the Lisbon council
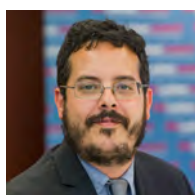### think tank for the 21st century

COVAL

Co-Creation of Public Services

Interactive policy brief

Why and How

Issue 25/2019

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In 2011, public-sector workers in Barcelona faced an interesting dilemma.[1] They wanted to improve the quality of air and water and cut down on noise pollution. But they lacked the data they needed to do so. And they didn't have sufficient buy-in from the city's own citizens, many of whom were not fully informed about deteriorating environmental conditions which – if they knew about them – could have served as a basis to change harmful patterns of behaviour and catalyse action in key areas.

The result was a revolution in thinking which is having far-seated repercussions even today. Through a project called Smart Citizen initiated by Fab Lab Barcelona, the city produced and distributed a set of "smart citizen kits," which consisted of sensors that citizens could use to measure light intensity, air temperature, toxic gas, humidity and noise pollution.[2] It came with an Arduino computer board, a mobile app, a custom-built application programming interface (API) for uploading data and even a special Wi-Fi system for interested citizens to use. The results are impressive, and the application evolved through crowdfunding into a fully fledged platform that is used as unique data source by research centres and cities all over Europe.

Had the Barcelona civil service discovered a silver bullet – a magic solution around which all citizen-state problems could be solved and better outcomes achieved for everyone? Hardly. But what they had done was intriguing – and potentially very far reaching. In the intervening time, a new generation of academics and public-sector consultants have devoted themselves to the study and iteration of "co-creation" – a complex process in which citizens stop simply consuming government services and start to play an active role in their design, delivery and execution. Related to this has been a drive towards "design thinking" in the production and dissemination

of public services. This is an iterative process, where a service is created based on feedback from citizen/consumers, often in collaboration. Later, the service itself is evaluated not by sloppy metrics covering blanket adoption and box ticking, but by real-world efforts to map the way the service is developed, analyse the way it is being implemented and use the information gained to deliver a better service. Over and over and over again.

Today, the challenge for public administration is fundamentally different. Co-creation has captured the imagination of many, and the authors of this paper are veterans of a movable feast of high-level conferences convened to discuss and analyse these emerging public-sector tools at an abstract, expert level.[3] But the fundamental challenge remains: How do we turn co-creation from a faddish idea popular with analysts, experts, fab labs and the like into a reality for Europe's 508 million citizens? In other words, how do we take the pockets of local success and deliver them to Europeans at scale? And how do we do that despite the notorious conservatism of many public administrations, and the fact that the public sector remains – and sometimes for good reason – so terrified of failure that initiative is often the exception and innovation seldom the rule?

The fact is, the academic literature and real-life experience with co-creation has moved well beyond the theoretical level.[4] Today, we possess many effective, well-tested toolkits, ready to be deployed and capable of delivering results, as well as a wealth of on-the-ground experience available to guide and shape co-creation initiatives for any administration ready to take the plunge. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Observatory of Public-Sector Innovation, for one, lists more than 100 toolkits available for service design in the public sector.[5]

The reason for uneven adoption in some places may well lie in a mis-conception: some believe co-creation is at heart an experimental, pioneering initiative belonging only to disruptors (see the box on page 10 for a list of other misconceptions about co-creation). Today, co-creation is a mature subject area. The key principles have been codified. There are standardised methodologies, some of which we will touch on later in this policy brief. There is also an extended theoretical and applied

The Co-VAL Consortium

The "Understanding Value Co-Creation in Public Services for Transforming European Public Administrations" project, or Co-VAL, is a 12-partner consortium, co-funded by the European Union. The project aims to find new ways of examining the co-creation of value in public services in order to transform public administrations and processes. Along with a plethora of new tools, cutting-edge research and a survey of public administrations, it will produce four policy briefs, which will set out the challenge of public administration reform in Europe and explore the cutting edge of unique "value co-creation" models for delivering better public services and improving citizen-state relations. For more, visit http://www.co-val.eu or follow the consortium on twitter at @CoVAL-eu.

'The academic literature and real-life experience with co-creation has moved well beyond the theoretical level.'

research effort underway, led in many places by members of the Co-VAL consortium whose research informed this policy brief. And there is a solid professional community, ready to deliver, and staffed by people with clearly identified job profiles, such as "user researcher" and "service designer." There are even success stories of entire countries that scaled up design thinking at national level, such as Italy's Government Commissioner and Digital Transformation Team and the United Kingdom's legendary Government Digital Services.

Perhaps the easiest way to understand co-creation is to think of it in terms of the way software has come to be used and developed. Agile management methods, which rely on smaller, shorter projects with frequent iterations that incorporate feedback from users, have become the standard.[6] There is simply no large online software that is not iterated frequently, based on consumers experience and feedback.[7]

This policy brief is divided into four sections. In Section I, we will define co-creation and look at why it is important. In Section II, we will briefly discuss two leading schools for development and touch on some concrete tools and policy choices awaiting civil services ready to dive in and adopt. In Section III, we put forward policy recommendations for delivering genuinely user-centric digital government, arguing that it is time to put co-creation at the core of government functioning. And in Section IV, we will look at some policy pitfalls – a not-unimportant area for civil services contemplating change in delivery fields that touch so directly on so many people's wellbeing. The policy brief ends with an "In Focus" appendix, touching briefly on the evolution of public-sector reform theories, including a bibliography for those who want to go deeper.

Chart 1. Co-Creation Policies

Key performance indicators for digital government adoption

Sound metrics for co-creation

Better evidence base for service design

Make user research a requirement

Use public budget to stimulate adoption

Monitor and evaluate

Prioritise

Co-Creation policies

Remove barriers

Support adoption

Adapt public procurement to agile methods

Enforce open standards and open data

Provide incentives for citizens participation

Reinforce capabilities

Design as infrastructural service

'Today, co-creation is a mature subject. There is an extended theoretical and applied research effort underway, led in many places by members of the Co-VAL consortium.'

I. Why Co-Creation Matters

In the opening scene of "Bodyguard," a popular British television series, Police Sergeant David Budd briefly looks up the voting history and biography of the minister who has just been appointed to serve over him. The website he uses – www.theyworkforyou.com – is a real website, set up in 2004 by a group of volunteers fed up by the lack of usability of the official parliament website.[8] This new unofficial service rapidly became the *de facto* standard for all people interested in the activity of members of parliament; even parliamentary staff now use it instead of the official website.

