

From Participation to Co-Production – Joint Research into Action: A Symposium

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Introduction and Rationale David Simon

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Participatory development approaches have a long history in policy and implementation, and have been the subject of an extended and well-rehearsed academic literature. Whether motivated by an instrumental desire to gather more and better information to inform the design of more effective projects, or a genuine belief in the traditional and/or local knowledge of the intended beneficiaries, participation became one of many silver bullets to solve development's problems. Yet, careful consideration of the implementation of participatory approaches has uncovered a range of critical challenges, from the identification of appropriate participants, to the most appropriate processes to ensure the right people participate, to the timing of such processes to reflect and respect the time constraints and financial stresses faced by the poor and marginalised. Even among relative equals, as in North – South academic collaborations, many subtle and implicit constraints and inequities apply (Simon et al. 2003). At the same time, widespread incorporation of the requirement for participatory methods into institutional practice in performative ways, prompted critiques of participation as a bureaucratic 'tyranny', which in turn needed to be escaped from (Cooke and Kothari 2003; Hickey and Mohan 2004).

Recently, the terms co-production and co-creation have emerged from this tradition to inform new expectations of project design, where the beneficiaries or users of a given intervention participate in its design, research and implementation. Co-creation is gaining currency because it draws attention to the joint definition of shared problems, the design of an appropriate methodology, as well as undertaking the actual research, whereas co-production often refers just to the research being undertaken together.

The approach is now widely used in diverse contexts, both South and North – in the latter especially in relation to public sector engagement by citizens (Durose and Richardson 2016). In other contexts, both South and North, such partnerships are purely voluntary endeavours by the individuals involved who come from different stakeholder groups out of their own volition. In others, such as the cities where Mistra Urban Futures operates in Sweden, the UK, South Africa and Kenya, co-production takes place based on formal institutional partnerships on a

transdisciplinary basis, in other words, bringing academic and non-academic institutions together.* The non-academic partners can be drawn from different parts of the public sector, private sector and civil society. Although complex and often time-consuming to establish, requiring formal processes in each partner institution, such partnerships can provide stability, resourcing and – importantly for the individual researchers – political authority to represent their institutions (e.g., Palmer and Walasek 2016; Perry and Atherton 2017; Perry et al. 2018; Simon et al. 2018).

In development contexts, drawing on participatory traditions, co-production is presented as a means of identifying and incorporating local and traditional knowledge into development interventions in order to enable these projects to perform better. On one hand, co-production moves beyond the problematic a priori valorization of either local/traditional knowledge (perhaps stressed by changing conditions) or scientific knowledge (perhaps not yet able to deliver what is needed in a manner more reliable than local/traditional sources of information) to create communities that can work across and combine these domains. Yet many questions arise, many of which are reminiscent of older participatory rhetoric, in particular:

- For whom do co-production approaches perform better, the donor or Southern recipients?
- Who participates in co-production?
- What are the most effective means of implementing co-production?
- How are power relations dealt with? For instance, (how) will larger, more powerful actors or partner institutional representative, not dominate or be prevented from dominating? Can or will intended development beneficiaries really say no to a donor?
- (How) can we co-produce monitoring and evaluation and whose interests do these tools serve?

- (How) should one decide when it is appropriate to co-produce or not?

This session sought to explore these issues and questions in a way that blended transatlantic and also North – South perspectives around the particular challenges posed by the often strong inequalities bedeviling such collaborative efforts in various forms of relationships and formal partnerships.

* NB: This is nowadays the dominant usage of ‘transdisciplinarity’, although in some circles, particularly in North American scientific contexts, it refers to interdisciplinarity within the confines of academic or scientific institutions.

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Co-production and Cogency: Planning and River Monsters

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Introduction

What is co-production? According to whom? Who wants it? How is it to be achieved in situations of serious imbalance of power, authority, communicative capacities and other challenges? The purpose of this contribution is to examine critically the assumptions that shape what becomes labelled as co-production in the domain of urban planning and transportation infrastructure design in the USA and to contrast this domain with an exemplar of how co-production is achieved via a popular media production.

