



# Hot Source Norwich: the Prototyping City

Summary  
15 March 2016

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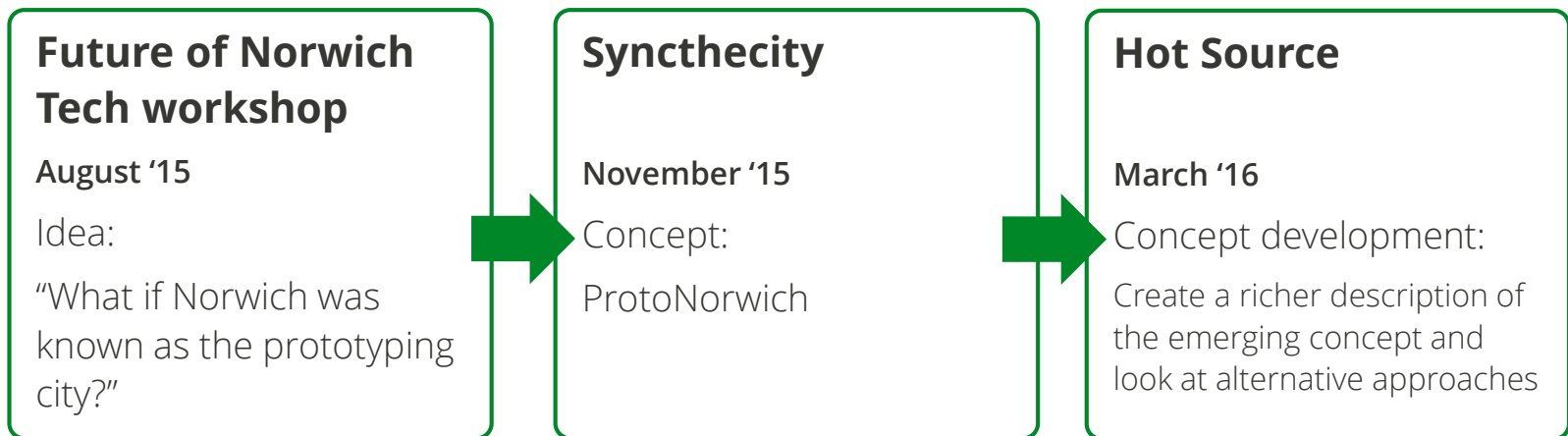


# Background

'Norwich: the prototyping city' is an emerging concept about a focus for the city's tech and business community as well as the private/public partnerships aimed at economic development.

It could help us:

- Create a unique position for the city and its capabilities on the local, national and international stage
- Provide a focus for investment, skills development and business activities in the city





# What do we mean by 'prototype'?

A **prototype** is an early sample, model, or release of a product built to test a concept or process or to act as a thing to be replicated or learned from.

*Wikipedia*

For the purposes of the discussion we set a very broad definition of what we mean by 'prototype'



In our discussion we'll consider all of these to be 'on topic'

