The adoption and adaptation of good practice:

Cross-national knowledge transfer in placemaking using the peer review method

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Abstract

The transfer of knowledge is a prominent feature in transnational networks regardless of whether they are aimed at practitioners, policy makers or researchers. Yet the process of transferring knowledge between countries and organisations is poorly understood, while the inclusion of citizens in the knowledge transfer process receives very little attention. This paper makes a contribution towards closing this gap in knowledge by presenting the outcomes of transnational knowledge transfer project aimed at community engagement in placemaking processes. The paper analyses the process and the outcomes of the knowledge transfer before critically discussing the barriers and challenges that were encountered. It concludes that knowledge exchange needs to be organised not only between officials but also between them and the communities they want to engage in their home cities. The concept of shared leadership has been found to capture the dynamics of knowledge exchanges well, but to ensure that organisations benefit from the application of new knowledge shared leadership needs to be balanced with strong strategic leadership. The implications of including citizens in a learning process through which tactic knowledge is shared between officials and communities are also discussed.

1. Introduction

The transfer of knowledge between organisations is essential for public agencies to improve services but knowledge transfer also poses a range of challenges. Organisational knowledge is as a resource that is embedded within the organisation's members, it's assets, processes, practices, routines and norms (Grant 1996). Explicit and tacit knowledge are seen as interdependent in that codified knowledge must be interpreted by drawing on tacit knowledge which in turn creates more tacit knowledge that resides in individuals (von Hippel 1994; Szulanski 1996). Hence the acquisition and transfer of knowledge is a complex as well as creative process where 'knowing' how to do things is difficult to make explicit because '*we know more than we can tell*' (Polanyi 1967, p.4). As the transfer and application of knowledge depends on the capacity of individuals to adopt and adapt new practices, people have a central role in the acquisition, transformation and exploitation of external knowledge (Cohen and Levinthal 1990). To be of benefit to the organisation new knowledge must be applied, and for knowledge to be relevant it requires to be continuously updated and reviewed. In this sense all organisations are engaged in a continuous learning process. In line with the principles of organisational learning set out by Agyris and Schön (1978) the individual is considered here as the agent of organisational learning. It is through individual learning that the structures, values, norms and capabilities of organisations develop and evolve in response to changes of the internal and external environment.

Knowledge transfer can occur through formal market transactions or through informal sharing processes. The term 'knowledge exchange' suggests a formal transfer of knowledge and transfer of resources, for example money in return for a patent or consultancy report, while 'knowledge exchange' suggests a mutual exchange of knowledge. For the purposes of this paper the transfer of knowledge is conceptualised as a process of sharing both explicit/codified and tacit knowledge where person-to-person communication is considered to be the most important aspect of initiating and facilitating the knowledge transfer process.

A cursory review of the literature suggests that the discourse on knowledge transfer is primarily concerned with the inter- and intra-organisational management of knowledge. That knowledge is also transferred between public organisations and citizens, as the discourses on New Public Management and New Public Governance testify, does not seem to attract much attention in the scholarly debate. The idea that knowledge is, often routinely and deliberately, transferred between public institutions and citizens is included in concepts like 'community engagement', 'capacity building' or 'co-production', but these concepts are not explicitly related to theory concerned with knowledge transfer. This paper makes a preliminary attempt to bridge this conceptual gap by exploring the transfer of knowledge on 'placemaking' based on a pilot project funded by the URBACT programme.

URBACT is one of many EU initiatives which aim to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and is specifically focused on the transfer of practices related to urban regeneration. Over the first 14 years of its existence URBACT funded networks where a municipality would put forward a project proposal to exchange good practices with other partners, supported by a Lead Expert (LE) experienced in facilitating the sharing knowledge in relation to 'best practices'. In these networks the principles of knowledge transfer are not made explicit , however, and the production of a 'Local Action Plan' provide evidence was used as evidence that knowledge had been transferred between the officials participating in the network and the organisations they represented. While some participants did learn from the practices of their partners and attempted to transfer newly acquired knowledge through the action planning process into their own organisations, others simply attended meetings over a period of three years and produced action plans that differed little from other strategies prepared prior to the network coming together. The assessment of the effectiveness of this approach to transferring knowledge was problematic and in the run up to its third programming period starting in 2015 URBACT generated a pilot project deliberately designed to document and assess the transfer of knowledge in urban renewal. This pilot programme was called Good Practice Transfer (GPT) and three networks were funded to test out ways of designing and documenting the transfer of knowledge on specific practices between organisations and the application of knowledge within participating organisations. Hence these GPTs represent deliberate intra- and inter-organisational knowledge transfer initiatives in a cross-national context. The outcomes from of the three pilot networks where the author was the Lead Expert are presented here.

