

COSIE

Co-creation of Service Innovation in Europe

Co-Creation of Service Innovations in Europe (CoSIE)

White paper summary

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Introduction

The present age of rapid change poses many new challenges and opportunities for public services. CoSIE is an applied innovation project underpinned by a wealth of evidence from research by the consortium and many others.



CoSIE aims to advance the social inclusion of citizens by co-creating public services with diverse groups in varied local contexts

It does this through real-life pilots in nine countries, in partnerships with services as varied as public health, social care, labour market activation, housing, and criminal justice. The CoSIE pilots work with groups often considered hard to reach and hard to help. The White Paper is about the ideas behind the pilots. This is a short summary of research, policy and key concepts that inspire CoSIE to advance innovation in public services.



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What is Co-creation

Co-creation in the context of public services refers to citizens' participation in the shaping and production of them. Definitions vary in detail and emphasis but they invariably point to new roles and responsibilities, and often to changes in the balance of control. A core idea is that **value** is (co)created through multiple interactions.

CoSIE undertook a review of research and policy literature, together with analysis of over 50 case studies in 10 different European countries. This exercise uncovered numerous closely related terms including 'co-initiation', 'co-implementation', 'co-design' and 'co-governance'. Many writers point in particular to contrasts and commonalities between co-creation and the longer established 'co-production'. Our working typology of co-production and co-creation is represented in *Table 1*. The horizontal axis refers to the planning of services while the vertical axis distinguishes between deficit and asset-based models. The typology denotes that co-creation occurs when people's needs are understood holistically (asset-based).

Table 1 – A typology of co-production and co-creation

		Who leads the PLANNING			
Who leads the DELIVERY	Professionals as sole service planners	Professionally led service planning with user consultation	Professionals and service users and/or community as co-planners	Service user and/or community led service planning with professional input	Service user and/or community led service planning
Professional as sole deliverer	Traditional service delivery	Traditional service delivery	Co-production	Co-production	N/A
Co-delivery between professionals and communities led by organizational priorities (deficit-based)	Co-production	Co-production	Co-production	Co-production	N/A
Co-delivery between professionals and communities led by user/community priorities (asset-based)	Co-production	Co-production	Co-creation	Co-creation	Co-creation
User communities as sole deliverers	Co-production	Co-production	Co-creation	Co-creation	Traditional, self-organized community provision



Social innovation

Social innovation now vies with technological innovation for prominence in European policy. Social innovations usually aim to satisfy basic needs, to transform social relations, and to increase people's capabilitiesⁱⁱ. Recent literature on commercial innovation emphasises the active contribution of the consumer and this is reflected in social innovation. Social innovation and co-creation have been called twin magic conceptsⁱⁱⁱ. One of the defining features of social innovation is that it provides insights and develops capacity and soft infrastructure (intangible assets such as know-how, intellectual property, social capital etc.) that endures and can be utilised by other sectors and forms of innovation.

Social investment

The idea of a socially investive welfare state has been a strong influence in the development of CoSIE. In the context of welfare, social investment implies that social and economic policies reinforce each other and promote individual agency. Social Investment has been described as a paradigmatic change that captures the spirit of recent welfare reforms across Europe^{iv}. At its heart are efforts to balance economic efficiency and social justice by building citizens' capacity for resilience over the life course (rather than just compensating for misfortunates).

Social Investment shares core principles with co-creation most notably recognising people as assets and building human capacity.

Personalisation

Personalisation has become prominent in social care and begun to take root in other services. Initially inspired by independent living, it encompasses various ways to change the balance between service provider and recipient. Personalisation can be superficial but what have been called "deep" versions "would give users a far greater role – and also greater responsibility – for designing solutions from the ground up"^v. Co-creation resonates strongly with deep personalisation.

The role of digital technology

CoSIE searches for new ways to use digital tools in order to enable the co-creation of services.