On account of their institutional and legal role, urban and transportation planners are called upon to mediate actual and anticipated conflicts between various public agencies, commercial factions, private interest groups and citizens. There is no denying that this task is extremely challenging because of the scale and intensity of these conflicts. It is clear from planning literature, and from the tenor of debate over land use issues in the popular press, that neither the extent nor the quality of public involvement in planning are satisfactory. Indeed, according to Mees and Dodson (2007:35), “Meaningful public participation in urban planning remains an elusive goal despite decades of rhetorical commitment by decision-makers.”

Arnstein’s famous Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) shows a continuum of public involvement stretching from “manipulation” all the way to “citizen control” (Fig. 1). These steps can be translated into ratios of public versus expert control, where “manipulation” consists of 100% expert control and 0% public control with “citizen control” vice versa. To measure the quality of public involvement, the author has used the Arnstein Ladder in conjunction with electronic polling at actual public meetings and at professional conferences to gauge stakeholder beliefs about participation quality. The public data were sampled anonymously at a range of public meetings dealing with real infrastructure projects in six states over the past 20 years. The second data set was elicited from professionals including local land use planners, urban planners and transportation professionals over the same timeframe at meetings such as the American Planning Association, the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting and the Building Bridges Conference (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969)

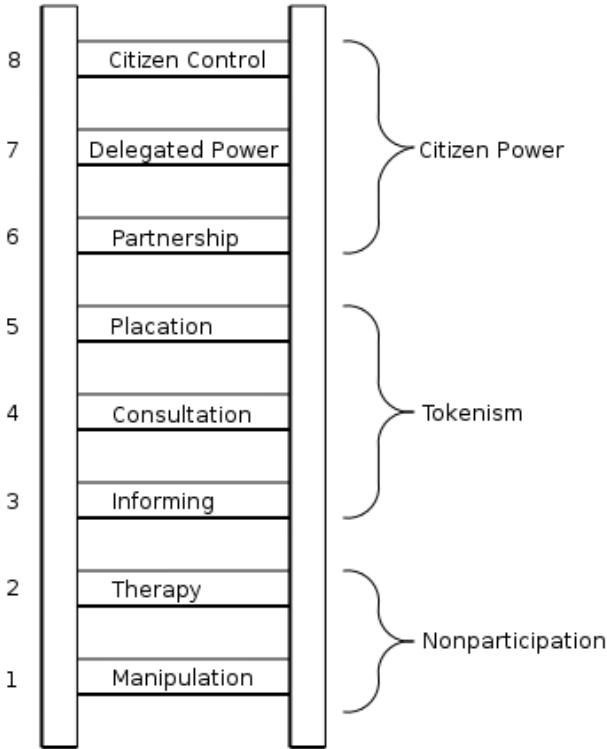
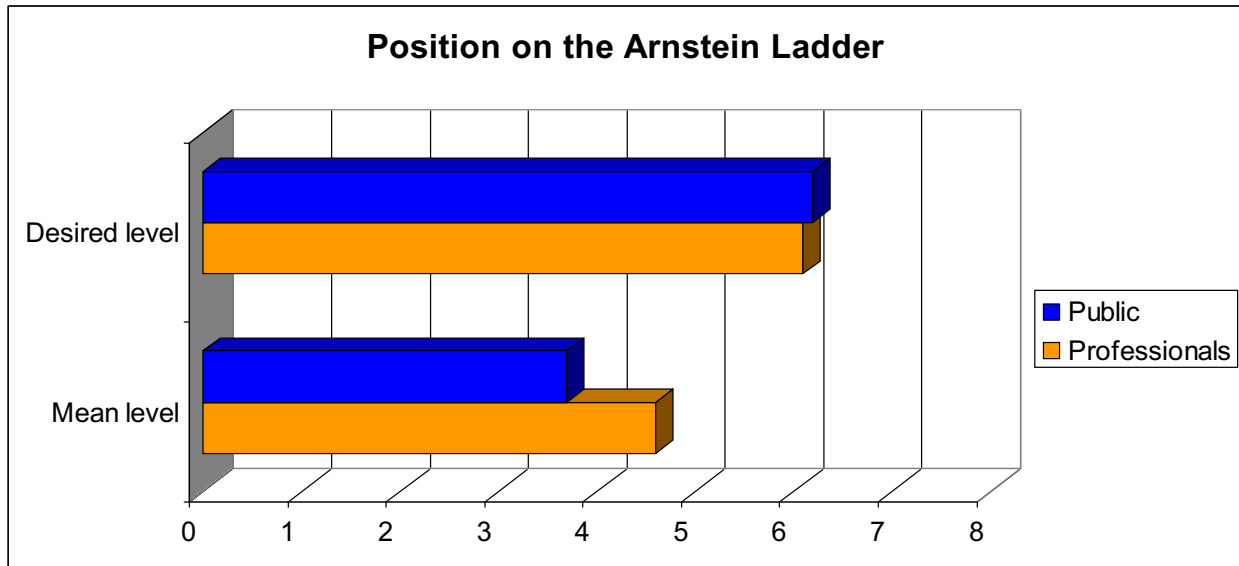


