

## From a text to practice and back again. Making knowledge(s) work as standards for public participation mechanisms

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to deliver a better understanding of practices of producing and managing knowledge that is intended to become implemented in the work of public administration and thus act towards the reinforcement of public participation and civil society. From the onset, the knowledge processes described are neither flat, nor transparent accounts. They consist of, firstly, establishing an elemental knowledge package in the so-called base document, and secondly, of transforming this package together with the setting in which it is intended to operate. Thus, they are of twofold character: the knowledge package is made effective not only by means of adopting it to some external conditions, but also the conditions themselves are accommodated to knowledge. At the end, the initial knowledge package is supposed to function as a certain standard, that is, a fairly coherent, non-imposing whole in a properly prepared setting.

**Keywords:** knowledge 'what'; knowledge 'how'; distributed knowledge; standards for public policies; knowledge translations

The role of expert knowledge in policy work has already gained some strong recognition in various strands of social sciences. So far, the analyses have focused mainly on policy design and implementation, while paying less attention to the development of standards of conduct for civil servants. Notably, this space of diverse influences between specialised non-governmental organisations and public administration constitutes an interesting field of knowledge processes; one in which experts try to convince other experts to take up on a certain knowledge package that, eventually, is supposed to bring about some positive change in a relation between public servants and the citizens and, thus, in social life itself.

In the first part of this paper I delineate the circumstances in which an elemental knowledge package is launched within the so-called base document. Thus, the base document is a medium that carries various knowledge(s): theoretical descriptions and practical recommendations with a specific axiological framework. From this moment, the efforts to make the knowledge package established are intensified. They consist in transforming both the knowledge(s) themselves, and the conditions in which they operate, with specific focus on three fields; these are: among the people engaged, within various formal and informal documents, and with regard to some tailored devices and instruments. Therefore, in the second part of this paper I present an overview of the work of these transformations, called here "translations". Finally, I provide some detailed examples of how translations are accomplished in a balanced, effective way that encompasses the whole knowledge package together with the three fields of its performance.

The argument is built upon an extensive ongoing ethnographic case-study research<sup>1</sup> of the practices of knowledge production in a Polish foundation dedicated to building civil society and improving the quality of public life – The Unit for Social Research and Innovation „Shipyards” (later called Shipyards)<sup>2</sup>. The conclusions I present in this paper deal with two mechanisms of public participation – public consultations and participatory budgets<sup>3</sup>. The proposed framework results from an extensive qualitative data analysis, largely inspired with selected works from Science and Technology Studies<sup>4</sup> and conceptions of distributed cognition<sup>5</sup>.

My intention in this paper is to provide a certain reconstruction of the knowledge processes outlined above. The standpoint adopted is one of a non-governmental organisation, therefore with only secondary insights from the civil servants themselves and without any objective of delivering an external, objectivity-oriented evaluation. Moreover, it is not yet possible to present the entire picture of processes that are supposed to result in crafting a standard. In many places the efforts to ‘implement’ the elemental knowledge packages in concrete ministries and municipalities have been intensified only recently and are still unfinished. However, several conclusions can be drawn from numerous activities and efforts that have been undertaken so far, in some cases actually resulting in introducing the knowledge package in real-life conditions.

### **Once upon a time... The making-up of a base-document**

Looking for the origins of the processes that today shape the landscape of Shipyards’ engagement with the mechanisms of public consultation and participatory budget is like trying to establish the beginning of a rhizome: not only is it interminable and constantly splitting in new, yet intermingling directions, but also probably makes little sense. The clue is that after a series of various undertakings and events – jobs done,

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<sup>1</sup> The research has continued since August 2014. Sources of data include participant observation, in-depth interviews and an extensive study of official documents, working papers, informal notes, etc.; data is analysed in accordance with the constructivist grounded theory (see Charmaz 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Shipyards was selected as the guiding case for research in the course of preliminary data analysis. Out of a great range of organisations dedicated to fostering public participation and modernizing the state it stood out for its declared interest in creating and disseminating knowledge for a social change, as well as translating academic concepts into expertise to diagnose needs and solve problems.

<sup>3</sup> In Poland public consultations are obligatory for most legislative acts on all tiers of administration (municipalities, counties, voivodeships and on the central level) but tend to be overlooked or conducted in a manner that in fact entails very little dialogue with the citizens. Differently, the participatory budgets are optional, but have recently gained tremendous popularity across the whole country.

<sup>4</sup> Especially, the works of Bruno Latour (1983, 1999; Latour, Woolgar 1986), John Law (2004), Andrew Pickering (1992, 1995; Pickering, Stephanides 1992), and Joseph Rouse (1992, 2014); also: Bińczyk 2013; Kołtun 2015 [in print]; Wehling 2006.

