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# **WHAT IF DESIGN COULD TRANSFORM THE WAY WE THINK AND MAKE PUBLIC POLICIES ? PROPOSING A NEW MODEL : THE POLICY DESIGN JOURNEY**

**ABSTRACT** | For about 15-20 years, a rather small – yet growing – community of designers started getting involved in public policy innovation and public problem solving activities. Those design activists (willing to work for the common good, public welfare and social justice) have decided to apply their design skills, tools and methods in order to help public authorities of all levels (from village, to city, metropolis, national governments, or EU commission, etc.) reset & solve public problems and/or fix public policies and public services. « Designing better policies for people, by people » could be their motto. In parallel to working on solving public problems, designers have also spend energy on training civil servants and sometimes elected officials about their design approach so as to empower them in replicating, once the designers are gone, some design-inspired techniques and tools such as co-design with users, involving citizens in policy ideation, prototyping and experimenting before implementing, etc. By doing so, designers slowly spread their know-how to equip public authorities with design skills and progressively transform them. At the same time, we started seeing the first public authorities which would offer to designers real official design positions within their own administrations. Designers would not be only consulting for public authorities but transforming public authorities from within (often linked with the creation of public policy innovation labs). If it's still too early to discuss the success and impact of this strategy on the long term, we can already observe that by applying design methods to policy making, a new way of creating policies is emerging, one inspired by design. In this paper, we'll propose to draw a new guiding approach to policymaking inspired by design. To do so, we will build upon the initial critics of the policy cycle model such as the one of Lasswell drawn in 1957 (still in use today as a reference model) which, despite its clarity and simplicity, is purely theoretical (too linear, too static and too rational) and never takes place in the « real world »

and question the actionability of policy threads or streams model as proposed by Howlett in 2015. Then, we'll look into how, in practice, designers have, through practice, « tinted » policy making with their own methods to finally, extract and draw a new model for policy making, one which would build upon the design thinking & doing methodology (questioning the double diamond of the UK Design Council) but also the design « spirit » (capacity to improvise, to detour, to navigate at ease through uncertainty, etc.). Considering public policymaking from the angle of a “journey” could enable designers but also public authorities to embrace the fact that true policy design is an unwritten voyage, made of choices, options, creative detours, opportunities, trips to the unknown, etc.

## **KEYWORDS | POLICY DESIGN, POLICY INNOVATION, SOCIAL DESIGN**

### **Introduction**

This paper examines the possible contributions of design approach to reshaping public policy making. Chapter 1 describes the evolution from ecodesign to service design and finally to social and public design, showing how designers have progressively expanded their focus from sustainability concerns to addressing public sector challenges. Chapter 2 examines the proliferation of Public-Sector Innovation labs (PSI labs) as institutional spaces where design practices are applied to policy making, highlighting both their potential and the resistance they face within traditional administrative structures. Chapter 3 explores how designers' distinctive postures and attitudes—including curiosity, attention to detail, empathy, and comfort with uncertainty—are gradually influencing civil servants' approaches to policy making through collaboration and training. Chapter 4 discusses the tentative visual representations of policy making processes as well as of design approach. Chapter 5 finally proposes a novel “Policy Design Journey” framework that reimagines policymaking as an organic, non-linear process where design methodologies can be meaningfully integrated at various crucial moments.

### **1. From ecodesign to service design and social & public design: the consolidation of an emerging practice**

Since the early 2000s, a rather small – yet steadily growing – community of designers started getting involved in public policy innovation and public problem solving activities (Kimbell, 2009). Moving away from the private sector, those design activists decided to work for the common good, the general interest, by working directly with the public sector. If the industry knows how to use design for

its products and services, why not apply design also to the public sector for its public services and policies?

This does not come out of nowhere, it is in part the result of half a century of questioning on the role and impact of design on society: in terms of sustainability of course, but also economics and social impact. In 1971, Victor Papanek <sup>1</sup>wrote: 'There are professions more harmful than industrial design, but only a very few of them.' Yes, in a polluted planet and a society suffering an over-consumption illness (and a 'Kleenex culture' – meaning a use-and-throw culture), designers are part of the problem. They have a responsibility. As Alain Findeli (2010) reminds us: 'the end or purpose of design is [or should be] to improve or at least maintain the habitability of the world in all its dimensions.'

The responsibility of design in some of the worlds' problems led to change of design practices (and design teaching) with green design appearing in the years 1980s, then ecodesign in the years 1990-2000, and sustainable design in the years 2005-2010 (Ceschin et al, 2020). 'This shows that the role of design has evolved and has integrated new concerns, thus making it a more responsible design that has oscillated between large focuses on environmental concerns and encompassing social and ethical concerns' (Vicente, Frazão, and Moreira da Silva, 2012).

In parallel, to integrating the concepts of ecodesign and sustainable design quite early on, design schools also started, in the years 2005-10, to develop the logic of product-service-system design (PSS) (such as the PSS master degree in the Politecnico di Milano). The idea? Products can be produced in better ways, more responsible ones, but they don't stand alone no more. In a service-based economy, products are part of a larger system that include services and in which interactions between actors play a key role, and all that could be designed. Not just the product alone.

Slowly, service design started to appear as a new discipline of design (Meroni, Sangiorgi, 2011) in design schools but also in design consultancies. Even though service design was, at first, largely private-oriented (and often focusing on digital user interface services), projects that would include (or be directly with) the public sector got more and more common. For example, design schools would not only work with private business anymore but also propose to their students to work on projects in direct collaboration with public authorities, in particular local governments (on cultural projects, public space and/or urban challenges, social services, etc.). But besides some occasional cooperation on projects, it took quite some time for design schools, to realize that a possibly new discipline of design (and market) was emerging, one purposely social and directly public-sector oriented. 'The primary purpose of design for the market is creating products for sale. Conversely, the foremost intent of social design is the satisfaction of human needs' (Margolin, 2002). This discipline or practice has a name: social design, or even public design (in dutch speaking countries in particular), and finally policy

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Josef Papanek was an Austrian-born American designer and educator, who became a strong advocate of the socially and ecologically responsible design as early as the 1970s.

design (or design for policy) which could be seen as a sub-category within social & public design.

