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The civil servant systemic designer: An emerging context for systemic design practice

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A rich picture of
the **civil servant**
systemic
designer:
An emerging
context

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October 11, 2013

Agenda





Vancouver

Calgary

Edmonton

Toronto

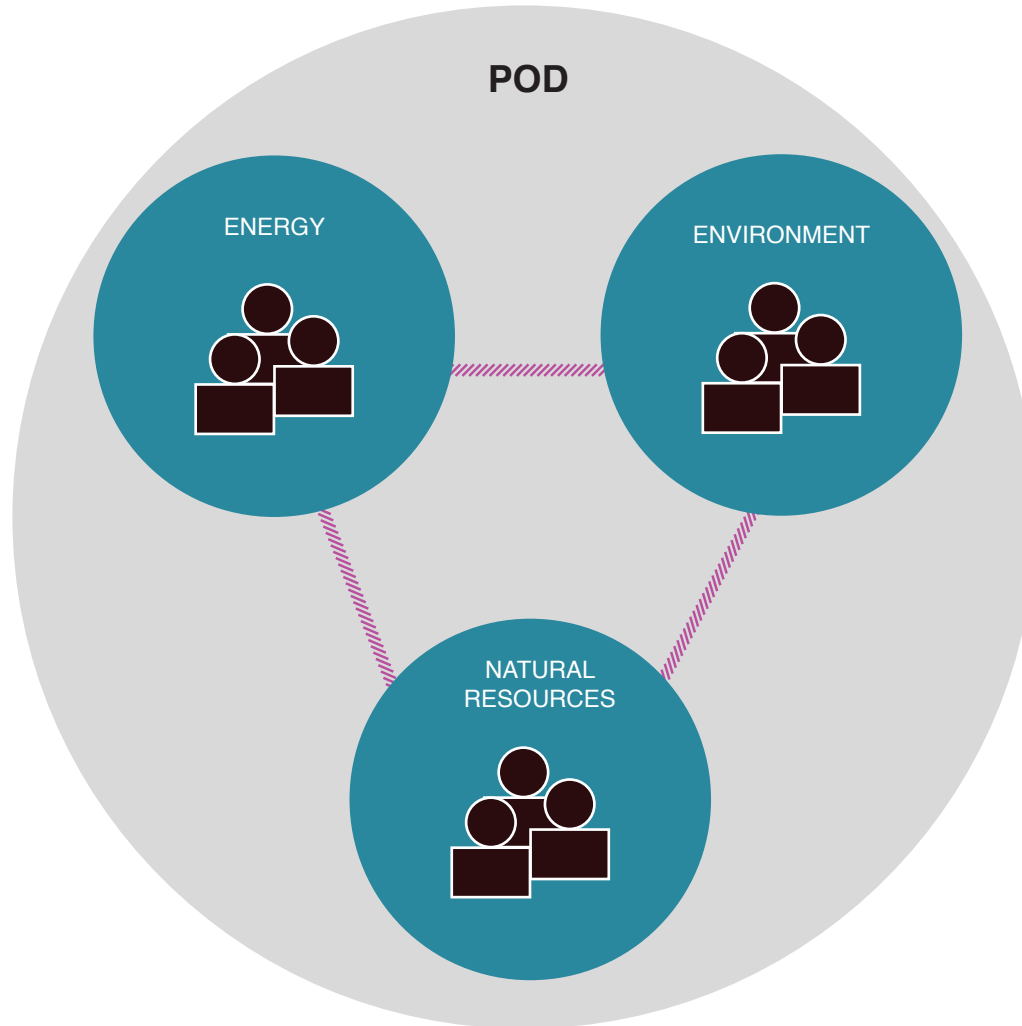
Ottawa

Montréal

“Government and public service is too important for it to fail through lack of care; through the simple inability of yesterday’s funding model or accumulated political capital to simply continue into the future. While this is a challenge on an immense scale – an unknown-unknown in terms of problems – it does not mean that we should not take it on.”

