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Introduction: Co-creation and the 'sandcastle' problem

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Introduction

Co-creation in the context of public services refers to citizens' contribution to implementing and shaping the services that affect them. It has become an orthodoxy in public policy that is widely accepted as humane and inclusive (Osborne et al, 2016; Bevir et al, 2019). Co-creation has many passionate, committed advocates and appears to be in tune with the times (Brandsen et al, 2018). Despite widespread enthusiasm and support there are also sceptical voices that warn of tokenism and failure to fully recognise imbalances of status and power (Dudau et al, 2019). In this book we present co-creation in a way grounded in practical service dilemmas and lived experience, with a wealth of original evidence from a diverse range of settings and policy domains across Europe. Our primary focus is on human and relational dimensions, at the same time taking an appreciative but critical view of new ways to use digital tools and resources to enable co-creation in public services.

The book is inspired and informed by practical action and original research across Europe. The editors and authors were part of a consortium that delivered a collaborative innovation project, Co-creation of Service Innovation in Europe (CoSIE). CoSIE was one of several projects funded by the European Commission on the co-creation of public services. It was distinctive in its ambition to advance co-creation with citizens who are typically excluded or overlooked. The consortium did this through ten real-life pilots, each working with a different public service and responding with innovations in co-creation to locally determined needs and priorities. Project teams consisting of municipalities, civil society organisations, companies and

universities implemented and evaluated the pilots. The CoSIE pilots were implemented successfully, albeit with some surprises and setbacks. Overall, they show that co-creation is possible even in contexts that look highly unpromising, for example, countries where administrative traditions are very top-down, services where providers assume that citizens are ‘hard to reach’, and even mandated services such as criminal justice and work activation.

Despite notable achievements of the CoSIE pilots at local and sometimes national levels, we recognise that pilots, experiments, demonstrators and the like rarely appear to sustain or expand their promised outcomes (Brandsen et al, 2016). This is why we have come to characterise this approach to policy making as ‘sandcastles’ washed away by the next tide or kicked over by an incoming political administration or new minister to build their own, leaving little trace. It also allows us to see the problems caused by a ‘sandcastle bucket’ approach to the adoption of pre-existing interventions from another context which can often struggle in the local conditions and fail to literally take shape in the way they were envisaged.

Co-creation

We take as a starting point the much-cited characterisation of co-creation by Voorberg et al (2015: 1335) as ‘active involvement of end-users in various stages of the production process’. This is more a description than a definition and quite broad. Interpretations vary in detail and emphasis but there is common attention to the rights, responsibilities and contributions of people directly affected by services (Brandsen and Honingh, 2018; Bevir et al, 2019). Co-creation echoes the term ‘co-production’, which has a longer history. Co-production has been described as a practice of reciprocity and mutuality (Boyle and Harris, 2009). It goes to the heart of both effective public services delivery and the role of public services in achieving societal ends such as social inclusion and citizen engagement (Pestoff and Hulgård, 2016). Many practitioners and some commentators use the terms co-production and co-creation interchangeably. In this volume we follow Torfing et al (2019) in making an analytic distinction for the sake of precision. Co-production refers to citizen contributions to the implementation of their services (Osborne, 2018). Co-creation implies that citizens exercise agency to define their goals in order to meet needs they themselves judge to be important. CoSIE adopted a formal definition of co-creation as ‘a collaborative activity that reduces power imbalances and aims to enrich and enhance the value in public service offerings’ (Fox et al, 2021: 8).

Co-creation necessitates interactions involving a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens, public administrators, community organisations, businesses and educators. Civil society organisations (CSOs) usually have a prominent role. CSOs have tended to be much more aware of co-creation than other

sectors and often champion it although co-creation also brings challenges for them. ‘Co-creation practices ... mobilize the experiences, resources, and ideas of a plurality of public and private actors in the creation of public solutions’ (Torfing et al, 2019: 797). Co-creation, in other words, involves working across many existing divisions not only provider and ‘user’, but also professions, agencies and sectors with different values, priorities and worldviews.