This paper explores the acquisition and transfer of knowledge on the practice of 'placemaking' and critically analyses the extent to which 'good practices' were adopted and adapted by participating officers, the municipalities they work for and also the citizens they engaged with. The discussion then focuses on leadership, trust and the peer review method as important dimensions in the transfer of knowledge through cross-national networks concerned with urban regeneration.

2. The P4C Good Practice Transfer Pilot Project

The Placemaking for Cities (P4C) project started from the premise that placemaking is about enabling local people to take the lead in creating spaces they wanted to use. Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (DLR) was recognised to be very effective in developing and

enabling communities to take the lead on a wide range of socio-economic and environmental initiatives, including placemaking, and was therefore chosen to be the knowledge providing partner for P4C. The partners transferring good practice into their own context were medium sized cities in Spain (Albacete), Hungary (Eger) and Finland (Pori)[1]. These partners had previously worked on the SURE project from 2010 – 2013, also URBACT funded, which consisted of eight partner cities and focused on the socio-economic regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods. By the time the four partners came together in 2014 to form P4C, their long socialisations process had created high levels of trust as well as a mutual understanding and appreciation of the different social and cultural contexts in which they operated. Hence P4C benefitted from important pre-requisites for the effective sharing of knowledge. P4C ran over a period of 18 months, with the initial three months being used to synthesise and record published material about placemaking in a baseline study and the remained used to undertake and evaluate the transfer.

The Placemaking Concept
Placemaking is a process which draws on the ideas, resources and commitment of a local community to create places that they value. Once started, placemaking is an on-going process through which a community creates and develops the spaces where people choose to pursue their business, recreational and social interests (Project for Public Spaces 2013). In P4C the emphasis was put on placemaking as a social process which connects communities, engenders public debate, promotes social inclusion and enhances the quality of life, thus addressing complex and deep tooted problems associated with deprived neighbourhoods. The transfer of practices which empower local communities and enable citizens to take the lead on the placemaking process therefore was the focus of P4C.

Project Structure and Methodology
The knowledge transfer in P4C was conceptualised as going through four stages. These consisted of the exploration of a practice, its adaptation for a new context, the application of the new practice and the evaluation of the application, which can then lead to the beginning of the process with further exploration, adaptation and application. The project was structured around one good practice exchange visit to DLR, the knowledge providing partner, followed by a good practice transfer visit to each of the three receiving partners. The good practice exchange visit was carefully prepared to ensure that the time available was used to explain the institutional structures, policies and routines, as well as the social and cultural context in which placemaking practices were undertaken. Participants spent two days visiting placemaking projects, meeting residents and officials for detailed discussions on the placemaking processes, including an allotment garden, spaces managed by residents on housing estates and a sea front promenade. At the end of the transfer visit participants identified the practices they were intending to transfer to their own city. At this stage the LE issued each participant with a diary encouraging them to record all details associated with the transfer of good practices to their locality, and to reflect on the challenges they encountered in facilitating the adoption, adaptation and implementation of new practices.

Three online meetings were scheduled between the good practice exchange in DLR and the first transfer visit to Pori. These online meetings took place roughly every four weeks. The

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[1] For further details on the P4C partners please see the baseline study at: http://urbact.eu/placemaking-cities

main part of the meeting consisted of a progress report by each partner and a discussion about their exploration, adaptation and application of the practices that they intended to transfer from DLR. The LE facilitated each meeting while the lead officer from DLR played a central role as 'critical friend'. This involved clarifying the rationale for particular techniques inherent in the practices considered for transfer and encouraging officers to 'dig deeper' and 'go further' in exploring how these practices could be adapted and applied in their own cities. Challenging and stretching participants' ability and willingness to do things differently emerged as being of central importance at this stage of the transfer process. The long standing relationships between partners were an essential element in facilitating the transfer of knowledge because mutual respect for the barriers individuals encountered in their respective cities and being able to trust that critical feedback from partners was intended to assist rather than undermine the knowledge transfer contributed to a critical yet constructive learning environment.

"This is a really good network, you need to have that trust to make the exchange of knowledge work." (Official Pori Municipality)

With the advent of the first transfer visit regular online meetings ceased and partners made contact with each other as and when they needed to. Preparing each visit required substantial effort and time. The LE discussed in detail the practices officers were trying to transfer and how their local application could be presented to visiting partners, including the participation of local stakeholders, so that the adapted placemaking practices could be explored fully. A very demanding element of the preparations was the development of a baseline for the visit. This would involve an assessment of the status quo in relation to placemaking practices in the hosting city and a definition of how things would be different in the short and medium term as a result of the transfer of placemaking practices. This was an iterative process running over several weeks which forced officers from the host city to critically reflect on current approaches to placemaking and to define what specifically they were trying to achieve by adopting practices from DLR. The baseline then informed the definition of criteria used in the peer review.

