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THE LEGITIMACY OF MULTI-MODAL DESIGN IN PUBLIC POLICY DELIBERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The issue of legitimacy lies at the heart of the design and evaluation of public participation in policy-making processes. Who feels entitled to speak? Who reformulates priorities? How is the responsibility for transformation shared (Krimerman, 2001)? Answers to these questions entail, in part, the design of multi-modal tools grounded in systemic inquiry (Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin & Jackson, 1967).

Our applied research involves two multi-modal initiatives spearheaded by citizen-designers heavily involved in French civic life, working in tandem with public officials.

The first concerns the implementation of a website meant to include intellectually challenged adults in a public consultation proposed by the Conseil Général du Val de Marne, France. Design input from the disabled contributed to the emergence of a safe 'playing field' for learning with and among all stakeholders (Johanssen, Linde, 2005; Friedman, 2003). It also revealed a larger set of cross-problems (Hall, Rapanotti, 2007).

The second study discusses different participatory tools used during the preparation of a bill on penal reform. Elected officials, the public at large and prisoners themselves were asked to participate in on-line exchanges and workshops meant to anchor legislative work in rational deliberation (Habermas, 1984). A multi-modal design approach reinforced the legitimacy of marginal voices and reframed the decision-making process.

We discuss the limits and fluctuating legitimacy of the citizen-designer, whose expertise is often challenged and difficult to orchestrate with that of elected officials and their administrative staff (Mitchell, Bradley, Wood, 1997).

Keywords: participation, inclusiveness, legitimacy, rational discourse, logical inquiry, playing field.

1 INTRODUCTION: THE NOTION OF 'PLAYING FIELD'

We implement multi-modal projects rooted in a pragmatic methodology that structures how ordinary citizens express opinions and participate in a public decision or a legislative process. Who feels entitled to speak, who reformulates priorities and how the responsibility for transformation is shared (Krimerman, 2001) are questions that are implicit in public deliberations. We are interested in making them an explicit part of the policy-making process, specifically through the design of digital tools that shape this process today.

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We are citizen-designers. Trained as philosophers, artists, programmers, we are affiliated with different militant citizen associations, among which "Concert-Urbain" and "PbSolving Lab". Our focus: the dialogue among stakeholders in an ethically bounded 'playing field' (Johansson, Linde, 2005) that helps to redistribute legitimacy in a decision making process. As citizen-designers we invent our own projects, we work with students to develop prototypes, and we are particularly attached to our freedom. Our 'social design project' is larger than any given client's and we try to share, freely, the insights and expertise acquired by our teams over time.

1.1 THE WEIGHING IN OF VOICES

The expertise of public officials in the policy-making process is increasingly scrutinized by citizens and civic organizations who question policies dominated by private interests, lobbies and short-term political priorities. In the face of this criticism, public officials have turned to participative tools and methods, both on-line and off. New forms of participation have become, —as in France, with public consultations,— a legal obligation.

The implementation of innovative participative tools capable of shaping the policy-making process has contributed to the emergence of a new profession, that of 'social designer'. Social design-thinking practice also includes rapid prototyping, user profiling and the definition of design challenges that expand how one understands a given problem and its larger context.

This much said, in the complex, power-bound field of policy-making, the designer's legitimacy is not a given. As Rittel and Webber argued several decades ago: 'There seems to be a growing realization that a weak strut in the professional's support system lies at the juncture where goal-formulation, problem-definition and equity issues meet.' (1973, p. 156) Design thinking in the political arena brings to the fore rivalries of 'expertise' that result, in turn, in an often unspoken competition between the designer and his client. The collaboration upon which design-thinking depends is challenged by vested interests in the design process itself.

The two case studies discussed here explore the notion of expertise in public deliberation. The first study concerns the implementation of a website meant to include intellectually challenged adults in a project entitled *Mes Idées Aussi*, led by the Conseil General du Val de Marne, France. The second study presents two different methodologies engaging members of Parliament in a rational public deliberation (Habermas, 1984) and systemic inquiry (Watzlawick, Helmick Beavin & Jackson, 1972), throughout the preparation of a bill on penal reform. Both projects discussed use digital technologies as a lever to promote learning with and among stakeholders (Friedman, 2003) and allow for shifting legitimacies in the policy-making process.