<sup>5</sup> A “mixed-method approach”, developed by Nancy Nersessian and her colleagues, is particularly important here as it allows dealing with distributed cognition systems that evolve in time. See Aurigemma et al. 2013; Nersessian et al. 2003; Nersessian 2009.

relationships started, experiences gained, knowledge internalised and imparted, and with emergence of specific external conditions<sup>6</sup>, there arises a fairly clear opportunity of making an impact towards a change in the field of communication between public administration and the society. In both cases described – the public consultations and participatory budget – the moment consists in creating a document that is supposed to, generally, settle a point of reference and help in improving the work of real-life mechanisms, so far extremely diversified and often ill-administered.

As mentioned, the documents emerge within a much more extensive and long-standing field of various types of knowledge, such as available textual resources (e.g. research reports including those authored by Shipyard itself, sample regulations from other countries), or the embodied experiences and contacts (Shipyard has already collaborated with public offices and other organisations dealing with civic participation). The fact that, once the time comes, Shipyard is in the right position to 'host' the further knowledge processes, is neither an accident, nor a result of a planned strategy. Shipyard simply enjoys a position of being recognised and properly legitimised as an expert in the field. Moreover, it makes for a somewhat attractive partner for civil servants, for it represents a cooperative, rather than conflict-centered worldview. This, in turn, is believed to foster mutual trust and engagement, which translate into the effectiveness of efforts undertaken<sup>7</sup>.

Hence, the appearance of the base documents, namely *Seven Principles of Consultation* and *The Standards for Processes of the Participatory Budget in Poland*<sup>8</sup>, should be treated as a moment in which the endeavours to introduce a change in the relationship between public administration and society are officially announced and intensified. Both documents take advantage of the 'what' (and 'who') is at hand, as also they are created in the course of discussing and reformulating of

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<sup>6</sup> For public consultations the change was triggered by massive protests against The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA), which, among other neglects, revealed the government's insensitivity to dialogue with the citizens. A huge public dissent resulted in The Ministry of Administration and Digitalization of Poland calling a number of special workgroups of diversified composition to develop propositions on how to ameliorate the situation in various respects, among others, in improving the quality of public consultations. Shipyard parted this team and actually became, together with The Ministry, the face of the whole enterprise.

Differently, Shipyard's work upon a model of participatory budgets resulted from the need to finish a long-standing project. There emerged an opportunity of channelling an unspent part of the budget to something previously unplanned, and thus marking a symbolic finish of the project. A crucial factor that influenced the decision to create a document on participatory budgets was a surge in number of municipalities that introduced them, usually with little assistance or knowledge about the process. Consequently, there was a strong demand for a guideline for real-life practice.

<sup>7</sup> As one of Shipyard members points out: „the transactional costs of starting such relationships are low” [int003/2014].

<sup>8</sup> Further in this paper I will refer to them as *The Standards*... or by giving a full title, and thus distinguishing this base document from an assumed overall result of knowledge processes it starts – 'a standard'.

the existing, various types of knowledge, from similar papers and examples of best practices, to experiences and anticipations of the members of workgroups.

In terms of their content, the documents are obviously propositional accounts, which, however, reveal an intrinsic orientation towards practice. They not only include a brief overview of 'what', but also have a large component intending to, possibly, show 'how'<sup>9</sup>; additionally, the practical recommendations are formulated in two variants: a minimum and a maximum. At the same time, the proposed ideas and practices are explicitly situated in a broad plan of values such as common good and civic engagement. This axiological backdrop provides a fundamental counterbalance for the practical recommendations that, on their own, would probably focus on merely making things work<sup>10</sup>. Hence, the knowledge(s) carried by each document provide a whole propositional-practical-axiological package.

Furthermore, the knowledge package conveyed in a base-document consist of actually 'carving' the renewed mechanism (of public consultation or participatory budget). The documents include, more or less explicitly, a definition of what they deal with and, at the same time, what is *not* under scrutiny. For instance, in *Seven Principles of Consultation* it is clearly stated that closed expert meetings do not count as consultations, or that when the period of collecting citizens' opinions is shorter than seven days, then again, this is no public consultation. Thus, the definitions provided in a knowledge package are in fact performative, of regulatory rather than descriptive character. The important thing is that the future translations of the knowledge package established in a base document are, above all, about enacting what this knowledge package entails. Thus, the primary strategy is one of constructing, whereas the activities consisting in ameliorating the ongoing issues seem of somewhat secondary importance.

Altogether, the particularity of a base document stems from, firstly, the moment in which it appears (as a result of proper, but generally unplanned weaving of the previously available knowledge(s) with some unanticipated circumstances), secondly, the way that it is created (in a process of negotiations between diverse engaged actors and their various types of knowledge<sup>11</sup>), thirdly, the tenuous content it embraces (consisting in ideas and more detailed examples of practices with recommendations, all explicitly situated within a specific axiological background). Accordingly, these are the reasons why I use the term of 'a knowledge packages' or 'knowledge(s)': the message that a base-document conveys is plural; it includes various forms of knowledge that are further contextualised against specific

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the distinction between „knowing that” and „knowing how” see Ryle 1949.

