



Co-production

Enhancing the role
of citizens in governance
and service delivery

Technical Dossier no. 4

May 2018

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Author: Leda Stott

Supervising editor: Toby Johnson

Design and layout: Anita Cortés, Daniel Renders

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AEIDL, Chaussée St-Pierre 260, B-1040 Belgium

+32 2 736 1890

esf@aeidl.eu

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1. INTRODUCTION

Co-production is widely presented as a new and more inclusive way of developing and delivering public goods and services. Responding to concerns about the extent to which the state, on the one hand, and the market, on the other, can realistically provide public services that adequately meet the needs of different citizens, the concept of co-production has been positioned as integral to a new form of governance involving the contribution of multiple actors to public services.¹ According to the European Commission (2011:19), growing interest in integrated and participatory service models that incorporate stronger connections between the public sector and civil society actors such as NGOs, community-based organisations and associations, and citizens themselves, has emerged because of disaffection with ‘the traditional, heavily statist system and the unequal liberal system – both equally as inefficient as each other – for providing public goods or public services’.

In the European Union, the search for more innovative service models has been reinforced by the recent socio-economic crisis and cutbacks in the provision of public services. To address this situation, the European Commission (2011:22) observed that:

Firstly, solutions must be found, in a time of major budgetary constraints, to deliver better services making more effective use of available resources. Second, the traditional ways in which the market, the public and the civil sector have provided answers to social demands are no longer sufficient. In this context, social innovation represents an important option to be enhanced at different levels (local, regional, national, European) and sectors (public, private, civil) as its purpose is to innovate in a different way (through the active engagement of society itself) and to generate primarily social value.

This emphasis on social innovation and a multi-level and cross-sector approach has been welcomed by those who see the growing involvement of NGOs and other civil society groups in service provision as offering possibilities for generating positive service models for those most affected by austerity measures such as lower income groups, women, youth and migrants. In this sense, multi-actor collaborative efforts to generate jobs and services that appropriately meet the different needs of these groups (and others) are part of a co-production process that strengthens citizen engagement through more inclusive, bottom-up and participatory connections.

However, while the notion of co-production is clearly attractive to advocates of greater citizen participation in the development of products and services, it is also true that the term is employed in a vague manner and used interchangeably with other ‘co-trends’ such as co-creation, co-design, and co-responsibility, among others. In addition, although there is agreement that co-production may afford opportunities for enhanced collaborative governance and involvement of users in developing innovative public service arrangements, more evidence is needed to confirm how successfully these openings have been translated into practice (Kleinhans, 2017). Lack of both an agreed understanding and evidence base for co-production are thus viewed as limiting its impact at policy level (Boyle & Harris, 2009:3).

In order to promote clarity on the rationale for co-production, and support the development of a common understanding of what it involves within the context of the European Social Fund (ESF), this dossier looks into the origins of the term and how it relates to other co-concepts. The paper also explores why and how co-production is being applied in relation to different themes and the extent to which there is confirmation of its positive impact and added value in practice. The dossier concludes with a set of emerging lessons and recommendations regarding the implementation of co-production in ESF programmes and projects during the 2021-27 funding period.

¹ Pestoff (2016:18) describes this New Public Governance (NPG) as an evolution away from traditional ‘command and control’ public administration (PA) and New Public Management (NPM) in which the market defines the rules by which services are delivered.



2. CO-PRODUCTION AND OTHER CO-TRENDS

In order to achieve greater specificity about the type of co-production that is of interest to the ESF, clarity between co-production and other related concepts is a crucial starting point.² This section thus aims to identify the origins and key characteristics of co-production and other co-trends, and their shared elements.

2.1 Co-production

The origins of the term ‘co-production’ can be found in the work of Elinor Ostrom and Edgar S. Cahn (Griffiths, 2016). Elinor Ostrom was a Nobel prize-winning political economist whose work at Indiana University during the 1970s focused on relationships between services and communities. She had a particular interest in co-operative economics and how communities manage common resources. Edgar S. Cahn, meanwhile, is a civil rights law professor who has developed the concept of time banks through which people swap time and skill instead of money.³ In his books *Time Dollars* (1992) and *No More Throw Away People: The Co-Production Imperative* (2000) he frames co-production in the context of civil rights and the idea that the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged have a worthwhile role to play in their communities.

Schlappa and Ramsden (2011:25) note that the ideas put forward by Ostrom and Cahn developed in the United States during a time when the government was struggling with severe budgetary constraints and pressures for public

sector reform. Co-production thus emerged as what Cahn has described as ‘a way to humanize the marketplace while elevating the non-market universe of families, community and service’.⁴

This understanding of co-production has been expanded upon by Boyle and Harris (2009:11) who define the term as follows:

Co-production means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change.

A central tenet of co-production is thus ‘the contribution of service users to the provision of services’ (Realpe & Wallace, 2010:8) through a:

... process that literally turns services users from passive recipients into active shapers of public services because it means involving all stakeholders, including the people who use a service, in the process of determining what services are delivered and how they operate (The Cooperative Council).⁵

The literature on co-production suggests that it may assume different forms. Pestoff (2016:21), for example, distinguishes between ‘light’ and ‘heavy’ co-production, with

⁴ <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/media-that-set-us-free/book-review-no-more-throw-away-people-by-edgar-cahn>

⁵ <https://cooperativecounciltoolkit.wordpress.com/whatcooperative-council/what-is-co-production/>

² See Boyle and Harris (2009:3) and Voorberg et al. (2014:16).

³ https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_time_bank_solution

Table 1: **Co-production continuum**

	Consumer co-production	Participative co-production	Enhanced co-production
Aim	User empowerment Citizen as co-implementer	User participation Citizen as co-designer	User-led innovation Citizen as initiator
	Engagement of consumers at the <i>operational stage</i> of service production process in order to balance their expectations and experience of the service.	User involvement through consultation and participative planning mechanisms during the <i>strategic planning and design stage</i> of service production and delivery process to improve quality of existing public services.	Users initiate and are involved in formulating and developing both operational and strategic modes of co-production that challenge the way that services are delivered.

Source: Adapted from Osborne & Strokosch (2013:537) and Voorberg et al. (2014:1)

the former involving more passive forms of participation in which citizens have limited influence and responsibility for public services, and the latter as having ‘direct democratic control’ over them. This sense of hierarchy is further endorsed by Osborne & Strokosch (2013) and Voorberg et al. (2014) who outline three stages of co-production, ranging from partial user involvement in service development to full control and ownership (see Table 1).

2.2 Co-creation

The term ‘co-creation’ is often used interchangeably with ‘co-production’ and appears to share many common elements with it. Unlike co-production, however, the origins of co-creation can be found in the private sector and a stronger emphasis on the importance of value creation (Voorberg et al., 2014:8). Prahalad and Ramaswamy, who coined the term in 2000, describe co-creation as an avenue for better engagement between businesses and their customers in response to changes brought about by globalisation, including: greater public scrutiny via access to information, heightened networking across social and geographical boundaries, enhanced customer choice and experimentation with different services and products (ibid:4). The authors outline a DART process for co-creation which encompasses:

- **Dialogue** – communicating better with customers;
- **Access** – sharing information and tools with customers;
- **Risk assessment** – providing full information disclosure about risks so that customers can make informed choices about products and services;
- **Transparency** – around prices, costs and profit margins. (ibid:8)

The concept of co-creation has also been linked to a business management model based on **co-innovation** in

which ‘external, collaborative, co-creative ideas converge to create organizational and shared value’ as a result of a new ‘ecosystem’ of interdependence between individual and organisational actors from different sectors (Lee et al., 2012:817). In this scenario, co-innovation is positioned as an evolutionary stage of innovation which provides customer value and enhances an organisation’s competitive edge. Lee et al. further suggest that an organisation has little chance of survival if it does not develop shared value with its stakeholders (ibid:818 & 824).

