

DESIGNING PARTICIPATION WITH TALK AROUND AN ORGANIGRAM

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I consider the uses of an organigram to encourage conversations about expectations of what participation in inter-organisational activities entails today and could entail in the future. Such conversations are part of the processes of organising for innovation between organisations. I argue that through scaffolding collective sensemaking about participation, an organigram can be design material for co-creation of an organisation-of-organisations that brings together people from different organisations. This suggests the practical importance of visual representations in encouraging co-design of ways of joint organising. However, I also caution that rather than a communicative device, an organigram may be a political device. Talk around organigrams may be both a springboard for the renewal of commitments and a way of assisting exits from partnerships. For this reason, it is important to consider who influences design of visual representations of inter-organisational innovation and for what purposes.

INTRODUCTION

When people from many organisations come together for co-innovation of products and services, participants long to reduce the uncertainty and ambiguity as they try to navigate between day-jobs at their home organisations and involvement in inter-organisational activities. The same questions come up over and over again about who makes decisions about what activities to include under the banner of the partnership. Some

people hope for an organigram that helps them find their place in an overall structure of inter-organisational activities. Moving beyond uncertainty and ambiguity to instead achieve collaborative advantage (Huxham and Vangen, 2005) is especially challenging when organisations who would ordinarily be considered as customers of services or products are now partners. Someone may take on the challenge of how to communicate the ways that the partnership *works*. Visual representations help with articulation, learning, collaboration, communication and maintaining empathy (Blomkvist and Segelström, 2014). In this paper I describe the use of an organigram as a boundary object (Carlile, 2002, Leigh Star, 2010) for a boundary organisation that brings together people from organisations with divergent interests (O'Mahony and Bechky, 2008) to talk about what participation entails today and what it could entail in the future. I explore the ways in which visual representations may do more than just support people engaging in innovation activities with people from other organisations. As talk is the foundation for effective collaboration (Hardy et al., 2005), it becomes interesting to consider how participation itself may change through talk around an organigram. I next present some of the concepts that frame my discussion, followed by information about the action research approach and the empirical setting. I then describe how and why an organigram was drawn and present five stories of what happened next, followed by reviewing the implications that stem from these different stories.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

At the heart of this paper is my interest in how ways of organising change over time through interaction between people (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010). The aspect of participatory innovation (Buur and Matthews, 2008) that I zoom in on in this paper is that of new relationships for co-design between partner organisations. Rather than customers, suppliers, purchasers, contractors or competitors, they instead become partners to one another. In a form of participatory innovation for product and service development, organisations partner with other organisations who would ordinarily be considered as

users of their services or products. They engage in activities of collective sensemaking, co-ideation, business modelling and co-design. Organising for inter-organisational innovation in such ways puts particular demands on depicting a partnership that goes beyond classic ideas of organigrams as depicting hierarchies and power relations by presenting a structure and relationships between different people, departments and jobs at different levels (Leavitt, 1965). Each partner organisation has particular vocabulary and norms for how to describe and visualise working processes. Participants in inter-organisational innovation are not starting from scratch. They may wish to somehow synthesise the familiar norms from their home organisations with the ways of working in the new organisation-of-organisations. The design principles of organizing for inter-organisational innovation that Ollila and Yström (2016) present, suggest a need to take seriously the emergent nature. Participants are co-creators of collaboration and it is through their presence that they are able to assert influence (ibid). Seeing participants as co-creators, I understand them as the users of a new form of organising that they shape together. This is the essence of inter-organisational innovation as “a participatory, connection-driven, people-driven innovation paradigm” (Salampasis and Mention, 2017:ix).

As is easily imagined, organising for innovation between many organisations is inherently messy. People bring a package of interests, motivations, goals and priorities from their home organisations (Husted and Michailova, 2010). Indeed, assumptions about what participation will entail are often extremely varied. Difficulties related to negotiating purposes and managing aims between people from different organisations is the crux of the challenge of organising and managing for inter-organisational collaboration. While people often consider divergent ideas as what makes joint work valuable, in practice making those ideas converge is necessary to get work done (Vangen and Huxham, 2011). A goals paradox however arises since both the congruence and the diversity of the goals of the partner organisations influence success in collaboration (ibid). Managing inter-organisational collaboration is about working with a combination of congruent and divergent goals (ibid).

