design thinking in public engagement: two case studies
agenda

- today’s questions
- the way we used to work
- what is design thinking?
- two case studies
- the c word
how do we ...

• move beyond consult?
• get people more engaged?
• deliver better results?
how do we reframe expectations?
the c word

“examples and samples of creative public engagement processes and reports of a similar nature that have been prepared by the team ...”
the c word

creative
spectrum

< inform - consult - involve - collaborate - empower >
my stuck story

< inform - consult >
agency days
our prevailing beliefs

clients aren’t trained enough to do this
talented
innovative
smart
brave
our process

diagnose > brainstorm > *pitch* < feedback?
diagnose the client’s problem
do some research
we'd diagnose the problem
brainstorm with colleagues
pitch the solution
collect feedback
when it failed ...

we blamed the client

• they couldn’t describe their problems
• they kept changing their minds
• they didn’t understand the bigger picture
we failed to realize ...

the client

• knew things we didn’t
• had their own insights and ideas
• had valid opinions
• was just as smart as us
relevant?

replace “clients” with stakeholders
  citizens
  co-workers
  community members
why do we get stuck here?

< inform - consult >
victims of our own expertise

as experts, we feel obligated to

• demonstrate our skill

• act with authority

• show responsibility

• always deliver predictable results
victims of our own expertise

as experts, we feel obligated to
be the experts
victims of opinion

we think the public’s only role is to share their opinions

how do you like me so far?
an actual study

Unskilled and Unaware of It:
How Difficulties in Recognizing One’s Own Incompetence Lead to Inflated Self-Assessments
while we have many techniques ...
we don’t have that much process

< inform - consult - involve - collaborate - empower >
we don’t have that much process

< inform - consult - involve - collaborate - empower >
terra incognita

< inform - consult - involve - collaborate - empower >
meanwhile, back at the agency ...
we got this email ...
we got this email ...
what is design thinking?

Wikipedia says “the ability to

• combine empathy for the context of a problem,

• creativity in the generation of insights and solutions,

• rationality to analyze and fit solutions to the context.”
“enlightened trial and error succeeds over the planning of the lone genius”

David Kelley, IDEO
lessons from the deep dive
focus less on the perfect solution
focus more on a better process
put people at the centre
people?

• users

• customers

• beneficiaries

• stakeholders

• citizens

• people affected by the system you’re creating
pledge to involve your colleagues
look beyond opinion
principles of design thinking

• share the process

• work across disciplines and roles

• build empathy for people

• seek paradox

• prototype & test with people

• iterate frequently
an iterative process

Research: people’s, their context and their needs

Design: create prototypes with people as collaborators

Evaluate: prototypes with the people who will use the solution

Implement: create value for OSI

Find information, complete tasks efficiently

Of face of Statistics and Information OSI's Clients
everyone’s doing it

Anyone can change their world. Building belief. Giving people the tools. Inspiring, enabling and equipping. We work WITH. Creating something good. Telling stories. Entrepreneurial twist. Provoking curiosity. What is possible? Experiences that lead to opportunities. Making the magic to happen. Human understanding. Using compassion and sensitivity to make change happen. You can do anything. It’s a balance of idealism and business. We make difficult things fun. We are about empowering as opposed to helping. It’s not that I have all the answers, it’s collectively we can get there.
today ...
participation for design projects
• the public realm
• processes, products & services
• strategy & design
two experiments

what happens if we tried applying the principles and process of design thinking to public participation?
problem:
web sites by public servants for public servants

assignment:
create a citizen-centered digital strategy
principles we tried

• expose the process to colleagues
• make engagement an experience
• observe the public realm
• build empathy through great stories
• design the strategy together
User Profiles
expose the process to colleagues
make engagement an experience
observe the public realm
build empathy through great stories
design the strategy together
the results
bc ministry of transportation

the results

• the strategy was quickly adopted
• stories went upstairs in record time
• stories were used to rationalize other initiatives
• clients determined to engage again
bow to bluff sunnyside station

problem:
find a location for a traction power substation

assignment:
get public consensus about the placement
bow to bluff sunnyside station

principles we tried

• expose the process to the public
• be honest about constraints
• design the solution together
• find the paradox
expose the process to the public
be honest about constraints
design the solution together
find the paradox
bow to bluff sunnyside station

the results

• we found a desirable location

• public trust grew quickly

• acceptable designs were ready in weeks

• the stage was set for additional engagement
the obstacle

our colleagues and clients are uncomfortable with losing control

what can we offer in return?
reframing creative engagement
is creative engagement the event?
or the result?
on creativity ...

if your team is committed to creativity,
this is your opportunity to push past consult
on creativity ...

remind your clients and colleagues

creativity is not about acting creative
on creativity ...

creativity is about the act of creating

most creative solutions come from collaboration
on creativity ...

creativity comes from here

< inform - consult - involve - collaborate - empower >
mistrì
better experience everywhere