Co-design with Citizens and Stakeholders

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What is the magic? That someone bothered to listen. That we were able to plan for our future and make decisions about what works for us (Family member, "Strengthening Services for Families" project, Evans, 2013).

New methodologies for facilitating meaningful citizen engagement have become increasingly important in a world in which many of the responses to the critical public policy problems we face need to be co-created with citizens and stakeholders. This chapter focuses on the growing academic and practice-based interest in *co-design* and assesses its' contribution to social progress. It argues that co-design has an essential role to play in building trust with citizens and stakeholders, eliciting knowledge of policy and delivery problems that public organisations do not possess and monitoring and supporting the needs and aspirations of target groups over time. However, the success of co-design is all in the doing. Done badly it can destroy trust systems; done well it can help solve policy and delivery problems, stabilise turbulent lives, and improve life chances.

The chapter aims to provide an understanding of the emergence and development of the co-design approach and associated methods, the principles underpinning it, and, the ingredients of better practice. It will draw on both academic and practice-based understanding. Both of the authors of this chapter have longstanding experience working on co-design interventions in both developed and developing contexts. Certain of these interventions will be used to illustrate both the strengths and the weaknesses of the approach.

What is co-design?

As Box 1 illustrates, there is nothing new about the use of design thinking in the public sector. For example, the Design Council, formerly the Council of Industrial Design, was established by Winston Churchill's wartime coalition government in 1944 in Britain "to champion great design that improves lives and makes things better". But what does appear to be new is the multi-disciplinary nature of its recent development. Co-design, is now a hybrid concept that draws on:

- product design thinking where design professionals seek to empower and guide users to solve design problems and refine existing products or invent new ones (see: Body, 2008; Brown, 2009; Buchanan, 2001; Heskett 2002; Martin, 2009 & Verganti, 2009);

- assumptions about what works in combatting social exclusion in social policy e.g. establishment of strong trust systems between citizen and case worker, personalisation of provision, and simplification of service interaction (see: Evans 2012 and 2013; Fabian Society 2010);

- normative social science that focuses on identifying and removing barriers to citizen participation in society, the economy, or politics through various processes of empowerment e.g. the literatures on community driven development (Barakat et al., 2012), political participation (Stoker 2006) or deliberative democracy (Dryzek 2000); and,

- citizen-centred thinking in *public value management* which argues that public intervention should be circumscribed by the need to achieve positive social and economic outcomes for the citizenry but, crucially what is and what is not public value should be determined collectively through inclusive

deliberation (see: Alford; Mulgan, 2009; Stoker, 2006); and, other citizen-centred approaches to public sector reform (see: Osborne and Brown, 2005; Parker and Heapy 2006; and, Preston, 2004); and,

- the practice-based literature on innovation that stresses processes of co-design, co-production and co-creation (see: Bason 2007 and 2010 and Bason et al., 2009; Brown, 2009; Design Council, 2009; Mulgan and Albury, 2003; Mulgan, 2007).

Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Harvard University (US) – http://ash.harvard.edu/
Australian Centre for Social Innovation – http://tacsi.org.au/
Big Innovation Centre (UK) – *www.biginnovationcentre.com*
Design Council (established in 1944) (UK) – *www.designcouncil.org.uk*
DesignGov – http://design.gov.au/about/
Design for Europe – *www.designforeurope.eu*
Design Manager's Australia – *designmanagers.com.au*
Helsinki Design Lab – *helsinkidesignlab.org*
Human Experience Lab, Singapore
Office for Design and Architecture, South Australia – *odasa.sa.gov.au/*
Involve (UK) – *www.involve.org.uk*
La 27e Region (France) – *www.la27eregion.fr*
Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation (Denmark) – *ufm.dk/en*
MindLab (Denmark) – mind-lab.dk/en/
Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Research Centre (New Zealand) – *sierc.massey.ac.nz*
Project H Design (US) – *www.projecthdesign.org/*
Public Policy Lab (US) – *publicpolicylab.org/*
Thinkplace (Australia and New Zealand) – thinkplaceglobal.com/
Cabinet Office Policy Lab (UK) – https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/category/policy-lab/
United Nations Research Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) – *www.unidir.org/*
UNDP Development Unit, Knowledge and Innovation – www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/.../development.../innovation.html

Box 1. Selective list of governmental and non-governmental organisations devoted to design and innovation (all websites last accessed 24 November 2015).

