The Civic Design Room:

Conversations on What It Looks Like To Operationalize Design in Government?
With Community, Within Government, and Your Team

By

Mariama N'Diaye

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning in partial fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

The Civic Design Room is a podcast and media thesis project that engages designers in the public sector, primarily in the US, on how they have operationalized design methodologies in the public sector. This podcast is a series of thirteen forty-five-minute to one-hour episodes, each featuring a different guest. These guests range from current or former US federal and local government employees to urban planners and designers working in local US governments and researchers based internationally in Colombia, the United Kingdom, and Finland.
 Each episode covers similar topics of design, politics, and the management skills needed to foster an innovative team in government. This thesis calls for a new mode of design - Caring Systems Design, which seeks to infuse principles of care ethics - attentiveness, responsiveness, competence, and responsibility - throughout the multiple, nested levels of government work - from the individual and team level to cross-departmental collaboration, to engaging with external communities and stakeholders. The project will live on Spotify, and the notes of each episode include supportive materials for those listening. The written thesis represents the breadth of my research, including the methods and processes used to create the podcast, the findings from each podcast, and the implications of my findings and strategies in urban planning and the public sector.

Keywords: Design, Public Sector, Civic Design, Care, CoDesign, Government, Public Sector Design, Participatory Design, Management

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PREFACE

For my thesis, I chose to embark on a media thesis to do two primary things: allow anyone to consume my research for free and to bring the richness of stories to the forefront. Often, I have wrestled with the field of academia with long-written pieces hidden behind academic firewalls. As someone who entered academia not through a pursuit of a PhD but for a love of learning, I found the existing modes of research inaccessible, thus unnecessarily blocking me from the vast amount of knowledge on academic campuses. Simultaneously, I gravitated towards the spoken word, primarily podcasts, where I learned immensely from the nuggets of conversations from those who came before me. As it relates to the field of Design-Thinking, I listened to the Design-Thinking 101 podcast early on in my graduate career. As the host, Dawan Stanford, spoke to academics, artists, nonprofit leaders, and government practitioners about using design thinking in their work, I was constantly jotting notes and learning key points. I discovered new people to follow on LinkedIn and to follow their work on LinkedIn, which had also become another educational tool for me through short-form posts. I found deep learning by listening and knew that the conversations I would engage in for this podcast were ones from which I wanted the world to engage and learn. I also chose the podcast as a method for my thesis because I wanted to center storytelling and deep unpacking in my work. I have attended countless conferences where we engage on the surface level of change that leaders have completed in government. I have attended webinars seeking to gain insights but often left wanting more. I always kept asking **how.**

I have always been fascinated by the how. How do things come to be? This curiosity has guided me through life and thus has made me fascinated with operations. I was never the kid who took part in a bike to see how the pieces would be combined to see what made the bike operate. I was instead the kid who looked at streets, who walked into a government service, who in classrooms always taught - how this came to be. I would ask my parents why things were how they were so often that they begged me to use that obsession to become a lawyer. This podcast was my time to ask how - to go into the nitty-gritty of **doing** that will allow listeners to walk away with a clear understanding of how someone did something. It is often through casual yet provoking conversation that one can dive into the how, which is what I have set out to do in this podcast.

For this obsession with how I titled my thesis, "The Civic Design Room." Now, I will share why I chose this title for my thesis. I first wanted to be clear that the participants of this podcast are passionate and focused on the **civic sector.** We are speaking on matters of the public sector, and thus, listeners should be prepared for this. Secondly, I wanted to be clear that this conversation is centered on civic design, which I will explain further in my thesis. For now, I will share various definitions of design when speaking to the civic sector leaders on this podcast.

Given the ambiguity of the field of Civic Design, I expected this would be the case. The title of this thesis, which has this ambiguous 'Civic Design' front and center, is a testament to the ambiguity I purposefully invited into my conversations. My thesis was challenged on one definition of Civic Design, thus allowing for a large premise of my thesis to be defining Civic Design, or Design in the civic sector.

Lastly, I use the term room in my title to symbolize an intimate closed space where we can speak behind closed doors. This podcast is a space for real, honest, and vulnerable conversations with people centered on their stories and experiences. Thus, the Civic Design Room.

At its root, my thesis seeks to uncover how design has been introduced into government and under what conditions it has excelled. It aims to do this from a community, government, and team level.

BACKGROUND

1. Summary of project objectives

For my thesis, I sought to do three things. The first was to understand the complexities of the many working definitions of design. The second was to share practical directives on applying design in the public sector and navigating bureaucracy. The third was understanding if management skills were needed to lead a team applying design in the public sector. I plan to explore more in this thesis how design gets introduced into government and how it excels. First, I will begin by explaining the history of design in the context of this thesis.

2. The History of Design

Design has a variety of definitions in the English language. According to Merriam-Webster, Design is a transitive verb, such as to create, fashion, execute, or construct according to plan, conceive and plan out in mind, and make a drawing, pattern, or sketch. Design is also an intransitive verb, such as to devise or execute a plan, draw, layout, or prepare a design. Simultaneously, design can be a noun, such as a particular purpose or intention held in view by an individual or group, a mental project or scheme in which means to an end are laid down, a deliberate undercover project or scheme, a preliminary sketch or outline showing the main features of something to be executed, and underlying scheme that governs functioning, developing, or unfolding, the arrangement of elements or details in a product or work of art, a decorative pattern, or a creative art of executing aesthetic or functional designs (Merriam Webster, n.d.). In summary, design in English is both a verb and a noun.

Over the years, people have sought to define design more explicitly linked to centering humans. John E. Arnold saw design as not a fixed method but a set of non-linear processes and attitudes (Arnold, 1959). In 1959, Stanford University Engineering Professor John E. Arnold released *Creative Engineering,* where he called for engineering design to be more human-centered, seeing design as comprehensive, "relating engineering, medicine, business, law, the humanities, sciences, and education to addressing messy, 'creative problems' for the benefit of society" (Arnold, 1959, p.5). Arnold also argued that design should be a problem-solving method to identify and satisfy human needs (Arnold, 1959). He saw the problem-solving method as - Question, Observe, Associate, and Predict- not a "set of steps of a process followed in certain definite sequence… To (him), these four words represent attitudes of the mind or the personality of the learner, the seeker, or the creative problem solver…the first three should be going on all the time, simultaneously, or in almost any combination or sequence. They represent the questioning mind, the prepared mind that finds the unexpected through keen observations, and the generic mind in the relationships, the associations it makes" (Arnold, 1959, p. 117). Klaus Krippendorff, a Communication Scholar, and Social Science Methodologist, defined design as a 'way of rendering things understandable, meaningful, transparent, alive and useable or that layer of cognition which centers us in our experiential world" (Krippendorf, 1989, p.5). Krippendorff argued that understanding and practice are inseparable twins, and understanding something is always the key to its practical use (Krippendorf, 1989).

Within the same decade, researcher and professor Don Norman, based at the University of California, San Diego, invited user-centered design into the lexicon. He introduces the term user-centered design, arguing that skillful designers can virtually eradicate the burden of accommodation to an artifact for users by adapting that artifact to users (Norman, 1986). He argues that designers should focus their work on the people using the system instead of just the system and shouldering the burden on users to figure out how to use it. He further argues in *The Psychology of Everyday Things* that user-centered design is based on the user's needs, with aesthetics coming after the functional needs of users are met, leaving aside secondary considerations, such as aesthetics (Norman, 1988). He calls for designers to make it easy to determine what actions are possible at any moment; make things visible, including the conceptual model of the system, the alternative actions, and the results of actions; Make it easy to evaluate the current state of the system; and follow natural mappings between intentions and the required actions, between actions and the effect and between the information that is visible and the interpretation of the system state" (Norman, 1988, p. 188). Tim Brown, former CEO of IDEO, an innovation design firm, furthers both concepts of human-centered design and user-centered design, drawing from human-centered design the notion of design as a problem-

solving method and on user-centered design as centering the user experience as a core element of design (Brown, 2012).

Tim Brown coined the term design thinking in June 2008, defining **design thinking** as a "methodology that imbues the full spectrum of innovation activities with a human-centered design ethos…(in which) innovation is powered by a thorough understanding, through direct observation, of what people want and need in their lives and what they like or dislike about the way particular products are made, packaged, marketed, sold, and supported (Brown, 2012, pg. 1). Design thinking has had many critiques over the years. In 2018, NYU Assistant Professor Natasha Iskander argued that "design thinking is, at its core, a strategy to preserve and defend the status quo…privileges the designer above the people she serves, and in doing so limits participation in the design process" (Iskander, 2018). Natasha argues that design thinking is less modeled after human-centered design and more after the rational-experiential problem-solving methodology, which relies on "a series of stages, each leading up to the identification of a solution" (Iskander, 2018). The steps of design-thinking are to Define, Ideate, Prototype, and Test, which Natasha argues establishes "problem-solving as the remit of the powerful turning the everyday ability to solve a problem into a rarified practice, limited only to those who self-consciously follow a specialized methodology" (Iskander, 2018). Natasha instead calls for an "interpretive engagement" approach where the process is collaborative and open to "wide-ranging interpretation, where participants revisit the understandings they have about themselves and others, as well as about the changing world they live in…with no clear beginning and end, with a goal that is often no more explicitly defined than imaging and articulating new ways to meet changes that are still murky and immeasurable" (Iskander, 2018).

This critique of design thinking led to the Stanford Design School redesign of the terminology. In 2016, the Stanford d.school and the National Equity Project sought to invite **Equity-Centered Design** as the intersection of Design Thinking and Equitable practices (d.K12 Lab Network, 2017). The d.school self-critiqued that "Design can often fail to address root causes of inequity and can reproduce inequitable power relationships" (d.K12 Lab Network, 2017, p. 13). Thus, Equity-centered design aimed to eliminate oppression by applying an equity lens (d.k12 Lab Network, 2017). The National Equity project, led by Stanford d.school, further Equity-centered Design into **Liberatory Design** in 2016 as the ability to add the steps of 'Notice' and 'Reflect' into the Design-Thinking process of "Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test" (d.k12 Lab Network, 2017,p.16). To Notice was to "acknowledge power, identity, and context," as well as "reveal your authentic self and opportunities to liberate" (d.k12 Lab Network, 2017,p.17). To Reflect means "noticing emotions, actions, insights and impact" and "sharing learnings, process, and opportunities to co-design" (d.k12 Lab Network, 2017,p.19). This was further enhanced by the EquityxDesign Collaboration, which saw Reflect as "noticing self, power, and oppression, as

well as pausing to notice emotions, new understandings, and challenge power ((d.k12 Lab Network, 2017,p.20) [Appendix A].

The Creative Reaction Lab furthered this notion of Equity-Centered Design. The Lab coined the term "Equity-Centered Community Design" as the "intersection of community development, design-based problem solving and equitable outcomes" (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018, p.5). The lab sought to build a flexible, nonlinear, and intersectional framing of design rooted in history and healing and acknowledge and dismantle power constructs (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018).

K.A. McKercher further extended this framing of design. **Co-design** emerged as a way to "bring together lived experience, lived expertise and professional experience to learn from each other and make things better - by design; it is part of co-production; it involves centering care, working with people closest to the solutions, sharing power, prioritizing relationships, being honest, being welcoming, using creative tools, balancing idealism and realism, building and sharing skills. Co-design uses inclusive facilitation that embraces many ways of knowing, being, and doing" (Mckercher, K.A., 2020, pg. 1). The co-design process depends on who is engaged and where. The critical element is that co-designers are decision-makers and not just there to provide suggestions; they actively share power while using participatory means [Appendix B] (MckKercher, K.A., 2020).

Emma Blomkamp argues that there are shades of Co-Design similar to Arnstein's ladder of participation (Arnstein, 1969). Emma claims that one should consider co-design based on scale, depth, and extent. For scale, Emma emphasizes we think about how extensive the co-design is, such as principles, a workshop, a phase, a process, or a container, as in all of the above (Blomkamp, 2024) [Appendix C]. Emma then urges us to think of its depth - the level of 'co' in the codesign (Blomkamp, 2024) [Appendix D]. Finally, Emma urges us to consider the extent and width of the co-design (Blomkamp, 2024) [Appendix E].

Nidhi Singh Rathore saw a missing link in the design terminologies rooted in the community. In November 2022, she argued for the need for **Community-Centered Design** to consciously question and dismantle existing power structure, evolving the institution's practice to welcome community members and democratize change, letting go of attachment and opening the process to individuals with lived experience. "Community-centered design challenges who policymaking chooses to include or exclude to increase intentionality of each step of the process…the role of a design practitioner in community-centered design is to reverse power structures, center communities, and encourage policymakers to build a more resilient relationship between the communities and government bodies" (Rangathore, 20222, p. 559).

As shared above, there are many different interpretations of Design. Each new adaptation seeks to bring design closer to a more equitable and holistic-centered framing. I particularly welcome K. A. McKercher's levels of participation in design as an apt summary of the different types of design, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Levels of Design Participation, Beyond Sticky Notes[1]

design *at*	design *for*	design *with*	design *by*
Keywords:	Keywords:	Keywords:	Keywords:
designer, doctor, engineer or professional as the expert, top-down decisions	*design thinking, anything 'centered' e.g. human-centered design (HCD), user centred (UCD)*	*co-design, participatory design*	*co-production, community-led design, citizen movements, design justice, research justice, self-determination*
Power:	Power:	Power:	Power:
what decision-makers and designers think and want	*what designers and decision-makers want to know and achieve*	*about what matters to people with lived experience and decision-makers (co-decided)*	*about what people, families and communities want for themselves*

3. The History of Design in the Public Sector

Regarding the public sector, theorists have called for a different approach to design in the public sector compared to the private sector (Manzini, 2015) (Bason, 2014). Ezio Manzini defines civic design as citizen-focused and designed to empower citizens to be actively engaged in their communities in helping to shape their cities, public spaces, and how people can live together (Manzini, 2015). Christian Bason, former CEO of the Danish Design Centre, defined design in the public sector as the use of design methods and tools to develop policies, services, and regulations, with the goal of better understanding not only citizens' needs but those of other stakeholders as well" (Bason, 2014). Both call on design as an approach to apply to the public sector; however, Manzini focuses primarily on empowering citizens (Manzini, 2015),

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[1] https://www.beyondstickynotes.com/what-is-codesign

whereas Bason's conceptualization of design in government is rooted in shaping policies, services, and regulations within government (Bason, 2014).

Design in the US public sector is relatively new, beginning in the United States federal government in the early 2000s (Wade and Freach, 2023). There has been a growing movement of governments from the local to the federal level utilizing design to solve their challenges (Alvarezz, Aurucchio, Mortati, 2022). As critical to its adaptation is **how** design gets introduced into government. Stephanie Wade argues, "This approach to (introducing design into government) can be introduced at different levels of the organization (i.e., bottom-up and top-down) and varying levels of rigor. Regardless of the level at which it is introduced, a critical factor of success is demonstrating the impact of design by having transparent and consistent senior leadership support from the Mayor/or City Manager (Wade and Freach, 2023, p.6). Lykketoft further argues that bringing design into government requires the dedication of time, staff coordination, commitment, resiliency, willingness to work in new ways, and the patience necessary to forge new mindsets, create new tools, and build creative confidence…Without the support of the city's senior leaders, a creative problem-solving approach cannot generate enough legitimacy to overcome the formidable barriers to change inside government. "Anchoring with top management gives the backing for the agency on lower levels, " enabling design to scale (Lykketoft, 2014, p145).

4. The role of care in Design

In addition, my research has called for deeper care in design, as you will witness reading through my thesis. Philosopher and Ethicist Virginia Held argued that the principles of care, which she defined as attentiveness, responsiveness, competence, and responsibility, should be central to the design of social institutions and practices. She argues that a care-centered approach to design would prioritize empathy and attunement to the needs of others, contextual, situated understanding of the complexities and interdependencies that shape people's experiences, responsiveness and adaptability to changing circumstances, and a sense of responsibility and commitment to the well-being of those who are impacted or will be impacted by design decisions (Held, 2006). Similarly, political scientist Joan Tronto has argued for integrating care ethics into the design of public policies and services. She claimed that there needs to be a "caring" approach to governance that prioritizes the needs of citizens and communities, as opposed to markets or bureaucracies (Tronto, 2013). Both argue that by placing care at the center of the design process, we can create more nurturing, inclusive, and responsive systems and artifacts. My thesis explores the various definitions of design and how design as a field can continue to advance equity and care to those whom the public sector serves and within government institutions across government employees and agencies.

My thesis is a call to action for civic Designers to think critically about how we design for communities and how we do so to build sustainable initiatives within government. I hope this practical approach to my thesis provides key actionable takeaways that practitioners can apply immediately.

5. The Role of Management in Design

Regarding discussing management, I believe that managing people is one of the most important skills one can learn. Yet, designers, such as Robert Fabricant, argue that designs are not the best managers, "Design thinking didn't come with any management approach or operational playbook; certainly not one developed at Ideo or Frog, which were never known for management discipline. Even as design thinking packaged itself successfully as a mainstream business process for senior management, we neglected to mention that designers, by nature, are pretty lousy managers, and there was little opportunity or support to develop those skills in boutique practice (Fabricant, 2024). In addition, Joseph L. Bower argued in 1977 that we assume incorrectly that effective management in the public sector has the same essential qualities as effective management in the private sector (Bower, 1977).

Bower argues while private managers are usually promoted from within the organization and are empowered to change the organization's structure, public officials are often "outsiders who enter office with cherished policy objectives, accomplish little, and leave the office with unfulfilled desires for structural reform for to accomplish important political objectives having to do with due process and responsiveness to the electorate, the United States has very nearly denied the public executive the tools of management" (Bower, 1977). In addition, "the time horizon of the public administrator is far shorter than that of the traditional corporate manager" (Bower, 1977). As a bonus, Bower speaks on the balance of resources for managers in the private and public sectors. "Business strategy has been called the art of imbalance - applying massive resources to limited objectives. In contrast, a public institution's strategy might be called the art of the imperfect - the application of limited resources to massive objectives….a business can limit its objectives to tasks consistent with its resources". In contrast, the same cannot be said for the government (Bower, 1977). It is hard for government leaders to mobilize resources because they are asked to achieve objectives within short time horizons, albeit institutional responses take a long time (Bower, 1977). These points show that operating as a leader in the public sector is quite different from operating as a leader in the private sector. The operations of leaders in the private vs. public sector are also valid for managers.

The private sector invests in managers; the public sector does not. Bower argues that the private sector can pay for high-quality managers and invest money into management

education. However, "there is no tradition in the United States of training public managers" (Bower, 1977). Yet, there are skills to be a good manager in government. José R. Pin argues that there are four essential requirements for achieving good governance, which are strategy - the selection of priority projects given limited resources; collaboration - bringing together the public sector, business, and third sector; organization - establishing stable definitions of the limits and powers of the government and its administration, and instrumentalization - the use of new technologies to make public administration more efficient (Pin, 2017). In addition, Pin argues a good manager in the public sector has a vision, strong mediation skills, strong listening skills, strong ethics and morals, communication skills, and the ability to gain people's trust and get them on board to do what's asked of them (Pin, 2017). [Appendix F] I firmly believe that this thesis would be inconclusive if I did not speak on the role of good managers in the public sector in advancing design, as advancements cannot occur with weak teams and leaders who cannot get things done.

The above conceptual design, care, and management framework heavily influenced my thesis. I began my interviews on a blank slate, allowing my questions and interviews to guide my findings without a hypothesis. However, after reviewing the data, I used the above contextual framework to analyze my findings. This conceptual framework shed light on the reasonings for my interviewees' varying and sometimes disparate views of design. In addition, the conceptual framework on the role of management in the public sector allowed for a more nuanced understanding of both the frustrations and demands shared by my interviewees on good management in the public sector. Finally, the notion of care was an unexpected emergence from my interviews, and this conceptual framework helped guide me to shaping the idea of a Systems Caring Design blending in primarily works from various professional backgrounds, such as government practitioner Christian Bason (Bason, 2014) and Ethicist Virginia Held (Held, 2006). Overall, this conceptual framework from my interviews to my synthesis helped me conceptualize my data.

METHODS AND PROCESSES

1. Intro

For my thesis, I sought to understand the complexities of the many working definitions of design and how those practicing design in government have applied design across their teams, government collaborations, and community members. I sought to do this using podcasts as a medium for data dissemination. My decision to create a thesis rooted in application and democratized dissemination through a podcast is rooted in Critical grounded theory.

To ground this project, I utilized Critical grounded theory, which generated my thesis theory from the systemic analysis of data from my interviews. I did not enter my thesis with a hypothesis or a theory in mind. Instead, I was led to Care-Centered design through my interview findings. Glaser describes the strategy of grounded theory as "the interrelationship between meaning in the perception of the subjects and their action" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded Critical theory, as defined by Glaser and Strauss, is a general research methodology where hypotheses and theories are developed through the collection and analysis of data, as opposed to traditional scientific research that takes a hypothetico-deductive approach using deductive reasoning (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I took this approach because I wanted to understand the needs and desires of my interviewees, constantly allowing for one interview to be in conversation with another and feeding off of the other.

2. Research Design

As part of my use of grounded theory, I applied a reflexive iterative data collection and analysis process, deeply inspired by Patton's emphasis on the importance of a cyclical process of empirical observation, reflection, and critique (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009). I applied this by conducting my interview, uploading the transcript into coding software, and coding my interview within 24 hours. After coding the interview, I listened to it again, editing the audio to be podcast-ready. While I listened to the audio to turn it into being podcast-ready, I jotted down notes I wanted to ensure were captured in my coding that may have appeared more prominently through the audio form than the written form. I then noted what themes were emerging, what, if any, questions I was asking that were leading, how I should rephrase my questions for the following interview, and where I could have probed my interviewees to go deeper. This critique of my first interviews led me to alter my behavior toward the following interviewees. I was highly conscious of the power dynamic as the interviewer, podcast lead, and data analyzer. I sought to address this power throughout my process by having prep calls to demystify my project and to address fears and hopes before the recording, allowing episodes to be recorded only when my interviewee felt prepared and emotionally prepared to engage, keeping the integrity of the audio in place by not trimming out filler words, working diligently after the interview to send back a cleaned-up podcast episode for their review, being transparent on what can and cannot be edited (i.e. quality of audio vs. word trimming), and fully embedding all edits from my interviewees, even line by line, into the final podcast episodes.

This thesis seeks to build actionable learnings for civic practitioners on designing with care with communities, government employees, and one's team. I decided to communicate these learnings through twelve podcast episodes from civic government practitioners and academics

working on the intersection of design in the public sector. A podcast is an "episodic series of digital audio files made available on the Internet for streaming or downloading to a personal device" (Stanford Graduate School of Education, n.d.). Listeners of this podcast will learn how designers working in the civic sector have navigated challenges and succeeded in implementing design methodologies in government, what they have learned from working with community members, and under what form of leadership they have been challenged or thrived. The podcast explores stories focused less on inspirational quotes and more on deep dives into how these brilliant individuals got things done. It is meant to be operational, using individuals' tactical approaches. It is also meant to be listened to asynchronously, allowing listeners to learn what the readers of my thesis will learn at their convenience and on their own time.

Utilizing a podcast as my medium of dissemination, I encourage people to learn through conversational learning. Conversational learning equally values the learner's emotional, sensual, and physical engagement in the learning process (Baker, Johnson, and Kolb, 2002). Cyberneticist Gordon Pask coined "Conversation Theory" in that learning occurs through the act of conversing about a subject matter, and it is through that conversation that knowledge becomes explicit" (Pask, 1976). Although I was speaking to subject-matter experts, the audience will still hear this maintenance of a conversational nature in each podcast episode. I do believe that a podcast medium will make my thesis not only more accessible to people where it is more publicly available but also the medium of hearing me talk with someone instead of reading one hundred pages of my writing will make this more accessible. It is modular, allowing listeners to listen to one episode or twelve, but either way, they will walk away with some form of learning.

In addition, I have gained great inspiration from podcasters who have advanced my learnings. Jess Myers published her podcast, *Here There Be Dragons* (Myers, 2017), using an unprecedented method of creating a thesis for the MIT Master's in City Planning in 2017. In addition, I listen regularly to *Dead Ends*, a podcast on how the world around us is designed (The School of Good Services, 2024), *Reimaging Government* on radical new approaches to addressing the most pressing issues facing public servants and politicians (Centre for Public Impact, 2022), and Design Thinking 101 comprised of designers' stories, lessons, ideas, resources, and tips (Stanford, 2018). I have found these podcast episodes precious as I start and stop as desired, occupy my time on my commute, and take dutiful notes to return to. I also heavily rely on the description of each episode, which is often rich with links and resources to learn more.

My podcast is dedicated to the civic practitioners I seek to reach who may not have time or want to read through my thesis but are constantly searching for how to do things better in

government. It is a thesis centered on democratizing learning through its podcast and Medium post format. It seeks to decenter me from the narrative and instead center the experiences and knowledge of experts in the field of civic design.

