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CO-CREATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. CONCEPTS, APPROACHES AND PRACTICE

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Abstract
The concept of co-creation of public services, which is the essence of this thematic issue of Polish Political Science Review, is part of the current debate on the modernization of the delivery system in the European Union upon Europeanization and globalization. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to enhance the understanding of the factors that assist the co-creation in public service delivery and its capabilities on the both conceptual and practical level. The article works towards presenting the perspective in public governance by examining key aspects which make the ecosystem of the co-creation of public services. In addition, it is intended as an introduction to this thematic issue, and it is a basis for a better understanding of topics discussed in individual articles by authors representing the European research community and non-governmental organizations. The authors present, in detail, considerations on both approach-oriented perspectives and empirical findings, which refer to various socio-cultural, political and economic contexts in different regions of the European Union.
To achieve the research aim, following research questions were developed: What concepts and approaches reflect the idea of co-creation of public services in the European Union? Do they impact the institutional practice? Thus, the first part of the article discusses the key concepts and approaches with the aim to provide guidance and a joint understanding, and then introduces the main notions which make up the ecosystem of the co-creation of public services in the European Union understood as a method (citizens' participation), a process (social innovation) and a system (public governance). The last part of the article is a reflection on challenges and limitations as well as stimulants that determine its practicing in changing settings and contexts.

Keywords: co-creation, public services, public policy, public governance, European Union

Introduction

The concept of co-creation of public services, which is the essence of this thematic issue of Polish Political Science Review, is part of the current debate on the modernization of their delivery system in the European Union upon Europeanization and globalization. At the same time, this concept signifies an attempt to define a new space between the market and the etatist model of public service management and thus forces a redefinition of roles traditionally assigned to the public, private and civic sectors as well as to citizens themselves. Because today's governments need to redefine the nature of their relationship and engagement with citizens (Nambisan, Nambisan, 2013; Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, 2014), the concept of co-creation becomes more attractive as it abandons the current demarcation of the state as a service provider and the citizen as its passive recipient (in bureaucracy) or a customer (in the New Public Management) in order to blur the boundaries between service providers while strengthening the role of the citizen as a recipient/user and service-maker. As part of the co-creation of services in the public sector, the entity representing it opens its value chain to stakeholders. Stakeholders, usually organized as communities of a specific common interest, become its active participants. As a result, representatives and stakeholders of the public sector essentially co-create a package of values relevant from the perspective and to the interests of the public sector. In its optimal form, co-creation assumes the double benefit of lowering public sector costs and increasing stakeholder satisfaction. In addition to improving the means of providing public services, co-creation introduces further political, economic, socio-cultural, ethical, and organizational promises. However, it offers at the same time a set of challenges and limitations.

Co-creation can be understood as a method, process or service (Sanders, Stappers, 2008; Brandsen, Honingh, 2018). Although numerous attempts to conceptualize the co-creation in public service provision have been made (Osborne, Radnor, Strokosch, 2016), current research lacks a consistent theoretical definition (Brandsen, Steen, Verschuere, 2018). The general framework mainly focuses on the following elements: the involvement of citizens as experts on their own experiences; engagement of customers as active part of the innovation process; open process of participation, exchange and collaboration; and creation of long-term outcomes by changing the relationships, positions and rules between stakeholders and users. In this paper, however, the co-creation is defined as a joint, collaborative, concurrent, peer-like process of producing new value, both materially and symbolically (Galvagno, Dalli, 2014). In the specific context of public service delivery, it is seen as the voluntary or involuntary involvement of public service users in any of the design, management, delivery and/or evaluation of public services (Osborne, Randor, Strokosch, 2016).

The purpose of this paper is to enhance the understanding of factors that assist the co-creation in public service delivery and its capabilities on the both conceptual and practical level. The article works towards presenting the perspective in public governance by examining key aspects which make the ecosystem of the co-creation of public services. In addition, it is intended as an introduction to this thematic issue and it is the basis for a better understanding of the topics discussed in individual articles by authors representing the European research community and non-governmental organizations. They present in detail considerations on both approach-oriented and empirical findings that refer to var-

ious socio-cultural, political and economic contexts in different regions of the European Union. In contemporary public policy at the European level, it is the current paradigm that fits into multi-level governance, anchored both in terms of values, which are present in the political debate, and in institutional arrangements. Moreover, in the last decades, there has been an increasing political will in the European Union to democratize innovation processes and to strengthen societal participation in innovation and research. After 2014, as mission-oriented research (Mazzucato, 2018), especially as part of the Horizon 2020 Program, the co-creation of public services was deepened thanks to the experience of international consortia implementing research and innovative projects. One of them is CoSIE (Co-Creation of Public Service Innovation in Europe), the findings of which will be presented in this issue. CoSIE's assumption is that co-creation as innovation in the public service delivery doesn't only concern the reduction of the public expenditure. Additionally, it contributes to meet social needs and to empower the beneficiaries of policies by changing socio-political relations, impacting different contexts and redistributing socio-political responsibilities. Moreover, in the specific framework of public service delivery, it aims also to a) advance the active shaping of service priorities by end users and their informal support network and b) engage citizens, especially groups often called "hard to reach", in the collaborative design of public services (Fox et al., 2020).

To achieve the research aim, the following research questions were developed:

- What concepts and approaches reflect the idea of co-creation of public services in the European Union?
- Do they impact the institutional practice?

To answer them, a review of co-creation sources documentation was conducted. The analysis of the existing source materials concerning the co-creation of public services in select European countries included published texts and electronic materials in the form of monographs and scientific articles, chapters from collective studies, conference texts, research reports and other sources, mostly in English. An important source of information were data on the prospects of co-creating public services in the selected European countries, which were represented by entities participating in the CoSIE project (Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Hungary, the United Kingdom and Estonia). There are two principal ways for a public administration to "co-create" public services: 1) "service design", which is the systematic application of design methodology and principles to public services with the goal of designing those services from the perspective of the user, and 2) so-called "living labs", which are independent administrative units located within the public sector but capable of operating autonomously and defining their own innovative targets and working methods. These two perspectives are discussed in detail in individual papers, which is why attention was focused on them during the review of the texts selected for the analysis in this article.

When carrying out the literature review, the resources of the scientific libraries of the University of Wrocław and Humboldt University in Berlin were primarily used. The following scientific databases were used as the source of electronic resources: Cambridge Humanities & Social Sciences Journals, EBSCO, Google Scholar, JSTOR, SCOPUS, Science Direct and Wiley Online Library. For the purpose of querying the available source materials in the area of co-creating public services, a tool was developed using Excel, which allowed for the ordering of the available materials according to criteria such as type of source, answers to formulated research questions and thematic areas of analysis. An ad-

ditional point of reference was an in-depth query of sources carried out for the implementation of the CoSIE project (Sakellariou, 2018). Based on this analysis, a set of key notions were identified. This study thereby deepens existing understandings of co-creation efforts within the context of a complex public service ecosystem.