The peer review was the central evaluative method to collectively reflect on and assess the transfer of good practices. Following site visits to see how the placemaking practices were being applied, P4C partners settled down to begin the peer review in a secluded room, protected from interruptions. Each peer review had between 11 and 13 participants which included two officers from the hosting municipality and two officers from visiting partners, plus two or three civil society representatives involved in the transfer of placemaking practices at the visiting municipalities. Over two days each participant in the room was asked by the LE to comment on the extent to which they felt the host partner had achieved the results they were aiming for. Each city had their own criteria, on 24 – 28 specific aspects of placemaking practice which were scored by each peer on a scale of 0-5 according how well the host partner was considered to have achieved a transfer of practices. These criteria had been carefully defined in the baseline against which the transfer would be assessed. These criteria were organised in relation to higher level placemaking topics such as place analysis, planning, implementation, internal collaboration or organisational culture[2]. During the peer

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[2] Details of the peer review framework for each receiving city can be found in Learning Logs 2, 3 and 4 at www.urbact.eu/p4c

review the officer from DLR was expected to act as an equal among the peers, probing, exploring and explaining barriers to and opportunities for a more extensive or deeper transfer of placemaking practices. The LE facilitated the discussion, took notes and recorded the scores given by each partner.

The end of the peer review process was marked by sharing the overall assessment with a wider community of local stakeholders through the 'ComUniversity'. The ComUniversity was designed as a space for public debate and reflection on the main opportunities and barriers to the transfer of good practices. At this meeting the visiting peers played the role of 'critical friends' challenging and encouraging local stakeholders to go further in empowering communities and enabling them to take the lead on the placemaking process. The size of the meeting varied from over 40 to 5 participants but in all cases civil society, businesses and public organisations were represented.

3. Project Outcomes

This section provides an overall assessment of the extent to which officials and their local stakeholders were able to transfer placemaking practices. P4C partners adopted and adapted a range of practices from DLR and developed a diverse programme of placemaking actions the detail of which cannot be presented here[3].

Albacete, Spain
In Albacete the director and project development manager of a social enterprise, BIC, participated in P4C on behalf of the municipality. BIC is part funded by the municipality and aims to encourage social enterprise and economic development in the muncipality. The placemaking actions focused on enabling traders to animate a local boulevard to bring about more social interaction by local residents and through this improve footfall in their shops and restaurants. Using planning for real and visioning techniques the BIC officers worked with local traders and residents to develop a programme of seven events that would take place in the boulevard between July and November 2014 and would involve the active participation of traders and residents in the delivery of actions such as fashion shows, food tasting, urban gardening, graffity workshops and so on. Empowering local stakeholders to make decisions on how public places should be used and then controlling and participating in the execution of their ideas represented an entirely new approach for Albacete.

The placemaking events were highly successful, attracting thousands of visitors, television and radio reported on each event, other neighbourhoods wanted to copy the activities, politicians wanted to be seen and heard at the events, traders and residents formed new relationships. By the end of the programme local actors had developed the confidence to undertake similar events in future without the input of BIC. Hence the transfer of knowledge between DLR, BIC and local stakeholders appeared to have been successful. Yet, when in the ComUniversity the P4C participants met 5 officials from the municipality, including elected representatives in charge of relevant council committees, it became clear that the

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[3] Details of placemaking activities undertaken are contained in the final project report which can be downloaded from www.urbact.eu/p4c

transfer of good practices would not reach into the municipality. The main barriers to the community led placemaking practices that had been adopted were related to administrative processes which control the use of public spaces and policies to allocate seed corn funding for economic development. During the ComUniversity meeting the visiting peers, as well as representatives of the traders and residents associations, tried to convince officials and politicians that their practices needed to change if they wanted to enable locally led placemaking to continue. But the success of the events was used as an argument for maintaining the status quo as far as municipal policies, regulations and procedures were concerned. Despite severe budgetary constraints officials and politicians promised to prioritise funding requests from BIC to support local traders and residents in organising similar events in future.

Eger, Hungary
Here the director of the planning department and the head of tourism development participated in the transfer project. The municipality had recently completed a multi million restructuring of the central squares of Eger, contracting external providers to design and deliver the improvements. Public participation during the design stage was primarily concerned with overcoming resistance to change and now that the newly refurbished squares were ready there was concern that citizens might not use of value them. Learning how to empower local stakeholders to take the initiative in developing and sustaining activities in the central squares of the city was the desired outcome of the transfer for Eger.

Visiting peers were able to observe play and dance by school children and the exhibition of work from art students in the newly created spaces, activities that had been organised by the head of tourism. It seemed to be difficult to bring about bottom-up, community led initiatives despite a well resourced voluntary sector. To encourage community led placemaking actions a mobile stage and sound equipment were purchased with the P4C budget and handed over to the local scout group to administer.