3. Research Preparation

To begin this project, I developed a Thesis Development Plan [Appendix G]. The first section of my Thesis Development Plan was my research methodology, which included my qualitative methods and a statement of my interview consent. The second section included the type of questions I planned to ask, and the third section included the written consent form. The purpose of the thesis development plan was to achieve alignment between my thesis advisor and me on the content of my thesis research process. I included the text of the consent form as well. It was important to me that even though this research was in podcast form, anyone participating had the right not to be quoted or have their podcast episode go live. Although my podcast was meant to be on an open forum, I still held fast to the ethics of qualitative research, understanding that all researchers should give participants the option to agree to be quoted anonymously or to decline being quoted at all rather than assuming all interview data can be published, as Kari Lancaster agues (Lancaster, 2017). The consent form created space for people to feel comfortable knowing that the data they chose to share with me would be used in the method they were comfortable with, from cutting out certain aspects to not publishing the podcast at all.

Then, I created a Google spreadsheet listing who I wish to speak with [Appendix H]. The columns were Name, Role, Reached Out to (Had I reached out yet or not), Agreed (did they agree to participate or not), Career level (Early career - less than five years, mid-career - 5 - 15 years, and senior 15+ years), BIPOC (whether they were Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color in the American context, in the international context, or White), Sector (Researcher, Government Employee, and/or Designer/Consultant), Connection to Thesis (summary of why I think they would be great for my thesis), their Work Experience (Listing out where they have worked, such as City government in Philadelphia or Academic at Brown University), Location of Work (Domestic - local, Global - National, Global - local, Domestic - county, Domestic - federal), and Level of Engagement (I need to reach out to, they expressed interest, they confirmed their interest), and the interview date. The purpose of this spreadsheet was twofold. It became a way to map out who I contacted to ensure I reached a diverse set of people from age, race, ethnicity, sector, scale, and geography. It also became a way to keep track of my engagements by mapping out who I reached out to and the conversation's status.

My timeline for recruitment and interviews was more truncated than I would have liked. I received my COUHES certification in 2023 and applied for this thesis to be COUHES-exempt in November 2023. The plan was to conduct all of my interviews during January and dedicate February through April to analyzing the data and editing the podcast. Due to administrative challenges, I did not receive my COUHES exemption until March 1st. This resulted in me spending most of January and February preparing to conduct my research.

4. Data Collection

4.a. Sampling Strategy

My participant recruitment was twofold: a public post on LinkedIn asking who would want to participate and a look internal to my network of thought leaders I admired and knew personally. The post on LinkedIn reached 7,202 impressions, with 44 comments and six reposts. Many of the comments also tagged other individuals I should engage with. I then responded to each comment, thanking them and inputting every name mentioned into my spreadsheet. I then went through every individual's LinkedIn and online portfolio to map out against the columns in my spreadsheet. This resulted in a list of sixty-one people. I then worked diligently to weave this list down to fifteen individuals. My goal was to land on eight individuals, knowing that some may not respond to me and may not work out for others. I prioritized Black and Brown individuals in the US context as I struggled to find literature centering on the experiences of Black and Brown individuals designing in the public sector. By targeting eight individuals and, primarily, BIPOC women, I sought to deepen my use of critical theory by emphasizing the importance of deeply understanding the situated experiences and perspectives of underrepresented groups in design in the public sector. This aligns with Charmaz, who argues for the need for depth over breadth to help uncover hidden power dynamics and biases and focuses on nuanced interpretations and thick descriptions instead of broad statistical generalizations (Charmaz, 1996). For this same reason, I wrote two to three pages on every interview identifying who they are, how they define design, and takeaways from their conversation. My goal here was not to lose the richness and perspective each person brought in my summary of findings.

I then contacted each individual through LinkedIn, utilizing Linkedin Premium to send unlimited messages [Appendix I]. I communicated via email to my acquaintances. For those who expressed interest in participating, I then sent an email [Appendix J] detailing my request, which was a reiteration of who I was and what I was doing, and a request for a 30-minute prep call. I utilized MotionAI, an online AI-augmented calendar that integrates multiple calendars and helps you schedule your tasks during your free time. It also has a calendar booking

functionality. I used it to suggest times and send a link for a 30-minute meeting on a calendar I had built for my thesis. In the end, I confirmed interviews with thirteen people, and two of those individuals conducted the interview together [Appendix K].

4.b. Sampling Selection - My Interviewees

Amongst the thirteen people introduced, they each held a variety of professions, both working within government and with government, with a heavy emphasis on the United States of America. All thirteen provided consent to be quoted and for all things said to be contributed directly to them. I interviewed Pam Hastings, a Principal UX Designer for Code for America, a 501c3 civic tech nonprofit organization that promotes "civic hacking," as described by its founder, Jennifer Pahlka (CodeForAmerica). I interviewed Vaidehi Mody, a Senior Planning Consultant at the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) - a public development corporation producing public housing in New York City and the largest and first agency of its kind in North America (NYCHA). I spoke to Nidhi Singh Rathore, Civic Design Lead, Montgomery County. I spoke with Mari Nakano, a Social Designer, Systems and Organization Strategist, Educator, and Visual Designer (LinkedIn). Mari is currently a Designer in Residence at the MFA Design for Social Innovation Program, School of Visual Arts, and previously served as the Design Director for the Service Design Studio housed within the New York City Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity (Linkedin). I spoke to Gina Kim, the Director of Design at the NYC Digital Service, housed under the New York City Office of Technology & Innovation (NYC OTI). I spoke to Harmonie Coleman, Senior Community Engagement Manager, IDEO.org, a nonprofit design studio that "designs products and services alongside organizations committed to creating a more just and inclusive world" (IDEO.org). I spoke to two City of Philadelphia's Service Design Studio members: Deputy Director Danita Reese and Community Co-Design Practice Lead Andrea Ngan. I spoke to Stephanie Wade, Founder of Ascendant, a consultancy helping public, private, and social sector organizations build cultures of innovation (Ascendant. cc). I spoke to Federico Vaz, a Tutor (Researcher) at the Royal College of Art School of Design and a Design and Futures Fellow at the United Nations Development Programme. I interviewed Mariana Salgado, a Senior Service Designer at Integrated Carbon Observation System in Helsinki, Finland, and the Podcast Host for Diseño y diáspora, a podcast on design for social change (Diseño y diáspora). I interviewed Monica Pachon, a Professor within the Department of Design, University of Andes in Bogota, Colombia. I interviewed Nigel Jacob, who labels himself as a Civic Innovation OG (LinkedIn) and previously Co-Founded the City of Boston's Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, tasked with using people-centered design to redesign the city's future (LinkedIn).

4.c. Preparation with Interviewees

During the prep call, I used the time to get to know the participants, walk through any questions they might have, share with them the questions I hoped to ask, and review any topic areas they wanted to have our conversation focus on. This prep call was not a review call but instead a pre-conversation where we talked about what excited us about this work and what kept us up at night. Guest et al. argued the importance of prep calls to build rapport, clarify questions, and ensure participants were prepared for the main interview (Guest et al., 2013). These calls lasted from fifteen minutes to an hour in some instances. I found it essential to create this space ahead of time to show that this level of banter, exchange, and informal conversation was to translate into an informal, thought-provoking, and reflective conversation in a room with just me and my guests. I then sent a follow-up email thanking them for their time, a link to set up a sixty-minute interview, and included a Google doc of the questions where they could edit directly in case they had any edits to the questions.

4.d. Interviews

In my interviews, I applied a semi-structured interview methodology where I asked ten questions [Appendix L] and separated those questions into four parts. The first part was a ground setting for the interviewee. Each interview began with "Tell us who you are. Tell us your name and how you describe the current phase of your work journey." This then led to a question on defining design in their voice. Weiss argued that starting an interview with a "grand tour" question that asks participants to describe their experiences or the setting in which they work helps to establish context and build rapport (Weiss, 1995). I purposefully started my interview with people describing the "current phase of their work journey" to understand where they currently worked, build rapport, and create space for my participants to share their experiences from the very first question. This established a rapport of storytelling very early on. The second part was a deep dive into a project where the interviewee sought to do things differently and could not reach their desired outcomes. This question evolved away from using the word 'innovation' as this is not commonly defined.

We dove deep into that specific project: what worked well, what was challenging, what design elements were incorporated, and what the key takeaways were for the interviewee after this project. The third part was a set of the same questions related to a project that the interviewee found to be quite successful and ended the project feeling accomplished. The fourth part dove into a bird's-eye view, asking what advice the interviewee would give to those seeking to do things differently in government and what managerial skills they would recommend for all managers with this desire to lead effectively. I emphasized throughout each interview a deep

dive on operationally how things occurred, particular design methodologies that were leveraged, and skillsets that were leveraged traditionally seen as outside of the civic design field. Each interview was recorded on Zoom and uploaded to my Zoom cloud. By recording on Zoom to my cloud, I could access the audio and video recordings of the interviews. This was key for me as I could have two sources of information - one from the visual interactions between my interviewee and myself and one from the audio of our conversation.

5. Data Editing for Podcast Purposes

Immediately after the interview, I uploaded the recording into Descript (Descript AI). Descript is a tool to edit audio and visual content by leveraging the power of AI to detect voices and convert audio into a transcript, allowing you to edit an audio recording directly through text edits. I did not use the technology to change anything an individual said but did use it to cut out words that were requested to be moved. I used it to detect each speaker and label them, allowing me to trim out parts of the recording more easily. I was okay with each recording lasting around an hour but wanted to trim out any parts where it was asked to during our recording. I purposefully left filler words, for the most part, to convey the podcast as truly a conversation that one would have with another - authentic and raw. I believe there is a functional use for filler words, whether it shows how the interviewee is being guided through their thoughts, how they connect words in English in relation to a different native tongue, and how they would naturally communicate to a friend. This aligns with Elise Kärkkäinen, who argued that using the phrase "I think" as a filler word in casual conversations served essential pragmatic functions, such as signaling hesitation, uncertainty, or an attempt to hold the conversational floor. She argues that removing these types of filler words could result in losing the natural rhythm and feel of authentic speech (Kärkkäinen, 2003). Similarly, I felt that when I removed the filler words, words were cut off, people did not sound authentic, and the rhythm of their speaking became robotic. It is for this reason I kept filler words in the podcast episodes.

6. Data Analysis

6. a. Initial Coding

After uploading the recording into Descript, I will export the transcript and upload it to @Atlas.ti (Atlas.ti). Atlas utilizes AI to help analyze the codes you place on a text. Coding was in alignment with my use of critical theory. I started coding the first three interviews in Atlas on a blank slate. While reading, I would tag a sentence I wanted to return to and the word I associated with it. While I read more, I began to add more codes to the text. For every three

articles, I would go back and recode the previous texts that may have yet to include my previous codes. After the first six interviews, I solidified the list of words I wanted to code all my interviews by. The words and phrases that were coded were 'Challenges with Engagement", "Collaborating with Long-Time Government Employees," "Communicating to Community Members," "Advocate," "Be in community," "Institutional Aspects," and "Good Manager" to name a few. After coding all my interviews, I reviewed a bar graph of the most popular codes. The most popular codes were useful. However, I utilized the organization of my quotes into codes to revisit the findings instead of only focusing on the most coded words or phrases. The reason for this was a continuation of critical theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), in which I was heavily focused on the nuances as opposed to generalizations.

6. b. Constant Comparison

Based on my capacity, I would work in Descript to listen and edit recordings to be podcast-ready, or I would work in Atlas to code the interviews, reading through the scripts and attaching one-word themes to poignant phrases. While editing the podcast in Descript, I would also jot down notes during it to remember returning to those moments as critical takeaways as a second touch point outside of my coding. Simultaneously, due to constraints, I interviewed people, followed up with other individuals, and finalized dates to conduct the interviews. I expected that only eight podcasts would come to fruition. I was pleasantly mistaken when, in the end, I recorded twelve podcast episodes with thirteen people. Given the volume of recordings, I centered clarity and transparency with my participants, notably in that I would only be able to conduct interviews in March, and all feedback on their episodes would be needed two weeks after receipt. I sent their podcast episode back to participants on a rolling basis, completing the editing within 72 hours to ensure ample time for their review. After listening to five of the recordings, I recorded the intro and outro of the podcast directly in Descript. I leveraged Bard AI to ideate on the title. The original podcast title was 'Operationalizing Design,' yet this felt too callous and impersonal. Through a series of prompts with Bard AI, I landed on "The Civic Design Room."

My written thesis began while I coded and edited the podcast episodes. I found it critical to write everything besides the findings while I was still analyzing the data to see what findings emerged as the interviews were finalized (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I began my summaries by writing a one-page summary of each interview. The primary purpose of my doing so was so that the individual summaries could live outside of my thesis in a Medium post. I wanted to continue democratizing my findings so that an individual who did not have time to listen to a one-hour podcast could still walk away with the main takeaways from this conversation. The secondary purpose of summarizing each podcast was to give life to each of my interviewees' nuances and unique identities and to understand how their backgrounds have influenced their insights. In

this way, I would be able to provide an overall summary of my findings while also shedding light on the nuanced findings on an individual level. After writing all of the summary findings, I then created the overall findings. Given the high number of interviews conducted shortly before the thesis's due date, I conducted individual findings on a rolling basis as the interviews were completed, in alignment with Patton's cyclical approach to empirical observation, reflection, and critique (Srivastava and Hopwood, 2009). This allowed for a consistent analysis flow as the interviews were still underway. In the last stage of my thesis, I wrote my written thesis in full and then edited each podcast episode based on the feedback from my participants. I will release a podcast episode and medium post every two weeks for post-thesis defense.

7. Ethical Considerations

Although a daunting task, I tried to center care throughout the conversation, holding deeply to the humanity and depth of the conversation. I often went away from the questions written on paper depending on the flow of the conversation. Sumathi Ranganathan argues, similarly, that rigidly adhering to a pre-set list of questions can undermine the collaborative, dialogic nature of the interview process (Sumathi Ranganathan, 2009). In this, I sought to utilize contemplative inquiry methods, such as empathetic listening, where I strove to deeply listen and attune myself to the experiences and perspectives of my research participants, as argued by Sharon Myers (Myers, 2000) centered probing to dive deeper when I could as opposed to exclusively following the questions on paper. My interviews were primarily conducted virtually and with cameras so I could engage and connect with my interviewees, except for one interview where my interviewee felt she could speak more authentically while not looking at a virtual screen. I did on-camera interviews in alignment with contemplative inquiry methods of embodied presence (Batcharaya, Wong, 2018), whereby being on camera, I aimed to be fully present and engaged during the interviews, looking out for subtleties of tone, body language, and relational dynamics on the one group interview.

I scheduled follow-up calls if my participants felt that they didn't get to cover everything they had hoped to. I rescheduled when my participant had a conflicting call or if they were not in a suitable space to show up as their whole selves. There were several moments when an interviewee joined the call and asked us to reschedule, not feeling mentally open enough to give as much as they would like to provide. We rescheduled with no hesitation. Brinkmann and Kvale argued that qualitative researchers must respect participants' autonomy and the need for flexibility in scheduling to accommodate participants' needs and preferences (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). I strongly believe in the importance of honoring this. I attended each conversation fully, treating them as if I had never done one before, even if I had four or five in one day. This was partly because I believed each person deserved the same amount of me but also because an audience member listening may only hear one. I reminded myself that if a

listener only got to listen to this episode, how can I give them my all so that they feel an equal level of engagement in this interview to others they would not get the chance to listen to? This was tough on certain days, given that my interviews occurred while I was fasting during Ramadan. Some were right before I broke fast. Overall, I felt rewarded by the richness of the conversations and the relationships built with my participants through this process.

8. Reflexivity

8.a. My Experience Growing up in Harlem

This project is grounded in my position as a queer Black Muslim Senegalese-American who grew up in Harlem, New York City. My understanding of the world is rooted in intersectionality as it analyzes the world through various forms of social stratification, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability, to name a few (Crenshaw, 1989). My lived experience is one of me growing up in a communal neighborhood where my living room felt like a revolving door of people sleeping due to their inability to afford housing. Someone slept in my living room for fourteen years as an example and, regardless of working, could never afford his own place. I had a mother who fed people every day, with people coming over right around dinner time and leaving soon after. They came for conversation, but we knew it was also because they could rely on my mom to feed them. My dad was a travel agent, so if anyone wanted a ticket to Senegal, they would come to my dad's "office," a tiny nook in our house next to the kitchen. Individuals could have booked online, but it was something about using a reliable, trustworthy source that understood their financial constraints and could provide them with advice. We were used to the lack of heat in our apartment, so we turned on gas stoves on open flames and layered up to keep warm in the winter. There were constant calls to the landlords to no avail. We weren't sure what to do beyond this. Simultaneously, I was attending a private high school with an average tuition of $63,000 a year through a full-ride scholarship.

I remember visiting my classmates' homes and being in shock and awe, not knowing that houses with multiple floors existed in New York City. I remember walking home one day with my volleyball gear on and the local Gyro restaurant owner telling me to stay on track and not be like the other people on my street. Daily, I was baffled by what is and what could be. I felt a level of guilt as I interacted with former public school classmates whose families were suffering from disenfranchisement in every sense of the word. Why was I allowed to change my life trajectory? Who established this baseline? I witnessed firsthand the daily reality of housing insecurity, food insecurity, and lack of access to essential resources within my own family and neighborhood. Simultaneously, the stark contrast between my home life and my private high school peers' affluence highlighted the vast inequities within the same city. This personal background has led me to reject an individualistic model of social change in favor of a

commitment to transformative, systemic approaches. Rather than focus solely on changing the trajectory of a single child, I feel a moral obligation to address the root causes of the structural disenfranchisement experienced by my community. This paradigm shift is underpinned by critical theory, drawing heavily on the work of Paulo Freire in his seminal text "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" in Freire's advocacy for problem-posing, dialogical approach to education that empowers marginalized communities as agents of their own liberation (Freire, 2000). In addition, my thesis utilizes bell hooks' interaction of critical theory and intersectionality by calling on critical theory to go beyond class as an axis of oppression but also the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, and other axes of oppression" (hooks, 1989). The foundation of this thesis is a commitment to the public sector, and I hope it can be a steward of change due to my perception of a commitment to communities and scale.

8. b. My Discovery of the IDEO.org Human-Centered Design Toolkit

My interest in this topic of civic design began on a plane to Paris in 2017, where my team at Bloomberg Associates was working to help its social welfare agency better engage with predominately immigrant groups. The team had just discovered the Human-Centered Design Toolkit put together by IDEO.org, and my boss printed out the entire guide and handed it to me on the plane (IDEO.org, 2015). I remember combing through in awe, feeling like I had the tools to engage with residents in ways I could not before. I had learned about ethnography previously as an undergraduate. Still, I felt ill-equipped to do an ethnographic study, nor did I have the desire to do so in the ways of ethnographers such as Bronislaw Malinowski, who emphasized the importance of immersing oneself in the daily lives of the communities one studies yet did so in a subjugating manner, calling people 'subjects' and 'savages' (Malinowski, 1929). The Human-Centered Design toolkit felt like the tools I needed because I found them simple to understand, felt applicable, and treated people less like objects to be studied and more as active participants. Over the years, I quickly realized that frameworks are helpful but not a solution. I remember attempting to use some of the frameworks with community members, but it missed the mark or did not land as I desired.

At the time, I worked one floor away from the Bloomberg Philanthropies Government Innovation team, comprised of innovation thinkers and designers. I remember calling on them often to support me in my projects and to learn from them and their ways of doing. Years later, I joined a project with the City of Atlanta to reimagine its city detention center into a center for equity. Designing Justice Designing Spaces was consulted to lead the visioning and implementation of this initiative (OneAtlanta, 2020). I watched their version of design and community engagement in awe. Over the years, my toolbelt kept growing, and I became deeply interested in how people have applied design in the public sector. Through years of admiration

and unspoken apprenticeship, I embarked on a second learning phase with a new set of people in Milan.

8. c. My Journey to Milan

This project began in 2020 when I moved to Milan as a Fulbright Scholar to interview various city agencies across the Municipality of Milan. The root of this project was a fascination to unblock local government leaders' challenges with engaging community residents, primarily immigrant communities. I had previously worked with the Municipality of Milan as a Consultant, where I helped their welfare services agency build a toolkit for newcomers to the city. This project was riddled with challenges regarding whether and how to engage with immigrant and migrant community members. In order to support the Municipality of Milan, I convinced them, along with my colleagues, to host a session with the families they were currently working with to understand their challenges. This facilitated group focus group became an aha moment for the civil servants, who recognized the value of creating space to hear from those they seek to serve. We then continued to engage with potential toolkit users using human-centered design methodologies, such as journey mapping [Appendix M]. It is through these facilitated interactions the City's welfare agency saw the power of engaging community members in designing new city-run initiatives.

I was curious to dive deeper into why there was such reluctance to engage and co-design with local immigrant communities, so I went back to Milan and interviewed nineteen city agency leaders. I was fascinated by my findings that city agencies struggled to understand who to engage, how to engage them, how to do so without making false promises, and how to keep people engaged, notably communities that are seen as hard to reach or do not traditionally participate in civic engagements (N'Diaye, 2020). I then sought out to find answers to their questions.

8.d. My Journey to Sierra Leone

This project continued in 2023, when, as a Morningside Academy for Design Fellow partnered with the MIT GOV/LAB, I shadowed the Sierra Leone Directorate of Science, Technology, and Innovation (DSTI) for a month.

In addition, I spent months working on a paper focused on the challenges of applying a human-centered design approach in the Directorate of Science, Technology, and Innovation in Sierra Leone. In 2018, the president of Sierra Leone, Julius Maada Bio, established the Directorate of Science, Technology, and Innovation, or DSTI. The directorate uses science, technology, and innovation to support the country's national development plan and to help transform Sierra

Leone into an innovation and entrepreneurship hub, according to DSTI's vision statement (DSTI.gov.stl). Senate permanent secretary for the Ministry of Agriculture, Andrew Sorie, described it as an "opportunity to have things that are locally developed and locally engineered so we do not need to keep outsourcing apps or platforms from other countries." (N'Diaye, 2023). DSTI could house innovation outside of the day-to-day hustle of technological needs across ministries with a local team and local knowledge.

DSTI is a lean team of finance and operation officers, software developers, data engineers, data scientists, product managers, researchers, policy analysts, business analysts, and communications specialists. This case study will follow the experience of Bineta Diop, one of DSTI's civil servants who joined the team early in her career as a Business Analyst. Within her role, she oversaw a team of Engineers, UX Designers, and Business Analysts and reported directly to the Chief Operating Officer. She served as a mid-level Manager for the DSTI team". The DSTI team sought to use a human-centered design methodology to digitize the Ministry of Finance's payment processing system and incorporate more voices in the government's problem-solving process. Simultaneously, the rigid bureaucratic and resource-constrained setting made it difficult to reach the parties they wanted to reach when they wanted to reach them. DSTI also struggled to identify how to achieve innovative digital products in a system where the foundational technological needs are still being addressed. The DSTI team must plan for and address these challenges when embarking on government innovation initiatives within Sierra Leone's national government. The challenges to engagement highlight the importance of not only utilizing design methodologies but also developing a strategic political approach that will allow individuals to reach users effectively within rigid bureaucratic environments (N'Diaye, 2023). I argued then that human-centered design as a framework itself is not aptly applied in any government context because it lacks the deep community, politics, and negotiation skills required to succeed in the government context, notably in more rigid and hierarchical government settings (N'Diaye, 2023).

My life's journey and my professional journey laid the foundation for my podcast, "The Civic Design Room." This podcast and thesis are deeply rooted in conversation, methodologies, and uncovering the how and why of people's actions or thought processes when applying design in government.

FINDINGS

1. Intro

My thesis sought to understand how design is defined in the public sector through the lens of people who apply design within government. I also sought to understand the challenges and successes they faced when applying design in government, whether with communities, other government employees, and/or their teams.

Although my research was based on three scales - within community, within government, and within one's team - four themes emerged across these scales. The first theme is the fluidity of the definition of design. The second theme is the role of collaboration and inclusivity, whether it is engaging diverse perspectives and stakeholders, fostering inclusive decision-making, or building strong relationships and partners. The third theme is the importance of empathy and understanding when conducting user research to understand needs and experiences, empathize with colleagues, recognize and value existing expertise, or acknowledge the limits, constraints, and historical contexts in which we engage communities. The fourth theme is the importance of relationship-building as the key to navigating bureaucracy. The fifth theme is the criticality of staying adaptable and iterative by exhibiting resilience and flexibility in the face of challenges, embracing continuous improvement and learning, treating design as an iterative and adaptive process, and being willing to question assumptions and adjust approaches. The sixth theme is the need for effective communication and transparency, whether using plain language, ensuring alignment among stakeholders, maintaining documentation, or communicating transparently to anyone with whom they are engaged. The following sections will dive deeper into each of these findings.

