

Towards a practice-based approach to public innovation – Apollonian and Dionysian practice-approaches

Fuglsang, Lars

Published in:
Nordic Journal of Social Research

DOI:
[10.7577/njsr.3685](https://doi.org/10.7577/njsr.3685)

Publication date:
2021

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (APA):
Fuglsang, L. (2021). Towards a practice-based approach to public innovation – Apollonian and Dionysian practice-approaches. *Nordic Journal of Social Research*, 12(Special issue), 1-23.
<https://doi.org/10.7577/njsr.3685>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact rucforsk@ruc.dk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

**This article belongs to the Special Issue Public sector Innovation -
Conceptual and Methodological Implications**

Guest Editors: Oddbjørn Bukve (HVL), Ann Karin Tennås Holmen (UiS), Maria Røhnebæk (INN)

**Towards a practice-based approach to public
innovation – Apollonian and Dionysian practice-
approaches**

Lars Fuglsang*

Department of Social Sciences and Business
Roskilde University, Denmark
Email: fuglsang@ruc.dk

*corresponding author

Abstract

This paper discusses how a practice-based approach to public innovation can provide an alternative, critical means of looking at public innovation. It unravels two ways practices can exist in relation to public innovation: Apollonian and Dionysian practice-approaches. The Apollonian practice-approach is purposeful, speaking of the actors' plans and interests and the rules of the game. In contrast, the Dionysian is a more spontaneous, bricolage-like approach to innovation that gathers people in an open space of innovation. Given these contrasting approaches further illustrated through two case vignettes, the paper argues that public innovation transpires not only through purposeful practices and plans but also more contextual public services changes. Research needs to capture both of these approaches and explore their impact on innovation. The paper concludes by outlining a research strategy for investigating practice-approaches in public service innovation and how a practice-based approach can add to our understanding of public service innovation.

Keywords: Public innovation, collaborative innovation, practice-based theory, bricolage, public-private collaboration.

Introduction

Public innovation literature tends to describe innovation as consensus-oriented processes that engage various stakeholders in developing new, joint solutions to common problems (Torfing, 2016; Wegrich, 2019). The literature describes several activities of co-creating, co-constructing, co-innovating, co-producing and co-designing public services in light of new networked and collaborative governance arrangements involving multiple actors (Bryson et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2016).

However, to not lose sight of the rich interests and experiences that actors invest in these practices and relationships, as well as the risks they run, there is a need to find research vocabulary that captures and identifies the wider practices of innovation and collaboration, including the potential tensions and dynamics between them (Fuglsang and Rønning, 2015).

Accordingly, this paper discusses how a practice-based approach to public innovation can provide an alternative, critical way of looking at public innovation. The paper explores how such an approach avoids some pitfalls of stressing only the normative and consensus-oriented descriptions of innovation. There is a need to describe the wider context of innovation. Building on previous research on innovation, the paper further proposes to distinguish between two practice-approaches to innovation, which, for the purpose of the paper, are referred to as Apollonian and Dionysian practice-approaches.

A practice-based approach takes organised activities as the unit of analysis (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017). Practices are theorised as routinised ways of doing things that order heterogeneous elements into coherent sets (Gherardi, 2006). Practices hang together via bodily and mental activities, emotions, material things, understandings, know-how (Reckwitz, 2002) and teleoaffective structures (Schatzki, 2016). Innovation integrates these elements in new ways to form new practices.

Taking an innovation-as-practice approach contributes to public innovation research by exploring innovation as an outcome of any intervention that has a significant bearing on practices (Cass and Shove, 2017). Since practices are intertwined with other practices in complex ways, interventions that affect practices and may lead to innovation could come from multiple directions. For example, medical doctors' or schoolteachers' practices depend on both

professional practices and family practices, citizens' health practices, transportation practices, and so on. This paper places special emphasis on how actors external to the public sector become involved in public innovation activities in order to better capture the wider context of such practice-dynamics. The paper is conceptual and asks the following research questions: What does it mean to state that innovation is practice-based? How can we deal with the issue that innovation is both contained in and disrupts practice-structures?

The core of the paper is the unravelling of two different ways in which public innovation activities can transpire in practices: Apollonian and Dionysian practice-approaches. These practice constructs extend previous research on service innovation as either structured, formalised and contained or less formalised and emergent (Fuglsang and Sørensen, 2011; Skålén et al., 2015). The Apollonian practice-approach is a structured approach whereby innovation is contained in formalised processes and plans within a practice context. The Dionysian practice-approach is a more playful, spontaneous and bricolage-like approach to innovation that brings people together in an open space of innovation. The two metaphors are ideal types used as sensitising devices to bring the practice dynamics of innovation to the fore.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 describes how innovation is defined in the literature, situating the paper in the tradition of networked/collaborative innovation. Section 3 focuses on the practice-based approach, which conceptualises four (Apollonian and Dionysian) practice-approaches to innovation. Section 4 presents two brief case vignettes to situate the practice-based perspective in a practical context. The concluding section discusses the paper's contribution and future avenues for research.

