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UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



**UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE
FOR DISARMAMENT
RESEARCH**



Conference Report
**The Glen Cove Conference on
Strategic Design and Public Policy**
Official Version: 3 August, 2010

Produced by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research,
the Center for Local Strategies Research, University of Washington, and
the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford

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Strategic Design and Public Policy

Approaching the Event

The Conference on Strategic Design and Public Policy was held between June 9-11, 2010. It was co-hosted by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Center for Local Strategies Research at the University of Washington, and the Said Business School at the University of Oxford.

The event was motivated by the Security Needs Assessment Protocol (SNAP) project team at the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR). SNAP is an innovation project, aiming to build the first “programme design service” within the UN for the benefit of peace, security and development field activities.

The need for a programme design service was identified through a year-long analysis conducted by the SNAP team of standing UN



Lisa Rudnick and Derek B. Miller, co-founders of the SNAP project, UNIDIR

assessment practices for local-level peace, security, and development programming. Two key findings emerged that

were relevant to this event. First, the United Nations does not have any assessment techniques that foreground cultural learning for designing locally appropriate activities (<http://www.unidir.org/pdf/activites/pdf2-act337.pdf>).

Second, the international community has put a great deal of time and effort into monitoring and evaluation techniques to try to ensure social impact. By contrast, it has no comparable commitment or system to assist with project or programme design itself. Together, these constitute profound and system-wide gaps in the generation and application of knowledge for the social good.

Likewise, in reviewing the research methods that now form the basis for current assessment techniques, it also appears that the UN system has effectively

reached a conceptual, theoretical, and procedural roadblock in the design of local action.

Following the publication of these findings, the SNAP team engaged in a wide range of academic, practitioner and field activities to build a first prototype for A) generating local cultural knowledge in a cooperative manner with communities, and then B) developing a service design model (with creative input by live|work in London and Oslo) to work effectively with client agencies' use of such knowledge in the creation of new solutions. (Live|work can be found at: <http://www.livework.co.uk/>)

Further research into service design brought to light a number of commercial, non-profit and development projects that had used cooperative design processes in creating or revising services. In sharing a basic orientation to these endeavors, the SNAP approach constituted a notable departure from standing UN systems that coalesce around a “best practice” model.

Best practice approaches favor learning lessons, generalizing from these lessons, turning them into universal best practices, and then producing guidelines or tools from these practices. By contrast, a *best process approach* such as SNAP foregrounds learning about the unique, the specific, and the non-generalizable, and starts from a premise that — in most cases, — no practice is universally best. Consequently, attention is directed towards generating needed knowledge, building situated theory for action, and assisting with design processes from that new basis of understanding.

By early 2009, following fieldwork in Ghana and an intensive research and development period, the project team concluded



Gerry Philipsen, Center for Local Strategies Research, University of Washington: Co-organizer

that this best process approach looked promising. To bring the approach to a wider community of actors, the team began working towards a “meeting of the minds” among professionals in the cultural research, design, and public policy spheres (especially peace and security) to determine whether a wider dialogue was possible and desired.

The SNAP team co-authored three lectures and delivered them to each of the three main professional groups. In March, 2009, Derek Miller presented the policy lecture “Applying Cultural Knowledge to Design Problems: Notes for the U.S. Military about Challenges and Opportunities”, delivered to the annual Culture Summit at U.S. Training and Doctrine Command (<http://www.unidir.org/pdf/activites/pdf6-act337.pdf>).

In July 2009, Lisa Rudnick was invited to present on “Applying Cultural Research: Challenges and Goals in the Context of the Security Needs Assessment Protocol”, to the National Communication Association Summer Conference on Intercultural Dialogue, at Maltepe University, Turkey. In November 2009, Miller delivered a presentation addressing the design community at the London College of Communication entitled, “Trying it on for Size: How Does Design fit into International Public Policy?” (forthcoming in the journal *Design Issues* and available on request).



Lucy Kimbell, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford: Co-organizer

These three lectures culminated in the first workshop on strategic design and public policy held in The Hague on 23 November, 2009. A joint statement was published by the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the Conflict Research Unit at Clingendael (Netherlands), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands from the workshop entitled “Strategic Design in Public Policy: Revisiting the Knowledge-to-Action Nexus.” The workshop was motivated by the SNAP project team, and the participants concluded, among matters, that “There is a general state of dissatisfaction on the part of researchers and public policy practitioners about the way knowledge is used for action in public policy; Attention needs to be directed to the means by which knowledge is generated, and the ways in which it is used; [there are] factors inhibiting the responsible generation, and successful use of, knowledge for public policy that warrant attention; [and] there is widespread interest and a recognized urgency on the part of both the research and policy communities to address these challenges.” Design was explicitly mentioned in the Conclusions as an area worthy of further investigation. (available at: <http://www.unidir.org/pdf/activites/pdf8-act337.pdf>)

The three lectures and the Hague Workshop had deliberately overlapping themes, exploring both the promise and challenges encountered by SNAP in bringing these three fields together. Each talk, and the workshop, generated a great deal of interest in

large part because overlapping interest *already existed* among these communities. What did not exist were bridges among them at the level of theory, practice, and organizational systems (see Lucy Kimbell’s analysis of this point from a design perspective at: <http://designleadership.blogspot.com/2010/07/glen-cove-conference-on-strategic.html>) . This suggested both the possibility and utility of a conference to develop these areas.