2. Fluidity of the Definition Design

Across all 12 interviews and 13 participants, Design was defined differently. I believe that my participants' diverse perspectives on design emphasize that design is both multifaceted and fluid. Digital Designer Gina Kim, Design Researcher Monica Pachon, Government Practitioner Nigel Jacob, Service Designer Mari Nakano, and Urban Planner Vaidehi Mody defined design primarily as a process or a methodology for solving problems. Mari Nakano described the design as a "way to curate a process," while Monica Pachon described it as a "methodology that allows peoples and teams to think about problems and solve them to a certain extent." This is similarly argued by Cognitive Science and Design Theory Scholar Herbert Simon, who defined design as "the process of devising courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones" (Simon, 1969). This was further emphasized by Horst Rittel, who

coined the term "wicked problems," who saw design as a problem-framing and problem-solving approach and a way to tackle complex, ill-defined social problems (Rittel, 1972). Design Researcher Federico Vaz described design as a verb, such as the act of designing, as argued by Richard Buchanan, stating, "Design is the human power of conceiving, planning, and making products that serve human beings in the accomplishment of their individual and collective purposes" (Buchanan, 1992). Service and Interaction Designers Mariana Salgado and Mari Nakano considered design a mindset or an approach. Mariana Salgado describes design as "a perspective which implies certain methods to solve problems" (main findings and quotations from each interview can be found in Appendix N), which Design Researcher Nigel Cross emphasized by calling design a distinct mode of thinking and problem-solving (Cross, 1982).

Global Innovation Leader Stephanie Wade and Service Designer Mari Nakano emphasized design as a way to spark joy and creativity. Similarly, Cognitive Scientist and Design Theorist Donald Norman argues that effective design is not only functional but also engages users' emotions and elicits positive experiences" (Norman, 2004). There were disparate opinions on whether design-centered people or community. Cultural Worker, Educator, and Designer Harmonie Coleman, as well as Innovator Stephanie Wade, described the design as human-centered and did so as a recognition of design as a way to deeply consider the needs of people. Nigel Jacob and Civic Designer Nidhi Rangathore challenged this notion of design being solely human-centered as a limitation that narrowly focuses on end-users, not broader societal impacts, and the public good. Nigel Jacob argued that "design should be centered less on one designer but as a group process amongst a community; we need to be less consumer-focused and more community and public-good oriented." Nigel Jacob calls for design to be viewed with more community-wide lends than focused on a set of experiences of a select number of users.

Christian Bason, former head of the Danish Design Center, argues similarly that design in the public realm requires a fundamentally different mindset and approach than private sector design (Bason, 2010. He argues that design in the public sector requires more systemic, collaborative approaches, larger challenges around navigating diverse and often competing needs and interests across stakeholders, there is a greater emphasis on societal value and collective needs rather than individual/commercial interest, there are greater political and bureaucratic constraints, and there tends to be a deeper need for citizen engagement (Bason, 2010). Others critiqued specific methodologies of design, such as design thinking" or "human-centered design," as overly rigid and minimalist, devoid of the depth needed to excel in the public sector. Design Theorist Richard Buchanan argued similarly that human-centered design can sometimes become excessively narrow and prescriptive, leaving little room for serendipity while overlooking the collective with a hyper-reliance on individualism (Buchanan, 2001). Despite the various definitions and critiques of design, all saw design as vital for problem-

defining and problem-solving. To all participants, design was both a process and a solution, both an act and a mindset, sparking joy and helping to communicate intangible experiences. Across all interviewees, design is not a one-size-fits-all and is open to interpretation.

The lack of a standard design definition across my interviews invited great room for interpretation. On one end, it may feel clouded in jargon as one is still left in the unknown: What is design? Better yet, what is Civic Design? There are also various definitions of design among design theorists from a methodology or process (Simon, 1969) (Rittel, 1972), as an action (Buchanan, 1992), as a mindset or approach (Cross, 1982), or as a way to spark joy (Norman, 2004). In addition, there have been many interactions of design, such as human-centered design (Arnold, 1958), user-centered design (Norman, 1986), design-thinking (Brown, 2008), Equity-Centered Design and Liberatory Design (National Equity Project, 2016), Participatory Design (Nygaard and Bergo, 1975) (Sanders and Dandavate, 2002), Community-Centered Equity Design (Creative Reaction Lab, 2018), Community-Centered Design (Rangathore, 2022), Civic Design (Manzini 2015), Public-Sector Design (Bason 2014), and Care-Centered Design (Held 2016).

Newer movements of design seek to challenge the existing structures of human-centered design. For example, equity-centered design centers on equity in the design process (National Equity Project, 2016). Participatory Design highlights the need for the design process to actively involve its users in the entire lifeline of the project (Nygaard and Bergo, 1975). Co-Design is the effort to design with communities that are deeply involved in decision-making in the entire design process (McKercher, 2020). Decolonized design actively works to dismantle existing power structures within the design (Decolonizing Design, 2017). Each new interpretation of design builds off and/or conflicts with the others, inviting a sense of fluidity and ongoing interpretation. What is d*esign?*

3. Collaboration and Inclusivity

My interviewees emphasized the importance of collaborating with local community partners and rethinking how we engage with people beyond the town hall. They called for the need to center inclusivity in our approach to interacting with community members, other government employees, and our teams while also going beyond codesigning with community members.

3.a. Collaborating with Local Community Partners
Regarding collaborating with existing community partners, my interviews outlined the criticality of leveraging existing community organizations to identify who to engage and how to engage them. They stressed the importance of working through trusted partners due to their ability to be trusted by community members, have existing connections, and understand the needs and

desires of community members that government leaders may not know. Mari Nakano, former Design Director for the New York City Service Design Studio, recognized that working with "a core organization out in the community to do deployment" was a lot more effective than their team trying to find people to talk to on their own. This sentiment is shared by Chris Ansell and Alison Gash, who argue for the need for collaborative governance in which there is a need for cooperation between government agencies and community-based organizations in addressing public issues (Ansell and Gash, 2008).

The relationship with community organizations also was not solely of deployment or identifying users. My interviews showed how critical it was for public servants to see community organizations as thought partners throughout the process, e.g., codesigners (McKercher, 2021). They can understand the nuance of what is needed to be as effective as possible with communities, which may not be obvious to those working within government. Mari Nakano expressed, "We don't want as a government to think we know everything. We want people to tell us, guide us, and steward us in the right direction around what's needed. And so by having a community organization as our partner to be our advisor, we were able to do things like tailor the application process to be as accessible as possible for the groups we were trying to recruit." This sentiment was echoed by Gina Kim, Director of Design at the NYC Digital Service, who, when beginning a project, identifies which community organization she can partner with. She shared, "There are a couple of community-based organizations that we partnered with earlier on in the project we're working on, and it gets very specific, like senior citizens out in Queens or Chinese-speaking seniors in the Lower East side, or the LGBTQ community in Brooklyn…there are all these different groups that we have built relationships with, and they have been super helpful." Throughout, having a diverse array of community-based organizations you can partner with is deeply valuable.

3. b. Going beyond Traditional Modes of Community Engagement

Regarding going beyond the town hall, interviewees expressed the need to stray away from the traditional town hall, where anyone can express their grievance at a podium. Gina Kim shared that "town halls are great for feeling the energy of people and can feel democratizing. However, it is not a great method for truly learning people's behaviors and desires." This sentiment resonated with Danita regarding addressing systemic challenges, stating, "How is that town hall going to actually fix generations of structural, systemic racism?" Nigel shared his frustrations with the town hall structure of engagement, sharing a time when he attended a community meeting between Havard and Allston representatives for a library development; "It was crazy. People were yelling. Emotions were on display, and it was not an effective way of having a conversation." Throughout the interviews, they called for a new way of engaging that

invited more facilitation, structure, and space for deeper conversations that one cannot get in a town hall setting. The town hall setting can also be non-inclusive as it is geared towards a select group of individuals who are available and have the energy, time, and ability to show up to have their voice heard amongst a large audience (McDowell, 2021). For Nigel, this looked like building the new library development that was up for debate in a virtual game for everyone to interact virtually in a simulation, albeit in the same room. For Gina, this involved having one-on-one interviews with people about their experiences. For Harmonie Coleman, Senior Community Engagement Manager for IDEO.org, this looked like a two-year co-design process with a select number of women with lived expertise who had been involved in the child welfare system in New Jersey. These women were paid to co-design a new approach to child welfare in New Jersey with IDEO.org through biweekly virtual meetings. Across each of these individuals, there was great value in engaging with communities outside of large town hall meetings that my interviewees felt were often unproductive.

This also rings true for going beyond who calls the Mayor's Office. Some individuals are used to calling in to complain or reaching senior leaders directly to make a complaint. Stephanie Wade, Founder and CEO of Ascendant, emphasized the importance of paying attention to "squeaky wheels." Stephanie describes squeaky wheels as "the same people over and over again…a certain constituent group who are more comfortable advocating for themselves or have been privileged enough to feel comfortable to reach out and just call the Mayor's Office or the Governor's office…resulting in confirmation basis of these are the calls I am getting so these are the problems communities are facing." Political Scientist and Harvard professor Archon Fung coined the term "squeaky wheel" to describe individuals or groups who are more vocal and active in participating in community decision-making processes, often leading to their concerns being addressed more readily than those of less vocal community members (Fung, 2004). The challenge with squeaky wheels is that although they may be a problem for some, their needs may not reflect the community's needs, Stephanie also argues. Instead of defaulting to those who show up to town halls or those who call, she asserts that it is critical to review the data, go into the community, observe the challenge, and ask a variety of people what they are experiencing.

4. Empathy and Understanding

4.a. Establishing a Baseline

As it relates to rooting in a deep understanding of the current baseline, my interviewees argued it is critical to understand the current status quo. Gina Kim emphasized interviewing and observing people to understand what their current experience of a system is before seeking to

improve the system. Gina expressed, "It is critical to really understand where users are today. What is a real-life expectation? Are users going to apply for five things at once? Is that a real behavior, or is that something we made up on our own? Is a user going to finish this whole task in one sitting, or are they being disrupted by life? Imagine being a single parent filling out a childcare form and being asked so many questions about a spouse. That could be triggering or stressful." These questions guide Gina in watching and interviewing people filling out digital forms in the settings in which they fill them out. For example, while working with the federal government's US Veteran's Office, she worked on a form redesign. Gina explains with the proposal to redesign the digital form, "They tested it with a Veteran who was homeless and had to go to a library, and guess what? The library didn't have the most updated Acrobat reader on which the form would need to be opened." Gina shared this story with me as a call to action, saying that it is not enough to test how someone experiences a service or a digital form but to do so in the setting where they would naturally be using it. Gina argues it is also critical to work with various users, especially those most marginalized, to ensure you are captivating their experiences. Gina argues it is when you connect with a variety of users in the settings in which they would naturally be doing a task that you will know what to improve, ensuring you are capturing would have a detrimental impact on your initiative. Norman argues that extensive user interviews allow government employees to deeply understand various end-users' perspectives, behaviors, and pain points rather than relying on assumptions or limited feedback (Norman, 1988). He also advocates for observing people use (or avoid using) government services and products in their natural contexts (Norman, 1988). Norman argues without this grounded, user-centric research, government agencies risk developing services that are disconnected from the real-world experiences and needs of the people they are meant to serve (Norman, 1988).

Vaidehi takes a similar approach when redesigning the public realm in the New York City Housing Authority public developments. Vaidehi does this by interviewing people currently using this space and asking questions like, "How are you using your open spaces? What is your favorite current open space? What is the space that you feel unsafe in? What do you think should be upgraded?" She asked this question to teenagers, adults, seniors, and various people for a comprehensive understanding. Simultaneously, she always observed the space. She sits down in the space observing, "Who are we seeing making use of the place, around the place? Are there any assets or community assets around there? Are there nearby daycares, markets, clinics, or senior centers that may or may not have a physical relationship with the place?" By speaking to a variety of people and observing the space itself, "more color is added to this picture of the unknown," as Vaidehi describes it. In *The Design of Everyday Things, Donald Norman* further argues that user research observation serves a critical role in the design of effective, human-centered products and services (Norman, 1988).

4.b. Acknowledging Institutional Harms

This baseline also relates to institutional harms. My interviewees rang the alarm on the need for recognition that by representing a government institution, you are implicitly a part of harming communities, whether in the past or the present. Several studies have spoken to not just acknowledge but also address institutional harms perpetrated on communities, notably marginalized communities. Jeremy L. Hall, Dominic Bearfield, and Sanjay Pedey, in "A New Era and New Concepts in the Study of Race in Public Administration," examined how public administrators can develop a greater awareness of the "racial contract" - the implicit, racialized social and political agreements that structured government policies and practices to perpetuate systemic racism and marginalization (Hall, Bearfield, Panday, 2022). Nigel Jacob, Founder of the City of Boston's Office of New Urban Mechanics, shared, "How do we think about trust at the moment, especially when trust is coming from other issues that this person might be facing, and you are implicit? You are implicitly involved because you are the government, which is all one thing." There is a level of implicitness every government employee has to the harms perpetuated before and during their time, as well as within and beyond their department. My interviewees argue that when engaging with communities, it is important to recognize that there may be a stigma against your association with the government. Andrea Ngan, the Community Design Practice Lead for the City of Philadelphia's Service Design Studio, shared how she wrestles with this constantly. "I am showing up with all this City of Philadelphia history. I had been schooled and told that this is what it is, right? But it is different to live it in your body when you quite literally just met this person in a community meeting, and we're vibing out, right? And your values are both aligned." Andrea emphasizes that regardless of your previous experiences, values, and/or approaches, you still represent the government and that identity cannot be fully dismissed or divorced from your work when working in government.

My interviewees push us not only to acknowledge but also to humanize ourselves outside of requests for labor from community members. Danita Reese, the Deputy Director for the City of Philadelphia's Service Design Studio, emphasized the importance of government employees being in the community with no requests. She shared, "What we heard from the community, from the jump, was you'll always coming to ask us for something, or you're coming to tell us what we got to do, whether we want to do it or not…it would be nice if from time to time…you would just come by and just sit." Danita shared this story as a reminder to government employees that we cannot build trust with community members if we always demand something from them or come up with an extractable goal. She urged government employees to "be seen by people, but also be willing to see others and just be in space." Danita shared this, looking like "coming to the block party and just hanging out. Make a place for yourself. If

you see people passing out flyers, you see people setting up chairs, make yourself useful, make yourself available, and introduce yourself." She argues that the way trust is built is by showing up with no agenda and with no purpose and showing community members who you are through your actions. John McKnight and Peter Block also argue that government employees should actively engage in community-building activities, citing their ability to foster social capital and strengthen communities (Mcknight and Block, 2010). Amongst my interviewees, there is a need for presence-based engagements where government representatives enter with no agenda and with a deep interest in understanding community priorities and concerns.

5. Relationship-Building

When discussing bureaucracy, my interviewees instead stressed relationships. Designer and Research Mariana Salgado emphasized the importance of relationships and collaborations in advancing any project. She shared the importance of Designers to "do it together…invest time and effort in a network of colleagues because the only real impact will come if you do things in peer learning communities." This sentiment of collaboration was palpable when speaking with Nidhi Rangathore, Civic Design Lead with the Montgomery County government, who shared, "Co-designed tools get buy-in early on. They are things that staff and employees are excited about because it is their ideas. They want to make it happen." It is the way one brings in their colleagues into the process and prioritizes their relationships with those individuals that will allow projects to thrive. Nidhi described the building of social capital as "a way to push through bureaucracy…building a relationship that I've got your back, and that's when you can go out to people and when you don't know how to hack a particular piece of bureaucracy, you can be honest with that person, and ask them how to solve it." Marina Nitze doubles down on this in "Hack Your Bureaucracy," where she argues that relationship building is a key bureaucracy hacking strategy where cultivating rapport and trust with those above and below you can help you understand different perspectives, gain support for your ideas, and navigate power dynamics, whereas building connections with peers can be valuable for sharing information, coordinating efforts, and building coalitions around shared goals (Nitze and Sinai, 2022). The main difference between Marina Nitze's definition and Nidhi Rangathore's is that Nidhi's is centered on care and deep relationships, less on what one can do the other and more on what you can do for that other person rooted in the humanity of people, as opposed to what they can offer you. According to my interviewees, it is through relationship building with care that bureaucracy hacking can occur.

This relationship-building is also deeply connected to appreciating existing expertise. Stephanie shared a way she communicates with those who have been working on a challenge for a while

as such; "We know you've been dealing with this and trying to work on this issue for a really long time, and we'd really like to bring you in because you are the expert. And we need your help…We're just applying a slightly different approach here to see where we might come up with new ideas. We want to do this with you. We're here to champion you and to help you in this work." Stephanie sought to emphasize the criticality of not only acknowledging the work that has already been done but also bringing those individuals into the fold and making it feel less scary that someone is coming in to "innovate" and redo all of their work. This argument has also been emphasized by Marina Nitze and Nick Sinai, where Nitze argues that a strategy for effectively navigating and driving change within bureaucratic systems is to acknowledge and engage with those who have previously tried and failed to solve a problem or implement a change within a bureaucratic system (Nitze and Sinai, 2022). Nitze argues that it is imperative when trying to introduce a new idea or approach that one acknowledges that the problem one is trying to solve is not new and others have likely attempted to address it in the past and that it is critical to show respect for the work that has come before and the complexity of the issue (Nitze and Sinai, 2022). This is a form of communication with subject matter experts who have worked tirelessly on a topic for years and sometimes decades.

6. Creativity

My interviewees emphasized how innovation was also fueled by creativity and play. Mari Nakano shared the importance of creative space for creativity and play in the public sector. They argue that existing spaces for creativity and psychological safety fuel comfort in ideating new solutions and approaches. Mari shared that the Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity's ability to be creative in ideation sessions was not isolated to those sessions but, instead, "other teams saw the service design team using post-its, drawing and leaving scraps all over the place, crafting things…there was always this notion of the Designers always making things." This perception channeled to the entire office when "we would often hold making sessions; every week, we would have non-creatives creative club meetings where everyone would come in, and there would be some type of design or creative prompt…And there's an activity tied to collaging and drawing or whatever it was. Every week, it would rotate. So it wouldn't be a designer facilitating it, it would be anybody…it was just for 30 minutes gathered together in a room and cranking fun stuff out." Although this may seem just fun things to do in the workplace, Mari observed that this creative outlet and empowering anyone to lead, "started to unlock a different way of making and doing..and so when we got to the work meetings, there was not fear to make people laugh at themselves. People would say, God, this is so dirty and ugly. And look at this designer with their beautiful handwriting and precision cuts…but no one was afraid to get going…And I think from a leadership director level perspective when folks saw everybody else on their staff making; I think the pressure was on to be like, oh well, I need to participate too, why not?" He argues that incorporating elements of creativity and planning into

government teams can help break teams out of conventional thinking patterns and spur more imaginative, innovative approaches to public challenges, build resilience by embracing a culture of trial and error, and break down hierarchies and silos by enabling more open, generative forms of collaboration (Resnick, 2018). It is through the invitation of play that government employees can foster creative and innovative processes and solutions. In the case of Mari, it was through these democratized creative outlets that when meetings relevant to projects emerged, people could speak up and think of bold new ways of doing.

7. Effective Communication

7.a. Transparency in Project Planning

My interviewees found that they were able to build trust with community members through a high level of transparency. Vaidehi Mody, Senior Planning Consultant at the New York City Housing Authority, shared that through transparency and open communication, she has had community members feel a strong level of ownership in a project. For example, she was working on a New York City Housing Authority redevelopment project in 2019, where her team started on a blank slate with community members within one public housing development. Through a series of interviews and workshops, the community members identified three redevelopment projects. Due to 2020 COVID-19 budget constraints, Vaidehi was only able to pursue one of the three projects. She shared these challenges with the community members involved in the project. Vaidehi explained, "We were transparent. When we went to them with this really hard news, they understood it. It was something that everyone was going through together, and they were also appreciative of us just being so transparent and open about the challenges that we are all facing together." This transparency resulted in a greater level of accountability for the community members, to the point where the community members coalesced, petitioned the project to their City Councilmember, and were able to secure the needed funds to launch one more development project. Vaidehi described the community members as empowered because "they had all the information that we were constantly giving to them from so many hundreds of surveys that we had, all the workshop meetings, the gap in funding, why we couldn't do it." Vaidehi believes this transparency gave them the ability to self-mobilize and fundraise for the other projects. This sense of ownership and increased trust is the bedrock of the open data movement. Governments can increase trust and accountability, enable more informed participation, foster a sense of co-ownership, and facilitate collaborative problem-solving (Boliver et al., 2019). This transparency built in a sense of ownership from community members shifting away from individuals providing inputs to actually owning parts of the process and project.

7. b. Clarity in Community Engagement

The need for clarity is also critical throughout the engagement process. Danita emphasized the need to be as explicit with people as you can - "why you are there, what you are trying to do, what if anything, you need from someone in the community." Danita recognized that sometimes we may not have the answers or want to come in with an open mind. However, Danita argues that this lack of clarity only further perpetuates who gets to hold the knowledge and lacks transparency on how the information community members will use. Danita argues that this goes into following up as well by playing back what people told you, asking them if this is in alignment with what they intended. Danita described this as going back to relationships; "we always followed up to be like, this is what you said, right? Do you agree? Do you want to change anything? Do you want to add in anything? And oftentimes, people will be like, the city has never returned to me what I have given to it." Danita learned that by being clear on her end and offering greater feedback loops of transparency to community members throughout the process, she was able to build greater trust with various community members. Kvale and Brinkman argue that this level of transparency is an ethical obligation for researchers to provide participants with clear and accurate information about the study and their rights as participants (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009).

7. c. Data as a Tool for Clarity

Across my interviewees, people emphasized the importance of data as a tool for clarity. Mari emphasized the importance of research, sharing with her team, "If you can find the research and the precedent for someone else having done that in another municipality, bring that data in." This data was critical to be able to justify their actions to senior leaders. Stephanie shared that qualitative data needs to be balanced by quantitative data. "Quantitative data tells you the size and scope of the problem. What qualitative data and design does so well is tell you the why, but you really can't have one without the other", states Stephanie. Data is a powerful visual tool that allows people to communicate, especially with decision-makers, so it is critical to have both quantitative and qualitative data presented. Miro Kazakoff argues in "Persuading with Data" that data visualizations are powerful communicators over text-based communication because visualizations can present complex information in a clear and concise way, can help focus viewers' attention on the most important aspects of the data, can make data more accessible to a wider audience, and can help viewers identify patterns and trends in that data that might be difficult to see in other formats (Kazakoff, 2022).

7.d. Transparency on Power as Element of Team Project Management

In addition, my interviewees emphasized the importance of transparency around power, even within the government. Lastly, the interviewees emphasized the importance of acknowledging power. Across my interviews, the conversation around power was palpable. Danita stressed the importance of creating a team culture where the team can discuss power dynamics that may be at play during an initiative. She stressed the importance of using tools, such as Power Maps, to map out stakeholders in relation to their power, whether as decision-makers or disrupters. Power Mapping is a tool that originated in the field of organizing as a tool for advocacy and social change; VeneKlasen and Miller describe power mapping as a method for visually representing the relationships between actors, institutions, and interests that influence a particular issue or decision-making process (VeneKlasen and Miller, 2002). She also emphasized speaking to power dynamics the minute they happen. "You have to have ongoing conversations about the people who are involved, people who are dropping back…it is absolutely critical to do this because you could see three months out, this person is going to torpedo something, and you can create an opportunity to plan for these disruptions to bring people back into a relationship or navigate those disruptions", Danita said. Danita and her team actively include power dynamics as an element of project management that she sees as often overlooked. It also is occurring in a lifetime; "we navigated it through conversations at every point when there's a little hair on the back of your neck asking what just happened in this meeting…and then being willing and not afraid to have a conversation about what you are intuiting." My interviewees argue that the constant thinking of power dynamics and how people are showing up in meetings amongst colleagues is critical to caring for one's relationships, those colleagues and their reasons for behaving as they are behaving, and your work. One way of doing this is to utilize a Power Mapping framework, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Power Mapping Framework, the City of Philadelphia Service Design Studio
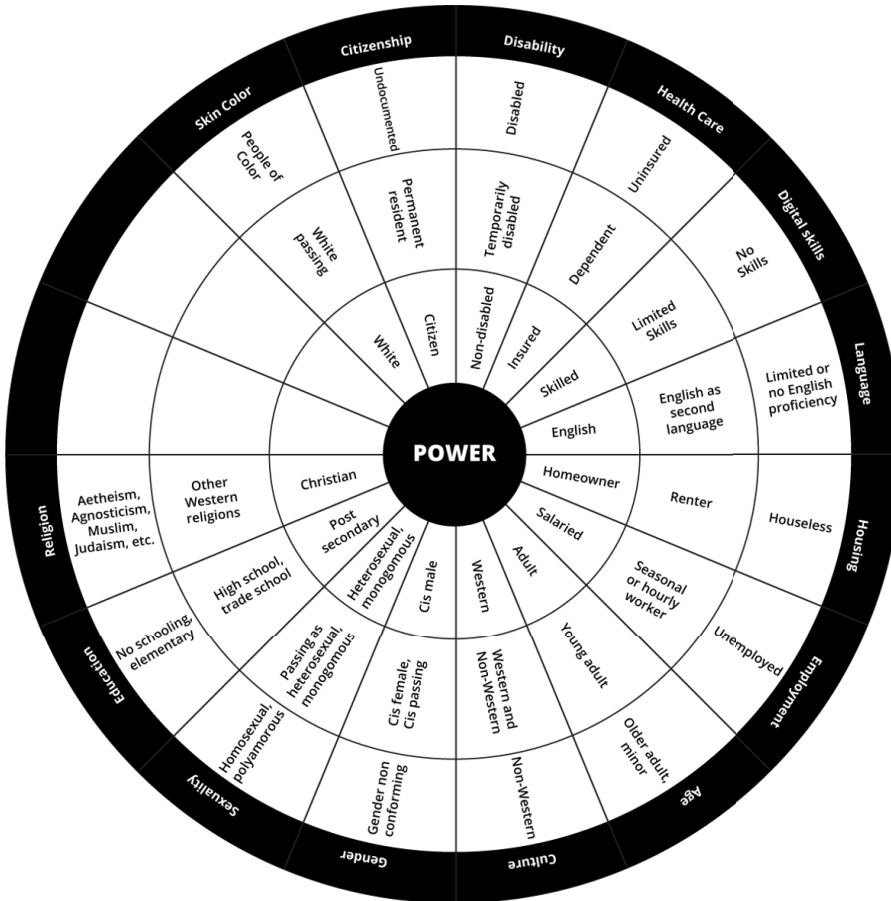
7.e. Transparency Fueling Vulnerability

Finally, transparency was also linked to vulnerability and the need for psychological safety in teams to foster that space for vulnerability. Amongst those interviewed, innovation and creativity on a team within a government setting could not exist without a culture of psychological safety on that team. Stephanie Wade exclaimed, "Innovation cannot happen without psychological safety because people will not bring forward their ideas if they feel like they will be shot down and criticized." Innovation requires "being vulnerable, being really communicative about where things are, what is needed. And honest about the state of where we are as a team and really spending time on care and feeding each individual team member with care helping to build those relationships." Stephanie argues that the creativity we seek from Designers or those passionate about innovation requires a deep level of vulnerability from leaders and care for individual team members. Without this, creativity methods cannot be exercised freely. Amy Edmonson argued for the importance of psychological safety in teams

(Edmonson, 1999). She defines psychological safety as "a shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking" (Edmonson, 1999, p.1). She argues that, particularly in government, psychological safety is paramount, and without that sense of safety, team members are less likely to voice dissenting or critical views, admit mistakes or knowledge gaps, and experiment with unconventional ideas (Edmonson, 1999). She also discovered that teams with higher levels of psychological safety tend to be more innovative, resilient, and effective - even in high-stakes, high-pressure government contexts (Edmonson, 1999). This sentiment was echoed by Pamela Hastings, Principal Designer at Code for America, who shared, "You need to really set sort of a psychologically safe space to make mistakes and to not know and to admit that we are trying things out and we are learning as we go. We are really validating our hypotheses. That we are working in an experimental medium." They argue that this emphasis on making mistakes and not having the right answers is needed in order to experiment and try things that have never been tried before.