Innovation in the Public Sector

Innovation is usually defined as the realisation of a new idea in practice such that it has an impact on an organisation or in the market. According to the innovation research tradition (cf. Oslo Manual; OECD, 2005), an innovation needs not to be new to society to count as innovation. However, it must be perceived as new by a significant number of relevant actors in an organisation (Hartley, 2006). Innovation represents step-changes or 'jumps' in the way problems are viewed and solved (Hartley, 2006; Sundbo, 1997) and must be perceived by key stakeholders as a way of changing practice in a significant

and lasting way to be considered innovation. Innovations can, however, be small, incremental step-changes or larger, radical changes. Finally, innovation is not the same as improvement – an innovation may or may not be perceived as an improvement.

Innovation has been described as driven by single entrepreneurs as well as research and development; however, this paper adopts an understanding of innovation as open, interactive, distributed processes involving many actors who change over time (Fuglsang, 2008). Service innovation processes are also described in the literature as combinations of 1) structured, formalised and sequential processes and 2) more informal and emergent processes (Skålén et al., 2015). In the private sector, innovation can be driven by the interpretations of management and employees of market changes and competitive opportunities. In the public sector, innovation can be driven by fiscal constraints, the political system and the demands of users/citizens for high-quality public services, as well as employees' problem-solving activities (Fuglsang and Rønning, 2015).

The public sector has traditionally been regarded as bureaucratic, profession-oriented and not very innovative, with silos between different areas and tasks that make it difficult to adopt outside ideas and innovations and significantly create step-changes that change the rules of the game. However, lately, there has been a greater focus on innovation in the public sector as a special way of developing policies, public services and public value.

The literature on public innovation links innovation to three governance paradigms (Hartley, 2005; Torfing and Triantafillou, 2013). The first is traditional public administration (TPA), where innovations come about as large universal innovations (Hartley, 2005) developed by policymakers. The second governance-innovation nexus is new public management (NPM), which represents the introduction of management and competition principles from the private sector; innovation concerns changing organisational form. Finally, there is the newer type of network-based governance (Hartley, 2005), where innovation takes place on all levels through interactive and networked processes involving many interdependent actors across sectors. This paper assumes the relevance of the latter approach.

The literature further describes collaboration as a driver of public innovation (Sørensen and Torfing, 2012; Torfing, 2019). Relevant innovations are more

likely to emerge from exchanges of experiences, ideas and opinions among interdependent organisational actors than single actors alone (Torfing, 2019). A critique of this approach, however, suggests that collaboration can lead to conflicts of interest or create over-alignment among actors. Neither is good for innovation as it prevents action or hinders critical dialogue concerning change (Wegrich, 2019). Notably, public employees are not easily mobilised for collaborative innovation processes and do not quickly, spontaneously or simultaneously make sense of new, innovative roles. It has been suggested that *leadership* is a key activity that may provide the overall narratives of change and that leaders can act as convenors of relevant actors, facilitators and catalysts of innovation processes (Torfing, 2019). Nevertheless, a better understanding and analysis of the relationship between collaboration and innovation is still lacking. What processes of collaboration and coordination can spur innovation, as seen from a practice-based perspective?

The concepts of collaborative innovation, networked governance and new public governance are closely related to several other concepts that also emphasise co-creation activities between relevant actors. The literature mentions different activities of co-production, co-creation, co-design, co-initiation, co-construction, co-innovation and value co-creation (Osborne et al., 2016; Voorberg et al., 2015). One contribution from the literature involves emphasising the user's role as a citizen and service recipient (Grönroos, 2019; Osborne, 2018; Osborne et al., 2016). In service production, the user must do part of the work, such as schoolchildren doing their homework. Co-production can also involve more deliberate, organised and rule-based forms of user participation in service delivery. Some authors distinguish between co-creation and co-production. Co-creation denotes co-innovation with users, whereas co-production denotes co-implementation of services (Voorberg et al., 2015). The literature also draws on the service marketing literature to further capture how users can invite the service provider into his/her value-creation process (Grönroos, 2019; Osborne, 2018), such as a patient telling a doctor about a treatment's value or loss of value. How public innovation activities capture users' value creation, given the asymmetric power relations in public services, provides a further puzzle concerning networked and collaborative innovation.

Practice-based Approach to Innovation

A practice-based approach stresses the messy reality of everyday life and the actual practices of innovation, emphasising the difficulties in containing the

knowledge, values and interests involved in an innovation process within a single practice structure (Fuglsang, 2018) as innovation is dependent on and affects various intertwined practices. In the recent practice-based literature (building on Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu), practices are defined as ways of doing, saying and ordering heterogeneous elements into coherent sets (Gherardi, 2006) established over time. They hang together through bodily and mental activities, emotions, material things, understandings, know-how (Reckwitz, 2002), and teleoaffective structures, that is, socially acceptable ends, beliefs and tasks (Schatzki, 2002). They are also described as being constituted by procedures, background understandings and emotionally charged engagements integrated into a unified practice (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011; Warde, 2005). Practices evolve and transpire in organisational life in and around organisations. They are stable and mutually coordinated over time and contain deep and partly tacit knowledge on how to define and solve problems.