The UNIDIR team set about contacting individuals and agencies in the international public policy community. From the cultural research community, the SNAP team mobilized its own Advisory Group and entered a valued partnership with the University of Washington’s new Center for Local Strategies Research (<http://localstrategiesresearch.washington.edu/>). From the design community, UNIDIR relied heavily on Lucy Kimbell at the Saïd Business School at Oxford.

To the best of the conference partners’ collective knowledge, this event would be the first of its kind to initiate a conversation to bring design practice into line with rigorous and cooperative cultural research for the benefit of peace and security programming.

It was decided to host the event over three days — a notably high investment of time for policy practitioners and private sector firms. Numerous organizations had to send their regrets including



Glen Cove Mansion

the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, the International Organization for Migration, and the UN Department for Political Affairs.

The conference partners selected Glen Cove Mansion on Long Island, New York, as the conference venue. Invitees were selected based on their unique experience, interests and talent in or among these three pillars of work and their expression of interest in advancing the quality of effort in this area.

Purpose of the Event

The aim of the Glen Cove conference was to explore the potential contributions that could be made by bringing cultural research and design together in the service of peace and security programming within policy contexts. There were three main objectives.

1. To learn whether there was shared interest, across the group, to employ cooperative cultural research and service design through a new synergy to better craft local solutions both with and for communities.

This would be an important development because there are high moral and practical considerations for bringing design processes into such radically different, and dangerous, environments.



A second aim was for participants from these three different professional camps to reflect upon the possibility of a common agenda for developing culturally-informed processes for the design of policy and programming.

The third and final objective was to invite participants to begin to consider what such an agenda might mean within each of their disciplines and professions. Working together on unfamiliar tasks would mean internal development at levels of curricular development, teaching, inter-institutional cooperation, funding and fundraising, professional business practices and more.

Achieving these aims required A) providing participants with a shared vocabulary from which to engage in meaningful conversation across very different professions, B) a common sense that their own work has a voice and a value in that conversation, and C) a means of working across disciplinary and professional boundaries that was generative and productive. The conference was built with these goals in mind.

The Sessions

The conference was built around five core sessions that had different formats. Each session ended with a facilitated exercise.



Elizabeth Kissam (UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations), Richard Buchanan (Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve), Steve Del Rosso (Carnegie Corporation)

Session 1

Session 1 was called, “Prospects and Challenges for Local Knowledge in Public Service.” It was explained how the international community is currently advancing key political agreements in the areas of humanitarian action, development and peacebuilding for which there remain complex and open questions about how to achieve positive on-the-ground social impact. Among these areas there is a notable convergence taking place around the value of local knowledge for effective local action but a lack of rigor and attention on how to generate it.

In this session, Randolph Kent (King’s College), Tore Rose (SecDev and UNIDIR Senior Fellow) and Roz Lasker (Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University) set the scene by describing their own challenges, over their professional careers, in getting local voices to actually impact the systems that claimed to be serving them.

Randolph Kent’s lecture took the participants through a remarkable, and worrying world of humanitarian futures, and concluded with this observation: “It would seem evident that the assumptions that have underpinned humanitarianism and humanitarian action for the past four decades, if not longer, are being challenged by transformations that are global but that at the

same time bring local to the fore... Defining the problem and solution is the critical design challenge. Who does it — in a very fundamental sense — is the secondary challenge.”

Tore Rose, as a former UN Resident Coordinator, gave an insider’s lament on some key concerns he had from a full career within the UN working on peace and development matters: “[When I first met the UNIDIR team to discuss SNAP and design issues generally] I was very skeptical and disillusioned about the way peacebuilding interventions at the community level were elaborated. I had observed, as UN Resident Coordinator in Mali and Rwanda, the way that international actors went about this. I simply did not believe the claims about consultative processes and national ownership. I had seen it in action. I thought that these words actually should matter, for both ethical and practical reasons ... But frankly I found much of this dishonest, or unwittingly incompetent.” He explained how — in a policy context, with mandates to follow — results ultimately depend on actions; actions follow from design; and design is empowered by knowledge. If we can attend to both knowledge and design seriously, perhaps better results will emerge.