2 PLAYING WITH A HANDICAP

In 2005, French law opened access of the handicapped to day care facilities, compensation, special education, employment and transportation services. In 2008, the Conseil General du Val de Marne (the "CG") signed the Charte de la Participation Citoyenne and issued its own pledge to develop 'a culture of participation' beyond the strict legal framework of the law. Training programs

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were implemented for architects, urban planners and engineers working closely with the CG's Social Services.

Mes Idées Aussi, launched in 2011, was an additional step in this broader process, targeting the needs of the intellectually challenged. The working premise: the quality of State social services hinged on the needs and suggestions expressed by disabled citizens themselves. Mes Idées Aussi reached deep into civil society, garnering voices at the margins of the public arena.

Three CG staff carried the project. Funded by Europe (DIACTIV'), Julie Mallegol and Miljana Dejanovik (European projects and the Service for the Elderly and Handicapped) invited Sophie Largeau (Project manager, Participatory Democracy) to help anchor the inclusion of the intellectually challenged in a public consultation. We were hired to create a website patterned after a model we'd developed for young adults growing up in poor suburbs (dring13.org). Our action-based research centered on questions we hoped would find an echo in this new project: how to speak up and in front of others, how opinions evolve through storytelling, how to mix on-line and off-line debate.

As we began to work on the website, the CG team prepared a face-to-face public consultation that assembled over 50 intellectually challenged young adults, elected officials and several heads of departments. During a two-day session at the CG, the young adults expressed opinions and made suggestions—158 to be precise— on subjects ranging from housing and transportation to discrimination.



Figure 1 – Meeting with the intellectually disabled and elected officials, in the amphitheatre of the Conseil Général du Val de Marne, France. For more details : <http://tval.valdemarne.fr/mes-idees-aussi-video-3256.html> and <http://tval.valdemarne.fr/mes-idees-aussi-video-3409.html>.

The suggestions were then duly processed by 17 different Departments in the CG. A second session was organized to present this work and explain what the next steps would be.

Preparing, training, listening, listing, meeting, evaluating: this was more than token participation. The CG had taken a great amount of care into creating the conditions for a particularly vulnerable segment of the population to speak and to be listened to by their elected officials.

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One question remained: Why go to all the trouble to create website after such a stellar public consultation? The on-line project we'd been hired to implement now seemed redundant to the political leaders who had met their stated objectives.

2.1 CONFLICTING VOICES

As recently reiterated (Liedtka, King, Bennett, 2013, p. 12) the success of 'communities of people helping one another to develop their capabilities and learn more effective behaviors' often hinges on a strong partnership between designers and managers. 'There are no stories of either managers or designers succeeding without the other...' The functionaries entrusted with implementing Mes Idées Aussi stood their ground: the CG would benefit from innovative tools developed by us in a non-commercial, citizen context.



Figure 2 –Julie Mallego (DD) and Sophie Largeau (xyz), Conseil Général du Val de Marne, France. During similar workshops, screenshots of the website were shown, changed and approved by 'all'.

As citizen-designers, we were eager to have the website fit into a larger context. We needed to understand how things were run from the inside. From day one, unexpected tensions surfaced. The administrators of the day facilities, highly dependent on subsidies from the CG, were not keen to open up their establishments to a team that was in a position to assess how public funding was being spent. The Special-Ed staff made pointed remarks about how we over-estimated users who could not read, were often color-blind and unable to discern a pop-up from a background screen. Many doubted that people with mental disabilities could articulate an opinion on-line. They also seemed wary of adding one more activity—running a website—to their already heavy schedule. Some openly challenged the relevance of the project and with it, our capacity to come up with suitable solutions to our design challenge.

In fact, at that juncture, formulating a convincing design challenge was not on the agenda. The priority was to keep all stakeholders engaged in a non-threatening way. Determining how the website would look and work became a lever for each stakeholder to speak up on a subject that no-one could claim to master, but that involved bits of everyone's expertise, including the disabled.

