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Guidelines for Translating Frameworks, Methods, Tools and Principles of Local Innovations for Marginalised and Vulnerable Communities – 2023

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Abstract

The Guidelines for Translating Methods, Tools and Principles of Local Innovations for Marginalised and Vulnerable Communities aim to reflect on the ongoing experiences and lessons learned based on the first piloting round in the cities of Amsterdam, Helsinki and Porto inside the framework of CommuniCity Horizon Europe project and propose solutions for ethical and inclusive engagement with communities aimed to translate, in its metaphorical but oftentimes also literal meaning, the aims, definitions, points of reference of the project and its pilots. The overall goal to bring together representatives of the world of technology and vulnerable and marginalised communities implies the need for translation being a starting point for the mutually rewarding engagement and co-creation of technological solutions targeted to the specific needs of cities and communities. The reflective points outlined in this work add value to the next rounds of open calls and consequent piloting processes as well as to the practices exercised by the so-called replicator cities, keeping in mind the overall project goal of proposing scalable solutions to be further taken up by the European cities and communities.

Keywords

technology, AI, community, city, vulnerability, marginalisation, CommuniCity, piloting, open call

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Introduction

The Guidelines for Translating Methods, Tools and Principles of Local Innovations for Marginalised and Vulnerable Communities aim to reflect on the experiences of the first round of piloting inside the framework of CommuniCity project in the cities of Amsterdam, Porto and Helsinki. While the title of this work may suggest a rather narrow and somehow imperative approach, the lessons learned from a 'real life' piloting of CommuniCity prove the authoritative approach neither suitable nor realistic. Instead, the shared reflections within the piloting context, outlining the key action, reflection and discussion points, with a possibility of replication in other cities and communities, and continuous dialogue on the experiences and lessons learned, prove to be ethically justified and suitable way to approach a complex issue of translation inside the framework of experiences of bringing together the worlds of technologies and vulnerable and marginalised communities.

This Guidelines have been written inside the framework of the Work package 2 of the CommuniCity project titled 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement in Practice' that (has been) led in 2022–2023 by the author of this work Dr. Kristina Khutsishvili on behalf of the University of Amsterdam. Due to the submission timing of these Guidelines, only the first round of piloting in cities of Porto, Helsinki and Amsterdam could be captured. Moreover, even inside the framework of the first piloting round the events described are still ongoing, with, for example, piloting in Porto not being finished by the moment of finalising the Guidelines (the initial starting delay had been related to the legal/signatory unexpected issue in Porto), and with finalising meetings with pilot teams still in place in Amsterdam (the last pilot meeting as well as the showcase of several Amsterdam-based pilots happening two weeks before finalising this work).

As in the whole scope of the CommuniCity project, in this work the dilemma and the needed balance of reflection on the best or simply good enough practices and solutions we can recommend to be replicated in other cities, communities and in application to other challenges, on the one hand, and the analysis on the lessons learned including the possible failures, doubts, discussions, disagreements, points for future analysis, on the other hand, is very much present. These two aspects of the CommuniCity project are seen not only in the analysis focused on the engagement with communities, especially with vulnerable and marginalised communities but in all daily activities. The dualism is determined by two main features of the project: the replication aim and the learning accumulation, sharing and dissemination aim. The replication aim is going to be realised in the second and third rounds of the open calls and piloting, adding new and new cities of the European Union to the project (Aarhus, Breda, Tallinn, and Prague complementing Amsterdam, Porto, and Helsinki in the second round). The learning aspect has been outlined as crucial in the project proposal, and in multiple discussions surrounding the project/piloting processes it has been unequivocal that the learnings derived from both successes and failures we encounter on the way are the key part and the key results of our work, with a Work package 6 in the project aimed to focus on learning and dissemination of the results. Being more reflective in its nature, the learning part implies the presence of continuous dialogue, be it between the partners of the project, the cities involved and the pilot teams, the tech providers and associations, while the replication direction implies a more straightforward approach. The parts of this duality are then merged as the vision of the project comprises the idea of the best and good enough practices deriving from the lessons learned during the piloting rounds of the CommuniCity project and in the project as a whole lead to successful replications in other cities and communities.[1]

It is important to emphasise, from the very beginning of this work, the complexity, as well as the ethical complexity of the goal we set for the CommuniCity project. Grants distributed to the winning teams as a result of the rounds of open calls are limited in their amount, so is the piloting period, and possibilities of project continuation are not guaranteed. While in cases of internal resources available, the pilot hosts have an incentive to proceed with projects further, such a scenario is not certain and depends on many factors. Keeping in mind these limitation factors, the main goal of the project is to acquire learnings that will enable replication in other cities and communities. The learnings in their broader sense then include not only successes but failures. At the same time, with the communities being at the centre of the processes, not all 'failures' may be desirable, if we may formulate it in this way. Some failures, the failures potentially having a negative impact to communities involved, need to be minimised. A replication goal embedded in the project, with so-called replicator cities joining second and third open call and piloting rounds, as well as piloting funding and timeframe limitations and the focus on learnings derived from the processes, all indicate the experimental nature of the project. The dualism of experimentation with the focus on disadvantaged communities brings unprecedented analytical and research possibilities but also the stress on responsibility and the ethical component of the project.

The learning and replication goals are relevant to the processes of engagement with vulnerable and marginalised communities, with an ethical part playing a significant role in the latter. The indicative, reflective contextualisation of the action points deriving from the lessons learned hence seems to be the most suitable outline design for such a discussion.

CommuniCity Project: The General Context

CommuniCity project is a Horizon Europe project, with an acting consortium uniting 12 partners from different countries of the European Union. It started on 1 September 2022 and

[1] From the technological standpoint, these processes are enabled by the use of Minimal Interoperability Mechanisms (MIMs) and the 'Technical Common Ground' Work package 4 of CommuniCity project. This work package has been designed as rather independent inside the framework of the project.

is aimed to run for a continuous period of 3 years. One of the main aims of the project is to bring together the world of technologies and vulnerable and marginalised communities. The means to reduce the 'technological gap', the problem that is widely discussed not only in the academic and practitioners' circles but also in wider society, are the processes of co-creation and co-learning. Co-creation is a means of developing Artificial Intelligence (AI) and broader technological solutions with and for the needs of communities. While aiming to come up with 'good enough' practices of co-creation in the project, it is also important to admit that in co-creation practices many things may go wrong. Obviously, the general approach of a 'good faith' project management and the presence of experienced and diverse partners sustain the context of goodwill and work to one's best ability. At the same time, the possible issues and challenges that might appear during the project, have been thought of already on the proposal drafting stage.

The project aims to empower vulnerable and marginalised communities in Amsterdam, Helsinki, Porto and other European cities through co-creation and co-learning processes to develop sustainable projects and technological solutions for urban and societal issues.

The project will feature three rounds of Open Calls at regional, national and European levels, with selected project pilots producing innovative solutions tailored to meet the specific needs of local communities. CommuniCity's overall aspiration is to contribute to the societal, urban, technological, cultural and economic development of European cities; to accumulate the experiences and the learnings on co-creation with disadvantaged groups; to come up with scalable practices and solutions, with the possibility to use the guidelines for successful open call and piloting processes as well as CommuniCity technical components and tools to replicate solutions in other cities and communities.

Points of Complexity

Among the specific characteristics of the project bringing complexity into the discussion are:[2]

- technologies per se: the unknown implied at this point, the dynamic, driver and the difference;
- communities to be brought into the centre of attention;
- conditions of vulnerability and/or marginalisation; aspiration to ensure the change for the better, consciousness / cautiousness not to do worse;
- varieties of geographies inside the project (starts from three cities in three different countries, with, as an example, three different national legal systems – Porto, Helsinki, and Amsterdam, with an aim of translation into other cities and countries); varieties of the backgrounds and specialisations of partners in the consortium, both institution-wise and person-wise (municipalities, academia, applied research, think tanks, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), *etc.*);
- variety of mentalities / views inside the 'applicant' domain: the tech providers, the associations (NGOs), the communities; the necessity to work in collaboration and to listen to each other;
- significant scale (different countries, 100 planned partners) of the project leading to bureaucratization;
- short lifespan of the pilots: winners of the open calls are given 6 months for the project development; the 'fate' of the projects after the funding period is over may differ.

ENOLL, The European Network of Living Labs, the partner of CommuniCity project, has summarised several contextual and specific aspects relevant to the project. *Diversity of needs* is presented through different groups visible in the project having distinct needs, reflecting their roles and contexts. According to Enoll, *customised approaches* are essential for the effective engagement of these groups. *Ethical considerations* play a crucial role in the project, be it the ethics of community engagement or research ethics. The *digital divide* is the core line separating the world of technologies and vulnerable communities. While devices and internet access are essential, they are not enough to bring these 'worlds' together, ensuring equitable participation. *Collaboration* between different stakeholders of the project could foster innovation, leveraging each group's strengths. *Interdisciplinary learnings* derived from the processes of piloting and collaboration are enriching perspectives and bring new ideas. *Community-centric approach*, co-creation with vulnerable communities, emphasises inclusivity by giving voice to marginalised groups.[3]

Methodological Challenge

Meant to be at the centre of the project, co-creation is the notion aimed at achieving the goal of bringing together the world of emerging technologies and the needs of communities. Being neither easy to be analysed / reflected upon, nor easy to exercise, the benefits of co-creation outweigh the difficulties of the process, at least, this is what we assume at the beginning of the project. Other notions at the starting point may also need a theoretical consideration: what kind of meaning is brought to co-creation when approaching vulnerable and marginalised communities? What meaning does inclusivity have?

