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Centre for Deliberative Democracy
& Global Governance
University of Canberra

Unit Description

This unit takes a deep dive into the power and limits of co-design and deliberative engagement. Each week, the online-only unit examines a policy area where various forms of multi-stakeholder engagement are applied, characterises debates in designing and implementing co-design and deliberative engagement, and introduces their principles and core design features.

Public authorities have increasingly turned to co-design and deliberative engagement to address contentious issues in policymaking and implementation. Participatory budgeting, citizens' juries, civic tech, and crowdsourcing are some of the many ways of involving stakeholders in public policy.

The unit provokes critical questions about co-design and deliberative engagement for the policy community:

- What are the most effective ways of involving stakeholders in policymaking?
- How can co-design and deliberative engagement be designed, implemented, and evaluated?
- What can we learn from global best practices as well as 'failed cases?'

Using global case studies and micro-podcasts from world-leading experts on open government and participatory innovations, the unit aims to provoke critical reflection on what it means to meaningfully collaborate with different stakeholders in contemporary times.

Learning Outcomes

1. Develop mastery of co-design and deliberative engagement processes, including the identification of policy areas and stages in the policy cycle.
2. Examine cases of citizen participation globally to develop options for co-design and deliberate engagement relevant to various policy areas.
3. Analyse the rigours and constraints of the design and implementation of co-design and deliberative engagement processes.
4. Evaluate the design and implementation of co-design and deliberative engagement processes that motivate iterative learning and inform decision-making.

The unit is designed by Prof Nicole Curato and Dr Nivek Thompson.

Unit Overview

WEEK	LECTURE CONTENT	ASSESSMENT
Week 1	Key debates and practical applications	Assessment 1 due
Week 2	Co-design and deliberative engagement in crises and emergencies	
Week 3	Co-design and deliberative engagement on highly polarising topics	
Week 4	Co-design and deliberative engagement with vulnerable populations	Assessment 2 due
Week 5	Co-design and deliberative engagement on new and emerging issues	
Week 6	Open questions and future directions	Assessment 3 due

Key debates and practical applications

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This week, we will set the scene for this unit by introducing basic terms, exploring debates about the value of engaging various stakeholders, identifying policy areas and stages in the policy cycle where these processes can be useful and showcasing global examples of co-design and citizen engagement.

'Listen to the people' is a catchphrase we often hear these days. It is a line associated with populists who claim to speak on behalf of the masses and with activists who demand to be heard. Increasingly, it is also a line associated to policymakers, regulators, and experts who recognise the importance of deferring to the wisdom of the people when it comes to complex ethical, moral, and political matters, such as climate change, artificial intelligence, and vaccine policy, among others.

But what does it mean to 'listen to the people?' What processes does listening entail? Does listening to the people mean doing exactly what the people want? And who constitutes 'the people' in the first place? Isn't it enough for decision-makers to listen to experts and deliberate among themselves about the best course of action?

This week provides an overview of what it means to 'listen' or 'engage' with a variety of people – ordinary citizens, the private sector, community groups, and industry associations, among others – before making collective decisions. We will introduce the processes of co-design and deliberative engagement as two (though certainly not the only) possibilities for forging connections between decision-makers and 'the people.'



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- discuss different perspectives on stakeholder and citizen engagement
- identify policy areas and stages in the policy cycle when co-design and deliberative engagement are relevant
- distinguish 'good' from 'substandard' applications of co-design and deliberative engagement.

Prof Selen Ercan

Co-design and deliberative engagement in crises and emergencies

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We live in an age of serial crisis (Curato et al., 2022). The climate crisis, humanitarian emergencies and the global pandemic have come to define our everyday lives. While crises and emergencies are often seen as situations requiring expertise and decisive leadership, scholars, practitioners and advocates of co-design and deliberative engagement have demonstrated how these situations are best addressed with meaningful input and collaboration from affected communities.

This week, we will learn how co-design and deliberative engagement have been applied in emergency situations around the world. We will focus on two design features of these approaches:

- (1) the method of delivery (online, in-person, hybrid)
- (2) the time required in engaging citizens and stakeholders (long-form versus short- and medium-form processes).

We will examine the trade-offs in design and implementation and invite you to take part in interactive tasks that will stimulate your thinking for Assessment 2.

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

Co-design and deliberative engagement in highly polarising topics

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'Polarised' has become a common way of describing contemporary societies. People only talk to those they agree with. Audiences only consume news reports, read op-eds and follow social media accounts that affirm their own opinions. The consequence is a divided society, where citizens see politics as a 'winner-take-all death match' (Talissee, 2019). Policies are perceived to represent the views of only one group of citizens, while those who did not get their way see policies as illegitimate for these policies do not represent their will.

How can we determine the common good in a polarised society? Is it possible for people to develop empathy towards groups whose views are radically different from their own? What role does co-design and deliberative engagement play in these contexts?

