

Population and Policy 2021

We focus on the use of design for and in policy making. It has roots in service design in social situations, but more explicitly design for policy has evolved from the notion of user-centred design, participatory design and co-design in planning products, services, experiences and in the visual and textual expressions of these processes. The cluster applies design research and methods to address policy and population challenges, global futures and novel ways to inform policy.

We have expertise in place-based design policy-making at local, national and international levels. This includes using design research methods to deliver policy that will support the wellbeing of people in those places such as healthy ageing; as clean energy or future mobility. We also have expertise in the development, deployment, governance and implications of digital products and services. We focus on strategies to co-curate policy with communities of practice and enhance a deeper understanding of place. Our research bridges the digital and physical, urban and rural, the public and the private sector, for example examining 'smart' initiatives to promote inclusion and equality. Our approach is interdisciplinary, we work with our colleagues in other Imagination clusters and themes, in particular the prosperity theme, also science and social science colleagues in Lancaster University and beyond, and we engage with policy and change makers at national, global and national levels.

Design for Policy, Design Futures, Urban Design and Planning, Design & Behaviour Change; Data Analysis and Interpretation, Design for Education, Evaluation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution

Methods:

Our methods include design research methods such as design speculation, design fiction and visual enquiry and analytical techniques, as well as observational and ethnographic techniques. In addition we inform our design research by including social science, qualitative and quantitative empirical studies.

Deliverables 2021

Book - Design For Pandemics
2 journal papers per topic area (6+)
3 bids from this cluster (> £500K)
10 conference presentations

Current Priority Areas:

We undertake Design research for/in and through policy at local, national and international levels and deliver research that translates directly into tangible, traceable outcomes. This includes using design research methods:

- develop approaches to population behaviour change in relation to UK Industrial Strategy and Global SDGs
- and interrogate and pose alternatives to hidden/unquestioned agendas and policy-making.
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Our current research priorities are:

Design Policy – place

We are interested in how design can support the development of policy for cities, urban environments and the connections between urban and rural areas

Priority 1. Cities, Governance and Urban design

- using design to support city-scale policy making processes
- enabling decision-making for smartness
- enabling smart solutions for city challenges
- using smart to develop new systems for urban design
- smart in rural areas, addressing the urban rural divide

Key Research Questions:

- How can design ensure participatory smart urban governance?
- How can we design 'smart' cities policies and processes?
- How can design inform policy in the future of cities?
- How should smart urban approaches apply to rural areas?

Priority 2. Healthy Places

- distancing in future places
- using design to address health inequalities in urban areas
- Design to support Net Zero lifestyles

Key Research Question:

- How design policy can support healthy places? eg the UK government planning white paper, how does this address health by design?

Key Research Aims:

- Collect qualitative data, document analysis and visual techniques to help policy makers address urban challenges in an integrated manner

Design policy - digital

We are interested in how design research can support the development of policy for new technologies such as AI and the IoT, and examine their impact on society.

Priority 1: Ethics

- designing regulation and policy for digitally enabled spaces in which data is gathered (e.g. public space IoT sensors, smart homes) which protects data privacy and ensures ethical practice
- using design and speculative methods in the development of Responsible AI and associated policy

Priority 2: Digital Public Spaces

- participatory design for governance and policies in the online sphere (e.g. social media platforms, digital archives and metadata)
- developing new business models, and means of value creation in this sphere (linking with Prosperity)

Key Research Questions:

- How do we ensure through effective policy informed by design that new technologies are introduced in a way that is responsible and ethical
- How do we use participatory and inclusive design in the deployment of fourth industrial revolution technologies and the creation of digital public spaces
- How can design contribute to digital placemaking.

Key Research Aims:

- Use speculative methods to enable ethical and inclusive use of technology in a way that creates value and respects human dignity and principles of responsible practice.
- Through interdisciplinary work support the development of new policies for digital spaces

Design for policy at local, national and global levels

We are interested in the use and application of design in developing and implementing policy at local, national and global levels, and currently agile decision-making in response to the COVID pandemic.

Priority - Design & Policy

- using design in local policy making (e.g. across contexts such as education, health, post-covid policy-making)
- Using design to work with policy makers to address current challenges
- Investigating tools and techniques are used in design for policy and how can we apply them
- Evaluation of design for policy – the value of design in strategic contexts, including public and private sector (with Elisavet and Boyeun)

Key Research Questions:

- How can we use design in local policy making (e.g., across contexts such as health, education, post-covid policy making)?
- How to develop shared understandings of the complexities of policymaking and design practices in this realm between policymakers and designers.

Key Research Aims:

- To develop a portfolio of research projects that explore the gap between how designers understand and engage with policymaking and how policymakers understand and engage with design methods and processes.
- To develop a range of design principles that enable the design of products, services and systems that encourage recovery and resilience post COVID-19

Methods:

Qualitative, mixed methods approach: Action research (local design for policy).
Case studies involving workshops and interviews plus documentary analysis

Design Policy - Society and Community

We are interested in how design research can support the development of policy to improve society/community at the following levels:

Priority 1 - Education

We are interested in how design research can support the development of policy and practices that affect the design of spaces and tools/products and enable learning to take place.

- The Home Learning Environment: how can we improve the HLE during and after the health crisis caused by Covid-19.
- Identify challenges and opportunities of the HLE to inform current school practices and official guidelines.
- The role of local authorities in reduce the social inequalities and promote sustainable and resilient learning environments for all.

Key Research Question:

- How can we design spaces and tools for learning that are healthy and engaging?
- What impact did the pandemic have on ways in which young people learn and how might they change in the future?
- How policy can support/empower the development of more engaging learning and teaching spaces.

Key Research Aims:

- To map and analyse the spaces and tools for learning
- To identify how existing school practices and official guidelines can be adapted to support a more effective learning environment.

Priority 2 - Living/Housing

We are interested in how design research can support the development of policy for housing refurbishment/retrofit/maintenance and development of new housing schemes to address carbon neutral/Nearly Zero Energy Buildings/Sustainable Houses/Housing For All - UN Habitat. For example:

- Designing regulation and policy to retrofit a Victorian House to a NZEB (if possible!)
- Designing Regulation and Policy to support the construction of Self-build Houses
- Designing regulation and policy to have ethical consumers and house buyers
- Speculative design to shape the house of the future

Key Research Question:

- How can we ensure through effective policy informed by design that existing houses are refurbished according to sustainable standards?
- How can we ensure through effective policy informed by design, house buyers can make conscious choices.

Key research Aims:

Improve the quality of Houses to meet eco-sustainable solutions/NZEB.

https://www.iea-ebc.org/Data/publications/EBC_Annex_50_Retrofit_Strategies_Design_Guide.pdf

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-design-guide?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_source=6ab7b688-d35e-4194-93a7-d83916a0d901&utm_content=immediately

Doctorate programmes

We have two programmes of doctoral work alongside our programme which intersect with and challenge the programme of research

Justin Sacks

How can design help people imagine a commonized economy?

Nuri Kwon

How can speculative design support participatory place-based approaches to policy-making in hybrid spaces?