As this issue seeks to share experiences from studying practices of co-creation in different fields of action and various settings, it will be accompanied by different perspectives. While co-creation is *a modus operandi* of specific participatory activities across fields like policy-making, service and product development, it is not limited to single domains and cannot be understood with a focus which addresses one specific research field. A major starting point for this introductory paper is the assumption that co-creation can only be understood from a trans-disciplinary perspective, hence taking into account its context-specificity with a variety of problems tackled by a variety of actors. The first part of the article discusses the key concepts and approaches with the aim to provide guidance and a joint understanding, and then introduces the main notions that make up the ecosystem of the co-creation of public services in the European Union understood as a method (citizens' participation), a process (social innovation) and a system (public governance). The last part of the article is a reflection on challenges and limitations as well as stimulants that determine its practicing in changing settings and contexts. At the same time, it should be noted that the considerations contained in the article are limited to the most important issues associated with the concept of co-creation of public services in the European Union. They provide a common basis for the issues analyzed in theses argued in this thematic issue. The innovative aspect of this article is the dissemination of the knowledge considering experiences of those countries in which co-creation is relatively developed (high–medium level: Finland, Sweden, Italy, the UK and the Netherlands) and, additionally, considering those, in which co-creation is under-developed or on its first steps (medium–low level: Spain, Hungary, Poland and Estonia). In addition, this special issue extends the spectrum of further research to include findings in those sectors and industries in which co-creation has so far been poorly discussed (such as transition to clean, renewable energies). Finally, it provides additional knowledge that will be helpful in better understanding the essence of co-creating public services as close and delimited to other similar concepts (e.g. participation or design-thinking). However, this issue does not provide an in-depth analysis of one additional aspect that constitutes the innovative dimension of the CoSIE arrangements: the ethical dimension of co-creation of public services. Nevertheless, the analysis of this detailed aspect that has already found their place in the current debate on co-creation of public services and is becoming more and more popular among researchers has been abandoned here. These include issues directly related to axiology (social norms and values), which has already been presented in more detail in other studies as part of the dissemination of findings resulting from the implementation of CoSIE (e.g. Fox et al., 2019; 2021; Wiktorska-Święcka et al., 2020).

Concepts and approaches

Inspired by the private sector, in which companies have started the expansion of their service innovation and delivery activities across organizational boundaries, the co-creation of public services is a concept of increasing interest to academics, policymakers and practitioners in public administration (OECD, 2011). While the concept of co-crea-

tion has business roots due to the desired effect of maximizing service satisfaction and thus market share and corporate profits, over time it has come to play a significant role in considerations on the modernization of public sector management. As noted by Osborne, Radnor and Nasi (2013), the production of services dominates in the public sector, which, due to their discretionary and immaterial nature, the simultaneous production and consumption process and the central role of the service user in this process provide favorable conditions for co-creation. As in the private sector, providers and consumers of public services pool a variety of resources and opportunities to create value for a given service in a joint effort. Additionally, both sides of the process are interested in maximizing the creation of public value. Ultimately, scholars define co-creation as a process in which a group of public and private entities tries to solve a common problem through the constructive exchange of various types of knowledge, resources, competences and ideas that increase the production of public value, improve products or improve results or develop new ways of solving identified problems (Osborne, Radnor, Nasi, 2013). This approach refers to the previously formulated thoughts related to co-creation (Prahalad, Ramaswamy, 2004). The above approach emphasizes in a special way the following features of co-creation: the active dimension (as opposed to the passive one); the creative aspect in terms of the contribution of citizens; and initiative taken by the public sector, not by citizens (which distinguishes co-creation from volunteering) (Kannan, Chang, 2013). The evolution of the principles of the public sector's functioning towards enhancing market mechanisms and then network mechanisms, as a consequence of seeking profit in the form of stakeholder satisfaction, has become a driving force of innovation in the public sector (European Commission, 2013b). Their goal is therefore – apart from improving the effectiveness and efficiency – to obtain legitimacy for the actions taken (Bekkers, Edelenbos, Steijn, 2011).

As mentioned above, it is desirable in the context of co-creating public value to increase the efficiency, quality and transparency of public services. However, this element is insufficient for the concept of co-creation to be fully institutionalized. Consistency between the character of the innovation and the environment where innovation takes place is essential. Moreover, the innovation process in public sector requires legitimacy, political sustainability, strengthening democratic values and respect towards the needs of citizens. All these elements make up the ecosystem of co-creating public services, as shown by previous research (European Commission, 2013a). They form a base of innovative solutions in the public sector. They are all necessary because now, when the public sector has largely taken advantage of the productivity gains made possible by efforts to redesign the work process, its greatest source of value is to reorient and open up to stakeholder relationships in new ways (Mulgan, Albury, 2003). Public sector innovation is driven by the need for governments to stimulate and increase responsiveness to meet individual and collective needs through services tailored to the individual requirements of citizens and local communities. Bason (2010) emphasizes that where innovations are for citizens, they should be designed and implemented with them, not for them, hence the market necessarily plays a very important role in the development of innovation in the public sector. According to Mulgan (2007) and Bason (2010), innovations in the public sector integrate new ideas and transform them into social value. Making a change in this direction requires the adoption of new structures and new tools, but above all a commitment to co-creation as a necessary method of innovation.

Various concepts and approaches related to the co-creation of public services have taken root in recent years in the current research literature (Pestoff, Osborne, Brandsen, 2006; Verschuere, Brandsen, Pestoff, 2012; Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, 2013; Fledderus, Brandsen, Honingh, 2014; Osborne, Radnor, Strokosch, 2016; Sicila et al., 2016; Torfing, 2019). This thematic issue will focus on a select few, which will be supported by an exemplification relating to pilots arrangements tested in select European countries (the UK, Poland, the Netherlands, Italy and Sweden). Among the discussed perspectives, the following should be mentioned: asset-based approaches, narrative approaches, ICT-supported approaches and design-oriented approaches.

Asset-based approaches recognise and build on a combination of the human, social and physical capital that exists within local communities. They acknowledge and build on what people value most and can help ensure that public services are provided where and how they are needed. They are underpinned by attitudes and values related to personal and collective empowerment and undertaken within the context of positive change. An asset-based approach makes visible and values skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a community. It promotes capacity, connectedness and social capital. Moreover, it emphasises the need to redress the balance between meeting needs and nurturing the strengths and resources of people and communities. At the identification stage, a number of methods are available to support the identification and collection of assets within individuals and communities. These methods work to make visible the things that are undiscovered and focus on identifying and sharing what people value and what they have to offer. In addition, they are close to further approaches identified in the context of the co-creation of public services (e.g. participatory appraisal, appreciative inquiry, storytelling, World Café and Open Space Technology). At the assets mobilisation stage, key characteristics of co-creation exemplify asset-based principles:

- recognising people as assets rather than as problems;
- building on people's existing skills and resources;
- promoting reciprocity and mutual respect and building trust;
- building strong and supportive social networks;
- valuing working differently – facilitating rather than delivering;
- breaking down the divisions between service providers and service users (Stephens, Collins, Boyle, 2008).

The asset-based approach can be applied not only in traditional sectors of the welfare state. It can also make a novel contribution by turning an "asset" lens onto social and technical innovation in the form of co-created initiatives intended to deliver on ambitions for the small-scale generation of renewable energy. This is the scope of the case study of the local renewable energy in the UK discussed in this issue by Susan Baines (Manchester Metropolitan University), Chris Fox (Manchester Metropolitan University), Tamara McNeill, (independent) and Lynn Martin (Anglia Ruskin University).

Narrative approaches, which are integral parts of asset-based approaches, concern methods helpful in the process of identifying assets. They fit into methods that support storytelling, which is an informal and appreciative way of collecting information about people's own experiences of successful projects or activities, their own skills and achievements (Foot, Hopkins, 2010). It can be a powerful mechanism for understanding and communicating the ways in which assets and asset-inspired programs affect the well-being of the persons involved. The innovative method in this regard is community report-

ing, which has been developed by People's Voice Media (peoplesvoicemedia.co.uk). This is a storytelling methodology which supports citizens to use digital tools to share their own experiences, which uses experiential knowledge as a catalyst for bottom-up change processes between citizens and services and institutions. Community reporting is a citizen-led, peer-to-peer methodology that facilitates equity in relationships between researchers and participants. The predominantly audio-visual outputs produced are fed into the wider evaluation and also are used during dissemination to visualise key messages. In this issue, the community reporting approach was discussed within a larger experimental research and action project about innovation of social services through co-creation practices. The article by Sandra Geelhoed of HU University of Applied Sciences, Hayley Throwbridge and Sarah Henderson, both of People's Voice Media, argue how storytelling as an alternative approach contributes to a process of system change and innovation of public services.

Another example of a narrative approach is discourse production. The case study of the Urban Regeneration Policymaking in Warsaw, Poland, presented in this issue by Aleksandra Zubrzycka-Czarnecka from the University of Warsaw, suggests that one can speak of a shift from a citizens' discourse of rebellious participation in non-deliberative governance towards a citizens' discourse of a more consensual and empowering participation in more deliberative governance.

The rank of narrative approaches has gained importance in recent years thanks to the development of new technologies that support the individual's ability to access, participate and engage with them. In particular, digital technologies have been seen as important for improving public sector innovation capabilities and the advent of "digital governance" and "new public governance" have led to a further reformulation of co-creation in the public sector (Osborne, Strokosch, 2013). Additionally, they support public services in mobilizing citizens' resources and support their active participation by establishing space for the co-creating of public services. Last but not least, an increasingly popular approach in co-creation are methods based on design thinking, which link creativity and innovation. Design thinking incorporates users' insights in depth and rapid prototyping, all aimed at getting beyond the assumptions that block effective solutions. Design thinking addresses the needs of the people who will consume a product or service and the infrastructure that enables it. The notions of participatory design, co-design and design attitude related to this approach, which in recent years have been defined as absolutely crucial for innovation (Kimbell, 2010), are strongly associated here with the co-creation of public services.

Thus, the considerations in this issue on possible approaches, supported by the exemplification of specific arrangements tested in various settings and contexts, show that the co-creation of public services can find application in areas traditionally reserved for social policy (e.g. housing, labor market), as well as those that have not been associated with it and fit into other sectors of public policy (spatial planning, energy). Co-creation as an innovation in the public sector, aimed at developing new arrangements in response to today's challenges, has a number of advantages. Among others:

- it combines bureaucracy with an external view of current practices, draws public officials' attention to user experiences and promotes creativity;
- it helps officials see how services can become more valuable to people while leveraging their own networks and resources; this can enable the co-creation of services with citizens and reduce costs;

- it is based on idea of design, visualization, prototyping and testing of new solutions, which substantially reduce the risk of the innovation process (Bason, 2010).

Involving end-users and other stakeholders throughout the development process – not just final piloting or implementation – is the method and the key to driving public sector innovation. Citizens are central to public sector innovation at every stage of its process. Innovations begin as ideas in the minds of citizens as users, public servants, managers and political leaders and are generated at the cross sections of social interaction. These ideas are transformed from idea to practice through the common commitment of stakeholders who anticipate the needs and respond to them. At the same time, the research shows that the understanding of co-creation is evolving and currently it is not only seen as a method, but also as a process where different stakeholders are involved in different stages of an innovation (Leclercq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2016; Hochgerner, 2018) or as a part of a system where organizations are involved to make decisions. Moreover, co-creation is also concerned at a strategic level – when citizens are involved in initiating the general planning of a service (Brandsen, Honingh, 2018). Referring to this interpretation of co-creation, public service is in the foreground, whereby its initiation and planning are in the focus. With regard to organisational aspects, basic factors influencing co-creation (Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, 2014) include the extent to which public organisations have structures and processes that facilitate citizens/users and stakeholders participation.

Co-creation changes the existing balance of power. It reorganizes the issue of the institutional distribution of responsibility in the system of public services and the methods of fulfilling the service function of the state towards citizens, i.e. who and how provides them with services. The public sector, which has traditionally been assigned with decision-making powers and plays the role of a party inviting representatives of other sectors to express their views and comments on predetermined public interventions, is operating in this new co-creation approach with a more interactive-oriented perspective. Its key element is to question both the current bureaucratic and market model of the state, characterized by the assumption of significant responsibility by the private sector for providing public services to citizens while maintaining their public financing. The deepening process of departing from the traditional, hierarchical relations between the state, its institutions and the subjects of the socio-economic environment, which has been taking place for several decades, in favor of horizontal, interdependent, network structures has contributed to the flattening of the hierarchy.

At the same time, the growing role of citizens in exercising public authority (*empowerment*) and their direct involvement in public services resulted in tensions between the individualization of needs and the maintenance and strengthening of social cohesion. This required the development and application of various non-standard solutions, defined as innovations in the public sector (Torfing, 2016). They were to both correspond to the possibilities of the public sector and at the same time meet the growing expectations and personalized needs of residents and potential users (Gerometta, Haussermann, Longo, 2005). The sought-after concept corresponding to the transformations of the public sphere turned out to be the co-creation of public services, which is a non-commercial system of managing public services at the local level, built on civic involvement and responsibility for the common good. Co-creation does not mean giving up on the state from ensuring prosperity or shifting more responsibility to the citizens themselves, but assuming that they can support the state if it is to meet the constantly growing expectations in the sphere

of welfare. As a result, specific solutions within institutional management have been developed to actively involve citizens in decision-making towards a proactive and pro-innovative administrative culture, as well as incentives for co-creation.

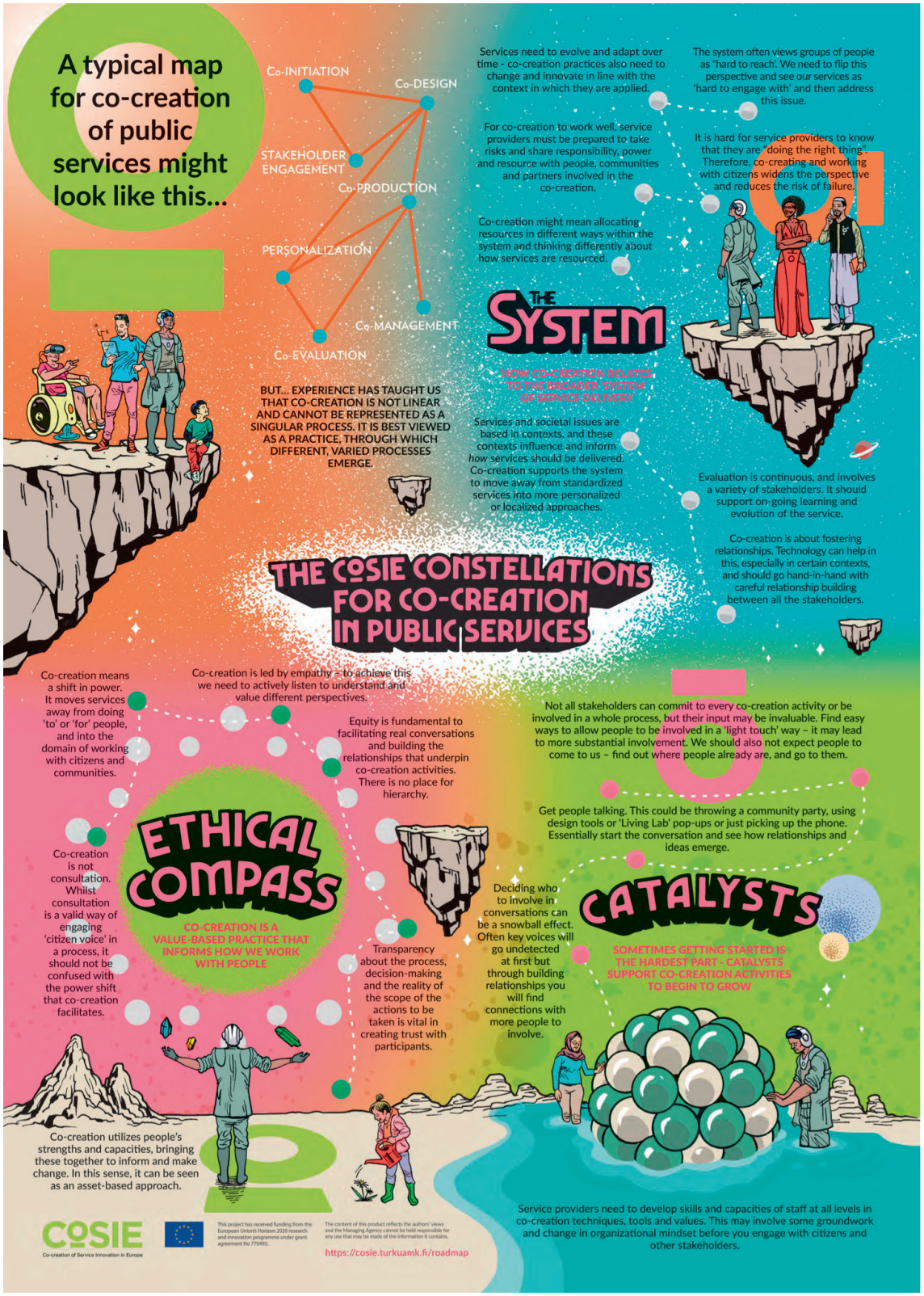
Citizens' participation as first element of the ecosystem of co-creation of public services

The ecosystem of co-creation of public services, as understood by CoSIE, is a complex framework which builds upon a set of numerous diverse elements and the multi-layed inter- and intra-relationships between them. The roadmap presented below is an attempt to visualize it (Figure 1).

The idea presented above assumes that the starting element for shaping the ecosystem of co-creating public services are values anchored in the idea of democracy, including those related to the subjectivity of a citizen, his/her active involvement in public issues, common engagement in the framework of civil society which results in novel arrangements and – based on this – is part of public paradigm. Thus, the main notions which make up the ecosystem of co-creation of public services in the European Union can be understood as a method (citizens' participation), a process (social innovation) and a system (public governance).

One of the main characteristics of co-creation is the value of collaboration with different stakeholders, the creation of a collaborative platform and the involvement of stakeholders in different innovation processes (Leclerq, Hammedi, Poncin, 2016; Hochgerner, 2018). Hence, in a value co-creation effort, the organization and its customers or service users and other relevant stakeholders engage in "a process of creative problem solving through which relevant and affected actors work across formal institutional boundaries to develop and implement innovative solutions to urgent problems" (Sørensen, Torfing, 2018). The above characteristics are directly related to the way citizens/recipients/users/customers are involved in the co-creation of public services, which make the first core element of the ecosystem of co-creation of public services. Pestoff (2012) distinguishes specificity in this context due to a) individual involvement, b) collective involvement and c) a mixture of individual and collective involvement. Due to the role of an end-user considering the involvement in the co-creation process, three main ones are distinguished in this respect: a) citizens as co-implementers, b) citizens as co-designers and c) citizens as co-initiators of public policy (Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, 2013). Another classification indicates four key roles that citizens can play in co-creating public services and solving problems (explorers, idea creators, designers and promoters) (Nambisan, Nambisan, 2013). By entering into the current debate on active social citizenship, perceived as a state of full participation in social life (Evers, Guillemard, 2013), in each of the above-mentioned roles, citizens use their creativity and integrate their own knowledge, experience, competences and skills with information obtained from various sources and from other citizens, public or private sector institutions. This means that they do not play all the roles at the same time. Public sector entities also involve them in selected roles, depending on the nature of the problem to be solved. The public sector secures an innovation ecosystem that can use a wide variety of mechanisms to support citizens in innovative problem-solving in co-creating public services. These mechanisms are part of the innovation ecosystem, i.e. a community of interacting entities – organizations

Figure 1. Roadmap to co-creation of public services



Source: https://cosie.turkuamk.fi/uploads/2021/05/1665acd7-printable_roadmap.pdf (accessed: August 25, 2021)

and individuals (including customers or users) – that jointly develop their abilities and roles and depend on each other for their overall effectiveness and sustainability (Iansiti, Levien, 2004; Wiktorska-Święcka, 2020). It is equally important to provide a participatory architecture that supports co-creation within civic cooperation and secures the way in which the rights (value) of innovation are shared among all stakeholders (Nambisan, Nambisan, 2013). The participation architecture is a "roadmap", i.e. a set of rules and guidelines that secures the coordination and integration of activities towards solutions. The literature also emphasizes that, apart from the community and the ecosystem, in co-creation it is necessary to provide space (physical or virtual) for innovation and problem solving. This space is an innovation platform that allows for a better organization of the process, including its division into individual stages. It also provides a knowledge exchange structure, including a communication infrastructure that facilitates formal and informal interactions between participants. Ecosystems and innovation platforms are a concept of co-creation infrastructure, while mechanisms reflect specific ways of implementing them (Nambisan, Nambisan, 2013). Thus, value co-creation implies the inclusion of various stakeholders to utilize their knowledge, skills and resources to improve the solution quality and create value that cannot be achieved without cooperation (Agger, Lund, 2017). Hence, service providers and users are no longer on opposite sides but interact with each other for the development of new opportunities to create value (Galvagno, Dalli 2014).

Because the increasing complexity of problems require more collaborative approaches that involve partners, including citizens/users, this first element of the discussed ecosystem is the participation of citizens in the co-creation of public services. Moreover, co-creation as a method is used in design as a way to promote participatory practice (Sanders, Stappers, 2008). An overall perspective of co-creation shows that it pursues a nonlinear logic, which embodies a multi-dynamic and multi-contextual process. It operates on different levels whereby citizens and other stakeholders are the key actors. New formulas of institutional solutions that affect the final shape of public services have an impact on the quality of life. Those with innovative potential are done by active citizens and the projects they construct. The local space (municipality, district or region) functions as an ecosystem conducive to the creation of environments in which the development of various projects is possible. Citizens (inhabitants, users or customers) not only play the role of co-decision makers in this ecosystem, but also co-designers and co-producers. In this way, the citizen becomes a creator, activist or citizen of "transformational normality" (Nambisan, Nambisan, 2013). Stakeholders with different backgrounds in culture, belief and knowledge take different roles and integrate them into a co-creation process. To take this into account, the tools, instruments and methods used within the co-creation process need to be well aligned and suitable for the respective contexts to promote its success.

As Torfing, Sørensen, and Røiseland (2016) note, the concept of co-creation is interesting because it changes the traditional way of thinking about participation. The participation ladder described by Arnstein (1969) was based on informing citizens about new plans and decisions, then it moved up through various forms of consultation and conscious dialogue, and finally reached the top rung of the ladder of civic power and control. Inspired by an anti-authoritarian rebellion from the late 1960s, the participatory ladder *telos* aimed at maximizing the democratic influence of citizens and creating the conditions for them to govern, preferably without the participation of the state. In today's complex,

fragmented and multi-layered society, where no single entity has all the knowledge, experience and resources required to govern independently, and the ability to govern depends on their mutual exchange (Kooiman, 1993), the idea of citizens' control seems outdated. The ultimate goal when it comes to solving urgent problems of the present day is therefore not to govern independently, but to co-create solutions with others to support new and potentially breakthrough ideas and put them into practice. The old ladder of participation should thus be supplemented with a new ladder of co-creation, which assumes the systematic involvement of relevant public and private entities in co-initiation, co-creation and co-implementation of new solutions. The first and lowest rung of the co-creation ladder is where public authorities seek to empower citizens to increase their ability to manage their own lives and encourage them to co-create services that are offered by the public sector. The second tier is of concern when citizens not only contribute to social services, but also engage in creating value for other citizens through voluntary work carried out in close cooperation with public workers, thus improving existing services through constant adaptation and synergy creation. The third level is of concern when individuals or organized groups of citizens contribute to the design of new solutions through crowdsourcing, group interviews, consultations and public hearings, which, however, allow only limited dialogue. The fourth level is where public and private actors engage in mutual dialogue at *ad hoc* meetings to design new and better solutions and coordinate their implementation. The last one is the level at which relevant public and private sector entities actively participate in processes that facilitate collaborative innovation based on joint agenda setting and problem definition, joint design and testing of new solutions and coordination of their implementation (Torfing, Sørensen, Røiseland, 2016).

The new co-creation ladder therefore seems to be useful for understanding the importance of co-creating public services in generating social innovation as part of the ecosystem.

Social innovation as a second element of co-creation of public services

The co-creation of public services promotes a culture of innovation (Sørensen, Torfing, 2015) because it engages stakeholders who are not usually involved. Through this process, different stakeholders do not only collaborate but also experiment. It also allows the development of their skills and opens up a new field for innovation practices, which can be applied in different sectors and services. As co-creation involves new practices and new modes of interaction, it can be considered as an emerging and currently diffusing social innovation, which is a multifaceted concept with different dimensions referring to numerous areas of public policy (Morel, Palier, Palme, 2012). Social innovations are the result of collective action and a collective mechanism of formulating innovative ideas for solving common problems or securing common needs. This approach combines with the concept of co-creation as a new approach to the role of a citizen as a recipient of public services and who is, at the same time, their co-creator and co-contractor/co-supplier (Wiktorska-Święcka, 2020). Gerometta, Haussermann, and Longo (2005) emphasize that social innovation basically takes into account three main aspects important from the perspective of co-creation: 1) meeting human needs (content dimension), 2) changes in social relations, especially with regard to management (process dimension) and 3) increasing the socio-political potential and access to resources (empowerment

dimension). This approach takes into account the special role of values such as public good, justice and equality. Moreover, a key feature in the social innovation process is the involvement of a complex network of formal or informal partnerships between different actors. In most cases, the success of an innovation lies in the participation and involvement of many different interest groups: users and beneficiaries of innovation, as well as producers and suppliers. Among the numerous participants (beneficiaries, donors, public institutions, volunteers, etc.) in the process of social innovation, the beneficiaries play a key role (Mulgan, 2007).

Thus, the concept of social innovation can be described to be similar to the concept of co-creation (Terstriep, Rehfeld, Kleverbeck, 2020). Moreover, processes of social innovation are often determined by co-creation because cross-sectoral cooperation and the participation of all actors involved are success factors for its emergence and fruitful development (Carayannis, Campbell, 2009). Therefore, co-creation can be conceptualized as an important practice within the process of social innovation processes, especially in two specific areas. The first area is the gradual innovation in goods and services in order to meet social needs more effectively or efficiently. The second area is institutional innovation that aims to use existing socio-economic structures to build new value (Nicholls, Simon, Gabriel, 2015; Wiktorska-Święcka, 2020; Wiktorska-Święcka, Moroń, Klimowicz, 2015). Both concepts, co-creation and social innovation, as interdependent, show common elements. Co-creation is essentially a process with high innovative potential. Social innovations will not fulfill their role without the active involvement of their future users. Therefore, the key mechanisms of co-creation as social innovations include:

- co-designing initiatives that enable citizens to participate in the development of a new policy or service; such activities are usually limited in time and affect citizens individually or in a group;
- co-creating initiatives that involve citizens – as individuals or groups – in creating a service that can be used by others; they may be short-term or long-term participation;
- initiatives to co-produce services that involve citizens – as individuals or groups – in delivering services to others; they can be based on short-term, transactional or long-term relationships (Kannan, Chang, 2013).

