

THE DEMOCRATIC QUALITY OF CO-PRODUCTION.

a theoretical review & initial research design

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A. INTRODUCTION

In our current society, where societal problems are becoming more complex and solutions less obvious, co-production seems the answer (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). Effects like efficiency and effectiveness, performance and democratic quality are quickly linked to the concept, yet there is still little evidence that confirms or disproves that assumption, that these are indeed the effects of co-production (Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012).

This paper will not only present a literature review but will also provide us with the basis of our future research agenda, concluding with a research question and several hypotheses.

By providing a summary of the state of the art on co-production and the link with democratic quality, we discover what research considers 'democratic quality' and how this can be operationalised.

This paper is constructed in the following way: it starts with the problem statement, then continues with the conceptual framework, where the concepts 'co-production' and 'democratic quality' are defined and explained. Next, we provide the methodology used to conduct the literature review, an outline of the records used in the review and discuss the different intermediate variables that influence the link between co-production and democratic quality. Ultimately we reach a conclusion and are able to present our initial research question and several hypotheses derived from this.

B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The growing conviction among researchers and policy makers is that the government is no longer able to respond to all the complex social issues in our current communities (Blakeley & Evans, 2009; Halvorsen, 2003). However, it seems a solution has been found, engaging the citizens (Wagenaar, 2007). As the experts of their community, it is assumed that citizens can more easily provide answers and solutions to the increasingly complex society's problems, also called 'wicked' problems, e.g. health inequality, social exclusion and a fragmented, individualized society (Brandsen, Trommel, & Verschuere, 2014; Durose, 2011). Both scholars and policy makers have grabbed 'this solution' and developed policy initiatives about it. For example, in 2010 the British prime-minister Cameron proposed the concept of 'Big Society', to promote the idea of citizen groups, charities and government working together (Watt, 2010), "We need to create communities with oomph [sic]– neighbourhoods who are in charge of their own destiny, who feel if they club together and get involved they can shape the world around them (Cameron, 2010)." Meanwhile, in 2013, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Netherlands created a document on the concept of the do-democracy (de doe-democratie). In this the Ministry remarks upon the growing number of citizen initiatives and their roles as co-producers. Herein they emphasise the government's intentions to be a partner and create a network with and between citizens and government (Ministerie van BZK, 2013).

Sceptics have criticised this new trend, claiming that citizen participation is solely used as an excuse to save on budget and time and allocate responsibility and accountability to the citizens. Again, here the 'Big Society' is used as an example, as the concept by now has mostly disappeared from governmental discourse, and critics' initial claim, that this was all to justify cuts in government funding, seems to ring true (Butler, 2015; Watt, 2010). Examples can be found in every sector, from education (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013) and healthcare (Pestoff, 2012; van Eijk & Steen, 2014) to taxation (Alford, 2002), housing (Brandsen & Helderma, 2012) and urban regeneration (Denters & Klok, 2010; Fung, 2004). And while governments' response might be flawed still, through inconsistent use of language or uncertainty as to what their role in the process is, there are clear signs that many still believe in citizen participation (Bakker, 2015; de Boer, 2013).

Citizen participation, however, is a varied concept, differing greatly from project to project. For example, in some cases this translates to government-organised citizen meetings with long term aims (Wagenaar, 2007) or short-term goals such as the restoration of a city devastated by an explosion of a fireworks storage depot (Denters & Klok, 2010) or citizen-initiated councils that aim to regenerate a rundown neighbourhood (Blakeley & Evans, 2009) while some go beyond the decision-making phase and act, for example through community policing (Fung, 2004).

These differences in participation have been noted long ago, e.g. the ladder of Arnstein (1969) which indicates the eight different grades within participation. The rungs range from "non-participation", i.e. the non-existent role of the citizen, to "tokenism", where citizens are informed and can inform, without assurance that their input is taken seriously as the professionals still have the decision-power, and from rung six upwards this power slowly shifts to negotiation and trade-offs until the citizens reach full managerial power (Arnstein, 1969).

One aspect of citizen participation is co-production, a well-established topic that is receiving a flurry of academic interest in the recent decades. Early scholars like Parks and Vandivort (1981) and Ostrom (1996) build the basis of this concept, which finds itself at a crossroads of different disciplines (sociologic research, public management research and studies in the voluntary sector to name a few), making it a crowded subject of research (Verschuere et al., 2012).

Co-production definitions often rely on those first descriptions offered by Parks et al. (1981,1999) "the mix of activities that both public service agents and citizens contribute to the provision of public services. The former are involved as professionals, or 'regular producers', while 'citizen production' is based on voluntary efforts by individuals and groups to enhance the quality and/or quantity of the services they use (Parks et al. 1981,1999)".

However the different interpretations of this base definition have created an unclear concept and widespread confusion. In their conceptual literature review Brandsen & Honingh (2015) have collected these interpretations and translated this into a more comprehensive definition for co-production: "a relationship between a paid employee of an organization and (groups of) individual citizens that requires a direct and active contribution from these citizens to the activities of the organization (Brandsen & Honingh, 2015 p. 10)."

