

Co-production of public space: Examples from Belgium and the Netherlands

NPO-Forum, 13 May 2024

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What is co-production?

- **Co-production:** The **active involvement** of end-users in various stages of the *service provision process* (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000; Vargo & Lusch, 2004)

First described in 80s by Prof. Elinor Ostrom

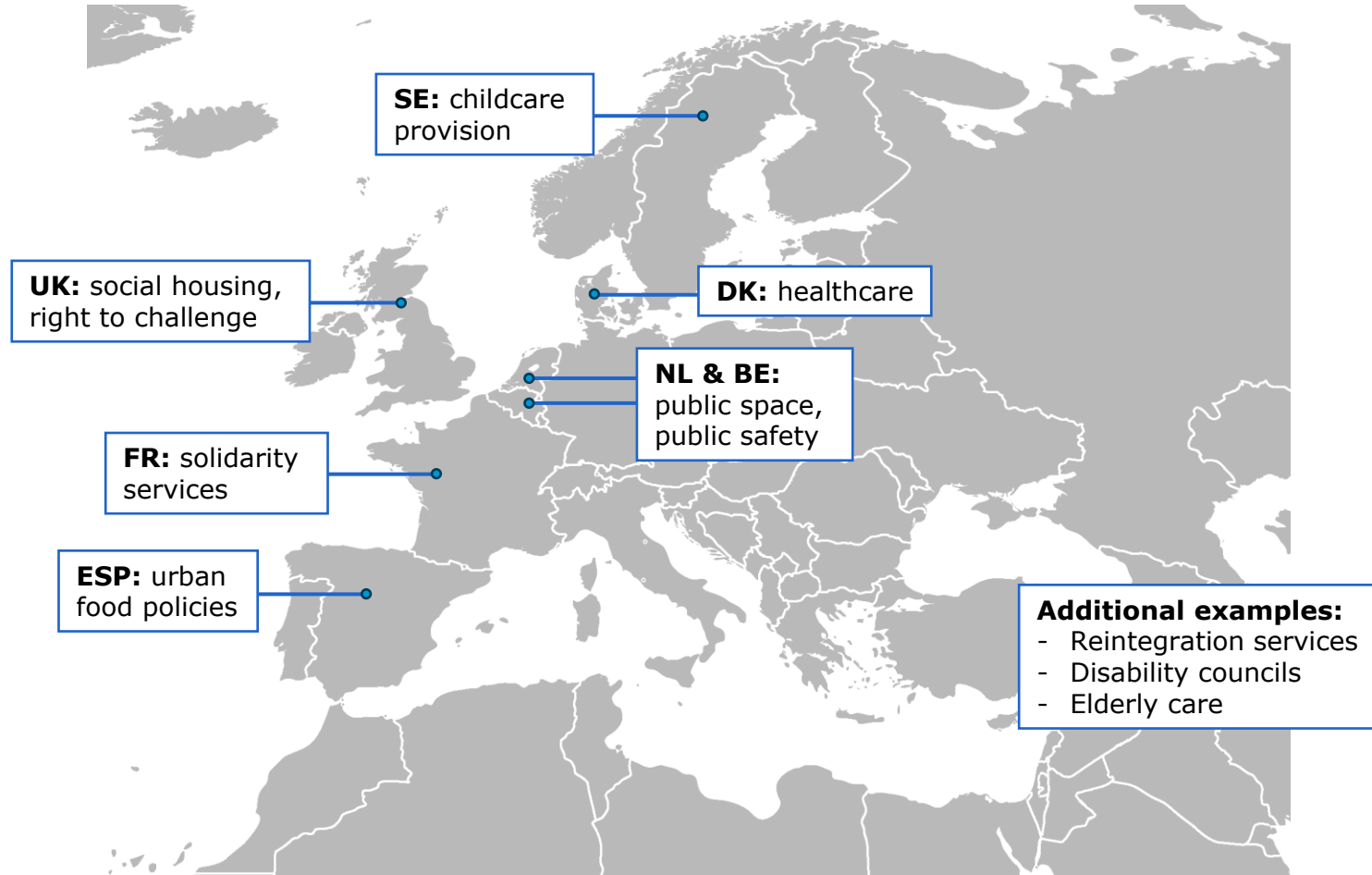
"There is no reason to believe that bureaucrats and politicians, no matter how well meaning, are better at solving problems than the people on the spot, who have the strongest incentive to get the solution right."

- Gained popularity in early 2000s in Northwestern Europe – response to NPM
- Dyadic service provider/end-user relationship as **equal partners**



Prof. Elinor Ostrom
(1933 – 2012)

Co-production across Europe



Why co-production?

- Actors make use of each other's assets and resources to achieve better outcomes (Loeffler, 2010)
- Joint responsibility for public service delivery (Lelieveldt, et al, 2009)
- Needs-based governance
- More efficient public service delivery (McMullin, 2023)
- Supports democratic engagement
- Increased (governmental) trust (Ryan, 2012)

Which fields or services could use more co-production in Vienna?

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Research project

- Which local governance actors play a role in fostering **sustainability** and **inclusion** of public space co-production?
- Case comparison – Rotterdam (NL) & Ghent (BE)
- 2020 (project kick-off) – 2024
- Interviews and surveys with citizen-initiators, public officials and non-participants

Co-production in Rotterdam, NL



- **Community gardening** - Rotterdam, the Netherlands
- Initiated in 2009
- 9 community gardens
- Invitation by local government → Right to Challenge (R2C)
- Co-production between residents/NPOs/local government
- **Goals:** education, social cohesion, poverty alleviation, reducing ecological footprint, political activism, health & inclusion

Co-production in Rotterdam, NL



First community garden
created (2 initiators)

2009



2017

Founding of
Association



Approached by
municipality

2019

2020

Start
R2C



2024

*Collaboration among neighborhood
actors (initiators, schools, NPOs)*

*Municipality joins as collaborator
(institutionalized co-production)*

Co-production in Rotterdam, NL



Process outcomes:

- Societal goals reached
- Legitimacy issues through dyadic organizing
- Skills and capacities needed co-produce

Co-production in Ghent, BE



- Ghent, (Belgium)
- Playground, outdoor classroom, sports & green space, and animal conservation
- **Goals:** social cohesion, education, space for sports & leisure
- 2 schools + neighbourhood residents
- Strong facilitative role by **district manager** (*Wijkregisseur*)

Co-production in Ghent, BE



Project proposal by
schools and residents

2021



Residents, schools &
district manager design
final plan

2022



2023

Collective implementation
of final plan

2024

2020

Collection of (473) ideas
by district manager

*Institutionalized co-production: district manager
is involved throughout the whole process*

Co-production in Ghent, BE



Process outcomes:

- Initial resistance from ,excluded residents`
- Mediating role for district manager

Co-production intermediaries

- I.e. NPOs, associations, neighbourhood councils, street-level bureaucrats
- Representation, mediation and advocacy
- Help navigate the public-institutional realm
- 'Translation' role between government and citizen

Ethical dilemmas of co-production

Inclusiveness & legitimacy

Should all end-users have **access** to co-production, and should it serve the interests of **all** end-users?

Accountability

Who is responsible for **unfavourable co-production** outcomes?

Co-production in Austria

- Are there examples of successful co-production in Vienna?
- What are challenges and opportunities for co-production in the Austrian socio-political context?



Thank you!

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