Social justice, assets and capability

Co-creation is not only about making public services better and more responsive, important as that is. Implicit within it are new roles and responsibilities and, at least potentially, changes in the balance of control. An influential body of work on co-creation from a public administration perspective stresses the interactional logic of public services as *services*, in contrast to the more linear logic of industrial production (Osborne et al, 2016; Osborne, 2018; Peng et al, 2022). We recognise this perspective but our emphasis is different. Rationales for the individual CoSIE pilots overwhelmingly emphasised issues of social justice for people who are marginalised and lack power (although this was not demanded in the funding call). For the editors and authors of this collection, co-creation is essentially a moral endeavour that recognises the legitimate knowledge and lived experience of people who typically have services ‘done to’ them. This line of thinking is grounded in ideas that emanate from advocacy, capability, human rights and social justice, inspired at least in part by struggles of disabled people for control over the support they need to live independently (Fox et al, 2021). Its moral framework recognises the anthropological dimensions of human beings as ‘receivers’ (in need of support), ‘doers’ (capable of action) and ‘judges’, referring to the idea that citizens are able to say what has value in their eyes, and that this should inform policies and programmes that target them (Sen, 1985; Bonvin and Laruffa, 2018).

Welfare states were founded to combat pervasive evils that beset 20th-century society and to mitigate damage from individual or economic crises (Esping-Andersen et al, 2002; Hemerijck, 2013). Today, many public services are still designed around seeking to fix things for people in the short term (Wilson et al, 2018) and encouraging them to take action that fits the service’s priorities, not their own (Fox, 2018). Co-creating public services implies a fundamental rethinking of the role of the welfare state and hence the relationship between individuals and the state (Cottam, 2018). It aligns with asset-based approaches that focus upon people’s strengths rather than what is wrong with them (Cottam, 2018; Wilson et al, 2018). All this resonates with an ‘investive’ turn in social welfare intended to strengthen people’s skills and capacities over the course of their lives (Hemerijck, 2015; 2017; Baines et al, 2019). ‘Social investment’ welfare has been criticised for

overemphasising labour market activation and failing to fully address the needs of the most vulnerable (Cantillon and Van Lancker, 2013). Morel and Palme (2017) counter that it should be viewed more holistically in terms of capabilities, thus foregrounding human freedom, democracy and citizenship (Sen, 2001). The strengths and capabilities of citizens are inherent in co-creation. The co-creative pilots highlighted in the second part of this book are all intended in different ways to enhance assets and build capability.

Social innovation

We see co-creation and social justice as intimately linked to another idea that has become firmly ensconced in policy agenda: social innovation. Social innovation mobilises citizens to become an active part of the innovation process (Voorberg et al, 2015). It denotes novel, effective and just solutions that benefit society as a whole (Phills et al, 2008; BEPA, 2010; Marques et al, 2017). Characteristic of social innovations across many contexts is that they ‘raise the hope and expectations of progress towards something better (a more socially sustainable / democratic / effective society)’ (Brandesen et al, 2016: 6–7).

The idea of social innovation has roots in various traditions and has been described as ‘fluid and diverse’ (Nicholls et al, 2015: 1). Yet there is some agreement that social innovation coheres around new forms of institutional relationships and collective empowerment, especially of the most marginalised (Moulaert et al, 2013). Social innovations, as much writing on the topic attests, are inherently co-creative in harnessing ideation from diverse communities and fostering new relationships and interactions (Mumford, 2002; Murray et al, 2010; Grimm et al, 2013). New ideas, in short, come from people and relationships (Cottam, 2018). All this is borne out in empirical studies of social innovations across Europe and beyond that highlight co-creative aspects (Evers and Brandesen, 2016; Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019; Oosterlynck et al, 2019).

Social innovation almost invariably has positive and optimistic connotations but real-life examples are not always successful or beneficial (Brandesen et al, 2016; Meijer and Thaens, 2020). Even when they are successful, effective approaches may not be sustained (Brandesen et al, 2016). As with all social innovations, a key challenge for co-creation is how individual examples can go beyond silos and discrete projects, share learning, and evolve into the ‘modus operandi’ of institutions and societies. As we shall see, social innovation, even with (or perhaps because of) co-creation is harder than we think.