Partly because of the government-run websites' notorious clunkiness – and the difficulty some public administrations encounter when they try to design web-based services that citizens are comfortable using – the uptake of online public services remains low, with only one in three European Union citizen claiming to have completed an online government transaction in the last 12 months.[9] This is not the result of lack of skills or confidence among citizens, as is demonstrated by their high level of adoption of e-commerce and social media. Many commercial websites, often under the impulse of competition from new web-only services, have made major improvements in becoming intuitive and usable. But government services remain difficult to use. In fact, the adoption gap between private and public services is widening. In 2018, 60 % of Europeans made purchase online while 34 % made e-government transactions. That adds up to a 26 % user gap in 2018, up from as little as 15 % in 2008. See Chart 2 below for more.

Chart 2. e-Government vs e-Commerce Adoption 2018

e-Commerce users as percentage of the population
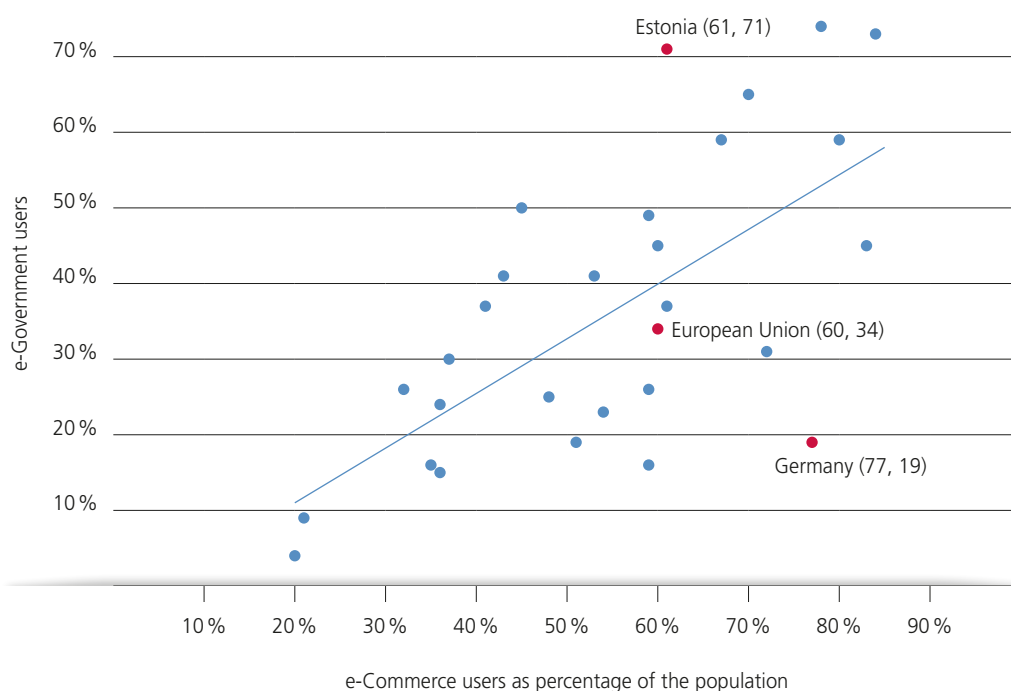
Source: Eurostat

'Perhaps the easiest way to understand co-creation is to think of it in terms of the way software has come to be used and developed.'

The Challenge of Measuring Co-Creation

Given the attention that co-creation of public services has received in recent years, one can only be surprised by the sheer lack of reliable data on its adoption. This is yet another confirmation that co-creation is still treated as a frontier activity rather than as a core function. A review of available metrics, produced as part of the ongoing Co-VAL research, shows a variety of inconsistent indicators that only marginally touch upon co-creation. Many of them were conceived almost 10 years ago:

- The 2009 "Measuring Public Innovation in the Nordic Countries (MEPIN) Survey of Innovation" by approximately 2,000 public sector entities in the five Scandinavian countries included one question on the importance of "user satisfaction surveys (or other user surveys)" as an information channel for innovation activities. The percentage of respondents attributing a high importance to user satisfaction surveys varied from 27 % in Norway to 40 % in Iceland.
- The 2010 European Innobarometer survey with 3,500 responses from public sector agencies, asked about the importance of "citizens as clients or users" as an information source for developing innovations. For all 27 EU countries, 46 % of respondents stated that citizens were a 'very important' information source. There was little variation by the function of the agency, with the lowest reported percentage of 44 % observed for general government activities and the highest percentage of 52 % for agencies focused on education.
- In 2010 Nesta conducted a pilot survey of innovation carried out by local authorities and National Health Service (NHS) trusts in England, obtaining responses from 64 NHS trusts and 111 local authorities. A report on the Nesta results shows that service users are found by 66 % of local councils to be an important source for what concerns the elaboration of ideas for innovation and that 58 % of local councils involve service users in the development of innovations.

Yet we know that co-creation can be measured, and with fairly standardised indicators. The Co-VAL project will release a systematic survey of co-creation in public services in 2020. And individual public administration are acting to increase their reporting. The UK Office of National Statistics, for one, performed 43 rounds of face to face research interviews with 115 participants offline and more than 2000 online in 2018.

What's more, this gap is the average of very different performances in different states as shown by the two extremes. In Germany, for example, 77 % of adults use e-commerce while only 19 % use e-government services. In Estonia, the situation is the opposite; more people (71 %) use e-government services than e-commerce (61 %). In other words, the gap is not a given, and there are countries where online public services are as much a part of citizens' daily lives as commercial services, or even more.[10]

The lack of e-government uptake in many places is a long-standing challenge, and the solution has been known for a while. It lies in a Copernican Revolution that puts the users, not the administration, at the center of service delivery. In 2008, when the first iPhone was being released in Europe, European Union and European economic area ministers met in Malmö to sign *The 2009 Malmö Ministerial Declaration,* which committed them to designing and rolling out "e-Government services designed around users' needs." In 2017, when the tenth generation iPhone X was being launched, EU and EEA members committed again to a set of "user-centricity principles for design and delivery of digital public services" in *The 2017 Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment*.[11] The consistency between declarations nine years apart says more about the slowness of progress than the strength of the high-level commitment.

10 Ibid.

11 Council of the European Union and European Economic Area, *The 2017 Tallinn Ministerial Declaration on eGovernment*, 06 October 2017.

'The first challenge, when addressing co-creation, is defining it.'

12
See European Commission, *eGovernment Factsheets Tenth Anniversary Report* (Brussels : European Union, 2019) and Dinand Tinholt et al., *eGovernment Benchmark 2018* (Brussels : European Union, 2018).

13
The present report addresses only public service delivery and does not address the co-creation of policies, which shares many aspects and methodologies but also present peculiarities and challenges that deserve a separate self-standing analysis.

14
Co-creation is defined as "the involvement of citizens in the initiation and/or design of public services." See William Voorberg, Victor Bekkers, Sophie Flemig, Krista Timeus, Piret Tõnurist and Lars Tummers, "Does Co-creation Impact Public Service Delivery ? The Importance of State and Governance Traditions," Public Money and Management, 2017. These themes are being explored in the Co-VAL project, which will include an effort to map and define better definitions while also compiling an evidence base on new tools and impact.

15
See Stephen P. Osborne, Zoe Radnor and Kirsty Strokosch, "Co-Production and the Co-Creation of Value in Public Services : A Suitable Case for Treatment ?," *Public Management Review,* 18.5 (2016) : 639-653. This research puts forward another case of intrinsic co-creation called "co-experience" which is the role of a citizen's life experience in shaping a public service encounter.

To be fair, digital government has come a long way in 10 years. There have been clear improvements in many services, as demonstrated not only by the increase in the online availability but also by the improvements in interoperability and usability.[12] And the recognition of the importance of "user centricity" as a guiding principle has led to a proliferation of individual initiatives, such as innovation labs and broad-scale urban experiments, but these improvements have remained in most cases confined to individual countries, cities or even individual services. They have not scaled.

The first challenge, when addressing co-creation, is defining it.[13] The term is over-used, so that almost every government service these days claims to have been "co-created."[14] But the reality is that without more effective implementation and commitment that runs beyond lip service, there is the risk that co-creation moves over time to effective oblivion without having had its moment of genuine impact.

To be sure, co-creation can be done in different ways and includes a variety of degrees of involvement of users. Co-creation does not necessarily mean that citizens self-organise and deliver services on their own. Indeed, citizens are not always willing or able to participate in such complicated processes. Fortunately, co-creation can also include formats where there is no need for users to co-create deliberately. This can happen by better using data and statistics on the way services are being taken up to make them easier for citizens to use. Concretely, it is possible to distinguish between two types of co-creation : "intrinsic" co-creation, in which the participation of citizens in the process is passive (i.e. the individual is not aware of their role), and "extrinsic" co-creation, in which the participation is active. In the case of "intrinsic" co-creation, individuals can be engaged in passive co-creation when the public services they access are studied to bring improvements in design. Extrinsic co-creation, by contrast, is built around co-design, i.e., the active involvement of citizens in improving existing services, in innovating new forms of public service delivery and in actually collaborating on the management and delivery of those services.[15] See Table 1 on page 7 for a schematic rendering.

The UK Apprentice Service : Co-Creation at Work

The UK Apprenticeship Service, which in 2018 won the Digital Public Service Innovation of the Year award, is a service helping youngsters to find an apprenticeship, employers to find appropriate training, and for training providers to post vacancies and manage applications on behalf of employers offering apprenticeship. The service has been transformed through a direct intervention of a team expert in service design. The team, which included "service-design" policy professionals from the start, made user needs their highest priority, and carried out an impressive amount of user research, including an amazing 4,000 research sessions with employers. The apprenticeship service has earned its place as one of the UK government's most effective user-centred high-volume transactional services. To date, 2.2 million young people have signed up for the service, which has processed six million transactions. For more, visit https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-transformation-strategy-2017-to-2020/government-transformation-strategy-appendix-case-studies#case-study-6-apprenticeships.

'Co-creation allows for delivering better services by capturing user needs and behaviour and adapting to it dynamically.'

Table 1. Defining Co-Creation

Intrinsic co-creation	Extrinsic co-creation	
Co-construction	Co-design	Co-production
e.g. User-centred design Log analysis Agile methods	e.g. Participatory design E-consultation	e.g. Volunteering Open data apps Living Labs
Citizens participate passively	Citizens participate actively through feedback and ideas	Citizens participate actively and take part in implementation

This conceptual model, and the notion of co-creation in general, applies to all public services, whether analog or digital. But to be sure all digital services can uniquely benefit from co-creation. Co-construction can also benefit from data generated in real time by the interaction of the user with public services. And co-design can benefit from tools such as a participatory design. Most importantly, open data and the open APIs built around them can allow citizens to build entirely new services on top of government data.

The importance of co-creation lies in the recognition that human needs and behaviours are increasingly complex and often unpredictable. Governments cannot expect to have sufficient knowledge to design services and policies that work in a vacuum. The reality – not only of public services, but of society and the economy at large – is that constant tweaking and tinkering are needed. New needs emerge, and they have to be responded to. Co-creation, in its different forms, allows for delivering better services by capturing user needs and behaviour and adapting to it dynamically. Obviously, this flexibility is greatly enhanced by new technology, which allows services to be dynamically recomposed and delivered, feedback to be gathered in real time and adjustments to be made at low cost even after the launch of the service – just as smartphones periodically upgrade their system. But the importance of co-creation is in the capacity to use previously unexploited citizens' resources and capabilities. Obviously, as a user of public services, citizens have a unique perspective on the quality of public services. It is simply impossible for governments to place themselves in the position of users. And it is fundamental that, through intrinsic and extrinsic co-creation, this knowledge is captured and put to use.

Co-creation also has the potential to leverage unique competences for users to add value to public services. Citizens can help providing real time information on the state of the roads through applications such as fixmystreet.com.[16] They can provide unique in-depth knowledge on specific issues; they can help changing the behaviour of other citizens; and they can develop new applications based on government data, as in the case of the https://openbilanci.it.[17]

'People and organisations learn how to deal with innovation by taking part in designing experiments.'

18
Francesca Rizzo, Alessandro Deserti and Onur Cobanli, "Introducing Design Thinking in Social Innovation and in the Public Sector: A Design Based Learning Framework," *European Public and Social Innovation Review (EPSIR)*, Vol 2 (1), 2017.

19
Marc Stickdorn, "Five Principles of Service Design Thinking," in Jakob Schneider, Marc Stickdorn, Fergus Bisset, Kate Andrews and Adam Lawrence (eds.), *This is Service Design Thinking: Basics, Tools, Cases* (Amsterdam: BIS, 2010).

20
For more on ENoLL, visit https://enoll.org/about-us.

21
Mila Gascó, "Living Labs: Implementing Open Innovation in the Public Sector," *Government Information Quarterly*, 34.1 (2017).

II. Co-Creation: Approaches, Tools and Application Cases

There are two principal ways for a public administration to "co-create" public services:
1) "service design," which is the systematic application of design methodology and principles to public services with the goal of designing those services from the perspective of the user, and
2) so-called "living labs," which are independent administrative units located within the public sector but capable of operating autonomously and defining their own innovative targets and working methods.

