

487. Relational knowledge inquiry at the front-end of co-creation to facilitate transformation

"Engaged and decolonial anthropologies enrich transdisciplinary research (Vienni-Baptista forthcoming) by facilitating conditions for just, inclusive, and plural co-creation. As a knowledge-intensive collaboration, co-creation represents the involvement of a "plethora of public and private actors" who convene "ideally on an equal footing" to develop desirable and feasible public solutions to commonly defined problems (Ansell & Torfing 2021). Incorporating the expertise of diverse stakeholders in intercultural TDR processes makes visible the issues of navigating epistemological complexity and plurality (Vienni-Baptista et al. 2022). Facilitation thus becomes important to study, particularly when stakeholders from outside the Western knowledge system are involved, such as indigenous communities from the global South. Facilitation is an entire phase of anticipatory knowledge creation (Rasmussen, Anderson, & Borch 2010) conducted to support preparation and planning (Bourgeois et al. 2024) in advance of co-creation activities. Our paper contributes to the conference theme of knowledge co-production and responds to the recent turn towards relational knowledge as seen in interdisciplinary sustainability sciences (West et al. 2020).

Our study is situated within Julie Thompson Klein's argument that knowledge is relational (2017), and, that TDR as a creative process can be considered a form of design (ibid). Using attributes of our communicative positionalities as tools for analysis, we develop a framework for facilitation inquiry to support just, inclusive, and plural co-creation with indigenous local knowledge-holders. Two cases from social design generate empirical evidence: Case 1 from urban Kenya and Case 2 from rural Indonesia. In Case 1, a sequence of three workshops was conceptualized to enhance resilience of the last mile of urban food supply in Nairobi, targeting informal traders of fresh vegetables. Youth from the same lower socioeconomic community were rapidly enskilled over Zoom as innovation facilitators. Three touchpoints for relational knowledge were identified through retrospective analysis: during participant recruitment and group formation; for conceptual development of customized thinking tools; and, for enabling facilitation of co-creation activities across barriers of epistemological traditions not just disciplines. In Case 2, the knowledge required for navigating these complexities of epistemological plurality was acquired by developing and testing a three-step rapid inquiry process utilizing methods from applied anthropologies, as commonly used in human-centered design (Blomberg & Karasti 2012; Wasson 2000). In this case, the aim of inquiry was to understand indigenous mechanisms of collaboration and co-creation, as well as local knowledge products created and utilized for disaster preparedness. The prototype of this facilitation inquiry was tested with communities residing on the slopes of Indonesia's most active volcano. An indigenous knowledge paradigm (Klein 2023; Chilisa 2019) guided methods used in each sequential phase of micro-inquiry, such as contextual inquiry, indepth interviews, and visual ethnography.

What is interesting in our analysis are the insights that emerged from working with facilitation as form of intercultural communication, particularly spoken communication (Condit 2006; Singh 2016), instrumental in the socio-epistemological process that is design (Peschl & Fundneider 2016). Using Singh's distinction of our communicative positionalities related to knowledge as analytical tools separates our epistemic positionality, which informs what we pragmatically make relevant

during speaking, from our epistemological positionality, which informs how we theorize metapragmatically what we make relevant or not make relevant (2021). The interplay of these attributes during facilitation correlates to our representation of the participants. That is, how we represent stakeholders and their context informs how we theorize what we make relevant or do not make relevant when communicating with them. This representation is, in turn, informed by our choice of research paradigm (Klein 2023).

Our analysis also reveals that our communicative positionality changes with each phase of inquiry. This clarity helps orient our epistemological positionality appropriate to the relevant phase of the TDR process. Reflecting on both cases together - the problem space as discovered in Kenya, and the potential solution as tested in Indonesia - also helped disentangle changing roles of our epistemic positionalities. Recognizing and identifying these helps with navigating our relational knowledge making process (Klein 2017). These analytical tools from interrogating our communicative positionality (Singh 2021) complement the sequential process of facilitation inquiry, and together, they contribute a framework for instantiating transformative TDR by applying engaged and decolonial anthropologies (Vienni-Baptista forthcoming).

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Authors of this abstract:

Niti Bhan, Aalto University

Bianca Vienni-Baptista, ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland