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ARE YOU IN THE NETWORK? THE IMPACT OF CO-CREATION ON THE NETWORK OF PARTICIPANTS

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Abstract
At present, local communities are increasingly confronted with problems that do not have simple solutions. To tackle them, complex responses are needed. One such problem is found in the question of who shall be responsible for stabilising the economic situation of people living in small villages? Is it the individual, who should be able to effectively manage his or her own farm, or is it the state, which is liable for creating a better economic environment? Is it the market, since it is the space for economic activities? Is it the municipality that is responsible for the well-being of the citizens living in the villages? Is it NGOs, because of their social responsibility? Boundaries have been blurred, making functions, goals, and responsibilities more complex. The aim of the H2020 CoSIE project is to revive the forgotten culture of farming, horticulture, and animal husbandry in 10 disadvantaged rural settlements in Hungary and, thus, to develop a new service model. The data presented are collected in two consecutive questionnaire surveys. The first took place in September 2019 and the second in January 2020, involving 72 households. Between the two surveys, the agricultural tools of the respondents developed remarkably and there were also significant changes in the network of the participants. Project participants regarded the change in their attitude as one of the most positive outcomes, as they became much more open to new things. The highest proportion of respondents reported an improvement in their relationships with locals. Joint communication has improved to a similar extent because there are more frequently spontaneous meetings than before the start of the project.

Keywords: Hungary, Co-creation, network, social policy

Introduction

Local communities today are increasingly facing problems for which there is no easy solution. The preservation and maintenance of health, the environment, the economy, and the coherence of communities would require complex answers, which have long been included in the activities of separate professional organisations and individuals. The complexity of the problem is also reflected in the fact that the previously clear and legally described boundaries between several public policies have become relative within various social problems. Many questions are waiting to be answered, such as who is responsible for stabilising the economic situation of people living in small villages? Is it the individual who should be able to manage their livelihood effectively? Or is it the state, whose job it is to create a better economic and legal environment. Is it the market, as it is the space for economic activities? Is it the municipality that is responsible for the well-being of the citizens living in villages? Is it NGOs through their social responsibility? The root of the problem

then stems from the blurring boundaries between certain areas of life and institutions, making functions, goals, and responsibilities more complex.

Rapid social and economic changes have resulted in the emergence of new types of needs. Intensive cooperation between service providers – i.e. state and third sector organisations, private companies – and service recipients (citizens) is formulated as a potential new solution. Furthermore, the need to jointly develop community-based services tailored to new types of needs. Instead of passive care, the goal is activation, participation, and empowerment of citizens. (Csoba 2017)

In Hungary co-creation is not a frequently used or embedded concept, especially not in the framework of social service development. If applied, it is done in the context of marketing studies, especially media studies, where they involve marketing strategies (Fazekas andNeumann 2014) and design thinking. Building on bottom-up approaches and demand-reflective development is not the current direction of development in Hungary. Many experts see co-creation and its closely related concept of co-production as closely linked to the wider debate on public service reform. Osborne and Strokosch (2013) note that co-production around the world is an important part of the current public service reform agenda. However, it is widely debated that the public sector environment is more complex than that of the private sector. Co-creation is based on a complex combination of top-down management (from government and service provider to service user) and bottom-up organisation (from service users and service providers to government).

Between 2017 and 2020, we became involved in the implementation of a pilot project in Hungary, the H2020 CoSIE – Co-creation in Service Innovation in Europe. The experiment was carried out jointly by the *University of Debrecen* and the *Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County Chance Social Public Foundation*. During the project, the experts tried to develop an approach to public services of their choice, a possible model of local economic development using the method of co-creation. The experiment and accompanying research sought to answer the question of whether it is possible to embed an innovative model organised at the local level that relies on the initiative and active participation of citizens who use the service in an existing centralised, paternalistic structure.

Our article is based on the observations of the Hungarian CoSIE experimental project. As part of the needs, processes, and impact assessments, we completed 148 questionnaires with participants.

Background of the research: the project

In the framework of an earlier H2020 project, InnoSI, in which we studied the Hungarian Social Land Program, we observed that there is a growing demand for the economic activation of the rural population in Hungary (Csoba 2017). The experimental goal of the H2020 CoSIE project in Hungary was to revive the forgotten culture of small-scale farming, horticulture, and animal husbandry in disadvantaged rural areas of Hungary. Furthermore, the goal was to develop a new service model for rural communities to strengthen. The project enhanced the local economy and democracy.