Yet, even with the growing interest, co-production research still lacks in certain areas. More specifically, there is still little research done on the effects and societal added value of co-production (Verschuere et al., 2012). It is clear that when the concept of 'citizen participation' or 'co-production' is used, an underlying connection with democracy is always presumed (Bakker, 2015). Citizen involvement is thus often considered as a virtue in itself (Voorberg, Bekkers, & Tummers, 2014). Whether this connection is justifiable, or when it really is not, is often discussed by news outlets (Jawando, 2015; Teasdale, 2008; Vermeij, 2015), yet in academics it remains hardly unstudied. Do participation projects truly reach all citizens, or only the middle class participants, those with the least need for it (Michels, 2015)? Are those citizens with a lower social economic status even able to participate (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013)? Can and are government actively enticing their citizens to participate (Bakker, 2015; Jakobsen, 2013)? Are the benefits from this participation fairly distributed among citizens (Cuthill, 2010)?

Herein lies the gap which our research aims to fill. If co-production really is used as the solution to the societal issues (Brandsen et al., 2014) then its democratic quality cannot remain untested. In a society that grows in diversity and division every day, the use of words like *inclusion* and *equity*, important aspects that can help promote co-production, cannot remain empty. As there are still large groups excluded or underrepresented one can have doubts about the benefits of participation and/or co-production (Fung, 2009, Denters & Klok, 2010, Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013 Michels, 2011, ...). Proof is thus needed that these concepts are interlocked with co-production and ensure democratic quality, and this is what we are trying to achieve with this paper and in future research.

Thus the purpose of this paper is twofold. We begin with a conceptual framework and a literature review on democratic quality, thus collecting what research has already found on the topic. Because of the lack of

research done on the subject, the criteria have been broadened to include articles that researched elements of democratic quality in citizen participation as well. When considering these projects we find they often involve decision-making processes (John, 2009; Lombard, 2013; Michels, 2011; Wagenaar, 2007), which could be located in the first phases of the Co-production Star of Governance International such as co-commission and co-design (GovInt, 2015). Taking this and the previously mentioned ladder of Arnstein (1969) into account, we can suppose that the interconnectedness between citizen participation and co-production, and thus their effects, is not far-fetched. *Secondly*, from the information gathered in this literature review we can then extract a research question and posit several hypotheses to incorporate in a future research agenda.

C. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before starting the theoretical review, we must first establish a clear definition for our two main concepts: co-production and democratic quality. The first is a concept where the abundance of different definitions have clouded the clarity of the topic (Brandsen & Honingh, 2015). While the second, democratic quality, is a collection of the different issues found in literature discussed below.

1. Co-production

There are already many well-established definitions and conceptualizations of co-production, most often based on the initial conceptualisation done by Parks et al. (1981) and Ostrom (1996): *“the mix of activities that both public service agents and citizens contribute to the provision of public services. The former are involved as professionals, or ‘regular producers’, while ‘citizen production’ is based on voluntary efforts by individuals and groups to enhance the quality and/or quantity of the services they use (Parks et al. 1981,1999)”*. And *“the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not ‘in’ the same organization (Ostrom, 1996, p. 1073).”* These broad definitions influenced the different interpretations of co-production that followed, and thus there is an abundance of definitions derived from these original creations. Besides that, as mentioned previously, co-production is a concept researched in many academic disciplines. This all contributes in the conceptual confusion of the term, and halts the linearity of progress (Verschuere et al., 2012). However some researchers have attempted to create one clear cluster base from which to start.

Governance International created the Co-production Star which shows us the different stages of co-production in public service provision (GovInt, 2015). They consider co-production as *“professionals and citizens making better use of each other’s assets, resources and contributions to achieve better outcomes or improved efficiency (GovInt, 2015).”* And divide the process into four stages: co-commission, co-design, co-deliver and co-asses (GovInt, 2015).

Brandsen and Honingh (2015) collect the different definitions proposed throughout the state of the art and rewrite this into one comprehensive concept. They base their new definition on three basic principles that need to be achieved: (1) *There needs to be a relationship between the professionals of an organisation and individual citizens (or groups of them)*. (2) *Citizens are required to directly and actively add to the work of the organisation*. (3) *The professionals are paid employees while citizens receive no financial compensation*. Next to these basis elements, Brandsen and Honingh (2015) provide us with a variation within the concept. Firstly, the extent of citizen involvement, meaning whether citizens are solely involved in implementation, or also partake in the design of the services. And secondly, whether the citizens’ efforts are in the core process of the professional organisation, or not. By placing these elements into a table, they find four types of co-production: Complementary co-production in implementation, complementary co-production in service design and implementation, co-production in the implementation of core services, co-production in the design and implementation of core services (Brandsen & Honingh, 2015).

From this, we should be able to acquire a more specific focus for our future research design, as this will provide us with clear margins to select case studies in. We base ourselves on the inclusive definition of Brandsen and Honingh (2015). However, as we are still in the first stages of our research design, we include all four types distinguished by them, thus creating our own working definition: *Co-production is a relationship between (groups of) individual citizens and paid employees of a (public or non-profit) organisation that requires direct and active contribution from these citizens in the design and/or implementation of core and/or complementary services on a local level.*

2. Democratic Quality

The participation of citizens is directly connected to the idea of democracy. This view originated from Rousseau, who believed that the participation of each citizen is vitally important for the state to function. Since then modern theorists have expanded on this theory, adding that this participation should stretch even further, into workplaces and local communities (Michels, 2011). However, as Young (2000) explains democracies can be measured in different degrees of democracy or, as we will call it, the democratic quality. Democratic quality is an abstract word used mainly in philosophical and sociological literature, e.g. Putnam & Rousseau. We will try to operationalise the word by formulating the essentials that are needed and used in literature to conceptualize democratic quality.