Digital technologies and digital social innovation

Digital technologies are sometime claimed to narrow the gap between service providers and citizens. Social media has the potential to reach groups who do

not respond to more traditional methods and there is a *prima facie* case that such digital resources can help to accelerate co-creation, although evidence is somewhat thin (Lember et al, 2019). Countervailing factors are likely to include the digital exclusion of many people in need of public services and the failure of digital innovations to connect with their life worlds (Jarke, 2020). One of the more recent developments in thinking around the role of digital technologies in social innovation contexts is the emergence of ideas around digital social innovation (DSI; Stokes et al, 2017). Drawing on long-standing traditions of participatory design in civic tech, community informatics and digital civics, DSI has been defined as ‘technology that enables greater participation in government or otherwise assists government in delivering citizens services and strengthening ties with the public’ (cited in Stokes et al, 2017).

The starting point of DSI is one of foregrounding social issues as opposed to technological artifice, which a recent review (Qureshi et al, 2021) labels as a ‘social first’ approach where the creation of societal platforms should have primacy over commercial platforms in order to meet collaborative social aims. The second aim of DSI is to maximise the social impact of the application of technology. Key here is the notion of ‘techno-ficing’, meaning that the utility and affordances of the technical artifacts for the societal or community issues at hand should be geared to the social purpose and not to technological aspirations, which some in the wider community refer to as ‘TechforGood’ or ‘DataforGood’. The final construct from the review is the role of bricolage is defined as the sustainable engagement of local assets to facilitate challenging resource scarcity and social norms to foster innovation (Qureshi et al, 2021).

Optimism regarding DSI potentially addresses the challenge for co-creation in how individual activities can move beyond the ‘concreteness’ and ‘overspecification’ tendency of technologies and technologists to enable the scalable and sustainable achievement of social aims of individuals, societies and communities by emphasising the ability to build social platforms and apply technology in its most appropriate form. However, perhaps like the life-cycle of our ‘sandcastles’, both social innovation and DSI require access to the beach, with lots of space, a relatively predictable tide and local readily available equipment and materials rather than the reality of construction in the middle of a busy street already full of structures and unpredictable movement.

The Co-creation of Service Innovation in Europe project and pilots

The CoSIE consortium was awarded funding from the European Commission Horizon 2020 under a call entitled ‘Applied co-creation to deliver public services’. The use of digital technologies in co-creation in the public sector, in particular open data and social media, was one of the key objectives of the programme. All the editors and authors were

part of the CoSIE consortium. CoSIE set out with two aims: to advance the active shaping of service priorities by end-users and their informal support networks; and to engage citizens, especially groups often called 'hard to reach', in the collaborative design of public services. This volume seeks to bring a critical edge to these expectations and their enactment, including the role of digital technologies for co-creation. Authors draw on successful and less successful practical efforts to co-opt digital technologies, meeting an urgent need to disentangle promotional hype from genuine co-creative opportunities.

One of the assumptions of the Horizon Programme call reflected in the innovative aspects explored and experimented within the CoSIE proposal and the subsequent project was the unproblematic utility of open data and social media tools as means of supporting co-creation processes with citizens and shaping the design of innovative interventions (Jamieson et al, 2019; Jalonen and Helo, 2020). A number of issues emerged around the problems of these sorts of technologies as a recipe for improving social justice for socially excluded/disadvantaged groups. The possibilities of digital resources in the forms of open data and especially social media proved more limited than originally anticipated. Evidence in specific contexts appears in the second part of this volume. The project level work explored the blending of various stakeholder engagement and interpretative methods (including Community Reporting and Living Labs) as ways of 'assembling' or 'bricoluering' elements together to co-create both the practices and the platform infrastructures for implementation of the pilots. Through a DSI lens we saw the majority of pilots adopting a social-first stance with some adopting techno-ficing elements and many moving to bricoleuring processes over the course of the project.

