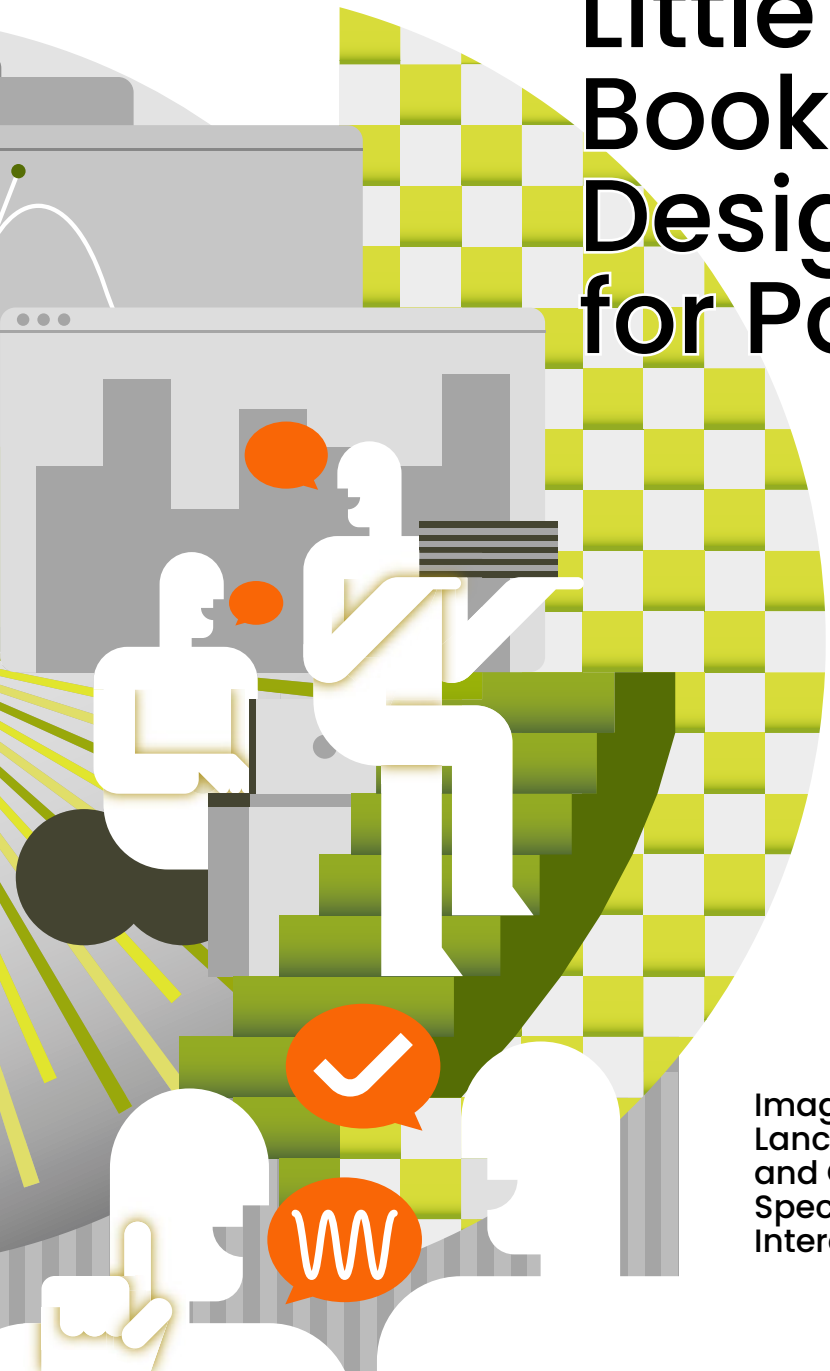
The Little Book of Design for Policy



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The Little Book of Design for Policy

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What this *Little Book* tells you

This *Little Book* explains what Design Research is and how it can be used in relation to policy making. It includes examples of projects where design research and policy come together and methods which might be used to do more of this in the future.

Contents

Introduction

What does it mean to talk about design in relation to public policy or even governance? Sometimes, when we hear the word 'design' we think of graphic design, fashion design or interior design. All these forms of design are rooted in developing an end-product that is manufactured, tangible, marketed, etc. These are things we can physically feel or see in the real world. But, what if 'design' simply meant a way of doing things instead of the finished product itself? When this is the case, we can apply design to many things beyond what is tangible, including the development and innovation of public policy and government services. This innovation can range from developing the user experience of a public healthcare website to including citizen perspectives in improving citywide mass transit systems.

The idea of 'design for policy and governance' has been around for some time but is only now gaining traction as an explicit way of doing things. Academics, researchers and practitioners around the world are now using methods specifically meant for innovating or improving existing government services. These methods leverage the incredible power of data and digital communication channels to bring ideas and people together, and to tackle challenges at the national and local level of government. In essence, design can be seen as a way of bringing communities together to take on problem solving for a common goal. This can ultimately make our community and world a better place.

What is Design?

Design is a process by which new 'things' are created through a considered process of problem solving and iteration. Design is often thought of in terms of disciplines such as product design, web design, fashion design and graphic design. It is also thought of in terms of outputs — the stuff in our daily physical and digital worlds — from the clothes we wear, the websites we browse and the smartphones we use to our homes and buildings. Design is all around us, playing a crucial role in shaping the world we live in and how we act in it, powerfully influencing our perceptions and experiences through its many outputs and their interconnections.

Design can be a force for good or bad depending on the intention behind it. When intentionally directed towards building a better world, design can improve the wellbeing of both people and the planet, but design is much more than the things we can see and experience and is increasingly being valued for the largely unseen, complex process that lies behind the outputs. This dynamic process is often characterised by a set of inter-related activities that help designers create meaningful solutions. It involves using various methods to empathise with intended users to develop a deep understanding of their needs, as well as prototyping many potential solutions to continually refine and make improvements along the way. Good design doesn't just happen. It usually emerges from this imaginative, patient, experimental process that is often fraught with uncertainty. Good designers are people who understand this process, navigate its uncertainties and strive to make positive changes in the world. Increasingly, designers and their distinctive, creative processes are being valued for what they can bring to the world of policymaking.

Areas of Design

Product Design
The design of new products relates to developing items which can be sold as a solution to problems. When designing a product, the designer must pay attention to features such as material, colour, function and useability, as well as considering the needs of people who will use the product. Industrial design is a related area for products which are intended for mass production.

Graphic Design
Graphic Design involves the use of arranging visual elements such as images, colours, text and symbols to communicate ideas. It includes different formats such as books, magazines and other printed media, web design and other digital content. It also includes creating branding, logos and other recognisable visual elements that might be used across a range of formats.

Interaction Design
Interaction Design goes beyond physical products or graphical images to consider how to design intangible interactions. These can be connections between people or between people and objects (including technology and machines). This might include areas such as User Experience Design or User Interface Design which consider, for example, how to create an online form, webpage or app that is easy to use and understand.

Service Design
Instead of focusing only on physical objects, graphical elements or digital content, the design of services involves all elements of a service including people, infrastructure, communication and objects to improve the service quality and the interaction between the service provider and its users.

Systems Design
Systems Design shapes the operation of complex networks that articulate different actors (humans, non-humans, natural entities) and the person or object performing an action (known as the 'actant') connecting them. This includes products, services or infrastructures. It also acknowledges 'infrastructures' as a unique category for design with its own ethical implications. It goes beyond offering support to the 'products and services in the surface' to include deliberate 'conditioners' of what is possible/easy and what is impossible/difficult to achieve for a given actor within a system.

Participatory Design
In the early 70s, a group of design researchers in Scandinavian countries (Simonsen & Robertson 2013; Spinuzzi 2005) laid the foundations for a new type of design influenced by social science methods of participatory research. These methods place great importance on democratic action, including participants in every stage of the process. Participatory design involves understanding the socio-cultural contexts of participants and is done in collaboration with the users of the designed product or service.

Co-design
Co-design is design which is led directly by the people and communities whose problems are being addressed. It is driven by social interaction and community participation and includes designers and communities working together. Sanders and Stappers (2008) define it as "any act of collective creativity" (p.6) embedded in the entire design process.

Speculative Design
Rather than designing solutions for current problems, speculative design considers what might happen in the future or what could happen in alternate circumstances. The aim is often to be provocative and to change people's way of viewing the world. It might involve creating speculative scenarios about the future or designing images and blueprints for products and services that do not and may never exist. Design fiction is a type of speculative design that creates tangible objects from imagined worlds. It might be used to create props for possible futures to engage people and allow them to consider 'what if?'.

What is Policy?