These approaches have two core insights in common – that late modernity requires active citizenship and that citizens have unique insights and expertise to bring to collective problem-solving. Here we find a happy marriage with design thinking where it is generally recognized that the quality of design improves the more user interests are integrated into the design process (Brown, 2009). These insights have therefore galvanised innovation in service design, policy programming and governance practices, together with the proliferation of governmental and non-governmental organisations devoted to its application (see Box 1).

Co-design is therefore a methodology of research and professional reflection that supports inclusive problem solving and seeks solutions that will work for people. It places the citizen or stakeholder at the centre of a planned process of learning which focuses on the achievement of very specific outcomes. For example, our work with vulnerable families aims to build the capacity of the family to stabilize, recover and reintegrate into the community (see; Evans, 2013).

The Co-design Process

Co-design thinking then is about understanding the lives of others (Buchanan 2001; Leadbeater 2004). It draws on ways of working that are commonplace in the design of objects and products and suggests that those ways of working could be applied to wider system and process design. Co-design tends to involve three stages of learning; all of which are iterative and require engagement and re-engagement between researchers,

practitioners and citizens. These include: (1) discovery and insight; (2) prototyping and (3) evaluating and scaling co-design interventions.

Discovery and insight

> *One of the most significant developments of system thinking is the recognition that human beings can never see or experience a system, yet we know that our lives are strongly influenced by systems and environments of our own making and by those that nature provides. By definition, a system is the totality of all that is contained, has been contained, and may yet be contained within it. We can never see or experience this totality. We can only experience our personal pathway through a system* (Buchanan, 2001, p.12).

The first stage of learning involves establishing a shared representation of concerns and problems with the target group; it draws on evidence that is synthesized and tested for its robustness but it also generates a broad range of perspectives on an issue as seen by different citizens. This requires creating a learning environment that allows citizens to tell their own stories rather than making assumptions about their preferences. It is based on the observation that citizens never experience the delivery system as a whole; just pathways through the system. We therefore seek to understand the problem through the eyes of the user. It doesn't require big numbers unlike a statistically significant survey but it does require spending quality time with a small number of participants, mapping their journeys, identifying obstacles and developing mitigating strategies.

This stage is about creating a space where participants can imagine and progress towards a future rather than becoming trapped in past models or ways of thinking. It uses a creative design dynamic to encourage new ways of thinking based on good practices. Some of the techniques that can be used include getting practitioners to experience the world from the perspective of others, getting citizens to draw or capture in non-written form their perceptions of a better future and generally trying to encourage a freeing from past certainties and developing a space where creativity and learning, and taking risks, is encouraged. Beyond these process elements this stage also involves a large scale search for alternatives, options and innovations that appear to address the issue in focus.

Various methods and tools can be deployed to aid the process of discovery at this stage of learning. As Box 2 illustrates, this can include action learning, network and journey mapping tools and reflexive practice. These learning methods are used to improve the quality of information about the citizen or stakeholder experience of the problem under study. This enables designers to build an evidence base on what does or does not work from the perspective of citizens and stakeholders.

Prototyping

The second phase of learning focuses on developing prototype interventions based on a joint commitment with key partners and developing appropriate rapid feedback research methods to support that dynamic. Here the logic is of a design experiment. For a broader discussion see Peter John's contribution to this volume. The experiment focuses on the design of an intervention as the core research problem. The techniques used at this stage will be contingent on the amount of time available to the project team. For example, the ideal type experiment would allow for sufficient time to observe and manipulate the intervention over a period usually in one location, until acceptable results emerge. The experiment would progress through a series of design-redesign cycles. There is feedback to the core participants so as the intervention unfolds the design adjusts to work in a particular context. Initially, the goal is success in a local and particular setting and that challenge is the focus of attention. The design experiment claims to provide an evidence base about 'what works' in the early stages of the development of an intervention; in addition, it may provide a staging post for a broader and more generalisable test in the future.

