

CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Role playing game: the challenges of citizen engagement

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This workshop consists of a role playing game that enables participants to experience the challenges that can arise when professional care organizations engage with citizens and communities. The game is based on Ludo Glimmerveen's doctoral research project, for which he conducted an ethnographic case study that investigated a professional organization's ambition to strengthen a rural community's 'ownership' over and involvement in a local elderly care home. As this care home was at risk of being closed – as national policy measures made admission criteria stricter and, as a result, the facility's financial continuity was compromised – the professional organization and local citizens started exploring and negotiating the possibilities for a 'joint venture' in which part of the local services would be taken over by local volunteers.

In processes like these - and therefore also in the role playing game - a number of established assumptions that tend to guide the organization of professional services are actively challenged. For example, to what extent can citizens be 'in charge' of local services? What are the boundaries of 'appropriate' citizen involvement? What are the consequences of citizens' and communities' emergence as a key strategic actor for the position of professional organizations and the extent to which they can be 'in control' of work processes?

In short, the workshop consists of:

A plenary introductory presentation about the case

Some time for participants to prepare their roles description of roles – both citizens and employees – will be provided.

The actual role playing game, taking place in groups of approx. 6 people the game can be played simultaneously by different groups, depending on the number of participants

A plenary reflection and wrap-up, based on participants' experiences and their lessons learned. We end with a short explanation of how events unfolded in the actual case that was studied.

Of course we can always discuss and adapt the exact format and logistics of the workshop. We will try to make sure that a sufficient number of facilitators are available for when multiple groups play the game simultaneously.

Keywords: citizen; communities; engagement; involvement; role playing game