In this context, our own expertise was a foil, reinforced by a form of inquiry based on 'methodic ignorance', so as to allow new knowledge to emerge

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(Bourdieu, et al, 1968). As designers, we were there to accompany and observe. The responsibility for the co-design process that included us was in the hands of the civil servants who had hired us. Every design step needed to be forged in consensus; the form consensus took was theirs to decide.

The sharing of 'legitimacy' involves risk. In this case, as expected, it challenged the status quo. As time went on, it became increasingly clear that the success of the website rested in the hands of the Special-Ed staff. To paraphrase Habermas, their knowledge base was instrumental, interpretive and emancipatory (quoted in Healy, 2014, p. 10). They were key to empowering the voices of those in their care. They ran the computers in the day care centers. They organized the workshops. They explained how the website was designed. They encouraged the handicapped to participate...and speak up clearly enough to be understood.

At least in part, Special-Ed staff had to carry the public consultation for it to work. The ramifications of this shift in roles—not part of their official job description—raised thorny issues. They also revealed differences in the priorities within the CG.

Officially, a public consultation could not be delegated, even partially. Making sure staff in Day Facilities ran debates was not the CG's job; nor did the CG have the right to impose their agenda on facilities outside of the CG's jurisdiction. Getting a website to begin to do this work was...premature. The agenda here was limited to increasing the legitimacy of the voices of the handicapped. A new keyword emerged: autonomy. The website would reinforce the ability of the handicapped to express themselves freely on their own, streamlining communication with their elected officials.

The argument for un-mediated 'bottom-up' communication masked a 'top down' rationale. It transformed the website into a tool to keep the consultation anchored in a hierarchical and compartmentalized process, keeping all other stakeholders firmly in their place, side-stepping the question of their messy interdependence. The website was participating in the emergence of a larger set of 'cross-problems' (Hall, Rapanotti, 2008).

2.2 THE PLAYING FIELD

"Co-designing" continued. We presented test screens to handicapped users who told us in plain terms what was unclear. We created new screens, which were shown and validated.



Figure 4. Rapid prototyping and lengthy evaluations with users, CG and Special-Ed staff.

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We tested our first prototypes in workshops organized by the CG and the Special-Ed staff, who also had many suggestions. We received long detailed memos. We began to feel the stress of having to synthesize conflicting demands and deliver technically robust tools.

