Policy Innovation Days: How do we create an open society for all?

26th and 27th of October 2021

Gerðuberg – public library conference and meeting centre in Reykjavík

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Populism and Civic Engagement

This document reports on the **Policy Innovation Days: "How do we create an open society for all?"**, organised in Reykjavík under the umbrella of the research project, **PaCE – Populism and Civic Engagement**.[1] This two-day event took place 26th and 27th of October 2021 at the Gerðuberg – public library conference and meeting centre, combining a Conference on the first day and a deliberation Workshop on the second day. The event was built upon the outcomes of a *Democracy Lab* held in Iceland 20. January 2021, titled: "*Trust in public administration, in the time of the covid-19 pandemic*", a first in a series of subsequent such *Labs* supervised by PaCE researchers in five other European countries.

We report on the contributions of academics and civil servants to a growing knowledge base, in support of politics and policy developments in a rapidly changing world. We report on the participation of twenty-nine (29) experts and professionals from different fields, who generously shared their opinions and insights in deliberation and debate. The main outcomes and recommendations are advocated here to encourage future policy strategies that can help mitigate the impact of crises on different sectors and groups of people at risk of marginalisation.

[1] **PaCE – Populism and Civic Engagement**, EC-funded H2020, Research & Innovation Action. Grant no. 822337.

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- Öryrkjabandalag Íslands (ÖBÍ) – The Icelandic Disability Alliance.
- 'Bjarkarhlíð' er miðstöð fyrir þolendur ofbeldis – Family Justice Centre for survivors of violence.

- Íbúar ses. Lýðræðisþróun víðsvegar um heiminn – Citizens Foundation, Connecting governments and citizens.
- Þjónustumiðstöð Breiðholts – City of Reykjavík, Breiðholt.
- Félag kvenna í atvinnulífinu (FKA) – Association of Businesswomen in Iceland.
- Reykjavíkurborg, Mannauðs- og starfsumhverfissvið – City of Reykjavík, Human Resources and Work Environment Branch.
- 'New in Iceland'. We have the answer. Call, chat or email us!

Finally, we thank ***Finnur Þ. Gunnþórsson*** from International Coach and ***Ásta Guðrún Guðbrandsdóttir***, both expert facilitators, for leading and facilitating the Workshop and the Conference, and special thanks to the City of Reykjavík, the Office of the Mayor and CEO and the Urban and Economic Development team, for supporting the event.

About this document

Task Lead: RVK

Dissemination Level		
PU	Public on the www.popandce.eu	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

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Disclaimer

The content and information presented in this report reflect entirely the views of the authors, as members of Reykjavík's partnership to **PaCE.** The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Key findings and recommendations coming out of the 2nd day Workshop at the **Policy Innovation Days** are based on the opinions and insights of *twenty-nine participants* and cannot be extrapolated as opinions that are representative of general publics in Iceland.

The PaCE consortium respects the protection of personal information and data and strictly adheres to the rules set down by the GDPR (2016/679), on handling data and the rights of participants in this research.

Executive Summary

The **Policy Innovation Days** presented in this report, were inspired by the results of a *Democracy Lab* organised in Iceland in January 2021, with focus on trust in authorities during the first year of the covid-19 pandemic. While participants had positive opinions to share about the response strategies imposed by authorities at the time, the *Lab* also revealed the impact those measures had had on livelihoods and wellbeing, especially of minority and marginalised groups. One can argue that the preoccupation early on, with response as a matter of controlling a contagion and a virus, blinded authorities to the extent of social engineering they were suddenly engaged in, if only by limiting mobility. The economic sector was affected, employment and migrant labour, private and occupational lives, the health and social sectors, even human rights. Authorities were not addressing the whole demographic, but leaning on a stereotype of '*the Icelandic nation*'. Adequately tailored information was lacking as well as transparency in decision-making. It further emerged that inter-departmental and inter-ministerial coordination was lacking in important respects, calling for cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary networks of co-operation to remedy and prevent negative cascading effects.

Accordingly, the purpose of the **Policy Innovation Days** was to address these challenges and expand on the issues they raise for governing institutions, the media, publics, politics and societal development. Academics and civil servants were invited to speak at a Conference on the first day, about public and media discourse, populism, trust, accountability, resilience, governing structures, opinion formation, civic participation and Reykjavík's Democracy policy. Then a deliberation Workshop was organised on the second day with members of governing and public institutions and civil society organisations, to address more specifically communication strategies, resilience, society for all, and political leadership.

The aims of the **Policy Innovation Days** were very much centred on the notion of innovation, as the title indicates, 'policy innovation' and associated notions of transformative (institutional) reform, the successes and failures of which hinge on ***social inclusion***. The presentations at the Conference had in common depictions of *complexity*, a reminder that there are no quick and easy solutions, and some measure of *urgency*, indicative of communities and societies on cross-roads. Similarly, Workshop participants show full awareness of the intricacies involved in addressing the topics that were suggested to them for deliberation and debate, however, with repeated recourse to social inclusion as the key to transformative change. This is approached from various angles: the importance of the open space, of reaching people, of active and inclusive communities, of effective communications, facilitation and, not the least, transparency and accountability in political leadership.

The Workshop delivered valuable recommendations as a result of the generous contributions of its participants. These recommendations are directed at policymakers and strategists, governing institutions, politicians and others in managerial and leadership positions.

The key categories are:

- **Communication tools** (instrumental approaches).
- **Accessibility and access requirements** (suggesting strategies of approach and exchange).
- **The reality of the labour market** (breaking through language barriers into work).
- **Access, barriers, opportunities** (suggesting strategies of integration and inclusion).
- **Responsibilities, management and contributions** (strategically tackling the demographic).
- **Political representation** (measures of visibility).

We hope that the reporting we present here is as inspiring and engaging to our readers as it was for us to prepare it, but also to see the event come to life and participate ourselves. We refer to the Discussion and Recommendations section for suggestions on how to move forward.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 6
1. Introduction 9
1.1. What is policy innovation for transformative change? 10
1.2. The Democracy Labs – a prologue 12
1.3. Policy Innovation Days – the formal objectives 14
1.3.1. The venue 15
2. The Conference 16
2.1. The City of Reykjavík and international research collaborations 17
2.2. The Programme 17
2.2.1. Populism, post-truth and media freedom 18
2.2.2. Trust and accountability 22
2.2.3. Politicians, public servants and Reykjavik's Democracy Policy 30
2.2.4. Resilience in populations 36
2.2.5. Opinion formation and the knowledge society 38
2.3. Lessons to take to the Workshop 45
3. The deliberation Workshop 45
3.1. A note on method 46
3.1.1 Design and facilitation 47
3.2 Topics of deliberation 51
3.2.1. Communication strategies, mediation of and public access to information 52
Key lessons 55
3.2.2. Resilience and a society for all in liberal democracy 58
Key lessons 62
3.3.3. Politics and political leadership and their influence on social transformation 64
Key lessons 68
4. Discussion and Recommendations 70
4.1. Workshop lessons 71
4.2. Policy innovation (and innovation policy) towards transformative change 74
5. References 77

1. Introduction

This document reports on the **Policy Innovation Days**, organised in Reykjavík under the umbrella of the PaCE project.[2] This two-day event – combining a Conference on the first day and a deliberation Workshop on the second day – took place 26-27. October 2021 at the Gerðuberg – public library conference and meeting centre. It was built upon the outcomes of a local *Democracy Lab* (20. Jan. 2021), titled: "*Trust in public administration, in the time of the covid-19 pandemic*", the first in a series of subsequent such *Labs* supervised by PaCE researchers in five other European countries.

Arguably, the **Policy Innovation Days** are both a ***reflective response*** and an ***action-oriented response*** to the findings of the *Democracy Lab*. A leading question inspiring the event was: ***How do we create an open society for all?*** This is an open question, however, anticipating a relatively small set of issues and concerns that are well placed in deliberative consultations. Among those are populism, social inclusion and post-truth discourse, trust in authorities, decision-making in politics and administrations, resilience of populations, and issues surrounding opinion formation and civic participation in debate and decision-making. On day one – the Conference – academics and experts presented research and policy actions of relevance to the central themes of the PaCE project. They reflected upon their findings and lessons, and responded to questions from the audience – see section below, titled: '*The Conference*' (also available, Conference programme and video recordings of the talks).

Altogether, the reflections at the Conference serve to build up and broaden the evidence base and thereby, they contribute to the Workshop on the following day. The Workshop was titled: **Co-creative policy innovation and trust in authorities in times of change**, and organised around three key topics, however, addressed in an action-oriented manner. The findings are based on the opinions and insights of twenty-nine (29) participating experts and professionals from various walks of life.

The following sections will describe the **Policy Innovation Days**, present key findings with implications and recommendations for future policy strategizing, aimed at mitigating the

[2] **PaCE** – **Populism and Civic Engagement**, EC-funded H2020, Research & Innovation Action. Grant no. 822337.

impacts of crises on different sectors and groups of people, especially those at risk of marginalisation. The approach is based, in part, on a call for *transformative change* emerging in the deliberations of the *Democracy Lab*, and very much in agreement with recent work by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), titled: **Policy Innovation for Transformative Change** (UNRISD, 2016), implementing the institute's **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** (UNRISD, 2015).

1.1. What is policy innovation for transformative change?

According to the UNRISD 2016 flagship report, **Policy Innovation for Transformative Change**, societies across the world face diverse and complex challenges, including poverty, climate change and environmental degradation, unsustainable growth, economic crises, health epidemics, inequality and social exclusion, lack of decent work and social protection, migration, displacement, political instability and insecurity. It also claims that strategies and instruments available to leaders are still inadequate in addressing these economic, social and political confrontations.[3] Many of the challenges are subject to debate and they are topics of academic research, and yet ***no concrete functional strategy and practical measures*** are envisaged in multiagency co-operation, to tackle together the economic, social and political dimensions of the most common societal challenges.

> "*Transformative change … is a long-term process requiring both individual agency and collective actions by societies … and its results include visible and measurable economic and political empowerment of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups; greater gender equality in all spheres; more equal redistribution of income and wealth; active citizenship with greater agency of civil society organizations and social movements; changes in North-South power relations and global governance institutions; empowerment of small enterprises, rural producers and informal workers; and a reversal of the hierarchies of norms and values that subordinate social and environmental goals to economic objectives*." (UNRISD, 2016: p.4)

That said, amongst numerous initiatives to rectify the things that have gone wrong around the world, this flagship report came to our attention. It highlights existing limitations and inconsistencies in inter-institutional and multiagency co-operation. It mentions inconsistent and

[3] It occurs to us that response to contemporary societal challenges, comprising of societal, environmental, and existential ills, ought to infuse a techno-scientific dimension with the economic, social and political response.

unbalanced civic engagement at different levels of decision making, discrepancies in communication strategies and flows of information, and lack of suitable and accessible instruments for public dialogue. Similarly, the present report on the Policy Innovation Days in October 2021, highlights limitations and inconsistencies in inter-institutional and multiagency co-operation, or what our participants referred to as 'silos'. The key problem with silos, we observe, is the fragmentation of strategies in monitoring and evaluating the needs of society, creating obstacles to effective diagnoses and their transferability into institutional / organisational policy agendas and action plans (see Schot & Steinmüller, 2018; Weaver et al, 2017; Haddad et al, 2022).

The UNRISD 2016 report – as its title suggests – aims to deliver on the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It offers critical guidance and gives examples of strategic models adopted by countries around the world (p.9-10), and it explores the domains of innovation that can drive transformative change. For example, in a section on the shifting global context: from innovation to implementation, it says that,

> "[a]dressing the root causes of […the challenges the world faces…] will require different types of *innovations* in conceptual approaches, policies, institutions and social relations, overcoming policy silos by working at the *intersections* between the three pillars of the [2030] agenda by integrating the economic, the social and the environmental objectives in a rebalanced way. It will also require moving from declarations of intent toward *implementation* by designing appropriate policies and institutions, leveraging the political will and consensus as well as the financial and administrative means to implement them" (2016: p.47 [*original emphasis*]).

Addressing the available strategies and instruments of innovation, a subsection in the report on empowered participation and accountable, effective institutions, states that,

> "[e]mpowered participation may challenge existing structures and relations of power, opening spaces for contestation and negotiation of policies and resources. Such spaces are crucial for fair decision making and outcome, and are thus essential for equitable, inclusive and sustainable development pathways" (2016: p.224).

The report names six policy areas that already show evidence of impact towards transformative change (2016: p.225), and four of those were implicated on the Policy Innovation Days as well as in the *Democracy Labs* of the PaCE project:

1. ***Social Policy*** – that can have impact promoting human-rights based approaches to policy design, by aligning with legal frameworks, participatory approaches and sustainable financing, and empowering innovative public-private partnerships.

2. ***Care Policy*** – that can have impact promoting dialogue between different social groups and civil society organisations, by strengthening institutional coordination between health and education, and promoting human-rights based approaches to social protection.
3. ***Domestic Resource Mobilisation*** – that can have impact promoting transparent, inclusive and accountable resource bargains with strong links to social policy.
4. ***Governance*** – that can have impact, reversing the normative hierarchy by putting societal and ecological objectives at the top, by promoting eco-social and sustainable economic policies to rectify injustices, and create spaces for meaningful participation of civil society in decision-making processes.

1.2. The Democracy Labs – a prologue

As we have explained, the *Democracy* Lab, held in Iceland in January 2021, inspired a response of which the **Policy Innovation Days** are a manifestation, hence, appropriate to offer a brief introduction to these *Labs* in terms of their purpose, objectives, format, and key findings (see report on the *Democracy Lab* in Iceland).

The *Democracy Labs* were focused on **trust in authorities** in different locations in Europe during the covid-19 pandemic, looking at public communication, availability of information, response and control measures, and political leadership. They were conducted in Iceland, Spain, Scotland, Poland, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as part of the dissemination and engagement work done by PaCE researchers, using *civic participation* as a format and a method of doing qualitative research. However, all but one of the *Labs* were conducted online, considering restrictions of assembly during the pandemic.

The purpose of the *Labs* was to assess the attitudes and democratic aspirations amongst publics and identify novel ways of democratic involvement. The objectives can be summarised as follows:

- Connecting with the lived experiences of participants.
- Thinking through with them how they might want to be involved in making and shaping decisions that affect their lives.
- Capturing their perceptions of power, trust, and democratic process.

– Better understanding the ways in which traditional and social media influence and shape political and social opinions.

Three discussion sessions were led by expert facilitators and organised into breakout rooms, each round of which was guided by direct questioning/probing, however, slightly adapted to the social and political particularities of the 6 locations:

Explorative question(s) – about the media and the pandemic (round 1)

How are authorities addressing citizen concerns and needs arising from the covid-19 pandemic? Share your experience and insights. or…

How does the media influence your understanding of the covid-19 situation?

Deepening question – opening the topic of how governments are dealing with the pandemic (round 2)

How do you feel about the covid-19 restrictions the authorities have imposed (local, reginal, national)?

Reflective or activating question – linking people's thoughts on the pandemic to their ideas, suggestions and recommendations (round 3)

In a future pandemic situation, what would be your recommendations to authorities? If you were in charge, what would you do?

Under the global theme of ***trust in authorities***, participants could articulate their views as positive and trusting or critical and suggestive of practices in need of change. The outcomes of these six *Labs* were remarkably similar (see the synthesis report). Participants point out challenges and uncertainties, e.g., on rights and duties. A host of concerns were raised regarding the actions of governing institutions, on the strength of measures, on communication strategies, co-operation and coordination across institutions, and the monitoring of cascading effects on individual wellbeing and quality of life. It is important in this respect that the same entities can fall on either side of the *trusted – distrusted boundary*. That includes frontline defence teams, experts, ministers and health authorities, information and communication strategies and more. Finally, participants in all the *Labs* offered recommendations on how to improve governance in times of crisis, and how to strengthen democratic participation and shape the policy strategy for a more inclusive society.

