OPEN **PRACTICES**

PROJECT OVERVIEW:
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE & DESIGN FOR POLICY

in association with:

epa
Environmental Protection Agency
An Ghníomhaireacht um Chaomhnú Comhshaoil

UNIVERSITY *of* **LIMERICK**
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OPEN PRACTICES WILL USE
USER–CENTRED DESIGN
RESEARCH TO EXPLORE HOW
GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS
IN IRELAND CAN CREATE
BETTER OUTCOMES FOR
PEOPLE AND BUSINESSES
IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABLE
BEHAVIOUR AND PRACTICES.

Background

Design, policy & behaviour change for sustainable development

The systems of production and consumption in Ireland have diverse environmental, social and economic impacts. These impacts occur in Ireland but also in the countries around the world from where many of the products we consume originate.

There have been repeated calls by governments, NGOs, the public and industry to bring about fundamental changes in lifestyles, business models and structural aspects of our economies in order to make production and consumption more sustainable. These changes in lifestyle include changing how and where we live, our diets, how we travel and how we work.

The Irish government and national partners are voicing stronger commitment to environmental issues and to sustainable development more generally. The EPA Strategic Plan 2013 to 2015 suggested that to enable a low-carbon and resource-efficient Ireland the EPA will work **"with others to build awareness and behavioural changes needed in our homes, communities, businesses and at a policy level"** (EPA 2013).

Much of the effort of the previous two decades on transitioning to a more green or circular economy has been technical in nature. The regulatory system has sought to command and control unsustainable activities, internalise external costs and create functioning markets for more sustainable technologies. There have been many successes but also a clear recognition of the limitations of current approaches.

For example, there is an understanding based on theoretical and empirical insights that resource efficiency can be ineffective in bringing about the desired absolute reductions in resource consumption and the related impacts. One reason for this is the "rebound effect" that is normally expressed as the incentive to increase production or expenditure on goods and services following efficiency improvements that lead to lower production costs and prices.

Another reason is that the true cost of goods and services in terms of environmental and social impact is not explicit to consumers. This externalisation of costs is seen as one of the more dominant market failures in relation to sustainable development. Often this externalisation occurs because the production of products can be distributed over complex supply

chains that carrying varying degrees of externalisation, subsidisation and patchy regulatory regimes. Most product related impacts are distributed across the entire supply and value chanin and individual and even supranational governments do not have sufficient reach or capacity to intervene at all appropriate stages of the lifecycle.

Behavioural aspects

There is a growing recognition that many of the challenges related to sustainability and resource efficiency are fundamentally social in nature. They are social in terms of the behavioural drivers of household consumption but also social in term of how we choose to structure organisations and businesses and the assumptions that underpin many of the policies that relate to sustainable consumption and production.

There has been an increasing emphasis on targeting the demand side of production and consumption with the embedded assumption that affecting the choices and behavioural drivers of consumers will push changes back up the value chain and impact on the design and production of products and services.

The home and places of work are important to us as social beings. They help to give us identity and it is in the home and workplace where we develop long-standing behaviours and habits.

This means that how people and businesses behave is determined by many factors. Individual behaviour is deeply rooted in social situations, institutional contexts and cultural norms. There are parallels with how businesses behave, especially in the context of innovation and sustainable business practice as busiensses exist within innovation systems and sectors that have particular institutional contexts and cultural norms.

It is critical to stress that the repeated message coming from behavioural and attitudional surveys in Ireland is that people care about the environment and feel they have a responsibility towards pro-environmental behaviour. There are a number of gaps between these values and actual action so it is important to explore these gaps.

One of the key challenges in this is that individuals, businesses and other groups within Irish society are heterogeneous in terms of attitudes, motivation, means and capacity.

Existing interventions

There are a number of national interventions in place across Ireland that are addressing sustainability and resource efficiency in households and businesses such as the the Green Business Programme, Stop Food Waste, Green Retail and Origin Green among others. There has been significant progress in terms of pro-environmental behaviour but, as always, more can be done.

If the EPA and Irish Government are to deliver on their ambitious environmental targets there is a need to understand how the gap between environmental values and actions can be bridged.