Methods and Tools	Purpose
Action learning	Recognises that solutions to problems can only be developed inside the context in which problems arise • *See connections between issues and events* • *Create a safe learning environment* • *Focus on the whole rather than the parts* • *Seeks a holistic solution to the problem*
Network mapping	Observes that most interventions are delivered through network arrangements • *What actors/resources are critical to the delivery of progressive outcomes?* • *Who is not there?* • *Which actors/resources should be closer in or further away from problem-solving* • *What does progress look like?* • *What are the key barriers to progress?*
Journey mapping	Understanding citizen/stakeholder journeys, challenges and aspirations • *What does the journey tell us about their story?* • *What has been the focus and what is missing?* • *What do you see as the barriers, risks and opportunities?*
Reflexive practice	Co-designing a plan to navigate the barriers: • *What changes are possible, desirable and sustainable?* • *Why are these changes relevant?* • *How can these changes be made?*

Box 2. Learning tools for co-design

Evaluation and scaling

The third stage then reverts to a more traditional evaluation phase where collaborative options analysis takes place on the basis of assessing pilot interventions through the use of Randomised Controlled Trials or other robust forms of evaluation (see Figure 1).
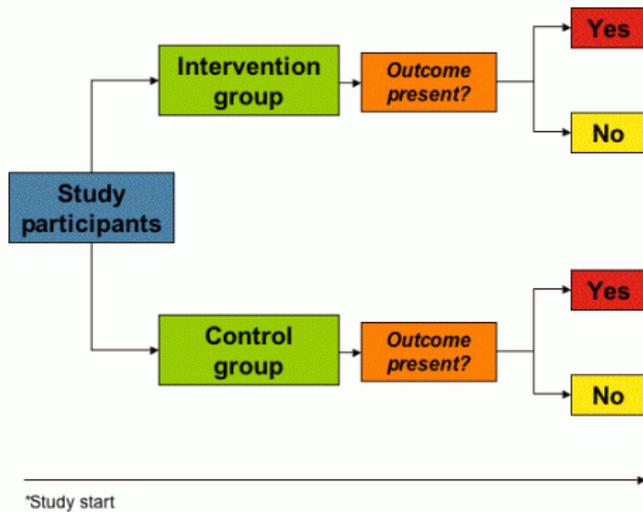
Figure 1. A classic random control trial

In summary then, the group of citizens or stakeholders with technical support, scope and define the problem and identify the change objective to be produced; review the range of options to produce the change objective; choose the option to be pursued; design a prototype; pilot, monitor, evaluate and refine. Figure 2 provides a graphic representation of how the learning process can be conceptualised. It is important to note, however, that co-design is very much a process of "muddling through the mess" as one stakeholder once put it to us. Craft rather than science; learning through doing.
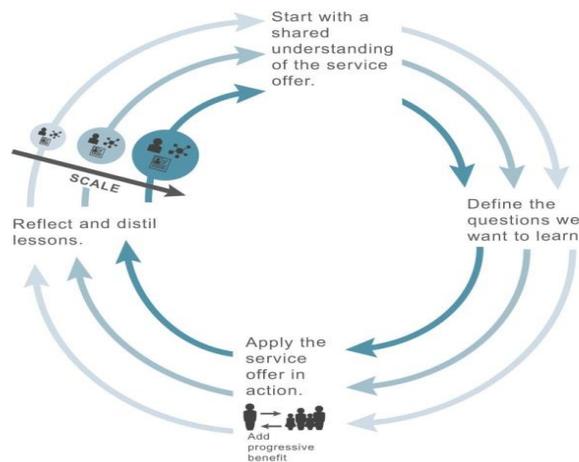

Figure 2. Learning through doing

Where can co-design make a real difference?

Various taxonomies have been devised in both academic and practice-based scholarship to match different engagement methods to different engagement purposes. These include Arnstein's Eight Rungs on a ladder of citizen participation (1969, p. 217) developed in 1969. Or the more recent spectrum of levels of participation developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) (see Figure 3) which better reflects the different purposes of participation.

