Successfully transferring 'Good Practices' in transnational programmes
Part 1: Analysing the 'Good Practice' and the Framework Conditions
Jim Sims, Founder of The Service Design Company and Urbact Lead Expert

Introduction

At the heart of the principle of the transnational exchange of 'Good Practice' across cities within Europe, sits a concept which is known as the **open method of coordination** (OMC).

This principle, which is a form of 'soft' inter-governmental policy-making, was originally created in the 1990s as part of the Luxembourg process and defined as an instrument of the Lisbon strategy, in 2000.

The **open method of coordination** largely operates separately from the (much more binding) process of law making within Europe, by providing a framework for cooperation between EU member states, enabling them to adapt and direct their national policies towards certain common objectives.

Under this intergovernmental method of collaboration, cities (regions and member states) generally work together by jointly identifying and defining objectives to be achieved; jointly establishing measuring instruments; benchmarking; and exchanging best practices.
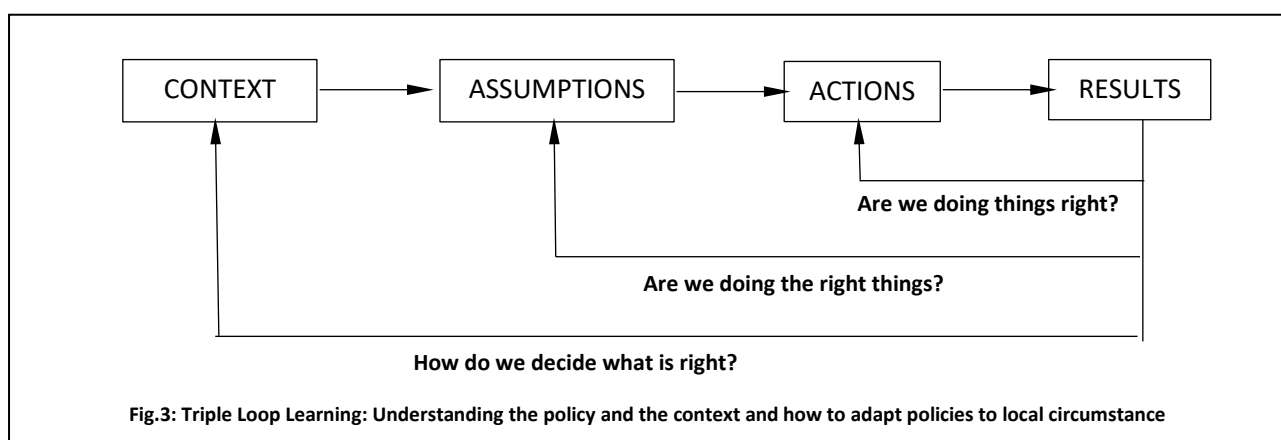
However, just because the process of transnational exchange and learning is more informal than binding legislation, doesn't mean it can't benefit from the adoption of a systematic approach. Indeed, there is an argument to be had for further formalising the process, to better understand 'what works and doesn't work'.

It would be wrong to underestimate how challenging the transnational implementation of 'Good Practice' actually is. For example, *data from Interreg IVC (which places a strong emphasis on 'learning by sharing') would suggest that only 151 of 2835 (or 5.3 per cent) of 'good practices' were actually transferred to a region in another country.[1]*

This white paper is intended to help anyone thinking about trying to transfer 'Good Practices' between cities in different member states, by considering the main issues that will help them to successfully transfer 'Good Practices' to partner cities.

Transnational Policy Implementation: Moving beyond 'standard rules' to 'understanding how we learn'

In order to maximise the chances of successfully transferring 'Good Practices', policy makers need to **understand the policy to be transferred and the context within which a policy will be implemented and adapt it to local circumstance**, a process which some authors have described as **'Triple Loop' Learning**[2];

Fig.3: Triple Loop Learning: Understanding the policy and the context and how to adapt policies to local circumstance

---

[1] [Interregional cooperation, State of play and perspectives. FACTS! final conference](#), Brussels, 30/11/2012

[2] Building on the work of Argyris and Schon (1974). The authors helped people understand and appreciate three types of learning that take place during the delivery of a project, through the development of a system for classifying the dynamics of learning.