Policies govern many aspects of our lives, influencing our work, education, finances, health and the environment. We find policies in both the public and private realms, for example how governments intend to tackle public health, public finances or how organisations intend to manage human resources or finances. For this *Little Book*, we take public policy and explore how governments at different levels (local, regional, national and international) have been working with design to create better policies.

There are many definitions of what a policy is. In public policy, a useful definition is: "… the expression of what society wants … and it guides the creation of mechanisms for pursuing those wants" (Picard, 2020 p.6).

However, policies can also be whatever governments choose not to do, for example, not intervening in a particular issue (Dye, 1987).

Governments around the world, from national to local, are facing huge challenges and it is vital that the public policy created helps to tackle them. New global challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic have shown the importance of global, national and local governments working together with organisations to create policies, often at a rapid pace. Further challenges, such as the rising cost of goods and services and the climate crisis also mean that governments need to act quickly.

Scales and Scope

What is and isn't considered policy?
Policies come in all sorts of forms and are wide ranging, from international to organisational. Here, we explain some different types of policies and policymaking.

International
These are policies designed to impact across different countries to tackle complex challenges. They are often created and implemented by bodies such as the European Union (EU) or The United Nations (UN). These policies often extend across various countries and, at times, continents, covering a wide range of areas, including humanitarian responses, global health or security.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN implemented global responses to try and tackle the virus, and the EU implemented policies that related to issues such as borders and security.

National
These are policies that are designed to impact a particular country.

In the UK, the government, headed up by the Prime Minister, is responsible for developing and implementing national policy. The Prime Minister appoints government ministers who, along with the government, are accountable to Parliament. Government departments and their agencies are responsible for putting government policy into practice.

Examples of National Policies include the Education Policy which is part of the National Planning Framework.

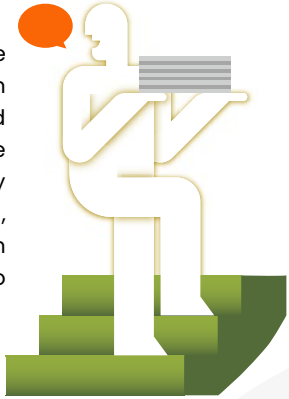
Local
This is undertaken by local government (Local Authorities). Depending on where you live, local government consists of at least one or two tiers of authorities. Councils are made up of elected members (councillors) who work with local people and partners to agree and deliver on local priorities. The decisions are then implemented and delivered by council staff.

Examples of policies created and delivered by local government include The Local Plan. This sets out how planning applications should be decided and identifies areas for development and areas that should be protected from development because of their environmental, social and/or economic value.

Organisational
These are internal/workplace policies that give an outline of the organisation's plan for tackling particular issues. They connect the organisation's vision and values and its day-to-day operations.

There are certain policies that organisations are required to produce by law, such as a Health and Safety Policy (if you have more than five employees), Disciplinary and Dismissal Policies and a Grievance Policy.

How do Design and Policy work together?



The last few decades have seen governments trying to engage in new ways to create, implement and evaluate policies. Through working with designers, government organisations have started to engage with stakeholders (those potentially affected by the policy) in more innovative ways. They have been doing this by using different types of design methods, such as co-design, participatory design and speculative design. These methods can help policymakers see a range of alternatives and allow them to be less constricted by more formal policymaking processes.

The practice of Design for Policy has grown significantly over the last decade and can be described as innovation in and application of design methods to the policymaking process (Whicher, 2021). While Design for Policy is difficult to define due to the broad range of policy areas it is applied to and the number of design methods used, Whicher and Crick (2019, p.293) state:

"[w]hile the practice of 'designing' has a long history stretching back to before the industrial revolution, applying design methods to jointly developing public services and policies with citizens is a comparatively recent phenomenon."

One of the key benefits of engaging citizens (and stakeholders) in policymaking processes is understanding how citizens access public services and are affected by policies. This is often done by understanding lived experiences, for example, by following citizens through their daily lives and trying to understand how services or policies might be improved. Another important benefit involves the distribution of power between the stakeholders during the decision-making process itself. Methods could include engaging citizens or policymakers in creative sessions and other alternative activities that pave the way for co-designing policies.

Design is also used in policymaking to help those making the policies understand complexity, whether through visualising data that will inform the decisions or the processes that are used to make policies. For example, visual design and graphic design can be used to create visual representations of potential polices, their implications for stakeholders and their intended processes of creation, implementation and evaluation.

Perhaps the key benefit of using design methods and concepts throughout policymaking processes is to help policymakers and citizens engage in mutually nurturing dialogues over the potential outcomes of policies.

The Hidden World of Design and Policy

Bringing the worlds of design and policy together is not a new concept. However, it is not easy for the public to access the data behind decision making which informs governmental policy making. Government policy is often developed behind the closed doors of Whitehall, within executive teams that apply the Ministerial Code to maintain confidentiality during policy formation. In the development of policy, a minister's primary fear is often routed in the media's power to bolster evidence to support a policy, or to weaken it, in the court of public opinion. This is particularly relevant if the evidence contradicts the ideological stance of a specific news outlet, for example, the politicisation of UK tabloid journalism.

Accountability for policy making becomes problematic when the evidence underpinning its development is not made directly public, challenging our ability to scrutinise and hold our governments accountable. In the UK, where parliamentary democracy and ministerial responsibility are foundational, the concealment of data used in the process of policy making undermines the principles of democratic policy strategy. Lack of access to evidence-based data leads to a lack of public trust. Obscured information raises questions about the motivations of policymakers, leading to public scepticism and resistance such as in the case of London Mayor Boris Johnson's 2017 scrapped London Garden Bridge project, described as a "vanity project" by his successor Sadiq Khan in 2023.

In a 2017 report, the Public Administration Select Committee noted the tension between the transparency agenda of government and the confidentiality afforded to the policy making process within the cabinet. The report called for ministerial statements to link directly to underlying data to be published for public scrutiny. The UK National Action Plan for Open Government (Cabinet Office. 2011–) introduced several initiatives, with Open Policy Making (OPM) emerging as a core strategy to improve the transparency of design for policy decision making inside government (see Figure 1).

In 2014, the Policy Lab was set up to pilot OPM for improved transparency in policy making processes as part of the Civil Service Reform plan. Today, the Policy Lab is a successful model for the collaborative engagement of users and ministerial stakeholders in policy development, with activities including:

- supporting teams to conduct user research and redefine the policy challenge
- engaging the public in co-designing policy concepts
- prototyping and iterating policy options with users, implementing more meaningful public consultation and
- piloting, upscaling, monitoring and evaluating implementation (Whicher, 2021).

Significantly, the development of the Policy Lab marks a government departure from statistical data gathering as the primary method of evidence-based data capture and signals a possible future of live and democratic participatory public policymaking.

