

Design for public policy: Embracing uncertainty and hybridity in mapping future research

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Abstract: Addressing contemporary public policy challenges requires new thinking and new practice. Therefore, there is a renewed sense of urgency to critically assess the potential of the emerging field of ‘design for policy’. On the one hand, design approaches are seen as bringing new capacities for problem-solving to public policy development. On the other, the attendant risks posed to effective and democratic policy making are unclear, partly because of a limited evidence base. The paper synthesises recent contributions in design research, policy studies, political science and democratic theory which have examined the uses of design for public policy making. Mapping out areas of debate building on studies of design from policy studies and from within design research, we suggest promising directions for future cross-disciplinary research in a context of uncertainty.

Keywords: design for policy; design research; public policy; political science

1. Introduction

Public policy is now required to respond to a context where “facts are uncertain, values are in dispute, stakes are high and decisions are urgent” (Funtowicz and Ravetz, 1993, p.744). From inequality to sustainability, public policy challenges are increasingly understood as difficult to address due to their ‘wicked’ (Rittel & Webber, 1973), in the sense of complex and interconnected, ‘squishy’ (Strauch, 1975), poorly defined, and contested (Hartley, 2018) nature. The nature of these challenges requires new problem-solving strategies, which recognize the value of different ways of knowing and “informal processes and improvisation in the face of unpredictability” (Scott, 2008, p.6). Opening up policy processes may be understood as a way to enhance democratic values, such as legitimacy, justice or effectiveness (Fung, 2006), but also to offer quality assurance in decision-making (Funtowicz



& Ravetz, 1993), and pre-figure (Cooper, 2017) new policy agendas, options, and tools. In this paper, we assess current debates on the role of design in public policy, we ask what scope is there for design to enhance policy processes, and what risks and challenges does it pose?

There is growing interest in the idea that professional design, associated with the design of products, services and user experiences, has untapped potential to enhance public policy processes. On the one hand, the past decade has seen many examples of the use of design skills and methods, and sometimes the active participation of designers, in public policy processes, mostly in public administrations in the global North. On the other, the outcomes, consequences and implications of these developments are not well understood. This paper aims to contribute by summarising developments in research within the emerging field of 'design for policy' and by identifying future directions for research.

More usually associated with industrialisation, consumption and the aesthetic aspects of modernity, designers and design expertise are increasingly visible in public administration settings such as central and local government and public services (Julier, 2017). The relation of design to public issues and government has developed and expanded across the UK, Europe and worldwide in recent decades within a political economy of new public management, public sector innovation, co-production, and digitalisation (Bason, 2014; Durose & Richardson, 2016; Whicher, 2020; Lewis et al, 2020; Kimbell & Vesnić-Alujević, 2020). This can be seen as part of the consumerisation and bureaucratisation of the public sphere where citizens are addressed as 'users' of digital public services, whose lived experience and creativity are sought out to co-design public services, as public policies are developed through 'sprints' and are 'prototyped' (Kimbell & Bailey, 2017; Julier, 2017). The proliferation of 'innovation' or 'design labs' in central and local government signals the increasing institutionalization of design in government (Lewis et al, 2021; van Buuren et al, 2020). These phenomena are part of a historical and categorical expansion in the role of design in society (Buchanan, 1992; Ericson & Mazé, 2011). However, the field of design for policy as yet lacks a strong conceptual, theoretical, epistemological, methodological and empirical grounding (Hermus et al, 2020; Whicher, 2020).

To explore this emerging field of research and practice, this paper provides an overview of its development and maps out areas of intersection and debate. Our overview is based on a thematic analysis of academic publications in design research, design studies, policy studies, political science, and democratic theory. The paper makes two contributions. First, it identifies maps intersections and promising directions for cross-disciplinary work in design for public policy that build on research in design. Second, it highlights potential opportunities and challenges in future research in design for public policy and argues for the need to embrace hybridity and uncertainty in future research and practice in design for policy. We conclude in highlighting the political work of introducing design into policy.

2. An emerging field

Within policy studies, interest in policy *design* – rather than other conceptions such as policy formulation, creation, innovation, and development – has become more common during recent decades (Peters, 2018). Policy design is defined by Howlett and colleagues (2015, p.291) as: “the deliberate and conscious attempt to define policy goals and to connect them to instruments or tools expected to realize those objectives”. The intention of these conceptualisations of policy design is less to dictate the ‘form’ of policy, with little variation or flexibility, but instead to facilitate ways in which policy can deal with complexity and differentiation (Heskett, 2005). The evolving concept of policy design, along with uses of design in policy practice, heralds an expanding but nascent field between design research and studies of public policy, political science, and public administration.