Inclusion

Inclusion refers to the possibility for everyone, minorities included, to participate. The legitimacy of participatory decision-making is thus dependent on the degree to which those affected by those decisions are included in the process and have an actual influence in the outcome (Young, 2000). Rousseau, but since then Robert Putnam as well argues that simply letting citizens participate already leads to more inclusion which in turn then leads to a more democratic country (Michels, 2011). These definitions are mostly used when discussing participatory decision making processes. For the purposes of our research, we can translate these into a more fitting definition where inclusion *is the possibility for those who are affected by the co-production project to be included in co-production and thus have an actual influence in the outcomes.*

Exclusion

Inclusion goes hand-in-hand with its counterpart, exclusion, which is similarly connected to democracy. After all, a lot of democratic history is made through vocalized uprisings by those excluded in the decision-making processes that influenced their own lives (Young, 2000). In the past we find examples in the French revolutionaries, the abolitionist movements and the suffragettes. But even more currently the worldwide movement of LGBTQT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, and Transgender) highlights the influence excluded groups can exercise when they band together and demand a more fair and democratic process. This concept is also called *structural exclusion*, making note of those excluded groups and the structural inequalities that make it more difficult for them to participate while making it easier for other groups that are more well-off (Agger & Larsen, 2009).

Equity/Fairness

When the benefits of the co-production project are evenly and fairly distributed, particularly for those with lower socio-economic status we reach equity (Cuthill, 2010; Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). Equity can be directly connected to fairness, a more general concept.

The concept of fairness then points to the notion that citizens need to be able to actively participate. They need to feel able to express their viewpoint and influence the discussion, they need to be treated with respect while the government needs to be transparent and trustworthy (Herian, Hamm, Tomkins, & Zillig, 2012; Webler & Tuler, 2000). Thus, ideally, fairness would mean getting equal opportunities, being equally free of risks and dangers and having equal access to resources (Fung, 2004). In this recapitulation by Fung (2004) we find that fairness and equity of the project are so closely related, they can be seen as identical.

Democratic Quality

We consider the above concepts to be aspects that need to be fulfilled to achieve democratic quality, and thus build our own definition upon them. From the above definitions, we develop two interpretations: (1) The possibility for those who are affected by the project to be included in co-production and thus have an actual influence in the outcomes. (2) The guarantee to be equally free of risks, have equal access to resources and to the beneficial results of the project.

A revised definition on the democratic quality of co-production would then be *the extent to which the citizens who are affected by the co-production project are included, equally free of risks and have equal access to benefits as well as an actual influence in its outcome.*

Thus, when we link this with the definition of co-production, we can state that co-production leads to more democratic quality, when it ensures an (1) inclusive relationship between the citizens and paid employees (of an organisation), where the direct and active contribution of these citizens has an (2) actual influence on the outcome and they are (3) equally free of risks and have equal access to the benefits.

D. LITERATURE REVIEW

We have acquired a general idea of the problem statement and which concepts will be studied, so the focus can now be directed to the current state of the art when researching the increase of democratic quality as a result of co-production. We begin by providing the methodology used for the literature review. Following this, we cluster the records according to four hypotheses that appear from the research, and which we can then use in the future research agenda.

1. Methodology

This study draws upon an analysis of literature. Records were retrieved from a search string on the Thomson Reuters database, ISI Web of Knowledge. The last search was run on the 27th of July 2015.

Search terms that were used included "co-production" OR "coproduction" OR "public participation" OR "citizen participation" OR "co-creation" OR "co-implementation" OR "co-delivery" OR "co-management" AND ("equity" OR "fairness" OR "democracy" OR "democratic")

We follow the example of Voorberg, Bekkers & Tummers (2014) and use clear and specific study and report eligibility criteria to clarify and explain our choices of selection. The initial search strategy was first narrowed through the use of the following report eligibility criteria which we excluded with the "Analyze results" option in the Thomson Reuters database, ISI Web of Knowledge.

- 1) *Year of publication:* We only included records published between 1990 and 2015.
- 2) *Research Area:* we selected those records that were only included in the research area of public administration.
- 3) *Language:* Only studies written in English were eligible.
- 4) *Type of document:* We included only peer-reviewed articles or reviews in our research criteria.
- 5) *Journal:* We excluded the region- and sector-specific journals that did not belong. Through the use of the analyse function on WoS those journals that only mentioned the subject once were also excluded.

The application of these criteria resulted in a selection of 272 records, these were then scrutinised by the researchers and either included or excluded based on the compatibility of the title and abstract with our problem statement. For our study eligibility criteria, we selected those articles that applied to the following criteria:

- 1) *Types of studies*: Records should discuss co-production or citizen participation with citizens and one or more of the different aspects in democratic quality: inclusion, exclusion, equity and/or fairness.
- 2) *Types of co-production/citizen participation*: records should contain active cooperation between citizens and governmental bodies.
- 3) *Types of participants*: participants should always be citizens and civil servants.
- 4) *Study design*: all types of study designs are eligible.

