

Research workshop on Public Sector Innovation Newsletter – MindLab and the Ministry of Taxation June 28-29 2007

For two days around 50 researchers with various academic backgrounds gathered at the Ministry of Taxation to explore what public sector innovation (PSI) is and could be and to form a research agenda around it. This newsletter reports what happened during these two days, the key insights that were shared, and the follow-up planned by MindLab.

Day one - June 28, 2007

Welcome and framing the overall challenge of public sector innovation

The Minister for Taxation Kristian Jensen opens the research workshop. He starts out by stating three factors that highlight the importance of public sector innovation: Demographic change, increasing citizen demands for high quality public services and the pressures of globalisation on Denmark to hold strong competitive power while also ensuring a strong social cohesion. On this background Kristian is very happy that so many skilled academics have chosen to participate in the workshop to discuss innovation in the public sector. This will contribute to our understanding of how Denmark might reach the Danish Government's goal of becoming the most innovative public sector in the world.



Kristian specifically mentions three areas where the Danish Ministry of Taxation is currently working to foster new innovative solutions: Engaging the ministry's own employees more actively in fresh thinking, using performance measurement as a driving force for

innovation and cross-departmental collaboration. As for the last of the three working areas, Kristian mentions the establishment of MindLab as a very concrete initiative to foster cross-departmental collaboration and to involve citizens and business directly in the development of new policy and services.



Christian Bason, Innovation Manager, MindLab, continues the welcome and presents the more specific goals of the research workshop. The overall question that is to be addressed is *Which issues or questions do I want to explore, in order to take innovation in the public sector to the next level?* The insights from the workshop should at least serve three purposes:

1. To identify the kind of research themes that three PhD's in MindLab should work on
2. To initiate several collab projects that can further the public sector's ability to innovate
3. To produce a catalogue with ideas for research questions, which will be distributed amongst the participants.

Christian ends his introduction by emphasising the diversity of the workshop participants sectoral and academic backgrounds as unique and something that makes the workshop a huge opportunity for defining the future public sector innovation research agenda.

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Café conversations on the current reality of public sector

After the welcome, our facilitators Jan Hein and Sven Ole Schmidt introduce us to the “Cafe current reality”. Over lunch we gather in small groups to get to know each other and to discuss the very overall question “What time is it in our society right now?”. Grounded in the insights that has evolved during the discussions of this overall question, the groups write down “what they dream possible for innovation in the public sector” and exhibit these dreams for the rest of the workshop participants. Many different dreams and questions are posted as can be seen from the following examples - see more in appendix A:



- More experiments – room for failure and success
- Innovation requires a shift of focus from control to trust
- Move beyond ‘user’ analogy from private sector to more useful and telling concepts: What do people actually do?
- Innovation is something we *do* and not something we talk about
- A public sector that works multi-disciplinary and across traditional organizational borders.
- That the citizens are engaged in the further development of the public sector and “social entrepreneurship”, e.g. through a “mental draft”
- A public sector that meet the citizen where the citizen is.
- Solutions that enable employees to handle complexity



To weave the insights and dreams of the first part of the café discussions, the groups are reorganized and asked to discuss and choose two to three questions that – if answered – would take the public sector to the next level. The groups write down a total of 22 questions that are presented in a circle on the floor in the middle of the room.

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As we walk around the circle in silence, we get a chance to read what each of us has expressed and to sort the corresponding questions into categories chosen by us. Six categories are chosen, here shown with a single example of question – see more in appendix B:

Learning

- How to burst the “Not-Invented-Here” syndrome? E.g. by accumulating experiences from different experiments and finding a way to blend user evaluation and political policies.

Why innovate

- To whom should public sector innovation make sense?

Reforms vs. innovation

- Is there a real political will to innovate (manage long term deep change process)?

How to innovate

- How to frame the task to avoid sub optimization in public sector institutions?

Situate innovation before operationalization / how do we contextualize innovations?

- Which are our habitual blindness's about the public sector? Which assumptions (myths?) about the public sector are underlying the drive towards innovation?

Involvement

- How should citizens/companies/institutions be involved in innovation?