The 'Service-Design' Approach

There is a clear distinction between the service design and living labs approach. Service design, for one, is a methodology to facilitate the inclusion of external stakeholders in the design of the services. In this regard, service design is a key agent of public sector transformation and a core element of a learning process, and in fact builds on two main assumptions. The first assumption is that the "most relevant actor that may be significantly transformed through and during the design process is the organisation that leads the process itself" while the second assumption maintains that the "design process can be conceived as a learning process, as people and organisations learn how to deal with innovation by taking part in designing experiments."[18]

Drawing on the cutting-edge work of Marc Stickdorn, service design is characterised by five main principles:
1) "user-centricity," as services should be experienced through the customer's eyes;
2) co-creation, as all stakeholders should be included in the service design process;
3) sequencing, as the service should be visualised as a sequence of interrelated actions;
4) evidencing, as intangible services should be visualised in terms of physical artefacts; and
5) holism, as the entire environment of a service should be considered in the analysis."[19]
So while public-service logic theorises value and value creation in public-service contexts, service design can be used to explore what users really value and suggest how such insights can be used to improve service systems.

The 'Living Labs' approach

Following the example of the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL), "living labs are defined as user-centred, open-innovation ecosystems based on a systematic user co-creation approach, integrating research and innovation processes in real life communities and settings."[20] More extensively, "living labs can be understood as settings or environments for open innovation, which offer a collaborative platform for research, development and experimentation in real-life contexts, based on specific methodologies and tools, and implemented through specific innovation projects and community-building activities. Living labs are driven by two main ideas:
1) involving users as co-creators of innovation outcomes on equal grounds with the rest of participants, and
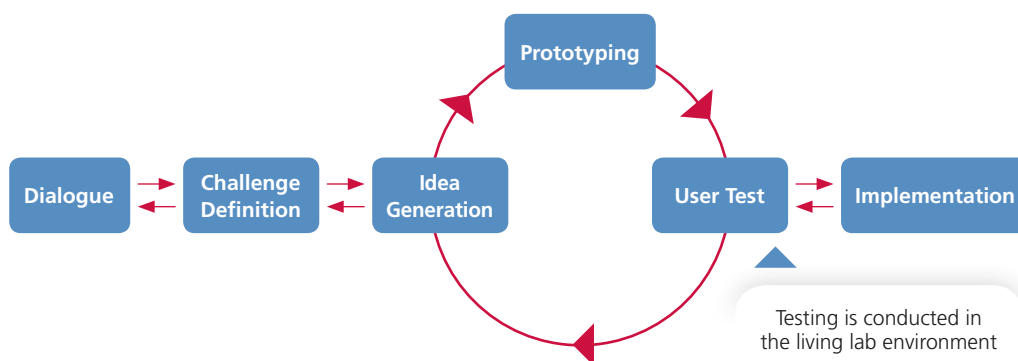2) experimentation in real-world settings."[21]

'Central to the living lab concept is the role of co-creation between diverse stakeholders in real-life settings.'

A good example is the Torino City Lab, an initiative-platform that creates an environment for testing innovative solutions for urban living in real conditions. The public administration provides support to private companies in facilitating testing operations in real conditions in frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, autonomously driven and connected vehicles, fifth-generation telecommunication networks (5G), the Internet of Things and drones. The interesting characteristic is that the lab's work is open to all of the city. Companies, end users and citizens are involved in testing through "calls for action." Specific initiatives include the collection of environmental data through low cost portable sensors and the improvement of government service-based apps.

Central to the living lab concept is the role of co-creation between diverse typologies of stakeholders in real-life settings. In fact, living labs are integrative contexts for co-creation and innovation that are real-life phenomena (the "living" part of living labs) while at the same time separate from everyday activities (the "lab" part). As labs, they remove pressures, risks and ethical concerns related to innovation from day-to-day activities in public administration. However, as close-to-reality phenomena, they aim to draw on everyday experiences and actors' interests and perspectives. For instance, the Danish Mindlab has made extensive use of user-centred design for creating a culture of experimentation and risk-taking across government, in areas such as education, employment and digital government. For more on how the living-lab method works, see Chart 3 below.[22]

22
Mika Yasuoka, Fumiya Akasaka, Atsunobi Kimura and Masayuki Ihara, "Living Labs as a Methodology for Service Design: An Analysis Based on Cases and Discussions from a Systems Approach Viewpoint," *DS 92: Proceedings of the DESIGN 2018 15th International Design Conference*. Design Society, 2018. p.127-136.

Chart 3. The Living Lab Methodology

Dialogue → Challenge Definition → Idea Generation → Prototyping → User Test → Implementation

Testing is conducted in the living lab environment

Source: Yasuoka et.al.

'We need to make sure that co-creation is taken seriously and not treated as a "nice-to-have" feature but as a fundamental requirement for successful public services.'

III. A Ten-Step Programme: Placing Users at the Centre of Public Services

As we have seen, there is consensus over the need to place users at the center, and greater involvement of users is present in all reform efforts of the last thirty years (see the "In Focus" box that begins on page 17 for a brief history). The problem is turning this declaration of intent into large scale adoption. To do that, we need to make sure that co-creation is taken seriously and not treated as a "nice-to-have" feature but as a fundamental requirement for successful public services. The overarching message of this policy brief is that co-creation is not some mysterious and obscure frontier-research activity only available to self-appointed "innovators." There is a consolidated body of knowledge and techniques. There is a large community of experts.

What Co-Creation is NOT!

Beside a positive definition, it is worth pointing out a set of commonly held misconceptions.

1. Co-creation is not about government outsourcing their functions to self-organised citizens. If anything, co-creation requires more leadership from government. And the most widely adopted form of co-creation does not entail a proactive role for citizens, but the adoption of suitable user research methods. Actual co-production of public services is far less common than the lighter forms of co-construction and co-design.

2. Co-creation is not purely "bottom-up," simply asking any user to state his/her needs or put forward ideas about how to solve a problem or to expect them to act by themselves. There are clear, well-structured methodologies to detect needs and co-design solutions. Organising a workshop is not sufficient to claim co-creation. One of the paradoxes of co-creation is the idea that to obtain well designed and user-centric public services one can simply ask a question on social media. The "build-it-and-they-will-come" attitude does not work with co-creation, just as it doesn't work for public services.