Roz Lasker began by reminding the conference of the Simon and Chabris study on selective attention from 1999, in which

viewers are asked to watch a video (available here: <http://www.theinvisiblegorilla.com/videos.html>) and count the number of times a basketball is passed among white-shirted students. During this time, a person in a gorilla suit appears on camera, beats her chest, then walks off. According to the study, 50% of people viewing the video *do not see the gorilla*. Lasker made the analogy clear, "In the 15 years that I and my colleagues have been studying collaboration, public participation, and community problem solving, we've seen this play out repeatedly – with serious consequences. Put simply, we've found that the people responsible for developing the services, programmes, and policies that constitute social action – I'll refer to them as experts here – have a different frame of reference than the people they want to help. (The experts are counting the passes; the people they want to help are just watching the video.) This limits the extent to which the experts can actually be of help. It limits what can be achieved through social action and even worse, sometimes leads to serious inadvertent harm. That's because, while counting passes is important, it's also crucial to deal with the gorilla on the field!". Failure to design with the public's knowledge can be a critical failure, as Lasker's own research has demonstrated. It is essential that mere consultation and perfunctory participation be replaced by serious and rigorous efforts to listen, understand, and ensure the utilization of local knowledge.

Session 2

The second session started on the morning of the second day. It was entitled, "Turning Public Sector Problems into Design Challenges." It was noted how considerable effort is being made in key sectors of the business, management, and design communities to harness the systems, processes, vocabulary and theory of design for improving "user experience" to bring value to services. In this session, we heard how the design of services is being reconceptualized and conducted in both the public and private sectors, and how this might suggest new opportunities for

international programming and policy challenges in peace and security.

With the presenters in the first session having established some particular problematics in learning, listening and designing with or for local communities, the designers took the floor to share theory and practice on how they attend to matters such as design research, "co-creation" and what has been termed "wicked problems" in the design field.

Richard Buchanan helped orient the conference towards understanding design as "forethought for action" or else "making things right." Reviewing the work of earlier and current design theorists, he articulated a model of "four orders" of design (from designing mass communication images, to industrial artifacts, to activities, to current efforts on collective interactions). He firmly placed this conference in the "fourth order" category, demonstrating its timeliness for designers as well as policy practitioners. With a discussion of designing products and the process of prototyping, evaluating, changing, and prototyping again, he was able to lay some common design vocabulary and concepts that gave the audience a platform from which to continue discussions.

Steve New took a moment to explain that he is not, in fact, a designer but comes from the rather more staid field of operations management. As such, he offered three fundamental observations that set the context for trying to design systems: A) the world is very complicated and almost impossible to understand, B) people are venal, incompetent and unreliable and C) most things fail - including efforts to improve things. While overstating the matter for effect, he explained how these assumptions help to draw out some fundamental principles for action, and these were principles that seemed to underpin the most successful exemplars of system design in operations:



Richard Buchanan, Lucy Kimbell, Steve New (Said Business School and Hertford College, University of Oxford), Kwesi Yankah (University of Ghana), Donal Carbaugh (University of Massachusetts)

First, a lot of effort and resources need to be placed on rigor; i.e. it is essential to invest in finding out what is going on in order to properly attend to it. Secondly, because even well-researched interventions were likely to be not right, good ideas ought never be implemented without experimenting first if possible, and this



Kwesi Yankah, Cale Thompson (Engine Service Design), Steve Del Rosso, and Roz Lasker (Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University)

type of experimentation should normally be participative, involving the people most affected by the intervention. Finally, effective systems are designed to take into account human limitations, and so are structured in ways that made it easy to identify problems and are as simple as possible.

These insights lie at the heart of many of the most successful industrial systems. Subsequent discussion noted how New's view of successful operations management was clearly in stark contrast to the means by which acts of international peace and security are being imagined, designed, enacted, and revised today. It suggested an important conversation between operations management and the management of complex systems in peace and security (e.g. stability operations, etc.).

Lucy Kimbell explained that there has been and continues to be debate about the definition of “design”, with interest in design growing among other professionals such as managers. She offered what she called a highly partial history of the intersections of design and the social sciences, which include anthropologists

and designers working in collaborative teams in commercial organizations to bring a deeper understanding of cultural and social lives into product and service development. In addition she pointed to a shift from designing *for* to designing *with* people; growing interest in how data and knowledge are represented; and gave several examples of designers concerned with public policy and development. In showing how the field of service design itself is less than 10 years old (with live|work being the first such firm established only in 2001), she underscored how this very conversation at Glen Cove would have been impossible only a few years earlier and constitutes a special convergence at a fortuitous moment. Some designers are now ready to have a frank discussion about the ways that their designs can or cannot shape social action.

Session 3

The third session took place in the latter half of the second day. It was called “Grounding Design in Cooperative and Ethical Cultural Research,” In retrospect, it might also have included the terms “rigorous and responsible,” given the strong emphasis by all three speakers on the real and moral consequences of weak analysis, and the necessity of reposing design on responsible knowledge and cooperation with communities.