To this end, we carried out project activities on two levels. We first launched pilot programs at the local level in 10 rural settlements, each of which supported with funds five low- and middle-income families to start economic activity, in the most cases small-scale farming. Family members consulted regularly with mayors, experts of the local authority,

and representatives of local NGOs. Members of the Roma Ethnic Minority Council and other stakeholders regularly participated in local sessions to initiate, plan, evaluate, and disseminate local activities. Secondly at the level of the whole Hungarian pilot project, representatives of local projects: managers, service users, coordinators and other stakeholders – the most important being the European Professional and Representatives Association Social Land Programs (Social Land Programs Professional and Advocacy Association) – regularly attended LivingLab workshops to develop a general service model. In these workshops, "aids" such as videos, photos, experimental products, etc. were used to facilitate "co-creation" conversations. These workshops were accompanied by training where participants were able to learn how to develop entrepreneurial skills and how to provide a supportive environment for local family household economic activity.

In addition to the LivingLab, we also used a variety of participatory tools to support co-creative processes, such as social media groups, to improve communication between remote locations. In addition, we trained the service users for reporting activities, such as recording and sharing their own stories using their smartphones and other mobile devices in the hope that they could contribute to positive social change.

The pilot program was launched in September 2018. In the first creative workshop, organised at the level of the Hungarian pilot project, the concept of co-creation was conceptually formulated, as well as the local needs assessment and household plans were prepared. Instead of the 50 originally planned, a total of 74 families were invited to start economic activities in their households to take part in the development of local services in this area. In 2019, local economic development plans were implemented, assets were purchased, families started their household economic activities, and workshops were organised to develop a common service model. In 2020, monitoring and evaluation activities took place.

During the modernisation of public services, local governments have faced new challenges. According to the modernisation paradigm, the role of local governments changes through innovations and reforms. The administrative role according to the previous routines contradicts the role of the manager, which is becoming an increasingly powerful expectation. The "village company", where the head of the settlement is the director of the company, is confronted with the emphasis on market values. As performance principles come to the fore, a conflict is rising between the aid principle and market principles: "if you have worked for it, only then!" According to this principle, in many cases subjects are only entitled to the benefits if they have done something for it.

One of the strengths of the domestic project is that, through various co-creation programs, cooperation between different stakeholders and all sectors – public, private, and third – has been strengthened and contributed to networking. The cooperation, exchange of experiences, views, and best practices between many groups and local stakeholders also has improved.

Theoretical framework

In the following, we present the international theoretical framework for the modernisation of public services, the approach to co-creation, and the aspects of its application. Furthermore, we briefly describe the development of the concept of co-creation and the parallels and differences that can be drawn with co-production.

Theories describe the modernisation of public services as a positive process in which a new form of operation emerges instead of the previous one through innovation and reform. In the case of public services, the traditional "public administration" has thus been replaced by market-based New Public Management (NPM), which is followed by different trends of "post-New Public Management" (Randma, Liiv and Drechsler 2017). In the 1990s and 2000s, the dominant model was the NPM model, but it received many criticisms for not being as effective and efficient as expected (Drechsler 2009). At the heart of the NPM were active citizens, for whom active participation in the creation and operation of services was important. Several new types of public service model have emerged during the innovation of the NPM model (Greve 2010, Colak 2019).

After 2001, five defining models emerged. First is Public Value Management (PVM), which puts collective preferences and values ahead of individual needs. Action focuses on identifying common interests (O'Flynn 2007). Second is New Public Service, which emphasises on democratic citizenship and humanism comes to the fore instead of management. It focuses on citizens and not on the interests of consumers and the community in the development of services (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000). Third is Digital Era Governance, in which the role of the state and service users is changing, the distance between actors is decreasing, and the partnership is strengthening. The digitisation of public services is coming to the fore. Fourth is New Public Governance (NPG), in which emphasis is placed on participation, networking, and complex services. The model is based on the active participation of the citizens, in which services are part of co-creation (Osborne 2006). Fifth is Neo-Weberian State (NWS), where the state has an important role to play in ensuring economic growth. It is characterised by a modernised traditional bureaucracy, efficient and citizen-centred performance appraisal (Pollit and Bouckaret 2017, Byrkjeflot 2018).