Despite variations, for Nynke Tromp & Stéphane Vial (2022), there are five components of social design:

1. Care-driven design activities for the wellbeing of underprivileged people,
2. Responsiveness-driven design activities for good governance,
3. Political progress-driven design activities for empowered citizens,
4. Social capital-driven design activities for beneficial communities, and,
5. Resilience-driven design activities for sustainable future systems

Social designers are now, in many countries, applying their design skills, tools and user-centered methods in order to help public authorities and institutions of all levels (from village, to city, metropolis, national governments, EU commission or international institutions such as OECD, 2022) reset and solve public problems and/or fix public policies and public services (Bason, 2014). 'Designing better policies for people, by people' could be their motto.

## **2. The integration of [social] design in public institutions: the Public-Sector Innovation labs (PSI labs)**

'The public sector is now established in theory and practice as a major site for design activity' (Buchanan, 2020).

Two proofs of this phenomenon: the multiplication of design studios who have specialized in public design (it's important to mention that many of those design consultancies have played a pioneer role in the development of design for policy (Buchanan, 2020)) and the multiplication of public innovation labs (within public authorities). And we could possibly even add a third proof: the emergence of 'social design' courses (Tromp & Vial, 2022) or 'design for policy' masters degree specialization in design schools, but also the emergence of 'public design' courses in political science schools (such as Sciences Po in France for example). For this article, we'll mainly focus on this second proof or phenomenon: the rise of public innovation labs.

Indeed, 'innovation labs (i-labs) are becoming increasingly popular in the public sector' (Tönurist et al., 2007, McGann, Blomkamp & Lewis, 2018). Mindlab (Copenhagen), Helsinki Design Lab (Finland), Nesta Innovation Lab (London), Kennisland (Amsterdam), Social Innovation Lab Kent – SILK (Kent), La 27e Région (Paris), the Australian Centre for Social Innovation – TACSI (Adelaide), MaRS solution Lab (Toronto), Public Policy Lab (New York), EU Policy lab of the Joint Research Center – JRC (EU Commission), are just a few of the – probably – most well-known public-sector innovation (PSI) labs (which integrate, at least in part, design activity) that exist worldwide (or have existed as some have gone extinct). But there are hundreds of similar labs throughout the world and keeping track of all of them is no easy task.

First, because they often operate at very various levels of governance. Indeed, PSI labs can be found at national levels, but also regional and local levels, and the latter ones can sometimes be harder to spot as their publicity is not necessarily very high and the publication of their work not systematic.

Second, because they, sometimes, carry very different names and present themselves (or are referred to) as: innovation units/departments, i-team or i-lab, public policy lab, change lab, design lab, social innovation lab (McGann, Blomkamp, Lewis, 2018) or creativity lab or public transformation lab. And the list can go on. But despite how they define or present themselves, they all try – more or less – to: improve, fix or create new public policies and/or services (policy result, outcomes, better services), instill a culture and posture of innovation within – and around – the institution (agility, flexibility, creativity), transforming ways of working (policymaking process, user-centered approach, co-creation, learning by doing, prototyping and experimenting), and finally promoting collective intelligence (in particular involving users and stakeholders). Often, labs also work in the future, or rather explore and invent desired futures (vision and scenario building), by using creative participatory foresight and design fiction methods (Pólvora and Nascimento, 2021) to pave future policies.

‘Public authorities attempting to innovate face a delicate trade-off between “safe” procedures and “risky” innovations [...] The idea that tax revenues could be “wasted” on risky, doomed-to-fail experiments makes the public sector a place that doesn’t naturally lend itself to innovation’. (Lewis, 2020). Public sector innovation labs are therefore seen as a good way to bypass this risk aversion by giving innovation an open and dedicated ‘safe’ space to experiment in and opportunities for collaboration on innovation across units, departments and sectors (Carstensen & Bason, 2012). In other words a dedicated sandbox or playground in which things that would not be allowed outside are exceptionally authorized inside. And by doing so, installing inside (or together with) public authorities, a certain practice and experience of innovation, so that in the end, ‘Public-Sector Innovation (PSI) labs are helping to create a new era of experimental government and rapid experimentation in policy design’ (McGann, Blomkamp, Lewis, 2018).

But one should not rejoice so quickly. Yes, labs multiply, but some also die (sometimes almost without notice), and most importantly, even though they multiply, they still vastly remain scarce in regard to the (potential) need. And it appears clearly that despite all the calls and various public announcements for more innovative, modern, agile, creative, efficient administrations, ‘there are strong pressures to maintain the status quo, and fewer incentives to innovate than to not’ (Hallsworth, 2011).

Even within public authorities that are ‘equipped’ with innovation labs, changing things are not easy. Indeed, public authorities who do host a lab don’t necessarily do things differently or apply, at all levels of its institution the principles, approach, tools, postures promoted by the lab. Far from it. But we won’t enter much in this specific question as this would require a deeper dive into the recent attempts to

evaluate and measure the impact of design interventions such as the one conducted by Jeanne Liedtka (2018) or the evaluation of the impact of innovation labs such as the ongoing work of Amy Zidulka et al (2024). We need much more research and evaluation on co-design for policy (Blomkamp, 2018) if we wish to have proofs of its transformative effects and added value on policies, institutions and people. What we know at least for the moment is that 'without the support of political leaders and top managers who lobby on their behalf, these laboratories could not continue' (Lewis, 2020).

People enjoy routines much more than they enjoy disruptions. This means that innovation labs are, at best, seen as object of curiosity (provoking a bit of interest) but most often as a rather 'possibly dangerous and disruptive new thing'. If not, sometimes, 'a new toy' of the managing directors. In his *Transformation Manifesto*, John Kao (2004) reminds us that 'every effort to change is accompanied by resistance, fear of the unknown, nostalgia for the status quo and concerns about the loss of efficiency and control that result from trying something new'. And any designer working for, with or within a public authority knows how well this resonates and how, despite giving design lectures, training workshops or design handbooks so as to re-assure about the process, the approach, etc., embarking civil servants (as well as elected officials) can be a tiring and tedious chore with uncertain results.

Are the public authorities who host a lab more innovative and deeply changed? We are in desperate need of proofs. Jean-Marc Weller and Frédérique Palle (2017) wondered: Is public innovation by design an 'underlying trend, revealing lasting changes in the forms of innovation in government, or is it a temporary phenomenon, the product of what some will call a 'fad'?'