The session started from the notion that as design (and management) press the boundaries into social research, on the one hand, and into international public policy on the other, it is essential that tabled design solutions for social action — whether in mine clearance, weapons collection, child protection strategies, or building humanitarian acceptance strategies — are built upon rigorous and ethical cultural research.

Gerry Philipsen talked about cultural research from a perspective of some forty years studying and teaching it, as well as serving on the SNAP Advisory Group for about four years. He talked about “the field experiences he had observed as ethnographer and community organizer (two different roles) and how he had seen the way various participative activities turn ineffective, inefficient, or even quite harmful to, and with local people.” He explained how this was partly a product of having failed to do the previous ethnographic work necessary to make “listening” and “cooperating” even possible across cultural systems. Though not all schools of cultural research take this

view, Local Strategies Research is committed to — and has the capacity to achieve — better understandings of local meanings of social practices by attending to speech and cultural codes.

Lisa Rudnick picked up the thread of the importance of understanding cultural codes for the development of effective local action towards peace and security by highlighting different ways of thinking about “the local.” She noted that whilst it is possible and even useful for some purposes to use external lenses in order to learn things *about a place*, this is importantly not the same as learning things *of*

a place - such as the ways and meanings that community members use to conduct and make sense of their own lives. Developing and testing SNAP’s approach to the generation and use of such knowledge had raised many challenges (of a methodological nature) and revealed certain obstacles (of a practical and institutional nature). This brought SNAP face to face with the question of how the “local” can be best

conceptualized in ways that are legitimate from the local perspective, and useful from the agency perspective. In other words, what aspects of the cultural codes that Gerry Philipsen had mentioned were most important

to, and useful for, creating cooperative action? (The answer was “local strategies”.) How could they be used? And towards what kinds of ends – both in terms of addressing community needs, and agency goals for providing assistance?

In grappling with these challenges with SNAP, Miller and Rudnick had to face squarely the question of what kind of knowledge are needed and to what uses they can be put. With that, Derek turned to an introduction of the Security Needs Assessment Protocol.

Derek Miller and Lisa Rudnick introduced the Security Needs Assessment Protocol as the first “programme design service” created for peace and security-related field activities. They explained some of the complexities associated with their three-step approach of Diagnose, Design and Deliver, and how this kind of work is needed to move from a best practice approach by programme designers to a “best process approach” that involves deeply cooperative relations between experts (local and international) and community members themselves. Such a shift would change the commitments of agencies from generating and



Michael Cernea (fomer Senior Advisor for the World Bank), Randolph Kent (King's College, London) and Derek B. Miller

applying universal solutions to generating and applying local and distinct ones with the community’s involvement. They explained how this reconceptualization of the programming process, and the kinds of knowledge needed for it, was both innovative and even threatening to many in the existing system.

In contrast to other approaches current in the UN systems, SNAP distinguishes applicable knowledge from “applied knowledge” with the latter characterized by its direct mobilization as a strategic asset in the design phase of projects and programmes. Such knowledge — appropriately generated and delivered — can

form the building blocks in novel techniques for cross-cultural design when prototyping, modeling, blueprinting, co-creating, and undertaking other operations familiar to designers (and engineers). This is where “the rubber hits the road”, Miller said, “on using knowledge to design action” rather than for lobbying and communication to influence *others* to take action. He noted that this distinction is not one that is made in conceptualizing applied knowledge in other approaches to social research, but nonetheless afforded certain insights to the process of bringing knowledge to action.

The discussion for this session was the most animated of all three sessions. The form of cultural research— including its commitments, methods, approaches and means of interpretation — was questioned by designers and policymakers. The session illustrated the tremendous gaps in understanding that exist between the cultural research and design communities in terms of a shared basis from which to even conceptualize the relationships among terms such as cooperation, rigor, method, interpretation, and application. Even words like “listening”, “local” “community” and “culture” were imbued with highly varied meanings in the discussion session. Debates ensued about matters of

accountability; where research and design begin and end; whether the activities of research and design can be distinguished sequentially; whether design research is the same activity as cultural research; how representation functions; whether cooperative activities yield shared interpretations; what people thought “analysis” meant; who was involved in the creative process and who was not.

This spirited engagement made it evident that A) a crucial conversation needs to take place between research and design professionals in order to better utilize the contributions of both of these communities in reaching common goals and B) that conversation is in strong demand due to a deep and shared commitment among the service design and cultural research professionals towards ethical action, cooperation with communities, and contributions toward social betterment. It also revealed tensions or concerns between them about the viability of design in its current form to address public policy problems, particularly in post-conflict contexts. For some participants, this discussion suggested the possibility of a far-reaching, cooperative and urgent agenda.