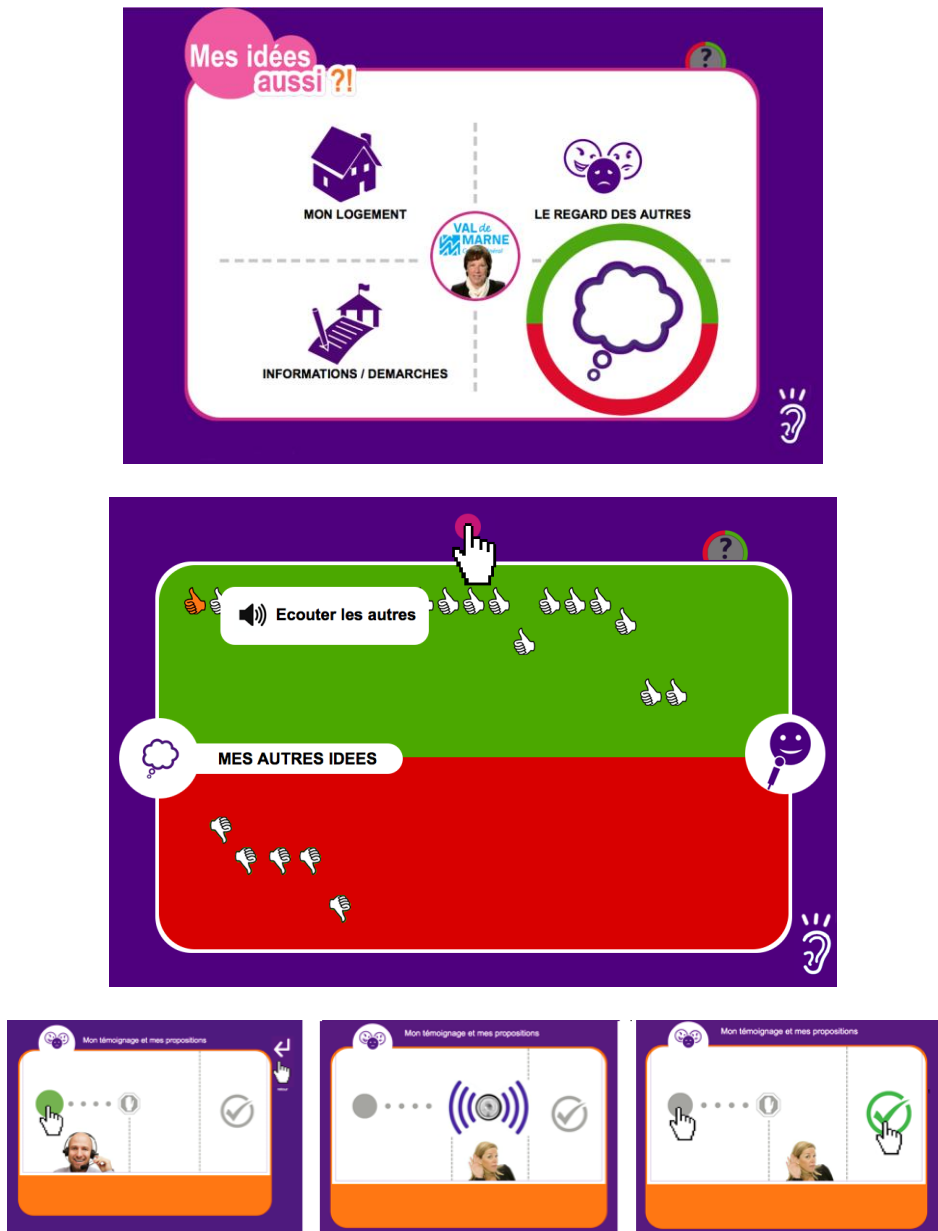


Figure 3. Some screen-shots of the website. All written elements are audible (note ear in lower right hand corner). Participation entails voice recordings. Videos and written texts can also be sent. Each contribution is uploaded to an interactive mosaic. It is open to commentary and a red / green "vote". Commentary includes highlighted answers from the CG staff.

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A first, informal, consultation was held. The CG staff tallied questions, suggestions and potential solutions. They listed 81 contributions (including 5 videos) and 80 comments (see Figure 5).

This painstaking work was not the designer's to do. And yet, it was an essential facet of a larger context that we could not ignore and, in fact, were obliged to consider in order to do our job well. Evaluating contributions included the choice of keywords that organized the database and allowed for an evaluation of results.

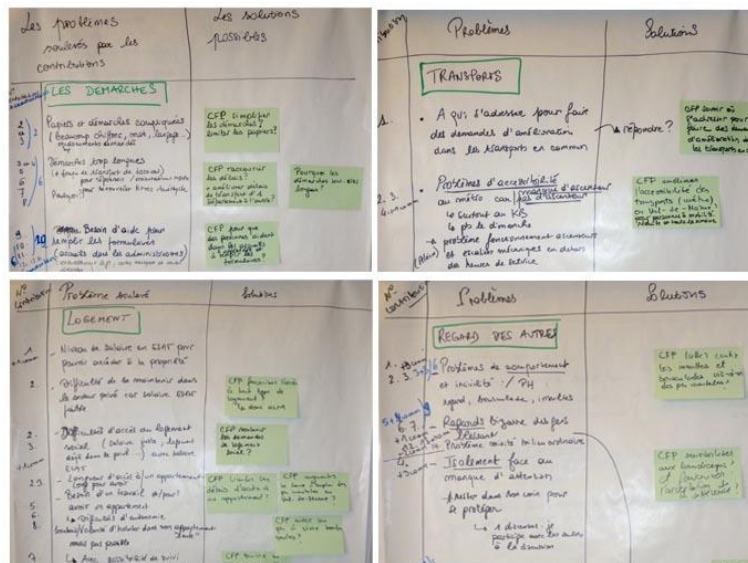


Figure 5. The painstaking tallying of contributions by the CG staff.