The seemingly mundane choices in terms of how to heat our homes, what type of food is eaten, how much food waste is created and how we deal with that waste, whether we choose to travel by car or public transport or whether businesses invest in resource efficiency or produce more sustainable products and services will in part determine whether the Irish Government can transition to a low carbon, more resource efficient society.

We should seek to learn from the successful aspects of the existing interventions. This understanding can be

gained through formal evaluations and imapct assessments but the behavioural aspect demands different human-centred insights.

Design for policy

Issues such as resource efficiency and other grand challenges such as the ageing society and climate change are placing great demands on governments and public sector organisations.

Political systems across the world are seeking to understand how to use increasingly limited resources at the very time that the demands on government and the public sector are increasing and at a time when the challenges they face are becoming increasingly complex.

The mantra has been about doing more with less. This invariably means the public sector and the people working in it are being asked to achieve more impact and better effective outcomes with less money and time, fewer people, and (often) less political support. This is a shared challenge of all levels of government and the public sector.

Now more than ever the public sector is looking to innovate in the sense that it needs to make possible that which was

previously impossible in order to tackle the mounting problems facing society. Innovation is being used in the public sector to maximise resources in order to achieve strategic goals.

Because of this there is a growing interest in and application of design in policy and public sector organisations around the world. The capabilities of design are being applied to policy problems across all levels of government. Typically this means redesigning services and strategies by focusing on actual user behaviour, rather than opinion or attitude surveys.

Design can help policy makers to holistically understand problems from the perspective of people, bring fresh interdisciplinary insights to complex problems, create the conditions for co-creation with multiple disciplines and apply an experimental and iterative approach to bringing ideas to market or society.

Open Practices

This research project, Open Practices, is aimed at understanding how the Irish Government and the EPA could help Irish people live more sustainably. It seeks to develop a better understanding of when and how policy interventions informed by behavioural insights should be designed. The primary focus of the research is on areas of resource use in the home and in business that are sources of the most significant environmental pressures.

An overarching aim of Open Practices will be to see how the EPA can apply these design methods in order to co-design and co-create innovative solutions (with other parts of government, businesses, the third sector and citizens). Co-design, as a method and context for policy innovation, interweaves emergent and alternative ideas (e.g. new knowledge, desirable visions of future behaviours), new policy practices (e.g. policy labs, practical experiments, ethnographic study) and new social relations (e.g. new networks and actors).

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE CAN BE ABOUT SEEING PEOPLE AS THE PROBLEM OR SOLVING PEOPLE'S PROBLEMS

Carli DiSalvo

Key definitions
in behaviour change

There are a number of key definitions and themes in the behaviour change literature.

Pro-environmental behaviour

Behaviours that minimise impact on the environment, where possible, through actions such as energy efficiency, reducing food waste or recycling

Rational choice theory

Assumes individuals have rational preferences and make decisions independently on the basis of complete information and always seek to maximise outcomes.

Defaults

People often stick to default options and changing the default options available to people can have a significant impact on the decisions people make.

Social Norms

Social norms have been called the 'grammar of society'. They are the collectively agreed rules about how to behave in society

Anchoring

A "judgement heuristic" where people rely on one piece of information. This can explain why a branded product is chosen over newer, more efficient and environmentally-friendly products.

Loss aversion

A "judgement heuristic" wherein people tend to be more reluctant to give something up than gaining something.

Emotions

Humans often build emotional relationships with behaviours and objects. It can mean that people are unlikely to replace inefficient old products or have an emotional attachment to owning a product

Status quo bias.

The tendency for humans to prefer familiar situations and the current state. Any change from the current state of affairs is perceived as a loss.

Nudge

'any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives'

Hyperbolic Discounting

The principle in decision making about future actions (prospective) where people tend to prefer short term rewards over long term benefits.

Intuitive Judgment Theory

A branch of behavioural economics that argues that humans apply a series of heuristics (short-cuts) and biases during decision-making.

Social Marketing

A marketing based approach to behaviour change. It is typically used in a policy context e.g. healthy eating and environmental behaviour.