In order for co-creation as a social innovation to exist in reality, the common denominator should be the involvement of the community in the process of co-decision on public policies and and the consideration of the postulate of stronger empowerment of the individual in public life. This could positively affect the improvement of the quality of public services, the more so as the concept of co-creation does not assume the creation of new structures, but aims to optimize the functioning of existing solutions in specific economic, political, social and legal conditions. Thus, social innovations are those innovations that are social in both their means and their results (Murray, Caulier-Grice, Mulgan, 2010). The concept of co-creation implies this understanding of social innovation. Thus, from a normative perspective, both approaches, co-creation and social innovation, are close to the idea of democracy, democratic values and the concept of civil society. They are related to the democratic rights of individuals, which include civil and human rights, the right to participate and the right to vote and to be heard. In this context, a new model of citizenship is required (Davis, Andrew, 2017), which is not defined here in terms of acquired status, but as a possible or actual differentiated contribution to society.

Public governance as the principle of the ecosystem of co-creation of public services

Co-creation offers a chance for a new opening in the public service system. In order to make this concept a reality, a specific management model is necessary. It should concern strengthening the position and increasing the potential of social institutions, improving mutual relations between various social entities and improving the skills, competences and social capital of social actors involved in the development and implementation of social and economic programs and strategies (Kelly, Mulgan, Muers, 2002). Hence, co-creation becomes a practical expression of the concept of public governance (new public governance, collaborative governance, participatory governance). Public governance, as a specific, normatively oriented concept of regulating common matters, assumes the involvement of citizens in the co-creation of public goods and the process of providing services, thanks to which it creates an opportunity to report individual needs and problems and respond to them, and also encourages the creation of various forms of civic self-help. Public governance promotes a comprehensive form of responsibility with many stakeholders. The state plays the role of facilitator and coordinator, and actors from the private and civic sectors, the role of partners and emphasizes their cooperation as a key form of involvement, calling it partnership. Public governance builds on the belief that as a result of globalization processes and socio-cultural and technological changes, public administration has lost its monopoly on public management. What is happening today in the sphere of solving collective problems is rather a product of the functioning of self-regulating networks in which public administration is one of its links. The rest are other entities, not operating in the public sphere, including citizens themselves. With the multitude and variety of stakeholders involved in the network, network's pluralism is becoming the dominant element of an interactive governance system in which cooperation is the principle regulating mutual relations between participants. In this normatively oriented, optimistic version of the doctrine, the relationships between the links in the network are based on trust to achieve jointly defined values and goals, not profits. Co-creation, which translates this vision of public governance into the multi-level system of public services delivery, is anchored in this paradigm. It means the implementation of the idea of participatory and network governance in which there is a visible expansion of various forms of cooperation functioning beyond the state – for example, within the local community. This is the main area of expansion for co-creation as well. It is the local government that is responsible for providing most of the public services that directly translate into the quality of everyday life of citizens. At the same time, it should be emphasized that, especially at the local level, the co-creation of public services is an element of the political process, the result of which depends to a large extent both on the decisive set of environmental factors, including the ruling coalitions, and on specific constellations of actors (Kazepov, 2005). This means that the co-creation of public services as such is strongly embedded in the local environment and is a key element of participatory governance. In the theory and practice of public life over the last few decades, a number of solutions have been developed to stimulate the implementation of this paradigm that refers to the mechanism of collective decision-making, i.e. conducting discussions with citizens and their participation – in various institutional formulas and to a different extent – in the decision-making process. An example may be de-institutionalization, which is manifested, *inter alia*, by the inclu-

sion of NGOs in the process of providing services. The latter phenomenon is perceived by the European Commission (2013b) as an alternative to traditional forms of governance, in which local communities actively participate in identifying needs and providing services by creating new solutions, and effectively contribute to solving emerging challenges resulting from acceleration of the ageing process of societies, the cyclical crisis of public finances and the growing number of excluded people and/or at risk of social exclusion (Mulgan, 2009).

Co-created public governance breaks with the classic view that the public sector is the sole provider of public goods, and the more recent view that competition between public and private actors is key to delivering better and cheaper public services. On the one hand, the creation of new services can be subject to co-creation. It can also include the review and reform of existing services and tools. On the other hand, the concept is not suitable for all problems and purposes. Hence, realistic expectations about the potentials, limitations and risks of co-creation are an essential pre-condition for its successful use. As such, nevertheless, co-creation replaces monopolies in the public service and public-private competition with multi-stakeholder cooperation, thus changing the overall perception of the public sector (Bovaird, Löffler, 2016). Ultimately, this is expected to improve the quality of services and strengthen the relationship between the administration and citizens (Fledderus, Brandsen, Honingh, 2014). At the same time, co-creation is considered to be a key to becoming a user-centric organization able to offer tailored and customer-oriented services. The key assumption here is the presence of a multi-level approach, strong networks and cross-sectoral collaboration. This issue presents examples of practical solutions being tested in this regard. One of them is the implementation of a program for prevention and management of childhood obesity in Reggio Emilia, Italy. The case study is an example of the inclusion of multiple inter-dependent actors in the delivery of public services in the multi-level governance structure. This, in addition, has been supported with the reflection considering ICT-supported approach towards co-creation of public services. The process of the pilot implementation has been presented and discussed by Andrea Bassi, Giulia Ganugi and Riccardo Prandini, from the University of Bologna.

The impact on the institutional dimension and shaping of public policy in a multi-level structure of public governance from a bottom-up perspective resulting from co-creation at the local level by community networks is presented by Inga Narbutaite Aflaki of Karlstad University. This perspective builds upon the findings from a strategically selected pioneering Swedish case of municipal management reform. The article explores and assesses the reform efforts towards new co-creative paradigm from the perspective of systemic change with focus on more trust-based steering. The presented pilot has undertaken a process towards Personal Assistance services provision in the city of Jönköping, Sweden, in which the service users, as the pilot's primary beneficiaries, have a more active role and influence over the service delivery and value creation.

The tested solutions presented in the articles support the thesis that co-creation can increase the innovation capacity of all sectors by increasing the sources for new ideas and facilitating cross-fertilization through knowledge and experience sharing. It has been proven that through the co-production of services with citizens and business, co-creation can reduce costs and improve on design driven ideas and testing of new solutions, which was previously one of the most important assumptions of public policy in the European Union (European Commission, 2014).