Depending on the political and power structures prevailing in different countries, hybrid models have come to exist today in which bureaucratic and market principles emerge simultaneously. Often, instead of linear development, we can witness a stagnant model where trends are at odds with modernisation (Randma, Liiv and Drechsler 2017). The Co-SIE project, and thus the co-creation that provides the theoretical framework for our research, has been adequate to the method previously formulated in the NPG model, where citizen activity is key. In this sense, co-creation means that end-users of the service fully cooperate with professionals in design, execution, and implementation (SCIE 2015[1]). In Osborne's (2018) term, a number of other factors distinguish the method of co-creation from previous participatory models. In contrast to the co-production used in the NPM model – where linear and product-centric co-production is at the centre where not the provider-driven, top-down design process is emphasised – in co-creation the service is created through a continuous interaction between the user and the service provider.

Co-creation/co-production

The essence of co-creation is that the users of the services participate together with the professionals in the design, creation, and implementation of the service (SCIE 2015). According to a similar approach, the concept of co-creation is distinguished from its close relative, co-production (Osborne-Strokosch 2013), in that in co-creation, the involvement of users takes place in the whole process of design and service. Bovaird (2007) and SCIE

1 Social Care Institute for Excellence: A social development agency in the UK. (Ed.)

(2015) use a similar definition. Co-production, although closely related to the concept of co-creation, differs from the previous concept in that service users take over some of the work of professionals (SCIE 2015). According to Osborne and Strokosch (2013), in co-production, it is not necessary to involve the user in the design process of the service. However, the difference between the two concepts is much deeper than how people are involved in the joint design of services. According to Osborne (2018), co-creation presupposes a dynamic relationship between values and interactions, while co-production is much more dominated by the organisation providing public services, its logic being linear, and being based on a product-centric conception of production (Osborne 2018: 225).

Technology, including digital technology, is a key tool in increasing the innovation capacity of the public sector (Mulgan 2006). The technology offers new options for the inclusion of the masses. The various tools for e-participation (e.g online questioners and voting) promise that a wider range of citizens will have access to policy-making. In contrast, the level of civic participation remains very low and the digital divide is present not only in developing countries but also in theoretically networked societies (UN 2014, Roszczynska-Kurasinska et al. 2017). Thus, digitisation alone does not solve the problems, it merely offers an opportunity to further develop the projects. The UN (UN 2014) has shown that e-participation will not replace traditional methods of participation, but will help to reach people who have difficulty accessing traditional methods. According to Osborne and Strokosch, the development of the Internet and, especially, social media sites has opened up huge opportunities for user-driven innovations and for the new types of interactions between public service providers and users.

What is networking?

Not only that can be a resource "what we know" but also "who we know". Human relationships and acquaintances are just as important as the knowledge and education. How well do members of the community, especially leaders, individuals and their agencies or organisations, know who can provide useful resources that strengthen the community as a whole? The essence of networking is to create useful relationships between the individual and communities, organisations, and societies to mobilise resources and achieve different goals. Networking takes place at different levels. It is about building reciprocal relationships with other members of the society at the level of neighbourhoods and communities. In many cases, the parties meet informally e.g. for a joint meal or occasional meeting. They often share resources, contacts, and information with each other. As a result of these conversations and newly found relationships, individuals often find work for themselves, look for housing, commercial services, and develop collaboration strategies (Tongeren 2001).

Many professionals increasingly rely on Internet "chat rooms", networking websites, and online forums to discuss the latest developments in their occupation or field of expertise and to ask each other questions. In many villages in less developed parts of the world, it is important to build social connections for those who need to find money and resources or seek information, e.g. how to sell their products. Networking is an important element of community organisation. (Tongeren 2001) This requires different members of the population to build relationships, share resources, and work together in an organised manner

for social change. Networking can occur between members of a single organisation or social group, people from many different communities and social groups.