<sup>10</sup> This way the documents settle the future goals for the actors from the field; goals that are instrumental, effectivity-oriented (and feasible on a daily basis), and simultaneously autotelic (worthwhile in terms of an incessant, perfectly unattainable quest).

<sup>11</sup> Both documents were created in a collective process that brought together representatives of the third sector, public administration, academic circles, informal initiatives, the politicians, etc. Thus, from the onset the documents are legitimised by the fact that they express a multitude of voices from actors representing diverse fields of expertise. Also, they enjoy a fairly strong support from their numerous authors-convenors.

backgrounds and needs, but at the same time, they all maintain a single identity, the appearance of ‘sameness’<sup>12</sup>.

Furthermore, the knowledge packages from *Seven Principles of Consultation* and *The Standards for Processes of the Participatory Budget in Poland* should be regarded as well embedded and powerfully creative at the same time. They work upon what is pre-given, but at the same time establish their own definitions of what they deal with and delineate the upcoming modes of operation. Therefore, the role of a base-document should be primarily seen as a contract which is at least potentially comfortable for all supposedly engaged sides: the ngo, civil servants and citizens.

Finally, what makes a knowledge package carried by a base document different from ‘a standard’ is not the character of its very content, for it stays propositional-practical-axiological; rather, it is the fact that such initial knowledge package is yet disconnected, crude, barely workable. ‘A standard’ is understood here as a transparent and coherent set of ideas, practices and beliefs that operates within a properly accommodated setting and thus can mark a change in the daily communication processes between civil servants and the citizens. In consequence, the knowledge(s) launched in a base document gain importance only within what the future is to bring, that is, in the course of a complex and often tiresome process of translating them and their settings.

## **2. On a way to becoming a standard: the tenuous, transformative work of translating knowledge(s)**

In many cases, the work of reforming of public policies ceases right at the point in which we are currently standing: announcing a document with a plan of amendments. It may receive more or less attention and be promoted for a little longer, but in general its appearance is the pinnacle of the whole undertaking. Contrarily, *Seven Principles of Consultation* was launched in 2012; *The Standards for Processes of the Participatory Budget in Poland* in 2014; and ever since their position and, to some extent, their content have been transformed<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Precisely, although the process pertains to a knowledge package that is ‘merely’ carried by a base document, what we are looking for is a transition from “Seven Principles of Consultation” to a plain, transparent: seven principles. This is because the actors engaged – civil servants, citizens, including Shipyard members – do not talk of knowledge processes, neither knowledge packages, nor even various types / forms of knowledge; rather, they deal with concrete mechanisms (public consultations) and concrete improvements to them (the *Seven Principles...* or, ideally, seven principles).

<sup>13</sup> Initially, *Seven Principles...* appeared in a much larger document which also included a diagnosis of the existing barriers, and recommendations on how to overcome them. A version worked upon a year later was already called *Seven Principles of Consultation*; it has stayed in use ever since. Not only does it lack the diagnosing part, but also is somewhat ‘soothed’ in a way that is deprived it of all conflicting voices (previously acknowledged of in the words of “We agreed to differ” or “The members of the group did not achieve consensus on this matter”, with explications of various standpoints and their justifications), and has a clearer authorship (centered around the ‘host’ – The Ministry; the previous version included a list of people that formed the workgroup).

In other words, a base document is merely a point of departure for long, and, as in the case of Shipyard, still unfinished, series of translations that assumedly lead to converting the conveyed knowledge package into a taken-for-granted standard with a properly accommodated setting. Thus, the process is one of making knowledge(s) successful, which simply means – effective in both an everyday, and a long-standing perspective.

Further in the paper, the transformations of knowledge(s) from a base documents are labelled “translations” (see Callon 1986; Czarniawska 2002: 7-8; Latour 1983, 1999). In general, the notion of translation allows focusing on the profoundly processual and often chaotic way that a knowledge package is turned into a standard. As will become clear, translations have to be balanced among three fields which are indispensable to success of a package. On one hand, each field poses its specific challenges to be met, on the other, as such it also requires transformations. Eventually, once they all are reconstructed and tied together, then the profoundly pragmatic and performative character of knowledge translations is somewhat concealed, thus enabling a standard to operate smoothly and in a non-imposing manner<sup>14</sup>. Finally, the concept of translation emphasises the fact that no one is ever in full control of the whole process: quite often the results of actions differ from those planned, or appear in unpredictable circumstances. In effect, ‘progress’ is almost impossible to measure for its very object – a knowledge package – changes, and moreover, it does so alongside transformations of the conditions in which it operates.

The three fields that have to be properly recognised and tied together each time a translation takes places encompass people, documents, and technical devices. Therefore, translations are described as consisting in “situating” when it comes to responding to various actors, as “anchoring” for inscribing knowledge(s) into documents, and as “orchestrating” them with instruments and devices, e.g. technologies, self-check agendas, “toolboxes”<sup>15</sup>.

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*The Standards...*, as of today, have had two editions; the second differing in a fairly insignificant manner and resulting mainly from the high demand of the paper version. Hence, what I call in this paper ‘base documents’ is not necessarily the chronologically first version; rather, the documents that carry the elemental knowledge package around which efforts are concerted.

<sup>14</sup> A standard can be compared to a Latourian “black box”. Latour argues that all scientific objects and facts operate as stabilised, extensive networks of heterogeneous elements, and, as constructions, they can always be decomposed. However, when a network becomes sufficiently large and steady, while its history and materiality are successfully erased, then it turns into a “black box” – something that we take for granted, as entirely obvious (see Latour 1999: 183-185). The better a black box, the more effort it takes to unveil its origins and contingency, and thus to deconstruct it.

<sup>15</sup> From a slightly different standpoint, translations consist of distributing knowledge packages in three respects: making them collective, culturally situated and extended in material settings and devices.

### ***Knowledge translations among people: situating***

Some groups of people are more important for making a knowledge package successful than others: for example, civil servants and citizens are indispensable, while media and politicians are 'merely' influential. However, the recognition of the exact identities of actors that have to be engaged is hard and requires a lot of tacit, constantly updated experience from the field. The translations have to be placed among those who somehow stand for others (either have power of imposing upon their will, like directors in offices, or represent large groups of interest, like non-governmental organisations), but low enough to make a new practice more than an abstract procedure<sup>16</sup>. All in all, the aim is to situate a knowledge package among the right groups of actors so that it transpires through the organisational cultures and people's mindsets.

The difficulty arises when we take notice of the fact that no identity is established once and for all: the "champions" sometimes lose their initial zeal, while the "hopeless" become "potentially successful"<sup>17</sup>. Accordingly, the way that a particular group of actors is recognised provides, on the one hand, a basis of recruitment, and on the other, of excluding, or "othering" (see Law 2004: 83-85). From such standpoint it becomes apparent that undertaking effort of improving anything among those who are entirely disinterested and disengaged (but who would seem to be in a dire need of such assistance) is a rare choice, mainly for reason of its probable failure<sup>18</sup>. Finally, each recognised group (at all times) has to be addressed on its own terms (of expertise, time, scope of changes introduced, etc.); again, also here the assumptions that are taken for granted in the beginning are often modified in the course of action. For example, it turned out that civil servants assigned to organise public consultations have different needs not only with relation to whether they work for municipalities or the central government, but sometimes even within the same office.

The below examples of how a knowledge package can be situated come from a series of seminars on participatory budgets. The participants were in fact teams consisting of a civil servant and an ngo-representative from the same municipality. The seminars had two variants: one for "the advanced practitioners", and the other for "beginners". Their principal idea was to convey a knowledge package from the base document, but at the same time make it possibly situated by encouraging the exchange of particular experiences or ideas on the part of participants. Clearly then, the guiding questions were how and in what form to include the very knowledge package in the participants' activities, and this way to situate it in their memories and within their experiences.

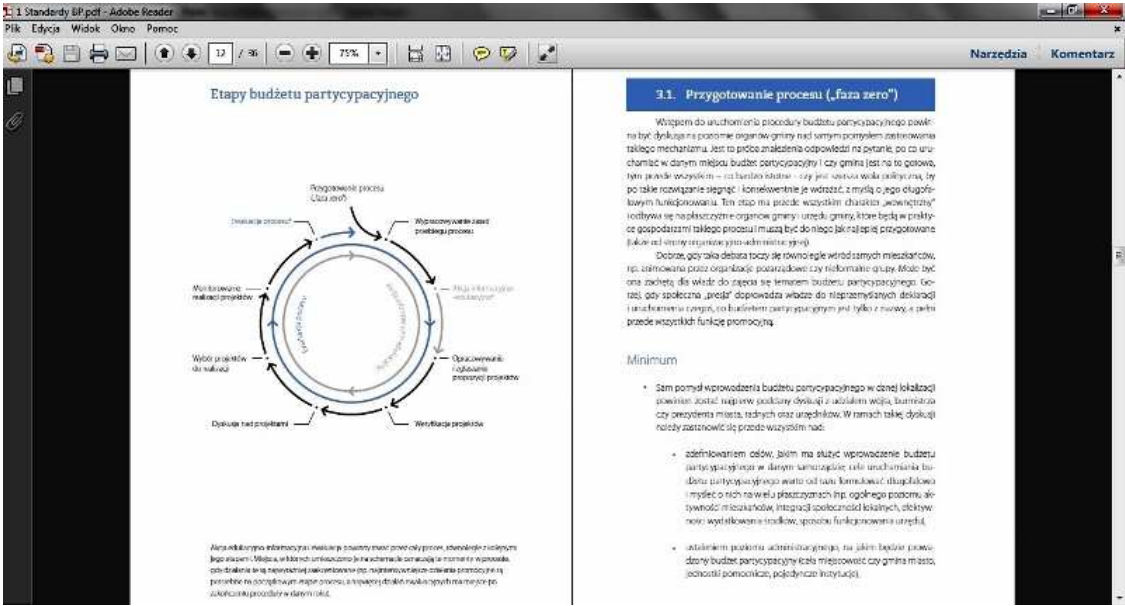
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<sup>16</sup> As Shipyard's members notice, enforcing certain ways of conduct by law while neglecting their axiological background which can be sustained by a proper organisational culture, easily turns into establishing empty rituals [obs 11.02.2015]. In other words, any translation should embrace all elements of the knowledge package: ideas, practices, and the axiology.