Figure 2. Arnstein level data from public and professionals



Note: “Public” data was gathered during the period 2000-2019 from more than 150 meetings dealing with real transportation projects in six states. N = 4255.

Several findings have been advanced from these data (e.g. Bailey and Grossardt 2010, 2011). However, for this purpose, the Arnstein Ladder data can be analysed to determine – from the viewpoint of citizens – what level of public involvement constitutes “co-production” in planning and infrastructure design systems comprised (rather simplistically) of citizens and expert stakeholders (planners/designers) using the Arnstein Ladder scale as a metric. The answer is almost unanimous: level 6, or what Arnstein termed “Partnership.” The public and the professionals all wish to co-operate in “partnership,” i.e. almost exactly on the sixth rung on the Ladder. In theory, then, the notion that the public and planners will necessarily be at loggerheads, no matter what processes are used, is counterfactual. In terms of the group methods and participatory techniques to be used, operationalising the meaning of “partnership” is a thorny question that would take substantial work and likely require asking questions that project sponsors and agencies often do not want asked. However, the adage “people know it [partnership] when they see it” is useful if guided by empirical measurement such as this. Moreover the strong agreement between experts and citizens regarding the aspirational Ladder level means that the functioning of processes of co-production could be mutually understood.

However, this is not the case at the moment. In all cases sampled, the public believes that public involvement is conducted at a relatively lower level on the Ladder than they would prefer. The difference between the actual (perceived) and desired (ideal) levels of public involvement is termed the *Arnstein Gap* (Bailey and Grossardt 2006:339). The size of this Arnstein Gap varies depending on which professional group is examined, but the consistency of

the public valuation across projects and geographic regions is notable. The second finding is that the professionals surveyed believe that they are doing better than the public thinks they are (termed the “professional conceit;” Bailey et al. 2011:57). This points to a universal issue with professionals self-defining “co-production.” The third finding is that the public does not desire “citizen control,” shown by the top rung on the Ladder. These data contradict a long-held perception among experts that the public, given free rein, would desire “citizen control” (Jackson 2001:146). So, co-production need not equate with anarchy or chaos. Finally, there is the systematic difficulty of generating even simple heuristic system performance data with minimal overhead like the Arnstein set above.

The institutions and systems of planning are deeply resistant to critical self-reflection, preferring instead vacuous pronouncements of participatory excellence and avoiding objective measurements (Connelly 2005). For example, when Wood (2014) proposed performing a similar Arnstein-based analysis on the Kansas City streetcar project, the project sponsors required him to remove the bottom three rungs on the Ladder from the poll “to avoid giving the impression that the agency had ever been less than democratic.” This is but one example among hundreds illustrating that if we cannot define co-production without large-scale participation in its very definition, then all subsequent analysis and evaluation of its implementation and success is elite-driven and irrelevant to participants.