From these criteria, twenty records subsisted for a more thorough analysis. By using Nvivo as our personal database, the records were thoroughly read and analysed. From this the framework of our literature review appeared as the database exhibited three different influences that could aid or counteract co-production projects towards better democratic quality. Those books and articles that were referenced in the records but had not appeared in the initial search string, were also read and added to the literature review.

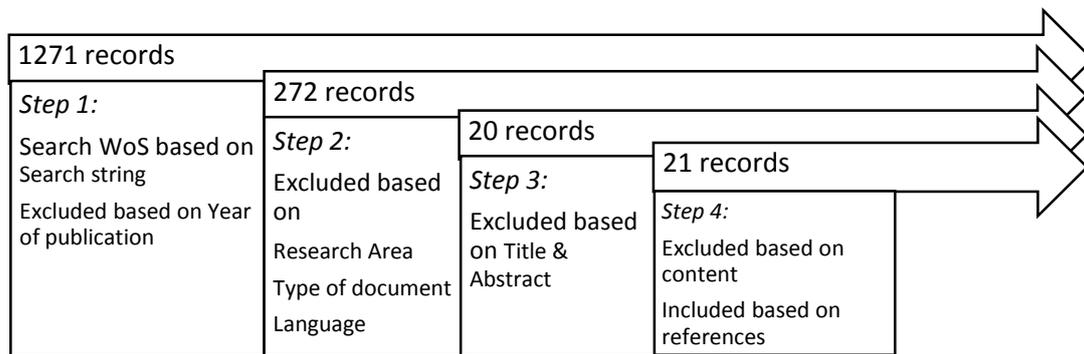


Figure 1 Methodology

2. Coproduction leads to Better Democratic Quality

As discussed above, Rousseau and Putnam both state that citizen participation leads to a better democracy. However, when concluding her international comparison on the effects of citizen participation, Michels (2011) notes that there are still large groups excluded or underrepresented in participatory projects such as participatory policy making and referendums, which in turn leads to doubts about the benefits of participation. And Michels (2011) is not alone in her conclusion, as other researchers have found similar results (Fung, 2009, Denters & Klok, 2010, Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013, ...) Consequently the question is: what variables influence the link between these participation projects and better democratic quality?

The state of the art provides us with a few answers, highlighting three very important possible intermediate variables that influence this link either positively or negatively.

We begin with the need for a strong foundation on which the co-production initiative is built and managed, this foundation can manifest itself in the form of sufficient and truthful *professional support*, e.g. public sector or a non-profit organisations. A second influence is the *competency* of our co-producing citizens, which is established through knowledge and resources but also in their self-confidence and belief in their own competence (efficacy). The third, and last, influence found, is the *salience* of the task or service provided, more specifically, the importance of the content, the goals and (in)direct results of the project for the residents.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

In their study on disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, de Graaf, van Hulst, and Michels (2015) provide three requirements on the part of the professionals to include citizens in participation projects. The acronym **EAR** represents **Enabling, Asking and Responding**. They explain this further:

Firstly, the frontline workers who work with the excluded groups know and understand their clients, they can thus reinterpret the formal governmental rules to fit the situation and the people involved, thereby enhancing willingness and participation (de Graaf et al., 2015; Durose, 2011). As Blakeley and Evans (2009) discover in their study of the urban regeneration in Manchester, the largest reason behind non-participation was the lack of time. This is a limitation Jakobsen (2013)'s collaborative experiment on a government initiative in Denmark found as well. His experiment proved that with professional support these restrictions could be reduced. Wagenaar (2007) explains that giving citizens the tools they need to participate, helps to provide the professionals with the citizen-experts' knowledge and the local information needed to effectively change the neighbourhoods. Those 'tools' can vary wildly, professionals can provide a literal toolbox with knowledge (Jakobsen, 2013; Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). But this can also be taken less literal, by providing crèches after work so that citizens have the time to co-produce or a local booth, to provide access to information.

Enabling can thus be connected with 'competence', discussed below. By engaging with those groups who are excluded, who (believe they) lack the competence to participate, professional support can aid in strengthening the skills, knowledge and capacity needed to participate (Durose, 2011). At this point we can safely conclude, from the existing literature, that by enabling citizens, i.e. by teaching them or providing the correct knowledge and resources, they will be more able to participate.

Secondly, in order to reach all types of participants, the professionals need to mobilise citizens via direct invitation, and not simply by providing the option without any further action on their part. More importantly, when working in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, professionals need to go even further than an invite. Getting these citizens to participate requires more personal ways to approach and entice them (de Graaf et al., 2015; Frieling, Lindenberg, & Stokman, 2014). Durose (2011) refers to this 'reaching', and notes the importance of identifying the excluded groups and focusing on their integration in the community.

