CONCEPTUALIZING END-USER ROLES IN INNOVATIVE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT – CASE STUDY ON USER ENGAGING PROPERTY PROCUREMENT PROJECTS

Hannu Torvinen (Corresponding author) – Doctoral Student (M.Sc. (Econ. & Bus. Adm.))
Department of Marketing, Oulu Business School
hannu.torvinen@oulu.fi
Tel: +358 294 482 913
P.O. BOX 4600, 90014 University of Oulu, Finland

Lotta Haukipuro - Project planner (M.Sc. (Econ.))
Center for Ubiquitous Computing, University of Oulu

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the roles of public service end-users in innovative public procurement projects. Innovative public procurement procedures aim to expand the responsibilities of supplier in the procurement and reconceptualize purchasing as a process of social construction between various actors. A key source for improving publicly valued outcomes of the procurement lies in user and community co-production. Even though the importance of user engagement has been widely acknowledged by public administration research, the discussion both on the means of engagement and role of service end-users has been limited. Besides scholars, the procurement practitioners tend to lack a clear understanding on who the client of the public procurement is and, therefore, do not know whose needs they're supposed to satisfy.

The purpose of the study is to improve understanding on the importance of different end-user roles for the outcomes of innovative public procurement projects. Our theoretical approach on the position and role concepts follows the research on business networks. Hence, the concept of position illustrates the expectations users are given by themselves and other actors whereas the concept of role represents the situation-specific character end-user adopts through sense-making in the procurement process. The dual challenge for procurement practitioners is to understand both the nature of user in different roles and to interact properly with each of these roles.

The findings are based on end-user engagement processes of three innovative public procurement projects in Finland with a shared emphasis on close end-user involvement throughout the procurement. Three kinds of data is used for the in-depth case analysis: semi-structured interviews, public domain documents and participant observation. We suggest four situational roles end-users take in user engagement process of innovative public procurement projects: *conventional, cooperative, collaborative* and *controlling* Even though end-users in cooperative and collaborative roles can be seen most influential for innovative outcomes of the procurement, also conventional and controlling roles can be seen essential for creating value in interaction with different end-user groups and different stages of the procurement process. Conceptually, study offers a more comprehensive illustration of end-user roles in the context of innovative public procurement practices. The paper reasserts the dispute of viewing the public procurement end-user only through interpretations of either private sector consumer or public sector citizen.

Keywords: End-user engagement, network position, network role, public-private partnership, value-in-use, public administration

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, both policy makers and researchers have remarked significant unused potential of public procurement in developing innovations, increasing prosperity and enhancing people's well-being in general (Aho et al., 2006; Uyarra & Flanagan, 2010). Due to new objectives and changes in the procurement environment, various more market-based procurement tools have been introduced to practitioners of public procurement ranging from public finance initiatives to various life-cycle models and pre-commercial procurement options. Public procurement seen as a demand-side-oriented tool for stimulating innovation (Aschhoff & Sofka, 2009) challenges the current institutional practices and skills in the field (Rolfstam, 2012). Accordingly, innovative public procurement practices change the way suppliers are being invited to supply pre-existing solutions in an improved way (Knutsson & Thomasson, 2014) and open up for new actors to be engaged in the purchasing process.

Existing research as well as practice of public procurement has for long acknowledged the importance of interaction with service end-user (Bryntse, 1996). Nevertheless, research both on the means of involving the end-users and the very definition of end-user can be seen incomplete. Public procurement practitioners tend to lack a clear understanding who the client of the public service is and, therefore, do not know whose needs they're supposed to satisfy (Bovaird, 2007). Alford (2002, p. 337) addresses the incoherence of defining the public sector client: "labels such as customer, consumer, client, user, stakeholder, citizen, taxpayer or the public are used in almost as many ways as there are writers about them". The dual challenge of public administrators is to understand both the nature of public in the different roles of customer, partner and citizen and how to interact with the public in each of these roles (Thomas, 2013).

Even though limited studies (e.g. Murray, 2002) on the role of public procurement end-user have been done, no extensive framework on end-users' various tasks or their complementarity has been illustrated. An example of more recent end-user focused studies on innovative public procurement methods relate to the concept of Public-Private-People Partnership (Majamaa et al., 2008; Ng, Wong & Wong, 2013). 4P model suggests that in addition supplier and the procurer dyad, "the people" i.e. the end-user should be considered as a third equal partner within the procurement process. However, also the 4P view on the definition of people includes all the individuals impacted by or interested about the procurement from the core users of the public services to the whole taxpayer community (Ng, Wong & Wong, 2013). As public agencies have an operational incentive to pay attention to the needs of public sector clients both as customers and citizens (Alford, 2002), understanding different types of end-users on the benefits they can offer is essential to tailor specific value to the groups in question.

To purpose of this study is to *increase understanding on end-user roles in the end-user engagement process within innovative public procurement.* A significant driver for the study lies in researchers' former findings on end-user engagement activities within innovative public procurement practices (Torvinen & Ulkuniemi, forthcoming 2016). Observations made during and after the study highlight uncertainty related to the character of public procurement end-user. While it seems that the procurement field comprehends the evolved role of supplier in charge of an increased set of project responsibilities and risks and the procurer's role in charge of the procurement contract and as a facilitator of interaction, the role of procurement end-user hasn't been interpreted to such length. To gain new knowledge on the subject, the following research question are addressed:

RQ1:   *What are the expected positions end-users in innovative public procurement projects are placed at?*

RQ2:   *What are the situational roles end-users adopt in the end-user engagement process of innovative public procurement?*

The growing interest on market-based public procurement procedures (Bovaird, 2006) can be seen consistent with popular network research stream on inter-organizational alliances and joint ventures (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). Thus, the study leans conceptually on business network research and especially position-and-role concept by Anderson, Havila, Andersen and Halinen (1998). Idea is that in addition to identifying the various roles end-users adopt in the procurement projects, the connectedness of different relationships and linkages where change in one relationship affects other relationships is taken into account.

Networks can be seen most plainly as set of actors (persons, teams, organizations or concepts) connected by set of ties (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). Actor's interpretations and sensemaking of network positions and roles can be seen pivotal for understanding network dynamics (Abrahamsen, Henneberg & Naudé, 2012). Even though business network literature (e.g. Håkansson & Snehota, 1995) often sees positions mostly related to relationships between companies, we apply the concepts on wider basis to individual end-user actors as the unit of analysis. In business networks, there are no positions without roles and no roles without positions (Anderson et al., 1998). Actor's position describes the actor's place in the network structure determined by the expected behavior and taken-on-activities of the individual (Anderson et al., 1998). The role on the other hand describes the actor's intent, how they interpret meaning in their situation and how they want to change it. The role activities i.e. made-up-activities are made of intentions related to the actor role (Anderson et al., 1998). Abrahamsen, Henneberg and Naudé (2012) emphasize that role interpretations and re-interpretations change also the existing dynamics of the network.

The study proceeds by first examining the concepts of position and role in business network research and present research streams on end-user roles within public procurement and public administration literature. The empirical findings of the study are based on the case of end-user engagement process within three innovative property procurement projects emphasizing increased collaboration between actors throughout the procurement. After the presentation of key findings of the study, a typology on end-user roles in public procurement is suggested. Finally, the conclusions about the study's theoretical and practical contribution as well as implications for further research are presented.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Innovativeness in public procurement aims both for the development of new technologies and services as well as process innovations that develop the management and work procedures in use (Uyarra & Flanagan, 2010; Aschhoff & Sofka, 2009). Even though no generally agreed upon definition of innovative public procurement is known to exist (Lawther & Martin, 2005; Yescombe, 2007), it is some specific market-based practices like public-private partnerships and pre-commercial procurement that have gained most interest from both the researchers and practitioners in the public procurement field. Innovative public procurement practices change the way suppliers are being invited to supply pre-existing solutions in an improved way (Knutsson & Thomasson, 2014) and open up for new actors to be engaged in the purchasing process. We see the focal relationships within public procurement as a triad between the public procurer, private supplier and the end-user of the public purchase (Havila, Johanson &

Thilenius, 2004; Majamaa et al., 2008). Close inclusion of end-user perspective in urban development process can be seen creating flexibility and benefits to all stakeholders. Where in traditional procurer-supplier centered partnerships, a genuine customership with the user might not be born, end-user engaging development processes expand the unseen potential for including consumerist possibilities in for public organizations (Majamaa, 2008).

We regard the end-user engagement in public procurement not simply as a sequential process of solving and fulfilling the users' needs but a continuous set of actions that aim to expand the role of service end-users by binding them in the value adding process as co-creators of value. The main objective for value co-creative end-user engagement in public procurement context is the generation of value-in-use through increased usability of the procured property or service (Grönroos, 2008; Torvinen & Ulkuniemi, forthcoming 2016). Most essential engagement activities to reach increased usability relate to interactive dialogue and sufficient access to resources enabled by the procurer and supplier in the innovative procurement project. Following overview on the concept of role within industrial network and public sector literatures acts as foundation for the empirical case study conducted within three innovative public procurement projects.

Conceptualization of position and role

Actor roles have been widely discussed in social sciences for several decades. Role is traditionally seen as the dynamic aspect of a status (Linton, 1936). A particular emphasis in the last few decades has been on role theory (Biddle, 1986) which sees the social behavior of actors originating from parts and scripts understood by the actors in the specific context. We rely on the interactionist school of thought in role theory. Where the structuralist school sees the role dynamics as an attempt to develop roles expected from the surrounding system (Turner, 1982), the present study sees the role concept from symbolic interactionist view which suggests roles as changing according to the situation (Anderson et al., 1998). The benefit of interactionist view lies in looking at roles as products of actors' meaningful interpretations of situations and thus allowing them to have a constructive and innovative character in them (Anderson et al., 1998). Interactionist perspective on role theory is especially fitting in the context of emergent roles (Knight & Harland, 2005).

The position-and-role framework by Anderson et al. (1998) utilizes role theory in the interplay between stability and change in business relationships. According to industrial network approach, the firms and individuals as actors possess and control different resources and form networks. The value of resources is increased in interaction with each other. The behaviors of different actors are to be understood through their voluntaristic value-increasing nature (Anderson et al., 1998). Abrahamsen, Henneberg and Naudé (2012) see network dynamics as a process where role perceptions are formed both by mutual understanding and interaction as well as actors challenging these understandings by bringing in new ideas on how the network should be organized and on network roles. Actors constantly seek to change their network position according to their understanding of the wider network thus also making changes to the network structure itself (Abrahamsen, Henneberg & Naudé, 2012).

The network position is defined by actor's own and other actors' expectations towards the actor in different relationships in the network i.e. as the result of actor's investment in exchange relationships (Axelsson & Easton, 1992, p. 205-217). In general, actors are able recognize their position in the network structure and that their behavior is influenced by a set of norms. Changing the position means strengthening the interaction to one actor or weakening ties with

others (Abrahamsen, Henneberg & Naudé, 2012). In addition to a tool to understand network structure and distance between actors, the actor position also provides understanding how the individual is embedded in the environment in the specific situation (Axelsson & Easton, 1992, p. 205-217; Anderson et al., 1998). Position of an actor is not static but changing all the time not only according to the new exchange relationships developed and old ones interrupted or transforming, but because of the counterparts' and third parties' positions changing as well (Axelsson & Easton, 1992, p. 205-217). A key reason to improve the network position lies in actor gaining better access to resources (Abrahamsen, Henneberg & Naudé, 2012).

Network role expresses activities that originate from the creation and sense-making process related to actor's own intentions and interpretations (Anderson et al., 1998). According to Anderson et al. (1998, p. 172) role represents actor's subjective and creative character: "actor has a position but acts in a role". Nyström et al. (2014, p. 484) define roles as "dynamic and processual aspects of positions that describe what actors intend to do." Thus role-acting is influenced by the relationship structure that the actor has one's original position with (Anderson et al., 1998). Similar and overlapping interpretations on roles tend to serve as good starting point for reaching desirable network dynamics and network change (Abrahamsen, Henneberg & Naudé, 2012). The present position of the focal actor or other actors can be seen both as an opportunity or threat for the actor's individual intentions (Anderson et al., 1998).

The interplay between taken-on-activities connected to actor position and made-up-activities connected to actor role constitutes the network dynamics (Anderson et al., 1998). In innovative public procurement projects, taken-on-activities are presumably made of expected end-user tasks determined by the procurement planning, whereas made-up activities are defined by actor's personal development and intentions formed during the procurement process. Anderson et al. (1998) define intention as an expression of personal will and a disposition for activities. Intentions determine the means and ends, which induces the actor to act within the network, creating specific roles. In other words, roles emanate from the actor's intentions in the process. Existence of position and role dimensions can be found in any business network (Anderson et al., 1998). Since the perceptions and interpretations of the actor are individual, also networks are unique relative to other networks. Therefore, role of the actor is not limited to single social position, but one actor can adopt many different roles in different situations and circumstances.

End-user roles as public sector collaborators

From a social-exchange perspective, government organizations need things such as cooperation and compliance from service recipients to meet not only people's material but also their symbolic and normative needs (Alford, 2002). Even though the cooperation with users and the surrounding community has been recognized essential for public procurement's success, the resources given to user's involvement in public procurement processes are often slim (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012). The early detection of user requirements and needs guides the procurement project towards better end results, efficiency and innovative solutions straight from the beginning (Satish & Shah, 2009; Majamaa et al., 2008). In addition to creative mind, users can also bring other resources to the process for instance by positively influencing other users and lowering the public opposition (Bovaird & Loeffler, 2012).

When examined from business networks point of view, the structure of public purchasing process can be seen as a combination of network and hierarchy and comparable to the definition of quasi-hierarchy typical in contracts characterized by uncertainty (Bryntse, 1996). A fundamental guideline to purchasing public services by Bryntse (1996, p. 199) is "the

interaction with service user has to be recognized". The public (i.e. service end-user) nowadays is more complex than ever both in numbers of interested individuals and groups as well as interests these people and organizations hold. As the amount and popularity of different public forums which dialogue between citizens and public officials takes place has increased, the question "who takes part" has become more and more timely in public administration literature (Barnes et al., 2003).

Some existing studies indicate that the end-user of public procurement can be seen rather similar as a competent customer on a private market setting (Majamaa et al., 2008). Majamaa (2008) and Ng (Ng, Wong & Wong, 2013) approach the end-user perspective with the concept of public-private-people partnership. The definition of "people" includes all the individuals impacted by or interested about the procurement from the core users of the public infrastructure and services to the whole taxpayer community (Ng, Wong & Wong, 2013). End-users appreciate the chance to do independent choices and are able understand the value for money-principle behind the procurement process. For the supplier, the competent customer is also a strategic partner that actively takes part in the development and commercialization of products by transferring information about the market characteristics and specific customer demands (Johansson, 2010).

Alford (2002) views that private-customer value alone has limited validity in depicting the customers in public sector context and his typology aims to clarify who is to be served by the public agency. While the reciprocal processes in private sector create private value for both partners, the value delivered by public sector is consumed both by citizens who receive public value and clients who receive private value. This distinction between citizens and clients is important to acknowledge also in end-user engagement within public procurement. As public value is necessarily consumed or enjoyed together as citizens, value received as a client can be divided into three "sub roles" of paying customer, beneficiary and obligatee. The role of paying customer is most comparable with the role of private consumer (e.g. bus user paying for the ride). Beneficiaries receive the service of benefit without direct compensation to the organization in return (e.g. students in public schools). Finally, the role of an obligatee includes users that use the public service against their own will (e.g. state prisoners). Obligatee role is extremely interesting in that client doesn't receive public sector services as valued goods, but regards the services as compulsory "bads". (Alford, 2002.)

Thomas (2013) defines three most prominent roles seized by the public as customer, partner and a citizen. In the role of customer, public is simply seeking for discrete service (e.g. garbage disposal) to use. In the role of partner, public works together creating the service (e.g. sorting the trash out prior to the service). In the role of citizen the public discusses with the government about the service development in general. Significant is that most often all these roles are relevant either in different situations or at once while interacting with the public. Successful public's engagement process requires understanding all three roles and ability to work so that it reflects to multiple roles. Managers can also encounter resistance while challenging the traditional organization culture; members of the community may resist requests to coproduce and not join public involvement in representative fashion (Thomas, 2013.)

Murray (2002) sees that best value in public procurement collaboration is achieved through working in a variety of expert roles of researcher, detective, teacher, doctor and architect. The creation of mixed cross functional teams from outside the core purchasing function makes sense especially when expertise is needed only temporarily within the specific procurement project (Murray, 2002). Discoveries on the public procurement end-user often reflect to von

Hippel's (1986) lead user concept. Edler and Rigby (2005) divide public procurement end-users further to lead users and traditional users. Lead users' presence is especially important in the development phase of the procurement because lead users can identify different technologies, user's personal dependencies and the future needs of the industry better than so called traditional users.

RESEARCH METHOD

An in-depth qualitative case study design was applied for the empirical part of the study concerning end-user engagement process of three innovative public procurement projects. Qualitative research methods are particularly relevant in our setting where prior insights on end-user roles can be seen modest (Ghauri & Grønhaug, 2005). Case research is considered to be particularly well suited to exploring decision-making and behaviors in intersectional relationships (like procurer, supplier and end-user triad) between individuals (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005). Two of the studied procurements of public properties apply currently popular Public-private partnership model to increase the opportunities for collaboration between procurer, supplier and end-users of the project. One of the procurement projects relates to a user-driven development process of new city district and community center by using a living lab approach to engage interested citizens into the process. All three procurement projects studied share the same geographic area in Finland and emphasize the principles of close end-user involvement in the process. The initiatives are named under pseudonyms according to principal aims set for the end-user engagement in the project.

The empirical analysis is based on multiple data sources including interview, document and participant observation data gathered on procurements' central actors. Triangulation made possible by multiple data collection methods provides a strong substantiation of constructs and rich case description (Eisenhardt, 1989). Three kinds of different data used also justifies the present study setting of one case phenomenon of end-user engagement containing data from three similar projects aiming for high quantities of both complementary and project specific data. The study analysis follows abductive research approach as it is carried out through continuous dialectic interaction between existing research on the subject and empirical case insight (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). This iterative design enabled both the first tentative research problem to be drawn from the study's empirical setting and for new findings to emerge through the research process.

The interview data is gathered through semi-structured, open-ended interviews on relevant key informants from all three parties of the public procurement triad: procurers, suppliers and end-users. The major advantage for semi-structured interview data is that while the materials are somewhat systematic and comprehensive to code, the interviews' conversational and informal tone still supports the experience centered goals of the study (Silverman, 2011). The interview data was subsequently transcribed and analyzed thematically using NVivo. Participant observation has been conducted by the corresponding author attending passively and taking notes and pictures within different procurement meetings, workshops and negotiations monthly for 18 months during the procurement process of *Set for life* procurement from its preliminary planning phase to the property's building phase underway. Participant observation can be seen as an efficient way to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena and its context that is objective and accurate to its natural setting (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). The observation data gathered focused on the activities and interaction between focal actors participating in the meetings. Document data (contracts, memos, drawings, news stories etc.) has a complementary function in two of the studied procurement projects and a primary role in the analysis of *Shared*

city project. The main benefit of the discussion data gathered through living labs approach lies in its ability to represent the naturally occurring phenomenon directly and by end-users' own voices without reacting to the study process or the researcher's bias (Payne & Payne, 2004).

Descriptions of the procurement projects

The procurement project handled under pseudonym *"Shared city"* deals with the planning process of new city district and community center using technological tools of living lab approach. European Network of Living Labs (ENOLL) define living labs as user-centered, open innovation ecosystems that strive to facilitate research, development and innovation processes related to different public-private-people partnerships in physical or real-life contexts (Bergvall-Kåreborn & Ståhlbröst, 2012). The procurer organization is the region's capital city whose smart city project aims for sustainable economic development and welfare for all city residents. End-user engaging interaction in the procurement was conducted through digital tools of online discussion forum, 3D virtual laboratory and UBI polls. The building process of district's first phase community center through an innovative alliance contract was started in April 2016. The primary data used for the analysis in present study is formed of document material on the engagement methods used and one complementary group interview with the procurer party.

In the procurement project *"More together"* same region capital procured a large community center containing three schools, library, youth space and sports venues. The public-private partnership contract with the supplier contains both the building of 23 000 square meters of public space and servicing it for the following 25 years. Original architecture for the building was done through an external design competition while most of the other responsibilities related to the procurement are included in the PPP contract between the procurer and the supplier. The city's idea is to build energy efficient and innovative public space for the whole surrounding community. Because of multiple dissimilar end-user groups, the planning process included a large amount of different user groups mostly engaged through face-to-face meetings during the building process. The primary data gathered from the project includes 9 interviews focused on the details of interaction with users during pre-planning, planning, construction and maintenance phases of the property.

In the procurement *"Set for life"* a small agriculturally focused municipality makes the biggest investment in its history and procures future school space for the use of fast growing number of primary school children in the area. The municipality aims for highly innovative technological and pedagogical solutions for the property procured on a 20 year PPP service contract including the maintenance of spaces. The identified core-users are brought into the planning of the procurement model and property itself very early in the process and also the decision-makers of the municipality have been kept closely engaged to the procurement during the whole process. The building phase of the property was started in April 2016. Primary data used for the analysis includes participant observation gathered within more than 30 meetings, workshops, negotiations and seminars during pre-planning, tendering, planning and construction phases of the procurement.

CASE ANALYSIS

Our general findings from our data indicate that the expected end-user positions are highly bound by the procurement policy in use. The expectations on user tasks as seen by the procurer and supplier actors are most often quite universal and follow the general rules of e.g. public-

private partnership guidelines in making the user a closer part of the procurement planning. It is the only the data from user interviews, online discussion forum and observations from the procurement meetings that reveal what is the actual role that user adopts in the process. Therefore, it is the consequence of interaction between all three parties that determines the end-user's role. The data also expresses the situation's high importance to the involvement of certain user or user group. All three procurement projects illustrated situations where a certain end-user actor could have contributed to the procurement but wasn't engaged or an end-user was engaged in the procurement but was unfit for the particular situation or phase of the procurement. The situation-based role is defined not only by the nature of the procurement and the procurement phase but also by the personality of people in interaction and their fit.

> *It is a question of personality after all. […] With that (Procurer 1) we're from the same province and saw immediately that we get along very well and of course then you tend to seek for that interaction there and recognize that things go better with this person than someone else.* (End-user 2, *More together*)

The general case findings also prove procurement of teaching facilities as an extremely critical and timely field in their user engagement process. In Finland, the current development of the national curriculum challenges the properties procured and thus, principal's and teacher's positions as substance experts can be seen very important in development of new spaces. Especially the data from procurement project *Set for life* indicates that if the expertise on new pedagogical methods cannot be drawn from the user party, external pedagogy consulting needs to be involved in the planning of truly innovative school properties. In general, the interview data supports our presumption that users are able to understand their daily activities well. How user's contextual knowledge transforms into action is especially attached on the engagement activities related to principles of dialogue (direct interaction) and access (indirect interaction, shared resources).

The three procurement projects where the end-user engagement was analyzed are arranged in an order where end-user's collaborative role grows more important with each project. Where in *Shared city,* the user had mostly an initiator position in the planning, in *More together* end-user took both an expert and coordinator positions in the procurement. In project *Set for life,* the end-user can be seen as the sole-developer of the innovative school property procured. Even though the timeline and analysis of projects didn't follow this order, we will represent the three projects as a trajectory where the users adopt more and more responsible roles within each setting.

Shared city

If reflected to the common goals on innovative public procurement projects, it can be seen that *Shared city* shows model use of technical user engagement tools in action. In practice, more than 200 citizens of all ages were involved in the project by 1) recruiting people to a moderated online discussion and an e-survey in an online forum, 2) forming a user group to evaluate the city plan in a 3D virtual laboratory and 3) implementing a survey on 15 interactive touch screens in the city area. A key issue in the engagement was that the practices offered an opportunity to involve almost any user interested not attached to the geographical location and demographics of the actor. As a result a new age group in terms of urban planning, young people were reached by the procurer. In general, the city officials responsible of the project considered the multiple technological methods used successful in involving end-users in the urban development process.

With the traditional briefing and conversation events we held, the (usual) participant was a male between 50 and 60 year old male who opposed. And he was the loudest. [...] Now we have reached totally new kind of user groups and at the same time taught the culture of city development. (Procurer 1, *Shared city*)

The aim of Living Lab approach was to engage users in order to improve the sustainability of new city district, as well as to develop citizen participation and research new forms of user involvement. The interaction in the online forum shows that interested citizens concentrates on issues such as 1) regional decision making, 2) housing and demographics 3) environment and nature, 4) transportation, 5) leisure activities and 6) retail businesses in the area. A lot of the engaged users feed on each other's ideas and it can be seen that a couple of user contributors get a personal following in the forum by other users. It needs to be also noted that citizen groups of all ages and with special needs (children, elderly, physically disabled) are well presented in the conversation.

A shared feature for all end-users that were engaged in the planning process is their voluntary willingness to get involved in the process. Even though sharing information on the planning was also aimed at the future inhabitants of the area in *target* and *consumer* positions, most important value for the future procurement phases lies in the positions of *initiator* and *influencer*. As the procurement planning through virtual tools doesn't aim for any detailed final solutions at this procurement phase, it is more important for the procurer to find the people that have ideas and might be willing to adopt a larger collaborative role in the future. A challenge for the procurer is the large variety of users in urban planning; e.g. also the small businesses located in the area can be seen the end-users to be engaged.

Our observations from the data show that the discussion by the users does not limit itself in the particular district planned, but the domain of the discussion covers also more general issues related to the decision-making in the city. The importance of acknowledging end-users in the position of *decision-maker* is also emphasized in the 3D illustration of the plans to the elected city councillors. A particular challenge for the planning through these methods is recognizing the background of people involved due to anonymity of the feedback.

I really hope we wouldn't take the leash of construction companies but we could truly see some alternative solutions. (Online discussion 1, *Shared City*)

It has made it definitely easier. Many members in the board of construction have said, that it's only now when they see it three-dimensional, that they understand what they're deciding about. (Procurer 1, *Shared City*)

More together

The key accomplishment of *More together* procurement lies in its ability to engage an extremely large set of different end-users in the process. The involvement of future users of the property was started in very early phases of the procurement planning which was a novel practice both for the procurer city and nationally. Even though the user community contains very different people with various backgrounds, our case data indicates that the users from the two largest schools were prioritized in the planning of the property from early on. As the core users of the procured property, also the project management was set as the responsibility for the principals of the largest school organizations.

Teaching is of course the core user here. But then there is so many other parties in this building [...] This is extremely complex set of multiactors here. We really don't have another property with as many user groups. (Procurer 1, *More together*)

The data indicates that more interaction points the users had with the procurer and the supplier, more influential they see themselves for the procurement outcomes. The shared opinion by user informants was that even though most users were willing to participate to their best abilities, the eagerness didn't always meet the engagement actions. Hence, we identified end-users both in *expert* and *co-developer* positions but also users that were underutilized in positions of *consumer*, *beneficiary* and *target*. In addition, we were also able identify few situations where the end-user was engaged without real willingness to do so i.e. having an *obligatee* position. Even though the importance of core users (principals & organization managers) in the initiative is striking in the project, secondary user groups were involved in closer detailing of the property in teacher groups emphasizing the pedagogical points of view and student groups of different ages. Most of the meetings engaging larger user groups were organized by the user organizations themselves and even though systematic, the blending of separate user organizations was rare. Even though we observed some minor power struggles between the different user groups, we didn't find them significant for the procurement outcomes.

*I'm certain that the principals and teachers are mostly enthusiastic to participate in planning because they know that it will be improving their own working conditions. [...] I don't have the expertise for physics even though I studied it a bit. With special classrooms the nuances and details come purely from teacher's and architect's interaction. (*End-user 2*, More together)*

(Planning) isn't the key competence of anyone. Everybody has opinions, but you need to point out options for them to say it, or even to form the opinion. Of course there is always some aware and active, who will say it no matter what. (End-user 5, *More together*)

The insufficiencies identified in the engagement of both primary and secondary users of the procurement can be seen partly resulting from the failed in engagement decisions but a significant restriction to the engagement was also caused by the architect competition held before tendering of the procurement. Even though the interactive dialogue between end-users and suppliers in the planning was functional, all three parties felt that too much was already decided before possible contributions from the supplier and users. For instance the informants saw that ideas in designing open learning environments didn't get through because of the design competition ruling the final drawings too early; hence, e.g. some of the user resources used for school visits around Europe were wasted. Although it also needs to noted that the design competition was seen compulsory by the procurer actor because of architecturally challenging location, and one of the core users did have a seat in the committee choosing the winning design.

The data shows that the managing responsibility of the engagement process was given often to the core users as the principals of biggest school organizations acted as project managers for the whole duration of the procurement; one principal in the pre-stages and second in the later stages of procurement. Also the responsibility on the procurement of furniture and other movables was given almost fully as the responsibility of the users. Hence, we were able to identify a managerial position of end-users in *coordinator* position. Even though qualified as

managers, both of the principals had very little experience on any kind public procurement beforehand and had to do their own work simultaneously to the procurement. Our findings show that especially these core-users engaged would have gained from more support on their assigned tasks.

> *We should have had more time (for engagement). More time for the project manager to dig in to the project and direct the pedagogical view of the user groups. He has to be a sparring partner in there. [...] Sometimes there is even too much eagerness, even utopia (in the ideas). I have to give credit to (2ⁿᵈ project manager) for keeping a good, assertive line in there.* (Supplier 1, *More together*)

Set for life

The case data indicates that even though its end-user base is smaller than in the two previous projects*,* the procurement project *Set for life* captures the most innovative content from its interaction with end-users. Even though the user engagement was heavily emphasized since very early premise of the procurement, it can be seen that instead of co-developing the project, core users have often took a *sole-developer* position in the project. The most significant factor for the grown role of users in creating procurement innovations lies in the personalities of end-users in key positions. The key users are both friendly towards interaction and eager to transplant change in their own pedagogic organization. We also see that the personal sense-making process of core users had a key significance in shaping the user role to highly collaborative direction. The duties in project managing were left more on the responsibility of procurer within the project and the novel positions core users were found to have within different phases of the procurement include *innovator, pioneer* and *showrunner*.

> *It is a positive coincidence, that the change (of national curriculum) 2016 is simultaneously on the way. And there is none of these (properties) done. I can't emphasize enough that we are building a school in a different way. We think of matters a different way, and I hope for broad-minded openings on how we can shake the tree of primary school teaching. I claim that it is going through its biggest change ever. (*End-user 1: Quote from supplier negotiations*, Set for life)*

Compared to *More Together*, the starting point in the procurement was build more into the usability and open learning environment as defined by the user who have not only developed the ideas within the procurement triad but also carry more of the risk related to the planned solutions. Rich interaction in the procurement has also been enabled by the small size of the municipality and the close working relations between responsible office-holders and decision-makers. As another difference on the *More Together* project, the core users in *Set for life* procurement had also a role and a voice in the negotiations with the potential suppliers in tendering phase of the procurement. Even though, it can be seen that neither the procurer nor the supplier didn't ask that many opinions from the user in the initial negotiation phase, it made actors more familiar with each other and paved way for the future interactions.
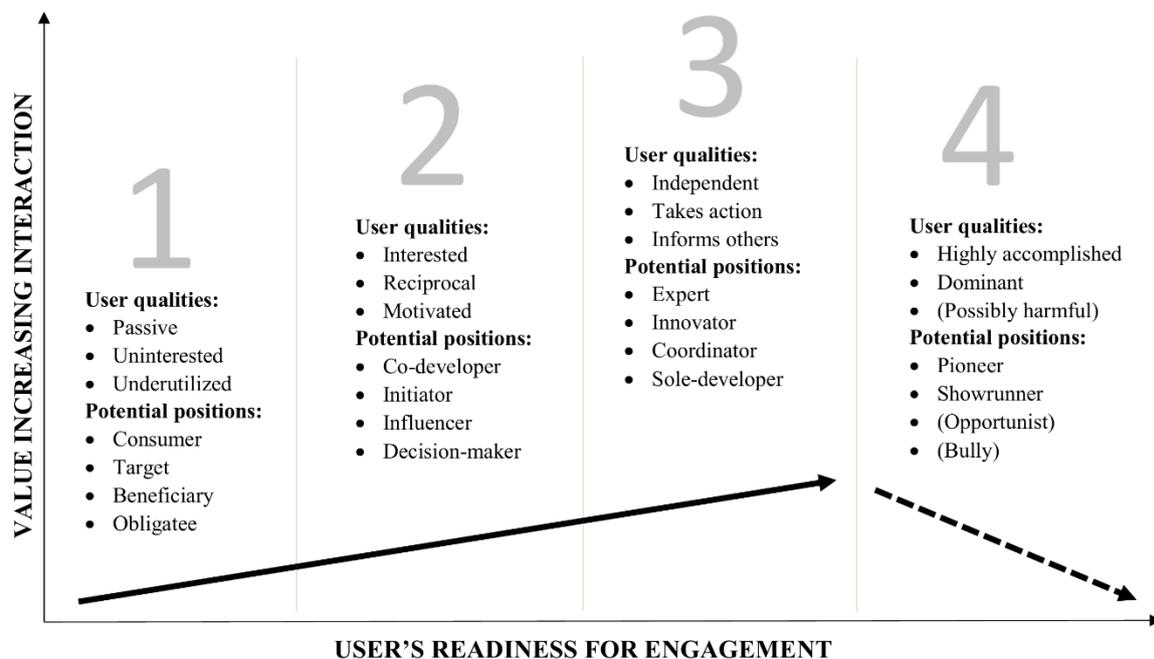
Besides pedagogical and operational planning with teacher and student groups, the procurer arranged workshops with the municipal decision-makers. The cooperation with decision-makers' can be seen slim in final the outcomes of the procured solution but valuable in lowering the public resistance for the procurement. Other findings from the *Set for life* procurement indicate the possibility of multiple positions held by same end-users. Especially in a smaller municipality, it becomes more probable that the same actor might be not only the occupational

user of the school but also e.g. a parent of a pupil, neighbour of the property, decision-maker in the local council as well as leisure time hobbyist of the public space. Some of these positions might take place simultaneously, some in different interaction points in the procurement project.

Both within *More together* and *Set for life* projects, there can be found situations where an accomplished end-user takes main control on progress of the procurement project. Our interpretation is that these controlling positions can also be seen harmful for value creating interaction to take place. Even though situations where end-user takes *opportunist* or *bully* position in the procurement have been acknowledged in the study analysis, the case data gathered within study's three procurement projects doesn't provide direct evidence on the presumption.

Summary of user positions

As the identification of user positions from the case data advanced, it became apparent that there are certain features that unite not only the end-users within the specific procurement position but multiple positions from all three projects and their different phases. Our findings suggest that more active the users are to be engaged in the procurement, more potential there is for value increasing interaction between actors in the public procurement triad. However, the readiness of end-users as individuals can't be seen as a guarantee for interaction to take place. It is also the procurement practice and the engagement activities used that determine the positions users can take and eventually how much interaction they will be part of. One of the crucial decisions in planning the practice lies in the time resources provided for end-users to take part in the procurement.

VALUE INCREASING INTERACTION

1
User qualities:
- Passive
- Uninterested
- Underutilized

Potential positions:
- Consumer
- Target
- Beneficiary
- Obligatee

2
User qualities:
- Interested
- Reciprocal
- Motivated

Potential positions:
- Co-developer
- Initiator
- Influencer
- Decision-maker

3
User qualities:
- Independent
- Takes action
- Informs others

Potential positions:
- Expert
- Innovator
- Coordinator
- Sole-developer

4
User qualities:
- Highly accomplished
- Dominant
- (Possibly harmful)

Potential positions:
- Pioneer
- Showrunner
- (Opportunist)
- (Bully)

USER'S READINESS FOR ENGAGEMENT

Figure 1. Tentative classification of end-user groups in innovative public procurement projects.

The main objective for end-user engagement within innovative public procurement practices is the generation of value-in-use through increased usability of the procurement (Torvinen & Ulkuniemi, forthcoming 2016). This in mind, we eventually situated the identified positions and their common qualities into an illustration (Figure 1) based on two variables: 1) How much value-in-use can be derived from interaction in the position person has and 2) How ready is the user to be engaged in the procurement. We ended up with four types of positions end-users generally have in our case procurement projects. These position clusters acted as an analysis checkpoint for the role typology to follow.

TYPES OF END-USER ROLES IN INNOVATIVE PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Based on further analysis on the position clusters, we propose four representative roles that each user position in the end-user engagement of innovative public procurement can be situated in. As the positions of actors vary according to the procurement context and specific phase in the procurement process, the typology emphasizes roles as situation-specific and determined by network interaction (i.e. symbolic interactionist view on role theory). The type of role is determined by two variables in any particular interaction point: 1) end-user's readiness to engage in independent value co-creation and 2) the level of value-in-use user interaction generates for the procurement outcomes. Figure 2 elaborates the four suggested roles all opening with letter C: *Conventional*, *Cooperative*, *Collaborative* and *Controlling*.
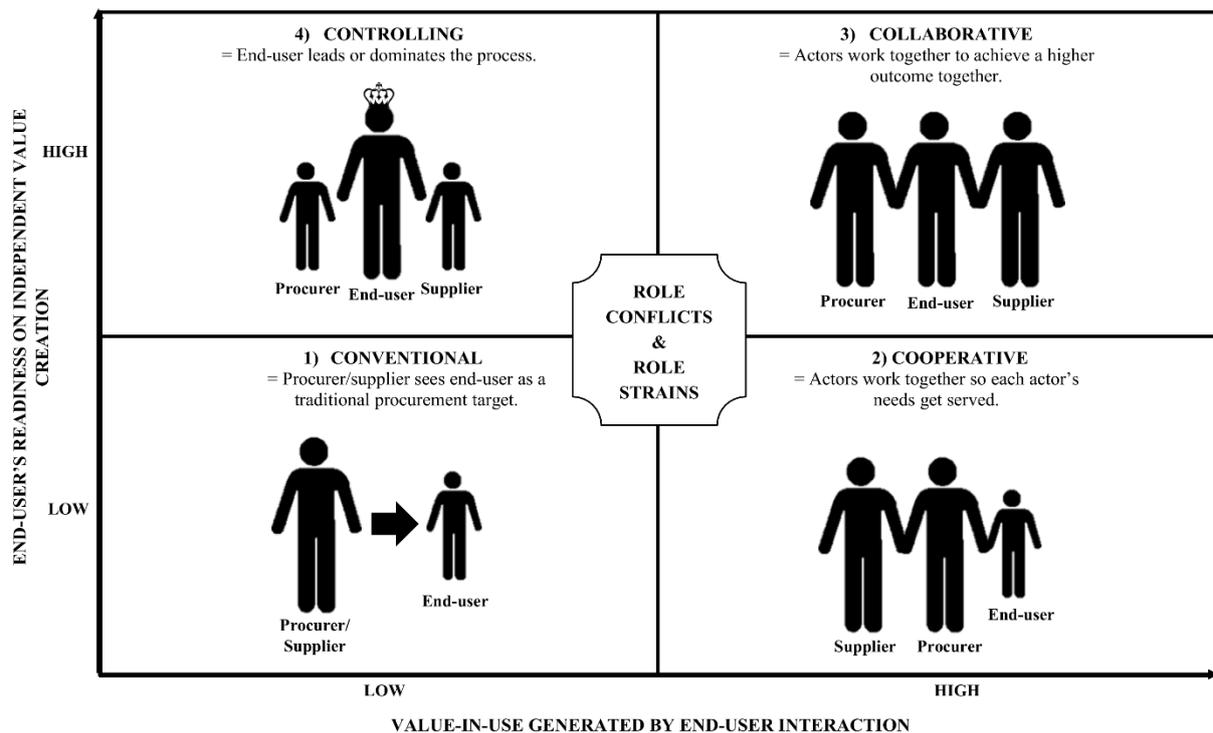
Figure 2. The typology of end-user roles in innovative public procurement projects.