Within this, the explicit examination of approaches, methods and tools from traditions associated with professional design (understood here as a creative professional practice linked to the design of products, experiences, services, and interactions) is recent. Bason (2014) argued that design for public policy throws up questions for public servants and politicians about their expertise, organizational capabilities, and the logics through which they develop and implement policy and engage with publics, including voters and beneficiaries of public programmes. There are now numerous examples of the use of approaches, methods and tools associated with design and sometimes too, involvement of professional designers including prominent examples in the UK government (e.g., <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk>), the European Commission (e.g., <https://blogs.ec.europa.eu/eupolicylab/>), and inter-governmental organisations (e.g., <https://oecd-opsi.org/about-observatory-of-public-sector-innovation/>).

Within studies of policy design, there is a growing ‘design-orientation’ (e.g., Howlett, 2014; Howlett et al, 2015; Howlett & Mukherjee, 2018a). Such research includes discussion of the processes for policy design and mixes of instruments (e.g., Howlett & Lejano, 2013; Peters, 2018); spaces for policy design (e.g., Howlett & Mukherjee, 2018b); institutional constraints (e.g., Peters, 2020); and the politics involved in policy design (e.g., Peters, 2018; Lewis et al, 2020). More broadly, there is growing interest in the relations between professional design and studies of political science and democratic theory, seeing in design opportunities to address the need for new democratic forms (e.g., Seward, 2021), the complexities of co-production with citizens and stakeholders (e.g., Durose & Richardson, 2016), as well as bridging current knowledge and future possibilities (e.g., Romme & Meijer, 2020). Such discussions can be seen in the context of third ‘ages’ of public policy scholarship, in which insights and concepts from political economy are increasingly visible in discussions of public policy (John, 2015).

Recent journal articles critically assessing the specific opportunities afforded through design (e.g., Hermus et al, 2020; Lewis et al, 2020; van Buuren et al, 2020) saw promise in the application of approaches, methods and tools associated with design in public policy development. In particular, researchers see an opportunity to translate insights from studies

of public administration into practice as a kind of ‘design science’. For example, van Buuren, et al (2020) identified three ideal types of design in relation to public administration: design as optimisation, design as exploration, and design as co-creation. In a systematic review of literature in public administration about the potential of and uses of design science, Hermus et al (2020) identified a wide range of methods and approaches which they analysed using Sanders’ (2005) distinction between informational and inspirational approaches in design, and they concluded that design is often a way of translating knowledge rather than producing knowledge. Lewis et al (2020) identified in design opportunities to acknowledge policymaking as a more reflexive, uncertain and even ambiguous process in comparison to versions of it depicted in policy handbooks or models. Other contributions highlight design’s capacity for: engaging productively with complex, uncertain and ambiguous situations in public policy (e.g., Kimbell, 2015; Kimbell, 2019); surfacing human-centred perspectives and lived experience (e.g., Junginger, 2014; Mazé, 2014); combining diverse expertise (e.g., Seravalli et al, 2017; Perry et al, 2019) and engaging stakeholders in policy development (e.g., Blomkamp, 2018).

However, research studying design – in the sense that is it meant here - in relation to public policy remains nascent and fragmented. These sub-fields use the same term (‘design’), but often mean very different things by the term. There are some commonalities, such as the idea of centering a human subject as the object of policy (Peters, 2018), and debates about the degree to which there are possibilities for conscious or deliberate design (Goodin, 1998; Pierson, 2000). However, the intellectual interests in the policy design field in public policy and administration have typically been quite distinct from those of professional design. For example, in political science and public policy studies, work is focused on questions such as theorising processes of policy formation, looking at the ways in which policy choices are value- and/or evidence-based, and evaluative work on the appropriateness of choice of policy levers. Whilst studies of public policy making have perhaps traditionally struggled to fully embrace valuable insights from professional design for public policy, a wave of recent studies have begun to grapple with materiality, social relations, agonism, institutional factors, and anticipation in studies of design (e.g., Kimbell, 2011; Binder et al, 2011; Escobar, 2018; Agid, 2019; Knutz & Markussen, 2020; Mazé, 2019; Brassett et al, 2021).

Work on institutional design has sought to understand how and why particular values ‘stick’ or ‘slip’ (Lowndes & Roberts, 2013). For example, Lowndes and Paxton’s work on agonism considered how political institutions could allow for contestation through institutional design, characterizing a design that would be “processual, collective, contextual, contestable and always provisional” (2018, p.693). These insights resonate with emerging theorising of more co-productive policy design (Durose & Richardson, 2016). Durose and Lowndes (2021) have also considered how reflecting on the ‘incompleteness’ of institutional design can help to facilitate democratic contestations and acknowledge more diverse forms of expertise.

Similarly, there has been a growth in conceptual work on relationality in public policy (Bartels & Turnbull, 2020), unearthing a long implied but under-articulated relationality in

classic theories of public policy that argue political negotiations and reciprocal adjustment are essential to policy processes, such as found in Lindblom (1959).

Meanwhile, concepts and theories of design, rooted in art and aesthetics or in engineering and technology, have not yet substantially confronted or integrated disciplines such as political philosophy or political science (Keshavarz & Mazé, 2013; von Busch & Palmås, 2016). While there is emerging work in design for policy (Whicher, 2020), including recent doctoral research (e.g., Trippe, 2019; Buchanan, 2020; Vaz, 2021; Bailey, 2021), related design research is typically disconnected from insights in political science and other relevant discourses, particularly regarding the politics of policy making.

Without stronger intersections between research in design and the political sciences, in dialogue with practitioners, insights from design practice and research are at risk of de-contextualisation and de-politicisation, entrenching use yet inhibiting their critical value (Richardson et al., 2019b). To address this, we mark out directions for future research that draw on concepts and insights from research within and studies of design. To carry out the study, we conducted a literature review of academic journals and books in English with the terms “design for policy”, “design” and “policy” and “design” and “government” resulting in 15 publications read and discussed by the authors. We then identified topics in these publications, summarised below. We also participated in two meetings of an academic group set up to examine design-led approaches to renewing public management and governance (IRSPM, 2021). Our locations in three UK universities, and involvement in policy related research and knowledge exchange projects over several years, prompts us to adopt critical reflexivity about our own positions and perspectives (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000).

3. Insights and future directions

Multiple topics are evident and latent within the emerging field between policy studies and design research. From our literature review, we started to articulate some of these, attending particularly to those topics that surface discourses within both fields and that, in combination, have the potential to shed new light on policy challenges in the contemporary context of complexity and uncertainty. This review is not exhaustive yet is intended to contribute by unfolding common topics as potentials for future research.

3.1 Opening up participation through design

One of the characteristics of design practice seen as of value to public policy design is opening up participation in policy making to a broader range of participants including citizens and ‘beneficiaries’ of public policy.

Broadening out and opening up policy to different voices is part of a recognition that “today, no single actor, public or private, has the knowledge and capacity to solve complex, dynamic, and diversified problems” (Kooiman, 1993, p.4), policy making has embraced more ‘interactive’ approaches, which acknowledge the necessity and value of approaches that focus on harnessing the resources and distributed expertise of wider stakeholders (Torfing et

al, 2012). This more 'interactive take' also recognizes a growing expectation on the part of citizens and communities to have active involvement in policy making, as well as recognition within public agencies and bureaucracies that collaboration with such wider stakeholders is legitimating, useful, and even necessary (Torfing et al, 2012). What constitutes the policy process has also been opened up by analyses, such as the seminal work of Lipsky, that recognize that policy is made as it is carried through, the encounters of those at the front-line of public services and institutions with the citizens and communities they serve (1980). Policy making in this sense is increasingly shaped by the pragmatic improvisation of such actors, in the face of complexity and uncertainty.

Although discussion of collaboration, partnership, participation, and co-production were already established political science research, qualities of design specifically relevant to this are foregrounded in design for policy. For example, van Buuren et al (2020) identified co-creation as one of the three ideal types for the application of design in public administrations. Durose and Richardson (2016) identified design as an important conceptual lens to understand co-production in public policy processes. Discussing the institutional form of policy labs based on five case studies in Australia and New Zealand, McGann et al (2021) found this novel institutional form to be emblematic of co-productive models of public problem solving.