The main difficulty relates to the double role of the academic partner in the project. On the one hand, the reflection

[2] These points are also outlined in the long abstract by Khutsishvili, K., Pavicic, N., Combé, M. (2023) 'The challenge of co-creation: How to connect technologies and communities in an ethical way' accepted for the conference ETHICOMP 2024: Smart Ethics: the leading role of ethics in the digital world.

[3] The analysis based on work of Enoll presented in the internal CommuniCity report 'From understanding the needs to mutual learning – From WP2 to WP6', by G. Lozzi, A. Tricarico, F. Spagnoli, Enoll, 2023, p.12.

is meant to be an academic output. The methodological part at this point is fully a choice/ a preference of the academic partner. On the other hand, the context does not change: the scale of the project, the role of the work package lead, the imminent administrative part ensures the double role: the project management on par with the reflection on everything that is going on. The engagement with other partners and the co-creation central element in the project itself, outside of the pilots' part, are bringing continuous discussions on different issues of project design. Consequently, the double role of the reflecting entity and the co-creator of the project cannot be minimised. The confusion deriving from this needs to be confronted as well.

Other challenges are related to the choice of the reflexive methods. Diaries, self-writing, and other approaches minimising the 'participatory' part, in contrast with participatory observation, come to the centre. In this way, the confusion related to the 'double role' in the project may be overcome. What may seem unusual in this sense, keeping in mind the broader 'interdisciplinarity' of the project outlined above – is the coexistence of these approaches, their use in the project, the 'humanitarian' narrative part they are bringing in, with the 'harder' language of technology and the formal component. Communities and the condition of vulnerability, on one side, and the languages of technology, bureaucracy – on the other. Bringing these aspects together is important also language-wise, with the possibility of language to be a good facilitator for co-creation.

What Do We Mean by 'Translating'?

Metaphorical and Literal Meaning

In this text, 'translation' plays the role of a metaphor, although it is useful to outline the existing in literature 'transitory' understanding of the action of translation directed toward communities, situated between the literal and metaphorical meanings. According to Taibi and Ozolins, community translation is "a service offered at a national or local level to ensure that the members of multilingual societies have access to information and active participation; "community translation is still emerging as a subfield of translation studies".[4]

As Guldin points out, "the common ground for translation and metaphoric thinking is to be found in the relationship of the literal and the figurative"; "the existence of two languages within a single language – the figurative and the literal – and their relationship can, therefore, be used as a model to explain translational interactions and vice versa".[5] A very literal meaning of translation implies the existence of two linguistic systems, with an action of transferring the content from one system into another. Systems may be designed in different ways, and the action of translation aims to make the content understood in another system. Translation attempt does not always lead to a certain result: it may be challenging to translate certain content, be it the content deeply rooted in the specificity of a certain linguistic system and/or factors shaping this system, or the result of the translation process not being understood/perceived fully inside a framework of a different linguistic system, with its own factors of formation.[6]

Metaphorical understanding of translation is used for different purposes, for example, in biomedical research, in the context of 'translational medicine', "a new paradigm that emerged to accelerate the transfer of knowledge generated on the bench to medical practice, involving, clinical research, to produce benefits for the community as a whole".[7] A translational approach in that sense broadens the horizons of an area/subfield of research/research methodology, enabling to consider a different sphere of application, with the possibility of innovative solutions/outcomes of such an application. Translation happening between the disciplines, entities, groups may have a synergetic effect on knowledge production and innovation, facilitating the possibility of novel approaches, originality, and experimentation. The translation attempt may also be not successful, yet useful: from a case of failure, learning derives.

The metaphor of translation brings with itself the existence of minimum three entities – one entity aiming to communicate something to another, the entity being the 'object' of translation, and the entity, the figure of the translator. While in the past, in a literal situation of translation, the entity exercising the translation was meant to be a physical person, in the age of emerging technologies it can be any non-human intermediary. Moreover, the entity aiming to communicate the message may at the same time play the role of a 'translator'.

The ethical issues of translation as well as the issues of 'justice' in translation have been long discussed by philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur.[8] The power relations and the question of agency may be outlined as central in the ethics discussion on translation. The possibility of failure to translate in the very literal understanding of translation, the learnings derived from such an unsuccessful attempt, the power asymmetry in the condition of the lack of the contextual or specific knowledge on the 'receiving' the translation side – are all relevant in the context of CommuniCity project. Moreover, the power imbalance/divide may be seen as one of the fundamental issues, the issue the learnings derived from three piloting rounds with and for vulnerable and marginalised communities are aiming to tackle. The very same power imbalance is also the reason why the strong ethical component of the project is seen to be necessary: not only the Work package 2 tackles the ethical aspects of engagements in the project but also the appointed external ethical board.

[4] See: Taibi, M. and Ozolins, U. (2016) *Community translation*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, p.8.

[5] See: Guldin, R. (2016) *Translation as Metaphor*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, p.20.

[6] The issue of (un)translatability is a matter of exciting debates, some of them situated on the disciplinary intersection with ethics/moral philosophy (see, for example, Foran, L. (2022) 'Untranslatability and the ethics of pause', Perspectives, 31(1), pp. 44–58).

[7] See: Monteiro, A.C. *et al.* (2021) 'The fundamentals and potential of translational medicine in Healthcare', *Translational Bioinformatics in Healthcare and Medicine*, pp. 13–27.

[8] See: Ricoeur, P. (2006) *On translation.* New York: Routledge.

Translation in its metaphorical sense as well as the very literal aspects of translation tackled as challenges in certain pilots are relevant to the understanding of the project but do not exhaust the descriptive part on how the engagement with vulnerable and marginalised communities should be arranged. One of the examples here can be the articulated goal of creating technological solutions with and for vulnerable and marginalised communities.[9] While technological solutions created for such communities may theoretically speaking be designed without their involvement and, as such, go accordingly to the power imbalance factor outlined above, creation of the tech with the communities indicates the situation facilitated in which the communities have a voice and participate in the discussion.[10] The project in this way is also aimed to attempt to tackle the disparity and power imbalance. The 'attempt' word is important since both the piloting timeframe and the amount of funding per pilot are the limitations for the scope of problems the project aims to tackle, yet being correctly addressed in the project proposal, with the learnings derived from the project activities adding value, potentially enabling replication of the best and good enough practices and forming the material for future analysis and investigation, possibly inside the framework of other further projects.

The Stress on Local Innovations

According to Hoffecker, local innovation is "the process and the product of developing and introducing into use new and improved ways of doing things compared to existing practice within a specific local context, which involve local people and resources in addressing challenges and opportunities present within that context".[11] The process of translation of frameworks, methods, tools of local innovations to vulnerable and marginalised communities implies the existence of the innovative system, that in the context of the CommuniCity project is centred around Artificial Intelligence and broader emerging technologies, and community system. Translation from one 'system' to another may hence face the issue of asymmetry, where the specific knowledge base is on the side of the innovation system, and where the community system lacks the 'preparatory' skills which otherwise would simplify the translation process and/or prepare the community system to perceive the translated content. The broadly discussed issue of the digital divide may be an example of such an asymmetry. The asymmetry of knowledge in the technological age goes in hand with the relational asymmetry of power and with issues of agency that will be outlined in the next chapter in the project context.

Three rounds of pilots in different cities of the European Union as well as the piloting format itself may be seen as an experiment of bringing the worlds of technologies and vulnerable and marginalised communities if not together but at least closer to each other. Experimentation methods have recently gained more attention in innovation studies.[12] The experimental elements are relevant to several aspects of the project: the open call and piloting processes, the community engagement and co-creation practices, the development of technological solutions, the replication processes, and so on. Societal and technological aspects of the project are both subjects of experimentation that can be contextualised in both social and technological innovation domains.

Technological solutions that respond to the needs of communities and are developed by means of co-creation with members of those communities may be viewed in the context of local innovation, with the city-centred and community-minded approach; in the context of technological innovation and social innovation.

Conditions of Vulnerability and Marginalisation

The View on Notions

Aiming to bring together the world of technologies and vulnerable and marginalised communities, we inevitably face questions on the very essence of the conditions of vulnerability and marginalisation. In addition to the notions itself, the questions arise on the identitarian, inner aspects of belonging to the disadvantaged community.

On the grant proposal stage of writing, the phrase 'hard to reach' was used while describing the communities at the centre of attention. Later we decided to abandon such a phrasing. The proposal to abandon the 'hard to reach' notion had been articulated by the author of this work, leader of the Work package 2 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement in Practice'. This proposal was based on the discussion happening between the participants of the work package ("Nobody is per se hard to reach"; "Such a terminology suggests that the municipalities are 'lazy' to reach the groups") and has been voted in favour of by the members of the consortium.

The conditions of vulnerability and marginalisation have different focuses, with the vulnerability being the 'inner' condition, an inward situation, while the condition of marginalisation implies being an 'object' of the process of marginalisation, being on the 'receiving side' of the external process, in contrast with the 'inner' condition. The word 'disadvantaged', in turn, is used as a comprehensive notion including the

[9] The reflections on the issue had been in the core of the proposals derived from the lessons learned during the first round of the open calls and submitted for the SXSW 2024 event: Khutsishvili K., Combe M. 'Making the tech: co-creation without exploitation'; Pavicic, N. 'Tech development for and with people who are less well off', available online at: https://panelpicker.sxsw.com/vote/137135.

[10] Here I purposefully avoid to use the phrase 'are given a voice' in relation to communities, as the passive tense itself may be seen as indicating the 'object-like' position in the situation of the asymmetry of power. Even when the situation of imbalance and disparity is very much present and needs to be tackled, by the efforts put into the project as well, the grammar of power disparity is easy to be addressed first.

[11] See: Hoffecker, E. (2018) Local innovation: What it is and why it matters for developing economies, *Working Paper 01*, May 2018, p.4, available online at: https://d-lab.mit.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Local%20Innovation%20Working%20Paper%2001.pdf.