Concepts, Contributions and Questions from Session 5



Tore Rose (former UN Resident Coordinator, UNIDIR Senior Fellow)

Session 4

By the morning of the third day, there was a palpable sense that the designers “just wanted to get their hands on something to design” as one participant put it. At the same time, the cultural research specialists were beginning to lend articulation to some of the premises and assumptions they were hearing from design practitioners, and contrasting them with their own. In a sense, an agenda was already emerging in the margins even before one had formally taken shape — such was the energy of the event.

The policy practitioners, for their part, were uniformly interested in the novel presentation of design to operational challenges. There was a growing recognition that “design space” does not really exist in international organizations for the application of research and design skills to operational problems, and that having and using such a design space would be to great benefit if only it could be created, provided resources and maintained.

The activities of the third day allowed these matters to move from discussion and debate and towards a pragmatic exercise.

The previous sessions to this conference had all provided overviews of challenges, promises and limitations of the three

pillars – public policy, design, and cultural research — when facing problems in the creation of public services. Session 4 changed gears by breaking participants into small groups to explore how cross-pillar cooperation and expertise might be used to consider a pressing real-world challenge in post-conflict stabilization issues: the “reintegration” of ex-combatants.

In working groups comprised of at least one cultural research specialist, a designer and a policy practitioner, participants were asked to use their combined knowledge and expertise to explore how a cross-pillar team might create a process for designing a reintegration project. In other words, teams were asked to create a model for what such a *design process* should look like, given the problem and contexts presented. (*Note: Participants were not being asked to design a reintegration process itself.*)

The practice of reintegration was introduced by Erin McCandless (New School for Social Research), Elizabeth Kissam (DPKO) and Derek Miller (UNIDIR). In short, reintegration refers to the activities and processes by which ex-combatants of armed conflict are facilitated by the UN and its partners in a government-run programme to return to civilian life after war.

Lucy Kimbell (Saïd Business School) gave a brief introduction to ways that design processes have been theorized. In particular she explained the idea of design as an iterative process of reframing, in which the problem and solution co-evolve. She highlighted that although professional designers conceive of their work in different ways, there are generally three iterative phases: exploration, idea generation and visualization, and testing. Working groups were given a template to help guide their process, with three main phases.

In addition, groups were provided with a set of structuring questions as they worked independently for about two hours.

- What is the goal (and how should this be determined)?
- What needs to be known to achieve this goal in a specific socio-cultural context?
- How should this be learned?
- How is that knowledge to be applied to a programme design?

- How can this be done to ensure that the designs are actually informed by cooperative and ethical engagement with those involved (broadly defined) in reintegration?

The working groups were given a scenario that approximated the case of Sierra Leone. Key characteristics of the scenario included the following: “community members” may include people charged with crimes against humanity, and against each other; that “co-creation” could put people at risk due to associations with foreign actors; that the design process could have unknown political consequences; and that the timeframe and resources were unspecified. It was what designers — echoing Rittel and Weber’s work in 1973 — called “a wicked problem”. It was what UN officials called “daily life” further illustrating the space that design and public policy will need to cross to develop cooperative systems.

Following the exercise, each of the five working groups presented their solutions:



Group work in Session 4 on reintegration of ex-combatants

Group 1 started by noting context constraints, such as time, available methods for work, incentive systems within the UN (which can go against both research and design processes), challenges of security, and the ambiguity of key concepts like “community.” They noted that the problem of reintegration has both a research dimension and a design dimension that need to inter-relate in an iterative process. They called for understanding the UN as a distinct discourse community, and then trying to understand what counts as “the local” in places the UN works (or, is working in the particular case being considered). Considering the interaction between the two discourse communities enables an understanding of what kind of dynamic is, and can be, achieved when the two come together. They envisioned a “design product”, which was to be a process. They were going to focus their investigation on “interactions” between the UN and the local; the ex-combatant and the community; and other pairings that made encounters the central focus of social research attention and design potential.



Group 2 delivered their notes in the form of a statement, or proclamation. They noted a problem in the UN system as regards the design of local actions; recommended a programme of “anticipatory action”; suggested steps towards visualization of the problems and innovation in solving them; and specifically noted that the research leading to an innovation conference cannot be learned by “going out and asking about reintegration” but rather must be attended to by carefully structuring local research practices to the socio-cultural and political context in which they operated.

Group 3 began with the statement “This is hard”. They provided three core steps around which an agenda would be formed: Exploration, Idea Generation, and Testing. The Exploration phase

involved scoping — What do we know? What don’t we know? It would include detailed learning about both the UN and the local, and could include an analysis of learning, moving from data to findings to insights. These insights would form source material *from which* categories could be derived (rather than upon which

frameworks would be imposed). The Idea Generation phase would allow for divergent thinking, a divergence of actors and interactions to explore the design possibilities for local, effective action on reintegration.

