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Introduction: Reframing the Paradox – Evidence-based Design and Design for the Public Sector

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Today we face complex challenges: the European migrant crisis, delivering health and social care for an aging population, dealing with the social impacts of growing economic inequality, and the transition to sustainable wellbeing societies. Increasingly, designers are working to address such complex challenges and to deliver improved societal outcomes. The call for designers to reject consumer culture and to produce socially useful and meaningful designs can be traced to the Socially Responsible Design movement in the late 1960's and 1970's. More recently, the debate concerning the relationship between design and society has called for designers to take more collaborative and participatory approach to designing for social services and interventions. Within the last decade design has started to be used at government levels to create innovation within the policymaking process itself.

However, a paradox is emerging. On the one hand, governments are realising that they cannot address new complex challenges in the way they approached them in the past and so policymakers are turning to design for new strategies and techniques. On the other hand, policymaking is increasingly being influenced by the positivist view of research that underpins traditional evidence-based practice models. This session brings together new research that examines the tension between the potential of design approaches to address governments' most urgent challenges and the assumptions of evidence-based practice and designerly ways of knowing.

The papers can be placed in two groups according to questions they share in common. The first group of papers relates to the question: Are designers ethically and critically prepared for intervening in social and political contexts? The papers in this group focus in different ways on the encounter between designerly ways of knowing and cultures of decision-making in central government.

Kimbell discusses an organisational ethnography of a public innovation lab in central government in UK. The study reports on the encounter between designing and policymaking



using a conceptual framework for investigating interdisciplinarity from the social studies of science and technology. The study shows that design can be used in policymaking but that design is challenged by policymaking in turn. Kimbell describes two ways through which design thinking engages with policymaking. First as a service in providing new approaches, a partner in facilitating projects, and a challenger that questions assumptions. Second, through logics of practice that influence policymakers' accountability to stakeholders, that involve innovative forms of collective inquiry, and that re-order issues and perspectives. Kimbell maintains that when design challenges policymaking to be done differently, it also brings new responsibilities upon itself due to the political and ethical implications of context and work.

Bailey and Lloyd report on an interview based study with senior civil servants concerning the uses of design thinking in strategic-level decision making in the central government in the UK. The study investigates what happens when design thinking confronts and challenges the policymaking and institutional culture of central government. Bailey and Lloyd present a reflective and critical account about what it is that design problematises when it is introduced into the institution of government. On one level design thinking is seen to simply offer new tools to policymaking, however Bailey and Lloyd's study describes insights that indicate a more fundamental confrontation between 'designerly ways of knowing' and 'policymaking ways of knowing'. They identify instances where design thinking in a policymaking fundamentally challenge existing notions of knowledge, ways of performing intelligence, ideas of skilled practice, the aesthetics of institutions, and the nature of political relationships and timescales. Bailey and Lloyd highlight that design thinking is not a value free set of tools, and that design for policy is situated in an unavoidably political context.

Umney, Earl and Lloyd make a new link between design and government by positioning parliamentary debate as the design of society. Umney et al.'s view is situated within Kees Dorst's frame creation theory that holds the view that designers' progress their projects by creating shifts in perspective or 'frame'. According to this approach, one way that these shifts in perspective are revealed is through the use of precedent examples in the design process. Through their analysis of a parliamentary debate concerning the development of a controversial high-speed railway line in the UK, Umney et al. show that the interlocutors sometimes use the same precedent to support different claims: for example as a reframing device to generate shifts in perspective, or to evoke aesthetic qualities, or to consolidate identity, or as common ground from which to overcome conflicting positions. Umney et al.'s study generalises design theory to the new domain of parliamentary debate and shows that the status of a particular precedent example as evidence is connected to the particular argumentative situation within which it is employed.

The second group of papers relates to the question: How are co-design and design research approaches used in designing and evaluating public services and infrastructures? This group of papers focuses in different ways on the methods and techniques of designing in the public sector. Common themes are the perceived lack legitimacy of design knowledge in within the

policy process, and the use of mixed-methods approaches to generating evidence and knowledge.

