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Bringing Design Thinking to the Challenges of Governance

New Delhi, March 18, 2011

The Topic

Design Public is a conversation about whether and how to bring **design thinking** to bear upon the challenges of government so as to promote **governance innovation**.

Background

The problem of governance is perhaps as old as society, as old as the rule of law. But it is only more recently -- perhaps the last five hundred years of modernity -- that human societies have been able to conceive of different models of government, different modalities of public administration, all having different effects on the configuration of society. The problem of governments, of governmentality, and of governance is always also the problem of how to change the very processes and procedures of government, so as to enhance the ends of the state and to promote the collective good.

Since the establishment of India's republic, many kinds of changes have been made to the policies and practices of its state. We may think of, for instance, successive stages of land reforms, the privatization of large-scale and extractive industries, the subsequent abolition of the License Raj and so and so forth. We may also consider the computerization of state documents beginning in the 1980s, and more recently, the Right To Information Act (RTI). More recently there have been activist campaigns to reduce the discretionary powers of government and to thereby reduce the scope of corruption in public life.

While all these cases represent the continuous process of modification, reform, and change to government policy and even to its modes of functioning, this is not what we have in mind when we speak of 'governance innovation.' Rather, intend a specific process of ethnographic inquiry into the real needs of citizens, followed by an inclusive approach to reorganizing and representing that information in such a way that it may promote collaborative problem-solving and solutioneering through the application of design thinking.

The concept of design thinking has emerged only recently, and it has been used to describe approaches to problem solving that include: (i) redefining the fundamental challenges at hand, (ii) evaluating multiple possible options and solutions in parallel, and (iii) prioritizing and selecting those which are likely to achieve the greatest benefits for further consideration. This approach may also be iterative, allowing decisions to be made in general and specific ways as an organization gets closer and closer to the solution. Design thinking turns out to be not an individual but collective and social process, requiring small and large groups to be able to work together in relation to the available information about the task or challenge at hand. Design thinking can lead to innovative ideas, to new insights, and to new actionable directions for organizations.

This general approach to innovation -- and the central role of design thinking -- has emerged from the private sector over the last quarter century, and has enjoyed particular success in regards to the development of new technology products, services and experience. The question we would like to address in this conference is whether and how this approach can be employed for the transformation public and governmental systems.

What is the Evidence that Design Thinking Positively Impacts Governments?

Many European countries have government-supported design conglomerations for the purposes of enhancing business and the government's interface with the public. Design Council in the UK not only works to create public identities but also helps formulate national design strategies that help the United Kingdom to differentiate its national brand and achieve broad national benefits. Elsewhere in the UK, a private organization, Think Public, and various governmental agencies, are working through a consultative approach with citizens to better target governmental services so as to maximize citizen benefits.

In Denmark, three national ministries came together to establish an internal innovation center called Mind Lab, which seeks to discover and implement new and improved means for the delivery of social and welfare services to its citizens.

In the context of public health, the first major public health information system has been built in Canada, and in many ways it may serve as a reference and benchmark for other countries around the world. The first deployment of a public health information system in

developing country contexts is in Ghana, where a specialized Resource Center is even now being conceived to enable the support and further development of this new system.

In India, early innovation research and concept development activities by the Center for Knowledge Societies for the Gates Foundation has shown promising results in terms of new opportunities to enhance the quality of health care delivery through the Bihar pilot itself, using the tools and techniques of ethnography, design, and user experience enhancement. In its studios in New Delhi and Bangalore, it has hosted innovation workshops with international health experts, public officials and other stakeholders to envision new kinds of technologies and solutions for improving public health delivery. In future, it may be possible to organize these kinds of efforts in the form of an Innovation Lab or Innovation Center.

Whereas, in the past, diverse attempts have been made to reform government, to make it more efficient, to reduce corruption and the arbitrariness of decisioning authority. Beneficial as these approaches may have been, they have not always been successful in fundamentally transforming the ways in which bureaucracies think about their mission, objectives and goals. They have not resulted in greater consumer orientation of these cadres, or greater public participation in the decision-making of these bureaucracies. These are the kinds of benefits that design thinking can bring to governmental and quasi-governmental bureaucracies.

In this conclave, our interest is to explore how design thinking and user-centered innovation might help such organizations better accomplish their mission and better serve their beneficiaries. We also seek to explore and establish particular modalities through which governance innovation can be achieved, as well as to identify key stakeholders and personalities gripped of the challenge of governance innovation. Our larger goal is to craft a path forward for integrating design thinking and innovation methodologies in the further re-envisioning, refashioning and improvement of public services in India and elsewhere in the world.

Specific Expected Outcomes

- A shared understanding and common vocabulary around design thinking and innovation
- A review of insights and outcomes from the event by members of government with a view to routinizing and institutionalizing innovation in government
- A documentation of case-studies, concepts and perspectives from different participants emerging from the conclave
- An emerging community of thinkers and practitioners interested in working together to share information and insights to accelerate governance innovation
- A consensus on the modalities and occasion for the conduct of a follow-up conclave, possibly in Bangalore as soon as September 2011

An Invitation to Dialogue

Design Public is a conversation among a select group of high level thinkers and actors who care about public services design. No more than 50 persons will be in attendance. Presentations will be brief. Panel discussants will intersperse with the other participants

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for greater involvement and equal opportunity for dialogue and response. All attendees will be asked to participate in the emerging dialogue through the day.