Triple Loop Policy Implementation enables policy makers to fully **understand the context within which a policy will be implemented and adapt it to local circumstance.**

This approach seeks to understand the basic beliefs and perceptions of different cultures and how best to adapt policies to local circumstance. In this situation, policy specialists reflect on how they think about the 'rules' before considering whether the 'rules' should be changed. This form of implementation helps develop a greater understanding of ourselves and others, by going beyond insight and patterns to understand context. The result creates a shift in understanding of our context or point of view, to produce new commitments and ways of learning. This form of implementation challenges us to understand how problems and solutions are related and the context in which they will be placed. It also challenges us to understand how our previous actions created the conditions that led to our current problems. In this approach organizations 'learn how to learn', enhancing ways to understand and change their purpose, by developing a better understanding of how to respond to the environment and deepen their understanding of why their organisation has historically acted the way it has.

The fundamental point about Triple-Loop Policy Implementation is that it stresses that only by understanding what pre-conditions exist in a member state (i.e. beliefs, assets, other resources, innovation systems etc.) and how to mobilise these, will you have any chance of successfully transferring a 'Good Practice' (but even then, it isn't guaranteed). Adopting the two previous approaches of merely implementing 'standard policies' or 'adapted policies' which don't consider context, are unlikely to succeed, except in situations where the practice is very simple or standardised.

5W1H: A tool to understand local circumstance when transferring 'Good Practices' transnationally

One simple analytical tool to help you reach a better understanding of the similarities and differences between the concrete actions partners in your Transfer Network might want to achieve and the extent to which their local circumstances might impact on its successful implementation is the 5W1H tool.
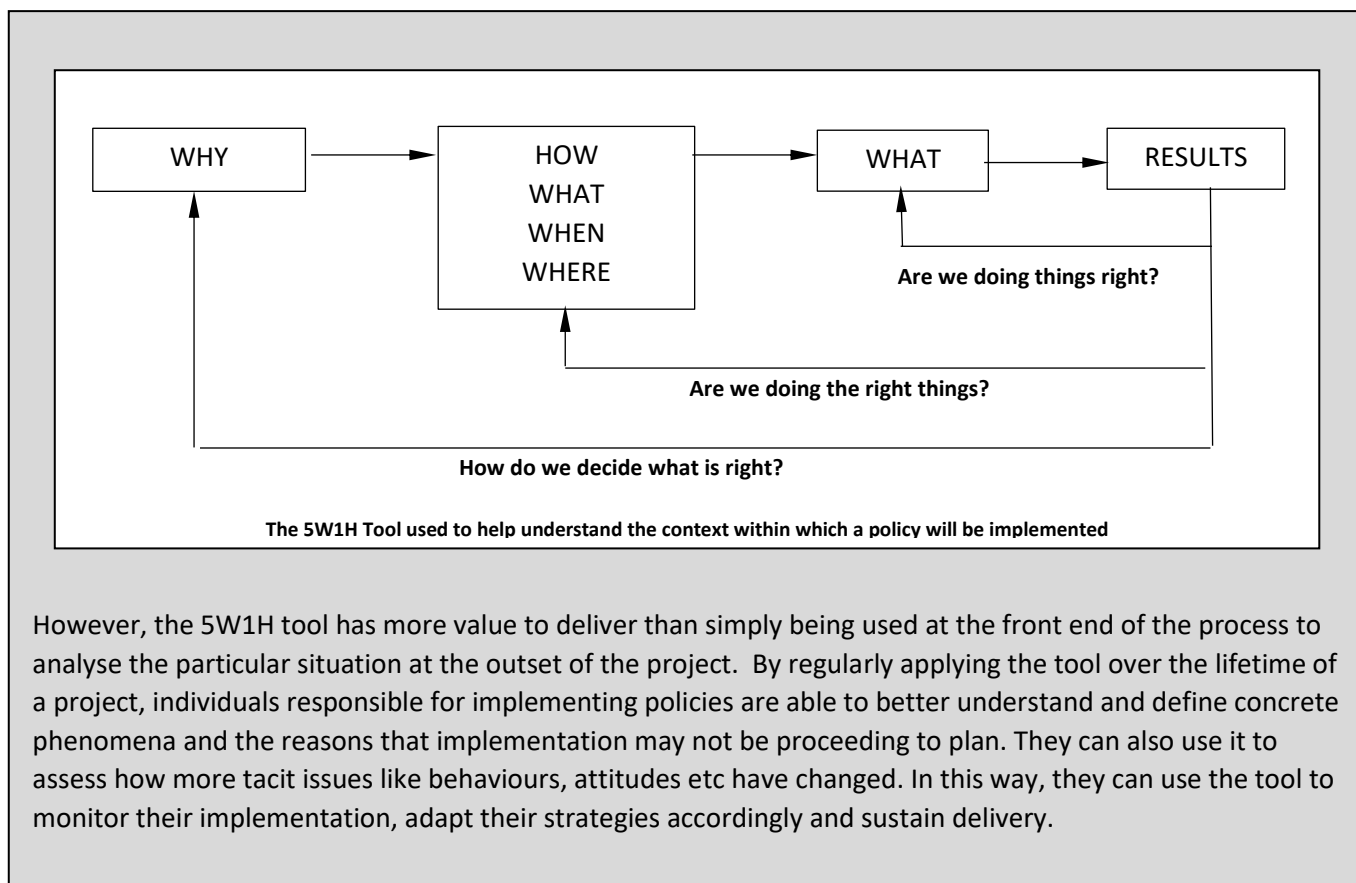
This tool, which is essentially a questioning methodology, is used extensively in 'improvement' programmes, to understand the current state of play and the factors that might act as a barrier to delivering improvement.