The need for psychological safety is also rooted in how managers protect their teams from external forces. Interviewees recalled great managers from their past, and each recalled people who shielded them from externalities that would jeopardize their ability to either create or execute. Danita Reese described her managers at the City of Philadelphia's Service Design Studio as a "roller derby team who locked arms and knockout obstacles and kept everything moving." Constantly, Danita's managers were able to move obstacles out of the way and allow their team to continue to do their work with the resources they needed. Pyschoanlayst and Anthropologist Michael Maccoby argue similarly that in high-pressure, politically charged environments of government agencies, leaders who can serve as a "heat shield" against outside threats, effectively buffering their teams from external pressures can create a greater sense of psychological safety and stability, therefore enabling their team to focus on their work, take necessary risks, and innovate more freely (Maccoby, 2002). For some, this also translates to how teams pick up projects. Mari Nakano would democratize decision-making from the project scope itself. She described herself "as a protector to make sure that their team could stay focused." They would bring in ideas to their team about questions or requests that were being asked of her team from senior leaders and ask her team, "What do you think?" She would communicate to her senior leaders, "I can't say yes yet…I need to have an open discussion with my team." This created a culture where the team felt protected by Mari, that she would not spring on tasks on their plate, and it would also work favorably for senior leaders as often even better ideas were developed amongst the team to bring back to senior leaders. This form of participatory governance has strongly been advocated for by Senior Public Sector Specialist Tiago Peixoto, who has argued that an open and accountable government must also include the active participation of public servants and citizens in shaping the priorities and parameters of government work. Peixoto and his co-author, Jonathan Fox, argue that collaborative scoping,

where team members are involved in defining the scope, objectives, and deliverables of projects, results in shared ownership and understanding of the work (Peixoto and Fox, 2019). It is through these acts of being a "heat shield" for one's team, prioritizing psychological safety, and collaborative scoping that team members would build the vulnerability to innovate.

Overall, my conversations unearthed that regardless of audience, there are core principles that one should abide by in order to successfully advance design in the public sector. Those core principles are collaboration and inclusivity, empathy and understanding, relationship-building, creativity and adaptability, and communication and transparency. These principles served as the bedrock of many lessons learned and the successful implementation of projects across my interviewees. In addition, although each of my interviewees provided a varying set of definitions design, I was surprised by how often the notion of care emerged through my interviews. Gina Kim notably said, "There is not enough care in the public sector." In addition, when speaking on navigating bureaucracy, many people pointed out the need to build relationships and acknowledge the humanity of their colleagues above a title or position. Instead of thinking that everyone was against them, my interviewees prioritized deepening relationships, making things easier for their colleagues, and making them feel valued. At the center of bureaucracy, they emphasized care. The care my interviewees spoke of was to their colleagues, to the institutions, to community residents, and to their team.

DISCUSSION

1. Intro

Across my findings, I was struck by three concepts. The first concept was the manner in which care emerged throughout my conversations. The second concept was the role of showing up in the community as an unspoken part of government employees' job descriptions. The third concept was the importance of communicating transparently to community members. Due to the sentiments of care ranging across various definitions of design and various levels of government work, I argue for the need for Caring Systems Design. Caring Systems Design is the infusion of principles of care - attentiveness, responsiveness, competence, and responsibility - as defined by Virginia Held throughout the multiple nested levels of government work - from the individual and team level to cross-departmental collaboration to engaging with external communities and stakeholders.

2. Apply a Caring Systems Design Approach

Caring Systems Design allows for this breadth of modularity while still capturing the essence of how we should be interacting with the world, not just with communities and end-users but also with all of the other stakeholders involved, including the planet. This need for caring systems design is especially important amongst public sector leaders as relationships serve as the core of all levels of engagement, as based on my interviews with the community, institution, and team.

With a focus on Caring Systems Design, I call on civic leaders to understand how they may embed this within their work. I have three guiding questions for public servants as they seek to embed greater care in their work:

1. How are you thinking about, approaching and engaging with community members with care noting the institutional harms that exist due to government?

2. How are you approaching your colleagues in government with care, considering bureaucratic constraints, previous attempts to do what you are doing, and personal motivations?

3. How are you fostering a space of psychological safety and care for not just the team but the individuals on your team?

At the team level, Caring Systems Design could involve a variety of practices. One practice could be for managers to prioritize psychological safety and trust and serve as a "heat shield" for one's team. This may also look like democratizing decision-making and project scoping to include diverse voices and perspectives. This may also look like fostering a culture of learning, creativity, experimentation, and adaptability to change. Lastly, this may look like attending to the holistic well-being and development of individual team members.

1. How can I create an environment where my team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, ideas, and concerns without fear of judgment or retaliation?

2. What steps can I take to understand my team members as individuals and their unique needs, motivations, and challenges?

3. How can I foster a culture of mutual respect, empathy, and collaboration within my team?

In terms of cross-government collaboration, Caring Systems Design could emphasize a variety of ways to engage thoroughly with other government practitioners. The first could be the cultivation of empathy, understanding, and responsiveness among different agencies and departments. The second may be designing processes and sharing information that is accessible to various types of government employees, both in how the information is conveyed and where the information lives, in addition to documenting processes so that there can be seamless handoffs and onboarding around shared challenges. The third may be creating spaces for collective reflection, learning, and adaptation across silos. The last maybe modeling care-centered leadership that prioritizes the needs of employees and the public.

1. For those you are speaking to, what are their motivations, preferred way to digest information, roadblocks, and fears? How are you tailoring how you approach them with this in mind?

2. How can you alleviate the work burden of your requests to people?

3. How can you power map your stakeholders and devise a plan to engage those who are decision-makers but become disengaged or those who become blockers?

In engaging with communities, a Caring Systems Design approach would work to truly empower and listen to communities. This could first look like deep, empathetic listening and attunement to the diverse experiences and contexts of community members. This could also look like co-designing solutions with, rather than for, communities - with particular attention to elevating marginalized voices. The third could be designed for long-term, holistic efforts for communities rather than just narrow, short-term outcomes. The last may be demonstrating responsiveness, transparency, and accountability to community needs and feedback over time.

1. Are the community organizations you are partnering with representative of the community in which they work and connecting you with a breadth of diverse residents?

2. How are you building your relationships with these community organizations outside of your requests for access or support?

3. How are you valuing the input of community organizations into your process beyond community members' recruitment?

4. How does your work ensure the inclusion and centering of the most marginalized community members?

3. Show Up in the Community

I was particularly struck by this theme from my interviewees of showing up in a community with no requests, no asks, and no expectations. I thought back to projects that I worked on while partnering with government employees, and I cannot recall one moment when community engagement began before the project began. Community engagement during my projects was a step in the process, often after the scope had been established and, in some cases, even when the solution had been solidified. After learning more about human-centered design (Buchanan, 2001) and the need to define with one's users, I shifted my thinking away from this treatment of community members as consultants as opposed to co-designers (Arnstein, 1969) (McKercher 2021). However, there were many instances when working with government employees that when I asked who your users were, there was a struggle to answer. Within these informal conversations, they quickly listed out a few go-to community-based organizations they had previously worked with and/or individuals they had met who had come to them for government services. Neither of these scenarios centered on relationships they had built on their own outside of the workplace. My interviewees' argument to go into your community, volunteer, attend block parties, and meet people across your city outside of your workday seemed obvious to me. Yet, I wondered why this didn't happen more often or at least was not spoken about.

This then led me to think about the government employees I worked with who were over-exerted and burnt out by the unwavering load of work in front of them. How were they supposed to keep up their work and then spend additional hours either during the work day or after the work day attending community events? How were they supposed to take their time to themselves as people - not government employees? When and how often should government employees attend community meetings? How would they find out about these events? How can a government employee prevent favoritism by selecting just the people who show up to be participants in community engagement efforts? How can a government employee enter these spaces prepared to present both as a resident and as a government employee seemingly "off-duty"? I was left with a series of questions from these conversations rooted in how one cares not solely for the people one represents but also for oneself. In addition, it also served as a call to action on how government employees can show up for communities outside of project-specific tasks and include that in the job descriptions as a necessary part of their work. This has been argued previously as a value-add by Mark Bradbury and J. Edward Kellough, who argue in addition to the government being more representative, resulting in policy outcomes that reflect the various interest groups but also that government employees volunteering can contribute to better representation and understanding of community needs (Bradbury and Kellough, 2008).

1. *How can you embed community outreach and community participation as fundamental and protected duties of government employees?*

2. Where can you volunteer your time in neighborhoods inside and outside of your community to get to meet more members?

3. Are there community facebook groups or newsletters you can join to learn when the next Block Party or community public event would be, while respecting the groups's privacy given your institutional representation?

4. Be Transparent with Community Members

The notion of being fully transparent with community members struck me as I reflected on my past experiences. I recall working on projects with government employees where we sought to engage community members, but the feedback loops weakened as external pressures heightened. For example, I recall a project where we held a community listening session in every council district in a large metropolitan city. I do not recall us sharing the key takeaways and insights from that session with its attendees, providing future moments for collaboration, or sharing with them the final report that was created. I remember being frustrated with government employees who pushed back on me, requesting that we do any form of engagement out of fear that we would now have to execute exactly what community members suggested we do. I recall arguing that listening to community members and incorporating both ideating and solutions would allow us to create better solutions. I do not recall us needing to be accountable to community members by communicating early and often as a guiding principle I fought for. In a similar vein, I, along with government employees, wrote many reports, but they were either not published publicly and/or not written for easy public dissemination. Overall, these approaches were not community-led (Wessells, 2018, p.19), nor could I call it any version of community co-design (Blomkamp, 2024), given how community members were primarily there to extract information to then use for our purposes. Yet, Arnstein argued in 1969 that how true community engagement requires a redistribution of power and control to citizens, which necessitates transparency and meaningful feedback loops (Arnstein, 1969). Simultaneously, David Wilcox argued that the levels of participation depend on the context and goals of the engagement process and must be rooted in a stakeholder analysis (Wilcox, 1994). This is a call to action for those conducting community engagement efforts to intentionally consider who they are going to engage and how they are going to engage them, down to what information they are going to share with whom, as well as what our feedback loops of communication look like.

1. Have you done extensive research on the harms that your government institution has done and continues to do against communities you seek to engage with inside and outside your department?

2. Are you being explicit and clear on what your requests are, why are you requesting this information, and what would it be used for throughout the lifeline of a project?

3. Have you run your proposal and community engagement strategy by someone who knows the community and works outside of your focus area to ensure it is understandable to a variety of readers?

4. How are you practicing active listening throughout your engagements with community members and building active feedback loops on how their insights are utilized?

CONCLUSION

1. Summary

My findings revealed that design has many definitions, and despite this, I call for the development of caring systems design. Caring Systems Design seeks to infuse principles of care ethics - attentiveness, responsiveness, competence, and responsibility - throughout the multiple, nested levels of government work - from the individual and team level to cross-departmental collaboration to engaging with external communities and stakeholders. I also call for greater community participation and transparency through the community engagement process as methods of inviting more care into government.

2. Limitations

I had a few challenges in my research. My thesis was primarily limited by time, with only a few weeks available to identify interviewees and conduct primary research. If there was more time, I would have hoped to bring in more voices from around the world who were also government practitioners. All of my international interviewee participants were primarily researchers. In addition, most of my interviews were based in the US. I would have hoped to have a more representative sample from around the world. I also would have created four different theses: local US government, national US government, local Global South government, and national Global South government. The reason here is that most of the literature on design in the public sector is centered on national European governments. For this reason, I would have hoped to

highlight the role Design has played in non-European governments from both the national and local perspectives. My final challenge was the method by which I gathered interview participants. There was a strong selection bias on who raised their hand to participate in my study. I do wonder what it would have looked like to use non-design-related language or to approach most of my participants as opposed to a call to action. Who would I have spoken to in this case?

3. Reflections
The interviewing, coding, and synthesis of this thesis occurred during the Holy Month of Ramadan. It was sometimes challenging to muster the energy to show up to put in the work or to have the 3rd back-to-back interview an hour before breaking fast. By choosing a podcast medium, I felt that in each interview, I was not showing up for just me and my interviewee but for all of those who were listening. This shifted the stakes of the conversation for me because I had to show up fully in every conversation as if an individual listening would have listened to only this episode out of my podcast series. In turn, I gave my all to every interview, diving deep, practicing care in how my interviewee and I spoke to each other, and creating a space for vulnerable conversations, although they would be shown publicly. There was a spiritual inclination to my thesis, given my observance of Ramadan. The stakes felt higher not just because my written thesis would live publicly in an audio format but also because I felt I had powerful voices' stories to treat with care.

In addition, my thesis was a challenge in learning how to edit audio recordings for a podcast. I learned as much as I could from watching YouTube videos, listening to my favorite podcasts, and exploring Transom - a website focused on radio production. However, at the moment, things are difficult to maintain.

There is an entire art of interrupting, staying quiet, and acknowledging in podcasts. I learned that it is important to not cut into breaths your interviewee to allow them to finish their sentence and to jump in before they take a breath to continue their next point (Yitbarek, 2018). There were moments when I wanted to jump in to dive deeper into something said, yet I struggled to catch that moment in between breaths. Simultaneously, I felt awkward staying silent during my conversations. I wanted my interviewees to know that I was actively listening (Rogers, 1957) to them, and to me, this meant validating their thoughts with audible sounds, such as, yes, or tell me more. This made for fruitful and engaged conversations. However, it made for a challenge in editing as my voice often overlapped with those of my interviewees, making it more difficult to remove my muffled add-ons in the background. In addition, I struggled to understand how many filler words, such as this, I should keep in my podcasts. At one point, I had automatically removed all filler words through the Descript tool and was left

with a choppy, inaudible audio recording. I quickly reverted and took the 2.5 hours needed to properly edit the audio recording. After twelve episodes, 13 hours of recordings, and 40 hours of editing, I quickly learned that I would need to listen to each episode with fresh ears. I spent time away from each recording before returning to it. Ritter and Dijksterhuis argue similarly on the importance of having an incubation period, one where one steps away for a period of time from tasks related to conscious thought in order to return to more creative discoveries (Ritter and Dijksterhuis, 2014). Throughout my thesis, I took breaks from writing and listening, and I channeled this into other creative outlets, such as dancing, singing, joining classmates in protests, and overall eating well. I found that these reprieves from the audio and the written helped strengthen my ability to continue to edit and evolve.

As I sat and engaged with each of the practitioners on my podcast, I was often energized by the actionable takeaways I felt that I now possessed having spoken to them. These are action items that I hope to apply immediately upon re-entering the workforce. I felt grateful for the ability to walk away from this project with a proud thesis that was not just meant for MIT but meant for the world. I was proud of the way I chose to go above and beyond to democratize this data, even though it meant more work for me. This thesis is a testament to the value of going above and beyond to meet people's needs and the need to provide practitioners with tangible lessons and tools they can apply to their work outside of the sphere of academic firewalls.

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APPENDIX
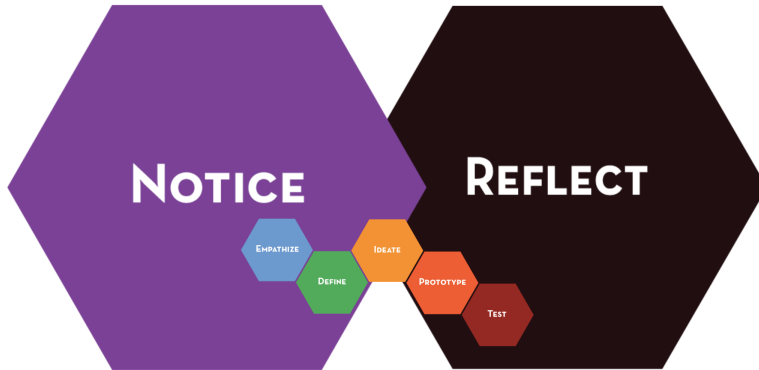
Appendix A

Liberatory Design

Liberatory Design was created by **Tania Anaissie, Victor Cary, David Clifford, Tom Malarkey and Susie Wise** during a collaboration in 2016/17 with the National Equity Project and The K12 Lab at the Stanford d.school.

Appendix B
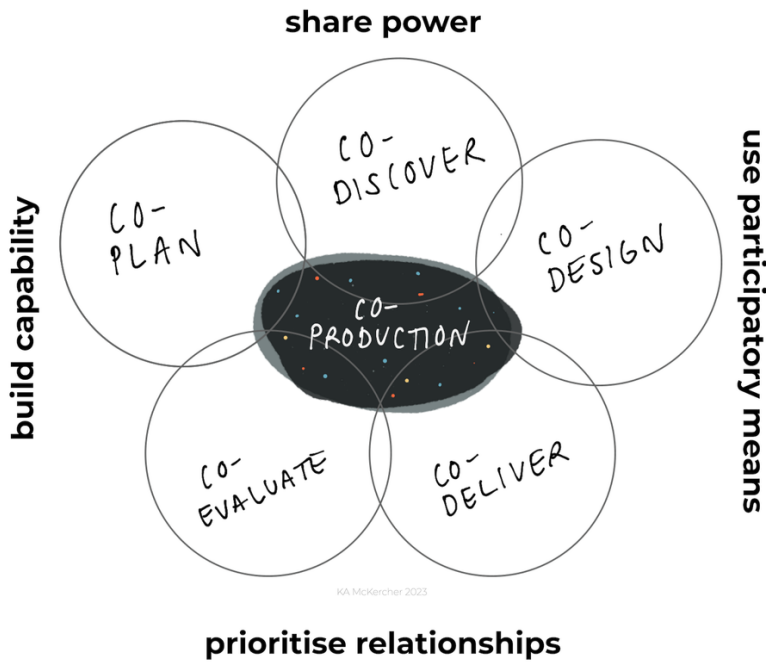
Appendix C

How *big* is the co-design
(scale)

Principles

Workshop

Phase

Process

Container

Emma Blomkamp 2024 CC BY-NC
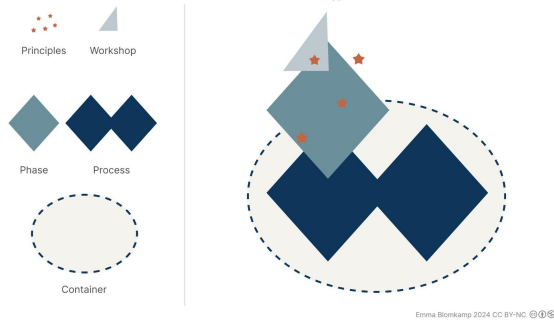
Appendix D

How *deep* is the co-design
(Level of 'co')

Lived experience

Practice wisdom

Research evidence

Cultural knowledge

Talk to

Listen and respond to

Collaborate with

Make decisions together

Delegate authority to

Emma Blomkamp 2024 CC BY-NC
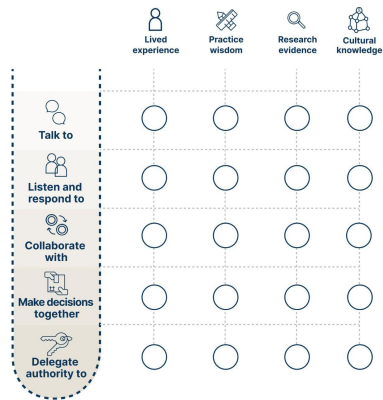
Appendix E

How *wide* is the co-design
(Extent of 'design')

Thinking

Practice

Order

Designerly

Tangible

Symbol

Design

Purposeful

Product

Co-creative

Interaction

System

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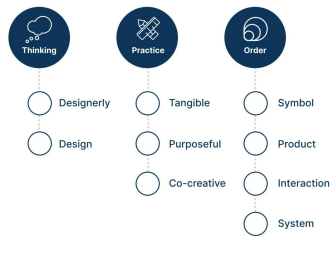
Appendix F

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A GOOD MANAGER IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE
THE FOUR-LEAF CLOVER
The key is knowing how to combine the **four essential functions for good governance**

STRATEGY COLLABORATION ORGANIZATION INSTRUMENTALIZATION

VISION
Having vision, but not being a visionary
Envisioning the final goal and the steps to getting there

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
Motivating the team
Stimulating action
Being able to **communicate vision**

MEDIATION SKILLS
Being able to **align interests**
Acting as a bridge between different social *stakeholders*
Rejecting authoritarianism

INFLUENCE
The ability to **gain people's trust and get them on board** to do what's asked of them

LISTENING SKILLS
Practicing **active listening**
Being able to **understand different sectors of society**

ETHICS AND MORALS
Being honest
Having **excellent morals and acting** as an example

Infographic: Visual Thinking

APPENDIX G

THESIS PODCAST PLAN

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

QUALITATIVE METHODS

My thesis will have three components: 1) A Case study on how a government team in Sierra Leone utilized Human-Centered Design, 2) A Podcast series speaking to Mid-Level Managers who have utilized versions of Human-Centered Design in their work, and 3) A Booklet of Tools and Strategies specifically targeted towards Mid-level Managers. The Podcast "Operationalizing Civic Design" will feature eight twenty to thirty-minute episodes. Each episode will focus on a different part of the world, hearing from global Mid-level Managers working in government. The tools booklet will serve as supportive materials for listeners, including tools and strategies mentioned by the interviewees and

through my research. My goal is to have government practitioners, particularly in mid-level management roles, feel equipped with the stories, tools, and voices of their fellow government practitioners to confidently and with critique, apply design tools in their work. This mixture of mediums - long-form writing, media, and short-form writing - aims to diversify how academia engages with the world, bringing the practitioner into MIT and vice versa.

INTERVIEW CONSENT

All interview participants will be provided full transparency of how their information and identification will be used in the thesis projects. Participants will be asked to verbally agree to consent, where they can indicate their level of preference in participating in the research, including for how they prefer to be quoted, audio-recorded, photographed, or video-recorded.

4. CONSENT FORMS

WRITTEN CONSENT FORM FOR NON-PROTAGONISTS

Hello! Thank you for your interest in participating in our research, "Operationalizing Design in Government". We expect this form to take 5 minutes to complete. If you have any question about any part of this consent form, you can wait to review and sign it in person with your interviewer or researcher.

PART 1. BACKGROUND ON THE RESEARCH

Who am I and what is this research about?
My name is Mariama N'Diaye and I am a Master in City Planning and Master in Business Administration Candidate at MIT. My thesis semester is a deep dive into how managers in government have operationalized design, specifically human-centered design, and the other tools/skillsets they utilized to do this successfully.