Let us consider a countervailing example of co-production with the example of Jeremy Wade. Jeremy Wade is a self-styled “extreme angler” whose television show “River Monsters” is syndicated via channels like Discovery and whose episodes have achieved global popularity (jeremywade.co.uk 2018) (Fig. 3). Jeremy’s shows feature a consistent narrative in which first he draws on local legends, literature and art, to define the monster fish and then sets about finding and catching this fish to illustrate the species, its habitat, and his angling prowess, to the viewers. The fiercer the fish, the more teeth it has, the more powerful it is, and the more historic and more ominous the surrounding stories and legends are, the better. In one episode, Jeremy heads “deep into the Amazon” – a Heart of Darkness domain replete with electric eels, monster anacondas, arapaimas that breathe air and jump two metres out of the water to seize their prey, candiru fishes, and many more exotic – to northern audiences anyway – natural hazards.

Jeremy teaches his audience several important lessons about co-production. First, the natives know best. Whitey is – generally – ignorant and often incompetent in the wild. In order to understand the habitat, habitus and habits of the creatures, native knowledge must be sought. It is wise to seek this knowledge before initiating the search. Second, science does not have all the answers. It has some – for instance, the filament line should be proportionate to the expected mass of the fish as well as its speed and the size of its teeth – however, search areas and techniques should be informed by indigenous knowledge in the first instance. Third, when special river-monster-management techniques are discovered, such as the indigenous ritual preparation for handling of the electric eels that negates shock risk, the specifics are treated according to the desires of the indigenes – in this case, the botanical biochemistries remain

undisclosed. Finally, Jeremy sometimes admits and broadcasts failure – the fish cannot be found, or if it is, it bites him as he brings it in to the boat and he is forced to let go.

Figure 3. Jeremy Wade at work



This kind of production is not unproblematic and for example, reproduces certain stereotypical tropes of imperialism and wilderness fetishism. It is easy for academics to be glibly dismissive and even condescending towards it. Nevertheless, I argue that extreme angler Jeremy Wade does a much better job of co-producing knowledge than most institutional systems manage. The academic-industrial complex is relatively incapable of catalyzing stronger and more effective knowledge exchange that could more reasonably be classified as “co-production.” Without wading too deep into Jeremy’s swamp, it will be clear to readers that other public goods management domains (e.g. energy futures, resource management, waste disposal etc.) all share dimensions of the infrastructure planning problem in that they involve allocations of benefits, costs and risks across populations and are already subject to legal mandates for participation - but this is not co-production. If co-production is to be the normative principle, and progress is to be made in terms of developing stronger modes of co-production, involving citizens and experts/managers in mutually informative problem exploration and solution development, then there are lessons to be learned from Jeremy Wade’s River Monsters. In the

urban planning and infrastructure design domain, an epistemic reversal is required in which locals are assumed to have superior knowledge of system properties and therefore, towards which knowledge-exchange systems such as collaborative GIS/geovisualization, online deliberation, and others should be oriented. As the extensive literature on PGIS and collaborative geovisualization attests, this is seldom – almost never - the case (Kyem 2004).

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CityLabs, embedded research and co-production in Cape Town

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Africa is hurtling towards its urban future in 2050, when over 50% of the population is predicted to be urban, young and connected in ways previously unimaginable. An average of 62% of African urban populations live in informal dwellings, many of whom work in informal economies. There will continue to be insufficient wage-earning jobs, which means that many urban residents will never afford formal housing or have the capacity to engage with formal economies or political processes. This brings a number of social, spatial and economic challenges, and with it unhelpful tropes of a continent in despair on one hand (Pieterse 2008), or Africa Rising narratives on the other.

Despite this, there are numerous opportunities for finding urban innovations, and leapfrogging beyond the constraints of industrial development in the interest of identifying and implementing initiatives aimed at realising more sustainable and just transitions. These urban transitions and transformations require new forms of knowledge, policy interventions and coalitions, and therefore this section of our symposium draws on a flagship co-production methodology of the Cape Town Local Interaction Platform as part of Mistra Urban Futures.

Cape Town remains stubbornly divided along class and racial lines, with pernicious conditions of urban sprawl, lack of social, spatial and economic integration, and ongoing conditions of inequality and in some neighbourhoods, deadly violence due to gang activity. The legacy of hundreds of years of colonialism, entrenched during apartheid, have resulted in a bifurcated city, where the minority is very wealthy and centrally located in desirable neighbourhoods in and surrounding the CBD, with the majority living across the rest of the metropole, often in undesirable conditions. Despite a highly lauded participatory democratic political model in South Africa, participation has been faltering for some time (Lemanski, 2007; McDonald, 2008; Turok, 2001; Wilkinson, 2000).

There is a range of urban experiments exploring the latent opportunities available to socially and spatially transform the city (Pieterse and Simone 2013), but this section will consider the [African Centre for Cities'](#) (ACC) CityLab and Knowledge Transfer Programmes. Both initiatives, supported by [Mistra Urban Futures](#), aim to explore knowledge co-production to address the challenges of slow pace of policy responses in keeping up with urbanization, and help decision makers to think about what the context demands in terms of knowledge, expertise, capability, intervention and support. Given the interdisciplinary nature of urban challenges, there is a need for grounded and collaborative methodologies to generate relevant knowledge for appropriate action (Parnell and Oldfield 2014).

Since 2012, the ACC has initiated 9 CityLabs that have been either theme or place-based, including the Healthy Cities CityLab, Urban Violence, Safety and Governance CityLab, Sustainable Human Settlements CityLab, Central CityLab, Philippi CityLab, Urban Flooding CityLab, Urban Ecology CityLab and Public Culture CityLab. The purpose of the CityLabs is to provide a platform for engagement and knowledge co-production between different urban actors, such as city officials, researchers and civil society. The CityLabs have produced a wide range of new research material in a variety of different forms and registers: from policy frameworks (Western Cape Government 2018), academic articles (Anderson et al. 2013; Berrisford and Cirolia 2018; Brown-Luthango 2013) and books (Brown-Luthango 2015; Cartwright et al. 2013; Cirolia et al. 2016), to films, photographic and art exhibitions (Sitas 2017), and other forms of information in different registers and for different audiences such as the Integration Syndicate, City Desired and Public Art and the Power of Place. The CityLab model is now being explored across the continent through the African Urban Research Initiative.

Another ACC initiative is the Knowledge Transfer Programme. This project involves a coproduced memorandum of understanding between the University of Cape Town through the ACC, and the City of Cape Town. There are two components of this programme. The first involves embedding researchers in the City of Cape Town. The first round of researchers were PhD students working in fields such as climate change, the green economy, and property dynamics (Cartwright et al. 2013). The second phase researchers include 3 PhD students and a post-doctoral researcher working on transit-oriented development, arts, culture and heritage and sustainable development goals. The embedded researchers spend a portion of their time working on City-led projects and a portion of their time on their research, which is related to the work they are involved in in the City. The second component involves a writers' exchange, where – initiated by the City of Cape Town – City officials are given time to write in collaboration with an academic in their field (Davison, Patel, and Greyling 2015; Greyling, Patel, and Davison 2017). These engagements strengthen both policy-responsiveness and engaged scholarship and propositional research.

As with the all forms of collaborative and co-produced research, this is not without its challenges. Managing power dynamics and ethical considerations of intimate access to information, is crucial. This involves trust and relationship building between both institutions and individuals. Also vital is finding ways to address competing and sometimes irreconcilable logics – such as the tensions between real estate driven development and struggles for socio-spatial justice. In order to avoid situations where everyone is ultimately equally unhappy, finding ways to enable productive dissensus is also important.

Ultimately, finding ways to recognize and learn from the impact of these kinds of initiatives is imperative. Co-producing how to, and what is being monitored and evaluated enables reflective and reflexive spaces for engagement. It is easier to measure tangible outcomes, such as policies and publications, but more challenging to observe the more intangible transfer of knowledge in these situations. In particular, the Knowledge Transfer Programme has built in processes to reflect on these softer dimensions – through ongoing member reflections, externally facilitated

workshops, and extending the comparative component to other platforms in the Mistra Urban Futures network. To conclude, “Co-produced interventions in cities are an alternative inspiration to off-the-shelf or best practice ‘solutions’ that are uncritically replicated between cities”.