The peer review identified a number of barriers to the transfer of practices, including cultural norms which gave preference to follow directives from public agencies, a reluctance to express personal preferences in public and a lack of awareness among officials and politicians of the benefits and processes associated empowering local communities to take ownership of public spaces. Discussions with 12 representatives from civil society organisations and businesses during the ComUniversity implied that challenging established behavioural norms was deemed unnecessary and undesirable. Instead civil society organisations and businesses asked for more resources from the municipality in order to animate the central squares through fares and cultural events.

Pori, Finland
The Director of the planning department and two of his officers participated in the P4C network. These officers were motivated to empower local residents to take more control over the design, utilisation and maintenance of public spaces, which was in part driven by cuts in public budgets which made the established model of service provision unsustainable. Officers were also keen to reverse the standard top-down, departmentalised delivery of spatial improvements by engaging a range of other departments and agencies community led placemaking. The focus of the transfer was a small area of underused land which had been identified as a priority for intervention in the previous SURE project. Departing from

established practice the officers knocked on doors, stopped people in the street, arranged 'walking tours', put up a mobile meeting and storage facility on the site and organised a small number of workshops to discuss possible improvements residents were willing to undertake themselves. A placemaking group began to from around a knitting circle which decorated trees, benches, lamp posts with 'knitting graffity'. With the help of the two officers residents also organised a competition for a mural and undertook some planting activities. By the time the P4C project closed the group met independently, had links with the local arts college and the mobile meeting and storage container had been refurbished and was being used as a shared resource for placemaking initiatives across the city.

The peer review identified a range of challenges, including that officers had been working for six months almost exclusively on transferring knowledge to residents as well as other departments and agencies at the cost of neglecting their main duties as planning officers. The support of the departmental director was critical as he considered this project as an experiment to see whether local people can be given resources and responsibility to undertake placemaking in self-determined ways. The results were considered good as far as the empowerment of communities was concerned, but in terms of changing internal professional and administrative practices there was much scepticism. For example, the two officers were considered to have been doing 'social work' which has no place in the professional practice of planners and architects in Finland. A dedicated community development officer, based in the planning department, was required to continue the placemaking work but resources and expertise associated with community development had been outsourced to NGOs some years ago and the budget for their work had been cut drastically over the years. Finding resources to bring this expertise back into the organisation seemed out of the question. Furthermore, there was very limited willingness of different departments to pool their expertise and resource to deliver 'cross-cutting' initiatives such as placemaking where social, cultural, economic as well as design and construction functions come together. Hence it seemed as though the transfer of knowledge reached into the local community and also the planning department, but the inter-organisational transfer of knowledge was limited.

The ComUniversity was attended by over 40 residents, civil society organisations, social enterprises and the local university, elected representatives or officials from other departments of the municipality did not participate. There was much enthusiasm about the new approach that had been taken in that it challenged behaviours and attitudes of citizens in ways which led to positive outcomes. But there was also scepticism about the extent to which this could be 'scaled up' to reach the wider community in the community. Cultural preferences remained to have public agencies provide services for the community although there was also a recognition that citizens would need to take more responsibility for providing services themselves in the near future. Continued investment by the municipality in community development work as practiced through the P4C pilot was advocated by stakeholders.

4. Discussion

The above account suggests that different practices were transferred in different ways by participants of the P4C project. In this section we explore the differences but also identify

some commonalities in relation to three topics which correspond to core themes in the knowledge management literature:

- Leaders, gatekeepers and boundary spanners
- Communities of practice
- Acquisition of tacit knowledge

Leaders, gatekeepers and boundary spanners

Knowledge is far from neutral and knowledge that reinforces or complements existing knowledges is more readily accepted than knowledge which challenges our existing world view (Kuhn 1970). Differential access to knowledge for creates asymmetries which are a source of power for those with preferential access. While access to knowledge is a source of power, it is important to recognise that power itself can give legitimacy to knowledge claims by lending support to the adoption or suppression of new knowledges. Hence people in senior positions within organisations have important functions as gatekeepers in either promoting or stifling the adoption of new practices.