The importance of “being asked” in the process of mobilisation of participants is reiterated by Simmons and Birchall (2005), who point out that the person who asks needs to be a well-considered choice and, preferably a professional who is known in the neighbourhood and thus easily approachable. Denters and Klok (2010) note that the success of inclusion in their participatory rebuilding project of a city destroyed by the explosion of a fireworks storage depot, might have depended on the way potential participants are invited to participate. More specifically, here the professionals approached citizens personally and did not rely on traditional self-organisation. In other words, they prove that innovative ways instead of the traditional can entice more participation. Besides, when uncertain citizens are offered enough information about the project, this can positively influence their evaluations of the professional organisation (Herian et al., 2012).

And *thirdly*, professionals need to show the co-producers the positive results of their participation, without evidence of their influence citizens will get disheartened and lose interest in the project (de Graaf et al., 2015). Buckwalter (2014) notes that direct and frequent interactions with professionals could lead to a sense of empowerment for the citizens. However, having the option or venue to participate does not guarantee a voice. Thus, he agrees with the statement of de Graaf et al.(2015) that citizens need to be informed and made aware of their impact on the project (Buckwalter, 2014). Halvorsen (2003) supports this view, claiming that when the government offers the option of participation, but then disregards the citizens’ input, the effects could be worse than when there is no option for participation at all.

In co-production research, the role of the professional is encased in a larger concept, namely the ‘ease of involvement’. Here the focus lies on whether information about the project is easily available to citizens, and how far the service provider is from the citizens. This distance can be measured both in a literal sense, if there are offices and professionals in the neighbourhood, and figuratively, if the professionals are easy to approach (Verschuere et al., 2012). Meanwhile the provision can again be linked with the concept of ‘Asking’ above.

Jakobsen and Andersen (2013) also mention professional support to even out inequity. They explain that increasing regular producer input, and focussing this on the disadvantaged citizens, will result in a fairer project. However, they note that the steep rise of professional support that is needed to achieve this, will increase the presumable costs. Solely focusing on more professional support will thus probably never reach far enough to sufficiently encourage excluded groups to participate. So, there are more influences, such as competence, needed to counterbalance inequity (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013).

Lastly, one more important note to make here, is the negative influence of professional support. This is mentioned by Agger and Larsen (2009) in their study of exclusion in a Danish urban regeneration project, who call this ‘discursive exclusion’, and refer to the fact that the power of the decision lies in the hands of the planners (the professionals). More specifically, they can select which issues to undertake. They are also more likely to direct themselves towards those areas where it is easier to achieve results, i.e. they focus on those participants with whom it will be easier to reach an agreement (Agger & Larsen, 2009).

Lombard (2013)’s research on participation at neighbourhood level in Mexico can attest to this issue as well. As she notes that the legal framework on which the public participation projects there are based, is written in such a way that it reinforces existing social segregation based on the citizens’ status, thus already excluding certain ‘second class’ citizens before they can even consider participation.

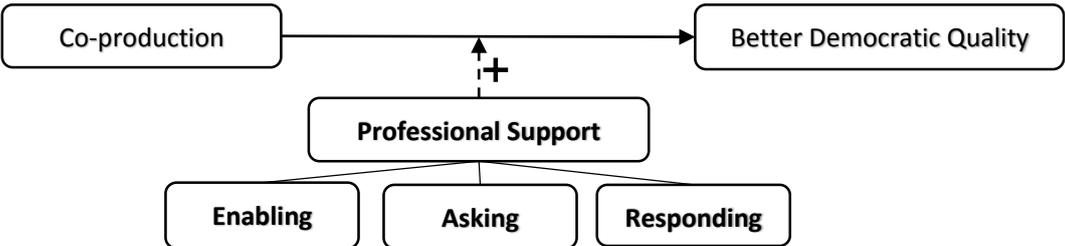


Figure 2 Summary of the variable ‘Professional Support’

COMPETENCE

Citizens need to have the resources and knowledge to participate. This is considered one of the main reasons behind inequity in citizen participation, and this even more so when the project relies heavily on the input of the service user as in co-production (Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013). Competence is also an influence mentioned in the study of de Graaf et al. (2015), explaining that those excluded citizens, often lack the resources (and interest) to participate. This inequity is largely based on income and education, but by providing new forms of participation and as stated above, by creating new ways of responding to these differences, that inequity can be overcome (John, 2009).

Webler and Tuler (2000) who studied public involvement in the Northern Forest Land Council, divide the concept into two requirements: “access to information and its interpretations and use of the best available procedures for knowledge selection” (Webler & Tuler, 2000, p. 571). This way the concept can be linked back to professional support, as to gain access to information is the view from the citizens’ side, whereas professionals need to provide the information. However, in their study, Webler and Tuler (2000) discovered more. They also mention ‘access to participate’ and highlight the importance of ‘the power to influence’, to achieve a fair process. This again, is another influence mentioned in the variable ‘professional support’, but seen from the citizens’ viewpoint. Fung (2004) even notes that the option of ‘power’ can convince those disadvantaged citizens who would be considered less competent, to participate when there is an urgent issue.

Agger and Larsen (2009) call this need for competence ‘structural exclusion’, explaining that citizens with fewer resources are simply less likely to participate (cf. also supra). A factor that is also discussed by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (2000), who state that non-participants are often held back by resource constraints.

It should be taken into account that it is not only the citizens’ competence that needs to be ensured. After all, their perception of their competences, efficacy, plays a major role in their willingness to participate (Blakeley & Evans, 2009; van Eijk & Steen, 2014). In their study of a deprived neighbourhood Denters and Klok (2010) uncovered the importance of this, when their results showed the citizens’ lack of confidence in their own personal skills.

Simmons and Birchall (2005) point to the need for development, training and schemes that help build citizens’ skills and confidence, which would strengthen both their competence and their efficacy, thus potentially attracting more participants. Meanwhile, once they crossed that threshold, citizens’ skills and competence increases by participating, which in turn contribute to their positive feelings towards government, their community and democracy as a whole (de Graaf et al., 2015).

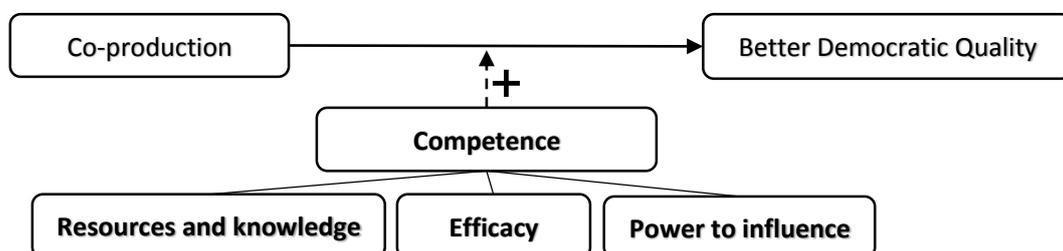


Figure 3 Summary of the variable ‘Competence’

SALIENCE

Lastly, there is the salience of the task or the service that is provided. Pestoff (2012) provides the clearest explanation for this concept. As he clarifies, citizens will consider the importance of the service for them, their family and friends, as well as its effect on their lives and life chances. “...the greater the intensity,

continuity and duration of need in a particular service sector, the more likely people may participate (Simmons & Birchall, 2005 p. 64)”. Thus, if the service is salient, citizens will be more motivated to participate. Or as de Graaf et al. (2015) explain, citizens need to like to participate, they need a sense of attachment to the project. That they have an interest in the issue the project is trying to address is one of the most important influences. To create or enhance this interest, professional support is needed, as citizens need to be able to share their vision and create shared goals with the professional organisation (Frieling et al., 2014).

In deprived neighbourhoods, where citizen competence is low, the influence of salience can be considered even more important. After all, high levels of deprivation may motivate residents to participate, counteracting the issue of competence (Denters & Klok, 2010; Fung, 2004).

This influence is also noted by Denters and Klok (2010) in the discussion of their successful participation project. After all, the rebuilding project they researched, was a highly salient issue for the residents and the success in acquiring representative participation could thus be directly linked with this. People who are happy with the situation or service will find it less important to participate than those who are unsatisfied (Simmons & Birchall, 2005).

Another example of the importance of how a salient task influences participation is offered by Blakeley and Evans (2009) who explain that people will pull out of the project once their short-term cause has been achieved. This highlights the importance of an enduring salience in the service offered, if the aim is to entice citizen participation.

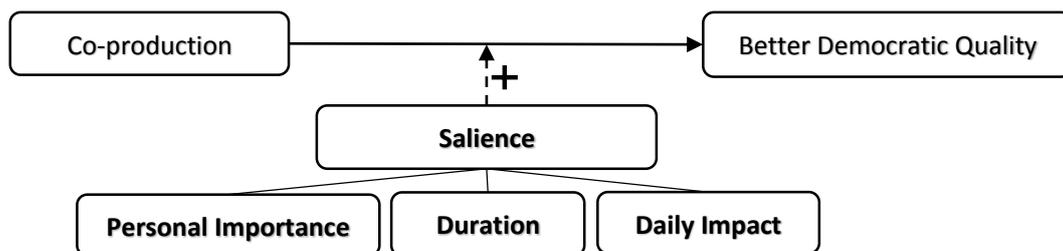


Figure 4 Summary of the variable ‘Salience’

3. Summary

The literature review provided us with three important influences that link co-production with a better democratic quality: professional support, competence of the co-producing citizen and salience of the task. These three variables have been operationalised and discussed in the literature, and we have found several explanations and levels within the concepts.

These three concepts thus create a ‘chain’. The chain can be seen in two ways. (1) It emphasises the link we have seen, from co-production to better democratic quality, and that when one of the intermediate variables is present these will influence the link in a positive way. (2) However, these influences do not have to work alone, they are interconnected. The chain thus also highlights the importance of linking the influences (Simmons & Birchall, 2005). More specifically, as already mentioned above, the professional support of an organisation is inherently connected to the competence of the co-producer. Through professional support, by enabling, asking and supplying, citizens are or feel more competent to participate. However, the concept of competence can also be connected with the salience of the service. After all, we can posit that people who have the knowledge, will be more able to understand the salience of the service, which means they will participate faster. And this again, can be linked back to sufficient professional support, as professionals who understand their clients (i.e. asking) and listen to their wishes (i.e. responding) , can create a more salient service. On the other hand, mentioned by Denters and Klok (2010), a negative aspect of the chain, is the strength that salience can hold. In simpler words, citizens who find a

project or service particularly significant for themselves or their loved ones, may overlook the other two variables, competence and even professional support, in their urgent need for the service. The linkage between these intermediate variables is thus an important factor to take into account for future research.

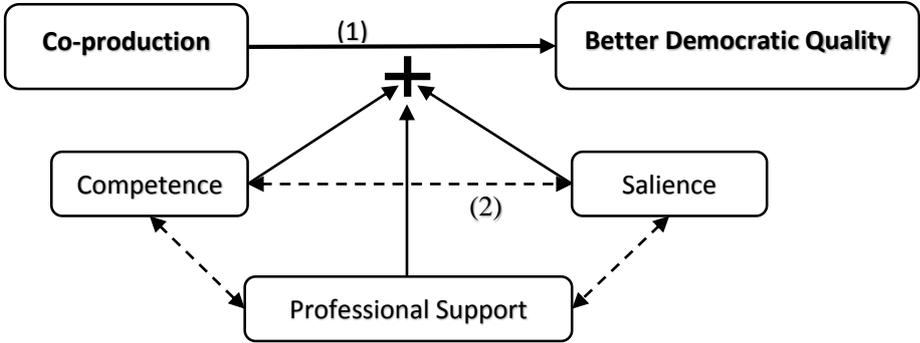


Figure 5 The Chain of variables

E. CONCLUSION: INITIAL RESEARCH DESIGN

Now that we have established a summary of the state of the art, we can create a preliminary design for future research. This design can be broken into separate parts. To begin there is the general research question. The second step is a hypothetical framework, which links back to the literature review above.

1. Research Question

From the problem statement and literature review above we derive the following questions:

1. *Does co-production in community development lead to better democratic quality?*
 - a. *Are citizens who are affected by the co-production project included?*
 - b. *Are they equally free of risks and do they have equal access to benefits of the coproduced services?*
 - c. *And do they have an actual influence in its outcome?*
2. *Is there an influence of professional support, the competence of the co-producer and/or the salience of the service? And are these three intermediate variables equally important to increase the democratic quality of coproduction?*

For the purposes of this study we have defined co-production as *a relationship between (groups of) individual citizens and paid employees of a (public or non-profit) organisation that requires direct and active contribution from these citizens in the design and/or implementation of core and/or complementary services on a local level.*

In our research we will focus on co-production in the sector of community development. Thus following the example of many of the preceding studies that have discussed the issues of deprived neighbourhoods (Denters & Klok, 2010; Frieling et al., 2014; Fung, 2004). We posit that projects of urban regeneration and community development, i.e. projects that try to reverse neighbourhood decline and include those groups with a lower socioeconomic status, provide an interesting empirical setting for researching the effects of co-production on democratic quality.

Based on what we discussed above, we consider the democratic quality of co-production as *the extent to which the citizens who are affected by the co-production project are included, equally free of risks and have equal access to benefits as well as an actual influence in its outcome.*

2. Hypotheses

From this research question and the above literature review, more specifically the separate intermediate variables discussed, we can derive several hypotheses.

HYPOTHESIS 1: WHEN THERE IS SUFFICIENT PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT, CO-PRODUCTION LEADS TO BETTER DEMOCRATIC QUALITY.

We follow the examples of de Graaf et al. (2015) and Durose (2011) here, and will use their concepts of Enabling, Asking/Reaching & Responding as the three main notions behind the concept 'professional support'. We can define these as following:

- 1) *Enabling*: Professionals try to make it easy for citizens to get involved supplying the knowledge and resources needed for the specific co-production project.
- 2) *Asking*: Professionals use innovative, personal ways to integrate the excluded groups in the co-production project.
- 3) *Responding*: Professionals show they take citizens' input serious by building decisions and changes on their responses. They focus on empowering the co-producers.

Our hypothesis posits that with sufficient professional support, co-production will lead to better democratic quality. More specifically this means:

- a) By enabling, asking and responding to co-producing citizens, co-production will lead to the inclusion of citizens who are affected by the co-production project.
- b) By enabling, asking and responding to co-producing citizens, co-production will lead to equity in risks and equal access to benefits as well as ensure that citizens have an actual influence in its outcome.

HYPOTHESIS 2: WHEN THE CO-PRODUCER IS COMPETENT, CO-PRODUCTION LEADS TO BETTER DEMOCRATIC QUALITY.

Competence is also used differently in the research by different authors (Blakeley & Evans, 2009; Jakobsen & Andersen, 2013; Webler & Tuler, 2000). We summarize the concept in the following ideas:

- 1) *Resources and knowledge*: citizens who are considered less capable and thus easily excluded, need to have access to those resources and knowledge that will allow them to partake in the co-production project.
- 2) *Power to influence*: citizens need to believe their input is valued, and see results.
- 3) *Efficacy*: citizens need to believe they have the skills required to co-produce.

We thus theorize that when the co-producing citizens are competent, co-production will lead to better democratic quality. So,

- c) By giving citizens access to resources and knowledge and enhancing the believe in their skills and power to influence, co-production will lead to the inclusion of citizens who are affected by the co-production project
- d) By giving citizens access to resources and knowledge and enhancing the believe in their skills and power to influence, co-production will lead to equity in risks and equal access to benefits as well as ensure that citizens have an actual influence in its outcome.