However, practices can be complex and 'compound' (Warde, 2015), that is, influenced by multiple underpinnings, which makes the coordination of individual performances and collective practices difficult (Warde, 2015) since practices are developed and reformulated in social and individual contexts. The outcome of a practice can be fuzzy and unpredictable on account of these intersections. The actors involved must gain access to knowledge about how a practice can be carried out from other practitioners; and they rely on individual tastes, habits and resources, as well as those of others. Knowledge about how a practice should be performed is not necessarily a clearly formulated system of ideas on which everyone agrees and is available in its entirety and can be maintained consistently. Sometimes, practitioners must improvise without solid ideas about how a practice should be carried out. Furthermore, different practices mutually intersect in wider practice-bundle arrangements (Schatzki, 2016) and where many new constellations are emerging. Pantzar and Shove (2010) describe innovation as the integration of mental images, skills and material resources to form new practices. Actors may draw on congruent or incongruent elements of practices, which may create or destroy the intended value of a practice (Echeverri and Skålen, 2011), for example, when different perceptions of a practice clash.

These ideas illustrate that practices must be understood as incomplete, dynamic, collective and intertwined phenomena. They evolve in constrained but pragmatic ways as actors attempt to create and re-create the value and

purpose inherent to a practice (e.g. the value of playing music or providing home-help to an elderly person). Innovation can be understood as interventions that lead to the creation of new practices, but innovation processes are not necessarily contained and stabilised inside-out in one single clear practice structure. The scope for practice development differs from context to context, raising questions about how the contributions of various actors and interventions in practice development can be effectively described. Thus, practice-based theory potentially provides an alternative understanding of innovation as something that transpires in many types of activities rather than in structured innovation processes. What the innovation concept adds to the lens through which we view practice is the notion that certain interventions can introduce 'significant differences into the world' (Schatzki 2019, p. 82). Whether they count as innovations is, however, dependent on whether the relevant actors ascribe such meaning to them.

The distinction between the Apollonian and the Dionysian practice-approaches to innovation can be utilised to illustrate two types of approaches for developing and implementing innovations. This distinction has a long theoretical history. It has been used in organisational research (cf. McGillivray, 2005; Westwood, 2004) to describe two extreme organisational experiences in governance and self-governance: the controlled and the subversive. The concepts have also been used to describe the social trend for youth culture to worship the Dionysian principle (Maffesoli, 1998). Likewise, it has been used in anthropology to describe certain cultures' celebration of breaking from cognitive routines (Benedict, 1961). For Nietzsche (2000), the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches referred to artistic practices of creation that mimic dreams or intoxication, respectively represented by the visual arts and music. However, in some of these different approaches, metaphysical generalisations are prevalent.

For the purposes of this paper, the concepts are used more metaphorically as labels for two public innovation practice-approaches. These metaphors advantageously capture the complex interdependence between the contained and subversive dimensions of innovation. The Apollonian approach represents a structured, controlled approach to innovation within a practice through which innovation can occur along controlled sequential stages. The Dionysian approach signifies a more spontaneous, bricolage-like approach to innovation that brings people together in an open space of innovation, potentially in a more rebellious manner. The Apollonian practice-approach can describe

processes of innovation in which actors discipline themselves to be oriented towards specific structures of ideas and purposes of change. Conversely, in the Dionysian approach, actors are less contained by the structures and ideas inherent to certain practices. Instead, these form a heterogeneous, compound set of resources and underpinnings that actors can draw upon.

It is tempting to describe innovation in TPA as dominated by the Apollonian practice-approach, since public innovation is politically controlled and governed by public rules and ethos and professional practice-systems. However, whether this accurately describes how policies and practices are formed in any organisation is questionable (Carstensen, 2011). Nonetheless, the Apollonian approach can still drive professional actions. Actors who see themselves as subsumed under injunctions of publicly recognised practices may aim to develop and change them in a structured manner.

However, the Dionysian metaphor describes the complexity of practices and difficulties in creating new practices in a straight-forward way since innovation has the potential to cause turbulence (Ansell and Trondal, 2018), chaotic states, contradictions and paradoxes with which employees and managers must deal. It also denotes the attraction to other injunctions, such as aesthetic practices (Strati, 1992) – e.g. smells, tastes or visual impressions – that attract or repel practitioners. For instance, Gherardi (2009, p. 543) reported how, in a study of US nursing homes, it appeared that staff members were routinely required to perform tasks that they viewed as repugnant and disgusting, such as the removal of faeces. Such aesthetic aspects can be seen as organisational life facts that affect the approach and resolution of problems.