[12] See, for example. Vignoli, M. (2023) New research methodologies in Innovation: A shift toward experimentation, *CERN IdeaSquare Journal of Experimental Innovation*, 7, 2, pp. 1–3, available online at: https://e-publishing.cern.ch/index.php/CIJ/article/view/1482.

notions focused on different aspects and conditions belonging to the 'disadvantaged' condition.

We may outline that the words 'disadvantaged', 'vulnerable', and 'marginalised' vary with respect to their sensitivity, with 'disadvantaged' being more neutral. Both conditions of vulnerability and marginalisation relate to ethical considerations: the 'do no harm' normative principle is supplemented by thoughts on the desirable 'empowering' effect relevant for both conditions, be it the 'inner' condition of vulnerability or the vectored toward the person or group, directed from the 'outside', condition of marginalisation.

Since our work, be it the piloting process itself, or related activities such as engagement with replicator cities, aims to produce and accumulate both framework and the knowledge useful for the cities to do the very same, the central subject of translation processes is a city, be it municipality (the structure relevant to the Municipality of Amsterdam in CommuniCity's first piloting round) or affiliated with municipalities innovation agents (structures relevant to Porto Digital, Domus Social and Forum Virium Helsinki in CommuniCity's first pilot round). Keeping in mind such a focus, we may also extend the 'subjectivity' to tech providers and associations. Here it is suitable to make a remark focused on terminology: while during our work we use the word 'association' implying its general clarity, inside the Work package there was a discussion on 'self-evidence' of the 'association' term for a broader audience, including, for example, young start-up managers or members of communities. Adeeb Sidani, Porto Digital, defines associations as "the entities that are, mainly but not restricted to, non-profit organisations that work closely in the field with the marginalised groups". Consequently, their role in the project is to "facilitate the understanding of the needs of the people and are the mediators to reach the people and implement the solutions". Neeltje Pavicic, the City of Amsterdam, sees the associations as "organisations that have connections with the 'target group' we want to develop tech with and for".

The 'target group' notion appears in the project and hence in this work but being used carefully: it is an element of the professional vocabulary of technological providers and also civil servants; the area and format of communication where this notion is employed is limited to the formal project related interactions between the parties sharing this vocabulary. While being convenient in formal professional communications, it is absolutely 'alien' for the purposes of broader discussion, engagement, including the engagement with communities. As it is seen by Sara Neves, Domus Social, the 'target community' is not the best expression in application to vulnerable and marginalised communities that are by the essence of their activities collaborators in the process. This element of professional vocabulary is used with limitations in this work as well, mostly referring to the wording used by the technological providers and civil servants during the periodical meetings and in formal communication. When used in this text, by 'target group' the community to which needs the pilot is addressed is meant.

The Questions of Agency

The agency of cities, tech providers and associations in CommuniCity's translation processes is part of a setting where the 'target groups', vulnerable and marginalised communities, are viewed on the receiving side of the translation process. Such a setting is a consequence of information asymmetry to which the conditions of vulnerability and marginalisation are contributing, and it also indicates power imbalance. It is important to stress that conditions of vulnerability and marginalisation may not be seen as the sole reason for power imbalance: artificial intelligence and broader emerging technologies being on par with cities and their disadvantaged communities at the centre of the project bring the asymmetry of knowledge and skills, the factor of the technological divide that exceeds in its application the groups targeted in the project. This 'unfair' condition has not been ignored in CommuniCity, vice versa, the fifth Minimal Interoperability Mechanism (MIM5) 'Fair AI' is featured in both reflections and project related activities, being discussed at conferences and explicitly outlined in open call materials.

The vulnerable and marginalised community specificity, as well as the situation of power imbalance, lead to the necessity to prepare a minimal set of recommendations on how to engage with communities. The points comprising the list are provided below, being developed 'inside' the timeframe of the first piloting round, based on piloting experiences in the City of Amsterdam:

1) Simplicity, clarity, evidence as core principles of all interactions with communities;

2) The precise goal in mind. Paying attention to positive externalities;

3) Reasoning in favour of mutual benefit (why do we need to know this concept, framework, tool? Why do we need to participate?)

4) Keeping in mind the power imbalance structure. Trying to share ownership (while giving fully may not be feasible) by following the above-mentioned points;

5) Adjusting not only the message but also its delivery (stepping out of the office space, going 'on the ground', emphasising the relatable points while keeping authentic).

6) Having interest in community and its members;

7) Being ready that initial attempts would not work. Putting effort.

8) Considering consulting or/and involvement of trusted people, the 'intermediaries' – people being close to communities and respected by their members. For 'intermediaries' it may take less time to open the door to community members. A thoughtful involvement may also count towards the agent's credibility in the community.

In CommuniCity, in Amsterdam and Porto, this was mostly the role of associations. Yet, in one of the pilots, the 'intermediary' individuals had been involved and paid by the pilot host to help to facilitate the trusted contact with a specific community of youth with criminal records and provide feedback on the pilot activities and the solution proposed by the pilot.

9) Having a picture beyond the translation process.

While translation is part of the process of engagement with communities, it is mean rather than a destination. Other parts of collaboration imply presence of the vision on how the engagement should be designed in order to have a positive effect on the community.

10) Collaboration being a useful context for translation and also co-creation. During the first round of open calls, we did realise that we are not in favour of 'testing on'.

In particular, the last point is outlined in the ETHICOMP 2024 long abstract submission on "The challenge of co-creation: How to connect technologies and communities in an ethical way", SXSW 2024 submission, and in the discussion in July 2023 during the training and following consortium meeting in Porto.[13] While the title of this work suggests the translation activities being directed to vulnerable and marginalised communities, we may also look at these parties differently. As it is proposed by Sara Neves, Domus Social, communities should not only be perceived as receivers, but also as 'senders' of messages and content that very often have to be translated for the teams without social technical skills. Translation in this perspective goes both ways with communities being empowered by the symmetry of processes going both ways.

Ethical Questions: General Overview, Including the Conditions of Vulnerability and Marginalisation

While being seen from a certain perspective as a project continuing OrganiCity and SynchroniCity project agenda and way of thinking, CommuniCity is significantly different from those projects from the perspective of social innovation and its focus on disadvantaged communities.

On the proposal stage, the ethical questions had been envisioned and approached in a comprehensive manner. The second work package, 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement in Practice', among its aims has a strong focus on ethical issues related to the project. The first work package comprises reports drafted by the appointed members of an independent ethical board observing the project.

The 'translational' aspect of work has an obvious ethical dimension related to the conditions of vulnerability and marginalisation. The 'do no harm' normativity, on the one hand, is combined with an expected impact, a positive information/education externality. The practical need for 'translation' aimed toward the 'target groups' in the context of piloting and general CommuniCity framework is at the same time an informative/education-aimed endeavour with an expected positive impact, if done ethically.

From the beginning, the ethical questions related to all of the aspects of piloting processes and the project in general are expected to be carefully considered and reflected upon, since the communities – and in this case vulnerable and marginalised communities and their needs – are at the centre of the project. Consequently, the normative aspects play an important role.

At the same time, a dialectical relation is present at this point: the 'do no harm' norm coexists with the experimental nature of the project and pilots. While the continuous effort to ensure the ethical issues are foreseen, analysed, and addressed in the proper way is present, there is still a space for the unforeseen and unexpected challenges. The stress on the 'learning' part of the project being present from the proposal stage, is extremely important. The presence of an independent ethical board and a work package with a focus on ethics – both from a theoretical normative perspective (the work of Demos Helsinki) and based on the piloting processes and empirical research (University of Amsterdam, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, City of Amsterdam) – the 'safeguarding' pillars in the project design. At the same time, with any unforeseen ethical issue taking place, the appropriate mitigation measures are combined with the 'learning' part: the documentation of the issue and the related reflection, that may have potential to be used by other pilots, projects, cities, communities if facing similar problems.

First Round of the Open Calls: The Challenges of 'Translation'

Amsterdam

The first challenge in the first round of the open calls for the City of Amsterdam is the challenge of translation in its literal sense: looking for a technological solution that would enable people to have a real-time conversation in their native language with employees at the municipality. The winning proposal is a mobile application that aims to facilitate the integration process of status holders (asylum seekers who received permission to stay in the Netherlands). In the future the City of Amsterdam would like to be able to use the solution also in other applications and on its websites.[14]

The second challenge in Amsterdam has a translational nature in a metaphorical sense: looking for AI technologies that can make the municipality's healthcare information more accessible by converting the information to video. Such videos

[13] Khutsishvili, K., Pavicic N., Combé, M. 'The challenge of co-creation: How to connect technologies and communities in an ethical way', ETHICOMP 2024 accepted long abstract that will be published in the beginning of 2024; Khutsishvili, K., Combe, M. (2023) 'Making the tech: co-creation without exploitation', SXSW 2024 submission, available online at: https://panelpicker.sxsw.com/vote/140926.

[14] Challenges articulated by the City of Amsterdam for the first round of the open calls: https://communicity-project.eu/amsterdam-challenge/.

could also be used to spread health information through social media and other online platforms. The winning pilot focuses on the Dutch National Immunisation Programme.

The third challenge in Amsterdam is formulated in broad terms having a precise focus on a 'target group'. The municipality of Amsterdam was looking for a technological solution that would empower young people who have been in contact with the law and have a criminal record. The challenge derives from the situation when coming into contact with the law at a young age and/or getting a criminal record may have a negative impact on a person's life later on. For instance, it can significantly reduce the chances of obtaining a code of conduct (in Dutch: VOG) needed for different purposes including getting a certain type of jobs and internships, security pass or visa to other countries.