The transfer of knowledge between organisations was led by the officer representing DLR and the Lead Expert for the P4C network. Both acted as leaders in their field of expertise, DLR providing knowledge on placemaking and the Lead Expert designing and facilitating the learning process. Partners transferring placemaking practices took the lead in acquiring knowledge and applying it in their locality, and then also led the preparations for the transfer visits where their adopted and adapted practices would be scrutinised by visiting peers. In doing so participants in the P4C project adopted different roles in the course of the transfer process, at times leading or being led according to what was required of them to facilitate the knowledge transfer at different stages of the project. This suggests that the transfer of knowledge between public agencies reflects the principles of shared or distributed leadership (Gronn 2002; Brookes and Grint 2010; Bolden 2011) rather than conventional notions of public service leadership concerned with hierarchy, control and power. Furthermore, leadership in the transfer of placemaking practice was also shared with the local community. Residents or traders had to take the lead in developing a vision for what should be done, rally supporters and develop plans for the implementation of placemaking actions. Hence the transfer of knowledge on placemaking also reflects the principles of community leadership which Brookes argues is an *" ... interdisciplinary approach to collective leadership in which locally elected members, officers from public institutions, the public and community and voluntary groups work to produce tangible results that improve community wellbeing."* (Brookes 2010, p.152).

The outcomes of the P4C project show how important the sharing of leadership functions is to the transfer of knowledge. In Eger there was very limited sharing of leadership with the local community, as the placemaking actions were organised by officials and local stakeholders were reliant on the municipality to sanction placemaking actions by providing budgets through which such actions would be 'purchased'. Although knowledge was transferred from DLR to the officers from Eger, there was little evidence that this knowledge was then shared with the local community. Empowering local communities to make their own choices and to take the lead on changing public spaces was not part of municipality practices and might even have been perceived as threatening established norms and routines. The director of planning has considerable power due to his senior position in the municipality but chose not to challenge existing practices. Instead the knowledge on

placemaking practices was kept outside the institution which points to a leader who is acting as a gatekeeper to knowledge transfer. Knowing what is acceptable and being realistic about the capacity of the institution to absorb knowledge are likely to have resulted in a decision to take some symbolic actions which showed that placemaking practices had been explored and can be applied, but empowering citizens to take the lead on placemaking practices might have been considered as being either too difficult or undesirable. A similar situation is found in Albacete where the gatekeeper also derives power from his position, holding the post of director of economic development. But here the gatekeeper does not personally engage in learning and applying new practices, instead he lets other people explore new practices and then decides whether these should be transferred into the organisation. There is also no evidence of the municipality considering to share leadership functions. The relationship between the municipality, BIC and the local community appears hierarchical and concerned with maintaining control over how public spaces are used.

Relationships outside the municipality, on the other hand, had strong characteristics of shared and community leadership. BIC took the lead in acquiring knowledge and in structuring the transfer to local traders and residents in ways which empowered them to take the lead on the placemaking initiatives. Rather than leaving them 'to get on with it' and risking that their placemaking partners might not absorb and apply knowledge on placemaking practices, BIC worked alongside a core group of local stakeholders throughout the placemaking initiative to assist them in acquiring knowledge about placemaking practices. This group then led a wider network of stakeholders through a demanding planning and implementation process which left everyone elated and wanting to repeat it in the coming year. BIC acted as a boundary spanner between the local community and the municipality, navigating bureaucratic hurdles, informing and interpreting information for residents and traders about administrative and political practices within the municipality and, vice versa, explaining to administrators the approach and rationale for the chosen placemaking practices. It is arguable that the placemaking actions would not have taken place without BIC facilitating this process between local stakeholders and the municipality, hence boundary spanners appear to fulfil a crucial function in the transfer of knowledge between actors who have not developed a shared understanding of why and how established practices could change.

Alabacete is an interesting example in that it illuminates long standing debates about 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in public led partnership arrangements and also the instrumental relationships public agencies maintain with civil society. Funding third sector organisations to experiment with the acquisition and application of knowledge protects established practices in the public institution and allows for the maintenance and control of clear boundaries between organisations. Gatekeepers, rather than leaders, would appear to be central to the advancement of institutional interests in such contexts.

Pori provides a very different picture. The person who due to his position would be the gatekeeper to the transfer of knowledge into the municipality actively encouraged the challenging of established ways of working. He also used his power to free up two officers from their standard duties to engage in the application of new knowledge to challenge established practices. Throughout the transfer process the director and his officers seemed to share decisions on what practices should be adopted from DLR and how they could be adapted locally, thus sharing leadership functions within their organisation. Decisions on

what placemaking actions should be taken were also shared between the officers and residents. This is an example of sharing leadership functions between the municipality and citizens and also one of community leadership where public officials engaged with civil society to undertake placemaking together.

Communities of practice
Knowledge exists in social contexts and while codified knowledge, for example in written form, plays a crucial role in the transfer of knowledge, much knowledge is transferred through the interaction of individuals. The concept of 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1998; Wenger, McDermott et al. 2002) draws attention to the important role groups of individuals play in retaining, applying and also creating new knowledge. Relationships and social interaction are central to knowledge and learning in groups that share certain practices and it would seem that in regard to placemaking the 'community of practice' needs to involve the community which lives in the place as well as professional officers working for a particular department or organisation. The concept of shared leadership, and in particular community leadership, strongly resonates with the idea of communities of practice in placemaking. On the other hand, conventional approaches to leadership would appear to be counterproductive as the social interactions within communities of practice cannot not be fully controlled and learning as well as new knowledge emerges spontaneously. Hence the flexible and inclusive co-ordination and facilitation of the learning process seems essential not just in relation to working with communities but also between officials.