Design for policy
the benefits of a design approach

Traditionally design was applied to help businesses shape ideas so that they deliver practical, attractive and useful propositions that people want to use. In more simple terms, design is about translating ideas in to reality.

In recent years, design has been explicitly adapted to the development of government policy and policy interventions. There is a growing recognition that the methods and mindset of design can be of benefit to the strategy and policy departments of the public sector.

Design touches on many aspects of the policy process including the framing of policy problems from a human perspective, the design of new services, the design of graphic communications materials, the design of innovative products. There are also examples of where specific tools and methods normal used by designers are being applied in the context of policy evaluation. It is also clear that design thinking is a way to overcome common structural flaws in service provision and policy making.

Some of the key benefits of a design led approach include:

– Rather than disjointedly patching together incremental solutions to problems as they arise, design thinking looks at the entire system to redefine the problem from the ground up.

– Design thinking starts by understanding user needs in order to ensure solutions are appropriate, waste is avoided and end users buy into them.

– Rather than jumping straight to expensive and risky pilots, design process tests iteratively, starting with low-cost, simple prototypes and designing out risk as prototypes become more evolved.
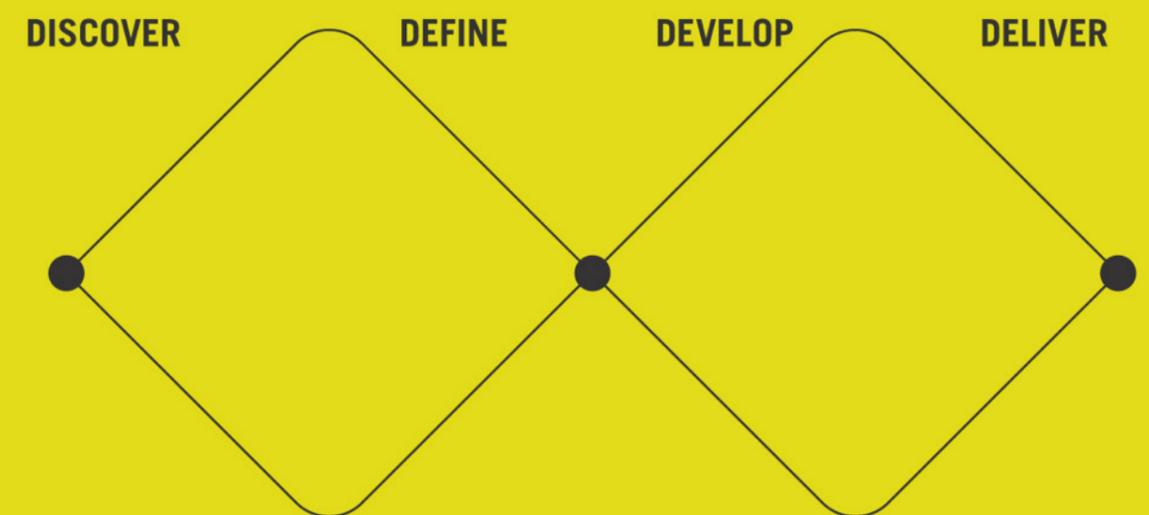
– Design methods offer effective ways of understanding which teams, departments, experts and specialists are relevant to a problem and engaging them in collaboration.

There are a large number of models and processes that seek to articulate the convergent and divergent phases of the Design Process. One of the more widely used mode is the 'Double Diamond Process".

This Double Diamond model is highly simplified but articulates how how designers often work through four key stages. At the discover stages designers will typically seek to understand the problem are they are seeking to design for. They will then use insights from this stage to focus on the user-needs and identify and define priority areas to be addressed.

The next stage will involve the development of prototypes based on the design opportunity identified, These prototypes will be tested in different contexts. The final stage involves the refinement of design objectives which will lead to the manufacturing of a product or launch of a new service. The model is presented in a linear fashion but there is often a more cyclical process at play.

The design process is inherently interdisciplinary and allows for the input and involvement of various people who may not typically work together to help to frame problems and deliver solutions and strategies. The design process should aim to integrate multiple viewpoints so as to seek insight into tangible ideas.

DISCOVER   **DEFINE**   **DEVELOP**   **DELIVER**