The fourth challenge in Amsterdam was a non-specified so-called 'wild card' open for a technological solution for any challenge related to vulnerable and marginalised communities.

It is also important to point out that the City of Amsterdam as well as the City of Porto share experiences of piloting with the winning team (the same team won in both cities) being based in another country, not in the Netherlands or Portugal but in Denmark. Consequently, the challenge of translation has been present in its literal sense. According to the winning team and based on their experiences in Amsterdam, they learned that expectations can deviate from reality when it comes to the expectations on a project and the actual execution of the project. Consequently, adaptability and communication are key. The team also learned that communication and compromise are essential for a good collaborative process when it comes to overcoming language barriers.

Porto

The first challenge articulated by the City of Porto is the social isolation of elderly people, the loneliness and psychological problems related to the lack of interaction and inclusion. The 'translational' aspect here may not be in the foreground but it is still there when it turns to the 'translation' of the technological concepts and tools, aiming to ensure that the 'target group' is prepared to benefit from the proposed technological solution.

The second challenge in Porto is the health and well-being of the elderly. It focuses on the issues of underprovision of critical goods and services to the elderly, such as healthcare services, food, medicines, due to the lack of mobility and autonomy in this group. Furthermore, the challenge outlines the presence of economic vulnerability and digital illiteracy factors sharpening the problems in the 'target group'. Hence, the challenge articulated the need for innovative technological solutions focused on overcoming the difficulties of reduced physical and mental capabilities of the elderly.

While the project partners based in the city of Porto, Porto Digital and Domus Social, have an extended experience of collaboration, the specificity of engagement with vulnerable and marginalised communities was not a daily practice for managers of Porto Digital. The related processes have been designed by means of active discussions with associations, people who have relevant experience, on the preparation stage. Associations having focused and specialised experience of engagement with the 'target group' of the elderly played the role of intermediaries in the first piloting round in Porto.

Helsinki

The first challenge in Helsinki derives from the issue of the lack of Finnish language skills in the group of unemployed immigrants. The linguistic problem is often intertwined with the lack of digital skills that are expected by the public authorities. Consequently, people find themselves lacking skills that are required to exercise the basic life and societal needs such as paying bills, registering for childcare or getting medical services. According to the forecasts, in 2030 around 25% of Helsinki's working age residents will not speak Finnish as their mother tongue. Therefore, Helsinki is looking for web-based solutions and content to support acquiring digital and societal skills by means that do not require any Finnish language skills. The challenge in its essence is a response to the 'translational' problem, with a technological solution seen as a 'bridge' overcoming the need for translation.

The second challenge in Helsinki relates to the first one: the city is looking for solutions to support long-term unemployed citizens with little or non-existent digital skills to integrate into Finnish society. In particular, Helsinki wants to strengthen their digital skills in order to motivate and help them to integrate into working life. The unemployment rate in Helsinki is increasing, and so is the number of long-term unemployed citizens. City of Helsinki offers rehabilitative work activities for the long-term unemployed to support their integration into society and working life.

In the third challenge, Helsinki articulated the need for virtual technologies to enhance social interactions and to develop the digital skills of disabled citizens. Adults and especially young adults with developmental disabilities face challenges preventing them from engaging with disability services provided by the city. According to the prior experimentations, virtual environments have a potential within the 'target group' and are considered as an attractive means of social interaction. To prevent marginalisation, a motivating virtual environment is needed, where people with disabilities can maintain social contacts and develop digital skills. The daily routines, as well as examining new situations and environments of everyday life, can also be safely practiced using such technologies.

The fourth challenge in Helsinki is elderly centred. In Finland, 80% of accidents among people over the age of 65 years are the result of a fall. Therefore, a reliable alarm system is needed for homecare customers so that they can live a safe and independent life in their own homes. In alarm solutions based on cameras, so-called dead corners are difficult to tackle and wearable alarm systems also have several challenges, such as

a lack of alarm if the customer is unconscious. In addition, the aesthetics and ethics of cameras often raise justified concerns. The city was looking for technologies offering a reliable and scalable solution that increases the safety as well as the wellbeing of the homecare clients. In order to avoid the negative impacts of cameras and wearables, the system must be based on sensor technology and artificial intelligence.

The Cities: Specificity and Commonality

Among the interesting observations based on the first piloting round in the cities of Amsterdam, Porto, and Helsinki is the 'difference'. Within the shared framework of CommuniCity and unified format of open calls within the framework, the difference could have been observed already on the phase of challenge formulation.

We can outline factors of different nature determining the difference: the institutional factor, in particular, different national legal and regulatory frameworks inside which different cities and partners of the project are operating, structural / design difference of organisations – partners of the project representing the cities, difference in approaches inside the partner organisations, be it based on the 'lessons learned' from the previous projects/piloting initiatives, knowledge base, organisational structure, legal system, and so on. For example, the city of Amsterdam is presented in the project by the municipality itself, while the acting partners on behalf of the cities of Porto and Helsinki are Porto Digital, the innovation company of the city of Porto, Domus Social, the social-oriented housing company of the city of Porto, and Forum Virium Helsinki, the innovation company of the city of Helsinki.[15]

Amsterdam

As it was outlined above, in addition to the kick off, mid-term and concluding meetings, Amsterdam designed periodical meetings aimed to facilitate discussions, with guests separated during the sessions according to their 'professional' focus in a pilot, be it a tech provider, association, civil servant, member of community involved in the project. These two meeting modalities, as well as other means of feedback and communication used in the project (e.g., the final reports) enabled collection of opinions, views and experiences needed for the reflective analysis and further accumulation of learnings.

For instance, the winning pilot teams outlined points of reflection and suggestions for further open call and piloting process adjustment. Among those are:

- The meaning as well as the definition of co-creation in CommuniCity may be unclear for a pilot team. The suggestion of the pilot team that raised this doubt is to organise a meeting on co-creation uniting all the pilot teams at the start of the second round of pilots, a meeting on co-creation with all the pilot teams. During such a meeting, CommuniCity and different pilot teams could share their methods.

- If a pilot takes its place during summer, it is more difficult to initiate the needed partnerships and engagement moments. In this case, it is proposed to extend the duration of piloting.

- It is crucial for the success of the pilot for a tech provider to make sure that it thoroughly understands the 'target group' itself, its problems and needs.

- The co-creation methods are not only the element needed for the CommuniCity project. They are a useful tool to appeal to the 'target group'.

- It is important to make sure that the open call is also announced in the 'target' neighbourhood itself so that local technological companies that have a good chance to understand the context already can respond and participate. The tips for this can be: making local videos for promotion[16]; information activities and meetings in the area aimed at the local network;

- The possibilities of involvement of community members on the very initial stage can be further explored. For instance, let the 'target' group read along with the proposals and thus give them a role in the jury.

- It is crucial for a technological provider to be sure that the association they are 'teaming with' has a solid contact with the 'target group'. Otherwise, numerous problems will come on the way, and they will be difficult to overcome inside a limited piloting timeframe.

- It is important for the teams to ensure that the members of targeted communities are available for translation and co-creation activities from the beginning of the pilot. Otherwise, the pilot may not be realised inside the given timeframe.

- Once the 'target group' has joined, make sure you start the co-creation quickly and don't wait too long, otherwise you will lose them.

- Emphasised by different teams and adjusted/developed for the second round: it is necessary to thoroughly explain to all parties involved, especially the technological providers, what is meant by co-creation and why it is important for the CommuniCity project and for the success of the particular pilot.

- All parties should be aware that if the winning team proposes the already existing in its technological portfolio

[15] The websites of the partners: Porto Digital https://www.portodigital.org; Domus Social https://www.domussocial.pt; Forum Virium Helsinki https://forumvirium.fi/en/.

[16] Has been done in Amsterdam closer to the end of the first open call: https://communicity-project.eu/2023/04/03/communicity-in-the-news-amsterdam-challenges/.

solution to be 'tested on' new audience, the 'target group', such a solution can indeed be partly adapted to the needs of this specific community but there is no 'one fit for all' and such solutions are not always suitable for all 'target groups'.

- Co-creation approaches used must 'fit well' with experiences of the 'target group'.

- Engagement with communities can be hard and time-consuming for technological providers.

- The open call information should be more detailed, with a focus on engagement and co-creation with the communities, the attention needed and possible challenges.

- The jury needs to pay careful attention to the team's response to these aspects in its project proposal.

- The more vulnerable a community is, the greater the chance that harm can be done if the expectations that have been raised are not met.

- While engaging with the community, be it translation or co-creation activities, it is important to 'take it seriously': listen well, gather the feedback carefully, explain and translate all steps well, even in cases of a difficult technological solution (such as, for example, animated video). No 'stereotyping' should take place. Equal non-hierarchical partnership approach is necessary.

- Translation challenge in its literal sense is something to be aware of. If the winning team is not based in the country where the pilot takes place, geographical and linguistic barriers can impact the engagement activities. Literal translation issues and co-creation in another language (English) than the official language of the country need to be further reflected on in the project.

- There is a complex issue on the financial remuneration prepared for members of the 'target community' for their participation: according to some pilot hosts and 'intermediaries' working with 'in the field', members of community put effort, they do work and this work should be remunerated, it is also a matter of respect and professional treatment. At the same time, another point has been raised by a technological provider: if they pay people to test the product, would it lead to people participating in co-creation just because of remuneration? In addition, members of another pilot quoted the words of one of the members of 'target community' who stated that he participates in the project "to help people, to work together towards a higher goal". This vector of shared experiences and motivation needs further reflection and discussion.