What will you be asked to do?
I am asking for you to be featured on my podcast, "Operationalizing Civic Design" which will be publicly available on podcast platforms, such as Spotify at the end of April 2024. If you would prefer to not have a podcast episode entirely of your own, we can weave in the anecdotes you share in our conversation today through other podcast episodes either anonymously or identifiably.

How will your information be used?

Your information will be used publicly in a podcast episode.

Will you use my name in your notes or reporting?

Unless you give us permission to use your name, title, or quote you in any publication related to this research, we will not use your name in connection to the information you share with us. Any data you share will be stored in a secure work space until the end of the project, May 2023. After the project ends, we will delete all of your personally identifiable information, unless you give us permission to do so otherwise. However, someone you know may recognize you from the details you share with us. Therefore, we cannot guarantee confidentiality and encourage you to not share any information that you aren't comfortable disclosing.

Do I have to participate in this research?

No, your participation is completely voluntary. You can choose not to respond to any interview question or stop an interview at any time. If you choose not to participate in the research, or change your mind later, your decision will not affect your relationship with your employer or MIT, or your right to other services or benefits that you may be eligible for.

How will this information benefit me?

There are no direct or financial benefits for you when you participate in the research. However, your participation in the case study may improve knowledge and support for governance innovations for your team or other institutions like yourself.

Will participating in this research harm me in any way?

We don't foresee any harm in you participating in the research. You may feel discomfort in remembering or talking about an unpleasant work experience. If you change your mind about information you've already shared with us, you can request the research team to delete the information before the research team begins data analysis within two weeks of our interview. The research team's ability to review recordings may be limited after that point.

Who can I contact for more information?

For more information about the research, you can contact Mariama N'Diaye at mndiaye@mit.edu

I have read and agree to participating in this research.

First name: _____ Last name: _____

Please sign your name here: _____ Date: _____

How would you like us to stay in contact with you to schedule interviews and other research-related conversations? Email/Phone

Email: _____

Phone #: _____

PART 2. CONSENT FORM

Can we take notes during our interviews or interactions? Y/N

Can we audio record our interviews or interactions for notetaking purposes? Y/N

Can we share your direct quotes in our reports?
- Yes, you can quote me
- Yes, you can quote me anonymously
- No, don't quote me

Thank you!

Appendix H

Person	Role	Reached Out to	Agreed	Career Level	BIPOC	Work	Connection to Thesis	Work Experience	Location of Work	Level of Engagement	Interview Date
Pam Hastings	Designer, Code for America	Yes	Yes	Senior	White	Government Employee	Principal UX Designer and Researcher, Code for America	Federal government in US	Domestic - Federal	Expressed Interest	Tuesday
Vaidehi Mody	Senior Planning Consultant at New York City Housing Authority	Yes	Yes	Mid-Career	BIPOC American-based	Government Employee	Leading NYCHA's Connected Communities program and its portfolio of open-space partnership projects with city agencies, non-profits and private philanthropies	City government in NYC	Domestic - Local	Expressed Interest	March 21st
Nidhi Singh Rathore	Civic Design Lead, Montgomery County Govt	Yes	Yes	Mid-Career	BIPOC American-based	Government Employee	One of the main writers in my literature review due to her focus on equity and design, and the way it shows in government	Montgomery County	Domestic - County	Expressed Interest	TUesday
Mari Nakano	Senior Strategist, FLOX Studio	Yes	Yes	Senior	BIPOC American-based	Designer/Consultant	A social designer and systems strategist who previously served as Senior Director to the NYC Service Design Studio	City government in NYC	Domestic - Local	Expressed Interest	March 22nd
Gina Kim	Director of Design at the NYC Digital Service	Yes	Yes	Mid-Career	BIPOC American-based	Government Employee	Worked at the Veterans Affairs office as a designer and now work on digital efforts locally. primarily focused on digital.	NYC, federal	Domestic - Local	Expressed Interest	March 11th
Harmonie Coleman	Senior Community Engagement Manager, IDEO.org	Yes	Yes	Mid-Career	BIPOC American-based	Designer/Consultant	Affiliated with government through various projects and can speak to the challenges of applying JUST design + what is needed to embrace design	NYC	Domestic - Local	Expressed Interest	March 26th
Sydney Heimbrock	Chief Industry Advisor for Government, Qualtrics	Yes	Yes	Senior	White	Designer/Consultant	Founded and led the innovation lab at OPM	Federal	Domestic - Federal	Expressed Interest	March 29th
Stephanie Wade	Founder, Ascendant Co.	Yes	Yes	Senior	White	Designer/Consultant	Founded Accenture's Design-thining practice, then led the creation of Bloomberg Philanthropies Government Innovation teams working with + Teams	Federal, Local, Interantional	Global	Expressed Interest	March 22nd
Federico Vaz	UNDP	Yes	Yes	Mid-Career	BIPOC International	Researcher	Has done extensive work with bringing design into government globally, notably in the UK. Takes a particular look on design and organizing as a missing link in government policy	All around the world	Global	Expressed Interest	March18th
Andrea Ngan	Community Co-Design Practice Lead, City of Philadephia	Yes	Yes	Mid-Career	BIPOC American-based	Government Employee	Co-led a team of 10+ cross-disciplinary content strategists, UX designers, software developers, and contractors to build a digital Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit.	City government in Philly	Domestic - Local	Expressed Interest	March 19th
Mariana Salgado	Lecturere, University of Buenos Aires	Yes	Yes	Senior	BIPOC International	Researcher	Senior Designer and Researcher; hosts podcasts on design for social change- Diseno y diaspora	Global	Global	Expressed Interest	March 18th
Monica Pachon	Professor, Department of Design, University of Andes	Yes	Yes	Senior	BIPOC International	Researcher	A professor of design thinking that helps designers understand politics and policy	Bogota, Colombia	Global	Need to Reach Out To	March 19th at 9am
Nigel Jacob	Former Founder of New Office of Urban Mechanisms	Yes	Yes	Senior	BIPOC American-based	Government Employee	Founded the Office of New Urban Mechanics in Boston	Boston	Domestic - Local	Need to Reach Out To	March 19th

Appendix I

Gina Kim ···

Gina Kim (She/Her) · 1st
Director of Design at the NYC Digital Service

FEB 27

Mariama Ndiaye (She/Her) · 5:17 PM
Interview Request: Graduate Thesis on Operationalizing Design

Hi Gina,

I hope you are super well. Mari Nakano shared with me your profile and for that I am very grateful.

For my thesis, I am building a podcast on how civic practitioners have operationalized design in government and the tools to help bring an idea from a concept to an existing initiative to a sustained initiative. I want to hear what has worked and how, as well as what has not worked and why you think this is.

I would love to have you as a guest on my podcast, given your experience navigating design and digital services both on the federal level (I am loving Marina Nitze's book!) and on the local level.

Latest message

Appendix J

Mariama Ndiaye
To: danita.reese@phila.gov; andrea.ngan@phila.gov
Wed 2/28/2024 8:00 AM

Hi Andrea and Danita,

To begin, thank you for the work that you have done to advance the field of equitable community engagement. Your toolkit has been incredibly invaluable!

As mentioned via LinkedIn, Andrea, I am a Master's in City Planning and MBA Candidate at MIT. For my thesis, I am building a podcast on how civic practitioners have operationalized design in government and the tools to help bring an idea from a concept to an existing initiative to a sustained initiative. I would like to hear what has worked and how, as well as what has not worked and why you think this is.

It would be an honor to hear from you both, having worked so deeply to advance the work of design and equitable engagement in the City of Philadelphia

The podcast itself would be a 60-minute conversation between the three of us. In advance of this, I would love thirty minutes of your time to meet, review the questions, discuss any parameters, and learn more about each other's work.

If you are interested in engaging, here is my calendar booking link below. If there is no time next week that works for you, do not hesitate to reach out, and I can move things around on my end.

https://usemotion.com/meet/mariama-ndiaye/thesis?d=30

Appendix K

Person	Role
Pam Hastings	Principal Designer, Code for America
Vaidehi Mody	Senior Planning Consultant at New York City Housing Authority
Nidhi Singh Rathore	Civic Design Lead, Montgomery County Govt
Mari Nakano	Senior Strategist, FLOX Studio
Gina Kim	Director of Design at the NYC Digital Service
Harmonie Coleman	Senior Community Engagement Manager, IDEO.org
Danita Reese	Deputy Director, Strategic Design, City of Philadelphia
Stephanie Wade	Founder, Ascendant Co.
Federico Vaz	Lecturer, The Royal College of Art
Andrea Ngan	Community Co-Design Practice Lead, City of Philadephia
Mariana Salgado	Lecturere, University of Buenos Aires
Monica Pachon	Professor, Department of Design, University of Andes
Nigel Jacob	Former Founder of New Office of Urban Mechanisms

Appendix L

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (60 Minutes)

1. Tell us who you are. Tell us your name and how you would describe the current phase of your work journey.
2. Design to me, is a process by which we create - it is the *how.* What does design mean to you?
3. I want to switch to thinking about instances where you have applied innovation in government, whether it was how you did stakeholder engagement, how you approached a challenge, or how you designed the initiative.
4. Let's think back to one of the hardest effort you engaged in in your career. A project where you sought to do things differently than how things were normally done. Can you walk me through that experience.
   a. What was different about this approach than how things are normally done?
   b. What worked well?
   c. What was hard?
   d. Would you say there were elements of design methodologies in it - what were those?
   e. What particular skillsets/ tactics helped you get through this project
   f. What was your biggest takeaway from this experience?
5. Let's think back to one of the most successful efforts you engaged in in your career. A project where you sought to do things differently than how things were normally done and felt extremely accomplished. Can you walk me through that experience.
   a. What was different about this approach than how things are normally done?
   b. What worked well?
   c. What was hard?
   d. Would you say there were elements of design methodologies in it - what were those?
   e. What particular skillsets/ tactics helped you get through this project/you wish you had during that time?
6. What are 3 tips on how to get things done that anyone considering leading an 'innovative' effort in your government need to know? How does this change depending on the context and in which context would this be different?
7. Are there any particular skillsets/tools that you think are critical to applying design in government, notably on ensuring implementation and sustainability? How have you learned these skills? Anyone in particular you pull from?
8. Any that have nothing to do with design? Your go-to tactics/tools/approaches/mindsets?

9. Is there anything you are very excited about when you think of embedding greater innovation in government?
10. Any challenges you have experienced or foresee? What recommendations would you have to overcome those challenges?

Appendix M

Esercizio di Mappatura del Viaggio - Welcome Kit del Comune di Milano

Appendix N
F-rating

Appendix N

Findings Per Podcast Episode

Note: Every sub-bullet is a direct quote from my interview.
Gina Kim
Who is Gina?
Gina Kim is the Director of Design at the NYC Digital Service. In this role, Gina focuses heavily on designing for digital tools, such as language access and digital form usability for all New Yorkers. Gina comes from a history of designing for the digital arena having served as a Digital Service

Expert for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as part of the United States Digital Service, and as a Senior Product Designer with the ACLU.

How does Gina define Design?

Gina defined design as both a process and a solution stating that the, power of design "comes from solution" and is "so incredibly powerful and so incredibly rewarding because it's the thing that people can tangibly engage with."

What does Gina find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?
1. Clarity on project goals with clear outcomes
2. Seek clarity on who your audience is down to demographics and lifestyle
3. Partner with community-based organizations to co-design the community engagement process, including who to connect with, what questions to ask, and in which way
4. Interview people to understand the current baseline - understand what their current experiences are before seeking to improve
    a. Um, and I think like this sounds obvious, but it's actually really. Not obvious sometimes, but really understanding where users are today. Like, what is a real life, like, expectation? Like, are users really gonna apply for five things at once? Like, is that a real behavior or is that something we made up on our own, right? Is a user gonna finish this whole task in one sitting or are they disrupted by life? [00:48:00] Are they, you know, like all these like really realistic things of what happens, like I don't Getting to that just takes a lot of intent and understanding and observing and understand. Yeah. Like understanding people and their lives and their lived experiences, um, people who are single parents who fill out a childcare form as being asked so many questions about their spouse, right. Triggering, stressful, like, I think there's something about being really real where people are and when their lives are. And. I think that's where actually empathy comes in. Like the act of user research to me, that is sure. You could call that empathizing. I think it's just understanding, I think. And I don't really know if you could fully empathize with someone because that is someone else's real experience, but I think like something like design, like you could add kindness to it, right?
5. Town halls are great for feeling the energy of people and can feel democratizing. Although they may not be a great method for truly learning people's behaviors and desires, they are useful in letting people feel heard.
6. Realize that what people do versus what they say are very different; have them test things to see how they feel about it even if it is a sketch

7. Identify the goals and objectives of each engagement with users, including the particular hypothesis you are testing
8. Have government workers go outside and do user research
9. Connect with diverse users and in the environemnt in which they would be using the service
   a. I think Mary and Brody and, um, um, was [00:51:00] like Courtney. I remember when Wallace was working on, um, They tested with a veteran who's homeless and had to like go to a library and guess what the library didn't have the most updated acrobat reader that the form open, you know what I mean? Like, you have to see that happen.
   And I think, um, this is like the importance of working with diverse people, right? It's like you start with like, who is actually using this the most or needs this the most, you kind of figure out a way to like get in contact with them. And then you just test the thing that you're working on. Sometimes it is like going there with like a set of questions of like, like, tell me about your day to day.
10. Leverage the Power of Quantitative Data
    a. Understand existing data
    b. Bring quantitative data to back up your statements and to support your findings
11. Question solutions to problems - why?
    a. people come with you with the solution and they tell you to implement it right when many times we don't even know what the problem is. So, and then when you like dig, dig, dig, dig, dig, you're like, that solution does not map out to that problem.

What elements of management skills are required to build a successful team who can apply design successfully?
1. Treat your role as that of an advocate for those you manage to those more senior
2. Make your team feel accepted
3. Remain accessible to your team
4. Listen to your team
5. Let them feel confident that you have their back
6. Create autonomy
7. Treat vendors as if they are your employees helping them navigate the ins and outs of government, develop clear roles and responsibilities, and actually understand what the vendor's job is
8. Build a team rapport for truth-telling and so that you all can be honest with each other and differing opinions/facts are welcomed

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Drum up excitement for trying things a NEW way without claiming that you know any better than them
   - well, we did it better than you, but it's like, you want to bring people back and get them excited of not feeling like, oh, this fails many times, but it's kind of like. This is why this might work this time, right? Like this. We're just trying a different angle. Let's see if this work. And like, are you excited about it? Because we're excited about it. Um, and just making people feel like, you know, essentially we're [00:58:00] always like leaning on the shoulders that were already here.
2. Recognize the work that has come before you and never assume people haven't tried
   - You realize, like, people inside, like, always understand, like, where they're coming from and how long they've been here and what they've tried, like, many times, like, and this I learned from, like, federal government, this I learned from USDS, U.
   - S. Digital Services, where it's, like, people who have been here try to solve the problem you've already tried solving, um, like, you know, if anything, you're coming in as, like, the fresh eyed person, um, and just identifying all over again what the problem is, So, like, never assume that people haven't tried.
3. Recognize people are much more under-resourced than you may think
4. Recognize people are human and also don't feel empowered and have every reason to feel grumpy

What design-related resources does Gina recommend?
Gina recommends conducting in-depth user testing. Some tools are:
1. User testing
2. Maze
3. Dovetail

Overall, successful design in government hinges on deep user understanding. This means going beyond traditional methods like town halls. Partnering with community organizations allows you to connect with diverse users in their natural environments. User research should involve interviews, observing real-world behaviors, and testing prototypes. By focusing on actions, not just words, you can identify user pain points and design solutions that truly meet their needs. Data analysis is another crucial tool, helping you understand user behavior and back up your findings.

Building a strong design team is equally important. Fostering a supportive environment where team members feel empowered and heard is key. Effective managers advocate for their team

and create a safe space for open communication. Collaboration is crucial, so treat vendors as partners and encourage diverse perspectives. Finally, navigating bureaucracy requires a touch of humility. Focus on building excitement for new ideas and acknowledge the past efforts of civil servants. Recognize that government employees are often under-resourced and may feel overwhelmed. By building trust and demonstrating respect, you can create a more collaborative environment for successful design implementation.

Federico Vaz

Who is Federico?

Federico is a Public Sector Innovation Researcher and Designer, and is currently a Design and Futures Fellow for the United Nations Development Programme and a Professor for the Royal College of Art's Service Design and Design Futures programs. Federico previously served as a Design Researcher for the MIT GOV/LAB - a research lab within the Department of Political Science. During Federico's time at MIT GOV/LAB, I served as Head of Design for the MIT GOV/LAB working together on the implementation of a new design approach for local governments in Abuja, Nigeria.

How does Federico define Design?

Federico primarily related to deign as a verb, as in the action of designing, as well as an adjective in terms of by design.

- the power of design, let's say, in when it comes to these things on being able to visualize [00:49:00] certain things that otherwise you kind of know, but as an abstraction.

What does Federico find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?

1. Address the end user directly - not exclusively through people who work with those individuals and not enough to consider them

   this might have to do with the particular circumstances or cultural norms of that environment in which often end users are not really fully considered. It's not that they are not considered, they are considered, but they might not be addressed directly. So there's Always some sort of firewall, someone mediating that conversation,

   So oftentimes, for instance, we wanted to know more about the taxation process. And instead of talking to entrepreneurs, Who were, well, engaging in registering their companies and registering with the tax authorities. We would talk to the tax agent who was, in a way, filing for them. And that was problematic.

   Right. Well, just to put it very simply, because they would have an agenda in terms, well, if the process is massively oversimplified, we don't have a job anymore. Right. Because we are the gatekeepers here. Largely, we are able to do this because we know how to go about this.

   Individual who's trying to open a business might not know how to, right? So it was knowledge base that we were tapping into and maybe disrupting the whole business model. So of course these people, it's not that they didn't want to help,

but they have a very [00:12:00] particular take on how to help. So going back to the users, well, it was actually quite important

2. Create s space where people can probe deeper and ask why

But I was, what I was always asking is for everyone in the room to ask why. So whenever someone had an idea, okay, ask why. Does that make sense to you? Does that make sense to anyone else? What are the assumptions behind it? So whenever I was coming up with something, I was always asking someone to ask me why.

3. Create an atmosphere of creativity through norming

   a. On the contrary, we're going to try to make sure that this setting allows us to be creative, right? So we can just, in a very non judgmental way, come up with random ideas, you know, and we're going to have certain, again, Um, norms, perhaps, that would allow us to do that. So we're gonna, on these days, we're gonna, I don't know, dress up differently. So you do not need to come up in a suit. You can come up as however you want. I'm not sure [00:37:00] that worked, right? Because we were still working in a public office. So there were norms that were way above us and were ruling how we operated. But at least making it very explicit that this is what is expected from you in this setting. I think those things actually work and there have been more transcendent than just specific tools that I then again, I wouldn't exactly call design tools.

   b. So what are the things that we're happy doing and what are the things that we're not happy doing and having when we were meeting as a team, right? And [00:36:00] how, how long should the meetings take is an hour and a half too much. Should we have breaks? Are we allowed to use our phones?

   c. showing again that vulnerability that we might get it wrong, but together we get it wrong, right? So you say something's like, well, you know, that's not a great idea. So how can we go about that sort of dynamic? I don't think the team wasn't necessarily that used to. Uh, I don't think that's how they typically work.

4. Community members need to trust you in order to feel comfortable approaching you - they should see you before a request of their time and energy is made and already establish you as not just an institution but also a person

Because the Nigerian federal government for people on the ground is seen as such a distant thing. Maybe, maybe in the U. S. there's a bit of a similar feeling. Yeah. I wouldn't know directly, but you can tell me. [00:15:00] Yeah. I feel like in

certain countries, federal governments are seen as very far away, very detached, far detached from their everyday lives. So when you hear that the federal government wants to talk to you, well, you might be a bit skeptical. You don't know why exactly, especially if it comes to, you know, Oh, I'm not sure if I want to talk to you. Right. Uh, so that was, that was tricky in that sense, but in other parts of the world, that's not necessarily the case.

all across the UK and people know those things, you know, people know what a job center is. They've been there, especially if you're looking for for work. So you might even know that, especially in smaller towns and smaller cities, you definitely know, you know, the public servant who is on the other side of the counter. So. If you, if you then need to reach out to people and you tell them, well, look, we're working on a new pension scheme, or we're trying to understand what are the main issues that you have, those things work significantly better because the government, it's not a federal government UK, but you know, there are some similarities. So the national law government, let's say, they still have, you know, somehow the hand on the pulse. Because our agencies operating at the street level, that gives you almost like the legitimacy, let's say, to say, Hey, we want to talk to you. Can you, can you come in? Can you bring, so it's this, this proximity sort of government approach that certain countries are [00:17:00] quite good at. So then even if it's just consultation, it's much easier to do because you know already how to contact them. Uh, you know who you're talking to essentially. And those people are, In a way, a lot more compelled to really tell you how they feel about those things.

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
5. Recognize that power is a critical element of government. You must think - what are people winning?
    - What are people winning? What's in it for me? That is absolutely crucial. Um, because you will have to negotiate. And I don't think that we are being trained to negotiate, right? To understand What are the power dynamics? Who gets a saying? Who might just change the entire scope of the project if they didn't like something, or this goes against their agenda?
    - What are the agendas? So, being able to develop that sort of, um, yeah, sensibility around those issues, [00:52:00] I think is quite important, and I'm actually not sure how you develop them if you haven't been trained to be a diplomat, let's say. Right? Maybe public administration school teaches you that, I don't know.
6. Value subject matter experts recognizing that they are experts of their work

- No one knows, uh, better than you do how to do your work. And also no one knows better than the actual users of the service, how or what the problems are, right? So we change things a bit instead of starting with, well, we have an idea, let's see how we can implement this. Let's go back to the basics. Let's try and talk to these people.

What design-related resources does Federico recommend?

Gina recommends conducting in-depth user testing. Some tools are:

1. Power Mapping
2. Stakeholder Mapping
3. Service Blueprint

Mariana Salgado

Who is Mariana?

Mariana is a Designer and Researcher based in Helsinki, Finland. She is a partner and Design Researcher for design firm Suo&Co, a Lecturer for the University of Buenos Aires, and the Podcast Host & Producer for Diseño y diáspora - a podcast on design for social change. Diseño y diáspora is one the most listened-to podcasts in Latin America and has published over 500 podcast episodes.

How does Mariana define Design?

Mariana describes design as a perspective which implies certain methods to solve problems. Mariana particularly focuses on social design. Design leverages visualizations, which can help immensely to clarify complex issues.

What does Mariana find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?

1. Leverage existing tools that people understand in order to reduce burden of onboarding/alignment
   a. very insightful because normally in a workshop with designers, you have a moment when you ask something and then you define and you define, and you, and in these dialogues, you don't need to define and you don't need to, um, to find, uh, certain, uh, um, like, uh, you don't, you don't have to, [00:16:00] to be in the same line.
2. Cast a wide net when seeking participants
   a. we also sent mails to, for example, uh, football unions, you know, to, uh, sports activists. So whoever that could, that might relate to the topic of [00:07:00] immigration in different ways could do it. Libraries, museums, et cetera.
   b. normally when For example, when we launch a questionnaire to citizens, when the ministries do this type of work, they always have like the usual suspects that will be, um, answering that. And in this case, we could outreach some [00:04:00] others that, that were not the usual ones.
3. Don't ask leading questions - allow for users to help shape the narrative
   a. So instead of ourselves facilitating these discussions, we ask people, okay, what do you want to, Talk about immigration and you can put your own set of questions and talk about that and then tell us and people themselves did it so normally in the ministry when we consult or listen to stakeholders, we had a very defined question.
4. Listen.

a. k listening is one of the skill set that nobody talks about. Of course, we facilitate and visualize and we, we know how to do that and how to analyze and then synthesize our, no, the work that has been done in these workshops. That is qualitative research work, right, at the end. Um, and what we, we know how to do is to answer these specific research questions through these workshops.

5. The Designer does not always have to be the facilitator - relinquish power
    a. So, for example, we ask, what do you think about reforming these part of the law that relates to. to irregular immigrants, for example, and it's a very small part of the strategy that relates to the Finnish designers, uh, the, sorry, the Finnish citizens living abroad in the diaspora. And in this case, the [00:03:00] question was much wider because we just asked whatever what you want.

6. You can invite and support people to come to the table but you cannot force them to
    a. So we sent [00:11:00] several invitations to the parties that are very critical to immigration, but they didn't organize any dialogue because we wanted to have them, right? We wanted the whole Finnish population could be part of. So we, we know which are the parties, the political parties that are critical and with it. Like, let's give all the opportunities, and we were very in, kind of, we repeatedly sent mails to them, but we couldn't make them participate…Well, if you mail them, insistently, I mean, you as a, you can invite people, but you cannot force people, no, right? We are designing [00:14:00] participations. And when, and, and my role as designer is to be coherent and, um, to have these participations as part of the process with the key. Persons involved, but, uh, I cannot forced certain things, right?

7. We must be resilient
    a. a lot is about, like, proof and error, no? I, I give ideas and they tell no, and I give another and they tell no, and I try with another, and in a moment I, yes, this one. But it's, it's a question of, uh, [00:40:00] trial and error and also of working together. You need a lot of time of this, um, Const building trust together with your colleagues that so they understand that what you are doing is not just throwing ideas to the roof but through these ideas that you have you are also understanding the limits the the frontiers of your work and what are the space in which you can intervene and what are the things that could be done and not done so all this is um is part of Of understanding what could be the value of the sign in a certain context.