### **3. Instilling designers' posture and attitudes within public authorities**

While I share the warning that design thinking should not present itself as 'a wholesale saving grace' (Clarke & Craft, 2018) for today's policymakers to avoid the risk of overpromising and underdelivering, and while I also share the concern that innovation labs may disappear if it's unable to prove itself useful and necessary – despite satisfying the political strategy: 'Look! We innovate, we have a lab' –, I still believe that design has a lot to offer to modify, enrich, improve the way we make policies on an everyday basis.

Despite the reluctance of people, and institutions, towards what's new and disruptive, the more designers, civil servants and politicians collaborate, either through the PSI labs or design consultancy, the more they get familiar with each other's ways of working. In particular, since designers often intervene but also train civil servants along the way – usually through 'learning by doing' –, we observe that civil servants become more and more comfortable with understanding design concepts (and process) such as user-centered approach, field investigation, co-

creation with users, ideation, modeling and prototyping, experimenting and crash-testing, etc. We also see that civil servants are becoming more and more familiar with design tools. Indeed, they start manipulating – or at least knowing about – design tools such as personas, user journeys, system maps, story-telling and scenarios, etc.

This is not only the result of more and more design-based innovation projects but also the growing number of trainings, keynotes, lectures, courses about design thinking applied to the public sector. Again, conducting an analysis of trainings or ex-post evaluation of design thinking trainings would provide us rich and more qualitative insights on this aspect. As a result of this greater acquaintance and cooperation between designers and public authorities, we also see, regularly call for tenders from public institutions demanding explicitly for design support in installing co-creation processes, designing and conducting policy experimentations or participatory user-based diagnosis of a policy or service. 10 or 15 years ago, public call for tenders asking for design were quite rare. Conducting a review of the call for tenders (at least at EU level) calling for design in the last two decades would be interesting in this regard to provide supporting evidence of this phenomenon.

What we see, from the practice, is that public institutions are, generally speaking, more and more familiar with design thinking or design-originated concepts. 10 years ago, in France, when I was asking civil servants I was training if they were familiar with public design, the vast majority of participants were answering 'no'. Today, at least half of them tell me they have a pretty good idea of what it is, even though they didn't use it or had experience yet working with designers. And a quarter of them tell us they already had trainings or lectures, or courses about it. Finally and obviously, a couple of them even have some experience working with design(ers) or using some design tools.

For those civil servants (but also eventually elected representatives), who had the opportunity to take an active part to design-led projects (whether the re-design of a policy or the design of a new public service for example), we realize that not only they are familiar with design process (or method), or even design tools, but they also became familiar with the design posture, or design attitude.

Of course, designers are not all alike but they all, (besides method and tools), adopt the following attitude or posture when given a problem:

- A high degree of curiosity, showing interest for everything, a certain willingness to learn, in particular topics or subjects they know nothing about yet ;
- An attention to details, showing high care for things that may sometimes, to others, seem anecdotal or useless. They pay attention to how things work, how they are built, how they stand, how they look.
- A care for esthetics, beauty matters for designers. It makes products, services, or policies more pleasant, more attractive, more appreciable.
- Empathy with users. Designers are focussing on answering to users needs by taking into consideration their struggles, their constraints and their diversity.

They don't design for an 'average lambda user' who does not exist, they design for real users who come with all sorts of feelings, emotions, worries, needs.

- A skill for bricolage. The 'Doing before thinking' (Jégou, Thévenet, Vincent, 2014) hands-on activity. Designers, obviously know how to draw and build things. But they also know how to build things out of the available bits and pieces around them. Make, then stepback, see, adjust, try and fix.
- At ease with uncertainty and improvisation. Designers are rather fine with blurriness and they tend to adapt quickly to changing situations or unexpected events or emerging opportunities. They're fine with modifying their original plans if need be.
- Friendly-hacking (Jégou, Thévenet, Vincent, 2014). 'An innovation is a successful disobedience, and local public authorities are embarrassed because they don't know how to deal with that' said Jean-François Caron (ex-mayor of Loos-en-Gohelle and former regional councillor in Nord Pas de Calais). In this logic, designers often go towards things that are not explicitly and openly authorized (yet not illegal) so as to push boundaries and play with practices (in a friendly way – and for the common good) otherwise, it's difficult to really innovate within an overly-constrained and rigid system.

These attitudes or postures are not strictly limited to designers alone, but they remain unusual within public authorities. At least, they are not written anywhere as key values of public institutions or cited as key postures for civil servants by the top management. On the contrary. Planning, organizing, managing, executing, performing and supervising are more commonly met concepts within public authorities.

What is interesting to observe is that designers tend to bring those attitudes along with them in the public sector and it slowly, seamlessly, instills a certain "spirit" or "way of doing" things (Deserti & Rizzo, 2015, Kimbell & Bailey, 2017)). Couple of years ago, after having worked with a french public authority, we heard the civil servants say "we're going to do this project *à la manière de* (in the style of) the 27<sup>th</sup> Region<sup>2</sup>". This meant that, despite the tools or design process itself, the civil servants captured and appreciated the 'spirit' or rather, here, the 'style' of working of designers (which, besides the technical tools or methods, include informal, convivial, participatory, collaborative, friendly creative work) and that they were planning on trying to replicate it, 'à la manière de' designers. 'Anchoring this logic and these new practices within the administration requires a real change of culture and a significant increase in capacities' (Christiansen, 2016).

And it needs to work both ways. Indeed, 'we argue that if policymaking learns how to incorporate the insights from design thinking into policy, and design learns how to deal with the politics of the policy process, there could well be significant benefits for policy design and for everyone who is involved in making it and everyone who is affected by it.' (Christiansen, 2016). Building upon this logic, we can congratulate the Ecole de Design Nantes Atlantique (France) and the political

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<sup>2</sup> The 27th Region is a french public innovation lab which, starting in 2007, were sending teams of designers together with sociologists and others professionals to public authorities for a limited period of time to carry on experimental and innovative public policy or service re-design.

science institute of Sciences Po Rennes (France) for launching, in September 2024, the very first (as I know of) experimental and joint Master Degree between a design school and political science school to create a 'Design for Policy' Master.

Echoing Jesper Christiansen's call for closer acquaintance between designers and policymakers, I decided, in an autoethnography logic, nourished by our field experience, to give it a try, and draw what designing policies could look like if we were to take into consideration the two dimensions (policymaking by institutions and designers' way of doing things). Of course, it is highly risky and this is to be regarded as an experimental artefact build to be criticized and for the sake of advancing knowledge and kickstart conversation amongst designers, policymakers, political scientists and whoever is involved or interested by public innovation in general.