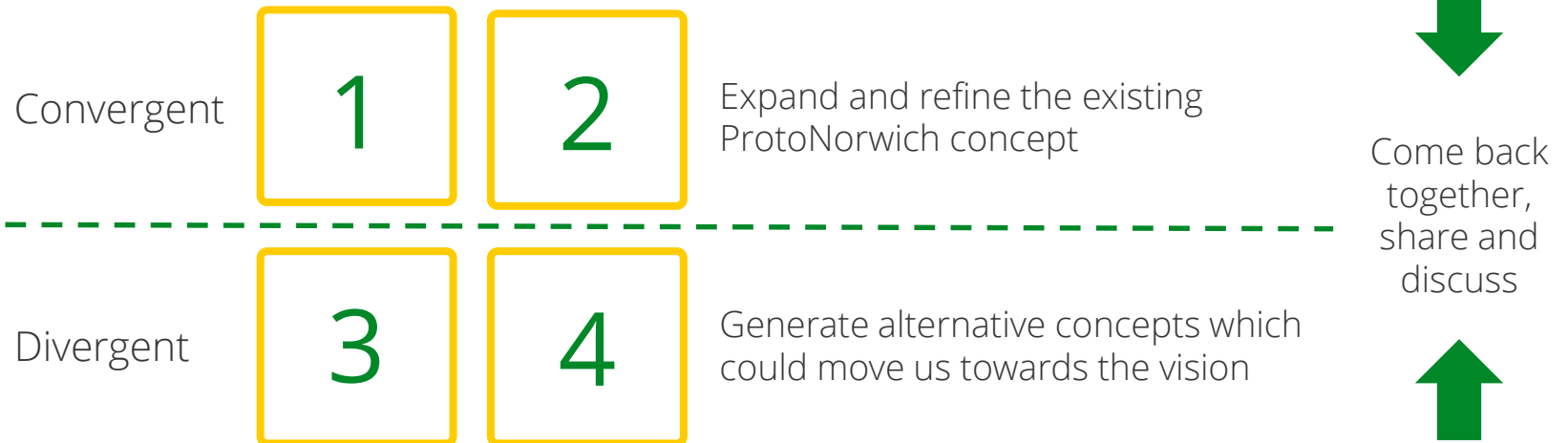
- Proof-of-Concept
- Working prototypes
- Minimum Viable Product (MVP)
- Beta Phase
- Local test market
- Test marketing campaign
- Vapourware

A thing which allows you to test, learn and improve a product or service before general release.

Could be created and deployed by either a start-up, or by a mature business.



# On the night we split into four groups



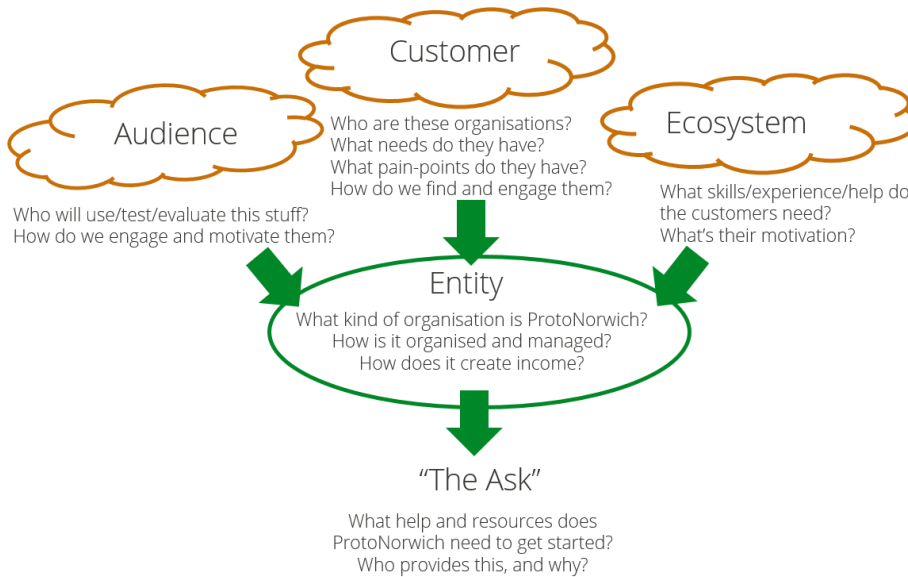
- Each group (of 7 or 8 people) spent about 1.5 hours discussing the topic before sharing back thoughts and reflections
- After sharing back we used 'dot voting' to identify the thoughts and ideas which most interested us.