To nuance the framework somewhat, it is relevant to subdivide the Dionysian innovation approach into three aspects: the pragmatic, aesthetic and subversive. Table 1 summarises these four aspects of innovation processes (one Apollonian and three Dionysian). Following the general literature on innovation, because we assume that innovation takes place as a collective process, it is relevant, for example, to develop categories for how actors in these approaches potentially *align* around a common innovation activity; how the practice-approaches organise *the innovation process*; what kinds of innovation *leadership and power* they provide to support the innovation process; and the imagined *impact* of these innovation processes, (e.g. whether they produce incremental or systemic/radical innovations). Following the above reflections, in the Apollonian practice, actors align around a practice

and structure of ideas (e.g. a professional practice or broader teleoaffective structures), and the innovation process is contained within this structure of practice. In the *pragmatic (Dionysian)* approach, actors align around a common set of resources, and the innovation process is about solving problems on the spot more informally, thus building structures from events in a bricolage-like manner. In the *aesthetic (Dionysian)* approach, actors assemble around a common taste, and the innovation process constitutes joyful or distasteful events. In the *subversive (Dionysian)* approach, actors provoke changes, thus leading to new unpredictable innovations.

Table 1 Four Practice-approaches to Innovation

	Apollonian	Dionysian (pragmatic)	Dionysian (aesthetic)	Dionysian (subversive)
Collaboration and alignment	Alignment around a common practice and structure of ideas	Alignment around a common co-created repertoire	Alignment around a common taste	Alignment around a will to change and push limits
The innovation process	Building innovations inside-out from structures of ideas in a sequential way	Building structures from events	Unfolding innovation and creativity through aesthetic events and joy/repugnance	Provoking change
Leadership and power	Containing innovation activities within a formalised, structured process and practice	Protecting people's access to and dialogue with their resources	Influencing and manipulating people's taste	Influencing people's sense of boundaries
Impact and visibility of innovation	High, predictable	Low	Medium	High, unpredictable

These four practice-approaches (Table 1) outline how innovation processes may happen. As suggested, the different approaches can be simultaneously present in the same case, and actors can shift their attention between them over time. This intertwining of different practice-approaches to innovation is also described in the general innovation literature. However, the practice-based model, rather than looking for single factors that can explain innovation, suggests that there are intertwined complex and paradoxical ways leading to innovation; this is rarely described in the innovation literature.

Case Vignettes

The method applied for the case-vignettes was a qualitative-interpretative one, meaning that an exploratory research strategy was applied. The case study approach was undertaken as a means of asking 'how' and 'why' questions, allowing for investigation of the broader setting and context of a particular phenomenon beyond the single practice (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Interviews were conducted with core actors in two case organisations (Table 2), and key documents and videos were analysed. Interviews were taped and partly transcribed. Respondents were asked to talk about incidents and experiences involving innovation, following a phenomenological-interpretivist research tradition (Fuglsang, 2017). Case reports were written for the two cases and approved by the case organisations.

The two case vignettes, as presented here, are not full case studies but illustrative cases used to locate the framework in a practical context, enabling further reflections on future research avenues. The focus was on investigating the experiences of innovation in the case organisations. The cases were selected as part of an EU H2020 project on value co-creation in public services (see Disclaimer). Here, public services were interpreted in a broad sense both as specific service functions produced or co-produced by public-sector organisations and, more broadly, as public tasks that can also be developed and carried out by external actors.

Table 2 Data Collected for the Case Vignettes

Type of material	Material Case 1	Material Case 2
Interviews	<p>One semi-structured interview with the 1) the CEO and 2) Design and Method Director from the LL-organisation.</p> <p>One semi-structured interview with a Chief Consultant at a University Hospital collaborating with the LL-organisation.</p> <p>One semi-structured interview with the Design and Method Director from the LL-organisation.</p> <p>One semi-structured interview with the Senior Project Leader from the LL-organisation.</p>	<p>One semi-structured interview with the CEO and founder.</p> <p>One semi-structured interview with a person employed on special flexible conditions (supported by the Government).</p> <p>One semi-structured interview with 1) the Director of Communications and 2) the department manager of the collaborating partner organisation.</p>
Documents	<p>A written description of the innovation methodology of the living lab, provided by the LL-organisation (31 pages).</p> <p>A written description of the specific LL project around a hospital, provided by the LL-organisation (79 pages).</p>	<p>Three videos where the CEO and founder lectures about the organisation and its worldview.</p> <p>Three documents describing the organisation and its partners.</p> <p>An article authored by a journalist.</p> <p>The organisation's website.</p>
Notes/observations	<p>Notes from a kick-off meeting.</p>	<p>Observation of a guided tour in the neighbourhood, including the activity house where the organisation is located.</p>

The cases were selected based on the following criteria. Both organisations work with collaborative innovation processes and see themselves as part of wider systemic changes creating value for society at large (i.e., public value for society). Both case organisations are private organisations working in the context of public innovation. Thus, they are believed to be critical cases of intersecting practices. The two organisations also differ in some important respects, thereby presenting the robustness of the data across case contexts. Case 1 is an organisation that works directly within the public innovation sector. Case 2 is an organisation that works more independently, with a vision of producing societal/public value by collaborating with public and private enterprises

Case 1 – Transforming Public Health Care

Case 1 studied a consultancy house that has developed a distinct method-driven approach to public innovation to spur innovation in public health. It has evolved in the context of a middle-sized Danish municipality. The method is very structured and comprises three innovation labs: a core lab involving key decision-makers from host organisations in the initial set-up of an innovation process; a trusted user lab engaging employees and citizens in service design processes to develop solutions to the strategic problems outlined by decision-makers in the core lab; and a scale lab for co-implementing innovations with real users.