Group 4 The problem they chose to address through design was a problem in the way the UN has traditionally worked: the people who are directly affected by DDR (i.e., residents of the communities where ex-combatants relocate and ex-combatants, themselves) have had limited influence in developing those programmes. They reasoned that the success of DDR programming, its ability to address the many serious contested issues involved, and its local ownership and sustainability would depend on the voice, influence, and agency exercised by participating

communities and ex-combatants alike. They concluded that their “design product” would be a locally-led process for creating DDR programs. Since it would not be feasible to focus on the entire country at once, Group 4 decided to limit their scope to a few locally meaningful communities where reintegration would be taking place; to develop, refine and test a prototype process there; and then to take the prototype to scale in other communities around the country.

The approach this group pursued would enable residents of local communities to think about DDR in their own frame of reference and to influence the way DDR would work in their communities. The role of the working group, as outsiders, would be to support community members in doing that. To make cross-cultural collaboration possible, they would first need to engage local

ethnographers as members of the research and design group. Then, working with the government and the UN country team, they would identify potential communities for prototype development and discuss the project with the traditional leadership in those communities. The group would support the communities that chose to be involved by helping them to (1) organize local teams to design and carry out a process for developing a DDR program for their community; (2) identify what

activities and that the exploration process was “protected” organizationally speaking. Based on good context analysis they would develop an engagement strategy, which would be partly structured by the questions, “who is the research knowledge for?” and “who will have access to it?” They were careful to ensure regular systems of feedback so that core assumptions could be illuminated and changed as needed, and that the system could go on learning and redesigning throughout the implementation process.



Christian Bason (Mindlab)

the local teams needed to know and who had that knowledge; (3) obtain that knowledge; (4) analyze it and put it to use in designing their DDR programme; (5) implement the programme and (6) develop locally meaningful indicators to assess how well their design process and DDR programme were working. The prototype design processes would be refined as the community teams learned from what they were doing.

Group 5 reminded the participants of the important “null hypothesis” which is that reintegration per se may not be the right solution. They imagined the process as a journey, and asked: What do we already need to know on the plane (as we head over to the country in question)? What do we need to know once we’re on the ground? They wanted to ensure that institutional and organizational processes made space for the research and design

Session 4 Takeaways

It should be noted that all teams placed “the community” at the centre of the research and design endeavour, and considered their model in the context of community structures, systems of meaning, and security requirements to the best of their ability. This was an emergent pattern that was not directed by the assignment.

The activity allowed participants not only to try their collective hands at creating together, but also to experience the promises and challenges of bringing research, design, and programming together. After the presentations, participants were asked to discuss:

- How did working across these pillars provide value to the way any one group might have done things alone?
- What limitations or challenges were faced in working together?
- Did these challenges seem worth addressing cooperatively in the future?
- Where there any “breakthrough” moments for anyone (or any working groups) when something seemed to click or come together?

Responses were lively, generally noting the challenge of working from different sets of assumptions. Some noted the impact of the problem being addressed and the context of work presented in the assignment on their previous assumptions; others remarked on what they now saw as a real need for both “more cultural knowledge, and more design” in creating solutions for

communities. Overall, the group seemed stimulated by the chance to work on a problem together. Likewise for those in the room with experience in DDR matters, it was striking how much insight, creativity, and process-oriented activity was achieved by people generally *unfamiliar* with DDR in only two hours.

Next, a plenary exercise was held to elicit concerns, contributions, and questions that arose from the collaborative work. Highlights included:

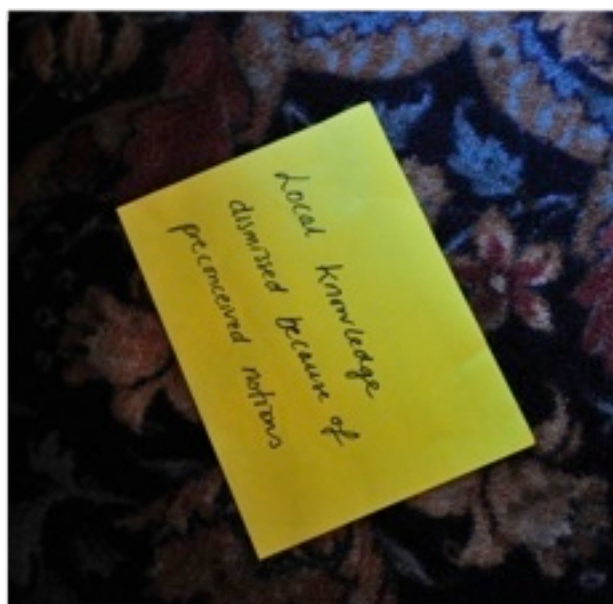
Concerns

1. There remains a “missing link” between cultural research and design that needs attention
2. Addressing this “missing link” will require champions in both sectors because it will not happen by itself
3. The term “local knowledge” is being used in different ways by different groups of participants and this needs attention so that a common conversation is possible on this central concern
4. There is uncertainty over what is meant by the term “design” that needs to be made clear, and differentiated from the work of researchers and policy practitioners.
5. There is a very challenging relationship between the aspirations of “user-centered design” — mobilized to such benefit in the private sector — and the top-down command environment that generally characterizes political contexts.
6. There has to be a champion for design in any organizational process, and that design space has to be protected otherwise it will not achieve serious returns.

Contributions

1. The teams were unanimous in “recognizing how much we need each other”, as one participant phrased it.
2. Combining “design talk” with “culture talk” was innovative.
3. Finding the essence of a problem takes time, and it needs attention and resources so that the design process can set about the right tasks in the right way.
4. Having frameworks for cooperation is going to be essential.

5. Conversations between cultural research specialists (with expertise in ethnography and interpretative methods) and designers working in public policy context seems novel or else undeveloped and holds high promise.
6. Design can direct cultural research towards application solutions, whereas cultural research can make design more reflective about its assumptive base and premises for practice.
7. Cultural research can produce knowledge that can be mobilized as a resource in design activities. Design research



A key message drops from the wall to the floor

can produce insights and artifacts that inspire and mobilize participants in design processes.

8. There are research processes and methods that can contribute directly to design processes and methods.
9. Both cultural research and design direct attention to interaction and relations, which policy often neglects systematically.
10. The objective of research is generally to understand the world, whereby the objective of design is to create something

new in the world — this makes for a powerful combination, and partly explains why research has trouble moving from observation to action.

11. The United Nations specifically (and other international policy actors more generally) is less effective than it could be if it could harness local knowledge and use collaborative design systems in a tutored and directed manner.
12. The UN does not seriously experiment, and makes massive investments without due consideration of either design processes or piloting the ideas. This may be a great error that needs to be addressed at the highest levels.



**Lotta Segerström (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
and Randolph Kent**

Questions

The questions posed all addressed the broad range of issues raised through the collaborative exercise, including matters of accountability, inclusion, representation, risks, and several others which went right to the heart of some of the significant challenges for using design and conducting cultural research for improving programming in post-conflict contexts (and for peace and security more widely).

Coming out of this discussion, participants shared a general sense of positive motion and desire for next steps. There was a strong sense of urgency to take this conversation out of Glen Cove and into the wider UN community in order to explore the limits and potentials being discovered, and ways of attending to them.

Session 5

This was the final session of the conference and the chance to determine whether the conversation should be taken forward and if so, in what way. The group expressed universal support for continuing the discussion, and a strong interest in cooperative activities, relationship building, networking and other tangibles.

The original background note to the conference had suggested a joint statement be made by participants. That recommendation was not directly taken up in large part because a statement

seemed to be too formal an output for some of the assembled. On the other hand, concern was expressed by other participants that a statement articulating the key observations that emerged from the three days of conversation would be of little use if not accompanied by an indication of steps to take for carrying them forward. Therefore, the participants chose to direct their attention to listing activities they would either like to see taken up, or would like to undertake themselves.

In reflecting upon the problems and potentials of using design and cultural research to engage problems of peace and security, the group had observed that public policy is often inhibited in its ability to effectively address many of the complex challenges faced by communities in need. The wide ranging and animated discussions entertained by participants in and out of the prior sessions explored the policy and programming challenges faced by the UN, the special requirements this places on design and research activities, and the contributions and limitations presented both by employing cultural research and design individually, and together, for addressing these.

Through these discussions, five general but key observations were made:

1. There is great potential in attending to design processes in the creation of new solutions for policy and programming (in particular for matters of peace and security).

2. For design processes to be both effective and responsible they need to contend with the socio-cultural and political realities in which policy and programming takes place.

3. A powerful synergy is suggested by the employment of design processes reposed upon cooperative cultural research towards the end of greater effectiveness, sustainability, and legitimacy in both policy and programming.

4. To achieve this potential synergy, a great deal of work will need to be done, and a new framework for collaborative action will be required, to enable cultural researchers and designers to work together with policy makers and programmers (particularly on matters of peace and security).

5. For this innovative approach to strategic design for public policy to develop, new interest and support will be needed to foster innovation and fulfill its potential from such actors as governments, international organizations, foundations and universities.

Participants expressed great interest in further exploring the cooperative possibilities for both short-term and long-term development suggested in these observations. They created a set of activities for moving forward from this juncture that appeared to cluster around four general areas of interest for activity.



Aditya Dev Sood (Center for Knowledge Societies)

When so assembled, these lend themselves to an emerging agenda for further work and development. Therefore, we offer here a formulation for an initial four-point Agenda for the development of Strategic Design in Public Policy (**SDPP**)

1. **SUPPORT COOPERATION to develop new methods, tools and practices**

A key goal is to learn more about each others' ways of working to foster cooperation and development between cultural research and design for the benefit of public policy.