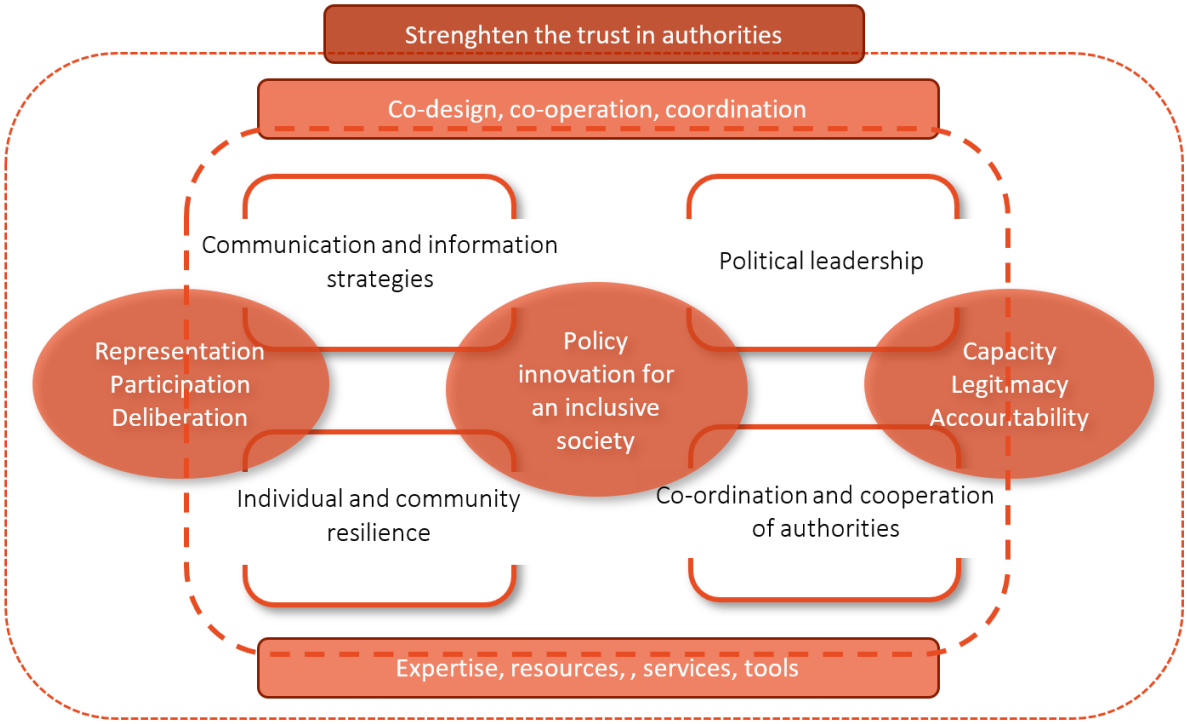

FIGURE 1. MAIN TOPICS SHARED BY THE SIX PACE DEMOCRACY LABS

1.3. Policy Innovation Days – the formal objectives

Based on the lessons gleaned from the *Democracy Labs*, the stated objectives of the **Policy Innovation Days** can be formulated as follows:

- Create a forum of exchange and discussion, bringing together representatives of the political and academic communities, public administrations and civil organisations, minority groups and other stakeholders.
- Consider the innovative potential of applying co-creative and cross-disciplinary research, knowledge and experience in deliberation and evidence-based policy strategizing.
- Propose a vision for policy innovation—future strategies and measures that better meet the needs of different groups and communities in Iceland.

In addition to this, we like to point out the choice of venue to host the event, following recent trends in civic engagement that seek to create open safe neutral spaces for the exchange of views and opinions on difficult topics, and to explore the potential therein for citizens to have a say in the development of policy agendas and action programmes.

1.3.1. The venue

Both the Conference and the deliberation Workshop took place at a public library conference and meeting centre. Public libraries have transformed over the past few decades. Alongside their conventional role as lenders of books and other media and places of study, they are now well recognised as open venues for social-civic gatherings, community participation, public education and knowledge exchange (on libraries as a critical civic infrastructure, e.g., Kranich, 2008). As the project director for civic participation at the library explained in her opening remarks, this venue is ideal for outreach and engagement activities because no one is required to justify their presence at a public library. [4]

Indeed, an ***open space for all*** is the guiding policy of the civic participation programme, in principle supporting the contributions of all people to societal and community agendas. It is the place to start difficult conversation, to step outside one's comfort zone. For example, the programme offers opportunities to meet members of social groups that, otherwise, might not be within reach, and it provides the tools to cultivate traditions in civil conversation in the comforts of the trust bestowed upon public libraries as neutral venues.

Difficult issues and public concerns are often associated with societal injustices and unequal power relations, and they require that conversation and social critique can take place on equal footing. This is especially important considering common tendencies toward cultural self-segregation, as individuals and groups are increasingly at risk of becoming trapped in ideological (and existential) silos. Accordingly, the conversations and other exchange at the public library cannot endorse racism, xenophobia, hate speech and similar proclivities. Rather, they are organised with the objective to cultivate awareness of the marginalisation of certain social groups and correct the many misalignments in (and unequal access to) civic participation.

This programme policy – what it stands for and its record – is the reason for why the Gerðuberg public library hosted the Policy Innovation Days, especially, keeping in mind the potential for social-cultural and political sensitivities coming under scrutiny during the Workshop. The

[4] The programme director is Dögg Sigmarsdóttir. She gave opening talks on both days about civic participation and public dialogue, and the contemporary role of the public library.

architectural design of this event overall is innovative in proposing communications and contributions from a tripartite of:

- Public dialogue and consultation
- Academic research
- Government policies and strategic agendas.

More specifically, how the Workshop on the second day is approached and orchestrated, speaks directly to the positive attributes of having an open space for all to achieve the objectives that the organisers set out with. The Workshop comprised of two work sessions, the first being the icebreaker (including **Silent brainstorm**), aimed at group cohesion and camaraderie in which individual ideas are presented, discussed and evaluated within the group, then followed by three rounds of interactive opinion exchange in line with the **World café** (qualitative) participatory method. Notably, the focus topics of the exchange were:

- Communication strategies, dissemination of information and public access to information.
- Resilience and a society for all in liberal democracy.
- Politics and political leadership and their influence on social transformation.

2. The Conference

In opening the Conference, the project leader of PaCE, **Dr Roxana E. Cziker**,[5] introduced the PaCE project and accounted for the findings of the *Democracy Labs* upon which the two-day event was based. As she explained, the rise of populism in Europe and waning support for liberal democratic development have been chief concerns of the PaCE project, a part of which has been to organise stakeholder engagements (the *Labs*), appealing to minority and marginalised groups to participate as explained in the introduction above (see *summary report*).

At the time when this is written, there is still ongoing work to follow up on the analyses of participant responses in the *Lab* in Iceland. However, the introduction to the findings by Roxana, along with the recommendations to governing institutions and political leadership, not only set

[5] Research Project Manager at the Office of the Mayor and CEO, City of Reykjavík.

the tone for the Conference, but are a part of the evidence base and background materials that were considered in the Workshop on the following day.

2.1. The City of Reykjavík and international research collaborations

It should be noted that the PaCE project is an academic endeavour by an EC-funded research consortium, and the City of Reykjavík (a government institution) was a research partner to the project. Accordingly, and as a part of the opening section of the Conference, two guests spoke on international research collaborations involving the City, in particular, as an interested party to collaborations that can benefit its policy programmes such as the *Green Deal* and Reykjavík's Democracy policy and action plan.

Lucie Samcová-Hall Allen (Ambassador of the EU to Iceland) spoke on longstanding EU-Iceland relations, the ultimate face of which is Icelanders' keen participation in EC-funded research and science. She underscored how successful Icelandic institutions have been and now, with changing relations between science/technology and publics/societies, there are new EC programmes dedicated to the changing landscape and great opportunities therein to take part.

Dr Magnús Yngvi Jósefsson [6] spoke on the journey Reykjavík has taken over 5 or so years, in cultivating research relations with academic and public institutions and commercial enterprise, with the sole aim of participating in research and innovation actions, coordinated support actions, demonstrations and framework partnerships that can support the City's policies in tackling the challenges of today and tomorrow.

2.2. The Programme

Speakers at the Conference were a combination of academics and public servants, and their presentations were organised into two thematic areas in line with the main outcomes of the January 2021 *Democracy Lab* (see Conference programme). The contents of the programme are described here however, in terms of the focus of the research and the agendas they present:

[6] Magnús Yngvi Jósefsson is formerly the Research Director at the Office of the Mayor and CEO at the City of Reykjavík. Magnús has led Reykjavík's participation in EC-funded research and innovation projects. He has a doctorate in business and management and is also a research fellow at the Centre for Policy Modelling at the Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK.

- Research with focus on populism, populist nationalism and post-truth discourses and, relating to that, post-truth politics and the populist challenge to media freedom.
- Research with focus on surveying populations about trust—trust in politicians, trust in parliament, trust in health authorities and trust in the media, as well as the relationship between trust and accountability.
- Research on relations between political representatives and public servants in Icelandic municipalities, and on trust in the decision-making processes, alongside reporting on Reykjavík City's Democracy policy and action plan.
- Research with focus on resilience in populations, in the job market and in the systems that serve in preventing and managing ill health.
- Research into organised debate, deliberation and opinion formation, including the epistemological challenges of participation and of taking the knowledge society seriously.

2.2.1. Populism, post-truth and media freedom

Two presentations spoke directly to the overarching topic of the PaCE project—***populism***. The former is based on a publication for general publics in Iceland, considering the gradual emergence of populist neo-nationalism in mainstream politics since WWII and what the implications of that might be for the future of democracy. The latter is based on research findings from investigations into post-truth populism and the threat it poses specifically to media freedom and, consequently, liberal democracy.

Eiríkur Bergmann [7] talked about the contents of his 2021 publication, '***Þjóðarávarpið***', on populist neo-nationalism over the last half century and its manifestations in the present. He traces this story, beginning in the aftermath of WWII when the pursuit of democratic and liberal ideology, civil freedoms and human rights, become an important means of facing the terrors of nationalism in the past. Importantly, this pursuit finds resonance in the agenda-setting of supra-national and intergovernmental institutions such as the European Union and United Nations, i.e., to safeguard peace, civil liberties, and democratic ideals.

[7] Eiríkur Bergmann is Professor of Political Science at the University of Bifröst, Iceland. His main research focus is on nationalism, populism, conspiracy theories and information chaos. He is the author of several books, most recently "*Nationalism*" (2020) published by Palgrave Macmillan and "*Þjóðarávarpið – popúlísk þjóðernishyggja í hálfa öld*" (2021) published by Forlagið – JPV Reykjavík, Iceland.

Having established these origins of post-WWII liberalism and democratic aspirations, Eiríkur described the re-emergence of nationalist and populist politics, first in the aftermath of the 1972 oil crises, then again after the Soviet era comes to an end in 1989, and yet again in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Exploring these waves of populist neo-nationalism in more detail, he illustrated the charge against immigration and taxation following the 1972 oil crises, with which political movements emerge in defence of a nationalist response. They achieve some recognition, although temporarily, for they do not break into mainstream politics at the time. Later, it is growing scepticism of the presumed public good of liberal democracy and the globalisation of production and markets, that becomes the charge of a second wave of populist neo-nationalism in the 1990s. This scepticism and the political movements that embrace it, materialise on both sides of the east-west divide, on the one hand, resisting the passage of western ideology and governance structuring eastward and, on the other hand, resisting certain manifestations of liberalism in the west, e.g., the erosion of work security and working-class livelihood, liberalist views on lifestyles, and more. Couched in terms of nationalist and protectionist ideals, Eiríkur explained, this resistance is further cemented after the attack on the NY twin towers in 2001, however, neo-nationalist politics are still on the margins. It is only in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crises that such agendas begin to enter mainstream politics. Anti-immigration and anti-globalisation sentiments continue to be very prominent and they begin to filter into populist discourses of established centre-right political parties, building on ideas about the origins of nations and of nationhood in decline, hence, in self-defence against foreign threats.

Eiríkur emphasised the role and influence of substantive societal changes after WWII—those of the increased mobility of persons and the focus on democratic and human rights, the increased globalisation of markets and institutions with new supra-national regulations and deregulations—all of that being key manifestations of first-world liberal democracy. He explained that some leading thinkers in the west were convinced when the Soviet era ended, that western post-WWII developments would be the only way forward. For example, crushing the Berlin Wall would be the first step in an altogether removal of borders, however, history has proven otherwise.

This work is an attempt at raising awareness of populist neo-nationalism amongst Icelandic publics and Eiríkur is stressing certain characteristics of these developments as cause for alarm.

Among the examples he takes is the populist appeal of 'strong-man' leadership, the political appetite for the authoritarian who understands the nation, can interpret its will and speak on its behalf—presumably on behalf of common sense. Another example is the flooding of simple solutions to address complex socio-political and economic issues, laced with anti-elitism and anti-science, he argues. The populist discourse appeals to an ideal of the ordinary person who adheres to particular forms of protectionism and conservatism in reference to cherished traditions. It creates enemies of elites and foreign foes in people's minds, while also giving shape to their protector against such threats, e.g., in blaming local elites for betrayal and deception and of siding with foreign menace. As Eiríkur reminded his audience, democracy can only be achieved in this worldview with the assimilation (sameness) within a nation in opposition to globalism, diversity and liberalism.

Maximilian Conrad [8] has been researching more recent instances of these trends Eiríkur discussed, with focus on so-called *post-truth politics* and *rhetoric*, and the populist challenge they pose to media freedom. As Maximilian argued, this is a fundamental challenge to liberal democracy with journalism in decline as well as trust in quality journalism.

Maximilian explained that the concept of 'post-truth politics' has been popularised widely in the research community, albeit, a debated concept. One definition is to say that it is a '*style of doing politics*' in which the truth seizes to be relevant. A lot in this definition is inspired by the US presidency of Donald Trump but the concept refers as well to watershed moments in 2016, Brexit and the election of Trump. Both have been found to campaign strategically using misinformation and disinformation. Factual correctness appears to take the back seat, giving way to more emotionalist approach, primarily appealing to the emotion of anger.

Whatever can be said about the notions of truth, factual correctness or evidenced reliability, Maximilian suggests that it is not truth as such that is entirely losing ground. Rather, post-truth rhetoric is aimed at issues such as the media not covering certain aspects of truths. It is a rhetoric aimed at the shifts in politics and policymaking in recent decades, whereby national/local

[8] Maximilian Conrad is Professor of Political Science and Head of the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Iceland. His main research interests include European integration and political theory, in particular, issues connected to democracy, communication, civil society, and the public sphere. Recent and ongoing research include work on disinformation and post-truth politics. Conrad is the Academic Coordinator of the EC-funded Jean Monnet Network *Post-Truth Politics, Nationalism and (De-)Legitimation of European Integration.*

concerns continue to be addressed through conventional political practice, however, giving way to supra-national configurations of policy-making and global governance, e.g., the European project presumably working against member-state sovereignty. Post-truth discourse articulates a corrupt liberal elite acting against the will and interests of ordinary people and their nationhood.

The prominence of these and similar articulations, renders much the same conclusions as Eiríkur provides in his work, the difference being the emphasis Maximilian places on the ways in which journalism is singled out and implicated as a villain. He demonstrated how post-truth politics aim at both journalism and status quo governance models, and how the rhetoric is perverted to fuel anger and distrust as much as possible. This explains in part, he says, the uncertainties that are thereby raised on the issue of what one *can make of* factual matter, regardless of how well- or ill-founded certain observations are. Journalism has become the 'liar press' and practising journalists are painted as criminals, not public servants, and the same applies to practising politicians.

To summarise, Maximilian argued that the unfolding of post-truth politics in recent times as a *populist challenge to media freedom*, is deeply problematic given the implications this has for the future of liberal democracy. He is particularly concerned with the inclusion of quality journalism in the framing of the preoccupying problem for post-truth politicians who operate a rhetoric about corrupt conspiring elites. With this in mind, he argued, it is pivotal to spell out the relations between populism, the delegitimization of public service journalism and the consequences thereof, especially, for media freedom and democratic development.

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Judging from the reactions in the audience, populist neo-nationalism is already alive and well in Iceland and some of the rhetoric has entered mainstream politics. Among other things, elites and conventional journalism are singled out as unreliable (even lying), xenophobic attitudes are promoted to cast blame on immigrant labour, pushing anti-globalisation (anti-EU) values with appeal to the 'nation' and its heritage. The audience encouraged more clarity on these developments.

In responding to the audience, Eiríkur suggested for instance that populist rhetoric is very commonplace and often completely innocuous, however, an effective instrument to bring closer

together certain groups of people who are forced to defend themselves against aggression or discrimination. One example would be using 'us' and 'them' in claiming the rights of 'us' to be equal in opportunity to 'them'. Eiríkur pointed out in this respect, the reasoning one might find amongst disadvantaged people, e.g., young males who fall by the wayside or people who feel socially-economically cornered for one or other reason and have lost their sense of belonging in the community. They tend to be more vulnerable to the appeal of populist politics that are fuelling discord and anger. To them, the populist rhetoric might make perfect sense.