Some practitioners do not see participation as having anything to do with politics or democracy but see it simply as a more efficient and effective way of developing and implementing projects and programmes. Others see the entire process as fundamentally political, affecting the ways people have or take power in relation to the decisions that affect them, and changing the role of those affected from being 'targets' of policy change to joint designers of that change. Participation exercises can usually satisfy both, but the differences can affect the types of methods chosen. While such taxonomy may be useful for determining what form of engagement may be necessary in different circumstances, policy-makers also require a heuristic device to enable them to identify where co-design can be useful at different decision points in the policy process. Figure 3 provides a starting point to this discussion with reference to co-design.
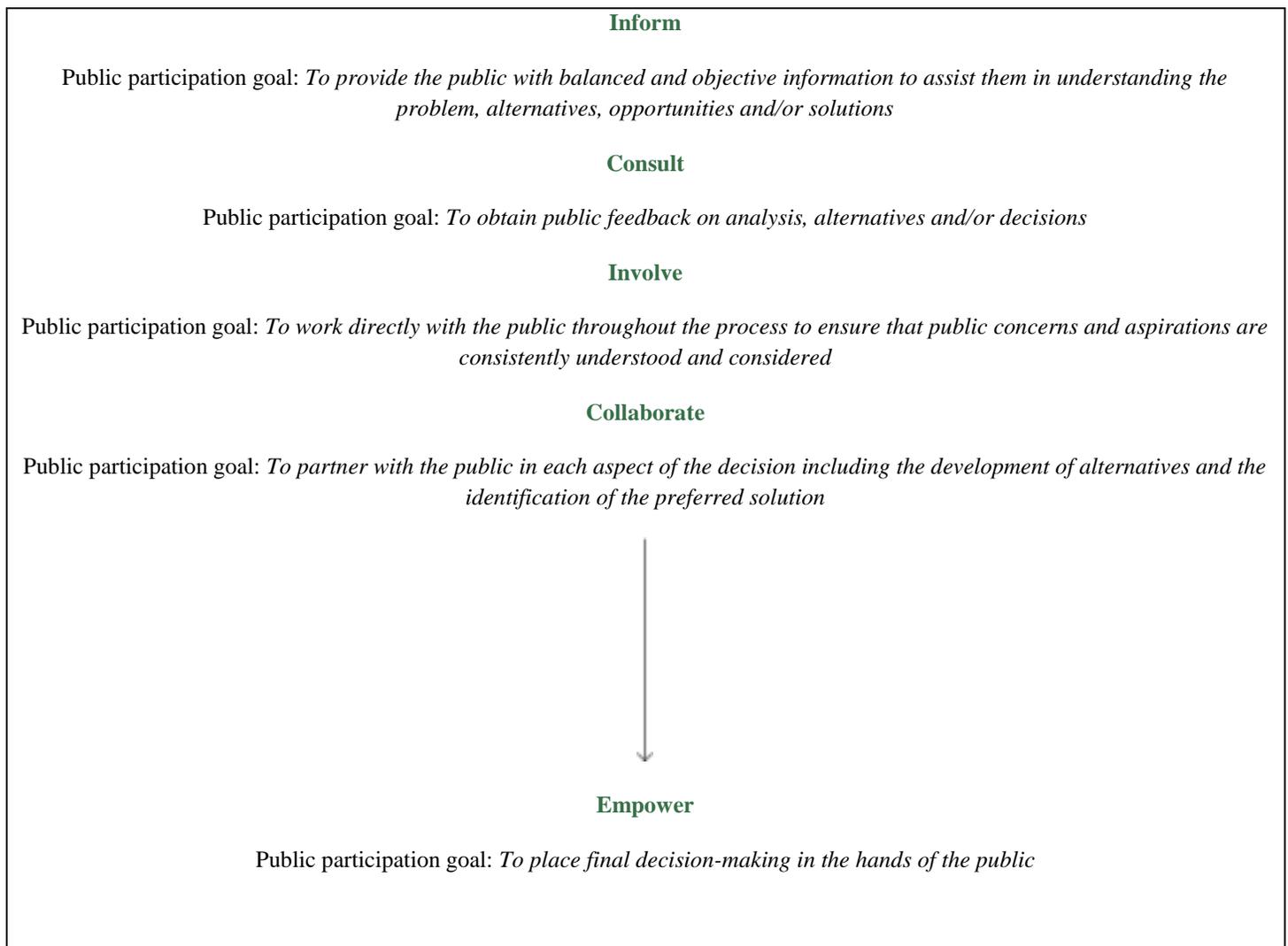