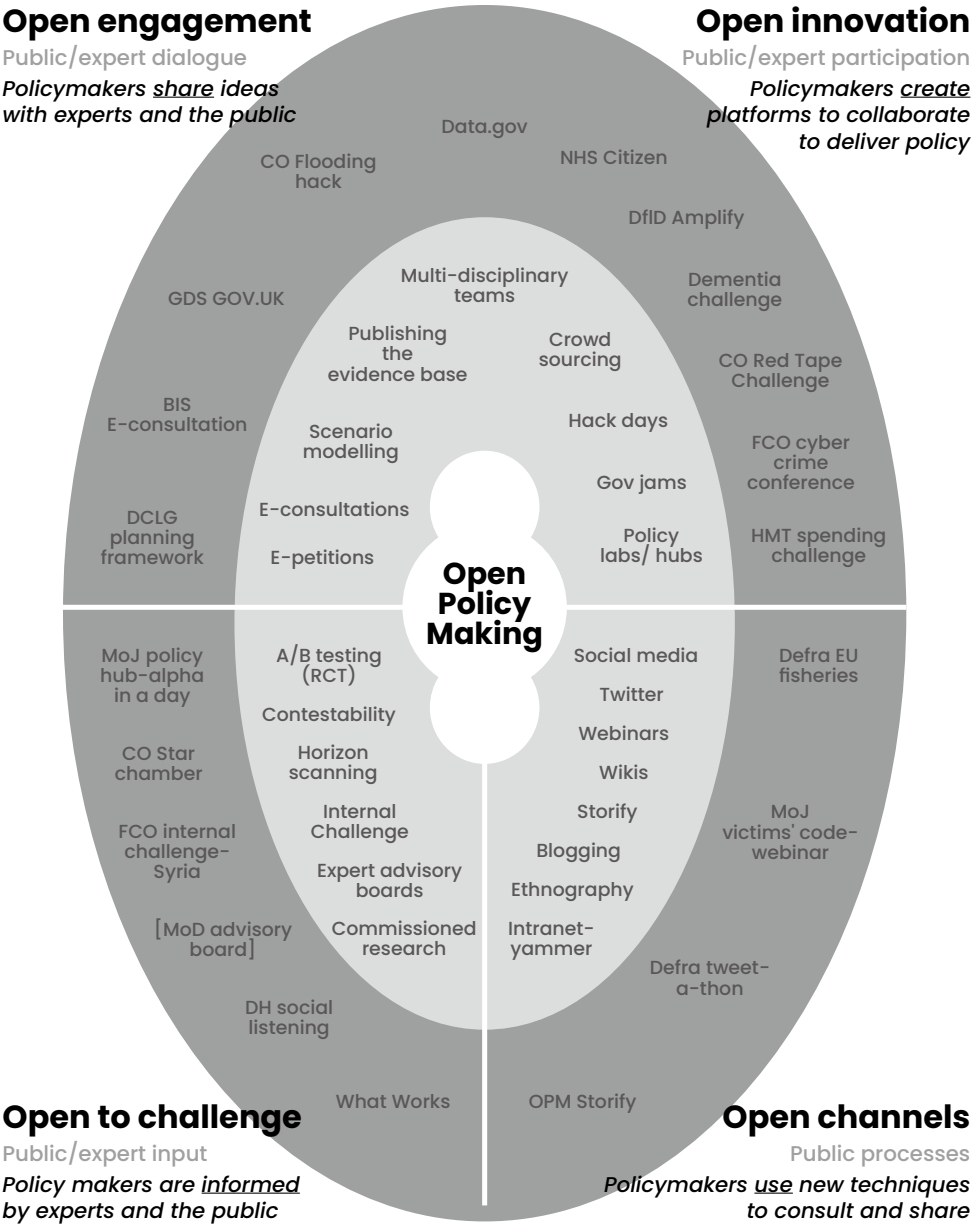


Figure 1: Different approaches to open policy making. Adapted from Policy Lab (2014)

Why do we care about Design and Policy?

By bringing design and policy together, we place new knowledge about design approaches within real-life governance and decision-making structures. In doing so, we learn that design approaches and methods can have a much wider impact nationally and internationally. It is through embedding new design approaches into policy that innovation and change can filter into real-life contexts.

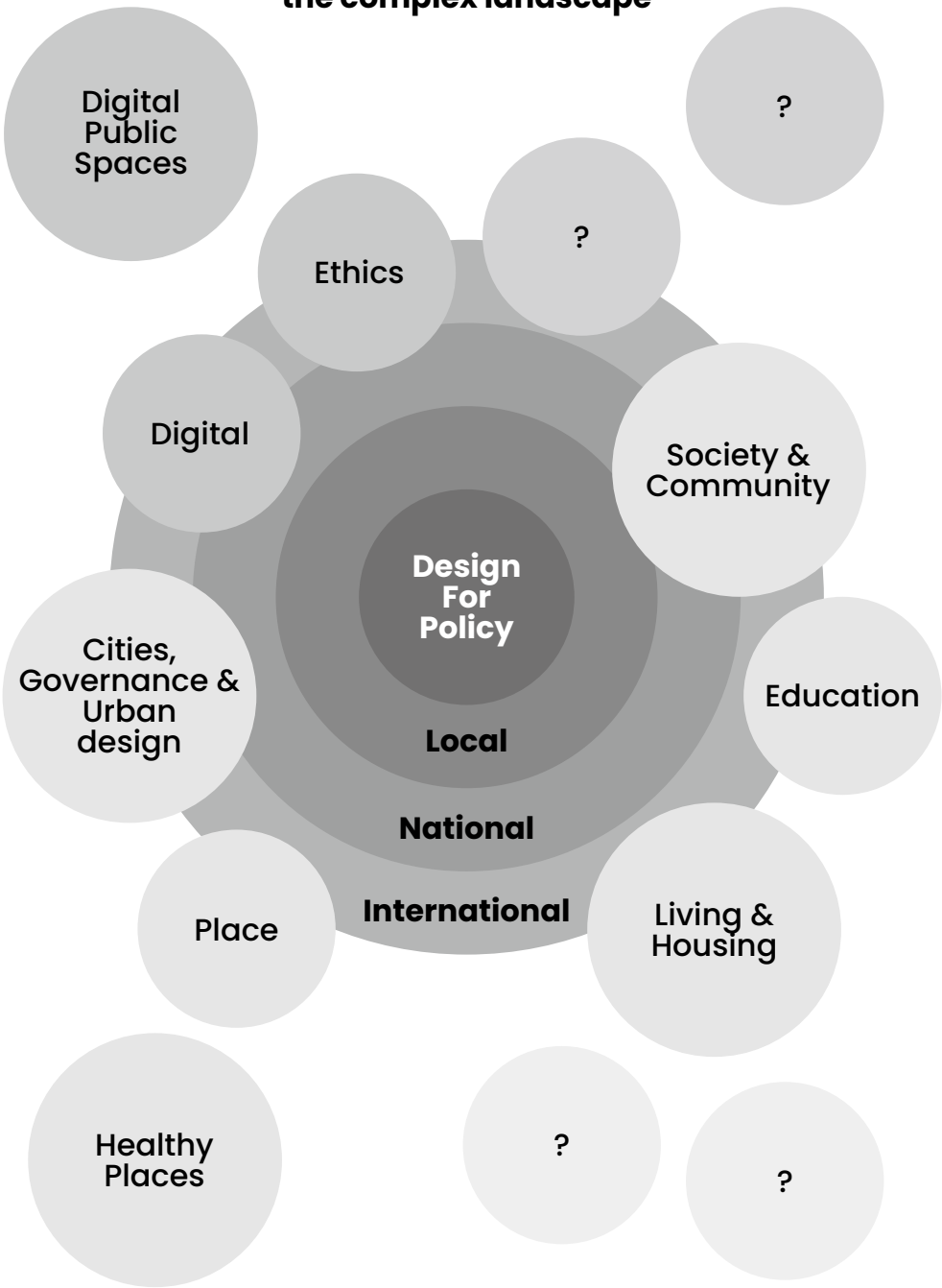
Policy and governance structures need to reflect and respond to the contexts of who and where they serve, such as neighbourhoods, cities and rural environments. These environments, and the lives of the people within them, are complex and ever-changing. Policy often lacks the ability to be nimble and can soon become outdated. There may be gaps, and policies might not reflect the diversity and complexity of the lived experience within those settings. Policy and governance structures can fail to meet the needs of who they impact and can fail to achieve their goals. They can lack transparency and accountability, key principles in modern governance. New design approaches are therefore needed.

"Be ready to revise any system, scrap any method, abandon any theory, if the success of the job requires it." (Henry Ford, 1923, p.2)

We care about design and policy because we believe it can improve policy and governance structures to consider complex problems, addressing multiple needs. Design research can operate at different scales, from the grass roots, face-to-face where individual voices are heard, to digital processes dealing with big data. Design approaches enable citizens to participate in decision-making processes, ensuring government actions are based on sound evidence. As such, design research can make a big difference to many of the challenges within society that need addressing.

We care about the usefulness of design research to society, and this is often achieved through policy. This can be applied to challenges that exist, such as the rising cost of living, to future challenges, like the climate crisis that need urgent policy shifts, and even to hidden challenges that are often overlooked, such as intangible perceptions of safety or belonging.

Why? Understanding the complex landscape



Case studies

The following case studies provide examples of how design and policy can be used in the real world, using a variety of different methods.

Case Study 1: Using Visual Methods

Dr Ana Rute Costa

The construction industry is one of the most resource intensive industries, responsible for nearly 40% of global energy-related CO2 emissions. The focus on embodied carbon (that is, carbon which is locked in physical objects) is a fundamental step towards meeting UK Net Zero targets. Since 80% of buildings that will exist in 2050 have already been built, it is vital that we make the most of materials already in existence.

This research (Costa, A. R. & Hoolahan, R; 2024) aims to facilitate material reuse in construction, and advocate for the deconstruction (instead of demolition) of existing buildings. By doing this, we can support materials that would otherwise have become waste going back into the supply chain and integrate them into new/refurbished buildings. One way to do this is through 'materials passports'. These are digital documents that centralise data of construction materials and can be connected with a physical tag placed on the material itself. They are used as a tool to improve the reclamation of materials and help support material reuse, not only for existing buildings but also for new builds. Materials passports can provide standardisations and specifications to ensure interoperability, security and acceptance by all stakeholders.