Another issue that turned up relates to the question of quality journalism. Journalists have been publicly vilified alongside the spread of social media, however, there is a lot more to be said about quality journalism on the wane as Maximilian suggested. The problematics turn on how easy it is to cultivate solidarity in parallel with division, fuelling people´s fears and, thereby, creating opposing warring factions. Maximilian argued that social media has become a vehicle of culture and political discourse, and it is a matter of power – being in power or powerless – which issues are politicised in the public sphere. Oftentimes, issues are politicised because they go viral on the networks, and algorithms are even used to tilt toward certain political agendas. Populist politics take advantage of such developments to further their cause, just as they take advantage of disaffected people who feel marginalised and willing to buy into all sorts of rhetoric to seek validation.

Two additional lessons came into focus in the exchange with the audience. One was the attention drawn to vocal 'bullshitters' in plain view, who do not care at all about factuality and say just whatever suites their agendas. The other was the suggestion that constant critique and ridicule of divisive hateful rhetoric is most likely to be ineffective, even counter-productive, one reason being the tendency towards insularity of reasoning by which, for example, populists demonise by default all outside critique.

2.2.2. Trust and accountability

Three presentations reported on surveys that seek answers on trust and accountability in times of crisis. The first introduced survey data from a set of studies on trust in politicians, administrations and authorities with a view to the relationship with accountability and liability exposure. The second introduced survey data on trust in conventional media compared with

social media for access to reliable and trustworthy information and measures to manage the covid-19 crisis. The third spoke on trust in authorities, especially health authorities to manage and respond to the public health threat of covid-19. Relating measures of trust with responses to covid-19, all three presentations make a point of showing high degree of trust in Iceland (compared to other countries), the implication being that Icelandic publics are generally well informed and the conventional media and governing bodies considered reliable and accountable.

Sigurbjörg Sigurgeirsdóttir [9] spoke on the relationship between trust and accountability and to give it some context, she spoke of the increasing demand in recent times, that politicians and administrations are accountable and withstanding of liability exposure. She mentioned the impact liability exposures can have on administrative procedures, a telling example of which is when a nurse was charged for the first time in Iceland with manslaughter by gross negligence.

Sigurbjörg's investigations address questions of how trust emerges, how it exists and what to make of trust behaviours. She explained that the relationship between trust and accountability (or liability) is not at all clear and not simple, although, we might assume that if there is evidence of accountability, trust would follow. As she explains, this may actually not be the case, in fact quite the opposite, and there are other relevant considerations in approaching the matter such as different ways of defining and examining trust – political trust, trust in public institutions, micro, meso and macro level patterns of trust and accountability. To shed some light on this, Sigurbjörg first presented the findings of a survey measuring the recovery of trust in public institutions after the 2008 financial crisis. Thereafter, she spoke on the findings of a survey on trust in Members of Parliament (MPs) and administrations and, finally, she presented recent survey data on trust in authorities in times of covid-19.

As regards the first study, her data show that trust did not return to the same degree it was measured before the 2008 crises. She frames the issue to say that, regardless of numerous investigations aimed at sharing information and analyses of what happened in the run-up to the crisis, trust did not fully recover. One could argue that, even if accountability is evident *after the*

[9] Sigurbjörg Sigurgeirsdóttir is expert in Political Science and Professor of Public Administration in the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Iceland. Sigurbjörg´s research is mainly focused on public policymaking and the administration of welfare and the healthcare system.

fact, the exercise of accepting liability does not necessarily prevent institutions from failing in the future. This might explain to some extent the tendency towards increased distrust rather than the opposite, i.e., if there is evidence of wrongdoing in the first place. Sigurbjörg refers to the academic literature on the matter, explaining how it varies in assessing this relationship. One is to say that trust and accountability are correlated, another to argue that trust is an independent variable that needs to pre-exist in some measure to cultivate and protect it, and a third claiming that there is no relationship whatsoever. Studies done in Britain for instance, are an example of a relationship in which public investigations and audits primarily confirm what is already recognised as the built-in *distrust* in administrations and politics. In short, the relationship is multifactorial and complex.

From survey data on MPs and administrations, Sigurbjörg raised the question of trust somewhat differently, i.e., in relation to the personal morality of MPs in Iceland—the impact of morality (or lack thereof) on their public duties and the way their professional work is perceived by publics. The results here show high degree of trust but also that a large majority of MPs in Iceland do not meet the expectations of publics. As a part of this study, respondents were given the opportunity to ascribe desirable and trustworthy personal characteristics to their MPs. Top of the list was to have the interests of the nation at heart over and above self-interests. Number two was speaking truths and number three to be qualified to do the job. Later in the study, an additional forth was articulated, that politicians should truly follow through on their political and policy agendas and action plans. Altogether, these results exemplify again the complexity in relating the notion of trust to the contextual features of institutional liability and being accountable to publics.

In relation to covid-19 in particular, a survey on trust in authorities is framed in terms of *more or less* of it, *before and after* the pandemic hit. Sigurbjörg shared some fresh survey data and the pandemic not over. While she did not provide further analyses of these data, her preliminary explorations appear to indicate that Icelanders are overwhelmingly trusting of authorities in times of covid-19. It is conspicuous – she says – how many people feel that trust has remained more or less the same, especially towards the health (epidemiological) authorities, with slightly more reduced trust in MPs.

Jón Gunnar Ólafsson [10] is also emphasising the high degree of trust in authorities in Iceland. He had been investigating the roles of government, media and publics in relation to the covid-19 pandemic—more specifically, with respect to what he called the information and disinformation pandemics coinciding with covid-19. He presented his findings from Icelandic surveys looking into trust in information and its mediators, based on similar surveys done elsewhere. Jón Gunnar began his presentation, speaking on the traditional role of the media which is to be a 'guardian', to filter information and confirm facts, to find people to speak with, bring together different views, analyse and mediate to publics. In terms of the covid-19 pandemic, several questions come up about this role, especially considering new-emerging technologies of communication and mediation, e.g., social media. There are questions raised about media coverage in Iceland, Jón Gunnar explained, for example, if there was lack of targeted criticism, resulting in relatively homogeneous reporting. As Jón Gunnar put it, perhaps our governing institutions were making unsound decisions but then it was unclear what instruments the traditional media could have at hand to adequately respond to such a turn of events.

The two surveys Jón Gunnar referred to, date from June and August 2020, providing two snapshots of the distribution of information about covid-19 in Iceland. He explained that the survey questions were centred on trust in those who mediate information on the pandemic, and among the key findings is that the daily press conferences of the civil protection and health authorities were considered most trustworthy, along with associated public (official) sources of information. Also, the majority of respondents considered themselves knowledgeable and well-informed about the pandemic and, on the issue of coming across misinformation/ disinformation, the majority claimed to have found such information in distribution on social media. The majority opinion was also that experts should be mediating information and they should be asked about particularities, not politicians who perhaps do not even trust themselves to participate in these conversations.

[10] Jón Gunnar Ólafsson is a post-doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland. He received his doctorate in media research in 2019 from Goldsmiths University, London. Jón Gunnar has participated in international research projects, including *Media for Democracy Monitor* and the *World of Journalism Study*. His research has been published in international journals such as the *Journal of European Public Policy* and the *Nordicom Review.* Jón Gunnar received a three-year research grant from RANNÍS in 2021 to conduct research into information chaos and media coverage of Icelandic politics and Covid-19.

Jón Gunnar suggested that the challenges in media communication are numerous under the circumstances, considering also what needs mediating at any given time. Among the examples he took is that knowledge of covid-19 has been changing over time, response measures have changed (e.g., wear mask/do not wear a mask) and, as time goes by and the pandemic progressed, it became more complex to bring quality reporting to publics. When everyone is tiring of the pandemic, it is harder to rely on people´s attentions and rely on the adequacy of mediating formats and venues.

A key concern Jón Gunnar is stressing here, turns on the lack of specialist knowledge among Icelandic journalists and the lack of critical voices and critical questioning, for example, how well (if at all) media outlets are addressing those who do not speak Icelandic. All-in-all however, he emphasised the majority figures in the survey data, those of overwhelming trust in authorities and the traditional media, compared with data from surveys done elsewhere.

Geir Gunnlaugsson [11] comes to a similar conclusion about overwhelming trust and satisfaction with authorities in Iceland and makes a point of emphasising that, as do both Jón Gunnar and Sigurbjörg. Amongst the survey questions he presented, are some that address public concerns over pandemics quite broadly, for instance, in relation to distant countries. How well (if at all) are Icelandic health authorities prepared, he asked, taking Ebola in Africa as his example and an incident of suspicion when an aircraft landed in Iceland's international airport with an individual on board possibly infected. Relating to this example, Geir explained the extensive efforts across the globe in recent times, at constructing contingency plans to manage severe threats to public health, for example, SARS, swine flu, Ebola, and more, and – as he further explained – part of building up response systems is to decide who the front-line staff are and what exactly a response is responding to. For example, could Icelandic health authorities manage an Ebola-

[11] Geir Gunnlaugsson is formerly the Medical Director of Health in Iceland, director of the Center for Child Health Protection and Professor Emeritus of Global Health at the University of Iceland. He studied medicine at the University of Iceland and the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, specializing in paediatrics and public health science. His research and publications have focused on breastfeeding, infant mortality, development and violence against children, infectious diseases, development cooperation and health care systems in Iceland, Guinea-Bissau and Malawi. He is a member of the Research Council of the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala and chairman of Africa 20:20, association of people supporting developments in sub-Saharan Africa.

infected patient? What are the insecurities faced by healthcare staff and/or residents of the country?

Geir suggested that if we sense the danger being very far away geographically, say in Africa, then perhaps there is also a general feeling amongst publics that Icelandic authorities would not be well equipped should such a disease present itself (his survey data said only 19% think they are). That said, Iceland should be seen relationally amongst other countries in the global community and contingency planning has to cover the possibility of serious infections entering the local population as now has happened with covid-19. Geir argued that publics in Iceland are not particularly aware of the actualities of a global context. For example, most people do not consider Ebola a serious threat, and it took quite some time before the response to covid-19 was generally seen as protecting the public against an imminent and serious public health threat.

The notion of trust is very prominent in all these considerations, not to mention, as Geir put it, that trust in (health) authorities can be seen in relation to the political climate of the time. The survey data he presented hold different kinds of questions relating to trust, some of which have to do with trust in reference to corruption or trust in reference to the agreeability (or not) of certain decisions by authorities and satisfaction (or not) with the results. For example, his data show that it seems easier to be biased regarding corruption in Africa as an explanation for why Ebola keeps appearing there, while only 10% of survey participants in Iceland would consider corruption being a factor in the spread of covid-19 or that pharmaceuticals had something to do with the development of the pandemic (14%).

Overall, Geir claimed that a vast majority of Icelanders trust authorities during the covid-19 pandemic. They are overwhelmingly satisfied with contingency plans and response measures to stem the outbreak, and they trust the health service. The conclusion he drew was that Iceland comes out very strongly in managing the outbreak in comparison with other countries. Further to that, he argued that the results show the prominence of agreement in Iceland and satisfaction with measures such as quarantine and isolation, and on the question of accepting vaccinations against covid-19, it is noteworthy, he said, how compliant publics wish to be.

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The three presentations, each in their own way, draw attention to majority agreements amongst publics in Iceland, insofar as they are overwhelmingly trusting of authorities, in particular health

authorities and civil protection, traditional media and experts. The reactions and comments from the audience prompted reinforcements, for example, the speakers emphasising the surveys as a testament to an unusually high level of solidarity and compliance in Iceland compared with data from elsewhere. The reactions also prompted disclaimers, for instance, referring to the timing of surveys conducted early during the covid-19 pandemic. Jón Gunnar made a point of suggesting that his survey data relate to the ways in which Icelanders typically react to seasons – happy to show off how very good they are at major short-term effort. The circumstances engender high degree of trust and functional information exchange, however, that may not last for very long. Another disclaimer was to say that surveys draw a relatively simple picture for Iceland in comparison with similarly drawn pictures of other nations. That said, one could argue that the key lessons to learn from the comments and questions are based in the mentions of alternative perspectives and approaches to those presented in the talks:

- The need for other methods than the survey format
- The relevance of other scholarships than indicated
- The acknowledgement of other pressing issues than the ones presented.

For example, Jón Gunnar was asked in reference to the overwhelming trust figures, who the agencies are that can erode trust and if the binary is not mistaken, of wrong and misleading information vs. correct and helpful. He was also asked in reference to figures on distrust in social media if the figures were only for covid-19 or in general. In answering those questions, Jón Gunnar suggested that a different study might have caught changing trust figures over time and measuring information quality is intractably linked with studying the impact information can have. He also explained that distrust in social media is measured universally, but another problem is the weakening quality of traditional media, e.g., when traditional journalism uncritically reports on the back of social media discourse. Addressing these issues, he explained, is perhaps better achieved by investigating more closely the discourses in play, instead of using surveys.

Sigurbjörg was asked in reference to society surpassing politics in growing expectations of MPs' good morality after the 2008 crisis, how people can expect change if they are not ready to vote for change. In her response, Sigurbjörg first explained that it varies amongst political parties, the degree to which morality is prioritised. Also, the older parties have relied for a long time on a consistent base of support which is now much more fluid and shifting. An explanatory factor she

mentioned is manipulation and deception, rooted in behavioural and social-psychological investigations of how opinions and decision-making can be influenced—methods that are often applied aggressively just before elections (see Akerlof & Shiller, 2015). These techniques originate in the advertising sector and migrate into politics to target the aspects of the human mind that are vulnerable to manipulation. Investigators have explained why these techniques work, for example, because of poor information literacy across the board. People trust information without checking for secondary sources. It is also quite comfortable to only believe what one wants to be true, whereas it takes substantive challenge to change a person's mind but people can be deceived. In short, these tools would not be used except because they work, and the relevant scholarship helps to better understand the dynamics of this kind of manipulation.

Geir was asked about the minority trends in his data, especially if health professionals are at all interested in investigating population segments that profess certain marginal views, say, if such views can be associated with behaviours they would consider 'undesirable' from a public health perspective. For example, a minority opinion of 14% (representative) might be a small number in Iceland (ca. 52,000 persons). Do health professionals ignore such numbers or do they see a challenge in potential consequences of certain attitudes, for example, if the ensuing behaviours result in the need for extensive additional services? Geir replied that he strongly agreed that marginal views (and behaviours) need taking into account when the effects can be expected in the work of health professions. In this regard, he offered the example of vaccinations and suggested that a special response plan should be available when it comes to resistance to vaccinations against covid-19, i.e., marginal opposition could be a considerable challenge because we only need a small number of individuals to cause trouble for the many.

Finally, Jón Gunnar was asked about people's ability to assess, select and draw conclusions from the magnitude of available information—if we are not reaching certain social-psychological limitations. Jón Gunnar referred to research in his response, showing that people search and browse their interest areas first and foremost, and the research agrees that this tendency is a causal factor in the polarisation we are witnessing in public discourse. The media does not contribute directly to this development, he said, but the technologization of the media does. Jón Gunnar also pointed out the contradiction in believing that we can all be very enlightened (or should be) with easy access to information. The vast majority use of information and

communication technologies is to access entertainment, and the question of whether or not one is enlightened or has the means to be is neither here nor there. Most people drive directly into what they already want and what they enjoy. Even the occasional 'lesson' one stumbles upon when sporadically turning on the radio or the TV is now quite rare in comparison.

2.2.3. Politicians, public servants and Reykjavik's Democracy Policy

Three presentations reported on processes of municipal governance. The first is based on research into the tensions between political leadership and administrative practice in local governance, and the importance of clarity and transparency concerning duties and the division of tasks, with implications for public trust in decision-making and leadership. The second and third report on Reykjavík City's Democracy policy and action plan, instigated to increase transparency, public trust and participation in decision-making. One is reported by an official, the other by an elected representative but both of them participated in the preparations and design of this policy.

Eva Marín Hlynsdóttir [12] introduced her research into Icelandic municipalities, looking at the relationship between political actors who are public representatives and public officials working in administrations. She opened her talk with reference to Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), claiming that politicians are not administrative officials and administrative officials are not politicians. In other words, while governments set policy and deal in ideological matters, administrations handle the day-to-day functions of governance. But, as Eva Marín explained in relation to her research, Wilson's dualism of administrative practice and politics does not quite stand up to scrutiny. There is a lot of overlap and turn-taking between the two.