Networking can thus help to share the resources and information of those working for social change, set an agenda, and lead to collective action. For example, those working in the field of local honey production find it useful to contact other local organisers to coordinate their efforts, learn what has already happened on the issue, and discuss what worked and what did not. It is equally important for organisations to connect with other agencies, groups, and individuals who may directly or indirectly support their work. Networking can be useful in expanding the research and knowledge base of social campaigns, creating new resources and supporting their efforts (Johannisson 1987). Creating co-creation makes it easier for organisations to get help from support groups and allies who support their goals. If those who coordinate their activities and share resources are more likely to succeed, networking often empowers groups and helps people have a real voice in decisions that affect them. Through networking, individuals can form relationships with third parties and non-governmental organisations, which can ultimately make it easier for them to reach some kind of agreement in current or future discussions or issues.

Why is networking important?

Individuals, groups, and organisations that have close ties to various support groups tend to be more successful in achieving their goals. Networking at both the individual and collective levels is a strategy of empowerment. As a result of networking, organisations and individuals can exert political pressure at the local and global levels to support their goals. Networking facilitates organisation and mobilisation, empowers civil society groups, and enables poor and powerless individuals to receive and provide strong service in the decision-making process. This is because the existence of strong social ties helps the parties to organise lobbying and advocacy activities at the national, regional, and international levels to bring about the necessary social change (Tongeren 2001).

Sometimes communities need external support and resources, but as much as possible, they need to build on what they already have. Applying a bottom-up approach is a challenge. As Bergdall (2012: 4) suggests: "Effective catalysts coming from outside the community do nothing directly for people. They encourage people to get their own business. Communities drive their own development; catalysts facilitate the process. This involves a number of practical activities that are much easier to talk about than to perform". In many ways, horizontal community engagement, such as building relationships between communities, rather than vertical community engagement involves the community in organisations and priorities.

We formulated three hypotheses on this issue. The co-creation in Hungary (and also in Central-Eastern Europe) is in an embryonic state. In our case the problem is not that the state might use digital technology to bypass the citizens (Veiko et al 2019), it would be a great step forward for our subjects if the use of ICT tools were to become established amongst them at all.

1. As a result of the project, the frequency of communication between the participants increased and their relationship with the locals improved.
2. The use of ICT tools remained even after the project closed.
3. The project did not result in a change in the labour market status of the participants.

Data and methods

Seventy-two families participated in the program, and each family was contacted during the surveys. The data collection was made in two steps in the 10 participating municipalities: the first at the start of the project, from July to September 2019, and the second in January and February 2020. All participants were interviewed on both occasions. The two surveys provide a good opportunity to compare the data, during which we can determine what changes the project has resulted in among the participants.

The project participants were mainly disadvantaged families living in small settlements. The aim was to improve their financial situation in a sustainable way, so they can start or increase the productivity of their family farm with the new tools added to them during the project. This is a significant source of additional income for them and, in some cases, can also replace a full-time job. Based on the age distribution, the focus was primarily on the middle-aged generation, with more than half of the sample belonging there. A quarter of the participants are under 40, a third are in their 40s, a quarter are in their 50s, and nine participants are over 61.

Most participants of the project completed vocational training. Nearly half of them have a primary education or high school diploma. Only five participants have a higher education degree. According to the data of the 2016 microcensus, 30.6% of the Hungarian society have a degree of eight grades or less than that, 17.8% have vocational training, 27.5% have a high school diploma, and 17.5% have a higher education (KSH 2018). The qualification of the participants in the project is therefore lower than the qualification of the average Hungarian society. Although the proportion of participants with eight-grade or lower level education is lower among our subjects, those with vocational training make up almost half of the sample, compared to the national data where it make up only a quarter. In the sample, the proportion of those with a high school diploma is significantly lower, and the proportion of those with a university degree is almost negligible.

The settlements were selected from Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County. The county, along the Tisza River, lies on a spatial fault line in the middle of the Great Hungarian Plain. The area of Jászság and Szolnok, which belong to the wider agglomeration zone of the capital, is developing, while the areas of the Trans-Tisza region are internal peripheries. Agricultural production is predominant in the rural county. The presence of tourism is significant only in a few settlements. The population, following the national population pattern, is declining and ageing. The current situation of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County essentially reflects the socio-economic and environmental condition of Hungary, i.e. its characteristics, opportunities, and problems to be solved are basically the same. All this presents us with the image of a county that is developing but not to the same extent and pace as the rest of Hungary, where regional and social differences can be eliminated through employment. The traditional areas of the county and the openness in all directions resulting from the geographical location mean value and opportunity as it encourages cooperation.