HYPOTHESIS 3: WHEN THE CO-PRODUCTION PROJECT IS SALIENT, CO-PRODUCTION LEADS TO BETTER DEMOCRATIC QUALITY.

Thirdly, the salience of the project is another important influence on the link between co-production and better democratic quality. More specifically, we derived three aspects from the literature review (Blakeley & Evans, 2009; Pestoff, 2012; Simmons & Birchall, 2005):

- 1) *the importance* of the project for the co-producer, but also for their family and friends.
- 2) *the duration* of the project and the need for said-project.
- 3) *its impact* on their daily lives.

From this, we hypothesise that when the co-production project is salient, co-production will lead to better democratic quality:

- e) By creating a project that is important for the co-producer or their loved ones and/or impacts their lives significantly and/or is durable, co-production will lead to the inclusion of citizens who are affected by the co-production project.
- f) By creating a project that is important for the co-producer or their loved ones and/or impacts their lives significantly and/or is durable, co-production will lead to equity in risks and equal access to benefits as well as ensure that citizens have an actual influence in its outcome.

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G. ANNEX1 :TABLE OF RECORDS

For clarification purposes, we added the following table, which provides the reader with a summary of our selection of records, the research area in which they studied and where and what data they acquired.

Authors	Research Area	Research focus, Data & Analysis
<i>Agger and Larsen (2009)</i>	Urban Regeneration	Study on types of exclusion in a Danish area-based urban regeneration program 'Kvarterloft'. Single case study with qualitative data analysis.
<i>Blakeley and Evans (2009)</i>	Urban Regeneration	Study on the motives behind citizen participation in the regeneration project of East Manchester. Single case study with quantitative and qualitative data analysis.
<i>Buckwalter (2014)</i>	Child Care	Study on citizen empowerment in citizen–agency relationships in three U.S. states (Kentucky, Utah, and Pennsylvania). Multiple case study with qualitative data analysis.
<i>de Graaf et al. (2015)</i>	Community Development	Study on enhancing participation in community development in five Dutch cities (Amsterdam, The Hague, Leeuwarden, Utrecht and Zwolle). Multiple case study with qualitative data analysis.
<i>Denters and Klok (2010)</i>	Urban Reconstruction	Study on the inclusion of former residents in the urban district of Roombeek in the city of Enschede. Single case study with qualitative data analysis.
<i>Durose (2011)</i>	Urban Regeneration	Study on the front-line workers' side concerning citizen participation in the neighborhood management system developed in Salford. Single case study with qualitative data analysis.
<i>Frieling et al. (2014)</i>	Urban Regeneration	Study on the Collaborative Communities through Coproduction method in two neighbourhoods in Groningen, Netherlands. Multiple case study with quantitative and qualitative data analysis.
<i>Fung (2004)</i>	Community Development	Study on the social change enforced by citizen participation in neighbourhoods in Chicago. Single case study with quantitative and qualitative data analysis.
<i>Halvorsen (2003)</i>	Forest Management	Study on citizens' trust in public agency at a series of public land management meetings in three rural communities adjacent to a single upper Midwest national forest. Multiple case study with quantitative data analysis.
<i>Herian et al. (2012)</i>	Budgetary decision making	Study on the public's input on the budget decision-making process in Lincoln, Nebraska. Single case study with quantitative data analysis.
<i>Jakobsen (2013)</i>	Education	Study on co-production and equity in language support for immigrant preschool children. Experiment with quantitative data analysis.
<i>Jakobsen and Andersen (2013)</i>	Education	Study on co-production and equity in language support for immigrant preschool children. Experiment with quantitative data analysis.

<i>John (2009)</i>	Citizenship	Study on the representativeness of citizen governance in the 2005 English and Welsh Citizenship Survey. Multiple case study with quantitative data analysis.
<i>Lombard (2013)</i>	Community Development	Study on the perceptions of democratic citizen engagement in two low-income neighbourhoods Loma Bonita and Moctezuma in Xalapa, Mexico. Multiple case study with qualitative data analysis.
<i>Michels (2011)</i>	Citizen Governance	Study on the democratic quality of citizen participation in Western countries. Multiple case study with quantitative data analysis.
<i>Simmons and Birchall (2005)</i>	Citizen Governance	Study on the motives to participate in three local authorities in the UK. Multiple case study with qualitative and quantitative data analysis.
<i>Pestoff (2012)</i>	Child care	Study on the potential of the third sector as a facilitator of the re-democratization of the European Welfare state. Quantitative data from a previous comparative multiple case study in Europe and a comparative survey study in Sweden.
<i>van Eijk and Steen (2014)</i>	Health care	Study on the different perspectives citizens have on their engagement in health care organizations in the Netherlands. Multiple case study with quantitative data analysis.
<i>Verba et al. (2000)</i>	Various activities	Study of citizen activity on an international basis. Multiple case study with quantitative data analysis.
<i>Wagenaar (2007)</i>	Urban Regeneration	Study on the complexity in social systems in neighbourhoods in the Netherlands. Multiple case study with qualitative data analysis.
<i>Webler and Tuler (2000)</i>	Forest Management	Study on fairness and competence in the Public Involvement Plan of NFLC. Single case study with quantitative data analysis.

