to gain sufficient knowledge about the opportunities to reduce demand and enforcement activity. Without an orientation towards this type of performance, officers could drift towards 'business as usual' responses such as greater patrolling, visibility and reassurance without focusing on the endpoint of reduced police activity. This was demonstrated in two projects where the initial strategy was to increase enforcement activity without an outcome of that activity being reduced demand. In-depth understanding has to be oriented towards the outcome of reduced demand to be useful here.

*CMO Statement C1/3+M1>O2 states that an in-depth understanding (M1) of a vulnerable locality (C1/3) will result in better performance (O2) such as reduced activity per outcome, greater focus on prevention than patrolling, other statutory partners participating fully, and skills and assets levered from community to support crime reduction. There is a stronger relationship here than the first CMO configuration, in that an in-depth understanding (in the terms outlined in the LISP Handbook oriented towards seeking out the community assets rather than deficits) will result in a better understanding of the skills and capabilities of the key stakeholders in the neighbourhood in question, understanding their motivations for being involved, and therefore (as the community begin to co-produce the safer community) the outcomes per unit of police activity will reduce, if the knowledge and understanding gained is used for that purpose.*

*CMO Statement C1/3+M1>O3 states that an in-depth understanding (M1) of a vulnerable locality (C1/3) will result in better legitimacy (O3) and confidence in policing. If this process of developing an in-depth understanding of a vulnerable locality is co-created with the key stakeholders in an open and transparent manner, then confidence that the police understand the dynamics of the neighbourhood and know they are using their policing experience to tackle the root causes of the right problems, that matter to the community. Officers own sense of legitimacy will also improve.*

Table 3. Testing Mechanism One

Context		Mechanism		Outcome		CMO configuration	Caveats
C1/3	High deprivation, chronic crime, & complex problem situation (vulnerable locality)	M1	In-depth understanding of people, place and problems	O1	Performance: Reduced demand, lower crime rates, less enforcement activity	C1/3+M1>O1	If oriented towards less enforcement as an outcome

Context		Mechanism		Outcome		CMO configuration	Caveats
				O2	Effectiveness/Efficiency: Reduced activity per outcome. Greater focus on prevention than patrolling. Other statutory partners participating fully. Skills and assets levered from community to support crime reduction	C1/3+M1>O2	If understanding gained is used focussed on identifying skills and assets to contribute to reduction in crime
				O3	Legitimacy: Improved legitimacy and/or confidence in policing	C1/3+M1>O3	If co-created with the stakeholders

Source: Curtis (2021, p. 300).

Strong CMO configurations (**Table 3**) can readily be constructed between the context of a 'vulnerable locality', i.e., that it is an area of high deprivation, chronic levels of crime and a complex problem situation. This does not mean that all other types of areas (low deprivation/high crime or low deprivation/low crime or low deprivation/low crime) the LISP social innovation process does not work, but in the terms mentioned above, less 'pressure' would be necessary on different mechanisms.

## CONCLUSIONS

Four of the pilot projects were investigated in detail, using Soft Systems Methodology as a means of structuring the comparison of the projects, and to derive conceptual models of the problem situations. The projects all varied significantly in the extent to which they fulfilled all the requirements of the designed LISP process, but all of those that produced a LISP proforma demonstrated some improvement in the performance, effectiveness and legitimacy.

Within the ethical approval of the research study, it was not possible to gather data from members of the public involved in the LISP pilots, interviews were only conducted with PCSOs and uniformed police officers. This made it impossible to adequately include the community voice in the research beyond that which was expressed through the rich pictures collected by the PCSOs themselves.

Another limitation was the inability of any of the pilots to complete the LISP eight step process within the pilot phase, due to operational limitations. Further work is needed to explore the CMO configurations in steps 7 and 8, and to test the evaluation of the interventions. However, the strengths of this approach are that it resolves the problem of idiographic, story-driven case-based research which dominates much of social innovation work. This research could have been 8 separate unrelated and incomparable projects, but the rigour of the soft systems methodology allied to the context-mechanism-outcome chain analysis demonstrated that the seemingly unrelated projects are comparable and have deep structural similarities



that supersede any a priori statistical demographic similarities that might be identified when trying to construct a counterfactual in a 'gold standard' randomised control trial. This opens the way up for social innovations from much more diverse backgrounds to be compared in a structured, coherent and consistent comparative process.