In Iceland, this is very noticeable in local governance in which an interplay between political/policy and executive roles is inevitable due to the very small size of many municipalities. As Eva Marín explained, attempts have been made to hire 'neutral' executives to oversee local administrations and ensure a separation from the political leadership. However, it is important

[12] Eva Marín Hlynsdóttir is Professor of Public Administration at the Faculty of Political Science, University of Iceland. Eva Marín has published a number of articles and books on government issues. Her research has for example turned to the working conditions of elected representatives and directors of municipalities, the impact of gender on the management of municipalities and the division of tasks between municipalities and the state.

to realise that this interplay is in direct consequence of the fact that administrations are meant to be carrying out the will of politicians and they exist for that purpose first and foremost.

The problematic being raised here turns on the question of transparency and coherence in decision-making, i.e., reaching decisions democratically. For example, there is a long tradition in rural Iceland to simply call on the 'head' of a district or municipality to sort out some issue or other. Historically, it is also the case that local officials can seize power and hold onto it to a point where it becomes a struggle for politicians to regain their leadership and authority within the district in question. The key problem is not only one of trust under the circumstances, i.e., whether or not officials are trusted overall, but also if political representatives ought to set restrictions on officials and the powers they can exercise.

To further complicate matters, the interviews Eva Marín conducted with mayors across Iceland show that it varies markedly how clear the job description is and it varies what the mayors think is clear or unclear about their role. It turns out that the law on the matter is not always as clear as the mayors themselves believe it is on the remit of their duties. Consequently, tensions in interplay between politics/policy and officialdom can run quite high in both directions. There are examples of officials standing firm, often by virtue of accumulated experience, even working against the policy agendas of local councils. Conversely, there are examples of local councils giving direct orders to administrative officials, the consequence of which tends towards hostility.

From these observations, it can be concluded that the rules of the game are not clear enough and thereby also the scope of duties and division of tasks. Eva Marín suggested in this regard that it is very possible to sharpen the lines and increase transparency. First and foremost, she explained, there is needs for good co-operation between political leadership and administrative staff, ensuring the transparency of their respective duties and the decision-making processes. It follows, that leaders within municipalities set a good example in their individual (and professional) conduct to increase trust, not only across divisions in governance but to increase trust in *good governance* amongst publics.

Sigurlaug Anna Jóhannsdóttir [13] spoke on Reykjavík City's Democracy policy, approved exactly a week before the Conference, and she focused her talk on certain justifications faced by the administration for having such a policy in the first place and how it should be understood.

Sigurlaug Anna is an expert in democracy and a civil servant in the City's administration, leading the development of the policy. As she explained, the Democracy policy is first and foremost designed as a tool for implementing the laws on municipalities, i.e., with provisions to ensure that residents and users of local public services have opportunities to participate in and influence local governance and that includes participating in preparations for policymaking. In other words, the policy stipulates participatory democracy to be exercised in-between elections and thus should be considered substantial support to representative democracy while not replacing it in any way. The key to the policy and the associated action plan are the tools and procedures of participation and consultation, necessary to provide elected representatives, the administration and residents with adequate supports and relevancy constraints.

Sigurlaug further explained that this policy had been a long time in preparation, i.e., beginning in 2018, being processed within the City's administration, through extensive consultations and, eventually, coming to the City council for final approval on 19. October 2021. There is a culture of democracy and governance to consider here, she argued, in matters of setting standards and articulating procedures, but also understanding the implications of delivering a Democracy policy in the context of existing ideas and approaches to governance and public engagement. For example, this work involved members of numerous political parties which in and of itself is a challenge. An important feature in the development of the policy was also the consultation process and the extensive engagement of different stakeholders reviewing draft documents. The 'Better Reykjavík' online engagement portal was used, focus groups were organised by a consulting firm, series of workshops took place within the City's administration and open public meetings were held (documentation is available @ https://reykjavik.is/en/lydraedisstefna).

[13] Sigurlaug Anna Jóhannsdóttir is an expert at the Human Rights and Democracy Office, City of Reykjavík. She has BA and MA degrees in political science, and a diploma in public administration. She also has teaching qualification in political science for the upper secondary level. Sigurlaug Anna has done research into democracy in municipalities at the University of Iceland, under the supervision of Professor Gunnar Helgi Kristinsson. In 2012 she published an article entitled "*Guidance on democracy in municipalities*" in collaboration with the Institute of Public Administration and Politics.

Being approved finally, she explained, the policy is now valid for 10 years (2021-2030), implementing an action plan and evaluation processes in parallel, the results of which will be captured at a three-year interval (first block 2021-2024). The goals are threefold: 1. supporting residents in influencing the development of their neighbourhoods; 2. supporting elected officials in better understanding the wishes of residents and in building decision-making on best available information and knowledge exchange; and, 3. supporting the administration in preparing and executing consultations between residents and elected representatives.

The vision for the future and guiding light is the mobilisation of residents to participate, to lay the foundation for innovation in democracy, increase trust in the City's administration, strengthen the quality of decision-making, meet people where you find them and ensure the legitimisation of new participating groups. Finally, the plan is to evaluate consultation processes for larger decisions and to ensure that these processes are effective and appropriately configured at all stages of decision-making.

Dóra Björt Guðjónsdóttir,[14] who is an elected representative and chairwoman of the City's Human Rights, Innovation and Democracy Council, spoke on democracy issues from a political standpoint. She painted the wider picture of what is intended, what the thinking is and the aim of political leadership in democratic development and opportunities for democratic participation, i.e., through democracy and transparency projects. She explained how, for her, it is important to look at the overall context of democracy in reference to the 'tree' as metaphor, with its branches and roots and the life supports of atmosphere, fluids and nourishment.

In discussing the newly approved Democracy policy, Dóra Björt pointed to the pathways it suggests for residents to engage in dialogue with the City, for example, via a tips website and the 'My Neighbourhood' (Hverfið mitt) online portal that facilitates public dialogue within City districts, through resident councils, the involvement of grassroot initiatives and more. For example, residents have been consulted on proposing and prioritising projects through online exchange and voting, as a way to tackle the limitation of funds against the myriad of good ideas for neighbourhood improvements, maintenance, increased security and more. This approach,

[14] Dóra Björt Guðjónsdóttir is an elected representative of the Pirate Party in coalition government in the City of Reykjavík. She is also the chairman of the Reykjavík Human Rights, Innovation and Democracy Council.

she explained, leaves room for optimisation in order to bring larger and/or more extensive projects into the fold, while also advancing diversity that can positively change the appearance and nature of neighbourhoods. But, the result is not only projects but increased public participation and a novel glimpse at how participatory democracy works in practice.

Observing Reykjavík's Democracy policy as a political ideology, Dóra Björt explained, it projects a holistic view of democratic development and working methods in practice, including the work that went into preparing the policy itself with the involvement of representatives across parties and extensive consultations with external actors. At its core is a cycle of working practices—listening to critique, changing, sharing and ensuring transparency, i.e., attending to all the 'branches of the tree'. Framing the political ideology in this way, is to foster a culture of democracy in the City and support a societal awakening about the necessity of organised consultations: conversation, enlightenment and reflection, and to anticipate benefitial outcomes of citizen assemblies, citizen juries and participatory portals.

In her final remarks, Dóra Björt emphasised the administrative aspects of quality decision-making that require consultation on the usability of tools and procedures and of streamlining management. To this end, political leadership is also required in activating adequate technologies and other supports, for instance, better and quicker access to relevant information at all times. Leadership is also needed in motivating and mobilising residents to support the decision-making processes to the benefit of future developments.

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Judging from the questions and comments from the audience, Eva Marín's presentation foregrounds common concerns about small municipalities in Iceland. It may not be clear at times who is in charge and making decision, and public response to decision-making or lack thereof can be mismatched with expectations of leadership.

For example, Eva Marín was asked to reflect on issues such as when expectations of elected representatives are frustrated because residents cannot engage them to solve some issue or other, and they blame officials for obstructing their pledge. She was asked to reflect on the informal (hidden) powers of administrative officials, for instance, in covid-19 interventions when political leaders stepped into the background. She was asked about the upward flow of information from residents to government representatives, for which administrators are often

in charge and possibly also in a position to steer towards their own ends. Finally, she was asked if she could think of a solution to these uncertainties and lack of transparency with respect to the roles and duties of mayors, elected representatives and administrations serving small electorates.

In her response, she emphasised the culturally entrenched image of the strong leader and mentioned in this respect her interviews with mayors, some of whom claim full awareness of the powers they hold—that basically they can govern as they wish. Nevertheless, she explained, publics demand that access to infrastructures and services is ensured on an equitable basis and there are hindrances built into the work practices of local government representatives to keep mayors in check. Also, politicians who meddle in decision-making without administrative involvement, typically signify corruption (nepotism) and lack of transparency. On the question of how to solve these issues, Eva Marín argued that the ideology of local governance is still pretty much in the 1980s when mayors were heads of small districts, often in position to favour their friends and associates. The ideology has not matured in correlation with developments in municipalities that have been growing and taking on larger and more complex societal projects in the past few decades. Therefore, it is very timely to reconsider the rules of the game.

Response to the political and administrative take on Reykjavík's Democracy policy and action plan, zeroed in on a question of the future impact of engaging residents in decisions at the municipal level and the hit-and-miss of engagement so far. For example, they were asked about the commitments of politicians and administrators to deliver clear results from engaging publics, for instance, what the role is of resident assemblies in the larger scheme of things. They were also asked about involvement in decision-making in specialised domains such as developing and implementing educational / teaching materials that need to serve children of different origins, living in very different social and economic circumstances.

In response to these questions, Dóra Björt referred to public engagements in the past, the willingness to participate perhaps with no obvious outcome and/or feedback. The Democracy policy, she claimed, is meant to rectify this and ensure not only feedback but also the sharing of relevant information. The idea of the resident jury, for instance, is based on bringing independent parties to the consultation table to review complex issues on a case-by-case basis and submit assessments—issues that require resolutions independently of party-political visions. On the issue of specialised services, Dóra Björt foregrounded the question if

municipalities are even capable of delivering the legally required services, in particular the smallest municipalities. Municipalities are required to deliver education and social services (including for disabled persons, young and elderly people) and much more, in addition to ensuring democratic participation in decisions that directly affect the lives and livelihoods of residents. In the end, it is residents who ought to be at the centre of decisions.

2.2.4. Resilience in populations

One presentation on the day centred on the topic of resilience, both individual and community resilience. Sigrún Daníelsdóttir [15] spoke at length about the cultivation of mental health and resilience in times of crisis which she summarised as the necessary flexibility and adaptability in responding to stress and sudden pressures, combined with a constructive ability to recover. As Sigrún explained, the five key factors to consider are: endurance, resilience, recovery, adaptation and transformation. These factors are of essential importance at a time when rapid change is imminent, affecting many aspects of private lives, as well as of social/occupational and community practices.

Notably, the covid-19 pandemic has been disruptive in this respect, although, it appears overall that the population is in reasonably good mental health. Sigrún argued however, that a crisis will foreground the most vulnerable social groups, for example, children, the elderly and foreign-born residents, and it is important to acknowledge that conditions are much worse amongst the marginalised, including individuals with special needs, those living with violence and those who lack social-cultural and economic capital. Furthermore, she mentioned the hardships felt amongst frontline healthcare workers and others in frontline services who were continuously on call during the pandemic.

Sigrún made a special mention of the importance of proactive selfcare—to maintain good physical health, to cultivate a positive attitude and meaningful social relations, and to seek assistance if/when needed. Effective selfcare requires adequate resources however, and

[15] Sigrún Danielsdóttir is a psychologist and works at the Public Health Department of the Office of the Medical Directorate of Health in Iceland. Her main work is focused on mental health and promotion of health in schools, workplaces and communities. Sigrún leads a policy team promoting mental health in schools and in suicide prevention.

individual outcomes can be measured in correlation with a person's social standing. The economic standing of individuals matters, and so does educational attainment, job security, secure housing, freedom from violence and discrimination, and personal safety in general. As Sigrún explained, looking into the significance of these resources brings to light the interrelations between individual capacities, societal practice and what a community of the collective can offer, but together they shape the underpinnings of a resilient society.

The thrust of the argument here turns on the problematic aspects of selfcare and of building resilience. According to Sigrún, different institutions and systems of care have not been communicating well and not operating very well together, while society is certainly in need of effective coordinated psychiatric and psychological services, including prevention and early intervention programmes in mental health and public health interventions more generally. Icelanders may have hundreds of years of practice in resilience, considering the hostility of the natural environment. Accordingly, when faced with a pandemic the notion of *the nation* – repeatedly recovering from natural disasters – becomes the basis on which appeals to solidarity are made by authorities, i.e., that the people are in this together. Sigrún concluded that we have seen both solidarity and resilience, however, highlighting the discrepancies that become evident at a closer look at the demographic of the country. She suggested that we are still learning from the financial crisis in 2008—learning to recognise the social groups that are vulnerable in one way or other. We are still learning to ensure the resilience of the job market which is one extremely important factor in both societal and individual resilience. And, we are still learning that effective coordinated mental health services are an investment in the future of our society, in view of community resilience resting on the health status of its members.

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A member of the audience enquired whether Icelanders are still learning to adequately deal with social-cultural and economic hardships (unemployment, disabilities, etc.) because they have primarily been hit hard over the centuries with natural disasters—external factors such as extreme weather events, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes and more. For example, the unemployed still tend to be met with blame of simply not being efficient or adequate. In her response, Sigrún described the systematic approach in Iceland to managing the covid-19 response, as well-oiled machinery (per civil protection and emergency management), but suggested that we should be asking here if complex and difficult societal issues concerning

individual and community well-being – as is evident in emerging psychiatric problems – could be addressed with a similarly well-oiled machinery.

One could argue that the metaphor of the 'well-oiled machine' is somewhat limited to tangible working parts operating together seamlessly, while some of the more difficult societal problems that a pandemic like covid-19 can unfold, are complex multi-problem clusters—what Sigrún referred to as 'wicked problems'. Such problems are not easily addressed with more or less insular systems of co-operation and orchestration. Rather, such problems call for ongoing explorations and modes of discovery about societal and individual affairs combined with vigilance, variability and dynamism in response to what will always be – in part – unknown emerging issues.

2.2.5. Opinion formation and the knowledge society

Three presentations reported on research into knowledge exchange, organised debate, deliberation and the interdependencies in knowledge formation and expert labour. The first explained the outcomes of engaging the resident population in deliberations and debate around the question of trust in authorities, including members of underrepresented groups. The second addressed the importance of taking the knowledge society seriously, e.g., rethinking the relevancy-constraints placed upon the involvement of expertise in matters of public concerns. The third reported on research into organised deliberative exercises, arguing that this form of debating – if used systematically – is a powerful tool to approach and reflect upon difficult societal issues and the interactional setting of an organised debate can engender opinion change.

Roxana Elena Cziker [16] introduced the PaCE research project, the members of which have been investigating the rise of populism in Europe since 2019 with the aim of coming up with concepts and tools to support liberal democratic development. A key part of that work, she explained,

[16] Roxana E. Cziker has been the project manager of the PaCE project on behalf of the City of Reykjavík. She has also been responsible for Reykjavík's participation in NET4Age-Friendly, an EC COST Action that aims to develop an international and interdisciplinary network to build a smart and healthy environment for senior citizens. Roxana holds a PhD in Psychology for people with disabilities and a PhD in Medical Science, studying the visual processing disorders in children with visual impairment due to congenital brain abnormalities. She also holds a Master´s degree in Management, Counselling and Psycho-pedagogical Assistance in Inclusive Institutions.

was engaging members of minority and marginalised groups in different regions of Europe as part of organised stakeholder consultations, i.e., to ensure the participation of under-represented groups.

Roxana spoke at length about these engagements, already mentioned on these pages (the *Democracy Labs*), with topical focus on trust in authorities during the covid-19 pandemic. The aim was to capture public attitudes and aspirations towards democratic development in reference to the pandemic, how social media influence the opinion dynamic and how underrepresented groups are situated therein. Roxana spoke further about organising the Icelandic *Lab* in January 2021, especially the approach of eliciting responses to exploratory, deepening, and reflective or activating questions and probes (see p.12-13 in this report, section on the *Democracy Lab*).