Officials created a community of practice within the P4C project, as all had similar backgrounds and wanted to learn about a specific topic together. They ultimately saw the P4C project as a success as far their individual learning was concerned. Residents from visiting cities were encouraged to meet their peers of the host city to learn from them about placemaking. These exchanges were rather limited both in terms of time and effort made to prepare the meetings between resident participants and it would be reasonable to say that the design of P4C neglected the importance of creating communities of practice between the residents of different cities. However, some officials participating in P4C then created a community of practice between themselves and the community they aimed to engage, as the case of Pori and BIC in Albacete illustrate. Participants from Eger, in contrast, did not seem to create a community of practice in their own locality, neither in their own organisation nor in the local community. This is significant because officers from Eger expressed a strong desire to understand how to empower communities through placemaking practices, yet the sharing or application of the knowledge they had acquired was rather limited. The judgement of the gatekeeper, the director of planning, that his organisation has limited capacity to absorb such new practices might explain this in part. But why was there no community of practice established between the officers and community stakeholders concerned with placemaking in the way it was done in Pori and Albacete? One explanation might be related to the gate keeping argument in that there was an interest to avoid creating unnecessary pressures on the municipality as it was unlikely to adopt such new practices. Another reason may be that the notion of community empowerment runs counter to cultural and social norms to such an extent that it is a 'taboo' subject. Hungary's recent past makes assumptions about certain knowledges being banned because they are considered as dangerous to established orders not too far fetched. But the local community may also not recognise, or purposefully ignore, the value for self empowerment, thus defending the status quo through a denial of the value of community empowerment, creating a dissonance between the core tenets of placemaking

and the perceived reality of citizens. This lack of readiness of the community as well as the municipality to adopt new practices might explain why the knowledge transfer was limited in the case of Eger. In this case, therefore, the benefits of participating in the P4C project are very limited to both the municipality and the community it serves.

Acquisition of tacit knowledge
The acquisition, transfer and application of knowledge is a process of learning. Organisational theory conceptualises organisations as being engaged in a learning process in order to adapt to changes in the internal and external environment with the organisation's members being the principal agents of organisational learning. P4C participants learned in groups, for example during the transfer visit to DLR, and also individually for example by reflecting on their learning in the diaries they kept. The peer review method seemed particularly useful in facilitating learning in a 'community of practice' while at the same time encouraging individual reflective learning. The peer review process had the added benefit of documenting what had been learned about a particular practice and what remained to be understood and applied. Yet the transfer of knowledge varied significantly between municipalities and the preceding sections point a number of reasons for this. A further reason for why transfers of knowledge varied significantly between cities is that it was primarily tacit knowledge that had to be transferred.

At the beginning of the P4C project stood the exchange of explicit, codified knowledge on placemaking. This took the form of a baseline study which ran to 56 pages and contained 21,000 words. In this report the theory and practice of placemaking was explored and current approaches to placemaking in the partner cities were reviewed, identifying the gaps in knowledge that the P4C project was intending to fill. The preparation and follow up the the knowledge exchange visit to DLR generated 6,000 words, describing the practices that were to be studied and then specifying the practices that were to be transferred by the three partner cities as well as setting out the process by which the transfer would take place. Following each transfer visit to the three partner cities a Learning Log was produced in which the transferred practices were described and the results of the peer review recorded. The length of these reports varied between 7,000 and 5,500 words. Adding to this the final project report which ran to 34 pages and 12,000 words we can say that an enormous amount of codified knowledge was transferred between participants running to nearly 200 hundred pages and exceeding 60,000 words! We can also say with some confidence that this amount of explicit knowledge on placemaking is unlikely to have been utilised by participating officials and that community stakeholders would have drawn very limited benefits from this body of knowledge, in part because it was codified in a language which was not their mother tongue and also because they were not the target audience of these documents.

A different kind of learning that draws on knowledge which is not explicit and codified, i.e. the reports referred to above, happens through social interaction between people in which tacit knowledge is shared and acquired. The acquisition of tacit knowledge played a crucial part in the P4C project substantial time and resources were dedicated to site visits, the peer review and online workshops which allowed participants explored the complexities associated with empowering communities, enabling citizens to define and develop placemaking proposals and translate these into self determined actions. The knowledge associated with such processes is not easily articulated or codified in writing, hence the reports created on these

topics was of lesser value than the face to face interactions between participants. Furthermore, articulating such knowledge posed challenges for the officer leading on placemaking in DLR, he repeatedly reflected on the challenges of communicating the complexities associated with his practices, particularly to people whose native language was not English, because working with communities was a complex as well as creative process where 'knowing' how to do things is difficult to share (Polanyi 1967).

The case of Pori shows that individuals within the organisation need to engage in sharing tacit knowledge about new practices to change established practices but that this does not necessary lead to a wider sharing of this new knowledge in the organisation. While the planning department developed a new 'community of practice', colleagues in other parts of the organisation chose not to join. This illustrates the difficulties associated with transferring tacit knowledge because it resides within individuals and groups and their transfer depends on socio-cultural norms and values which are beyond the control of an individual or the organisation. The difficulty of sharing tacit knowledge is often referred to as 'sticky knowledge' [ref Sulansky; von Hippel] because it is time consuming and requires extensive social interaction and also trust between individuals to overcome barriers associated with different motivations and capacity to absorb new knowledge. Hence transferring tacit knowledge requires higher inputs of staff time than the transfer of explicit knowledge. Furthermore, allowing participants to experiment with the application of knowledge to develop new practices would seem necessary in order to reap the benefits from such a learning process. This suggests that knowledge transfer networks would need to run for longer period of time as certainly the P4C pilot was too short to allow participants to acquire, absorb and then apply new knowledge.

What is also important is that citizens acquire tacit knowledge from cross-national networks primarily from the officials who participated in them. The amount of time officers spent in Albacete and Pori working with residents and traders to transfer knowledge on placemaking practices is indicative of the resources tacit learning requires and also points to the priority citizens give to informal, person-to-person learning as compared to learning from written material. While it is a cliché 'people don't read' this study points to a long established debate about the need for appropriate staff resources where engagement with communities is desired to achieve particular outcomes (Schlappa 2001; Schlappa 2002; Banks, Butcher et al. 2013). Creating a learning environment which assists citizens to acquire knowledge from officials would seem essential for any knowledge transfer project concerned enabling communities to take responsibility for their immediate physical environment. There are also implications for proposals concerned with the co-production of services more generally (Pestoff, Brandsen et al. 2012) which are discussed in the concluding section below.

5. Conclusions

Sharing knowledge on placemaking is complex and requires careful preparation and facilitation of the learning process. While explicit knowledge could be shared relatively quickly and widely, acquiring and sharing tacit knowledge proved much more challenging and at the same time more important than acquiring explicit knowledge. Time was a critically important because developing an understanding of complex practices relied largely on face-to-face exchanges between participants. The 18 months available for P4C seemed too short

to allow participants to learn about and then apply new practices despite participants having known each other for four years before P4C started. Furthermore, the inclusion of citizens in the knowledge transfer process was under-conceptualised in the preparation and implementation of P4C. Assumptions were made that officers would share their knowledge with local stakeholders without giving any attention to the structures and processes that might be conducive to facilitate such an exchange of tacit knowledge. This might be taken as an example of the inward looking, perhaps even instrumental, nature public sector led netowrks and could be severely criticized. This paper intends to use the P4C experience as a learning opportunity for the improvement of future such networks and makes suggestions for the improvement of future networks in relation three key aspects of the cross-national transfer of knowledge:

- Peer review
- Trust, and
- Leadership.

Peer Review

The experience of P4C suggests that most important dimension in the transfer of complex tacit knowledge is person-to-person communication. The peer review method is based on person-to-person communication and can be rigorously focussed on specific practices or knowledges. This mitigates against participants going on visits without making serious attempts at learning and transferring practices. Careful preparation of the peer review also prevents participants from making unrealistic proposals, such as aiming to change institutional structures, regulations or processes and then blaming lack of change for the lack of their own efforts to transfer knowledge. Institutional change often starts with changing practices and the peer review provides a robust tool to explore how participants go about adopting and adapting practices from other partners. Furthermore, the codification of the learning process through the scores that were given during the review, together with a record of the key issues that were raised, could provide a robust basis for an assessment of the effectiveness of the transfer process. If complemented by video recordings the knowledge that is codified in this way might be more accessible than conventional reports, such as those produced for P4C.

It is often difficult to give critical feedback because of fear of offending other participants, particularly where they are hosting a visit. The peer review method de-personalises critique and allows the facilitator to intervene where criticisms are becoming counterproductive, but participants must have levels of mutual understand and trust which tolerate and perhaps even invite critical feedback. The long standing relationships between participants were of clear benefit to the P4C project:

"The peer review was a good method, but without the trust it would not have worked. We would have to each other what we wanted to hear. Sometimes being honest and explaining the problems we faced was more difficult than saying everything is fine. To share that other partners are struggling with the same problem is encouraging. It shows that we are not dealing with a fairy tale situation, we are dealing a with real life project." (Pori)

However, a 'close knit group' of participants with long standing relationships also generates challenges with including new participants. The experience form P4C shows that such 'new comers' need to have the ability to make relevant contributions in a coherent and non-

threatening manner while demonstrating a genuine interest in the topic. P4C also shows that citizens feel intimidated by the critical analysis of practices and prefer to engage with their own 'peers', namely the citizens from the city they are visiting. Here the design of the knowledge transfer failed to anticipate the need for a peer review process specifically designed for citizens, which is remarkable given that placemaking is fundamentally about enabling citizens to take self-determined actions. Future networks which intend to transfer knowledge to citizens need to include a specific process through which citizens can transfer tacit knowledge to each other. Whether the peer review method could offer a suitable method to facilitate such a knowledge exchange should be explored further.

Trust

The importance of trust has been referred to above but trust is not only important for participants who are directly involved in the knowledge transfer project. Trust is also required to facilitate the transfer of knowledge between them and the local community. Lack of trust is frequently identified as a major barrier to developing collaborative relationships between the community and public agencies (Vangen and Huxham 2003; Huxham and Vangen 2005) an issue relevant for local governance and strategy as well (Bovaird 2005; Bovaird and Löffler 2012). Hence the transfer of knowledge concerned with practices that involve learning between officials and citizens would need to include considerations on how such trusting relations can be developed so that both sides can improve their practices.

Building trust is challenging, particularly across different spatial and historical contexts but it would seem that encouraging extensive face-to-face contact helps in creating confidence and reinforces mutual understanding and respect. Here continuity is important, people need time to get to know each other, but unfortunately international transfer networks are characterised by constantly changing participants. At times it appears that decisions on who travels to a meeting are based on a lottery system or reflect hierarchical power relations rather than careful assessments of who is best placed to explore and transfer new knowledge. P4C benefitted from an established core group of officers who attended all meetings, but this was not the case with residents or traders. Similar problems are well documents in relation to regeneration partnerships: With the best will in the world, volunteers, citizens and business people cannot match the resources that are available to public institutions to participate in meetings and visits (Taylor 2001). Public agencies are then leading the network and, often inadvertently, exclude residents from strategically important processes. This presents a dilemma for international knowledge exchange networks because it would appear to be essential yet unrealistic for citizens to participate as fully in the transfer of knowledge as their official counterparts are.

Leadership

Despite a fairly rigid project structure the learning process was loose and emergent requiring flexibility and responsiveness on the part of those involved. P4C illustrates that participants had to take the lead at different stages of the transfer process. The intra-organisational transfer was led by the providing partner DLR and the Lead Expert, while the inter-organisational transfer was led by local officers, as was the transfer of knowledge between officials and local communities. The concept of shared or distributed leadership characterises the intra and inter-organisation transfer well, while community leadership captures the nature of applying placemaking practices locally. The P4C experience suggests that such collaborative and emergent forms of leadership need to be balanced with more

strategic approaches to leadership if participating organisations are to reap the benefits of the knowledge transfer. For knowledge to become useful it needs to be applied and the findings from this study show that powerful individuals can either retain their personal learning and not transfer it into the organisation (Eger) or sabotage the transfer all together by not acquiring new knowledge in the first place and then blocking those with ideas for the improvement of practices from transferring them into the organisation (Albacete). Gatekeepers will not always have the organisational interests at heart when changes to established practices undermine their position or introduce practices that might make their life less comfortable. The acquisition and transfer of new knowledge should therefore form part of a strategic intent that is articulated and pursued by senior management. Ostensibly placemaking is a practice fairly low down the strategic priorities but when seen through the lens of knowledge transfer placemaking provides a valuable perspective on the dynamics of a three-way knowledge transfer between officials from different countries, between officials within their organisation and between the organisation and the community. As such the findings from this study have relevance for other knowledge transfer initiatives, particularly those concerned with the engagement of citizens in the provision of services.

The final point to make here is that officials need to learn to do their work differently, not only because of the impact of unprecedented budgetary austerity but also because the context in which public agencies provide their services has changed profoundly over the past 30 years (Alford and O'Flynn 2012). One of the key challenges is the adoption of new practices which facilitate the collaborative provision of services involving service users as a key component in the service delivery process (Osborne 2010; Osborne 2010; Pestoff 2012). So far this discourse has centred on officials needing to learn to get closer to service users and co-producers, but what this study suggests is that citizens also need support in developing their own practices to engage with officials and public agencies more general. The acquisition and transfer of such knowledge among local communities would warrant much closer attention in both policy and knowledge management discourses. A practical step towards this would be for leaders of public agencies to make the development of communities of practice between officials and citizens a strategic priority before signing up to another knowledge transfer network in Europe.

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