Of the 10 settlements included in the sample, eight have a population of less than 1,000, but two of the settlements have a population of more than 5,000. In other words, the majority of settlements are small villages.

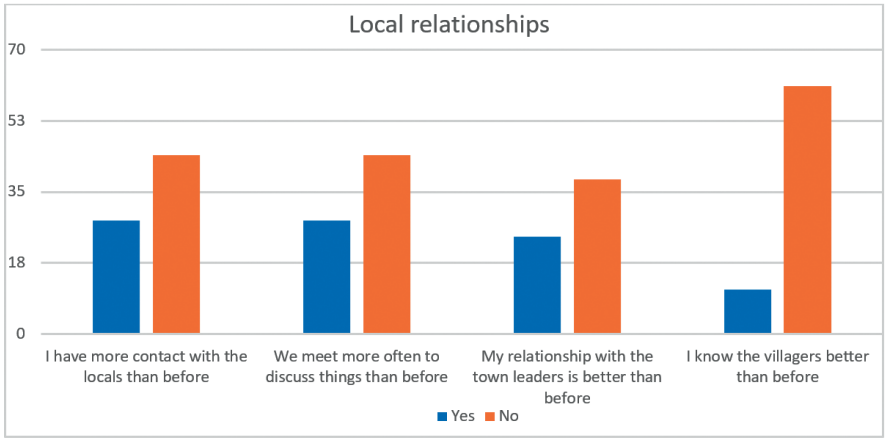
Ten settlements or organisations were selected from these settlements, and their partners primarily included local governments (Tiszaörs, Kőtelek, Besenyszög, Jászladány, Panyola, Piliny, Magyargéc, Sóshartyán), a social cooperative (Kunszentmárton) and

a church organisation (Tomor). Family households that already had some experience and resources were included so that they could move forward and develop their household economy. This mostly affects middle-class families, which is why Roma households were left out of the sample. Within the project, we conducted researches using several methods. However, due to the size requirements of the present study, we only analysed the data from the survey. Our choice was made primarily for the analysis of quantitative data, because through them we can measure the change in the status of the labour market, the development of the network and the utilisation of ICT tools.

Results

In the survey at the end of the project, we asked participants if they could see if there had been any change in their relationships with each other and the settlement management. Changes can also be observed in the social network of the settlement. The highest proportion of respondents reported an improvement in their relationships with the locals. The clear result of the project is therefore that the relations between the locals have significantly improved. In addition to personal gains (making friends, preventing loneliness), this also facilitates a better flow of information and exchange of experiences. Joint communication improved to a similar extent, as many indicated that spontaneous, non-management organised meetings were more frequent after the project. The locals therefore initiated discussions and meetings on their own. In addition to improving their horizontal relationships, they also reported improvements in their vertical ones (with the members of the mayor's office). Although to a smaller extent, these types of relationships also improved, according to several participants.

Figure 1. The local relationships of the participants



Improving contacts with the locals were reported by a higher proportion of young people than the elderly. The average age is 44 years for those who have more connections because of the project and 51 years for those who have not grown their network of contacts. Based on the results of the ANOVA test, a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) can be observed. The project's ability to expand local contacts was thus better exploited by young people than by members of the older generations. In the other cases, however, there is no significant difference between the age groups. The improvement in the relationship quality with

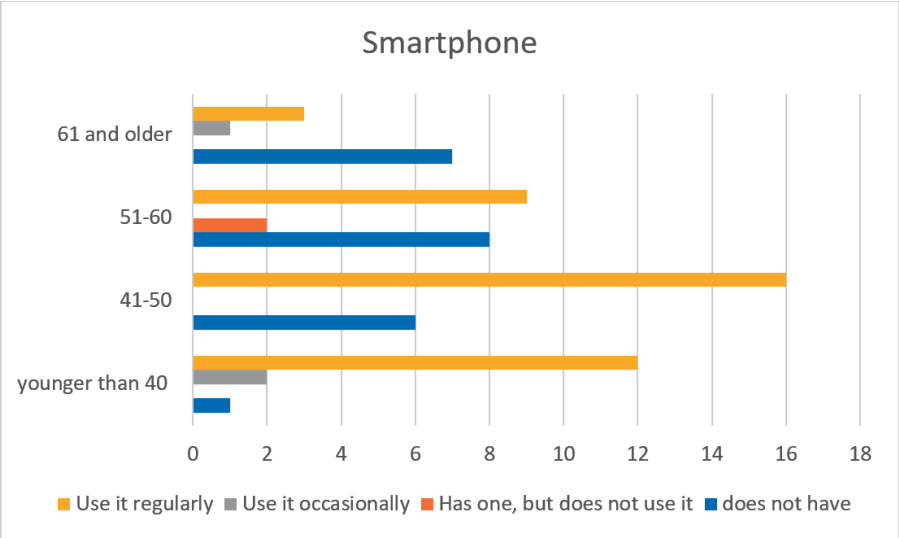
the villagers was reported by the young as well as the elderly. These results support our first hypothesis that local relationships have improved.