The case study included an innovation lab set up in a smaller town and its hospital to change health care priorities and solutions. The process was prepared in consultation with the main stakeholders, the hospital and the municipality. In this case, citizens were selected to become part of three 'street labs' from different parts of the town. Informational meetings were held with citizens, and a dinner was organised as a community event. The street labs became the basis for involving citizens in formulating 13 insights and 4 visions of health care. Citizens from the street labs further tested possible solutions to these visions created in collaboration with the local university and the hospital.

Apollonian Approach

Case 1 thus involved working with a clear and distinct innovation method supposed to create significant changes in health care practices, making it easier for patients to stay at home and consult with the hospital. The

consultancy house asked the host organisation (the hospital) to frame the problem, thus seeking to create ownership of the innovation process and contain it within the wider system of practices of the hospital in order to change these. However, the case organisation was convinced that there is a need for fundamental changes in the healthcare system to enable changes in citizens' healthcare behaviour:

We just need to find great solutions which are as radical as possible in relation to the organisation and solve the fundamental problems (Head of Design and Method).

We need to change the entire operation of the society [...] you have to interpret the law to the edge. [...] ... How can we as a society tackle those issues (increasing numbers of ageing and elderly)? We have to do things differently; there is not enough money (CEO).

The case organisation thus positioned itself as a catalyst for such overall changes, albeit within the overall structure of a predesigned method that ensures that the main stakeholders control the process. By collaborating with public health organisations, it aims to develop new and distinctive solutions that have a bearing on people's practices. As a consultancy house, the case organisation specialises in organising an innovation process professionally. It essentially argues that there is a need to involve experts to organise and control systematic innovation in public innovation processes in order to significantly impact practices.

Dionysian-pragmatic Approach

However, the innovation process is not easily controlled. A more open and pragmatic approach is emphasized because the journey towards the overall goal is highly uncertain, and outcomes may be blurred. The municipality, which is one of the main stakeholders, is not easy to convince; reference must be made to potential financial benefits:

We try walking into the City Council and say: 'We have created a project with some private people' - 'When does it end?' - 'Never' - 'What is the cost of it?' - 'We don't know' - 'What do we get out of it?' 'Nobody knows' - Good luck with that [...] What we have to prove towards [the town] is that the external financing sources are large. [The town] has a better chance of a larger share of the investments in the future than other municipalities (CEO).

The settings in which the project takes place can be confusing and heterogeneous, so improvisation and pragmatism are needed to navigate alternative injunctions from the host organisations' practitioners and use them as resources at hand rather than remaining too firm about specific ideas, as the excerpt below demonstrates:

We were totally shocked when we entered the meeting: there were 17 people, three from the municipality, three from [the case organisation] and the rest from [the hospital]. There was an incredible number of hospital people, from all professional backgrounds [...] I had no idea what was going on there, it was very surprising. Because we had not agreed on this setting [...] P leaned forward – he's a very charismatic director – and said, 'Please finish this conversation, so we can get to talking about something entirely different', and I was fine saying, 'Let's not bother then' [...], and he says 'we are building a city!' (CEO).

Dionysian-aesthetic Approach

This approach to innovation is influenced by more aesthetic practices, meaning that it is difficult to just argue for the systematised innovation process as a needed and important process. For example, the strict system-driven innovation method is essentially rather boring:

...should be called system-driven, really boring bureaucratic innovation (CEO).

Involving the citizens in the street labs was not straightforward; it entailed some work to attract them, which was ethical as well as aesthetic in nature. Several of the interviewees stressed the importance of a community event where they served chilli con carne for the citizens, as well as other 'tricks':

Then we had an evening where people came to eat chilli con carne; some had a barbeque, different events and activities where people could join voluntarily and discuss these things – kind of a community meeting [...] we used different tricks for different areas. (Chief Consultant at a University Hospital)

Thus, recruiting people for innovation sometimes requires tricks that make the practice set-up for the innovation more compounded and complex. Thus, a boring innovation process can be transformed into a social event that people may enjoy.

Dionysian-subversive Approach

Riot aspects are visible, related to the focus on pushing or transgressing the limits of the healthcare system without knowing exactly where to go. This kind of wild entrepreneurship, which the CEO called 'provocations', has to be constantly balanced with containing the innovation process within the extant practices:

It is about balancing the provocation. Some can handle being provoked a lot more than others, and if you provoke the professionals at the wrong time with the wrong provocation, they will just leave. Then nothing will move forward.

However, the interviews show that the provocations are of great importance to the innovation activities as a way of prompting innovation. In the interview, the CEO also provoked the interviewers by offering surprising views and demonstrating a strong willingness to break boundaries. The consultancy house was founded without a clear idea of how the public sector would develop but was based on the feeling that 'intelligent' services were needed after a major municipal reform: 'After the structural reform in which the municipalities were merged, we thought: "The world needs a new consultancy house"' (CEO). However, it was only through concrete interactions with the municipality that certain needs were formulated, such as seeing the city as a living lab for healthcare changes with a commitment to asking citizens.