Trust and distrust in authorities is the overarching thematic category in organising the responses that the Icelandic *Lab* generated—a global theme, under which participants articulate positive insights and trust, critical views and distrust, challenges and uncertainties. For example, positive views were formulated about the frontline civil defence team, health authorities, the knowledge-driven strategies, the availability of information and media updates, relaxed mobility measures, people's co-operation in many areas and the country's overall security. But, alongside these formulations are the expressions of concern with regard to the actions of governing institutions, on the strength of measures in managing the pandemic, on communication strategies, co-operation and coordination, the monitoring of cascading effects and issues of individual wellbeing and quality of life. For example, critical views were voiced with respect to communication strategies—issues of clarity, accessibility, adaptability and coherence. Lack of adequately tailored information for various groups and sectors was brought to light, lack of transparency in decision-making, and over-reliance on authorities for consultations and availability of (and access to) information and evidence. It further emerged that inter-departmental and inter-ministerial coordination appeared to be lacking in important respects, calling for cross-sectoral and transdisciplinary networks of co-operation to prevent and/or remedy negative cascading effects. The economic sector was affected, e.g., employment and migrant labour, also the health and social sectors, even human rights. As Roxana pointed out, it matters who the trusted and distrusted are, as it appears that the same entities can fall on either

side: frontline defence teams, experts, ministers and health authorities, whether or not it is good to be in Iceland, and more.

On the bases of these exchanges of views and concerns, *Lab* participants came up with recommendations on how to improve governance in a time of crisis. As Roxana explained, the recommendations aim at strengthening democratic participation for a more inclusive society which inspired the organisation of the Policy Innovation Days, asking how we create an open society for all. Thematic/conceptual categories were also extrapolated from the analysis of participant responses, i.e., to shape the structure of the 2nd day Workshop: 1. Communication strategies of governing institutions; 2. Resilience and coping mechanisms; and, 3. Political leadership.

Kristrún Th. Gunnarsdóttir [17] spoke at length about multi-disciplinary trends in academic research, dating back to around 1970 and variably referred to in the scholarly literature as Science Studies (SS), Science and Technology Studies (STS) or similar. Kristrún explained how these trends have roots in transitions in epistemology in the late 20th Century, alongside the emergence of novel scholarly approach and empirical methods to investigate techno-scientific progress. This mix of scholarship involves researchers with background in the science and engineering disciplines, however, focusing their investigations on social-cultural, political and other means of shaping knowledge and techno-scientific governance. It also involves researchers with background in the social sciences and humanities, directing their gase at specialised fields of scientific and technological production. The scholarly influences are often far afield, Kristrún explained, STS is a bit like describing robotics. In the end it requires naming the whole alphabet of knowledge domains that are asserting themselves in variable combinations, notwithstanding, traditional sources of philosophical and ethics treaties of scientific reasoning and the impacts of technologies already in use.

Research centres and academic departments, devoted to this type of scholarship, accentuate the importance of *taking the knowledge society seriously* and to pay attention to what is at stake

[17] Dr Kristrún Th. Gunnarsdóttir is an expert, working in central governance at the City of Reykjavík. She has been a research fellow in the UK since 2009, working on EC-funded projects on innovation, governance, and societal progress. Her research focus has been the analyses of discourse in policymaking and planning, in conflict over ideology, and in connection with policy actions. Kristrún has written on policy innovation, promise and expectations, public understanding and public participation, and interdisciplinary consultations on the future.

when a narrow range of experts aggregate around what essentially are societal and existential problematics such as the covid-19 pandemic, digital transformations or urban engineering, to name a few. To cement this line of reasoning, Kristrún took examples from her own field of investigating the promises and perils of smart solutions, e.g., how ordinary environments in relation to such solutions are mis-represented by the engineering disciplines when left to their own devices, or how the exploition of ordinary living turns underhand when exclusively approached through the lens of marketing. She also took the example of the *trio* in daily press conferences in Iceland in the early reponse to covid-19,[18] as if they had been abandoned at the very start of the pandemic without support from those whose expertise (qualitative and quantitative) is the constitution, structure and characteristics of the communities they were addressing. This observation is by no means a condemnation of the work of these people, Kristrún stressed, but the *trio* defaulted to relying on a stereotype of *Icelanders* and only addressing *the nation*, until different voices, audiences and concerns began appearing on the sidelines.

The distinctions that are enforced here, segregate not only disciplines, but nature from culture, object from subject, and they enforce the self-evidence of certain definitions, such as that technology is neutral, only good and bad applications of it, or that nature (in itself) does not discriminate. What STS scholarship has taught us however, is how dubious these distinctions and definitions become under scrutiny. We may belive it is the sole business of engineering to design smart solutions until we see for ourselves the social-cultural and political shaping of those designs. Similarily, we are prone to believe that a virus exists wholly independently of our ideas of it, which is certainly reflected in the plethora of images representing the corona virus floating in suspension. However, a closer look at the epidemic shows how it sinks into the trenches of differentiation that societal practices shape and maintain—where we differentiate people, origins, circumstances, abilities, strengths, weaknesses and much more. The virus travels in these trenches because there are no other routes for passing through. And, as Kristrún argued, clarity on these interdependencies is key to taking seriously the full availability of knowledge, experience and expertise.

[18] The *trio* are the Chief of Police - Civil Protection, the Chief Epidemiologist and the Medial Director of Health.

Jón Ólafsson [19] spoke on opinion formation and its influences and took the example of a deliberative poll that was conducted in connection with the debate on the Icelandic constitution (2019-2020). This deliberative exercise took as its point of departure an opinion poll from 2019, showing that a relatively few people consider themselves to have good knowledge of the constitution, but the attitudes towards it were variable. An exercise was conducted subsequently to reach publics through deliberative participation and to report back to authorities on any new attitudes or changes in attitudes.

Jón explained what he means by deliberative exercises. They are a mix of opinion polls and organised debate, typically first conducting a poll on certain issues using random sampling, then inviting individuals from that group to participate in debate. In preparing participants for debating, they receive a set of proposals with for-and-against arguments, emphasising that it is possible to have different (but perhaps equally sensible) attitudes towards the same things. Smaller groups are then organised to deal with each of the issues, during which participants can ask questions of available experts and simultaneously reflect on their own views and attitudes. Jón further explained the premise of debating and deliberating which is not to find the 'correct' answers, but the opportunity to study the material at hand, evaluate for-and-against arguments and have topical discussions to shed more light on the issues that are questionable or a source of controversy.

Here it is perhaps most interesting, Jón pointed out, to examine attitudes before and after a debate or explore what happens during the debate, especially if it can be assumed that in the end all participants have become well-informed, have listened, discussed issues, and so on. However, ordinary reasoning also distracts, e.g., if we take it for granted that a sensible attitude automatically leads to the right solutions. Common sense in itself is not always patient, understanding, listening and so on, as Jón explained, ordinary reasoning as a force has two main functions: 1. justifying everything that comes to one's mind at any given time; 2. criticising

[19] Jón Ólafsson is Professor at the School of Humanities at the University of Iceland. Jón´s research is in the field of political philosophy and culture studies. He has written on participatory democracy and theories of democracy and has addressed questions concerning political epistemology. He is currently leading a project on democratic constitution-making, which is supported by RANNÍS and within it discussing how the public can play a direct role in shaping society-based policies.

others. This force is then offset by interactionism which suggests that our sensibilities work best in communication with others where attitudes and knowledge are shaped and developed.

The suggestion here is that this interactional approach is a window to further examine how ordinary reasoning works. Jón took as an example the deliberative exercise on the Icelandic constitution where a majority of 52% on a proposed change reduced to a minority of 32% in consequence of debating. In another example Jón suggested that things are gradually clarified during debates, sharpening on important issues and shifting expectations, so on and so forth, his conclusion being that this form of debating, if used systematically, is a very powerful tool for an interactive approach to difficult issues and opinion formation to sort them out.

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Jón's presentation drew interest in his views on populist rhetoric, in particular the difference between a discourse of *we vs. they* as opposed to the positioning of the will of the people against an elite. He was also asked to reflect on the commitment of politicians and the government in relation to studies in democratic reform—calling for the understanding that public participation has consequences and that citizen assemblies have a role to play and, btw, what happened to the constitution?

Jón opened his response by stating his position, not being so worried about populism compared to many others. We tend to overemphasise the most negative characteristics of trends, he explained and added, if education and empowerment of individuals is the key, then we are looking at a very slow process. The problematic issue is that there are no immediate solutions, while we simultaneously observe fear mongering all over the place.

Perhaps it is better to take a long-term view, Jón suggested, and consider the foundations of effective public consultations. There are strong voices arguing that 10 years is too long to be spending on revising the constitution, but maybe that is not the case at all. That said, at a closer examination the disputes are not that difficult to overcome once we cool down the adversarial tensions of hate and disgust. Given that the instruments are adequate and effective at getting people to listen to each other, it becomes easier to construct the conversation and meaningful consultations—very mundane observation in fact, he said.

A comment from the audience confirmed the temptation amongst Icelanders (perhaps everywhere), that when someone steps forward offering a solution (especially with authority),

that we naively want to believe we can hang our hat on it. We learn this from the covid-19 pandemic but then there is the question of reaching a large group of immigrants, the lack of visibility there and what tools are available to legitimise and engage their participation as well as members of other marginalised groups.

Kristrún opened her response, referring to the PaCE *Lab* data from January 2021, unequivocally showing how helpful it would be to *shed the Icelander*, as she put it, to take a moment to look around and really observe the constitution of the demographic and the societal structuring. If we did that as a matter of course, she argued, the response programmes and approach to covid-19 might have been rather different right from the outset. The data show that different institutions and associations have been dealing with societal and individual impacts, however, not adequately coordinated (see also Sigrún's presentation) and not reaching all those who are affected. Among other things, it goes to show that if information and communications are supposed to be useful, they have to be understandable and accessible and tailored to all kinds of people and needs and not just *idealised versions of Icelanders* with children and grandparents, and homes that are functional sanctuaries. Unfortunately, this was the tone in public address by the *trio*, especially early on during the pandemic.

Talk of overwhelming solidarity, of being in this together, the high degree of trust and compliance, is also good reason to shed the Icelander for a moment, Kristrún added. Not to cast doubt on the large proportions that surveys indicate are trusting and satisfied (e.g., presentations by Geir and Jón Gunnar), but one has to assume that the numbers refer to *us Icelanders*, an imaginary of a nation that does not hold very well, considering the full residency of the country. By fixing our gaze and our attentions on 'our' solidarity, she argued, we are erasing large numbers, dozens of thousands of people who are 'not together with us', hence, at odds in all sorts of ways for all sorts of reasons.

In response to suggestion from the audience, that the *trio* was indeed *the authority* in power, Kristrún pointed to an unquestioned distinction between expertise and politics, particularly evident in public discourse on how preferable it was to have the experts assessing and suggesting actions, instead of politicians. But, she argued, commanding decisions directly affecting people's lives are always political wherever they come from so this distinction is neither here nor there in the context of the pandemic.

2.3. Lessons to take to the Workshop

Although the presentations on the day are divided here into five sections based on the focus of the research and the policy actions they speak of, what they all have in common are depictions of *complexity* as well as some *urgency*. They tell us about post-truth politics, sensitising rhetoric and narratives of discord. They tell us about misinformation, tensions between political leadership and administrative practice, and lack of transparency and coherence in decision-making. They talk about trust, political integrity, expertise, accountability and the need for participatory democracy. They explain the resources necessary to foster societal and individual resilience and, they reflect upon knowledge exchange, public engagement, organised debate and deliberations.

The complexity depicted in these presentations is a reminder that, after all, there are no quick and easy fixes. The diversity of needs, requirements, interests and stakes requires mindful approach and foresight. It is a reminder that if individual and group empowerment is key, the road to agreeable resolutions is going to be a very long road.

The urgency also reflected in these presentations is indicative of a society on cross-roads, calling on authorities, institutions, individuals and groups to rethink existing practices, to take the pulse on both the common and the marginal attitudes that shape interactions and public discourse, and commit to and be prepared for transformative change.

3. The deliberation Workshop

The Workshop was guided in delivering recommendations to policy actors and public administrators, by the overarching question inspiring the Policy Innovation Days: ***How do we create an open society for all?*** as well as by its title: ***Co-creative policy innovation and trust in authorities in times of change***. It was action-oriented and organised into two work sessions that are explained below in a *note on method*, preceded by an introductory session to familiarise participants with the context and purpose of the whole event.

The introductory session comprised of three short presentations that together provided a conceptual bridge across context and purpose, the evidence that came together at the Conference on the previous day, and the upcoming deliberations. Again, the director of the civic

engagement programme at the Gerðuberg public library, Dögg Sigmarsdóttir, opened the day with an inspirational talk on the socially inclusive and interactive space that the public library has become—a venue that encourages freedom of expression, the exchange of ideas and opinion. She spoke at length on the concept of an ***open space for all*** and gave examples to illustrate the importance of its real-life manifestations, where all sorts of people can initiate topics of discussion and debate with implications for their own wellbeing, their community and sense of belonging. In short, the open space facilitates dialogue and connecting with others, and it inspires transformative ideas in part by the willingness of its visitors to respect one another and peacefully co-exist.

The lead organiser of the Policy Innovation Days, Dr Roxana E. Cziker, stated that the public library became the venue of choice for reasons that coincide with the introduction by Dögg. She briefly explained the connection between the Workshop on the day and the *Democracy Lab* that was held in Iceland in January 2021, on matters of trust in authorities during ten months of a covid-19 crisis. She familiarised participants with the outcome of the *Lab* and what it contributes to the evidence base, against which Workshop deliberations could also be evaluated. Thereafter, Dr Kristrún Th. Gunnarsdóttir explained the Conference themes on the previous day. She gave an overview of the academic research and policy initiatives and summarised the main outcomes.

Altogether, the purpose of the introductory session was to connect a substantial evidence base with the topics that subsequently would be presented to Workshop participants for debate and deliberation. However, the wider implication of what had already been achieved at the opening of this Workshop – and very much set the tone for the work to follow – pertains to the pivotal role of the ***open space*** and the importance of ***policy innovation***, ***evidence-based policy*** and potential for ***transformative change***.

3.1. A note on method

The circumstances of the covid-19 pandemic, among other things, imposed restrictions on in-person meetings. This restriction altered the implementation of PaCE project actions, including a restructuring of the methodological design for the *Democracy Labs*. The research team involved in organising and conducting the *Labs*, compared and evaluated a host of available

methods against the intended purposes and aims of the debate and deliberation design, including considerations of accessibility, length in time and mode of interaction.[20]

Among well-known methods that potentially could meet the criteria are Charette procedure, Dynamic learning agenda, Joint visioning, Mind mapping, Six thinking hats, World café, Concept mapping, Expert interviews, Learning journeys, Market place, Social bookmarking, Social network analyses, Storytelling, Writeshop, and more (e.g., Karner et al, 2011). Eventually, the **World Café** qualitative method was chosen for its welcoming environment, promoting respectful relationships and equal partnerships in a relaxed, informal and creative atmosphere and, importantly, because it is very adaptable to conducting the deliberations online which was essential at the time when the *Labs* were supposed to take place.

3.1.1 Design and facilitation

The design of the Workshop involved a multi-stakeholder approach of bringing together the expertise and experiences of [29] professionals, policy makers, researchers and 3rd sector parties. The recruitment is based on identifying (and snowballing) individuals, operating within the relevant institutions and organisations (see Acknowledgements),[21] preferably in position of authority and/or responsible for implementing programmes relating to the topics of the Workshop. The Workshop used *civic participation* as a format and a qualitative research method, here specifically using the **Silent Brainstorm** method and – again – the **World Café** method in two separate sessions respectively, led by expert facilitators.[22]

In choosing these methods, the organisers already anticipate to which areas of expertise and experience the participants belong. Therefore, one can argue that a certain *quality and texture of participation* is already predicted in making these choices. For example, using **Silent Brainstorm** to elicit response to the leading question, "*How do we create an open society for*

[20] Applying interactive facilitation techniques and methods, requires careful consideration of purposes and aims, including: trust & alignment; community building; problem solving; common problem understanding; understanding of different viewpoints; knowledge sharing; developing a shared language; exchanging of information & experience; building a shared vision; collective knowledge generation; collective action; dissemination of findings; reflection & learning; monitoring; knowledge transfer.

[21] See list of participant institutions and organisations, p.3-4.

[22] Facilitators were hired from a local consulting company.

all?", is premised on the understanding that participants already have expectations – individually – on how their contributions are relevant and useful. As regards the World Café method, one can also argue that assessing its suitability is inextricably linked to participant profiles (and profile diversity), and the choice of topics for the deliberation session.

Silent Brainstorm is a technique for quickly and quietly generating ***individual ideas***, free from distractions, interactions, time for reflection or the influences of others. It favours equal contributions of those who engage, and it is suitable as a creative method to propose all sorts of conflicting responses, involving people of diverse backgrounds, different thinking styles and agendas.