There is potential here to develop policy design by further interrogating and integrating established strands within design research. Participatory and co-design attend specifically to the staging, materiality, and experiences of participation, thus providing new understandings of the qualities of interaction between citizens and the state (Bailey, 2021; Mazé, 2021). Beyond mere representation or consultation, DiSalvo (2009) argued that design practices allowed the materialisation and formation of publics within democratic processes, and he (2022) attends to the labor, locality, and cultures of community participation. In many such design studies, there is increasing attention to the diverse values, agencies and dissensus accompanying the incorporation of citizen perspectives, and citizens themselves, into policy making processes.

A future direction for research in design for policy is to examine to what extent, and under what circumstances, design can shape and open up participation in public policy making and what is closed down through different approaches.

3.2 Institutionalizing design and designing institutions

Design for public policy is not homogeneous and relies on variants of contemporary design practice. While generally the use of design has moved upwards within governmental hierarchies and upstream in policy making processes (Mazé, 2021), there are nevertheless important differences in instances, contexts, sites, and scales of use. In their review of public administration literature on design, Hermus et al (2020) mapped out a range of scales (e.g., local, regional, supranational) and types of 'solution' (e.g., framework, method, policy) produced through applying design. In the policy design literature, Mintrom and Luetjens

(2016) examined the 'design thinking' vein in public policy and concluded it was resource intensive and would not displace or override existing forms of policymaking. Reviewing the relevance of service design, Trippe (2021) argued it was most applicable to policy 'instrument' design. Such studies begin to probe the different variants of design for policy, which would benefit from interrogation with respect to differences, narratives and institutional factors at different levels and stages in policy making.

The institutionalisation of design for policy is also an area of research. The phenomena of the 'lab' in government – policy, innovation, and design labs – has been studied, in which labs manifest as instruments of governance and as institutional designs. In a review of studies of policy labs, Lewis (2021) noted that several emphasise using expertise associated with design providing capabilities for improving the design of public policies. However, they also faced constraints and were institutionally precarious. Whicher's (2021) analysis of three UK policy labs led to a framework to develop, monitor, and evaluate policy labs and user-centered design teams. There is potential here to build on studies of design including analysis of institutional logics (e.g., Sangiorgi et al, 2020), scaling (Hunt, 2020) and systems (e.g., Nold, 2021). Other work has raised dilemmas about the degree to which conscious design necessarily implies a bounded institutional form. Given that design principles build in adaption and flexibility into decision-making systems, there is more scope to explore how more messy and incremental policy processes can be accommodated in, or evolved towards, a design paradigm (Richardson & John, 2021). Nor are institutional placements fixed, for example, DiSalvo (2022) observes the 'informal institutioning' arising through design for community participation. Through engaging citizens and communities, design approaches can shift the balance of power and institutions themselves (Opazo et al, 2017; Durose & Lowndes, 2021).

Future directions for research critically assessing how and when design is instituted, at multiple levels, in various forms and throughout policy processes. There is potential also in notions of incompleteness (Garud et al, 2008) in public administration, and how this might be addressed from various perspectives in design.

3.3 The visibility, materiality and making of policy

Different traditions in policy studies have paid attention to the social process of policy making (Freeman & Maybin, 2011; Freeman & Sturdy, 2015; John, 2015). Design studies further attends to the materiality of such processes, for example as the 'tangibility of governance' experienced at the voting place or other 'touchpoints' (Tunstall, 2007). Trippe (2021) argued that expertise and methods associated with 'service design' foreground awareness of the materiality of the procedures of governance, which ultimately shape citizen perceptions (and trust). Such issues open on to established design research about the visual and material power of design, including in terms of political rhetoric (Buchanan, 1989) and the 'governmentality' of differently designed forms (Mazé, 2021; Bailey, 2021).

Visual and material design can be put to a range of purposes within policy making. On one hand, design has been understood as inherently and inevitably persuasive, such that design choices can be used intentionally to steer beliefs, behaviours and conduct (Mazé, 2019; Silbey & Cavicchi, 2005). There is potential here to build further on intersections between design and anthropology, attending to the socio-political effects of design artifacts (e.g., Molotch, 2003; Julier, 2013; Gunn et al, 2013). On the other hand, and in contrast to persuasive uses, design has also been used for facilitation within policy deliberation. In an ‘object-oriented democracy’ (Latour & Weibel, 2005), design can be used to make the consequences of or alternatives to a particular policy design more visible, tangible and thus accessible to the public. Methods and materials of participatory design, for example, were used by Hyysalo et al (2019) with national policymakers and local stakeholders to deliberate, align and detail energy transition pathways. Consensus cannot be presumed, however, for example, Lanng et al (2021) found that the use of material participatory design enabled citizens’ attempts to contest institutional definitions. Making policy more participatory and public can enable the incorporation of further and necessary expertise and stakeholders, but these may also challenge policymakers’ assumptions and aims.