Osborne et al. (2016:645) incorporate a less managerialist view of co-innovation by exploring the potential of co-production to co-create different forms of added value for public service users at both individual and societal levels (see Table 2). In the Type 4 category of value creation, co-innovation is described as a process in which ‘...the focus is not upon the service alone but upon how it is produced within the holistic service system and upon novel combinatory means to improve such service delivery’ (ibid:648).

2.3 Co-design

Co-production has also been linked to co-design. Also known as participatory or co-operative design, this concept emerged in the 1960s and 70s to encourage community stakeholders to get involved in creative architectural and design processes (Szebeko & Tan, 2010:581). The central principle of co-design is that all relevant stakeholders are valued as partners in development and decision-making processes related to products or services. Szebeko & Tan (ibid:583-4) suggest that co-design follows a process that includes the following phases:

- **Diagnosis** – developing a shared and full understanding of the issue to be addressed;
- **Engagement and discovery** – bringing the right people

Table 2: Types of added value generated through co-production

Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4
Meets an individual social need (or need of groups of individuals) e.g. enabling individuals with disabilities to enhance their lives.	Meets community needs in a way that adds to society, e.g. through a community regeneration scheme.	Meets individual well-being as result of Type 1 & 2 activities, e.g. as a result of helping resolve the impact of a disability on daily life.	Creates social capital by co-creating capacity to resolve future problems, e.g. by developing skills/ confidence of individuals with disabilities or local communities as a consequence of Type 1 or 2 activities.

Source: Adapted from Osborne et al. (2016:645)

into the project and conveying the value of participation to each stakeholder group;

- Design – bringing together all project stakeholders to share findings, vote on key priority areas as a community and begin generating ideas;
- Developing and testing – prototyping of ideas or services with feedback from potential users;
- Influencing, delivery and enterprise – reviewing and categorising the ideas and opportunities collected;
- Measuring and sustaining – evaluating and maintaining the positive impact on individuals, communities and organisations.

Co-design is not understood or implemented in the same manner in all contexts. Sanders & Stappers (2008:4) note that in Scandinavia, for example, co-design has been promoted as a way of working with trade unions to encourage worker participation in decision-making processes with the ‘user as partner’. In the United States, however, co-design has focused on customer involvement in initial product design processes with the ‘user as subject’. This differentiation resonates with the EC’s vision of the end user as a citizen as opposed to the private sector perception of the end user ‘as an interesting source of product and service innovation’ (Voorberg et al. 2014:2).

2.4 Co-responsibility

The Council of Europe describes co-responsibility as an ‘approach where councils, civic associations and citizens in their different shapes and guises – parents, service users, patients, tenants, residents, passengers, etc. – co-operate and work together’ to achieve social well-being (Bloomfield, 2012:5). Social well-being is portrayed as encompassing a range of criteria – from access to essential resources to social and personal equilibrium. Among these categories, particular attention is paid to the ‘living environment’ and access to basic services (ibid.:8), and the need to devolve services to neighbourhoods through new models of governance that encourage the active involvement of citizens (ibid.:4).

To achieve optimal social well-being, a continuum of citizen participation is proposed that begins with consultation via **co-governance**, then increased involvement through **co-management** and co-production before achieving co-responsibility and the ‘equal and balanced engagement of different stakeholders and actors, especially citizens, aiming at individual and collective well-being within the living environment’ (Bloomfield, 2012:15) (see Table 3).

2.5 Co-construction

In their analysis of co-production, Osborne et al (2016:649) mention ‘co-construction’. Generally used with reference to knowledge and learning, it is defined by Hargreaves (2006:10) as ‘the readiness to treat students as active partners in the design, implementation and evaluation of their education’. This involves ‘personalisation’ in which students are active partners ‘through involvement in every aspect of schooling, not just learning itself’ (ibid.:17).

The National College for Teaching and Leadership⁶ positions co-construction as a learning paradigm that builds incrementally on other models of learning (see Table 4).

For Hargreaves (2006:10), co-construction is a cycle composed of five key elements (see Figure 1):

- Engagement – with learning and the life of the school
- Responsibility – for own learning and behaviour
- Independence – in, and control over, learning
- Confidence – in oneself as a learner
- Maturity – and mutual respect in all relationships

Co-construction places particular emphasis on ensuring that information and lessons about how users and other professionals work together is captured effectively. In view of the European Commission’s calls for a systemic approach to social innovation that allows for ‘social learning

⁶ <https://www.nationalcollege.org.uk/transfer/open/adsbm-phase-3-module-1-enabling-learning/adsbm-p3m1s2/adsbm-p3m1s2t2.html>

Table 3: **Steps towards co-responsibility**

Co-governance	Co-management	Co-production	Co-responsibility
Actors from different organisations and sectors assist in strategic planning of a service, project or programme.	Different organisations pool their resources to coordinate delivery of a service or project	Citizens produce, at least in part, the services they use themselves.	Citizens are equally involved in joint activity that takes place across all services within an area.

Source: Adapted from Bloomfield (2012:15)

Table 4: *Paradigms of learning*

Transmission of knowledge	Construction of knowledge	Co-construction
Teachers deliver and assess 'non-contested' knowledge.	Teachers facilitate knowledge and support learners to draw upon their experience to gain new insights.	Teachers and pupils share development of knowledge. Feedback and reflection are encouraged.

Source: National College for Teaching and Leadership

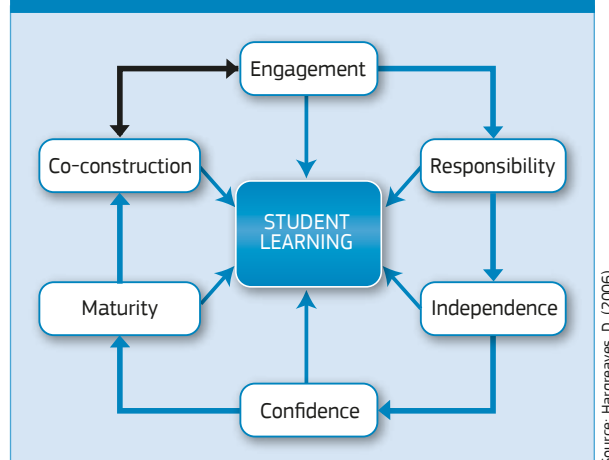
and citizens' involvement, empowerment and participation' (European Commission, 2011:9), the joint learning through feedback and reflection that is central to co-construction is of relevance for co-production. Osborne et al. (2016:649) also highlight the importance of sharing the 'lived experience' of service users and reiterate the need for a better understanding of the role of learning in co-production.

2.6 Common elements and questions

Co-production clearly shares a number of overlapping elements with the co-trends described above. These commonalities further raise a series of questions about how co-terminology is used and point to areas that require unpacking further in order to refine our understanding of them (see Table 5).

While all the co-trends propose closer engagement with users, distinctions can be seen in the extent to which this collaboration is 'with' or 'for' end users and the role played

Figure 1: The co-construction cycle



by public administration in relation to the promotion of co-processes. These differences are further manifested in the use of co-terms to describe both a process by which government bodies relinquish social and regulatory

Table 5: *Common elements of co-trends and issues they raise*

Common elements	Issues and questions
Focus on active involvement of end users (as citizens or consumers) in development of public goods and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does participation need to be at the top end of citizen's engagement ladder (steering/control)? Is this realistic? How far are stakeholders able/willing to participate 'actively'? What resources, skills, etc. may be needed to assist active involvement? What role do 'third sector' organisations representing citizens assume in these arrangements? How do we ensure that participation is meaningful/ appropriate in different contexts, and in relation to different themes, groups and phases of development?
Positioning as part of an evolutionary continuum (from passive to active citizen/user participation in development of services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How far does this depend upon political context and institutional settings? What kind of 'enabling environment' is required for this? What are the risks of promoting greater citizen's participation (in terms of raised expectations/ manipulation, etc.)? How far is there room for other service provision arrangements?
The participation process must be accompanied by the production of products or services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As well as the process of participation what concrete outcomes should we expect? What kind of results do we want (individual/collective/both)? How do we measure the added value of working in this way?

Sources: Adapted from Pestoff (2011) and Voorberg et al (2014)

'control' to the market, as well as a way of promoting heightened citizen participation in developing new forms of service delivery. Jocelyne Bourgon⁷ (2011) suggests that these two views of co-production can be

⁷ Jocelyne Bourgon was a guest speaker at the ESF Transnationality Public Administration and Governance network meeting in Prague, March 2017.

combined in a framework whereby public administration retains its traditional authority to steward society while, at the same time, developing new abilities to support the collective power of society (see Box). As well as exploring the concept of co-production in relation to public administration, her 'New Synthesis' framework also seeks to integrate other co-concepts, such as co-creation and co-design.

An overarching framework for understanding the co-trends?

Bourgon (2011) claims that 'the role of public institutions and public organisations is to enhance the collective capacity to achieve results of higher public value and at a lower overall cost to society, in all circumstances, across systems and across generations.' The central narrative of the New Synthesis for public administration is reflected in

Bourgon's main argument is that public administration should blend and balance traditional government authority with the development of new abilities to support the collective power of society. Thus, as well as undertaking traditional duties such as stewardship, taxing and spending, legislation and law enforcement, public administration can also facilitate collective power where new ways of combining existing resources and people lead to better results. This process can take place through:

- Partnering with others to achieve public results so that responsibility, risks and rewards are shared

- Enabling others to innovate through initiatives that encourage co-creation and co-production with others
- Empowering citizens by allowing them to exercise power and mobilise for action (Wauters 2015: 45-6).

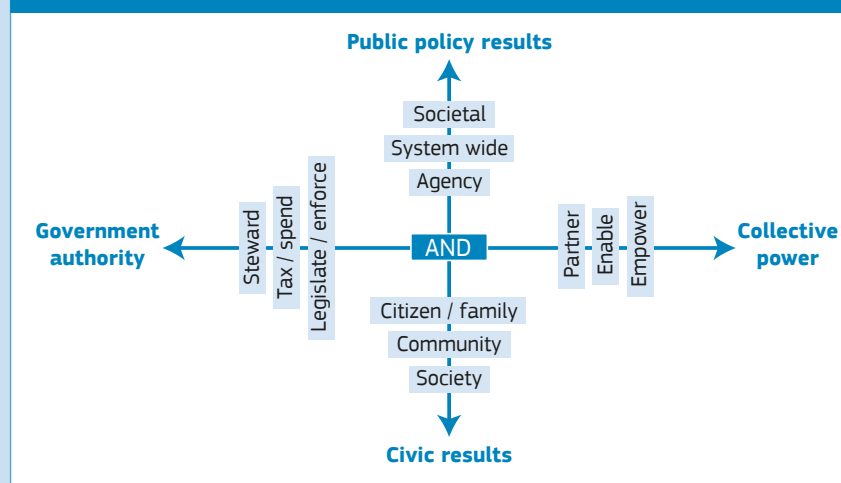
Bourgon suggests that enabling collective power is necessary for addressing wicked problems – such as volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – where innovation and emergence, and adaptive capacity for resilience, are needed (see right half of the framework in Fig. 2). Here, public administration needs to move from a passive position to a proactive stance where it can anticipate and detect emerging issues in uncertain conditions. Working in collaboration with different actors, this process entails thinking about alternative futures and how to get there, and the challenges that this may involve.

In the New Synthesis framework, no matter how proactive government is, there will always be sudden shocks and crises. Here the capacity of society to adapt,

absorb, change and even prosper in the face of crisis is important. This resilience is developed through self-reliant individuals able to take charge of their lives and shape their futures. With a critical mass of such people, resilience may also be developed by working together and ensuring the enhanced capacity of communities to define issues, find solutions and act to achieve them. While resilience cannot be created by government, it can nurture it by building upon strengths and avoiding quick fixes that tend to disempower people and communities. Social capital can thus be fostered through co-production which ensures that helping others is built into the service delivery system and deliberately creates active roles for citizens and communities (Wauters 2015: 47-8). In this sense there is an understanding that 'co-production represents the shared and reciprocal activities of people and public agencies to produce results of public value' (Bourgon, 2011:114). Because people are viewed as important assets that can be put to good productive use through co-production, governments can thus shift citizens from being passive consumers of public services to active participation and bring about an increase in self-sufficiency.

As well as co-production, the New Synthesis framework also integrates co-creation and co-design methodologies in policy-making. These co-trends are not just seen as tools for achieving better public policies but also as supporting the creation of a dynamic and adaptive system of governance in which public organisations constantly connect with their environment, and where the public, private and civic spheres have the capacity to co-evolve in a manner that maximises the overall performance of a society.

Figure 2: New Synthesis Framework



Source: Wauters (2015) based on Bourgon (2011)



3. CO-PRODUCTION AND THE ESF: ARRIVING AT A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM

The core elements of co-production clearly coincide with the mission and values of the ESF. The ESF promotes a people-centred development approach based upon different social actors working together in partnership to address challenges at different levels. As well as national and regional level action, there is also acknowledgement that it is critically important to work

at the level of local communities.⁸ This focus is manifested in support for Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) through partnerships between local actors who co-design and implement development strategies for their areas (see Box).

⁸ <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=54&langId=en>

Co-production and Community-Led Local Development (CLLD)

Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) is derived from LEADER,¹ a method used in rural areas of Europe to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies for the development of their areas with co-financing from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). Adopted more recently by the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), working through the European Fisheries Areas Network, FARNET, some 2,600 Local Action Groups (LAGs) have been developed using this approach in both rural areas and fisheries-dependent areas (ENRD).

In addition to the EAFRD and EMFF, CLLD has been promoted in the 2014-20 programming period to encompass the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the ESF. This means that a single action can be supported simultaneously under two or more of the four EU Funds through a multi-funded CLLD approach, designed to enable LAGs to work in an integrated manner through reinforced links between rural, urban and fisheries areas (ibid).

The central plank of CLLD is to encourage local people to develop local partnerships in which they design and implement an integrated development strategy that builds upon local assets. This approach is based on the application of seven key principles (ESF Transnational Platform, 2016):

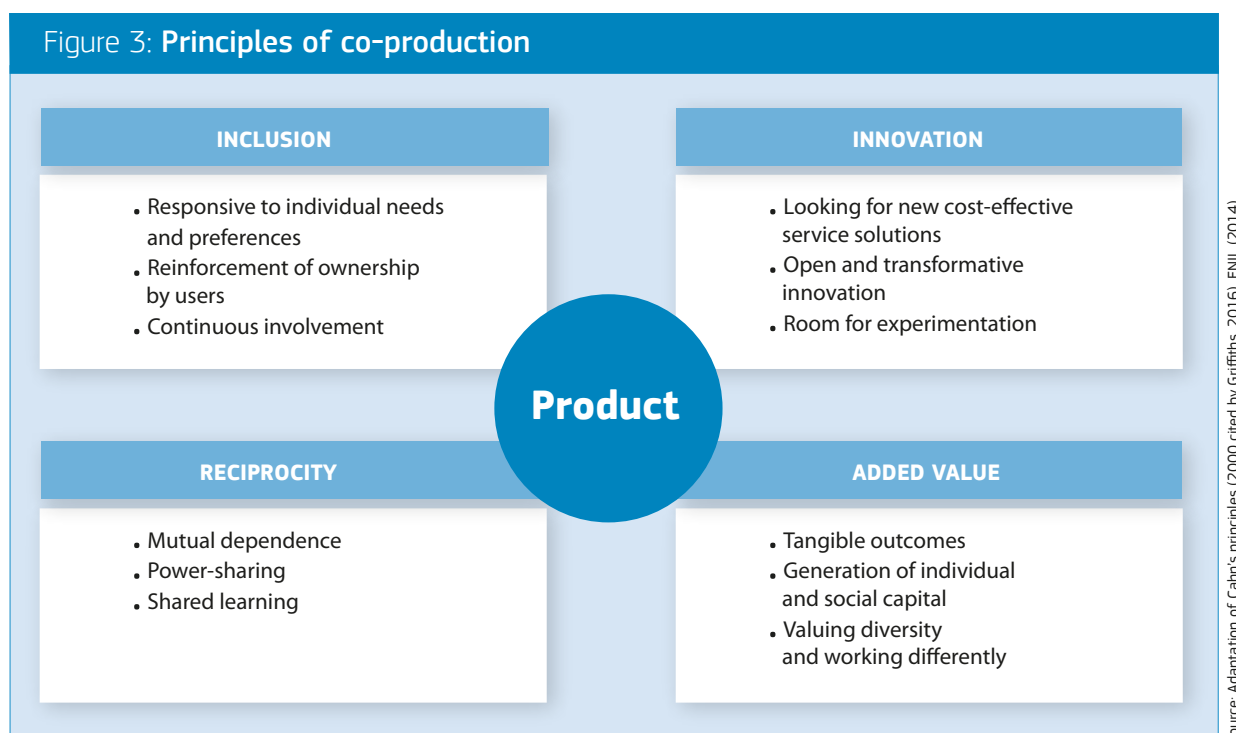
- An **area-based approach** to ensure that funding is concentrated in a clearly defined area with specific problems.