Conventional role

The first, conventional role represents end-user seen from the traditional perspective on public procurement. As with contemporary public procurement procedures, the end-user in the

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conventional role is mostly seen as a target or consumer who the public service is produced for. Hence, both user's readiness to engage in the procurement process and the potential value-in-use generated by user interaction are low. The users in conventional role are not seeking private value the procured service creates or they receive it from the positions of beneficiary or obligatee whose capabilities to contribute on the procurement are low.

Interaction with the end-user in conventional role is one-sided and engagement in shared dialogue between all focal actors does not take place. In innovative public procurement projects, user is often a secondary actor for the project and only involved in the end-user engagement process through a more primary end-user in a cooperative, collaborative or controlling role. The crucial task for the procurer and supplier is to acknowledge that even though the value potential of user in conventional role is limited, their acknowledgement might still be crucial for the future of the service contract or the public's approval for the project.

Cooperative role

In the cooperative role, the potential value-in-use generated by the end-user grows. User in cooperative role is willing to take assisting tasks in the network with an interest to form either private or public value that best serves the specific user. However as an associate, the end-user role is still seen less important than the roles of procurer and supplier controlling the procurement process. Interaction with end-user in the cooperative role is reciprocal and aims for value-in-use formed by win-win situations for all actors. Example positions related to cooperative role include co-developer, initiator, influencer and decision-maker.

As the aim of user interaction lies in goals of all the actors separately, also the fulfillment of end-user needs is seen as a way of creating benefit for all parties separately. This can lead to situations where the public sector procurer seeking for public value for the whole community and private sector supplier seeking for financial profits from the satisfaction of core users might have different perceptions on user needs. What separates the cooperative role from collaborative role in the study is that even though the user in cooperative role works as associate of the procurement process, they are not urged to create value independently from the other actors. Important for both the procurer and supplier actors is to provide workable points of interaction and enough freedom of choice so that the specific users are able to engage to the procurement the correct phases.

Collaborative role

In the collaborative role, the user becomes an equal partner within the exchange relationships in the procurement triad. As the visionary goal of focal actors is to become one consortium, the aims of engagement are not set on creating value for each partner separately, but the goal for engagement can be set in outcomes that create some higher results and innovations that benefit all parties involved. Thus, the full value-in-use potential of end-user engagement enabled by the innovative public procurement method is reached. Example positions that end-users take in the collaborative role include expert, innovator, coordinator and sole-developer.

The interaction with end-users in the collaborative role is both direct and indirect. Thus, in addition to reciprocal dialogue, user is given access to indirect resources (e.g. contacts) that assist for him or her to create value independently from procurer and supplier. Even though the collaborative role can be seen as sort of an ideal situation for the both the outcomes of the procurement and enabling independent value creation, it needs to noted that not all users and

user positions are set for collaborative role in the engagement process. Firstly, it is waste of resources to push users seen as secondary towards the collaborative role. Second, it is only a certain group of users that have qualifications and motivation on taking independent actions and becoming co-creators of value in the procurement. Important task for the procurer and supplier is to identify these individuals in the right situations and provide them easy access to the information and tools they need to collaborate.

Controlling role

The controlling role includes positions where the user role becomes dominant compared to the roles of the procurer and supplier. If the user is truly accomplished enough to both develop and lead the engagement process, the dominant role can be beneficial for the procurement. However, end-user adopting a controlling role might also be harmful for interaction in the process. When harmful, the dominant user acts as an independent value creator in the process, but without interaction with other network actors, no shared value-in-use is born. Examples where the end-user has a controlling role to the engagement process in a positive way include acting from the positions of pioneer or showrunner. Controlling role can create negative outcomes in the positions of opportunist and a bully.

Noticeable is that the controlling user role might appear in a specific situation of the procurement process (e.g. decision-making or particular planning) or in a more comprehensive way where the end-user takes full lead of the engagement process. The prerequisite for successful end-user lead on procurement interaction lies in exceptionally accomplished core user of the procurement. Conversely, the danger lies in user hijacking the process and killing the collaborative interaction between actors. From innovations' point of view, the unchallenged development ideas by the user in the controlling role might lead to either solutions too ambitious or too ordinary. The task for procurer and supplier parties is to identify the risky situations where too much user control can take place and try to avoid network dynamics harmful for the procurement.

Role conflicts and role strains

Our case results indicate that same end-user might need to act in various roles either in different phases of the procurement or simultaneously in different end-user positions. Role conflict can be seen as a tension that occurs when the user is facing two or more roles as having multiple statuses, whereas role strain is a tension that occurs when the person is faced with a single role having multiple statuses.

A simple example from a school procurement project like *Set for life* is an end-user of small municipality that might simultaneously possess the statuses of teacher, parent, leisure user, decision-maker and a tax payer. When given the various expectations related to each position end-user meets a role conflict where the actor needs to take more than one role in the given situations. Noteworthy is also that the actors in the procurer organization i.e. the public officials are also part of the user community and understand the value to the public through their own personal roles as citizens (Barnes et al., 2003).