There is potential here to connect with research that examines the role of design in mediating uncertainty. In a context of rapid non-linear change around public policy issues such as the climate or social justice, there is growing awareness of future uncertainties (Urry, 2016). In studies of policy, researchers have argued for an anticipatory approach to policy design, careful understanding of the problem and its root causes, as well as selection and use of the most appropriate instrument(s) to address it (Bali et al, 2019). In the humanities and social sciences, there is growing recognition of anticipatory approaches to change (e.g., Miller et al, 2018), ‘inventive research’ (Marres et al, 2019), including the role of design (Brasset and O’Reilly, 2021). For example, Halse (2008; c.f., Halse et al, 2010) argued that design’s material practices offered a way to ‘rehearse’ possible futures. Pink et al (2018) showed how creative, materialising practices associated with design enabled negotiating uncertainty. Kimbell (2019) emphasised the improvisational and the circuitous nature of design practice in relation to public policy, with potential to resist the subjectification and desubjectification processes associated with public bureaucracies.

A future direction for research in design for public policy is to critically assess the possibilities and limitations associated with the material practices of design for public policy and the varied purposes and consequences of these in public policy making.

3.4 Expanding what counts in design for policy

Research into design for policy in political science often describes design as ‘human-centred’ (e.g., Junginger, 2014; Bason & Austin, 2021) to distinguish the approach from technology-centred or organisation-centred approaches. This desire for a more ‘human’ face to public policy (Unwin, 2018) may be understood in response to a backlash against standardization and bureaucratized policy (Russell, 2020), in the face of expectations of greater differentiation, and sensitivity to context (Durose et al, 2022). A contrast is here implied

between a 'rational' lexicon of policy that emphasizes fairness, consistency, evidence, and transparency, and a 'relational' one, which instead emphasizes multiple voices, relationships, values, responsiveness and local adaptation in policy (Cairney, 2016; Durose et al, 2022).

However, within studies of design, in contrast, a historical emphasis on 'human-centred' design has shifted towards emphasising design practice as ontological (e.g., Binder et al, 2011; Escobar, 2018; Nold, 2018). For example, studies of design have emphasized the making of social relations resulting from the arrangement of new 'socio-material design things' (e.g., Binder et al, 2011) in staging, along the lines of Binder et al (2015), 'democratic experiments.' The competing worldviews behind policy options can be explored through participatory design methods (e.g., Hillgren et al 2020), and 'design futures' can engage empathic and 'higher order' learning about the realities and futures of those unavailable to participate directly (Mazé, 2014). Critical design studies inquire into the different 'worlds' brought into being by design (Willis, 2006).

Future directions for research include examining the social relations and political subjects enabled or constrained through the application of design in policy making. There is potential for research exploring how the lexicon of policy can be enriched, including enlarging what and who might matter in policy making. To address climate and social justice, other ontologies and modalities of engagement are already expanding in policymaking, challenging limits to participation (conventionally limited to the 'vote' and 'voice'), for example including children and future generation (Berkley & Lister, 2020) and other species in environmental policy and spatial planning (Metzger, 2014).

3.5 Politics matter

Lewis et al (2020) noted the irreducible politics associated with design for policy. Evident within each topic broached above, politics within design for policy is a potential and crucial matter for research. The introduction of new ideas and practices, methods and tools from design into public administrations is not neutral. For example, in a study of UK civil servants, Bailey and Lloyd (2016) noted that that use of design practices both exposed and challenged the political institutions and policy professionals they sought to change. Elsewhere Julier and Kimbell (2019) argued that practices associated with 'social' design are inescapably bound up with ideological and political narratives.

There is potential here to further connect with critical studies in design attending to the politics of design processes and the implications of design use in the world. Some such recent studies of particular relevance to design in the public sphere, for government and for policy, include, for example, examinations of widespread uses of design by colonial regimes for purposes of domination and exploitation (Schultz et al, 2018), of the embedded inequalities within and perpetuated through design culture (Sloane, 2018), and, in context of anti-racist critiques of public institutions, Agid's (2019) account of designing, freedom, safety

and imprisonment that reveals the complexity and contestation associated with designing and designs.