Two cross-cutting approaches were proposed by the project to support the pilots through the process of local deliberations of co-creations and to provide the basis for generating generic reflections on the co-creation for the production of project level outputs, such as the massive open online course and Roadmap. First, Living Labs (living laboratories) are environments that can support public open innovation processes. Originally developed in the 1990s for technological innovation, Living Labs have emerged in the 21st century to foster experimentation and testing of new solutions in public services (Dekker et al, 2020). CoSIE made use of visualisation and animation tools that the Living Labs team based in Newcastle, UK had developed over many years of supporting service innovation and co-creation in complex, multi-agency, cross-sector service environments. As CoSIE progressed, the Living Labs approach evolved into deployment in an online tool, CoSMoS (Jamieson et al, 2020). This digital environment fostered reflective discussions/deliberation about intentions and intervention (strategising); resources and ethics needed to support co-creation (resourcing); value

and impact (evaluating); and learning based on variety of evidence sources including experiential knowledge (learning).

Community Reporting is a storytelling methodology that trains and supports citizens to use digital tools to articulate and share their own lived experience stories for research, service development and policy development. It is characterised by: scope for citizens to ‘set the agenda’; creating spaces for deliberation to occur between different stakeholders; and providing tools through which effective ‘institutional listening’ can occur. As part of the CoSIE project, Community Reporting was applied in each of the CoSIE pilots as a tool for co-creation, supporting the innovations being made in the different public services. Community Reporting also enables stories to be mobilised for change as ‘a mechanism through which public services can truly reconnect with citizens’ (Trowbridge and Willoughby, 2022: 299).

At the heart of the project were the ten pilots. Each CoSIE pilot had different target groups, service needs and local settings. They worked with marginalised, sometimes stigmatised people beset by multiple disadvantages (for example, disability, residence in depleted or remote locations, low income, refugee status). Pilots took place in ‘brown field’ sites with many other competing or cooperating interests and initiatives. CoSIE did not presuppose a single pathway to co-creation. On the contrary, partners tested and developed diverse platforms and interventions.

The pilot partners had already clearly identified a social need and target groups before the project started. They were at different stages of readiness to act so their inception was arranged in ‘waves’ which commenced in sequence as follows:

- Wave A: ‘Leading’ pilots were the readiest to implement co-creation. Each of them had the benefit of learning from earlier co-creative actions in their respective regions or services. They commenced first, in spring 2018.
- Wave B: ‘Following’ pilots lacked the history of established co-creation that informed their wave A counterparts and were expected to benefit from the leading pilots’ experience.
- Wave C: The final group were dubbed ‘promising’ pilots. Each had identified a significant need and a strong local will to co-create. Wave C pilots were intended to learn from the first two waves.

Finally, methods and tools produced from work done during waves A, B and C were applied in a test site in the context of inner-city community gardens for citizens and other stakeholder groups in a municipality near Athens, Greece.

There were 24 partners in the CoSIE consortium. Pilots were initiated variously by municipalities, public service agencies, CSOs and companies. Evaluation was undertaken by university partners in each country. The

chapters that follow this introduction are informed by evaluative research as well as Community Reporting and events and interactions occasioned by Living Labs. With hindsight, we reflected that the three ‘wave’ pattern set out in the original plan for the project looked overly neat to fit the complex reality of the worlds of the pilots. There was certainly evidence of mutual learning as intended. However, pilots learned and grew in many ways and the rather linear idea of a knowledge transfer model across the three waves did not capture the actual learning processes.

The CoSIE project was carried out from 2018 to 2021. The ten pilots (and one test site) are listed in [Table 1.1](#) with their partners, and a brief indication of their target groups, overall aims and digital social innovation journey. Despite their many differences, there was a common logic across all of them in commitment to re-envisage and reposition those who are typically the targets of services (that is, have services done to them) as asset holders with legitimate knowledge that has value for shaping service innovations.