Twenty-seven mechanisms drawn from what works in neighbourhood policing and from other public policy interventions have been shown by the research to be at work in the LISP framework and six of which have been uniquely developed in this study, providing a most robust complex of key activities that make LISP projects successful in the appropriate contexts. This study has demonstrated that the twenty-seven mechanisms satisfactorily map from the vulnerable locality contexts to the PEEL policing outcomes, therefore demonstrating that the LISP process is an effective new tool in neighbourhood policing for engaging with high-risk vulnerable neighbourhoods in an effective, legitimate and confidence building manner.

The LISP social innovation process has been demonstrated to achieve stronger outcomes in contexts (different neighbourhoods) where there is chronic crime and/or deprivation is worse. Beyond reducing crime, different communities have different aspirations, and different ideas of how to keep crime low: those are outcomes. But regardless of context or outcome there are five mechanisms that work quickly and easily, and five that are really difficult to implement. Those that are readily triggered are:

- Highly connected individuals;
- Attuned to community dynamics;
- Tacit skills;
- Demand effort from stakeholders;
- Offer encouragement and feedback.

These will not take long to establish and will suggest that the social innovation LISP project is going well and there will be high confidence of success. The following mechanisms are much harder to implement:

- In-depth understanding of people, place and problems;
- Sufficient 'dose' of intensive engagement with sufficient time;
- Make accommodations for setbacks;
- Explain the theory of change;
- Share execution and control of the intervention.

Without clear and careful attention to ensuring that these mechanisms are in place and soundly implemented, not matter how desperate the context or how modest the outcomes, how engaged or enthusiastic the community or how modest the interventions that are designed, the LISP project will probably be deemed a failure. Community engagement based social innovation requires a stable team, responsabilisation, a mix of contingent interventions, perspective taking, a sensitivity to hidden communities, and attention given to connecting communities together that hitherto are not.

Social entrepreneurship has been associated with the practices of an individual combining "passion of a social mission with an image of business-like discipline, innovation, and determination" (Dees, 1998, p. 54), but later emerging as both a set of distinct processes, plus effectuation (Servantie & Rispal, 2018; Owusu & Jansen, 2013; Nelson & Lima, 2019) and bricolage (Desa & Basu, 2013; Di Domenico *et al.*, 2010; Janssen *et al.*, 2018). Both effectuation and bricolage are described in these references as ad hoc or unstructured strategies of resource identification and collation and signal a postmodern twist to theorising.

The literature on social innovation identifies that the current understanding of social innovation is that it is an eclectic craft called 'bricolage', whereas the contention of Pawson (2013) in public policy interventions is that these mechanisms structure and order the process of innovation. This may lead to an assumption that the 'agent' is the key to the social innovation seen in the LISP projects reported here, i.e., that the PCSO, or other individuals, possessing or creating networks of high social capital to create the socially innovative interventions, but to leap to this sparse conclusion would be to render the 'wicked issue' of both social innovation, and neighbourhood policing, 'tame'. It would be an adequate observation, but does not account for the evidence, and is not the complete outcome of the 'context-mechanism-outcome' work. Most notably, it doesn't account for how the agents go about this creative process, or at least, not in a manner that allows for a consistent and repeatable framework to be parsed from the evidence. The current theoretical account of this process undertaken by the social innovation agent is that of 'bricolage'. Although Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) endow social bricolage with six features (making do, refusal to be constrained by limitations, social value creation, stakeholder participation, and persuasion of significant actors) at its core their theory is still informed by Derrida's original (1970) concept of 'freeplay' and therefore still reliant on the agents' skills and talents to make do, confidence to refuse to be constrained, and find and persuade significant actors. The findings encompass Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) six features of social bricolage but resists the temptation to tame the wicked issue by oversimplifying the challenge of social change to six elements, but instead provide twenty-seven verified mechanisms

(parsed out to 5 straightforward and 5 more challenging) that work across hundreds of potential circumstances.

This research specifically identifies that a common idea in contemporary social innovation theory is that of 'bricolage' but that it is generally understood as a random, eclectic and essentially mysterious craft, consonant with postmodern thought. This research, grounded in critical realism, that identifies mechanisms that drive social behaviours and regularities, shows that social innovation can actually be a process of consistent and repeatable activities. This is not to reject the concept of bricolage, at least in the form identified by Di Domenico *et al.* (2010) above, but rather to suggest that the improvisation is not wholly 'freeplay' as the theorists might suggest or wish for, and that bricolage is constrained and structured. This research does not suggest that social innovation must be constrained and structured, but that social innovation can be consistently and repeatably applied and yet create unique interventions, whilst yet activating and mobilising the same underpinning mechanisms. Sorting through the mess of bricolage seems to reveal a different set of layers (laminar layers as Bhaskar (1975) would describe them) that comprise the mechanisms that contribute to the social impact that social entrepreneurs are seeking to achieve.

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