3. It is not about "radical openness." Opening up is a prerequisite for co-creation, but openness to be effective needs to be well designed and iterative. Moreover, the amount and type of people to involve has to be carefully designed. Co-creation does not necessarily mean that anyone can be involved. It can be organised with a limited set of people who contribute. And it does not refer to citizens only, but to any user type, including companies and other public administrations.

4. It is not about technology. Co-creation applies to both digital and analog services and this distinction is today increasingly irrelevant – there are few services that have no digital component. Most importantly, co-creation means starting the process from users' needs and problems, not from technological solutions. Of course, digital technology is in itself a useful instrument for co-creation, because it can help the possibility of both intrinsic and extrinsic participation. But even when it comes to purely digital services, one of the most impactful results of co-creation is often just to write in a more comprehensible manner, avoiding jargon.

5. Co-creation is not a form of frontier innovation for pioneers. It is a set of methods that can be (and actually should be) applied to any service by any organisation. There are standardised methodologies, in particular for user centred design and co-design.

'Co-creation, at the level of fully-fledged user research, should become a prerequisite for funding government innovation.'

It is a clearly defined process that requires the same things as any other policy priority: leadership, resources and skills. As Michael Slaby, chief technology officer of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, puts it: "It's not complicated, it's just hard."[23]

The goal is to move co-creation from the periphery to the centre of public-sector innovation, to ensure that ultimately, there will be no public service without any co-creation element. Obviously, co-creation should be intended in the widest sense, as outlined in this policy brief, including intrinsic co-creation instruments invisible to users.

We have examples of countries which have managed to place co-creation at the core, and it is no accident that Scandinavian countries lead both in digital government uptake and design thinking.[24] But the UK provides the best example of scaling up – of actually moving co-creation from the periphery to the core. It did so by creating a dedicated team, largely brought in from the outside, with extraordinary political endorsement (reporting to the prime minister) and with a clear mission – in that case, to make the government's online presence consistent.

Building on these experiences, we propose a 10-point roadmap built around four key themes:

A. Prioritise Adoption

1) **Make user research a requirement for public services.** This is a minimum requirement for effective government. It could include the introduction of a "user test" for public services, similar to the EU's "SME test" for regulation. Just as the "think small first" principle requires that any regulatory intervention is accompanied at an early stage by an assessment of the impact on small and medium-sized enterprises, any intervention in the provision of public services (online or off) should be accompanied by a proper analysis of user needs catalogued using service-design methods – a "think users first" principle.[25] And following the example of "better regulation," the European Commission and EU member states should develop guidelines and toolboxes for public administration to use in order to actually fulfil this new "user test" principle.[26]

2) **Use the public budget to stimulate adoption of co-creation.** Co-creation, at the level of fully-fledged user research, should become a prerequisite for funding government innovation. No innovation in public services should happen without proper use of design methods, at least for assessing user needs. Any public body funded government innovation initiatives should make it a conditional requirement to introduce co-creation methods in the project. At European level, the EU structural funds should make funding conditional on the adoption of proper co-creation and co-design methods. Clear definition and guidelines on co-creation should be provided, and adequate reporting mechanisms should be in place to ensure implementation.

23
Alexis C. Madrigal, "When the Nerds Go Marching In," *The Atlantic*, 16 November 2012.

24
Most of the pioneering initiatives and think tanks for design thinking in public services come from Scandinavia, such as Mindlab in Denmark and Demos Helsinki in Finland. Norway is considered the most advanced country for adoption of service design in the public sector. See Birgit Mager, *Service Design Impact Report: Public Sector* (Cologne: Service Design Network, 2016).

25
European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Think Small First - A Small Business Act" for Europe* (Brussels: European Commission, 2008).

26
European Commission, *Better Regulation Guidelines* (Brussels: European Commission, 2015).

'Citizens are stimulated in taking part in co-creation activities when they see that their effort is recognised.'

B. Support Implementation

3) **Reinforce capabilities in public administration.** Upscaling of co-creation requires public sector managers to have specific in-house capabilities and tools. Among others, these include expertise in service blueprinting to determine the line of visibility between what is and is not visible to users and the ability to identify the "touch" points for service users; ethnographic and observational research to identify the subjective experiences of users; constructing personas by using data obtained from interviews with users to construct a persona for a fictitious user; visualisation and mapping, specifically service blue-printing and customer journey mapping.[27] In this regard, public administration need to hire external experts that are able to apply methodologies such as design thinking in the elaboration of public services. This entails making recruitment processes in public administration more flexible. So far, most digital teams were created through *ad hoc* exceptions and extraordinary recruitment powers, but if we want co-creation to scale, it cannot be done by bending the rules and finding exceptions; it will require adapting recruitment mechanisms.[28] On top of that, there is a need to establish organisational learning processes which ensure that participative outputs feed back into the process and shape future service propositions or contribute to new innovations.

4) **Establish service design as an infrastructural service in each member state.** A way to generalise the use of co-creation and specifically of service design in each EU member state could be the establishment of "co-creation support services" (mirroring other infrastructural services such as payments and authentication platforms) responsible for providing direct support to local and central public administrations that are involved in the establishment of new services and that lack the internal capabilities. To this end, the service-design team would elaborate and make available toolkits and guidelines to be used by public administrations, and will also provide public administration with direct support. Clearly, co-creation is not as scalable as other infrastructural services as it entails substantial human effort. But the costs could be covered as part of the above-mentioned funding mechanisms that will now require co-creation methods to be used.

C. Remove Barriers

5) **Adapt public procurement to agile development methods.** As it stands, public procurement procedures struggle to deal with design processes. Procurement procedures aim at minimising risk, sterilise contact between buyers and tenderers and typically follow a linear "waterfall" process where requirements are defined *ex ante* and changes are the exception rather than the rule – the opposite of a service design process. If the externalisation of design and delivery of services is extensive, an organisation and its employees may actually be prevented from learning from interaction with users, as well as from better designing the new services capturing factors that reside in their implementation at later stages. Public administration should adopt innovative and experimental public procurement processes allowing them to collaborate with the whole network of actors potentially involved in the delivery of the service. This would amend current rules of public procurement, according to which actors involved in the design of the service then cannot take part in its delivery.

6) **Enforce the norms on open standards and open data.** Co-creation can be made impossible by the adoption of proprietary standards solutions as well as the reluctance to open up government data. Open data, standards and software enable citizens to co-create services on their own terms, as widely demonstrated by the proliferation of civic apps. In this respect, governments should define clear principles regarding ownership and re-use of data and service components, as well as provide indications on accountability for quality of services, while at the same time recognising innovation and risk taking as key components of governing.