There was also a significant difference in adaptability between young and old. Adaptation to others was not a serious problem for younger respondents. Older participants on the other hand, considered it as an advantage that the project members have adapted to them rather than themselves having to adapt to the situation. The average age of those who see this as an advantage is 53 years, but those who did not highlight this have an average age of 45 years. It can be observed then that older people prefer that the project members adapt to them, so they do not have to learn new things. This phenomenon is most likely due to the fact that they do not want to change their habits that have developed so far. They were able to achieve their goal within the framework of small-scale farming, as they had the opportunity to continue their routine farming methods, with the difference thanks to the subsidies they were able to acquire more modern assets, which they could use either themselves or with the other families.

Motivation also played an important role in the activity, whether it came from the project leaders, the municipal staff, or the other participants. There is a significant difference between the different employment categories (chi-square significance value $p < 0.05$). Everyone among the public workers emphasised that the support from their network of contacts was important to them, and more than three quarters of the inactive said the same. A supportive attitude was also important to more than half of the employees. Entrepreneurs and farmers needed the smallest amount of motivation, but even in their case, almost half of them emphasised the importance of assistance in this area.

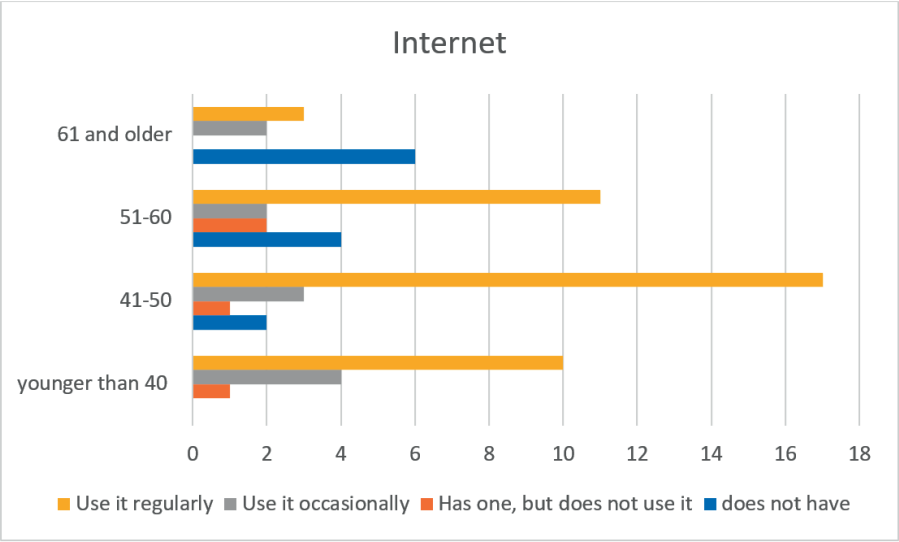
The size of the contact network can have a serious impact on the knowledge and the use of ICT tools. One of the project objectives was to improve the online communication skills of the participants. They also had to share their experiences on social media platforms, and a significant portion of the communication took place on these places. Several participants started using smart devices because of the project and therefore created social media accounts. However, it is worth examining whether all generations are equally accustomed to online communication or if only the young people could use these tools.