<sup>17</sup> Also the identity of Shipyard evolves in time, for instance, from an initial "proprietor" or an "author" to a "host" that only oversees the work of a knowledge package.

<sup>18</sup> The same can be said about those actors who seem to be doing fairly well on their own and, thus, need no help from outside.

The first example is based upon a picture below (Picture 1). The schematic outline presented is a part of *The Standards for Processes of Participatory Budgets*.



Picture 1. An outline of the stages of a participatory budget; page 12 in *The Standards for Processes of Participatory Budgets*.

The outline as such seems very concise, quite telling and thus fairly easy to memorise, at least in its ‘circularity’ (which is one of the most important points of the knowledge package from *The Standards*... – that participatory budget is a long-standing process with overlapping stages, not a series of annually held, easily manageable events).

Moreover, the outline is convenient to be reproduced on flipcharts, posters, and in presentations, which is exactly what happens at the seminars (see Picture 2 and Picture 3 below).



Picture 2. The outline presented on a seminar for “beginners”.





Picture 3. The outline as a working paper in an exercise on a seminar for the “advanced” practitioners.

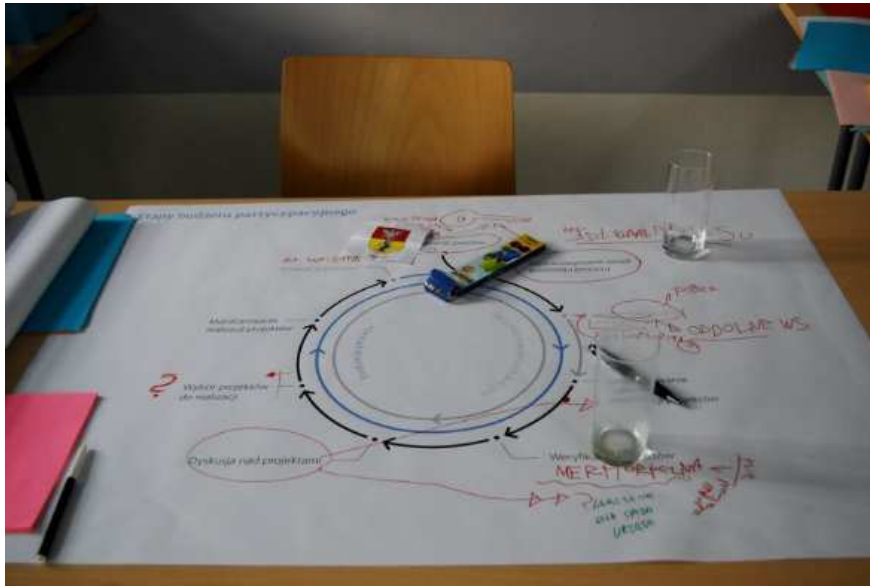
Accordingly, the knowledge package from *The Standards...* has undergone a translation consisting in that the circular outline, together with the activity within which it is employed, is capable of conveying all crucial elements of the package. In both cases the outline is accompanied by a narration from the Shipyard moderators and the participants. Thus, apart from the ‘what’ it is, there is a sense of ‘how’ it works, and eventually, ‘why’ it does so (or, ‘where’ it aims).

However, there is a significant difference between the two contexts in which it appears. The difference draws upon what we assume of the participants in terms of their current knowledge(s).

In Picture 2 we can see that the outline is a part of presentation, that it, it is situated in a rather one-sided communication process with little possible feedback. However, this is exactly what it is to do: the beginners probably know little of the mechanism, and thus primarily they need the whole package that gives an overall vision of ideas, practices and value-laden long-standing objectives of the participatory budget.

Differently, in Picture 3 the outline is situated in a far more dynamic situation in which feedback very much welcome. For the “advanced” practitioners supposedly have some image of what a participatory budget is and have experienced how it works. Therefore, they need to be somewhat acquainted with the knowledge package from *The Standards...* so that they consider it something right and purposeful, but at the same time available within their current framework of knowledge(s). In consequence, the outline acts as a certain framework that prevents the exercise from turning into a sociable chit-chat (it settles an objective – to talk over all stages, and facilitates time management); it is only a medium of translating the knowledge package from *The Standards...* in a way that it becomes contextualised. The majority of work is done by the participants themselves and the moderator who delivers examples of the knowledge package from *The Standards...* Their job is to share and justify one’s own

experiences, ideas, and doubts with people representing other municipalities, thus probably representing distinct standpoints. Picture 4 (below) shows the outcome of this exercise: the translated, situated knowledge(s) purposely made present, at all times remaining their identity as a 'single package' of *The Standards*...