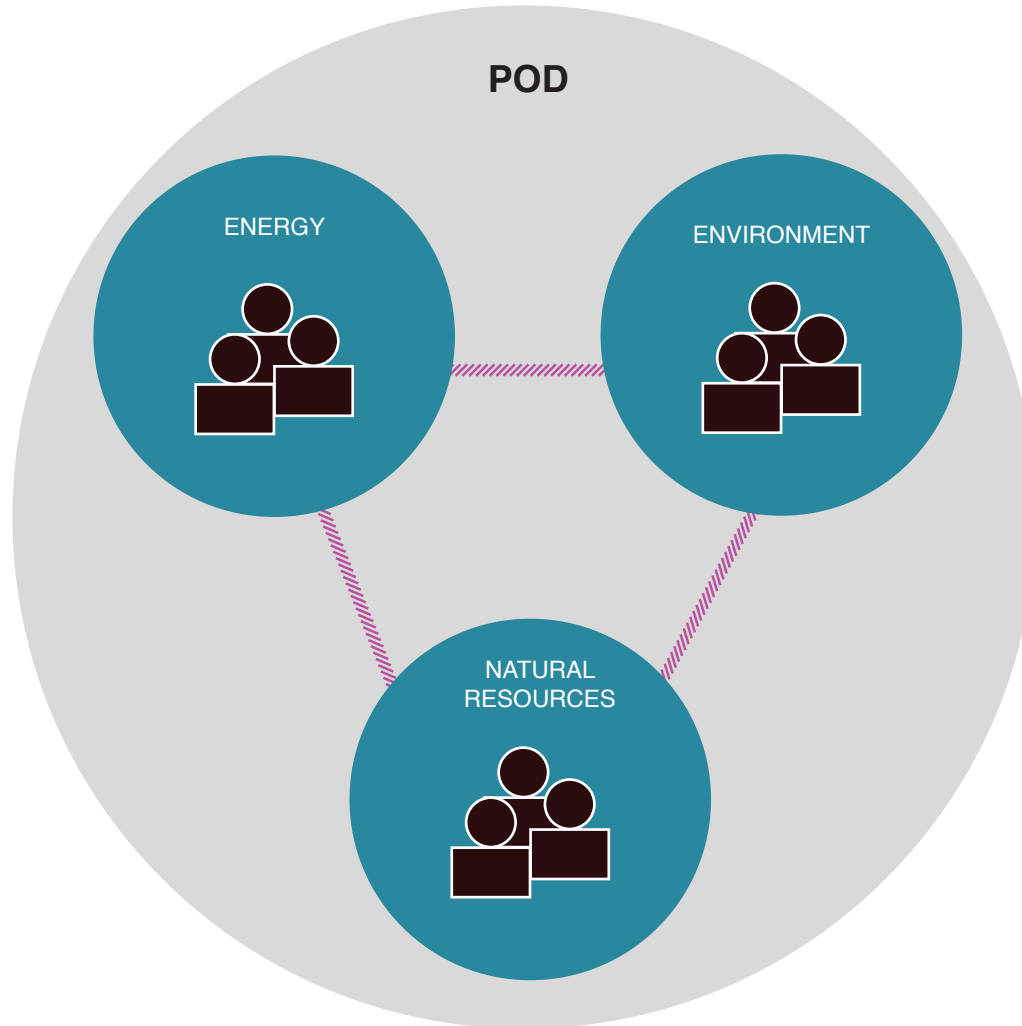
Civil Servant Systemic Designer – one entrusted with the public interest by duty and responsibility – who practices within the architecture of government, deploying systemic design methodologies towards the complex predicaments that societies faces.