Book structure

Following this introduction the book is divided into three parts. The first part takes stock of recent developments in theory and policy. In the second part we draw on our original research to document differences and commonalities of co-creation practice across diverse services and national contexts, highlighting implementation challenges and strategies to overcome them. The final part returns to the metaphor of the ‘sandcastle’ with reflections on sustainability.

The first part comprises two chapters. In [Chapter 2](#), ‘Understanding co-creation: strengths and capabilities’, Chris Fox sets out the principles of co-creation in conceptual terms. He presents co-creation as more a moral than a technical or administrative change to business as usual. Taking a stance grounded in lived experience of people who deliver and receive services, Fox argues that human flourishing and the ‘good life’ must lie at the heart of our understanding of co-creation. He sets the scene for the empirical content (the second part of the book) with a counter to criticism that co-creation (and the so-called ‘co-paradigm’ more generally) is a fad with little substance. The substance in social justice and legitimate knowledge of people who typically have services ‘done to’ them, he argues, is real and urgent.

[Chapter 3](#), ‘Co-creation as a driver of social innovation and public service reform?’, by Andrea Bassi, Inga Narbutaitė Aflaki, Heli Aramo-Immonen and Sue Baines, turns to the policy context. The authors draw attention to the intersection of co-creation and social innovation, and review how social innovation has become a prominent policy imperative, especially in the European Union. International evidence is considered that foregrounds co-creative aspects to social innovations. The chapter illustrates the intersection of co-creation and social innovation, using examples from the

Table 1.1: CoSIE sites, target populations and aims

Country	Pilot name and partners	Target population	Main aim	Digital social Innovation process
Italy	Reducing childhood obesity. Health Authority of Reggio Emilia; Lepida; University of Bologna	Families of children in Reggio Emilia diagnosed as overweight or obese	Make a trusted app available as a bidirectional communication channel between families and institutions	Techno-ficing with social-first elements
Sweden	Strengthening social services with co-creation dialogue. Municipality of Jönköping; Karlstad University	Residents of Jönköping with various needs using municipality Personal Assistance (PA) services	Embed co-creation in the PA service (where it lagged behind other disability services in the municipality)	Social-first with minor techno-ficing elements
UK	Personalised services for people with convictions. Interserve Ltd; Manchester Met University	Individuals serving community sentences or released from prison on license	A new more person-centred model of practice in rehabilitative processes	Initially techno-ficing transitioning to social-first during the project
Estonia	Co-designing innovative community-based services. Association of Municipalities of Võru County; Helpific; Tallinn University	People with disabilities in a remote rural area of Eastern Estonia	Increase citizens' involvement in service design, and challenge the traditional format of social and health care services	Initially techno-ficing transitioning to social-first during the project
Hungary	Self-sustaining villages. Jasz-Nagykun-Szolnok county; University of Debrecen	Households in small, remote settlements beset by social and economic disadvantage	Enable households and communities to build upon their assets and utilise their own resources	Social-first with techno-ficing elements moving to bricoleuring processes
Spain	Empowering Valencian entrepreneurial skills. València Activa; Polytechnic University of Valencia	Citizens of Valencia who have been left behind by the world of work	Co-create a community that inspires and enables people to reduce the risk of entering into a business venture	Social-first with techno-ficing elements

(continued)

Table 1.1: CoSIE sites, target populations and aims (continued)

Country	Pilot name and partners	Target population	Main aim	Digital social Innovation process
Finland	Youth co-empowerment for health and wellbeing through social media. Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities; Turku University of Applied Sciences	Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)	Find new ways to involve NEET young people to increase their participation in society and decrease exclusion	Techno-ficing with social-first elements
Poland	Neighbourhood meeting place for seniors. 'ProPo' Active Senior Foundation; University of Wroclaw	Older residents of a housing estate in the city of Wroclaw	Develop the concept of a common shared space for incubation of ideas and actions on local issues	Social-first with techno-ficing and bricoleuring elements
The Netherlands	No time to waste. Nieuwegein municipality; University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (HU)	Residents of a socially and economically deprived neighbourhood in Nieuwegein	Reinstate lost trust in the relationship between residents and municipal government	Social-first with bricoleuring elements
The Netherlands	Improving services for unemployed people. Houten municipality; HU	Refugees at a long distance from the labour market in the municipality of Houten	Work with job seekers and employers in new ways to improve the job-seeker employer match	Social-first with bricoleuring elements
Greece (test site)	Inner city community gardens. University of Penteion, Athens with the municipality of Aghios Dimitrios	Residents of a suburb with high population density and lack of green space	Access to fruit and vegetables	Social-first and techno-ficing with bricoleuring elements