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to develop understanding on end-user roles in the end-user engagement process within innovative public procurement. Due to demographical and technological

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development in the public procurement environment, new innovative public procurement practices change both how suppliers are being invited to their solutions to the public sector in improved fashion (Knutsson & Thomasson, 2014) and enable for new actors to be engaged in the purchasing process. The study sees the dynamics of public procurement relationships before all as a triad between the focal actors of public procurer, private supplier and the end-user of the public purchase (Havila, Johanson & Thilenius, 2004; Majamaa et al., 2008). Even though the inclusion of user perspective has been acknowledged both from innovation policy and public procurement point of views for a while, there are scattered views on how the end-user role is seen both by scholars, practitioners as well policy makers in the field.

Thomas (2013) sees the dual challenge of public administrators in understanding both the nature of public in the different roles of customer, partner and citizen and how to interact with each of these roles. Seen from the social-exchange perspective, cooperation and compliance from service recipients are needed by the public sector to meet both material, symbolic as well as normative needs of the public (Alford, 2002). It is end-user engaging development processes that expand the underutilized potential for including consumerist possibilities in for public organizations (Majamaa, 2008). The study applies network role theory on identifying and evaluating different expected positions users have and roles they adopt in the end-user engagement process of innovative public procurement practices. The concept of role is seen situation-specific as typical for symbolic interactionist view on role theory (Anderson et al., 1998). This theoretical approach can be seen supported by Bryntse's (1996) definition of public purchasing process as a combination of network and hierarchy. An in-depth case study was conducted examining the end-user engagement process of three innovative public procurement projects in Finland with a common emphasis on close end-user involvement during the procurement.

Firstly we asked, *what are the expected positions end-users in innovative public procurement projects are placed at (RQ1)?* User's position in the end-user engagement is determined by expectations on actor's investment on interaction with the procurer and supplier parties. Our case study indicates that the expectations set for different end-user positions are heavily influenced by norms related to the innovative procurement policy in use. Even though the procurer and supplier set project specific guidelines on the extent and subjects of user engagement in different procurement phases, the collective expectations on end-user positions' are highly dependent on procurer's and supplier's understanding on the procurement practice applied (e.g. PPP model). The cause of this can be explained both by the cautiousness caused by heavy regulations on the field of public procurement and quasi-hierarchical nature of public administration in general (Bryntse, 1996).

The quantity of different end-user positions is most dependent on the procurement context and size of the user community. Especially in smaller user communities, same user tend to take different positions in different phases of the procurement. In general, amount of user positions grows with the quantity of interested actors in the community. Most value expectations are normally set on positions where users act as substance experts, developers or coordinators of the procurement planning. Least expectations are given on engagement of people in target, customer, beneficiary and obligatee positions. A significant difference in comparing the public procurement end-user position to position of customer in a private sector setting lies in the perception of value received by the individuals. Even though the end-users do receive private value in situations where they acts as paying customers, the same end-users act also as receivers of public value as citizens in the community.

Second, we asked *what are the situational roles end-users adopt in the end-user engagement process of innovative public procurement (RQ2)?* Our case findings indicate that user roles form as the consequence of interaction within the focal network actors. This corroborates with the view by Abrahamsen, Henneberg and Naudé (2012) who see role perceptions formed by mutual understanding and interaction as well as actors own changing understanding on network dynamics and their own role in it. Even though the norms in the beginning of the procurement planning guide the expectations on end-user engagement in certain extent, the true user value is eventually determined by situational roles people adopt to. As we evaluated the various positions found in our empirical case data, we were able to outline the engaged end-users acting in one of four roles determined by two variables: 1) end-user's readiness for independent value creation and 2) potential value-in-use generated by interaction with the user.

The four proposed situational end-user roles are *conventional, cooperative, collaborative* and *controlling* role. Even though, it's visible that the end-users in cooperative and collaborative roles are most important for beneficial outcomes of the engagement, also end-users in conventional role can be seen valuable e.g. in situations where passive engagement approach in needed for sharing information or lowering public resistance towards the procurement. It can also be seen as a waste of resources to engage users in positions where their collaborative engagement doesn't create any extra value. Users in the controlling role can both benefit and harm the procurement depending on their know-how and attitude towards interaction with the procurer and supplier.

Key contribution of this study lies in providing an empirically supported typology for evaluating the value potential of a single end-user in different phases of an innovative public procurement project. The present study reasserts the dispute in public procurement research of viewing the public procurement end-user only through interpretation of either private sector consumer or public sector citizen. We see that both views are needed to understand user behavior at any given situation in the procurement. As a contribution to the literature on industrial marketing and purchasing, the study results indicate that closer the interaction in the purchasing networks becomes, less confined the actors are to their expected positions. Thus, we reassert the symbolic interactionist role theory in that the role of an actor is determined by user's own subjective intentions and creativity in the given situation. Acting and learning in a certain role also reshapes dynamics of the business network they are part of.

According to Webler et al. (2001) the key skill for public practitioners is to develop a process that allows everyone to be heard and have a say in the outcomes of public participation. We find this managerial claim both correct and incorrect in the present study. In long-lasting public procurement projects there are always combinations of end-users and situations where closer engagement doesn't add value to the procurement outcomes. However, even though engaging end-users in the conventional role for closer interaction isn't lucrative for the innovativeness of the procurement, being transparent and present for these users can still be extremely beneficial for e.g. public's approval of the procurement project. Public procurement practitioners need also to notice that end-user roles are not fixed but changing according to the situation and development of the user's subjective understanding. A common argument in discussion about innovative public procurement policies is: "One size does not fit all." This distinctiveness of local procurement projects, local actors and interaction between them is extremely true in the case of this study.

The limitations of the present study according to business networks principles is that knowledge on any network can never be final and conclusive but the coming, going and

changing actors continuously change the activities and the network dynamics alike (Anderson et al., 1998). In addition, Knight and Harland (2005) suggest that role typologies can be seen applicable only within their own contextual boundaries and not managing networks in general. Thus, also the goal of the present study is not to build an absolute construct of end-user roles within the context of innovative public procurement, but to form a context-specific description to apply for further research. Further research on end-user roles can either focus on testing the typology on other public administration environments or in a larger quantitative study on similar procurement projects.

Another interesting future research avenue recognized is advancing the knowledge on the effects of relative strength between focal actors the procurement process. Even though we were able to identify the existence of controlling role of the user in certain situations, our data didn't demonstrate a situation of end-user hijacking the whole procurement. Since it can be seen that the ideal of equal partnership within the triadic public procurement relationships can never be fully reached, there is a call for further studies on the essence and consequences of these unbalanced power structures in the network.

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