Co-creation: dilemmas and challenges

The potential benefits of the concept of co-creation have already been recognized in detail in the literature (Torfing, Sørensen, Røiseland, 2016), but not necessarily, however, in the context of the ecosystem of co-creation of public services as defined in this article. With regard to the citizens' participation as a method, it has been emphasized that the key value of co-creation is its positive impact in increasing democratic participation and debate at a time when many citizens want to play a more active role in public decision-making (Norris, 2011; Warren, 2002). With regard to citizens, where factors include personal characteristics, such as skills, level of education, core values and family status. Other factors concern the level of their awareness and sense of ownership over the process. In addition to a willingness to participate, citizens also need to be aware of how and where they can influence the services and consider it is their responsibility to do so. Gaining a chance to influence public policy can also strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the public sector and trust in government. In addition, it helps to support more efficient and effective solutions by improving existing arrangements, which become more holistic, synergistic and adapted to local needs or, thanks to their innovative nature, are better than the previous ones (Sørensen, Torfing, 2011), which is closely linked with social innovation as a process in the adopted ecosystem. In addition to the often mentioned other benefits resulting from the discussed approach (for example, in terms of increasing social cohesion or building social capital), the current discourse includes a number of positions regarding the challenges and dilemmas associated with it, like a risk-taking administrative culture, which recognises customers as reliable and resourceful partners and does not try to avoid failure by minimising risk, over-managing or shifting the targets. Moreover, the presence of clear incentives for co-creation is crucial, such as the visibility of added value and benefits for service delivery at every stage. This addresses public governance-oriented issues as systemic orientation in co-creation of public services. Nevertheless, there are several cross-cutting elements between ecosystem pillars. These factors can be both stimulators as well as limitations for the co-creation of public services. Sześciło (2015) describes this complexity as "the dark side of co-creation". Additionally, he indicates that it may be the result of implementing the discussed approach:

- as a strategy to dismantle the welfare state and the illusion of "great society";
- as a welfare state interception strategy;
- as "games for the rich";
- as a choice between democracy and efficiency;
- as a cost-intensive concept (Sześciło, 2015).

The researcher also considers whether the law and its application can contribute to maximizing the benefits of co-creation and mitigating potential threats and related challenges (Sześciło, 2018). He refers to the concept by Christensen, Goerdel and Nicholson-Crotty (2011), who claimed that in the field of public management reforms, the law not only limits but also creates an opportunity for co-creation. Thus, the regulatory framework provides a mandate to operate in the public sector, while limiting the autonomy of the regulator and setting the boundaries of administrative action to prevent violations of public values or individual rights and citizens' freedoms. In addition, another element of the regulatory strategy in the field of co-production and co-creation is the use of law as an instrument to protect the key values of public service systems, i.e. universal and equal access to services,

and to prevent discriminatory actions, which means that the standards of accessibility and quality of public services should be anchored in the law. Finally, the last element of the legal framework that protects key public values in the context of co-created public services, is the system of responsibility for their provision (Sześciło, 2018).

In addition to the limitations mentioned, there are challenges that influence efforts to bring innovation to public sector organizations. Laws and regulations often hinder change by freezing the standards, rules or processes of co-production and co-creation. Their rigidity requires public sector entities to comply with laws and regulations that are by definition non-negotiable. Another problem that may be related to politics is the attempt to introduce innovation to the public sector by collaborating with multiple stakeholders in conditions of partisanship and ideological divisions, which may appear as a potential barrier. Finally, scale remains a limitation, as co-creation requires specific efforts and inputs to ensure optimal results. While there is ample evidence that it can operate successfully locally, other tiers of public governance are still in the sphere of experimentation (Sześciło, 2018).

While co-creation offers opportunities for the development of a more integrated and outward-facing public service delivery system, implementing co-creation in practice means addressing significant professional, political and ethical challenges. These are not the only dilemmas surrounding the application of the co-creation approach to the delivery of public services. They have been sufficiently discussed (Papadopoulos, Warrin, 2007; Røiseland, Vabo, 2016; Torfing, Sørensen, Røiseland, 2016), and the key dilemmas include:

- attitudes of stakeholders involved in the co-creation process (for example, experiences of actors involved, such as a sense of community);
- different understandings of value (for example, inevitable resource constraints and potentially competing values make it difficult to pursue all potential values simultaneously);
- a context (apart from the specific conditions of each situation, local factors – especially political, economic and socio-cultural conditions – help to define possibilities of co-creation);
- specific areas and tasks of the public sector regarding the applicability of co-creation (for example, national security issues that involve secrecy; crisis situations that require quick and decisive action; and political and ideological conflicts that prevent cooperation and mutual learning – in fact examples exist of co-creating responses to war, natural disasters and epidemics; Noran, 2014);
- access (co-creation can result in biased participation favoring the most extreme or privileged groups, having the time and energy to participate, and knowledge and resources that can help them gain influence in joint decisions);
- accountability (difficulties in ensuring democratic accountability due to the participation of non-elected actors and the lack of formal and transparent decision-making and monitoring);
- transaction costs (co-creation can be costly in terms of resources spent organizing collaboration between actors with different expectations, commitments and worldviews that are difficult to combine).

Thus, drivers and barriers are often linked to the above-mentioned basic factors which – to the context-depending extent – match the profile of the adopted ecosystem of public services as a method, a process and a system. Based on this, the three categories of

drivers and barriers identified (Bekkers, 2016; De Vries, Bekkers, Tummers, 2016) relate to (1) the environment in which social innovation practices occur, where the crucial element is the citizens' participation; (2) the process of innovation as a part of the process of public service delivery; and (3) the outcomes as part of systemic arrangements. Additionally, it should be emphasized – which makes the discourse even more intricate – that the "dark side of co-creation" can become its "bright side". Dissatisfaction or satisfaction with the result, perceived honesty and a sense of community are, along with the experience of co-creation, the main determinants of both negative and positive reactions of community members. Findings show that perceived injustice and dissatisfaction with the outcome can cause negative reactions from participants. On the other hand, perceived honesty and a sense of community are the basis for positive actions by community members involved in co-creating public services (Gebauer, 2013).