7) **Provide the right incentives to ensure citizens' participation.** For citizens, there are a number of factors influencing their participation in co-production activities, such as ability and level of information.[29] For instance, the role of information has been acknowledged both at the point of access and during the process of interaction as influencing citizen's capacity to actively engage. In this regard it has also to be noted that material rewards may fall short when applied to the public sector and other intrinsic values might influence citizens' willingness to contribute to public-service production. Indeed, a recent experimental study on financial incentives has found only a limited effect of such rewards on stimulating citizen's willingness to co-produce.[30] As shown by forthcoming research carried out within the scope of the Co-VAL project, information on the co-creation process delivered through direct means, possibly by beneficiaries of own efforts, strongly affects citizens' willingness to co-produce, while immediate and individually enjoyed benefit has no effect on their effort.[31] In general terms, citizens are stimulated to take part in co-creation activities when they see that their effort is recognised and taken into account and when they feel the effects of it.

D. Monitor Results

8) **Make metrics on adoption the key performance indicators of digital government.** Metrics are a fundamental policy instrument in Europe, especially in areas that do not fall under the competences of the EU such as public services. Digital government today is measured through different indicators, such as the percentage of public services that are available online or the availability of open government data. Making adoption of digital services the central metric will incentivise European governments to place users genuinely at the centre. Moreover, the metrics should not be elaborated through surveying citizens, but by using data automatically generated by online services, namely the percentage of service transactions delivered online. Many member states already do this, but data are not standardised. For this reason, every digital government service should publish adoption metrics openly and in real time, and EU member states should work towards standardising such indicators. At the European level, data on uptake of digital service should be included in the list of "high-value datasets" defined in the latest proposal of the revised directive on public sector information.[32]

29 William Voorberg, Victor Bekkers and Lars Tummers, "A Systematic Review of Co-Creation and Co-Production: Embarking on the Social Innovation Journey," *Public Management Review* 17.9 (2015): 1333-1357.

30 William Voorberg, Sebastian Jilke, Lars Tummers and Victor Bekkers, "Financial Rewards Do Not Stimulate Coproduction: Evidence from Two Experiments," *Public Administration Review* 78.6 (2018): 864-873.

31 Natalia Oprea (ed.), "Research Report on Experiments," Co-VAL Deliverable 1.3. The two experiments carried out by Co-VAL required participants to perform administrative tasks for two philanthropic activities related to health. The results showed that citizens who receive information directly from a beneficiary are more willing to co-produce, while monetary reward alone has no impact on influencing citizens in the production process.

32 European Commission, *Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Re-Use of Public Sector Information* (Brussels: European Commission, 2018).

'To make the best of co-creation, one should be aware of the challenges.'

9) **Provide a clear evidence base for service-design in government.** The adoption of co-creation practices is resource consuming both in terms of dedicated time and effort, as well as in terms of monetary resources. Therefore, it is very important to present a clear evidence base showing the advantages of investing in co-creation. It is ironic that public sector innovation labs strive to bring an experimental culture to public services, but there is a lack of experimental evidence about the effectiveness of co-creation.

10) **Provide sound metrics on adoption of co-creation by public administration over time.** The only metrics available are vague and ambiguous, and do not provide a proper definition of co-creation (see the box on page 5). The Co-VAL project will provide a first basis in 2020 when it publishes the results of a dedicated survey and the Co-VAL Dashboard, which will track co-creation projects across Europe.[33] Precisely because co-creation is now mature, it is possible today to define standard indicators, such as the number of users involved and the number of co-creation sessions held.

The United Kingdom's Government Digital Service: User Centric Design at the Core of Government

The most successful large-scale case of application of user-centred and participatory design techniques comes from the United Kingdom's Government Digital Service (GDS). The task of the unit was to transform government using digital transformation and service design, reporting directly to the cabinet office and having the capacity to recruit expertise from outside government. The unit, which was established in April 2011, aimed to foster a "digital by default" strategy developed by Martha Lane Fox, a wildly successful digital entrepreneur and for a time the "digital champion" of the UK government. Since then, the GDS has made extensive use of service design in developing public services. This led to a complete overhaul of the government online presence. Specifically, GDS launched a new toolkit that aimed to be a one-stop shop for digital service design resources. It has since become the standard for all government online services. The toolkit contains a service manual building on a set of 18 criteria (called the "digital service standard") to help governments create and run digital services. It contains an entire section on design for scoping and prototyping.

GDS developed "10 design principles" for the online services of the UK government:

1) Start with user needs
2) Do less
3) Design with data
4) Do the hard work to make it simple
5) Iterate. Then iterate again
6) This is for everyone
7) Understand context
8) Build digital services, not websites
9) Be consistent, not uniform
10) Make things open: it makes things better.

These principles are similar to those developed in other countries by other organisations. The key difference is that GDS managed to actually implement them at the largest scale, by combining a strong political mandate, top-class competence, constant communication and clear focus on delivering results. For more, download the gov.uk service toolkit at https://www.gov.uk/service-toolkit and the gov.uk service manual at https://www.gov.uk/service-manual/service-standard. See also Andrew Greenway, Ben Terrett, Mike Bracken and Tom Loosemore, Digital Transformation at Scale: *Why the Strategy is Delivery* (London: London Publishing Partnership, 2018).

'The conceptualisation of empowerment necessitates that those in government share power.'

IV. The "Don'ts" of Co-Creation; and the Need for a Civil Service that Can Deliver

To make the best out of co-creation, one should be aware of the challenges. The participation of citizens in public service production and delivery is challenged by power asymmetries and the failure to embed participation as a core structural process of public service design and delivery.

The asymmetry originates through the differentiation of roles between public managers, stakeholders and service users, with power generally being retained and exercised by the former two. In the old model, public managers held the organisational skills, knowledge, capacity and creativity to influence decision-making and produce solutions.[34] They were contrasted against service users who were thought to have limited capacity, knowledge and expertise to shape public services.[35] Sometimes "transformative leaders" were placed in a dominant position, "serving" the needs of citizens and ultimately creating value. However, this conceptualisation suggested public managers were working for rather than working with service users, implying an implicit relationship of dependency rather than a collaborative and deliberative approach.[36] Furthermore, citizens' participation has oftentimes created new sub-elite groups who have exclusive access to decision-making. Such groups are limited largely to "experts" or "representatives" rather than including the wider citizenry.[37] In this regard, citizens' participation can lead to distributing power disproportionately to organised groups and potentially further marginalising others.[38]

Considering structural changes, public service reforms from the 1960s onwards have centred predominantly on institutional change via decentralisation, networks and direct citizen participation or deliberation with the aim of empowering citizens or consumers to varying degrees (for a history of public-sector reform definitions, see *In Focus: Theories of Public Engagement, – Then and Now,* the appendix beginning on pages 17-18). In fact, despite specific iterations within each narrative, participation has continued to be consigned to the periphery of public service design and delivery.