Inform

Public participation goal: *To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions*

Consult

Public participation goal: *To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions*

Involve

Public participation goal: *To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered*

Collaborate

Public participation goal: *To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution*

Empower

Public participation goal: *To place final decision-making in the hands of the public*

Figure 3. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of participation

Here we understand good policy-making as a process of learning which involves the absorption of target groups of citizens or stakeholders into different decision points in the policy process. It is noteworthy that decision points 1 (strategic direction), 2 (policy design) 3 (delivery) and 4 (learning) will inevitably involve greater decision-making competency for citizens and stakeholders than is traditionally the case if a co-design approach is used.
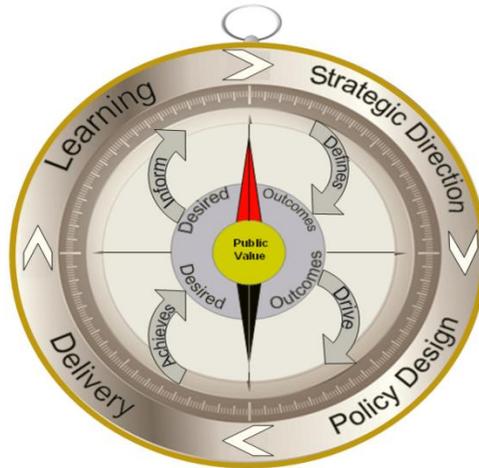

Figure 4. Learning and co-design

Case Studies in Co-design

This section provides some illustrative case studies of co-design in action at the three most prominent decision points where co-design is used by practitioners.

Co-design of delivery systems – "Improving Services with Families"

> This model implies that we are going to have to change some things to enable people to work in a different way (Steering Group member).

"Improving Services with Families" (ISF) was a pilot project co-designed by the Community Services Directorate (CSD) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Thinkplace, a Canberra-based design consultancy and a group of families experiencing multiple forms of exclusion. The project proceeded from the observation that a group of families in the ACT was experiencing a perpetual cycle of disadvantage. The policy issue at stake here was to improve outcomes for families that could not, or chose not, to access the support they required to meet their full range of needs. The CSD accepted that traditional service delivery methods did not support these citizens particularly well and over recent years looked to engage with new, innovative methods. As the Director of CSD put it, '[I]n this policy vacuum, a 'co-design' methodology with service users based on an action learning approach was more likely to be effective than a traditional policy-making process'. Design thinking provided an innovative methodology for building bridges between citizens experiencing multiple exclusions and their community.

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ISF was an innovative project in at least five ways: 1), it was a place-based programme (via the family and public housing); 2) families were provided with personalised support through the provision of a lead worker who acted as a facilitating partner for the family; 3), it provided a choice of services for the family to access but they determined which services would work for them; 4) it used a communitarian approach – the family had rights but they also had an obligation to manage their own recovery processes; and, 5) the programme was delivered through a collaborative system of governance broadly representative of the community of practice for supporting families at risk in the ACT; and 6), it sought to build more detailed and sensitive family information profiles which could be shared by families, Lead Workers and appropriate agencies system-wide to both improve the quality of information and reduce the administrative burden.

Evaluation findings demonstrate that the fundamental benefit of the project to most project partners lay in the process of lesson-drawing across the partnership on the strengths and weaknesses of place based service delivery using the Lead Worker model – learning through doing and professional reflection. ISF can be understood as a process of learning in which the means (place based service delivery through the Lead Worker model) to an end (better wellbeing outcomes for vulnerable families) was subject to careful deliberation by informed and reflexive practitioners. In addition to the process of inter-organizational learning across the community of practice, the project also benefited from a common understanding of the problem, resource and information sharing and the news skills that were transferred through the design process itself by ThinkPlace.

The ISF project also attracted high levels of participant satisfaction with all participants getting what they wanted from the project; a remarkable outcome for this form of programming. The overall level of satisfaction participants experienced with the project paints a strikingly different picture to that presented by participants prior to intervention. The most frequently cited reasons for this reversal of fortunes is contributed to the role of the Lead Worker and the quality of the trusting relationships that they built with their families, the quality of mentoring and advocacy, and, their role in facilitating access to particular services.