8. Build and/or join a transcdisiplinary team
    a. your team and try to get a team [00:45:00] that is transdisciplinary, uh, with a diverse group of people with different ages and ethnic and everything could be.

b. So be brave to choose a team that is really diverse. Um, And, and also think one clarification that is not transdisciplinary if all the disciplines are for social sciences. I, I say that because in my, I mean, I have heard, yes, we are very transdisciplinary. We have anthropologists and sociologists.

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Recognize that you may not have the subject matter expertise, but you do have the methodology expertise that could be useful

   And we, designers, we also tend to do that. So for being in a good attitude, you really have to be open minded and respect a lot the expertise of the other. Even though we don't have this subject matter expertise, because if I am talking about, you know, with a person that has been doing 20 years, um, designing and, and writing the same law. Of course, I don't know as much about this law that I, uh, because I haven't been doing that, but I am as a designer expert in the methods that could lead us to a better and a more inclusive way of working.

2. Work collaboratively - it will allow you to go further

   it was super important to have a transdisciplinary team. So that diverse group of people. So, uh, we had in that project, people come from different areas and also rely in the already existent work. No, they part from a method that was already. And, uh, the third one, I think, to do it together because we have done it in a very big consortium of ministries, but we have also been relying in other networks of colleagues that, um, good.

   Could make it bigger, right? So we were a lot, um, working as a big, um, as a big group in order to have the impact and be able to that the [00:19:00] others could also respond to that,

   - do it together invest time and effort in networks of colleagues because the only real impact will come if you do things in peer learning communities.

3. Understand what they want to see as a result from being a part of your project

   a. But then, of course, when we organized the data, the, the persons for the Ministry of Employment, for example, they were eager to know, what was said in terms of, um, of how immigrants get work or, uh, in relation to work, right? So we have a section in relation to work. So of course, all this is because also people have decided to talk about that topic.

4. Build trust between you and your colleagues

- You need a lot of time of this, um, Const building trust together with your colleagues that so they understand that what you are doing is not just throwing ideas to the roof but through these ideas that you have you are also understanding the limits the the frontiers of your work and what are the space in which you can intervene and what are the things that could be done and not done so all this is um is part of Of understanding what could be the value of the sign in a certain context…I think time, attitude, approach. Yes, of course time and, but it's a lot about, about, um, you know, doing things together that goes to the same objective and, uh, feeling that you are part of the same team.
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What design-related resources does Mariana recommend?
1. Piloting

Danita Reese and Andrea Ngan

Who are Danita and Andrea?

Danita is the Deputy Director for the City of Philadelphia's Service Design Studio, and Andrea is the Community Design Practice Lead for the City of Philadelphia's Service Design Studio. Both have done immense work for the City of Philadelphia, notably in building an Equitable Community Engagement Toolkit for the City of Philadelphia.

How do Danita and Andrea define Design?

Andrea defined design as a process of making with thoughtful intention and consideration and with care; Danita defined design as where imagination, planning and creation meet.

What do Danita and Andrea find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?

1. Be in Community; Show up and not ask for anything; spend time absorbing, observing what is already taking place
    a. What we heard from community, from the jump, was Y'all always coming to ask us for something, you know, or you're coming to tell us what we got to do, whether we want to do it or not, but you know, it would be nice if from time to time it's kind of like your grandma or maybe it was just my grandma where she would be like, You know, I'm gonna feed you but you know, sometimes it would just be nice if you would just come by and just [00:19:00] sit, you know, so like community members were telling us and city staff was saying the same thing like we don't have time.
    b. you got to be patient and allow yourself to be seen by people, but also be willing to see others and just space.
    c. Like so often in community, people were like, just come, just come to a meeting, not your meeting, but come meeting that we're already having. If we're a community organization or come to the block party and just, just hang out, just be. Make a place for yourself. You know, if you see people passing out flyers, you see people setting up chairs, you know, make yourself useful, make yourself available and introduce yourself.
    d. We should live in the city in oder to work in the city
2. Listen with no agenda
    a. I'm here to listen. I'm here to learn, you know, I want to know what's already happening so I can figure out how do I get in where I fit in versus coming in with my agenda being like, well, I'm going to talk to you about this today,

3. Recognize the role you play as representing an institution that has and continues to cause harm
    a. Oh shoot, I'm showing up with all this city of Philadelphia history. I had been schooled and told that this. is what it is, right? But it's different to like, live it in your body when you quite literally just met this person in a community meeting and we're vibing out, right? And, and are in most, you know, value, like all the values are sort of aligned, right?
    b. Oh shoot, I'm showing up with all this city of Philadelphia history. I had been schooled and told that this. is what it is, right? But it's different to like, live it in your body when you quite literally just met this person in a community meeting and we're vibing out, right? And, and are in most, you know, value, like all the values are sort of aligned, right?
    c. There's a great distrust in organizing, you know, or like even government. So it's like and we've heard this in other communities where it's like go to the grocery store, look at the bulletin, or like, You know, there are just other ways.

4. Be explicit and clear with people
    a. be explicit with people as clear as you can, uh, about why you're there, what you're trying to do, if, what, if anything you need from someone in community, um, and to practice [00:43:00] that.
    b. And it's hard sometimes to say, I need to ask you some questions that I'm not sure I can move anything with it. I'm not sure I can actually change the decision or impact the decision, but. We need to know because we need to document X, Y, Z, but like the moment you say that people are like, okay, just, all right.
5. Follow up with people
    a. it goes back to relationships, like we always followed up, like even to be like, this is what you said. Right. Do you agree? Do you want to change anything? Do you want to add to it? And oftentimes people will be like, the city has never returned to me what I have given to it. Okay. I mean, like people would seem like sort of dazed by it, but then you would slowly see [00:44:00] them being like, she ate that.
6. Recognize you cannot reach everyone
    a. like it's the scale when you work at the municipal state and then federal level is, is, um, inhumane. Like, When you think about what we were trying to do, what we've done, right, it still misses so much lived experience so many perspectives. How could you possibly have full agreement right and consensus around how everyone wants to be engaged. Right. So let's just like balk at that.
7. Instead, prioritize those often excluded

a. who are the folks, who are the communities who are always left out, who've never been prioritized, you know, who really like It's beyond like not wanting to be engaged, right? We've never invested resources and even trying to build relationships, deep relationships.

8. Reach people in new ways, outside of the institution
   a. There's a great distrust in organizing, you know, or like even government. So it's like and we've heard this in other communities where it's like go to the grocery store, look at the bulletin, or like, You know, there are just other ways.

9. Recognize the tension of building at the speed of trust in a fast-paced institutional environment
   a. so there was always a tension between, we need to go slow because we have to build relationships with people who don't trust us. the city, uh, whereas the city, you know, and people within it are saying, but we need the standards yesterday.

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Empathize with your colleagues recognizing the structural limitations that have been placed on them
   a. it is hard to imagine or reimagine a better future and envision and create the stepping stones and lily pads that we need to like live into that when you're always being rushed or told No, [00:32:00] you can't pay people XYZ you can't be a people at all.
   b. oftentimes our engagement practitioners are just the messengers, right? Folks who are being set up in these like impossible engagement tasks, right? Like, like, how is that town hall going to actually fix generations of racism, structural, systemic racism, right?
   c. I mean, this is what semantics can teach us, right? We can present and show up and feel like we're being earnest, but then was that actually just our conditioned tendency within an institution that has me scared about whether or not I can keep my role, right? Was it that showing up? In that meeting, answering those questions, right, versus like my abundant self, right, being like, oh, okay, I [00:47:00] actually think this is what is doable. Right. I think when we talk about power internally within this institution you can't talk about it without thinking about, well, is the motivation actually fear driven.
   d. it was hard because a lot of folks couldn't trust that sharing, you know, that kind of a desire and longing would go anywhere, especially when, at the essence, we're also talking about an institution or a space that hadn't always valued

monetarily, like staff wise, um, the skills of engagement, the skills of relationship, the skills of being in reciprocity, right?

    e. there's always limited time and needing to do things really quickly. And, uh, the orders come from wherever they come from, but their orders that you then are like deputized to go out and enforce or, you know, Um, so that like there's just a cycle on every level of that we're working on where there was just scarcity.

2. Proceed with care
    a. We would show up we would start meetings and we asked people how they were and we really wanted to know how they were right and you know if it meant that it chewed up 3045 minutes of an hour long agenda. Then, you know, that's what it is but we really needed to be human with each other.

3. Document your work and Close Loops
    a. then we had that coalition space. We were also bringing folks in community together and I think as much as possible constantly funneling all these like conversations back into open [00:17:00] documents. Right. And then being like, how does this does the sound, you know, aligned.

4. Acknowledge how it may be perceived to say we need to do something better
    a. And I think a really big facet of trying to steward a collective vision is that it, it looks like we would have. Many conversations with folks, some folks were ready [00:16:00] and willing in the very beginning. Some folks were like, who are you? Like, who are you to come in here? I've got decades of engagement experience.
    b. And you want to ask me questions about, you know, how, how we can do this better. It sounds like, you know, I'm not doing it well. And so you're there like building trust

5. Build Relationships
    a. Leaning on relations that had been built in the past or, um, just all these things that like, upon moving through you're like, Oh, there are ways to also give yourself power and [00:38:00] permission to just be.

What elements of management skills are required to build a successful team who can apply design successfully?

1. Protect and fortify your team
    a. roller derby people who are the ones that like lock arms and go and like knockout obstacles, you know, and keep everything moving. That's what they did for us. And so I think. It's important, but they were only able to do that because

Leanna in reporting to Stephanie managed that relationship over time, it grew Leanna's trust in Andrea and I grew over time.

2. Create an environment where you can have conversations about how people are showing up and discuss power dynamics
    a. you have to have ongoing conversations about the people who are involved, people who are dropping back, people who are showing up. You have to be mindful of that. And it [00:52:00] is. It's a, it's a lot more to manage that isn't accounted for in your project plan necessarily, but it is absolutely critical because you can, you could see three months out, oh, this person's going to torpedo something, you know, like what, cause then that shifts, you, you then have a plan, uh, opportunity to say we can plan, For how do we communicate with this person or around this person to ensure that that doesn't happen to bring people back into relationship.
    b. we navigated it was having conversations at every point when there's a there's that little hair on the back of your neck was like, No, what just happened in this meeting, something they like looked at each other in a way might seem like they will text and maybe it was me.
    c. then being willing and not afraid to have a conversation about what you're intuiting. Because quite often [00:53:00] are, you know, our intuitions not lying to us. And there's there's data there that we have to figure out and account for. Um, and that allows us to, I think, be active in in power dynamics versus others

What design-related resources do Danita and Andrea recommend?
    2. Power-Mapping

Monica Pachon

Who is Monica?

Monica is a Professor at the Faculty of Design and Architecture at the Universidad Los Andes in Bogota, Colombia. Monica is a political scientist who spent her career as a comparativist. Now, she is teaching classes utilizing the design method and fusing in political science into design studies. Monica has worked to redesign the national ballot for Colombia, and partnered in applying design and political science in a variety of fields, including redesigning the blood donation experience for Colombia's Red Cross.

How does Monica define Design?

Monica defines design as a methodology that allows people and teams to think about problems and solve them to a certain extent.

What do Monica find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?
1. Policies must reflect users and be able to be understood by users
    a. your policy might be good, but your execution is terrible because you, you don't understand your user.
    b. So we're working with the Secretary of Women, right? And the assumption of them is women want to be emancipated. It's a feminist, you know, discourse, which obviously it's important. But people that are in the situation that they want to be emancipated, That could be the recipients of the policy that they were creating, didn't understand the word of what they were saying. So they're like, you women want to be, you know, cuidadoras, carers. I don't know how to translate it in English, but so people understand. Here, cuidador, formal care, not informal care, but formal care. Yeah, [00:32:00] the economy of care. So when, when I asked the citizens, what do you understand of what the policy lemma is, right?

    So the policy is like, we will take care of the people who take care of us. And so I would ask the women. Who do you think is this policy for? And they're like, oh, yes, this policy is for policemen, for firefighters, and for, you know, the army, because those are the people who take care of us. Yeah. And I'm like, no, this policy is for you guys.

    And they're like, makes no sense. I'm no, I don't care. I'm not a carer. Right. And I'm like, and she's, and they would say, I'm, I'm, I'm a mother. Yeah. I'm a daughter. I'm [00:33:00] a, I'm a nun. And that's what we do in families. We care about each other, but we don't, we don't call ourselves carers. Right. So translating the language because of the, the assumption of, of, of policymakers is.

    Oh, everybody understands what we're saying, right? No, no, not everybody understands the theory behind your, your policy might be good, but your execution is terrible because you, you don't understand your user. So, from the point of view of the students, and from the point of view of the client, you have to actually come together, right?

    And say, Okay, you know, it's not it's not this or it's not that you have to you have to find the right language and you have to understand and the citizens is citizens are not perfect and will not will not get informed and that's it, you know, and you have to deal with [00:34:00] that.

2. Understand the political context
    a. my way to go in design is always teaching students theories that might help them understand the potential user, not only to go to the use, not, not to go to the user directly, [00:18:00] but to actually understand the user. Theoretically understand what are the cognitive processes behind the. You know, the understanding of politics and policy and then go to the use, right? So, so your approximation to the user is not condescending or has the wrong assumptions that the assumption, you know, the assumption that the user is interested, that he will help you.

    b. So, there are different types of citizens and it is important for us to understand what is behind. This, this, this construction [00:19:00] of the collective, what is it, what, what are the assumptions people have about, you know, the institution, what is it, what, what, what are the, the fears people have when they're donating vote?
    c. So what we did was, you know, step by step, step by step, step by step. So what [00:28:00] happened. And, you know, with the students is, Design students is like, what is an electoral system? You know, first of all, you know, I mean, why is it important? What are the parts of the electoral system? How can we translate an electoral formula?

3. Community residents don't have to do what you want them to do- your job is to make it interesting and less confusing
    a. So what you have to be able to do is to create the processes or, you know, design the services to actually create the interest to do, but if, but, but, you know, I, I think sometimes that we are, we get confused in a way, right?
    b. Understanding the users and, and, and, you know, letting, letting assumptions go. [00:29:00] So when even designers, when deal with, with the, with, with public issues, they say, well, but you know, citizens should know who are they're going to vote for. Citizens should know that this is, right. And I'm like, no, since then, do not know. And they shouldn't. They might want to if we per persuade them to, but they don't need to. It's not an obligation, you know, they, they won't be graded if they vote irresponsibly. It's, it's, you know, it's a matter of how enthusiastic they're about their own election. And so we have to make them, you know, be enthusiastic about the election. And we also have to. We have to make instruments that are easier for people to actually make democracy work and we built that electrode kit and it was applied and What what

[00:30:00] the institution reported to us is that they have less a, um, conflicts in the election outcome, right?

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?

What management skills are required to build a successful team who can apply design successfully?

What design-related resources does Monica recommend?
1. Service Blueprint

Nigel
Who is Nigel?
Nigel is the founder of the City of Boston Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics which he ran for twelve years. The Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics was one of the first civic research and design teams for a Mayor's Office in the United States. The Office explores and tackles experiments and prototypes, working across departments and communities to create and evaluate new approaches to government and civic life.

How does Nigel define Design?
Nigel defines Design as comprised of people who think a lot about humans or people, and Nigel stresses for the need for design to also think deeply about people in the community. Nigel sees design as less centered on one designer but as a group process amongst a community. Nigel dislikes design thinking and human-centered design because it is often focused on the consumer, and less community and public good oriented.

What does Nigel find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?

1. Introduce different modalities outside of the traditional town hall and create distance/space to create together
   a. so I very quickly went to one of those community meetings that Harvard was having with the, with, with their neighbors, with their butters for this, for this library. And it was crazy. I'd never seen, I'd never been to a community meeting

before. Certainly not here. And, uh, people were yelling, you know, uh, it was, it was just crazy. And I got it, you know, this is, this is where they live, right? So people, like all of the emotions were on, were on display, but it was, it was also incredibly, uh, Not effective right as a way of having a conversation

b. What if we built Also, uh, uh, Houghton Library Park in Second Life and invited the, the abutters into the space together. And that was where we would have the dialogue because the thought, the hope was, um, that by, uh, creating a just enough distance with the actual concern in, in IRL, you know, in real life, that it would give people more space. To make it more of a collaborative dialogue, you know, and so we would, it would give people a little bit of distance, um, and how they thought about their issues represented in the space. And so we reached out to the community first to explore this idea, and they all, everyone had lots of ideas and thoughts.

c. sandbox way of creating just enough space from the actual issue that you can have a different, different kind of dialogue, I think, um, you know, uh, was, was definitely, you know, Um, of learning, you know, as we, as we moved forward in New York mechanics, a lot of, we always focused on the relational, we tried to downplay the transactional.

d. I think that introducing different modalities for people to have difficult conversations is incredibly rich way of thinking about it. I think the way that we did it was one of those methods.

2. Show- don't rely on just telling

a. a lot of people struggled with, uh, having a good intuition as to what is financially possible in the, in the space, you know, why couldn't you have a dog lot next to a jungle gym or something? We were able to make that more intuitive in the, in the game. So you would be able to, you had like a little [00:26:00] treasure chest that you could grab and drop in the space. And then when you tried to drag something else that couldn't, that by, um, ordinance couldn't go next to it, it would glow red and you would say, oh, what's going on?

b. When new mechanics plus code for America showed up with them, it would be, we would know, we would, we would play it out. It's [00:46:00] like, okay, what would it work?

c. How would it look? What would it look like? And and what would happen in this kind of situation? And how do we think about it? And who's is everyone being heard in those? And so we create a very different kind of dynamic. That was in the case of parents. Um, and students because it was the same thing with students.

3. Leverage Partnerships
    a. we found, uh, a non profit at the time. It was called Code for America. Um, it was brand new and it was very untested. And the idea was, could you get, Their model was, could you get designers and, you know, uh, technology or a design type people to come and work on urban issues? And so we had a team that came in and, uh, there was a lot of Of cultural negotiation happening, you know, that, you know, we had to figure out, like we had to be mindful of the way they worked and, uh, to, because it, it wasn't even us in that moment. It was like this other group. And [00:43:00] so we had to be thoughtful about understanding the culture at Boston will be schools and how they did or didn't want to work with what they perceive to be a vendor.

    b. also creates spaces. So, for example, no one ever said, [01:02:00] we can't just go over to MIT. Or to Harvard, right. And just, and just talk to folk and get ideas. But when I was first starting on this work, I got a lot of shit from my colleagues to say, how is that your job? They said, they literally said to me, how is it your job to go and hang out at MIT for half a day? And I said, like, show me a rule where that's not right. And so where I am forbidden from doing that. And so if I come back refreshed or with a new colleague or a new collaborator, is that not better for all of us? And so I think looking for spaces of autonomy. And so oftentimes that's through partnerships. So like partners also bring new resources, which can, which can give you other space, right? So if you're working with, uh, in the case, um, you know, uh, with a university class to do something that gives you a lot of space to maneuver, right?

4. Test it Out!
    a. we'd be telling them their ideas are good and prototyping it right there.
5. Acknowledge and address that you are implicitly involved in causing harm to communities
    a. You know, how do we, how do we think about trust in this moment, especially when trust is coming from other, other issues that this person might be facing and you're implicit. You know, you're implicitly involved because you are a government and it's all one thing.
6. Get Out of City Hall!
    a. find spaces to disconnect yourself from that. And often you can do that by leaving city hall and by finding other gives these opportunities for autonomy.

b. find your people. You know, I think you're never alone, uh, there's always people, um, that are thinking about these things sometimes in different ways than you are about how to be more flexible or creative, you know, and it's the same thing.
7. And into Community!
    a. oftentimes if you're [01:04:00] trying to make to do interesting things about the physical infrastructure of the city, you may well find that the guy or the woman in the truck.
    b. You know, that's driving, that's fixing potholes often has insight into different ways of doing things. And so they might not see themselves as innovators or whatnot, because they got, you know, hard hats and whatnot. Um, but oftentimes get again, like getting to know that local context can generate huge, new, insightful ways for it.
8. Speak plainly and relate to people
    a. His filter at the end of the day was how does Mrs.
    b. Smith, the end of his street, how does she understand what you just said? Right? And so it was a very grounded and it was, it was a really useful discipline to think about, you know, whatever big idea that we have, if we can translate it. into something that will impact people's lives and understandable, maybe it's not worth doing, right?
9. Value Building Rapport over Checking Boxes
    a. The current interaction is broken
    b. it's just about building rapport and building the ability to have a discussion in order so that we can make the discussions about materials and all those those things
10. Understand local context
    a. understand local context.
    b. Right. I think that's [01:01:00] one. And, and sometimes that can be divisive, but I think it's actually, it's actually a strength to understand the specifics that people are facing. I think that would be the first one. And so it's not just about government. It's about understand how what government does is understanding that the composition of the networks of the, of the, the neighborhoods rather and understand the issues.

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Build a team where people are allowed to take risks

a. A place at city hall where people are allowed to take risks. You know, the, the people in the team are able to facilitate collaborative relationships between the public and, and the, the city hall staffers to try out new ideas.
b. the implicit, uh, issues in cities then as now is that there's always somehow the sense that if something is broken City Hall should just fix it. But the reality is City Hall may not know how to fix it. Like what do we do with climate change? I mean, right? So there needs to be some ability to experiment, you know, in collaboration with the community, try things, learn from them, and have that.

What management skills are required to build a successful team who can apply design successfully?

What design-related resources does Monica recommend?
1. Protoyping

Mari
Who is Mari?
Mari is a Systems Designer, a Social Designer, an Educator, a Facilitator, and a Maker. Mari entered the field of design through Graphic Design and has been transforming their craft now to focus deeply on planetary justice. Mari previously served as the Design Director for the New York City Service Design Studio housed within the Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity for five years.

How does Mari define Design?
Mari defined design as a process, a mindset, and an aesthetic. Design is the way we curate a process, orchestrate a team, unlock creativity, and bring flexibility, openness, joy, and whimseyness even to some of the most mundane spaces. Mari critiques the way she was taught design, which was often centerd on the five-step human-centered design methodology and that we need to minimize everything. Mari sees this version of design as "removing all human nuances"

a. What, what it does is remove all these human nuances, um, you know, and, and because in government we're working, we're doing social work. You can't. You can't ignore those things. You can't, you can't block those [00:30:00] out. So you really need to be, you know, much more attuned and sensitive to the nuances of every community and down to every individual because the experiences and stories of one person or can be drastically different from the other.

And sure, we can synthesize common insights and all that kind of stuff. But if you fail to continue to include the other kinds of stories that get dropped out of it along the way. You know, you're, you're losing a lot of rich information, um, that can really lead to like better change, um, and, and change that's deeply rooted in the community, but that signals to the community that they were seen and heard

What does Mari find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?
1. Meet people where they are at
   a. You have to be able to convene and engage people, but not in the, not from the perspective of yourself of saying, Oh, let's, let's gather everybody in this office [00:32:00] room. You need to meet people where they're at, you know, and make sure you're showing up in their spaces or where they're inviting you or making sure if you are inviting them to yours that you create access, you know, whether it's to compensate pay people for their transportation, whatever it is, you've, you've got to really think respectfully and thoughtfully about.
2. Partner with Core Community organizations
   a. working with a core organization out in the community to do that deployment was probably a lot better.
   b. We don't want as government to think we know everything. We want people to tell us and guide us and steward us in the right directions around what's needed. And so by having a community organization as our partner to be our advisor. We were able to do things like tailor the application process to be as accessible as possible for the groups we were trying to recruit.
3. Relinquish power
   a. co that collaboration was super crucial to doing this right. You know, but also to signal to the community that we're, we were, we want to relinquish some of this. Power that we hold and that's some, you know, that we traditionally hold and, and, and trust a lot of this to you all, you know, um, and so we had to take those steps to, to, to attempt to do that and, and, and show that, um, and trust that things were going to work out, crossing our fingers that there would be potential failures or hiccups and all that stuff.
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   c. But I might be working with a community based organization who has. You know, staff and folks who live and breathe in that community.
   d. And then that's, that's where we call them up and say, Hey, who do you know? You know, and it could be someone you work with. It could be someone in, in your community. And then from there saying, could. Is this someone we can connect with, you know, um, and then kind of really leveraging the partnerships that we have with those community based organizations or any community leaders to ask, you know, can we invite other people on your mind that you think would really add, you know, a powerful voice to this conversation.

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7. Think deeply on how you are centering people
   a. How, how are we centering people? Who are these people that we're trying to center? Um, you know, and. What is it, what is it that, like, what is the time and effort and resources that we're putting into really getting to know the people that we're, we're, we're working with, you know, or, or the communities we're working within to do these processes or frameworks.
   b. if we are trying to build autonomy, um, inside communities, how are we handing off those designs so that people can continue to evolve and grow them and become leaders to, to continue to build these, build out these ideas as opposed to like, let's keep deferring back to a, a design agency or to a government org every time we need to revamp this thing, that kind of process, like just, Is inefficient and it doesn't work well in the long run.