Last but not least, it should be mentioned that one of the basic challenges of co-creation is the unclear demarcation towards other similar concepts, especially co-production. Scientific literature rarely attempts to distinguish between them (Payne, Storbacka, Frow, 2008; Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, Svidroňova, 2015). These two terms are usually used synonymously (Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, 2014; Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, Svidroňova, 2015). Only an in-depth interpretation may serve to emphasize what connects or what divides both concepts. Torfing, Sorensen and Roiseland (2016) clearly distinguish between co-production and co-creation. They recognize that public sector co-production refers to the interactive process by which providers and users of public services use their various resources and capabilities to produce and deliver them. However, co-production understood in this way does not reflect the broader trend in the interaction of the public sector with society, in which a range of public and private actors work together to find and provide new and better solutions to common problems and challenges. This can be secured by co-creation in the public sector, which is related to the concept of social innovation and the concept of collaborative governance. The emphasis put on the wide participation of various public and private entities brings this understanding of co-creation closer to the concept of "enhanced co-production" (Osborne, Strokosch, 2013), which is a combination of "consumer co-production" and "participatory co-production". Co-production is thus generally associated with the services citizens receive throughout the production cycle, while co-creation is concerned with services at a strategic level. Brandsen and Honingh (2018) emphasize that when residents are involved in the overall planning of a service – perhaps even just initiating it – then there is co-creation, and if they shape the service in later stages of the cycle, there is co-production. Contribution to the design of the service can be both individual and collective. Finally, what makes the two approaches similar is ultimately the hope that, while viewed as the optimal form of public service delivery designed to improve efficiency and effectiveness, they may contribute to stabilizing or even reducing public spending. This hope is emphasized by normatively oriented authors (Fugini, Bracci, Sicilia, 2016), although so far no sufficient evidence has been provided in this regard.

Conclusion

To sum up, over the past decades an enormous amount of knowledge has become accessible, changing traditional governance processes and the way public organizations inno-

vate. Many co-creation initiatives have been launched to deal with this changing world. Co-creation can be understood as a method (citizens' participation), a process (social innovation) and a system (public governance). Unfortunately, though, co-creation is not a silver bullet and there is no guarantee that ideas will succeed. Opening up and co-creating can be scary. Most public institutions hesitate to share ideas and strategies with citizens. However, in the end it's the results that count: new products, new profit pools, new ways of thinking, new energy benefit from sharing perspectives and collaborating. Thus, the current literature states that citizens' participation is becoming increasingly an important method in the ecosystem of the co-creation of public services as a new way of their production. Co-creation, however, is by no means limited to a mode of operation for participatory governance, but introduces a form of collaborative way of working with civil society in a democratic state. A major reason for this development seems to be the goal to find better solutions for social problems. Thus, processes as a second stage of the ecosystem of co-creation of public services with the participation of all actors are affected by these solutions in the form of social innovations (BEPA, 2010). In this regard, co-creation, understood as a participatory multi-stakeholder socially oriented innovation process, forms the context in which public services are produced. The framework implies the modified paradigm of public governance which bases at the strategic level.

E. Ostrom (1996), laying the foundations for research on co-production, initiated a series of studies dedicated to this area, extended by co-creation and continued, among others, by Pestoff (1998) and Alford (1998; 2002). Thanks to them, it was possible to conduct in-depth research (Pestoff, 2012; Pestoff, Brandsen, 2008). Recent co-creation and co-production research has evolved from conceptual framework to fact-finding – from the analysis of single case studies (Bovaird, Löffler, 2016), to experimental (Jacobsen, Andersen, 2013) and cross-sectional (Fledderus, 2015) research and extending it by international comparative research (Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, Svidroňova, 2015). The presented paper, which seeks to contribute to an understanding of co-creation in its contexts, leading to the general notion of co-creation as a partial practice of social innovation processes and public innovation processes in more general terms, is an element of the discourse in line with the latter trends. Moreover, this paper supports a deeper understanding of the co-creation efforts considering public service delivery within the complex ecosystem. A theoretical foundation has been found firstly in the value co-creation, and secondly in the associated focus on the organizational capabilities that enable the overcoming of barriers and challenges and support the joint generation of value with citizens within the public governance framework. Co-creation, which can be understood as an integral part of the social innovation process and described as "magic concepts" that have been embraced as a new reform strategy for the public sector (Voorberg, Bekkers, Tummers, 2014) refers to the active involvement of end-users in various stages of the production process. However, regardless of whether co-creation is conceptualized as a method, process or service, it can be summarized as an intervention that changes the way things are done in several fields. In particular, it addresses changes in traditional cultural and organizational practices from a top-down approach to a bottom-up approach in which citizens or end-users become actors in a development process. The field in which co-creation takes place is a crucial dimension to observe when trying to describe and analyze the modes of action of co-creation and the changes it triggers. From a policy perspective, the co-creation of public services necessarily involves adopting asset-based approaches and it is a necessary

practice in public service reform. From a practice perspective, the focus on supporting individuals to develop their capabilities suggests new modes of working for organisations.

The review of the scientific literature here shows a major element of the ongoing debate on the co-creation of public services in Europe. These include the issues of conceptualization with a particular emphasis on the public governance paradigm, the role of the citizen, institutional arrangements, the role of ICT, stimulants and barriers in the practice of the analyzed approach and issues that are challenging from today's perspective. The papers contained in this issue fit into the above-mentioned trends and thus enrich the discourse in Europe, which is of particular importance in the period 2021–2027, when the European Union sees co-creation as one of the desired driving forces for future development (https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/co-design/co-designing-new-european-bauhaus-0_en). The papers in this issue enrich the current debate on the co-creation of public services in various countries in Europe. They provide additional arguments that result from testing the discussed approach in various specific local contexts. Thus, they enrich the existing knowledge on the practice of co-creation in various areas of development policy by delivering new insights. They also complement the previously identified gaps in the potentials and limitations of this approach by arguing how stakeholder engagement in co-creation involves cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects, how far it is driven by stakeholder-, firm-, and context-based factors as well as what mechanisms promote stakeholders' interactions level co-creation processes. Addressing the first research question: What concepts and approaches reflect the idea of co-creation of public services in the European Union?, findings indicate that still some challenges must be overcome in defining co-creation efforts. It is clear that these challenges result on the one hand from the concept itself, and on the other hand, from institutional arrangements and methods, which determine the institutional practice. A substantial challenge arises from the confrontation of traditional forms with new digital technologies. In response to the second research question, key capabilities for institutional arrangements which have been developed and are visible in the practice in selected EU Member States are derived and linked with the corresponding culture, inclusive political culture and governance approach and settings. The respective characteristics of these capabilities are also dependent upon the context in which the co-creation takes place and the actors involved. Accordingly, overcoming existing barriers and challenges firstly requires a deep understanding of their nature, for the necessary capabilities to be built up and aligned with the involved partners. Moreover, co-creation of public services assumes interactive and dynamic relationships where value is created as a base for further interaction. As shown above, co-creation – as a non-commercial system of public service delivery, built on civic involvement and responsibility for the common good – reorganizes the issue of the institutional distribution of responsibility in the public service system and the methods of performing the service function of the state towards citizens. Co-creation, therefore, is not only participation in the direct provision of a service, but also in deciding how to organize a system of services, including their financing and implementation. Co-creation is often practiced with different patterns and modalities. By identifying co-creation as the principle of public service delivery, this approach aims to make public governance more personalized, user-close and user-oriented, efficient and therefore more effective.

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