XPIN, the Dutch interdepartmental expertise bureau for Innovative policy making

My name: Jurgen van der Heijden. I work at the University of Amsterdam, but I am currently detached for two days a week to XPIN as their scientific advisor.

- XPIN has been established by all Dutch departments 2,5 years ago for a four year period.

- We work with a group of 6 to 8 people and a large network surrounding us.

XPIN, presentation for PI-Forum
What's this presentation about?

- Main question: why does a country like the Netherlands have something like XPIN at the moment?

- Interesting for discussion is why Japan has PI-Forum and what's comparable?

- Four steps to answer this main question:

- 1. History

- 2. Ideals/goals

- 3. Context

- 4. Future

- Conclusion/discussion

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 1: History 1

Since 1987 people discuss "interactive policy making": the making of policy in cooperation between government agencies, citizens, companies and NGO's; modern governance (in short).

The department for transport, water management and infrastructure has been experimenting with interactive policy making since 1994 in numerous projects and continues doing so.

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 1: History 2

Other departments followed, and more important a group of people from all departments, and from consultancy firms and universities organized itself. Maybe that compares to PI-Forum?

This group, one could call the "fanclub" of interactive policy making, still exists as XPIN's network. Out of that grew in 2000 XPIN, effective in 2001. Most people working at XPIN come from this group.

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 1: History 3

Although this "fanclub" has vague characteristics of an NGO pursuing the ideal of interactive policy making, XPIN is not like PI-Forum a private initiative but a public service.

In 2001 XPIN was officially founded by the council of secretary-generals of all 14 Dutch departments. (The secretary-general being the highest civil servant in charge of a department.)

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 2: Ideals/goals 1

XPIN is first of all about the ideal of interactive policy making, but looking at our name XPIN stands for innovative policy making and not only interactive policy making.

The term innovative policy making has no real meaning and gives XPIN freedom to go out and look for itself what the needs are of the government and its employees in times of ongoing acceleration of innovation.

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Step 2: Ideals/goals 2

- Asking for our ideals and goals it's best to see what we have been doing and will be doing.

- In depth we have been looking for a reversal of the relation between government and citizen.

Instruments of modern governance help out the government to communicate better with citizens, but that's not enough. The instruments are still made for the government ….

Modern governance, like interactive policy making, seeks to help the government in dealing with citizens, but shouldn't this be otherwise? Helping the citizen dealing with governance?

However simple this may sound many of us still appear to look at the government and not consider the primacy of the citizen. Turning that around is the in depth ideal of XPIN.

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 2: Ideals/goals 4

- Working on this ideal we gave emphasis to a few subjects:
- 1) Politics
- 2) Instruments
- 3) The internet
- 4) The market
- 5) Organisation

Regarding all five subjects the main questions is how to empower both citizen and government to start working from the perspective of what the citizen wants and can do about that himself.

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 3: Context 1

To really understand XPIN it's important to see that we're part of a whole range of organizations, public and private, working on the innovation of the public domain.

Like XPIN there are other public expertise bureaus, but interesting for PI-Forum might be to see how lately two private organizations have been founded.

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 3: Context 2

1) The Public Cause is an organization that wants to assemble as many as possible citizens concerned with the quality of the public domain.

www.publiekezaak.nl

2) The OmslagGroep (Foundation of Change) is an organisation of companies that wants to contribute to an optimal functioning public sector.

www.omslaggroep.nl

Interesting maybe for PI-Forum is also the fact that there are some foundations who make it their work to consult on matters of modern governance and succeed to survive on the market.

Last October XPIN assembled 40 organizations that all work in our field. We tried to get them behind a common goal but did not succeed in that (yet).

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 4: Future 1

XPIN still has 1,5 year to go. After that we want to reinvent ourselves; to keep our message alive it's best to go on in a new format. The coming year is crucial to get support for that.

Our plan for next year is to go out and look for best practices. That we and others have done before, but we want to do it in a new way. Over the last few years we've discovered two things about best practices …

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum
Step 4: Future 2

1) Best practices are not only about knowledge how to do things, but also about motivating others that they're not the only ones working on the innovation of the government.

2) Very interesting and motivating is the growth rate of best practices. Looking at the Netherlands you can see an amount of examples that adds up to thousands of them, and that amount grows very fast.

So assuming that best practices are motivating and that their numbers are huge, our message next year will be that the Netherlands are more innovative then we would have thought.

Beside that message we also have thoughts on the foundation of an XPIN Future Center and on founding an organization called XPIN-Tech. (Given time I will tell about those.)

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum Conclusion

- Why does a country like the Netherlands have something like XPIN at the moment?

- A first answer is that all these best practices prove that innovation is here to stay.

We do have to adapt to this change, but for both the government and citizens it's hard to do that and reverse their relation to the primacy of the citizen. That's why there is something like XPIN.

Presentation of XPIN for PI-Forum Discussion

Interesting for discussion is why Japan has PI-Forum and what's comparable with the Netherlands?

Please take a look at <www.xpin.nl>. We do have some english pages. Or send questions to jurgen.heijden@ictu.nl

Thank you!