Porto

Porto's approach to the first piloting round can be described as an approach realised through the collaboration of Porto Digital and Domus Social with associations, without direct interaction with the elderly community. We may expect though that this approach is going to change in the second round of the open calls through the higher stress on co-creation and less reliance on associations as intermediaries, 'translators' to the communities. The level of motivation of associations in the first round smoothed the processes in Porto: associations were sincerely interested in technological solutions proposed by technological providers.

One of the main concerns articulated by Porto-based partners of CommuniCity project in regard to translation and further engagement activities with communities is how to avoid the situation of disappointment within the 'target communities'. These concerns are shared by partners based in the city of Amsterdam.

With a limited amount of resources available, the pilots most probably will not have financial and other support in Porto after the piloting rounds and timeframes. Consequently, the piloting timeframe may not be enough to develop a rather finalised solution responding to needs of the community. In this scenario, the effort put by the members of communities into the engagement activities with the pilot teams may be seen by them as fruitless. The reflection articulated by Sara Neves, Domus Social, is the challenge of explaining to the communities that their members are in a way participating in 'testing' of the solutions. While they are definitely contributing to the achievement of creation of the solution, it is not necessary that they will be the final users and beneficiaries of such a solution. The open and honest communication in this regard should be a part of the very initial process of community engagement including the stage of translation of concepts, tools and principles of local innovations to the communities. Without such a communication it is not possible to sustain the trust within the communities toward the project and parties involved, which, in turn, may lead to negative externalities in relation to further communication between members of the community and civil servants and associations and avoid disappointment that contradicts with 'do no harm' principle of ethical engagement outlined above.

At the end of each round, the adjustments may be made, including the adjustment in communication and engagement with the 'target group' including translation activities.

Engagement and co-creation activities are seen on two levels: one may engage in formulation of challenges together with associations or/and one in formulation of the solutions to these challenges. The translation activities then are relevant to both modalities, being necessary to ensure the needed understanding of processes.

Porto also held periodic (biweekly) online meetings, but only with the pilot project teams, all at the same time. A lesson for the next round is to involve, at least, the pilot hosts in the meetings as well. The meetings in Porto were aimed to monitor project implementation and were not co-creation meetings like in Amsterdam. The Amsterdam meetings design will be adopted in Porto in the second piloting round.

Two pilots in Porto proposed solutions that were on a rather advanced stage and then had been adjusted to the needs of the community; two other pilots were built 'from scratch', with a starting point of defining the needs of the community.

The community engagement including the concept translation activities are aimed to be intensified in the city of Porto during the second round of open calls and piloting, with understanding that the co-creation element had not been as strong as it could be due to the timing constraints and unexpected organisational challenges.

The specificity of the 'target community' is outlined as a factor of difference in Porto, with the change in 'target community' chosen in the second round. The 'target community' will stay the same in all three rounds in Porto which is seen as a positive factor by Porto-based partners, since it allows them to work with the community for 3 years and not just 6 months. However, the challenges are aimed at different groups within the same 'target community': the first open call was targeted to the elderly and in the second it will be young children, the unemployed and in two other challenges the entire community.

The literal aspect of translation activities is also emphasised by Porto-based partners, with the need to translate the technological communications of the solutions written in English to Portuguese to be understood.

Helsinki

The approach to open calls and piloting processes in Helsinki has been determined by the established ways of operation meaning operation in other projects. Forum Virium Helsinki (FVH) being an innovation company of the city of Helsinki agency-wise is in the similar position with Porto Digital, while the City of Amsterdam operates in the project directly, as municipality, with civil servants leading and contributing to the project. At the same time, relations with the City of Helsinki make it necessary for FVH to comply with the City of Helsinki procedures. The challenge collection process in Helsinki had been based on continuous collaboration with the city, with needs and interests articulated not necessarily in relation to the CommuniCity project but in general, also in the context of other projects. In Helsinki, associations have not been involved in the first CommuniCity round, this is determined by the way FVH operates with its connection to the city. Each of four pilots of FVH has been related to a particular division at the City of Helsinki, as the City has its own objectives and approaches the CommuniCity project as a possibility to achieve these objectives. The members of 'target groups' in Helsinki are clients of the City of Helsinki, with this setting being different from settings in the cities of Porto and Amsterdam. The respective divisions of the City, in turn, have extended experience conducting the co-creation sessions as well as other engagement activities, with these formats being seen as the established way to proceed. This set up, in turn, appears to be a 'comfortable' context for FVH in their CommuniCity project efforts.

'Research permit' factor in Helsinki has had a significant influence on both organisational and content part of the CommuniCity related processes. The City of Helsinki has a unit activities of which are dedicated to all types of research done with the City including the students' thesis work on issues involving the City. The introduction to the research permit application procedure summarises the situations in which acquiring of the research permit is necessary: "If you are interested in studying a topic related to Helsinki, the City of Helsinki can provide you with the data you need and make the necessary arrangements to grant you a research permit."[17] The time needed to obtain a research permit is a significant factor in the timeline of the piloting activities: "It is important that you submit your research permit application in good time. Applications are processed in the order they are submitted, and this usually takes 4–6 weeks". The relevant activities in cities of Amsterdam and Porto, in turn, do not require such a permit. This factor of difference has an impact on the process design in the general context of similarity, unification and replicability aim of CommuniCity project. As it is pointed by Sara Neves, Domus Social, it would be very interesting to test the research permit system in Porto in the next rounds open call and piloting rounds, despite its constraints described by FVH.

The research permit institutionalised system in Helsinki also covers the issues of ethics. All the activities directed toward the 'end users', members of 'target groups', be it kids, the elderly, the disabled or any other community, including, for example, such detailed elements as the design of surveys which the participants would be asked to fill in the project need to be properly defined, described and included in the very beginning, before the project activities even start. Such a system has its own strengths and weaknesses: on the one hand, it encourages a thoughtful and transparent research design; on the other, it puts serious obstacles to flexibility and adjustment needed if something in the initial design would not match with the real-life circumstances. Here the duality of aims in the heart of CommuniCity project are illuminated: for the experimental part of the project, such a system is more an obstacle rather than an enabler since it is difficult if not impossible to adjust and change on the way, while for the sensitive, ethical part of the project, with vulnerable and marginalised communities being at the centre and the principle of 'do no harm' essential for all of the engagements with the communities, such a system makes it easier to ensure that the activities are conducted in 'safe' and ethical way. Yet, it is important to note that without a thoughtful detailed and well envisioned plan, the engagement activities with communities being meant to be at the centre of CommuniCity, would not be possible to be conducted. The factor of experience and practice of both handling the research permit documentation, coming up with relevant research design and engaging with communities may be crucial for the project to be successful in this system. To

[17] Research Permit information, The City of Helsinki: https://www.hel.fi/en/decision-making/information-on-helsinki/data-protection-and-information-management/research-permits.

understand the practical part of the process one may provide an example: not only the communications with members of the 'target community' such as the elderly people should be envisioned and drafted for the research permit application but also the communications with, in case of elderly people, the staff members taking care of them, be it e-mails or other means. The points in relation to GDPR also need to be outlined in the permit application. All the surveys, interview questions and any other engagement and feedback gathering activities need to be specified.

As a consequence of taking place in such a system, FVH has not handled any personal data of members of their 'target groups' in CommuniCity, it was done by the City of Helsinki. FVH also did not need to respond to the ethical questions appearing on the way since all the activities have been 'pre-determined' and handled in the permit application. This created a curious situation when presence of the Work package 2 'Ethical and inclusive Engagement in Practice' in the project has been highly appreciated by FVH, as the company is not itself used to responding to the ethical issues in such a way as it is done on a 'macro' level of the project.

In general, the way FVH manages piloting is established by years of its practice. With regard to the experimentation part of the project, such a scene set has its strengths and limitations: best practices of piloting guide other cities in their CommuniCity experiences, yet such a significant background combined with the research permit system may be seen as limiting for the attempts of 'trying something new', experimenting on the way.

The difference between CommuniCity and previous projects FVH had been involved in is in the timeframe: oftentimes, FVH operates the piloting processes that exceed 6 months framework.

An example of the challenge faced by the winning teams in Helsinki in their engagement with the vulnerable community relates to the pilot with virtual reality glasses. The pilot team wanted first to engage with members of the community, but it was impossible before the research permit process was finalised. In this way, a 'conflict' with the CommuniCity ways of process design may be spotted: it might be useful first to have a session with the members of the 'target group', to collect their impressions, gather feedback, and then adjust the research plan according to their needs but this is not possible in the research permit system. In the same pilot, community engagement was exercised through workshops aimed to teach members of the vulnerable community, the disabled, skills needed to use the virtual reality glasses. The 'translation' had been conducted by the instructor who was positively surprised how skilful some community members came to be in these activities and how positive the response was. The engagement had been a success: the community members were interested in this way of learning; it was positive for the staff members because they were able to conduct interesting activities for their clients during which they also learn. This was also a good learning experience for FVH.

Translation in the Context: Ethical Considerations Based on the First Round of Piloting

Key Points of Ethical Piloting and Community Engagement

The list of key points of ethical piloting and community engagement has been prepared by the author of this work with the input of Kaisa Schmidt-Thomé and Anna Björk, Demos Helsinki research institution partner, for the second round of the open calls:

1. Your pilot should be centred around the needs of vulnerable and marginalised communities.

2. While working with the communities, the 'do no harm' principle is at the core of all engagement activities.[18]

3. Your social skills matter. Please, pay special attention to power structures and hierarchies in all engagements.

4. Invest time and effort in your pilot design and make sure you have considered the social context, key stakeholder groups, language used for communication, and the impact generated by the pilot on all parties throughout the pilot's lifeline.

5. We value creating AI and broader technological solutions with and for the communities rather than 'testing' the solutions on their members.