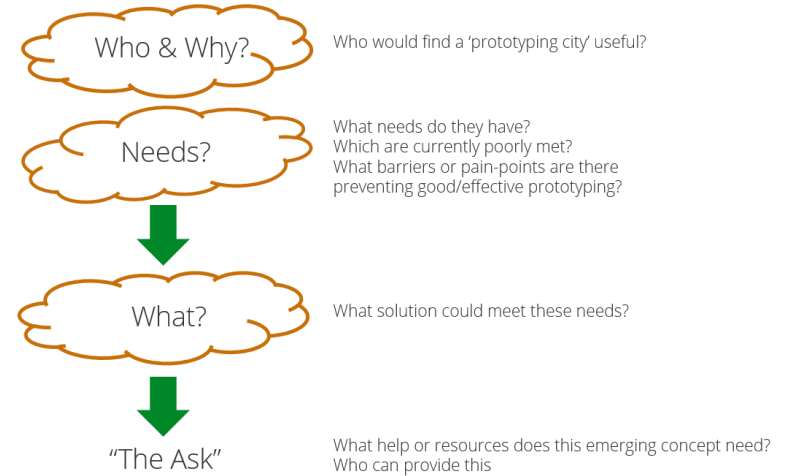
# Discussion frameworks

We used these loose frameworks to guide conversations in the convergent and divergent groups:

## Convergent groups



## Divergent groups





# The Vision

All groups used this draft vision statement as an articulation of the outcome we are seeking to create:

## **By 2021 Norwich will have an international reputation as the Prototyping City**

- It's easy for companies to develop and deploy prototype products and services in the city and surroundings
- There is an ecosystem of organisations and individuals who provide wisdom, skills and services to support creation, deployment and improvement of prototypes
- A large number of citizens are active in using and helping to improve early-stage products and services
- Major, multinational brands choose Norwich as a test-bed for new products and services
- There are national/international business success stories which cite Norwich as a positive contributor
- Prototyping activities have a measurable impact on the local economy: employment, GVA, business formation & relocation



# What did we come up with?

## Convergent groups

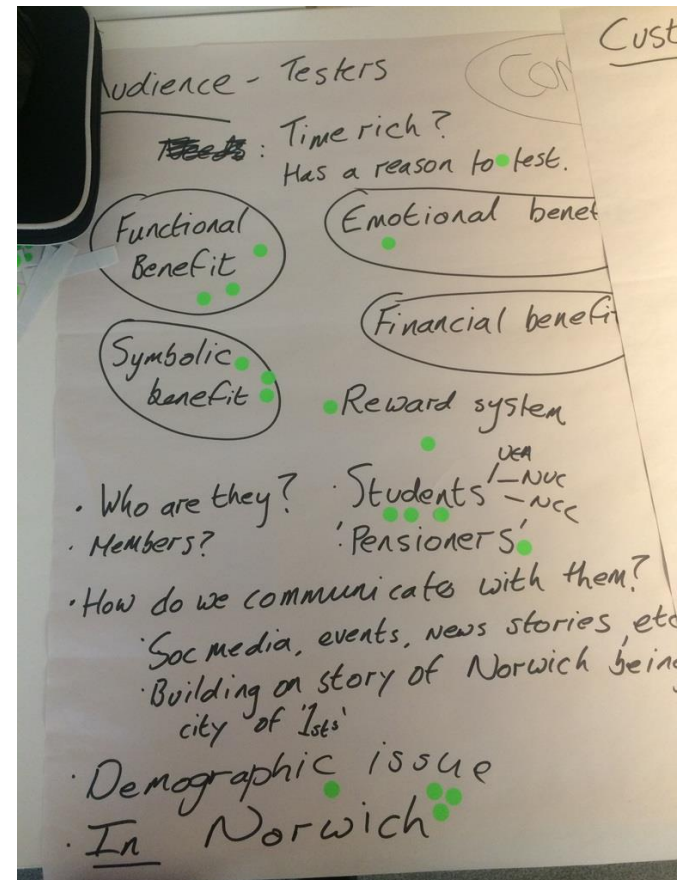
Both groups focused most attention on the 'citizen community' element of the ProtoNorwich project. This was the part least explored in the Syncthecity ProtoNorwich concept back in Nov.