Ideally it should be used to analyse the explicit issues that could potentially impact on the transfer of the 'Good Practice' and the tacit issues (i.e. implied, but not necessarily stated) - like, for example, institutional control, power dominance or the beliefs and attitudes of a particular culture - might impact on its successful implementation.

How it works: 5W1H (who, what, where, when, why, how) is a simple questioning tool that helps you analyse a process or problem that you are looking to improve. Four of the W's (who, what, where, when) and the one H is used to comprehend the details, analyse inferences and judgment to get to the fundamental facts and guide statements to get to the abstraction.

In standard improvement programmes, the last W (why) is often asked numerous times, so that one can drill down to get to the core of a problem and understand the underlying (and often hidden) belief systems that frame the context for its potential implementation.

- **What:** A question to better understand the problem, idea, or policy to be implemented;
- **Who:** A question to better understand the stakeholders and influencers;
- **How:** A question to better understand the implementation methodology and approach;
- **Where:** A question to better understand the place, city or suburb;
- **When:** A question to better understand the past, present or future situation; and
- **Why:** A question to better understand the underlying reasons, motivations and causes;

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  ┌───────┐      ┌───────┐      ┌───────┐      ┌───────┐           │
│  │  WHY  │─────▶│  HOW  │─────▶│ WHAT  │─────▶│RESULTS│           │
│  └───────┘      │ WHAT  │      └───────┘      └───────┘           │
│      ▲          │ WHEN  │          ▲                               │
│      │          │ WHERE │                                         │
│      │          └───────┘    Are we doing things right?           │
│      │              ▲                                             │
│      │          Are we doing the right things?                    │
│      │                                                            │
│   How do we decide what is right?                                 │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

The 5W1H Tool used to help understand the context within which a policy will be implemented

However, the 5W1H tool has more value to deliver than simply being used at the front end of the process to analyse the particular situation at the outset of the project. By regularly applying the tool over the lifetime of a project, individuals responsible for implementing policies are able to better understand and define concrete phenomena and the reasons that implementation may not be proceeding to plan. They can also use it to assess how more tacit issues like behaviours, attitudes etc have changed. In this way, they can use the tool to monitor their implementation, adapt their strategies accordingly and sustain delivery.