6. Co-creation also applies to the relation between tech provider and association.

[18] While engaging with vulnerable and marginalised communities, with an aim to bring two worlds together, the world of emerging technologies and the communities, it is important not to do 'worse'. In this statement, we take the standpoint of winning pilot teams and primarily the tech provider party of a team being supposed to be in the role of agents interacting with communities. Yet, the responsibility here should not be solely assigned to winning teams and tech provider parties. The pilot hosts, associations, CommuniCity project managers are also among the facilitators of engagement with communities on par with tech providers. One of the examples of worries expressed by CommuniCity partners and outlined in this work is the risk of disappointment in the communities. The example here can be: community members put effort into co-creation activities but the final solution is not available for them due to the project not being continued by the pilot host after the piloting stage.

One of the ways proposed in the project to mitigate the risks of disappointment is to correctly manage the community's expectations, and involve community members only when the purpose and possible outcomes of the project and their participation in it are very clear.

In addition, Work package 2 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement in Practice' and the external Ethical Board, with activities conducted being reflected in Work package 1, are meant to support the project stakeholders in their engagement activities including translation activities discussed in this work.

7. We believe in Fair AI (MIM5).[19]

8. Transparency and explainability matter, as well as privacy, data protection and responsible data use.

9. We aim to learn from this project together: you may be able to dedicate time to our research needs. We want to learn from both our successes and failures. Our research will follow the principles of RR&I and other applicable research ethics principles.

10. Responsibility and accountability are among the core values while engaging with vulnerable and marginalised communities. This engagement should be mutually rewarding.

11. Open mind and flexibility will be needed while piloting: you will be collaborating with people with diverse backgrounds, also in a professional sense – beyond the members of AI/technological world, we are civil servants, managers, researchers, social innovation experts, and the list continues.[20]

During the first round of the open calls, approaches to facilitate the discussion, reflection and analysis being the basis of learning formation differed from city to city. For example, during the preparation stage, the City of Amsterdam in consultation with the University of Amsterdam designed periodical meetings aimed to gather the agents involved in the piloting processes: the tech providers, associations, civil servants, and members of communities. The participants were divided by their respective 'groups': the tech providers from one pilot held a discussion with tech providers from other pilots, associations exchanged opinions with other associations, civil servants with other civil servants. During the first round of piloting, the City of Amsterdam held two such sessions – in July and September respectively.

Below I provide the concept of periodical meetings created inside the framework of the CommuniCity project in Amsterdam.[21]

The goal of such meetings, as was outlined in set up and conceptual documents provided for the discussion by the City of Amsterdam, is to facilitate the conditions for the participants to be open about the obstacles they encounter during the pilots. "We want to learn from them what bottlenecks there are in co-creating tech for and with marginalised groups, so we can think of solutions", is stated in the set-up document.

1) All the CommuniCity pilots within the City of Amsterdam city have periodical 2–3 hours meetings to exchange experiences and learn from each other at a location in the involved city. This exchange will also be used by the CommuniCity team to learn how development of tech for, with and by marginalised groups can be improved and stimulated. We try to design the meetings to enhance openness. All decisions about the setup are taken with this in mind.

   Important: These meetings should not be for the pilots to showcase their progress and successes, but rather to get a better understanding of difficulties and bottlenecks, so we can look for remedies together.

2) There can be three meetings during the pilot: 1. Kick-off; 2. Midway; 3. End.

3) Several members of each pilot's team are expected to participate:

- 1 representative of the association;

- 1–2 members of the 'target group';

- 1 representative of the tech company.

4) The meetings will be at a location in the city where the pilot is taking place, offline.

5) Preliminary program of the meetings includes:

- Reception: all participants gather in the informal atmosphere and have a look at each other's projects that are presented on posters. Welcome word;

- The group is split up: all 'users' together, all associations together, all tech companies together. There will be a moderator for each group and a researcher who takes notes. The group discusses issues/bottlenecks that are encountered by the pilots and ways of dealing with them;

- Lunch or bites and drinks.

6) Context: an important aspect of the CommuniCity project is learning about technology development with, for and by marginalised groups. Disseminating this knowledge is another important aspect. Researchers can use these meetings to hear about the experiences of the participants, including the use of co-creation methods.

7) We want to find out how municipalities can facilitate and support tech development for, with and by marginalised communities.

[19] MIM is an abbreviation for a Minimal Interoperability Mechanism. As defined by the Open and Agile Smart Cities (OASC), coordinator of the CommuniCity project, MIMs are 'a set of practical capabilities based on open technical specifications that allow cities and communities to replicate and scale solutions globally. The formal description of MIMs is provided here: https://oascities.org/minimal-interoperability-mechanisms/. In simple terms, the idea of MIMs is to suggest formal technical ways and tools to replicate solutions in other cities and communities. The possibility of accumulation of learnings and ongoing (and also future) replication in other cities and communities are significant elements of the CommuniCity project (e.g. by engagement with replicator cities, new cities joining the project - for the second round those are the cities of Aarhus, Tallinn, Breda, Prague.) In this way, MIMs are relevant technical instruments applied, tested and developed in the project. The MIM5, Fair AI, compliance is desirable for the CommuniCity open call applicants, detailed information on MIM 5 can be obtained at: https://mims.oascities.org/mims/oasc-mim5-transparency.

[20] The list is available on CommuniCity website: https://communicity-project.eu/key-ethical-points/.

[21] The conceptual work on periodical meetings had been initiated and conducted in February 2023 by the City of Amsterdam (Neeltje Pavicic, Machteld Combe) with consultations with the University of Amsterdam (Kristina Khutsishvili).

An interesting observation deriving from the comparison of the points articulated during the periodical meeting held in July and September.

Creating Solutions with Communities or Testing Solutions on Communities?

One of the ethical questions not yet sufficiently answered in the project is what is the ethical way to respond to the possible situation when the community members add value to the development of the solution but then will not be amongst the ones who benefit from this solution in its later development stage. The underlying reasons for such a situation may be different: in one of the examples from the City of Amsterdam, the piloting solution, despite multiple challenges on the way of this particular pilot implementation, is appreciated by the pilot host with an aim to sustain and utilise the solution beyond the piloting timeframe. The unexpected problem the pilot host is facing at the end of a piloting period is the high maintenance cost of the solution making this aspiration not feasible while having motivation and resources available but not matching with the costs and with alternative possibilities of spending these resources on direct activities supporting the 'target group' with regard to the same challenge; the similar obstacle is observed with pilots in Porto.

Another ethical challenge that has been outlined in this work is the dilemma of 'co-creation with' and 'testing on'. Does the line between the two exist and if so, where should it be drawn? If, for example, the proposed solution is an application that needs to be developed through the new data coming from a vulnerable or marginalised community being 'fed' to this application, is this an example of co-creation or 'testing on'? One of the answers proposed is that the way the obtained data will be used determines the answer: one may use the data for improving and/or finalising a commercial solution or a solution tailored for these specific people, members of the 'target community'. When the latter happens, there is still an issue of the solution not being made available free of charge or at a reduced cost to those who tested it and helped it to evolve, as is the experience of Porto and also Amsterdam. This issue is a part of learning experiences and definitely an ethical consideration that needs to be further discussed inside the project in general and Work package 2 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement in Practice' in particular.

In view of project partners who share the technological professional background, any technological project needs people and data, with technological solutions needed to be tested. From this standpoint, there is not much of a difference for the technological provider whether it is engaged in 'testing on' activities or co-creation activities, with the latter being more challenging and demanding. Both modalities though require the translation activities on the initial stage aimed to prepare the 'target group' for the engagement activities.

According to Sara Neves, Domus Social, by co-creation we should mean questioning the product itself with the setting being different to the situation when the product is first designed and then the opinions on it are collected. It should start and grow from the beginning in a process of dialogue that demands a lot of time. While 'testing' is not a negative term, it is different from co-creation.

With regard to both ethical questions outlined below, what we would want to avoid by all means is the harm caused to 'target communities' by them feeling 'used', exploited by pilot teams for the teams to develop the commercial 'for profit' solutions. The social innovation vector should be kept in mind while designing the open call and piloting processes, also in communication and translation of the related concepts to applicants and especially to the technological providers who may not realise this fully due to the daily specificity of their professional activities, in contrast, for example, with the associations involved.

The questions of ethical engagement on which Work package 2 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement' is focused also include the practicalities of approaching and motivating the communities to participate in the project including the questions of reward. For instance, the Amsterdam-based pilot hosts and intermediaries working on translation between the civil servants and communities, articulated the practice of financial reward assigned to both participants of engagement sessions and intermediaries, the "translators". The question of financial reward seems to be a 'hard question' for Sara Neves, Domus Social, as there are problems implicated to such payments as well. Adeeb Sidani, Porto Digital, does not see any harm in paying the members of communities involved, as "this is how it goes in the technological world", yet, if we talk about the solutions, communities are 'receiving a product' with financial reward "meaning" less than the product itself. Hence, the continuity of the solution should mean more than the financial reward. It is also important to note that the co-creation process itself is a valuable learning process, regardless of whether the pilot solution continues; co-creation is not only a process with the aim of improving the product, the proposed solution. For everyone involved in co-creation, it should be a respectful, open and collective process of experimentation and mutual learning.

It is also important to mention that the ethical considerations relate not only to 'target communities' but also to pilot hosts, with risks of disappointment and demotivation being relevant also to the latter group. For instance, in the case of Amsterdam, pilot hosts belong to different structural units inside the City of Amsterdam. As it was outlined by the CommuniCity project manager on behalf of the City of Amsterdam, (potential) pilot hosts put in a lot of effort, starting from participation in the formulation of challenges later articulated by the City, to which the applicants need to respond during the open calls. The motivation of pilot hosts is caused by their interest in finding sustainable technological solutions for their existing needs.