This method was combined in the first session with a 'game' of *prioritising*, *presenting*, *ranking* and *selecting* ideas, altogether executed in five stages:

1. *Generating ideas.* Participants individually (quickly and silently) frame up to three answers to the leading question, "*How do we create an open society for all?*"
2. *Prioritising.* Participants individually prioritise one of their own answers and, based on criteria of relevance, expand it into an *idea to be presented* to others.
3. *Presenting.* Each idea is now presented to 5 other semi-randomly selected participants, i.e., on the condition that those people have not previously met or worked together. Each participant then has 1-2 minutes to introduce and argue their idea to one at a time of the 5 participants linked to them.
4. *Evaluating and ranking.* As a result of the previous stage, each idea goes through 5 rounds of evaluation, in each round being ranked with a score from 1 to 7.
5. *Top selection*. Finally, the whole group is presented with the three highest scoring ideas, resulting from presentations, evaluations and ranking in stages 3-4.

Arguably, this method is an effective warm-up exercise for subsequent interactions, i.e., the ultimate icebreaker to introduce participants to one another, focus the issues and get people talking.

The World Café qualitative method, centres on *techniques of facilitation*, however, a simple, flexible and effective participatory method of engaging people in open and informal dialogue (Löhr et al, 2020). '*World Café*' is also a metaphor, referring to "*naturally occurring networks of*

conversation and social learning through which we access collective intelligence, create new knowledge, and bring forth desired futures." [23]

This method is typically used to facilitate the exchange of ideas and opinions of people with different backgrounds, knowledge, expertise and experience,[24] one reason being its particularity in promoting respectful relations and equal partnerships, hence, generally considered welcoming of marginalised groups (MacFarlane et al, 2017). It can be adapted to meet a wide variety of needs, specific to context, number of participants, purpose, location and other circumstances. In being a constructive welcoming environment, it also fits the so-called *Positive Psychology* framework, i.e., by strategically promoting interactions and equality, not to mention, stimulating creativity and tapping into collective intelligence. In short, the World Café refers to the "*café ambience that is created in order to facilitate informal conversation, representing a neutral public space where people feel free to engage with each other*." (Löhr, et al, 2020, cf. Brown & Isaacs, 2005).

For the purposes of the second work session, the World Café method was enacted, using five principles:

- *Setting*. Participants are divided into 5 small groups of 5-6 persons each who share a table. These groups will then stay together during three rounds of deliberation in order to ensure a consistent flow of ideas and exchange of information amongst their members, while also encouraging all members to participate actively in the work of their own group.
- *Facilitation.* Two facilitators explain the whole process, starting with a warm welcome and an introduction to the World Café method, thereby, setting the context. They divide into the groups semi-randomly, i.e., strategically using criteria of avoidance: *professional and personal affiliation*. The facilitators are responsible for the deliberations, by monitoring the timing and drawing up conclusions at the end.
- *Deliberations.* Three topics are prepared, each guiding a round of deliberation. Each round is allocated 25 to 30 minutes and each group will have to designate a group leader who can

[23] https://thesystemsthinker.com/the-world-cafe-living-knowledge-through-conversations-that-matter/
[24] http://www.theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/

animate the discussions and take charge of collecting the paper sheets and post-it notes that members produce in the process.

- *Guiding questions.* Each of the topics are supported by a set of guiding questions / considerations for group members to keep in mind, rather than to look upon as strict conditions for addressing the topics. Accordingly, these questions / considerations were printed out and distributed on the tables, one for each of the three topics:

Topic 1. *Communication strategies, mediation of and public access to information*

Information/messages/instructions *What are the main features/elements to be considered as communication strategies envisaged by authorities?*	Dissemination and communication channels *How can we define effective dissemination and communication channels?*	Groups *What are the distinct groups of people in the country?*
Things to consider: – opportunities – barriers/obstacles	Things to consider: – opinion – culture – specialisation – level of understanding – critical views and appreciations – technology	Things to consider: – circumstances – knowledge – attitude – ability – interest – location – background

Topic 2. *Resilience and a society for all in liberal democracy*

Impact/consequences *What is the direct impact of the covid-19 pandemic?*	Evaluation and monitoring *What kind of supervision is necessary and in which sectors? Where is lack of supervision?*	Follow-up *What methods would be recommended for strengthening the resilience of individuals and communities in the country?*
Things to consider: – workplace – quality of health – well-being – economy	Things to consider: – long-term consequences on different sectors	Things to consider: – diverse groups of people – language barriers (different dimensions)

Topic 3. *Politics and political leadership and their influence on social transformation*

Parties *Who are the main leaders in the community and what are their roles?*	Instruments and approach *How can networks be created and refined among representatives of different parties?*	Actions/measures of implementation *How can policies and strategies be formulated and implemented in order to address the needs of different sectors?*
Things to consider: – offices of human rights protection – services – administrations – NGOs – other stakeholders	Things to consider: – rights – communication – education	Things to consider: – coordination between different authorities – coordination among authorities and different organisations – consultation and co-operation

- *Harvest.* The designated group leaders share the insights and key findings resulting from group deliberations.

As we already explained, the **Policy Innovation Days** are very much inspired by the outcomes of the January 2021 *Lab*. For example, the topical areas of choice for debate and deliberation in this Workshop are taken directly from the content analyses of *Lab* data, in which these broadly based topics acquire their relevance. Then, the deliberations begin to independently extrapolate *focal points* for further investigation which is largely in agreement with the lessons of the Conference, as we shall see. Each group and each round of deliberations produced substantive results that translate into recommendations for policy makers and public administrators and are transferable in recommending a platform for future policy design and innovation for change.

3.2 Topics of deliberation

In the following, we describe three rounds of deliberation by the five (5) groups of participants in our Workshop, each of which is guided topically. The topics overlap in many respects, for example, matters of ***inclusion*** (or lack thereof) are addressed in relation to *communication* and the *mediation of information* (Topic 1) but also in relation to the question of *resilience* (Topic 2) and concerns about *political leadership* (Topic 3). That said, we present the three domains separately in the order they were addressed in the Workshop and we summarise each topic descriptively, based on the notes (paper sheets and sticky notes) produced individually by the

groups. For each topic, we also discuss the lessons we can learn from this labour, building on our analyses and considerations of the scholarly literature with input from the Conference presentations on the previous day.

3.2.1. Communication strategies, mediation of and public access to information

Key findings of the January 2021 *Lab* in Iceland point to serious challenges concerning the communication strategies adopted by authorities during the first year of the covid-19 pandemic. The findings argue lack of **transparency, coherence, consistency, clarity**, and **accessibility of information** and they challenge the extent to which **circumstances, type, format, quantity, frequency, timing**, and **origin** address and respond to the needs of different groups of people. As Kristrún suggested on the previous day, shedding the Icelander from time to time might help bring about more inclusive perspectives and strategies. Overall, participants' points of view reveal a clear call for an **integrated, inclusive, and culturally sensitive** communication strategy that recognises and assumes the diversity and complex constitution of the population. Also, as Roxana emphasised in her overview of those findings at the Conference (see presentations by Kristrún and Roxana), they highlight that an effective communications strategy would entail multi-disciplinarity, good co-operation between different levels of governance and different societal sectors, and creativity in reaching people. Arguably, we are seeing similar concerns emerge in the Workshop.

Group 1.

This group reflects on being in the **OPEN SPACE** of the public library in which this deliberation Workshop is proceeding and, that – in essence – is at the heart of practising dialogue and communication strategies. Then they expand from there to consider the ***school system as a facilitator*** in a similar way as the public library, signalling their awareness of the geographical location of this particular SPACE, i.e., the neighbourhood surrounding the library which is well known for being exceptionally multicultural for Reykjavík.

The second thing they emphasise turns on ideas on HOW TO REACH PEOPLE which is a crucial method of approach. We notice the emphasis on ***physical methods***, ***on face-to-face methods***, on using ***posters*** to pin up in the local neighbourhood stores, to have ***contact persons*** within certain communities, especially amongst marginalised people. They also mention conventional media

such as television and radio, rather than relying too much on smart tech as communication and outreach devices.

Group 2.

This group also emphasises the importance of REACHING PEOPLE and this notion of ***reach*** is here centre stage. There are a few notes on approach to that, ***physical approach***, ***virtual approach***, ***technical and/or strategic***. On the list of priorities is ***ordinary speak***, ***being warm*** and ***personable*** – to ***talk to people***, not only self-reflecting as an institution. In other words, they prioritise being prepared for multiple voices in different places, from different individuals to diverse groups and – in relation to that – they highlight the notion of OPEN SPACE which indeed is the venue where this deliberation is taking place.

They also emphasise the question of WHO is really in charge. Who is mediating information relevant to 'my' life or crucial for 'my' life? They emphasise WHAT needs communicating, i.e., what is a dialogue about, taking examples of ***basic rights*** issues, on ***available services*** and ***responsibilities***, and on differences in the relations between publics and institutions. Furthermore, they mention relations between local and federal organisations, governance institutions and the third sector. In short, these relationships as much as the topics of dialogue here are all issues that revolve around TRUST, hence, very important to address.

Relating to the WHO and WHAT is also the question of HOW to communicate, applying all meaningful and relevant methods and according to people's profiles:

- Translation (using smart tech).
- Taking phone calls.
- Having individually tailored information.
- Having availability of personal conversation, interviewing and consultation.
- Using visual representations.

Group 3.

This group's main emphasis is on POWER relations in dialogue and exchange, asking WHO is in power and how that power is used to marginalise others. Examples include:

- Marriages of Icelandic males to female immigrants.

- Disabled people being dependent on others who are in a privileged position and create obstacles because they lack compassion, empathy and understanding.
- Any agent in power, being those in position to take advantage of their role, for example, translators between different languages, including sign language.

The group also emphasises the role of GATEKEEPERS, somewhat a similar concept to the ***contact persons*** mentioned by Group 1, but here articulated as persons who ***detect problems*** and ***respond***, and ***guide people*** through a process and procedures.

Related to this is the importance this group attaches to ***cultural literacy*** within all systems and institutions. The days should be gone, of the county sheriff who does not have a translator on call. Furthermore, there are certain professions that require cultural literacy in order to generate relevant and crucial information in great diversity, for example, journalists, teachers/educators, and medical doctors.

Group 4.

This group is reflecting on the situation of migrant adults and children, emphasising ***improved teaching of Icelandic***, including the need to address ***accessibility issues***. They are emphasising as well improved teaching of mother tongues of children migrants. Related to this is their suggestion that the mediation of information by governing bodies, media enterprise and organisations, including the third sector, should be made available in more languages than currently is often the case.

This group also emphasises ***adaptation strategies*** and methods to facilitate access for non-users of digital technologies, for people lacking in literacy for all sorts of reasons, for example, by being flexible in the use of written and visual formats.

Group 5.

This group is considering immigrant workers, emphasising the importance of the Icelandic language for all purposes of exchange and – similarly to Group 4 – they suggest ***improved teaching of Icelandic***, however, placing the responsibility firmly on ***employers to encourage and ensure access***.

Regarding immigrant labour, they emphasise active and engaged communications and dialogue because it is a serious challenge to REACH PEOPLE – yet another emphasis – with relevant and crucial information. In this respect, they suggest multiple pathways for information exchange and dialogue, including direct approach and technical approach.

Overall, what matters the most, in their opinion, are **trust**, the **approach** and the **actual conversation** and, on the issue of REACHING PEOPLE, they ***prioritise the conversation*** as the most effective means of getting the foot in the door. An example they take of a **communications pathway**, rests on the ***concept of citizen democracy***, for example the '*My neighbourhood*' digital platform, although, observations indicate that women are participating in larger numbers than others. Furthermore, the attempts at REACHING PEOPLE need to ***build trust*** as well as having opportunity to ***show trust***. Information must be reliable and leading to a comfortable degree of predictability.

Key lessons

Communication strategy is considered a key instrument authorities have in their arsenal, and the interface is essential for public communication and interaction with target audiences and focus priorities during crises. The ideal multi-dimensional communications architecture should comprise of communication policy goals, relevant indicators for monitoring and evaluation, suitably defined target groups, diagnosis of community needs, agencies and actors that share responsibility, and official and trustworthy communication spaces (see European Commission, 2019; Bragina et al., 2020). In addition to that, an efficient, relevant, and goal-driven communication strategy can bridge between public authorities, public co-operation and compliance. Such a strategy is also significant in designing action plans and devising public interventions. Altogether, a robust communication strategy "*can facilitate public trust, confidence, and, importantly, compliance with the behaviours needed from individuals, communities, organisations, and nations*" (Hyland-Wood et al, 2021, p.2; see also Carter et al, 2011; Siegrist & Zingg, 2014).

While these considerations are specific to crisis management, they are also reflected in government efforts more generally, to improve upon democratic decision-making protocol, for example, considering Reykjavík's Democracy policy and action plan, introduced by Dóra Björt

and Sigurlaug Anna at the Conference. The covid-19 pandemic has confirmed once more that effective communication is not only about one-way messaging and passive transfer of information to publics. Rather, it is an interactive process of information exchange, involving diverse opinions and expertise—multiple forms of mediation and consultation between individuals, groups, communities, institutions and organisations. (Hyland-Wood et al, 2021). This dynamic of exchange and intervention gives more substance to conversation and consultation, especially in a time of crisis. Complex and rapidly changing circumstances exert pressures on authorities, policy makers and professional sectors, especially in the areas that cross policy and disciplinary boundaries.

Sigrún Daníelsdóttir argued similarly at the Conference, that communication, leadership, co-operation and coordination are central during rapid change when decisions are made under pressure and demanding intervention. Furthermore, rapid change requires dynamic flow of information, taking into account common skills, abilities and knowledge, cultural and social identity, age, gender and access to official sources of information, all of which influence the circumstances in which information is selected, processed, interpreted and understood.

To avoid the biases engendered by variable interpretations, communication strategies can be strengthened by incorporating community perspectives, needs, values and beliefs, cultural and social profiles, quality of information and digital literacy. This was the experience in Australia with the 2009 H1N109 influenza, that an effective strategy of *going to people,* mirrors the complexity of the communities it wants to reach, understanding the issues, designing and aligning communication to particular social groups in a placed-based approach that is focused on the situated context of people, recognising local power structures and instituted cultural realities.

Participants suggested four key domains of action that ought to frame – in their view – better, secure, and easier access to public information:

- Open space for public dialogue.
- Strategies and pathways of reaching people.
- Active community mediator(s) and facilitator(s).
- Information skills and instruments.
- Responsibility and power.

These suggestions appear to be formulated in terms of ***effective mediation***, ***open spaces***, ***adequate instrumentation*** and ***improved skillsets***, all of which are necessary to achieve the desired outcomes, and they bear some resemblance to the emphasis in Jón Ólafsson's lecture at the Conference, on the importance of the conversation and open-minded exchange to address difficult public issues. However, the implied assumption here is that existing public communication strategies are not fit for purpose and need substantive rethinking and overhaul. This resonates with the findings of the January 2021 *Lab*.

Where to share information? According to participants, a familiar and informal open space and sense of community shapes the role of physically and psychologically interactive public spaces that motivate and encourage free dialogue and conversation**.** Two settings in particular, appear to be popular with the groups in terms of their mediation potential: the community-school, considered a binder between home and community, and the community-library as a multicultural space for dialogue and networking, where people can freely state their opinions and concerns. Arguably, the *sense of community* projected here is in line with its definitions, e.g., "*a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members´ needs will be met through their commitment to be together*." (McMillan & Chavis, 1986, p. 9). Workshop participants are predominantly referring to a closer community (the neighbourhood) for the development of social bound and interconnectivity, against perceived decline of communities and identity/belonging in the western world (Bonaiuto et al, 2003; Francis et al, 2012).

How to reach people? Nowadays, access to (digital) information is wealthy and generous, it being accessible in different formats and distributed via multitude of channels. However, there are still substantial inequities in access to and use of ICTs, and still striking challenges in communication ethics and information integrity. Furthermore, the covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that even if multi-channelled and multi-formatted dissemination of information is achieved, some people still consider access problematic. This situation is particularly challenging when attempting to reach minorities and marginalised groups. As participants suggest, the whole process of communication and information flowing from public institutions to different groups of people should be re-considered, re-structured, and tailored**,** bearing in mind the particularities and the profiles of different groups and communities and reaching people in their place.