We carried out interviews and focus groups with more than 50 professionals and academics across Architecture, Engineering and the Construction industry to gain insights which helped us develop a roadmap for materials passports and better material reuse in construction. However, we also used visual methods to engage with the participants. These were used to promote reflection, discussion and collaboration. The diagrams (see Figures 2–6) were key tools to understanding how to accelerate material reuse in construction, generate fruitful discussions and map the processes at different stages of the construction process. Below, we present the diagrams produced and analyse how these evolved across the research project.

The first diagram (Figure 2) was used in the bid application and represents the first attempt to map the problem and to provide an overview of how to accelerate material reuse in construction. The second diagram (Figure 3), developed from the first, integrates key aspects identified from relevant academic and other literature and was used during

interviews. Based on the results of these interviews, we developed the third diagram (Figure 4) that was used in focus groups. After analysis, the team realised it was important to have a more circular diagram (the fourth diagram, Figure 5) that translates the circular economy driving the acceleration of material reuse in construction. The fifth and final diagram (Figure 6) is a revised graphic representation aligned with the policy paper we produced which has materials passports at the centre of the circle, as a key enabler to accelerate material reuse in construction.

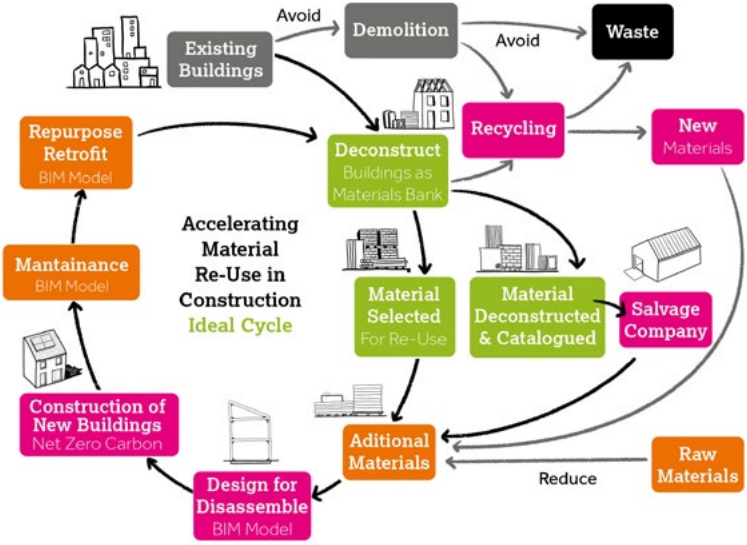


Figure 2: First Diagram – Research application phase

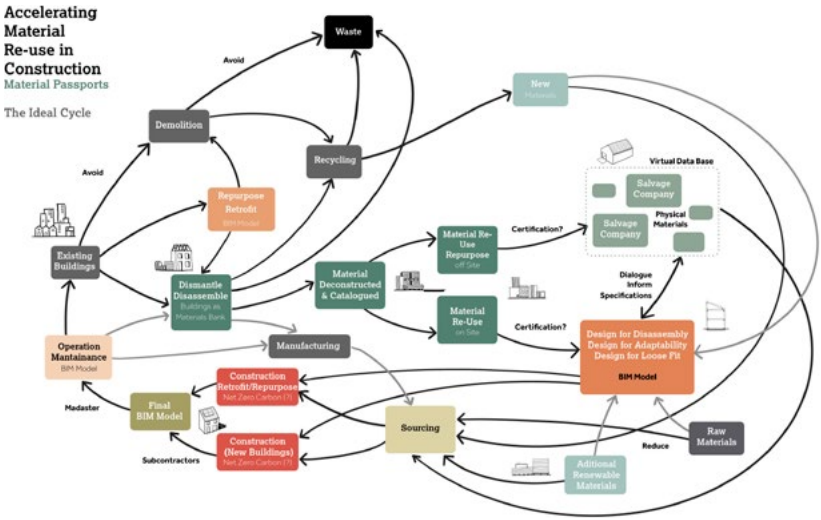


Figure 3: Second Diagram – Second Phase – interviews

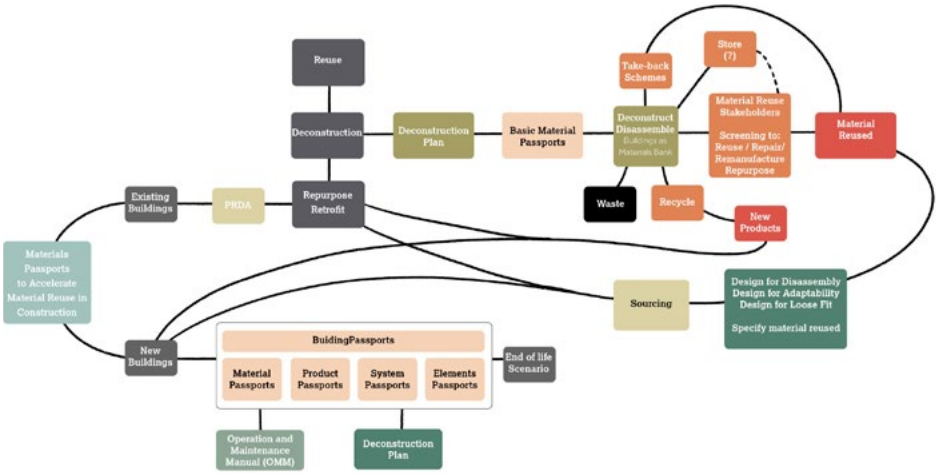


Figure 4: Third Diagram – Third Phase – focus groups

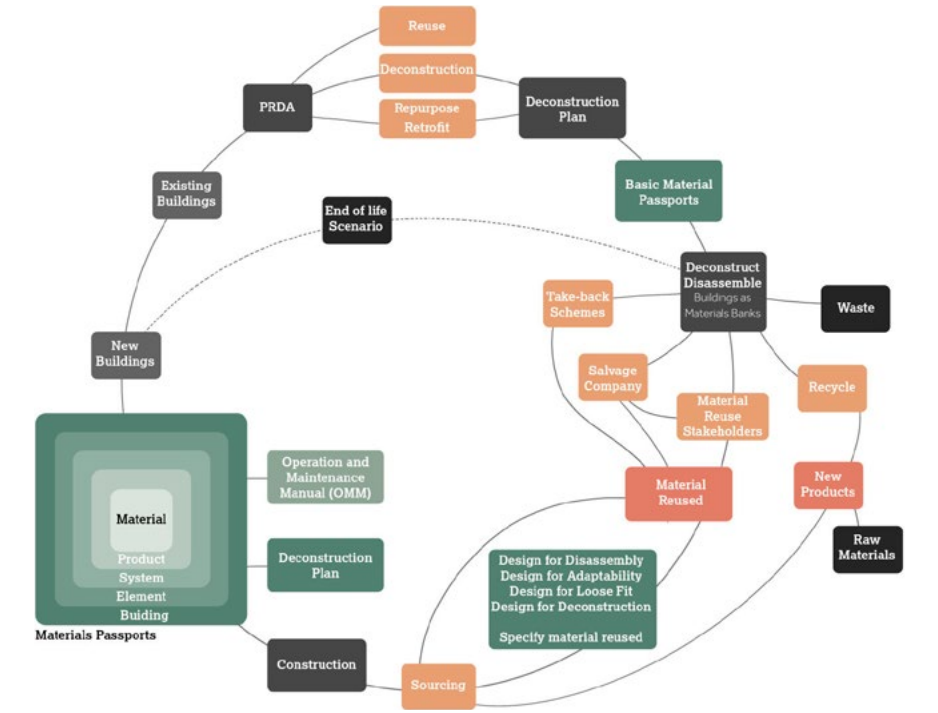


Figure 5: Fourth Diagram – Third Phase – research team meeting

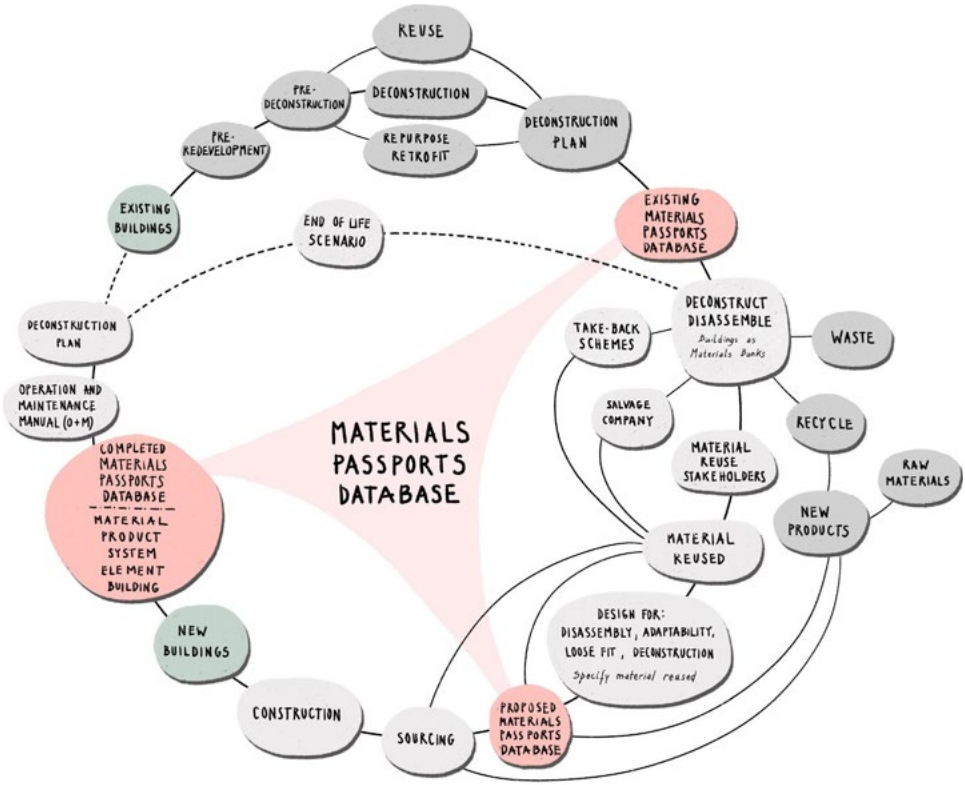


Figure 6: Fifth Diagram – Fourth Phase – Policy Paper Consultation

Design for Policy is an iterative and dynamic process that is never fully completed. The five phases highlighted above (bid application, literature review, interviews, focus groups and final publication) can be seen as a single cycle of a design for policy process that can be put into place consecutively to address major changes happening within the policy context.

Why was this important?

Through this case study, we presented the key role of design for policy in gathering, collating, organising and presenting coherent information to write policy guidance. Design for policy approaches have been fundamental to gathering different stakeholders' perspectives, creating a collective vision and identifying individual responsibilities. The diagrams developed were clear enough to facilitate the discussion and flexible enough to allow different participants to engage with the project according to their own knowledge and views. We argue that visual methods are an inclusive and democratic tool for gathering policy perspectives.

Case Study 2: Using Futures Methods

Dr Naomi Jacobs

In 2020, Lancaster City Council approached the School of Design at Lancaster University to get advice on how they dealt with creating policy for sensors in public spaces. The ability for physical objects to collect and share data, a concept also known as the 'Internet of Things' (IoT) is now very important for many aspects of urban planning and development, helping manage our public spaces. There are also many devices and objects being installed by different organisations and individuals that might need regulation. Lancaster City Council wanted to develop policy that guided them in making sure that these devices, and the data they collect, are used ethically.

The resulting project, Participatory Policies for IoT (at the Edge) Ethics, or PPITEE, used methods from Speculative Design to consider ethical challenges of both existing and future Internet of Things deployments (Kwon, et al, 2023).

Speculative Design is a creative design method that speculates about what possible futures could exist. It does not try to predict the future, but rather to imagine 'what if' and then consider good and bad aspects and whether this is a future we would like to see realised. One technique used in Speculative Design is called Design Fiction. This is where real artifacts and objects are created to represent the world of the fictional future – 'props' from a world that doesn't (yet) exist. We also combined this with another design method, the Walking Workshop.

Figure 7: A 'smart lamppost' created for the project by placing a sign.

Figure 8: An imaginary parking system using AI prediction. We asked people to reflect on what the icons on the sign might be intended to communicate.

We took members of the City Council on a walk around Lancaster City Centre with a field guide to Internet of Things in the city that guided them to certain 'stops'. At each of these stops was a device – some of them real and some of them fictional – that we represented with created objects. These were based on real technology being used in other cities, for example, a 'smart lamppost' (see Figure 7), or things that are technologically possible but are not yet in common use, such as AI that recognises suspicious behaviour by analysing the way that passers-by walk or that allows users to park their vehicle via an automated data collection system (see Figure 8). We asked questions such as 'what do you think this is?', 'what are the benefits?' and 'what are the risks?' to provoke conversations on topics such as data sharing and ownership, security, privacy and who controls the public space.

Following these activities and input from experts on cybersecurity, we came back together with the council for 'policy prototyping' – where sections of a draft policy were evaluated and organised to create a final draft that was shared with the council and which they can implement (see Figures 9 and 10).