In terms of the process of project learning, the work of ThinkPlace was very well received in all respects – the efficacy of the tools and the outcomes achieved from their implementation and the respectful and compassionate approach that ThinkPlace adopted in their interactions with participants. It is noteworthy that individual participants found the journey mapping process emotionally difficult at times but ultimately rewarding. But it is equally noteworthy, that the children found the journey mapping experience invaluable in helping them work through certain emotional problems.

Crucially, the ISF project provided a strong foundation to future community of practice initiatives in the ACT to combat various aspects of social exclusion regardless of the target group. In consequence of the successful pilot, the ACT government used co-design methods to establish a Human Services Blueprint – an innovative systems approach for social policy delivery in Canberra.

Co-design for community development – the case of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was created in 2003 by Dr Ashraf Ghani (the current President of Afghanistan) and Hanif Atmar (former Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development) and financed by a consortium of international donors coordinated by the World Bank. It was designed to reduce poverty by empowering communities through improved governance, and social, human, and economic capital. The establishment of directly elected Community Development Councils (CDCs) lies at the heart of this strategy; putting communities in charge of their own development and providing them with technical support and resources to deliver co-designed projects that matter to them. The NSP adopts a community-driven development approach underpinned by co-design methods. The programme attempts to

target the needs of rural communities by employing community-driven development, delivered through a collaborative partnership, encompassing central government, local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the communities – represented by purpose built CDCs. Today, the NSP forms the central component of an architecture of national programmes managed by the MRRD, designed both to help the Afghan people to rebuild their lives and nation, and to demonstrate that the Afghan government, with technical assistance, could develop the inclusive governance structures required to sustain a stable state

As described in the founding document of the NSP, the goal of the Programme is to reduce poverty through empowering communities to pursue two main objectives: (1) to lay the foundations for a strengthening of community-level governance, and (2) to support community-managed sub-projects comprising reconstruction and development that improve the access of rural communities to social and productive infrastructure and services. The implementation strategy of the NSP consists of four core elements: (1) facilitation at the community level to assist communities to establish inclusive community institutions (CDCs) through elections, reaching consensus on priorities and corresponding sub-project activities, co-designing sub-proposals that comply with NSP appraisal criteria, and implementing approved sub-projects; (2) a system of direct Block Grant transfers to support rehabilitation and development activities (sub-projects) planned and implemented by the elected CDCs; (3) a series of co-designed capacity building activities to enhance the competence of members of CDCs (both men and women) in terms of financial management, procurement, technical skills, and transparency; and (4) activities linking local institutions to government administration and aid agencies with available services and resources. The MRRD recognizes that the quality of the implementation process of the NSP is essential for the long-term sustainability of community investments and for the overall success of the Programme. As such, at the community level the identification of priorities and the planning of sub-projects are based on principles of co-design, participatory planning through inclusive community meetings and representative elected development councils; community contributions to capital costs and operation and maintenance; and project transparency and accountability to the community.

To help the MRRD achieve its targets, an Oversight Consultant (GTZ/IS) was contracted to oversee the overall management and supervision of the NSP. In addition, the MRRD contracted 22 NGOs (both national and international) and UNHABITAT to co-design and facilitate the delivery of the NSP in selected districts, across all the provinces of Afghanistan. These non-governmental organizations are termed Facilitating Partners (FPs), and their role is to facilitate community participation in the planning, implementation and management of subprojects financed by the NSP Block Grants and ensure that these projects are genuinely co-designed with the community.

Evaluation data suggests that the NSP has been a great success. Although the NSP has struggled in meeting its economic recovery objective at the community level its impact on community governance has been far-reaching. First, it has (re)built community governance by encouraging more accountable and inclusive forms of decision-making and representation through genuine processes of co-design with FPs. Second, it has enhanced the role of the government in planning and delivering recovery and development and strengthened capacities among some of the main Ministries and their line departments. Third, it has led to increased dialogue between informal and formal institutions, thereby building the legitimacy of the fledgling state. As a fourth impact, in attempting to fill some of the critical gaps in the state structure at the sub-national level, the NSP has directly and indirectly created new coordinating bodies and has thus played a crucial role in joining-up state infrastructure and changing attitudes (for further details see: Barakat, Evans and Strand, 2006).