O’Rafferty, DeEyto and Lewis report on a design research project that explores how government interventions and services in Ireland can create better outcomes for businesses and communities in terms of sustainable behaviour and practices. The author’s take the perspective that designers provide distinctive methods and practices that influence the construction of knowledge in policymaking contexts in new ways. They argue that current policy interventions focus on individual actors and so make the assumption that there is a direct correlation between individual rational choice and pro-environmental behaviour. In contrast, O’Rafferty et al. draw on Social Practice Theory and design research approaches such as design ethnography, user-journey mapping and co-design workshops to generate insights and service prototypes that are informed by evidence of actual rather than assumed behaviours. However, they found that applying co-design approaches in policy and public service contexts also faces challenges in gaining recognition as a legitimate approach that produces reliable evidence that aligns with the larger policymaking process. The authors reflect that applying design in policymaking is no easy task since government is a politically contested context and design attitudes and competencies are not typically found within public sector organisations.

Teal and French report on two examples of the use of design methods to engage with the public in informing changes to policy and in designing social services. The focus of these examples is on involving everyday people in policymaking by utilising different types of artefacts and strategies to support meaningful dialogue between policy makers and the public concerning health and social care services in Scotland. Teal and French take an asset based perspective that aims to build social capital within the community by supporting individuals utilise their capacities as active agents to obtain particular health and wellbeing outcomes. Teal and French describe two examples of ‘Pop-up’ installations designed to create engaging experiences and to shift the focus of public consultation from passive participation to active dialogue. Teal and French maintain that the ‘Pop-up’ approach provides an effective means to include the perspectives of a diverse range of participants and to generate and capture conversations with greater detail and insight. Consequently they argue that the designed engagement approach shows the value of qualitative research methods and their potential for use in mixed-methods evaluation research and social innovation.

Manohar, Smith and Calvo address the need for new approaches to capturing and assessing the value of engagement between public sector agents and their community members. Traditionally, evaluation has been conducted using methods such as surveys and focus groups, however, Manohar et al. propose that evaluation can be conducted collaboratively while embedded within co-creation approaches to community engagement and consultation. They describe an evaluation process and framework they developed for projects to assess public services and interventions in Lancashire and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Manohar et al.’s ‘Creative Evaluation’ approach aims to be creative,

engaging, and deployed unobtrusively within their consultation tools. Their approach generates a portfolio of qualitative and quantitative evidence that assess the three themes of difference in process, difference in result, and difference in learning. Furthermore they combine evaluation with principles such as accessibility, participation, and contextualisation. Gagnon and Côté contribute a critical account of design research for public design in Quebec. They develop a conceptual framework that identifies three ways that design thinking can generate innovation: first by changing the design process, second by transforming human experiences, and third by playing a strategic role in organisations. They analyse three design research projects that address social innovation issues concerning the implantation of public infrastructures in urban and regional landscapes. From their analysis, Gagnon and Côté maintain that there is a gap in the design process between the design research stages and implementation stages in public design projects in Quebec, and that different models of design practice are needed to operate successfully in public contexts. Lastly, Sustar and Feast argue that evidence-based design is a concept defined by a hierarchical model of evidence that aims to standardise types of evidence corresponding to their strength. According to the model, evidence varies in strength to the extent that it can provide objectively good reasons for an explanatory relationship between the evidence and the truth of a hypothesis. Sustar and Feast criticise this position and claim that models of evidence based design that focus on evidence strength do not capture other essential aspects of design activity as it is currently practiced in the public sector. Sustar and Feast draw on existing knowledge in design and epistemology to present a model of an evidence-knowledge system that incorporates evidence strength and adds two further dimensions: relevance and confidence. Sustar and Feast test the model through interactive reflection with a case study of a designing for services project for the immigration services in the Finnish public sector. Their analysis of the case study suggests that essential aspects of designerly work are aimed at generating knowledge about the relevance of the proposed design to its context and to supporting the stakeholders' confidence that the design process will deliver the solution they actually need. This pluralist model of an evidence-knowledge system for design reveals that decision making in contemporary service design projects, like the one presented in the case study, utilise case based reasoning approaches and triangulation of different evidence types to converge on a final solution, rather than using objective evidence to determine true empirical and causal explanations. Consequently, they maintain that, on one hand, evidence-based design should aim to capture more functions of evidence in designerly work, and on the other hand, designing for services and public innovation should develop methods to better address the dimension of evidence strength.