- A **bottom-up approach** in which the local community identifies the needs and challenges it is faced with in its area, and proposes solutions and defines projects to address these.
- An **integrated approach** that includes different actors and sectors working together with a single strategy.
- **Partnerships** involving key actors from the public, private and civil society sectors working together in LAGs.
- **Innovative approaches** that encourage the application of solutions that are new to an area.
- **Cooperation** between LAGs.
- **Networking** and peer-learning exchanges to connect the knowledge and experience derived from CLLD across Europe.

CLLD principles clearly coincide with those of co-production and suggest that it may be beneficial to explore how the two approaches can be mutually reinforcing. Such a connection could be made by exploring the possibility of using CLLD funding to support co-production processes to achieve sustainable outcomes with local level end users. In this regard, it is worth noting that a dedicated investment priority on CLLD has been established in the ESF for the current programming period, and 13 Member States have selected it. Some of them, including Sweden and Poland, will allow it to be integrated with other ESI Funds within the same local strategy (ibid).

¹ From the French acronym for *Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale* (Links between the rural economy and development actions).

Figure 3: Principles of co-production



The ESF also places emphasis on flexible and collaborative ways of developing high-quality public services which acknowledge contextual differences and tailor initiatives for and with different groups of citizens.⁹ The Thematic Network on Partnership has also noted that while participation should not be ad hoc or marginal, continuous engagement may involve different forms of participation in different contexts at different times, and may also require support in the form of institutional strengthening and capacity-building (Thematic Network on Partnership, 2016).

A fit-for-purpose definition of co-production for the ESF must therefore acknowledge the need for:

- Flexibility in relation to context (political and institutional settings) and time
- Differentiated service models
- An acceptance that stakeholder involvement may incorporate a variety of different forms
- The possibility of support to encourage participation
- A focus on outcomes that demonstrate added value (for individuals, groups and society as a whole)
- Learning from different experiences of involvement in the development of public services

These pointers are also usefully informed by Cahn's principles for co-production which include: recognition of people as assets; the promotion of reciprocity; endorsement of the value of working differently, and the building of social networks (as outlined by Griffiths, 2016). To these, the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) (2014) adds innovation, power balance and cost-effectiveness, while the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EAPSD, 2016) includes responsiveness to individual needs and preferences, empowerment through continuous involvement in the design, development and delivery of the service, policy or activity, and ownership by allowing users to 'be in control of their lives'.¹⁰ Figure 3 attempts to draw these different principles together.

The principles outlined above raise a set of critical questions that have been incorporated below into criteria for assessing and classifying examples of co-production in practice (see Table 6).

⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=55> and <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=527>

¹⁰ http://easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/joint_definition_-_co-production.pdf

Table 6: *Co-production assessment questions*

Principles	Questions
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are different user groups involved as partners? • Are relevant (and changing) social, economic and environmental circumstances incorporated into the project? • Is support offered to stakeholders whose involvement may be constrained by lack of resources, skills, confidence, etc.? • Are all resources equitably valued? • Does the initiative respond to individual needs and preferences? • Is there reinforcement of ownership by users? • Is there continuous involvement of users throughout the initiative? • Is information on the co-production process (including how decisions are made, how monitoring and evaluation is carried out, how finances are managed, etc.) accessible to all? • Does the initiative contribute to society's esteem for different groups of citizens/users? • Does the initiative address users/groups that receive little attention?
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the initiative produced a change in the 4Ps of Innovation:¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products: changes in products or services? • Processes: changes in the way we do things? • Positions: changes in how new ways of doing things are communicated and re-framed? • Paradigms: changes in the underlying mental models that shape what we do? • Has the initiative produced new cost-effective service solutions? • Is room given for testing and experimentation? • Is there acceptance that both successes and failures are useful learning experiences? • Have key lessons led to modifications in approaches, etc.?
Reciprocity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do all those involved recognise that they depend upon one another to succeed? • Is power shared equitably among stakeholders? • Is learning shared from different experiences of involvement? • Is there a clear understanding that each stakeholder can gain from co-production processes and results (over and above the achievement of a common goal)? • Does the project change with changing needs (i.e. as to the target group: the way of approaching the issue or a changing environment)? • Is there an acceptance that stakeholder involvement may incorporate a variety of different forms?
Added value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are impacts measured? If so, how and when? • Are there clear and tangible outcomes for all stakeholders at different levels (e.g. individual, organisational, societal, policy levels, etc.)? • What is the concrete and enduring use of the initiative for users? • Does the project further the potential of users? • Does the work foster dialogue / cooperation with other institutions / organisations? • Is there a structured and supportive development process in place which assists in mainstreaming and scaling up at both governance and project levels? • Has the project put strategies in place for reducing barriers at different levels (i.e. the promotion of: positive government policies; supportive legal and administrative framework, good cross-sectoral relations and a culture of cooperation; connections with organisations capable of scaling up the innovation; opportunities for increasing skills and expertise)? • Has the initiative been supported and accepted by wider society?

Source: Adapted from Scoppetta (2012)

¹ Tidd, J. & Bessant, J. (2011) *Managing Innovation: Integrating Technological, Market and Organizational Change*, USA: John Wiley & Sons. <http://www.managing-innovation.com/teaching.php>

4. THE EVIDENCE BASE – CO-PRODUCTION IN ACTION

Using the principles shared in Figure 3 and the questions outlined in Table 6 as a guide, this section shares a selection of examples of co-production in practice. It offers information on why and how co-production is being adopted and implemented in relation to different ESF transnational network themes, and with what results and added value. In some of the cases, the term ‘co-creation’ is used by those involved, reinforcing, as noted above, the cross-cutting nature of co-terminology, and efforts to describe more inclusive and ongoing forms of engagement with citizens and end users in the development and delivery of services, policies and other activities.

4.1 Inclusion: Co-production and social care

Miro Griffiths and Ewan King (2014) believe that co-production in social care is essentially ‘about having an equal voice and involvement in making decisions about how services are commissioned and provided’. The authors suggest that co-production can make services more sensitive

to the needs of service users and carers, produce better outcomes and reduce unnecessary costs and inefficiencies.

Some of the most interesting examples of co-production processes in social care come from the United Kingdom. These include the development of the Independent Living Movement that emerged from **Project 81**, an initiative led by a group of disabled people living in residential care who set out principles for taking more responsibility for what was happening to them, and expanding their decision-making possibilities and choices. In the early 1980s they reached a social and financial agreement whereby their respective local authorities provided them with an amount of money, agreed through an assessment, which they could use to pay for the support they needed through employing their own personal assistants (Evans, 2003). This enabled them to move out into the community and served as a model to empower and transform the lives of disabled people in the UK.

Co-production building blocks: Every element is important and every participant plays a key role.



Source: ENABLE project

The legacy of Project 81 can be seen in **The Think Local Act Personal** partnership¹¹ which involves over 50 organisations working together to transform health and care through personalisation and community-based support. In addition to central and local government, the National Health Service and provider sector, the partnership promotes the principles of co-production through a National Co-production Advisory Group composed of people with care and support needs, carers and family members.¹² Another example of co-production in action can be seen in the UK supported living network, **KeyRing**,¹³ in which tenants, as KeyRing Network members, liaise with support workers and 'Supported Living' managers in order to apply for funding and to run neighbourhood improvement campaigns (ENIL, 2016).