8. Learn from other fields

a. We, [00:11:00] if, if we want to be the best designer, we have to We need to build knowledge and expand our, you know, our mindset and thinking, uh, through other disciplines. And so for a designer who may not have had a background in community organizing, I would say to them, Go figure out how to be in community. Who's your community?

9. Be in Community
   a. I think a lot of times, like what, what is missing from the design practice is training and understanding, like just people [00:06:00] knowing, relationship building, uh, you know, and just, just. being in community, like legitimately being in community, not just saying, Oh, I showed up to a focus group at a, you know, at a community center of some sort.
   b. go be in community, whether that's volunteering, you know, just showing up, you know, and showing your face, um, being present and learning, you know, and just being quiet, because it's not always about, let, let me go in there and talk and tell my design spiel, it's sometimes like, I'm going to be a fly on the wall, and a wallflower just Be present here and listen.
   c. I think civic designers Or public servants in general, I hope see themselves also not just as a staff worker of some sort, but as advocates and allies of the of the communities that we're serving. And so to be that you really need to know what's happening out there and be able to [00:14:00] bring in the stories that real people are like telling us, you know, and when you build that empathy, just the work is just much more powerful.

10. Think critically about HOW you are requesting people's time
   a. Well, not just saying, Hey, could you get that guy to show up, you know, tomorrow? It's [00:17:00] what do we need to do for, for this person to, to show up and be at the table? Is it, is it compensation, you know, and what does that compensation look like?
   b. You know, do, do they not want to meet with us because they don't trust us and, but are they open to having a conversation? So do we need to take a few steps back to say, Let's, let's hold that conversation about some government trauma first here to see if there is something to move forward with. I mean, sometimes we have to do that just realize like we, we have, you know, as a government have really traumatized a lot of especially like poor communities, right?

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
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   2. Welcome neutral facilitators
      a. But it was important for us to have sort of a neutral individual come into. Hold these discussions because there were so many of us to, um, really balance out. Um, and, and the service design team also wanted to participate as a, as a participant in all of this. So we needed to separate ourselves from that as well.
   3. Identify Champions to steward work

a. we identified sort of champions, you know, within the office who were eager to kind of be the, the lead, the co leads of small groups. Or we, we individually recruited folks who we felt both had capacity, but also maybe would be an opportunity to sort of professionally develop and hold a little bit of a leadership role.

4. Ensure things stay top of mind
   a. then I think on top of it to the facility, the contracted person [00:20:00] held regular check ins with a couple of us to just keep us. Keep things fresh, keep it on, on top of mind. And then there were people like me or our finance admin director, for example, who, um, really were like on the ball, just checking in with people, figuring out everyone's schedule, trying to accommodate folks.

5. Use plain language
   a. if you can explain your work to a six year old, you know, um, then everybody understands, you know, um, and so there's something about plain languaging.

6. Become a Relationship Builder
   a. if you want to like really be in this space and embody being in these spaces, you really have to learn how to be a relationship builder, um, you know, a people, a people know where you have to be able to talk to folks, um, and like bond with people.
   b. you should be able to understand that and be part of a team that deeply values holding relationships and taking the time to build trust with communities in order to move the work forward.

7. Recognize that design is a series of adjustments
   a. Hypothesizing could be may not be, you know, and I think that we have to be ready to veer off out of a framework or veer off a timeline to really enable and open and invite conversation storytelling and different perspectives, you know, and so so with that, I'll say, because of that sort of ability to meander through something together collaboratively, you know, we always had a way to adjust.
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but it helped really make it very clear what What was going on and where there might be challenges, you know, um, and so we let really people just craft in that way, um, use Legos, like whatever was around, um, to create their ideas and then, um, through that was able to share.

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10. Communicate with data
    a. If you can find the research and the precedent for someone else having done that in another case, like in another municipality, bring that data in, you [00:40:00] know, so we, so we've, we worked with our team to say like, Do you have research on like, um, you know, the effectiveness of hyperlocal investments? What is the trend around that? You know, should we be investing more hyperlocally as opposed to thinking of innovation at like large scale? Because that's a, that's another mindset we're in is that like, let's put our money to serving millions of people, but that's just the number. Is it effective versus do we invest that money into a hundred people? You know, um, and well, will that make actual real change along the way? Um, so we, we brought that kind of data to the table.

What management skills are required to build a successful team who can apply design successfully?

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    Um, for, for a while, [00:26:00] um, we would every, every week like do these, um, non-creative clubs at one of our other designers. Emily, former designer, Emily Herrick, um, who now also still works in gov. Um, but she, uh, she started this non creatives creatives club where everyone would come in and like there would be some type of design or creative prompt, you know, where it's.

And there's like an activity tied to it with collaging and drawing and whatever it was. And, um, but, but the every week it would rotate. So it wouldn't be a designer facilitating it, it would be anybody, you know, and we would put a list together and say, Oh, you know, Joe, you're up next kind of thing. And because of just doing that, and we just only did it for 30 minutes gathered together in a room and just like crank some fun stuff out.

That also just started to like unlock a different way of making and doing. And because we were doing those types of activities, um, by the time we got to this meeting, There was not fear [00:27:00] to make, you know, people laughed at themselves. They're like, Oh my God, this is so dirty and ugly. And look at this designer with their beautiful handwriting and, you know, precision cuts and all this stuff that we would joke about it, but no one was afraid to get going, you know.

Um, so I would say, yeah, so even leadership on high, like from up the ladder, everybody would be able to jump in on these things. And I think from a leadership director level perspective when folks saw everybody else on their staff making, I think the pressure was on to be like, Oh, well, I need to bake too, you know, like, why not?

2. Democratize decision-making down to the project itself
   a. I looked at myself both as like a protector, you know, to make sure that my team could stay focused. Um, but I also was the type of person that could bring in ideas and say, Hey, there's, there's the, there are these questions or requests percolating right now. And. It seems like our team could maybe, uh, be, be great at taking the lead on running this.

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   b. because every single time I would go to my team and we would have these huddles, they had even better ideas to bring back. So, I, I always look at, like, the first question is never the right question. It's usually, um, the, it's the first thought, but that we, everyone who, whoever brings that question to the table should be open to refining that question, specifying that question before we agree to move on, you know, and so the team always brought back.

3. Hire people who you know can grow that come from interdisciplinary backgrounds
   a. so for people coming [00:48:00] in, I'm like, I'm not hiring people because they can just do one thing. I'm not hiring workhorses like that. You know, I want people who.

b. Come in to grow, especially in government.
c. I would always really encourage any team member. to pick up their own projects, to try something different, to experiment, you know, um, so, so that was another part of it. Um, [00:49:00] I also really looked to hire people that, um, were coming from, um, fueled by a mission, um, and a vision for themselves, you know, and for a greater community.
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a. you've been here for a while, you need to take care of those who come in. You know, this isn't just like, this isn't an individualistic thing. We work together. So if we're fostering someone new or younger, you have to take care of them like they're your sister, you know, and be there for them. And, you know, especially for BIPOC folks who never really get to experience the love and support.

What design-related resources does Mari recommend?
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Harmonie

Who is Harmonie?

Harmonie describes herself as a cultural worker, an educator, and a designer. Harmonie is a Senior Community Engagement Manager at IDEO.org, which is a social impact nonprofit design firm working to build a most just and inclusive world. Harmonie started her career at IDEO.org in a partnership with the New Jersey Department of Children and Families in order to move the child welfare system from one of punishment and surveillance to one that centers on family well being. Harmonie then engaged with the New Jersey Department over the course of two years working to lead the co-design process.

How does Harmonie define Design?

Harmonie sees design as a spectrum from human-centered design on the far left to community-led on the far right.
a. This HCD, maybe on the left, like a traditional human centered design approach, um, rooted in empathy, which we could talk a lot about what that means, um, but rooted in

empathy and thinking about asking people, um, you know, what works best for them and their day to day life and really getting a better understanding of the problem. So starting there, And you move into more participatory, um, design is [00:17:00] like engaging people, um, and like generative moments of making. And so when you're actually making a thing, working with them on that, um, co design is like the entire process. They're in it. They're working with you. It's like, we're all kind of getting our hands dirty, so to speak, at various stages of the design process. And then community led. Which I have not seen as much as I would like to see, um, I think it just requires a lot more resources and time, um, in deep relationships with community, um, but it's when, like, actual community members, they already have the project, they're holding the decision making power, they know what they want to accomplish, and maybe then they're bringing in designers or consultants or whoever to, like, make the thing with them or for them. Um, but they hold ultimate decision making power.

What does Harmonie find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?

1. Recognize the legacies of oppression attached to government
   a. I think the legacy of oppression is just so deeply entrenched in all of our systems. And so it really does require A lot more like [00:12:00] radical imagination.
   b. But I think because we were talking about harm done by the system, and in many ways they represented the system or still actively worked for the system, it did not feel right for them to be at every co design call.
   And so they were present for like big [00:35:00] kickoff moments or the inspiration session that we had, the celebration festival at the end, but like the visioning, the making, the prototyping. They were not there for those. So we were having separate partner calls, um, to kind of like keep them updated, share our decks, share what came out of the sessions, um, they did not attend the, the main, like, co design aspects of the, the Zoom calls that we were having, um, later.
   So we worked on phase two. Phase two technically, but phase one of the co design process with the roughly 30, um, co design members from September to December, and then took a beat, holidays, woo, we did it, we made a vision, okay, it's January now, what are we going to do with said vision, and so this was phase two of the co design work.
   With that, Benita was present for All of those calls. So kind of thinking about, I guess that trust building or relational scale that I mentioned [00:36:00] earlier, um, increasing over time, I think at that point, cone designers felt comfortable

with Bonita and like knew who she was and also felt respected by and, um, comfortable with a commissioner buyer too.

    c. When you've kind of broken the table and smashed the table and threw the table out the window for century, um, might not be the best approach.

    d.

2. Bring community members into the making and visioning,
    a. Hey, here's what we think it's coming from the top down. We know what's best. We got it. We'll do a listen toward like gut check. Make sure you know, it's okay with you, but we're gonna roll with it. They did not want to do it that way. They had tried it that way several times. And so they really wanted community members involved in the making and the visioning, um, the ideating, the prototyping from like [00:15:00] beginning to implementation, uh, to the end. And then also of course the evaluation as well. And so they wanted community members. involved in the work, um, entirely. And so co design, I think in that way, I think about it, like as a spectrum, I think there's been so many conversations about what is co design?

3. Leverage existing partners
    a. we started with, um, reaching out to partners and you like the library, local community groups or nonprofits who are already deeply involved in community. And then you think what our next step was, oh, we would ask them like, hey, do you have recommendations we had this flyer that.
    b. Um, so that, hey, we're looking for change makers in X city. Uh, if you're interested in, um, working to transform the child welfare system in New Jersey, you might want to work with us. Uh, qualifications, uh, previously impacted by the system. Excited to partner with us. Available to join on Zoom. Like that was it.

4. Pay people and Communicate Thoroughly
    a. Um, there's a stipend, of course, attached. It was super, super important. We paid people for their time. Um, that was something we were not compromising on, and we wanted to make sure that it was a good rate, not [00:30:00] Remembering how much it was, but I know it was, um, like, we felt good about it. Like, I think we never want to, um, treat this work like it's not something quote unquote professional. Like, it doesn't require expertise in some way because it does. And so we also marketed that on the flyer and wanted to be super clear about the benefits. in addition to like community building and those softer things, you will also be getting paid. So that was really important to have on the flyer. Um, and then from there, after all the cold calls and, um, I was

texting, I was texting in Spanish at some points, we were thinking about having some Hispanic folks join us.

5. Individualize your outreach
   a. And so all of that to say we had people.
   b. Who maybe needed some help with Zoom. It took some, like, calling people, like, Hey, are you able to join? Okay, Ms. So and so, it's alright, I'm gonna send you the link again and then let me know if it works. So a lot of, like, Those kinds of things, um, removing some of those [00:42:00] barriers to participation through reaching out to people directly through texting and following up, um, and just being available inconsistent.

6. Be clear on goals
   a. And so we used A lot of these like futuring prompts to create space for healing and so people could share as much as they wanted to around maybe their past experiences or past harm.
   b. Um, but it wasn't the focus or the focal point. It was always, what do we want to make together? What is, um, child welfare and interested to look like in 2040 like these types of. I think also, what was the one? I love the headline activity. We used to have this, and still use it actually, um, in person or on Zoom.
   c. It's like a fake newspaper, you know, the New Jersey Daily. I'm not sure. Sorry, New Jersey folks, what the, the [00:44:00] newspaper name is, but it'll have like the whole font and everything laid out. You know, it'll ask like, what is the headline, um, if this project is successful? What is like the, the announcement in 2040 or 2050?

7. Leverage Facilitators
   a. hink the commissioner was super excited about kind of just bringing in someone who knew how to, [00:11:00] like, engage, um, community members in ways that the department had tried to do, but maybe couldn't do in the same way or as deeply because of other work they were prioritizing, and just because of that relationship that had been fractured, like asking someone to come to this table.

8. Value Preparation
   a. there's a lot of, um, a lot of work in the beginning around What do we want the experience to feel like?
   b. What are like some key moments of making or visioning together? How are we thinking about that trust building component as we're designing together? And then we also had this wonderful, um, psychologist on our team, Dr. Barbara Prempeh, who still, she's just wonderful. Um, and she worked with us as a design team, but then also with the co designers, which we felt was super, super important.

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Leverage Facilit

What management skills are required to build a successful team who can apply design successfully?

What design-related resources does Harmonie recommend?
- Movie Poster
    - we also use like a movie poster type of prompt. So, you know, you, I think I'm trying to remember how we phrase it, but It was either like you are the star of the movie or you're making your own movie about, um, a family navigating the child welfare system.
    - You can make it future focused, it can be what's happening now, like just kind of giving them, I think, as much, you know, runway to work with as possible, um, thinking about. [00:47:00] You know, like the title of the movie, who's acting, people love that part. Oh, uh, Denzel's gonna be playing me. I said, okay. So having a bit of humor infused, and I think it's also super important.
    -
- Headline
    - It's like a fake newspaper, you know, the New Jersey Daily. I'm not sure. Sorry, New Jersey folks, what the, the [00:44:00] newspaper name is, but it'll have like the whole font and everything laid out. You know, it'll ask like, what is the headline, um, if this project is successful? What is like the, the announcement in 2040 or 2050?
- Sacrificial Concept Cards
    - Sacrificial concept cards or like mashups, I think are always a good tool. So our design team will like go away for a week or whatever. And think about, um, just some like potential concepts or potential solutions that might be appealing to co designers.
    - So and you want them to be maybe not as wild as possible, but Um, like kind of out there, like really, really hopeful and okay, we're going for the ideal future here. So maybe every time a child is born in New Jersey, they

get a baby bond open something of the sort, which I think does exist in some counties, but stuff like that.

- So we're all coming up with these ideas. And then I'm like, adding some detail to them, adding pictures and then presenting them back to co designers and asking them. Okay. You have this [00:49:00] idea, what would you change? What don't you like about it? But what might, what might you combine with another concept card?
    - Small Nudges
        - is this brave move, small nudges framework, which I think can be used. In a variety of like different stages of the design process, but we often use it in like synthesis and prioritization moments.
        - So it's almost like a two by two matrix, like the high effort, low effort, high impact, low impact. But instead of saying that, it's kind of jargony, saying brave moves and small nudges. So, you know, what can we do tomorrow? What feels like it's a quick win? It's important. But it's kind of easy. It's right there.
        - And then what what might feel like more transformative or like we really are going to have to put some put some work in it. But maybe it would [00:50:00] feel like the best thing you've ever accomplished. That would be a brave move. And so asking people to map these concepts that we've created along that spectrum and seeing where they land and then working with our partner with DCF or with PFPC to better understand.
        - Okay, does this. align with what you see as a brave move and small nudge and doing that mapping, um, not backward, but working with them, I think, in a different space to kind of think more about the feasibility and viability lens. Um, and just saying, okay, well, this is where Co designers landed those. So what can we prioritize based on what they are super excited about?
        -

Stephanie

Who is Stephanie?

Stephanie is the Founder and CEO of Ascendant, a global innovation consulting firm. Stephanie has worked in the US federal government leading The Lab at OPM, the first design-led innovation lab for the US federal government. Stephanie also led a portfolio of programs for the Bloomberg Philanthropies foundation helping to develop, deliver, and use best practice innovation tools to hundreds of cities.

How does Stephanie define Design?

Stephanie defines design as creating something that is incredibly considered, something that sparks joy, and has measurable outcomes. For Stephanie, to be considered is to spend a lot of time understanding what is needed. Stephanie also emphasized the act of sparking joy as being a critical part to design as design in governmenet innovation has relied on the notion of any government experience not being painful. Her hope is that we can push government to go ebyond not being painful to being something that is enjoyable for those that experience it. Stephanie also emphasized the need for design to be related to be measurable outcomes as a reminder to the field of design that its work must be tangible. It must actually "create something that is going to create change", and it is not enough for it to just be created.

What does Stephanie find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?

1. Use both qualitative and quantitative data to justify actions
   a. Nobody, very few people are talking about police response times that we're speaking with. And let's back that up with the quantitative data that we've collected around these issues as well to corroborate it. Quantitative data wasn't showing that this was a major problem, um, according to other research that they've done. And what we've found is across all of these different groups, what people were struggling with was [00:08:00] Perceptions of safety, we don't actually feel as safe as we used to in this community. And that was due to several factors that were around just basic infrastructure, sidewalk, safety, lighting. But also around a prevalence of people who are unhoused in their community. And that was driving a lot of anxiety across the groups that we talked to, again, regardless of demographics, income, neighborhood, um, you name it.
      And so I think that has, is causing the project to pivot like, okay, um, let's understand what the city has in its control to help the city. address these issues. And that's not something that we would have found if we had just said, great, let's just go reduce police response response times.
   b. So in the quantitative data world, it tells you the what, here is the size and scope of the problem. What qualitative data and design does so well is tell you the why, but you really can't have one without the other, because the, what doesn't tell you the full scope of the problem and the, why doesn't help you quantify it in a way that is accessible to people who are decision makers.

2. Need to be great Project Managers
   a. everybody in innovation is so focused, focused on process. This process is just the start of it. How you actually manage a project and manage people and teams to build a collaborative direction that's actually going to be, you know, to implement an actual idea is where the success is won and lost. And to do that, well, you do have to manage a team, um, when you're in leading an innovation lab or, or, or, or team or whatever it might be.
   b. There still needs to be strong project management and setting expectations and [00:23:00] understanding timelines and meeting timelines, et cetera, because you do have to operate in a world that is, that is working on a timeline of accountability and transparency and, and making sure you're, you're doing that.
   c.
3. Equitable Approach is not the Default
   a. government sometimes, they just get into a pattern of always hearing from the same people and over and over again, you show up to the town hall and government's just like, well, that's who shows up. No, you have to take a proactive approach to building equity. It's not something that falls in your lap.
4. Take an audit of your involvement in community as a baseline for engagement
   a. So if you are working on public safety issues and you want to reach out to, let's say, businesses in the area, [00:36:00] the first thing you can think about is like, what is your experience? You know, what, what, Do you know about the community and where might there be minority business owners? Um, do you have a favorite burger shop that you go to like just start thinking about your community?
   b. Gosh. Yeah, actually Yeah, and I you know, frank makes the best burger in the world or whatever, you know Let's go stop by his store and let's just go talk to him, right? It takes going out into the community
5. Partner with community leaders throughout the entire design process
   a. It takes going out into the community um I've seen people do that. I also have found a lot of great support. It often requires you finding a proxy, um, finding somebody in the community who's a leader, who knows how to treat this outreach with kid gloves, because the last thing you want to do is cause harm to, um, to people who may have had historical, uh, discrimination or bad experiences or.
   b. It can also be faith based leaders. I have found a lot of support. And, um, and then social service providers, right, who are working in communities, go to those social service [00:38:00] providers who know a lot of different people and demographics and will probably have had meaningful conversations with several

people so that they can say, you know what, I think that Um, I think that Jamia is going to be a really great person to talk to, and I know she'll probably be okay. Let me reach out to Jamia and ask. Um, and so letting them do that outreach, it's softer, it's going to be better received, and it's safer for those residents. Um, certainly, You know, government should be posting on social media and, um, and, and maybe flyers and leaflets in different places, thinking about different, different disabilities and access needs.

And you can't, you know, making sure you're not an entirely digital recruitment focus because there may be, there's a big digital divide. How do we reach people who don't necessarily have access to, um, technologies and technology in a reliable way. So sometimes it's ads and papers and flyers, et cetera.

6. Leverage Snowball Sampling to build your participants
    a. it's a, where you identify like a, that community leader and they go out and they kind of build on their network and that reaches more people.

        And then when you actually do conduct research with those folks asking them, do you know anybody who might be willing to talk to us? And then They start to say, ah, this one person's got five more people and that person's got five more people. And so you just kind of exponentially grow and, um, and push out that network to start finding people that you hadn't

7. Become a great Synthesizer
    i. Very detailed and considered synthesis of that data to move beyond the surface level to get to the deeper, the deeper pieces. And for me, that synth of the data synthesis is absolutely key. And when I'm interviewing and when I'm, um, working with teams, [00:41:00] The level of rigor around data synthesis to me is a litmus test for whether or not I think that's people that that's that's the right fit for me to work with.

8. Play around with your goals and user research numbers:
    a. When [00:49:00] you are, when it is new in your organization and in government, especially is that the criticism that you aren't talking to enough people that you're not getting generating statistically significant data because you're talking to maybe 30 people or 50 people in the community that is statistically insignificant.

        And people want to toss your data out the window because all they care about is the quantitative data that has, uh, uh, You know, an end number that is greater than I think, what, 0. 05 right? The statistical significance number of, you know, reaching a certain percentage of the population, which quantitative data research is good at doing.

What I often say is that Yes, go collect that statistically significant data from a quantitative way, but when you are doing qualitative research, you are, you are, you have to, you have to talk to fewer people so that you can go deeper, that you're adding all of the parts under the iceberg above the water piece is the quantitative data.

Now you have to go do the under the water piece and that you [00:50:00] don't have to talk to 5, 000 people. To understand where you need to go because what happens is that as you start to talk to people and there's no set number, it really depends on the size and scope of the problem that you're dealing with.

But let's say you start with targeting 35 people. When you, you will get to a point where you are saying, You're hearing sat you're at saturation where you're hearing the same things across diverse groups of people, um, no matter what and who you talk to. And then you can start to say, I think we've learned everything we need to now.

That doesn't mean that you end there. Um, it means that you go back and do your data synthesis in a rigorous way and identify where you have gaps and you go back out and talk to more people again, getting to a point where you have saturation across diverse groups of people. So. I would say start, you know, with a very strong stakeholder map and understanding who the diverse populations are.

Maybe start talking to six or eight people within each of those groups, 12 if you have the bandwidth. You usually should hit saturation probably by [00:51:00] 12, um, depending on what you're dealing with. But you could even just start with six and gauge where you need to go next because it has to be iterative.

Maybe we don't need to talk to this group. Maybe we're off here. We need to go talk to this group, right? You kind of have to play around in the very beginning and then you, once you start to figure out where you go, where you need to go, you can hit saturation pretty quickly.

9. Be wary of squeaky wheels

    a. If you're in an environment that is very negative and judgmental and shoots things down right away, well, what's going to happen?

Nobody's going to raise ideas anymore. And there's some really great ideas that are bubbling under the surface. Aren't going to come out. And that's at an individual level, at a team level, you also need to build dynamics where people are not so attached to their idea that the team is really focused on building [00:20:00] a collaborative idea.

b. The same people over and over again, which is what we're finding in the other city I mentioned, right? It's that there are certain constituent groups who are, you know, Uh, more comfortable advocating for themselves or have been privileged enough to feel comfortable to reach out and just call the mayor's office or the governor's office or the whoever's office, right?

So, and, and all that you hear is confirmation bias. This is, these are the calls I'm getting, right?

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Avoid jargon and buzzwords
   a. When you use those strong innovation words, or I should say sometimes, um, buzzwords, um, it can feel again, very alienating,
2. Change the Environment
   a. instead of going up into their room, into their office, the big palatial office, I said, you're going to come down to our lab. I'm going to walk you through our boards, which at the time were still physical post it notes.
3. Acknowledge the problem without commiting to it
   a. Hey, we hear that you feel this is a problem. We want to go learn more so we can make sure that we're solving it the right way. And we're going to have the most impact. And then they're oftentimes [00:11:00] reasonable. If you come back with hard data, quantitative and qualitative data showing.
4. Quick Wins and Long-term Plan
   a. So how do you continue to focus on slowing down enough to lift up what's going on or report about it in a way that's going to build excitement and build a runway for you to continue to work on what often tend to be longer term projects in a world where we're always looking for quick, quick wins and fast turnarounds to do innovation.
5. Do the necessary prep work
   a. A lot of what you have to do is, um, is, is that management piece, which is there are, who do I need to get in the room before, who do I need to talk to before we get in a room, right? That political and strategic Lens of managing and moving projects forward to implementation. It just because you have good ideas doesn't mean they're actually going to be implemented.
   b. And that takes a lot of intentional thought about who do you need to get buying from? Who do you need to do pre meetings with before you get to this meeting?