#### **4. So, what if policymaking were done a designer's way?**

Of course, we're not arguing that designers should replace civil servants to make policies but rather try to draw, to explore, to imagine what it would mean to design policies that would integrate some of the designers' way of solving problems (some even say 'designerly' so as to express the designers' way of thinking and doing). Or in other words, if design thinking gets more and more used for policymaking, how would it fit into the policymaking process? Where would it enter in the process? To what would it contribute?

Before imagining how we could design policies a designers' way, let's have a look at how policies are made today, in theory first, then in practice. Indeed, we will see that there is quite a gap between the two.

So how are policies made? Many researchers, and in particular political scientists, have tried to describe or even picture how policies are or should be made. The most famous policymaking model is undoubtedly the policy cycle of Harold Lasswell dating back in 1956. At that time, he described policymaking through 7 stages (1. Intelligence, 2. Promotion, 3. Prescription, 4. Invocation, 5. Application, 6. Termination, and 7. Appraisal), but this got, later on, reduced and re-organized into 5 key stages which have been regularly reshaped, adjusted, rephrased, etc. But, in general, here are the five main stages of the policy cycle:

1. Setting up the agenda,
2. Policy Formulation,
3. Decision-making,
4. Policy Implementation
5. Policy evaluation.

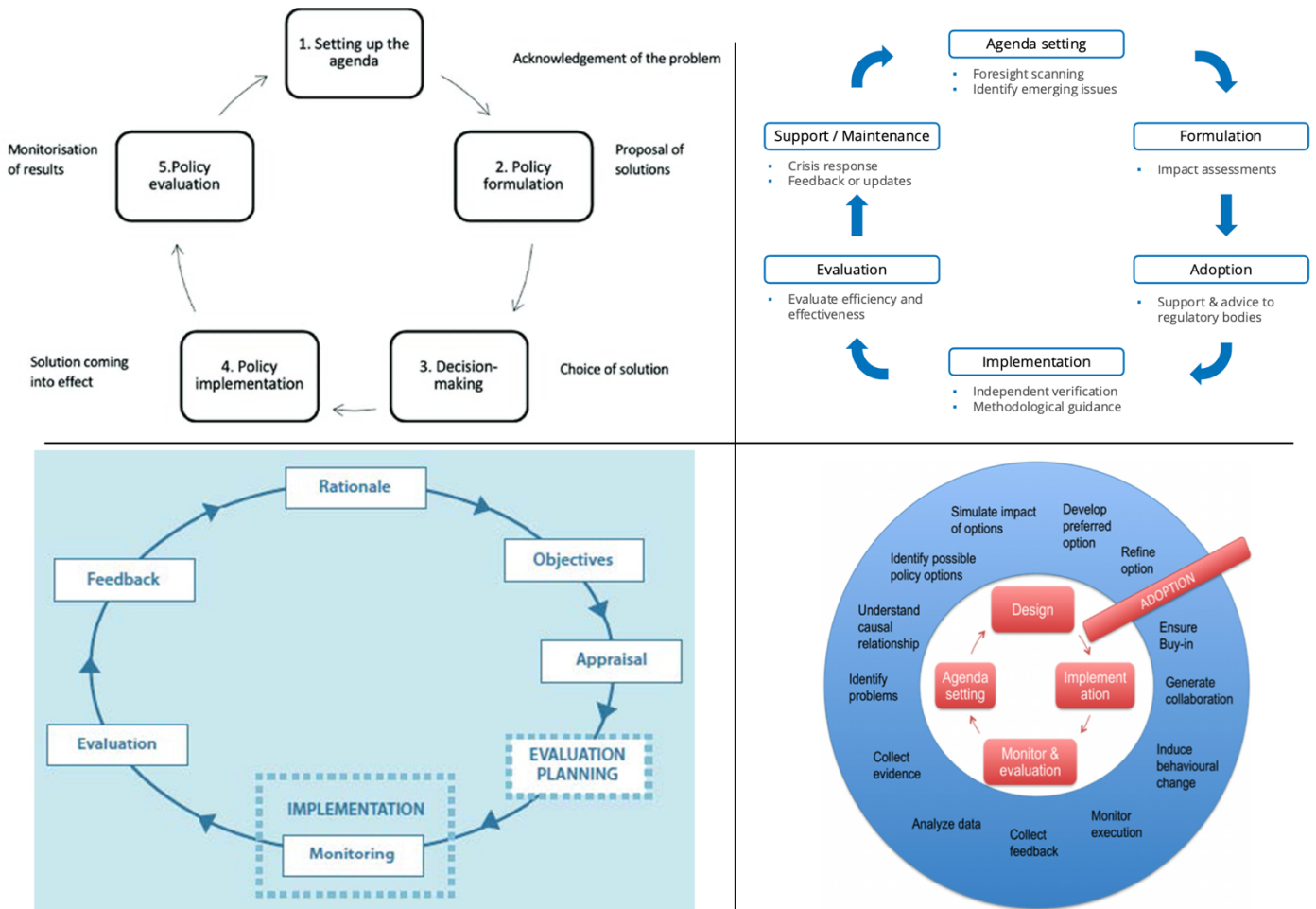


Figure 1-2-3-4. Different variations of the policy making cycle models: Public policy cycle (Lasswell, 1957) (top-left), Policy cycle as found on egu.eu European Geosciences Union (top-right), The ROAMEF cycle of the British Government, adapted from HM Treasury Green Book (2013) (bottom-left), Model elaborated by Stefano Armenia based on Howard (2005) and EC (2009) (bottom-right)

Some variations come up with 6 stages instead of 5, such as the ROAMEF model from the British government in 2022 (bottom left). But regardless of its variations and subtleties, the policymaking process is pictured as a cycle made of sequential stages which end up forming a loop.