Social media sites enable citizens to create, share and comment on issues in ways providers and public authorities can not control. Such technologies can make room for enhanced individual input into services hitherto dominated by professionals.^{vi}

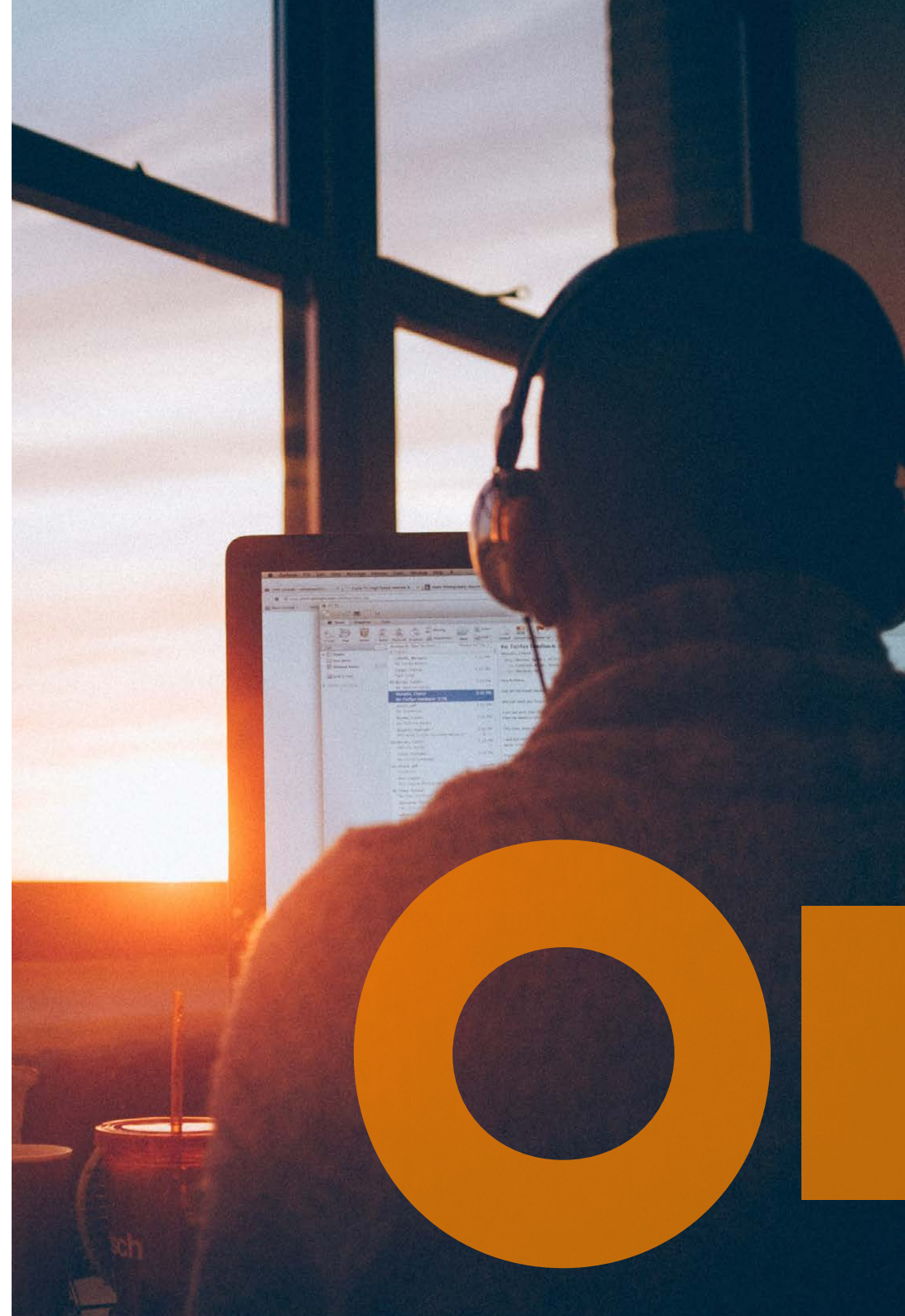
Yet while digital tools for participation excite optimism and enthusiasm, the evidence to date is that promises are largely unfulfilled. Inequalities in access to on-line resources and skills are sometimes called “digital divides”. These can be quite extreme and likely to inhibit ambitions to co-opt digital technologies for the disadvantaged and marginalised.