Initiatives such as **Who's Challenging Who?** (WCW) and **Looking into Abuse** have also adopted co-production principles and processes in work with people with intellectual disabilities in the UK. WCW is a training model in which people with intellectual disabilities act as lead trainers in intellectual disability social care settings (Hutchinson et al., 2014). Recent findings suggest that the training has promoted changes in staff empathy towards people with challenging behaviour, and has had positive effect on staff confidence, attitudes and work-related well-being, as well as a reduction in recorded incidents of aggressive challenging behaviour in residential settings (Randell et al., 2017). Meanwhile, **Looking into Abuse** projects, supported by the Unit for Development in Intellectual Disabilities (UDID)¹⁴ at the University of South Wales, focus on encouraging staff working with people with learning disabilities to **listen** to what people with learning disabilities have to say, **believe** what is being said and then **do** something about it.¹⁵ The Teaching and Research Advisory Committee (TRAC)¹⁶ at UDID is composed of a group of people with learning disabilities who have been involved in teaching students, supervising student placements and collaborating in research projects (See Flood et al., 2013; Northway et al., 2013; Northway et al., 2015).

Co-production projects relating to residential social care in other countries in Europe have been documented by the

European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) which found that such processes increased the satisfaction of people using services and staff, assisted better relationships between them, and increased the confidence and self-esteem of people with disabilities (Angelova-Mladenova, 2016). The challenges to co-production included power imbalances due to limited control by people using services over the planning process, and failure to ensure active involvement throughout the co-production process (from decision-making to implementation and evaluation). EPR's recommendations for improving co-production include greater support, advocacy, personal assistance and training for people with disabilities so that they can assume an equal decision-making role, as well as accessibility of information and adequate resources for co-production processes (ibid).

Similar recommendations have been made by the **ENABLE project**,¹⁷ an Erasmus+ sponsored project to bring innovation in services for people with intellectual disability through inclusive learning and knowledge transfer. The project lasted 2 years (2015-17) during which time partners in different EU Member States worked together to implement a co-production methodology and set up a learning platform.¹⁸ Those involved believe that co-production

17 Erasmus+ Project Number: 2015-1-LU01-KA204-001346, see: <http://enable-info.eu>

18 <http://enable-info.eu/learning-2/>

Presentation of co-production methodology with educators, users, and their families during ENABLE conference in Luxembourg.



Source: ENABLE project

11 <https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/>

12 <https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/Latest/Co-production-in-social-care-what-it-is-and-how-to-do-it/>

13 <http://www.keyring.org/Home>

14 <http://udid.research.southwales.ac.uk/projects/>

15 <https://www.southwales.ac.uk/courses/bachelor-of-nursing-hons-learning-disabilities/202/we-must-listen-believe-and-do-something/>

16 <http://udid.research.southwales.ac.uk/TRAC/>

represents a unique opportunity to rethink relationships between the state and the citizen by making service users, families, professionals and the local community equal partners in the production and delivery of social services. They reinforce the fact that co-production is an ongoing team-building process that can add value to whole communities but that it requires open communication, long-term planning and changes in mind-sets, particularly with regard to relinquishing power and control (ENABLE, 2017).

4.2 Migrants: Neue Nachbarn Arnsberg (New Neighbours Arnsberg)

Neue Nachbarn Arnsberg (New Neighbours Arnsberg) is a refugee-led initiative working with German municipalities to co-develop innovative approaches to integration, participation and urban development. The project embodies a form of co-production where refugees help the municipality to become better at what it does. The project aims to promote contact between the 'new' citizens of Arnsberg, who arrive as refugees, and the 'old' locals, who will work together on a voluntary basis to develop the town in co-operation with the local administration. The refugees help themselves and their fellow refugees to settle in more quickly, to learn German, to understand the place and to find their occupational bearings. Importantly, the project supports refugees to actively participate in local life by supporting the urban development process, thus raising the level of integration overall. Refugees become new citizens and new neighbours; they are transformed from recipients of aid to helpers, and from people who are being looked after to active stakeholders.

The project was founded by Moneer Al-Shikh, who left Syria and arrived in Germany in 2015. During his time in a German refugee camp he became anxious to actively do something in his local community to show the world that Muslims were not to blame for the Paris terrorist attacks.¹⁹ He organised a demonstration and, through this, got to know the mayor of Arnsberg. The mayor asked him what he wanted to do and Moneer told him that he wanted to help integrate refugees into German society. The mayor then offered him an office in the Town Hall, which was to herald the start of the *New Neighbours Arnsberg* project.²⁰

¹⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/November_2015_Paris_attacks

²⁰ <https://www.tbd.community/en/a/reimagining-integration>

The co-production process

The mayor's offer enabled the project (staffed at first by six volunteer refugees) to maintain direct contact with the administration of the Arnsberg municipality. The small office provided by the mayor included a computer and a dedicated phone number firmly anchored within the town hall. This gave the project and the refugees a structure and location from which to organise themselves. It also gave them access to the services they needed to connect with refugees. So, for the first time, the municipality of Arnsberg was talking with refugees and not about them, and was working with them, not for them, to co-produce policies around integration, civic engagement (volunteering) and urban development policies.

Results

The project has helped refugees and the local community in a number of ways, facilitating refugee integration into Arnsberg and German culture through:

- Assisting with language translation – they have translated for more than 300 people who have had to deal with the local authority, banks, hospitals and the police;
- Accompanying / signposting refugees to the authorities and services they need;
- Helping to arrange accommodation for refugees;
- Organising events for refugees with the local authority (*Neubürgertag für Flüchtlinge*), including activities for refugee children, women and older people in refugee camps in Germany;
- Organised events at which local Germans could learn about the refugees, their countries and their stories;
- Setting up a football team to play with German locals and also a music band.²¹

However, the project has also benefited Arnsberg through:

- Easing the administrative burden on government institutions (e.g. through translation assistance);
- Quickly activating refugees and local people in Arnsberg through volunteering;
- Challenging prejudices and stereotypes about refugees and the countries they come from;
- Helping refugees to understand and navigate in their new society, its laws and cultural expectations.

The project has won a number of awards, including a semi-finalist place in the European Social Innovation

²¹ https://suedwestfalen-agentur.com/fileadmin/user_upload_diek/Dorf_Integration/Neue_Nachbarn_Arnsberg_presentation3.pdf

Competition 2016 and the Ausgezeichnete Orte im Land der Ideen prize in 2016. The project also won the 'Refugee Aid' prize in the Westfalen Bewegt competition in 2016 where, at the award ceremony, Dr Karl-Heinrich Summermann, Chairman of the Westphalia Initiative Foundation, stated that 'Nobody knows better what refugees need than refugees themselves'.²²

Future plans

The project aims to promote and eventually expand its model of working to other German cities. It also hopes to do more to help refugees find work and to establish a comprehensive database of information through which refugees can access information relating to integration and local services.

4.3 Co-producing Scotland's Social Enterprise Strategy

Support for social enterprise development in Scotland has grown exponentially over the last two decades. With around 200 start-ups now established in Scotland each year, the 2017 Social Enterprise Census calculates that some 81,000 people are employed in 5,600 social enterprises, 64% of which are led by women.

An enabling environment for social enterprise emerged in Scotland during the EU's EQUAL Programme (2002-8) which informed the first Scottish Social Enterprise Strategy in 2007-8. Since then, social enterprise has been positioned as an important business model that is encouraged by government through policy and regulatory frameworks; access to finance, markets and networks; provision of infrastructure; programmes for leadership development; national business support; and endorsement in schools and universities. As well as political support, a number of agencies and networks have been active in promoting local-level social enterprises. The Voluntary Code of Practice for Social Enterprise in Scotland (launched in 2012) has also defined a widely agreed set of criteria by which social enterprises can be identified and recognised.