In this sense, CommuniCity is seen as an instrument for tackling the objectives or/and a possibility to find practical solutions

to significant problems in the eyes of pilot hosts. Then, at the end of the piloting period, which is the case in Amsterdam in the first round, the pilot host unexpectedly finds out that the solution, while being desirable, is too expensive to be continued by means of procurement; the disappointment and demotivation to further put effort into the project may follow. At the same time, we should not forget the context of the CommuniCity project with its focus on learning.

The scenario when technological solutions are having their continuation after piloting rounds is obviously a very positive scenario, indicating the value added above the scope of the project and strengthening its impact. Yet, this scenario had not been 'promised' in the project proposal. It is also interesting to point out that the view on such a moral dilemma differs between the cities, with the City of Amsterdam worrying about the issue and even considering re-design of the challenge collection process and avoiding further involvement of potential pilot hosts from other structural units of the City and Forum Virium Helsinki putting stress on the learning process instead of further procurement. Moreover, closer to the end of the second round of open calls, the regulatory difference was spotted by the partners. In Finland, it is not possible to procure the solution right after the end of the pilot, while in the Netherlands such a constraint does not exist. Hence, the regulatory difference determines the difference in perceptions and expectations of our partners. It is also interesting to outline that if this difference came to the light for an extended discussion earlier, it could have been included in meetings aimed at the AI procurement clauses update - two rounds of peer review were facilitated in May and June by Living-in.EU movement, with several members of CommuniCity project including the author of this work taking part.[22] It is worth mentioning that CommuniCity will also be a 'testing ground' for the clauses, but this process could only start after the end of the first piloting round.

Ethical Exploitation of Results

The input on the issue of ethical exploitation of results from the piloting stage (based on ongoing experiences of the first round of piloting) needed for the SPI to draft a deliverable D6.7 – Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy had been provided by the author of this work on behalf of Work package 2 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement in Practice'.[23] With learnings derived from the piloting rounds as well as from all the activities and experiences surrounding the piloting being at the centre of the project, with a Work package 6 dedicated to 'Learning, Impact and Dissemination' and led by Enoll, the need for ethics focused input is unequivocal. Being at the centre of the CommuniCity project meaning-wise, the learnings derived from all stages of the piloting process need to be accumulated, analysed, and discussed. The consequent knowledge is forming the learning framework that, in turn, ensures the added value exceeding the scope of the project. This goes in line with the format into which the project has been inscribed, that is the 'coordination and support action', the action aimed to inform other actions and initiatives. The learnings of diverse scale, subject and essence, if being successfully disseminated, with respect to peculiarities of target audiences and modalities these audiences are used to (for example, civil servants, academics/researchers, community members) then can be reflected upon, instrumentalised and internalised by other cities and communities. This envisioned positive impact of the project implies that the results of piloting processes and all related interesting and potentially useful observations, findings and insights need to be carefully collected, discussed, systematised. The ethical aspects of these processes are important, with the values of transparency, integrity, and accountability forming the necessary framework. The focus on vulnerable and marginalised communities and community engagement activities including the attempts to translate frameworks, methods, tools and principles for local innovations for vulnerable and marginalised communities make it crucial to ensure that the 'do no harm' principle is respected, and all of the communications and interactions with the members of communities involved are facilitated and conducted in good faith, with integrity, sensitivity, accountability as an intrinsic context of action.[24] It is very important to ensure that clear and open communication is in place, be it communication with members of 'target communities', the winning teams – tech providers, associations, between the partners and inside the partner organisations. For example, it is absolutely necessary to explain a 'bigger picture' of the CommuniCity project to local stakeholders, including members of disadvantaged communities and associations working with them. Starting from the very beginning of this text, it has been emphasised that the 'target' communities, vulnerable and marginalised communities, are objected to relations of power asymmetry, reflected even in the title of this work. As a balancing attempt, it is important to encourage and facilitate the situation when members of 'target' communities are sharing their impressions/experiences related to participation in the pilot and CommuniCity project.

The community members should be informed about the goals of the project and pilot in an open and honest way, to avoid the situation of disappointment and mismatch of the outcomes with initial expectations. For instance, if co-creating a useful mobile application in response to the need of the community, members should be aware that the piloting timeframe may not be sufficient to finalise the product. In the less optimistic scenario, the pilot may not go in the right direction, and the piloting technological outcome may be not good enough for the need/challenge outlined by the city.[25] As was pointed out by

[22] See: https://living-in.eu/events/roundtables-procurement-clauses-ai, The consequently updated version of the clauses is available at: https://public-buyers-community.ec.europa.eu/communities/procurement-ai/news/new-version-procurement-clauses-ai-available-supporting-responsible.

[23] CommuniCity project deliverable: Oliveira, C., Vasconcelos, L., Oliveira, R. (2023) D6.7 – Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy (Update 1), Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação (SPI).

[24] While there is no sure and 'guaranteed' way to fully prevent the possibility of negative experiences in people and communities, the effort is made to minimise such a possibility, reflected also in design of work packages, with WP2 dedicated to ethical issues and WP1 focused on appointment of the external ethical board and the deliverables - reports drafted by its members.

[25] Although the criteria for assessment of the project proposals aims to decrease such a risk through elements included such as feasibility, potential impact, and other.

Neeltje Pavicic, the City of Amsterdam, we need to avoid the situation of having 100 disappointed communities. Quite the contrary, we need to do all possible for the project and its pilots to add value in solving societal problems. Positive externalities and impact need to be ensured and the related risks, especially the risks related to the community engagement including the translation activities, need to be mitigated. The importance of learnings accumulated, and the whole experimentation and learning design of the project need to be communicated to community members and associations as well as other stakeholders. The ability and willingness of all stakeholders to notice, reflect and share is crucial for the learning accumulation, so the importance of such a reflection needs to be communicated in the very start of the processes and continuously stressed throughout the timeline.

All of the possible questions, doubts and problems raised should be discussed in a direct and open way. The main points of such discussions, as well as the conclusions and decisions made, may also have the potential to build the learning base – be it learnings for the piloting process, project management and execution, community engagement, and so on.

As it was pointed out by CommuniCity managers on behalf of the City of Amsterdam, the fact of the European Union being the source of funding for CommuniCity project with its AI and broader emerging technologies pilots developed with and for marginalised groups, makes it right for us to put an effort to make the marginalised groups all over the European Union to benefit from the results. According to Neeltje Pavicic, the City of Amsterdam, "if we invite tech parties and other organisations to do a pilot with such a small grant, we can expect they take part not for this small amount of money but because they expect exposure and possibility to scale up". In the research for the upcoming deliverable of the City of Amsterdam, it was found that one of the main bottlenecks is the difficulty to turn a technological solution for the marginalised group into a profitable business.[26] Enhancing the possibility to replicate such a solution by targeting a particular marginalised group in many European cities might be an answer to this bottleneck, according to the City of Amsterdam.

It is important to promote a shared understanding of the comprehensive, thorough and united nature of the knowledge system, the system of learnings, that the CommuniCity project with its partners and all of the stakeholders involved in the related processes is accumulating. The learning dissemination activities should ensure that the efforts of the partners and stakeholders involved in the processes around learnings are recognized. Open, clear and transparent communication, respect and recognition of all of the stakeholders adding value while achieving a common goal, are the necessary elements for the ethical work around the pilot stage learnings.

[26] Deliverable on 'The process for incremental improvement and matching the needs of citizens to solutions of tech providers', with the deadline in the end of February 2024.

Conclusions

The focus on vulnerable and marginalised communities combined with experimental design determines the ethical complexity of the CommuniCity project. While the project goals and main elements of its structure, be it the open call framework, piloting solutions, communication and dissemination guidelines, are unified for the project as a whole, its cities and partners, the difference as a feature of processes happening around the pilots and open calls has been noted from the very beginning. Differences in national legal systems, the entities responsible for piloting processes in participating cities, in ways the challenges to which the proposals submitted for the open call need to respond are collected and formulated, in ways dialogue between the parties involved is facilitated are among the obvious. The duality of the unified (and hence well prepared for the replication) and the specific, peculiar to the city, pilot or community, well reflects the complexity of engagement with communities in the project. As it is reflected by members of the winning teams, finding one solution for different communities and their needs may be problematic. Yet, the balance of good practices deriving from the lessons learned and ready for replication in other cities and communities and the specificity in its many dimensions are features of the real life processes, with their complexities and challenges, in contrast with the oversimplified view on processes. Consequently, the work aimed at accumulation and dissemination of learnings of the project is very important both for next open call and piloting rounds and for other ongoing and further projects. It may be also relevant to illustrate the learnings with practical examples of what 'worked' in CommuniCity and what did not.

Translation and co-creation activities aimed at the communities in question do not make the piloting processes easier, quite the opposite. Yet, the opportunities for experimentation and learning accumulation enabled by such design are unprecedented. To facilitate and conduct the related activities of community engagement including the initial translation activities in an ethical way, it is necessary to keep in mind the 'do no harm' principle, the power imbalance including the imbalance of professional, technological subject-related knowledge, and the general condition of belonging to a disadvantaged community. The balancing act as well as the risk of harm mitigation act may be exercised by providing clear and honest communication including the communication on general aims and limitations of the CommuniCity project and particular pilot, encouraging the dialogue on equal terms, aimed at 'de-objectivization' of community and its members and empowering the 'receiving' side of the translation process from the very beginning of the engagement.

Ethics and consent

Ethical approval and consent were not required.

Data availability

Underlying data

No data are associated with this article.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Sara Neves, Domus Social, Portugal, and Matti Hämäläinen, Forum Virium Helsinki, Finland, for their valuable, thoughtful and insightful commentaries.