Figure 2. The proportion of people with a smartphone by age group



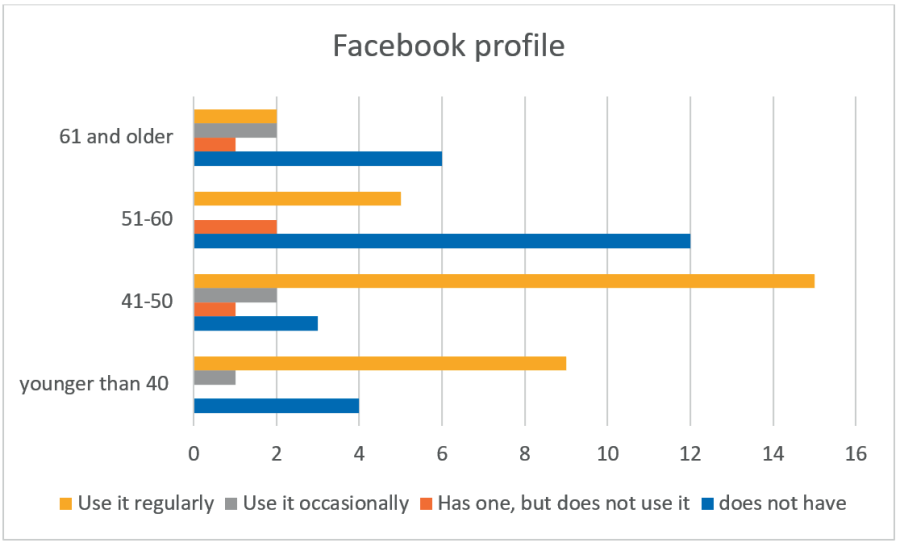
From the results, we can conclude that the younger age groups use their smartphones more often. At the end of the project, in all groups (apart from the oldest age group) the daily smartphone users make the majority. However, amongst the elderly the most regular answer was that they do not have a smartphone at all.

Figure 3. The proportion of internet usage by age groups



The proportion of internet access decreases with age. The daily use is the most common amongst the middle-aged group and the lowest amongst the elderly. If we exclude the oldest age group, the number of daily users is greater than all of the other categories combined. So, like the smartphone, internet usage is typical for young people, but rarely used by the elderly.

Figure 4. Facebook profile by age group



A significant proportion of respondents do not have a Facebook profile. Social media use is the least prevalent in those in their 50s and 60s. Most people under the age of 40 and those in their 40s use Facebook every day. The fault line between the generations thus can be drawn at 50 years, since younger people typically use it daily, while those who are older than 50 typically do not have a profile at all. The attendance of Instagram amongst participants is similar to Facebook. Most people under the age of 50 use it regularly, but most people over the age of 50 do not use it at all. Most of the respondents do not have a Twitter account. Even for young people, only a few subjects have an active account, so even amongst them the vast majority do not have an account at all.

Significant changes have also taken place in the daily lives of the participants. They saw the attitude change as the most positive thing, as they became much more open to new things. This is largely due to the use of ICT tools, since most of them started to use these devices and platforms because it was necessary for the project, but later became part of their daily lives. The ICT devices are no longer just a tool for the project administration but can also be used in the administration of other matters as well as in their personal relationships. In addition, their knowledge in general has also increased, as a significant number of the participants have indicated that they have a better general understanding of things than before. The project also had an encouraging effect in their relationships, with several respondents highlighting that now they are much more courageous to stand up for their opinion in front of others. Thus, in their personal and professional relationships, their self-expression has improved, and they are able to express their own opinions more successfully, and thus better represent their own voice and stand up for their own interests. Our second hypothesis, that the use of ICT tools was maintained after the project, was confirmed.