Social Enterprise Strategy for Scotland (2016-26)

In December 2016, the Scottish Government published the country's first ten-year Social Enterprise Strategy.

The strategy is a broad, long-term and ambitious framework that aims to support the social enterprise sector in three priority areas: stimulating social enterprise activity, developing stronger organisations, and realising market opportunity. It is implemented through three-year Social Enterprise Action Plans with agreed actions, resource commitments, responsibilities and deliverables. The first action plan (2017-20) sets out a partnership process across government and other sectors to catalyse the contribution of social enterprise in particular policy areas and markets, some of which are aligned to specific government priorities. These include: employment of disadvantaged groups; digital inclusion and the adoption of new technologies; health and social care; criminal justice and the reduction of offending behaviour; and early years and child care. In January 2017, following debate in the Scottish parliament, a budget of €1.2 million was set aside for early interventions with agreement of an initial annual rollout of approximately €5.8 million.

Co-production of the Social Enterprise Strategy

The Social Enterprise Strategy was developed by the social enterprise sector and the Scottish Government through a process of co-production. This involved a two-year 'visioning exercise' that included:

- A series of ten thematic round-table consultations involving 154 representatives of local and national authorities, social investors, enterprises and networks, as well as grant-makers and third sector organisations;
- An online cross-country consultation involving social enterprises in an interactive digital poll for which 3,334 votes were received on 71 ideas;
- Focus groups with representatives from minority ethnic communities and rural social enterprises;
- Consultation with stakeholders representing island communities;
- Internal consultation with different departments of the Scottish Government;
- Written and verbal feedback on early drafts of the strategy from key stakeholders in government and the wider social enterprise community;
- An equality impact assessment of the strategy with the involvement of equalities representative groups.

Continued broad participation is planned through annual consultations with stakeholders and the review of action plans against key performance indicators. Furthermore, the Scottish Government, as the Managing Authority for

²² <https://www.wp.de/staedte/arnsberg/neue-nachbarn-arnsberg-gewinnen-sonderpreis-id12331819.html>

the ESIFs in Scotland, has incorporated social inclusion, social economy and social innovation in the strategy's priorities. This means that, as well as support for a social entrepreneurship development programme, growth and social innovation funding is directly available to social enterprises.

The Social Enterprise Strategy is firmly linked to Scotland's investment and policy priorities for the 2014–20 Structural Fund programming period. In order to meet Europe 2020 objectives related to tackling poverty and supporting social inclusion, for example, four ESF social economy funds with a strong emphasis on social innovation have been established: the Aspiring Communities Fund, the Social Economy Growth Fund, the Social Entrepreneurship Learning and Development Programme, and the Social Innovation Fund. The Social Innovation Fund aims to stimulate social innovation by building stronger links between the social economy, communities and academic and research institutions in order to generate innovative and sustainable solutions that promote positive systemic change.

The partnership approach that has been adopted to stimulate social innovation and enterprise also includes citizens who are themselves affected by poverty and inequality. This engagement is viewed as enhancing capacity to deliver better outcomes for the most disadvantaged groups. Collaboration among different actors will also encourage new ways of working across sectors and organisations. As well as sharing learning and good practices, it will assist the emergence of creative spaces for experimentation, the

design of prototypes for new products and services, and the scaling up of successful models.

4.4 Governance: Collaborative local government in Amersfoort, Netherlands²³

Administrative changes in the Netherlands following the 2007 financial and social crisis involved the transferring competences from the national level to cities while at the same time reducing their budgets. Annual surveys showed that citizens were becoming more and more dissatisfied with the city council's performance. As the social situation declined, more citizens became involved in bottom-up initiatives in which they became empowered through the process of self-organisation. City leaders in Amersfoort therefore began to look at the possibility of re-engaging the administration in delivering public services in collaboration with citizens.

Two pilot projects led the way for change in Amersfoort: the **Elisabeth project**, involving the joint development of a green area through a citizens' project group which received a dedicated budget and responsibility for a plan to develop the area and maintain it over a 10-year period

²³ Material for this piece has been drawn from Jégou, F. (2015) *Amersfoort: designing a collaborative city administration, Case Study, Social Innovation in Cities, URBACT II Capitalisation and Wingelaar, M. (2016) Social Innovation, Amersfoort, Presentation at ESF Transnational Seminar, Brussels, 21 June 2016.*

Developing the Elisabeth Project.



Source: Amersfoort City Council

beginning in 2013; and the citizen's project group on **sustainable food** which won the 2012 Dutch Capital of Taste award by preparing a bid, seeking funding and organising supporting events. As a result of these initiatives, the city administration began to look more deeply at the concepts of social innovation and co-creation.

From 2013 onwards, multiple experiments took place in participatory and bottom-up pilot projects such as collective innovation forums, exchange initiatives between citizens and the city administration and new participative processes. The success of these initiatives led to the implementation of a new model of collaboration between the city's population and its administration.

The co-creation process

The co-creation process has involved a range of participatory tools and methodologies, including events, experiments and initiatives, citizen-driven projects and formal changes at municipal level. A large public conference was organised by citizens in 2013 to discuss the democratic system and explore how to organise these new modes of collaboration between citizens and the city administration. Council members and civil servants took part in these citizens' groups in order to present recommendations to the mayoral team. In 2014, Amersfoort hosted a G1000 process to achieve more representative participation: the city facilitated an invitation to 1000 randomly chosen citizens to a deliberative event. Around 600 people (including civil servants and elected representatives in their status of citizens) jointly discussed perspectives for Amersfoort, and selected and developed 10 project plans out of more than 100 ideas. One of these ideas has been elaborated later on to a co-production process of city council members, citizens and civil servants to produce a new policy on city nature and trees in the city.

The city council has experimented with new settings for meetings that promote a better connection with citizens, including a City Café where councillors meet citizens for half-day sessions to talk informally and without time restrictions. The change process is assisted by a Change Team in the city council which fosters multi-disciplinarity and collaboration between different departments; promotes transparency in public action; develops interdependent and integrated policies; fosters responsibility beyond silos; and learns how to learn from failures. Civil servants are further encouraged to connect better by spending time outside their offices and playing a more active role in the life of the city.



Source: Renzo Gerritsen – RG Fotografie
See: <https://www.g1000amersfoort.nl/2016/04/13/g1000amersfoort2016-groener-veiligere-socialer/>

Follow-up to the Amersfoort G1000 process in 2016.