Figure 9: Policy prototyping: members of the council consider key questions and how these might inform creating a new policy

Figure 10: Policy prototyping: we considered various stakeholders who might be impacted by the policy

We also created an online tool, Trustlens[1] which can be used by anyone considering deploying Internet of Things technology in public spaces, to consider and evaluate the different types of ethical risks that might need to be considered.

Following the success of the PPITEE project, the team have carried out a series of additional walks at four different locations across the UK. These included not only council officers but members of the public, with the goal of starting conversations about the hopes and fears of citizens when it comes to technology in public spaces (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Taking IoT for a Walk: members of the public consider a design fiction and make notes in their field guides on a walk in Bridlington

Why was this important?

Creative design methods used in collaboration with the council helped them consider new approaches to policymaking that take into account not just the current situation, but how new technologies might be introduced in the future and the potential consequences of that. Making possible futures tangible and giving people the chance to experience them in place allows problems and challenges to be thought about before systems are actually developed, at which point it is often too late to easily solve any resulting problems. Policies can therefore be developed that consider these risks, support better solutions and protect the public.

1 https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/trustlens/

Case Study 3: Using Mapping Methods

Dr Mariana Braga

Policies can play a meaningful role in providing people with access to opportunities in different areas of life and in mitigating the effects of a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in the context of disadvantaged communities.

During the pandemic, a series of preventative measures were proposed through global health policies, such as handwashing, social distancing and self-isolation. However, in Brazilian informal settlements[2], these measures were often unfeasible due to a lack of water and sanitation grids, overcrowded houses occupied by multiple generations of the same family, or a lack of access to internet services. On top of that, the political climate and general distrust in politicians contributed to people's disbelief in the virus itself. These factors made alternative solutions necessary. In this particular context, communities' social cohesion, leadership and organisation were crucial to mitigating the disease's impacts. Nonetheless, such social assets, as well as people's life circumstances, are often still neglected when policies are crafted.

How did we discover this? First, we had conversations with community members living in informal settlements in two Brazilian cities, Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro. From these conversations, the factors influencing their ability to prevent the spread of COVID-19 were visualised through a mapping process. This made it possible to clarify:

- the varied factors influencing the capacity of communities to keep healthy and prevent illness and how these factors interrelate (see Figure 12) and
- community knowledge and actions that contributed to mitigating the effects of the pandemic on them (see Figure 13).

2 There are different kinds of informal settlements, and their characteristics vary across Brazil. These territories are also known as subnormal agglomerates (SBAGs) by The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brazileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE]) and one type of SBAG are commonly known as 'favelas'. There are similarities between these areas which relate to the historical migration from countryside to cities that preceded the emergence of informal settlements, particularly favelas in 1940s Brazil. The IBGE recognises that living conditions in informal settlements are generally limited by the physical infrastructure of the cities, such as the existing water and sanitation grids and geographical features that are not favourable to safe urbanisation. This results in a lack of basic services such as waste collection, sewage treatment, water and energy supply etc. It is also quite common for citizens not to have a formal address (IBGE, 2010). Populations are predominantly composed of black people with low levels of formal education (Musumeci, 2016). Income sources are usually based on informal or low-income activities such as cleaning, construction work, waste picking and collection, and families are often matriarchal (Musumeci, 2016).

Figure 12: Example of one of the maps generated with communities in the first phase of analysis. This specific map illustrates communities' problems, adaptive strategies and challenges on prevention (Fonseca Braga et al., 2020).

Why was this important?

Design methods, in this specific case, gave a holistic view of these varied factors through visual mapping. This design-based analysis enabled us to make visible poorly documented social assets of these communities that could be considered when developing more creative and innovative policies. These social assets were identified as adaptative strategies of communities at the first stage of analysis (Figure 12) and as community-led strategies at the second stage of analysis (Figure 13). Our process also helped to map public policy and service gaps, or situations in which policies need to be suited to people's life circumstances and provide the appropriate level of support (Figure 13). Otherwise, communities will be exposed to higher risks. For example, when there is no access to public health services and accurate diagnoses, people might use medication based on media speculation and might share prescriptions. This is important as conventional policies are often unfeasible when considering these communities' livelihood diversity. Therefore, visual mapping provides relevant points for community empowerment so that the policies created are both responsive to community needs and ethically fostered.