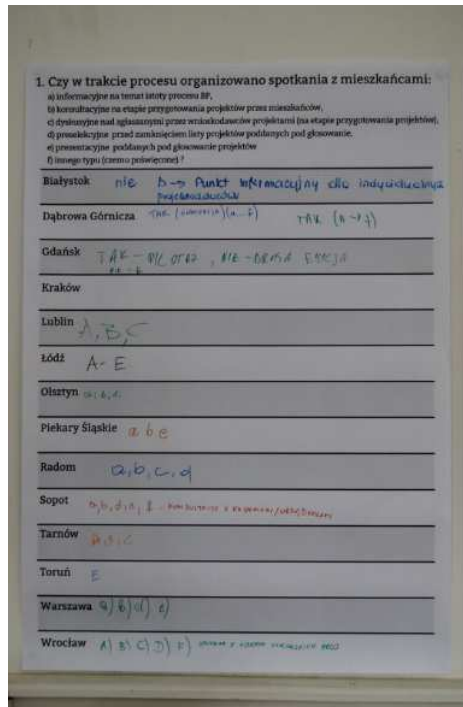
Picture 4. The contextualised outline as medium of conveying the situated knowledge package.

In sum, thanks to a narrated, discussed, and specified outline, the knowledge package comes to life as an active framework of thinking, and hopefully also becoming a part of the experiential, embodied knowledge which the participants can bring to their daily practices.

The second example of situating a knowledge package is one of turning it into a giant checklist (see Pictures 5, 6 and 7 below).



Picture 5. A discussion over answering the questions from the checklist.



Picture 6. A poster from the checklist. Note that the question is written in the heading, while the spaces for answers from each municipality are given in lines below. As shown in the case of two municipalities on top, giving some additional information is also welcome.



Picture 7. The checklist as a 'silent participant' ready to be brought up.

On the whole, there are around 20 posters, each with a question pertaining to a specific practice from the knowledge package. Representatives of every municipality file their answers in separate rows, which makes the information visible and comparable. However, this is not merely a means of diagnosing the state of the art. Questions are based upon the knowledge package from *The Standards...*, only that the package is turned into a delimited, clear-cut Questions & Answers list. Furthermore, once filled in, the checklist serves as a useful tool in the course of seminar – moderators have a host of examples to support their claims at a glimpse of

an eye, while participants take a lot of interest in seeing “how it’s done” in other places, often discussing particularly interesting topics with each other. Altogether, the checklist allows situating the knowledge package from *The Standards...* in a fairly subtle, transparent way: by posing the questions that are adequate within the package.

To finish with, the knowledge package from *Seven Principles...* - the second base-document described – also operates under various forms and is being situated in more or less explicit and concise manner within conferences and workshops<sup>19</sup>. However, as will become clear, the translations that it requires are to a greater extent related to the field of documents.

### ***Knowledge translations within documents: anchoring***

The second field of knowledge translations is the one of documents, mainly legislative ones (which create obligations or only formulate recommendations), but also guidelines, research reports, etc. Arguably, anchoring takes place in close relation to situating: as we could see above, even situating knowledge(s) among people requires creating various papers that only seemingly operate as flat, textual accounts.

Accordingly, earning as many references as possible, especially in the documents that create some legal obligation, is one of the criteria of success of a knowledge package. In the beginning, *Seven Principles of Consultation* was considered fairly successful for the fact that The Ministry of Administration and Digitalization of Poland introduced it as obligatory by a ministerial order, and thanks to becoming a part of the recommendations included in governmental *Better Regulation Programme 2015*. Still, it soon became clear that one office’s obligatory policy and the endorsement from another did not suffice to encourage other ministries to take up on *Seven Principles...* in the pace and scope hoped for<sup>20</sup>.

At the same time, it is acknowledged that mere complying with obligations, especially if they are formulated as quantitative indicators, cannot suffice to make a real-life change<sup>21</sup>. Clear-cut instructions do play an important part in the process of

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<sup>19</sup> One of the Shipyard members pointed out that *Seven Principles...* are designed as „a flyer you can put on the door of your fridge” which in fact stands for a „thick book” [int022/2015]. The metaphor is very apt, for a pdf version has merely a couple pages, but with this succinct content it conveys a host of great ideals and values, holding upon boundless traditions of democracy as well as the experiences and ideas of its various authors.

<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, it has been regarded a great success that *Seven Principles...* has become a part of an obligatory *Guidelines for Impact Assessment and Public Consultation on The Government's Legislative Process*, and has been formulated as a series of detailed practical tips on each phase of the process.

