Building scenarios to make controversies come to light: The Controversy Workshop

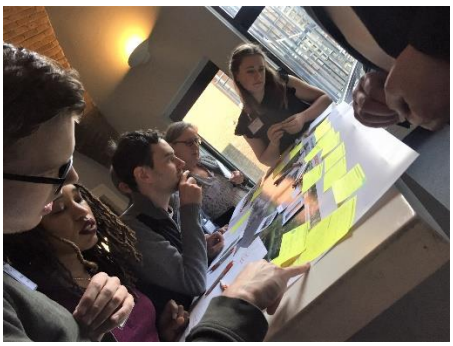
Introduction

In this project, we explore controversies in smart cities to understand how, in this context, technology challenges and reshapes societal values. Our premise is that, to gain insights into the impact of technology on societal values, we need to understand where the potential frictions or tensions occur. To achieve this goal, together with the Design Innovation Group, we designed a workshop approach and involved stakeholders that belong to different sectors of society (government, the private sector, citizens and academia) in different exploratory sessions.

Goal of the session

In the workshop session, the main goal is to facilitate the process of making smart city controversies explicit.

The intended outcome of this method is a list of potential smart city controversies based on the interpretations of participants involved in the session. Identifying controversies helps to acknowledge the impacts of technology at different levels, and is the first step for the development of tactics that address the tensions that might originate from the implementation of urban technology.



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Description of the method

The workshop approach consists of 5 main steps:

Step 1-Setting the scene

We set the scene for the rest of the workshop, giving participants insights into the current data that companies and governments collect in smart cities. We probe participants by showing a visual with a public space and the type of data that private and public organizations collected. Displaying this visual, we ask (1) the first thing they notice, (2) the most surprising element of the visual, and (3) any other additional comments.

Step 2- Dream city

In this step, we ask participants to imagine their dream smart city. To facilitate participants' thinking process, we provide some preconditions, namely: (1) all data can be available, (2) people involved in smart city development have good intentions, and (3) everything that needs to be properly secured is secured. Apart from the existing data collection and usage as shown in the visualizations, we provide participants with tech-cards including the description of technology such as virtual reality, block-chain, drones or augmented reality. The main goal of the tech-cards is to broaden participants' visions about dream smart cities scenarios, beyond sensors and data-driven solutions. To register what participants consider an ideal smart city, they had to fill 3 cards that stated:

- "In a smart city, it would be wonderful…"
- "In a smart city…"
- "In a smart city, I would use technology and data to…"

Step 3- Voting

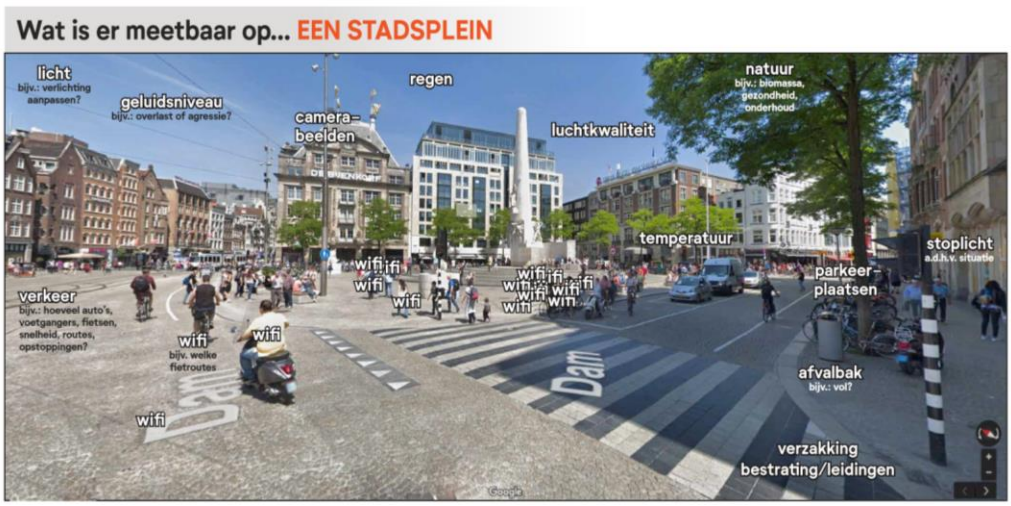
To number down the amount of options, in this step, participants vote for their 3 preferred dreams.

Step 4- Nightmare

At this stage, participants reflect on the potential downsides and nightmares that could emerge from the dream imaginary.

Step 5- Discussion of controversies

During the final stage, participants discuss the tensions originating from the use of technology in smart cities, helping to make controversies explicit.



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