I would also like to acknowledge the highest level of dedication, creativity and integrity demonstrated by Neeltje Pavicic and Machteld Combé, the City of Amsterdam, in the CommuniCity project, that made our productive collaboration a pleasure.

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✗ **Émilie Dionne**
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This open letter aims to report on the challenges raised by community-based projects that aim to co-create, with various marginalized and vulnerable communities, AI projects. Based from their experiences, through out a multi-elements research program, the open letter aims to provide solutions and tips on how to address and mitigate challenges, that can and/or will arise when aiming to do participatory action-research, and specifically when the communities are in situations of social vulnerability and marginalized. This open letter addresses, therefore, an extremely pertinent, relevant, and important topic. What it aims to do – what its authors aim to do – both in their work, research and innovation approach, and with this article/letter, is extremely commendable. This letter, however, poses a number of challenges in its current form, and I cannot recommend its indexing as is; but I hope these comments will help the authors to redress them, as the letter is extremely rich in what it brings, and it can make a significant contribution, if improved.

1. **Contextualization**. To begin, I think some time should be spent in introducing better and more clearly this letter, the research that was done, the objectives of the letter, too. I found it very challenging to 'understand' the letter. First off, this is in part due to the editing of this letter: there are many errors, syntactic mainly, words missing from sentences, incomplete sentences. This makes it very difficult to follow and understand the letter, and therefore, to fully gain from all the rich elements that are brought throughout.
    1. First addressing, however, the need for greater clarity, from the onset, would help clearly: please tell us precisely and clearly what is the objectives and the aim of the letter; why these have rose for the authors; and how the letter is organized.
2. **Thorough editing of the paper.** There are many co-authors on this paper; it is lengthy too; plus, the authors have clearly spent an important amount of time in thinking through these issues, writing and drafting this letter. Therefore, I'm quite surprised that it was submitted as is, without careful review of the language, and especially in the context of <u>what</u> is discussed, that is: research-action collaboration with communities, especially in various situations of 'vulnerability' and marginalization; where, throughout this letter, the many issues raised by 'language', 'communication', '*translation*', is brought – all key elements of

great contribution this open letter harbours. However, the letter itself is very hard to read and follow, and would be absolutely unacceptable for submission to community-based partners, even more so people and communities living with vulnerability and marginalization. Please attend not only the *language* and *copy-edit* well and thoroughly this paper; but also attend to the overall *organization* and *structuring* of the letter, what it aims to do, and how.

3. **Integrate in current literatures and debates**. The topic discussed in the open letter is of great importance; however, it is surprising that so little integration and discussion of current and past literature is done. There has been, for more than 40 years now, so much writing about working with communities, involving them, co-creating and designing; be it in the research or innovation (tech) worlds, governance as well (urban planning, policy planning), etc. All that is discussed in this paper is greatly relevant, interesting too, yet it is hard to understand why no more is said or done with regards to the existing literature. I would recommend clarify what has been used to 'ground' the projects, the larger 'umbrella' project as well as the 'funded' projects. What resources, for example, would have been provided to the 'competing teams'? etc.
4. **Addressing the repetitions**. Perhaps due to the lack of structure of the overall letter, I was also getting lost and finding confusion the encounter of so many repetitions. This, in my view, needs to be addressed, and working on the overall structure and organization of the letter would help; and perhaps too, facilitate the integrate of an engaging discussion with existing literature (for the authors would be able to reduce the text).

Is the rationale for the Open Letter provided in sufficient detail? (Please consider whether existing challenges in the field are outlined clearly and whether the purpose of the letter is explained)

Yes

Does the article adequately reference differing views and opinions?

Partly

Are all factual statements correct, and are statements and arguments made adequately supported by citations?

Partly

Is the Open Letter written in accessible language? (Please consider whether all subject-specific terms, concepts and abbreviations are explained)

No

Where applicable, are recommendations and next steps explained clearly for others to follow? (Please consider whether others in the research community would be able to implement guidelines or recommendations and/or constructively engage in the debate)

Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Sociology (of biomedicine, technology, aging, gender). Gender studies.

Feminist studies. Feminist philosophy and epistemology. Mixed Methods. Qualitative research and Sociology (of biomedicine, technology, aging, gender). Gender studies. Feminist studies. Feminist philosophy and epistemology. Mixed Methods. Qualitative research and methodology. Care ethics. Care. Healthcare. Primary Health Care. Sociology of healthcare work. Action-Research. Community-based research. Participatory Research. Participatory action-research.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to state that I do not consider it to be of an acceptable scientific standard, for reasons outlined above.

Reviewer Report 11 June 2024

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Centre for Studies in Science Policy, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Delhi, India
Bibhuti Ranjan Bhattacharjya
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We have found this letter very relevant for scholars engaged with co-creation as a theme of their research. It gives good amount of background of the cases it has studied.

Our suggestions to improve the article are the following:

1. The title does not give us the context of the study. It can be modified suitably to reflect the fact that the letter initiates a dialogue with the CommuniCity project in the context of EU, as other social and geographical context may produce a very different sort of challenge to the problem at hand.

2. We were expecting some long quotes from the so-called target groups (or participants) to tease out the challenges they are facing. Without this, the readers are not able to get a feel of the problem.

3. One of the possible contributions of the document is to problematise co-creation. This can indeed be an important contribution given the rise of its use in the academic and policy research today. However, the authors need to connect their work with previous works on co-creation in order to flag this point. It might be helpful to note that co-creation has been studied in different fields, beyond AI, and a flavour of those studies might strengthen the background for the current work. A better connection to previous research on co-creation would also help understand the domains of possible application of their research. Currently, it seems that the article is only meant for improving the design/methodology of the CommuniCity project. Can/should it be broadened?

4. That takes us to the introduction of the letter. Currently, it is too much about the specific project and its various work packages. Is it very relevant for the current publication? Otherwise, this is the place to give the Letter a more conceptual and theoretical orientation to achieve a broader readership. This will change the conclusion too.

Is the rationale for the Open Letter provided in sufficient detail? (Please consider whether existing challenges in the field are outlined clearly and whether the purpose of the letter is explained)
Partly

Does the article adequately reference differing views and opinions?
No

Are all factual statements correct, and are statements and arguments made adequately supported by citations?
Partly

Is the Open Letter written in accessible language? (Please consider whether all subject-specific terms, concepts and abbreviations are explained)
Yes

Where applicable, are recommendations and next steps explained clearly for others to follow? (Please consider whether others in the research community would be able to implement guidelines or recommendations and/or constructively engage in the debate)
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Local innovation; co-creation processes, Frugal innovation.

We confirm that we have read this submission and believe that we have an appropriate level of expertise to confirm that it is of an acceptable scientific standard, however we have significant reservations, as outlined above.

Reviewer Report 03 May 2024

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Bart Wernaart
Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, Netherlands Antilles

'Guidelines for Translating Frameworks, Methods, Tools and Principles of Local Innovations for Marginalised and Vulnerable Communities – 2023' summarizes and analyses the first piloting round in the cities of Amsterdam, Helsinki and Porto inside the framework of CommuniCity Horizon Europe project. The overall goal is to find meaninghful methods to bring together representatives of the world of technology and vulnerable and marginalised communities as a starting point for cocrreating technology that aligns with the local needs of a city. The guidelines are written in the context of a Workpackaghe called 'Ethical and Inclusive Engagement in Practice'. The main goal of CommuniCity is to to come up with scalable practices and solutions, with the possibility to use the guidelines for successful open call and piloting processes as well as CommuniCity technical components and tools to replicate solutions in other cities and communities.
The topic is urgent, and the need for scalable tools to engage vulnerable groups in the co-design of technology that has an impact in their lives, and impacts their way of living in urban areas is more important than ever for various reasons.

I Have some concerns that might be addressed in the revision.
1) What are the main societal challenges that lead to the desire to involve vulnerable people in the co-design of new technologies in urban regions? It would help to clearly identify those and use that as a starting point in the letter.
2) I understand that the case studies/pilots are not fully finished at the time of writing. Nevertheless, the authors can be more specific regarding the data of these pilots. How many people participated? What target group where they part of and how was this defined (how are 'vulnerable' people defined, and to what extent did these vulnerable people participate?).
3) One of the bigger challenges in citizen participation is how to not engage only the 'usual suspects'. In particular it is difficult to involve the truly vulnerable people who are not verbally empowered and do not naturally find their way to local initiatives.
4) The title suggest the formulation of guidelines that can be used in other contexts as well. These guidelines seem to be missing or not fully displayed in the letter. Also, it is unclear how the points of complexity, or the key points derived from the Amsterdam pilot were extracted from the available data.
5) It is unclear how the suggested insights can be used elsewhere or scaled up. I would recommend to be specific in how to translate the insights of this latter to further research.
6) Some sentences are incorrect or seem to be unfinished. A language edit might be helpful.

Is the rationale for the Open Letter provided in sufficient detail? (Please consider whether existing challenges in the field are outlined clearly and whether the purpose of the letter is explained)

Yes

Does the article adequately reference differing views and opinions?

Partly

Are all factual statements correct, and are statements and arguments made adequately supported by citations?

Partly

Is the Open Letter written in accessible language? (Please consider whether all subject-

specific terms, concepts and abbreviations are explained)
Partly

Where applicable, are recommendations and next steps explained clearly for others to follow? (Please consider whether others in the research community would be able to implement guidelines or recommendations and/or constructively engage in the debate)
Partly

Competing Interests: No competing interests were disclosed.

Reviewer Expertise: Moral Design, ethics, citizen participation, smart city.

I confirm that I have read this submission and believe that I have an appropriate level of expertise to state that I do not consider it to be of an acceptable scientific standard, for reasons outlined above.