

INTREPID Training school, Barcelona 13-16th February 2017

Workshop on Co-production towards Sustainable and Just Cities David Simon

Scope: Although the conventional expert-led approach to knowledge production relies on compartmentalized expertise, this remains the dominant form of practice. Similarly, while the virtues of interdisciplinarity are widely appreciated, institutional structures and systems of academic organization and evaluation generally perpetuate or even reinforce narrow disciplinarity. Conversely, numerous forms of participatory research, often pioneered in the context of 'development' work in the global South, seek to get beyond narrow consultation of the intended beneficiaries by engaging them more actively in planning and decision making. While sometimes successful, pressures of time and resources have often led to dilution or shortcuts. This invariably reduces the extent of participation, sometimes to little more than conventional consultation. More recently, bold new initiatives have sought to overcome these problems through bringing teams of different stakeholders, including academics, together (= transdisciplinarity) to undertake joint research. This requires them to share their respective understandings of the problem at hand, to develop and implement the methodology jointly, and support the partner that has the formal responsibility for implementation. The diverse transdisciplinary co-production/co-design/co-creation approaches share features of deep participation and often overcome the shortcomings of traditional approaches, and improve the appropriateness of solutions and their chances of successful implementation. However, they are very time-consuming and uncertain in terms of process and outcome. There is no blueprint and each process must be formulated individually. Urban sustainability contexts, embodying concerns with equity or justice, provide some particular challenges.

Aim: Complementing the workshops on transdisciplinary competences, interdisciplinarity and participation, this session introduces urban transdisciplinary co-production approaches in theory and practice. The participants should gain experience with some of the benefits and challenges in order to be able to experiment with them in their own professional contexts.

Outline of the session

- 1) Introductory overview, highlighting key issues based on the work of Mistra Urban Futures and explaining the class exercise (30 mins).
- 2) Exercise: working in 4 small groups – ideally composed of teams from different sectors/disciplines – on different aspects of co-production (60 mins).
- 3) Plenary report-back (5 mins per group) and discussion (30 mins)

Relevant reading

Durose, C & Richardson, L (eds) (2016) *Designing Public Policy for Co-production*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Palmer, H & Walasek, H (eds) (2016) *Co-production in Action*. Gothenburg: Mistra Urban Futures

<http://www.mistraurbanfutures.org/en/annual-conference/conference-book>.

Polk, M (2014) Achieving the promise of transdisciplinarity: A critical exploration of the relationship between transdisciplinary research and societal problem solving, *Sustainability Science* 9(4), 439-451. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11625-014-0247-7>.

Polk, M (2015) Transdisciplinary co-production: Designing and testing a transdisciplinary research framework for societal problem solving, *Futures* 65, pp. 110-122.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2014.11.001>.

Polk, M (ed) (2015) *Co-producing Knowledge for Sustainable Cities*. London: Routledge.

Simon, D & Schiemer, F (2015) 'Crossing boundaries: complex systems, transdisciplinarity and applied impact agendas', *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 12, pp. 6-11, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2014.08.007>.