This cycle model is clear, straight forward and easy to understand. It's a great tool for pedagogy. However, to some, the policy cycle is missing important dimensions of policymaking as it happens in real life. Indeed, according to John W. Kingdon (1984) policymaking is not integrated, and decision making is also not rational. Several dimensions co-exist together, yet in parallel: problems, policies and politics. For Kingdon, each of these dimensions have a life of their own. Policies are not made in an enclosed pipe, they are subject to interferences, politics on one side, and problems on the other. Problems are not nicely standing static on the side of the road, waiting to be picked up. They are alive (energy poverty, for example, is real, it's tangible and it does not 'wait' for policies), and not only they are impacting people's lives (or ecosystems in the case of pollution for example), they are evolving, even sometimes getting worse. Those 3 dimensions (problems, policies and politics) constitute what Kingdon calls 'streams', which led to the development of an extra approach to policymaking, the one of Multiple Streams Framework

(known as MSF). MSF got very popular in political science since its creation (see figures below) as it highlights the complexity of policymaking.

John Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework explains that policy changes occur when these three independent streams converge and form a 'policy window' (often due to a focusing event such as the alignment of a standing-by solution with an emerging problem, but also a political change (new government)). Inside these policy windows, streams align, allowing policy entrepreneurs to push their solutions onto the agenda.

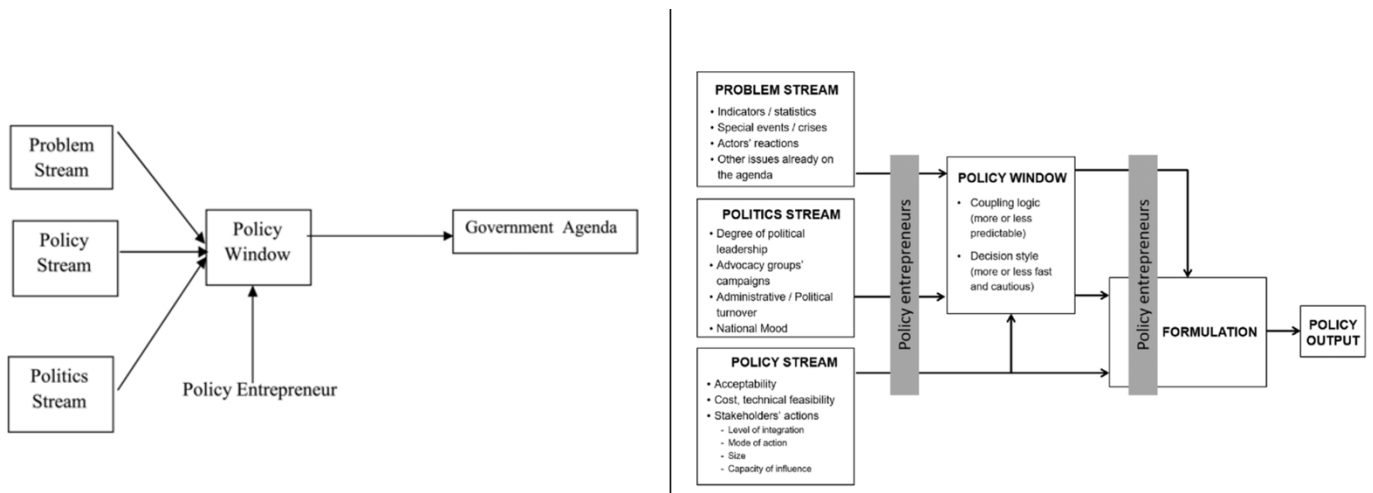


Figure 5-6. The Multiple Stream Framework (MSF) of John W. Kingdon (1955) (left) and Graphical representation of Kingdon's Multiple Streams Theory. Sources: Adapted with permission of Taylor and Francis Group, from Zahariadis (2007) (right)

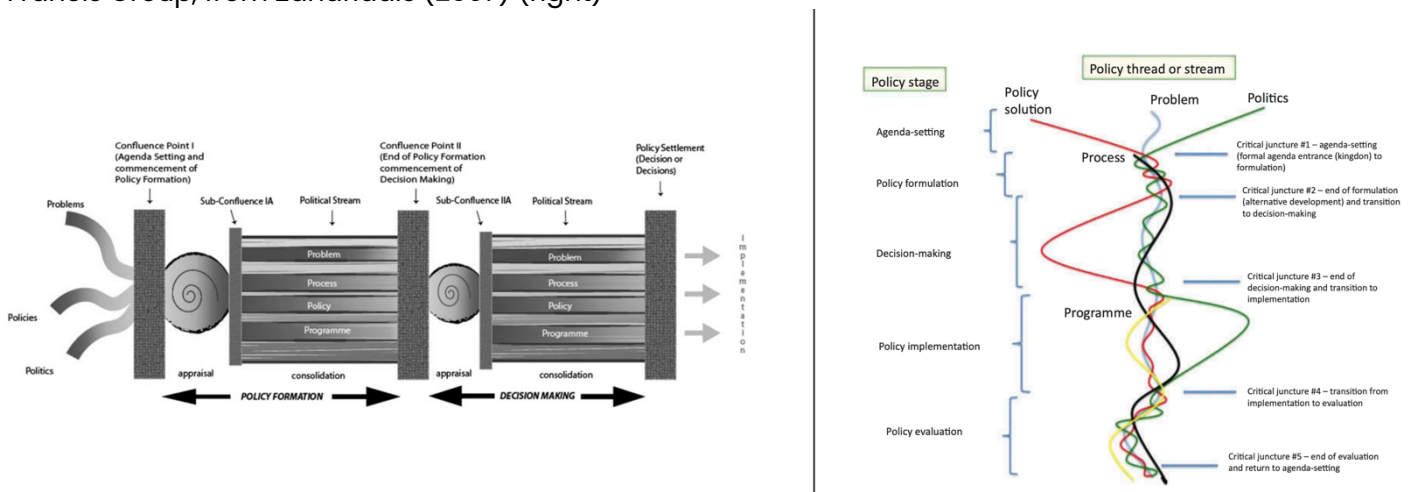


Figure 7-8. The Five Stream confluence model of Howlett, McConnell & Perl (2014) (left) and Five-thread (Stream) model of policy process Howlett, McConnell & Perl (2015) (right)

In my view, what is interesting in Kingdon's streams model is that it tries to picture policymaking not in an idealistic and theoretical way (like the policy cycle) but rather a more down-to-earth approach taking into consideration how things happen in reality. Since then many political scientists have (seriously) played around with the models and proposed enriched, revised versions (such as the Five stream confluence model of Howlett, McConnell & Perl (2014), which brought together Kingdon's multiple stream framework together with the Advocacy Coalition Framework of Paul Sabatier (1998)) and in particular their weaving metaphor (which highlights the fact that the stream (or threads) are not linear but



economic conditions, changes in subsystem actors). In other words we could say that things are definitely always messier in reality than depicted in policy models. In this regard, Paul Cairney's policy 'spirograph' is probably a rather good illustration of the reality of policymaking, yet difficult to use.