Since its inception in September 2003 the programme has reached 22,500 rural communities, accounting for 10.5 million people — half Afghanistan's population — in 175 out of 364 rural districts across all 34 provinces in Afghanistan. Contrary to recent media reports, the evaluation identifies significant evidence of increased public faith in the system of government, improved community relations and the empowerment of CDCs. Eighty-six per cent thought it had brought greater unity and national solidarity and 77 per cent considered the government to be interested in their community, compared to 26 per cent of those not involved in the NSP. As one respondent put it: 'the NSP unites communities, bringing us together to solve our problems and plan for our future; for the first time the government has shown that it cares about us so we must now show our loyalty to our government.'

Co-design for strategic learning – the case of the ACT government's 'Out of Home Care' system

In 2014, there was a growing awareness that the ACT's 'Out of Home Care' Framework was not flexible either to the complex needs of children and young people in the care system or to the increase demand for services. In particular, the inflexibility of the existing service model meant that the needs of children and young people in care, birth families and carers were not always met in a consistent and timely manner. Moreover, there was little evidence that the experience of service users was being utilised in policy development. 'Experiencing Care in the ACT' was designed to bridge the gap and inform the development of a five-year 'Out of Home Care' Strategy. The project used a co-design approach to understand the experience of out of home care for service users. The project engaged citizens and stakeholders from all parts of the system including Indigenous and other culturally diverse users, service providers and members of the Community Services Directorate to understand how the broader out of home care service is experienced by users. Thinkplace was commissioned to develop a research approach for listening to the experiences of birth families, young people who have been in out of home care, kinship carers and foster carers. The listening informed insights that have led to recommendations with implications for change to policy, administration and organisational culture. Research questions were generated by a Core Design Team in order to get an understanding of participants' experiences and to optimise the opportunity to generate rich narratives and journey maps. Some overarching themes that Thinkplace sought to understand included: the user journey through care; what they understood about what was happening to them; how they felt; insights into whether they received the support they needed/wanted; their sense of belonging (particularly for young people); the identification of important relationships; and, issues of self-agency (barriers and triggers).

The research interviews were conducted by ThinkPlace. The format of the interview was exploratory. A conversation was framed with clear boundaries and some pre-prepared questions. Within these parameters the interview was allowed to unfold as an organic conversation. To a certain degree the interviewer allowed the participant to lead the direction of the conversation, which meant that they were able to talk about what was most important to them. The interviews were audio recorded and extensive notes taken. The narratives have subsequently been rewritten with names changed and identifying details omitted to protect the privacy of participants. The core design team collaborated in the analysis and synthesis of the narratives. From each narrative, macro pathways were produced that represented the complex journeys experienced by each segment. The maps are divided into the phases of pre-care, entering care, ongoing care and leaving care, and represent the possible pathways that individuals and families can take through the care system. Detailed pathway maps were also created to describe the experience of one person or family's story from each segment. Having analysed and compared all the narratives the Core Design Team summarised the needs and challenges for each group and synthesised these into four key insight areas. From these insight areas, the Core Design Team developed 15 recommendations which have transformed the delivery of 'Out of Home Care' in the ACT.

Principles and conditions for co-design

Our case studies emphasize the importance of seven principles of co-design in action. Firstly, it is important for the design process to have a clear policy intent – why is there a need for this policy, project or programme? What are the expected outcomes? What form of public value creation is intended? Co-design processes should be intentional and action-oriented.

Secondly, depending on the objective of learning, citizens and stakeholders should be placed at the centre of the process of learning and co-creation. It is therefore critical to select participants who have experience of the policy intent. This beckons the question; who can provide insight into the lived everyday experience of the policy system? Whose voices have not been heard, first hand? Who can offer perspectives that could transform existing paradigms and assumptions?

Thirdly, co-design requires particular skills of observation, negotiation and empathy that are often in short supply in many public sectors. This raises a range of issues regarding capability and expertise to problem-solve. What is the current experience like? What works? What is broken? What are the desires of the end users? What are the opportunities to design a change that meets the policy intent?