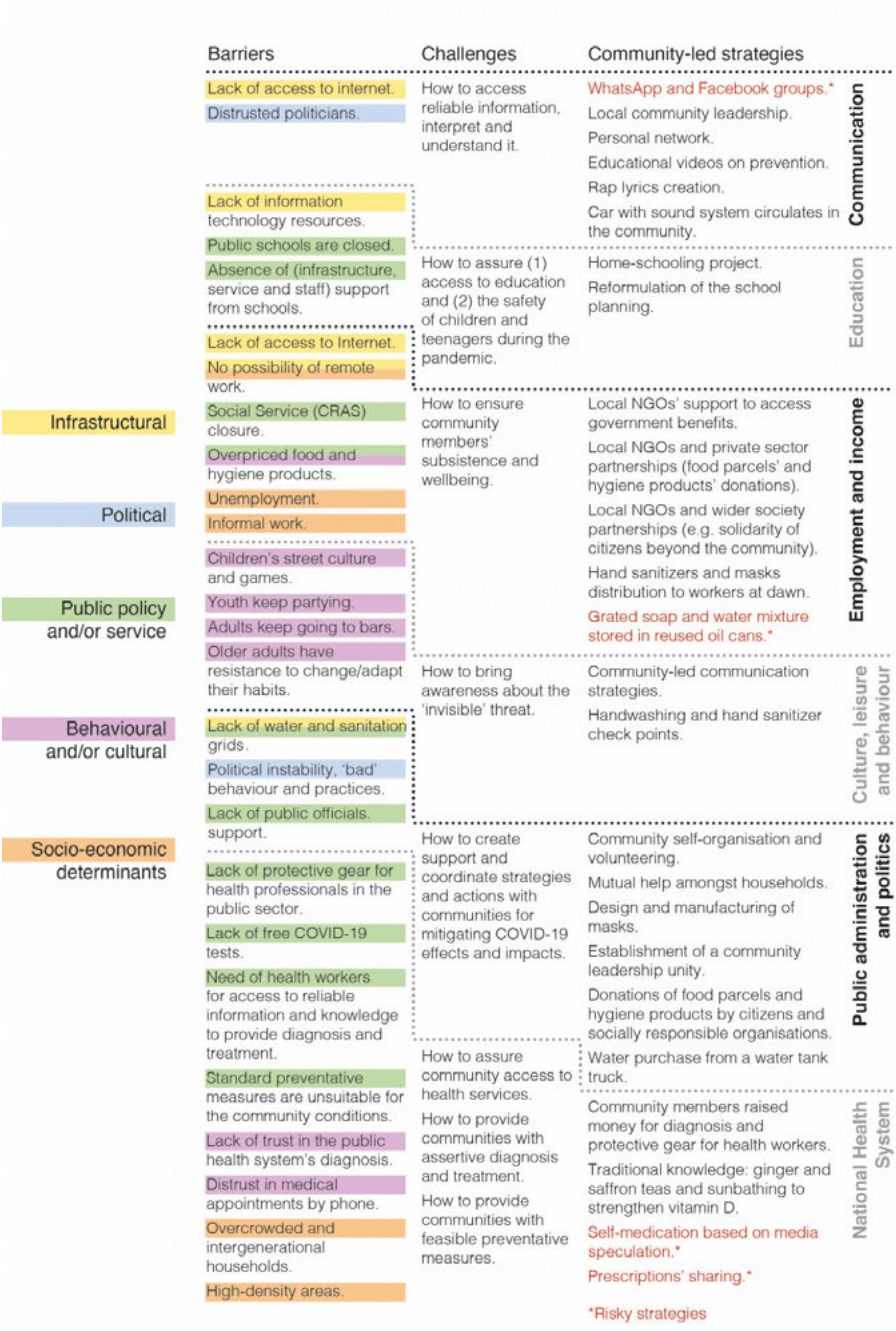


Figure 13: List of the barriers, challenges and community-led strategies for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic, part of the second phase of the analysis (Fonseca Braga et al., 2021).

Case Study 4: Using Creative Engagement Methods

Dr Mirian Calvo and Dr David Pérez

This case study presents a collaboration between Lancaster City Council and the ImaginationLancaster team in designing a consultation and creative engagement for Mainway, a housing estate in Lancaster, in the North West of England (see Figure 14). The estate, consisting of 257 dwellings and approximately 500 residents, is owned by the council and faces numerous challenges such as anti-social behaviour, criminal activities, drug abuse and deteriorating building conditions. The aim of the 'MyMainway' project was to involve residents and community members in discussions about the future of the estate in an inclusive and meaningful way.

Figure 14: Mainway social estate view and logo of the consultation

This creative engagement initiative had three main objectives:

1. to build trust and mutual understanding with the residents
2. to explore the advantages and disadvantages of two redevelopment options for the estate: refurbishment of the existing buildings or complete demolition and rebuilding, and
3. to identify the residents' preferences regarding these options and determine general space layouts and outcomes, considering potential disruptions.

To address both global and local realities, a creative programme of engagement was designed based on four strategies:

1. The needs of the residents were prioritised to foster mutual understanding and sincere interactions.
2. Various engagement routes were established to accommodate the diverse perspectives of the residents.

3. All households in the development were visited, and individual meetings were held with each resident.
4. A neighbourhood engagement centre, the Hub, was incorporated into the initiative. The engagement events were organised into two blocks spread over two to three months, allowing for flexibility and adaptation to potential changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We facilitated the first events, consisting of walking tours around the Mainway estate with its residents. The walks enabled us to gain first-hand insights and to build trust and rapport with residents by inviting them to express their views and emotions related to a specific location. The residents guided the walking routes (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Touring walk with dwellers, 2020

Figure 16: Door-to-door engagement, 2020

Additionally, we facilitated walking tours with councillors and conducted online expert workshops. Two main participatory design methods were employed: door-to-door engagement, which involved creative activities at the doorstep of each resident (see Figure 16), and thematic drop-in sessions at the Hub focusing on topics such as refurbishment versus regeneration, new visions for Mainway and the customisation of households (see Figure 17). These methods were adaptable to the changing circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and facilitated an inclusive and transparent participatory process.

Figure 17: Thematic drop in sessions, 2020

Throughout the project, we held a total of 11 engagement events and weekly drop-in sessions over a period of three months. These events engaged with 50% of the households on the Mainway estate, resulting in over 3,500 meaningful statements from residents and locals, and generating more than 260 participatory interactions (see Figure 18).

Figure 18: Debating about recommendations with dwellers and locals, 2020

Figure 19: Children writing and drawing on the pavement about the activities they liked, drop-in sessions, 2020

The project involved a variety of stakeholders with different agendas, lived experiences and interests in the development of the estate. The residents included elderly individuals who had lived there since the 1960s, young families with children, people with reduced mobility and residents exhibiting anti-social behaviour. The City Council also played a crucial role in the process, with estate managers serving as the point of contact between residents and the council, addressing issues related to property status and public spaces within the estate (see Figure 19).

Why was this important?

This project was significant as it provided a space for different stakeholders to contribute and break social constructs, allowing for a more creative exploration of the dynamics of the space and envisioning a preferable future. The creative engagement approach improved the relationships between the City Council and the residents, fostering participation and power distribution in addressing the concerns of the estate's residents.

Case Study 5: Using Equity-Centred Service Design Methods

Dr Temidayo Eseonu

In 2019, a UK local government's employment support service wanted to understand young people's (aged 18–25) lack of engagement with their service. This service helps the residents in the local area find jobs and supports their career advancement whilst at work. The service was also particularly interested in the experiences of racially minoritised young people because they were more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts and, therefore, more likely to need employment support services. A key aim of the project was to understand the needs of racially minoritised young people, which could contribute to the (re)distribution of service resources to tackle racial inequalities.

Some public policy and administration scholars have critiqued the reliance on service providers' own knowledge to understand the needs of racially minoritised groups. Without engaging with these groups, there is a risk that racialised assumptions and stereotypes would inform service design. To avoid this risk, the project 'Youth Views' was launched to engage with young people (current and potential users) and the wider eco-system of public, private and third-sector organisations involved in providing employment support services. Invitations were sent to organisations that worked with racially minoritised young people, and events took place in the locations of these organisations to ensure the representation of racially minoritised young people. In the project sessions, many facilitation techniques were used to bring diverse social perspectives into the discussions. Discussions started with ground rules to ensure a respectful tone was maintained and framing materials or prompts were used to gather specific information from the standpoint of racially minoritised young people.

