



Helping the Public Sector be more creative

An experts' workshop at Dutch Design Week

Capital D Headquarters, Eindhoven
19th October 2014



The Creativity Team



Creativity is one of the four Scottish Government Business Strategy imperatives. The Creativity Team aims to foster the belief that being creative is an important part of our jobs; and to support creative practice. Together we can increase the Scottish Government's creative capacity by exploring, testing out and implementing new ways of working to achieve better outcomes for the people of Scotland.

Design has become an increasingly prominent feature of our work. We collaborate closely with Glasgow School of Art Institute of Design Innovation (InDI) and their networks led us to Leon and his team at ImaginationLancaster (IL). Design is helping to increase empathy with service users; to enable us to think differently particularly by allowing us to take a visual and experiential approach to policy; and to test new and possibly risky ideas in a safe and manageable way. Besides, I don't think you should ever turn down the opportunity to work with people who develop tools for engagement using a strong business case and enormous beach balls!

I am extremely grateful to the PROUD project and its partners for hosting this workshop and introducing me to Dutch Design Week. It was a fascinating experience to see what sorts of work is advancing design for social innovation and meet such knowledgeable people from the private, public and third sectors as well as frighteningly clever academics! The outputs from the workshop are all the richer having had input from representatives from across Europe: France, Finland, Belgium, the Netherlands, UK and Denmark to name a few.

Sincere thanks for coming along and helping to move on our approach to creative policy and service development with your fascinating, practical and challenging insights and suggestions.

Anna Winters,

Creativity Programme Lead, Organisational Development and Learning | People Directorate | Scottish Government

Imagination and PROUD



PROUD stands for People Researchers Organisations Using Design for innovation and co-creation. PROUD brings designers together with public organisations, businesses and user communities to experience the value of design whilst working together on innovative solutions for today's real world problems. Working with partners across Europe we are developing and sharing new ways of co-designing improvements to public space and public services.

ImaginationLancaster is an open and exploratory design-led research lab at Lancaster University. We conduct applied and theoretical research into people, products, places and their interactions. ImaginationLancaster is currently ranked joint third in the UK for design research. Lancaster University now approaching its 50th year is proud of its international reputation as a centre for excellence in teaching and research, and of the consistent excellent feedback that we receive from our students. Lancaster University is ranked in the top one percent of universities in the world.

Dr Leon Cruickshank

Reader in Design, ImaginationLancaster, Lancaster University.

Aims

To explore the key conditions for creativity to flourish in the public sector in general and in particular the Scottish Government.



Participants

Emma Barrett, Silk Innovation Lab, Kent
Bas Raijmakers, Design Academy, Eindhoven
Gemma Coupe, ImaginationLancaster
Hilde Bouchez, Design Academy Eindhoven
Icare LeBlanc, Ville de Saint-Etienne
Ingrid van der Wacht, Capital D
Jan Glas, LuxInnovation
Linda Bax, Capital D
Luba Trojan
Martyn Evans, ImaginationLancaster
Stephen Clune, ImaginationLancaster
Steven Cleeren
Sora Lina, Essen Red Dot Museum
Rachel Cooper, ImaginationLancaster
Wina Smeenk, Freelance Facilitator & Lecturer
Heather Ballie Young, Glasgow School of Art

Facilitators

Leon Cruickshank: l.cruickshank@lancaster.ac.uk

Anna.Winters: Anna.Winters@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



The Questions

The Scottish Government, following research, has identified 7 key insights as crucial conditions for a creative organization. We turned the insights into questions asked participants for their views on all seven.

The main tools for the session were the Hexagons developed by IL as part of the PROUD project and we used the various colours to identify which part of the session had generated the answer. People were firstly invited to the GREEN hexagons to respond to the questions.

The questions were:

How can an organisational culture of creativity be cultivated in the Civil Service?

How can we help civil servants challenge their assumptions?

How can service users involvement in public sector innovation become the normal default position?

How can public sector innovation be incentivised without adopting a 'market' approach?

What is inspirational creative leadership in the public sector?

Do new physical spaces need to be created to promote creativity?

If not how can creative spaces be established?

How can a greater proportion of great ideas be put into practice in the public sector?



