Co-Design and Pragmatism

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Background

• Trained in ‘industrial design engineering’. Work at TNO, a government/commercial innovation lab

• Work in design and innovation projects: user involvement, co-design, innovation management

• Parallel to my day-to-day work, I reflect what we do in our projects and on the methods we use

• Previously, I ‘deconstructed’ human-centred design (PhD thesis 2008); currently, I am exploring how ‘pragmatism’ can help to understand and organize co-design differently
John Dewey: *The need for a recovery of philosophy*, 1917, p. 65

Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of [designers].

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**Outline of my presentation**

Move towards *co-design*, in ICT products/services

New fundamentals for *co-design* are needed

Pragmatism as a novel perspective on *co-design*

An example from practice: MiReCol for *co-design*
Move towards co-design, in ICT products/services

One person designs \quad A finished product

User-centred design \quad Interaction design

Human-centred design \quad Service design

Co-design \quad Transformation design

Diverse people work on in an innovation project, and on organizational change – co-design-as a process

New fundamentals for co-design are needed

Current fundamentals:
• Science – about ‘what is’, search for universal truth
• Engineering (linear, logical, search one optimal solution)

However, co-design is about ‘what ought to be’, about specific situations and specific responses, not-only-linear, not-only-logical, finding ‘solutions that work’

‘Design thinking’ is about: ‘where do we want to be?’
‘how do we get there?’ (John Thackara 2006, p. 2)
Pragmatism as a novel perspective on co-design

- Draw from philosophical pragmatism in order to better understand (theory) and organize (practice) co-design

- Pragmatism: about ‘how things work’ in practice, about experience and empathy (ethics), about cooperation and negotiating (politics) and it is future-oriented (imagination)

- I am not a philospher, but I draw from philosophy; in this case from parts of two of John Dewey’s texts: How we think (1910) and Logic: The theory of inquiry (1938)

Co-design as a process of inquiry (1/2)

1 Feeling that there is a problem, making the situation ‘questionable’
   - Experience (personal, subjective) as starting-point

2 Defining (provisionally) the problem that will be addressed
   - How the problem is defined (cf. ‘wicked problems’)

3 Exploring and defining the problem and possible solutions, in parallel, iteratively
   - Using perception to explore problems, and imagination to explore solutions
   - Expressing and discussing (subjective) experiences and perceptions

4 Reasoning about the problem and possible solutions
   - Discussing means and ends, and relations between them, systems thinking
   - Expressing and negotiating different (personal) roles and interests

5 Trying-out solutions, to see whether they solve the problem
   - E.g. early prototyping, trials, pilots, and learning from that
Co-design as a process of inquiry (2/2)

Where do we want to be?

- Idea-forming (beeldvorming)
- Perception, envisioning
- Express and discuss subjective experiences (rather than only ‘facts’)
- Ethics of co-design
- E.g.: ‘dramatic rehearsal’

How do we get there?

- Decision-making (besluitvorming)
- Conception, creating
- Express and negotiate roles and interests (rather than look for one ‘best’ solution)
- Politics of co-design
- E.g. ‘conflict management’

An example from practice: MiReCol for co-design

- MiReCol: Mixed-Reality Collaboration
- Mixed-reality: Mixing the real and the virtual
- Tool for urban planning in a co-design fashion
- In progress…
Multi-touch, multi-user table

MiReCol promotional video-animation-clip
Key elements of the MiReCol system

• Tools to express experiences, e.g. 'story telling' by citizens

• Tools to visualize and experience problems and solutions, in real-time, using models and simulations ('tangibles')

• Tools to negotiate perspectives ('serious gaming')

• Tools to monitor and influence group dynamics, esp. communication and cooperation

• Thank you for your attention

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