Reaching people with the right information entangles different approaches: format of information/message, instruments and channels for information dissemination, skills and abilities for selection, processing, interpretation and understanding. In regard to format, participants argue that the 'same' information should always be displayed in different layouts, arrangements, and levels of complexity, e.g., posters, visual representation, simple text, etc. Also, information dissemination should choose different channels and communication formats: physical and virtual/digital approach, face-to-face, personal conversation, interviewing, group dialogues, conversation, and consultations with contact persons in neighbourhoods. Another condition for efficient and effective communication strategy, they suggest, is harmonising people's digital and literacy skills and cultural literacy, and assisting people with migrant backgrounds to improve their Icelandic language skills.

Who is the mediator? Dissemination and information need attention, responsibility, and action-interaction, an active exchange between a sender and recipient. In participants' view, information exchange is the shared responsibility of public institutions, state organisations, governance, and non-profit organisations, completed by citizen initiatives and interest to be involved and informed. In their view, for the entire process to be fulfilled, it must meet certain conditions: respect for human rights, access to services, contact persons – Gatekeepers, etc.

Who is responsible and in power? Public authorities, government, organisations, institutions, third sector organisations and independent experts should share the responsibility of designing and disseminating information to targeted groups of people, as a measure of evaluation and the monitoring of needs and interests.

3.2.2. Resilience and a society for all in liberal democracy

Participants in the January 2021 *Lab* suggested that measures adopted by authorities have led to long-term consequences, evident in different sectors such as health and wellbeing, the economy, domestic and cultural life (including rights issues). Authorities were focused on protecting public health, but still to the detriment of preventative and protective measures to safeguard mental health, psychological states and wellbeing, and adequate ongoing treatments and follow-up on people with chronic diseases and other illnesses. Sigrún elaborated on this particular problematic in her talk on resilience and mental health at the Conference.

A resilient society must be willing to focus on multisector well-being and healthy lifestyle programmes that can strengthen both individual and collective resilience as well as the resilience of authorities, and of coping attitudes in response to crises. The covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that public administrations, social groups and individuals did not distinguish and articulate proper strategies and resilience mechanisms to manage secondary and cascading effects of the crisis in economic and social sectors facing disruptions of the normal life flow. Arguably, the covid-19 pandemic is not the only crisis in history that has taken societies by surprise, the lesson being that immediate intervention during crisis cannot address the complexity of ensuing effects if no preventative measures are envisaged in advance. History has repeatedly demonstrated that a crisis can 'knock' on our doors at any time and the realisation of not being prepared is historically familiar. Participants in the January 2021 *Lab* recommended preventive measures to better prepare the entire population for an eventual crisis, especially, preparing vulnerable people such as children, adolescents, lone parents, migrant workers, the elderly, individuals with existing disorders and adults at risk of abuse. We see similarities in the Workshop deliberations, in terms of what is included as 'means of coping'. However, the groups appear to divide between focus on resilience *as such* and focus on the notion of 'society for all', the latter couched in discourse of inclusion which only underscores the integral role of inclusion in fostering resilience.

Group 1.

This group is reflecting that we now live in a multi-cultural society, hence, we are pressured to ***learn new social behaviours***, considering that all of us are, in effect, different or ***otherwise***. They emphasise ***asking people*** as a way of REACHING them on the question of what they need, in order not to give up in times of crisis. REACHING PEOPLE, a subject also repeatedly mentioned by the participants under Topic 1, is preventing adversity and decreasing the chance of resignation.

Related to that is reflecting that typically ***people fear what they don't know***, hence, the importance of understanding diversity in different circumstances. The group takes examples of ***strategies to combat fear*** that ***include careful formulations*** of the information exchange, of efforts to improve knowledge, and of having ***good and open communications***. Furthermore, the group emphasises both ***formal and informal venues*** for dialogue and exchange:

- Official information (press) meetings or meet-ups.
- Meetings in small groups, being aware of the time-constraints in availability of some people/work sectors.
- Casual conversation/consultation and sharing with others.
- Pep-up coffee shops, given some adequate format/housing/combination with other services/practice, such as for example the public library.

Group 2.

Centring on resilience, this group emphasises ***connecting people***, REACHING PEOPLE, preventative measures, and creating the necessary time to ensure ***access to societal goods***. On outreach specifically, they suggest a method of ***finding people where they reside***. A lot can be gained by fostering constructive near-environments and SAFE SPACES in which ***neighbours are equals***. The group refers to ***social wealth*** when people can come ***together to connect and belong*** socially, knowing that others have similar experiences. In other words, the ***pathway to resilience is human connection***.

Related to this view, the group suggests ***strengthening empathy*** by creating venues in which ***people are heard***, and they can ***step into each other's shoes***. The main obstacle, they suggest, is how accustomed we are to ***focusing on in-groups*** and ***ignoring out-groups*** which begs the question of ***WHO is marginalising***.

Thinking on preventative measures – that need budgeting – they mention:

- Tackling social isolation.
- Identifying and meeting needs.
- Regenerating institutions/breaking down stonewalls.
- Connecting the goings-on in society with the actions/strategies of institutions.

Group 3.

This group suggests ***quotas for gender and diversity***, to build requirements about diverse backgrounds into the hiring and other practices of institutions and companies. They suggest organising a 3-year experimental project to work through such demands for social inclusion. For instance, if we demand teaching Icelandic, it needs ***teaching consistently and strategically***. We also need to ***employ people with varying expertise to ensure diversity***.

More specifically on learning and teaching Icelandic, the group points out that it is ***not enough to just offer courses***, we need to support ***conversations in Icelandic***:

- Build dialogue across different groups into all teaching of Icelandic.
- Teach ordinary Icelanders how to ***teach Icelandic as a matter of course*** in everyday life.
- Develop activities that could be based on an 'Icelandic village ideology': *Do you want to talk to me in Icelandic?*

Group 4.

This group is grounding ***equality in relation to employment rights*** of Icelanders versus immigrant workers, emphasising:

- ***Fair practices*** when firing staff.
- Improved dissemination of ***information on rights and duties*** in the labour market.
- A requirement that employers hold regular ***courses on wage issues***, and perhaps that unions incorporate this requirement into the contracts they sign with employers.

The group also foregrounds ***issues of human trafficking*** in reference to the police force tackling such issues, for example, through the development of a division ***dealing specifically with slavery*** and further developments in international co-operation, to ensure that we can adequately ***punish perpetrators*** and ***support victims***. In short, the group recommends more effective, better coordinated, more accessible financial and social support to the groups who need it.

Group 5.

On matters of influence and impact with respect to social inclusion, this group suggests that ***social media is undermining of inclusion***, illustrated by how dissonant we are, however much connected in response to covid-19. They are also concerned about ***social isolation*** which can be ***linked to economic standing***, and they are asking if everyone has the ***same opportunities to participate***, mentioning specifically young men and young people.

On monitoring and evaluating social inclusion, they are concerned about young people – again – and in relation to that, concerned that there is indeed a ***glass ceiling on educational attainment*** which is an obstacle to belonging.

Further, on strategies to improve social inclusion, the group suggests empowering ***critical thinking and judgement about social media***. Their concern is how low the bar has become on the Internet (anything goes). They also suggest ***reaching marginalised people where you can find them*** instead of expecting them to show up, and we need more ***inclusive dialogue in public address***, e.g., 'dear residents' rather than 'dear Icelanders' and we need to ***address values***:

- What are my/our goals?
- What drives me/us forward?

Key lessons

Resilience is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, resulting from the interactions between intrinsic, interpersonal assets (individual), intrapersonal resources (stable, caring and supportive family and/or social environments) and extrinsic (social and contextual) factors (Rayman & Varga, 2015), where family, schools, peers, colleagues, neighbourhoods, and ***inclusive communities*** play an essential role. Further, as Rayman and Varga argue, resilience is sustained and coexisting with effective processes of inclusion and integration that can ensure access to a responsive social environment for active multi-dimensional participation, addressing the economic, social, political and cultural aspects of individual and social lives. Resilience has to be approached also from the perspective of overcoming attitudes of individuals and communities facing threatening, unknown and uncertain situations, outside of conventional human/political control.

Individual and collective assumptions of threat are very common response to change, novelty, uncertainty and the unknown in general—a threat response that is activated each time people evaluate real or imaginary unpredictable situations as being out of human control and endangering their 'perceived stability and security'. This notion of a *default to threat* has its roots in the emotional theory of 'negative bias', and is based on the view that people are more likely to prioritise negative information over positive, expecting that uncertain situations only turn up the 'negative' side of a coin. (Carlton, 2016a). Fear of the unknown (FOTU) as defined by Carlton, is "*an individual's propensity to experience fear caused by the perceived absence of information at any level of consciousness or point of processing*" (Carlton, 2016b, p.31; Carlton, 2016a, p.12). Sometimes threats are obvious and real, at other times people imagine threats that are not realised but come to life in and through imaginary thinking and ruminations of envisaged future

threats. A principle of conservation and of a comfort zone regulates individual vigilance (silent or active), tracing every 'step' in order to prevent the 'loss of something', carefully checking every corner and edge for 'some or no' danger.

Arguably, the factors that sustain fear of the unknown and of uncertainty, are the instinct of conservation and the preservation of one's comfort zone when faced with lack of predictability and lack of knowledge that could support the individual in understanding certain situations. One could even argue that common manifestations of threat response and fear are central to the populist discourse of 'us vs. them' or of instigating opposing factions of corrupt elites and ordinary reasoning, which was discussed in some detail at the Conference (see presentations by Maximillian Conrad and Eiríkur Bergmann). Indeed, the covid-19 pandemic brought people into a state of uncertainty, a global threat to people´s health and lives, potentially, with dire consequences for their future wellbeing and quality of life. The uncertainty in and of itself is tangible threat, a catalyst for not knowing what one can do or what one should do—of increased vulnerability to suggestive manipulation.

In accordance with the above, our participants address and underscore inclusion in the deliberations, suggesting it is in fact an integral component of resilience. Inclusive social environments, community belonging and public dialogue are prerequisites to resilience in the sense that they support and equip people with the necessary strategies to react and respond to adverse and uncertain situations. Participants recognise that social environments unravel attitudes and behaviours, that we fear the unknown, refer to in-groups and ignore out-groups. One suggestion they make is to encourage more inclusive dialogue, co-operation and networking to address opinions and values and openly ask what drives people and what their goals are. Again, we find resonance with the findings of the January 2021 *Lab*.

Participants mention the agents they believe can sustain resilience mechanisms: authorities – individual citizens – collectives. As a result of collaborative effort, these agencies *can* facilitate access to information, diversified dialogues, conversation and consultations, and they *can* establish preventative and protective measures for different groups:

- Diversity – acknowledging multi-cultural society and societal dynamics.
- Preventative and protective measures.
- Language – considering multilayers and multilevel information exchange.

- Awareness (or not) of the availability of information – avoiding reluctance and fear for the less familiar things such as strangers and foreigners, difference and distance.
- Open spaces that facilitate dialogue, networking and making the 'unknown' more familiar, approachable and empathic.
- Achieving robust self-representation and collective identities in small communities, neighbourhoods and *'village life'*.

Participants suggest that the multicultural society and social dynamics we are experiencing nowadays, call for reflection, awareness and response to diversity, and also require learning to accommodate different behaviours, and improving knowledge and awareness (facts, information, skills). The social dynamics require constructive and open communication, drawing the attention to education and preparedness for dialogue and opinion exchange.

In participants´ opinion, vulnerable categories of people are more exposed to social and economic risks, especially during crises since they are less equipped with resilience strategies. Therefore, preventative and protective measures such as periodic evaluation and monitoring of community needs, as a collaborative effort across institutions, can better tackle people at a risk of social isolation and exclusion, and better prepare organisations to respond to their needs.

Finally, 'reaching people where you can find them', in the context of social interaction and exchange, is a strategy sensitive to people's preferences, for example, of asserting their identities within their local communities amongst familiar faces, avoiding the 'vacuum' of wider society—the risks of insecurity, fear and distrust.

3.3.3. Politics and political leadership and their influence on social transformation

Participants in the January 2021 *Lab* look upon politics and political leadership through the lens of (dis-)trust in public authorities in response to the covid-19 crisis. The dichotomy leans to the side of trust, however minimal the political presence on the front lines. Participants (like everyone else) only became aware of the political leadership in reading or hearing of certain interventions introduced by them. Furthermore, participants in the *Lab* favoured the primary role of experts (civil protection and health authorities) in decisions on intervention, considering the imminent effect upon personal health and well-being, whereas political leaders remained in the background. In a similar vein, Sigurbjörg, Jón Gunnar and Geir Gunnlaugsson, all refer to

overwhelming trust in authorities in the survey data they presented at the Conference, in particular the primacy of health authorities in charge of response to covid-19. As Jón Gunnar pointed out, they were delivering the most trustworthy information in co-operation with the civil defence authority through the traditional media format—the press conference.

In comparison, Workshop participants consider political roles in terms of leadership and influence on policy agendas, even though the political agenda or the leadership are not necessarily well understood, nor how leadership shapes the strategizing of policy. This was argued by Workshop participants as they foreground the lack of visible co-operation between public administrations, political leaders, publics and different stakeholders, including third sector and community organisations.

The January 2021 *Lab* touched upon this disconnect, however, participants in the *Lab* did not explicitly address the consequences for policy innovation and the potential for transformative change, whereas participants in the Workshop made recommendations that are indicative of contemporary demands for democratic development through effective coordination, conversation, consultation, knowledge exchange and transparent conduct and decision-making in the public sphere.

Group 1

This group reflects on policy from an institutional perspective, and it reflects on the contributions of the most ***diverse voices in policy-making and political life***, the main obstacles to participation being lack of language skill, unwelcome attire and not having citizenship. They emphasise the view that a policy strategy should be ***approached bottom-up***, e.g., searching for and including the contributions of different stakeholders invited to sit at the same table. Also, policymaking should create a ***space for co-operation and coordination*** between institutions, avoiding too many public-sector silos.

The group suggests that an information policy will help the process of ensuring adequate dissemination of ***relevant information to all people***. They consider it important in this respect, for instance, to protect the accessibility that the healthcare services can enable (knowing their clients) with efficient information dissemination in different languages, using different formats, e.g., ***visuals and audio instead of only written text***.

In relation to political leadership, the group emphasises the importance of sticking to a particular policy and to ***maintain an agreed-upon leadership***. They argue that ***resilience relates to 'staying the course',*** the metaphor they used was that you can change your mind in the 'middle of the river', but you cannot 'switch horses'.

Group 2.

Central issue for this group is to see ***conversation taking place***, and by that they mean, in-between and within institutions, as well as, with citizens and stakeholders.

Governing ***institutions need to understand each other's mandates***. Building networks of those institutions is halted by ***procedures and habits***. There is institutional ***strain on public servants and politicians*** which raises the question of ***who decides who comes to the table*** and at which point in the process – considering also long-term procedural change.

Further, regarding 'the conversation', the group questions ***third-sector access to decision-making*** and ***stakeholder access to politics*** in general – again – ***WHO sits at the table?*** Are publics/users of same value as stakeholder organisations? WHO can represent/be spokesperson in consultations – public/user consultations and/or expert consultations?

Disseminating information is also a crucial consideration for this group, inside and in-between institutions/sectors, as well as, for stakeholder groups and society at large. Reflecting society in governance, requires **breaking up the existing information flow structures**, emphasising ***random invites*** to the 'table' – again – ***informed discussions***, and ***visibility*** of different social groups. Reflecting different institutional divisions or sectors in governance, requires considerations of the flow of information so that ***all parties can be informed about what goes on***.

Finally, the institutional interface with publics/users is problematised by the question – again – about access, i.e., ***accessing participation***, ***accessing information***, and ***accessing political parties***. The pitfalls are, for example, language barriers and, more generally, obscure decisions about WHO is invited to take part.

Group 3.

This group emphasises ***public agents and structural issues***, for example, with special mention of domestic violence for which social workers can serve to bridge between home and school. They

mention the importance of ***journalists to support education, information gathering and advisement***, noting that the cultural background here needs to be of all sorts – or should be.

As an example, the group considers a ***programmatic approach to welcoming new members to local communities***, suggesting the use of existing platforms such as the online neighbourhoods platform operated by the City of Reykjavík. They are suggesting it can be used, e.g., to facilitate the ***welcoming, monitoring and adaptation*** of new community members:

- How is it going?
- What is happening?
- Is it working?
- Who is knowledgeable?
- Who receives information?

Again, with children entering school, social workers in schools can help establish the necessary bridge with their homes to improve social bonding.

Group 4.