6. Acknowledge OGs, Celebrate and lean on the skillsets of those who have tried it before
    a. Hey, you know what? This could feel really threatening to somebody who's been here a long time. And we're working on, let's say it's housing. This person's been working on housing in the city for 30 years and knows more than I will ever know about this issue. What happens when you go in there and tell them I'm going to help you find all your answers in the next six months?

       They're going to tell you get out of my office, right? And I'm not going to help you. Like I've been doing this for 30 years. So part of what you, I think the narrative that's helpful is we are, you know, Hey, Steve, whatever you are, you know, this is a mandate from the governor, the mayor, whoever it might be, um, you know, we know you've been dealing with this and trying to work on this issue for a really long [00:16:00] time, and we'd really like, you know, we'd really like to bring you in because we, you are our expert.

       Right? And we need your help and in fact, you know, it could be your department that they're, let's say, let's say you have to do this for Steve, right? Well, then you change the narrative to with Steve, right? And it's, and, Champ down on the jargon, like, especially for new designers who get into this, they want to use all the words and all the language, but really just make it very simple and easy to understand.

       We're just applying a little bit of a different approach here to try to see where we might come up with new ideas. We want to do this with you. We, we we're here to champion you and to help you in your work. Um, we can't do without you, et cetera. Right? So it's about making it accessible, making it less scary.

7. Bring People Along - keep the pressure
    a. And I would do that periodically throughout the project. So at every key milestone, they could ask questions, they could influence where we were, they could understand what we were doing. And again, coming back to that buy in, I was getting buy in because I wasn't moving as fast as they wanted because there was a political wind that was wanted.

8. Do not shy away from one-on-ones with blockers
    a. We pulled out [00:28:00] people when they were serious blockers and we really needed them to be on board.

       We did one on one conversations with them. Let's go understand what you need. And sometimes it was really, they just needed to vent. They just wanted to be heard. And sometimes that's all it is, is that they want to feel like they matter. And that their experience is as valued as the rest of the experiences that we're uncovering in our research.

And sometimes that's enough to break down the barrier so that they show up to the next conversation much more open, because it was almost like a balloon was deflated for them. Working. And then it's managing at the peers level and, So many other things, but I'll say the last one, um, that was more challenging.

9. Center Listening and Understanding At All Times
    a. I'm struggling to figure out where there's a disconnect right now because [00:30:00] we don't have time. We've got to move on this stuff. And so, you know, I had to step back and then again, Do the same thing. Let me understand. Let me calm down and let me go sit with the developers and let me understand what their point of view and perspective is.

What management skills are required to build a successful team who can apply design successfully?
1. Build Pscyhological Safety
    a. building that psychological safety as a starter point, right? That, um, You have, like, innovation cannot happen without psychological safety because people will not bring forward their ideas, um, if they feel like they will be shot down and criticized.
    b. That you are not the one who has all the right answers and you are emulating the same behavior, asking your team members to exude, which is about being vulnerable and, um, being really communicative about where things are, what's needed. And honest about the state of where you are as a team and really spend time on care and feeding with care and feeding of [00:21:00] each of the individual team members, um, helping to build that, those relationships.
    c.
2. Understand the preferences of your team
    a. building that understanding of people's preferences, needs, um, how they show up in a meeting or how they show up one day.
    b. So learning how to a recognize what that is and why that person might be doing it because they're introverted, they're extroverted, they really love detail. They really hate detail. They need coffee in the morning before you talk to them, like whatever it might be, right?
3. Build an atmosphere of Openness and willigness to speak up
    a. If you're in an environment that is very negative and judgmental and shoots things down right away, well, what's going to happen?
    b. Nobody's going to raise ideas anymore. And there's some really great ideas that are bubbling under the surface. Aren't going to come out. And that's at an

individual level, at a team level, you also need to build dynamics where people are not so attached to their idea that the team is really focused on building [00:20:00] a collaborative idea.

4. Build multidisciplinary teams
5. Be resilient

What design-related resources does Stephanie recommend?
1. Magic of Design by John Kolko

Nidhi

Who is Nidhi?

Nidhi is a South Asian woman living in Washington, DC on the ancestral homeland of the Anacostian people.Nidhi's work is grounded in community and relationships, and deeply value centered. Nidhi is a designer, reseacher, educator, author, and a thinker who applies design methodologies to reimagine civic engagement. Her multidisciplinary practice focuses on deconstructing nebulous concepts, bringing people together, and breaking down complex problems. She is currently the Civic Design Lead with the Montgomery County government in Maryland, USA.

How does Nidhi Design?

Nidhi describes design as a language. She acknowledges that design is sometimes used as a tool to talk about experiences and stories that are impossible to talk about otherwise.

What does Nidhi find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?
1. Recognize that you represent the instiution whenengaging members in the commnity
   a. but as a public servant, but I have to position myself as the government, like the person who's coming from the government to talk to you, you're, you have to think as an institution, you have to think as an entity and, um, you know, you could be.
   b. whatever in terms of like your social, uh, political beliefs could be whatever, but you're going to serve anyone and everyone who walks through a particular door. Um, and that's where, you know, um, it's been really interesting to see how the public servant mindset has challenged my design mindset because, um, the public set public, uh, servant mindset has been more about.

      c.   Service, whereas design mindset has been more about [00:33:00] delivery and just like portfolio and like case studies.

2. Use a variety of ftronts to reach people
    a. the call out is really like just a combination of message, WhatsApp, social media, email, everything. Um, and the best way to be most equitable is to put, put your, um, note on like All of those fronts because often the challenge happens like in terms of hiring people for local government jobs, getting people recruited for [00:53:00] research, getting people recruited for partnerships. The biggest challenge is that people don't know that things are happening. Yeah. So knowing who you can just shoot a message to and who can do what is very important. So that again, you're not reinventing, but you're just multiplying the messages.

3. Leverage existing community reps
    a. because different communities, again, work differently. So, [00:50:00] you know, for me, for instance, when I talk to my friends, I talk to them on iMessage. When I talk to my mom and parents, I talk to them on WhatsApp, because my parents are, you know, on WhatsApp. So, yeah, that's it. Indian and like when I lived and my Indian friends also add up to them on whatsapp and I think that's how it happens even locally that when you put the call out you can do it, you know, um, uh, on social media but also there are chat groups that these representatives would have because you have to think from the perspective that often these representatives are called to do troubleshooting when there's a large community like issue like flood happened and in this flood, people don't know who to reach out in the government, but they know who Mariama is and the fact that Mariama is working for the African American, [00:51:00] uh, American commission. Um, and she's a representative. So they're going to call you so you know who to go to to get them the resources, but they might get to you through WhatsApp or through a call and you would know, because it's a part of your job to know that where you can reach out to people and where you can put, let them know that there are departments looking for Research participants.
    b.

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Prioritize localization
    a. And for that reason, innovation always has to come in from the lens of like, okay, how do we, Localize this.
    b. What are the enabling and disabling conditions? And how can, and is it possible to create those enabling condition or overcome those disabling [00:30:00] conditions? That like reality check is needed when we are creating something

that needs to be sustainable. Something that will not be cut off when the budget cuts happen.

2. Treat bureaucracy as a series of nos that you get to flip the script on and people you get to work with
    a. Um, you know, bureaucracy can be very frustrating when you are from privilege and you have been not said no for things. That's when you're like, Oh my God, I'm so frustrated. Yeah. Because people have not [00:22:00] said no to you. People have said no to me as a brown woman who grew up in India a lot of times. So I know how to turn that around. I like turning that around because I like opposing that idea. And I think that's like, that's the flipping of, um, script of managing bureaucratic processes. People have said no to me, but that's not the end.

       And I know that because I wouldn't be here if I agreed to that. No. And I just listened to that. No. Um, and most importantly, I've seen that bureaucratic processes, the best way to come over them is through social capital, because Often in bureaucracy, we forget people are humans. We see people as departments.

       We see people as divisions. We see people as the positions that they take in. And like, these are the people who have been doing this job for [00:23:00] 10 years, 15 years, 20 years. They've been doing this. This was their first job. This has been their job. Since forever, this is all they know. So you're stepping in and suddenly you're like, Oh my God, bureaucracy.

3. Codesign as a method of building buy-in
    a. I think the reason I talk a lot about community is because it really helps me. withdraw from that ego of being the creator. When I'm in community with people, when I rely on the fact that co creation can actually help us get to [00:18:00] things faster, but also in terms of management, in terms of executive leadership.

       Co designed tools get buy in early on. They have more sustainable approaches. They are things that, uh, staff and employees are excited about because it's their ideas. They want to make it happen. So I do see that, you know, the least amount of challenges and I'm, you

4. Make things as easy as possible for people
    a. Even when I ask for like translations and things, I'm like, Oh, Should we make like Spanish of this and it's like, Oh, if you do it now, then we'll have to just keep doing it. We're going to keep doing it. But I also have to reflect, I also have to

reflect on the fact that that is correct. This person has so much administrative burden and like so much to do that.

I can't be angry at them. Right. It's again, like systemic. It's a system of challenge. Um, but I do hear that of like, Oh, how do we even get people? Um, and it has really helped me like, you know, understand that how, um, I could then continue that conversation to be like, [00:47:00] well, you know, there are representatives within the county body, within the city body that are hired to work with the community.

We just write a script, we get out to them, we create an interest form and we just like put the interest form out. And there could be like different ways of putting that interest form out. Um, And just recently, like last week or so, I was in a meeting where we were literally just having the same conversation.

And honestly, the people who were questioning how can we recruit people started suggesting who can put the word out. Because then we really broke down the action of getting people that they didn't have to get the people. Because I think that's also that's like, you know, one of the root causes of, um, in equity or in practices in local government is that it's seen as like, I have to do it. No, you don't really have to do it. There are people hired to do it, but you don't know who those people are. So [00:48:00] you think you have to reinvent the wheel every single time. Um, And I think the benefit of being in either like the mayor's office or being in like the county executive's office, because these are the two offices I've been in, um, is that I get to see where like, who is or like have again, that social capital that, oh, wait, there is a department that does this.

5. Build social capital through building relationships
    a. So I think like that's where social capital really comes in handy because when you build relationships and partnerships, you know, people as humans. You're able to push through bureaucracy through that support of like, What can I do for you so that you can like, you know, move this forward? How can I make this easy for you?
    b. you're building a relationship that I've got your back and that's when you can go out to these people and when you don't know how to hack a particular kind of or piece of Um, bureaucracy. You can be like, hey, do you know who can help me with this? I have no idea what's happening here. You can be honest with that person, and that honesty, that social capital really gets you through, um, in the long run.
    c. Um, and I think social capital also comes in really handy when we talk about bureaucracy, to understand bureaucracy, because When you are working in local

government, people who are working in local government are the residents that you're serving, are the people that you're serving. They, so I don't live in Montgomery County, but I work with people who live in Montgomery County. I work with [00:28:00] people who came to the United States undocumented, got citizenship, built a career, and then worked for Montgomery County. You know, the kind of experiences and conversations I have are crazy, but I see that to say that only Montgomery County in Maryland is one of the most diverse places.

6. Stay persistent
    a. No, we can do this like that persistence, um, I think gets me through the challenges.

7. Move at the pace of trust both within and external to govt
    a. What is the pace of trust? If there is no trust between me or the people that I'm trying to work with, be it again, inside or outside the government body, work will not happen. So earlier I talked about being honest and I think [00:40:00] there is needs to be honesty in that part of the process. Also that when you're trying to build trust with community or within, um, you know, again, I say in and outside of government, uh, because, you know, Again, as I mentioned earlier, that people who are working within local government are also your residents.

What management skills are required to build a successful team that can apply design successfully?
1. Let your team know and feel that you want to hear from them
    a. little bit, but the least amount of challenges I see are in the spaces where the leadership themselves are dedicated to the staff vision. So, you know, where management and upper middle management steps in to say, like, I want to hear from you. And they say that in the session that your ideas matter, I'm going to just be here.

What design-related resources does Nidhi recommend?
1. What is anti racism and why is it anti capitalist - Arun Kundani

Vaidehi
Who is Vaidehi?

Vaidehi is a Senior Planning Consultant at the New York City Housing Authority primarily focused on open spaces and the public realm of public housing. Vaidehi is a trained architect with experience in placemaking, community planning, education, and design.

How does Vaidehi define Design?

Vaidehi defines design as a process, and a evolving dynamic approach towards an outcome. Vaidehi emphasizes that this approach and process ia adaptive, as opposed to a template that can fit anywhere. "It has to make room for nuances and has to evolve with changin needs".

What does Vaidehi find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?
1. Communicate to build trust and with empathy
   a. Um, and the most driven person I know, and I'm smiling because the takeaway here is if you communicate with empathy, if you communicate to build trust, and if you're transparent, even about the problems, you will kind of change the perspective that the people that you serve have Towards their agencies.
2. Honor transparency
   a. because we had built such an amazing relationship with the residents, with the community there, everything was a knowledge to them. We were transparent. When we went to them with this really hard news, they understood it. They understood it. They got it. It was something that everyone was going through it together, and they were mindful of that, and they were also appreciative of us just being so transparent and open about the challenges that we're all facing together.
3. Start with understanding a baseline from various groups dissagregated through one-on-one conversations
   a. So we did not know what exactly would come out of this funding to come out of this project. But we were [00:10:00] kind of creating questions that would help us get to that. So it's framing the correct questions, asking them things like, how are you using your open spaces? What is your favorite current open space? What is the space that you feel unsafe in? Um, what is the space that you think should be upgraded? And we were asking them all of these questions. We were also trying to understand if a teenager is telling us something different than, um, a senior and how are we, like, analyzing all of that.
4. Observe the space
   a. When you don't have that in, when you don't know where to, where and how to start the conversation. I think for built environment projects, at [00:22:00] least

that, that, you know, I can speak best to. It's beginning with observation of the space and observation of the place. Who are we seeing making use of the place, um, around the place?

b. Um, are there any assets or community assets around there? Are there any community assets that are, um, accommodating more than just one? So daycare centers, are there any markets, are there any clinics, senior centers that may or may not be having a physical relationship with this place? Can, can we start there?

c. Um, and sometimes if none of that works, it's that initial, Conversation starter in that place itself during these observations where you have to start having conversations very, very quick, very, very brief questions. And the more it's done and the more [00:23:00] people were able to connect with the more color is added to this picture of unknown.

5. Then create space for deeper participatory design through longer conversations/workshops

a. Slowly, that led to, and I would say that evolved into, like, a second phase of workshops slash participatory design where, once we had teams.
of safety, of health, of wellness. And once we had like a shorter list of focus areas in the development, um, we started framing conversations about that. So if the community is again and again telling us about health and wellness, and then we are thinking of [00:11:00] outdoor spaces, should it be walking trails?
Should it be a fitness area that is outside? Should it be something else that we're not capturing in the precedence? So it's following that guidance. of the of the conversations that we've heard from the residents of the themes that come out of it

6. Treat the designer as a translator

a. then how do you as a translator i think a designer here is like a translator of community input and what is technically possible and how do you carry that through towards design towards intervention is is what i think participatory design

7. Bring community members along and empower with richness of information

a. So unlocking that potential of community input and has to see that phenomenal. work with us then. And I should just say, you know, I was talking about how we couldn't build everything that we thought we wanted to going into the project, but something really amazing happened in the following years, which was the residents, the community, they were so engaged. They were so empowered. They had all of this information that we were constantly giving to them from so

many hundreds and hundreds of surveys that we have, all of the workshop meetings, the gap in funding, why we couldn't do it. They self mobilized and they fundraised for the other projects. They reached out to the council member. They helped [00:14:00] us fill the gap, and I think that was such an eye opener for me about some power of participatory design and engagement that is not directly related to what gets constructed within that project.

8. Decenter yourself as the expert-holder
    a. you have to firstly enter a room knowing that you're not here to bring in your expertise, but you are here to absorb their expertise. Your agenda is actually empowering the [00:19:00] people and

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Leverage partnerships
    a. Um, I, I always joke about how, uh, a little bit, a little bit of what I do is matchmaking of solutions. Um, That's funny. Because working with so many external partners, so many [00:40:00] external agencies, you have eyes and ears on parallel efforts on maybe parallel or adjacent areas or fields. And it just takes that amazing moment to bring things together and kind of make the best use of all our resources and all our efforts and get to like a maximized outcome.
2. Dissolve the boundaries between industry and academia
    a. e've worked with, um, different schools through many years, I would say five years at this point, um, where that kind of partnership has really helped us look at our programs, look at our goals in a very, very different perspective. So, in. In the public sector, you know, we're stretched and we're always stretched and there's always that need, um, and most times gap of research of innovatively thinking about. The things that have happened and the things that [00:41:00] could happen when it comes to program development and our collaboration with Columbia's School of Public Policy has been so fruitful and has been so impactful, not just for us to think differently, but also leverage their research and their outcomes. To more fundraising, which has been incredible. Um, the student group once a year through their capstone program, um, work with us and collaborate with us.
    b.

What management skills are required to build a successful team that can apply design successfully?
1. Empower your team members
2. Lead by example
3. Center clarity

What design-related resources does Vaidehi recommend?

Pamela
Who is Pamela?
Pamela started her career as a photographer and a layout artist, then launching a civic in civic tech leveraging technology to make services more accessible and more human centered. Pamela currently serves as the Principal Designer at Code for America, a civic tech non-porift working to bring the 21st century tech into government. Pamela works largely at the state level to strengthen its social safety net.

How does Pamela define Design? Pamela defines design as how our intentions are realized. In government, this may look like re-envisioning government benefits or services with design intent, as opposed to systems being built on reaction to something.

What does Pamela find is key to implementing design methodologies in governments?
1. Bringing in Designers at the top of a project prior to problem definition
    a. I had a particular project where we were brought in after the problem had already been defined, right? So there really hadn't been an opportunity to discover. what the human needs were, it was more based on what the technology requirements were. So what I would call technology first, right? And it's well intentioned, right?
    b. when you say to your stakeholders, how do you know? How do you know that this is a problem? Right? And so if that goes sort of how unanswered, or we validated it from this process that didn't involve the humans who use the system, we can suggest that.
2. Probe deeper into the why of the problem definition and proposed solution
    a. I always kind of rely on the framework of the five whys where you ask why each decision was made and keep asking why each decision was made. You can pretty quickly get the original intention and if it is to solve x and it has not been validated as a real human problem, you can suggest there's a little risk there. And you might suggest that there can be some user research done.
3. Invite people into the process through lightweight prototyping

a. And I find that that combined with some lightweight prototyping to really invite participants, human participation into that process can Sort of open it up and make it more inclusive and approachable.

b. It can be sketching out paper on paper what these steps might be for a person to go from point A to point B in an interface. You need to apply for this benefit. These are the steps you would take. Do those make sense to you? Oftentimes I will prototype Figma, where it's very easy to, to simply draw them in a grayscale series of boxes without any kind of high fidelity design attached to them, really wireframes, if you will, that really talk to the usability and sort of say, how do we use this thing? Does it work? Do you struggle? Is much less important than what it looks like. Right. So I think lightweight prototyping is really just trying to get the core [00:13:00] concept that you're proposing in your hypothesis in front of people and seeing if they grasp it or if they struggle and getting that feedback and iterating.

c. maybe there are just boxes and arrows that can do the trick, right? Maybe when you're, you're finding yourself needing to do that visual design layer, I think it's important to ask the question if it really, Helps you understand what you need to understand in the session because, you know, you [00:14:00] can look at a car all day long and talk about the design of a car. But what you really need to know is how it drives. And so if you focus on the usability and what it feels like to use. What you're designing. I think you'll get less caught up in what it looks like because it's really not what we're concerned with when we're when we're testing.

4. Map your Ecosystem
    a. And I think sometimes it's really been helpful to me to, understand the ecosystem that I'm working in.
    b. So I have stakeholders, sure, but who are my subject matter experts? And how can I invite them? If I have a concept or a hypothesis, maybe I'll walk them through it first, right? And I'll get their feedback and treat them as subject matter experts. So they're in a way giving me feedback as well, right? And then I can take it around to all the folks who might be working on this and create a little bit of a community of people who want to know more about what's working and what's not working.

5. Treat reaching those who will interact with your solution as a journey
    a. you're working on something that caseworkers use in a government service, you might want Talk to them through their supervisor, initially, or be introduced to

them through a supervisor or somebody who introduces you to that supervisor, and you might say, how could we ask some questions of them?

b. And could we turn those questions into a workshop? Could we turn that into screen sharing with a lightweight prototype that they interact with? Can that be become a moderated interview? So I think it's a series of [00:11:00] breaking down barriers and building relationships to get to the folks that are going to be interacting with this piece of solution that you're building, right?

6. Be a journalist sometimes - Embed yourself into places to understand how people work
   a. I had a day where I really wanted to work with caseworkers. So I live in Chicago and I spent three days at the VA embedded with caseworkers, just shadowing them and eating lunch with them and doing their, um, work.
   b. Their, their job, you know, with them, sort of them showing me the ropes and so I could understand their perspective. I think it's a matter of really just taking that little journalistic, entrepreneurial, you know, way of opening doors and trying to influence people to participate.

7. Reject the notion of codified authorship with design tools
   a. there's an illusion of it's codified, and this is the way, but that's, that's absolutely not true. I think that one of the beautiful things about being in design is that we can say, That doesn't quite work. I'm going to do something new and I think that at the end of the day, these are artifacts that we're not, they're not an end in themselves. They're a communication [00:19:00] tool. There are ways that we, we as designers can create dialogues through visualizations that are very hard to do in written documents, which are important memos and things like that, which render sort of the problem we're trying to solve invisible. So if we can assist and invite people to the conversation through these artifacts, and they can help us with our process, they're really kind of ephemeral. They're only as good as they are for the moment when we need them.

8. Stay curious and approach people with curiosity
   a. And I think that when you seek to understand angles you cannot see, you assume less. You have to assume there are angles you cannot see. Working in government is so collaborative, and there's always a trade off and a mix of understanding. We're not all speaking the same language. We don't all have the same agenda. So I think it's really critical to ask and listen first, and seek to understand other points of view before you assert your own, before you make assumptions, right?

9. Think subtractively
   a. a lot of times government can be heavy with a lot of layers of [00:25:00] bureaucracy, layers of decisions that have been made, legacy decisions that date

back decades. Yeah. So, when we come in and we want to add value and we're very well meaning, oftentimes it can be easy to think about what we can design, what we can build, what we can add to a system. But I've found that sometimes the most innovative thing you can do is to think about what you can subtract from a system. And it sort of turns it on its end when we think about what we can take away. How can we make it lighter? How can we make it easier? How can we make it more streamlined and reduce friction is really a process of subtraction, which I think is a powerful mindset tool.

10. Learn how to reach alignment and facilitate conversations

How should Civic Designers navigate bureaucracy and communicate with other civil servants?
1. Recognize that bureaucracies are not naturally a bad thing
    a. I think bureaucracies exist because of systems of governance, and we need them, right? We need sort of checks and balances, and those structures do support a lot of things that we rely upon to run our society
2. Conduct Ecosystem Mapping to understand who you should engage with, in what way, and how
    a. What if we turn it into an ecosystem, and we look at it as circles. of responsibility, then we can sort of place our team and the project that we're working on in the middle of that circle, and we can sort of look at who might be able to help us, who [00:16:00] might be able to influence this, or help us get to someone who can help us, and that is going to be, you know, A system of engineers, of product folks, of people who build APIs that might not be on our team, but we need to talk to them. It might be people who are subject matter experts because they have a certain domain knowledge. And it might be the people who are really responsible for funding the program. So I think when you, one of the things I always use is an ecosystem map. So I can really understand who to have a cadence of connections with. Like maybe I need to check in with the funding resource less often than my subject matter expert who can say, is this okay to remove or do I have to keep it in? How can you help me understand this? And I think that ecosystem creates a little bit of a microculture within the hierarchy and the bureaucracy for, for innovation.

What management skills are required to build a successful team that can apply design successfully?
1. Honor continuous learning
    a. creating the safety that learning is a continuum and we're always doing it. So it's okay to ask questions. It's really okay to be where you are.

b. let's approach the problem from different perspectives and honor your perspective as not as the same as mine. And then that honors the conversation between us, and I'm learning, [00:22:00] and you're learning, we're learning together, and we're on kind of a growth trajectory, and so I feel like I've, I've been an educator too, and I feel like I learned so much from just the dialogue of learning

2. Build psychological safety
   a. And really setting sort of a psychologically safe space to make mistakes and to not know and to admit that we're, you know, trying things out and we're learning as we go and we're really validating our hypotheses. That's, it's really kind of an experimental medium

3. Stay curious
4. Appreciate and value the expertise of those around you
   a. There's always so much to learn from everybody's perspective in the room, even if they're brand new to design, even if they are, you know, they're a policy writer, they're still coming to the table with a very important perspective.

What design-related resources does Pamela recommend?
1. 5 Whys
2. Moderated interview
3. Lightweight Prototyping
4. Ecosystem Mapping
5. Prioritization exercises