Both groups explored mechanisms for building and maintaining a large network of participants.

Having a large 'on tap' resource of willing participants for test/research activity removes two of the big barriers to increased levels of prototyping activity in the city: ease of deployment; cost of finding participants/collaborators

A third barrier is that businesses and start-ups in the city do not yet have a sophisticated understanding of design-thinking (with its emphasis on make-test-learn-iterate) and how this can be used to reduce risk and cost in developing products and services through their early stages.

This suggests that communication and education for the local business community about how/when/what to test is a component part of any solution





# What did we come up with?

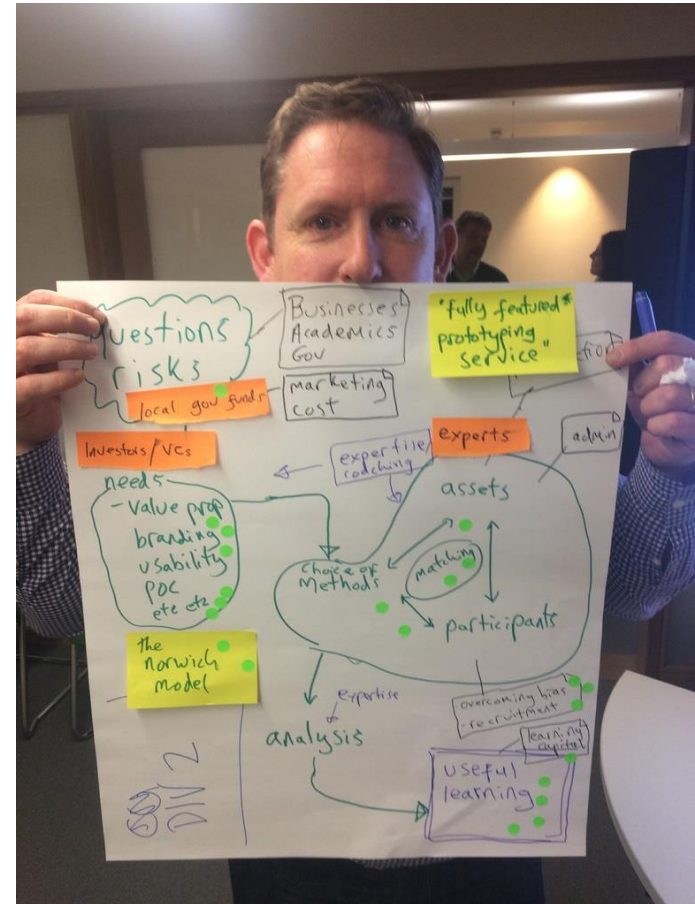
## Divergent groups

Both groups talked more broadly about ecosystems that would yield more successful prototyping activity.

As well as having the kind of network of skills and experience described in the ProtoNorwich concept the groups identified other elements which would probably also need to be present. At a high level these could be described as:

- *Method*: a description of the various stages of prototyping and the activities associated with it. This would help businesses understand the benefits of prototyping and make their product/service development plans accordingly
- *Agency*: some active, organising force which helps businesses understand their objectives and needs within prototyping and helped them put together a plan for execution. This could be either a public or private enterprise.

The groups also challenged whether the concept needs to be geographically tied to Norwich: should it be to enable prototyping *in* the city or *from* the city?