Open Space session begins

After a well-earned coffee break, we all gather in a big circle at the Cantina of the Ministry of Taxation, where Jan Hein introduces us to Open Space Technology.



After the introduction we are all invited to post *issues or questions that we want to explore in order to take innovation in the public sector to the next level*. The issues and questions are posted in the big time-schedule that allocates our workshops in space and time. The matrix gets filled with hot topics for conversations and the different work groups meet.



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The workshops in the first session are:

1. Putting the citizen at the centre – symbols and realities
2. Innovation between creativity and control
3. What is welfare and what could it be?
4. Who should be the innovators
5. How to initiate an experience exchange between private and public companies and institutions
6. How can we use citizens in innovation
7. How to look at interaction with public sector as experience
8. The public sector and enabling solutions – how to embrace chaos and diversity (unpredictability, unexpected outcomes)

The participants of the individual workshops sum up the essentials of the conversation, research questions, next steps and possible participants in word-documents (open space documentation) and on posters. The completed open space documentation can be found in appendix C.



After two intense hours of open space dialogue, the remains of the day and evening is spent with wine in the “Told-og Skatkammeret” (Custom House) and in the Cantina with good food, a beautiful sunset and views of the Copenhagen harbour front and great company and networking.

Day two - June 29, 2007

Continuing open space dialogue

When we arrive at the Ministry of Taxation Friday morning, the posters and open space documentation made yesterday are posted on the walls together with the rest of the harvest from day one and the abstracts that some of the workshop participants have chosen to send the workshop organisers prior to the workshop. With coffee and croissants in our hands, we walk around and read the insights from day one, before the two open space sessions of day two starts. The burning questions that are to be discussed today are:

Session 2:

1. The wisdom of the crowds – involvement
2. What can we learn from hip-hop about innovation?
3. Can IT take social innovation to a next level innovation?
4. How to encourage citizens to set up small everyday experimental



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practices that are relevant to their local concerns?

5. Mental draft
6. Types of innovation – for whom by whom – patterns, relations, cases
7. How to get started?

Session 3:

1. Democratic legitimacy
2. What is democratic dialogue in public sector innovation?
3. When do we feel inspired and creative? What are the circumstances?
4. Public sector innovation partners
5. What is the public sectors view and perception on innovation?
6. Why do we refer to people as 'users' and what does it imply?
7. Methods in research of public sector innovation



As with yesterday, open space documentation and posters are made to capture the essentials of the conversations. Alongside discussing the topics in the sessions, some participants also take the opportunity to more

informally discuss other issues with each other.

Summing up the three open space sessions, all posters and open space documentation are put on display on the walls, and the participants who posted the questions host small exhibition stands where the rest of the workshop participants are invited to gain insights and comment on the key findings.



Conclusion and reflection

Christian Bason from MindLab ends the workshop by concluding that the issues and questions discussed and the insights gained during the two days shows that the research agenda for public sector innovation is one of great diversity and one that requires collaboration with researchers from a broad variety of academic disciplines.

Christian also stresses that the two days have more than fulfilled his expectations for the workshop results. The open space documentation forms a catalogue of ideas for research questions and it is Christians feeling that the knowledge that has been shared and the contacts created will be a good platform for the establishment of concrete collab projects and MindLab PhD's. To ensure that the potential of this platform is utilized, Christian states that MindLab will take responsibility to follow up on the key questions and areas for collaboration. He announces that MindLab intends to establish an academic Advisory Board to guide MindLabs future research efforts.

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The participants are invited to indicate whether they would be interested in joining such a board.

Finally we all reflect on the process and the insights we have gathered. There is broad agreement that the two days have broadened the understanding of what public sector innovation is and could be, and that the workshop has served as a framework to pose all the critical questions related to public sector innovation that you otherwise rarely get to discuss. Finally we share valuable comments on how future discussions on public sector innovation can become even more rewarding, e.g. by mixing researchers and practitioners in workshops, elaborating on more specific questions related to public sector innovation and by designing practical experiments on what you can "do" with innovation. Some of us also stress the importance of follow-up activities to ensure that the insights from the workshop can be further explored and utilized.