Understanding your own 'Good Practice': To help you understand what to look for in partners

Sometimes, just because someone has been successful at implementing a project in their own city/territory, doesn't always mean they really appreciate everything that 'came together' to make it work in practice. This is particularly true of some of the 'softer' aspects of success, particularly those that sit outside the implanting organisation, like culture, beliefs, partner capability/capacity, user attitudes etc.

One of the ways to ensure you develop a strong partnership that is capable of transferring good practices is to fully understand what skills, capabilities, resources, framework conditions were needed to make it a success in the territory in which it was originally implemented and try and establish a list of 'requirements' to look for in any potential partners.

What the Triple-Loop process and the 5W1H model teaches us is that this kind of analysis needs to stretch beyond developing simple understanding of WHAT the policy is to understand HOW, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and WHY the policy works. There are also a range of additional tools which you can use to answer these questions.

Understanding the 'What': Analysing the concrete elements of your 'Good Practice'

The first and easiest step to understanding your own policy and what to look for in your partners is to undertake a simple analysis of what 'concrete' components you believe you needed for the policy to be implemented successfully in your own city/territory. This will help you understand what to look for in your partners.

This might obviously include the tangible management resources needed to implement the policy (including funding, people, technology and time), a model which is also sometimes referred to the 4M's model. The 4M's model is a term that has come out of the construction industry and provides a simple but effective way of looking at any task you need to do.

Requirement	Questions
Men (and women!)	What people do you need? What skillsets should they have? How many do you need? How do they work together?
Money	What's the budget? How do you raise the money? What contingency do you have?
Materials	What physical machines/tools do you need to do the job. Do you need any buildings? What do you consume to do you consume to deliver your task?
Minutes	What time does it take to implement the project? Where any phases of preparation required before hand?

Analyse your own 'Good Practice' to develop a list of requirements that you needed to implement the project and that your partners will need – as a minimum requirement - to also make their implementation a success.

Be tough on yourself about what you needed – try not to be too superficial about the analysis. Challenge your partners to demonstrate that they have the resources that they need to receive your good practice.

Once you have completed this task you might chose to ask yourself whether you believe your 'Good Practice' is actually easily transferable. Some 'Good Practices' may not be that easy. For example;

• Low visibility/constitutional projects (built around ideas and philosophies) can be particularly challenging to transfer, particularly if the foundations of your belief systems are so fundamentally different from your partners;

• High visibility/complex policies (which involve the integration of multiple programmes) are also challenging to transfer, particularly in times of political uncertainty or tight financial conditions; and

• Policies which are highly cash intensive or involve elements of capital development (buildings) may also be difficult to transfer, unless partners have the right resources/commitment.

Once you have completed this analysis, you can decide whether to progress to the next stage of the analysis.

Understanding the significance of your organisation: Undertaking an Organisational Assessment

The next level to think about when analysing the 'framework conditions' that you needed to successfully implement the 'Good Practice' is to understand the capabilities that your organisation brought to the implementation (and identify other important factors which might support the implementation in other territories/cities). One way to do this is through an Organisational Assessment (OA).

Various tools exist to help undertake this process. Burke & Litwin[3] developed a 'Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change' which provides a framework to assess organizational dimensions that are key to the successful implementation of change programmes and demonstrates how these dimensions are linked by cause and effect relationships.

The model revolves around 12 organizational dimensions all of which underpin Organisational and Individual Performance in change projects. It provides a link between an assessment of the wider institutional context and the nature and process of change within an organisation.

To use it to assess what, if any, critical success factors your organisation bought to the implementation;

---

[3] A Causal Model of Organizational Performance and Change, authored by W. Warner Burke and George H. Litwin published in Journal of Management in 1992 (Vol.18, No. 3, 523-545).