# Norwich: The Prototyping City

## The emerging concept

When we considered input from all the groups the following features/requirements emerged:

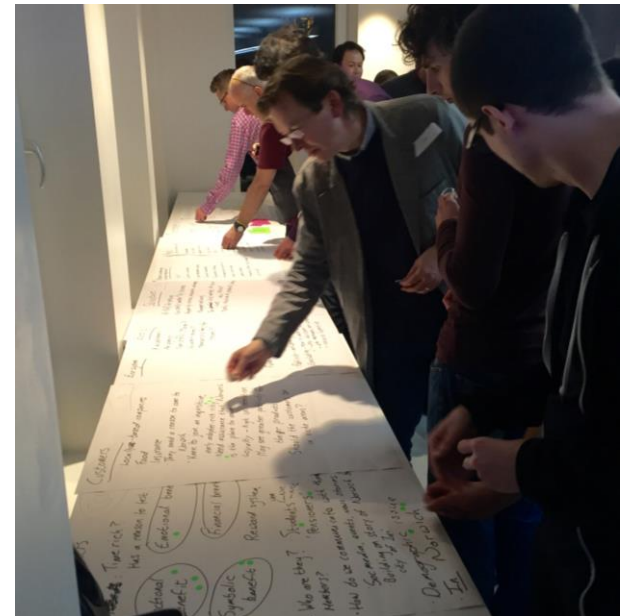
A Prototyping City would need four components

1. *Participant resource*: a very large, managed panel of profiled citizens willing to participate and collaborate in research, testing and prototyping activities
2. *Expert ecosystem*: a large, diverse network of individuals and companies willing to provide services which fill skills gaps for organisations looking to prototype in the city
3. *'Agency'*: some organising entity which helps connect organisations looking to prototype with the right citizen audience and experts from the ecosystem
4. *Method*: a widely understood and accepted method for planning and executing successful prototyping and using this to make better business decisions & better business outcomes

Components 2-4 would combine to help organisations set learning goals for prototyping activity and to help them analyse and act on findings

It would be the role of the public sector to show leadership around method both in communications but also in prioritising resources towards businesses committed to design-thinking and systematic prototyping

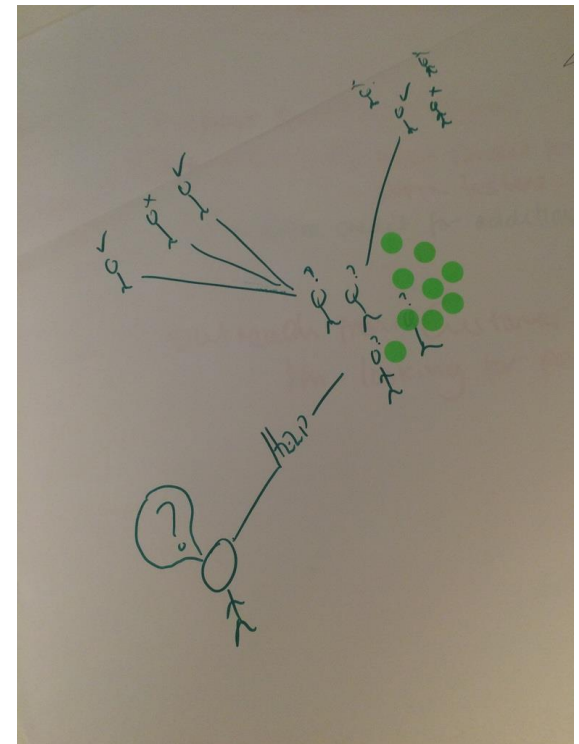
Support should be given to start-ups at very low cost to reduce barriers to prototyping and adopting a 'make/test/learn/repeat' approach





# A speculation from Foolproof

1. Gain commitment from public sector and business to design thinking and the 'make/test/learn/repeat' philosophy; show leadership in this to the local business community  
↓
2. 'Public sector lays the cable': funds the creation and management of a citizen participant network  
↓
3. Local, national and international companies can use the network at low or no cost  
↓
4. Stimulates more prototyping activity in Norwich from both local businesses and attracts this activity from other locations  
↓
5. Success stories using the Norwich ecosystem are shared, driving more activity and attention to the city  
↓
6. 'The Norwich Method' becomes exportable to other communities and geographies





# Norwich: The Prototyping City

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