Digitalisation is not a silver bullet that will solve problems alone but an opportunity that requires simultaneous process development. The United Nations, for example, declared that, “e-participation will not replace traditional participation methods: rather it is a device to engage people who are difficult to reach in traditional ways”.^{vii}

For CoSIE, digital technologies have the potential to be part of the solution when aligned with broader approaches to co-creation. Some CoSIE pilots are experimenting with ways to adapt technologies creatively to reach groups who do not respond to more traditional methods.

The dark side of co-creation

Most of what is written about co-creation is positive and optimistic but unintended negative outcomes are also possible. Some discern a potential ‘dark side’ *co-destruction* that stems, in part, from its complexity.^{viii}



Getting to the heart of Co-creation

Co-creation is more than consumer choice

Co-creation is not simply synonymous with greater choice. It is informed by versions of 'personalisation' driven by advocacy for people with disabilities. Co-creation locates people who typically have services done to them at the centre of the decision-making process (along with their communities).

value derives through interactions in which the wider life experience of the "service user" is part of the context

Co-creation is about value creation

Public service providers do not create value for citizens but rather make a service offer^x. Value is created in the context of the relationships between services, citizens and the communities within which they are situated. Linear notions of co-creation borrowed from manufacturing have been robustly

rejected in recent public service scholarship. Instead, there is a case for a "service dominant logic" where value derives through interactions in which the wider life experience of the "service user" is part of the context.^x

Relationships are key to value co-creation and innovation

An important theoretical touchstone for co-creation is New Public Governance (NPG). In contrast to the largely dominant New public Management with its emphasis on the market, the key governance mechanism in NPG is trust or relational contracts^{xi}. Picking up on this theme with reference to social innovation are claims that the reciprocal, trusting relationships we manage in our private lives can apply also to our relationships with public services^{xii}.

The relationship between the State and the citizen

Relationships between individuals and services and between individuals, services and the wider communities within which they are situated are the essence of co-creation. Given its stress on direct participation of citizens, co-creation could put civil society roles under strain. CoSIE is designed to make a strong contribution to better appreciating this dynamic.

Re-thinking professional roles

The CoSIE project pays specific attention to the contribution of professionals in the realisation of the pilots, and new types of interaction that emerge among them. In particular, CoSIE is concerned with the structural elements that can boost or impede the active involvement of front-line staff in the different phases of the co-creation process. This will allow us to identify the kind of skills professionals need to develop to guarantee a more pro-active and open minded attitude toward the contribution of the beneficiaries in making decisions about their services.

Measuring value co-creation

The CoSIE project is committed to exploring different conceptions of value and their moral dimensions, the effects of these on individuals and communities involved in co-creation and, importantly, their implications for future social policy.

The moral dimension of co-creation brings challenges for its measurement and evaluation. Exploring these moral dimensions and developing useful evaluative frameworks are key tasks for the CoSIE project that are being explored through the pilot projects. The use within CoSIE of storytelling by Community Reporters is one manifestation of this commitment.