CoSIE pilots that took place in Hungary, Spain and Estonia. In doing this, it highlights innovations in collaborative forms of governance, professional roles, digital technologies, and the balance of control underpinned by asset-based approaches.

The second part of the book comprises five chapters about putting co-creation into practice. Each chapter draws on original research evidence based on evaluations of one or more CoSIE pilots. [Chapter 4](#), entitled ‘Co-creating capacity? Empowerment and learning for front-line workers and organisations’, is by Inga Narbutaitė Aflaki and Andrea Bassi. They offer new perspectives on front-line managers and workers as potential social innovators, detailing how co-creation transforms their identities, roles and relationships. Reporting from a Swedish municipality in which the CoSIE pilot moved Personal Assistance services for people with functional and cognitive impairments towards co-creation culture, it illustrates co-creative approaches and strategies harnessed to transform disabling narratives. Emphasis is placed on the importance of change conversations and learning dialogues, where collective sense-making about change takes place, and on the role of a facilitator to lead the transformative change. Contrasts and comparisons are drawn with a different service (children’s health) in another national context (Italy) to underline key learning regarding approaches and strategies that can help to empower front-line workers as change leaders in asset-based working.

In [Chapter 5](#), ‘Co-creating with marginalised young people: social media and social hackathons’, Heli Aramo-Immonen and Hanna Kirjavainen focus on young people whose voices are rarely heard. This chapter reports some positive advances in innovation with digital technologies. The aim of the pilot in Finland was to find new practical ways to involve NEET (not in education, employment, or training) young people in co-creation processes to increase their participation in society and decrease exclusion. It did this in a set of short, intensive, activities called hackathons (a name derived from the IT industry), fostering interactions that co-created new, practical ideas. One idea that originated in a hackathon won a nation-wide innovation award and has been adopted and extended across the country. The Finnish pilot also had a specific objective to increase use of social media as a way to uncover unmet service needs of marginalised young people. It extended its reach with a dedicated tool that yielded valuable information about the lives of young people not accessible any other way. This pilot was able to deliver on promises of social media for co-creation when others were not.

[Chapter 6](#), ‘Digital technology, stigmatised citizens and unfulfilled promises’, by Sue Baines, Jordan Harrison and Natalie Rutter, reports a CoSIE pilot situated within the criminal justice system in England. Building on an earlier proof of concept, this pilot demonstrated that tools originally developed in a social care context can be adapted for people on probation,

recognising their assets as well as deficits. As one of several supplementary interventions, work commenced with high hopes on an app intended to promote greater involvement of individuals in their rehabilitation. This was not successful. Social media were entirely shunned by this pilot. A pilot working with residents of an extremely disadvantaged neighbourhood in the Netherlands similarly reported fear and loathing of social media. The chapter concludes with the reflection that digital technology, especially social media, may be unwelcome, inappropriate and even unethical in some service contexts.

Chapter 7 is ‘Connecting citizens and services through the power of storytelling’ by Hayley Trowbridge. This chapter explores digital storytelling – specifically the Community Reporting methodology – as a tool to connect citizens with services. It reports various ways in which Community Reporting was utilised for co-creation in the CoSIE pilots, focusing on Spain, the Netherlands and Poland. There were challenges of working with digital stories, notably digital exclusion, heavy demands on time and resistance from some powerful stakeholders. Nevertheless, these pilots demonstrate the power of Community Reporting to help develop services in a way that draws upon the existing assets of the people and communities. Recommendations are proposed for practitioners to progress the agenda of storytelling within service design.

