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Codesigning with public partners

controversies and agonism Helping municipality employees to get ready for a role as co-designer

Andersen, Pernille Viktoria Kathja; Christiansen, Ellen Tove

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Helping municipality employees to get ready for a role as co-designer: Making agonistic perspectives available for explicit negotiation and navigation

Summary

Motivation:

This research is motivated by an interest in finding ways to make agonising perspectives explicit for negotiation in the form of a tangible dialogic tool. The tool is designed to support collaborating stakeholders in this case municipality employees to get ready for a role as co-designers. The communication theory underlying the dialogic tool design is the positions of dialectic communication and agonist pluralism (Sennett, 2012; Mouffe, 2000)

Data

Analysis is based on data from a SAGROM workshop with municipal employees from two Danish and Two Swedish municipalities engaged in co-creation of green transition in their respective local areas. Focus of analysis is how the workshop participants (four groups) negotiate their standpoint to proposed agonistic perspectives

The SAGROM project

SAGROM: Co-creational green transition (www.sgo.org) is a collaboration between two Danish and two Swedish municipalities aiming to develop methods and tools that can engage and motivate citizens' green transition choices through co-creation. To reach such goals the municipality employees must act as key players initiating these new forms of citizen engagement.

Contact information:

Pernille V. K. Andersen
pvka@hum.aau.dk
Ellen Christiansen
ech@hum.aau.dk

Originality/Value

Staging co-creation between citizens and municipality workers require that initiators', in this case municipality employees, reflect on their own role as co-designers - a new role that may be experienced as in conflict with the traditional role as authority and professional expert. This poster presents a case of how to make agonizing perspectives available for explicit negotiation as a way to support municipality employees professional self-reflection upon their new role by means of a tangible dialogic tool called 3P. According to Mouffe (2000), if we want people to be free we must always allow for the possibility that conflict may appear and to provide an arena where differences can be confronted. The 3P tool is designed as a way to provide such an arena.

The dialogic tool '3P: Positions, perspectives and priorities'

The 3P tangible dialogic tool has been designed to make visible for attention agonistic perspectives through two formats: 1) Narratives re-presenting agonistic perspectives related to internal controversies on the various municipality employees and public partner's roles, knowledge and approaches towards co-creation, 2) colour coded bricks and a game board, offering a visual scaffold for negotiating and making explicit contradicting and conflicting interests and values.

3P is theoretically and conceptually inspired by the positions of dialectic communication and agonist pluralism (Sennett, 2012; Mouffe, 2000). The material form of the 3P tool is designed to handle as well as display opposing conceptualizations of central dilemmas in what Andersen (2016) have called 'versus-positions', which offers a constructive way to assist participants in 'staying with the trouble' - as Haraway (2014) puts it - by making them available for explicit attention and triggers for negotiation.

Take away message

The poster presents findings which indicate that a necessary first step in leading co-creative processes of municipality-citizen engagement, is to support municipality employees to reflect on and negotiate possibilities and challenges involved in their role-shift to co-initiators and co-creators.

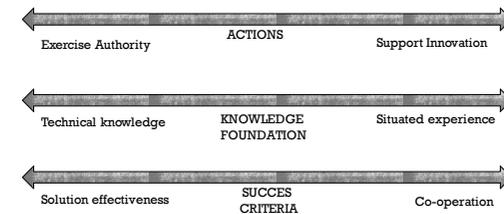
Findings related to 3P tool use

In a workshop setting in the SAGROM project with four groups of municipality employees the 3P tool :

- helped to address, focus and conceptualize employees professional role related to co-creating initiatives.
- lead to a more distinctive and nuanced stance on possible directions towards professional roles related to co-creative initiatives than had been the case in other more open-ended workshop initiatives in the SAGROM project.
- assisted the employees in moving from an identification of common challenges to responding to these by starting to select overall directions for future actions related to their own co-creative cases.
- made the employees - after acknowledging controversies - move into a rather consensus seeking and one-sided discussion favouring a "citizen-oriented perspective" over a 'municipality-oriented' approach, meaning that they did not find much value in their current role as municipality employees as authorities and professional experts.
- Made the employees favoured a yet non-existing professional role as initiators of innovation, favouring citizens' situated knowledge and an "ideal" democratic approach to citizen engagement - thereby downplaying the complexity in current and future roles, despite this was laid out by the tool.

Identifying agonistic perspectives to form antipoles

Former SAGROM project partner meetings, workshops and a literature review on public co-creation reported in (Agger & Tortzen, 2015) have been used to identify agonistic perspectives related to internal controversies on various municipality partner's roles, knowledge and approaches towards co-creation. Three central agonistic perspectives have been identified from this work and re-presented in the following antipoles:



In order to make the agonistic perspectives available for explicit negotiation through 3P, a range of 'versus-narratives', in the form of small paper cards, have been formed to represent and make visible different aspects of the antipoles related to municipality employees role as co-initiators and co-designers.



Figure 1: The 3P tool in use in a workshop

The read dots hereunder shows an example of outcome related to how the municipality employees position themselves within the agonistic perspectives related to own casework based on their work with 3P.