This group provides a list of key concerns:

- Politics are very important and ***need to be accessible***.
- Increasing ***skill and interest in political participation*** through the school system.
- ***Teaching democratic participation*** from a young age.
- ***Making politics accessible and fun*** for all groups, regardless of time and capacity, age, gender, nationality, etc.
- Important that ***elected representatives mirror the make-up of society***.
- City government organising regular events, bringing together different groups for ***introduction and exchange of ideas***.

Group 5.

On the question of leading agents, this group asks if politics and institutions reflect the demographic of the country´s residents, and underscore in this respect the ***interactions between elected representatives, stakeholder organisations and public servants,*** along with the role of social media platforms.

On the question of instruments and approach to leadership, they emphasise ***OPEN conversations with party representatives*** and gaining ***better insights into the needs of society***. Further, the group suggests promoting more the instruments and approaches already available (various engagement platforms) and supporting ***conversation that motivates interest and respects people***. Further, they argue that ***articulations and representations (of issues of public concern) really matter*** here as an architecture of multiple choices.

On action and implementation, they mention ***stakeholder consultations***, ***shadow government*** and ***direct democracy***. The group suggests asking, ***what is the will of the people***, REACHING, again, those who, otherwise, do not participate, and facilitating ***direct conversation with elected representatives***.

Key lessons

Workshop participants underscore lack of co-operation and negotiation between politicians and public authorities which, again, they see reflected in agenda setting, including which issues are considered important or not. Some issues are already organised 'in' while other issues are organised 'out', an observation coined the 'conflict of conflicts' and widely referred to in the political science literature on how "*political conflict is not only about decisions on issues that are already on the political agenda but also about which issues make it onto the political agenda in the first place*." (Baekgaard et al, 2018, p. 239; also, Schattschneider, 1964; and reviews in Baumgartner et al, 2017; Zahariadis, 2016). It follows that the academic literature is suggesting that policy agendas have a problem of *issue framing* (e.g., Dewulf & Bouwen, 2012; Christiansen, 2018). Selection criteria of 'relevant' issues to be addressed in policymaking is dictated by variables of value to party politics, interest groups, assumed public opinion, and/or dominant economic and social indicators—the problem being that underlying bias on which issues to address, by whom, how and in whose authority, is not adequately and openly debated.

That said, the relationship and co-operation between elected politicians and administrative professionals is rather more complex than often suggested. Eva Marín spoke extensively on this relationship in her talk at the Conference. Administrations can influence the size and issue composition of a broader policy agenda which, as Baekgaard et al point out (Baekgaard et al, 2018), is very different from the assumption that elected politicians simply get the bureaucracy

to turn laws into rules in line with politicians' intentions. "… *[B]ureaucracy is a core position in the process of transforming conditions into political problems and solutions that reach the policy agenda*." (2018: 240). The extent of the complexity in relations between politicians and administrative professionals is not explicitly formulated by Workshop participants, but rather perceived as disparate elements in a decision-making process that appears non-integrative and uncoordinated in the public sphere.

Workshop participants make a point of elaborating the implications of what they perceive as lacking in the decision-making processes of politicians and public administrations, recommending an integration of key elements to remedy this state of affairs. That includes, institutional facilitation of social cohesion; the harmonisation of dialogue and consultation; consistency in political ideology and narration; including bottom-up decision-making approaches; promoting open and secure public access to institutions; strengthening democratic participation and empowering civic education.

Coherency and consistency of political leadership and policy agendas might be defined by attachment and loyalty to a political ideology that accommodates a particular culture of governing. However, what is suggested by Workshop participants is institutional reform, i.e., a refiguring of governing practices that will, in all likelihood, result in cultural shifts in politics and policy development. That said, essential to reform is to examine, better define and harmonise the complex roles and relationships established amongst public servants, politicians and publics in order to figure out how their interactions shape the entire process of policy development and decision-making. Institutional reform is not perceived as a process implementable in a single institution or single sector, but rather a holistic approach that cuts across multiple sectors, institutes, processes and procedures (Public Sector Group, 2003). Institutional reform entails also communication strategies and cross-institutional and cross-sectorial co-operation, redefining the roles and interventions of political leaders, communities, organisations and society as a whole.

Workshop participants suggested that responsive political dialogue could reduce the perceived lack of coherence in decision making. They also recommend that political leadership adequately adhere to ethical conduct and good governance, in line with discussions by Eva Marín and Sigurbjörg at the Conference:

- Accountability (liability exposure), justifying actions to stakeholders.
- Rule-following leadership, acting in accordance with existing regulations.
- Loyalty in leadership (to the electorate groups).
- Leadership initiatives and leadership agreements that motivate interest and respect people.

4. Discussion and Recommendations

Many of the issues that were raised in the Workshop resonate with the findings of the *Democracy Lab* on which the **Policy Innovation Days** were based. They resonate as well with the depictions of complexity and urgency we observe at the Conference. The Conference programme provided the academic input needed to bolster a knowledge base that can be applied in policy development and political reasoning. It provided political and administrative insights into recent efforts in governance, to overcome some of the challenges in decision-making practice: integrity, trust, accountability and the need for participatory democracy.

Arguably, our Workshop participants show full awareness of the intricacies involved in addressing the three topical domains that were suggested to them for deliberation and debate. This is perhaps most evident in the repeated recourse to a relatively small **set of key issues centred on social inclusion**, that they then approach from many different angles: the importance of the open space, of reaching people where you find them, of active and inclusive communities, of effective communications instruments and facilitation, conversation and dialogue and, not the least, transparency and accountability in political leadership. We include a listing of their direct recommendations below, directed at public and governing institutions, civil society organisations and leadership more generally.

As regards allusions to urgency, we like to emphasise that transformative (institutional) change has become a priority issue in recent years. The flagship report of the UN Research Institute for Social Development suggests that there is need to align "social and environmental challenges better with innovation objectives" (Schot & Steinmüller, 2018, p. 1561; also p. 9 in this report; UNRISD, 2016). **Inclusive society** – a subject of key interest in this report – **is the main target** of transformative change, formulated in Schot & Steinmüller (2018) in terms of social and policy innovation. The notion of inclusive society entangles different societal sectors, the economic, social and political in/exclusions that fall under the responsibility of politicians and civil servants

but also publics. Furthermore, addressing social inclusion and its opposite, social exclusion, calls for re-considerations of "*market economy, social welfare systems, representative democracy, and workfare policies*" (Weaver et al., 2017).

This call for transformative change is indeed urgent and, in agenda setting for social inclusion, one of the urgent issues is **to see individuals and groups at risk of exclusion come to political and administrative attention**. Effective cooperation between politicians and administrators, clear prioritisation of agendas and of designating implementation measures and follow-ups, are all key elements in supporting social inclusion. That said, policy priorities change over time, politician come and go and there is no guarantee that important topics stay on the agenda or that policy initiatives and strategies are actually followed through. In response to that we offer further discussion and recommendations on this matter in our final section below.

4.1. Workshop lessons

The following list of recommendations combines ideas and suggestions that come out of the Silent Brainstorm method and the three rounds of deliberations. We present them here under *researcher categories*, within which there are proposals and recommendations aggregated from several participants. They have been organised here in no particular order and are paraphrased and/or partially in their original formulations:

Communication tools (instrumental approaches)

Citizen engagement toolbox, a platform providing access to official information from different authorities and organisations, divided by sectors and areas of interest e.g., programmes, strategies, policies, human and employment rights, etc. The toolbox should be accessible to different categories of people and managed by organisations and companies that can contribute their expertise.

Accessible comprehensive website, containing information about services with easy-to-read instructions and application templates accessible in variable formats.

Dissemination strategy, based on the principles of universality and inclusion, as a collaborative effort of different community organisations and cultural institutions. It should also have a principle of presenting information, using simple structuring, e.g., an overall information about

a topic with options whether to access layers of more detailed information and then which detail, to accommodate varying levels of interests and needs. Accessible searching engine must also be envisaged.

Accessibility and access requirements (suggesting strategies of approach and exchange)

Information provided in different format, e.g., verbal, non-verbal, written, audio, visual etc. to facilitate the access of people with different cultural, language and literacy backgrounds.

Facilitate access to information, through technology systems and devices such as Alexa and Siri.

Accessibility and universal design, of information, e.g., short videos, animation etc. facilitating the understanding of people with different cultural backgrounds, digital and language literacies.

Design communication and information channels, for different groups and communities (e.g., immigrants, disabled people, elderly people, children, etc.) as a collaborative effort between authorities, different community organisations and NGOs.

Reaching people where you find them, tailoring the particularities and profiles of different groups and communities to which the communication and information is flowing.

The reality of the labour market (breaking through language barriers into work)

Enable access, to the labour market of people with foreign background based on use of the English language, and facilitate access to different jobs truly based on their qualifications.

Devise training programs, in Icelandic, supported by local authorities/central government and accessible to different ages, professions and proficiency levels. Proficiency levels might be based on preliminary selection criteria that can be used indicatively to provide access to the appropriate level of training.

Create platforms and open spaces, for thematic dialogue (clubs) to enable conversation and practice in Icelandic by people of immigrant backgrounds. The platforms and open spaces can be managed by libraries, organisation and association for foreign people, and more.

Access, barriers, opportunities (suggesting strategies of integration and inclusion)

Evaluation, monitoring and follow-up programmes, that better tackle the needs of groups and communities, tailoring support programmes to marginalised people at risk of isolation and exclusion.

Designate contact persons and representatives, of different communities, who better understand and acknowledge community needs.

Initiate co-operation programmes, between schools and recreational facilities, cultural institutions, welfare departments and the healthcare system.

Counselling services, for people newly arrived in Iceland, including evaluation programmes that assess their status and needs for further support.

Exploit the principle of universal services design, inclusive services, transformative human-centred approach, and accessible environments to facilitate diversity and fair access, fair and ethical treatment.

Responsibilities, management and contributions (strategically tackling the demographic)

Balance roles and responsibilities, of local authorities and central government, based on prioritisation criteria in the assessment of groups and communities aimed at supporting and improving future support programmes.

Institutional facilitation, of social cohesion, participation, and empowerment.

Shared responsibilities, in preparation, design and dissemination of targeted information.

Cultural shift, in politics, accountability and loyalty to the electorate.

Political representation (measures of visibility)

Political representation, of minority and marginalized groups and communities, and strategic consultations with them.

Leadership on preventive measures, to curb social isolation.

Self-representation, of robust collective identities in small communities, neighbourhoods.

Access facilitation, to political agendas and political dialogue, to encourage civic engagement and bottom-up strategizing.

4.2. Policy innovation (and innovation policy) towards transformative change

Agenda setting strategies and implementation procedures can take considerable time, easily exceeding the typical four- or five-year political mandates. In addition to that, our society is dynamic and changeable, involving social-cultural, political and economic uncertainties. These two factors, **time constraints** and **uncertainties**, can disrupt the implementation of strategic agendas and interventions. Political leaderships come and go and administrative structures change and, in consequence, the policy-making process is halted and so a new cycle begins to re-establish priorities and agendas.

In light of this, the question of how we can ensure enduring, holistic and systemic policy innovation designs, has become a topic of research in the last three or so decades. It first emerged in the early-mid 1990s (e.g., Lundvall, 1992; Nelson, 1993; Freeman, 1995; Edquist, 1997; also review in Borrás & Edquist, 2016; Haddad et al, 2022), and the approach early on was to look for strategies that can encompass the complexity of societal challenges and propose procedures and methods.

Policy innovation scholarship has shifted its focus over time, to examine the conceptual transformations of society in different historical contexts, however, practical applications towards transformative change still address broadly the societal challenges of sustainable transition. Among the numerous efforts to formulate such applications, we offer here a recent example from Haddad et al (2022), that elaborates a cycle of **innovation *in* policy** development which is also a proposed **policy *on* innovation** with a promise of transformative (institutional) reform.

Considering the complexities of administrative and organisational procedures, capacities and interventions, Haddad et al. divide the cycle of policy innovation into agenda-setting, policy formulation, legitimisation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and policy learning (Haddad et al, 2022):

- **Agenda-setting** calls for identification and prioritisation of particular issues and their causes, establishing what the impacts and main outcomes are that will define the policy domain. Agenda-setting is a cyclical process, with multiple monitoring and evaluating stages, in which new priorities might be introduced into the strategy. The complexity of agenda-setting requires the contributions of many different actors, coordinated by governing institutions. Amongst the difficulties they will encounter is how to translate challenges/issues into concrete actionable strategies, how to coordinate, how to agree on rules and procedures, promote entrepreneurship and influence.
- **Policy formulation** involves the identification and selection of potential solutions to problems, considering cost, feasibility and effectiveness. It involves selecting suitable policy strategies and instruments, e.g., new technologies, a combination of horizontal and vertical policies, cross-sectorial and cross-national approach, re-organising and re-distributing tasks and responsibilities. Amongst the difficulties in this work is the targeting of multiple objectives, stimulating both technical and non-technical solutions, finding the right 'granularity' of policy, combining instruments and recognising key actors.
- **Legitimisation** considers the consensus amongst politicians, experts, civil servants, interest groups and publics, regarding regulations and procedures. Preferably, this process should be developed with contributions from motivated and creative actors to ensure a robust policy. Amongst the difficulties here is the availability of learning platforms, the risk of 'destructive recreation', shifting legitimacy over time, the appropriateness of governance structures, and translating transformative ideas into policy practices.
- **Implementation** engenders considerations of human, financial and legal resources, necessary for a transfer into practice. Policy implementation is also dependent upon capabilities, knowledge, level of understanding and willingness to be a part of this process. Stakeholders involved in the initial stages of agenda-setting and formulation may no longer be engaged when it comes to implementation. Amongst the difficulties at this stage, is conflict of interests and power struggles, the involvement of stakeholders, building trust, aligning interests, encouraging collaboration and balancing trade-offs between strong leadership and guidance.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** measures the outcomes of strategies and interventions, the impact on different sectors and groups of people. It is a measure of indicators and the monitoring of risks, possible conflicts and tensions. The main difficulties here emerge from the monitoring and evaluation process itself, of arguing the effect of the policy and possible conflicts that arise in the process.

- **Policy learning (lessons learned)** is the last stage of the policy cycle, directly connected with the monitoring and evaluation process. At this stage problems tend to be reformulated, the policy re-evaluated and readapted through a rather complex learning process, characterised by trial-and-error. It represents the beginning of a new cycle. Amongst the difficulties that arise at this stage, is managing stakeholders and continuing the process of monitoring and reflection.

In is noteworthy that this cyclical model does not highlight specifically the re-positioning of publics in participatory modes of governance and policy development. Namely, the notion of transformative change calls for re-considerations and a re-positioning of the responsibilities of publics, i.e., to be aware, take initiative and exercise an active role in societal development. Both the Workshop on the **Policy Innovation Days** and the January 2021 *Democracy Lab*, demonstrate this—the value of debate, of exchanging of ideas, opinions and suggestions, amongst rather different people sharing an open space. They came from governing institutions, third-sector organisations and citizen initiatives. This format, we suggest, can be considered good practice for future consultations in policy innovation.

That said, transformative change is a long-term process, entangling permanent adaptation and re-considerations of policy strategy, not least, considering the pivotal role of individual and group empowerment, an inclusive approach where members of society can each find their place and be motivated to contribute. It calls for innovation, adaptability and adjustments that are echoed in the gradual changes of social structures and relations. At the same time, there are pressures on institutional norms and procedures, both formal and informal, i.e., to adapt and adjust to the changes in societal behaviours and in the new-emerging practices of orchestrating *across* the social, economic, environmental and political spheres.

In other words, policy innovation is an institutional and societal innovation. Governance arrangements are now associated with participatory democracy, public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder engagements in service-delivery, financing and decision-making. They entangle change at macro, meso and micro levels, apply top-down missions and bottom-up strategies, considering individual and community needs (Edler & Fagerberg, 2017), and they instrument *technically* as much as they facilitate access to and exchange of information.

The deliberations of Workshop participants reflect very clearly these wider societal and institutional demands and pressures. The deliberations confirm the complexity of the

demographic of Icelandic society (as of other societies), the fragmentation of opinions, values, needs and interests, but also the inter-connectivity and inter-dependencies. They offer novel insights as they call for strategies, resources and methods to embrace complexity and proactivity. As Christian Bason from the Danish Design centre suggests,[25] we are shifting from a traditional policy model of a *traditional man approach* to a *sense-making approach*. Perhaps that also means more vision-oriented approach, rather than problem-oriented exclusively—more focused on publics and shaping new allegiances, than on 'systems of governance'.

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