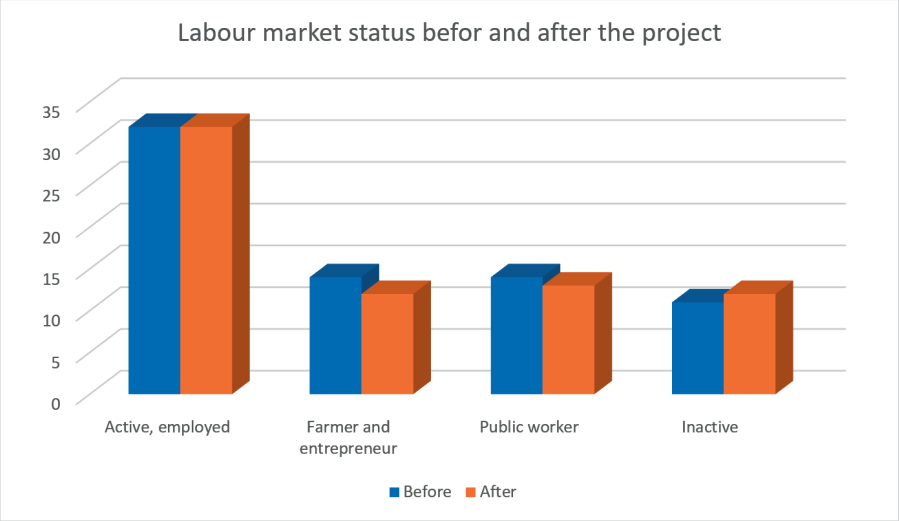
Economic results

Most participants highlighted that the new tools have improved their means to produce corps. Thanks to more favourable production conditions, the increase in the volume of produced crops was significant in several cases. Initially, many families saw the project as an opportunity to improve their self-sufficiency. So far, their small-scale farming has only been a food supplement, which has reduced their shopping expenses. However, after the expansion many reported significant improvements, and there were also those who considered leaving their original job, in favour of the former income-supplementing activity. However, most participants still view it primarily as an income-supplementing activity and not as a viable daily job. The labour market status of the participants also remained unchanged. Before and after the start of the project, the number of people in employee status was equal, so they did not leave their full-time jobs for small-scale farming. The number of entrepreneurs and primary producers as well as public workers decreased; the number of inactive persons increased minimally. Thus, there was no significant change in the labour market status of the participants, the job change exists only in theory and long-term plans, which confirms the third hypothesis.

However, regarding the network, a significant difference (chi-square significance value $p < 0.05$) can be detected between the occupational categories. More than three quarters of farmers and entrepreneurs indicated that their relationship with the village leaders had improved since the beginning of the project. Nearly half of the inactive made a similar

statement. The public workers and employees reported an improvement in their relationship with the settlement management in the lowest proportion. Due to their status, they have most likely been in contact with the municipality so far, but in the case of entrepreneurs and inactive people, this possibility was not available before. As a result of the project, the network of participants expanded.

Figure 5. Labour market status of the participants before and after the project



In most cases, the participants carried out similar economic activities in the settlements involved. There were settlements where everyone was involved in beekeeping, but in other places the making of compote and drinking juice was typical. There were settlements where the participants were not engaged in agricultural production but tried to integrate into the service sector. Guest houses have been set up and accommodation and dining facilities have been provided for tourists who arrive here. In their case, the project helped to take advantage of the opportunities offered by rural tourism.

Conclusion

It is impossible to glide over the fact that the resources available to local governments are constantly shrinking and yet their tasks are changing. The level of participant needs and requirements are increasing while the level of performance expectations are increasing. In this new, changed situation, relationships will play a key role. Social networks can facilitate the information sharing between individual participants, thereby encouraging collaboration between them.

The CoSIE aims to help actively shape service priorities through end users and their informal support networks; and involve citizens – especially groups that are often "hard to reach" – in planning public service cooperation. Project-wide activities support the creation of resources and tools that support co-creation when developers are no longer responsible for implementation and delivery. In the project, local governments in small peripheral villages focused on their collective preferences, values, community initiatives, and own resources and supported bottom-up organisational forms in order to survive.

Based on experimental experience, we can conclude that building on the initiative and active participation of service using citizens, new forms of public services can be created that meet real local needs and focus on collective preferences and values rather than the individual. Our pilot program under the CoSIE project has helped stakeholders identify opportunities for bottom-up initiatives and facilitated the process of modernising public services.

The success of the project was that the participants underwent a kind of change of attitude as they became much more open to new things. This is largely due to the use of ICT tools, as many started using them because of the project, but later became part of their daily lives. They are no longer only present in the administration of the project but can also be used in the administration of other matters as well as in their personal relationships. The clear result of the project is therefore that the relations between the locals have improved. In addition to personal positives (making friends, preventing loneliness), this also facilitates a better flow of information and exchange of experiences. Joint communication has improved to a similar extent, with many stressing that spontaneous, non-management organised meetings are more common than before the project began. Locals also initiate discussions and meetings on their own. In addition to improving their horizontal relationships, they also reported improvements in their vertical relationships. The relationship of the project participants with the leaders of the settlement has also improved, although not in such a large proportion as with their counterparts in the village. Thus, in addition to renewing the service system, the project can also significantly expand the network of participants. However, the services did not affect the labour market status of the participants.

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