Case 2 – Towards New Inclusive Forms of Co-production

The organisation studied in Case 2 does not directly produce public services, but it seeks to define a new space for inclusiveness and co-production that impacts public service organisations and public value creation. Among others, the organisation studied in Case 2 has collaborated with a public activity centre and a hostel centre that provides temporary accommodation for adult homeless citizens who have problems with dependence on alcohol or drugs or both. The organisation is a honey-producing social enterprise promoting a philosophy of co-production and inclusive community. A source of inspiration that was stressed in the interviews was Donna Haraway's (2016) philosophy of inter-connections across and between sectors, species, spaces and social communities.

The enterprise rents beehives to public, private and social organisations in the capital of Denmark. It also conducts beekeeping and honey production

courses in schools and non-profit housing organisations and organises workshops and events at its location situated between a public prison, a home for homeless people and an activity centre for people with alcohol and drug problems. The organization has also worked with two homeless persons from an employment centre, a collaboration that was terminated.

Apollonian Approach

The organisation promoted an overall vision and task of systemic and paradigmatic change. The founder spoke of a needed paradigm shift in how all organisations and all life forms operate and organise themselves. A paradigm shift means a fundamental shift in the way we organise production to deal with problems of climate change as well as changes in the labour market. 'The direction we are going is creating institutions where we are changing people from being consumers to being co-producers' (CEO). Referring to Haraway (2016, p. 136), the founder/CEO describes the emerging new practices as follows:

'We must insist on lives lived and stories told for flourishing and abundance, in the teeth of rampaging destruction and impoverishment. We must cultivate the ability to re-imagine wealth, learn practical healing of bodies, minds and spaces and stitch together improbable collaborations.'

The CEO argued that through pollination and a relationship with humans, honeybees could stimulate curiosity, spur people to cut across boundaries and challenge normal categories of consumption and production. As such, bees, humans and plants become multi-species teams across societal sectors and silos, connected by meaningful relationships.

Dionysian-pragmatic Approach

Although this paradigm is specifically adopted as a driver of change and innovation, honey production is just one way to start. A paradigm change must occur through many changes that link people together in an enabling manner:

It is easier to act your way into new ways of thinking than to think your way into new ways of acting...we can create structures now that will allow new systems to emerge.

This pragmatism does not change the commitment to the overall broad goal but rather lies in the method of innovation. There is no one way of creating

inclusiveness but many possible paths. The indignation concerning how bad things are creates an impetus for diverse groups to join in a journey of change in which diverse and surprising talents constitute a set of resources for change.

Dionysian-aesthetic Approach

The aesthetic, artistic dimension of community and community building is strongly stressed by this enterprise through its emphasis on honey, bees and flowers and by inviting volunteers with artistic skills such as brewing the 'most fantastic mjød (mead)' or 'ideas of how to make baklava with honey from the rooftops. ... all these peculiar artistic passions that people have outside the conventional work market, outside any conventional measurement of what growth should be' (CEO). Honey is not 'seen as a product in itself, but as an invitation to plant a flower, to see the environment in a new way, to connect the homeless person or the refugee from Syria with the buttered toast and honey that you might enjoy in your kitchen with your children' (Video 1).

Dionysian-subversive Approach

How to reach the overall goal is described as an act of 'staying with the trouble'. The CEO argues that we are living in times of ecological destruction and impoverishment, which call for new ways of organising and producing. This is framed within the mindset of Donna Haraway (2016), who introduced the concepts of making-kin and making-with, or sympoiesis, which are necessary if we are 'to stay with the trouble' of current times (Haraway, 2016). To make kin is to engage in logical relations across species based on the notion of sympoieses, that is, 'collectively producing systems that do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries'. The reference to Haraway implies a rejection of the system boundaries usually placed between people, public/private organisations, humans and non-humans.

Summary of the Two Case Vignettes

Both cases contain elements of the Apollonian and Dionysian approaches to innovation. They both depart from the aim of making radical changes by introducing changes that are contained within a practice structure. In Case 1, the change process was contained in host organisations (the public hospital, the municipality), and in Case 2 in wider goals of co-production and 'sympoiesis'. However, both cases are in continuous dialogues with people and resources about what these changes should look like and how to carry

them out. There is an element of chaos, riot and paradox in both cases because they need to innovate themselves through to changes without knowing exactly where they are going. The aesthetic dimension is a clear aspect of change that guides action in one of the two cases, whereas it is a more limited resource in the other case.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper examined two intertwined ways in which innovation can transpire in public service practices: the Apollonian and Dionysian practice-approaches. The Apollonian approach describes actors as aligned around a practice structure or 'teleoaffective' structures, seeking to contain innovation within these structures. The Dionysian approach depicts actors as aligned around heterogeneous sets of ideas and materials that build structures from events, navigating through the emotional and aesthetic bonds of attachment and having the will to change without knowing exactly where they are going.