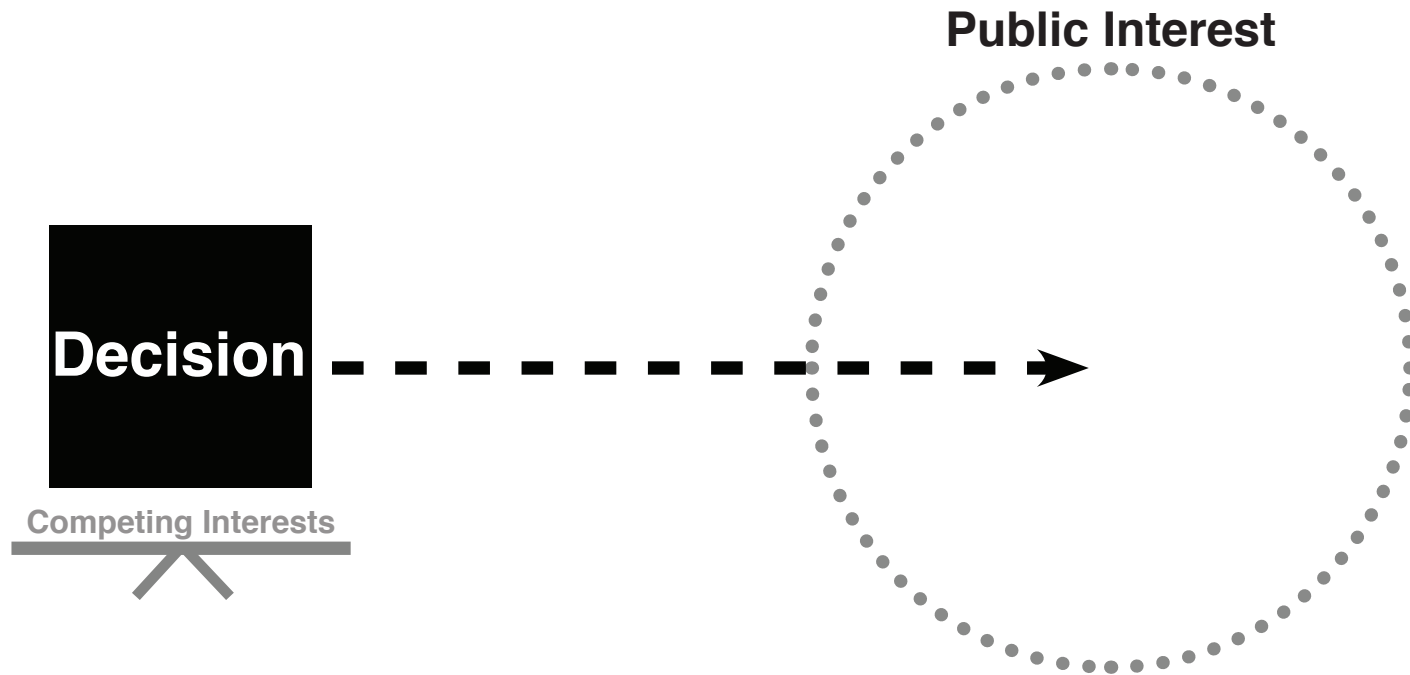
ACTIVITIES:

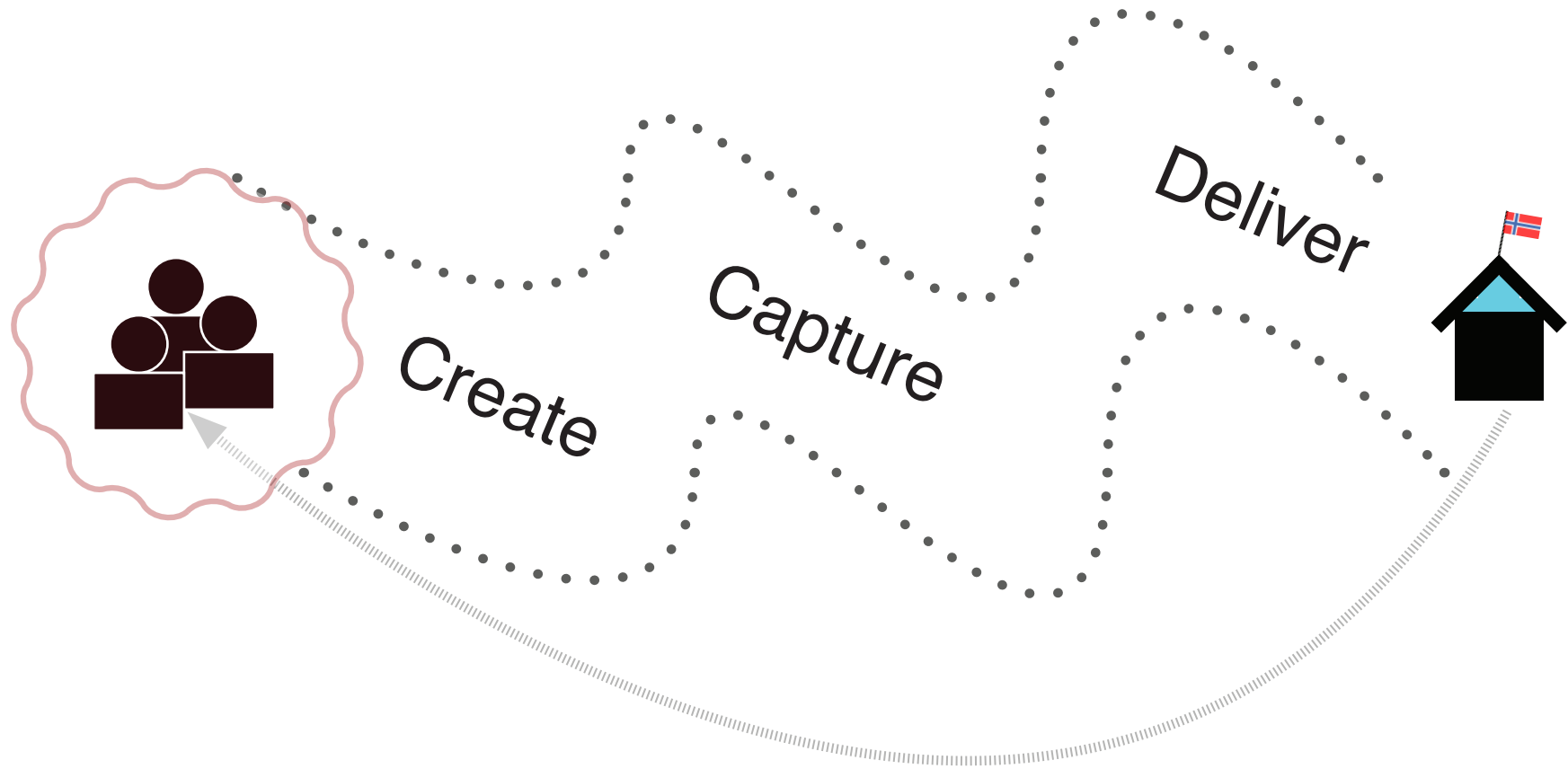
- Design research
- Problem framing
- Policy synthesis
- Futuring
- Integration
- Policy prototyping
- Capacity building/
coaching