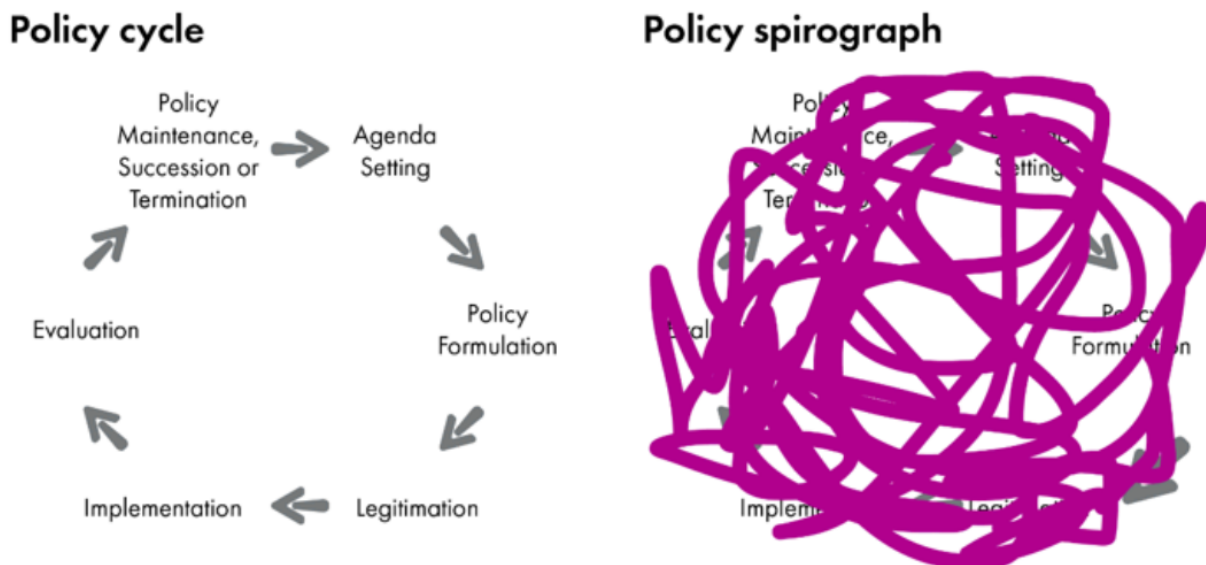


Figure 11. The policy spirograph by Paul Cairney (2015)

Policymaking has clearly more to do with bricolage than perfectly well planned engineered manufacturing. And anyone who has worked as a policy practitioner, knows too well that policymaking is definitely more organic (or fluid) than mechanical. And it's not only the case for policymaking but also for design thinking.

My colleague François Jégou (senior designer) and I teach together (in design schools but also in political science schools) and train senior civil servants (at the French National Institute for Territorial Studies) about design and how to apply design in the public sector, and each time we present the 5 steps of the design thinking process, François Jégou keeps telling me: 'what we are showing is wrong, and not only it's wrong but it's also a bit misleading. A designer does not start to have ideas at stage 3 when it's finally time for ideation, he gets ideas when he goes out in the field, when he discusses with users, when he is under the shower'. And it's not only true for ideation. Prototyping usually happens sooner in the process, or at least at the same time as ideation, because designers 'think with their hands', François Jégou says. The design thinking models, just like the policy ones, are misleading as they tend to present things as sequential, and not only it's wrong but it's problematic. Why? Because part of the problem we see with public institution (and their difficulty to make good policymaking) is their rigidity, the fact they tend to 'stick to the plan', to follow an imaginary linear process. And it's difficult, for a (rational-wannabe) policymaker, to accept that while in Phase 3 we might need to go back to Phase 1, or that Phase 4 will take place at the same time as Phase 2 because they feed one another and should advance hand in hand.

So, whether we look at policymaking or at design thinking, in practice (in the real world), we see that they have more to do with a journey than a cycle, or sequence or even steps. It's a journey that sometimes may look straight, but also cyclical,

regularly chaotic, but always evolving, living, changing. It's organic. Considering public policy from the angle of a journey could also enable us to envisage that it is made up of obstacles, options and choices, but also of bifurcations and detours, sometimes deliberate, sometimes not. Improvisation is therefore a key aspect to take into consideration. Using the metaphor of a "journey" would also illustrate the fact that no policy is laid down in advance (despite a vague idea of direction), that no solution is defined in advance, but that they will emerge "along the way". This way of looking at policies may appear a bit radical or disturbing as it proposes to move from a clear paved process, easy to follow and grasp, to a sort of journey, with unclear pathways, and unknown ends...

But this metaphor would actually enable us to draw policymaking in a more realistic and authentic way, but also allow us to incorporate the design approach (as a 'methodology or process') in one hand, and the design posture in the other. Designers are often said to be quite at ease with uncertainty, blurriness, fuzziness. They are not stressed by not knowing where they're going. In fact, they rarely know where they are going, they enjoy wandering and visiting unknown shores. They are also quite fine with following their intuition (building upon what they've seen, the users they've listen to, the impressions they got from spending time on the field). Just like a navigator who would go around and ask questions to both fishermen, but also merchants, travelers, locals before taking the sea but also a sailor watching the clouds, the seagulls and looking for whatever sign he feels might be interesting to catch. Designers easily take creative detours, and remain open to (or even provoke) creative accidents or serendipity. Regularly, the solutions they come up with may seem to be 'coming out of nowhere' or from paths that were not foreseen. Also, they are fine with going backwards, to check on things they might have missed on the field. Combined with their skills to draw, build, model and prototype, they may be a useful add-on crew to have onboard of a wandering policy ship (to echo the sea and ship metaphor of Howlett, McConnell and Perl, 2014). Of course, if design can be a useful add-on to equip public authorities with, other disciplines could also help us make better policies such as foresight, human sciences (sociology, behavioural insights, etc.), and evaluation.