For the CG to be able to make sense of the questions and problems collected on the website, the entire process of 'recording-commenting-voting' had to be articulated with the process of 'listening-analyzing-evaluating'. This meant designing interactions BEFORE anyone turned to the website and AFTER opinions had been recorded. The intrinsic multi-modality of social-design work had started to become clear to everyone.

2.3 DESIGNER PROBLEMS

In a report on a previous series of citizen workshops, the CG team had remarked that 'The injunction and cognitive appropriation of participatory democracy remain insufficient and impel us to seek new ways of engaging people in real life situations...' (Largeau, 2009). The 'us' used here reveals the CG's deep involvement in reaching beyond its administrative bounds into the daily lives of citizens.

But in the context of *Mes Idées Aussi*, the website was not to be designed with a 'real life situation' in mind. Our playing field had shrunk. In a surprising turn, instead of citizen-designers, we were referred to as 'operators', technicians providing elected officials with a tool. The tool itself was considered neutral, at the service of the elected official using it to get closer to her constituency.

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Did our expertise depend on its being recognized? It occurred to us that this situation might be temporary, perhaps of no real concern to us. It was clear, however, that a kind of competition had developed within the design process itself.

At this juncture, we were asked to train the Day Care staff to use the new website. This was an opportunity to articulate context, tools, methods, stories and objectives. We handed out a questionnaire meant to get them to think about issues that were at one remove from the website per se. For example, in the computer lab, how could dialogue be encouraged if people's backs were turned to each other? What was the role of speech therapy in a public consultation? Was it important to insist that the dialogue mediated by the website was with an elected official? If so, how would it change the tone of each comment? How could civic education be integrated into the programs proposed by Day Care facilities?

We encouraged them to take the questionnaire home, in the hope that this would get a larger, parallel, dialogue going. It did, several months later, during meetings held between July and October 2014. These meetings included elected officials, CG Department Heads, Project managers, staff of Day Facilities and disabled citizens. We were not there, but the CG staff later shared the content of the discussions with us. Word for word, fragments of the terms used in our questionnaire had surfaced during these meetings.

We would have to wait to be asked to provide the "next move" when a new consensus emerged, officially.

3 OPEN DELIBERATIVE INQUIRY ON PENAL REFORM

Political philosophers have argued that legislative assemblies are not truly deliberative bodies. They do not embody 'communicative action' meant to reach common understanding by reasoned argument, with consensus and by cooperation (Habermas, 1984). Dominated by the Executive Branch, under pressure from voters and lobbies, having to conform to party lines, MPs have their hands tied when it comes to organizing objective deliberations in the name of the 'common good'.

Political scientists have suggested that parliamentary work is simply incompatible with the process of rational deliberation (Leydet, 2014). We wanted to test another hypothesis: with the help of citizen input and digital technologies, would it be possible to engage MPs in an authentic deliberative process, close to French revolutionary ideals or those of more contemporary tinkers such as Habermas? Could such a platform help to reach common understanding by reasoned argument, with consensus and cooperation?

3.1 ROUND ONE: THE PITFALLS OF COMMUNICATION

Trained as philosophers, we were part of a small team of volunteers that also included a designer, a lobbyist/communicator and a computer programmer. Our objective: to create a web platform that was meant to make it easy for any citizen to challenge and rationally discuss legislation proposed by members of Parliament. The deliberation would continue with an impartial,

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comprehensive and traceable synthesis of all arguments expressed, so that each MP could hear and answer participants.

We asked MPs from different political parties if they were interested in testing this experimental platform. Dominique Raimbourg answered in the affirmative. He offered to open a debate on overcrowded prisons. A task force had been created to study the question and Raimbourg was responsible for writing the Report that would subsequently inform a bill on penal reform. He had already interviewed approximately 120 stakeholders, experts in penal reform and leaders of important civic organizations.