The project sought to understand how young people navigate and experience services, focusing on the manifestation of key tangible components of service delivery. The areas of interest included how users interact with services, eligibility criteria, the primary channels used to access a service and what benefits users gain from services. This project used different methods to understand the user experience of all elements of an employment support service. It also sought the perspectives of providers and users to improve the service quality and the interaction between the service provider and its users. What was important in this project was the process by which the problem of lack of engagement was considered. Each element of the service went through several iterations to take account of what would work well for young people. Over the project's lifecycle, 52 young people and 33 people involved in service delivery gave their views on service design.

The project began with a discussion session asking young people about their general experience of using services, as some of the attendees had used the employment support

service and some had not. The discussion session used Ketso, which provides a creative hands-on platform where everyone can be heard equally, making group interaction highly effective. Using different coloured leaves, as in Figure 20 below, young people answered the questions about what works well, what does not work well and ideas for improvements. There was then a process of identifying which service design elements to keep and which elements to remove to improve user experience. Following this, young people ranked the ideas for improvement and chose their top three elements.

Figure 20: Completed Ketso tool

In the next session with a different group of young people, a summary of the discussions from the Ketso session was shared. With that in mind, the young people were asked to put elements of their experience they felt were important when interacting with a service on concentric circles. The circle closest to the centre was the most important and spanned outwards to the least important (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Concentric circles of importance

The same exercise was conducted with service providers, where they were asked to consider what service elements were most important and what were the least important. Critically, there was an overlap between what users deemed important and what service providers considered important. Service providers demonstrated knowledge of the service's generic elements that were important to young people. The second exercise with service providers asked them to create personas of service users who are not engaging with their services. Personas are fictional characters that help to understand the varied needs of many users. This exercise highlighted how racialised assumptions and stereotypes can influence how service users are imagined. Where service design is based on these assumptions, it is unlikely to meet the needs of particular demographics. In the persona created below, one of the assumptions about a racially minoritised young person is a lack of aspiration but also high expectations of earning high incomes. The work with a sample of racially minoritised young people in the area did not highlight low aspiration; rather, they spoke to the racism they experienced in accessing and participating in the labour market. Given the gap in understanding what racially minoritised young people need from employment support services, this exercise emphasised the genuine need to engage with racially minoritised young people (see Figure 22).

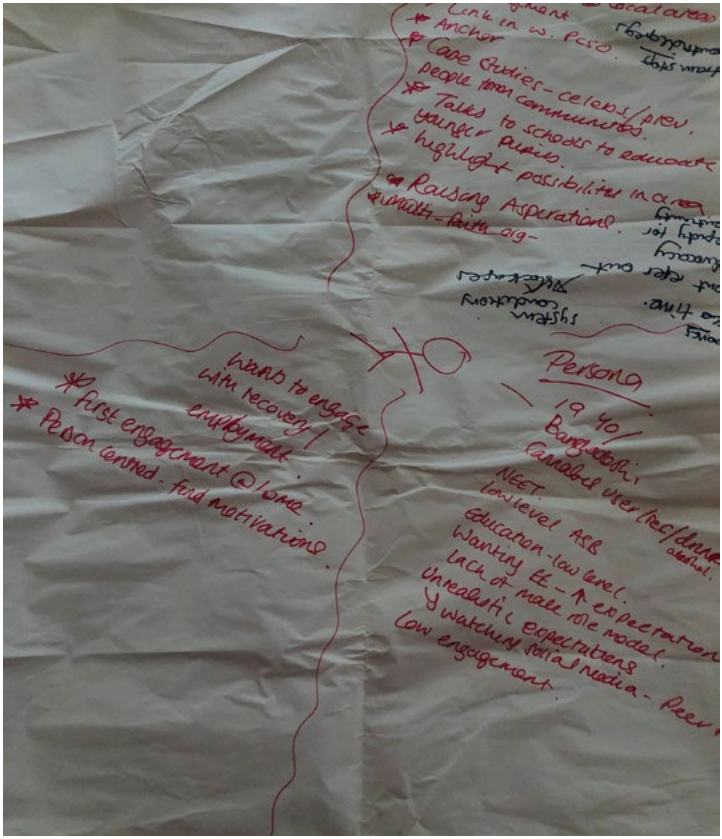


Figure 22: Persona of a young Bangladeshi person

Through engagement with racially minoritised young people, they made additional requests for what to include in the service offer. At the end of the project, a different model of delivery that would suit young people in the area, including racially minoritised young people, was put forward to service providers (see Figure 23).

Figure 23: Service model prototype

Why was this important?

The project sought the views of young people to understand why they were not accessing employment support services and what changes could be made to increase their engagement with the service. An equity lens throughout the service design process ensured that the support requirements for racially minoritised young people were identified and incorporated into elements of interactions with employment support services. An equity lens asks that we understand and prioritise user needs, particularly those most affected by social inequalities. The equity lens for addressing racial inequalities centred the voices of racially minoritised people through the recruitment strategies and the facilitation practices employed in the project. The project successfully drew attention to what should constitute the services offered by an employment support service to enable racially minoritised young people's transition into the labour market. While the marginalised group in this project was based on race, equity-centred service design methods can be used with other marginalised groups. It can also reveal how different axes of marginalisation intersect, as with race and disability in this case.

Case Study 6: Using Placemaking Methods

Dr Mirian Calvo and Nuri Kwon

In 2021, Glasgow hosted the COP26 conference, during which the UK government announced its commitment to achieving net zero by 2050. Within this context, a project, Placemaking with Young Adults, was launched focusing on future development in the Lancaster District of the UK. The project aimed to explore diverse methods for placemaking and sustainable policymaking. Throughout the project, we engaged with young adults aged between 18 and 30 in the Lancaster District and policymakers from Lancaster City Council and the County Council. By doing so, the project encouraged collaboration between young people and the local authorities.

We used a placemaking framework based on the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), which is a non-profit organisation established in 1975 to promote a comprehensive approach to placemaking. According to PSS, placemaking is a community-centred design process that promotes new ways of thinking about a place, with a focus on physical, cultural and social factors that affect a place and help it to flourish. The framework established by PPS has four themes:

1. sociability
2. uses and activities
3. access and linkages and
4. comfort and image.

We, the research team and local authority officers, customised the framework to reflect the sustainability principles of the Lancaster District's climate emergency agenda. As a result, the finalised framework in this project included:

1. design and appearance
2. movement and travel
3. social communities and
4. places and spaces (see Figure 24).

The inner ring indicated the themes, while the middle ring showed the attributes, which are intangible aspects of a place that are difficult to quantify. For instance, the attributes included how people felt about a place, such as whether a place feels welcoming or safe. The outer ring represented the elements of a place that can be measured, such as how many women, older people and children were in a place.

Based on the framework, the project was conducted in three stages to develop collaborative engagement between young adults and policymakers:

1. workshop with young adults (see Figure 25)
2. workshop with policymakers
3. workshop with young adults and policymakers (see Figure 26).

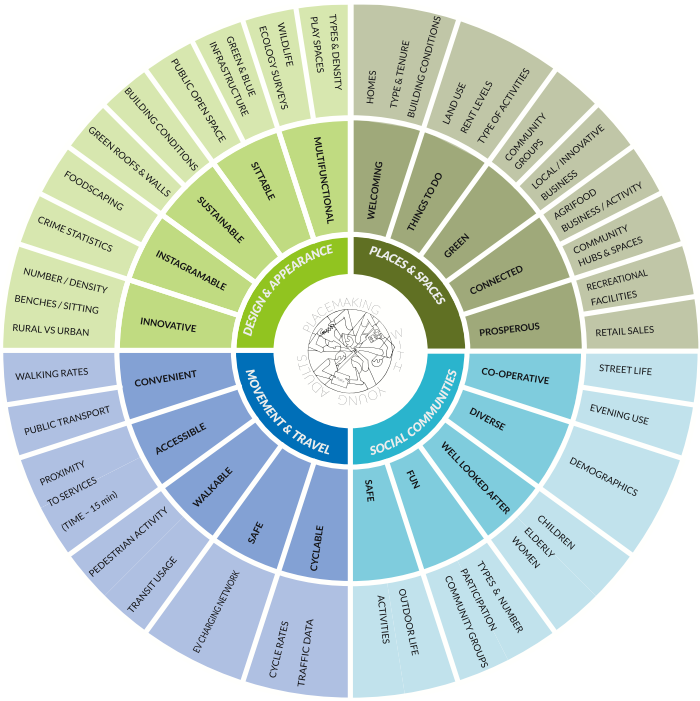


Figure 24: ImaginationLancaster + LCC placemaking framework.