Summing up the results of the open space dialogue – five overall themes

MindLab has conducted a brief analysis of the almost 20 different workshops that were held during the open space sessions. We have identified five crosscutting themes that we think highlight some key aspects of the discussions and questions and would like to see further explored. In the following you will find an overview of the themes, some key research themes – all of interest to MindLab, and an indication of our intended follow-up. The full record of the workshops can be found as appendix to this newsletter.

1. The innovation process

What enables or destroys good innovation processes? What are the individual steps, actors, tools? Several sessions focused on the dynamics of innovation processes. A complete A-Z of innovation was the not focus, but there were discussions of a number of elements with special challenges.

Essence of the discussion

Constraints

One discussion concerned constraints as a frame for creativity: "Is the normative system we have today relevant to the issues we have today?" Games and spaces for innovation on different levels were discussed: Personal / organizational / national. Top-down and bottom-up innovation.

People

Another theme concerned how to get the right constellation of people involved in the process. How do different constellations of people (citizens, politicians, government officials, front-end personnel etc.) support or hinder innovation? "What do the people involved do? How do they do it? When do they do it, how do they relate to each other, etc."

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Roles

The issue of key roles in the innovation process was raised. Creative catalysts (“the rose-smeller”) – and producers. Producers can continue work and implementation of the ideas. “How do we make the innovative process and the numerous micro-innovations more visible and move away from the romantic idea of innovation being the instant result of a flash of god-given inspiration?”. “How do we develop leadership for innovation?”

Enablers

Creative spots as an enabler for innovation was discussed – physical space as a framing for innovation. “How to work with fun as a creative source in the public sector”.

Selection mechanisms

The issue of spotting/selecting/refining the good idea was examined. Selection criteria, and “how can we carry out good experiments around PSI”. Documentation – storytelling as an example.

Key research themes

- Are there particular characteristics to the innovation process in the public sector, and if so, what does that imply for public organizations’ approach to innovation?
- What is the potential of using experimentation as part of the innovation process in public organizations?

Who participated

Dorte Salskov Iversen, Jon Sundbo, Merete Ahnfeldt-Møllerup, Daved Barry, Jens Riis, Thomas Hammer-Jakobsen, Tine Damsholt, Christina Brodersen, Camilla Sløk, Thomas Binder, Toke Bjerregaard, Liv Krause, Morten Krogh Petersen

Next steps

We invite interested researchers and potential PhD students to contact MindLab if the above-mentioned research questions are of interest. Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

We invite interested researchers to engage in collab projects using the three ministries that funds MindLab for case-studies. Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

MindLab and the Ministry of Taxation will host a WorkingLab in October 2007 focusing on the role of experiments in public sector innovation – what can be done, legal matters etc. Responsible: Helle Vibeke Carstensen, Ministry of Taxation

2. Methods of Innovation

There were two workshops sessions which mainly related to this theme. They particularly circled around the issue of methods of research in public sector innovation and the question of various types of innovation. The question was raised: “Innovation for whom and by whom?”

Essence of the discussion

Ontology

The theme entailed a discussion on what could be called a Public Sector Innovation ontology vs. a Private Sector ontology. The ontologies are different and thus warrant a different terminology. Can such a new terminology be developed?

Values

Do different values in the public sector vs. private sector have implications for methods? Which methods can we use to study values in the public sector? Imagine a triangle: Political conditions vs. Real conditions vs. Experienced conditions.

Typology

Another theme concerned the types of innovation: product – service – organisational – market. Can this model be used as a framework for studying PSI? What can we learn? Can it be used?

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Public vs. private

The question was raised whether there is higher pressure on innovation processes in the public sector (no bottom line, missing financial incentive, lack of a transparent value chain). Is the public sector inferior to the private sector, perhaps due to the missing bottom line? Key notion: Public sector creates/carries out innovation on different conditions than the private sector.

Other methodological issues

Is there a relationship between potential innovation, experienced innovation and real innovation? Is it a sequential relationship?

Can a service be duplicated? Can public sector innovation processes be systematized and structured? Or does this kill innovation – isn't innovation always driven by personal motivation?

Is there a discrepancy between "ideals of innovation processes" vs. real life uncertainty? Innovation equals risk.

Key research themes

- What is "value" in a public sector context? Which methods can be used to study values in the public sector?
- What are the intrinsic strengths in the public sector? What are positive mechanisms for public sector innovation?
- Can we translate the innovation terminology from the private sector to the public sector?
- What are the limits of control of innovation processes when challenged by uncontrolled systemic changes embodied in human and organisational actors with various agendas?
- What are the incentive structures for innovation?

Who participated?

Christian Tollestrup, Morten K. Petersen, Toke Bjerregaard, Pernille Berg, Lars Fuglsang, Steffen Jöhnke, Mie Bjerre

Next steps

We invite interested researchers and potential PhD students to contact MindLab if the above-mentioned research questions are of interest.

Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

We invite interested researchers to engage in collab projects using the three ministries that funds MindLab for case-studies. Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

MindLab will host a WorkingLab in January 2008 focusing on the challenges of using experiences from private sector innovation processes in the public sector. Responsible: Christian Bason, MindLab

3. The users

The theme "the users" was the most discussed, as it was addressed by more than five different workshop sessions. The term "users" can have many meanings, but was mainly understood as the citizens and businesses who use and are influenced by public services and regulation. What is their potential in contributing to public sector innovation?

Essence of the discussion

Different roles of users in innovation

One discussion concerned the numerous ways that users could contribute to the innovation process, e.g. innovators (collaborators, lead users) or knowledge of user behaviour as source of innovation. A key element of this discussion was the competence question – are users competent to contribute?

The term 'user'

There are many different relationships between citizens and the public sector (e.g. patient, pupil, client, passenger, etc.). What are the practical implications of the shift from citizen, patient, client, etc. to "user" as a generic term within the range of different "services" in the public

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sector"? Is the term "user" at all helpful?

The relationship between the users and the networks they are situated within

We cannot see users as distinct from the networks/contexts/relations they are part of as users of public services. One hypothesis could be that putting the user at the "centre of public service" is to create an alliance between the government and the citizen, with the purpose to combat the very administrative system the government is running.

It was stressed that citizens have a process view that can be used for innovation, if one follows the users through the system. In which parts of the public sector is the user NOT in the centre of the process? Care for the elderly, hospitals, day care, schools, etc. How to ensure coordination and specialisation in coordinating the administration?

Methods

It was suggested that one may closely (ethnographically) follow the practical and messy real-life innovative processes – study how and why and when innovation happens.

Another discussion concerned the question of how to encourage citizens to set up small everyday experimental practices that are relevant to their local concerns?

Key research themes

- How can specific service interactions between citizens and the public sector inform us how to innovate in the public sector?
- Which forms, methods, and processes work best to involve users actively in innovating public solutions? How does the problem, context and purpose determine which methods and process are most effective?
- How to involve users in everyday experiments?

- How can public organizations organize for citizen involvement? How can we qualify the crowd to be wise?
- What are the lessons from previous and current types of formal user involvement – councils, public hearings, school boards, etc.? How is citizen input used today, if at all? What is international best practice?

Who participated

Mogens Kühn, Thomas Hammer-Jakobsen, Lars Fuglsang, Birgitte G. Jensen, Merete Ahlefeldt-Møllerup, Liv Krause, Christian Tollestrup, Steffen Jöhncke, Morten Vendelø, Daved Barry, Peter Lotz, Birgitte Geert Jensen, Mie Bjerre, Thomas Binder, Stefan Meisiek, Merethe Haugaard, Lars Heide, Lene Holm Pedersen, Joachim Halse, Dorte Salskov-Iversen, Morten Krogh Petersen, Toke Bjerregaard, Jon Sundbo, Tine Damsholt, Vinay Venkatraman

Next steps

We invite interested researchers and potential PhD students to contact MindLab if the above-mentioned research questions are of interest.

Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

We invite interested researchers to engage in collab projects using the three ministries that funds MindLab for case-studies. Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

MindLab will host a WorkingLab on users and public sector innovation. The purpose will be to increase our concrete, in-depth understanding of users and their role in public sector innovation, through presentations of specific methods and empirical cases. MindLab will get in touch with potential presenters. The seminar will be held November 2007
Responsible: Christian Bason, MindLab

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4. Democracy and welfare

This theme focused on what public sector innovation means in the light of democracy and the idea and principles of a welfare state.