True to form, members of the opposition party denounced the way in which the interviews with stakeholders had been organized:

'In spite of their very high quality, these intense preparations and hearings have a hidden objective: identify all the measures that might help by-pass, avoid or empty out our prison system. Moreover, we note a constant depreciation of the former administration whose stance is repeatedly stigmatized as being "repressive" [...] This posturing needs to be denounced' (Raimbourg et al, 2013).

They pointed out the 'strategic actions' of the political majority; Raimbourg's consultation was considered to be a communication ploy.

What could our platform change in this context of 'politics as usual'? Was Raimbourg ready to engage in a rational deliberation with ordinary citizens? His motives were complex. By soliciting opinions not heard during the initial highly criticized hearings, the platform would help him identify misunderstandings and measure the social acceptability of potentially unpopular legislation in anticipation of a public and media debate. However, he also seemed to consider that ordinary citizens— and prisoners in particular— lacked expertise in the subject, and so were less legitimate than the stakeholders that had already been consulted.

Other, hidden, stakes complicated the situation and led to several misunderstandings during the course of our collaboration.

3.2 ROUND TWO: RATIONALIZING PARLEMENTARY DELIBERATION

The success of our platform hinged on getting MPs to change their working processes. We needed a clear presentation of the problem they wanted to solve. We needed to know the causes of the problem and what was at stake. Finally, a list of solutions would have to be drawn up. Strict logical links between these different levels of information were essential to building a coherent debate, guaranteeing that each citizen could comment on individual facets of the problem.

This disciplined context, essential to structuring dialogue between anonymous voices and their representatives, was a tall order, difficult for the MP and his assistant to fill. Even though legislative solutions were easy to come up with, it was difficult for them to link the problem itself to its logical causes and the legislative proposals they wanted to discuss with citizens. There was never a satisfactory logical link between legislative measures, the original problem and list of causes.

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Eventually, the MP modified the way he framed the issue. 'Prisons are overcrowded' turned into 'Courts hand out too many prison sentences'. This new take had the merit of revealing the problem that the MP really wanted to address. However, it also weakened the MP's position insofar as it was easier to argue with.

This step in the right direction was not enough. Our 'argumentative process' was not bearing fruit. It wasn't suited to Parliamentary work. More to the point, it revealed a fundamental 'conflict of expertise' and several misunderstandings about our role as designers.

The first misunderstanding concerned the design expertise needed to orchestrate a collective deliberation. Whereas the technical and graphic skills of other members of our team were easily recognized, our own expertise in the field of rational and collective deliberation was repeatedly ignored. As MP but also as a trained and practicing lawyer, Raimbourg considered himself to be THE expert on the subject of deliberation.

For the MP, our platform was just a communication tool, useful for changing the scale of conventional hearings but in no way capable of impacting the quality of the deliberations related to his legislative work. We disagreed.

These misunderstandings were fuelled by additional shortcomings within our own design team. The graphic designer, the lobbyist and the programmer resisted our methodology as well. They wanted to create an attractive platform for MPs to communicate, not deliberate. In spite of their initial respect for our expertise, they kept ignoring the essence of our design proposal.

We had to start anew and implement another platform, based on a radically different set of premises.

3.3 ROUND THREE: PRISONER CENTERED INQUIRY

In the meantime, the government had re-framed the question of penal reform. Although the underlying objective remained the same, i.e. reducing the number of prisoners, the issue of 'overcrowded prisons' had been replaced with a new agenda: the 'struggle against recidivism'.

We decided to set up a Laboratory on recidivism. This time, the debate was not framed in political terms. Inspired by Design Thinking and Systemic Problem Solving methodologies stemming from the school of Palo Alto (Watzlawick et al, 1967), we decided to help prisoners to build a political voice in this debate and to contribute to its analysis. Those foremost concerned by recidivism but kept out of the decision making process—i.e. the prisoners themselves—were now placed center-stage, at the heart of a pragmatic inquiry.

As in the former website, our design-work was experimental, voluntary and free, completely independent of any given stakeholder's agenda. In spite of past misunderstandings, we decided to continue working with Raimbourg and his assistant. They had made a sincere effort to contribute to our platform. They showed a real commitment to opening up the legislative process and a genuine concern for the condition of prisoners.