- Answer the questions in the relevant boxes in the table below based on interviews with key stakeholders in your organisation, to identify the organisational elements that were important to helping you implement the 'Good Practice' and that may be important for your partners;
- Summarise the findings. This can then be used as a basis for understanding the performance and change issues

The External Environment	Questions
(Dealt with in more detail below)	See below
Transformational Factors (long-term levers)	
Mission and strategy	What do top management see as the organisation's mission and strategy? Is there a clear vision and mission statement? What are employees' perceptions of these?
Leadership	Who provides overall direction for the organisation? Who are the role models? What is the style of leadership? What are the perspectives of employees?
Organizational culture	What are the overt and covert rules, values, customs and principles that guide organisational behaviour?
Transactional Factors (operational levers)	
Structure	How are functions and people arranged in specific areas and levels of responsibility? What are the key decision-making, communication and control relationships?
Management practices	How do managers use human and material resources to carry out the organisation's strategy? What is their style of management and how do they relate to subordinates?
Systems	What are the organisation's policies and procedures, including systems for reward and performance appraisal, management information, HR and resource planning, etc?
Individual and Personal Factors (short term levers)	
Work unit climate	What are the collective impressions, expectations and feelings of staff? What is the nature of relationship with work unit colleagues and those in other work units?
Task and individual skills	What are the task requirements and individual skills/abilities/knowledge needed for task effectiveness? How appropriate is the organisation's "job-person" match?
Individual needs and values	What do staff value in their work? What are the psychological factors that would enrich their jobs and increase job satisfaction?
Motivation	Do staff feel motivated to take the action necessary to achieve the organisation's strategy? Of factors 1-10, which seem to be impacting most on motivation?
Individual and Organisational Performance	
	What is the level of performance in terms of productivity, customer satisfaction, quality, etc? Which factors are critical for motivation and therefore performance?

Understanding 'market maturity': The importance of analysing the market conditions

Clearly, organisation capabilities are not the only factors which influence whether a 'Good Practice' will transfer to another territory/city or not. A number of factors which sit around the good practice (in the task environment) might also influence it, including;

- The availability of **Partners/Stakeholders** who might be needed to support the delivery of the 'Good Practice' (this could be suppliers, distributors, marketing partners etc.); and
- The potential **Competition** that might undermine the implementation of the policy; and

As an example of how significant the market conditions might be in supporting the implementation of transnational projects, it's worth considering Trippl, Asheim and Miörner's[4] analysis of the different market structures they have found in innovation systems across Europe.

Their analysis, which also has a broader application, in trying to understand market structures, identifies that territories may suffer from institutional thinness, organisational thinness or a combination of both. This led them to distinguish between three types of less-developed market system's, characterised by the diagram below.

	Organisational thickness	Organisational thinness
Institutional thickness	Metropolitan / city regions in Northern & Western Europe	Industrial districts in the Third Italy, Nordic peripheral regions
Institutional thinness	Larger cities in Southern & Eastern Europe	Southern and Eastern peripheral regions

In this model;

- **Institutionally thick but organisationally thin market systems**. Will possess public sector organisations with a pronounced culture of cooperation (institutional thickness) but will lack strong business networks/communities (organisational thinness);
- **Organisationally thick but institutionally thin innovation systems** are characterized by the existence of a strong critical mass of firms as well as research, educational and other supporting organizations (organizational thickness). However, they have a weak cooperation culture as well as less well-developed government institutions (institutional thinness).
- **Institutionally thin and organisationally thin innovation systems** are poorly endowed with business networks/communities (organizational thinness,) a weak cooperation culture as well as less well-developed government institutions (institutional thinness).

There are a range of tools available to analyse the market conditions in which a project might be implemented.

Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping is a straightforward process that ensures you understand the stakeholders that are important in helping you deliver a service, that the right stakeholders are involved and that you are managing them in such a way that supports your delivery. To undertake stakeholder analysis, you can use a table, like the one shown opposite.