## 5. The Policy Design Journey

As announced, I decided to give it a try and come up with a proposal that would depict the policymaking process as what it is, in my view, meaning a journey, and enrich it with design inputs. In other words identify at which moment, of the policy journey, design could contribute, hopefully, in a meaningful and useful way. Again, it does not mean that design is the new panacea to policymaking but possibly one of the many useful contributor (or add-on) to new ways of making policies along with its friend-disciplines of foresight, evaluation and behavioral science.

To me, policymaking is an adventurous journey within a vast sea of optional routes and hazards. Therefore, I decided to visualize the journey as a nautical-like chart or navigation map, of course not in a geographical sense but a metaphorical one. And it's important to warn everyone that this Policy Design Journey map is not

meant to reflect how things work right now, in real life, but rather how things could work if we were to better integrate design within policymaking at the same time as to revise the policymaking process itself. So it is not a depiction of the current state of affairs but a wishful view, yet pragmatic – and hopefully credible –, of how policies could be designed. Now that this is made clear, let's dive into the Policy Design Journey in details.

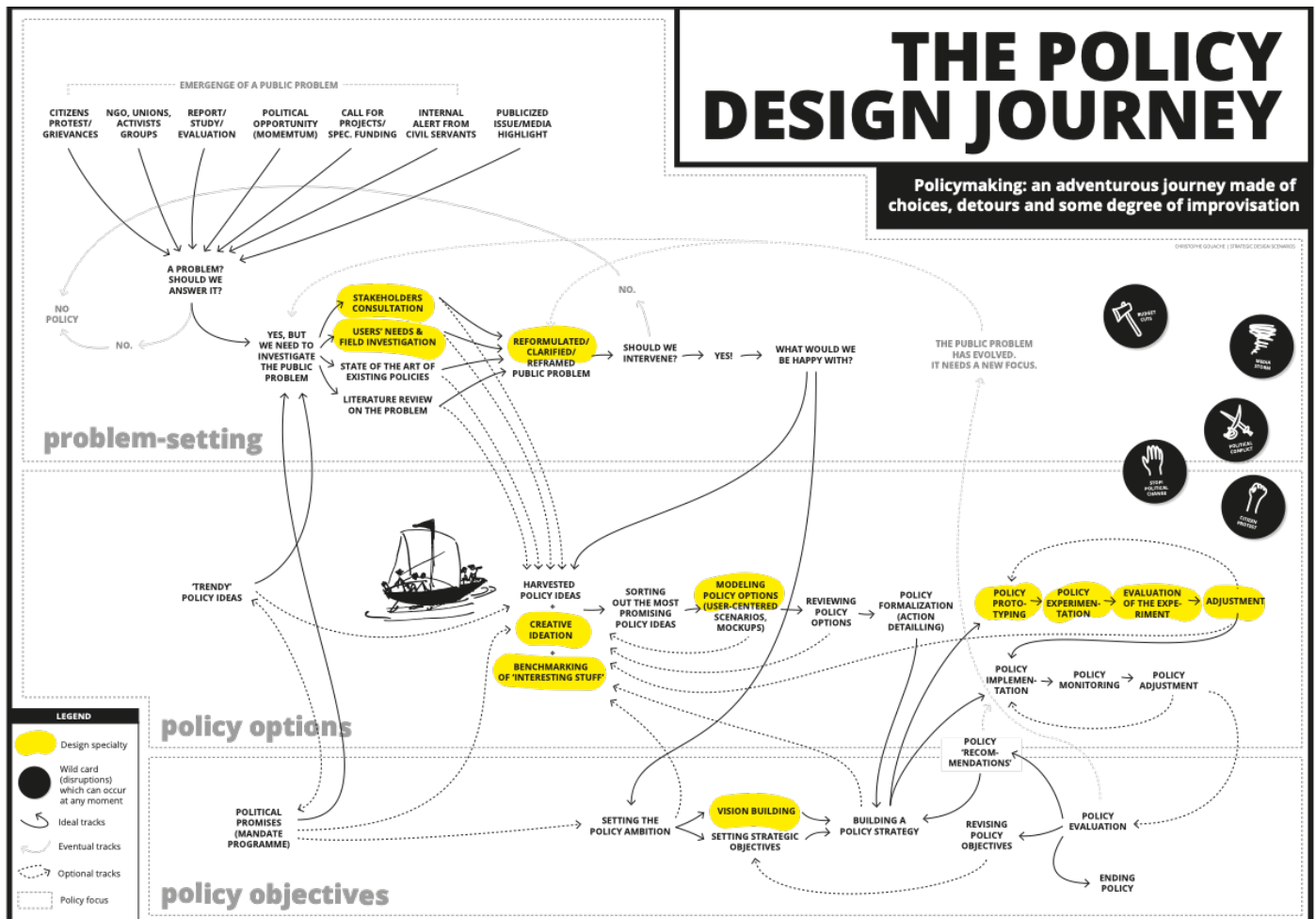


Figure 12. The policy design journey by Christophe Gouache

First, I would like to highlight the underlying layer of the map. Indeed, it has been structured (or arranged) with 3 distinctive zones or areas: the problem-setting, the policy solutions and the policy objectives.

The first one refers to the public problem. Here we build upon two main ideas: the first one being that all policies try to solve a public problem (Knoepfel et al, 2015), the second one that the public actor want and have the possibility to tackle effectively the problem or at least part of it, in other words that practical solutions exist and can be put in place by the public actor – policy solutions – (Neveu, 2017). As Erik Neveu argues, the public problems (which are virtually unlimited) may be popularized by all sorts of actors and claim-makers, therefore the problems that could or should be answered, possibly, by public actors are numerous (and complex) but also in competition with one another.

A public problem might be brought to the political attention in different ways: citizens' protests & grievances (for example an increase of the price of gas), NGOs or activist groups may publicize or reveal a problem that was either overlooked or unknown by the mass (for example chick culling - killing unwanted male chicks which led to new regulation or ban policies in a dozen of countries), report/studies or evaluation (for example the Report of the The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change), political opportunity/momentum because of the maturity/favorable context to highlight a particular public problem (for example policies to prevent violence against women), sometimes problem may also be brought by a funding opportunity or call for projects (for example topics such as the 'integration of marginalised communities' pushed under European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)), civil servants may also play a key role by alerting, based on internal technical evidence, their elected officials about ongoing public problems (for example the decreasing quality of local water), and the media (includ. social media) may publicize or highlight real social problems (for example food price inflation) but also, sometimes, highlight anecdotal events or phenomena which take huge proportions and may lead to the making of specific policy response and regulations (for example the controversy that took place in France in 2016 with the banning of burkinis by a couple of local municipalities, which then sparked international debate and led, in some countries or municipalities, to dedicated policies on the 'burkini problem'). I will not enter further, within the scope of this paper, on the fascinating question of how public problems are formed (or not), considered or ignored, etc. but felt this was important enough to be appearing in our policy design journey as public problems and the way they are proposed to the political agenda is key for our Policy Design Journey.