This section concludes with **Chapter 8**, ‘Co-governance and co-management as preliminary conditions for social justice in co-creation’ by Riccardo Prandini and Giulia Ganugi. Taking a social justice perspective, this chapter proposes a framework for observing which actors are included (or not), and ways they can participate in decision-making. The framework is applied to explore the formation of the stakeholders’ community of the pilot in Reggio, Italy. Led by a public health body, the pilot included an exceptionally large and diverse group of internal and external stakeholders but fell short of full participation and empowerment for the most marginalised. This points to a need to develop more ‘constitutional imagination’.

The final part of the book (**Chapters 9, 10, 11 and 12**) looks outwards from individual pilots to develop the theme of navigating towards innovative and more just services across Europe. The authors examine various reusable resources for enhancing and building co-creation to move beyond the tendency for increasingly unsustainable sandcastle building, and seek to cultivate parallel infrastructural approaches which allow us to continue to experiment but also to put that in the context of mutual stakeholder co-creation and learning. We will also explore this in the context of making investments which persist beyond the current political and policy cycle.

In **Chapter 9**, ‘Evaluation and the evidence base for co-creation’, Chris Fox, Andrea Bassi and Sue Baines reflect on diverse views of what counts as good information and reliable evidence within the CoSIE project

and the wider co-creation field. They consider challenges of building an evidence base for co-creation, recognising that linear, cause-effect relationships between co-creation and outcomes can be elusive given the interconnectedness and complexity of services. They go on to propose a new strategy for evaluation of co-creative interventions in future using relatively recent ‘small n’ methodologies and designs for impact evaluation.

Chapter 10 is ‘Living Labs for innovating relationships: the CoSMoS tool’, by David Jamieson, Mike Martin, Rob Wilson, Florian Sipos, Judit Csoba and Alex Sakellariou. The CoSIE project applied Living Labs to support pilots with meeting their goals of service innovation and co-creation through the innovation of relationships. The web-based CoSMoS tool was designed with and for the CoSIE pilots so that stakeholders can be engaged interactively or offline, individually or within a workshop environment. During and after facilitated workshops, pilot team members and stakeholders populated CoSMoS with evidence using input questions and prompts. The chapter shows how the tool was applied in Hungary and Greece. It concludes with reflection on how it served to scaffold reflections and learning on the wide range of social, ethical, moral, organisational and technical challenges of co-creation across different service environments.

Chapter 11 is ‘Moving towards relational services: the role of digital service environments and platforms?’ by Mike Martin, Rob Wilson and David Jamieson. There is widespread recognition that information and communications systems that support service innovation and delivery should be joined up. Yet it has become clear that ‘integrationist’ approaches have failed because they are unable to cope with dynamic complexity. Drawing on the applied learning from the CoSIE project, this chapter sets out a third, architectural approach to the creation, operation and governance of collaborative sociotechnical information infrastructures and platforms for service innovation. This ‘relational’ approach supports mixed economies of provision in which public, private and third sector agencies coordinate to meet multiple and evolving objectives and interests in the delivery of services for people and communities.

In **Chapter 12**, ‘Conclusions: Moving beyond building sandcastles ... long-term sociotechnical infrastructure for social justice’, the editors, led by Rob Wilson, summarise the book’s central premise. They consider what the future holds for the challenges of co-creation in social service innovation and asset-based working, and what is required to take the approaches described to the next level. This provides a foundation for understanding, analysing, designing, and accounting for services and the environment or ecology they operate in. The chapter explores the paradox of ‘concrete elasticity’. This apparent oxymoron denotes ‘concrete-ness’ in policy and programme planning, delivery and design against the ‘elasticity’ required for an authentic, sustainable co-creation where real lives and complex public

service systems intersect. A new service model is presented that combines context-specific structures with reusable infrastructures able to support and sustain successive initiatives.

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