Results

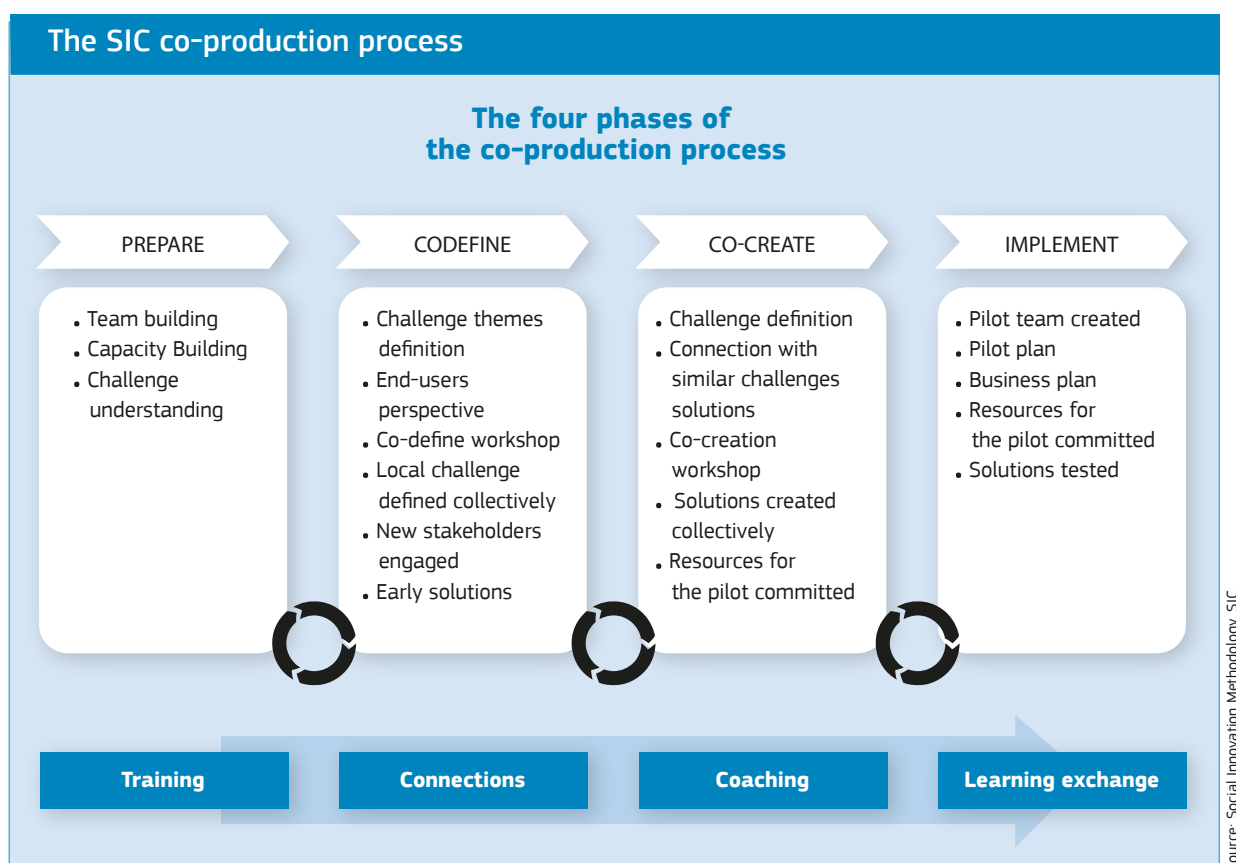
Although there has been no formal assessment process, interviews during the G1000 process showed that citizens felt that silent voices were becoming more audible and that inequalities were being better addressed. To avoid too much dependency on the citizens who initiated and organised the two original flagship projects, a joint capacity-building programme has been created in which citizens, civil servants and elected members are learning together about integrated problem-solving and working in collaborative networks. In spite of these results, there is still work to do in spreading the co-creational working approach to all parts of the municipality and to involve more (groups of) citizens so it is not just those who know how to 'reach' local government and how to be heard and seen. This is why, for example, Amersfoort is now exploring how to encourage youngsters to share their opinions about the city and the choices that are being made.

4.5 Learning and skills: Social innovation and co-creation in European cities

In 2017, the Social Innovation Community (SIC)²⁴ began experimental work to support the co-creation of solutions to collectively define local issues and challenges in cities in Croatia, Estonia, Italy and Norway. Host centres were trained in the use of innovation tools and resources from the SIC Learning Repository²⁵ and then facilitated

²⁴ <https://www.siceurope.eu/>

²⁵ <http://www.silearning.eu/>



<https://www.siceurope.eu/learning-portal/experimental-hubs/how-set-process-social-innovation>

processes through which local stakeholders such as public employees, civil servants, young professionals, private businesses and refugees co-defined the specific local challenges for which they wished to find solutions. The challenges identified included cross-cutting issues affecting all EU countries: refugee integration, urban revitalisation, families at risk of eviction, holistic public services and lack of job opportunities for young people.

1. Preparation of the process

The host centre explored the challenge and possible solutions with a core team of engaged stakeholders with different perspectives of the challenge and potential funders of the solution. Core team stakeholders were trained by the host centre in the application of social innovation principles, tools and methods. They conducted careful research into the challenge and prepared a challenge question for the 'co-define workshop'.

2. Co-defining the local challenge

Stakeholder interviews assisted the core team to define the challenge themes or questions for the co-define workshop with a wider group of stakeholders, including end users. In order to better frame the challenge and ensure that

the solution achieved a wide impact, the co-define workshop sought to share diverse perspectives, raise initial solution ideas, and, through shared understanding, develop a concise description of the challenge.

3. Co-creating solutions

The core team improved its understanding of the challenge and emerging ideas for solutions by leveraging outputs from the co-define workshops through engagement with new stakeholders, insights and contributions. After refining the local challenge they designed and delivered 3-day co-creation workshops with local actors from the public, private and third sectors to co-produce social innovation solutions to address the challenge. Other social innovators were invited to inspire participants and showcase examples of how they had addressed similar challenges.

4. Implementing the solutions locally

The host centres supported actors who had created a solution idea to actively develop pilots by reflecting on new findings around the challenge; developing a business plan; connecting them to key actors, potential funders and donors; finding funding resources; enabling new alliances and partnerships; and exploring similar successful solutions.

Results

Putting social innovation on the agenda in Zagreb

The City of Zagreb wishes to be renowned for facilitating social innovation processes and supporting participatory development. To achieve this goal, the municipality worked with the Social Innovation Lab (SIL)²⁶ to mobilise cultural creative professionals to improve the city through workshops that brought together public servants across different departments with profit and non-profit actors from creative industries, such as start-ups and museums, and stakeholders from academia. Together they co-defined local challenges and designed a number of solutions, including:

- *Smart Parks App*: To promote sports and active recreation in the city, especially for less active groups such as youngsters and older people.
- *Croatian Language Training for Asylum Seekers*: To establish a multi-disciplinary working group that supports asylum seekers and acts as intermediary between them and city officials.
- *Pop-up Ilica*: To develop sustainable management models through the use of empty spaces for incubation and testing of new cultural, artistic and creative projects, services and products.

The co-creation process has made public servants more aware of their service role and increased collaboration between departments, city officials and other societal stakeholders in seeking innovative and viable solutions together.

Radically innovating social services in Turin, Italy

In Turin the delivery of critical services to address issues such as housing emergencies, income support and re-entry

²⁶ <http://socinnovationlab.eu/>

into the labour market is limited by weak collaboration across municipal departments. To address this challenge, the Municipality of Turin, Torino Social Innovation (TSI)²⁷ and the University of Bologna organised an experimental process to improve the efficiency and coordination of social service delivery. A new integrated service called 'TO-HOME' was established to better address the challenges of people at risk of eviction by enabling employees from three different social service departments (housing, employment and social care) to jointly deliver social services. Awareness was raised about the needs and perspectives of end users and support obtained from wider associations, networks, civil servants, and other organisations working on housing and unemployment challenges. In addition to building the capacity of public servants and getting closer to the perspective of end users, support from action researchers at the University of Bologna demonstrated the positive value of Science-Society interactions.

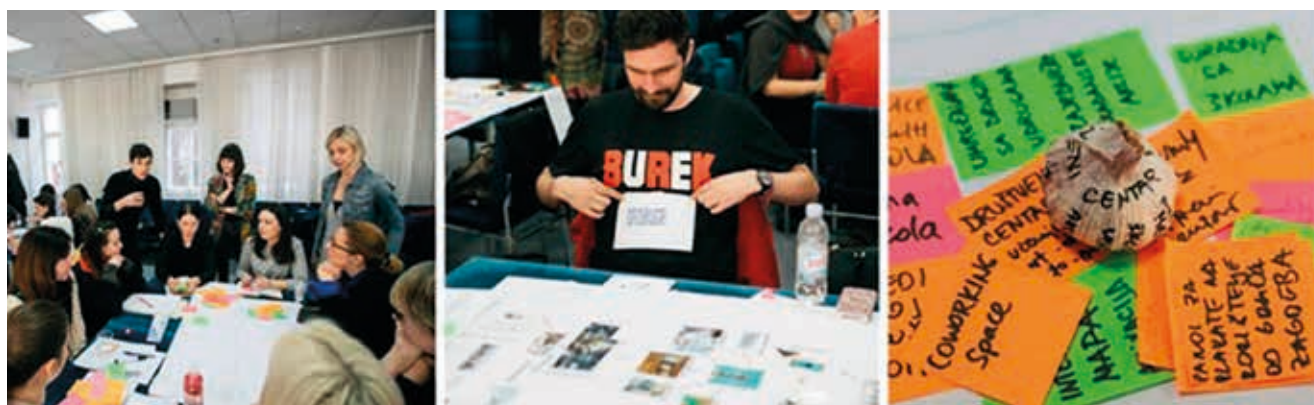
Creating opportunities for young people in Pärnu, Estonia

In the coastal city of Pärnu, a summer rental market favouring tourists forces graduate students to seek learning and job opportunities elsewhere. To address this challenge, the Pärnu Community Fund, a network of community leaders and local NGOs supported by the Young Foundation,²⁸ and Forwardspace, a network and co-working space for freelancers and entrepreneurs, facilitated a co-creation experimentation process with young residents of Pärnu, local entrepreneurs, community organisations and policy-makers from the municipality. A number of solutions

²⁷ <http://www.torinosocialinnovation.it/english/> A local policy programme aiming to support the flourishing of social innovation in the city as one of the assets through which to regenerate the urban economy

²⁸ www.youngfoundation.org

Participants during co-creation workshop in Zagreb.



