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Designing for policy and institutional change in governance

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Designing for Policy & Institutional Change in Governance

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practices create concepts, and in turn concepts create practices (or vice versa)
Do government people “design”? 
And what is design in policy / governance anyway?

Vs. “usability”/HCD/UX & design of policy instruments? 
Vs. institutional/community design?
Who designs? - in a way, we are all designers - as we are scientists and artists (though some are professionals) – H. Simon

Cultural change: 1. Omnipotent designer 2. Professional co-design team

3. Stakeholder design

So, what can we design in Governance / Pub. Admin. / Public sector?


Policy instruments (e.g. plans, regulations, strategies, standards, training).


• **Design** (“ability to imagine that-which-does-not-exist, to make it appear in concrete form as a new purposeful addition to the real world”)

• **Policy** (intervention into society for betterment based on (re)configuration of values (Ozbekhan) → the whole policy process)

• **Evidence as design/policy judgment** (not science)

• **Generating systems** (Alexander: “systems for designing systems”)

• **Public Administration** (vs. Public Sector)

• (state/society-centric) **Governance vs. Government**

• **Center of Government** – CoG / central bodies

• **Meta-governance** (system of systems governing systems)

• **Development** (increasing opportunities / perspectives / capacity)

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#RSD5
Case study: Stakeholder design of a generating system/s for policy

Identifying Design by focusing on

- **Design Attitude** (Boland & Collopy)
- **Design Competence & Culture** (Nelson & Stolterman)
- **Design Ability** (Cross)
EU-funded project in BiH: Strengthening the Central Bodies of Governments/CoM
(strategic planning, policy & RIA)
How did it manifest?

through processes, practices, attitudes, values, culture, relationships, methods....
A. Challenging the brief by redesign for upstream focus & stakeholders design

-> The Why & the Who?

REFRAMING: A “Gap Assessment”
collaborative -> introducing new concepts and frames of reference
took 4 months -> was not planned & delayed the “implementation” + increased the “risk” + invested scarce resources

low expectations -> convenience: everybody expected it to fail – so no “danger” in “playfulness”

NEW WHY-> purpose & intention (new “desiderata” with the same objectives!)
change of formal structures & use of benchmarks-> development of new practices, processes, skills, and attitudes
linear & downstream delivery (problem-solving) -> iterative design of a generating system for policy

NEW WHO -> Broadened boundary: from 4 to 20+ institutions (+ all other related projects)

-> The “material” we are working with is “us”

USE WHAT YOU HAVE: the “upgrade” of the existing “Thesis” (re-composition)
context & material (people, culture, practices) are already there + most what you need has already been done
it has a “history” – you cannot start with a blank canvas
do it with local understanding by actual people (not “empathy”)

ALL OPEN UNTIL ALL IS DONE: iterations / probing until it is “good enough” (as defined by stakeholders)
nothing put on a paper for 3 months -> then a “Schreck prototype”
the “agony” of diverging and converging: strange-making and sense-making + judgment calls
still some “crystalline” process -> phased (concept, processes, templates, regulation, testing, application)

WORKING ACROSS (6) SYSTEMS: interactive & inter-subjective approach
relating and connecting + cross-fertilization & peer-learning
operating INSIDE & OUTSIDE the “box”
30+ workshops, coaching sessions, conversations - only in the first 10 months
visiting people for “friendly chats” - releasing their frustration and helping the sense-making

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B1. Design into “making”. “Closure”.

-> Done? Ready? -> NO! Start all over again from the scratch

BRIEF CHANGED -> ALL OVER AGAIN (5month before end) -> integrate 3 other systems (budget + investments + HR)
One (!) stakeholder insists we integrate it all (although donors/experts prefer to leave it for the “next phase”)
major increase of complexity + high intensity (done in 2 months) -> Maaaajor improvement of quality and added value!

to ensure “harmonization” - had to be re-done in other 2 governments
more risk involved: but trust and shared understanding again to the rescue

2nd “LETTING GO” & EVOLVING (living) DESIGN
don’t “overdo” – leave it “unfinished” -> not the “final” or even a “solution”
cannot scale “solutions” to complex problems -> can scale practices (as continued in the last 2 years in cantons)

no need for an “exit strategy” – it has always been “theirs”
out from the “studio” -> raised to the political level (EU used it as a pillar for the whole EU integration agenda)
Beyond “co-design”

• Not expert-driven, but a facilitated process of stakeholder design
• Not “they do not understand our design” - it is their design and they create meaning (including aesthetics of it)
• Final design only after involving all ministries and agencies (100+)
• By the time it is finished the capacity was built in – learning as a part designing (“they know better then us”)

+ Understanding the culture: the case of working with N.G

Responsibility for design outcome

• More commitment than in the contract (with less time/resources): the whole responsibility (guarantor of design: g.o.d.)
• Creating trust, while nurturing (painfully) an enabling context (shared assumptions & expectations + agreement on iterative & participatory design)

+ Trust: the case of working with a GenSec - “tear it up & throw into trash if you do not like it at the end”
Policy as learning
(Hisschemoller & Hoppe, 1996)
The “actual” design problem
(Nelson & Stolterman, 2014)
Being a “professional” policy designer

How all this came to be?
- How many more are out there?

What does it mean for policy people and designers?

A) We do not have a policy design methodology – we still might not even know what it is

B) Policy and Design are much closer than one would expect (but cultures still very different)
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