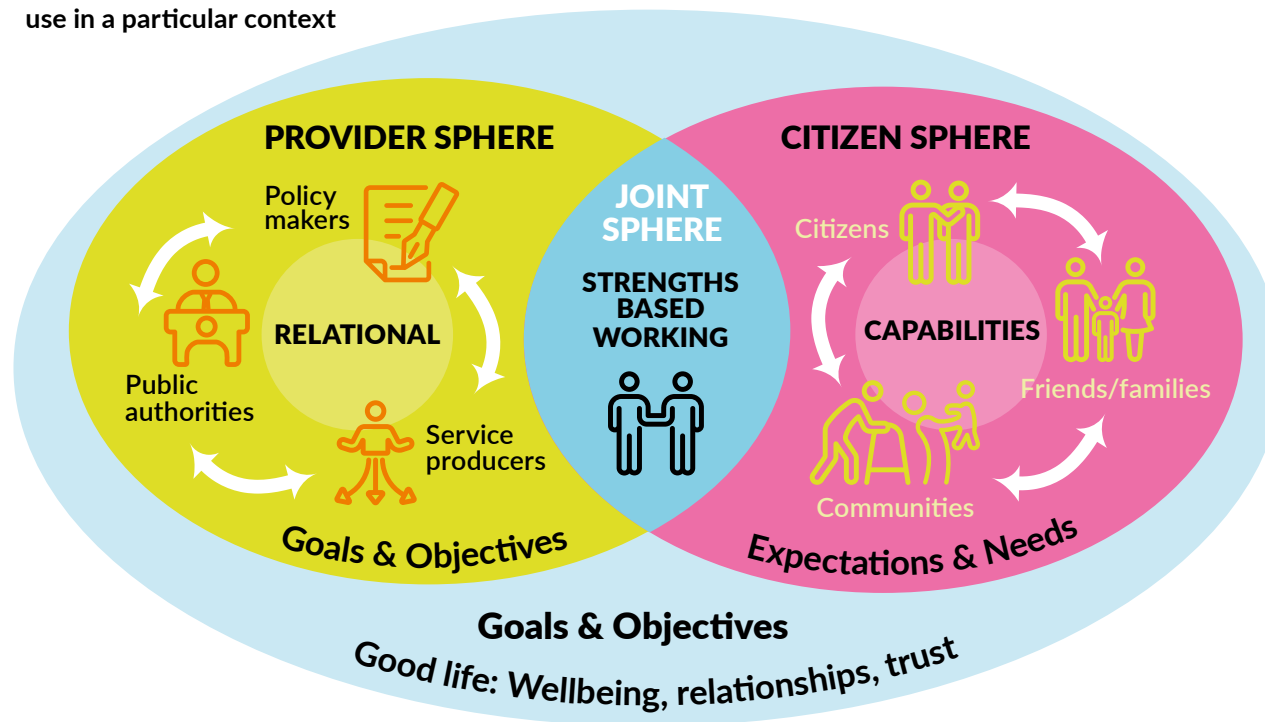


Conclusion

Research and policy literature shows that co-creation:

- a) Understands people who receive public services as active partners rather than passive “service users”
- b) Promotes new collaborative relationships involving providers, end users and many others (eg. families, informal support networks, advocacy groups)
- c) Implies interactive and dynamic relationships where value is created in use in particular contexts
- d) Digital technologies bring promises and potentially also threats
- e) Has a strong moral dimension

Value is co-created and determined in use in a particular context



CoSIE situates the co-creation of public services within emergent thinking on social innovation while building on our previous Horizon2020 project on Innovative Social Investment.^{xiii}

CoSIE understands value as fundamentally derived and determined in a particular context and that relationships between services, citizens and the communities that they are situated in are central to the creation of value.

Finally, CoSIE does not presuppose one pathway to co-creation but has a distinct understanding of the possibilities of developing co-creation between services and citizens in bottom-up, person-centred ways.

The common logic across all the CoSIE pilots is commitment to re-engage and reposition those who are typically the targets of services as asset holders with legitimate knowledge of value for shaping service innovations.

This is further developed in our second White Paper.



Find out more about CoSIE

<https://cosie.turkuamk.fi/>

Main paper – This is a summary of a longer paper:

Fox, C., Jalonen, H., Baines, S., Bassi, A., Marsh, C., Moretti, V. and Willoughby, M. (2019) *Co-creation of Public Service Innovation – Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Tech*, Turku: Turku University of Applied Sciences

<https://www.turkuamk.fi/fi/tutkimus-kehitys-ja-innovaatiot/julkaisuhaku/46/>

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