In addition to some of the more specific political points and references in the sections above, the notion of 'agonism' has emerged in common between policy studies and design research. In research about design processes, Knutz and Markussen (2020) built on studies on performativity and performance art to problematise and broaden the understanding of participation in design to specific politics of participation. Agonistic participation in design research (Keshavarz & Mazé, 2011; Björgvinsson et al, 2012) is in contrast to efforts to forge consensus, as in deliberative activities associated with mini-publics within democratic innovation studies and practice (e.g., Dryzek, 2000).

The converse here is the need for design into policy to engage with the politics of the policy process. The literature on research utilization here is relevant, for example the seminal work of Weiss (1979), but more recently scholars such as Stoker (2013) and Cairney (2016), have drawn attention to the need to recognize the rhythms and politics of policy making in order to affect change within that process. The argument here in connection to design for policy, is that even its value is self-evident, its meaningful use in the policy process will likely require political work, for example, by policy entrepreneurs. As design is used and institutionalized in policy making, further critical studies and practices may be foregrounded within policy studies.

Future directions for research critically assessing the politics – of representation and participation, of institutions, procedures and processes, of materials and form, and of lexicons and in/exclusions – resulting from the application of design in policy making.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Issues such as the climate emergency, economic growth and social justice pose pressing questions for policy makers, citizens, researchers, and designers. Design practices have become more visible in public policy making and public administrations, as one response. Such developments present opportunities and challenges for researchers working at the intersection of design and public policy. With acute uncertainties including the unfolding climate crisis, global health pandemic, populism in many democratic countries as well as broader geo-political uncertainties, the possibilities, and consequences, of design for public policy are unclear.

Bringing together research and practice in design and public policy surfaces the opportunities and challenges associated with transdisciplinarity (Osborne, 2015). In their study of entanglement between disciplines or 'interdisciplines', Barry, Born and Weszkalnys (2008) attend to qualities of heterogeneity and striation, in which difference cannot be reduced to a question of disciplinary autonomy or boundaries. Richardson et al (2018b) recommended avoiding 'epistemological policing' but instead saw opportunities in engaging an extended network of peers to embrace hybridity resulting in new opportunities in

research and practice. Marenko (2021) proposed seeing transdisciplinary processes as inventive, characterized by divergence, diversity, and plurality.

Building on this, we do not anticipate a singular 'design for policy' stabilising. Rather we note the unavoidable frictions, power imbalances, and discomfort associated with cross-disciplinary field building and practice development. Differences in ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and contexts should be acknowledged, addressed and may remain between studies of design and studies of public policy. To point at the potential of "an inventive ontological space" (Barry et al, 2008. p.40), we have titled one section in this paper 'an emerging field'. However, we recognize that any such field (or fields) will be fundamentally marked by differences as much as by potential synergies.

To conclude, by mapping themes at the intersection of design and public policy, we have marked out directions to move research on in two ways. First, we identified directions for future cross-disciplinary work in design for public policy that build on and connect to recent research in design. Second, we attend to the challenge of carrying out research bridging disciplines as well as connecting research and practice. Embracing uncertainty and hybridity may serve to advance knowledge and practice; instead of a single design for policy, multiple conditions for, forms of practice and accounts of designing for public policy may emerge.

We acknowledge some risks and limits arising within our discussions during the writing of this paper, which point to some considerations for future research. Firstly, there is some bias and limits to our research here – we acknowledge own positionality within UK universities as well as methodological and linguistic limits to our literature review. Inevitably there are gaps in our mapping, and we foresee that there may be further relevant scholarship, particularly in other contexts, which could alter how we might map the number and content of topics. This represents an initial stage in our ongoing collaborative mapping and analysis.

Secondly, we note some critical and potential limiting issues in the emerging field. There is a danger of design becoming a 'magical' (Pollitt & Hupe, 2010) solution to policy challenges, which fail to acknowledge the politics of the policy process itself, and the risks, and potential limits of design into policy. Whilst interest in design from government may help to legitimise the presence of communities in decision making, the field must attend critically to the risks and power struggles and risks for communities in processes of decentralization and 'responsibilisation' (Taylor, 2007). Future research also needs to engage with how design can engage with, on one hand, the particular and multiple logics within the public sector (Issalys, 2005) and, on the other hand, often haphazard public policy processes inscribed with existing distributions of power, and not designed with 'design' in mind.

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