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Reflections from comparative co-production research on the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda

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The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed by national governments worldwide in 2015 highlight the importance of cities in achieving sustainability, particularly through SDG 11 which aims to make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The New Urban Agenda, adopted by the UN during Habitat III in 2016, is also a statement about the role of cities and a commitment to urban sustainability (Klopp and Petretta 2017; Parnell 2016; Satterthwaite 2016; Simon et al. 2016). At the international research centre Mistra Urban Futures, we are carrying out a comparative research project with the aim of understanding how cities are engaging with, understanding and implementing the SDGs and the NUA. The project involves 7 cities around the world, Buenos Aires in Argentina, Cape Town in South Africa, Gothenburg and Malmö in Sweden, Kisumu in Kenya, Sheffield in the UK and Shimla in India. The research started in mid 2017 and will run until at least the end of 2019. We have one researcher or research team in each city who is conducting the research through transdisciplinary co-production. In each city the researcher has set up a working team with city officials to co-produce the research (in a few cities that started later, this process is still being set-up).

I will comment on a couple of reflections from the research process so far. We are interested in understanding how cities implement these agendas. By doing the research through co-production, we are influencing that implementation. By asking questions to city officials about the SDGs and the NUA we are also raising awareness about these agendas, particularly about the NUA which is so far very little known in the cities we are working on. This is not unique to co-production and would happen in a more traditional research project as well. An aspect that may be more unique to transdisciplinary co-production research, is that we are being asked by our city official counterparts for guidance on how to implement these agendas. In particular, the NUA, which does not have a concrete implementation framework as the SDGs, and thus is perceived as more vague and harder to grasp and implement. By providing guidance, we may be influencing that same process we are trying to explore. An example is the work taking place in Buenos Aires. The city has formed an SDG office and our research team has started to work closely with them. As the office was prioritising the SDGs they would start working with, they included SDG 11 as our research project is focusing on that SDG. Part of the work has also included organising collaborative meetings to review the indicators of SDG 11 and how they relate to the main programmes the city is implementing, particularly with regards to housing. Various agencies of the City of Buenos Aires who participated in these meetings have decided to incorporate the outputs of the meetings, which included the adaptation and complementation of some of SDG 11 indicators to better fit the needs of the city, into their work programmes.

The extent to which we might influence the work a city is doing with the SDGs and the NUA depends significantly in our co-producing partners. If our co-producing partners are in position to change planning and policy processes, then our research may have a wider impact in the way the city works with these agendas. We are working mostly with the public sector but even within the city administration, institutional silos often limit collaboration and thus working with one city department does not necessarily guarantee that the knowledge and the process of localizing the SDGs and the NUA will permeate into other parts of the city administration. We are planning on addressing this challenge by organising workshops with actors from different departments in the city.

Analysing the same process that we are being part of presents interesting opportunities and challenges. One challenge that we continue to reflect upon is how to build productive working relations with our counterparts, something that requires trust and openness, at the same time as we maintain our independence as researchers and the ability to be critical of the processes we are analysing, and at the same time we are being part of, when needed.

We are also discussing how to engage with citizens, who are often absent from the discussions on these global agendas and from the planning of interventions that are ultimately designed to benefit them (a critique that has been raised from the Millennium Develop Goals process) (Caprotti et al. 2017; Kaika 2017; Klopp and Petretta 2017). If we fully want to include citizens in the co-production process, the question emerges of who can speak or represent the citizen's voice. The same applies if we start considering involving the private sector.

As the research progresses, we will continue reflecting on who and how we can involve as co-production partners and how their involvement will influence our analysis as well as how we, as researchers, will influence their work, particularly as it relates to the localisation of these international agendas, but more broadly to urban sustainability.