In theory, participation empowers citizens through the structural integration of participative and deliberative mechanisms. However, participation through empowerment is restrained by the enduring hierarchical power structures of both representative democracy and public management, with the scope and impact of participation being determined by public-service staff.[39] The implication is that participation is side-lined in public service design and delivery. In short, empowerment through structural change has not been effective in transforming public service production into a participative process, because the conceptualisation of empowerment necessitates that those in government share power.[40] More recent research suggests that participation, upwards through representative democracy and horizontally through deliberation and co-production, will result in a shared public interest which can be translated to achieve public value outcomes. However, some scholars fail to consider how these participative structures may be embedded in closed decision-making structures, sometimes forwarding consumer mechanisms of participation

34
Larry D. Terry, "Why We Should Abandon the Misconceived Quest to Reconcile Public Entrepreneurship with Democracy," *Public Administration Review,* 53.4 (1993): 393-395.

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Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert, *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

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Albert Meijer, "Coproduction as a Structural Transformation of the Public Sector," *International Journal of Public Sector Management,* 29.6 (2016): 596-611.

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Cheng Chen, Michael Hubbard and Chun-Sung Liao, "When Public-Private Partnerships Fail: Analysing Citizen Engagement in Public-Private Partnerships-Cases from Taiwan and China," *Public Management Review,* 15.6 (2013): 839-857.

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'It is necessary that public service staff are trained appropriately in managing the service experience to create value.'

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Richard Shaw, "Another Size Fits All? Public Value Management and Challenges for Institutional Design," *Public Management Review,* 15.4 (2013): 477-500.

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John Alford, *Engaging Public Sector Clients: from Service-Delivery to Co-Production* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

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Timo Meynhardt, "Public Value Inside: What is Public Value Creation?," *International Journal of Public Administration,* 32.3 (2009): 192-219.

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Stephen P. Osborne, Zoe Radnor, Tony Kinder and Isabel Vidal, "The SERVICE Framework: A Public-Service-Dominant Approach to Sustainable Public Services," *British Journal of Management,* 26.3 (2015): 424-438; See also Per Skålén, Jenny Karlsson, Marit Engen and Peter Magnusson, "Understanding Public Service Innovation as Resource Integration and Creation of Value Propositions," *Australian Journal of Public Administration,* 77.4 (2018): 700-714.

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Christian Bason, *Leading Public Sector Innovation: Co-Creating for a Better Society* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2018).

46
Rob Baggott, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum? Reforming Patient and Public Involvement in the NHS in England," *Public Administration,* 83.3 (2005): 533-551; John Clark, "Unsettled Connections: Citizens, Consumers and the Reform of Public Services," *Journal of Consumer Culture,* 7.2 (2007): 159-178.

or emphasising network structures that are occupied predominantly by professionals. This has clear negative implications for the inclusiveness of participation.[41] Similarly, the plurality of actors introduced by networks opens horizontal channels of influence for professionals or organised groups. Downwards channels of influence towards citizens such as co-production, however, have remained closed or at best controlled by those sitting on networks.[42]

Focussing more specifically on the co-creation of value, there are four main challenges emerging for participation. First, value can be co-destructed, where the co-creation process is mismanaged or services are poorly designed.[43] This happens as front-line staff can have a negative effect on the service experience and their role in the value creation process is therefore crucial. The service user can also destroy value where they refuse to participate according to procedures or rules set out by the public sector organisation.[44]

Second, different dimensions of value can be served in different measures. For instance, a public-sector officer might place greater emphasis upon social outcomes (e.g. equality) and the contribution to meeting social and economic needs or on its capacity to develop, while service users may place greater prominence on the quality of the service experience and the value they receive as individuals. Due to the complexity of values that any public sector user might seek to address, this is likely to require a delicate balance of responsibilities, often within budgetary constraints.[45]

Third, the challenge around appended forms of voluntary participation (e.g. such as consultation or surveys to evaluate services) remains in terms of professional opposition to user-led services and partial or cosmetic forms of participation. Structural changes administered under the former narratives have not been sufficient in overcoming these obstacles, suggesting that voluntary forms of participation are perhaps dependent upon a deeper cultural change, which seeks to alter the power imbalance.[46] This would involve reconceptualising service users as knowledgeable, skilled and experienced players, through their integral role in service delivery, who can make important contributions through co-production and co-design. Finally, it is necessary that public service staff are trained appropriately in managing the service experience to create value. They are not currently trained to effectively deal with value creation in its various dimensions, apart from in terms of efficiency.

'Involving citizens in public services and policies is not a new idea: it has been part of most administrative reform efforts in the last half-century.'

In Focus: Theories of Public Engagement – Then, and Now

Involving citizens in public services and policies is not a new idea: it has been part of most administrative reform efforts in the last half-century. Recent research from the Co-VAL project identifies six prevailing reform narratives, which have come and gone as times have changed.

1. The **New Public Administration** narrative started in the 1970s. It argues for structural change through the decentralisation of decision-making and service delivery.[47] Specifically, it articulates the need for the redistribution of power and authority away from elected representatives to the citizenry to close the gap between promises made by governments and the reality of programme delivery, with a focus on social equity and on collaborative governance.[48]

2. The **New Public Management** narrative developed as the normative and pre-eminent model of public service reform in the 1980s. The New Public Management paradigm emerged from the criticism of traditional bureaucracy and considers markets as the key mechanism through which to coordinate resources with needs, the repositioning of citizens as customers or consumers, a preoccupation with performance measurement and management, as well as the assumed superiority of private sector management techniques.[49]

3. A third paradigm, dubbed **Public Value**, emerged in the 1990s as an alternative to New Public Management, endorsing a more collaborative approach with the aim of creating "public value." The concept of public value is conceptualised as equivalent to that of the private value created by corporate organisations, being stakeholder-driven and translated as the shared goal of collaborators.[50]

4. The **New Public Service** emerged from the United States in the late 1990s/early 2000s, stemming from a desire to replace market structures, entrepreneurial public managers and self-interest with a collaborative approach where government is responsible for empowering citizens through training and the coordination of voluntary activities, with a focus on the needs and preferences of citizens, rather than bureaucratic control or objective performance measurements.[51]

5. The **New Public Governance** narrative reflects the impact upon public management of network governance and collaboration which originated in European governance literature in the 1990s. New Public Governance builds on organisational sociology and network theory and suggests that public management is becoming increasingly fragmented, with public services being produced by networks from the for-profit, public and third sectors.[52]

A new paradigm, the **Public Service Logic**, which is at the core of the current debate, has developed over the past 10 years, drawing upon the substantial body of knowledge in service management theory. Public Sector Logic focuses upon the management of public services as services, which departs from the product-dominant logic that associates services with manufactured goods and that has been applied to public services over the last four decades.[53] While the organisational performance of public-sector organisations remains one of its central concerns, it is repositioned within a narrative concerned with the value that public-sector organisations can create with its service users, citizens and communities.