This week, we will identify the applications of co-design and deliberative engagement in polarised settings. We will zoom in the topic of recruitment or the different ways in which people harbouring a diverse and opposing views can be brought in the same room to collectively determine ways of breaking political impasse and generating mutually acceptable policy outputs. We will conclude this week by examining whether co-design and deliberative engagement do make a difference by introducing various mechanisms for evaluation.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- identify the applications of co-design and deliberative engagement in highly polarised settings
- assess the strengths and weaknesses of different recruitment strategies in co-design and deliberative engagement
- evaluate the impact of multi-stakeholder and citizen engagement.

Co-design and deliberative engagement with vulnerable populations

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Empowerment is at the heart of co-design and deliberative engagement. Giving citizens and stakeholders a fair shot at getting their voices heard to influence policy outcomes and implementation shifts the concentration of power from public authorities to society at large.

Power, however, is unevenly distributed in society. Scholars and observers of co-design and deliberative engagement criticize these processes for only giving space to 'the usual suspects' – the highly educated well-off people who have discretionary time. Meanwhile, there are 'hard to reach' groups who are 'seldom seen' and 'seldom heard' (Flanagan & Hancock, 2010) in public engagement practices.

This week's topic will examine the various ways in which vulnerable people can be engaged in co-design and deliberative engagement. We will begin by taking a critical lens in defining 'vulnerability,' followed by a series of global examples that demonstrate the range of possibilities for engaging with 'hard to reach groups.'

We will then zero in two practical questions that often come up when designing and implementing co-design and deliberative engagement with vulnerable groups:

1. Do citizens with low levels of formal education and lack of confidence in political talk have the capacity to engage in policymaking and implementation?
2. How can co-design and deliberative engagement be implemented in resource-scarce contexts?

As always, we will draw lessons from case studies around the world to inform your reflections and shape your thinking as you prepare for your next assessment item.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- identify the applications of co-design and deliberative engagement with vulnerable populations
- evaluate the evidence related to citizen competence in co-design and deliberative engagement
- identify the resources needed in designing and implementing stakeholder engagement with vulnerable populations.

Dr Hans Asenbaum

Co-design and deliberative engagement on new and emerging issues

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'Democracies,' argues political theorist Graham Smith, 'have a blind spot when it comes to the long term' (Smith, 2021). Electoral cycles, powerful interest groups and the underrepresentation of future generations in policy debates are some factors that encourage short-term thinking in democratic systems.

There are various pathways forward. One is to give experts more influence in political decision-making, for experts have the competence to anticipate new and emerging problems based on scientific research. The other pathway is to give citizens and stakeholders the power to determine how they want to create their shared futures based on collective values.

These pathways, of course, are not mutually exclusive but often intersect. This week, we will examine the application of co-design and deliberative engagement in new and emerging technologies and the different ways in which expert knowledge is used in these processes. As always, we will draw on examples from around the world on how diverse forms of knowledge can contribute to policymaking and implementation on complex and emerging technologies like AI governance, genome editing and mitochondrial donation.



By the end of this week, you should be able to:

- explain the value of engaging stakeholders and citizens, not just experts, in new and emerging issues
- understand the role that experts should play when considering new and emerging technologies, whilst also recognising the reasons why stakeholders and citizens input is necessary to delivering good outcomes
- identify the skills, competencies and mindsets required of policymakers, public servants and experts when engaging in co-design and deliberative engagement.

Prof John Dryzek



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Welcome to our final module on co-design and deliberative engagement.

In the past few weeks, we critically examined the applications of multistakeholder engagement in a variety of contexts, including crises and emergencies, highly polarised societies, vulnerable communities, and new and emerging issues.

This week, we will take stock of the key learnings from this module, identify open questions and chart future directions in the theory and practice of co-design and deliberative engagement.

By the end of this week, you should be able to:

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Assessments

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

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1	Identify a policy area 750 words	15%
2	Design a research project 2,000 words	40%
3	Review a research paper 2,250 words	45%

ASSIGNMENT 1

Identify a policy area

15%

Minimum of 750 words, 12-pt font, single spaced

Identify one issue or policy area that can benefit from co-design and/or deliberative engagement. Write a report that provides a background of the issue and the reasons why co-design and/or deliberative engagement are suitable in this context.

ASSIGNMENT 2

Design a multi-stakeholder engagement

40%

2,000 words, 12-pt font, single spaced

Develop a multi-stakeholder co-design or deliberative engagement process that responds to the issue or policy area you identified in Assignment 1. Prepare a one-page document titled 'Design at a glance' which provides a summary of the core design features of the multi-stakeholder process. In addition, prepare 'Speaker notes' that justify your selected design features.

ASSIGNMENT 3

Evaluate the design of multi-stakeholder engagement

40%

2,250 words, 12-pt font, single spaced

Imagine you received an unsolicited proposal for co-design and deliberative engagement (proposal provided). Your task is to write a memo to your colleagues and provide recommendations on whether the proposal should be (a) accepted, (b) rejected, or (c) revised. Include in your memo an introduction, outline, appraisal, suggestions and recommendation. Ensure that the memo speaks to the concepts and practical applications covered in this unit.