Co-creating digital citizenship: Considering the reconfiguration of participation in digital public service design

Juliane Jarke
Institute for Information
Management Bremen (ifib)
University of Bremen
Bremen, Germany
jarke@uni-bremen.de

Citizen-driven service development and the delivery of digital public services has become a central focus of policy makers at European and national level for the past decade. Across policy documents and funding calls, is the importance of user-centricity in service design repeated by referring to user involvement, empowerment, collaboration or personalisation [e.g. 1]. In particular, participatory design projects haven taken empowerment to be one of the their key objectives and claim that "participatory design methods themselves can be regarded as empowering" [9:6].

Hence, not surprisingly have policy makers and other public sector stakeholders started to promote civic participation in digital public sector innovation. Such participatory approaches go by labels such as co-production of public services [12], co-design [8] or civic technology [10]. Recently the term co-creation has gained attention and is now considered "a cornerstone for social innovation" in the public sector [12:1346]. For example, co-creation has become an approach promoted by organisations such as the European Commission (in the H2020 framework programme there are 76 calls on co-creation across a variety of topic areas) or associations such as the Open Government Partnership (which has recently published their own toolbox and good practice guide to co-creation in open government). However, there is not one definition of co-creation but rather there exists a multitude of understandings of the term within and beyond its use in public sector innovation [3].

There is a broad understanding that within the context of eGovernment, co-creation is meant to bring together government agencies, NGOs, citizens and/or businesses to spur innovation and lead to services that better fit the needs of its users. In the context of Open Government, it is meant to allow for new forms of collaboration and participation, in particular with respect to the re-use of open government data by civil society. Such initiatives place "numerous demands upon the digital conduct of citizens" [7:78] and enact "an imaginary of citizens as data analysts

equipped with the skills necessary to [...] analyse the transactions of governments and thus hold them to account" (p.82). It demands the active involvement and engagement in such activities and hence further advances imaginaries of civic collectivity in a digital age. This leads to what Isin and Ruppert [7] have called "digital citizenship".

Importantly, there remains a question about how citizen participation is configured in the design of digital public services. Vines et al. [11] rightly point out that we need to consider "who initiates, directs and benefits from user participation in design" (p.1) and how control is shared. This relates to a number of choices made in co-creation projects such as a project's pre-conditions (openness, purpose, scope), its participants (diversity in knowledge, differences in interests, distribution of power), its results (outputs and outcomes) and process (types of activities/methods and setting) [5].

In my contribution to the MuC workshop, I would like to focus on the process dimension. That methods are not neutral but performative has long been argued in fields such Science and Technology Studies (STS) [e.g. 4,6]. The choice of methods in co-creation projects translates individual citizens into explorers, designers, data curators, users, and/or service providers. Co-creation methods stem from co-design and participatory design approaches (e.g. prototyping, probes, user testing) to civic open data use (e.g. data walks, hackathons) to co-production of services (e.g. partnerships between government and civil society organisations) and each come with their own construction and configuration of design participation and users.

My reflection is based on a three-year EU-funded project in which we developed and evaluated methods for co-creating digital public services with older adults. I will draw on three co-creation processes that we conducted in two European cities: Bremen and Zaragoza. I will argue that depending on the problem focus, scoping and governance structures of the projects, methods were adopted differently and enabled older adults to assume differing roles in and control over the process and its results. For example, data walkshops in Bremen and Zaragoza facilitated different role-shifts for the participating older and allowed for different types of knowledge to be articulated [for an account of the German walks see 2]. This led to the enactment of different imaginaries of digital citizenship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

1. Katarina L. Gidlund. 2012. Designing for all and no one - practitioners understandings of citizen driven development of public e-services. *Proceedings of the 12th Participatory Design Conference on Research Papers: Volume 1 - PDC '12*, ACM Press, 11.
2. Juliane Jarke. 2019. Open government for all? Co-creating digital public services for older adults through data walks. *Online Information Review*.
3. Juliane Jarke, Irina Zakharova, Gabriela Molina León, Hendrik Heuer, and Ulrike Gerhard. under review. Beyond Participation: A Review of Co-Creation. .
4. John Law. 2004. *After method.* Routledge, London.
5. J. J. Lee, M. Jaatinen, A. Salmi, T. Mattelmäki, R. Smeds, and M. Holopainen. 2018. Design choices framework for co-creation projects. *International Journal of Design* 12, 2: 15–31.
6. Annemarie Mol. 2010. Actor-Network Theory: Sensitive Terms and Enduring Tensions. *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 50, 1: 253–269.
7. Evelyn Ruppert and Engin Isin. 2015. *Being digital citizens.* Rowman & Littlefield, London; New York.
8. Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers. 2008. Co-creation and the new landscapes of design. *CoDesign* 4, 1: 5–18.
9. Hanna Schneider, Malin Eiband, Daniel Ullrich, and Andreas Butz. 2018. Empowerment in HCI - A Survey and Framework. *Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems - CHI '18*, ACM Press, 1–14.
10. Andrew R. Schrock. 2016. Civic hacking as data activism and advocacy: A history from publicity to open government data. *New Media & Society*.
11. John Vines, Rachel Clarke, Peter Wright, John McCarthy, and Patrick Olivier. 2013. Configuring participation: on how we involve people in design. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems Pages*, ACM Press, 429–438.
12. W. H. Voorberg, V. J. J. M. Bekkers, and L. G. Tummers. 2015. A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production: Embarking on the social innovation journey. *Public Management Review* 17, 9: 1333–1357.