Generating new futures through collaborative support networks: reflecting on inclusion, awareness and sustainability (submission 30)

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Collaborative support networks are increasingly used to support the inclusion of otherwise marginal, marginalized or less visible groups in structures such as schools, institutions of higher education, and political entities (see, e.g. Camarinha-Mator & Afsarmanesh, 2005). Their form and scale can vary from communities of practice (Wenger, 2000) to global action networks (Waddell, 2010). Participating in such networks can also increase awareness for interpersonal, interdisciplinary, and interorganizational collaboration in differing contexts. One of the inherent features of such networks is that they bring together individuals with various types of experience, whereby the value of that experience for the network is not only based on their formal qualifications such as academic merit or time spent in a job, but also on the quality of their reflection on that experience and its potential to enrich the whole. As catalysts for inclusion and as awareness raisers for the power of network thinking, collaborative support networks may become an essential element of future societal structures. This in turn may help societies to adapt and sustain themselves gracefully in the face of major issues, like climate change, which seems to us one of the most challenging anticipated environmental changes coming at us in our history on earth. The form and shape of collaborative support networks can vary tremendously, and can include non-traditional characteristics like humor and playfulness. Such characteristics may be helpful in the adaptations collaborative support networks may help make in societal structures. We hope to highlight some of these non-traditional qualities in our session.

In this session, we will use the concept of generative metaphors from Don Schön (1979). We will give a few examples of generative metaphors from our respective experience and background. We will reflect on how metaphors can enrich the outcomes of collaborative support networks and catalyze new futures. As they combine qualities that pertain to both the realm of the poetic and the realm of logic (as suggested in Bateson & Bateson (1987)), metaphors may have an emancipatory and empowerment-building quality that can further dialogue in unanticipated and creative ways. We will also reflect on Mary Catherine Bateson (1991)'s idea of generating "our own metaphor" and discuss the meaning of the collective "we/our" when building metaphors. In doing so, we will explore the role of metaphors in comprehending the future as "a cultural fact" (as suggested in Appadurai (2015)) and providing anticipation with an agency for change (as outlined in Celi & Morrison (2017)). In this sense, we aim to explore anticipation as a constructivist and collaborative endeavour that allows for what Patokorpi & Ahvenainen (2009) refer to as "abduction", i.e. a method between induction and deduction, that connects basic research with applied research. In particular, we will feature an abductive approach (Bateson, 1979, Celi & Morrison, 2017) that invites connections across domains, relying on pattern, metaphor and double/multiple description to foster emergent futures. We will do that among ourselves and also with all present in the session itself, as we try to have the process of our session parallel the content on which our session is based.

References

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Note: the authors will also have curated session on the same theme. The curated session is titled: "Collaborative support networks as generative of new futures: using world café and other dialogic methods to further inclusion, awareness and sustainability" and has been given the number 25 in Easy Chair.