<sup>21</sup> *The Standards...* also require some strong anchoring in legislative documents, but almost only on the level of municipalities in which a participatory budget is planned. As an optional mechanism it does not entail the whole governmental legislation; moreover, an initial interest of a ministry in granting *The Standards...* a patronage was regarded as interesting, but not very necessary (if not even risky).

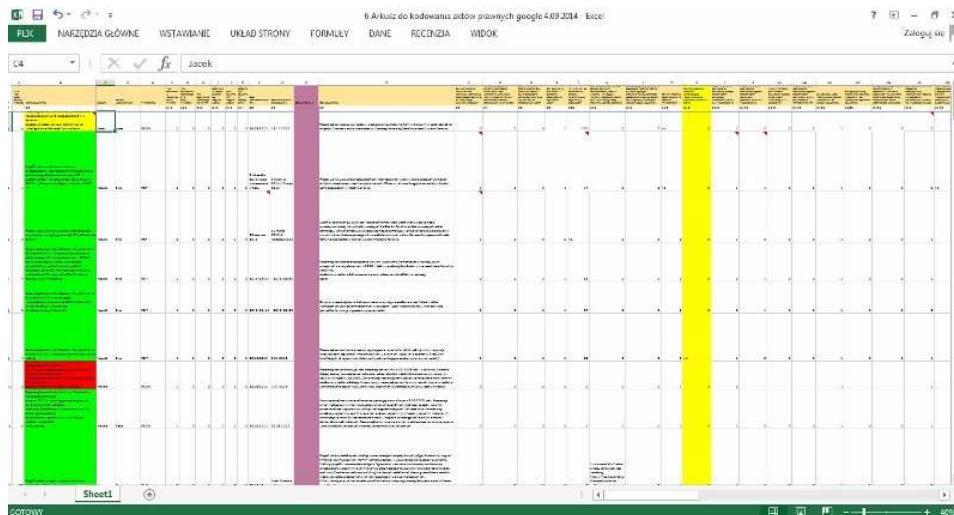
knowledge anchoring, as they impose certain way of conduct upon people, but they do not translate into true engagement that prevents failure in the face of some complex or extra-ordinary situations<sup>22</sup>. Such strategy leaves out much of their axiological background. And this is why anchoring within documents has to go hand in hand with situating among people, particularly with respect to the organisational cultures of the leading institutions.

So far I mentioned only those situations in which anchoring has taken place within documents authored by public offices which are more powerful, but less predictable from those produced by Shipyard itself. Examples below show that such translations are also possible and fairly effective.

*Public Consultation in Ministries. A Report from Survey of Consultation Practices in Central Government* is a result of Shipyard's willingness to check upon the way that *Seven Principles of Consultation* are installed in ministries. Now, what may at first seem quite easy and straightforward, in fact entails a number of translations. They start from transforming the knowledge package from the base document into a series of indicators, which itself is extremely difficult for *Seven Principles...* are primarily normative. For example, turning "good will" or "transparency" into a manageable set of indicators requires asking numerous, often detailed questions, which however cannot make the knowledge package fully explicit and estimable. Moreover, the data is often missing or the sources are unreliable, thus each answer has to be double-checked: by a researcher from Shipyard and a ministry representative. At the same time, as the ministries have taken up on *Seven Principles...* in a varied scope and manner, they have often neglected archiving certain types of information: until the base-document says so, they do not seem important. Therefore, their lack does not point to some negligence, only the absence of evidence pertaining to this part of a knowledge package. Picture 8 shows a fragment of a coding sheet for this research: the colors indicate 'the status' of each sampled legislative act (in lines – the red is pending for some reason), and the answers that have proven particularly problematic (mainly for the described impossibility to make unambiguous judgements over the available information; they are shown in columns).

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<sup>22</sup> Importantly, this conviction was expressed by the representatives of both Shipyard and the public administration, on the occasion of presentation of results from the research described above (in December 2014).



Picture 8. A screenshot of a fragment of the coding sheet of sampled legislative acts. Note that it shows around a one third of its actual width (the number of codes).

Nevertheless, in the end a research report has been announced within a series of restrictions concerning, among others, the generalizability of its results. It has received some general appraisal from the ministry representatives, mainly for its usefulness for their future practice (note, however, that those ministries who could be judged as lagging behind in terms of implementing *Seven Principles...* usually do not voice any opinions; they simply remain uninterested). All in all, the report can be considered an important moment in anchoring the knowledge package as it manages to deliver a fairly coherent account that, in spite of an open declaration that it is based upon *Seven Principles...*, cannot be repeated in every single section, and will eventually be lost in further citations. Also, the research itself has proved a significant incentive to modify some of the previously taken assumptions on the specificity of the work and the needs of ministerial officials, thus enabling the future translations to be more effective.