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Situating Co-Production: Practice, Pitfalls and Potentials

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As David Simon notes in his Introduction to this Symposium, there is a long tradition of participatory research upon which co-production draws for its inspiration. In the 1890s, whilst at Atlanta University, W.E.B. Du Bois collaborated with members of communities to understand how poor Black populations in the United States were trying to manage under appalling conditions, whilst Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, following an earlier visit to London, founded Hull House in Chicago in 1889. The ethos was for women to share knowledge and skills with each other and together with recent migrants, who were offered shelter and accommodation. Collaborations were routine in the investigation of social conditions for the purpose of human betterment.

With its changing population, the City of Chicago provided the conditions to explore the dynamics of change, with numerous empirical studies being conducted, including those categorized as participatory (Bulmer 1984). Here we find an emphasis upon taking the contextual issues that inform people's lives seriously. Early in the Twentieth Century, those such as Robert Park (1972) viewed society not only as a source of obligation, but also one of inspiration. In order to effect social change, there was a need to build bridges between conflict and communities through the generation and utilization of knowledge of other customs and histories; all of which was accompanied by a compassion which comes with preparedness to engage in the effort of understanding. The spirit of such work continued through the works of those such as Kurt Lewin (1946), Paulo Freire (1970) and within the history and practice of participatory action research (Reason and Bradbury 2001).

Whilst diverse in orientation, there are similarities in all of these approaches. Taking the social context in which people live, think and act is shared by them all, along with an attempt to take-on-board what has been termed the knowing-doing gap through recognition of the centrality of tacit knowledge in the achievement of a reflexive relation to the world (May and Perry 2017). The filters and frames that we deploy not only enable sense-making in the world, but are also pregnant with the possibility for change. Paulo Freire regarded how people are situated as a 'dense reality' in which a movement to recognition of how it structures our lives then informs a commitment to change: "Humankind *emerge* from their *submersion* and acquire the ability to *intervene* in reality as it is unveiled" (Freire 2017: 82. Original Italics).

From situatedness being a fundamental feature of our lives, co-production cannot be content to remain at the level of such awareness. Context-dependence can easily become a celebration of the status quo with no resulting transformative effects. Not only does co-production need to

understand the former in terms, for example, of the typifications we use to make sense of the world, but it also has to navigate a precarious space between the actual and potential for the purpose of achieving change. As Kieron Bailey asks, we need not only to understand what it is, but also 'who wants it'? Those who deploy it as a methodological panacea in situations of power disparities not only bring false hope to those already marginalized, but may well add to the inequities that produce those circumstances in the first place.

The promise of social change in the use of co-production has to be handled with care. That means generating explanations for not only why things happen, but the impediments to their realization and a clear sense among those who participate concerning expectations of what may result from the process itself. The forces that produce particular contexts and issues may very well lie beyond the confines of a project whose duration and remit is limited, whilst even those which lie within its potential can be highly resistant to change. In discussing Arnstein's (1969 Ladder of Citizen Participation, Kieron Bailey points out that there is congruence between how experts and citizens see the potential of co-production, but a gap is apparent between actual and desired levels of participation. Professional views of co-production may differ from citizen expectations, leading to co-optation within particular agendas, as opposed to engagement for the purpose of generating mutual understanding.

When it comes to taking the importance of context seriously in order to achieve much needed socio-economic and political change, the city of Cape Town is a site for co-production. Rike Sitas highlights the importance of history in understanding the city. Here we see continuation of a 'stubbornly divided' city along the lines of class and race, with urban sprawl, violence and the legacy of hundreds of years of colonialism characterizing its contemporary landscape. Cape Town thus faces enormous issues in seeking to bring about greater integration and social justice. In these situations, ambivalence is a frequent visitor that is manifest in face-to-face relations where responsibility and blame may easily become individualized in processes of co-production. Such attribution lies in direct tension with the social production of knowledge that is meant to be distinctive about the ethos of co-production.

As Rike Sitas' experiences testify, building trust and relationships between institutions and individuals is core to the success of such processes, as is recognition of potentially irreconcilable tensions between the struggle for social justice and real estate-driven development in the pursuit of profit without any consideration of such matters. In these contexts she makes an important point that can be easily overlooked by those seeking a method for the generation of consensus: dissent is a feature of the social, political and economic landscape and how to understand that requires careful consideration and empathic practice.