With all this said about the complexity of organising for inter-organisational innovation, in this paper I explore how people used an organigram to find a way to go on (Shotter, 1996) with one another. Rather than look to understand the singular function or use of the organigram, I present *fractional coherence* (Law, 2002), attempting to draw together stories without centring them. I do this to emphasise the organigram as multiple – there are many views of what it depicts, how it can be used (if it is used at all), and stories about the impact that the processes of re-drawing an organigram had. The

various versions or understandings of the organigram make “*singularities*, or single objects out of their multiplicity” (ibid:3). I present some the ways that participants appeared to relate to the organigram as they talked around it at a time when they were deciding activities, roles and responsibilities for the coming year.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

I draw on the first few months of a two-year action research project (Lewin, 1946, Susman and Evered, 1978) named KIVI. The KIVI project is about strengthening collaborative capabilities (Blomqvist and Levy, 2006), both for people coordinating inter-organisational innovation activities and for those who participate in those activities. Such collaborative capabilities are about interacting relationally, creating something together through joint work (ibid). Focussing on collaborative innovation capabilities and through starting from practical concerns, the KIVI project scaffolds people in their abilities to contribute to innovation, by supporting learning across two settings of inter-organisational innovation. As a project team – researchers, coordinators in the two settings of inter-organisational innovation and the KIVI project manager from a science park – we also engage in collaborative sensemaking activities.

FIELDWORK METHODS

In this paper I describe one cycle of *diagnosis*, *planning*, *action* and *review* in one of the settings included in KIVI. This action research cycle (Lewin, 1946) was about how to depict SustainACity. Two researchers from Chalmers University, Jane and Sanne, worked with two consultants from GreenTime consultancy, Louise and Thelma. Louise and Thelma coordinate the collective activities of SustainACity, working on behalf of all fifteen partner organisations. The whole KIVI project team met for two days in March 2017 to identify challenges (*diagnosis*). Sanne, Louise, Thelma and I then planned action (*planning*) during two shorter conversations. Louise and Thelma facilitated conversations (*action*) about participation between the participants of SustainACity, using the organigram, and redrew the organigram after comments. We later reviewed interventions (*review*) at a one-day meeting of the KIVI project team. From conversations with Louise and Thelma, I gathered photos, documents and audio recordings. I wrote fieldnotes during observation at four meetings of SustainACity. I also gathered documents and emails. Such material and interventionist methods for engagement helps with understanding contexts of use related to the organigram in collective spaces. This is about how the people of SustainACity use the organigram when talking about participation in SustainACity with their colleagues from partner organisations. It is talk in the space of an organisation-of-organisations.

My discussion is of five perspectives on the organigram told as stories. I discuss how in the talk around the organigram the participants raised expectations of what participation entailed. These expectations were values-laden, bound up in beliefs about the ultimate goals for participation and how these goals should be achieved.

EMPIRICAL SETTING: SUSTAINACITY

SustainACity is a partnership of fourteen organisations in a Northern European city. The website for the partnership states that SustainACity is “an exciting cooperative venture bringing together industry, research and society in the development and testing of solutions for next-generation sustainable public transport”. The partnership began to take shape in early 2013 after a conversation between a senior city official and a senior leader at AutomotiveCo. In June 2015, the partners launched a new bus route in the city centre to test prototype electric and electric-hybrid buses, and to demonstrate services and infrastructure, such as charging facilities for the buses and an indoor bus-stop. The second phase runs until June 2018 with work on new products and services related to sustainable transport. While there are many different organisations involved, a central aspect of how the partner organisations have agreed to work up until now is summed up in a 2015 report published by the partners:

All the partners are expected to take part in activities...and in many cases the activities involve mutual dependencies between the different partners. At the same time, none of the partners can tell the others what to do.

There are no clearly demarcated hierarchies nor norms written into policies and procedures within the SustainACity partnership. Instead, the practices of organising for SustainACity are emergent. Louise and Thelma sometimes describe SustainACity as like a pot luck dinner, where each partner organisation brings a dish to the party and also gets to try the dishes that the other partner organisations bring. That none of the partner organisations is responsible for directing SustainACity or any of the other partner organisations is what some participants within the SustainACity partnership talk about as making partnership special. They describe the partnership as about joint exploration. However, not all participants experience SustainACity in such ways, instead appearing to feel that some partner organisations do (attempt to) wield power over them. This plays out in conversation when some people come close to telling other what to do through pushing them to commit to delivering particular activities.

DIAGNOSING A MANAGERIAL CHALLENGE

At the KIVI project meeting in March 2017, Louise and Thelma, the two consultants from GreenTime employed to work on behalf of all partner organisations, talked about a main concern of participants in SustainACity – they said that they were asked over and over again about

what to do if project activities were falling behind or how to get approval for particular activities. The answer was, simply, that it was up to each partner organisation. They showed Sanne and I a presentation about how SustainACity was organised. On several slides was the disclaimer:

Decisions on content are made by project partners in the respective projects and focus areas, not in the coordinator group, steering group or partner group.

Whilst the steering group, made up of representatives from six of the partner organisations, were interested in what activities were labelled as SustainACity, it was not up to them to say what activities could take place. As Louise said, “they are not a board” [of directors] but instead “confirm” what one or more of the partner organisations have already decided. The steering group “protects the brand” of SustainACity. Louise said that, since the beginning, the way of organising for SustainACity had been more about “self-censure from the partner organisations”. The steering group were door openers. Louise and Thelma wanted the first intervention from the KIVI project team to be about re-drawing the organigram agreed by the partner organisations in June 2016 (see Figure 1).

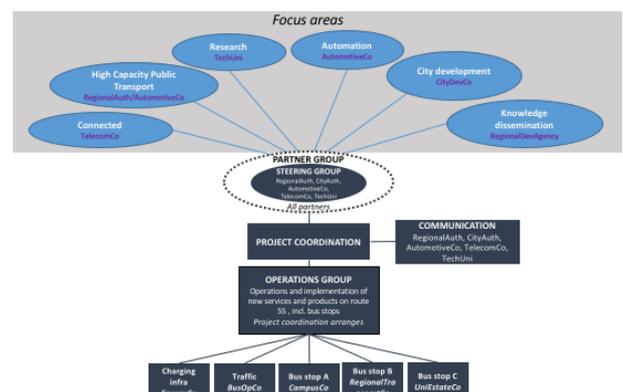


Figure 1: Organigram for the SustainACity partnership in June 2016.

Louise and Thelma described this organigram as a solar system, drawn to avoid the impression of any hierarchies between any of the partner organisations. The organigram both depicted delivery of services related to the bus route in operation since June 2015, and the areas in which new activities would be developed up until June 2018. The organigram included six focus areas or areas of responsibility for ongoing activities, depicting these as linked to a partner group and steering group. In turn this linked to project coordination and an operations group. Five areas within operations (three bus stops, charging infrastructure, and traffic) were depicted as linking to the operations group. Communication was linked to project coordination. Names of partner organisations were listed against the focus areas, the steering group, communication and the five operational areas. While there were many elements in the organigram, Louise and Thelma wanted to explore ways to capture more about both the formal and

informal ways that decisions were made collectively. They felt that the partner organisations had never lived up to how the partnership was depicted and were interested in trying out other ways to depict SustainACity.

PLANNING TO INTRODUCE A NEW ORGANIGRAM

After the project meeting for the KIVI team, Sanne and I met Louise and Thelma to plan in detail what action to take. This meeting was an intense four hours. Since the KIVI project meeting a few weeks earlier, Sanne and I had prepared some slides as a starting point for the conversation about the question: *How can SustainACity be depicted as an 'organisation'?* The ideas we introduced were about paradoxes in spaces in-between organisations: neither/nor – both/and; no man's land – everybody's land; and individual – collective. We talked about the different institutional logics, practices and motives, and the unclear roles, outcomes and processes. Sanne brought up Ralph Stacey's (1996) ideas about bounded instability and legitimate and shadow systems. She drew these out to depict the relation of the formal and informal practices. See Figure 2.

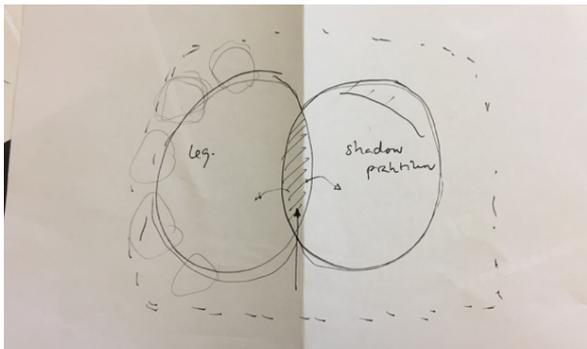


Figure 2: Sanne sketches legitimate and shadow systems.

As the afternoon continued, Thelma began to sketch out how she related ideas of shadow and legitimate systems in the practices of organising as SustainACity. See Figure 3 where she has drawn a core star and several circles. The box to the side also references functional structures. In response, sitting across the table from Thelma, Sanne began to draw what she was hearing Louise and Thelma describe as the many elements that they wanted to fit into the organigram to represent

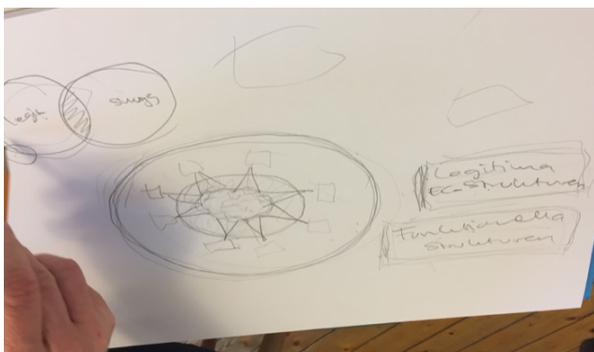


Figure 3: Thelma sketches a model.

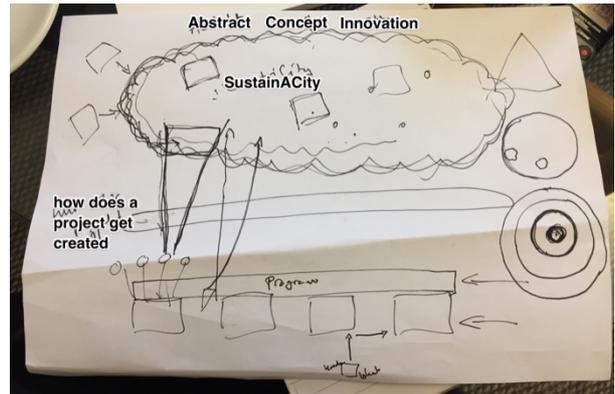


Figure 4: Sanne draws different aspects of organising.

SustainACity. See Figure 4. It became clearer that Louise and Thelma were also concerned about how much time was spent in meetings to come up with ideas for what activities could be included within SustainACity. They agreed with each other that these meetings were frustrating since the ideas were not taken forward. As they sketched, Sanne and Thelma shared their ways of thinking about organising. By the end of the afternoon, we had agreed that Louise and Thelma would keep sketching the organigram so that they had a version to introduce two weeks later during a meeting of the coordinator group for SustainACity. Following discussion at that meeting, Louise and Thelma would edit the organigram and present it to the senior representatives of the partner organisations that made up the steering group for SustainACity. I would attend these meetings to observe the interaction.

AN ORGANIGRAM IN USE TO DESIGN PARTICIPATION

I now present a set of five stories to illustrate how the redrawing of the organigram had implications for the different partner organisations of SustainACity. This is the *action* step in the cycle of action research. From the first version, Louise and Thelma distinguished between bearing projects and associated projects, beginning to divide the partners into a clearer hierarchy. The bearing projects were explained as 'owned' by one of the 'main' partners and to which tests or research would be connected (associated projects). After talk around the organigram over two months (April-June 2017), the four 'bearing projects' in the first version of the organigram became seven 'demonstration arenas' (Figure 5), the 'associated projects' became labelled as 'projects'.

STORY ONE: CITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT X

In the first version of the organigram, presented to the coordinator group, Louise and Thelma included a box labelled *City Development Project X* alongside three named bearing projects. This represented the uncertainty about City Development, one of the six focus areas depicted in the organigram from June 2016 (Figure 1). A few weeks later, when the steering group met, two city development projects were listed on the

new version of the organigram – both incorporating the names of city areas. Elizabeth from AcademicPropertyCo attended that steering group meeting to tell the representatives about a project to rejuvenate part of a university campus. Elizabeth offered to include the project under the banner of SustainACity. This gave AcademicPropertyCo new status in the partnership, as they helped deliver a city development project and were now invited to be a member of the steering group.

STORY TWO: PROCESSES, TOOLS & METHODS

The second story is also about the focus area of *City Development* (see Figure 1). One of the final demonstration arenas to be named on versions of the organigram was the one for which the group of government agencies within CityAuthority would be responsible. CityDevCo, one of the agencies, is depicted by being named on the organigram from June 2016 (Figure 1) as responsible for city development. After versions of the organigram depicted *City Development Project X*, and then *City Development Project Freeport*, the later versions of the organigram included a demonstration arena titled *Planning Processes, Tools and Methods*. In meetings, Louise made fun of the long title that the people in the city's agencies had chosen for the activities they wanted to pursue through SustainACity. Joanna, the coordinator for the city's agencies in SustainACity, told me about the frustration she and her colleagues felt about the way they were treated by participants in SustainACity from some partner organisations over the past year. She felt that the city had been told what to do by the partner organisations – develop an indoor bus-stop – despite the general idea that no other partner organisations could tell other partner organisations what to do. This felt like repetition of an indoor bus-stop already demonstrated since June 2015. Joanna said that instead she and her colleagues saw SustainACity as a policy lab, where they could partner with other organisations to demonstrate the social, economic and environmental benefits of electric vehicles. She was committed to research that could help lay the ground for changes to implementation and planning processes and assessment methods for city development. She talked about how this was what would enable innovation within the city's transport infrastructure. While she picked up signals from the other participants in SustainACity that they did not consider testing processes, methods and tools as substantial activities, Joanna was satisfied that she had been able to influence the organigram to depict what the city's agencies wanted to do under the banner of SustainACity.

STORY THREE: NOT JUST PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The organigram was also used in discussions about whether SustainACity could expand beyond electric buses to include other electric vehicles, such as

construction machines, rubbish trucks and delivery vehicles. This discussion began in November 2016 when participants from AutomotiveCo asked about expanding from sustainable public transport to sustainable solutions within transport more generally. The participants from AutomotiveCo saw this as both about business development for their organisation but also as developing SustainACity – while the first phase, up until June 2015, had focused on the development of the bus route, now, the AutomotiveCo representatives argued, the partner organisations would benefit from expanding to test and demonstrate other electric vehicles in the city, especially electric construction vehicles since there were so many industrial areas of the city being re-developed. This could help the city authorities demonstrate a concerted effort in moving to electric vehicles across local government services. When the idea of expanding the scope was raised in November 2016 at the steering group, the representatives noted that they would have until June 2017 and the annual meeting of the partner group to talk about this among the partner organisations, especially in relation to the idea that they might need to bring in new partner organisations. While such projects were not included in the first versions of the organigram that Louise and Thelma drew, talk in meetings around the organigram made it clear how such activities could become new demonstration arenas. Discussions revolved around how the partnership groups and meeting structures would be modified so that people could selectively attend, rather than be kept informed of activities across the whole of SustainACity. This was especially important for RegionalTransportCo, focussed as they are with providing public transport services rather than the infrastructure for transport in general. Even though other electric vehicles were not depicted in the organigram for some time, the participants began considering the implications of expanding the scope of the partnership as they talked about what the organigram depicted. There would be activities that their organisations would neither be involved in nor interested in. This flexibility about what meetings participants would attend became a part of new versions of the organigram. Two months later, the organigram included two demonstration arenas for public transport (buses) and two for other vehicles. See Figure 5.

STORY FOUR: LOST AMONG THE INTERMEDIARIES

In the organigram from June 2016 (Figure 1), RegionalDevAgency was depicted as the partner organisation responsible for the focus area of *Knowledge Dissemination*. When Louise and Thelma redrew the organigram, this focus area was not a bearing activity/demo area. Instead there were two types of temporary forum – one for creating project ideas, the other for knowledge dissemination. Over the months leading up to the partner group meeting, RegionalDevAgency pressed that they be depicted with

a central and permanent role in the organigram, not off to the side. When the two fora were depicted as swirls on the side (Figure 5), rather than as boxes, it seemed that the participants from RegionalDevAgency struggled to feel that they were appreciated as a partner organisation. They could not find themselves in the organigram, not least as talk around the organigram suggested that their partners expected to coordinate the temporary fora alongside other partner organisations who also did not have responsibility for a demonstration arena or similar central role. This made visible the overlapping roles as intermediaries for three of the partner organisations. At the partner group meeting in June, Johnny from RegionalDevAgency talked about why his home organisation had decided to leave SustainACity but how they hoped that they would still be involved in helping publicise the activities of SustainACity as an example of the city and region's expertise in sustainable mobility. In the four years of the partnership so far, RegionalDevAgency was the first partner organisation to leave.

STORY FIVE: RESEARCH VS. TEST & DEMO

From being one of the six focus areas in the organigram in June 2016, *Research* disappeared from the organigram. While TechUniversity had had responsibility for this focus area, Louise and Thelma did not include it as a bearing project, the boxes that later became labelled the demonstration arenas. Instead research was invisible in the organigram. Pointing to the organigram, people gestured about how research would fit in the boxes of projects that would relate to the demonstration arenas. Linda, TechUniversity's coordinator for SustainACity, told me that she had struggled to see how discussions about the organigram would be important for her and her colleagues. She spoke instead about test and demonstration arenas. She saw these arenas as in tension with her colleagues' wish to have long-term, financed research projects, instead of testing products developed in-house by partner organisations. She felt that some partner organisations had a different idea about research, wanting quick answers from short tests. Linda's perception of TechUniversity's participation was that it was enough to be included as a partner organisation, rather than to feel the need to have a central responsibility depicted in an organigram. She seemed to believe that it was in the interests of TechUniversity to be kept informed about activities that were part of SustainACity so researchers could consider whether there were research projects to add. Linda was not disturbed that TechUniversity was not visible within the organigram.

REVIEWING THE ACTION

By June 2017, the participants had talked about several different versions of the organigram at meetings of the coordinator group and steering group, as well within their home organisations. Sanne and I were there as

Louise and Thelma presented the version shown as Figure 5 to senior representatives from all partner organisations at the annual partner group. The participants approved this way of depicting SustainACity, as well as the goals and vision for the partnership over the coming months, replacing the version from the year before (Figure 1). It was this meeting that had been an event that Louise and Thelma used as a moment in time to reach some sort of stable representation of SustainACity. Having the partner group meeting as a deadline, allowed them to push for comments on the organigram from each partner organisation.

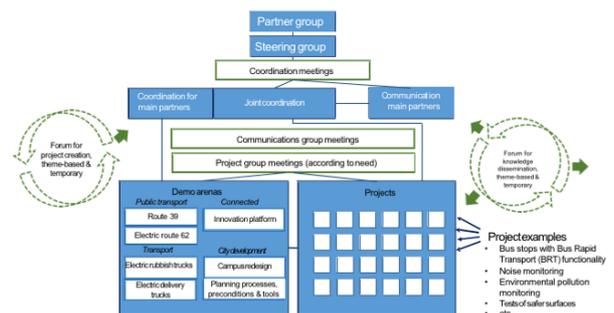


Figure 5: Organigram for the SustainACity partnership in June 2017.

In August 2017, the KIVI project team met to review the activities of the Spring. We (Sanne and I) presented two main observations. We spoke about how the organigram had appeared to become an agreement for the partner organisations about commitments, as shown by how it was formally approved in June 2017 at the partner group meeting. The other observation was that while the organigram included many different aspects – meetings, groups, processes, activities and arenas – the participants had seemed to want to represent SustainACity in a static way. We talked about how this was a classic way of representing organising but that SustainACity seemed to be emergent, always in process of becoming. We suggested that SustainACity was a boundary object with interpretive flexibility.

In response, Thelma showed us a picture of slime mould that she had taken while out walking in the woods with her family in the summer. See Figure 6. This was a metaphor of how she experienced organising as SustainACity. Excitedly she talked about the identity crisis of this organism, fascinating to biologists because it cannot be classified and for how it is a self-organising system. Later she emailed us links to Heather Barnett's *What humans can learn from semi-intelligent slime* (www.ted.com/talks/heather_barnett_what_humans_can_learn_from_semi_intelligent_slime_1). Thelma drew parallels between how SustainACity resisted being categorised and standardised into an organigram and seemed to have a life of its own like the slime mould.



Figure 6: Thelma's photo of slime mould.