A similar series of translations is currently undertaken around *The Standards for Processes of Participatory Budgets*. The most transferable elements of the knowledge package it conveys have been turned into a series of questions. Some of them were employed in the checklist from seminars; this time however they take form of a survey that is supposed to establish if, how, and to what extent municipalities comply with *The Standards...* Notably, once the data will be obtained and made available, its origins will become fairly invisible. This is not to say that such data is useless, or that there occurs some mistake. In fact, *any* kind of survey acts in exactly this way: reinforcing and somewhat accustoming the framework from which it originates (see for instance Law 2008). Moreover, the sources of information on participatory budgets that have been developed so far often deliver data that is chaotic and incommensurable, most likely for a simple reason: data gathering was not structured. It probably consisted in collecting the available evidence that municipalities themselves revealed, thus on different topics and according to distinct criteria. Differently, the fact that Shipyard draws upon the knowledge package from *The Standards...*, grants some coherence and repeatability to the whole process, and, therefore, increases chance that the survey's results will become a useful, reliable tool for diagnosing and comparing participatory budgets across Poland.

### ***Knowledge translations into devices and instruments: orchestrating***

Finally, the third field of knowledge translations includes all technical devices and instruments which make the conduct of new practices easy and manageable, not only for those directly engaged with them (e.g. civil servants), but also those who are assumed to benefit from them: stakeholders and the citizens in general. Notably, the orchestrating needs to be reinforced in two other fields; without incentives and the axiological background incorporated in the organisational culture and the law that makes certain solutions available at all, almost any device remains disintegrated and, as a result, 'shelved'. For example, the processes concentrated around *Seven Principles of Consultation* entail a lot of effort dedicated to creating and promoting an Internet platform that would allow managing the activities of both sides (e.g. uploading documents, searching them through, filing opinions and responding to them) in a single, user-friendly space.

Nevertheless, orchestrating also takes place by creating various toolboxes and checklists for self-evaluation. For instance, the methodology from the study of *Seven Principles...* implementation (described above) is planned to be converted into a handy list of questions with checkboxes. Supposedly it should help ministries to conduct regular, simple and almost costless check-ups of their work. Obviously, such instrument alone is not enough to make any improvements, but it certainly helps to stay updated and quickly address some daily problems. Furthermore, the data concerning the participatory budgets, also mentioned above, will be made accessible on a special website as, among others, researchable files (including those with raw statistical data) and in a tailor-made comparing device. Therefore, the website is quite likely to become a popular source of information for journalists, academics and the practitioners themselves not only for the character of the data provided (structured and comparable), but also thanks to its convenient appliances of data presentation.

The instruments of orchestration can be considered a pinnacle of the tenuous work of translations in all fields. They have to convey all that is important in a knowledge package, but, firstly, make it plain and simple without turning into a set of indicators, secondly, stay short and convenient, yet not resembling of a mere 'play', thirdly, be feasible without the costly presence of evaluators, but do have power of diagnosing problems. Altogether, they need to be well-situated so that they are easy to fit into various needs of actors in different conditions, and equally well-anchored so that they are introduced as tools for real self-evaluation and that stay in relation to other documents regulating the field of practice.

Not surprisingly, from the examples of translations sketched above, there inevitably arise numerous questions: where to begin? What to mesh together in the first place? What action in one field will give best possible outcome in two others? To make the matters even worse, one has to remember that the whole field is constantly changing: both as a result of translations (e.g. people and organisations learn, documents spread and cite each other, technical devices gain popularity and become more friendly), and for completely external, but very powerful reasons, like the elections or introduction of some new legal frameworks of practice.

And finally, that there is no universal path to follow. On the one hand, both initial knowledge packages that are described in this paper may have similar aims; both function as, what was sometimes called, “an axiological spine” or a “spirit” [int32/2014], both are published in print and are accessible online, both can fit PowerPoint Presentations and agendas of conferences and workshops, and finally, both do act as means of discipline and as means of empowerment. Yet, in the end, both require distinct strategies of translations; largely due to their varied settings: actors engaged, legal anchorage, scope of flexibility.

## Conclusions

In light of the cases presented above, I think it is fair to argue that knowledge which is supposed to be successfully implemented in people’s everyday work and, thus, bring some change in social reality, should rather be seen in terms of a process than a static entity. Not only as such it is diversified in terms of the content it proposes – a package of ideas and ways of conduct with the axiological backdrop, but also becomes successful only in the course of complex, multiplying translations which, eventually, also transform the very setting in which a package is assumed to operate. Thus, the translations entail much more than reforming the existing situation; rather, they consist of performing the knowledge package and reconstructing the conditions for its success. The greatest difficulty consists in that nothing here is pre-given or established once for all times. The knowledge package is translated together with its setting: the elements that are usually separated, defined as internal and external to knowledge production, here become inextricably intermingled and mutually constituting. Eventually, the success is one of making the initially ‘crude’ knowledge package invisible, natural, taken-for-granted; that is, of converting it into a standard.

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