7 key issues in promoting creativity in the public sector

1 Organisational culture of creativity

2 Challenge assumptions

3 Involvement of service users

4 Incentivise for innovation

5 Creative leadership

6 Creative space

7 Ideas into practice







Responses

This section documents the responses of the participants including their more extended presentations by thought leaders in this area.







Rachel Cooper, Professor of Design Management at the University of Lancaster

Rachel highlighted the challenges for civil servants of getting innovation through the various ‘filters’ in our environment and the importance of inspiring leaders. These include attitudes to risk, leadership support at all levels, Ministers’ expectations, and challenging assumptions by myth busting – and getting out into the ‘real world’ and confronting the reality of dealing with services. She also raised the public sector career ladder and the challenges that supporting creativity may pose to climbing it.

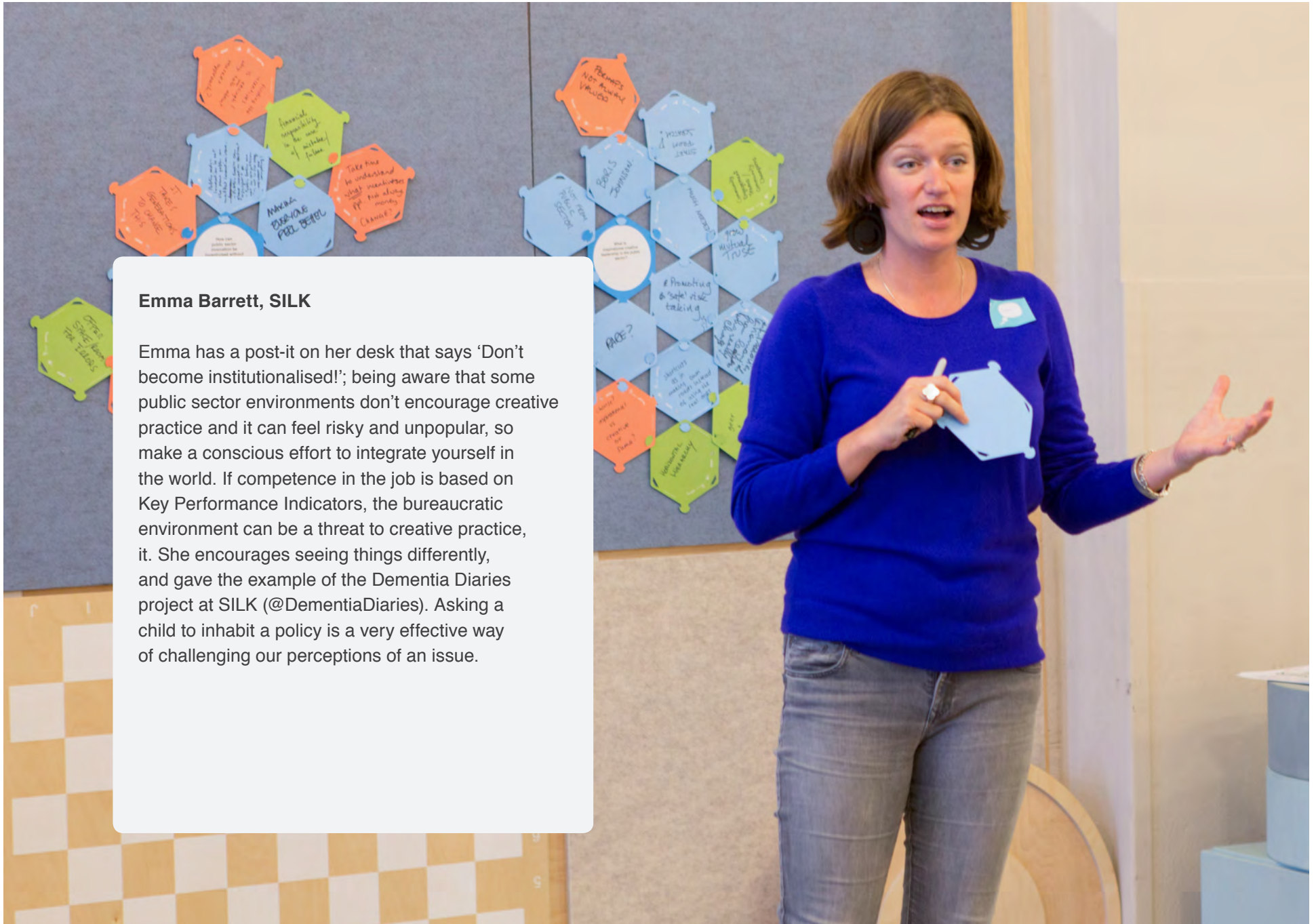
Bas Raijmikers, Design Academy Eindhoven

Bas reflected a number of comments by questioning how we know when something is a good idea in the first place? He suggests we explore the 'middle diamond' of the design process (I'd thought it was a double diamond, but thinking is moving on). The key element for him was to firstly define what is a good idea.