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We decided to meet the prisoners personally. We wrote up a questionnaire inspired by systemic problem solving interviews of the Palo Alto school. We asked several questions that revealed the vicious circles inherent in an individual's acts and behaviour, contributing to the persistence of problems. Around twenty stories were collected, for the most part taped during private interviews lasting about one hour. The transcriptions were posted on a website with their approval. Instilling mutual trust and a level playing field between the interviewer and the interviewee was a priority.

A systemic analysis of each opinion allowed us to identify a number of challenges, meant to better understand how to reduce recidivism. During a collective workshop, the challenges were presented to the prisoners, who Ok'd them and identified new ones. The educators were also asked to make suggestions during other workshops. The results were then published on the website.

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Voir les témoignages 23 Trier par thème Voir les challenges 30

Challenges à relever pour améliorer le problème de la récidive

Comment faire pour considérer les détenus comme des citoyens ? - D. Raimbourg (député)
Les détenus étant appelés à réintégrer, à un moment ou un autre, la société et à en redevenir des citoyens à part entière, la peine doit les y préparer en ne leur ôtant que les droits strictement nécessaires à la protection collective. Si on enlève tous leurs droits aux détenus pendant l'exécution de leur peine, on leur fait perdre l'habitude de se comporter en citoyen (avec les devoirs qui vont avec) et on favorise chez eux un fort ressentiment à l'égard de la société qui rendra d'autant plus difficile leur réinsertion. On infantilise les détenus, ce qui ne peut pas être le préalable à la reprise d'une vie responsable.

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Comment faire pour faire participer l'ensemble de la société à l'exécution de la peine ? (visiteurs de prisons, collectivités locales...) - D. Raimbourg (député)
Pour que l'exécution de la peine soit efficace, utile à la société, joue son rôle de dissuasion collective et favorise l'amendement et la réinsertion du détenu, il est souhaitable d'impliquer l'ensemble de la société et non seulement l'administration pénitentiaire dans l'exécution de la peine.

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Comment faire pour favoriser un parcours de peine ? - D. Raimbourg (député)
Pour lutter contre la récidive, faire prendre conscience au détenu de son infraction et préparer sa réinsertion, il est utile de moduler la peine dans le temps, de définir des étapes dans son exécution, de ménager des transitions au début et à la fin de celle-ci. -- COMPLEMENT -- Les collectivités locales doivent prendre leur part dans la construction du parcours de réinsertion. Elles peuvent proposer des T.I.G.(travaux d'intérêt général) . Cela permet de resocialiser, de découvrir ou redécouvrir des métiers, des activités. - C. Capdevielle (député)

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Comment faire pour que les personnes qui bénéficient de mesures alternatives à la prison n'aboutissent pas à la case prison?
On voit aux quartier arrivants des prisons un grand nombre de personnes qui bénéficiaient de mesures alternatives (TIG, Surveillance électronique, obligation de se soigner). Certains d'entre eux donnent pourtant le sentiment s'être socialement insérés et d'avoir un emploi qu'ils risquent fort de perdre en étant incarcérés. Cette incarcération présente un risque élevé de déstabiliser durablement des sujets fragiles.

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Figure 6. Formal restitution of the problem's causes and stakes, open to public commentary.

The last step consisted in organising level discussion groups with the prisoners during which the prisoners exchanged views on what caused relapses— factors such as poverty, the degrading and condescending attitudes of law enforcement officers, the prison administration and the Court Justices. They also discussed the best strategies to help stave off recidivism. This process gave the prisoners a point of entry in a real process of critical questioning concerning their own freedom and the public policies voted in their name, as exemplified in the following extract of a conversation between two prisoners:

- 'Relapsing, it's all in your head. 80 percent everyone who has been in prison, most people, are repeat offenders, it's not a question of whether they've been helped or not. If you want to do something about it, you have to go it alone; if you want to relapse, you will [...]

- 'The State wants an answer to the question: 'why do you relapse and what can we do for you so that it doesn't happen...' It knows that it's in your head but what can it do with your head space so that you don't relapse...?'