Draft Schedule

10.00 am
Using Design to Improve Citizen to Government Interactions
How can Physical, Informational and Interaction Design Improve Public Services?

Niels Hansen, Project Manager, MindLab
Younghee Jung, Senior Designer, Nokia Corporation
Shiv Vishvanathan, Professor, DA-IICT
Harsh Shrivastava, Consultant (Planning), Planning Commission of India
Sunil Abraham, Executive Director, Centre for Internet and Society
Sudhir Krishnaswamy, Founder, Centre for Law and Policy Research

11.00 am
Envisioning Urban and Living Systems of Tomorrow
How Can the Government Best Use Designers and Design Thinking?

Santosh Desai, CEO & MD, Future Brands
Aparna Piramal Raje, Design Thinker, Mint
Daniela Sangiorgi, Lecturer, Lancaster University
Naresh Narasimhan, Principal Architect, VA Group

12.00 pm
The Role of Media in Promoting Governance Innovation
How can Media Promote Design and Governance Innovation?

Suresh Venkat, Executive Producer, CNBC TV18
Yatish Rajawat, Editor-in-Chief, Business Bhaskar
R. Sukumar, Editor, Mint

1.00 pm
Working and Networking Lunch

2.00 pm
Innovation Workshopping Breakout Sessions

Track One:

A: Conducting Ethnography to Inform the Innovation Process
The group is responsible for coming up with an innovative approach to curbing power theft in peri-urban locations in India. Many factors are responsible for this phenomenon. What questions will you ask and how will you collect information on the ground to inform any future innovations you might come up with? (Case Study subject to change)
B: Brainstorming and Concepting in Response to Ethnographic Data
The group is responsible for conceptualizing a new ways to promote maternal and child health using mobile devices. Data on this question has already been collected and will be shown to you in the form of a brief presentation. You must come up with as many different

ideas or concepts as possible using post-its. Then you must prioritize these concepts and vote on the ones you would like to see implemented. (Case Study subject to change)

Track Two:
Approaches to Institutionalizing Innovation in Government
This group will consider ways and means for accelerating and institutionalizing innovation in governance, through for example, the provision of knowledge, best practices, support, training, and organizational change. Ideas may include, but not be restricted to new kinds of handbooks, online sources, academic and applied training and other ideas. Approaches should be evaluated and prioritized prior to presentation back to the group.

4.30 pm
Team Presentations (over tea served at tables)

5.00 pm
Routinizing and Institutionalizing Governance Innovation
Key Questions: *How Can This Assembly Share Knowledge and Expertise to Accelerate Governance Innovation? What institutional, organizational, and partnership models can foster Governance Innovation?*

Arun Maira, Member, Planning Commission & Member, National Innovation Council
R. Gopalakrishnan, Member Secretary, National Innovation Council
Mohd. Haleem Khan, Director, CAPART
Derek B. Miller, Director, UNIDR Policy Lab
Aditya Dev Sood, CEO, Center for Knowledge Societies

Other Discussants and Interactants

Amit Garg, Director, MXV Consulting
William Bissell, Managing Director, FabIndia
Kalpana Awasthi, Officer on Special Duty (OSD) to Sam Pitroda
Abhimanyu Kulkarni, Design Director, Philips Design
Anil Khachi, Deputy Director General, UIDAI
Ram Sewak Sharma, Director General, UIDAI
Narahari Mahato, Member of Parliament, AIFB
D. S. Ravindran, CEO, Center of e-Governance, Government of Karnataka
N. Cheluvaraya Swamy, Member of Parliament, JD(S)
Syed Azeez Pasha, Member of Parliament, CPI
Moinul Hassan, Member of Parliament, CPM
D. Raja, Member of Parliament, CPI
Josh Glazeroff, Visa Chief, US Embassy
Steven Solnik, Member-Government Performance and Accountability, Ford Foundation
Vibodh Parthasarthy, Associate Professor, Jamia Milia Islamia
Pooja Sood, Curator and Director, Khoj Foundation
Shubhagato Dasgupta, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Policy Research
Kiran Dhingra, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation
Rohini Nilekani, Chairperson, Akshara Foundation & Pratham Books
Sashwati Banerjee, Executive Director, Sesame Workshop India
Aditya Mishra, Client Partner Manager, TCS
Ravina Agarwal, Program Officer, Ford Foundation

Anant Shah, Program Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Nita Soans, Advisor, Center for Knowledge Societies
Ekta Ohri, Head of Project Operations, Center for Knowledge Societies

Individual Participation

In order to make each voice count, entry to the conclave will be by arrangement only. Others who are truly interested, should please drop us a few lines on how they would like to contribute and we will be glad to get back in touch.

There are no registration fees. However, we would like to see participants take their own initiative in covering their own travel costs and making their own arrangements for stay so far as possible. If specific needs are perceived, please communicate them to the organizers.

Institutional Participation

Confederations of industry, associations of management, departments of government and diverse development sector and civil society organizations are invited to express their interest in supporting this event.

Organizers
Center for Knowledge Societies (CKS)
Centre for Internet and Society (CIS)

Sponsors

Venkatramanan Associates (VA)
Centre for Law and Policy Research (CLPR)

Date and Venue

The date for the event has been decided for Friday, the **18th of March, 2011**. It will be held at the TajVivanta in Central Delhi.

Thought Leadership and Dialogue

Dr. AdityaDevSood, CEO, Center for Knowledge Societies
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Participation Enquiries

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