The six narratives tackle users' involvement in different ways, especially for what concerns the rationale to participate, the mechanisms of participation, the role of citizens and civil servants and finally the locus of participation, understood as the phase of citizens' participation in public service delivery. A comparison among the narratives is depicted below.

Public Service Logic frames value as a central idea decomposed into four dimensions:
1) service outcomes, which is the capability to meet economic and social needs and encompasses the dimensions of effectiveness and efficiency of public services;
2) experience, which can be both short-term satisfaction and long-term impact;
3) capital-building, where individuals increase empowerment and control over their own lives; and

47
George Frederickson, "Towards a New Public Administration," in Frank Marini (ed.), *Toward a New Public Administration: the Minnowbrook Perspective* (Scranton: Chandler, 1971); George Frederickson, *The New Public Administration* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980); Ibid, "Comparing the Reinventing Government Movement with the New Public Administration," *Public Administration Review,* 56.3 (1996): 263-270.

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George Frederickson, *The New Public Administration* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980).

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Christopher Hood, Andrew Dunsire and Lynne Thomson, "Rolling Back The State: Thatcherism, Fraserism and Bureaucracy," *Governance,* 1.3 (1988): 243-270; Christopher Pollitt and Geert Bouckaert, *Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Joel Aberbach and Tom Christensen, "Citizens and Consumers: An NPM Dilemma," *Public Management Review,* 7.2 (2005): 225-245.

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Gerry Stoker, "Public Value Management: a New Narrative for Networked Governance?," *The American Review of Public Administration,* 36.1 (2006): 41-57; Janine O'Flynn, "From New Public Management to Public Value: Paradigmatic Change and Managerial Implications," *Australian Journal of Public Administration,* 66.3 (2007): 353-366; Richard Shaw, "Another Size Fits All? Public Value Management and Challenges for Institutional Design," *Public Management Review,* 15.4 (2013): 477-500; John Bryson, Barbara Crosby and Laura Bloomberg, "Public Value Governance: Moving Beyond Traditional Public Administration and the New Public Management," *Public Administration Review,* 74.4 (2014): 445-456.

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Robert Denhardt and Janet Vinzant Denhardt, "The New Public Service: Serving Rather than Steering," *Public Administration Review,* 60.6 (2000): 549-559.

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Stephen P. Osborne, "The New Public Governance?," *Public Management Review,* 8.3 (2006): 377-387; Jan Kooiman, "Governance and Governability," in Stephen P. Osborne (ed.), *The New Public Governance?* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010).

'Recent research from the Co-VAL project identifies six prevailing reform narratives, which have come and gone as times have changed.'

53
Stephen P. Osborne, Zoe Radnor and Greta Nasi, "A New Theory for Public Service Management ? Toward a (Public) Service-Dominant Approach," *The American Review of Public Administration,* 43.2 (2013) : 135-158 ; Stephen P. Osborne, Zoe Radnor, Tony Kinder and Isabel Vidal, "The SERVICE Framework : A Public-Service-Dominant Approach to Sustainable Public Services," *British Journal of Management.* 26.3 (2015) : 424-438.

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John Alford, "Co-Production, Interdependence and Publicness : Extending Public Service-Dominant Logic," *Public Management Review*, 18.5 (2016) : 673-691.

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Christian Grönroos and Päivi Voima, "Critical Service Logic : Making Sense of Value Creation and Co-creation," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41.2 (2013) : 133-150 ; Stephen P. Osborne and Kirsty Strokosch, "It Takes Two to Tango ? Understanding the Co-Production of Public Services by Integrating the Services Management and Public Administration Perspectives," *British Journal of Management* 24 (2013) : S31-S47 ; Per Skålén, Jenny Karlsson, Marit Engen and Peter Magnusson, "Understanding Public Service Innovation as Resource Integration and Creation of Value Propositions," *Australian Journal of Public Administration,* 77.4 (2018) : 700-714.

4) capacity development in the service system, which includes organisational capacity to create a new culture.

In this regard, the creation of value is the rationale for participation, both in terms of individual value to the service user and wider collective value to the public.[54] Furthermore, service users are situated at the centre of service delivery either as co-creator of value through their role in the production, consumption, evaluation and contextualisation of public services (value-in use) ; or as the major creator of value, based on their capacity to use the resources provided through the use of the service (value-in-context).[55]

For instance, considering a public service for employability, trainers make value propositions during class time, exchanging their knowledge of a subject area with students who may interact by completing assignments, asking questions and by participating in class discussions (value-in use). This is the process where value is co-created and service users participate through co-construction. However, outside the classroom, service users create value for themselves (value-in-context), based on their capacity to use the resources provided through the classroom experience.

	New Public Admini-stration	New Public Management	Public Value	New Public Service	New Public Governance	Public Service Logic
Rationale for participation	Distribute power, accountability and legitimacy	Service improvement and reduce costs	Creation of public value and societal learning	Democratic renewal and legitimacy	Negotiate interests and service improvement	Produce different dimensions of value
Locus of participation	Political dialogue	Mainly service evaluation, but sometimes during planning and delivery	Indirect through representative democracy and embedded through deliberation and delivery	Citizenship institutionalised throughout the policy cycle	Inter-organisational relationships and service production	Service relationship
Mechanisms of participation	Decentrali-sation and advocacy	Consumer mechanisms such as choice, complaints and satisfaction surveys	Deliberation and dialogue	Deliberation and dialogue	Networks and co-production	Voluntary and involuntary processes of participation
Role of public service users	Active citizens placed in a central position	Self-interested consumer	Co-creator of public value	Active and responsible citizen	Co-producer	Creator/co-creator of value
Role of public service staff	Manager, service designer and facilitate participation	Expert, innovator and manager	Arbiter of public value, collaborator	Transformative leaders' and collaborators	Collaborator	Co-creator of value

Source : Kirsty Strokosch (ed.), "Literature Review on Public Service Reform Models," Co-VAL Deliverable 1.1

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