The first column on the left lists all the categories of stakeholders that may have an interest (or 'stake') in the 'Good Practice'. This includes customers, intermediaries, distributors and those involved in or excluded from the decision-making process. They can be divided into two groups:

1. **Primary stakeholders** – those affected directly by the policy, either positively or negatively, and

---

[4] Identification of regions with less developed research and innovation systems, Michaela Trippl, Björn Asheim and Johan Miörner, December 2014

2. **Secondary stakeholders** – those with an intermediary role including delivery agencies, policy makers, or supporting agencies such as social workers.

The following three columns in the table describe the stakeholders' involvement and role in delivering your service. The first column on the table opposite summarises the actual situation and how each stakeholder is affected by your service or the problem you are trying to address. The second describes their potential role and desire to bring about change, while the third focusses on how the service can meet their demands

Once you and your team have brainstormed the key stakeholders, fill in the other columns with Post-IT Notes. Carefully reflect on what can be done to best meet or counteract stakeholder interests. Think about what can be done to maximise the engagement of those who are likely to support the delivery of your service and minimise the resistance of those who may be more likely to block it. This kind of analysis could help you turn stakeholders in to raving advocates, or neutralise negative stakeholders.

In addition, it might be important to assess - and if necessary develop or adapt the capacity - of different stakeholders to fully engage in the service you are delivering. This will depend largely on their importance and influence.

Once you have undertaken some stakeholder analysis, another tool that you might want to use to assess the importance / influence of stakeholders is the importance/ influence matrix, shown opposite. It can be used to prioritize stakeholders, as well as to think about the right approach to take with each of them.

This matrix can be used in a workshop format, as a role play exercise or as a simple tool to be filled in by staff. Once the stakeholders have been defined (in the analysis table) they can to be placed in the grid following two criteria:

Stakeholder Interest Analysis
A tool for understanding the interested parties

Issue			
Stakeholders	Interested & how affected	Capacity and motivation to bring about change	Possible actions to address stakeholder interests
Primary Stakeholders			
Secondary Stakeholders			

Stakeholder importance / influence matrix

	High importance / Low influence	High importance / High influence
Level of importance ↑		
	Low importance / Low influence	Low importance / High influence

Level of Influence →

1. **Influence** - how much power the stakeholder has to facilitate or impede the successful delivery of your services?
2. **Importance** - how much priority should the you give to satisfying the needs and interests of the stakeholder?

Once you have undertaken this exercise, you will have four categories of stakeholder;

- **High importance, low influence.** If upset these stakeholders, they may gain influence and try to resist change. They require special attention if their interests are to be protected.
- **High importance, high influence.** These stakeholders can be both significantly affected by the change and most able to do something about it, either supporting or opposing actions proposed. It is particularly important to engage these people, ensuring both that they understand what is going on and creating a sense of ownership of what is being done.
- **Low importance, low influence.** These are low priority stakeholders who may require limited monitoring or at least be kept informed throughout the process as it can be that their status evolves over time.

- **Low importance, high influence.** These are stakeholders with high influence, who can affect the outcome of the actions proposed but whose interests are not the target of the actions. These stakeholders may be "deal breakers" and constitute a serious risk if not handled properly.

Once you have categorised your stakeholders and developed strategies for managing them, you might want to consider developing some customer personas for each of your important stakeholders (as well as customers).

Competitor Analysis

Identifying any potential competing propositions in the locality to which a 'Good Practice' might be transferred is vital, as these propositions might result in a failure to transfer your 'Good Practice'.

The process is simple, and involves analysing competitors and evaluating their strategies to determine their strengths and weaknesses relative to those of your own product or service. With this evaluation, you can establish what makes your 'Good Practice' unique--and therefore what attributes you play up in order to attract your target market.