The paper contributes to practice-based research by pointing out the need to deal with these wider practice-dynamics. Practice-based research has mostly focused on the innovation *of* practice (cf. Brown and Duguid, 1991; Pantzar and Shove, 2010). Arguably, there is a need to apply practice-based research to uncover the actual practices *of* innovation, especially, how these practices are not limited to local and situated changes but take place in larger systemic contexts.

The framework suggests an intersection between contained, formal innovation practice-approaches and more informal wide-ranging engagements in practices. The answer to what it means to say that innovation is practice-based, in response to the first research question, is that practice-approaches co-exist in complex, paradoxical ways that pose challenges for management and public democracy and for the identification of interventions that lead to requested significant changes.

Our second research question was: How can we deal with the issue that innovation is both contained in and disrupts practice-structures? The case vignettes show that innovation activities are contextually embedded nexuses of actions in which public-sector actors potentially lose authority. More specifically, in a traditional public administration framework, one would expect public innovation activities to be universal, large-scale and aligned around

policymakers' policies and ideas and contained in professional practices. However, in the cases, practices are compound, mutually intertwined, and complex; hence, innovation transpires not only in local practices and encircled nexuses of intervention and change but also in actions outside the scope of policymaking. Provocations and aesthetic, pragmatic techniques that sometimes go under the radar of policy are used to prompt action in these larger contexts. Collaborative approaches to innovation spur actions that are interconnected with other actions in complex chains of events. The answer to the research question is that research must comprehend and conceptualise these larger chains of actions much better and capture the broader set of emotions, visions and beliefs that make them hang together (Schatzki, 2016, 2019).

One avenue for research is to investigate how public democracy can be conceptualised and maintained in such larger innovation contexts. What are the robust forms of democratic decision-making in system-wide innovation processes? Are, for example, hybrids of representative and participative democracy relevant? Or do we need new concepts to describe how democracy (and power) is embedded in practice-dynamics? Research needs to scrutinize how decision-making is distributed across these processes, how responsibility is shared across many actors, where the responsibility of policymakers lies, and what types of leadership and management are required.

Future research should investigate the broad, rich interest in public innovation activities not limited to actors' alignment around specific practices. Future avenues of research along these lines can include the following two approaches. First, more empirical research is needed to understand the intertwined innovation practices that go beyond collaborative or consensus-oriented approaches. We need to know more about how practices impact each other and how interactions between actors across various practices can be described conceptually; how practices with formal authority and direct policy power in, for example, healthcare are intertwined with family practices, transportation practices, eating practices, experience practices, and so on. Zooming in on small nexuses of change but also zooming out to view the larger structures and finding relevant concepts to describe them is required (Nicolini, 2009; Schatzki, 2016). Second, since innovation in the public sector is especially complex, with no single actor or single solution appearing to be able to solve every problem while enabling policymakers to remain in control,

further research is needed to understand and reconceptualise how management, leadership and democracy can transpire in such structures.

The strength of the practice-based view is its ability to speak to both policymakers and managers. It can speak to policymakers by highlighting contextual interventions required for certain practices to change; it can speak to managers by identifying contextual innovation activities that go unnoticed by management and policy. The approach limitation is reached when practice-based analysis leads to endless descriptions of innovative practices, thereby losing sight of the bigger picture. This is why practice-based theory needs to develop sharp practice-dynamics conceptualisations that can speak to and be picked up by policymakers and managers. A further limitation of the present study is that it deals with only two case vignettes to obtain the substance of the concepts. Full and detailed case studies are needed to explore the wider, rich context in which public innovation occurs – to abductively conceptualise pivotal practice-dynamics in decision-making processes concerning the nature of interventions that lead to significant changes.

Disclaimer



This project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 - Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 770356. This publication reflects the author's views only, and the Agency cannot be held responsible for any possible use of the information contained therein.

References

- Ansell, C., & Trondal, J. (2018). Governing turbulence: An organizational-institutional agenda. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 1(1), 43-57. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ppmgov/gvx013>
- Benedict, R. (1961). *Patterns of culture*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (1991). Organizational learning and communities-of-practice: Toward a unified view of working, learning, and innovation. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 40-57. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2.1.40>
- Bryson, J., Sancino, A., Benington, J., & Sørensen, E. (2017). Towards a multi-actor theory of public value co-creation. *Public Management Review*, 19(5), 640-654. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2016.1192164>
- Carstensen, M. B. (2011). Paradigm man vs. the bricoleur: Bricolage as an alternative vision of agency in ideational change. *European Political Science Review*, 3(1), 147-167. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773910000342>
- Cass, N., & Shove, E. (2017). *Changing energy demand. Concepts, metaphors and implications for policy*. Lancaster University.
- Echeverri, P., & Skålén, P. (2011). Co-creation and co-destruction: A practice-theory based study of interactive value formation. *Marketing Theory*, 11(3), 351-373. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1470593111408181>
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>
- Fuglsang, L. (Ed.) (2008). *Innovation and the creative process: Towards innovation with care*. Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781848440104>
- Fuglsang, L. (2017). The critical incident technique and everyday innovation. In F. Sørensen & F. Lapenta (Eds.), *Service Innovation Research Methods* (pp. 40-59). Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781785364860.00009>
- Fuglsang, L. (2018). Towards a theory of a practice-based approach to service innovation within spheres of interaction. In A. Scupola & L. Fuglsang (Eds.), *Services, Experiences and Innovation: Integrating and Extending Research* (pp. 147-164). Edward Elgar. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788114301.00015>
- Fuglsang, L., & Sørensen, F. (2011). The balance between bricolage and innovation: Management dilemmas in sustainable public innovation. *Service Industries Journal*, 31(4), 581-595. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2010.504302>
- Fuglsang, L., & Rønning, R. (2015). On innovation patterns and value-tensions in public services. *Service Industries Journal*, 35(9), 467-482. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2015.1042971>
- Gherardi, S. (2006). *Organizational knowledge: The texture of workplace learning*. Blackwell.
- Gherardi, S. (2009). Practice? It's a matter of taste. *Management Learning*, 40(5), 535-550. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507609340812>
- Grönroos, C. (2019). Reforming public services: Does service logic have anything to offer? *Public Management Review*, 21(5), 775-788. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2018.1529879>

- Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373780>
- Hartley, J. (2005). Innovation in governance and public services: Past and present. *Public Money & Management*, 25(1), 27-34.
- Hartley, J. (2006). Innovation and its contribution to improvement. Department for Communities and Local Government (UK).
- Maffesoli, M. (1998). Société ou communauté. Tribalisme et sentiment d'appartenance. *Corps et Culture*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.4000/corpsculture.520>
- McGillivray, D. (2005). Fitter, happier, more productive: Governing working bodies through wellness. *Culture and Organization*, 11(2), 125-138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759550500091036>
- Nicolini, D. (2009). Zooming in and out: Studying practices by switching theoretical lenses and trailing connection. *Organization Studies*, 30(2), 1391-1418. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840609349875>
- Nicolini, D., & Monteiro, P. (2017). The practice approach: For a praxeology of organisational and management studies. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook on Organizational Studies* (pp. 110-126). SAGE. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957954.n7>
- Nietzsche, F. W. (2000). *The birth of tragedy*. Oxford University Press.
- OECD (2005). *The measurement of scientific and technological activities. Oslo manual. Guidelines for collecting and interpreting innovation data (Third edition)*. OECD. <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264013100-en>
- Osborne, S. P. (2018). From public service-dominant logic to public service logic: Are public service organizations capable of co-production and value co-creation? *Public Management Review*, 20(2), 225-231. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2017.1350461>
- Osborne, S. P., Radnor, Z., & Strokosch, K. (2016). Co-production and the co-creation of value in public services: A suitable case for treatment? *Public Management Review*, 18(5), 639-653. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2015.1111927>
- Pantzar, M., & Shove, E. (2010). Understanding innovation in practice: A discussion of the production and re-production of Nordic walking. *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, 22(4), 447-461. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09537321003714402>
- Reckwitz, A. (2002). Toward a theory of social practices: A development in culturalist theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2), 243-263. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310222225432>
- Schatzki, T. R. (2002). *The site of the social: A philosophical account of the constitution of social life and change*. Pennsylvania State University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780271023717>
- Schatzki, T. R. (2016). Keeping track of large phenomena. *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 104(1), 4-24.
- Schatzki, T. R. (2019). *Social change in a material world*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429032127>

- Skålén, P., Gummerus, J., von Koskull, C., & Magnusson, P. R. (2015). Exploring value propositions and service innovation: A service-dominant logic study. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(2), 137-158.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-013-0365-2>
- Sørensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2012). Introduction: Collaborative innovation in the public sector. *The Innovation Journal*, 17(1), 1-14.
- Strati, A. (1992). Aesthetic understanding of organizational life. *Academy of Management Review*, 17(3), 568-581. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258723>
- Sundbo, J. (1997). Management of innovation in services. *Service Industries Journal*, 17(3), 432-455. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069700000028>
- Torfing, J. (2016). *Collaborative innovation in the public sector*. Georgetown University Press.
- Torfing, J. (2019). Collaborative innovation in the public sector: The argument. *Public Management Review*, 21(1), 1-11.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2018.1430248>
- Torfing, J., & Triantafillou, P. (2013). What's in a name? Grasping new public governance as a political-administrative system. *International Review of Public Administration*, 18(2), 9-25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/12294659.2013.10805250>
- Voorberg, W. H., Bekkers, V. J. J. M., & Tummers, L. G. (2015). A systematic review of co-creation and co-production: Embarking on the social innovation journey. *Public Management Review*, 17(9), 1333-1357.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2014.930505>
- Warde, A. (2005). Consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), 131-153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540505053090>
- Warde, A. (2015). On the sociology of eating. *Revue d'Etudes en Agriculture et Environnement - Review of agricultural and environmental studies*, 96(1), 7-15.
- Wegrich, K. (2019). The blind spots of collaborative innovation. *Public Management Review*, 21(1), 12-20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2018.1433311>
- Westwood, R. (2004). Comic relief: Subversion and catharsis in organizational comedic theatre. *Organization Studies*, 25(5), 775-795.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840604042414>