Suggested activities include:

- **Conduct** a series of seminars and meetings on key theoretical, conceptual, educational and procedural matters pertaining to the intersections of cultural research and design. Central concerns include but are not limited to: Research ethics; Comparison of research methods and goals; Data collection; Conceptual frameworks; Interpretative analysis; and Team ethnography.
- **Convene** a conference dedicated to the advancement of methods for data generation and analysis for designers and cultural researchers.
- **Share** ideas and tools that would improve the local impact of peace and security programming among professionals in the three pillars of cultural research, design and public policy.
- **Faciliate** professional exchanges that allow research, design, policy and programming professionals to experience each-other's contexts and ways of working.
- **Explore** the means by which cultural researchers and designers work in teams to build theory and practice on how these systems can be refined or improved to accommodate cross-disciplinary approaches.
- **Investigate** collaborative problem solving processes through a design lens, and design processes though a cultural lens.

Another goal is to learn more about the special requirements placed upon both design and cultural research in attending to contexts and problems of policy and programming on matters of peace and security.

Suggested activities include:

- **Investigate** current practices used by UN agencies, International Organizations, NGOs, and others in the design of policy and programs on matters of peace and security.
- **Research** the form and extent to which service design, in particular, and design more generally, has already contributed to both public sector and private initiatives. psychology, etc.).
- **Pursue** ethnographic investigations of UN projects, both inside organizations, and also in field locations.
- **Collaborate** with other fields (e.g. cognitive science, organizational behavior, management, innovation) to learn how design processes (by that, or any other name) are attended to so that this Agenda is both informed by, and can contribute to, the wider efforts on moving knowledge to action.

2. DEVELOP RESOURCES for cooperative action

Resources and tools are needed for being able to work cooperatively, and to work on the kinds of problems and contexts of concern addressed at this conference. Crucial areas in need of development are intellectual, human, and network resources.

Suggested activities to attend to these include:

- **Adapt** existing models (e.g. the Lasker approach) to track voice and influence in co-design processes to ensure that aspirations for cooperation manifest themselves in genuinely collaborative results.
- **Build** curricula for art and design schools to better prepare students to work with others on problems of peace and security including professional researchers, public policy practitioners, and communities.
- **Build** curricula for departments concentrating in cultural research (e.g. anthropology, communication, cultural psychology, etc.) to help students better conceptualize applied research in the context of design activities and design processes towards the end of public service.
- **Build** curricula in schools of public service (e.g. public policy, government, international relations, development, etc.) to better appreciate the need for local knowledge in the design of local

actions, and the potential for design to assist in project, programme, and policy development.

- **Build** a bibliography to serve as a basis for cooperative educational and research activities across the pillars.
- **Create** mechanisms (e.g. blogs, internships, fellowship programmes, professional exchanges) to allow people and ideas to come into better contact and across the three pillars, so that multi-disciplinary innovation becomes a cornerstone attribute of the new agenda.

3. PROMOTE AWARENESS of strategic design and its value for public policy and programming

In order for this way of working to be both developed and taken up, it is imperative to raise awareness and generate support among UN actors, governments, and other relevant actors.

Suggested activities include:

- **Create** workshops for key UN decision-makers and programme planners to introduce strategic design (as culturally informed design), to increase their understanding of how it can support their work and generate models for use.
- **Involve** key decision-makers (UN, governmental, etc.) in a design activities to actively demonstrate the value of collaboration between cultural research and design for the benefit of policy and programming.
- **Create** outreach materials for both the donor and practitioner audiences (print matter, DVDs)

4. PURSUE SOLUTIONS for social betterment through action

- **Collaborate** on projects that allow designers and ethnographers to work together in the service of public policy problems.
- **Support** existing projects and programmes on international peace and security to help in their design or redesign as appropriate.
- **Develop** and support an ethos among research, design, and public policy professionals that recognizes and values the importance of rigor, cooperation, and problem solving in the design of local action for social betterment.

In Conclusion:

The agenda for Strategic Design and Public Policy established at Glen Cove provides an organizing platform from which to consider and advance new activities that may lead to the improved design of peace and security initiatives around the world. It opens a massive and profoundly complex field of endeavors in which the ethical, practical, intellectual, and political landscapes are still partly beyond imagining.

Cultural research, for example, maintains a very tentative and ambivalent relationship with public policy generally, and with all matters of security and military engagement specifically.

Design aspires to both deeper research and more policy relevance, and is forcefully moving in that direction, but it remains insufficiently developed compared to other fields when it comes to ethics, research design and methods, and adapting its premises to new contexts of safety, security, and moral impact.

Public policy, for its part, will have to reflexively consider and navigate the complex shoals of political representation vs. community-led innovation, and begin to consider what relationship the civil servant does, or can have, to the design of public activities.

None of these problems are new. However, when seen from the perspective of a shared agenda, new and emergent challenges come to the forefront that will need to be grappled with if opportunities are to be properly developed in a responsible manner.

Something important is happening. It is hoped that this event helps like-minded people take a further step towards its fulfillment for the common good.

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