Source: SIC

were put forward to address the lack of housing and work opportunities for youth in the region, including:

- *Co-Võrk*: An initiative to convince companies to relocate to Pärnu with an information portal to help them to find services and local agents.
- *Pärnu Network*: To support small start-ups with a community of self-educated entrepreneurs who share their skills, knowledge and learning resources so that young people are encouraged to start their own businesses in Pärnu.

The co-production process raised awareness of the 'youth drain' problem in Pärnu and a social media campaign #jäämepärnu (I'm staying in Pärnu) trended in Estonia. New collaborations between local public, private and civil society partners have also been developed.

Network to encourage refugee inclusion in the workforce in Oslo

The social entrepreneurship incubator, SoCentral,²⁹ works to integrate refugees in the workforce and in society in Oslo through initiatives such as BOOST Refugee. To further define local issues and challeng-

es around refugee integration, SoCentral organised an experimentation process supported by the Danish Technological Institute (DTI)³⁰ with a large and diverse group of participants from the public sector, businesses, social entrepreneurs and civil society. This led to solutions such as:

- *An employer network*: Involving individuals in different organisations hosting a refugee as a language intern in their workplace, and serving as a tool for job seekers to find employers willing to host refugees and for employers hosting refugees to connect and exchange experiences.
- *Integration day*: To facilitate cross-sector collaboration between the various initiatives and organisations working to include refugees in the workforce through a series of regular breakfast events.

SoCentral is now keen to expand its role as a facilitator of social innovation processes and to bring actors together around specific topics over a longer period of time. The municipality has also included social entrepreneurs and social innovation conditions in some of its funding schemes for social issues.

²⁹ <https://socentral.no/english/>

³⁰ <https://www.dti.dk/>

Practising idea pitches during co-creation workshop in Pärnu.



Source: SIC



5. EMERGING LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The broad and growing interest in co-production shown by ESF stakeholders working on different thematic objectives suggests that **deeper consideration of how this way of working may be promoted in the 2021-27 programming period is merited**. Co-production is increasingly being used in different contexts as a way of putting innovative new service delivery models in place that reinforce the ongoing participation of end users and citizens. While more detailed evidence of the extent to which co-production is a ‘game-changer’³¹ able to deliver satisfactory and sustainable service delivery models needs to be gathered, **the examples shared here suggest that it does have the potential to activate citizen participation, create tailored service options for different end users and, in so doing, assist in deepening the quality of implementation of the partnership principle**.

The partnership principle is, and should continue to be, at the heart of what the ESF is and does. However, feedback from a review of the European Code of Conduct on Partnership (ECCP) finds that MAs need to make more efforts to go beyond compliance at the institutional level when putting the principle into practice (PTN, 2018). This may be done by including more diverse partners; ensuring more transparent decision-making; promoting ongoing involvement of partners throughout programme cycles; providing enhanced support for working in partnership and ensuring equitable involvement; improving partnership review and assessment processes, and promoting more meaningful learning exchanges (ibid). These processes are central to **co-production and could, through flexible adaptation in different contexts, generate some of the energy and dynamism needed to reinvigorate action on ECCP principles**.

Initial findings from this study suggest that some of the factors necessary for ensuring that co-production processes yield practical and sustainable outcomes include:

- An **enabling environment** that draws on **positive histories of collaboration** such as community participation, social dialogue and cross-sector working. In the Netherlands, for example, the high level of citizen

engagement has clearly contributed to the success of the Amersfoort initiative. A **constructive legal and regulatory framework**, such as the one in Scotland where the Social Enterprise Strategy is firmly linked to investment and policy priorities, and **progressive norms** for thematic issues, such as refugee integration in Oslo and Arnsberg, also contribute to an overarching context that is favourable for co-production.

- **Institutional support** for social innovation processes and participatory development, such as that provided by the City of Zagreb and Amersfoort City Council, can do much to catalyse positive co-production. The ability to relinquish ‘control’ by **granting greater rights to citizens in the development of new service models**³² is central this, as well as acceptance that meaningful change comes from the **learning derived from experimentation** (including permission to ‘fail’).
- The role of **intermediaries** able to **bring together the different stakeholders** needed to make co-production a reality and assist a **shift away from a directive to a collective form of leadership**. This function may be assumed by individuals, as in the case of Moneer Al-Shikh and the mayor of Arnsberg in the New Neighbours Arnsberg project, and the citizens who led the Elizabeth and sustainable food projects in Amersfoort, or by groups such as the Project 81 founders, the National Co-production Advisory Group of the Think Local, Act Personal partnership, and the Social Innovation Community Group.
- Acceptance that, while **stakeholder involvement must be flexible** and is likely to take a variety of different forms in different contexts, **participation must make efforts to break across silos and involve end users as key decision-makers**. **Active engagement processes** that go well beyond ad hoc consultation exercises are therefore essential during the design, implementation and evaluation phases. This emphasis is exemplified in the view expressed in the Scottish case study that greater engagement enhances the capacity to deliver better outcomes for the most disadvantaged groups.

³¹ See Voorberg et al., (2014:16)

³² See Kleinhans (2017:1514)

- **Continuous promotion and renewal of connections** between diverse social actors so that co-production processes address issues in **a holistic manner by working across different thematic areas and levels**. This approach can clearly be seen in Amersfoort's multi-disciplinary and cross-departmental work; the links made in Arnsberg between refugee integration, civic engagement and urban development; connections between learning and social care in initiatives such as the Who's Challenging Who?, Looking into Abuse and ENABLE projects, as well as through the transversal use of social innovation in developing the Scottish Social Enterprise Strategy and the SIC city experiments in Zagreb, Turin, Pärnu and Oslo.

In view of the fact that co-production endorses both ECCP and CLLD principles, and because of the enthusiasm that this way of working appears to be generating to date, **we recommend that co-production should be considered as a serious methodology for deepening the partnership principle in the ESF in the forthcoming programme period (2021-27)**. To do this, we further recommend the need for:

- **Careful identification of stakeholders** with special attention to breaking across institutional and sector silos, and to involving *different* end users with *different* needs, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalised at local level.
- **The co-design of appropriate participation methodologies that guarantee continuous engagement of relevant stakeholders** using *different* and *relevant* forms of participation in different contexts at different times, and ensuring that appropriate support is provided to ensure maximum engagement.
- **Innovations** in the products or services offered and the ways services are created, delivered, presented and reframed, with an emphasis on using technological, financial and methodological innovations to extend and improve services to end users.
- **Mainstreaming efforts** that promote sustainability by **demonstrating tangible change** in the short term; **showing that stakeholders have internalised the learning from working together** over the medium term so that new ways of doing things become part of organisational cultures; and **changing the way things are done** in the long term. By strengthening connections with public administrations and gaining policy influence, results can be reinforced at end user level through expansion, improvement and changes in service delivery that become accepted practice.³³
- **Deeper links to CLLD** and the possibility of funding co-production processes through this mechanism so that sustainable partnership arrangements are promoted within an approved and mutually reinforcing framework.

³³ See Stott (2014:39-40)



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