For each competitor or strategic group, list their service, its funding model, growth pattern, marketing objectives and assumptions, current and past strategies, strengths and weaknesses, and size. Answer questions such as:

- Are there any competitors for the service you are looking to introduce?
- Who are the competitors?
- What products or services do they sell?
- What is their market share?
- What are their past strategies;
- What are their current strategies?
- What type of media are used to market their products or services?
- What are each competitor's strengths and weaknesses?
- What potential threats do your competitors pose?
- What potential opportunities do they make available for you?

A quick and easy way to compare 'Good Practice' with similar services on the market is to make a competition grid. Down the left side of a piece of paper, write the names of four or five products or services that compete with yours and across the top of the paper, list the main features and characteristics of each product or service.

A glance at the competition grid will help you see where your product fits in the overall market.

Understanding the Context: Understanding the External Environment

Another useful tool for understanding the context within different cities is the PESTLE Analysis Tool, which can help you to analyse the 'external environment' within which a project is delivered.

PESTLE stands for Political, Economic, Societal, Technological, Legal (which includes Regulatory) and Environmental.

By listing these factors in a matrix and brainstorming with an expert group within the partnership, you will be able to identify the external factors that are likely to impact on the potential transfer of a project, within each of the categories below. You can do this for the giving city and the receiving city, to identify any material differences in the territories.

By the time you finish the process, you will have developed a local context map, for the 'host' territory and each territory you are looking to transfer the 'Good Practice' to.

Once complete, make sure you spend enough time trying to map and identify any differences, or material issues which might impact on your ability to successfully transfer the 'Good Practice'. One way to do this is to ask another city to come in and identify any risks they can see from in the PESTLE table, that needs further analysis/discussion.

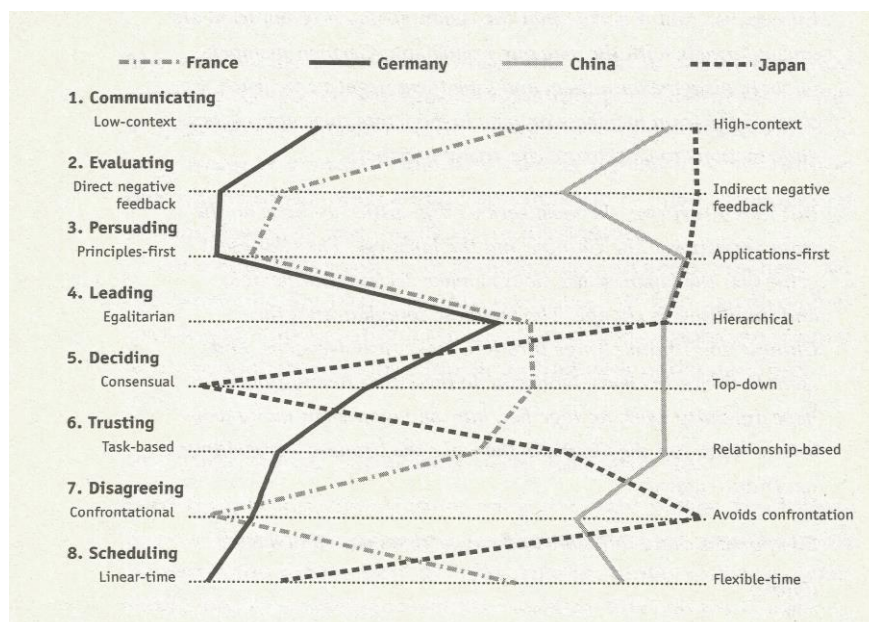| Factor	Local Issues to Consider
Political	
Economic	
Societal	
Technological	
Legal (and Regulatory)	
Environmental	

Understanding the Context: Alternative approaches to implementation across different cultures

To understand how important the Triple-Loop approach to policy implementation is to successfully transferring 'Good Practices' across different cultures, organisations, cities or member states, it's worth considering different approaches to policy implementation across cultures.