Essence of the discussion

A number of fundamental questions were asked: How to create a new platform for the welfare system? Can interest groups be activated in new ways to rethink how welfare services are developed, delivered and created? What is the role of the state vis-à-vis the citizen(s)?

Key research themes

- Is there a shift from democratic participation as an end in itself to participation as a tool for improving the quality of public services?
- Can users be included more actively in public sector innovation through a “mental draft”? Can we enhance public sector innovation by making children our priority?

Who participated

Lotte Darsø, Liv Krause, Astrid Bjerg Caspersen, Mie Bjerre, Christina Brodersen, Birgitte Geert Jensen

Next steps

The essence and key questions do not fall within the scope of MindLab’s expected research focus at the present time, but we invite further dialogue and discussion, for instance with the three sector ministries behind MindLab (tax, employment, economic and business affairs).

Other follow-up will be:

Briefing: We will brief the Minister of Taxation of the dialogue on “mental draft” and the welfare questions.

Responsible: Helle Vibeke Carstensen, Ministry of Taxation

Inspiration for alternative PhD set-up: A “group Phd” approach – involving

ethnography, action research, and political science – could be relevant to a future MindLab project, for instance concerning the problem of how to attract and retain qualified foreign labour.
Responsible: Christian Bason, MindLab

5. Innovation enablers

This theme focused on who and what makes innovation to happen in the public sector. The issue was obviously discussed in many of the workshops, but some of the workshops focused more specifically on what might be called “drivers of innovation”.

Essence of the discussion

Potential enablers

Numerous enablers of public sector innovation were identified through the discussions, including such factors as technology, networks, organisation, leadership, strategy, processes, research and development, culture, design approaches, and private sector methods.

A dimension of this was the role of political objectives, frameworks, incentives and responsibilities that are distinct for the public sector. Is there a need for “letter of freedom for the civil servants”?

Functions of enablers

Another essential theme was the question of what enablers do, and how they do it. For instance: How can new technology be used to create differentiated (individual / tailored) user services? How can concrete innovations become more known throughout the relevant domains of the public sector – how to create networks that effectively spread innovative practices?

Key research questions

- What are innovation enablers? Ex.: What is the future of technology as an innovation driver in the public sector?

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- What do they do? Ex.: What role do strategy, organisation and leadership play for public sector innovation?
- Who are the enablers? Ex.: Managers, employees, external sources, users.
- What are best practice examples of public innovation enablers today (globally?)
- What can and cannot be learned from private sector experiences?
- MindLab as case example of a potential innovation enabler (strategy, organisation, triple helix)?

Who participated

Jon Sundbo, Vinay Venkatraman, Mogens Kühn Pedersen, John Storm Pedersen, Christian Tollerup, Pernille Berg, Poul Kyvsgaard, Astrid Bjerg Caspersen, Stefan Meisiek, Dorte Salskov-Iversen, Daved Barry.

Next steps

We invite interested researchers and potential PhD students to contact MindLab if the above-mentioned research questions are of interest.

Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

We invite interested researchers to engage in collab projects using the three ministries that funds MindLab for case-studies. Contact: Christian Bason, MindLab

Create a virtual institute for public sector innovation, IPSI. We invite interested academics to get in touch. Contact: Helle Vibeke Carstensen, Ministry of Taxation

Overview of next step initiatives and deadlines

Below you will find an overview on the next step initiatives that we hope you will find an interest in examining further with us by contacting us:

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Contact</i>
Collab projects	Ongoing	Christian Bason
Candidates for MindLab Advisory board	<i>Deadline:</i> Sep. 15 th 2007	Christian Bason
Virtual institute for PSI (IPSI)	<i>Deadline:</i> Sep. 15 th 2007	Helle Vibeke Carstensen
PhD research areas or candidates	<i>Deadline:</i> Oct. 1 st 2007	Christian Bason
WorkingLab on the role of experiments in public sector innovation	Oct. 2007	Helle Vibeke Carstensen
WorkingLab on users and PSI	Nov. 2007	Christian Bason
WorkingLab on the challenges of using experiences from private sector innovation processes in the public sector	Jan. 2008	Christian Bason