Figure 25: First placemaking workshop. Young adults develop- ing sustainable visions

The first workshop was to develop a collective vision of the future of Lancaster District and explore the sustainable aspirations of young people. The second workshop focused on analysing and clustering the young adults' aspirations and transforming them into sustainable policy themes with policymakers. The final workshop consisted of bringing young adults and policymakers together to collaboratively develop a further four sustainable policy themes which embraced the young adults' aspirations (see Figure 26). All workshops included people of different ages, backgrounds and expertise. As a research team, we recorded many insights into sustainable policy and observed the potential in placemaking with the public, particularly the next generation.

Figure 26: Third placemaking workshop. Young adults and policymakers working together to envisage sustainable policy themes

As a result, we discovered intangible aspects that young adults consider to be essential in a place. Figure 27 illustrates the results. We found out that there are significant aspects, such as the cost of living and social cohesion, which were not included in the initial placemaking framework. This is highlighted in yellow in the diagram.

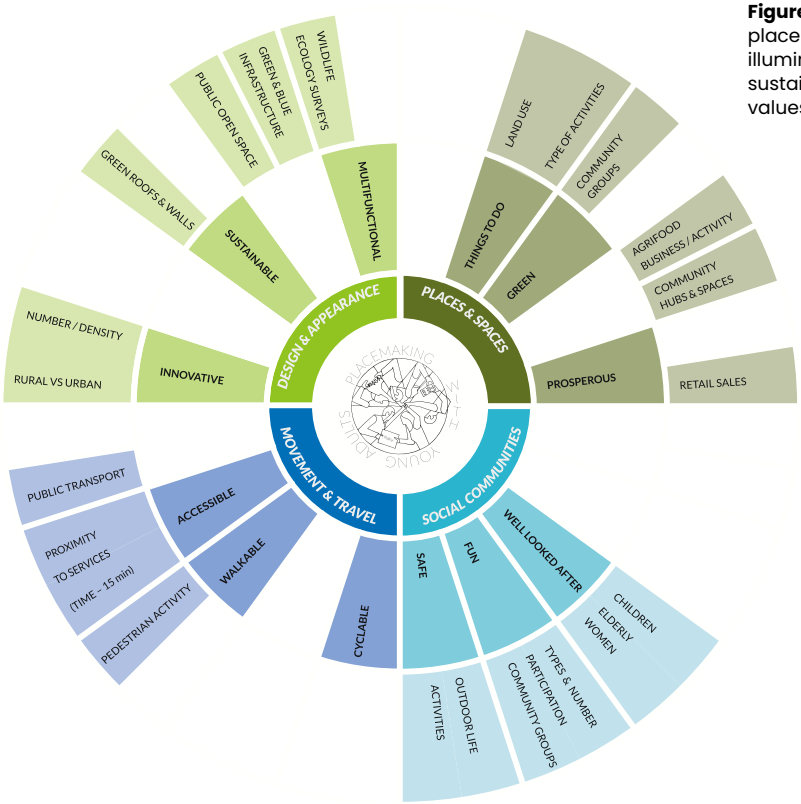


Figure 27: Final placemaking diagram illuminating key sustainable young values.

Through this work, we could outline the visions and aspirations of the young adults and those of the policymakers and bring them together to work towards new policies (Calvo et al., 2024). Bringing these two groups together helped to create mutual understanding, synergy and respect. Young adults imagined a community that is welcoming, encourages active travel, uses renewable energy and works to bring people together. They want these visions to be a part of the planning and development of new settlements. They want to set an example for other communities to be inspired by and contribute to a more sustainable future. On the other hand, policymakers highlighted the need for a customised framework for placemaking, which reflects on the context of Lancaster District. They noted that workshops and activities for policymakers must be more welcoming, sharing and co-creating. In the policymakers' view, the priority is on green space and mobility in the development of policies for the Lancaster District. They also highlighted considerations including nature, climate change and population growth, and spotted missing themes, such as affordability, depopulation and social housing. Finally, the importance of fostering young adults' engagement was highlighted (see Table 1).

Young adults' visions	**Policymakers' visions**
• Welcoming places • Good, active travel infrastructure • Essential housing qualities and features • Food growing • A robust travel public transport network • Renewable energies • Identity of the place	• Customised placemaking framework for development process in the Lancaster District • Policymakers' workshop structure and activities • Emphasising green space and mobility • Considerations including nature, climate change and population growth and missing themes, such as affordability, depopulation and social housing • Fostering young adults' perspective and engagement

Table 1: List of young adults' and policymakers' visions

Why was this important?

We learned from this project that placemaking methods can help involve members of the community (young adults in this project) in creative ways so that their ideas are included in policymaking. The workshop discussions helped participants address their wishes and needs and describe aspirations and functions of a place in everyday life. This process helped the research teams to understand the tailored needs and contexts of the place in relation to sustainability. The engagement of young people is particularly meaningful in policymaking because there is a gap of re-engagement from young people in current policymaking processes. This was a valuable opportunity to understand how young people are thinking about place and sustainability and to reflect their insights in policymaking. Overall, placemaking methods are valuable in policymaking to map and optimise local assets and resources and to create a holistic view regarding economic, social, cultural and environmental issues by engaging with community members in place.

What is the Value?

Design is not just about creating tangible products or visual aesthetics. It is a process of problem-solving and iteration that can be applied to a wide range of areas, including policy development and government services. By adopting design approaches, policymakers can enhance the user experience of public services, incorporate people's perspectives and improve the overall efficiency of policy implementation. Design allows us to envision potential futures and encourages dialogues and reflections between policymakers and people about policy.

In policymaking, design can help with understanding complexity. This can be done by visualising data that will inform the decisions or by illustrating the processes that are used in making policies. For example, visual design and graphic design can be used to create visual representations of potential polices, their implications for stakeholders and their intended processes of creation, implementation and evaluation.

Design can also help in distributing power between stakeholders during the decision-making process itself. This includes methods that engage citizens and/or policymakers in creative engagements and other alternative activities that provide favourable means of co-designing policies. The collaboration between design and policy can lead to innovative and inclusive policymaking processes. Design methods such as visual methods, futures methods, mapping methods, creative engagement methods, equity-centred service design methods and placemaking methods help designers, policymakers and people work together. It allows all stakeholders to co-design and co-generate new ideas that work better because they are crafted by the collective, bringing a fresh eye. These methods can help policymakers better understand the needs and aspirations of people, identify gaps and opportunities in existing policies and develop solutions that are more responsive, equitable and sustainable.

Transparency and responsibility are key principles in democracy and modern governance. Design methods can contribute to these principles by engaging people in decision-making processes and ensuring that government actions are based on sound evidence. By involving stakeholders in the design process, policymakers can build trust, foster collaboration and create policies that reflect the diverse perspectives and needs of the community. Understanding how people access public services and are affected by policies is also crucial. This is often achieved by understanding lived experiences, which might be done through following people in their daily lives and then understanding how services or policies might be improved.

Design for policy is an ongoing and iterative process. The case studies given illustrate specific moments in time and specific contexts. Design for policy requires continuous engagement, evaluation and adaptation to ensure that policies remain relevant and effective. Policymakers, public representatives, and politicians (e.g., councillors) need to be open to revising existing systems, methods and theories. The success of their policies requires it.

Conclusion

This *Little Book* explores the intersection of design and policy, highlighting the potential for design research methods to be used in the policymaking process. Through the case studies provided, we can see how design approaches can be applied to various policy areas, including everything from construction and employment support to public health and urban development. These case studies bring to the fore the value of design methods in understanding user experiences, engaging stakeholders, envisioning possible futures and addressing complex societal challenges.

The case studies also show the value of design for policy in addressing complex challenges and creating positive social change. From developing materials passports for construction to exploring the ethical challenges of the Internet of Things, these projects show how design methods can help policymakers navigate uncertainty, envision possible futures and make informed decisions.

Embedding design in policy has the potential to create more inclusive, innovative and effective policies. Design research methods can help policymakers better understand the needs and aspirations of people, develop creative solutions to complex challenges and create policies that are responsive, equitable and sustainable. By adopting design approaches, policymakers can enhance the user experience of public services, engage stakeholders in decision-making processes and improve the overall quality of governance. Design for policy is not a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather a dynamic and iterative process that requires continuous engagement, evaluation and adaptation. By embracing design thinking and methods, policymakers can create policies that have a positive impact on individuals, communities and society as a whole.

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