Emma Barrett, SILK

Emma has a post-it on her desk that says 'Don't become institutionalised!'; being aware that some public sector environments don't encourage creative practice and it can feel risky and unpopular, so make a conscious effort to integrate yourself in the world. If competence in the job is based on Key Performance Indicators, the bureaucratic environment can be a threat to creative practice, it. She encourages seeing things differently, and gave the example of the Dementia Diaries project at SILK (@DementiaDiaries). Asking a child to inhabit a policy is a very effective way of challenging our perceptions of an issue.



Insights 1

It's daunting to ask experts with years of experience to comment on an approach in government by a small team that is developing and emerging. And reflecting on the responses, suggestions and warnings issued by participants it was a comfort to see that many of the proposals are either ideas we are considering or things we have already put into practice. That's not to be complacent; there are also lots of new ideas for us to consider. It may seem impractical to suggest that children make policy; but we are bound by article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are always improving ways to enable children to shape policy .

All of the responses are now helping to shape how we support creative practice in the Scottish Government. The responses are laid out in detail in the photographs in this report, and it's worth reflecting on some themes. Given that few of the participants work directly with the Scottish Government, responses were necessarily based on working with public officials in other spheres and so perceptions of the organization were based on other experiences. That does not make them any less valid, and it is interesting to see similarities of response regardless of sector or country.

Getting out to get creative?

I was struck by how many responses encourage civil servants to leave the organization in order to be more creative! Whether that's on secondment or immersive learning there is a view that it's not possible to develop creative capacity within the organization. I hope our team and other creative practice within the Scottish Government can demonstrate that's not the case.

It makes me think we are doing better than people may expect with the programme of support to creative practice that we do offer. However, we also value the experiences provided by other organisations and have strongly benefitted by secondments into and out of the Scottish Government. The design principle of developing empathy for people at the receiving end of our policies has become an important driver of better policies and services.

Insights 2

Creative Spaces

Views were split on changing the immediate physical environment – we know that the work environment impacts on our ability to be creative. Sharing a water cooler is recognized as improving links between teams – but do we need a Google style office to promote creativity? Responses provided some existing examples such as MindLab in Denmark, Policy Lab in the UK Civil Service and SILK (Social Innovation Lab Kent), which perceives the county as a creative space rather than any room or office. Or is it about using creative props to change the way we approach problem solving? The Digital Health Institute in Scotland and other organisations have developed experience labs, safe spaces that replicate real life practice. Or at the other end of the scale, just playing music can change a working space dramatically.



Conclusion and Next Steps

We continue to develop our work on creative practice by supporting practice and culture change. This workshop has contributed greatly to our work programme by giving both comfort that we're considering many of the right things; providing examples of where to compare and emulate practice from elsewhere; and challenge to push ourselves further in challenging our assumptions and traditional working practices that need to evolve.

I'm very grateful to PROUD, Dutch Design Week and especially Leon at ImaginationLancaster for giving us this unique opportunity to test and share ideas with experts from across Europe.

Genuine engagement with our citizens and partners requires a creative mindset and has never been more important for Scotland, thank you for contributing to our ability to do that.

Anna Winters,

Anna.Winters@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Creativity Programme Lead, Organisational Development and Learning | People Directorate | Scottish Government

Delivered by...

This workshop was hosted and conceived of by Anna Winters leader of the Creativity Team within Organisation and Development in the Scottish Government. The content and structure was developed by Dr Leon Cruickshank, in ImaginationLancaster, the cross-disciplinary design research center in Lancaster University.

For more information on ImaginationLancaster, please visit the following webpages or email Leon Cruickshank.

l.cruickshank@lancaster.ac.uk

http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/people/Leon_Cruickshank