In her book 'The Culture Map'[5], Erin Meyer identifies eight scales that underpin the fundamental differences between cultures, which directly influences how different cultures implement projects. These eight scales are;

- **Communicating:** low context vs. high context;
- **Evaluating:** direct negative feedback vs. indirect negative feedback;
- **Persuading:** principles-first vs. applications-first;
- **Leading:** egalitarian vs. hierarchical;
- **Deciding:** consensual vs. top-down;
- **Trusting:** task-based vs. relationship based;
- **Disagreeing:** confrontational vs. avoids confrontation; and
- **Scheduling:** linear-time vs. flexible time.

Having set out how different cultures value different approaches on a scale that operates from left to right (for example setting out how a scale of Consensual to Top Down Decision Making would have Japan on the left as the most consensual, running through Sweden, Netherlands, Germany, UK, US, Brazil, France, Italy, Russia, India and China, finishing with Nigeria as the most Top Down Culture on the right) Meyer explains how combining scales enables policy makers to create a map of the differences between cultures. This map is a useful tool for policy makers looking to transfer a 'Good Practice' to use and understand, as it can guide different implementation approaches in different territories.

An example of mapping the cultural differences between France, Germany, China and Japan

---

[5] The Culture Map: Decoding How People Think, Lead and Get Things Done Across Cultures, Erin Meyer, Public Affairs 2017

Culture Mapping: A tool to understand cultural differences in implementation approaches

Try it for yourself in your own partnership. Use the map below to map the cultures of your own partnerships, to better understand how you might need to adapt the transfer of 'Good Practices' across borders. When using the tool, remember;

- **Communicating:** low context is clear, direct without any hidden meaning, high context is sophisticated, layered, sometimes requiring reading between the lines;
- **Evaluating:** direct negative feedback describes societies that are comfortable providing direct negative feedback and indirect negative feedback describes societies that do so more subtly, softly;
- **Persuading:** principles-first describes societies that prefer fact based persuasion and applications-first describes those that prefer theories and concepts before facts;
- **Leading:** egalitarian describes a leadership style where the boss sees his/her subordinates as equals, hierarchical describes a very layered organisation;
- **Deciding:** consensual describes a team based approach, top-down describes top-down/leader based;
- **Trusting:** where trust is built through excellence in task-based delivery or based on relationships between teams and people
- **Disagreeing:** societies either adopt confrontational approach or avoid confrontation; and
- **Scheduling:** where time management is very linear and precise or flexible/relaxed.

Communicating:

low context - high context

Evaluating:

direct negative feedback - indirect negative feedback

Persuading:

principles-first - applications-first

Leading:

egalitarian - hierarchical

Deciding:

consensual - top-down

Trusting:

task-based - relationship based

Disagreeing:

confrontational - avoids confrontation

Scheduling:

linear-time - flexible time.

Once you have mapped your partnership, discuss what you think the implications are for your project.

Conclusions

If you conduct this analytical process, once complete, you should have developed a solid understanding of the following key issues which could potentially impact on the transfer of your 'Good Practice' to a range of other territories;

THE 'GOOD PRACTICE'

ORGANISATIONAL COMPETENCIES

MARKET CONDITIONS

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Mapping these issues for the 'host' territory/city and the 'receiving' territories/cities should provide you with a robust model for understanding;

- The basic elements of the 'Good Practice' (to identify what basic operational requirements you need your partners to provide, if they are to adopt the 'Good Practice'); and
- The 'Framework Conditions' in which it was originally implemented and the territories you are looking to transfer it to (to identify potential risks, issues or points of difference which will necessitate you having to adapt the policy, the context or the environment in which it is to be delivered).

Adopting this approach won't guarantee that you will be able to successfully transfer the 'Good Practice' but it will certainly maximise your chances.

Jim Sims MCIM APM
Director
THE **SERVICE DESIGN** COMPANY
Delivering competitive advantage through service differentiation

Email: info@theservicedesign.co.uk
Web: www.theservicedesign.co.uk
Tel: +44(0)7483229838
Address for Correspondence: 10 Park Rd, Winslow, Buckinghamshire. MK18 3DL. United Kingdom
Registered office address: 71-75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London, England, WC2H 9JQ. United Kingdom