The collected materials were presented on our web platform as a rich display of stories, challenges and ideas. They provided a base from which any one could participate in the discussion, starting to think and to analyse the battle against recidivism.

Raimbourg and several other MPs working on penal reform were asked to participate in this inquiry by commenting on what the offenders and ex-offenders had to say about their own experience of recidivism, including their analysis and solutions.

Voir toutes les solutions 59 Trier par challenge Solutions nécessitant une loi 16

Solutions nécessitant une loi

Mettre en place des jurys en correctionnelle. Voir

> Comment faire pour que la police et la justice ne paraissent pas d'autant plus dures et intraitables que les prévenus sont socialement défavorisés ?

Tweeter

Réserver le fonds interministériel de prévention de la délinquance aux collectivités locales qui mettent en place des mesures de réinsertion des (ex) détenus - D. Raimbourg (député) Voir

> Comment faire pour aider les détenus à trouver un travail dès leur sortie de prison (sortie sèche ou peine aménagée)?

Tweeter Partager

Mettre fin à la révocation automatique des sursis simples - D. Raimbourg (député) Voir

> Comment faire pour que des peines mises à exécution longtemps après les faits ne viennent pas casser une dynamique de réintégration ?

Tweeter Partager

Figure 7. The MP Raimbourg participated actively in the website on recidivism.

We had hoped that the MPs specialized in penal matters would study the material collected BEFORE the parliamentary debate was to be held. Even though Raimbourg carefully considered the challenges and solutions that had been published, the prisoners' contributions were not deemed to be central to the debate or particularly valuable in resolving the problem of recidivism. An authentic deliberation did not take place between the MPs and the prisoners themselves.

All the other stakeholders (unions, associations, etc) were notified but none participated on the platform, most having already had the opportunity to be

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heard during earlier parliamentary auditions. Journalists covering the subject of penal reform were also informed of our project but none published articles about what prisoners had to say about their personal experience of recidivism or their proposed solutions to the problem.

3 SUSTAINING DEMOCRATIC DEBATE

Two crucial insights emerge from the difficulties in bringing design thinking and systemic problem solving to shape legislative processes.

For one, political figures cannot be expected to adopt the posture of 'self-reflection' that is key to any collaborative design process. As party members with specific interests and political positions to defend, they cannot suspend their expertise and adhere to 'methodic ignorance' as a means to gain new knowledge (Bourdieu, et al, 1968). Social designers need to find solutions to this particular design challenge.

Secondly, the legislative process is slow, and elected officials don't necessarily have the same sense of urgency as citizens in prison or the handicapped waiting for adequate housing...or designers themselves for that matter, eager to test and perfect solutions. The designer's capacity to act is thwarted by administrative timetables. This compounds the negative effects of unspoken rivalries of 'expertise', as noted in the examples discussed above.

This much said, digital tools and a structured, multimodal approach to deliberation, allow for the emergence of new, singular voices to be expressed in the public arena. No longer reduced to silence, these voices have shaped new media venues (Balle, 1997, p. 21), reinforcing engagement through social media (Proulx, 2007). Emancipated from traditional mediations (representatives, unions, associations, conventional top-down media) they carry with them the promise of a more authentic democracy, conceived as a collective dialogue, in which no voice is excluded, considered inferior or automatically disqualified.

As our work with the handicapped and prisoners revealed, this process must be echoed throughout a multimodal chain. The chain includes the questionnaires handed out, the ways in which meetings are conducted, the display of posts in a web-site, the data processing apps, the posters for the public events, the orchestration of questions and answers during an on-line 'consultation'. More to the point here, the interfaces left behind by the designer embody and sustain specific rules and methodologies. They reinforce a chain of meaning that is, ideally, 'consequential', i.e. mutually reinforcing, articulated and coherent (Dewey, 1910).

In spite of difficulties encountered in both case studies discussed here, we remain very optimistic as to the potential impact of citizen-design work and the inclusive deliberative platforms we experimented with elected officials, their administrative staff, educators, civic organisations and the public at large. Participants themselves were capable of initiating a real problem-solving process in an environment that encouraged listening and an authentic dialogue, motivated foremost by a search for truth.

4 REFERENCES

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