Regardless of who points out the problem, once it is under the spotlight, a fundamental question needs answering from the public authority: A problem? Ok, we see. But should we answer it? No? Ok, we won't make any policy (as we may consider, for example, that this problem might be someone's else's job to take care of - because of competence, mission or else - or because it's 'not a real problem' or 'not a priority'). If the answer is 'yes, we should do something about this problem' - even though we don't know what yet, the policy journey is initiated. And in our 'ideal' Policy Design Journey (PDJ), this should lead to the investigation of the problem (indeed, in reality and unfortunately, many elected officials skip this step because they claim 'they know the problem' and they might even have the answer to it, 'it's simple all we need to do is to build a wall' (to prevent illegal immigration for example). Yet, it is very unlikely that a public actor can respond to a complex problem if it skips a proper problem-investigation. Why? Because 'to every complex problem, there is an answer that is clear, simple and wrong' reminds us Henry Louis Mencken (American journalist & essayist). Wicked problems cannot be tackled by a simple unique solution. Otherwise they would not be wicked, they would be simple problems.

At this problem analysis moment, design may come at hand by suggesting an immersive investigation on the field, careful listening of its users and a tour of stakeholders, but also, a 'good old state of the art' or evaluation of existing policies on the subject (or close related problem) may prove useful as well as a literature

review of the problem. Indeed, it is very unlikely that a public actor is facing a public problem that no one ever met before (in one way or another). While all of those investigation methods should allow us to better grasp and understand the problem as well as its multiple causes and its effects on people, they may also, at the same time, provide us with policy ideas. Indeed, this goes back to François Jégou's earlier remark: 'when we (designers) go on the field, spend time with the users, listen to the stakeholders, discuss with the workers, ideas come up, on the spot'. This is the same for literature review which can prove to be mines of ideas (yet are often overlooked).

All of this should allow the public actor to get a better grasp of the issue, at the same time as a better understanding of how it should (could) approach the problem (or its sub-factors or causes): that is problem (re)framing or problem (re)formulation. Regularly, policies fail at tackling a problem, not because they are bad policies or wrong actions, but because the problem they try to tackle is not the right one. Or not from the right angle. Setting the angle (or the 'Define' stage of design thinking) of the problem is also something design can help with.

While the public actor investigates about the problem, it may also, at the same time, wonder about its political ambition (or policy objectives) about it: what do we wish? What can we reasonably hope for? Or eventually promise? Potentially, the public problem was even already cited in the political programme for the mandate and this is how it's been brought onto the agenda. The policy objectives background layer (or stream) highlights where political strategic decisions take place. And sometimes, a policy journey does not 'start' from a public problem but the political programme, that's often the case when, for example, a new government takes office. Not all policy journeys start with a problem. Sometimes they start by a political promise or statement during elections.

The policy objectives area (bottom part of the PDJ) is the area in which strategies and visions are built, as well as 'big decisions' regarding the continuing, stopping or revising of a policy or strategy. It's also, mainly, where politics happen (to refer to Kingdon's politics stream).

In a Policy Design Journey, sometimes ideas may come first, meaning aside (or before) problems and politics. Indeed, 'trendy' policy ideas may be politically popular at the moment, either because it's been publicized as a good practice, or maybe because a neighboring government had success implementing such a policy (for example the banning (or restricting) of short-term rental like Airbnb in touristic cities, first publicized by the City of Barcelona then soon copied in other highly touristic cities). In this case, 'trendy' policy ideas may have enough political attention that they mark the beginning of a policy journey. But in this case, ideally again, it should lead back to the problem-setting area for problem clarification and eventual (re)framing, rather than a basic 'copy-pasting' of the policy idea (as context and social realities are necessarily different). An other example of a Policy Design Journey that starts with a 'trendy' policy idea are URBACT Transfer Networks. URBACT Transfer networks are problem-based networks of European cities who come together (for example to work on sustainable food) and work in a close collaborative way for about 2-3 years to transfer the 'good practice' of one city to

all the others. Of course, each EU city, rather than copy-pasting the policy solution of the 'Model City' needs to investigate its own local challenge/problem in order to, later on, come up with its own version of the policy solution.

If we look closely at the policy options area (or stream), we'll also see that design can support the policy process by bringing in, not only its creativity and ideation tools, but also its culture of modeling, mocking up and later on prototyping (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017) and experimenting (in order to crash test a policy before implementing it).

In particular, we can see that the 3 areas (or streams) are not impermeable pipes or isolated canals, but rather areas of a vast sea, meaning that we seamlessly pass from one to another, that we may go back to a previous waypoint, navigate back and forth but also take long detours and new routes, based on windows of opportunities, but also on needs, capacities, time, competencies, and so on.

Finally, the Policy Design Journey is subject to disruptions which may occur at any given moment, which may include: budget cut, political change, political conflict, media storm, citizens protest (and possibly some others). There are no need for examples as we all know, from experience, how a political change of government can stop a policy right away or how a massive citizen demonstration can make a government cancel or stop or modify a policy idea... These disruptions are not only unpredictable but their impact on the Policy Design Journey is also uncertain. Just like a storm, high waves or dangerous wind, the 'captain of the ship' (to cite Howlet's metaphor) may have, whether he/she likes it or not, to change route and adapt.

The Policy Design Journey (PDJ) is not meant to be a handbook or manual for policymaking but rather a tool that could help reflect, organize, plan, consider the multiple options, routes, choices that a team in charge of making a policy may encounter or experience. It could also be useful – eventually – to PSI labs who may, using it, try to draw their desired journey, or consider possible activities that were not planned at first, when working on a new project or topic or public problem. It may also be handy to explain and/or discuss policymaking (that would include a bit of design, but also evaluation) with design and/or political science students.

Finally, I would like to invite practitioners (designers, policymakers, etc.) as well as researchers to 'tear apart' this Policy Design Journey in order to eventually come up with enriched versions of it.

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