Taking research values that seek to increase the possibility for marginalized voices to matter also means new ways of listening and taking the time to learn. This is not the same as the tokenism that often informs community consultation exercises, or the placing of duties to consult in the implementation of policies whose very conception is jealously guarded by elites. In climates that pervade the globe, time and power and implicated in frenetic activities that frame the relations between knowledge and economic development in highly selective ways (May and Perry 2018).

The value placed on time to consult should take priority over the apparent necessity for delivery in short time frames – the results of which are often either abandoned or reinvented in a spectacular triumph of forgetting over memory. This is not simply about creating opportunities to express dissatisfaction, legitimate as that is in any system that claims to be democratic, but also the meaningful incorporation of those voices into policy development so that the gap between dissatisfaction and failing to listen does not create further injustice. The quality of societal institutions to (be able to) take on board the views of civil society is fundamental to this aim (Boltanski 2011).

It is within this space that Sandra Valencia's contribution sits. She reports on the implementation in seven cities of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have already been agreed by national governments. Whilst there is evident variation in the capacity and capability of different urban areas to undertake this work, she notes the issue of how the work itself raises issues, whilst at the same time being expected to aid the efficiency and effectiveness of their implementation. It will be interesting to see the extent to which currently excluded views – communities within civil society – alter the process itself and even raise issues about the feasibility and desirability of the goals themselves.

The point she makes about change as a result of intervention is important. If we expect solutions to already existing problems, we not only assume that those problems are the relevant ones to examine and thereby accept previous definitions, but also engage in the fantasy that co-production might have the last word on our practices. As Cornelius Castoriadis wrote of science, it appeared as the only form of activity: "to resolve questions without raising any" and in so doing "it would be released from the need for questioning as well as from any burden of responsibility. A divine innocence it would possess, a marvellous form of extraterritoriality" (1991: 263).

The practice of co-production is time-intensive, difficult and messy, with the result that not only is the expertise of the researchers themselves placed in question, but those experiences are not always amenable to the sanitised accounts of the research process that are positively received by those in pursuit of something called 'best practice'. It involves a process of 'active intermediation' in which the critical task involves moving across boundaries and creating spaces to mediate between accounts and view of the world (May and Perry 2017). It is for such reasons that Keri Facer and Kate Pahl write that: "The main enemy of intelligent and rigorous approaches to understanding the legacy of complex research projects ... is the assumption that there is one toolkit/process/method that can capture it" (2017: 18).

As modes of knowledge production are changing with researchers involved in collaborative knowledge generation, it is not only the multidimensional reflexivity of the researcher that comes into play, but that of all knowledge producers in the process – and of how they interrelate. In our fragmented, high-speed, time-poor, highly-pressured societies, where policy proceeds at a startling pace in the absence of learning, collective spaces for reflection are even more necessary. The challenge is to design spaces for collectively producing knowledge, without collapsing into group therapy, whilst maintaining concern to contribute to the possibilities of more just

transformations of the world to which we belong. Resistance to that possibility among those who benefit from current arrangements should not be underestimated.

Because of the issues in the process of co-production that are raised by the contributors to this symposium, the depth of relations necessary for its success requires the generation of trust and that takes periods of time that tend to exceed that of other approaches (May and Perry, forthcoming). It raises questions about epistemic boundaries and with that, the identities and appraisal of expertise of those who perform this work, as well as suitable ways of evaluating its success beyond those measures associated with propositional forms of knowledge. Kate Lyle (2017) expresses this in terms of a movement from 'tolerant ambivalence', where boundaries are maintained, via a 'cooperative mode' where we find sharing through joint purpose, to 'transformation' which requires a reorientation and recombination of knowledge which can transcend boundaries. Knowledge institutions and those funding research need to take on board the realities of reaching this latter stage and recognise not only that different forms of evaluation are required, but also what then constitutes successful research becomes the narrow confines of what now exists (May 2018).

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