DISCUSSION

I have illustrated how talk around the organigram helped people raise what participation meant for them today and in the future. For some partner organisations, a central role was important while others accepted being depicted without a specific role. Others used the organigram to make a stand about what objectives they wanted to pursue within SustainACity, perhaps countering the expectations of others or expanding the expectations others had of them. While there were multiple uses of the organigram, there were also people from some partner organisations who did not seem to have any use for the organigram.

As consultants working on behalf of all the partner organisations, Louise and Thelma decided to act as designers of the organigram. They took the initiative before someone else did, perhaps intending to create a shared space for collective discussions, but also to create a representation that once jointly designed, could be adapted for use in home organisations. It also seemed to be about testing whether they could make public their own models of how SustainACity was organised so as to save themselves repeated questions. However, Louise and Thelma also used the organigram to ensure that particular discussions happened. They wanted different people to reveal their cards. This made the organigram a political device. The organigram was an intermediary through which to understand the partnership and became a focusing device in the manner of a boundary object (Leigh Star, 2010) with interpretive flexibility and with a tacking back and forth between the different interpretations that participants had.

It was through the questions and answers about what the organigram represented that conversations expanded to pressing concerns: could all the partner organisations accept an expanded scope for SustainACity? Was it time to formalize different levels of partnership? Through discussions about how to depict SustainACity, participants began to see the implications for their home organisation of how the partnership was changing. The organigram, although Louise and Thelma controlled

changes to it, invited people to participate in co-designing SustainACity. Some people were keener to participate than others but participation in talk around the organigram led to influence over ways of organising as SustainACity. The act of visualising, as a process, was the vital sensemaking activity, not the final outcome (Eppler and Platts, 2009:67).

As so many elements were added – meetings, groups, processes, visions, facilities, activities and tangible outcomes – the organigram became less and less a stand-alone communicative device. It was a concept map illustrating both an overview and detail, and interrelationships between these details (Eppler and Burkhard, 2007:116). Rather than making possible an overview of organising as SustainACity, people zoomed in on a box or a swirl for particular purposes. The organigram was always viewed from a particular perspective and explained from that perspective, influenced by representing their home organisation and SustainACity, the organisation-of-organisations. The organigram did not speak for itself but instead always needed to be explained by someone. It was a way of initiating more recent newcomers into SustainACity, often with gestures as is the case with explanation of diagrams to novices (Kang et al., 2015). For example, to point out to people how their home organisation is involved or to understand that they have been invited to a meeting to shape an idea for projects that could connect to a demonstration arena.

Changes to the organigram were products of conversations between particular people at particular moments. The organigram mediated 'knowing' (Nicolini, 2011) of what participation in SustainACity was about for the people participating in that conversation. Such knowing related to some of the values associated with participation that underpinned the partnership: for example, that every organisation demonstrate commitment through investing time and money in activities that resulted in communicable outputs to stakeholders beyond the partner organisations themselves. While the organigram approved in June 2017 (Figure 6) was different to the one of June 2016 (Figure 1), the representation was perhaps just as limited in helping participants understand decision-making processes. The talk around how to depict the organising of SustainACity engaged participants in discussions about participation, important since talk is the foundation for effective collaboration (Hardy et al., 2005). As organizing occurs around innovations, it is important to conceptualise organisations as both substances and processes (Garud and Turunen, 2017:33). Any organigram for inter-organisational innovation will be but an intermediary outcome, though a beneficial outcome, and intrinsic to understanding the substance-process duality of organising for innovation (ibid:35).

IMPLICATIONS

In this paper I have presented the practical importance of organigrams as visual representations of participation, facilitating conversations about what participation entails today and what participation could be in the future. I have shown the importance of devices that help participants raise what matters to them about organising. Participants may use organigrams as boundary objects to enable the ongoing co-design of inter-organisational innovation. Further research could explore how visual representations of organising may act as a springboard for both the renewal of engagement and as assisting an exit from a collaborative partnership and at which times in inter-organisational innovation organigrams can be most generative for talk about designing participation. Managers of inter-organisational innovation may wish to explore ways to use visual representations as design material and as a sort of design game, encouraging participants to embrace a process view of organising, rather than one of fixed structures. Process views of organising help open up for talk about the collective responsibility to shape joint work over time. Such co-ownership may also encourage people of each partner organisation to consider how they organise internally to meet the expectations from their partners for participation in inter-organisational activities.

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