Fourthly, there is often a need to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to the process of discovery which is often at odds with traditional ways of making policy through the usual suspects? How can decision makers, frontline staff, key stakeholders and end users build a shared understanding of issues, opportunities and solutions at every stage?

Fifthly, it is also important to rapidly prototype solutions with end users engaging with creative questions such as what might the idea look like? How can the idea be physically created to "play", to experiment? How many ways can the solution work? How can the concept be quickly tested, explored with end users, refined and redesigned?

Sixthly, it is also fundamental to curate the knowledge created from each stage of learning both in terms of establishing institutional memory but also in terms of engaging in subsequent professional reflection and communication with potential funders. How can the story be told? What is the compelling narrative that will influence decision makers? What are the critical success factors for delivering on the policy intent?

Finally, it is important to balance the desirable, the possible and the viable – how can we resolve the policy issue by addressing end user needs and make it work for government and others? How can the solution be financially viable and sustainable? How can we ensure the legitimacy of the intervention?

It is also evident that co-design appears to work best under certain starting conditions: where the policy setting is very complex and understanding the best policy option is unclear; where significant behavioural change is required from the target population; and, where existing delivery systems simply do not work and an innovative or transformative solution is required. Moreover, acceptance of these starting conditions by policy-makers leads to the recognition that business as usual will not work and innovative learning methods need to be deployed to address the problem. By implication permission is required by policy-makers to invest time in the inception of co-design projects, engage meaningfully with end users, address power imbalances in decision making and suspend dominant problem solving paradigms that are linear, logic driven, and past data driven, to be more exploratory, and open to discovery.

In Conclusion – capturing the political and bureaucratic imagination

The value of co-design to policy-makers can be significant. It leads to sharper problem definition because of the inclusive character of policy formulation. It allows for the generation of evidence-based understanding of existing practice. Through action learning approaches this can lead to the generation of real time data which can be integrated directly into decision processes. Co-design can identify multiple solutions to delivery problems that can be adapted into tailored interventions. These interventions tend to be afforded greater legitimacy because the end users have been involved throughout the process of policy development. In sum, co-design is an important approach for public policy because it allows for three important actions: reframing of a complex policy setting; structured policy experimentation that generates rich evidence; and sharing of the risks of policy failure with citizens and stakeholders. Through engaging end users early on, implementation issues can be integrated into policy design and help mitigate problems before they emerge. Co-design is a practical and applied approach which means that low residual prototypes can help both end users and policy makers see what will and won't work. For example, the Australian Commonwealth Government's Department of Human Services, responsible for making payments to unemployed people, conducted a co-design project with long term unemployed young people and explored how an online service could replace the need for them to visit counters every week. The policy of shifting services online, in principal was right, and the department had developed a very basic interface. The co-design project involved working with young unemployed people to find out what online experiences worked best for them. The young people were given the opportunity to design their own interface based on what was understood as critical functions and actions they needed to demonstrate – such as keeping appointments to seek work, completing reports on interviews attended, and tracking their payments (from multiple Government agencies) and other household expenses such as rent and other costs. The paper prototypes they generated were then compared with the departmental prototypes and it was discovered that the department had missed the core user requirement (to demonstrate self-management) and so they needed a more calendar, notes-based approach, compared to lists of payments and other static information. This co-design work was integrated quickly into the department's online approach, saving them from a possible delivery failure and associated costs.

Co-design can radically improve the quality of policy-making and operational delivery. It can contribute to creating more active citizens, help manage complex problems in public service design and delivery, build new relationships and knowledge required for 21st century governance, and develop individual skills, confidence, and ambition. For these and other reasons, co-design has become an essential method for enhancing the quality of public policy-making and delivery. The latest interventions to support vulnerable citizens have captured the political imagination because they are achieving better outcomes at a significantly lower cost (see: Evans, 2012& 2013 and Fabian Society 2010) and they are seizing the bureaucratic imagination because they compel service providers to work beyond their traditional boundaries, join-up through a systems approach, and share skills, resources and risk. However, co-design does require strong political support, the appetite to try something new and the capacity to share power. Most significantly it requires access to a skills base in design methods, advocacy and brokering that are not in plentiful supply in the public sector. Nonetheless, this is the stuff of effective future governance that places the citizen at the centre of a co-created process of policy learning.

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