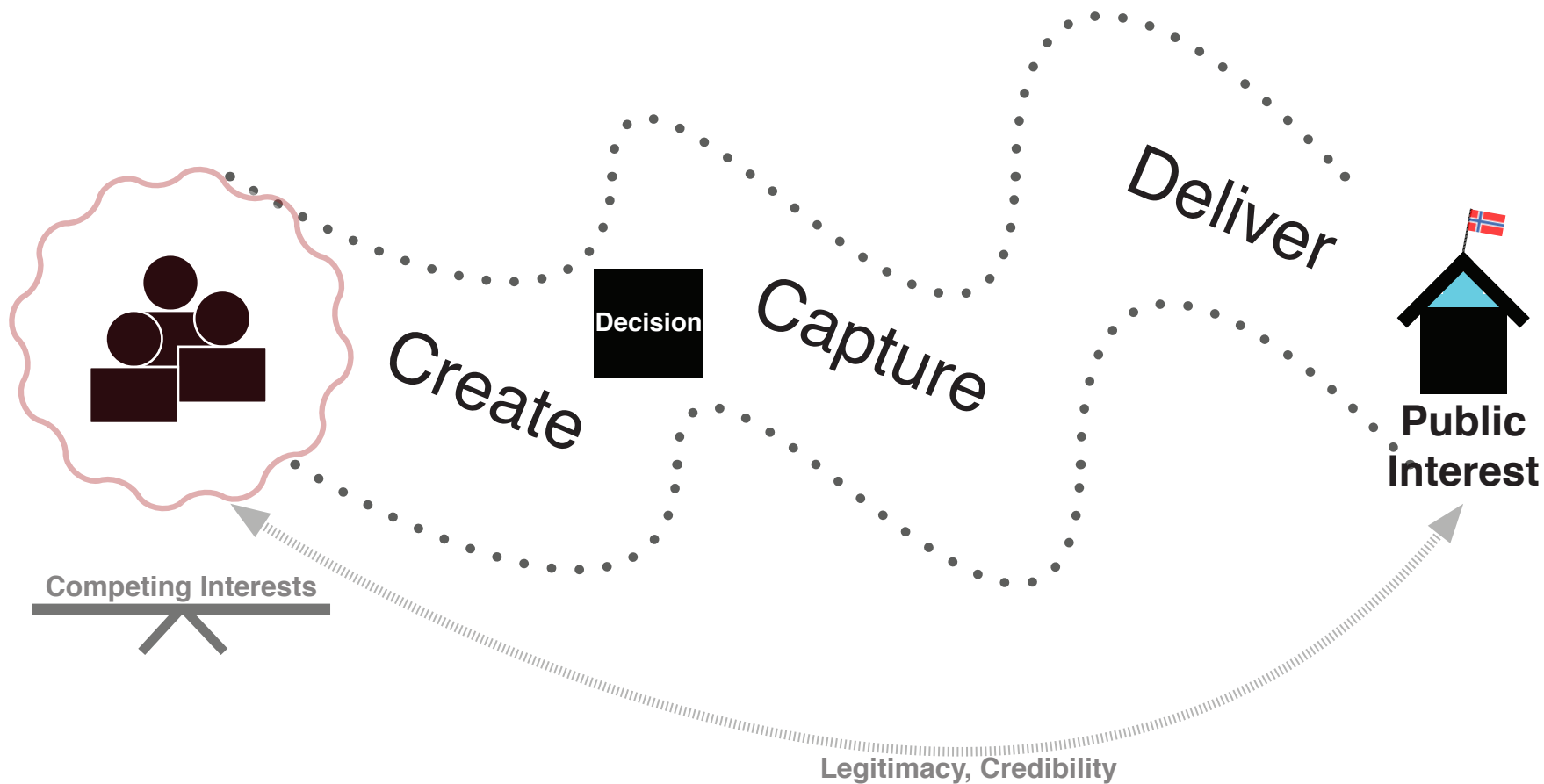


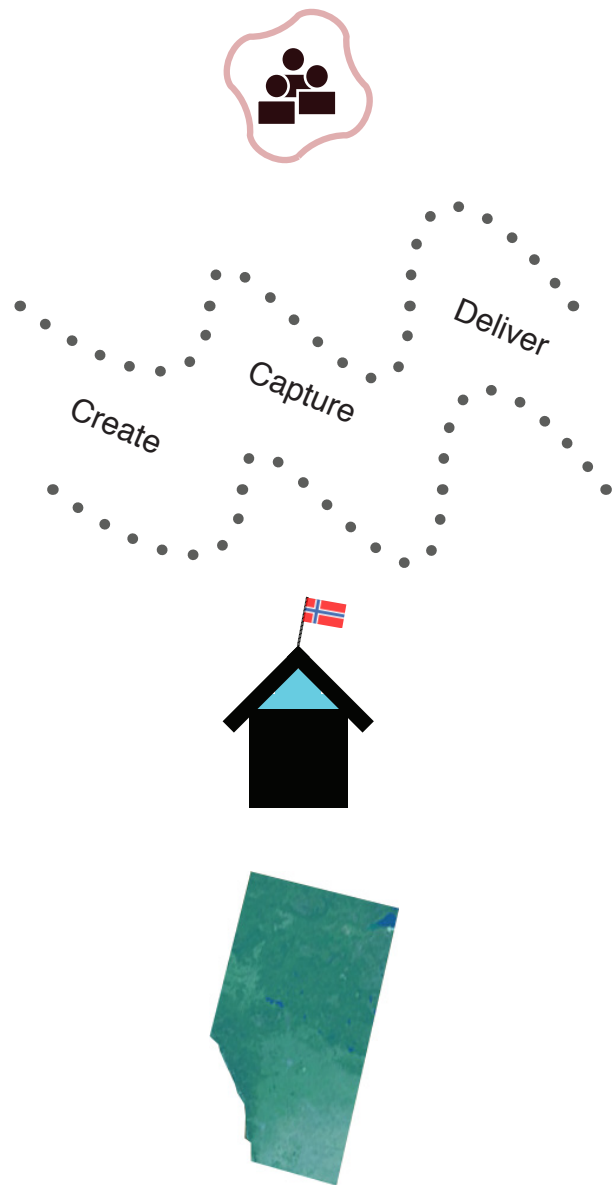
TOPICS:

- National and provincial energy policy
- Integration of the regulatory system
- Climate change
- Strategic & organisational risk
- Engagement & social licence
- Energy information & literacy
- Leadership & succession planning







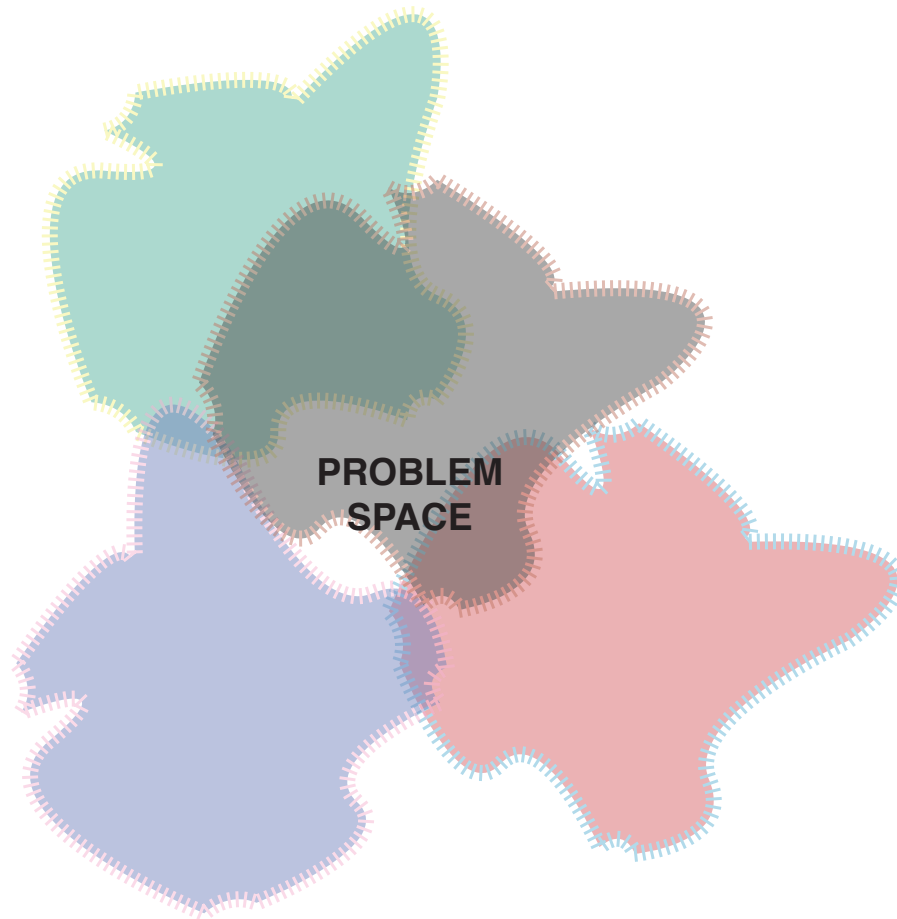


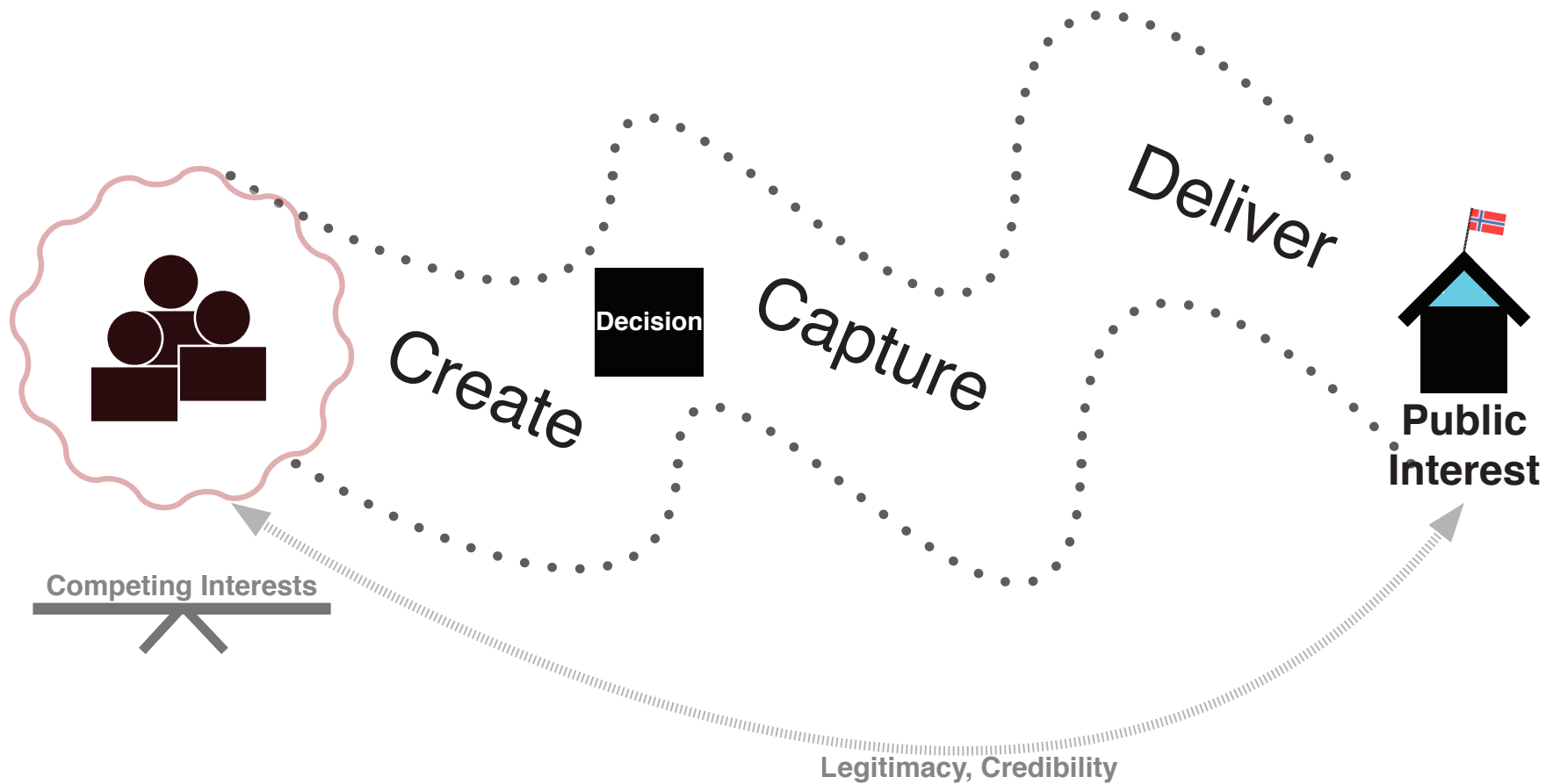
Centricity

Value

Material

Scale





8 broad lessons for systemic design practice within government...

1. Visualization as practiced by designers is both a powerful integrative tool and cognitive shortcut to inform executive decision-makers. Visualization should strive to translate between traditional public sector language and the citizens we serve.

2. We must develop fluency in articulating the platitudes and nuances of complex policy. In this respect, framing must strive for **context as well as depth.**

3. We must seamlessly network and integrate across the public and private spheres. This includes finding the people closest to complex problems. Networking is one pathway to integration.

4. Systemic design and **systemic futures studies** are complementary methodologies. Both concern the anticipation and co-creation of the future. Both are concerned with robustness, resilience, adaptability and centrality in designing solutions.

5. As part of the minority culture within government, must **cultivate and service the needs of champions.** Champions articulate the story to outsiders and interpret cultural differences. They give the designer an inside perspective to the institution, while the designer helps the champion to see the institution from an outsider's view.

6. We must be honest and open about cultural differences and how these impact the delivery of work. This reduces unproductive conflict and supports productive collaboration.

7. The moment of shared understanding coincides with improved literacy and awareness of complexity. Systemic methodologies are tools for building integrity and cohesion around shared concerns.

8. We are humble leaders, who cultivate innovation, transform the idea of value away from just efficiency, re-frame risk in context to opportunity, reconnect stewardship with decision-making and build trusted citizen experiences at many scales.

Outstanding Questions...

What is the role of management in systemic design practice? How is systemic government structured?

Might systemic design be better positioned at the boundary between government and the public?

How might Alberta best grow systems-thinking within its education system?

Thank-you



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